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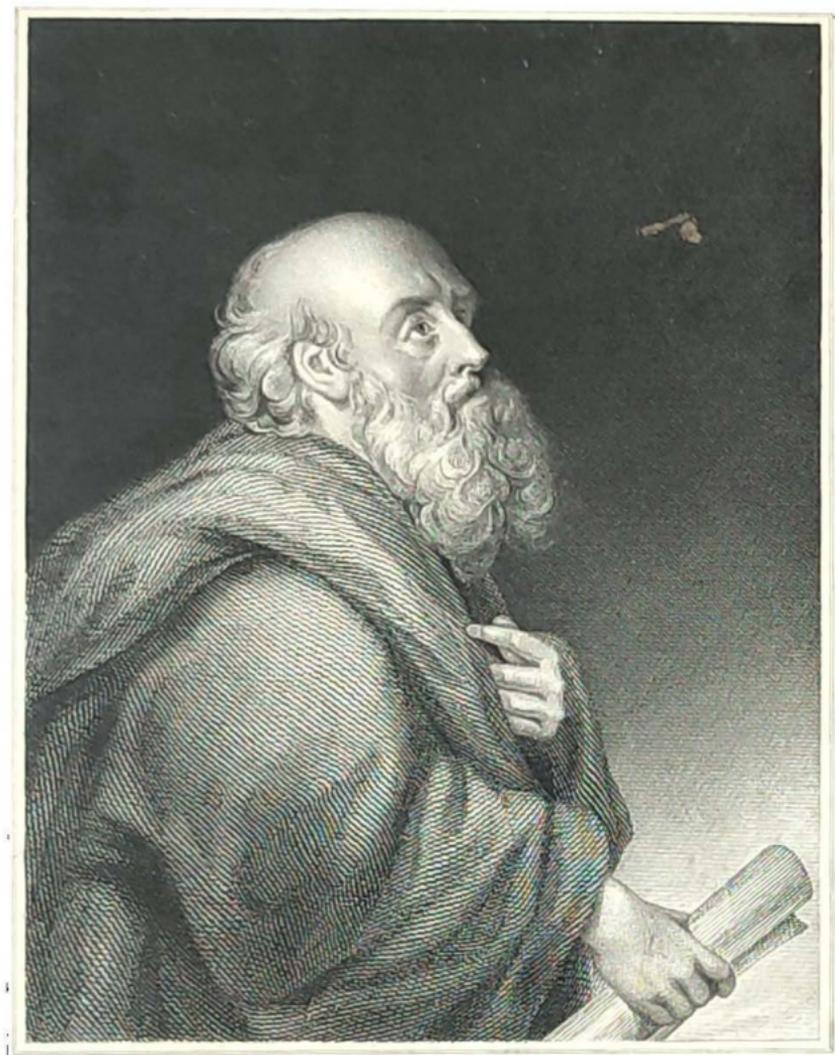


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O R I G E N .

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BIOGRAPHY

OF THE

EARLY CHURCH.

BY THE

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P R E F A C E.

THE following pages supply the remainder of the list of prominent persons in ecclesiastical history down to the time of the rise of the Arian controversy, and thus complete the plan proposed in the former volume. The Reader will perceive that not only the history is given in much fuller detail than in the preceding case, which is owing to the much more ample stock of materials; but that also the opinions maintained by the characters are explained with more minuteness. This is partly owing to the same reason, partly also because the arrival at times of controversy *within* the Church gives them a greater importance, and partly also because the Author, unhappily, can no longer refer his Reader to the faithful guidance of the works of the Bishop of Lincoln. He hopes that he has now presented a tolerably faithful picture of the Church of the three first centuries, and wishes

his Reader to bear in mind that his object has been not so much the detail of naked facts, as the exhibition of them in union with their surrounding circumstances of time and place, as far as his knowledge and reflection would enable him so to associate them, and in the manner in which he has thought that the mind would most clearly and profitably contemplate them.

Tarvin Vicarage,
Dec. 15th, 1838.

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ORIGEN.

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IN the course of this biography we have been going hitherto as if through an unknown country, down the

early course of its mighty river. Our view has been mostly confined to the narrow glen through which it rushes to the plains. Once or twice the view has opened as it were into side valleys, and given us comparatively wide prospects. Such are the glimpses which we gain through the works of Tertullian, and the Alexandrian Clement. But then it has been contracted again. Henceforward, however, the view opens both to right and left, we catch distant prospects in front, and before long the eye rests without much impediment, as upon the wide extent of a champaign country; and as towers and spires of churches are seen all around rising to the view of the delighted voyager, so to our historical eye the numerous churches of the east and west, thickly interspersed far and near between the cathedral towers of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, form a varied and most interesting prospect. By means of the works of Origen and Cyprian, and with the supplementary aid of the History of Eusebius, we are enabled to extend our views over a wide space, hindered by comparatively few obstacles. In Cyprian's case more particularly, our eye is carried by the help of his epistolary correspondence, through an extensive range of historical fact and character. And had time spared us a similar document from the hand of Origen, we should have enjoyed a tolerably clear contemplation of the history of the third century.

But even then our eye would still rest, as it does now, almost exclusively on one portion, where the light falls in a bright gleam, while the rest of the view is involved in a general gloom of indistinctness. This is the Northern part of the African continent,

where during this age the Churches of Alexandria and Carthage shine with a brilliancy which throws every other into dim distance. In the former there passes before us a succession of illustrious men, whose fortunes and characters concern the universal Church, and seem to draw all its events in their train. The latter presents to us the eventful and glorious pontificate of Cyprian. And how melancholy and deep is the interest of this view, when we think of the irreclaimable barbarism with which these chosen dwelling-places of the truth are now overrun, and the noblest temples of God are become an heap of undistinguishable ruins.

While Alexandria, thus, like the moon, reflects with pure brightness the rays of the Sun of righteousness, and illumines the night of the heathen world around her with exceeding splendour, Rome, like a distant comet lately arrived within our sphere, shines with a lurid and disastrous aspect. Undistinguished by ecclesiastical literature, she is scarcely seen but through her interference with other Churches, and makes up for her deficiency of learning by her decisive practice, which clearly begins to assume the shape of a claim of superiority. Nor did her real nature pass unsuspected by the discerning spirits of the day. Origen seems to have viewed her with distrust, though it was long after his time that she came blazing in the midheaven, and putting out the placid light of the stars with her portentous lustre.

As yet, however, all these lights of the spiritual world were kept in regular courses, and maintained in clear brilliancy, by the purgatorial agency of persecution. Pride was brought low almost as soon as it reared its

head, and assumption of power was quickly humbled by the exercise of a superior irresistible power, which made the eye gladly to turn from temporal to spiritual prospects. It is in the midst of such a visitation that Origen makes his first appearance on the stage of history, and in the midst of such he disappears. He is born to us, and he also dies on the field of battle.

(A.D. 202.) We have already had occasion to mention the persecution which was set on foot in the tenth year of Severus. So severe was it, that a writer named Judas, descanting on the seventy weeks of Daniel, stopped his computation at this year, thinking that the advent of the Antichrist was now at hand¹. It was, however, but a signal for the true followers of Christ to show themselves, and no where did the noble army of Martyrs form so brilliant an array as at Alexandria. There was the stage to which were brought all the spiritual combatants from Egypt and the Thebaid. They fought a good fight, and the trial was distinguished both for the violence and the variety of the tortures. Among them was Leonidas², the father of Origen, who was now about the age of sixteen, and having been brought up with far more than ordinary care, both as to intellectual and spiritual attainments, was capable of repaying such excellent nurture by no less excellent fruit. But at so early an age his enthusiastic temper prevented that cool judgment with which in later years he defined the limits of a just and proper martyrdom. He did not now deem that the example of Christ's retreat was a caution against precipitate exposure to

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 7.

² Ibid. vi. 1.

martyrdom. Still less did he think that the trial should be avoided by all reasonable means, both on account of the uncertainty of the result, and because we ought to be reluctant to make ourselves the occasion of a crying sin in the persecutor: for that a martyr reckless of such considerations may have to answer for the crime of murder¹. In direct opposition to these opinions of his maturer years, the stripping courted martyrdom by the most open and studied exposure. Among such fervid bosoms the example of the holy and revered sufferers was strongly contagious. He longed to enter into the combat, and had been all but engaged when his mother interfered. But her counsel ceased to have all effect, when he found that his father had been seized and imprisoned, and she would have been unable to hinder the fulfilment of his greedy appetite, had she not, by hiding his clothes, compelled him to keep at home. Thus frustrated in his favourite purpose, and yet unable to rest under his present violent excitement, he wrote a letter to his father, strongly inciting him to martyrdom, and exhorting him, among other words, in the following, "Take care not to change your mind on our account."

A noble beginning was this, and the more satisfactory, because it was not, as too many youthful omens are, contradicted by the end. It is, however, but one among several very beautiful examples which the primitive Church exhibits of boys, and even girls, despising the world at its very height of honour and delight, and fearlessly confronting perils and trials

¹ Comm. John xxviii. 18.

from which many a veteran legionary would have shrunk with dismay. Such patterns, being the joint effect both of the moral and spiritual courage which the Gospel of Christ calls forth from hearts naturally the weakest, are most obvious proofs of the Divine excellency of its principles. They were not lost upon the Heathen. The spectators of such magnanimous self-devotion, taking it into their hearts, entertained, in such reflections, angels unawares. And these stirring indwellers never allowed them quiet until they had obtained entire possession for their Master, and Christ was all in all. Origen taught them no less by example than by precept, and it is interesting to find that this future literary champion of the faith was so early well qualified as its physical champion on the stage of the martyrs. Writing, like talking, is too often in a very different strain from acting. And sometimes the most just and noble precepts have come into at least a momentary discredit from the inconsistency of the preceptors. But the influence of the works of Origen must have received considerable increase from his notorious readiness, not to say eagerness, to suffer for Christ's name's sake, and to this confidence in his sincerity may be attributed much of that indulgence which long after his death was shown by many to his most dangerous speculations.

His father fulfilled all his heart's desire. He was beheaded, and left Origen, who had not quite completed his seventeenth year, in utter destitution, together with his mother and six younger brothers, inasmuch as all the property of the martyr was confiscated to the treasury. Yet in his last moments he could be

comforted with the assurance that he left a stay and support in Origen: for unwearied had been the care with which he had attended to his son's education, and remarkable had been the success with which it had been rewarded. From a child Origen had been diligently exercised in the Holy Scriptures, the study of which was not made a bywork of the leisure hours left by the time given to the usual elementary course of the Greek youth, but was the principal. His father required from him daily lessons of repetition of them, not without the boy's most hearty will and concurrence, who showed great alacrity for the work, and already displayed the peculiar turn of his mind, by not resting content with the simple and obvious meaning of the text, but curiously searching into the deeper sense. The old man had enough to do to answer his questions in this matter; and though inwardly delighted at such proofs of industry and intelligence, thought it right to administer a gentle rebuke, and to admonish him not to search beyond the evident meaning, nor to a depth beyond his years. So highly did he rate his son's talents, that he offered most devout thanks to God, the supreme cause of all good, forasmuch as he had vouchsafed to make him the father of such a son. And often, when the boy was asleep, he would go, and bare his breast, and kiss it with reverence, as the receptacle of the Holy Spirit, and would congratulate himself upon his happy lot, as father of such a child. We can honour and appreciate these feelings of Leonidas, and yet consider his judgment premature. For so deceitful, or rather so very misunderstood, are the signs which children give of

future ability, that Origen might have exhibited still more brilliant auspices, and yet have turned out but a common-place person. Indeed, the very tokens which are mentioned are those from which we might have presumed that want of originality of mind, for which no powers of acquisition, however vast, and his were gigantic, can atone, and which reduces him at once to the class of second rate. It is not the quick and curiously inquisitive boy that becomes the solid and original thinker. On the contrary, it is the silently observant, and perhaps even apparently slow. The grand privilege of an original mind is singleness of view and unity of object. It is, therefore, dissatisfied until it can reduce a new article of knowledge to some principle which it has already within itself, and can make it part and parcel of the whole system. It turns it over and over again, and settles its proper place before it will admit it. Hence it appears slow, while the work of thought is in fact going on most vigorously, and seems incurious because it selects few objects at a time, and, distrusting all foreign help, will observe for itself, and interrogate itself rather than others. In its early stages, therefore, such a mind will be thought by the generality of observers inferior to one, which destitute of such power of combination, takes all information as it comes, without such perfect digestion. It will seem inferior in information, in promptitude, and in vivacity. But as the coral-reef, which has been gradually built up in invisible depths, at length emerges, and growing into solid land, bears fruit and nurtures man, so this mind in due time manifests its superiority, and, administering to the highest and most

essential necessities of men, is found advanced far beyond the limits of comparison.

But that God, to whose care the martyr had confidently committed his destitute family, interfered with his providence, and Origen found means of support in the house of a lady of great wealth and consideration, and at the same time encountered a temptation, from which God also made him a way to escape. There resided in her house, as her adopted son, the most notorious leader of heresy in Alexandria at that day, one Paul, of Antioch, to whom numbers, not only of heretics, but even of the orthodox, flocked, attracted by the charms of his eloquence. A youth of unsettled opinions and infirm principle, if even he had subdued his curiosity, and not indulged his itching ears, would not have been able to resist the stronger dictates of self-interest, which were so obvious. But Origen would yield no compliance, nor enter into any compromise, and although his own party scrupled not in many cases to join the heretic's prayers, he resolutely kept aloof. His father's instruction had sunk deep into his breast, and this son of a martyr, who had strictly observed from his childhood the rules of the Church, "regarded with loathing" (to use his own expression) the teaching of heretics. Such conduct was not likely to secure him the continuance of his patron's favour: at all events we find him shortly after in a hardy independence, exerting his own means for a subsistence.

Here again he found the excellence of the provision which his father had made for him. He had been supplied with the instruction of the best masters of the day. Ammonius Saccas, the second

founder of the Eclectic school, had taught him philosophy¹, and in the Catechetical school of Clement he had entered upon the free range of the departments both of human and divine knowledge². He added much to this stock after his father's death, devoting himself with greater eagerness than ever to his studies, so that having confidence in his qualifications he set up a grammarian's school. Great success attended this undertaking. So valued was his instruction, that in no long time after his father's decease he abounded, for one so young, in the necessaries of life. This was a happy beginning, and laid the foundation of his future fortunes, towards which the next step was a considerable advancement³.

The persecution, which was still going on, produced, as usual, effects quite contrary to the purposes of the persecutors. If it swept away the most conspicuous and valuable members, it made ample compensation by drawing into the fold the most generous hearts among the heathen. The invitation was rude in form, but most lovely in spirit. Amid the horrors of the manifold spectacles of torture and death, the sufferings of the Christians moved their pity, their fortitude excited their admiration, and their whole conduct, so firm and yet so gentle, made them curious to learn the principles of action which put to shame all the boasted virtue and endurance of philosophy. Thus man's arm, when most determinedly raised in the execution of its own will, and

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 19. Phot. Bibl. 251.

² Ibid. vi. 6.

³ Ibid. vi. 2.

in opposition to God, only more effectually performed his gracious purposes. Some of the heathen, among whom was Plutarch, a future martyr, and his brother Heraclas, future bishop of Alexandria, were seized with a desire to hear the word of God. They naturally applied to the Catechetical school: but finding it without a master, Clement having been forced away by the persecution, they betook themselves to Origen. Heraclas had formerly studied philosophy under the same master as Origen, whose senior he had been by five years in the school¹: yet he willingly submitted now to his instruction, paying thus high homage to his abilities. Origen had not long employed himself in this private instruction before he was called into the vacant chair by Demetrius the bishop, although he was now but in his eighteenth year.

The progress of the persecution under the new governor Aquila, who had succeeded Lætus, called forth all the energy of the fervid zeal of Origen, and gave him the opportunity of showing that he was not only an excellent teacher, but also a diligent practiser of what he taught. All mouths were full of his praises on account of his kind and ready attention to the saints and martyrs. He not only visited the prisons, but accompanied the martyrs to the place of execution. And in doing these duties of Christian charity, so little did he regard his personal safety, that he would boldly go up to the martyrs and kiss them in their last moments. On many of these occasions the populace were so enraged, that he must

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 19.

have been stoned to death if Providence had not wonderfully interfered to preserve him. So conspicuous had become his zeal and boldness for the word of God, and such were the hair-breadth perils into which they had brought him, that he seemed to live only through continued divine interposition. On one occasion, for example, the heathen, exasperated to fury at his success in the work of conversion, which was attested by crowds of pupils, beset his house with soldiers : and to such a pitch of severity did the persecution against him reach, that the whole city of Alexandria could no longer hold him, changing as he did house for house, and driven from every quarter. The result produced was again exactly the opposite to the design of his persecutors. This noble bearing excited a desire of learning its principles, pupils flocked to him in crowds, and became converts to his zeal.

Such well-earned popularity brought him an immense addition of labour, to which even his unconquerable powers of application were inadequate, unless he were to give up his favourite and much more important occupation about the word of God. In order to alleviate the burden he gave up the lower department of the grammarian, and with the purpose of providing against the consequent loss of income, he sold his books, which he had collected with great care, for an allowance of not quite sixpence a day, and continued for many years the ascetic life which was suitable to such a pittance. He carried it to an extravagance which left little room to be exceeded even by the austerities which later days reduced to system. The day was given up to spare

diet, rigorous fast, and other bodily mortification, the greater part of the night was consumed in the study of Scripture, and even the small part allowed to sleep, as he lay upon the bare floor, was scrupulously measured. In his dress he carried to the very extreme of the letter, in a spirit very different from that which guided his later interpretations, the injunctions not to have two coats, and not to wear shoes¹. By this extravagant exhibition of voluntary hunger, cold, and nakedness, he excited the apprehension and compassion of his friends, who entreated him to allow them to relieve his necessities, and to remunerate his labours in the cause of divine truth. They could not however prevail, and he continued his course of austerity for many years, going bare-foot, and abstaining from the use of wine and of every thing else which was not an absolute necessary of life. The consequence was a serious derangement of his health.

This conduct is very characteristic of the mind and temper of Origen. The latter was ardent: the former was unable to take a large and comprehensive view, so that, not seeing the whole relation of things, he laid undue importance on some particulars, and pressed them with all the ardour of an enthusiastic temperament. This mistake of parts for the whole brought him into many absurdities, to say nothing of serious errors: and this capricious turn was furthered by his intemperate avidity of reading; as was the subject of his study, such at the time were his views. To the last he seems never to have truly compre-

¹ Matt. x. 10.

hended the relation of the several parts of Scripture to each other, nor of the relation of philosophy to Scripture, so as to keep it in due subordination. Sound common sense he seems to have thought only fit for the vulgar. But eccentricity, however often mistaken for genius, is the very reverse of its simplicity.

His austerity of life had great effect, exciting many of his pupils to imitation, and also much helped his efforts in conversion. Many of the heathen, men of no small consideration, both among the pupils of literature and philosophy, were brought by his teaching to the acknowledgement of the truth. And few teachers have been equally blessed with witnessing such early, such excellent, and such abundant fruit of their labours. So fully did he possess them with his own ardent spirit, so lively grew their faith under his fostering care, as he planted and watered with the word of life, that it produced both flower and fruit. When, in a short time, the next pressure of the persecution came on, and when the trumpet sounded to battle, they were found equipped in the armour of light, ready as good soldiers of Christ, inured to hardness, and unentangled with the affairs of this life¹.

Plutarch led a band of six martyrs, one of whom was a female, and two, including her, were only in the preparatory state of catechumens, and thus received the baptism of fire for that of water. Origen, like a true father in Christ, never lost sight of his children to the end, and in attending the last moments

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 3.

of Plutarch again run a narrow risk of being slain by the indignant multitude¹. It may surprise the reader that Origen, so notorious as he was for converting the heathen, should escape the vengeance of the magistrate while his pupils were punished. The cause lies in the utterly infidel and unprincipled conduct of the agents of the persecutors. They would have abandoned Christianity to a free course, had it been, as it was calumniously represented, a deadly moral contagion, which required all their efforts to prevent it from spreading. But it afforded a most convenient pretext for rapine and oppression, and therefore it especially attracted their attention. Aquila, the present governor, would perhaps have been the last man to wish the death of Origen. A man living in his state of poverty, had nothing to provoke his appetite for plunder, and he did essential service in providing abundance of victims to his avarice. The magistrate therefore winked at Origen's continual violation of the sanguinary laws of Rome, looking complacently forward to his share in the fruits of his labours. And while God took to Himself the souls, he possessed himself of the gold and worldly riches of the servants of Christ².

Thus Origen went on teaching boldly amid continued danger, which, if it occasionally thinned their

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 4.

² Mosheim (Comm. de Reb. Christ. p. 455.) indeed thinks that Severus's edict affected only converts, and that Christians by birth were safe. Still these were obnoxious to former laws, and it is not likely that when these gave so ready a hold upon a teacher, he would be let alone, and his pupils punished, except by a corrupt magistrate.

number, only drew more tight the bands of fellowship and love between master and disciples. In our easy days of unbounded freedom of opinion, and security of teacher and learner of any tenet which does not threaten serious public mischief on its very face, and even of very many that do, we can scarcely appreciate the tightness of such connexion. In quiet times the dealer and receiver of Christian knowledge, not having the practical application of its most searching doctrines before their eyes, cannot but want all that full consciousness of sincerity, and satisfactory assurance of reality, which the common participation in instant danger supplies. In all cases community of peril is a strong bond of union and good will. But when the danger to the body ushers in the very end and object of the lesson, which is no other than the happy release of the soul into the realms of spiritual bliss ; when the cheerful community of that danger is a lively earnest of the joyful communion of everlasting happiness, and they feel assured that suffering together they shall be glorified together : when the pupil knows that his master is dealing forth, at the hazard of his life, and may be summoned in the next moment to exemplify his precepts ; and the master knows that the pupil receives in defiance of the savage threats of the powers of the world, and may be instantly called upon to practise his lesson : when one heart is open to the very bottom, to pour forth all its treasures of comfort and encouragement, of wisdom and truth, and the other is opened to all its breadth and depth to receive the precious dole ; when the dealer sees the effects of his teaching where human hope would least

have looked for them, and the receiver feels his need fully satisfied, though it goes beyond all that he could previously have dreamed of: when thus they find themselves together, the teacher and the learner, like two sailors floating on a wreck, with nothing in view but wild agitation around and below, and heaven above, is not such indeed a time for drawing most tightly the bands of Christian love? And when the hope of the Gospel is the brightest, the consolation most cheering, the knowledge found to be most true, the wisdom experienced to be most deep, the joy felt to be most lively and lasting, the fortitude most enduring, the patience most long-suffering, the grace most effectual, will not the love also be most fervent, the fellowship most intimate?

Considered in this light how beautiful is the picture which the imagination so readily draws of Origen, standing amid his pupils calm and collected, as if in a noiseless secure retirement, while the world is furiously shouting without, and the door is wide open to its murderous intrusion. Some, as Plutarch, had wealth, others had charms of female beauty, others had parents or children, all had some treasure of this world to part with; and with it they cheerfully parted, leaving the school for the court of justice, the court for the prison, and the prison for the scaffold. Never were lessons more immediately followed up by their practical application. Origen warned against temptation, and in an instant it was at hand in its most urgent shape of enjoyment to be retained, of torture and death to be avoided. He spoke of the lightness of the present affliction compared with the eternal weight of glory hereafter;

and immediately affliction came, with all the weight of the world's loss. He enlarged upon the love of Christ, how it should enable them to part with father and mother, brother and sister, and presently father and mother, brother and sister were to be parted with. He described the glorious crown of martyrdom, and almost in the next moment it was ready to descend upon their heads. He told them of Paradise, and in a few hours a soul issued forth, and joined the current of souls which yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow was pressing from his school to that region of perfection. But who shall exhaust the thoughts which arise on contemplating this son of a martyr, and father of martyrs, surrounded by pupils, who are successively called away to bear their last testimony to Christ, leaving him at every such departure a more satisfactory proof of the power of God through his Gospel, and of the faithfulness with which he had administered its word. Few men have stood in a situation of such overpowering excitement, for few have either possessed the influence, or had the opportunities of Origen. It was likely to produce some extraordinary effect upon his enthusiastic temperament, and it burst forth in an act of fanatic mutilation of his person, arising from a rigorously literal interpretation of a text of Scripture. Applauded as it was by his bishop Demetrius at the time¹, it passed under his own sentence of condemnation in the cooler judgment, and under the opposite scheme of interpretation which marked his latter days². And we shall find that he thus gave to his

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 8.

² Comm. Matth. tom. xv. 1.

future enemies, and to Demetrius himself among the rest, a handle against him which they were neither slow in seizing, nor faint in grasping.

(A.D. 213.) The laborious exertions of Origen, at this period of his life, are almost incredible, and display a pertinacity of resolution, which, after making every allowance for constitutional disposition, seems scarcely possible to be exercised under any influence less powerful than that of the Holy Spirit. His door was open day and night to all comers, and the hours of light and darkness were alike consumed in instruction for the benefit of others, and in reading of Scripture for himself¹. It is true that even an ungodly and ambitious spirit of proselytism will stimulate men to reckon the severest toil of instruction for nothing, and that the lust of fame or the indulgence of intellectual pleasure and superiority will support men under the pressure of the most laborious study; but these and similar incentives will assuredly fail, under such circumstances as those in which Origen was now situated. A worldly-minded spirit of proselytism will fail, when the world, which was looked to as the reward, is found to be fast passing away; bigotry has a natural antipathy to the acquisition of knowledge, and the excitements to study will not long endure against a continual and increasing hazard of sudden and final interruption. The true source of inspiration to Origen of strength and good courage, is further shown by his frequent expressions of diffident modesty and deep humility, which he lets fall amid his pro-

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 8.

foundest speculations, and by his unaffected prayer, put up for guidance on every occasion of difficult interpretation. Indeed no reader of his works can go through many pages and mistake his genuine piety, and deep Christian humility, any more than he can his intense power of application, and prodigious extent of acquirements. Nor, though admitted to the full view of the infirmities of his mind, does the student fail for a moment in his hearty respect.

Those toils, however, now received a very necessary intermission, which may have been procured from him by the anxious fears of his friends, perhaps of Demetrius himself, respecting the state of his health. A visit to the capital of the empire, and of the world, would of itself have been an enjoyable recreation. But Origen had also been long desirous of seeing "the very ancient Church of Rome." Accordingly, he was now gratified with the spectacle. Zephyrinus was then bishop there, and, if he was not wanting to the usual hospitality of his predecessors, and scholars still met with the same favour as Irenæus had enjoyed, he would pay every attention, and afford every facility to the distinguished master of the distinguished school of Alexandria¹.

And yet if we may conjecture from the shortness of this visit, which he never repeated, though in after time he had abundant leisure, as also from his opinions, from his writings, and from her behaviour in the hour of his need, he was very far from satisfied in his converse with this celebrated Church. He may be considered as the representative of the

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 14.

Eastern Church, and already those jealousies had begun which ended in its separation from the Western. They lay so deep in the framework of society, that not even the all-compacting power and policy of civil Rome had been able to associate these two portions of her empire into hearty union. As early as the battles of Philippi and Actium they were found arrayed on opposite sides, and these contests were to the empire much the same omen as the Paschal controversy was to the Church. Difference of language was perhaps not so great a barrier between them, as its inequality; that of the West, as represented by the Latin, being regarded, together with its mimic literature, (if ever they deigned it a look) with a not very unreasonable contempt by the speakers of the Greek. But there lay a deeper cause still in the very different habits of these portions, which are as distinct as ever at this very day. The supple artificial mind of the one was despised by the stiff practical sense of the other; which in return for the reproach of barbarism freely retorted with the charge of unprincipled duplicity. The Church of Rome, at the time of Origen's visit, was warmly engaged in her quarrel with the Montanists¹, and was therefore less disposed than ever to regard with complacency the differences which had already begun to cool her sisterly affections towards the Eastern Churches.

The rigorous rule of abstinence generally adopted in the East was little to her taste, but still less so the literature and philosophy of that region, which she regarded almost with a look of horror, and not

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 20.

without some reason. A son of hers delivered her sentiments about this time in the following terms: Speaking of heretics, he says, "They do not search the meaning of the divine Scriptures, but industriously exercise themselves in seeking what form of syllogism can be found for the establishment of their impiety. And if there be proposed to them a passage of divine Scripture, they examine whether it can make a conditional or a disjunctive form of syllogism. Then again they forsake the holy Scriptures of God, and study geometry, as may be expected of men who are of the earth, and speak of the earth, and are ignorant of him that cometh from above. Some of them industriously cultivate the Geometry of Euclid; Aristotle and Theophrastus are looked up to with admiration, and Galen is even adored perhaps by some. So, abusing the arts of the unbelievers to the service of the tenet of their particular heresy, and adulterating the pure faith of the divine Scriptures with the unprincipled craftiness of the godless, need it be said, that they are not near the faith¹?"

The master of the Catechetical School of Alexandria, which made this reprobated system the very basis of her instruction, the pupil of that Clement who had affirmed that the Greek philosophy was an introduction to the Gospel for the Gentile in the same relation as the law was for the Jew, the writer who held that human wisdom was the gymnasium of the soul, while divine wisdom was the end², and had systematically adopted all its aids for the interpretation of Scripture, was not likely to find himself

¹ Euseb. E. H. v. 28.

² c. Cels. vi. p. 284. Ed. Cantab.

quite at his ease where this fierce denunciation found general favour, and spoke the common opinion. Accordingly, he so far differs from Irenæus, his predecessor in the enjoyment of Roman hospitality, that he not only never commends the Church of Rome, but even directly opposes what he must have known from his residence there to have been her favourite point, and on which she could least bear contradiction¹.

Thus he seems to have quitted her without feeling or leaving regret behind him, the successor of Tertullian and the predecessor of Jerome in their dislike to the Roman clergy, who had the singular infelicity of being on ill terms with three of the most celebrated fathers of the Church.

On his return to Alexandria he resumed his labour of instruction with undiminished vigour, which was not only stimulated by the earnest urgency of Demetrius, but perhaps also received fresh impulse from a spirit of resistance to the intolerance with which his favourite studies and the system of his school and Church had been decried at Rome. So untameable was his perseverance in study, that, as Didymus, the scholiast on 'Homer, from his extraordinary industry was entitled Chalcenterus or brazen-boweled, he obtained the name of Adamantius². The conflux of hearers from morning to night was such, that he could scarcely gain breathing time from his work, much less obtain the opportunity of leisure which he so much desired for the study of the Scripture. For this latter purpose, he took in as partner

¹ See his Comm. Matt. Tom. xii. 10, &c. But we shall state this position when we come to consider his opinions.

² Photius. Bibl. 118. gives a different reason.

in his school Heraclas one of his friends and pupils, brother of the martyred Plutarch, whose name was already high both for human and divine learning. Turning over to his care the lower department of his school, he devoted his attention exclusively to the proficients.

The first-fruits of this convenient arrangement was an acquisition hitherto quite novel in the teachers or defenders of the Church, and followed but by an example or two down to the Reformation. This was his making acquaintance with the Hebrew language. His undertaking the task is a mark at once of the exceeding inquisitiveness of the mind of Origen, and of his entire devotion to the sacred cause. The Greek was conceitedly incurious about foreign tongues, and though, if he were Christian, the barbarous style of the Septuagint was likely to have abated his fastidiousness, and prepared him for a foreign idiom, and its obscurity strongly invited him to explore the original, yet he had remained content with his very imperfect knowledge of the Old Testament, until Origen braced up the iron nerves of his industry, and was the first, and almost the last, to make his way up to the hidden source. It is readily seen indeed from his works that his knowledge of the language was never adequate to the purposes of a scholar-like interpretation of the text. It served with him a negative rather than a positive purpose, enabling him to detect the incorrectness of the Greek versions, and among the various renderings generally to select the right. Thus it gave him an essential advantage, and he introduced a new æra in the history of Biblical knowledge, being the first of the fathers

who had taken the pains (for which they had little time) or seized the opportunity (which was rare) of properly qualifying himself as an expounder of the writings of Moses and the prophets. We shall shortly see the important use which he made of the acquisition ¹.

It was about this period, that he formed a friendship which was not only a source of great consolation almost to the very end of life, but also of essential service to his literary career. Among those whom his prominent station and fame attracted towards him, was Ambrosius, a man of talent, rank, and fortune. His history remarkably illustrates the mischief and criminality of heresy. Being wilfully or recklessly mistaken for the Gospel by such men as the philosopher Celsus, it gave them an opportunity of misrepresenting and reviling revealed truth; and to the man, who, in honest search of conviction, was advancing from paganism to the Gospel, it was a net and trap of Satan ². Disguised as an angel of light, it intruded itself forward, and put into the hungry man's hand a stone for bread, and a scorpion for fish. It was as if a runaway wicked slave should personate his master, and, placing himself in the way of those who were coming as guests to his house, should guide them to a place which he had designed for robbery and murder, instead of leading them into the habitation where they expected peace and friendship. Ambrosius was but one of many, who had been entrapped by these wicked arts. Origen found him fluctuating in the wide and wild expanse of Gnostic

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 16.

² Comm. Joh. tom. v. 4.

error. His wearied soul had sought a resting-place, and found nothing but endless agitation. It had sought the refreshment of living water, and had been intoxicated into fever, by strong and drugged drink. He had already exchanged the extravagancies of Valentinus for the ravings of Marcion¹; when he found rest in the convincing arguments of Origen. He ever after looked up to his preserver with singular affection and esteem, which he had returned to him with no niggardly recompense. Such a friendship it is both delightful and profitable to contemplate. Its origin stamps it at once with the seal of sanctity, and assures us of its heavenly-minded and enduring nature. Its love is an immediate and genuine offspring of the love of God. Its interests are those of the undying soul, its bonds are those of peace, its unity is that of the Spirit. It seems to have been the gracious gift of God, sent in timely season, to both of these men. Ambrosius was presented with a guide to the truth of the Gospel: Origen derived from it not only encouragement to his labours, which he had from other quarters, but, what he most needed, pecuniary means for prosecuting his literary undertakings, and, what he was shortly to need, a steadfast support in the day of trouble. Adorable indeed, is the merciful wisdom of God, which with its heavenly mediation brings together two persons, who find their peculiar wants satisfied in each other, and two strong perfect men are made out of two weak and imperfect. How sad it is to think that the means which it has

¹ Jerome's Catalogue in Ambrosius, c. 56. compared with Euseb. E. H. vi. 18.

thus provided for our common comfort and support, should be commonly so little understood, and almost everywhere so much undervalued. The glorious and happy mansion of the Church is furnished with abundance of instruments and appointed means, would men but see them, for bringing about such blessed communion. But instead of living together as children who eat the bread of their father's table, men bite and devour one another, like the dogs that feed upon the crumbs. They prefer a part of knowledge to the whole, all their views are partial, and suited to the narrow comprehension of the ignorance of carnal conceit, and to the blind wilfulness of human passion. Thus God's means are abused to a contrary use, and the cords which He has provided for the bonds of love, are applied for scourges to the backs of their brethren. How closely the lively stones of that glorious building would be dovetailed into each other, how solid its walls would be against all adversaries, how deep would be the peace, how plenteous the consolation of grace and knowledge within her palaces, is shown by brilliant examples here and there, numerous enough to encourage us, rare enough to rebuke us, sufficient to show the power and beauty of the means of grace, and few enough to accuse the perverseness and unthankfulness of the rejecters. Among such examples stands the friendship of Origen and Ambrosius, a friendship begun in the truth of the Gospel, continued in efficient ministry to the service of Christ in his Church, and ended by a death which testified to the truth, and glorified their Father which is in heaven. From this moment the name of Ambrosius is intimately associated with that of Origen ;

it is embalmed in his immortal works, and the lasting fame of a man of note in this world, is contrasted in all its native insignificance, with the crown of life, of righteousness, of glory assigned to the saint in the world to come.

But Ambrosius was only one of a long train, which, attracted by the great reputation of Origen, prest forward to submit to his instruction, and to experience his ability in discussing divine subjects. Even heretics in overflowing numbers, and of the most eminent philosophers not a few, condescended almost to a state of pupillage, in deriving from him lessons which concerned not only the word of God, but also the subjects of Greek philosophy. For, according to the system already established by Pantænus and Clement, he considered the latter as a necessary part of the instruction which, as a catechetical lecturer, he was bound to impart. And as an introduction to it, he also taught the usual preparatory course of geometry, arithmetic, grammar, and rhetoric¹. Human wisdom he reckoned, as we have already seen, the preparation of the soul, divine wisdom the very object². Such pupils therefore as he found of good and suitable parts, he led on through these preparatory exercises to philosophy, introducing them to its various schools, and commenting on the writings of their masters. Hence he obtained a high and extensive reputation for philosophy, even among the heathen, and had an opportunity, through the discussion of those truths on which philosophers speculated, to

¹ c. Cels. iii. p. 146. (Ep. ad Gregor.)

² c. Cels. vi. p. 284.

lead them covertly on to points of revelation. He gained by these means many converts to whose hearts and understandings he could never otherwise have found access¹. But he also incurred much blame for giving too much importance to profane studies. Though he could defend himself not only by argument, but also by high example. Such, he could maintain had been the system of Pantænus's former catechist—such of Clement his immediate predecessor and master; and he could afterwards appeal to the plan of his successor Heraclas².

For sixteen hundred years men have been discussing the propriety of introducing philosophy into the Church, and of late general opinion seems adverse to it. Some wonder that it should ever have been a question for a moment, and look upon it as the plague-spot of the Christian mind. But, it is scarcely fair to judge from its evil effects only. Such able and pious men as conducted the school of Alexandria must have found in it great advantages to their cause, when they so systematically took it into their service. And the objectors will be sorely lost to answer the question, how it could otherwise have been disposed of. When the Christian teacher had made his way up to the educated classes, he found the ground occupied by it. What was to be done? Had it been a system of utter falsehood, like their religion, he could not have had a moment's doubt. But here, especially in the Eclectic philosophy, was a system of moral truth, of which any error formed no necessary part. All was open to discussion and to improvement,

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 18.

² Euseb. vi. 19.

and, when taken into the hands of a Christian teacher, it furnished a code of social and individual duties, which, while it commanded the assent of the heathen, supplied himself with the ground which he desired. Had he rashly opposed the heathen on such ground, he must have been driven to the necessity of contradicting the intuitive principles of our nature, and would have incurred the odious charge of brutal ignorance or unprincipled scepticism. But by coming to an understanding with his hearers, he could point out the unavoidable defects of the system (which its unsettled form allowed him to do most securely), he could inspire an earnest desire to amend them, he could dwell on those attributes of God, of which the contemplation would most favourably introduce the scheme of redemption to their minds, and would even prompt a longing after something which was felt to be necessary, but was beyond conjecture as to its nature. So that, taken at its very worst, philosophy was like those many things which we could wish had never existed, but, finding it impossible to remove them, we are fain to deal with them as well as we can, and are content to exert ourselves to the utmost that we may put to use all their good, and prevent as much as possible of their evil. The inweaving of philosophical conjecture with scriptural truth, was indeed the result of this system; and Origen lies open to severe reproof upon this point, but as it did not necessarily arise therefrom, it is quite another question.

In the midst of these sedentary avocations he was called away for a short time by a singular message. Letters came from the chief of Arabia, addressed both

to the governor of Alexandria and to Demetrius the bishop, desiring them to send Origen over to him with all dispatch, as he wished to converse with him. He was sent accordingly; and having concluded the business, whatever that might have been, he returned after no long absence¹. So widely spread was the fame of Origen by this time. It had not only pervaded the cities of Asia, which were seats of ancient civilization and doors of frequent communication, but it had found its way even into the remote nook of Arabia. As it is most improbable that the Roman governor would have been applied to, had this mission had anything to do with the Gospel, we may suppose that its object was much the same as that which Mammæa had afterwards in view when she sent for him to Antioch.

(A. D. 215.) Hitherto we have contemplated Origen in the days of his prosperity. We have seen him loved and approved at home, admired abroad, almost adored by his pupils, in high esteem and favour with his bishop, in possession of the leisure which he so much coveted for pursuing the study of Scripture, and passing amid such holy occupation, which was varied only by his lectures, that noiseless retirement which makes the interest of the life of the scholar so inadequate to the high qualities of his mind, and to the great importance of his pursuits. But now events are at hand, and we are soon to see Origen experiencing the chequered features of a public character. We are arrived towards the turn-

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 19. We are here baulked for the thousandth time by the imperfect statement and vague language of Eusebius.

ing point of his life ; and, as usually happens, the change proceeds from an event whence no human sagacity could have augured such consequences. The tyrant Caracalla, in his destructive progress through the provinces, came to Alexandria, the third city of his empire. Here he was probably received with some bitter joke by a populace which had always indulged with remarkable freedom a satirical disposition. If in this respect they completed the resemblance which their city and people bore on so many other points to that of Athens, they had the misfortune of completing the resemblance of their fate. The bloody and unrelenting revenge of Sylla was outdone by Caracalla. He ordered a massacre of frightful extent : and as the ignorant multitude, in its fury against its superiors, selects for mutilation or destruction the buildings and statues which are the pride and boast of the place ; so in a city like this, more especially since wit was the crime, the military executioners were likely to make a careful search after the accomplished, the learned, and the wise. Origen's life would therefore be in extreme jeopardy. As the braving of the peril could be no test of his Christian profession, he could have no hesitation upon immediate flight. Cesarea, the seaport of Palestine, offered him a convenient retreat. It was the nearest town that could supply a suitable residence to a scholar ; he had friends there ; and it presented him a desirable opportunity for visiting the Holy Land. Nor was he disappointed in his choice ! The Bishop Theoctistus received him with open arms ; and his old fellow-student Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem, came down to see him. His employ-

ment at Cesarea has been already related in the account of the life of this bishop.

But he was by no means stationary at a place which was in the neighbourhood of such scenes. Making it his head-quarters, he thence visited the holy places of Palestine. Thoroughly imbued with Scripture, ardent in pursuing his investigations, enthusiastic in his temper, humble, thankful, pious, he must have trodden the soil of the land of the Prophets, the Redeemer, and his Apostles, with an unwearied foot, and have gazed around him with an unsated eye. He saw at Bethlehem the cave where the Saviour was born, and in the cave the manger in which he had been laid¹. Guided by holy writ he followed the traces of David and of Elijah, of armies and of battles, of multitudes and of preachings, of the Lord and of kings, priests and prophets. He explored the banks of the Jordan, and searched the interesting shores of the lake of Tiberias². Jerusalem had indeed nothing to present but those features of nature which the hand of men can neither alter nor destroy. Yet these, even at this day, supply no ordinary interest; and Origen, in company with Alexander, who had explored them so often, and rich in the memory and suggestions of his mind, would not lose a single tittle of all the instruction that could be extracted from them. It is indeed scarcely possible to conceive any treat upon earth more delightful to the Christian scholar than a tour

¹ c. Cels. i. p. 39. Two centuries later, Jerome could say, "Bethlehem reversus sum, ubi adoravi præsepe et incunabula Salvatoris." Adv. Ruffin. ii.

² Comm. Joh. tom. vi. 24.

in Palestine at that day. The history of the Gospel was remote enough, and its traces on the soil indistinct enough, to give scope to the imagination; while the scenes of the Old Testament, if they had become extinct through the destruction of cities and other works of men, survived, with all their freshness, in the strength of the hills and the other works of God. Everywhere he found some of the brethren; his own language was the language of society; his own church was the church of the land, even to minute particulars; Greek taste and skill had adorned the towns; Roman policy had provided roads; the caves and mountains had long ceased to be the haunts of robbers, and the traveller moved in security. The effect upon Origen must have been almost overpowering. The critical eye could have no rest, the gaze of enthusiastic admiration no repose. Perhaps we shall not be much mistaken in supposing this retreat, whence dated the beginning of his misfortunes, to have been the most happy period of Origen's life. It came, as unusually bright gleams of happiness generally do, on the eve of a dark and pitiless storm. Received with extraordinary honours by the two bishops, one of whom was celebrated through all the churches of Christendom, surrounded by admiring hearers, gratified with the purest delights to intellect and imagination from within and from without, he reached the summit of such happiness as the world can give, and as the world also can take away.

But at this very moment began that dissatisfaction in the mind of his bishop, which at last drove him an exile from his country. Demetrius was highly offended at the bishops of Palestine for granting to

Origen the privilege of preaching to the congregation. It was in fact a dictation to himself; for he would find it difficult to refuse him at Alexandria that which had been allowed him at Cesarea. They had no right to reduce him to straits by such irregular interference with his own catechist. Origen seems also to have prolonged his stay beyond the limits which the welfare of the school required, and the bishop was obliged to send him a second summons, both by letter and verbally through deacons, before he returned.

(A. D. 226.) Some public honours still remained for him to receive before the full tide of disgrace set in. Mammæa, mother of the Emperor Alexander, being at Antioch, and having heard of the great fame of Origen, sent for him thither. Her motive is uncertain. It might have been to derive instruction from so celebrated a philosopher: it might also have been a vulgar curiosity, so common in persons who affect rather than possess literary attainments: and it might have been that unworthy spirit with which persons of worldly wealth or power sometimes assume to be patrons of persons of intellectual wealth and power. They seek to enjoy the visible and substantial expression of their own superiority, by bringing it thus side by side with the invisible and shadowy rank of mere reputation; and strive to assure themselves of the secondary place of their rivals by putting them in the position of receivers of favours. It is not likely, notwithstanding Eusebius calls her a most religious and pious woman¹, that she whose

¹ E. H. vi. 21. Whence she has been put, together with Philip (not a fit associate we may hope), on the honourable list

vanity or ambition adventured to direct the counsels of the empire would reap much benefit, especially at such an anxious time as the eve of a Persian war, from the conversation of one so lowly-minded, so disinterested, so frank, so superior to all considerations of worldly wealth and power, as Origen. After some stay, in which he nobly promoted the honour and glory of the Lord, and firmly maintained the dignity and excellence of the Christian character, he returned to Alexandria and resumed his usual employments.

His Scriptural studies, undertaken at so noble a sacrifice of worldly comforts, and pursued with such unabated ardour, began now at length to manifest their results beyond the narrow and obscure province of his lecture-room, and to show their fruits to the eyes of the whole Church. This event was principally brought about both by the instigation and at the expense of his friend Ambrosius. Few, or rather no, literary men have ever possessed such a friend, or are likely to possess. He was a man of elegant mind, and of such acquirements that Origen did not disdain the assistance of his learning and of his judgment¹. Of his eagerness for information, and of the high value which he set upon the conversation of Origen, we have a curious and interesting evidence in the very words of Origen which occur in a fragment of one of his letters². "Ambrosius," says he,

of Christian princes by later writers, who greedily turned according to their own fancy the vague and uncertain expressions of Eusebius.

¹ Ep. ad African. 16.

² Preserved by Suidas in his article on Origen.

“the holy, and truly devoted to God, desires to be kindly remembered to you. He, while he considers me as industrious and quite athirst after the divine word, reproveth me by his own industry and love for sacred lore. Hence he goes beyond me to such a degree, that I am ready to faint at what he adventures. For it is impossible either to dine without entering upon disputation, or to walk after dinner and refresh one's body. But at that season we are obliged to enter upon philology, and to examine and adjust the various readings of copies. Nay, and we cannot even sleep at night, and pay due attention to the body, since our exercises in philology extend far into the evening. But I omit saying anything of the time from morning to three or four o'clock, since all who wish to be industrious devote that interval to the examination of the divine oracles, and to reading.” In addition to the stimulation of his counsel and entreaty, which were urgent and continued¹, Ambrosius supplied him also with that which too seldom accompanies advice of any kind, the ample means of practising it. For he provided him at his own expense with short-hand writers more than seven in number, who succeeded each other at stated times in writing as he dictated, together with transcribers no fewer in number, and girls well practised in writing out in fair hand². Thus equipped, both from within and from without, with such resources as few men were ever able to command, but many might have better applied, Origen sate down to a commentary upon Scripture.

¹ Comm. Joh. tom. v. 1.

² Euseb. E. H. vi. 23. Comm. Joh. vi. 1.

Great indeed is the interest with which the student of sacred lore looks forward to the perusal of the earliest extant commentary on Scripture, especially if he shall have taken his fill of dissatisfaction at the partial views, and unauthorized speculations which are so abundant in modern expositions. He considers that at the time of its composition not more than a century and a quarter had elapsed since the canon of the Gospels had been sealed by the last surviving Apostle of the Lord ; that but a short line of faithful ministers connects the day of that Evangelist with the time of Origen, but seven bishops at Alexandria having intervened between the last contemporary of the Apostle and Demetrius. He reflects that persecution must have repeatedly cleansed the Church, and continually forced it upon its own resources of divine comfort, so as eagerly to derive it through every channel of written or unwritten tradition, and observes that the antiquities and traditions of the various churches had been diligently investigated; collected, and published by more than one writer. What a beating of expectation, therefore, is in his heart as from a distance he contemplates such a work. He expects to find many and lucid rays of illumination thrown upon the text by quotations from Apostolic tradition. He hopes to find on a multitude of points the settled opinion of the general Church : and he has the reasonable and pleasing prospect of the removal of many obscurities and difficulties, and of the supplement of many links of relation and connexion, through the interpretation of a man who spoke the language of the New Testament, had studied that of the Old, had investigated on the very soil the

antiquities of Palestine, had visited the principal places which lay on the track of St. Paul, was a most curious and diligent enquirer in all that he took up, had made Scripture his especial study to the detriment of his temporal interests, had expounded it to the delight and satisfaction of his cotemporaries, and enjoyed a reputation which has never since been surpassed: but as he draws nearer, his ardour of expectation gradually cools. As early as Justin he begins to suspect the barrenness of the land. Arrived at Tertullian he finds his heart fail, and Clement of Alexandria fully prepares him for the annihilation of all his hopes in Origen.

According to his friend's suggestion, Origen commenced his work with a Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, and sets out with approving the wisdom of that suggestion on the principle of the Gospels being the first-fruits of Scripture, and the Gospel of St. John the first-fruits of the Gospels¹. The way in which he establishes this, prepares the reader for all that follows, in which it would be difficult to point out a single interpretation that is founded on sound critical principles. Such foundation gives him the less concern, because it is necessary but to the elucidation of the obvious and literal sense, whereas his aim is to extract the hidden and allegorical. Once or twice indeed he condescends to expound the literal sense, and in so sensible a manner as to move regret, and even indignation, at his having so trifled with his powers, and so mistaken his proper object. But then it is only to prepare the way

¹ Comm. Joh. tom. i. 4, 5, 6.

for his favourite allegory : for this he seeks every possible occasion. And it often raises a smile to see the shifts to which he will resort for the purpose. Sometimes he will lay the great stress on the most trivial and accidental word in the passage, just as a bad reader lays the emphasis on the least important word. Sometimes, by minute and microscopic hair-splitting, he will bring to view a sense which no one could ever have dreamed of as being literally contained in the text, or by most sophistical cavilling will extort a contradiction from the letter, in order that he may challenge the literalists to solve it on their principles if they can. Many a plain text is thus made the occasion of taunting his opponents, while at this day it remains a reproach against himself¹. Sometimes he will bring two passages together, between which no one could ever have dreamed that any relation subsisted, by catching at some unimportant word which is common to both of them. Sometimes he will lay great stress on the etymology of the names of places and persons, and on the properties of numbers ; and when he is bent upon introducing some creature of his fancy, or wishes to snatch a text out of the hands of an adversary, he will not scruple to assert that the text is corrupt, as commonly read². It would indeed be difficult to find a text that would suit him, so that he should either never insist on a trivial word as important, or reject a not unimportant one as spurious. That a man of undoubted piety and reverence for God's word

¹ Comm. Joh. tom. x. 2, &c.

² See Comm. Matth. tom. xv. 14.

should take such liberties, will only surprise those who have never contemplated the obstinacy and perverseness of the human mind, even in the best of men, and have never observed what they will do against God's word in God's cause.

Such, together with the allegory arrived at by the foregoing means, is the staple of this, and of all his commentaries. He has also, with the pedantry of an imitative mind, adopted both the method and the terms of the Alexandrine commentators upon Homer, and the scholar is equally surprised at finding their problems, questions, difficulties, solutions in a commentary on Scripture, and pained at the reckless manner in which their occasion is sought. The wearisomeness of such palpably unprofitable reading is increased by the style of the commentator, which is never remarkable for clearness, and is too often involved, cumbrous, and luxated. It betrays its extemporaneous dictation and want of correction by many of its faults, dragging, as it does sometimes, through sentence after sentence before it can exactly hit the idea in point, and dwelling very unequally on matter equally important. Certainly no one would ever recur to this commentary for either agreeable or profitable reading, or would think of resorting to it in a case of Scriptural difficulty. It is valuable principally as illustrating Origen's opinions, and the system of his school, as well as supplying much information upon the Gnostic question. He continually keeps in view the works of Heracleon, a great champion on that side, and the more so perhaps, not only because this Gospel is most con-

cerned with that question, but also because Ambrosius had been formerly but too familiar with such writings.

(A. D. 230.) It was in the midst of his occupation in this work that he was interrupted by the journey, out of which arose that storm which never ceased to roar around him as long as he lived, and howled even over his grave. He was invited on a spiritual mission to Greece, where the Church of Achaia was much vexed with heresy¹. Of course he gladly seized the opportunity of visiting Palestine by the way. There broke out the source of his subsequent troubles. With the view, most probably, of obviating the objections which Demetrius had formerly made against the admission of Origen to preach in the congregation, Theoctistus, aided by Alexander, ordained him priest at Cesarea². Thence he arrived in Greece, and spent perhaps most of the time there in ignorance of the trouble that was awaiting him. At least it is pleasing to think that no tidings had yet reached him which could in any way alloy the pure and refined delight with which he would enjoy such a sojourn. If as a student of Scripture he had traversed Palestine with so much interest, he would also as a philosopher enjoy the admonitions of the spot in Greece, which his favourite teachers of human wisdom had made famous by their birth or residence. Athens must have been visited by a lettered Alexandrine with all the lively feelings which a colonist experiences on visiting the land of his fathers. There

¹ Jerome's Catalogue.

² Euseb. E. H. vi. 8. 23.

was the original country of his literature. And the scholar would return to his studies with redoubled ardour after he had witnessed, in all their native beauty and with all their interesting accompaniments, the scenes which had been the subject of a literature more early and more fortunate than his own. The Christian too had no narrow field for investigation and reflection here. He could trace the steps of St. Paul along a line of flourishing Churches, which owed their birth to his preaching. So great a recreation would this visit prove to Origen. But his enjoyment only renders more dark, by the contrast of its brightness, the gloominess of the storm which was awaiting his return to Alexandria.

There is considerable obscurity in the detail of the events which followed, and ended in his finally quitting his native country. It is certain that Demetrius was exceedingly displeased both at the assumption of the bishops in ordaining his catechist, and with Origen for accepting of a foreign ordination. And who can say that he had not good reason? The bishops might have known, that, if Demetrius had not yet conferred that rank on Origen which his predecessors had enjoyed, he had his reasons, and that he was the best judge of those reasons. The testimonial from Demetrius which Origen carried out with him on his honourable mission, instead of supplying the excuse which Alexander extracts from it¹, rather aggravates the charge of unwarrantable interference, inasmuch as it shows that Demetrius must have had some strong private reason for withholding the priest-

¹ Jerome's Catalogue in "Alexander." See it also in "Origen."

hood from a man whose morals, learning sacred and profane, and piety, were so far above the common standard. Neither is it possible to frame any apology for Origen, who cannot be acquitted from a charge of insubordination, and that too at a time when he was executing a confidential and honourable commission by his master's leave. The resentment of Demetrius has been ascribed to the workings of envy at the acclamations of praise which rang the name of his catechist into the ears of men from one end of the Church to the other¹. But surely we ought to be slow in imputing such a motive to a man who held so high a station in the Church at that day. Besides this was now the second intrusion upon the counsels of Demetrius respecting Origen. He had not thought proper, notwithstanding his extraordinary talents, to allow him to preach to the congregation, probably from the very same reason as that on which he had hitherto refused him the priesthood. Yet then he had been thwarted from the same quarter. The management of his own domestic concerns had been interfered with, his private reasons had been virtually challenged, by persons who had the least right of all so to do. The least that he was bound to do was to make a strong remonstrance. He did not however oppose the return of his catechist, who came indeed to a scene of storm and disquiet, but yet was able to command sufficient serenity to pursue his studious course, and proceed with his commentary on St. John. At last, however, the tempest rose to such a pitch, that he was obliged to

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 8. But he is a strong partisan in favour of Origen.

depart¹. The immediate reason is not stated, and cannot be conjectured. But the results are published to all posterity. Demetrius summoned a council of bishops and some priests, which ordered the departure of Origen from Alexandria, and forbade him either residing or teaching in the place. It did not however remove him from the rank of the priesthood. But this was done by another assembly of Demetrius and some bishops². Nor was the bishop content with what he had done at home. He wrote letters to the bishops throughout Christendom, in which he dwelt upon the act of self-mutilation in strong terms, notwithstanding that he had once admired Origen for it. This is mentioned by Eusebius as an act of inconsistency in Demetrius³. And yet it needed not to be so. The bishop might have applauded the youth's devotion and self-sacrifice, and yet retained his opinion in consent with the general rule of the Church which the Council of Nice afterwards made law in her first canon, that such persons should not be admitted to the priesthood. Perhaps this was the very objection which he had borne in his mind all along to ordaining his catechist, but out of tenderness to him had not thought fit to divulge. Rome readily agreed with Demetrius. But of all the Churches, whose guest Origen had been, she alone, and for reasons easily conjectured, and stated a short time ago, declared herself hostile. The rest, which were those of Palestine, Arabia, Phœnicia, and Achaia,

¹ Comm. Joh. tom. vi. l.

² Photius, Bibl. 118. Demetrius has been stoutly defended by Mosheim, de Reb. Christ. p. 670.

³ Hieronym. ep. 29.

refused to concur in his condemnation¹. And Caesarea afforded him a retreat in his hour of need. Heraclas succeeded him in the Catechetical school.

Never before, nor since, has an individual, whose opinions were not impugned, been an object of such general concern to the universal Church. It was arrayed on opposite sides in his cause, and if he had wished to experience in the most palpable manner the wide-spread influence of his character, his vanity could scarcely have been more completely gratified, especially if envy had so large a share in promoting hostility against him². But perhaps this passion has been too indiscriminately ascribed to his enemies. At Rome they were as little likely to envy him as to admire him. But they were glad of any handle against one who may be considered at once as the representative and champion of a party and system which she regarded with hearty dislike. They were probably unacquainted with his writings, which might have given them occasion to charge him with novelty of doctrine and heresy. For no such charge was made, although already the most objectionable, namely, the *Stromateis*, and the works on *Principles* and on the *Resurrection*, had been composed. But distance of place, difference of language, and a prejudice against all philosophical views in matters of divinity, would keep them in profound ignorance of their existence, and the time had not yet arrived when he was condemned from mere general hearsay, and a work which had been heard with pleasure and

¹ Hieronym. ep. 29.

² *Ibid.* But Jerome at this moment happened to dislike Rome more than he did Origen.

a sense of improvement before the author's name was told, was rejected with displeasure as heretical in the moment that it was mentioned as one of Origen's¹.

Since, however, Eusebius distinctly charges Demetrius with the spirit of envy, it will be right to consider how he would be influenced by it. In imputing such a motive to him we pull him down at once from his height of a worthy occupant of one of the three chief thrones in Christendom to the level of the lowest of his flock. We take him as a weak, selfish, narrow-minded man, whom the possession of conventional rank made but the more impatient of another's real and intrinsic rank, when once he was brought to acknowledge its existence. We may suppose him to struggle against the unwelcome consciousness of this inferiority by exerting the substantial powers of office, and then, when the act was over, to fall back upon his own resources, and feel more acutely than ever the continual superiority of his rival. We may imagine him thus to have lashed himself into a fury which burst forth in an act of tyranny. But is it right, on the representation of a partizan, to adopt such a solution of the conduct of Demetrius, when one quite sufficient is afforded from other causes, without exalting him above human infirmity?

(A.D. 231.) Origen quitted his native soil for ever. The trial must have been severe for him who left behind him the place of his birth, the scenes of almost all his past life, the spot of his father's martyrdom and also his honoured grave, the school where

¹ Pamphil. Apol. Præf.

he had been taught, and had so long taught, his native Church, together with beloved and near relations, a crowd of attached pupils, and warm friends, to say nothing of his foregoing those literary resources in which the city was abundant beyond every place in the world, and abandoning many departments of study which they alone could enable him to occupy. The library of Jerusalem, however well furnished by the care of Alexander, would be a most imperfect substitute, if any, to one whose residence was at Cesarea, and Origen was one whose genius, not very rich in native resources, would much require the aid of a large collection of books. He was received at Cesarea with all the warmth of friendly hospitality by Theoctistus, but it was some time before his ruffled mind could resume its calmness, and the lapse of many years was required to still all its agitation. Being a man of quick feelings and enthusiastic temperament he could not but be deeply affected at his treatment. But in some passages written after this date, he seems also to betray the fretfulness of wounded vanity. Nor is this inconsistent with the strain of meekness and modesty which pervades his writings. They were indeed his prevailing qualities. But Origen must have risen above the infirmities of human nature, if his heart was unaffected by the adoration which he received for so many years from every quarter, at home or abroad. One who had heard all Christendom applauding him, could not very patiently brook a large part of Christendom, in which also was his own country, reviling him; and that too, without any cause that seemed to him either adequate or reasonable. His

adversaries, moreover, were mostly men who disliked that philosophical speculation which he considered the road to perfection, and he returned their dislike with the imputation of unlearned rudeness. He was not likely to endure degradation at the voice of such men without some burst of indignant feeling. Exile also, however kind may be the adopted country and adopted friends, has pains which cannot be mitigated. The more we endeavour to soften them by assimilating it as much as possible to a residence on our native soil, the sharper and more frequent is the pang of regret, prompted as it is by every point of similitude. His school and scholars at Cesarea could not but often recall to a yearning mind the school and scholars of Alexandria, and the kind encouragement of Theoctistus and Alexander would cause him to cast back many a tearful look at the days of the warm and instigating patronage of Demetrius. Could it be otherwise than that in his numerous writings, expressions of indignation should burst from one who, undeservedly, in the eyes of almost all the Eastern Church, was suffering such misfortune? If we consider the language used by men under similar circumstances, we must allow to Origen the praise of no common forbearance, whatever pain we may receive from the general tenour of the calmness, meekness, and modesty of his mind, as displayed in his writings, being once or twice broken by the angry expressions of a ruffled spirit.

From Cesarea Origen wrote a letter to his friends at Alexandria, in which he severely remarked upon Demetrius, and inveighed against the bishops of the whole Church, and said that it was in vain that he

had been excommunicated by the Churches. He disputed on general grounds against the bishops, who had judged him unworthy of their communion, asserted that he would not return railing for railing, and spake of persons who charged him and his doctrines with blasphemy¹. This is the first hint of the unpopularity of his daring speculations in some quarters, which undoubtedly created him enemies in Egypt, while his fame made many more. His writings contain several allusions to these opponents, whose hostility never ceased through life, and was bequeathed to their successors of following generations. He had not been long at Cesarea before he resumed his labours upon the exposition of Scripture. Still, however, he had neither recovered his calmness, nor regained all those conveniences which he had previously enjoyed. On sending to his friend Ambrosius the continuation of his commentary on St. John, which had been broken short at the preface to the sixth tome by the preceding troubles, he says as follows, in a new preface, by which he had replaced the loss of the former.

“ And I dictated as far as the fifth tome, in spite of the appearance of opposition from the storm at Alexandria. For Jesus rebuked the winds, and the waves of the sea. But in course of time ensuing upon this assault we have been brought out of Egypt, God, who led his people forth from it, having been our deliverer. Afterwards, when the enemy carried on the war against us with the greatest bitterness, through his new publications, which are

¹ Hieronym. Apol. adv. Ruffin. ii.

truly at enmity with the Gospel, and raised all the storms of malice that are in Egypt against us, reason counselled me to stand up against the attack, and to keep my mind and understanding steady, lest evil thoughts should be able to introduce the storm even into my soul, rather than to put together the sequel of my work at an unseasonable time before my mind had regained its serenity. Besides, the absence of my customary short-hand writers prevented me from betaking myself to dictation. But now, when the many fiery darts shot against us, have, by God's quenching, been blunted, and our soul, inured to what befalls on account of the heavenly word, is forced to bear the attacks which have been made against it, having obtained, as it were, some degree of calm, we no longer delay, but are ready to dictate the sequel, and pray God that He may be present as teacher, and utter a voice in the secret sanctuary of our soul, in order that the edifice of the Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John may receive its completion. And may God hear our prayer, so that we may be able to put together the body of the whole word, without the interruption of further accident which may effect any disruption, be of what kind it will, of the series of the work. But know that this is the second comment which I am now making, and with much alacrity, of the sixth tome, because what I had previously dictated at Alexandria, has somehow or other never been brought away¹."

This is a mild and dignified complaint from a

¹ Comm. Joh. tom. vi. 1.

man who felt himself so deeply wronged, and whose favourite pursuits had received such cruel interruption. It would have been well if no stronger language could have been produced. But as we advance further in the commentary, we find that the progress of time had not been quite able to subdue his angry feeling, and meet with passages of severe remark which are strangely contrasted with the general tenour of calmness, and with the absence of allusion to daily incident, which pervades the work. Such is the following satire.

“ He found then in the temple, which too is said to be the house of the Father of the Saviour, that is in the Church, or in the announcement of the healing word of the Church, certain persons making the Father’s house a house of traffic. -And Jesus ever finds some in the temple. For when are there not, in what bears the name of the Church, which is the house of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth, certain money-changers sitting, needing stripes from the whip made by Jesus of cords, and cashiers wanting their money to be poured out, and their tables to be overturned? And when are not those who sell in traffic the oxen which they ought to keep for the plough, on which to put their hand, and, not looking back, be fit for the kingdom of God¹? And when are not they that prefer the mammon of unrighteousness to the sheep that supply them with the materials of their dress? Many too, at all times are they who despise what is unadulterated, sincere,

¹ Luke ix. 62.

and void of all bitterness and gall, and for the sake of wretched self betray the care of those which are metaphorically called doves¹."

His note of censoriousness becomes still deeper, when, after a lapse of almost thirty years, he sits down to his commentary on the Gospel of St. Matthew. Speaking of men in the Church who made their vile gain out of the godliness of others, he says, "Yea and still more, if he wept with good reason over Jerusalem, he will with still better reason weep over the Church, which, though it be built that it may be a house of prayer, yet has become, on account of the shameful spirit of gain and luxury of some, and would to God that I could not say of rulers of the people too, a den of robbers²." Then, after expressing a wish that Christ would come to purify his temple, he says, "And I conceive that what is said concerning the sellers of the doves, suits those who put churches into the hands of covetous, tyrannical, ignorant, and godless bishops, priests, or deacons. Wherefore Matthew and Mark have mentioned chairs of those only who sold the doves, which they say were overturned by Jesus. I would that these things were heard, with a mind befitting the divine Scripture, by them who claim to sit in Moses's chair, and sell whole churches of doves, and deliver them up to presidents, such that what is said by our Lord in Jeremiah may be said of them, 'The rulers of the people have not known me; they are sottish sons, and without understanding. They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge³,'

¹ Comm. Joh. tom. x. 16.

² Comm. Matth. tom. xvi. 21.

³ Jerem. iv. 22. LXX. translation.

And that which has been said by Micah, 'The rulers of my people shall be cast out from the house of their luxury¹.' For had they heard they would not have sold the doves of Christ, but would have appointed rulers that spared the doves, and made provision for their salvation, and did not look about one in order that they may slay him and make a feast of him²." A little afterwards he says, "They among the laity, who give their time to nothing but dress, and are studious only on the subject of buying and selling, and rarely continue in prayer, and in the works which the word requires, are they that buy and sell in the temple of God. But they who, as deacons, do not fairly administer the money of the Church, but are always handling it, and unfairly managing it, and heaping up that which is deemed wealth and money, in order that they may be enriched from the contributions to the fund of the poor, these are the money-changers that have tables of money, which Jesus overturned. But they who, as bishops of the people and priests, have been entrusted with the first seats, and have, as it were, sold whole churches to whom they ought not, and have appointed for rulers those whom they ought not, these are they who sell the doves, whose chairs Jesus overthrew." Later in the work he says, alluding perhaps to his own wrongs, "And we may see many doctors not permitting to enter into the kingdom of heaven those who desire to enter, especially when, without judgment and without reason, they excommunicate some, not on account of the sins which they commit,

¹ Micah ii. 9. LXX. translation.

² Comm. Matth. tom. xvi. 22.

but through a spirit of party and strife often prohibit from entering men who are better than themselves. And so, while they are not permitted to enter, such as are sober in mind, watchful in spirit, overcoming with patience and long-suffering their tyranny, forbidden though they be, do nevertheless enter, and inherit the kingdom of heaven ¹."

The consciousness of his unjust treatment breaks out most plainly of all in the following extract from the same work. "May we not say then, that as those high-priests and scribes were blameable, according to the literal history ², so there are certain high-priests blameable, according to the hidden sense of it, who do not adorn the title of episcopacy by their life, nor are clothed with the truth? These men then, albeit they see the wonderful things of God, nevertheless despise the little ones and babes in the Church, which sing the praises of God and his Christ, and are grieved at their progress, and accuse them before Jesus as sinners, even them who do not sin, and as disobedient, even them who observe every injunction, and say to him, 'Hearest thou what these say?' And we shall understand this the better, when we consider in what manner very often men that are fervent in the spirit, and expose themselves against the unbelievers even unto imprisonment, and despise danger, and with all constancy practise chastity and virginity, being rude in speech, are rebuked as disorderly by these blameable high-priests, and accused before Jesus, as if they themselves were more just than such sincere and good children ³."

¹ Comm. Ser in Matth. xvi. ² He is on Matth. xxi. 15—18.

³ Comm. Matth. tom. xvi. 25.

Such passages would not be noted in Tertullian, and if they be found in Cyprian they are called forth by matters of fact which were then before him. But their appearance amid the calm and, so to say, unpractical tenour of Origen's works, immediately arrests our attention. The last extract differs from the foregoing, in that there is nothing in the text (as may be said of the others) which obviously leads to such a comment. He manifestly interprets the motions of his own heart, rather than the sense of Scripture, being neither the first nor the last who has made the word of God to preach from the prompting of his own spirit, rather than from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. That the Church, now spreading wide in the sphere of wealth and ambition, had lost so much of her purity, that she could be truly represented by the picture, drawn in the foregoing passages, is a painful consideration. And it must have required some strong excitement in the meek and charitable mind of Origen to divulge before the world what in cooler moments he would unwillingly describe to himself, and to complain of catholic ungodliness within hearing of the heretic, whom he so inflexibly opposed and denounced. But so it is. Our own passions, if not our own self-interest, instigate us to merge all public considerations in our individual gratification, and instead of submitting ourselves as part to the whole, to set up ourselves rather as whole to the part. How is such a feeling reprov'd and convicted by those beautiful and majestic representations of the Christian's position, which Scripture sets forth before us! He is a member of a body, of which Christ is the head ;

he is a branch of a vine, of which Christ is the main-trunk ; he is a stone in the building, of which Christ is the head-stone in the corner. And yet considering the treatment which Origen endured, in what writer shall we find so little outburst of self? Compare him for a moment with Tertullian or Jerome, and, remembering how they have expressed themselves under the vexation of slights, and even of opposition to their opinions, imagine how they would have bellowed, and made every corner of the Church to re-echo to the cry of their agony, had they been put to the heart-rending trial of Origen. The passages above quoted are very nearly all, and certainly the strongest, in which Origen gives way (and some may deny that he does give way, and may certainly not unfairly dispute it) to private feeling. Assigning them all the bitterness that they can contain, we must still be compelled to admire the dignified forbearance and charitable fortitude of a man, who, however deservedly he might have incurred suffering at all, assuredly suffered far beyond the extent of his deserts.

But Demetrius was by no means the leader of a party which followed him merely on the occasion, being guided by his influence, and espousing his personal cause. He was the representative of a large and powerful body at Alexandria, to which, even if we impute the motive of envy, we must also grant the credit of sincere alarm at the perilous speculations which Origen had vented. We learn indeed, from his own mouth, the suspicion with which they were received. Sometimes he checks himself at once, saying that he would trust no more to

paper, having hazarded enough already¹. In another place he speaks of persons tempting him, that they may gain an occasion against him, and proposing questions, not for the sake of information for themselves, but of accusation against him². In another he says, "After the similitude of that Jerusalem which killeth and stoneth the prophets, there are often appointed in this Jerusalem (viz. which is above, and which he explains of the Church) men who are ignorant and fear not God, and, as far as they can, slay and stone with words uttered without judgment men who are advanced in the word and in life, who need not the application of the rule of the Churches, but are suspected on account of the profundity of their doctrines by those who are in the habit of saying novel things and who do not attend to the sound word of our Lord Jesus Christ³." That he had such enemies in Alexandria we further learn from the fact that at the death of Demetrius, his successor Heraclas, Origen's own pupil and partner, and son in the Lord, and as much devoted to philosophy as himself, did not venture to recall him, although he came to the chair so soon after his retirement, that he could not have been reconciled to his exile. Neither is there any attempt to restore him, recorded of Dionysius the next successor in the episcopal chair, and another pupil of Origen, although a space of sixteen years must have allowed the animosity of the majority to become extinct by

¹ Comm. Matth. tom. xvii. 30. See too *ibid.* tom. xv. 35.

² *Ibid.* 28.

³ Ser. Comm. Matth. xxviii.

death, had it been merely personal, and not founded in reasons which would effect generation after generation. Had any such endeavour been made, or indeed the least overture, it would hardly have escaped the notice of Pamphilus or Eusebius, who would have been too glad to mention it, and succeeding writers would hardly have failed to repeat the important fact. The above extracts tend to show that the ill-will was as unabated as the cause of it was continual.

It is the privilege of celebrated characters to confer reputation on the place of their birth or abode, instead of deriving it from them. It boasts of them, and not they of it, as others, when they would take credit to themselves, are obliged to do. Hence Cesarea, already much resorted to as the sea-port of Palestine, both by the merchant of Eastern produce, and by the pilgrim to the holy places, became noted as the residence of Origen, who there still lived in one of the thoroughfares between the East and West, and maintained a conspicuous station in the face of the whole Church. It was soon a point of conflux from all quarters of the lovers of learning; and the school of Origen, banished from Alexandria, revived with undiminished brilliancy at Cesarea. Among the number of pupils who flocked to him continually, was one who afterwards fixed an imperishable name in the Church, amid the first rank of her worthies. This was the future Gregory, surnamed Thaumaturgus, and bishop of Neo-cesarea, in his native province of Pontus. His name at this time was Theodorus. Together with his brother Athenodorus he had been studying the Roman law at Berytus, a famous school

of jurisprudence¹. The fame of Origen, however, attracted them to Cesarea. They came to him in the Gentile profession, and well read in Greek literature. He introduced them to philosophy, and covertly instilled Christianity through that channel with his usual success. They remained with him five years, and so well prepared and recommended were they on leaving him, that, though young, they were both elected to sees in their native country. Nor did youth alone seek benefit from his instructions. The two bishops Alexander and Theoctistus looked up to him for advice and information, and committed to him alone the charge of interpreting Scripture, and of all other ecclesiastical instruction. Firmilian also, bishop of the Cappadocian Cesarea, relied so much on his authority, that he maintained continual communication with him. Sometimes he invited Origen over for the benefit of the Churches in his quarter, at other times he went himself to Palestine, and stayed a considerable time with him, enjoying the advantage of such communion².

(A. D. 236.) The Church had now been blest with a long calm under the mild rule of the emperor Alexander Severus, and perhaps to Origen's personal disadvantage, since the Christians would, as usual, turn from the foreign war against the prince of this world to intestine discord among themselves, and he was likely to be the chief object in dispute. But now there rose up an emperor of very different affections

¹ Jerome's Catalogue. Euseb. vi. 30. de Martyr. Palæst. 4. Origen, Ep. ad Gregor.

² Euseb. E. H. vi. 27.

towards his Christian subjects. They were Christians for the most part who had surrounded the person of Alexander, and all that concerned the memory of that unfortunate prince was hateful to his tyrannical successor¹. The hatred arising from the consciousness of having inflicted an injury is proverbially the most deadly of all, for it is caused by the most intolerable wound of all, the loss of self-respect, which requires the continual plaster of self-justification, it is promoted by the not uncertain suspicion of the bad opinion and ill-will of the injured party, and aggravated by the continual dread of the humiliation of a just retribution. Persecution therefore was once more set on foot, breaking a long general peace of about thirty years, and after a residence of five years at Cesarea, Origen's tranquil course was again interrupted, though perhaps with less violence from the heathen, than formerly from his own brethren of Alexandria. He however, most probably through the protection of his friend poverty, escaped uninjured. But his wealthy friend Ambrosius was immediately in danger of his life.

The man who had cheered and encouraged his own father in the prison of the martyrs was not likely to forget his friend. His fidelity breathes like an odour of sweet savour from his treatise on Martyrdom, in which he exhorts Ambrosius, together with his fellow-prisoner, to be strong and of good courage. He reminds his friend that his riches increase the merits of his martyrdom as far beyond those of a poor man, like himself, as the martyr who expires in tor-

¹ Ibid. 28.

tures, is superior to him who was exempt from them¹. Some of the topics however of his consolation go on very perilous ground. He is not content with assigning paradise for the residence of martyrs,² but goes so far as to say, "And see whether, as our Saviour's martyrdom was the purification of the world, so the baptism of martyrdom be not for the cure of many cleansed by it; for as, under the law, the priests who assisted at the altar seemed to administer remission of sins by means of the blood of bulls and goats, so the souls of those who have been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, do not vainly assist at the altar in heaven, but administer remission of sins to them that pray. And as the High Priest Jesus Christ offered himself a sacrifice, so the priests of whom He is High Priest, offer themselves a sacrifice. Wherefore they are seen at the altar as at their proper post. But then, like the priests of old, they must be without spot or blemish, having fulfilled the full measure of confession³." The practical danger of such unscriptural doctrine, which will be examined more at large hereafter, may seem but little counterbalanced by the difficulty of finding many such intercessors. He limits their number by the following requirements for the full measure of confession. "They must not, during the whole time of examination and trial, have given place in their hearts to the devil, in his wishes to pollute them by suggesting wicked thoughts of denial, or wavering, or any speciousness which tempts them to conduct hostile to martyrdom and perfection. And, in addition

¹ De Martyr. 15.

² Ibid. 36.

³ Ibid. 30,

to this, they must not stain themselves with so much as a word foreign to confession. They must bear too all the reproach, mockery, laughter, reviling, and pity, with which the heathen pity them, taking them for mistaken men and fools, and calling them deluded. Neither again must they be distracted by their affection for their children, or their mother, or whatever is deemed dearest in life, and so be allured back to their possessions and to this life. But turning away from all these they must give themselves up entirely to God, and to the life which is together with him, and by him, as future partners with his only-begotten Son, and with them that partake with him. Thus they will have fulfilled the measure of confession. But if they fail, even in one particular, then they have not fulfilled, but have defiled the measure of confession, and they want what is wanting to them, who build on the foundation of wood, or hay, or straw¹." Since he distinctly says, in another place², that martyrdoms were but few and occasional, and since human nature is scarcely capable of fulfilling the measure here laid down, there must have been considerable doubt whether there were one to share his privilege with the Mediator. The treatise contains several more of Origen's strange tenets, which cannot be noticed here. Considering the subject, he writes coldly. Once, indeed, he rises into a passage of eloquent exultation on the spectacle of martyrdom³, but in general the treatise is coolly rational, and the topics rather common-place. His argumentative turn of mind is very apparent, and so also is the

¹ Ibid. 11.

² c. Cels. iii. p. 116.

³ De Martyr. 18.

want of that deep feeling which is essential to imagination, and therefore to any continued strain of eloquence. Quick feeling he had, but this ministers to quite a different province of mind. His friend Ambrosius escaped, and survived to be the stimulator to further works of Origen.

This persecution was as transient as the appearance of its author on the throne of the empire, and Origen was soon enabled to resume the full activity of his labours. He proceeded with his Commentary on the Old Testament, which he had begun at Alexandria. Nor did a second visit to Athens interrupt the work, for there he finished the Commentary on Ezekiel, and, beginning that on the Song of Solomon, finished it on his return to Cesarea¹. He entered also into a friendly controversy with the learned Africanus who was living at Emmaus, and had written to him a letter in which he denied the authenticity of the story of Susanna and the Elders. The arguments were the inconsistency of some of the historical facts, a plagiarism on Jeremiah, difference of style, different behaviour of the prophet, the omission of the book in the Jewish canon, and, what is not less convincing than all, the internal proof that it never had an Hebrew original, supplied by a play upon words in the Greek², which could not possibly hold in the Hebrew, to say nothing of its being so unsuitable to the prophet's gravity. Supposing the witnesses to say, "I saw them under an ash," the prophet would reply, "The angel of God will reduce you to ashes." The reply of Origen is emi-

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 32. ² See verses 54, 55, 58, 59.

nently unsuccessful, and discovers a strange want of sound critical judgment. In answer to the last objection, he contends that the translators, unable to render the same play, adopted a similar one—just as the English example given here is similar to and not the same with that in the Greek. But it is interesting inasmuch as it mentions his labours upon the Hebrew text, which it is now time that we should mention.

Allusion has already been made to the rash and fruitless encounters of the Fathers with the Rabbis¹. Origen was deeply sensible of the mischievous consequences, and, to prevent them in future, devised a work which alone would have handed down his name in honour to posterity. This was to exhibit a correct view of the Hebrew original to such as were ignorant of the language, so that they might not advance against the Jews passages which were not contained in the original, and thus harden them against conviction by exciting their scorn and ridicule². There were means sufficient for this purpose through translations already made. For besides the authorized version of the Septuagint were three others, one by Aquila so literal as to be ungrammatical, a second by Symmachus which was rather paraphrastical, and a third by Theodotion which pursued the mean between the two. Besides these he found two others by unknown hands, which he combined with the above in the following manner. He drew out eight columns, putting in the first the Hebrew text in Hebrew characters, in the second the same text in

¹ Vol. i. p. 148.

² Ep. ad African. 5.

Greek characters, and in the remaining the six translations. Whence the work was called the Hexapla. In it we see the first hint of our modern division into verses. For the whole book of the Old Testament was broken up into small portions, which, being set opposite each other in their proper columns, could be caught by the eye at a glance in any variation. In order to adapt a work to more common use, he afterwards put forth an edition in which the columns of the Hebrew and of the anonymous versions were omitted, and only the four familiar translations were published. Hence this was called the Tetrapla. Further, this work introduced a new edition of the Septuagint, which he made from a careful collation of manuscripts, and, adopting the marks which had been used by the Alexandrine Grammarians in their editions of the text of Homer, placed an obelus or dagger against such passages as were not in the Hebrew original, and an asterisk or star against such as he had supplied in accordance with the Hebrew from the other versions, besides employing other less important marks¹.

The value of such a work is evident at first sight, as well as the prodigious pains of industry which were necessary to its execution. Yet the thankless world, careless of its importance, reckless of what it cost its compiler, has been content to let it become extinct, and with most liberal impartiality has consigned to the same oblivious fate the labours of

¹ Ep. ad African. 4. Comm. Matt. tom. xv. 14. For the Hexapla see Euseb. E. H. vi. 16, with Ruffinus's translation. Hieronym. in Ep. ad Tit. iii. Epiphan. Hær. 64. § 3.

scholars equally upon the text of Homer, and upon the text of the law and the prophets of God. Deep indeed and irreparable is the loss which biblical criticism has sustained. The value of a knowledge of the state of the Hebrew text of that day, of the pronunciation of the language, and also of the state of the text of the Septuagint at that period, and of the various renderings of the versions, cannot be calculated. And the neglect, to which we owe the loss, is one of the standing disgraces to human nature. She is accused of reckless abuse of entrusted talents, of stupid irreverence for the monuments of her forefathers, of careless improvidence towards her children, of carnal indifference to the things which minister to immortal soul and spirit, of gross unthankfulness to God. A few fragments only survive to cry from the ground, and lift up their condemning voice in the hearts of the lovers of sacred literature against the wretched generations which, in possession of so glorious an edifice of divine learning, could suffer it to fall, so that one stone should not be left upon another. But the student of ecclesiastical monuments cannot have gone far in his search before he finds that he must make up his mind to many and severe losses; his indignation soon subsides into calm regret, and he thankfully praises God for what he has given rather than condemns man for what he has taken away.

(A. D. 243.) From the privacy of such labour he was occasionally called to stand forth in the face of the Church, as the champion of the Catholic faith. Among the ranks of its opponents there now arose one whose position gave him a very dangerous influence. Beryllus, bishop of Bostra in Arabia, asserted the heretical tenet

that our Lord and Saviour had no distinct and personal pre-existence in the divine essence, and that when he came in the flesh he had no distinct personality as to his divinity, but merely the divinity of the Father residing in him, through means of a rational soul of divine essence¹. Origen had every motive to oppose a doctrine which not only disagreed with Catholic verity, but also was adverse to his own peculiar notions on the subject of the soul. After a number of bishops had publicly disputed with the heretic, he prepared his way by a private conversation with him, in which he tried to ascertain his opinions. When he had clearly discovered them, he so persuaded him with arguments, and gained him over by demonstration, that he brought him back to sound doctrine, and established him in the truth. Thus he enjoyed a pleasure truly gratifying to his pure and candid mind, that of having brought over a brother from the error of his ways, and also of acquiring a grateful friend, with whom he afterwards maintained a correspondence. The documents of the controversy, which included the acts of a council summoned on the occasion, were extant in the days of Eusebius and Jerome, but have now been long ago lost².

(A. D. 245.) Philip had now succeeded to the empire. His favour to the Christians, though most probably grounded on merely worldly motives, was such as to give rise to a notion that he had adopted their religion. After therefore the brief trembling of uncertainty which every elevation of a new ruler

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 33. The last clause of this creed has been deduced from Socrates by Mosheim, de Reb. Christ. p. 699.

² Jerome's Catalogue, c. 60.

created in their hearts, they enjoyed the prolonged respite, and Origen's literary leisure went on uninterrupted. In the first year of this reign he attained the age of sixty, and still he was an exile from his native Church and city. In the third, another pupil, Dionysius, was set in the episcopal chair. But Origen still remained in the country and Church of his adoption. It has been already observed that it was probably out of the power of either of his pupils to recall him, without exposing their Church to dangerous and disgraceful division, and perhaps bringing into jeopardy their own dignity and power. Yet it may also be thought very singular that there should be no mention of any communication or correspondence having passed between him and them. They had not indeed leisure for much of this kind of occupation, and most probably dared not dedicate to it such as they had. The wish to express their kindly affections may have been over-ruled by that prudence which was indispensable in a situation so delicate and responsible as theirs. And, so doing, they would follow the example of their heavenly Master, which bids us forsake house, and brother, and sister, father and mother, wife, children, and lands, for his name's sake. The world is too apt to judge harshly and hastily where affection is sacrificed to conscience. Blind to spiritual things, it sees but two human parties to the affair, and immediately exclaims at unnatural conduct. It has no notion that where the sacrifice is made, the affection is far more ardent and more constant than in other cases, being an efflux of the love of Christ, a stream pouring from its fountain, a flame lighted at its fire. Nor

does it behold that third and superior party, to the maintenance of whose honour and glory amongst men all things must be adjusted, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, who must sanction every affection, ratify every bond, confirm every resolution.

It was now at length, that, having from long practice attained great perfection, he allowed short-hand writers to take down his homilies or extemporaneous expositions of Scripture ; a thing which he had never permitted before. These were addressed to the congregation, and differed from commentaries, chiefly in being of a less studied character, and of less recondite doctrine, as may be expected when even catechumens were present. There is the same continual strain of allegorical interpretation, although it does not touch such high matters. This, in a composition which should be addressed at least as much to the feelings as to the fancy, and to plain sense as to curious ears, gives an air of studying how to gain glory of man, rather than of God ; seems to display a heartlessness on so solemn an occasion ; and, as to any spiritual result, is altogether unpractical and unprofitable. They would not be endured in any congregation of these days and of this country, and give rise to many reflections upon the state of the knowledge of the Scripture, of the prevailing education, on the rank and attainments of the hearers at that period. The foolishness of preaching seems to have been quite abandoned, as was befitting, when the wisdom of man superseded the wisdom of God. But such unreal matter is little calculated to stand the trial of change of taste ; and of all the immense mass of homi-

lies, not less than a thousand in number, but a very small remnant survives, and but a small proportion of that in the original Greek. Considering what losses have taken place in ecclesiastical literature, we may very patiently bear this. The world would be little wiser or better if it could still have the power of listening to such instruction. A much more lamentable loss is that of his correspondence, in which appeared letters addressed to persons in the highest rank both in state and Church, as to Philip the emperor, and to Fabian bishop of Rome. Eusebius had collected upwards of a hundred of them. From him we learn that he wrote to Fabian and very many other bishops of various Churches to assert his orthodoxy, which therefore appears now to have been very generally disputed¹. These epistles would have thrown great light upon the time, the life, the character of Origen, and we might have had much tangible matter instead of the mass of unsubstantial conjecture, through much of which we must now make our way, in order to gain a glimpse or two of his real character, and a hint or two of events of his life.

This was a period of deep peace², and therefore afforded to Origen abundant leisure and tranquillity for executing a work, which was truly serviceable to the faith, and does most justice to his reputation. This is the answer to Celsus. The view in which Mark Antonine regarded the Christians, has already been described³, and it has been shown how encouraged by his patronage, as well as warned by their

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 36.

² c. Cels. viii. p. 406.

³ Vol. i. p. 150.

danger, and stung by the silent reproof of the spectacle of Christian purity, the philosophers of all sects, however at variance with one another, made common cause against the Gospel¹. But their fiery darts have long ago been quenched against the shield of faith, and even of their names none survive except those of Crescens, Fronto, and Celsus. The last however fared somewhat differently from his companions in the field of fame. Much of his work in form, and some portion even in words, survives in the reply of Origen. He was of a sect, which, together with those of Democritus and Aristotle, was most sceptical on the articles of the vulgar superstition, being, according to Origen's assertion, an Epicurean, although he had good reasons for never avowing himself such in his work, but rather concealing the fact². He entitled his work "The Word of Truth," and if we may judge from its effects in requiring an answer from Origen almost a century after its publication, it was so successful as to become the stock-book of the objectors to Christianity, and to have much influence in deterring the educated classes of the heathen from embracing the faith. It supplied them with the objections and answers with which they were desirous of stifling the conscience whenever it was awakened for a moment by some appeal to the Gospel, and they found it inconvenient to obey. And it amply furnished the ignorant and uninquiring with a plentiful store of mockery, ridicule, and scorn. The

¹ Comm. Matt. tom. xii. l.

² c. Cels. i. p. 8. v. p. 232. viii. p. 407. Ed. Cantab. Some modern writers however dispute this assertion.

arguments, opinions, and facts, which are presented to the reader in the extracts from it in Origen's reply, are a fund of exceeding interest, and give us considerable insight into the fluctuating state of the heathen mind under the agitation which the Gospel excited through all ranks and countries. We find from the very work of this unbeliever, that the battering-ram was already shaking the wall, when a philosopher says, or in accommodation to his readers is obliged to say, "God forbid that I, or these, or any other man, should reject the tenet of the future punishment of the unjust, or of the future rewards of the just¹." Though it was a tenet of Platonism, yet it would never have been thus distinctly enounced, conjectural after all as it was, had not the insensible influence of the Gospel given it confirmation, or had it not suited the purpose of Celsus at the moment. In either way, Christ was preached. Again he says, "This is pretty true, that mankind is, in a manner, naturally inclined to sin²." This also had not been denied by some philosophers, but we may say the same of it as of the last. And the folly of idolatry is freely acknowledged, in numerous places. Indeed the popular religion is given up throughout as quite indefensible in itself, and obedience is claimed for it only under the title of obedience to law, and in consideration of certain truths being concealed under some of its dross. It is curious to see in return, how comparatively little was the influence of philosophy on the mass of society. The tenets of the philosophers

¹ c. Cels. iii. p. 120. viii. p. 409.

² Ibid. p. 150.

were less commonly known than the main doctrines of the Gospel ¹.

Amongst the charges which Celsus brings against the Christians, are the following. They used to say, "Do not examine. Only believe. Wisdom is a bad thing. Folly is good ²." And they repelled all the educated, all the wise, all the sensible, but welcomed all the ignorant, the silly, the foolish, and slaves, women and children, as alone worthy of their God, confessing thus that they could prevail upon none else ³. Like vagrant jugglers, they took care never to exhibit before sensible men, but wherever they could find a crowd of lads, and slaves, and silly men, there they pushed and displayed themselves ⁴. They were of low rank, and while they ventured not a word in the presence of intelligent parents, they laid hold of the children, taught them to despise and disobey their parents as ignorant people incapable either of knowing or doing good. And told them that if they wished for such knowledge, they must abandon father and teacher, and follow them in the company of women and their playfellows, to the women's apartments, or to the tannery, or to the fullery, that they might receive that which is perfect. And thus they prevailed ⁵. They took care to shun well-informed society, which would detect their cheats ⁶, while they freely received amongst them thieves, robbers, witches, committers of sacrilege, and riflers of tombs ⁷. He continually, whether through

¹ c. Cels. i. p. 7.

² Ibid. p. 8.

³ Ibid. iii. p. 137.

⁴ Ibid. p. 140.

⁵ Ibid. p. 144.

⁶ Ibid. vi. p. 284.

⁷ Ibid. iii. 147.

ignorance or malice, confounds the orthodox with the Gnostics, and thus charges the body of Christians with the extravagances of the heretics¹. And miserable indeed is the exposure which he makes of heresy and schism, showing us what stumbling-blocks they were, both to those without and those within. "You will hear them all (he says) while they differ to such a degree, and are most disgracefully quarrelling one with another, yet saying all the while 'The world is crucified to me, and I to the world².'" "And (he asks) while one party introduces to you this man, another that, yet all are forward with the expression, 'Believe if you wish to be saved, or else go your way,' what shall they do who really wish to be saved? shall they divine by throw of dice as to whom they shall betake themselves³?" "Since they are spread and grown numerous (he also says) they are split and divided again and again, and each one is desirous of having his own party; thus they mutually convict each other, having but one thing, so to say, in common, if indeed they still have the name in common. This alone however they are ashamed to abandon. All the rest is differently ordered by different parties⁴." Truly this is a bitter and most true rebuke, and such as a heathen may well cast in our teeth at the present day. Nor let any one think our times excused by such an example of primitive discord. It must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh⁵. Perhaps we shall not go on much longer

¹ Ibid. vi. p. 295, &c.

² Ibid. v. p. 273.

³ Ibid. vi. p. 282.

⁴ Ibid. iii. p. 118.

⁵ Matth. xviii. 7.

without realizing the example also of the correctives which God applied to this rampant disorderly spirit, when as a loving Father He scourged the early Church with the rod of persecution.

These misrepresentations and exaggerations are followed up by charges of plagiarism against Moses and Christ, whom he asserts to have borrowed from the ancient philosophers, although he might have known that the former was dead nearly a thousand years before the first of that tribe arose¹. He, nevertheless, ranks Christians among the rudest of barbarians, in having neither temples nor statues, which latter, as worshippers of a God in human shape, they must confess (he says) to be in the form of God, though no one dreams, any more than they, that they are Gods². He rates at the obscurity of the prophecies³, denies their inspiration⁴, and ascribes the Christian miracles to magic⁵, while he asserts that prophecies were uttered, miracles performed, future judgments proclaimed in the mysteries, and descants on heathen oracles with all the fanatic eulogy which a friar would bestow upon the virtues of a relic or an image⁶. He is pleased also to point the finger at what he calls absurdities, as the conception by the Holy Ghost⁷, the resurrection of the body⁸, the worship of God in the man Christ⁹, the existence of a Spirit adverse to God in the Devil¹⁰, the

¹ c. Cels. iv. p. 191. vii. p. 237, &c. ² Ibid. viii. p. 373.

³ Ibid. vii. p. 338. ⁴ Ibid. p. 340. ⁵ Ibid. vi. p. 302.

⁶ Ibid. viii. p. 407, 408. ⁷ Ibid. i. p. 30.

⁸ Ibid. v. p. 240. ii. p. 94, 104, &c.

⁹ Ibid. iii. p. 135. vi. p. 325. vii. p. 349.

¹⁰ Ibid. vi. p. 303.

rest of God on the seventh day¹, and others, which may teach the modern infidel that he is not quite so original as he imagines, but that this ancient Epicurean has forestalled him in his most boasted discoveries, and Christianity has survived the exposure for nearly seventeen hundred years. He has forestalled him also in his character. There is quite enough of him preserved by Origen to show that the old philosopher had all the overweening vanity, all the pretension to universal knowledge, all the conceited dogmatism upon things which he had but superficially skimmed, all the unprincipled misrepresentation, all the intrepid assertion of falsehood, all the shameless suppression of truth, all the cant, all the intolerance, which characterize the modern philosopher when he takes in hostile hand the same subject. And he also exhibits the same cruel exultation in the sufferings of the Christians before his eyes, that they do in reading them². Deriders of antiquity as they are, they will confess, perhaps, that in this instance the old benighted mother has produced one enlightened child, whom they may deign to acknowledge as a predecessor.

Such, in brief, was the work which Ambrosius called upon his friend to answer, and invited him to an exercise much more adapted to his genius than writing commentaries on Scripture. His ardent love and intimate knowledge of heathen literature and philosophy, instead of being serious disqualifications, were here necessary qualifications. His curiosity

¹ c. Cels. vi. p. 317.

² Ibid. viii. p. 404. He cruelly taunts the Christians with mention of a persecution at that moment raging.

and quickness, instead of leading him into airy speculation, being now strictly applied to each objection of Celsus, as he made it, display themselves to advantage as admirable instruments. His intimate knowledge of Scripture, now that he was on the defensive, could be put to all its use without its abuse. More attention also has been bestowed upon the style, though it be still too cumbrous. As the work was intended to meet the eye of the learned, and of enemies too, it was highly necessary to pay some attention to this point: but he is never tempted to run into declamation. This indeed was foreign to his genius, which is fanciful and argumentative rather than imaginative and eloquent. Facts and arguments are his weapons, and, as far as can be judged from seeing but one side, he leaves the field triumphant. It would be easy to point out defects, and even serious errors; but they are such as beset Origen on every occasion, and it would be a most invidious task to look for faults in a work which has done such eminent service in the cause of the Gospel of Christ, which has put us in possession of so much valuable and interesting information, and which has received the hearty praise of every generation, that has been able to read it, from the day that it was written unto the present hour.

Once again Origen was summoned from the retirement of study to undertake a public part. Arabia again required his presence, where it would seem that the leaven of the opinions of Beryllus was still working. He had denied the existence of a human soul in Christ; and now certain persons asserted a tenet which, if it was not the foundation of that

denial, was at least connected with it: they maintained that the soul died with the body, and also revived with it. A council was summoned upon the matter, and Origen invited to attend. The nature of the soul was the favourite subject of his speculation. He had vented upon it his most daring fancies, and had come to a result in the opposite extreme. Familiar with the ground, practised in the arguments, most intimate with Scripture, quick and acute in reasoning, and fluent from long habit, he was little likely to encounter a rival. After a public disputation his opponents surrendered their judgments to him, and the heresy was quashed.

(A. D. 250.) The Church had now enjoyed external peace, if we except the short fury of Maximin, for almost half a century. The majority of the Christian host had never seen an enemy in battle, but was well inured to the bloodless strife of controversy, and, many as were the disputes which were now on hand, there would have been many more, if God had not given a sudden check by raising up Decius. Like Maximin, he had been, whether voluntarily or not, a traitor to his master, and had therefore every motive which passion can add to policy for persecuting the Christians. Immediately the sword was waved from province to province, the prisons were full, the scaffolds were in constant use, and Origen had soon to accept that martyrdom which, in the ardour of his youth, he had so eagerly sought. His friend Ambrosius, whom, with his fellow-prisoner Proctetus, he had comforted under similar circumstances, had died before this visitation, which would have been inevitably fatal to him. He was gene-

rally blamed because, rich though he was, he never remembered the poverty of Origen in his will¹. It should, however, be considered that Origen might have refused the offer while his friend was yet alive, for that he preferred a life of poverty. Nor indeed would any other accord with his ascetic practices. Ambrosius moreover not only knew this, but knew also that the possession of fortune might endanger the life of Origen, the services of which he desired that the Church might long enjoy. A friendship so honourable to both parties, and so full of brilliant results to ecclesiastical literature, should not be lightly taxed with insincerity on either side, and demands a defence in every generous mind.

Still there remained an old and ardent friend in Alexander of Jerusalem. He was brought down to Cesarea², a prisoner of the Lord, and thus Origen and he might have met in the common prison, and bidden each other a joyful farewell before they were separated for ever in this world, but were to rejoin each other in a few days in the world to come. The aged bishop went first, dying in prison after the severity of torture. Origen also suffered long and severely. All that could try his faith and prove his patience was studiously inflicted upon him, and he was singled out from all the rest, pre-eminent as he was in name, for pre-eminence in torture. Besides the usual fetters and other torture, he was thrust into the deepest dungeon, with an iron collar round his neck, and for many days had his feet fixed in an engine of devilish cruelty, for which, or any thing resembling it, nearer

¹ Jerome's Catalogue, in Ambrosius.

² Ibid. in Alexander.

than our stocks, our language has hitherto, most happily, wanted a name. He was threatened also with fire at the stake. But neither threats nor torments could move him, although these were applied with cautious refinement, lest he should escape the executioner by death¹. He survived the painful trial, and, after a successor had filled the throne of his persecutor, expired, and was buried at Tyre, in the sixty-ninth year of his age².

Origen is by far the most remarkable character of the Fathers of the Primitive Church, or indeed of any age of the Church, for none had ever so powerful an influence both upon his own and upon succeeding generations. His warmth of heart, his frankness, his firmness, his meekness, his wisdom, his piety, procured and attached to him many and lasting friends. His splendid talents, his prodigious acquirements, deeply envied as they were extravagantly admired, raised up many unappeasable enemies, whom his rashness of speculation supplied with but too specious ground for their acrimonious outcry.

But, it must be repeated, his mind was not of the first order. It had indeed gigantic powers of acquirement bestowed upon it in quickness of perception and of feeling, in acuteness of observation, in unsated curiosity, in tenacity of memory, in vivacity of disposition, in unwearied industry, and it possessed that liveliness of fancy which results from the multifarious

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 39.

² Jerome's Catalogue in Origen. Phot. Bibl. 118. In this life I have deliberately omitted the three anecdotes given by Epiphanius (Hær. 64. § 1, 2), as deeming them to contain internal evidence of want of authority.

information of such a mind. Hence also its influence was greater amongst its fellows, who had more sympathy with it than they would have had, either in conversing or reading, with a mind which stood aloof and alone. But it wanted the royal, or rather tyrannical, power of originality, which compels every faculty of mind to one point and one service, absorbs all its powers under one head, and goes to work with the unvarying purpose and concentrated strength of compact despotism. Instead therefore of acquiring permanent dominions of truth, it won but here and there castles of speculation with irregular irruptions, and these he was often compelled to evacuate almost as soon as gained. It is indeed a lamentable thing to say of a good man that wrote so much, but it must be said, that not one iota has he added to the possessions of truth, but many and many are the articles which he has added to the catalogue of error. Filled to overflowing with ideas taken from Greek philosophy, he never could combine them into a new and harmonious system, but he used them as the tools of independent and arbitrary speculations, as the subjects of the loose guesses which form the staple of his works. From the same cause, his Scriptural information is equally unfruitful of certainty. Suppose a man who had been amply supplied with the materials of building, should build an unarranged crowd of cottages, some of wood, some of stone, some of both, and in some cases so perversely that he used the stone for the inside and the wood for the outside, and sometimes took down two or more and built them up again into one, at another time took down one and built up again two or more

with the same materials; so that a person coming after a short interval of time would never find things alike—and all this when he was expected to build one well-proportioned edifice with the proper application of the wood and stone. So is it with the productions of Origen. His reader will never find him fixed in one permanent and comprehensive view of things; it is impossible to deduce from his works any one system, which shall not be contradicted in some of its detail by various passages. Hence the great difficulty of truly representing his opinions, and hence a most convenient handle for misrepresentation. Writers have varied and will vary to the end of time in the statement of his tenets, in all those points where the unpronounced voice of the Church at his day left him liberty, and even in some where it had not.

In the palmy days of the Greek tongue, before the Attic had lost all its beautifully mellowed Ionic tint, and had assumed that comparatively dry and harsh colour under which it became the universal language of Greece, so abundant was it found in the resources of exquisite harmony, that the delicately organized Athenian, when he had once experienced the perfection which study could produce, could never afterwards endure the inferior staple of extemporaneous speaking. He required the smell of the lamp in the orations which were addressed to his passions as well as to his understanding; and Æschines and Demosthenes, when it was their turn to reply in their two great contests, made each their answer from the previous presumption or report of what their adversary would say, and not from having heard what he

did say. The ridiculous situation into which such side-pushing brought the combatants was unperceived, through the ample compensation of the electric effect of the powers of language. By the time, however, that the Greek had become the language of the Church, both the tongue and the speakers of it had grown coarser, and extemporary delivery was not only endured but also required. But not only is natural fluency, in almost every instance, the result of a mind unencumbered with much thought, and confident in the mere memory of terms, so that the written compositions of persons thus gifted are almost proverbial for poverty of thought, and carelessness of style; but the higher minds are deteriorated by the acquired habit of giving utterance with little or no premeditation. The first conceptions in a mind of any depth of native resources, are comparatively superficial and indistinct, and the expression of them comparatively vague and feeble. But such a habit, as it allows the man no time to go far in search, soon accustoms him to be content with what he can first lay hold of; and thus gradually losing his sense and desire of perfection, he degenerates into commonplace of thought, and negligence of style. As he gains in one mode of utterance, which is the command of mere words, he loses in another mode, which is the command of sterling thought. Our coarse modern jargons, though they do show it, show the difference of these two modes of utterance of thought but faintly indeed compared with such a language as the Greek, whose richness gives such power of expression, and whose harmony is capable of such perfection. The defects of Origen's style,

partly natural to a mind, which, occupied rather in acquiring from others without than in contemplating its native riches within, was indistinct in conception, have already been noticed as savouring of his habits of extemporaneous delivery. Never, at any time, are his sentences terse and well-turned, seldom clear and close, but almost always intricate and cumbrous. His flights of fancy, far from relieving the heavy drag of his style, only try the reader's patience more severely. Imagination he has none! and here he differs much from his master Clement, to whom he is as inferior in the higher powers of mind, as he is superior in reputation. His language, however, considered in its words and phrases, is like that of the rest of his Alexandrine brethren, of a genuine stamp, showing what may be called an unnatural purity. For it is evident from many internal marks alone, that it was very superior to the cast of the spoken language of the day.

His writings were exceedingly voluminous, even according to the account of Jerome¹, who reduces to a third the enormous amount of six thousand which Epiphanius, led by common report, assigns². Of these his homilies alone were a thousand in number³. Far the greater part has perished, but a large mass, compared with the surviving works of other authors, is yet extant. Of some of the works contained in it, an account has already been given, and of the whole a general view is all that the limits of this volume will admit. Their prevailing character

¹ Apol. adv. Ruffin. ii.

² Epiphan. Hær. 64. § 63.

³ Hieron. ad Pammach. et Ocean.

has been already described, and is well known to all who have ever taken up the reading of ecclesiastical history, into which they enter, far more than those of other men, as the causes of events, and concomitants of facts. How would his meek and gentle mind, sufficiently ruffled at the consequences to himself in his own day, have been distressed could he have foreseen the violent heats which they afterwards produced in the East, especially in his native city¹, and could have had a moment's glimpse of the disgraceful quarrel between Jerome and Ruffinus! And how pained and wrung to the heart would this champion against heresy have been, could he have imagined that appeal would be made to the authority of his writings, by a most formidable heresy, and that his memory would be taken under special patronage, by men who were tainted with its poison²! For never was man more meekly observant of the established opinions of the Church. It was only where her voice was silent, or seemed to him ambiguous, that he allowed himself any licence. Then indeed it must be allowed that, like a horse let loose from his winter's stable into the grass of his summer's pasture, he kicks, rolls, and luxuriates in his favourite ground of philosophical speculation. And yet even

¹ Sulp. Sever. Dial. 3. c. 6. The monks were everywhere on his side, as the champion of their mystic theology. See too Epiph. Hær. 64. § 4.

² Eusebius the historian (*Arianæ signifer factionis*. Hieron. Ep. ad Pammach. et Marcell.) and Pamphilus the martyr (who had need, says Jerome, of martyrdom to wash out his errors. Ep. ad Pammach. et Ocean.) jointly composed a defence of Origen. Euseb. E. H. vi. 33. Phot. Bibl. 118.

then he is meek, modest, diffident, and full of earnest prayer for illumination, which he sometimes offers up upon the brink of his wildest ventures, just as the ancient generals sacrificed on passing a boundary, thus proving at once the sincerity of his heart, and the deficiency of his judgment. The same practice he recommends to all, as they enter upon the interpretation of Scripture¹. Indeed the fault of Origen seems to have been the rashness of timidity rather than the boldness of self-confidence. This causes him to be in too great a hurry to snatch his opponent's support from under him, without looking to the consequences. All is sacrificed to the exigency of the present occasion. Thus, for example, in order to deprive the Gnostic of his arguments for the world not proceeding from the Author of good, and for his doctrine of man's predestination for good or evil, and of his birth accordingly either of God or of the devil, he asserts the original equality of all rational souls, a tenet which lies at the foundation of all his dangerous speculations, and led him, among the rest, to opinions concerning the foreknowledge of God, which go to deny his sovereignty. And his haste to forestall the objections which had been raised against the harmony and propriety of scriptural facts, may have served to confirm him in his perilous and strange position, that many facts, taken literally, are not only unimportant, but were never so much as intended to be believed as having really happened; but were introduced merely as vehicles for the mystical sense. To the effects of this inward

¹ Ep. ad Gregor. 3.

quality we should add those of outward circumstances, as to which few men have been so peculiarly situated. In his school he had to regulate what he could not have arrested, had he ever so much desired it, namely, the course of philosophy, and to reconcile it with the Gospel. In this important station too, he was naturally regarded as the advocate of the faith against all Gnostic or otherwise heretical assailants. But in all matters of literary controversy, it is advisable, wherever it can be safely done, to meet the enemy at the threshold, upon some broad and abstract principle, rather than grapple with him in the detail of fact and argument. For, in general, both the indolence and the prejudices of the readers indispose them to enter into minute examination. Few so honestly seek the truth as to go into any painful search for it. Their desire is rather to be confirmed in previous notions, if not passions. They expect therefore from their champion an argument, which, while it seems to embrace the question, shall be at the same time easy to remember and to reproduce. The same course recommends itself also to him who may either from the impatience of timidity endeavour to quell the enemy at a blow, or from the confidence of strength wish to display his power. These considerations will lessen our wonder at the inconsistencies of Origen, and we ought to remember moreover, that as the greatest part of what he puts forward is proposed in the shape of conjecture, it is unfair to insist upon their cohering into one harmonious system. Indeed upon many things which he wrote, the public would have no right to pass sentence, inasmuch as they were not intended for its eye,

and only came before it through the indiscretion of his friend Ambrosius, to the great sorrow of Origen, which he expressed in the previously mentioned letter to Fabian of Rome¹. In such a case they ought not to be regarded as coming from his deliberate judgment.

It will have appeared then, that it is no easy matter to give an account of the opinions of Origen, and that we must be particularly on our guard, as Athanasius has warned us, against taking that for his deliberate opinion, which he advances in speculation or disputation². But even with this limitation, it will be difficult enough in many cases to satisfy ourselves that we have obtained his real sense. Some contradiction or other will start up from another quarter, and sometimes almost in the same page, to disappoint us. What wonder that there should have been so much said in accusation, and in defence of his opinions, and who shall say that anything approaching to a satisfactory sentence will ever be pronounced? It is therefore with some diffidence that the following examination of his opinions is submitted to the reader.

First in order come his sentiments upon the article of the Trinity. And here peculiar circumstances bid us pay much deference to external authority. Comparatively little remains of the original Greek of the text of Origen, and the ancient authors of the Latin version avowedly passed over or smoothed down those

¹ Hieron. Ep. ad Pammach. et Ocean.

² De decret. Synod. Nicæn. 27. See too Origen himself de Prin. i. 6. 1. And he says that his commentaries were wrung out from him by force of entreaty. Comm. Matth. tom. xiv. 12.

points which were of dangerous tendency, and more especially with regard to this article¹. Athanasius defends him against the charge of Arianism, and quotes passages to show that he held the eternity of the Word, and his consubstantiality with the Father². Such may be added to without difficulty from the surviving Greek. It cannot indeed be denied that there are passages which, taken independently, utter a very suspicious note. But still, on a large view, a candid mind will acknowledge that Origen was orthodox on this point. If we try him by the touchstone of Arianism, namely, those propositions to which it was reduced as to its essence, which are, that there was a time when the Son was not, that he was not before he was begotten, that he was made out of nothing, and that he was of a different essence from the Father³, we must, on the whole, place him on the list of the sons of the Church. That the Arians should have claimed him we cannot wonder, for men of their unstable and slippery opinions, if they perceive in any one the slightest apparent deflection from the straightness of the rule of faith, are eager to congratulate themselves, and fortify their misgiving hearts, by this addition to their number. And Origen, always so hotly intent upon the point before him as to be apt to forget every other consideration, is, beyond all writers, unguarded in his

¹ Ruffin. præf. ad Libr. de prin. Hieron. Ep. ad Theophilum &c.

² De decret. Nicæn. Synod. 27. See too the Apology of Pamphilus, c. 3.

³ Athanas. ib. 6. Symbol. Nicæn. Arius's letter in Epiphan. Hær. 69. § 7. 8.

language. Do we not know, were it only from the experience of our own Church, how eagerly heretics lay hold of the slightest handle that may enable them to quote great and venerable names on their side, and though, through the very rudeness of their grasp, it may break short in their hands, yet they will hold up the stump in triumph notwithstanding? To the claims of such men can be opposed the high authority of Athanasius, of the two Gregories, both the Neocæsarean and the Nyssene, of Dionysius of Alexandria, of Alexander of Hierapolis, all of whom expressed such approbation of him, as under the circumstances they would never have done, had he held the opinions which these men imputed to him ¹.

It is on coming in order to the next article, the hypostatical union, or union of the Godhead and manhood in the person of Jesus Christ, that we have the first open view of the wild sea of Origen's speculations. The nature of soul is the theme of his most daring theory, the main subject of his most dangerous work. In the very opening of that work, the treatise "upon Principles," he gives a warning which cannot be misunderstood by any who have a moderate acquaintance with his writings. He says that the Church had determined nothing concerning rational soul, excepting its immortality and free will; leaving the question quite open as to whether it be sown together with the body or be pre-existent to it ². Having thus dutifully asked as it

¹ Phot. Bibl. 232. To these indeed are opposed the prejudiced Epiphanius, the violent Theophilus, the spiteful Jerome.

² Preface. So also on Ep. Tit.

were leave, and finding himself free, he amply makes up for the constraint under which he had been kept in other points, and runs to the utmost bounds of his liberty. He, however, egregiously mistook its extent when he ventured to mould to his purpose the Platonic theory of the pre-existence of souls in the heavenly regions, and their descent into bodies¹. This had already been a source of heretical tenets², and disliked, as he himself confesses that all speculations on the subject were³, it was least likely of all not to be regarded with extreme suspicion. Indeed, the only doubt allowed seems to have been whether soul and body were conceived together, or whether after the organization of the body had been completed in the womb the soul was created and assigned to it. The first of these opinions had been espoused by Tertullian before him⁴, the latter by Jerome after him⁵, who says it was that of the orthodox. The theory of Origen is as follows.

Limiting Plato's proposition (which the Gospel would not any way allow to him) of the equality of all souls, rational and irrational⁶, he supposes that God, before all things, created a definite number of rational beings, all of whom, as being in himself

¹ See the *Phædrus*, § 54, 55. ² Tertull. *de Anima*, 23, 24.

³ See the last passage quoted from him. ⁴ *De Anima*, 25.

⁵ *Apol. adv. Ruffin.* ii. See Pamphilus, *Apol. c. 9.* for both of them.

⁶ *Phædr.* § 61. He did not, nevertheless, escape the charge of *Metensomatosis*. See Pamph. *Apol. c. 9, 10.* Though he strenuously and frequently denies the doctrine. See *c. Cels. viii.* p. 397, and the passages adduced by Pamphilus.

unchangeable, and therefore no cause of diversity, he created equal, and communicated to them free will. And in his foreknowledge of the consequences of this gift in each, he created also a definite quantity of matter, to suit their different states of degradation from original purity ¹. Not that even in this original state they can exist without some sort of body (for such is the privilege of the persons of the blessed Trinity only ²), but that this body is of a nature so pure, subtle, and glorious, as to be a spiritual body ³. In proportion as, by the abuse of free will, they decline from purity, they are invested with grosser bodies, the purer being of an ethereal nature, as are those of the sun, moon, and stars (which, with Philo ⁴ and other followers of Plato, he believes to be rational beings ⁵). Owing to these lapses there is, as it were, a descending current of souls from the highest state to the lowest, from that of angels to that of devils, free will remaining all the while unimpaired ⁶. So that at any given moment all creatures, angels, devils, and men, are found in the places assigned to their degree of merit, every vessel having its place in the great house (2 Tim. ii. 20), and a judgment-day having already taken place ⁷.

¹ De Prin. ii. 1. iii. 8, 9.

² Ibid. i. 6. ii. 2. iv. 3.

³ Ibid. iii. 6. Once or twice, with his usual inconsistency, he speaks of souls as being in their original state pure intelligences, and of the return of the soul to such a state (ii. 7. 11), &c. And Jerome has made a handle of it.

⁴ De Gigant. 2. Pamphilus says that many reputed churchmen held the same. Apol. 9. Plat. Timæus, § 17.

⁵ De Prin. i. 7. Comm. Joh. i. 24. c. Cels. v. p. 235.

⁶ De Prin. i. 6. 8. ii. 1. iii. 5.

⁷ Ibid. ii. 9.

But owing also to the progress, which free will allows, through emendation, towards final recovery, there is also an ascending current upwards, God here too adapting corporeal nature to the various situations required by the merits of his creatures. Thus at length the end will be readjusted to the beginning, and the growing likeness of his creatures advancing into unity with God, He will be all in all¹. Free will however may, yea, and will, operate again as before, so that lapses will again take place, God granting this possibility in order that his creatures may know that they stand by grace and not by their own power. Hence a new world will be created, and this world has been preceded, and will be followed for ever by a succession of other worlds².

This strange theory is enounced in language, which is often so inconsistent in its details as to create considerable difficulties to a mind ever so heartily disposed to understand it, and has therefore afforded a most ready handle to spiteful misrepresentation. But the vital objections to it lie on its very face, and extend and multiply most rapidly as we proceed in the detail. These affect principally the points of, 1. the Hypostatical union, 2. of the Atonement, 3. of Original Sin, 4. of Free Will, 5. of the sense of Scripture, 6. of the Resurrection, 7. of the State after death, 8. of Angels and Demons.

(1.) The Everlasting Word, being the invisible image of the invisible God³, being the image of the Father's goodness, his will the image of the Father's

¹ De Prin. iii. 6.

² Ibid. ii. 31.

³ Ibid. ii. 6. c. Cels. viii. p. 389.

will, yea, one with it¹, being very reason, very wisdom, very and essential truth and righteousness², the vapour of his power, the pure efflux of his all-ruling glory, the unspotted mirror of his energy, in which the saints behold God³, the sun of the rational world⁴, is the object of contemplation to all rational souls⁵, to whom he is also the fountain of reason. In him they contemplate the divine perfections, and according to the degree in which they can contain them, become more or less perfect images of the image of the Father⁶. Among these the soul of Jesus was alone capable of the plenary participation of the very reason, very wisdom, and very righteousness⁷, so as to become the perfect image of the image of God⁸. This soul was assumed by the incarnate Word, and though it was indeed of the same nature with other souls, yet from habit and extreme ardour of love the choice of free will had grown into a principle of nature, so that sin became a natural impossibility to it, as much as cold is to a red-hot iron bar in a red-hot furnace, and as that bar gives out to the touch the sensation of fire, and not of iron, so does this the sense of God. And as all holy souls have some heat of the Word of God, so in this the divine fire abides substantially. This soul was the substance which formed the necessary medium between the Godhead and the flesh, for it is impossible that these two should come into immediate union, but not im-

¹ Comm. Job. tom. xiii. 36.

² Ibid. tom. vi. 3.

³ Ibid. tom. xiii. 25.

⁴ Ibid. tom. i. 24.

⁵ Ibid. tom. xx. 7.

⁶ Ibid. tom. ii. 3. Hom. in Luc. viii.

⁷ c. Cels. v. p. 258.

⁸ Philocal. xxv. p. 91.

possible for rational substance to receive God¹, in whom, as in the Word, Wisdom, and Truth, this soul had merged, so as to become essentially one spirit with him, in a manner which is much more intimate than that in which husband and wife are one flesh (1 Cor. vi. 16), or than that in which Christians are one with him, according to what the Apostle says, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (ib. 17)². Thus the man Jesus became one with the Word³. Nor did the Word only assume flesh for man, but also an angelic nature for angels, and every intermediate nature for every intermediate nature, becoming all things to all, being first and last⁴, that he might win all, and then returned to his original state of glory. And the exaltation which the man Jesus received for his reward (Phil. ii. 8, 9) was his being no longer another than the Word, but the same with him⁵.

(2.) From such strange doctrine follow consequences still more strange. He evidently implies that Christ has assumed his mediatorial office in every rank of being, and, even supposing that he suffered in the state of man only, yet as these have been, and

¹ Thus he gets rid of a dilemma of Celsus, who says either God must be changed into mortal body, or must appear to be so changed, the former supposition being impossible, the latter derogatory to God's truth. c. Cels. iv. p. 171.

² Comm. Joh. tom. xxxii. 17. Comm. Matt. tom. xv. 24. xvi. 8.

³ The fullest account of this theory is in his book de Prin. ii. 6.

⁴ Comm. Joh. tom. i. 34. Comm. Matt. tom. xv. 24. c. Cels. vii. 343.

⁵ Comm. Joh. tom. xxxii. 17. See Cels. ii. p. 64.

will be worlds in which the same descent and ascent of souls will recur, we cannot avoid Jerome's deduction "that Christ has oftentimes suffered, and will oftentimes suffer¹." And when we come to this act of suffering, we are introduced to a fresh train of error. He says, indeed, that Jesus took the sins of the whole world upon him, being himself sinless, in order to cleanse it, and that we have been bought with his precious blood as with a price², yet this satisfaction is of the same kind with that which other men can render, only greater in efficacy. We have already, in the notice of his treatise on Martyrdom, informed the reader of this opinion, which he expresses still more distinctly on other occasions. For example, he compares Christ and the apostles and martyrs, to Aaron and his sons, who were charged "to bear the iniquity of the sanctuary" (Numb. xxviii. 1), and in such a sense understands St. Paul's expressions, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you," (2 Cor. xii. 15), and "I am now ready to be offered" (2 Tim. iv. 6). He is therefore afraid that remission of sins is not now so easily procured, since martyrs have become scarce, and thinks that the devil on this very account was unwilling to raise a persecution against the Christians³. In another passage he says that Christ is indeed the Lamb which suffered for the sins of the whole world, but that the blood of saints and martyrs, as that of the goats, rams, and bullocks, contribute also to the purification of

¹ Ep. ad Pammach. et Marcell.

² Comm. Joh. tom. xxviii. 14. Comm. Matt. tom. xii. 28.

³ Hom. Num. x.

sin, and may expiate in some degree the offences of the people. For that angel, just man, saint, apostle, may, through the earnest prayer of intercession for the sins of the people, be accepted as a sacrifice to obtain their purification. While however they effect this by prayer, Christ does it by power¹.

Again, his soul was the only part of himself offered by the Saviour, although by the whole Saviour, God and man². So that, after all, the price is but that of a human soul, which, however sinless, still is not and cannot be considered *essentially* sinless, according to his theory.

Equally low is his view of the intercession of Christ. As he there put him but at the head of the sacrifices, so he here puts him at the head of the mediators, making him, however, mediator for the mediators, as he was sacrificer for the sacrificers. Angels and the souls of saints pray for themselves, and for men through him³, to the Father, to whom alone prayer, in the proper sense of the word, ought to be offered. With the Son we must employ entreaty⁴. "Thus we worship the one God, and his one Son, and Word, and image, with our supplications and requests to the utmost of our power, offering to the God of all our prayers, through his only begotten, entreating him, propitiation as he is for our sins, to offer as high-priest our prayers, and sacrifices, and entreaties, to the God who is over all⁵."

¹ Hom. Num. xxiv.

² Comm. Matt. tom. xvi. 8.

³ De Orat. ii.

⁴ Ibid. 15.

⁵ c. Cels. viii. p. 386. see too *ibid.* p. 395. and v. p. 235.

But as he tasted death for all rational creatures, not even the stars being pure before God (Job xxv. 5¹), so is he to all a mediating high-priest, being the door to the God of all, and is prayed to, as such, by the stars and by all angels².

(3.) According to his theory every soul comes into our world in a condition of degradation from a purer state. He therefore freely uses the scriptural texts which assert man's birth in sin, and corruption from the womb. But it does not allow of the derivation of sinfulness from Adam, and indeed he takes all that is said of Adam to be said of human nature in general³.

(4.) This theory is very inconsistent with correct notions of the working of God's grace. It supposes the freedom of will unimpaired down through every stage of declension from holiness. Thus the operation of that which we call preventive grace is excluded, and he asserts that faith comes of ourselves, and that the gifts of God's grace wait upon the proper exercise of the gifts of nature⁴. The grand means of conversion are the threats and promises of God, there being no compulsion⁵. He maintains indeed distinctly that the power of conversion is within ourselves, and that God requires something from us in the first instance, before he will give, lest he should give to the unworthy; and what we must offer to him thus, is what was required from Israel in Deut. vi., namely, to fear him, to love him, to walk in his ways.

¹ Comm. Joh. tom. i. 40. c. Cels. vii. p. 343.

² c. Cels. iv. p. 233. v. 238.

³ c. Cels. iv. p. 191.

⁴ Ser. Comm. Matt. 69.

⁵ De Prin. iii. 5. Compare c. Cels. iv. p. 167.

Unless we offer these first, we shall receive nothing¹. So also the sinner's emendation is the joint act of the grace of God and of his own purpose, just as agriculture is the mixed effect of Providence sending the weather, and of the farmer working the ground, and navigation of Providence supplying the wind, and of the pilot applying the helm, the grace of God being posterior to the purpose². We are indeed subject to the influences of external things, which befall independently of our will, but the rational principle within us enables us to put them to account consistently with free will³. Much more could not well be said for the freedom of the will, and it is singular to contrast his continual inculcation of its operation with his very rare and slight mention of the workings of grace.

The controversy on this subject had been anticipated in the schools of the philosophers, and has ever arisen as soon as the mind of a people has attained a certain point in progress. At this day it is still in debate, and ever will be, until man shall condescend to acknowledge that it is quite beyond his reach, to reconcile the attributes of an immutable Being to the notions of a being who must derive them from the source of continual succession. He might by this time have been content to acknowledge that, while his reason, ascending to the proper appreciation of God's sovereignty, confesses his predestination, at the same time an intuitive sense, of no less clear evidence, convinces him of his own possession of free

¹ Hom. Num. xxiv.

² Philocal. xxvi. p. 99.

³ Ibid. xxi. p. 51.

will, and of his responsibility as a free agent. If he go beyond this, he immediately comes upon a monstrous conclusion. He either, with the Gnostics, commits the error so pernicious to morals, and contrary to all notions of God's justice, of denying free will to man, and of supposing that we have been predestined, independently of our characters, to eternal happiness or misery ; or else with Origen he commits an error derogatory to God's power, limiting his will in order to enlarge man's. The following are Origen's own words. " In the beginning of the creation, since nothing happens without a cause, God went forth in his mind over each of the things to be, seeing that when this thing has taken place, that thing will follow, and, on that following, another thing will be consequent, on which happening another thing yet will be. And thus going on to the end of events he knew the things that would be, not being in any degree the cause, to each of those things which are known, of their happening. For as a man, when he sees that another who is rash through ignorance, and through his rashness walking thoughtlessly will fall if he come on a slippery road, is not to him the cause of his fall ; in the same way we must understand that God, having foreseen each man's character, sees too the causes of his being such, and knows that he will do wrong in that, if he shall be right in this : and, if I must say it, it is not his foreknowledge that is the cause of the events ; for God has nothing to do with him that has been predestined to sin. But, to say what is paradoxical and yet true, the event is the cause of his foreknowledge being such on the matter. For it does not happen because it has been

foreknown, but has been known because it was to happen¹." Every one must see the error of such a position, which leaves something independent of God, making him only to know, by his infinite wisdom, the remote consequences of his own initial act, and not to determine them according to his sovereign power. In reviewing the controversy in the works of Origen, we are struck with meeting quotations, especially on the Gnostic side, of the very same passages of Scripture as were employed fourteen hundred years after, when the immediate question was no longer the origin of evil, whether it came from the Maker of this world, but the source of good, whether it were at all in man.

(5.) His views of the nature of the sense of Scripture are so intimately connected with those of Christian progress, on which we have just touched, that they must be considered together. Since every rational being has, as such, its reason from the Word, it never can be entirely estranged from God, but is still capable of virtue, still retains some of its seeds². No soul therefore can enter any new state, still less that of our body, empty of holy and saving seeds³. Now as we have no natural gift which does not, upon our exercise of it, obtain the correspondent grace of God to increase it, so, if we have faith in the Gospel, it receives an increase from grace, without which a man is reckoned for nothing. This is

¹ Philocal. xxiii. p. 72. This is the most summary and explicit passage. But many more might be cited, especially from Philocal. xxi. xxiii. xxv. xxvi. xxvii.

² c. Cels. vi. p. 284.

³ Comm. Joh. tom. xx. 5.

the lowest state of grace¹. But while many believe, few abide in the faith; which being thus unfruitful of works is dead. And faith operates thus. He that believes what is justice will not commit wrong, and he that believes in wisdom, from the contemplation of its nature, will neither say nor do a foolish thing. And he who believes that Christ is our peace, will abstain from strife. He that believes him to be the power of God, will not be powerless in matters of virtue². Such as thus persevere, make progress in truth, and reach the second state of grace, which is knowledge³. In this, in answer to every virtue acquired, is revealed, in reward, some corresponding mystery of wisdom⁴; and progress in purity of heart brings on the third and last state of divine wisdom⁵, which is that of the perfect, in whom the struggle against the flesh is over, and they are sinless, so that they no longer need the Son of God as a physician, or as a shepherd, or as redemption, but as wisdom, and reason, and righteousness, and all the most glorious attributes of his that the perfect can comprehend and contain⁶. In this state of purity the mind ascends above all material things, so as to perfect its contemplation of God, and receives a participation of divinity⁷. And these veritable disciples of Christ have their conversation in a world which is different from the sensible world of heaven and earth; a world in which are the things

¹ Ser. Comm. Matt. 69. 85. c. Cels. vi. p. 284.

² Comm. Joh. tom. xix. 6. ³ c. Cels. vi. p. 284.

⁴ Comm. Matt. tom. xii. 14. ⁵ c. Cels. ibid.

⁶ Ser. Comm. Matt. 94. Hom. Luc. ii. Comm. Joh. tom. i. 22.

⁷ Comm. Joh. tom. xxxii. 17.

unseen ; a world, unseen, intelligent, whose beauty is contemplated by the pure in heart, as they prepare themselves by gazing upon it to follow up so far, that they may see God himself, in such way as he admits of being seen. In this world dwells the soul of him who said, " I am not of this world," entirely pervading it, and leading to it by the hand those who are taught that neither this world of earth below, nor that of heaven above, have anything for the searcher of truth. Thus hath Jesus chosen them out of the world, that they may be no longer of the world¹.

To persons in these several states the Word presents himself in a different form. As when he was on earth, he did not, according to a tradition current in Origen's days, appear the same to all spectators, but changed the form of his body when he chose, and to whom he chose, so that Judas was obliged to single him out with a kiss ; so neither does he appear under the same form to the mind of all Christians, but according to their state, as each is more or less able to contain him. To the multitude below he has no beauty, but to the few upon the mount he appears in glory².

According then to these three stages of progress there are three different classes of hearers of Scripture.

1. They who are represented by the servant that received but one talent, are the mere literalists, some

¹ Comm. Joh. tom. xix. 5. The Platonism is obvious.

² c. Cels. ii. p. 64. iv. p. 170. vi. p. 328. Ser. Comm. Matt. 100. Hom. Luc. iii.

of whom never go beyond the letter which they have received in the first instance¹. To these the Word is flesh; they must have a bodily Gospel, in which is professed nought but Christ crucified. They are the Pharisees who clean but the outside of the platter; and as the rigid observance of the literal sense was to them the source of unbelief, so is it now of all heresy². It suffices indeed for salvation to the simple³. But the perfect disciple must go beyond.

2. They who represented by him that received two talents, go indeed beyond the letter, but not to the full extent. That is, they go as far as the moral sense of Scripture, which is a hidden sense indeed, but advance not beyond the Christian's practical duties, nor in speculation beyond the incarnation. St. Paul exemplifies this in his interpretation of Deut. xxv. 4. in 1 Cor. ix. 10. As the last sense was represented by the body, this may be expressed by the soul⁴.

3. They who represented by him that received five talents, ascend to the more divine and sublime sense of Scripture, which goes up to the Word in the beginning, and is also concerned about the reality of the Jewish types, and the good things of which the Law contained the shadow, referring continually the world of sense to the world of intelligence before described. Such is the sense which St. Paul derives from

¹ Ser. Comm. Matt. 66.

² Philocal. i. p. 7, 8. Ser. Comm. Matt. 24. 27.

³ Ser. Comm. Matt. 27.

⁴ Ibid. 39. Hom. Gen. ii. Philocal. i. p. 9.

the two sons of Abraham (Gen. xvi. 15 ; xxi. 2), who allegorically represent the two covenants (Gal. iv. 22). This sense may be expressed by the third and last component part of man, the spirit ¹.

It is the continual search after this last, in season, and out of season, which has driven Origen into so many perilous assertions. Dangerous as he says the mystic sense is to the vulgar, it has not been least dangerous to himself, and he would have done better if he had observed his own rule of withholding it from the babes that require milk. Yet we can safely acquit him, in unveiling what he has, of the impiety of betraying the ineffable oracles of God ². As an example of his inconsistency, we may instance his assertion that every iota of Scripture, however unnecessary it may seem in the literal sense, is important in the hidden sense ³. And yet he uses strange liberties in a text which is not quite moulded to his mind, and talks of the great number of various readings which have arisen either from the carelessness of transcribers, or from the mischievous boldness of some in correcting their copies, or from adding or taking away whatever they thought proper in the correction ⁴. He maintains, moreover, that the blessed Word has purposely interposed stumbling-blocks and impossibilities in his text of the Law and of Scripture history, in order that we may be induced to search. And that, having in constant view the announcement of the connexion in spiritual things either as to fact or practice, wherever he found

¹ See the preceding references.

² Comm. Matt. xvi. 12. 27.

³ c. Cels. v. p. 250.

⁴ Ibid. xv. 14.

historical facts capable of being adapted to these mystical facts, he employed them to hide the deeper sense from the vulgar. But wherever he had to explain the order of consequences in the case of objects of the intellect, but the series of historical fact so adapted did not agree with this purpose, then he interwove with historical fact that which was not fact, and which, though sometimes possible, was sometimes also impossible. Sometimes a few words, thus untrue according to the letter, have been introduced, sometimes more. With the same object, among the commandments of the Law are found some of no apparent use, others impossible in application. The same is the case of the Gospels and Epistles, in which also the historical fact is not always literally true, nor the injunctions always reasonable. Origen then proceeds with a catalogue of such facts and ordinances of mere adaptation. Among them he instances the first, second, and third days of the creation with evening and morning, and yet without sun, moon, or stars; God's planting Paradise; the visible and sensible tree of life; Cain's going away from before the face of God; Jesus being taken up into a high mountain to see the kingdoms of the earth; and ten thousand other such facts in the Gospels alone. Then again as to the Law, the commandment against eating the vulture, which is irrational, since no one would dream of such a thing; the admission into the list of clean meats of the tragelaphus, which is purely a fabulous animal; the prohibition of a man going out of his place on the seventh day (Exod. xvi. 29), which no man could possibly help. And in the Gospels, the injunctions

to salute no one by the way; to turn the left cheek when the right cheek is smitten, which can only be by the left hand,—and such like. He allows, however, that the facts, true according to the letter, are much more numerous than those which are true in the spiritual sense alone; but asserts, that while the whole of Scripture has the spiritual sense, a part only has the bodily¹.

Such are some of the positions into which Origen is driven by his theory of the hidden sense. Had such been the true character of Scripture, it would indeed have been, as he calls it, a sealed book², and soon have been resigned entirely into the hands of men whose wisdom was more worldly than spiritual. A better style of commentary arose afterwards to rescue God's Word. Nevertheless, so convenient an instrument for pleading divine authority for human inventions was never lost sight of in succeeding days, and even, wherever at present it has ceased to be used for the purposes of temporal power, it is still employed for the display of intellectual power. It was severely condemned both within and without the Church in Origen's days, and he met with but too just a rebuke on this head from the philosophers Celsus and Porphyry³, the latter of whom reproaches him with having borrowed the system from Greek philosophy, a charge which perhaps had been but too true had it been made against the originators, Aristobalus and Philo⁴. After all, had it even not

¹ Philocal. i.

² Epiphan. adv. Hær. 645.

³ c. Cels. iv. p. 196. Euseb. E. H. vi. 19.

⁴ c. Cels. iv. p. 198.

been mischievous, it would have been at least ridiculous. It is very often nothing more than riding a metaphor to death. The hidden sense is therefore generally that which either did not enter into the thoughts of the writer, or which he would wish to be excluded from the reader's view. To give one of the shortest examples. Where our Lord says, that "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matt. xix. 24), Origen lays stress on the crookedness of the shape of the camel, and on its uncleanness according to the Law, "the circumstances of which," he says, "demand remark, inasmuch as his chewing the cud puts him in the class of clean, but his not parting the hoof in that of unclean" (Levit. xi. 3, 4). But he barely hints at the magnitude of the animal¹.

While upon this subject, we may remark his rejection of the tenet of the Millennium, which we have seen to be so generally held by the primitive Church. The Alexandrine scholars were indeed totally opposed to it in all their systems both of doctrine and practice. Their devotion to intellectuals was offended at its materiality, their ascetism revolted from its carnality. And their allegorical system supplied them with ready means of disposing of any difficulties which may be urged from the text of Scripture. Origen beyond all would be forward to reject a tenet which was so contrary to his peculiar notions upon the subject of the soul. He has therefore condemned it in more places than one².

¹ c. Cels. vi. p. 286. Comm. Matt. tom. xv. 20.

² Comm. Matt. tom. xvii. 35, &c.

(6.) Origen was accused of denying the resurrection of the body; and certainly it is so far from being a necessary point in his theory, that it seems incongruous with it. If it be requisite that the same body should be preserved through two successive states of the soul, there will be the same reason why it should be preserved through all, and man will be of the same substance as the stars, which is contrary to his position. Yet no one was more unwilling to disagree from any settled doctrine of the Church than Origen. The result is a strange compound, which cannot be reconciled either to his own system or to Scriptural faith. According to his system, death is the quitting of any state, and the resurrection the entrance of the soul upon a new state, so that earth is a hell to a superior state, and a heaven to an inferior. And this he asserts¹. He also calls the body the prison-house of the soul². Whence it should follow that it will not be resumed in a higher state³. He however qualifies such positions by distinguishing between the flesh and the body. The former he affirms will be reduced to its original elements, flesh to earth, breath to air, moisture to the deep, heat to ether, and will never reunite to form

¹ Philocal. i. p. 18.

² Ser. Comm. Matt. 57. 58. 72. Epiphan. Hær. 64. § 43.

³ Pamphilus (c. 7) vehemently denies this, though Origen, in one of the very passages adduced by him, as everywhere else, says that the future body will be spiritual, in order to be adapted to its ethereal place. But it is equally easy to defend and to accuse Origen. Passages are ever at hand for either purpose, so undecided are his opinions, or rather so free and at random are his conjectures. Origen is fond of quoting 1 Cor. xv. 50, and sometimes with very significant hints. See c. Cels. v. p. 243.

the same system¹. But the risen body will not be more like the previous, than the plant is to the seed, there remaining only a certain principle in the animal body from which rises the spiritual body; yet it will so far still be the same as the previous in form, as much as that of the infant, and that of the old man, undergoing however the utmost change that the maintenance of the same form will allow, becoming, in adaptation to its higher mansion, ethereal, glorious, of a shining nature like that of angels², its qualities being changed³. This notion may be illustrated thus: conceive the skin of any animal to be filled with water, so as to exhibit the proper form; the same form will still be retained, if while some of the water is continually allowed to run out, an equal quantity is continually poured in. Such is the maintenance of the outward form of our bodies, notwithstanding the continual change of flesh through the continual taking in of food and parting with it. It alone remains the same from the hour of our birth, and it alone will be maintained after death⁴. It will however be glorified, and become spiritual instead of animal through the expurgating virtue of the resurrection, so that the good will be as the glory of the sun, moon, and stars, while on the contrary the bad will be as the flesh of birds, beasts, and fishes (1 Cor. xv. 39—42⁵). Such in brief is the opinion of Origen

¹ Epiphan. *ibid.* 54. Hieron. *ad Pammach.* Orig. *de Prin.* ii. 10.

² *Comm. Matt.* tom. xvii. 30. *Fragm. ap. Epiphan. Hær.* 64. § 14. c. Cels. v. p. 246.

³ c. Cels. iv. p. 202.

⁴ Epiphan. *ibid.* 38.

⁵ *De Prin.* ii. 10. c. Cels. vii. p. 334. *Hom. Num.* ii.

on this point. But we much want the firm footing which would be afforded by a work expressly devoted to it, and the loss of his treatise on the Resurrection is severely felt by such as wish to explore his notions upon a subject which admits of so much speculation, and on which he expresses himself with such cautious obscurity.

(7.) The souls of the good go to a place called Paradise, where, as in a school, they are taught by angels concerning all that they have seen on earth, and where they behold the living forms of which the Law gave the shadow. In proportion to their purity of heart and activity of mind, they are advanced to the regions of heaven, and make progress through several states of a first, second, third, &c. heaven, which are called by the Greeks spheres, and are the mansions spoken of by our Lord in John xiv. 2. In each of these they learn its constitution and the causes thereof, so that when they come to the region of the stars they will learn all about them, and the causes of their positions, and whether they be animated or not, and all else that can be known. Having thus followed from place to place Jesus Christ, who has passed the heavens, and, under the tuition of angels, gone through the celestial world of things that are seen, they are introduced to the celestial world of things unseen, and delivered, as become quite capable of containing him, into the charge of Christ, whose instruction will prepare them for their introduction to the Father himself. In this spiritual sense he understands the second advent of Christ. Then, when they shall have been sufficiently prepared, Christ will deliver them over to the Father,

as become capable of receiving him, and they shall behold him immediately, and no longer through his image. And this will be the consummation, when the Son shall be subject to the Father, and God shall be all in all ¹.

But just as after our entering upon this state we need the sacrament of baptism to purge away the defilement of birth, so at the resurrection or entrance into the next state, as none will rise without defilement, all will need a sacrament of purgation, through fire. And while such as Peter and Paul pass through it without hurt; it shall lay hold of the less perfect in proportion to the quantity of materials which the viciousness of their nature supplies, according to the quantity of wood, hay, and stubble to be consumed (1 Cor. iii. 11), or of dross to be refined away (Mal. iii. 2)². The time of this purgation will therefore be according to their deserts. To some it may be that of infinite ages, but to none will it be eternal, no, not even in the case of the sin against the Holy Ghost³. For it is of a remedial and not a penal nature⁴. Upon this distinction he is very earnest, and, so great is his dread of making God the author of evil in any way, that he insists on the exclusively remedial nature of all punishment whatever. It is the cautery of the physician, or the artificial inflammation produced by his skilful provision; and he even

¹ De Prin. ii. 12. iii. 6. Comm. Joh. tom. xix. 5. xx. 7. Ser. Comm. Matt. 51. 70.

² Hom. Luc. xiv. xxiv. Hom. iii. in Psalm 36. c. Cels. iv. p. 168. 174. 206. v. p. 240. vi. p. 292. Comm. Rom. viii. 11.

³ Ibid. and Hom. Luc. xxxv. Comm. Joh. xix. 3. De Orat. 27.

⁴ De Prin. ii. 11, &c. This notion is Platonic.

suggests that the drowning of Pharaoh relieved him from his sins, and sent him perhaps in peace to the place of souls ¹. He thinks that Scripture pronounces this fire to be eternal, not from the state of the fact, but from a spirit of caution, lest the vulgar, if they thought otherwise, should run riot ². It is not, however, a material fire, but an invisible fire, as that of fever is invisible, and consists in the pangs of memory and conscience, so that the soul, having its unity and compactness destroyed, suffers like a body torn asunder ³.

This fiery purgation, he believes, will extend to the universe, and will recur at certain periods ⁴. To which conjecture he is led both by his fondness for the Greek philosophy, and by the consistency of his notions on the soul, which acknowledge a succession of worlds. In the end, the whole rational creation will be brought by the Word into one mind, and converted into his own perfection ⁵. And as every rational creature may pass from one rank to another, and through each into all, and arrive from all into each, according to the motions of his free will, any one of them may be advanced from a state of punishment which has endured for ages to those higher places which are invisible and eternal. The devil himself is not incapable of salvation, who, as Lucifer, was once light ⁶. According to this, a devil may become an archangel, as Jerome says ⁷, and an archangel a devil; with many other horrible absurdities.

¹ Philocal. xxvii. p. 104.

² c. Cels. v. p. 241. vi. p. 293.

³ Ser. Comm. Matt. 72. De Prin. ii. 11.

⁴ c. Cels. iv. p. 174. 206.

⁵ c. Cels. viii. p. 425.

⁶ De Prin. i. 5, 6. ii. 10.

⁷ Ep. ad Avit.

(8.) Angels are of various ranks, according to the list in Coloss. i. 16, and into their number are taken the souls of just men¹; and from among them were sent such men as John the Baptist, who came, in imitation of the incarnate Word, to minister to the salvation of man². Their ministrations are very various. Some are set over nations and provinces; others over Churches, which had thus two presiding angels, the visible one being the bishop; others over congregations; others over individuals. Thus, every congregation is in fact double, one of men praying, another of angels hearing and joining in their prayers, and offering them up through the one high-priest to the God over all³. And not only do they minister to the spiritual wants of man, but also to his bodily. The rain, sun, and all that gives increase to the fruits of the earth, are under their administration; as also the fountains and rivers, and the air, which are kept by them in a wholesome state. They have also at the outset the very difficult task of uniting the soul to the body, and in the end of disuniting it again, and at the last day of assigning souls to their proper receptacles of glory or shame⁴. Each angel is responsible for him whom he is appointed to guard, and will appear with him at the judgment-seat, so that it may appear, on examination, whether the sinner fell through his own recklessness, or the carelessness

¹ Comm. Matt. tom. xv. 25. xvii. 30. Comm. Joh. tom. i. 34.

² Comm. Joh. tom. ii. 25.

³ c. Cels. iv. p. 166. viii. p. 400. 420. Hom. Luc. xii. xxiii. De Orat. xi. 31.

⁴ c. Cels. viii. 398. Comm. Joh. tom. xiii. 49. xix. 4. xxviii. 5. Comm. Matt. x. 12.

of his guardian. So that angels, no less than men, have a judgment to expect¹. In all this, there is a strange mixture of heathenish notions, impertinent conjecture, erroneous deductions from Scripture; and we perceive evident traces, although not exclusively marked by him, of those superstitious tenets, which afterwards obtained in the Church respecting these unknown agents. He has, however, been most unfairly adduced as authority for one of them; for no one can deny more stoutly than he the charge which Celsus makes both against Jew and Christian, of worshipping angels. In one place, indeed, in answer to Celsus, when he supposes that, as they adored his Son together with God, they worshipped his servants also—he says, “If then he had in mind those who are truly servants of God after the only begotten of God, namely Gabriel and Michael, and the rest of the angels and archangels, and said that these ought to be worshipped; perhaps, after we had purified the meaning of terms, both respecting the word ‘worship’ itself, and respecting the acts of the worshipper, we might have expressed on the subject, agreeably to a discussion on such matters, what we were able to comprehend about them².” How far he was prepared to go after such cautious words, will perhaps appear from the following sentence:—“And though we see not demons but angels set to preside over the fruits of the earth, and the birth of animals, we speak of them in laudatory terms, and pronounce them blessed, as having been entrusted by God with what is useful to mankind; not, however, that we

¹ Hom. Num. xxiv. Hom. Luc. xiii. ² c. Cels. viii. p. 366.

render to them the honour due to God, for neither does God will this, nor they who have been entrusted with such things. Yea, and they accept us the more, guarding as we do against sacrificing to them [as you do to demons], than if we sacrificed. For they have no need of the steam of incense and blood to rise to them from earth [as the demons have, who are fed by such steams]¹." And afterwards he asserts that Christians spoke in laudatory terms of the Sun, as a beautiful creature of God, and observing the laws of God, and as being addressed in the words, "Praise the Lord, Sun and Moon, &c."² Again, mentioning that angels are called gods in Scripture, he observes that we are not enjoined to worship and adore in the place of God the ministers of his gifts. For, that to invoke angels, when we have not received the knowledge of them, which is beyond man, is not agreeable to reason. But even supposing this knowledge, exhibiting to us their nature and office, it would not allow us to have confidence in praying to any other than the God who is over all through our Saviour the Son of God³.

Exactly analogous to these, but quite contrary in their action, are the fallen and bad angels. They are divided into the same ranks⁴, are set over provinces and men, which have thus always at their side a prompter of evil to counteract the work of the prompter of good. This latter notion is as early

¹ c. Cels. viii. 416. I have inserted the words in brackets, in order to give the full sense.

² Ibid. 421. *εὐφημεῖν* is the word common to both passages, which I have translated by "speaking in laudatory terms."

³ Ibid. v. 233.

⁴ Comm. Matt. tom. xvii. 2.

as the days of Hermas¹. Hence, where a wicked congregation is assembled, there is a double one, of bad men and of bad angels². Under this class also, and sometimes confounded with it, come the demons. This is a term borrowed from heathen philosophy, which assigned to these beings a place next or near to the supreme God, and an inspection of human affairs. There were reckoned both good and bad of this class³. But Christian theology admitted only of the latter sort, and included in it the gods of the heathens. Justin and Athenagoras suppose them to be the progeny of the fallen angels through their commerce with women⁴; Origen distinguishes them from the bad angels, but asserts that they were not originally demons, but fell into this degraded state, and are a species of the genus of apostates from God⁵. He states that, from their want of our gross earthly bodies, they have some knowledge of the future, and so are the authors of divination, and of the inspiration of oracles⁶. From the viciousness of their nature, they are continually infusing into the hearts of men unholy desires, sinful passions, perplexing them with unreasonable fear or unreasonable joy. And not only do they war against man's spirit, but also afflict his body. For instance, they are the causes of lunacy. They delighted, as heathen gods,

¹ Lib. i. Mand. vi. 2.

² De Orat. 31. Hom. Luc. xii. xxxv.

³ See Diogen. Laërt. Præf. § 8; or c. Cels. vii. p. 377. The opinion of the Stoics may be seen in Diog. Laërt. vii. § 151. He mentions also Plato's, in iii. § 79.—See Athenagoras, Legat. § 23.

⁴ Justin. Apol. ii. 5. Athen. Legat. 25.

⁵ c. Cels. iv. p. 225. vii. p. 377.

⁶ Ibid. iv. p. 225.

to feed on the smell of sacrifice and blood, haunted sepulchres, attached themselves to the grosser earthly bodies, possessing those of the more cruel and rapacious kind, by the flight or motion of which they put man upon augury, and so led him away from God. They were brought and confined to their several sacred haunts, temples, and statues, by the power of magical incantations. In short, they were the authors to men of all disobedience, superstition, and mental corruption and alienation ¹.

To expel these was the especial province of exorcism, a work which appeared sometimes so difficult that the exorcist prepared himself by much fasting and prayer. During the act he was wont to utter the name of Jesus, and to recite also historical facts concerning him. Origen testifies to many instances of men being thus delivered from grievous diseases, such as mental alienation and madness. Spots also were thus freed from their haunt, and even animals from their possession ².

Baptism was administered in the name of the Holy Trinity, and infants were admitted to it, whom Origen affirms to be thus delivered from the defilements of their birth. It conveyed remission of sins, sanctification, regeneration. With regard to the remission of wilful sins after baptism, he is not very decided in his opinion. Sometimes he thinks it possible, though very difficult ³. At other times he thinks contrariwise, and conceives that sin, after

¹ Comm. Matt. tom. xiii. 6. c. Cels. iii. 131. 133. vii. 334. &c.

² Comm. Matt. tom. xiii. 6, 7. c. Cels. i. p. 7. iii. p. 124. vii. p. 376.

³ Comm. Joh. tom. xxviii. 6. Hom. Luc. xiv.

baptism, may be the sin against the Holy Ghost ¹. As to the latter, he also states that the Father penetrates through all things, animate and inanimate, rational and irrational; the Son only through rational, among whom come unbelievers and catechumens. These, in sinning, sin against the Son, because he is in them, but obtain pardon through baptism. But the Holy Spirit (penetrating only through things holy) penetrates only through those who have received baptism. Hence baptized persons, in sinning, sin against him, and hence have no pardon. He was followed in this remarkable opinion by Theognostus, one of his successors in the catechetical chair of Alexandria, a man of high character and attainments ².

But there was a baptism which was sufficient to wash out all sins, namely, of fire or blood, by martyrdom, which, according to Matt. xx. 22, he divides into two parts; 1. the cup, which implies the drinking and not throwing out again, that is, the accepting, and not shrinking from, the pain and sorrow; and 2. the baptism itself, which procures remission of his sins for the sufferer. We have already seen the strait limits within which he confines a genuine martyrdom. But neither, at the very outset, was it to be precipitately incurred; but, after the example of Christ's retreat, to be discreetly avoided, both because of the uncertainty of the event, and for fear of becoming the minister of sin to the persecutor, which the needless martyr, triumphant as he may be, will have to

¹ Comm. Joh. tom. xxviii. 13. Ser. Comm. Matt. 114.

² Athanas. ad Serap. Ep. iv. 9.

answer for. There were also hypocrites in martyrdom as much as in the profession of justice and chastity, and as in the character of bishops, priests, and deacons. As before observed, martyrdoms were few and occasional¹.

We have also already seen what power of intercession Origen ascribes to the martyrs, and also to the angels. The souls of saints, he also says, are not inactive, but still at work, and, retaining their concern for God's people, pray for them. But, of course, he says nothing of our praying to them, when he allows not of any entreaty being made but to the Son for intercession with the Father².

On the subject of the eucharist he says, that what is entitled the Bread of the Lord, having been consecrated by the Word and prayer, does not, of itself, sanctify the receiver, but so affects him only who receives it with an undefiled mind and a clean conscience. And that, as to its material part, it goes the way of all food (quoting Matth. xv. 17), while as to the prayer made over it, it benefits the receiver; so that it is not the matter of the bread, but the Word which has been spoken over it, which benefits him who eats it, not in a manner unworthy of the Lord. And thus much (he adds) for the typical and symbolical body. But much too might be said concerning the Word himself, who became flesh and real food, which, whosoever eateth, shall assuredly live for ever. For were it possible for one still abiding in

¹ Comm. Matt. tom. xvi. 6. Ser. Comm. Matt. 24. Comm. Joh. tom. xxviii. 18. c. Cels. iii. 116.

² Comm. Joh. tom. xiii. 57. Comm. Matt. tom. xv. 35. See Euseb. E. H. vi. 5.

wickedness to eat him who became flesh, Word as he is and living bread, it would not have been written, "Every one that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" (John vi. 51)¹. Again, he says that the bread which the God-Word professes to be his body, is the Word which nourisheth souls, Word proceeding from God-Word, and bread from the heavenly bread which has been placed on that table, concerning which it is written, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies" (Psalm xxiii. 5). And that drink which the God-Word professes to be his blood is the Word which watereth and excellently cheereth the hearts of the drinkers; which drink is in that cup whereof it is written, "And thy cheering cup, how excellent it is" (ib. LXX. transl.)! And that drink is the produce of the true vine, which saith, "I am the true Vine," and it is the blood of that grape which, being put into the winefat of his passion, produced this drink. Thus too the bread is the Word of Christ, made of that wheat which, falling on good ground, yielded much fruit. For it was not that visible bread, held by Christ in his hands, that the God-Word called his body, but it was the Word, in the mystery whereof that bread was to be broken. Nor was it that visible drink that he called his blood, but the Word, in the mystery whereof that drink was to be poured out. For the body and blood of the God-Word, what else can they be than the Word which nourisheth, and the Word which gladdeneth the heart. But why said he not, "This is the bread of the New

¹ Comm. Matt. tom. xi. 14.

'Testament," as he has said, "This is my blood of the New Testament?" Because the bread is the Word of righteousness, by the eating whereof souls are nourished. But the drink is the Word of the acknowledgement of Christ, according to the mystery of his birth and passion. Since then the Testament of God is applied to us in the blood of the passion of Christ, in order that on believing that the Son of God was born and suffered according to the flesh, we might be saved, not by righteousness, through which alone without faith in Christ's passion there could not be salvation: therefore concerning the cup it is only said, "This is the cup of the New Testament¹." Such is Origen's Comment on Matth. xxvi. 26, 27. Such the language of a man most tenacious of the fixed sense of the Church, who in another place also distinctly mentions "the bread of the Lord," though it had been consecrated². Such expressions as the table of Christ's body, and the drink of his blood³; and such sentences as, "We eat with thanksgiving and prayer for his gift the loaves which have been offered, on their having become, on account of the prayer, a sort of holy body, which also sanctifies such as use it with a wholesome purpose⁴," since they may be used by ourselves without scruple, without any notion of a conversion of the elements, will as little serve the cause of the doctrine of modern Rome on this article. Meanwhile the above passage will give the reader some idea of the style of Origen's Commentary.

Rome showed any thing but favour to Origen, both

¹ Ser. Comm. Matt. 85.

² Ibid. 82.

³ Comm. Joh. tom. xxxii. 16.

⁴ c. Cels. viii. p. 399.

during his life and after his death. We are not, therefore, to expect from him any such terms of compliment as her kind treatment obtained from Irenæus. But while he was at Rome he could not but have heard, until he was weary, the continual note of her fond presumption on her foundation by Peter, and on his primacy. For that it had been already sounded appears evident from the language of Cyprian, who came so shortly after. Nothing, however, can be more pointed than his contradiction of her claims. He allows indeed that the Catholic Church was built upon Peter, but then he means upon the faith of Peter; for he asserts that Christ's words in Matth. xvi. 18, are applicable to every one who, illuminated in the heart from the Father in heaven, and not taught by flesh and blood, makes the same confession with Peter. He then becomes Peter. And that every disciple of Christ is a rock, and that upon every such rock is built all the doctrine of the Church, and all its polity according to that doctrine; for that in each one of the perfect, who have the stock of the words, deeds, and thoughts which complete blessedness, is the Church which is built by God. He then goes on to contradict the notion that the whole Church was built by God on Peter only, and asserts that it was built on all the twelve, and that the keys were given to all the twelve, and the power of binding and loosing to all the twelve, yea, and to all the perfect also. He thinks indeed that Peter's name may have been placed first as more honourable than the rest, and he seems to allow some superior privilege to him, as binding and loosing in many heavens, while the rest did so but in one. This is clearly one

of his conceits. But he never names Rome in these discussions¹.

On the subject of ecclesiastical discipline, we may remark a passage which would make him no friends either at Rome or at Alexandria. "But since," he says, "they who assert the rights of their episcopal rank employ the literal sense, as being Peter, and as having received the keys of the kingdom of heaven from the Saviour, and teach that what has been bound by them, that is, condemned by them, has also been bound in heaven; and that what has received remission from them, has also been loosed in heaven; it must be said that their tenet is sound, if they have really that, on account of which it was said to that Peter, 'Thou art Peter;' and if they are such that the Church is built upon them by Christ, then this expression may reasonably be applied to them too. And the gates of hell must not prevail against him that is willing to bind and loose. But if he has been straitened by the chain of his sins, it is to no purpose that he either binds or looses. And perhaps you may say that it is in the heavens which are in the wise man, namely the virtues, that the vicious man is bound, and again, on the contrary, that the virtuous man is loosed, who has obtained too oblivion of all sins committed previous to his state of virtue. But as he who has not the chains of sin, nor sins compared to a long rope, or to the thong of the yoke of a heifer (Isaiah v. 18. LXX. transl.), will not be bound by God, so neither will he by whoso-

¹ Comm. Joh. tom. v. 3. xxxii. 5. Comm. Matt. tom. xii. 10-15. xiii. 31.

ever shall be Peter. But if a man, who is not Peter, and is not what has been here mentioned, thinks that like Peter he shall bind upon earth, so that what he has bound on earth, shall have been bound in heaven ; and to loose upon earth, so that what he has loosed shall have been loosed in heaven ; this man is vainly puffed up, not knowing the sense of the Scriptures, and through this vanity falls into the trap of the devil ¹.”

From the above passage, which savours of Origen's resentment at his excommunication at Rome and Alexandria, we gather, what Firmilian, Origen's friend and admirer, and Cyprian also, tell us, that each bishop considered himself a representative of Peter. It repeats also that sharp reprehension of some of the authorities of the Church, which has been before noticed : too much stress has been laid on these sour and querulous passages. Sour minds instantly catch the infection of acrimony, and, a great matter being kindled by a little fire, they invariably go beyond the intention of the complainant by generalizing what he only particularized, and making a rule of the exception. Hence such passages are continually brought forward with a great parade, to throw a general slur upon the faithfulness and purity of the primitive Church, by men who, having quarrelled with all the institutions around them, find that unless they would stand convicted before the world, and not subdue the misgivings of their own conscience, they must carry on the quarrel up through every generation until

¹ Comm. Matt. tom. xii. 14.

they reach the indisputable ground of the living Apostles. Meanwhile they forget that they have destroyed the testimony which every man of common sense, and of a sincere spirit of inquiry, demands for the authenticity of Scripture, and that they have left nothing to produce against the unbeliever but the assertion of their own individual conviction, which is but too often not the most unreasonable cause for his rejection.

But when did not such men exist? Origen bitterly deplores the evil effects which their self-will produced in his days, and his description needs not be altered in a single particular to suit our own. Among such divisions men lost the desire of really seeking the truth. Great numbers were scandalized and fell. The parties mutually accused and betrayed each other, and thus embittered a spirit already overflowing with gall. The Scriptures, especially the prophecies, were wrested by their malice or their ignorance; false doctrine overthrew the strong and multiplied the number of itching ears; charity grew cold¹.

There only remains the brief mention of some of the customs and circumstances of the Church in Origen's day. Apostolic tradition was still referred to as one test of orthodox doctrine and catholic custom, and, bowing on all occasions implicitly to the expressed opinion of the Church, he assumes an attitude of uncompromising hostility towards all heretics². There still appeared to linger some relics of

¹ Ser. Comm. Matt. 39.

² Comm. Matt. tom. xiii. l. Ser. Comm. Matt. 39. de Prin. Præf.

the gifts of miraculous healing, and prophecy was considered as not quite extinct¹. Of course he asserts the superior sanctity of the unmarried state in all persons; and, not content with the universally received canon which required that bishops, priests, and deacons should not have married twice, he delivers it as his opinion that no one after a second marriage belongs to the pure, immaculate Church, and, however saved, will not be crowned. Bishops had authority in matters relating to marriage². Confession of sins was made not to God only, but also to those who had authority to remit them, and the penance of grievous offenders was longer than the time of their having been in the state of catechumens. Nor were they afterwards admissible to any ecclesiastical office³. He mentions the observation of Sunday, Friday, Easter, Whitsuntide, which he maintains to be necessary for the generality of Christians, for the sake of sensible admonition to men who are either unwilling or unable to hold such festivals every day, as the perfect Christian does. Always engaged in the words, deeds, and thoughts of the Lord, he every day celebrates a Lord's day. Always preparing himself by abstinence and subjection of his body, he every day celebrates a day of preparation (the Greek term for Friday). Always bearing in mind that Christ our passover was sacrificed for us, and that we should keep the feast by eating the flesh of the Word, and always, in every thought and word and deed, passing over from the

¹ Comm. Joh. tom. xx. 28. c. Cels. vii. 337.

² Comm. Matt. tom. xiv. 22, 23. xvii. 4. Hom. Luc. xvii.

³ Hom. Luc. xvii. c. Cels. iii. p. 143.

affairs of the world to God, he makes every day a day of Passover (or Easter). And ever being able to say with truth, "We have risen together with Christ," yea and that too, he "hath raised us together with him, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ," he is always celebrating the days of Whitsuntide; and above all when he retires to his upper chamber, he there experiences the gift of the Holy Spirit and some portion of the gift of the fiery tongue from God¹. Origen has been neither the first nor last to talk in this strain, and to him and them, on this point, may truly be applied those words, "professing themselves to be wise they became fools." Affecting a spirituality which as dwellers in the flesh, they could not possess, some Jews in the days of Philo boasted of the circumcision of the heart, and so neglected the ordinance of God in the flesh²; and some Christians in our days, professing the baptism of the spirit, despise the sacrament of the baptism of the flesh, although it has been imposed by our Lord's distinct and especial command. But here, as elsewhere, extremes meet, and such spirituality, on a little examination, proves to be mere carnality. It is convicted of a want of self-knowledge, of unwarrantable self-confidence, of spiritual pride, and blind selfish conceit, of narrow comprehension, and of the consequence of all these, a want of charity. For surely he who thus sets himself up in schism with the body of the Catholic Church as it existed in

¹ c. Cels. viii. p. 392. Pentecost was not only our Whitsunday, but included also all the time from Easter day.

² De Migrat. Abraham. § 16.

its early and purest days, must be grievously deficient in this quality, and care as little for the brethren who are around him, and for the brethren who are to come after him, as he does for the brethren who have been before him. Such notions make all visible unity impossible; and how the invisible unity can then exist, of which the visible is the fruit and test, as works are of faith, let them answer who are deeply indeed concerned to answer, and on one day will be compelled to answer.

We cannot forget the glowing account which Justin and Tertullian give of the progress of the Gospel in their days¹. If we were to take them literally, and thence refer to the statement of Origen, we should be compelled to suppose that the cause had gone backward, in the interval of almost half a century. Origen's words are: "Many not only of barbarous nations, but also of our own, have not to this moment heard the word of Christianity. . . . The Gospel of the kingdom has not yet been preached in all the world. For there is no account of its having been preached among all the Ethiopians, especially amongst those who are beyond the river. And not only that, but neither among the Seres, nor in the East (of Asia) have they heard the word of Christianity. But what shall we say of the Britons, or Germans, who are on the borders of the Ocean, or amongst Barbarians, Dacians, and Sarmatians, and Scythians, of whom a very great number have not yet heard the word of the Gospel²." As Origen is supporting an interpre-

¹ Justin. Dial. Tryph. 117. Tertull. adv. Jud. 7.

² Ser. Comm. Matt. 39.

tation of his own, perhaps we ought to diminish the extent of his depreciating account, though not to the same degree that we must lower the exaggerated tone of the others who were maintaining an argument with the Jews. The ecclesiastical history of our own island is singularly situated between these apparently conflicting accounts. Tertullian says, "Places in Britain, inaccessible to the Romans, have been subdued by Christ." It is hardly worth while to seek to reconcile accounts about a part of the world of which so little was known, or thought of, or cared about, that, if it was but heard that the Gospel had reached it at all, a writer (especially in Africa, or Syria,) would feel himself at liberty to describe it as a partial or a general illumination, just as might happen to suit his present purpose¹. But it is possible that Tertullian may have taken advantage of some remote parts having received the Gospel, even before it generally prevailed in the portion under Roman civilization; and in another place Origen testifies to its reception in the island, which could not well have been later, according to him, than the beginning of the third century².

But the limits of this work now demand that we should bring the account of Origen to a conclusion. And yet it is difficult to find a satisfactory point of termination. A writer so learned, so voluminous, so speculative, so celebrated, so influential upon the

¹ Tertull. adv. Judæos, 7.

² Hom. Luc. vi. The earliest historical document of the British Church is the subscription of the Bishops of London, York, and Lincoln, to the canons of the first Council of Arles, held A. D. 314.

Church, both while he lived, and in succeeding ages, requires a larger volume to do him full justice, larger in extent than one that would be readily taken up, larger in literary matter than one that would be generally read. Even then his biographer would most probably find that he had left very much of his information unemployed, and very much of his own mind unexpressed. Perhaps also this sketch will be found too minutely drawn for the general reader, while it is too slightly touched for the ecclesiastical scholar. Supposing all hitherto reported to be sufficient, we ought still to descend into the succeeding centuries, and accompany the stream of events and opinions of which he is no scanty source. We should then have to remark the lamentable fact that in the history of our race, the avowal or practice of erroneous principles is often the surest perpetuator of fame. The man of truth dieth, and no one regardeth him. But the man of error leaves a name behind him. Truth is of too pure and ethereal a nature to be discerned by the common eyes of the world, unless some foreign mixture condense it like a fog into visible shape ; it is seen but in the company of error, and the course of history runs like the stream which in an autumnal evening is tracked by a line of mist. Error hovers over all its length. The Gospel itself had left but few facts for history if it had not been in the first instance resisted, and in the end corrupted. And men of right opinions, unless they have been engaged in controversy with error, and thus become marked with its wreathing folds of cloud, are forgotten together with their writings. Pure truth seems to have no object, no relation to our thoughts and

actions, and has therefore no interest for the great body of mankind. Of the characters which are taken for the subject of the present volume, Cyprian and Dionysius leave no discernible impression on the events of succeeding history, while Origen, Novatian, and Paul, each leave a train of active consequences, and noisy followers, to keep up their name amid the shouts of the broils of future times. Yes! the meek, the mild Origen, the submissive child of the Church, bequeathed in his rash speculations an intestine war to his native Church, which, even when a century and half had passed over his writings, scandalized a stranger from the rude and distant Gaul. Sulpicius Severus, on his arrival at Alexandria, found the Church in a shocking state of commotion. The bishops assembled in council had forbidden the reading of the works of Origen, which were naturally favourites with the contemplative and ascetic tribes of monks. When they found their orders ineffectual, they called in the aid of the soldiery of the Prefect, which dispersed them into various places of banishment¹. The same works were the cause of a most disgraceful paper war carried on in the face of the Church between Ruffinus and Jerome, both presbyters and scholars of high character. And the sentence which he underwent from the councils of Rome and Alexandria was followed, at an interval of three centuries, by a condemnation of his works by a general council. Even at this day his writings are a cause of disagreement of opinion whenever they become the subject of discussion, and will continue so to be to the

¹ Sulp. Sever. Dial. 3. 6.

end of time. For they disagree in themselves. Such is the result where an author indulges his fancy and conjecture without looking to consequences, such are the mischievous effects of speculations vented upon sacred subjects, and proceeding from a mind which is capable of giving them a lasting form. Writers on the things which concern the Gospel of truth may take from him an useful warning, and whenever an ingenious conjecture or brilliant speculation on matters which should never be placed in the company of uncertainty, shall tempt them to exhibit it to an admiring world, let them look carefully to its probable effect on the spiritual welfare of their readers, and if there be the least chance of causing error, let them prefer the safety of the truth and of their own souls to the enjoyment of a doubtful fame. Let them call to mind how so good a man as Origen could lay stumbling-blocks in the way of his brethren, and seeing the irreparable extent of the mischief which he so unconsciously made, let them overcome the temptation of a brilliant conceit, and blot out the writing.

CYPRIAN.

Reflections on the Church of Carthage—Cyprian's occupation as a Rhetorician—His conversion and conversation—He is elected Bishop—Corrupt state of his Church—His visions—The persecution of Decius—Cyprian's retirement—His correspondence with Rome—Various classes of the lapsed—Opposition from the faction of Felicissimus, aggravated by the imprudent conduct of the Martyrs—Audacious conduct of the lapsed countenanced by the Confessors—Return of the majority to Cyprian—Concessions made by him—His correspondence with the Confessors at Rome—Immoral conduct of the Confessors—Further vexatious opposition from Felicissimus—Cyprian's return—Decree of the African council concerning the lapsed, and the excommunication of Felicissimus—A rival Bishop set up by the faction—Concession made by a second council—Pestilence at Carthage—Council on Infant Baptism—Cyprian's relief of the Christians in the mines—His answer to Papianus—His correspondence with Gaul and Spain—First and second councils on Baptism of Heretics—Differences with Stephen of Rome—Cyprian supported by Firmilian—Third council on the same subject—Final settlement of the question by the General Church—Cyprian's opinion on Clinic Baptism—Persecution of Valerian—Exile of Cyprian—His martyrdom—Character as a Bishop—As a writer—His opinions on Church Government—On Baptism—Penance—Almsgiving—Martyrdom—Virginity—The Eucharist—The intermediate state—The end of the world.

EVERY student in his rambles in the neighbourhood of Cambridge has most probably experienced one

walk and one day, when looking towards Ely from some of the neighbouring heights, he has seen the dark blue monotonous lump, which her ancient and magnificent cathedral heaves against the sky, suddenly burst forth distinctly into all its rich variety of tower, lantern, and galilee; and with such liquid clearness as to place him as it were on the spot. He might have watched with renewed delight several successive alternations of such obscurity and brightness, ever as the sun broke forth with a vivid gleam, until at last a storm has suddenly come on, and swept the whole object from view. Similar are the glimpses which he will have of the African Church from the ground of ecclesiastical history. He will see her suddenly emerge from her general obscurity in three bright bursts of distinctness, owing to the glory of her three illustrious sons, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine. After the last of these she is lost to his eyes for ever in darkness, storm, and confusion.

Her peculiar situation on the mass of the civilized world allowed indeed to this Church but very rare opportunities of pushing within the range of historic notice. She was shut up in a corner of a continent which at this very day seems as irreclaimable as ever from the lowest depth of barbarism. The curse of Ham still lies upon it, and upon its sons, in almost all its original and horrible freshness. She had not the favoured sons of Japhet around her, as had Rome, and could not therefore, like her, exalt and strengthen herself by a numerous family through the conversion of the surrounding nations. If the Mediterranean was open to her on one side, it was only to expose

her to the contrast of the superior brightness of a rival before whom she looked dim, distant, and provincial. For Rome, which had trembled at the armies of Carthage, was appealed to for Apostolic authority by her Church¹. Gaul and Spain, which had once obeyed her temporal sway, might have disputed with her any claim to superiority on the ground of prior reception of the Gospel, and smiled at any spiritual assumption of their sister province. But it is with Churches as with states. In proportion to their quiet insignificance from without, they are often but so much the more vexed with serious troubles within. External leisure is the certain forerunner of internal disquiet, and this disquiet in its turn calls off the public attention still farther from foreign affairs. They are like solitary individuals with all their history wrapt up within them. Hence Carthage, having soon reached the utmost limits of conversion in her barbarous neighbourhood, like a state which has attained her utmost extent of conquest, sate down to the game of intestine strife, and separated herself from the history of the general Church. Alexandria had added Ethiopia and India to Egypt, and having been the blessed instrument of fulfilling that prophecy concerning her heavenly Master, "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God²," stood up in the face of the Catholic Church surrounded by a numerous spiritual progeny. Meanwhile Carthage had long ceased to have children, and only came on public notice in fits of fretfulness and talk.

¹ Tertull. de Præscr. Hær.

² Psalm lxxviii. 31.

Perhaps nothing could have saved her from her fate of perpetual intestine dissension. If we may judge from the history of old Carthage, the Punic race was of a character peculiarly suited to the work of faction, and when this Church, outstepping its province of Africa Proper, included also in its pale the inhabitants of the two remaining provinces of Numidia and Mauritania¹, she only gathered fresh fuel for the fire of discord. The character of neither of these people was marked by that steadiness which is so essential an element towards good government either in Church or State. On the contrary, it had more than a common share of that thoughtlessness which is so ruinous to all order and discipline. Such tendencies had not been improved by the demoralizing effect of Roman rapacity², which quenched the little remaining care for the calls of the morrow. Can we wonder then that schism, the brood of passion, shortsighted and narrow-minded, found in this fiery and reckless population, a most ample field of operation? Busy indeed was the old Serpent with all his wiles and venom in this native country of serpents. Perhaps there is not one in all Lucan's frightful catalogue³, for which an observant Christian of the third or fourth centuries might not, by the ingenious adaptation of the allegorical system of his day, have found a fit antitype in the leaders of schism and heresy in this distracted Church. The memory of almost all of them is extinct, together with the Church whose ruin they so effectually wrought.

¹ Cypr. Ep. 45. 71.

² Juvenal. Sat. i. 47. viii. 120.

³ Pharsal. ix. 619.

The first separation of the orthodox has already been noticed in speaking of Tertullian, who, if not the very author, lent all his authority to this deplorable outbreak of pride of spirit. The first schism in a Church, like this and Novatian's at Rome, generally originates from extreme austerity, which quarrels with the lax rein of the Church. But the second and succeeding arise from an unprincipled caprice, or envious spite, like that of Felicissimus, which will not endure the steadiness, nor brook the submission of Christian obedience. For the effect of the example of unreasonable and unlovely austerity, is everywhere to throw the general body into the opposite extreme, especially among a people of levity. The first secession therefore, besides giving the signal for every one to do what seems good in his own eyes, tends to relax the morals of such as remain within the pale, to say nothing of its being likely to draw off after it many characters most influential upon the discipline of the Church. Such was the miserable result at Carthage. The arm of discipline was enervated, and henceforward began to be stretched forth not so much to the call and proportion of the offence as upon calculation of its power to coerce. Its officers anxiously considered the danger of driving the offender into the many rebel arms which were on all sides spread wide open to receive and welcome into their ranks the discontented children of the Church. They went therefore to this spiritual work with somewhat of a cold and worldly-minded caution, and lost much of the blessing which would have attended a more straightforward and single-minded spirit. Such wavering would not be less frequent when Christianity

had advanced upwards among the richer orders, and their contributions were found so necessary to the support and respectability of the Church. Then, alas! Mammon set up his altar close by Jehovah's in the temple of God. The purse knew its power, and gave its owner the means of gratifying a twofold revenge, by bestowing upon a sect the wealth which had been withdrawn from the Church. Thus was laid a snare for the bishop and his Church, who, prompted, perhaps unwittingly, by their interest, might flatter themselves with being lenient when they were timid, cautious concerning the spiritual welfare of the Church while they were calculating against temporal and even pecuniary loss, and binding up the wounds of a moneyless waylaid passenger, when they were doing all in hope of a fee¹.

(A.D. 200.) The Apology of Tertullian was ringing its notes in the ears of the admiring Church, at the moment that Africa was in the unconscious possession of the person of another future glorious champion of truth in the infant Cyprian. He was born in a rank of life sufficient to ensure him a liberal education², but as his biographer, through one of his conceits, thinks proper to begin at his spiritual birth only, we know no more of his history before conversion, than that he practised the profession of a rhetorician³, which, while it was one of most laborious drudgery, was generally most scantily paid,

¹ See Cypr. Ep. 52.

² Life by Pontius, his deacon, written in a very affected, inflated style, containing a sea of declamation with a few skiffs of facts floating in it.

³ Jerome's Cat. in Cyprian.

both with regard to personal consideration and pecuniary profit. The bloated harpers and singers of those degenerate days pointed the finger of scorn at these starving teachers of a liberal art¹. They were indeed an unfortunate race, for the lover of classic literature can scarcely contemplate their occupation with patience. It rose upon the ruins of Roman eloquence. In better days the Roman youth, after a sound and large education in general literature, was taken from the privacy of home, and introduced to the patronage of the distinguished orator of his day, in whose company and from whose example, both in courts of justice and in political assemblies, he learned his profession as it were upon the field of battle. Thus he acquired a genuine and nervous eloquence, became acquainted with the practice of the laws, accustomed to the face of judges, to the sight of listening crowds, and understood the ear of the people. But after that the fall of the Republic had closed up the grand fountain of eloquence in the silence of the popular assemblies, the youth, after a very limited education, was taken to the school of the rhetorician, and there, instead of the sight and sound of the mighty orators and of the impassioned crowd of the forum, and in place of the all-absorbing questions of state, which were agitated with all the earnestness of an interested heart, he saw his own raw, ill-informed equals, with whom he declaimed on topics so little connected with real life as the facts of the fabulous portion of Greek history, and the killing of the ancient tyrants².

¹ Juvenal. Sat. vii. 150 et seq.

² Ibid. and the Dialog. de Orator. 28—36. The whole pas-

It is not pleasing to contemplate Cyprian engaged in such an employment, and yet we are reconciled to it when we view it in contrast with that sphere of instruction to which God afterwards called him ; for it sets forth in a lively manner the graciousness of his Almighty Master. He then taught in the school of Christ, persuaded men with the true unadulterated eloquence of the Spirit, and, having for his listeners a clergy and people imbued with celestial wisdom, exhorted them in the duties of a continually urgent service, in doctrines of everlasting moment, in the council, in the Church, and as it were upon the very field of battle. As far as it had given him a fluent delivery of pure language, his former profession was the means, under God, of a very useful spiritual gift : nor had it left him so poor as it did almost all others. He was equally fortunate with Quintilian in amassing a comfortable independence in a calling where wealth was the exception and not the rule. And here also perhaps we shall not be mistaken if we say that we can again trace the hand of God leading him on. Such means gave him leisure to contemplate the singular spectacle which his age and country exhibited. Generally speaking, rhetoricians would be among the very last persons to open their eyes to the real state of what was passing in the world. The little empire of their school would include within its limits all that they deemed worthy

sage is deeply interesting at this moment, when in a similar stage of decline of society, there is much danger of a compendious utilitarian system, which is fit but for slavish imitative minds, superseding the large and various instruction which alone can nurse generous and original minds.

of observation, and the subjects to which their attention was daily called were so little in unison with those of common life, and yet so much more highly prized, that they cannot but have been the latest of men to notice any new phenomenon in public life, and still more to appreciate it when noticed. When at length Christianity was understood by them, they would be among its most bitter adversaries. It was found contrary to their fond prejudices, and, what was worse, unfavourable to their interest. Cyprian, however, here again was an exception to the general rule of his brethren. Active in mind, ardent in spirit, he would not confine his views within the narrow bounds of his profession, and both his history and his writings testify that he had kept free commerce with the world. And yet it was late in life before he seriously turned his attention to the grand phenomenon of the day. Like the generality of the world he was probably repelled, not only by its uninviting features, but still more by the infamous calumnies which had been raised as a wall of partition to prevent men from contemplating that which grew in favour as it was contemplated, and was sure in the end to captivate. But now the time had come which his Saviour had appointed for breaking down this wall. This was when Cyprian first admitted the friendship of Cæcilius, a presbyter of grave character, and much honoured in the Church of Carthage. Then, at one crash, fell down the heap of falsehood, and, cleared from vile disguise, the Gospel appeared before him in its own majestic and beautiful features. He was one of those who had the privilege of entertaining angels unawares.

In the person of this old man he admitted an ambassador of Christ, who brought him such guests as he had never thought of before. He brought not his shadow, as the uninvited companions of great men were called, but he brought the glorious company of the Apostles and Prophets, and Jesus Christ at their head. They might have been coldly received at first, as they very commonly were: yet so do they win upon the heart that they are seldom, if ever, allowed to depart from the house which has once taken them in. They do not long remain strangers, but shortly become among the dearest inmates. They never quitted Cyprian. Warmly and fervently he pressed their stay, and washed their feet with tears of joy. It was now, perhaps, that he first took up the works of his favourite Tertullian, to which he ever afterwards assigned a certain portion of each day for perusal¹. The Apology would naturally be the work to which he would first give his attention, and none would feel its power more vividly than he. The mist of his old prejudices rolled away, and when he beheld the light he rejoiced in it, and determined ever after to walk in it.

(A. D. 246.) Being admitted on the list of catechumens, or such as were in a course of instruction preparatory to baptism, he made rapid progress in his several studies, and lost no time in putting his knowledge into practice. Nothing could exceed the vigour of the dominion under which he kept all the carnal affections, and he gave a public example of his sincerity by selling his property for the benefit

¹ Jerome's Catalogue in Tertullian.

of the poor¹. We may present to our imagination the new convert, ever as he heard the Gospels read, looking at the reader with breathless attention, and imbibing, as it were, through eyes and ears into his heart, the conversation of our Lord with the young ruler. And he determined to have his treasure in heaven, and to follow the Lord. The word came to men of his day with a keenness of point and edge, of which the most sincere amongst us can scarcely form an adequate notion. Many deductions from it, however imperfect and even corrupted, are afloat in the conduct of daily society around us, and form the staple of decent worldly conversation. The common notions of charity, for example, are such as never would be dreamed of in heathen society. Hence, when we read our Bibles, we think that we recognize our common-place virtues in the Christian graces there set forth, or at least, viewing them from higher ground and from a quarter of more light, are not so struck with sudden wonder at their surpassing sublimity and brilliancy. Knowing also that Scripture, at its first issue, spoke to persons whose condition in a state of civilized society was as different as possible from our own, we are apt, and perhaps too glad, to accept its close questioning, and stern exaction of duty, with a great deal too much allowance in our own favour, and to reckon as figure and theory for ourselves what was letter and practice to our predecessors. Thus we elude the piercing of this two-edged sword. It does, however, please God occasionally to interfere for the right interpretation of his

¹ Life by Pontius.

Scripture, and throwing society into utter confusion by some awful visitation, he makes it exhibit once again those marked contrasts, which realize at once the language of which we thought so lightly; and then if the demand upon our obedience be more severely exact, so is also the comfort which it affords more deep and abundant, and the courage which it inspires more ardent and enduring.

In order duly to appreciate the sacrifice which Cyprian made in "selling all he had, and distributing unto the poor," we must remember that he was married. Very different indeed is the degree of trial, where a man has simply to deny any enjoyments of the world to himself, and when he has to deny them to others whom he loves most dearly. And the severity of it increases in proportion to the very facilities which they supply. Their readiness to acquiesce adds to the pang of reluctance which he feels. For they are on that account more dear and lovely than ever in his eyes, and appear more worthy than ever of enjoying that which he is withdrawing from them. O, could the veil which hides the history of the private hours of members of the early Church, when such sacrifices were not unfrequent, be drawn up, what scenes would disclose themselves? What weeping sore, and breaking of hearts! what patience and long-suffering with joyfulness, what confidence and rejoicing of hope! The bands of Christian love are far tighter than any which the world can draw, and that which invariably dissolves earthly love, adds but strength to this heavenly affection.

Having given such unequivocal proofs of progress, both in doctrine and practice, during his probationary

state, he was admitted to baptism ; and the grace of the Holy Spirit, now descending in full measure upon him, together with the knowledge of the Son of God, he was enabled to see through many difficulties which had previously quite baulked all the endeavours of his understanding. He had not been able to conceive how human nature could possibly undergo an entire spiritual change, while the body still remained ; how what had grown up with the man, yea and grown into him, for so many years, could all at once be put away. He had never observed such a change in common life. He knew no example of the spendthrift learning frugality, of the ambitious man seeking inglorious retirement, of the man of company, dress, and display, betaking himself to solitude. Nor could he conceive how drunkenness, pride, anger, covetousness, cruelty, ambition, and lust could lose their effectual hold upon the bodily senses. But after that, when the stain of his former life had been washed out by help of the regenerating water, clear and serene light poured from above into his purified bosom, after that a second birth, with the breath of the Spirit drawn from heaven, had made him a new man, then it was wonderful how doubts cleared up, mysteries unravelled themselves, what had been dark became light, difficulties became easy, impossibilities became possible ; so that he could readily acknowledge that his former life, born of flesh, liable to sin, was of the earth ; that his life now begun, born of the Spirit, was of God¹. According to custom he assumed a new name in bap-

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 1.

tism. This was Cæcilius, which he took from the venerated author of his conversion. Thus his full name henceforward was Thascius Cæcilius Cyprianus. The adopted name had been that of the clan which contained the family of Metellus, so celebrated for his military exploits in Africa. Under such an auspicious title Cyprian entered upon the services of his Christian soldiership in the same regions.

(A.D. 247.) Such a novice was not likely to remain long in a private station. He was quickly raised to the priesthood, and most exemplary was the pattern which he exhibited. He freely distributed to the poor from his substance,¹ which was now perhaps little more than the salary which he derived from the Church. His house was open to all comers, and was daily visited not in vain by the widow, the orphan, the halt and the blind. He himself meanwhile lived in penury, and kept his body in painful subjection, nor could even the persuasion of his wife prevail upon him to relax his rigorous rule. He had set out with a rule which he always diligently endeavoured to impress upon others. Observe, he would say, the examples of those just men whom Scripture records as having won the favour of God. Mark the particular acts by which they won it, and then make those acts your constant object of imitation. By means of this rule, while he made others his example, he became also an example to others. In such endeavours he had the encouragement and counsel of his friend Cæcilius, whom, as the father of his new life, he treated with the utmost deference and reverence. So was the pious presbyter moved by his kindness, and hearty

expression of affection, that he concluded the tokens of his love and esteem by recommending, when the hour of his death was at hand, his wife and children to his care ¹.

(A. D. 248.) The early Church seems to have looked with much foresight and comprehensiveness of view to the characters of those whom she chose for the very trying and responsible situation of bishops. She paid little regard to the claims of long standing, and although piety was an essential qualification, yet where it was shared in an equal degree by those who were less and by those who were more gifted with the talents of government, the latter were particularly selected. Neophyte as Cyprian was, yet he had exhibited in a brief time more proofs of his fitness, than many had shown through their lives up from a Christian cradle. He was evidently also well acquainted with the world in which he had lived so long, and possessed that gift of influencing the minds of men which in such perilous times was especially requisite. Added to these claims were several others, which, though not to be insisted upon, yet could not but come into consideration. The character of Cyprian was high among the heathen. His charities, if nothing else, would have made him popular among the brethren, and he had been a great benefactor to the Church. Hence on the death of the bishop there was an unanimous call upon him to succeed to the vacant chair. But the men who are most conscientiously active in their duties, are often least eager to be

¹ Pontius.

advanced to a wider and higher sphere of responsibility. Vulgar and untried spirits eagerly seize the offered splendour and power. But these, trying well their hearts and minds by the high standard of what God's exact scrutiny requires, and not by what blind fellow-man's sympathy or patience will bear, ever find themselves inadequate to what is already before them ; and though they have full confidence in God's help for the duties of their present station, they think that much deliberation is required on their part before they step on to another. Until therefore they find his clear and distinct summons either sounding in their own hearts, or expressed in outward circumstances which put the choice out of their own power, they are afraid of the sin of tempting God in obeying the call, however unanimous, of their brethren of weak flesh. But at that very moment when they think themselves least adequate, they are, in fact, most adequate. It is their exalted notions of duty that makes them so low in their own eyes, and by these they are enabled under God's grace to fulfil to the very top of human ability the measure of the service which has been allotted to them. They are abased in order to be exalted.

Like Ambrose, the object of an election more sudden still, Cyprian shrank with dismay from the offered honour. He made way for those who were of older standing and longer experience, and humbly withdrew, deeming himself unworthy of so high a post. But the more unworthy he thought himself, the more worthy he appeared to be. The people were confirmed in their assurance of the propriety of their choice, and blockaded his doors with crowds,

while every avenue was eagerly sought through which to pour in their earnest entreaty. Fain would he have fled, and been let down, like the Apostle, by the wall through a window in a basket. He found himself however compelled to yield, and, thus terminating the anxieties of the brethren, was received at his coming forth with the manifestation of exceeding joy. For once at least, therefore, the voice of the people was the voice of God. For surely if ever we can safely presume upon an expression of the Divine will through the consenting voices of a multitude, it is, when a whole Church, both clergy and laity, of the purer and primitive times, containing in its bosom so many future confessors and martyrs, and all being far too earnestly intent upon the glory of God in the spiritual welfare of their commonwealth, to dare or condescend to be respecters of persons, when such a body utters but one voice. The event proved that the Spirit of God had thus moved the hearts of the people. In this bishop, whose firmness was most severely tried by schism within and persecution without, they had a confessor and martyr, whose death and writings preached to them that came after, even as his life had done to those who witnessed its sanctified course. In him Carthage had the privilege of enjoying almost the solitary instance of a celebrated father, a celebrated bishop, and a celebrated martyr, united in one person¹.

He bade farewell to the quiet of privacy, and embarked at once upon a sea of troubles. Notwith-

¹ Pontius ; Cyprian, Ep. 55.

standing the unanimity which had been shown in his election, the seed of troubles was sown in that very hour, or very shortly after, and we shall soon have occasion to observe the fruits. It is indeed humiliating to think that the times which seem above all others to call for unanimity, are often those in which the spirit of strife finds its most plentiful aliment, and still more so to observe that this sad display of human weakness and wickedness should have been manifested at least as often in times of spiritual as of temporal peril. But the corrupt heart of man fears not to make the holy things of God to minister to his passions, and will sacrifice the cause of truth to the gaining of his vile and selfish end. Both heathen and heretic were furious in their attack upon the Church during this age, and their assault was answered and abetted by a corresponding fury of traitorous schism within.

The province of Cyprian was wide, and the population not the most tractable to the hand of a spiritual ruler. Besides the anciently civilized province of Africa, which more immediately required his inspection, Cyprian had also to look, with no little sense of responsibility, to the wild districts of Numidia and Mauritania, whose bishops regarded Carthage as the head of Africa¹. With them it behoved him to be in proper and constant correspondence, and to hold communication as their guide and representative among the churches in the less retired regions of the world. Called thus to a difficult situation at a difficult time, he so conducted himself as to con-

¹ Cypr. Ep. 45.

ciliate all hearts to him, both at home and abroad. Even several of those who had begun with opposition were so won over by his gentleness, his forbearance, his kindness, and ready forgiveness of injuries, that they were afterwards enrolled upon the list of his most trusty and intimate friends, to the admiration of all who knew his retentive memory, and saw how he could forget a wrong. In everything he preserved a sober and dignified mean. His administration was vigorous and yet lenient, his deportment was grave and yet cheerful, so as to win at once both reverence and love. His dress was equally removed from the affectation of sordid penury, and the display of ostentatious wealth¹. Thus he seems to have most happily combined the qualities by which a bishop reconciles his duty of a cheerful hospitality with that of firm discipline.

(A.D. 250.) Whenever the ministers of God's grace are insufficient with all their zeal to calm the stormy passions of the public corruption, the divine Head of the Church gives commission to the ministers of his wrath, who are ever found more active in their work in proportion to the iniquity with which they have to deal. For they are in fact its children and sucklings, and are both more numerous and more vigorous, according as their parent is more active and more strong. What had therefore now gone beyond the controul of the crook and staff of such men as Fabian at Rome, Dionysius at Alexandria, Cyprian at Carthage, was subjected to the sword of Decius, and after an interval of peace, which had lasted

¹ Pontius.

nearly half a century (if we except the brief persecution of Maximin), the Emperor of Rome and prince of this world had it in charge to recommence his work, and to try, by very decisive tests, whether the spirits now so insolent and rampant in the Church were of God. The scourge was indeed loudly called for by the sins of Christians, if we may judge of the universal Church from the state of the African. A worldly-minded sordid spirit prevailed, whence arose a practical infidelity, which, reckless of the day of visitation, grudged every contribution to the Church and to the poor, and delighting in the importance derived from schism and distraction, vented its malignity in a vexatious opposition to the authority of the bishops¹. Some even of the bishops were so possessed with this detestable spirit of selfishness as to forsake their flock and their church, and go after worldly lucre in the most barefaced and unscrupulous manner. Priests had foregone vital religion, deacons the integrity of faith. The virgins, who, having espoused Christ, ranked next to the glorious company of Martyrs, gave public scandal by appearing at the loose solemnities of nuptial festivals, by exposure at the public baths, and by being seen in other most strange, and (as we should think) most unequivocal situations². All were intent on gain, and charity was no longer visible in works, nor discipline in morals. They shrank not from perjury, they practised unscrupulous fraud. All was false, even to the

¹ Cypr. Ep. 40. et de Unit. Eccles. sub fine. Lib. de Laps. p. 327.

² de Habit. Virgin. p. 183. Ep. 62. de Laps. p. 319.

false beards of the men, and the painted cheeks and dyed hair of the women. Forgetting, as well they might, that they were a peculiar people, they intermarried with the heathen. Faith was laid in the dust, and discipline in ruins¹.

After making every allowance for the exaggeration of declamation, we have still but too strong proofs, in this description, of the sad declension from Christian purity, which so long a peace had fostered. We have seen a similar testimony from the mouth of Origen. Cyprian's pure unclouded eye beheld the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. In the increasing infidelity of his flock he saw the fuel a-preparing for the furnace of the almighty Refiner. And after his eyes had been pained with so many sickening sights, and his mind harassed by so many cares and sorrows in the daytime, visions of approaching retribution haunted his sleep by night. He dreamed that a voice said, "Ask, and it shall be given you," upon which the people were ordered to pray for certain persons named to them. But in these petitions they much disagreed both in word and will. He who gave the order was heavily displeased at this want of union among the brethren. At another time he dreamed that he saw the enemy ready to cast his net amidst his careless flock and take many captive². In due time he beheld the melancholy realization of these visions.

Since Cyprian laid great stress upon his visions, and appealed to them as his guide under difficult

¹ de Laps. ib.

² Cypr. Ep. 7.

circumstances, it becomes necessary to advert for a moment to this point. We have seen that Origen maintains the lingering existence of some relics of the extraordinary gifts of the apostolic age, among which he reckons prophecy. Of this, visions and express internal warnings are the least extraordinary vehicle: they are the last link in the chain of supernatural information, and therefore are often exceedingly difficult to be distinguished from the topmost link in the chain of natural, namely, the promptings of high excitement. This latter cause is quite as sufficient to account for all that Cyprian has detailed, as for those singular coincidences between the dream of the sleeper, and some event afterwards befalling, which are familiar to every age. Such visions are seldom any thing more than the operation of the imagination dressing up into circumstantial detail by night the foreboding meditations of the day. And it would be wonderful, indeed, if they were never realised by events which were certain enough to be the object of anxious but sober forecast. But we should do gross injustice to Cyprian, as well as to his illustrious cotemporary, Dionysius of Alexandria, if we were to ascribe to this cause those express injunctions, and often in express words, which they assert to have received from the Lord¹, and not only in themselves, but sometimes even from others². Making all allowance for enthusiastic temperament, and strong excitement from without, can we suppose that both these brave and glorious confessors, whose writings are marked with strong, good sense, and whose deep

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 40. vii. 7.

² Cypr. Ep. ix. 54. 66. de Mortal. p. 423. and Pontius, &c.

piety none can doubt, could so impose upon themselves as to mistake the counsel of fear for the injunction of God, when, in quitting their flocks at a time of persecution, they took a step hitherto unprecedented in the Church? Is it agreeable to sound judgment to refuse their testimony? Is it accordant with charity to sacrifice their characters to our own theory? It is not denied that Cyprian may not have always been able to distinguish natural from supernatural prompting, at a period too when so much importance was ascribed to dreams: but it is denied that he had no supernatural warnings. In these days, when every article of belief is to be ultimately tested by the senses, and men, who have never dived into their own minds, and reached there the confines of unknown foreign agency, have learned to ridicule, with all the flippancy of thoughtlessness, the notion of conscious communication with the spiritual world, as of a thing in its nature impossible, rather than from experience generally improbable; in such days this partial assent to Cyprian's claims will, perhaps, be put down to the account of narrow-minded superstition. By all means be it so¹.

There cannot be offered a lesson of more awful warning and more stern rebuke to times of loud and rampant profession than the history of this persecution. The spiritual pride which had fed itself with captious objections against the measures of ecclesiastical rule, and, waxing fat, had kicked against the peaceful crook of the bishop, was immediately

¹ Dodwell says, "Non credent hæc fortasse Athei," speaking of Cyprian's visions. Dissert. iv. § 19.

crest-fallen at the drawing of the sword of Decius, and proved itself a noisy coward and hollow professor. A certain day was appointed, within or upon which the Christian profession was to be renounced, and all who allowed the time to pass were to be supposed by the omission to confess themselves Christians. When this fatal order arrived there was a rush of Christians to the forum, all eager to enter their denial. They did not wait for accusation, but seemed voluntarily to embrace the opportunity of apostasy. From morning to evening the magistrates were surrounded by crowds anxiously pressing to register their denial of Christ, and many, after all, from want of time, were deferred till the morrow, much against their wishes and entreaties. Mounted aloft in the forum, in the presence of the governor, and magistrates, and assembled people, they denied the Lord who bought them. Thence they were led to make their words good at the altar in the capitol by offering sacrifice to idols. When it came to this dreadful extremity, and the sight of the altar, and the smell of the sacrifice opened the shocking reality of their situation to their self-deluded minds; some, perhaps, grew dizzy, knocked their knees, panted with anguish and terror, dropped their arms, while their tongue clave to the roof of their mouth, and their speech faltered. But the great majority needed not even to shroud their looks of shame with the veil which covered the head of the sacrificer; and, not content with their own disgrace, urged their brethren to bear them company, yea, even carried their baptized infants with them up to the altar. Others, however, manfully stood up for

their profession, and were sent into banishment or were shut up in prison ¹.

Meanwhile Cyprian was in a post of unusual danger. The policy of Decius directed his sword against the bishops in the first instance, and Fabian at Rome was its immediate victim. The people also of Carthage, animated by their easy victory over the crowd of nominal professors, and vehemently stirred up by the evil instigation of him, whose house the amphitheatre peculiarly was, demanded, with shouts, Cyprian for the lion. Wishing to prevent a tumult, and warned by the Lord, he retired ². The propriety of this unprecedented step was amply proved by the event; and that it was in no respect produced by fear was demonstrated by his whole subsequent conduct, and more particularly by his end. Had he even received no orders from his Master, he might, on taking a calm review of his duty, have doubted whether he ought to obey the stern (and, as we may say, fanatical) dictates of his favourite Tertullian, or rather reserve his life for his flock, whom his death could not benefit. He is a brave, but a bad general who needlessly exposes his person. The Church of Rome was at this moment severely experiencing the inconvenience of the loss of its head, and that of Carthage would be put into the same confusion by his own death; whereas his absence would not prevent him from exercising a wholesome authority, and superintending its welfare. But on the other hand was to be set the scandal of a bishop

¹ Cypr. Ep. 8. de Laps. p. 328. ad Demetr. p. 397.

² Epp. 5. 14.

deserting his post. And, to avoid this scandal, Cyprian would, no doubt, have preferred that part which he thought might perhaps less injure his flock, if the Lord's command had not intervened, and ordered his retreat. Our knowledge of Cyprian's manly and affectionate character will not allow us to doubt that he yielded reluctantly to the call of duty; that he tore himself away with much sorrow from the company of his faithful priests and deacons, and forewent, amid weeping, the sight of his beloved people; that he felt that self-reproach which an honourable mind experiences, when considerations, however superior, forbid a share in the common danger. He went naked into exile, being put on the list of proscribed, and public notice being given, that "if any one was in possession of goods belonging to Cæcilius Cyprian, bishop of the Christians, he should give information¹." Thus, if he was not allowed the opportunity of the first, he obtained the second degree of glory by the sacrifice of his worldly goods²; and surely we may add, by the sacrifice of his feelings.

The place of his concealment is unknown. His deacon and biographer, Pontius, might have told us, had he not been more intent upon displaying his eloquence than in detailing facts. He took with him a small train of attendants, and among them Victor, as his deacon, whom he had elevated from the inferior rank of reader³. From this distance he kept a good look-out upon his flock; and among his first cares was a proper charitable provision for the confessors and for the poor, and a regulation

¹ Cypr. Ep. 69.

² De Laps. p. 325.

³ Ep. iv. 6.

respecting the visits paid to the prisons of the former, which he forbade to be visited by throngs of people, as they were, but ordered that only the priest, who offered, and a deacon should go, and that these should take turns with other priests and deacons, so that the heathen might not take offence. Communications also reached him, some of which gave him great concern. Among these was a letter from the Roman clergy to himself, announcing the death of their bishop, Fabian, of which he had received but uncertain accounts before, and also another from the same body addressed to his own clergy ¹. Some expressions in this caused him much pain, besides that the whole strain of the letter treats him slightly, as if he had quite deserted his flock. He had, no doubt, made up his mind to mortification, and, having the answer of a good conscience before God, was well able to endure unmerited reproach from man. Still a sense of his own dignity, and of the duties of his station, prompted him to write to the Roman clergy, expressing doubts whether the letter was genuine, and desiring to be satisfied ². In due time, and after he had written to them an account of the reasons of his retreat and subsequent conduct, he received a highly gratifying answer, in which they entirely approved of all that he had done, and expressed towards him great affection and veneration ³. One of these letters (perhaps both) was written in their name by the celebrated Novatian; and its polished style, though somewhat too rhetorical, is in strong contrast with the rude and scarcely grammatical style of the offensive letter of which Cyprian had complained.

¹ Ep. 2.² Ep. 3.³ Epp. 30, 31.

Other letters were the cause of more serious pain. Hitherto no blood had been shed at Carthage. But now the proconsul had arrived, and immediately put into active operation that power of life and death which the ordinary magistrates could not exercise. Martyrdom was added to confession, and torture to imprisonment. The faithful were scourged, beaten with clubs, stretched with their limbs on an instrument of exquisite torture called "the horse," pinched with red-hot iron, slowly roasted in the flames, or left to a lingering death in a stifling prison by hunger and thirst: the names of thirteen are recorded as having suffered this last horrible fate; but they could not be overcome by the world who had nothing in the world. Some, indeed, from the extreme agony were unable to support the trial; but of these also some came off conquerors in a second fight; others continued, amid torture, unconquered to the end. Among the latter Mappalicus led a troop of martyrs, and their forehead, stamped with the seal of God, received the crown, in which the white lilies of their spotless life were interwoven with the red roses of the blood of their passion¹. Thus far, however he might mourn the temporal loss of friends, Cyprian could exult in the glory accruing to his Church, and congratulate her upon her splendid triumphs. But the same severity which gave victory to some, brought the shame of defeat to the majority. The brethren were laid prostrate in entire ranks, officers and all. For even a portion of the clergy proved recreant². Cyprian says he wanted words to ex-

¹ Ep. 8. 14. 21. de Laps. p. 331.

² Ep. 5.

press his grief; for who could be so hard-hearted, so forgetful of brotherly love, as to behold with dry eyes the miserable wreck, the mournful remnant of his friends and brethren, and not burst into weeping, and utter his sorrows with tears sooner than with words? All had been one, all members of the same body, and he, as their shepherd, felt himself as wounded in all their wounds. His breast was their breast, and he shared in the sorrow and lamentation of their spiritual funeral. He wept with those that wept, he wailed with those that wailed, he lay in the dust with those that lay in the dust. The darts that wounded them wounded his members. The sword that passed through them passed through his bowels. His mind could not escape the assaults of persecution, and sorrow for his prostrate brethren prostrated him¹.

This wide ruin began to call loudly for reparation, and never was there more necessity for the application of a delicate but firm hand. Cyprian was the very man to deal with it, and even to him it was a matter of great difficulty. He had formerly entertained the severe principles of Tertullian, and thought that communion should be denied to all that had sacrificed, or even obtained a certificate to that effect². But he was no inflexible theorist; and when he came to practice, his good sense and practical wisdom suggested to him that a more lenient system must be pursued, that hope must not be denied. He soon, therefore, (especially as the Martyrs, as we shall see, furthered his change of opinion,) looked for a suitable

¹ de Laps. p. 325.

² Ep. 52.

remedy. Those that had yielded to persecution, the lapsed (or fallen away) as they were called, admitted of the following classification :—in the first class of deepest dye were placed that crowd which had made a voluntary denial at the very apprehension of persecution, and leaped forward, as it were, to sacrifice : next to these came they who had gone reluctantly, and after a long struggle, to the altar ; and only then because they wished not to save themselves, but their wives, children, and kindred, and who had perhaps afterwards afforded a safe retreat to some of the suffering brethren : in the third place came they who had undergone torture and yielded to it, whose spirit had been willing, but flesh proved weak ; a class deserving all commiseration, and entitled to very tender consideration. All these went under the general opprobrious name of *Sacrificates*, from having offered sacrifice, and *Thurificates*, from having offered incense. And among them, to the great grief and scandal of good men, were some of the clergy, as we have seen ; and in some places, although we know not if in Cyprian's diocese, even bishops¹. There was, however, besides these, a fourth class of offenders of a lighter dye, but of large numbers in so wealthy a Church, and including several priests. These were called *Libellatics*, from the libel or certificate which they had received from the magistrate, who was not unwilling to turn his power of annoyance to a good pecuniary account. For a certain sum of money, therefore, he granted to applicants a certificate, which assured all concerned that the

¹ Ep. 52.

person named in it had done all that had been required of him. There could not have been devised more artful means of ensnaring the conscience. It was true that they had not sacrificed actually, but they had virtually, by the confession contained in the certificate. They had consented to the act, though they had not committed it. Their conscience was defiled, and they became an object of mockery to the heathen, and of scandal to the brethren. Perhaps they were really the most unhappy of all the lapsed. They had lost beyond all the others their self-respect through this cowardly and hypocritical evasion; and it would be more difficult for many to extricate their consciences from this tortuous trap, and to return into that profession of which they still usurped the name, than if they had made an open and direct denial at once. Since, however, their offence was less flagrant upon the face of it, they were reckoned by Cyprian, though not by others, the least guilty in the list of offenders¹.

Such a classification would cost little trouble on paper, although even at this stage judgments differed. But innumerable would be the difficulties attending its application to practice. For in the confusion of a persecution, and in the throng of those who surrounded the altars or tribunals, it must have been very difficult in many cases to ascertain with any certainty of evidence how far a man went in degree of denial, and some might escape observation altogether; and still more difficult to distinguish the infinite variety of circumstances which would make

¹ Ep. 52. 68. de Laps. p. 133.

the same form and degree of denial a very different form and degree of moral guilt. Such an investigation required a time of peace, and therefore Cyprian's plan was to delay all proceedings, until, the persecution having ceased, the Church could meet in full council, and deliberate dispassionately and at leisure. Nothing could be more reasonable; but there arose a serious impediment from a quarter, whence, from the very day of his election, he had experienced continued and vexatious counteraction.

One evil of popular election is, that at every new accession to office it gives birth to a discontented party. These effects were most severely felt both in the Church of Rome and of Carthage about this time. At the latter place rose a faction headed by five Presbyters, who, again, were led by Felicissimus, a man described by Cyprian as of bad character, and as having been ordained deacon by Novatus, without the bishop's knowledge or permission¹.

The unsettled state of things produced by the persecution, together with the absence of the bishop, gave them advantages which they were neither slow in seizing, nor delicate in handling. A person unacquainted with the workings of the human heart might express his wonder that, so far from increasing divisions, this evident chastisement of his unruly Church by its heavenly Master did not bring all into one mind, as it involved all in one calamity, referred all to one and the same source of consolation, and reminded them, through their common suffering at the hands of those that were without, that they were

¹ Ep. 40. 49.

one body, had one Lord, one faith, one baptism, had been made to drink into one spirit, and should therefore be of one spirit. He would suppose that whatever pride and uncharitable misunderstanding might have separated them before, yet that now, when all hearts were turned to God for help and comfort, meekness, long-suffering, brotherly love would abound. So calculating, he would make no allowance for the working of that passion which, being the original sin, is the last to be eradicated from the human heart. He would not reckon on the effects of pride. Nor would he take into account, that any disturbance of the state of a commonwealth, whether temporal or spiritual, opens views of self-interest so tempting, as not to be counteracted by the most sober and spiritual qualities that persecution can enforce upon a partisan. He will run to the spoil, and, instead of finding his interest in his religion, will find his religion in his interest, and give to the latter a more specious appearance from the purer view with which the former seems now to be regarded. He will even delude himself with the notion that the deviation of things from their usual order will justify a deviation from settled principles. As the same heat that softens wax hardens clay, such is the different effect of the same persecution on different hearts. With such an unchastised spirit, Felicissimus and his party unscrupulously turned to their own account of factious opposition one of the most holy and blessed effects of the present persecution.

It produced from its bloody soil a noble crop of martyrs. And great was the reverence paid by the Church to these tried witnesses of the truth of God

in Jesus Christ. Their prayers were deemed to have a peculiar value with God, and they were to be assessors with Christ when he came to judgment. Therefore their requests were treated with singular deference by the Church, and the custom arose of asking their intercession with the Church when its communion had been forfeited. Such a privilege is obviously liable to great abuse; and accordingly it was greatly abused. As in most cases of beggary, the most worthless suppliants were often most successful, by wearying men with that importunity with which our Lord has bidden us weary Heaven¹. Increasing laxity in the Church at once gave a more holy character to the martyr, as having exhibited rarer qualities, and augmented the number of those who needed all the forgiveness that he could procure. Thus the discipline of the Church was brought into jeopardy, and the province of the bishop was invaded by petitioners whose prayer was law. On the present occasion the prisons were crowded with throngs of the lapsed, coming and entreating their mediation, and, unfortunately, the usual precautions had been neglected. It had hitherto been the rule that the priests and deacons should visit the prisons, and instruct the martyrs, who were often very ignorant men, and but slenderly acquainted with Scripture, so that they may shape their requests to the Church in conformity with sound doctrine and good discipline. To such an one as they thought a proper object, these mediators gave a ticket, recommending him to the merciful consideration of the Church.

¹ Tertull. de Pudic. 22.

But in consequence of this neglect, so great was the facility of the martyrs, and so pressing the application of offenders, that those tickets were issued indiscriminately in large numbers. As the persecution went on, and the number both of lapsed and of martyrs increased, the evil reached a great pitch. Tickets were dealt out at the rate of a thousand a day, and these too not containing a single and definite name, but in the form, "Admit that person, with all his, to communion." At this rate a man might present himself at the head of twenty or thirty people, whom he chose to call "his," and claim the peace of the Church. Busy and impertinent men also imposed upon the simplicity and ignorance of such of these sufferers as knew not how to write. Thus Lucian, the confessor, issued tickets in the name of Aurelius, and also of Paul, and still farther, pretending a dying charge of the martyr Paul, sent them out after his death to all who had need. Nor did he stop even here. He persuaded the whole body of confessors to join him in giving the peace of the Church to all who should make satisfaction for their fault. To such an abuse had grown that indulgence which at the beginning of the persecution the martyr Mappalicus had granted but to his lapsed mother¹.

The audacity of the lapsed grew with this indulgence. At first they were content with that which was all that the martyrs professed to give, which was, to prefer their undeniable request, that their petitioners' cases might be taken into merciful consideration, and the peace of the Church restored

¹ Ep. 9, 10. 21. 22.

to them, when it should please God to restore peace to his Church, and his divine protection should bring the bishop back again. To this Cyprian had answered that he should waive all proceedings until the persecution was over; that meanwhile the lapsed may not only have a proper interval for repentance, but also an opportunity, through a second trial, of repairing their first error¹; and all would have gone in a straightforward course, had not the faction of Felicissimus greedily seized so inviting an opportunity of raising an opposition to the authority of the bishop. All who produced tickets from the martyrs were immediately admitted by them into communion, to the destruction of all discipline, and the utter confusion of all notions of right and wrong. For while in the case of minor offences the delinquents were obliged to do penance for a certain time, and then, in the regular order of discipline, to come to confession, and recover the right of communion through the imposition of the hands of the bishop and clergy; now, in the case of a deadly sin, after a very insufficient time, while the persecution was still going on (and therefore before their trial was finished), while peace had not yet been restored to the Church, they were admitted by these factious presbyters to communion, without the previous purgation through penance, confession, and imposition of hands. To such lengths could the spirit of schism go. In order to gain numbers to their side, these men could sacrifice the discipline of the Church, and the souls of their brethren. Provided they gained power, it

¹ Ep. 52.

mattered not to them what were the means or what might be the end. Provided they humbled the bishop, apostasy might be deemed a venial sin. The consequence of this was a general impatience and murmuring against the delay interposed by Cyprian. Having effectually fomented this, they now proceeded farther. They worked upon the confessors, and obtained from them that pernicious offer of general pardon, and that insolent requisition which they made to the bishop, stating that they had "granted peace to all persons concerning whom a satisfactory account shall have been rendered before him as to their conduct since the time of the offence, and it was their pleasure that this notice should be given, through him, to the rest of the bishops." The leaven which the agitators had infused into the hearts of these holy, but, generally speaking, ignorant men, is very evident in the concluding clause of this short and pithy epistle, "We wish you to be in communion with the holy martyrs." These words are deeply significant. The martyrs, from the notion of their powerful intercession with God, were considered to possess in a still higher degree the mediatory power of priests. Wherever, therefore, they were, there was the true Church, the authority of which lay more in the sanction of the martyrs, than in the determination of the bishop. Here, therefore, Felicissimus gained a grand point: he not only ensured for Cyprian much ill-will, provided he conscientiously did his duty, since, when the time for examination of cases came, he could not but have to refuse to many that which all boasted that they had received from the martyrs and confessors: a truly

devilish device, though not peculiar to the agitators of his day ; but also through these confessors he gave his own party the appearance of the true Church, and might retort the charge of schism upon Cyprian ¹.

This conduct of the confessors answered to the most of their desires the purpose of their unprincipled instigators. The lapsed demanded immediate conveyance of this grant of the confessors, and throughout all Africa rose and required its ratification by the bishops, some of whom, lacking the requisite firmness, were terrified into compliance. Cyprian was out of their reach, but they wrote to him in an insolent strain, and presuming upon having the confessors on their side, and through such tried saints, undoubted communion with the great Head of the Church, assumed that their body, in opposition to Cyprian and the body of the faithful, constituted the true Church, as if, as Cyprian observes, God was the God of the dead and not of the living. They wrote, therefore, to him in the name of the Church, insolently claimed that which was much to give even to the most abject petition, and asserted that it had been already granted in heaven. Cyprian, however, was not the person to be prevailed upon thus. He wrote in answer to them, pointing out the extreme absurdity of a body of men, dead in sin, calling themselves the Church of the living God, which, if they were, then he must crave to be admitted to the Church, and not they ; and he exhorted them to that humility and godly fear which became persons in their pitiable situation. Such was the work

¹ Ep. 9. 10. 16. 30. 40. 55.

which Felicissimus and his party prepared for Cyprian. And thus they were enabled to swell their ranks and fill their churches, and on such rotten support to assume an attitude of defiance to their bishop¹.

But time will declare and make manifest every man's work, and the fire of events will try it, of what sort it is. That of these agitators was doomed to turn out but hay and stubble, and Cyprian had a very early earnest of the peace which was to crown this painful struggle. He found support in the very ranks of the lapsed, many of whom, although they had received tickets, yet humbly and patiently waited the bishop's return, doing penance; and in letters, wherein they acknowledged their sin, said that the peace of the Church would be a greater boon when granted to them in his presence. He found also support in the confessors, and in all the bishops not only of his own province, but also across the sea, all of whom maintained his opinion that no steps should be taken in the case of the lapsed, until the Church could meet in council, and pronounce a sentence which should at once support discipline and be tempered with mercy². Among these supporters was more particularly the Church of Rome, whose presbyters in their epistle to him justly remarked, that "in so important a business they should in the first instance wait for the restoration of peace to the Church through cessation of the persecution, and then that the bishops, priests, deacons, confessors, and such of the laity as had stood faithful, should confer counsels,

¹ Ep. 27. 30.

² Ep. 40.

and take in hand the case of the lapsed. For that it seemed exceedingly invidious not to examine by means of many that which had been committed by many, and that one individual should pronounce sentence, when animadversion is to be made on a great crime widely diffused amongst a multitude: because that a decree cannot stand, which does not seem to have had the consent of a good number¹." In addition to all this encouragement from without, he had also the experience of divine admonition, both through visions of the night, and through the inspired extasies of children by day². Thus he continued unshaken by the violence of the storm which his factious enemies had raised around him.

One concession however he was induced to make, in which again he was countenanced by the provision of the Church of Rome. That Church, being still without a head, was forced to that suspense concerning the sentence of the lapsed which Cyprian had thought fit to adopt. But, with her usual leniency of discipline, she had provided that, in case of any one of the lapsed being overtaken by imminent peril of death, so as not to admit of further delay, then if he had, ever since his lapse, undergone penance and confessed his guilt with a thorough detestation of it, if he showed the tokens of a truly penitent heart by tears and groans, and weeping, and if no hope remained of his recovery, then he should be relieved, although with great caution and carefulness. The Church left to God the real state of the man, as to what he would do with him in

¹ Ep. 31.

² Ibid. 9.

pronouncing sentence, but in the mean time was desirous to steer such a safe middle course, that offenders might not praise her for too great facility, nor the truly penitent complain of her extreme harshness¹. The same course was taken by Cyprian. The summer was now at hand, which was a very sickly season in Africa, and therefore the case of the sick called for his provision. He ordered that if any one who had received a martyr's ticket should be overtaken by dangerous sickness, then he should confess to a priest, or if a priest was not at hand, and the case was urgent, to a deacon, and so through imposition of hands go to the Lord in that peace with the Church which the martyrs had by letter requested Cyprian to give².

During this time also Cyprian held a highly interesting correspondence with the confessors at Rome, at the head of whom were Moses and Maximus. With that affectionate fellow-feeling which then pervaded the yet unbroken body of the Church, they had written to their noble fellow-sufferers at Carthage, and exhorted them to the strict observation of the precepts of the Gospel and discipline of the Church. This letter arrived most opportunely to strengthen the hands of Cyprian. He answered it himself, and complimented them upon being the first to show the example of true Christian soldiership. They raised the standard of heavenly warfare, they gave the happy omen of successful battle, their courage imparted its character to the contest. And not only this, but they were consistent throughout in their

¹ Ep. 31.

² Ibid. 12. 14.

obedience, and exhorted others to the same. This was indeed to be a confessor of the Lord, and martyr of Christ. For to be ready to be a martyr for the sake of the Lord, and to endeavour to annul the commandments of the Lord, to use against him that weight of character which had been received from him, to rebel against him with those arms which he has given, this is to be ready to confess Christ, and to deny the Gospel of Christ. Cyprian's disappointment at the conduct of his own confessors is very evident in these observations¹. This letter was returned by a very gratifying answer, in which they tell him how they had been confirmed and comforted by his words, and assure him that he is not less worthy of the crown who exhorted than he who suffered, he is not less worthy of praise who taught than he who practised, he is not less to be honoured who counselled than he who fought. Such expressions, coming from a quarter where he had reason to think that his retreat was looked upon with a suspicious eye, must have given great comfort to Cyprian. They go on to speak in passionate and enthusiastic terms of the bliss and glory which awaits the martyr. They entreat his prayers for victory in their fight, and whom, they say, should we charge to ask these things for us, rather than so glorious a bishop?

They then proceed to approve of all his measures; how he had exhorted and comforted his confessors by frequent letters, how he had assisted them by his charity, how in a manner he had made himself present in all things at all times, and had never

¹ Ep. 25.

halted, like a deserter, in any part of his duty. Still more do they admire his firmness of conduct in the trying business of the lapsed, and applauding all his measures, condemn their contumacy¹. All this could not but be most gratifying ; and not long after his gratification was increased by the arrival of Celerinus, one of the number of these confessors, who brought with him assurances of the kind remembrance and affection in which he was held by the whole body. Moved by such demonstrations, he wrote a stirring letter to them, setting forth in glowing terms their glorious lot. They had now been imprisoned about a year. In allusion to this he says, " Now let the magistrates, and consuls, or proconsuls, go in the ensigns of their annual dignity, and glory in their twelve fasces. Behold ! in you celestial dignity is marked with the glorious ensigns of an annual honour, and by this time has passed the revolving circle of the year through the lasting endurance of triumphant glory. The rising sun and the setting moon were illuminating the world. But to you the same Being who created sun and moon, was a greater light in prison ; and the brightness of Christ, shining in your hearts and minds, irradiated with its pure and eternal light the darkness of the prisonhouse, which is so horrible and melancholy to others. Winter passed in its course through the vicissitudes of the months. But you, shut up in confinement, answered to the time of winter with the winter of persecution. To winter succeeded spring, gay with roses, and garlanded with flowers. But for you

¹ Ep. 26.

came roses and flowers from the delightful garden of Paradise, and celestial garlands crowned your head. Lo! summer comes, fruitful with abundant harvests, and the threshing-floor is full of corn. But you, who sowed glory, reap the harvest of glory, and placed on the threshing-floor of the Lord, behold the chaff burned with unextinguishable fire, while ye yourselves, like winnowed grains of wheat, and precious corn, having been now winnowed and laid up in store, reckon your prison a granary. Nor is autumn without its season of spiritual grace for the discharge of duty. The vintage is pressed out of doors, and the grape, to supply the cup, is trodden in the wine-fat. But you, full clusters as ye are from the vineyard of the Lord, and bunches of ripe grapes, trodden by the vexation of the trampling of the world, experience your winefat in the torture of your prison, and pour forth blood instead of wine: strengthened for the endurance of suffering, ye freely drink of the cup of martyrdom. Thus does the year roll on with the servants of God, thus the vicissitudes of the seasons is celebrated with spiritual deserts and heavenly records¹." Not long after receiving this letter, its readers were led out to their fate, and entered into the joy of their Lord.

(A. D. 251.) Thus Cyprian found abroad that consideration and support which many refused him at home. The contrast of the conduct of the confessors of his own Church with that of the Church of Rome, already sufficiently humiliating, soon after became acutely painful. Being set at liberty or

¹ Ep. 15.

returning from exile, several of them compensated for their long straitness of confinement by immoral licentiousness. So was thrown to the winds the claim of superior sanctity and of closer communion with God, upon which they had presumed, and undervalued the authority of their bishops. But spiritual insolence and pride only wants the proper temptation to induce it to unveil its essential carnality. These men had probably no great strength of genuine Christian principle at the outset. They may have been among those to whom instruction in prison by a priest or deacon would have been so serviceable. And they may have been confessors of any religion, since it seems to have been their natural rather than their spiritual constitution, that made the resistance, and their confidence rather than their faith that supported them. The deep reverence and brilliant honours paid to them while living, and the assured prospect of immediate translation to Paradise after death, were inducements quite sufficient to enlist candidates for the struggle who had little other qualification than ambition, physical courage, and power of bodily endurance. Besides, it is more easy for all men, especially for the ignorant, to resist the violence of men than the fraud of the devil, and they will also sooner overcome a temptation where the sin concerns either the acceptance or violation of some outward and bodily form, than where it involves the breach of some spiritual precept or moral rule. Men will shrink from eating forbidden meat, and will be horrified at the sight of superstitious ceremony, who will have no compunction whatever in defrauding their neighbour, or in

indulging their lust. We need not wonder then that they, who had readily resisted the palpable form of offering sacrifice and of burning incense, especially when it visibly embodied the abjuration of their religion, should fall before the invisible assault made upon their minds by the seductions of carnal appetite. They were the less prepared to stand, inasmuch as their minds, never very strong, had been corrupted by the effects of public applause, and by the power which had been conferred upon them by the factious and the lapsed. Thus they arrived at that spiritual presumption and false security which is the sure precursor to a grievous fall. And grievous indeed it was. Some did not scruple to defile the temples of their bodies, so lately hallowed by the grace of confession, and yield their members if not their consciences, to scandalous situations of uncleanness. Others gave themselves up to intemperance. Others, vainly puffed up, indulged in a reviling contentious spirit, and the tongue which had confessed Christ in heaven, was full of venom and spite against his brethren upon earth. Such persons, it is evident, were in the lower walks of life, and their parallel may be occasionally found in ignorant fanatics, among the lower orders of this country. They were addressed by Cyprian in a very earnest and affecting letter, in which he entreated them, not to tarnish the glory which they had acquired, to remember that the struggle was not over, to endeavour to gain increase to so auspicious a beginning. He reminded them how it was more difficult to keep than to obtain, and that it was not the acceptance of faith and regeneration, but the maintenance of them that gave

life ; that they had shown a brilliant example to the brethren, whom they must now lead with all carefulness, as faithful guides ¹.

His quarrel with the faction, to which this and all the other mischief was mainly attributable, was now coming to a crisis. Cyprian had made himself present among his distant flock, not only in spirit, but also in the works of the Spirit, and more particularly in looking to the relief of the needy and the prisoners, to whose necessities he largely contributed from his own purse no less than from the chest of the Church. He commissioned two bishops and two presbyters to minister to the wants of the brethren, not only of the utterly destitute, but also of such as were willing to exercise their trade, but yet needed assistance. He ordered them also to make out a list according to their ages, condition, and merits, so that he might promote the worthy, the humble, and the meek to ecclesiastical offices. In a business, which proceeded so immediately from the bishop's authority, and which could not but add much to his influence, Felicissimus was immediately ready with his opposition. As deacon he himself was concerned with the distribution of the money of the Church, and might, therefore, meet Cyprian with a similar influence. His violent opposition prevented both these intentions of Cyprian. He even went so far in the tyrannical exercise of his influence as to threaten the brethren, who first came up to receive Cyprian's distribution, that he would exclude from communion with his Church all who obeyed

¹ Ep. 6.

the bishop's order. He acted thus the part of the true schismatic ; the relief of the poor, the authority of the bishop, the discipline of the Church, were all to give way before the indulgence of his spite and the interests of his faction. By these and other acts he openly threw off all dependence upon his bishop, and proclaimed himself the head of a hostile party. Having already strong charges against him for embezzlement of money, and a serious one of unchastity, Cyprian was now moved to retort upon him his own sentence. He authorized the commission to excommunicate him, which was done accordingly, and some of his partizans were included in the same sentence¹. He followed up this step with an earnest address to his flock, entreating them not to listen to the disturbers of the public peace, pointing out the one and true Church, and exhorting them to firmness and perseverance².

(A. D. 251.) The faction of Felicissimus and his five presbyters, having strengthened themselves with large forces from the great body of the lapsed, was powerful enough to interpose a bar to the bishop's return for some time³. He had wished to be with his flock before Easter, by which means he would have been able both to enjoy its solemnities in the midst of his flock, and also to hold the synod of African bishops which used to meet at that season ; thus the suspense of the lapsed would have had a much more speedy termination. This, however, did not suit the purpose of their leaders, whose interests, as of all demagogues, were in reality quite

¹ Ep. 38, 39. 55.² Ibid. 40.³ Ibid.

opposed to those of their deluded followers. They became more violent, and the troubles which they raised would not allow him to leave his solitude, which every day grew more irksome. He longed to converse again with his Church in person, to give the private counsel, the public admonition, to receive and return the respectful salute and affectionate embrace. He could not refrain from tears and groans. It is true that he was not quite alone, for he had a few companions; neither, if he had been left quite to himself, could he have been said to be alone, who had Christ for his companion, or who, having in his body the temple of God, is never without God. Yet he had, what is the most intolerable loneliness of all, the distractions of the world continually intruding their carefulness into solitude. The mind has then but insufficient means of preventing them from eating deep into the core, and the anxiety is increased by distance and delay. A care which might have been alleviated, and even quite dispersed in a few hours on the spot, may thus be drawn out into many long and intricate folds, and may perplex for months. The mind is oppressed with a sense of helpless responsibility, and feels like a man who is bound to a tree to be shot at by persons with whom he could grapple most successfully hand to hand. Cyprian therefore, if he was first in rank, was also first in intensity of suffering among the confessors. Two years had nearly passed since his retreat, before at length he had the delightful assurance that he might leave it without exciting any tumult among the heathen, and without fearing any serious impediment from the schismatic.

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The imagination delights to dwell upon the meeting of such a bishop with his faithful clergy and people. He himself never forewent the vivid impression which was then made upon his mind. In after days, speaking of the return of Lucius, the Roman bishop, from a similar exile, he says, "Would that I could be present to experience the joyfulness of your return! What exultation of the brethren! what rushing into mutual embraces! The eyes of those that accompany you can scarcely be satisfied, the very faces and eyes of the people cannot be satiated, with the joyful sight of your return. Then the brethren began to understand what and how great shall be the joy which will accompany the coming of Christ, an image of which, since his advent will shortly be at hand, has already preceded in you; so that, as John coming as his harbinger and forerunner preached that Christ had come, so now, by the return of the bishop, who is priest and confessor of the Lord, it is seen that the Lord also is already on his return¹." With this general exultation would be mixed no unpleasing melancholy, when they missed several beloved faces, which could no more be seen in the Church below; and the mind would be carried to a still higher pitch of triumphant joy when it thought of the procession which had already taken place in happier regions, where the Church in heaven had opened her gates to receive the host of warriors returning from battle, and men and women, youths and virgins, entered in with crowns of glory on their brow. When the first

¹ Ep. 58.

fervour of joy had abated, and these long-parted children met once again in the house of their heavenly Father, with the sacrifice of prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving, many affecting incidents would offer themselves. Among the most interesting was the appearance of two new readers. One of them was a youth, named Aurelius, who had twice made a bold confession; first by undergoing banishment, and a second time by suffering torture. Cyprian thought him reserved by God's special interference, that the modesty and humility of the courageous youth might remain a living example to the people, of obedience to the discipline of the Church, and of sincere confession of her faith. The other was Celerinus, who came of a family of martyrs, his grandmother and two uncles, both on the father's and on the mother's side, having received the crown of martyrdom. He nobly maintained the rank and lustre of such lineage by being the first to suffer in the persecution, and, by victory in a desperate assault of imprisonment and torture for nineteen days, to clear the way for others to follow. Admirable yoke-fellows were these; and thrilling would be the impression on the hearts of their hearers, as they read in the Gospel the words of the Lord, and recited such passages as, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able." (Matt. xx. 22.) Their voices, which had pronounced their testimony to Christ, now proclaimed that Gospel which gave birth to martyrs, and, after having been heard with asto-

nishment by the heathen multitude in the forum, were now heard with joy by the brethren in the Church. How affecting was the sight of them who had exchanged the engine of torture for the reading-desk, and, having been a spectacle to the Gentiles on the one, were now a spectacle to Christians in the other! They were indeed lights set upon a candlestick to enlighten the spirits of their brethren. The number of priests also, which had been diminished by the lapse of several, was added to by the reception of Numidicus, who, having, by his exhortation, sent before him a large number of martyrs to be burned and stoned, and having seen his wife expire by his side in the flames, being himself left for dead, half-burned, and overwhelmed with stones, was drawn from underneath the heap by his daughter, who came in quest of the corpses of her parents, and was recovered¹. In such an assembly how fervent would be the thanks which they offered up, and with what tears of pious joy would they mention the names of those blessed martyrs who had gone forth from among them to their everlasting rest! But to counterbalance the general satisfaction was the large and visible gap made in their numbers by the lapsed and the schismatics. The absence of many well-known faces reminded them that there were some who mocked at this delightful reunion with the gall of envious bitterness in their hearts, and others were weeping tears of penitence and shame, and looking forward with fearful hope to the sentence which was

¹ Ep. 33, 34, 35.

shortly to decide their fate. This melancholy task immediately succeeded to the joy of Cyprian's return.

Accordingly, the African council met, and after the authority of Scripture had been produced on both sides of the question, came to a decision justly balanced between severity and leniency, so that the lapsed might not be driven to desperation and recklessness of living by hopeless exclusion; that discipline might be preserved by the exaction of long penance, and by the examination of the several cases as to their causes, and how far will and how far necessity had been concerned. Thus the Libellatics were admitted after penance, and even the Sacrificates, doomed to a life of penance, were to receive peace in the article of death¹. All the lapsed, however, were ever afterwards inadmissible to holy orders, and bishops and priests were deprived of their functions². The council also confirmed the sentence of excommunication which Cyprian had issued against Felicissimus and his supporters³. This treatment of the lapsed was also adopted by Cornelius, bishop of Rome, and his council⁴. But the sentence against Felicissimus drove him and his followers into measures of extreme violence. Collecting together five bishops, three of whom had been deposed for heresy or other crimes, one had lapsed, and a fifth been ordained by one of the three heretics; they, together with a few more who had been guilty of sacrifice, procured the ordination of one of the five presbyters, Fortunatus by name, as bishop of Carthage, in oppo-

¹ Ep. 52. 54.

² Ib. 60.

³ Ib. 55.

⁴ Ib. 52.

sition to Cyprian, giving out that twenty-five bishops had assisted. Felicissimus immediately hastened to Rome to procure the acknowledgment of that Church, and by his violence prevailed for a moment so far, that Cornelius hesitated. He, however, in the end met with a decided repulse. In this business Cornelius by no means acted with that frank decision which Cyprian had shown, when, on a similar embassy of Novatian's legate to procure his acknowledgment, against Cornelius, he dismissed him without a moment's parley. This extreme step of the faction was its ruin, and in a very short time Cyprian was enabled to assure his brother of Rome that Fortunatus was nearly deserted¹. He was, however, the second bishop which schism had opposed to him, and, though of a different sect, of the same origin. For Novatus had been all along the instigator of Felicissimus, and the prime author of all the discord which had arisen, especially respecting the lapsed, whose cause he was the first to espouse against Cyprian. Having done his worst in his native Church, he went to Rome, and was there the instigator of the schism of Novatian. Of course, if Cyprian could be attacked by him through this schism, the opportunity would not be neglected, and, accordingly, when the party had received the affront from Cyprian, of disowning Novatian when he asked the acknowledgment of his claims through his legate the presbyter Maximus, they elected this man bishop at Carthage, and embodied their spite and malignity in the sacred character of a Christian bishop.

¹ Ep. 55.

(A. D. 252.) The licentious conduct of some of the confessors shows that all the dross was far from having been purged away during the late persecution ; and the schisms which were tearing the Churches within, especially at Rome and Carthage, cried aloud for their usual constringer from without, when certain ominous sparks and flashes declared that the Almighty Refiner had so far from quenched his fire, that he was kindling it again for more effectual work than ever. Cyprian foresaw what was coming, and visions announced to the Church the approach of another trial. At their usual meeting the African council anxiously considered what should be done. The Church had never been overtaken in such a state before. A very large portion of her spiritual army was, as it were, in the hospital. It was, therefore, imperative upon them to use the most speedy means of communicating spiritual health and strength, and bring all her forces together into the camp. They, therefore, decreed that such of the lapsed as had remained in the Church, and had persisted all along in showing the signs of true penitence from the day of their lapse, should be re-admitted to communion. Thus the ranks were filled up again, and the lapsed, fortified with the body and blood of Christ, were ready to shed their blood in a glorious confession, and, having drunk of the cup of communion of the Lord's blood, were prepared for drinking of the cup of martyrdom¹. All this was highly agreeable, both to the foresight of Cyprian, who saw a much more desperate struggle

¹ Ep. 54.

than ever coming on, and also to his merciful disposition, which, notwithstanding the firmness with which he had resisted the prayers and the threats of the lapsed, when they demanded premature restoration, yet, when the danger was over, outran even the lenity of the people in affording facility of re-admission ¹.

This dreadful persecution was ushered in by as dreadful a precursor, which, while it guided, also delayed its steps. It was a public calamity, which, by absorbing all the attention of the heathen, gave to the Christians the suspense of a suspicious calm. It was as fuel heaped upon a fire, which, though at first it may seem to deaden, causes it afterwards to blaze out more fiercely than ever. A pestilence of a most frightful character raged through the empire. According to Cyprian's short description, it appears to have been a species of cholera ². Its indiscriminate severity offended some of the weaker members of his flock, who, in their foolish hearts, never considered that such visitations, however they involved the Christian outwardly, were unable to affect him inwardly, if indeed, like a true Christian, he placed all his enjoyment in the spirit, and not in the flesh, and laid up all his hopes in the next world, and not in this. Moreover, how could they expect that the Christian should be exempt from a general calamity of the world, while, as born of the flesh, he had all things in common with the world? Had it not, on the contrary, been foretold in Scripture that the Christian should suffer, beyond the rest, in a

¹ Ep. 55.

² de Mortal. p. 149.

world which was the furnace of his trial? But, as born of the Spirit, he was separated from the world, and therefore from the overwhelming despair and sorrow of the heathen. These and similar arguments Cyprian enforced in a treatise written especially on the occasion¹, for which, as well as for one addressed to Demetrian, in order to rebutt the usual calumnies of the pagans, who accused the Christians as the authors of the calamities of the empire, he found leisure amid the continual occupation of personal duty and oral admonition, and under the manifold vexations of spirit assailing him from without and from within the fold. He had, not long before, given up the few hours which he could command for his own use to a long and elaborate address to the brethren on the subject of the lapsed, and another on the unity of the Church, then in such jeopardy: and it was somewhere about this time also that he composed his tract upon the Lord's Prayer. Thus all his time, within doors and without, was given up to the care of his flock; and heart, and head, and hand, and tongue were incessantly occupied in promoting the glory of God.

On the present occasion he assembled his Church, and preached to them on the duty of charitable assistance, not only to the brethren, but also to them that were without. He reminded them, through passages of Scripture, how pleasing was this duty to God, and told them that Christians, imitators of their Lord in all things, must imitate him also in overcoming evil with good, and in that comprehensive

¹ de Mortalitate.

love with which he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. He had the satisfaction of finding his appeal answered to all his heart's desire. His people divided themselves into regiments as it were for this service of love, and neither the rich spared their money, nor the poor their labour. Every one was at his post, and the heathen derived help and comfort from the funds and from the energies of Christian charity. For some time the pestilence raged with dreadful fury, invading every house in turn, and carrying off the people rapidly and in heaps. The heathen exhibited the usual conduct of men who have no hope but in this world. They left the sick to perish without help, neglected the last rites to their memory, but eagerly hurried after the abundant spoil of worldly wealth which so general a mortality provided¹. But amid their cowardly flight, their heartless abandonment, their black despair, and helpless consternation, how sublime appeared the immoveable courage, the undisturbed calmness, the unwearied charity of the Christian, as he went in the strength of the faith of the Lord from sick to sick, and raised from the brink of the grave many an one, who, he could not but suspect, would be among the first to inform against him, and throw the stone in the approaching persecution; who had given earnest of what he would do by what he had done, when possibly he was the cause of death to the father, brother, or friend of the Christian who was now saving his life! But in such an occupation the

¹ Pontius. Cypr. ad Demetr. p. 394.

Christian was also disarming his foe, and preaching Christ with less interruption and with greater effect than ever. Many an alien's head and heart must then have been convinced, not only of the falsehood of the calumnies vented against the Christians, but also of the divine source of such undismayed confidence and unconquerable love. And he sought after it, and he found it. Thus the loss which the Church had sustained in her numbers, through the final apostasy of some of the lapsed, would be amply replaced by a supply of catechumens; and the dry and withered branches being broken off would make way for young and vigorous shoots. But we must not forget the effect upon other hearts, which were past feeling, and, not enduring to see under so lovely an appearance what they so deeply hated, were hardened by the sight into a more deadly hatred. They were but exasperated to fury by the trouble, and darkness, and dimness of anguish, and made but a deeper plunge into the pit of uncleanness and cruelty.

The persecution did not come so quickly as had been expected, at least with that violence which they dreaded. It was much more severely felt at Rome, where the bishop Cornelius, who had not quite completed one year of his pontificate, was sent into banishment, and shortly after died, and his successor Lucius was scarcely elected but he also was forced into exile. Cyprian had correspondence with both these bishops. With the former he had, as we have seen, much important intercourse on matters of business. Similarly situated, both with regard to their counsels respecting the lapsed, and to opposition

from falsely elected rivals, they were brought near to each other's hearts, and a brotherly love existed between them, of which we have a beautiful token in the affectionate and animating letter which Cyprian wrote to him in his exile. It was the last his brother ever received from him¹. To the latter he wrote on a more joyful occasion, which was his return². In one respect the news which reached Cyprian from Rome was highly gratifying. The lapsed, who had been restored on the same footing as at Carthage, most gallantly redeemed their former default, and amply justified the measures which had been taken in their case. Cyprian therefore could look forward with confidence when the crisis of the trial should arrive in his own Church.

(A. D. 253.) In the following year was brought before the African council a subject of great importance in the history of infant Baptism, inasmuch as it shows the custom never to have been disputed in that Church, being here supposed as a matter of course. One Fidus had communicated his opinion that infants should not be baptized within the second or third day after birth, but should be deferred until the eighth, according to the ancient law of circumcision. Cyprian, constituting with his colleagues a body of sixty-six bishops, wrote in their name, and maintained the propriety of baptizing infants at any time, however early. All, he said, from the moment of birth, whether infants or advanced in years, are equal, as to title, to an equal share of divine grace; of which fact a type was given by Elisha when he

¹ Ep. 57.

² Ibid. 58.

stretched himself upon the child, head to head, and foot to foot¹. God has no more respect for ages than for persons. As to the eighth day, that was merely a type, prefiguring the real eighth day, which is the first after the seventh, that is, the Lord's day, on which he rose, and gave us life and spiritual circumcision. But when the reality had come, the type of course ceased. Besides, if there be no impediment to the reception of grace, even when most grievous sinners come in faith to that sacrament, how much less in the case of an infant who has never sinned, except so far as he has contracted by his birth the contagion of death from Adam, and who comes to receive forgiveness of sin the more easily, inasmuch as not his own sins but another's are remitted to him. Indeed, so far from infants being properly hindered from this grace, they are the fitter objects both of our help and of divine mercy, on this very account, that weeping and wailing at their very birth they do nothing else than implore and intreat².

With these public cares were mixed many of a more private nature, amongst which we may select his generous relief of some Christians, who, amid the distractions of the empire in those miserable times, had been carried away captives from Numidia by an incursion of barbarians. Nothing can be more beautiful than the spirit of the letter with which he accompanies the donations of himself and other con-

¹ "Foot to foot" is an addition of Cyprian's, who seems here, after Origen's fashion, to think the allegorical sense the only true one, the literal being impossible, according to his quotation of the passage, as he confesses.

² Ep. 59.

tributors. All being members of one body, a portion of ourselves, he says, is in captivity, and their suffering is our suffering. Moreover they are temples of God, and we must not allow the temples of God to remain in captivity. They have also put on Christ, and in them therefore we must consider Christ, and redeem him from the peril of captivity, who has redeemed us from the peril of death. And, again, if our Lord says, "I was in prison, and ye visited me," with how much greater approbation and reward will he say, "I was captive, and ye redeemed me!" To this letter were appended the names of the contributors, among which were not only those of the clergy and people of Carthage, but also of bishops of other Churches, who were then at Carthage, and who subscribed both in their own names and in that of their flock. The sum contributed by each was set against his name, and this earliest recorded Christian subscription amounted to about 800*l.*¹

(A. D. 254.) The situation of Cyprian, although restored to his Church, had been far from easy all this time, as to what might come from the heathen. He had been again demanded for the lion by the infuriated populace at the circus¹. It was therefore hard indeed to be attacked with gross calumny and uncharitable censure by men calling themselves Christians, who poured continually into the ear of the weak-minded those prejudices against Cyprian which they well understood how to infuse, and well knew that when infused could never be removed. Among

¹ Ep. 60.

² Ep. 55.

such fit recipients of their venom was one Pupianus, who had been a confessor in the persecution, and, like too many others, not having strength of mind sufficient to bear his honours meekly, was puffed up, and probably, like them, offended at Cyprian's independent conduct, when they thought to subject him to their conclave. The misrepresentations which he had so readily listened to, had such full effect upon him, that, even after such a length of time had elapsed that he might have satisfied himself, had he been willing, of their falsehood, he wrote to Cyprian calling upon him to satisfy him, otherwise he must retain his scruples against communicating with him, and deny the validity of his ordination. He taxed him with unbecoming pride, bidding him remember that priests ought to be humble, forasmuch as the Lord and his Apostles were humble. He accused him also of being the cause of the divided state of the Church; and maintained that all who communicated with him were polluted by his polluted mouth, and had lost the hope of eternal life through the contagion of his communion. Such a letter shows what Cyprian had to contend with. When he retired to his chamber from the peril of appearance in public, from personal remonstrances with the lapsed, from the insolence of the schismatic, from the railing of the heretic, there, if he was not even still pursued by these vexations, and if he did not overhear the distant clamour of the circus which demanded his life, he was met by such letters as this, ready for him amidst the heap of anxious and perplexing correspondence which he was obliged to maintain. It might have been said of him in a

manner as St. Paul had said of himself, " His flesh had no rest, but he was troubled on every side ; without were fightings, within were fears." (2 Cor. vii. 5.) His answer seems to have been dictated in a moment of infirmity produced by the irritation of so many and importunate calls upon his patience. It is in a strain remarkably different from that of all the rest, and we cannot but imagine him as having just laid down Tertullian when he set himself to write it. He drops entirely his prevailing characteristic of gentle and polished courtesy, and answers his accuser with severe rebuke, contemptuous irony, and indignant self-vindication. He had been bishop, he says, six years ; had all along received the acknowledgment and communion of holy martyrs, who wrote to him from their prisons ; been acknowledged by fellow-bishops, who had testified to Christ under proscription, bonds, exile, and death ; by confessors who still bore the scars of their glorious wounds ; by pure virgins ; by honourable widows ; by all the Churches throughout all the world : and yet Pupianus forsooth, setting himself up as bishop of a bishop and judge of a judge, must hold an inquisition upon him, and be satisfied before he will communicate with him. He retorts by declining communion with him, unless he shall come to a better mind, and, after a solemn assertion of communion with Christ through a vision, in answer to the ridicule which the party of Pupianus threw upon his visions and dreams, says in conclusion, " This answer I have written from a pure conscience, and from a trust in my Lord and God. You have my letters, and I yours. Both will be recited in the

day of judgment before the tribunal of Christ¹." There are few, it is to be hoped, who will not excuse this single exception to the kind and courteous tone of Cyprian's correspondence, putting it down to that strong provocation, to which human nature, however far recovered from native corruption, will occasionally yield, and recollecting that such a strain is the rule and not the exception with Tertullian and Jerome. But at the same time they must own that it is not worthy of the gravity of Cyprian's office or character, and will heartily regret that it was ever written, and that when written it should have been preserved.

There now happened two occasions on which Cyprian, as shepherd of the whole flock of the Catholic Church, looked beyond his own particular fold, and gave help to colleagues in a distant pasture. Both arose among the many consequences which followed the lapse in the late persecution. One occurred in Spain, where the people of Leon, Astorga, and Merida, had deposed their bishops Basilides and Martialis, for having been among the Libellatics, besides being guilty of other grave offences. Basilides had indeed resigned from a sense of unworthiness, and, putting himself under penance, reckoned himself sufficiently fortunate in being allowed to communicate as a laic. He did not however persevere in this becoming frame of mind, being very probably encouraged by the party of the lapsed, which was now stirring divisions in every Church, and advised by worldly-minded friends, in whom

¹ Ep. 69.

Satan always finds his surest allies. Desirous of restoration, he went to Rome, and misrepresenting his case to the bishop Stephen, of whose impetuous character we have here a foretaste, he so far prevailed, through the ignorance of the true case which distance produced, as to have no unfavourable answer. Thus emboldened, both he and Martial pretended to resume their episcopal functions, and afford a melancholy example of men in so responsible a situation, having the daring effrontery to pretend to guide a flock which had deliberately and legitimately rejected them as unworthy. Under these difficulties the clergy and people had recourse to Cyprian, who now for the first time appears opposed to Stephen, and sent over Felix and Sabinus, whom they had elected as the new bishops, to represent the case, and procure his acknowledgment. The matter was referred to the African synod, and in his and their name Cyprian expresses his full approval of what the people had done, and recognizes their new bishops in a letter, which is remarkable both for the light which it throws on the mode of electing bishops at that day, which will be noticed hereafter, and for the opinion which Cyprian expresses on the invalidity of the ministration of an unworthy minister. He very properly observes that a Church cannot expect her prayers to be heard which offers them through a man whom she knows to be unacceptable to God, and permits his services when it is in her power to reject them¹; that therefore they should also take care to elect none but such as should be

¹ Ep. 68. See also Ep. 70. 72.

without moral spot or blemish, for that "no man that hath a blemish shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord." (Levit. xxi. 21.) He goes however farther than this, and asserts the necessity of personal holiness in the priest towards the validity of his ministration of the sacraments, under all circumstances. "In our ordinations," he says, "we ought to choose none but the unspotted and unblemished, who may offer sacrifices to God holy and worthily, and be heard in the prayers which they make for the health and wealth of the Lord's people, since it is written, 'God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.'" (Joh. ix. 31.) Wherefore the utmost diligence, and earnest inquiry and trial, is requisite in the choice of priests, that we may be assured of their being heard of God." Cyprian here commits the very error of confounding the visible and invisible Church, which he objected to Novatian¹, and falls into a vulgar but most serious mistake regarding the character of priestly ministration, as if it were so mediatorial that the prayers of the people, however heartily offered, and however in accordance with all outward and prescribed means, may be hindered and rendered null by an invisible obstacle in the ministry. It must be granted that this is a natural prejudice, and requires for its dissipation much experience co-operating with a large comprehension of the scheme of the Gospel. It was but half-dissipated by the time of the reformation, when, moved by the consideration of reserving power to

¹ Ep. 52. p. 130.

the priesthood, the Church of Rome at the council of Trent finally sanctioned the doctrine that the internal state of the minister, as to his purity indeed of heart, did not interpose any bar to the efficacy of his outward ministration, but that the intention of his heart did¹. It was reserved for a more dispassionate and less interested body of men to lay down the simple and general truth, that the office of the priest is merely instrumental, depending for its efficacy not on any intrinsic quality of the priest, but on the commission of Christ; that he is the appointed channel and mouthpiece of Christ on one side, and of the people on the other; that he ministers not in his own name, but in Christ's; so that all who hear and receive rightly and by faith on their own part, are not hindered in the grace of God's gifts, by individual defect on his part². Thus at length the dictate of the natural and unprobed feeling, which, laying too much stress upon the character of the inward man, made a whole Church dependent upon one individual for the efficacy of its ordinances, was supplanted by the counsel of common sense; which perceives that, if once it be established that the worthiness of the people cannot, under every provision that they are capable of making, prevail before God against the unworthiness or secret intention of their minister, all confidence in the reception of grace through Christ's outward institutions, and in the efficacy of common prayer and public preaching, must be lost. Whether this proposition also may not have been pushed to

¹ Council of Trent, Session vii. On the Sacraments in general. Canon 11, 12.

² See our 26th Article.

the extreme in practice, and have rendered us too indifferent to the quality of personal holiness in the stewards and ministers of God's holy Word and sacraments, is a question well worthy of deep and anxious consideration.

The other occasion arose in France, where the Church of Lyons once again comes to view in a transitory flash of notice amid the deep obscurity which had succeeded to its brightness under Irenæus. Its bishop, Faustinus, was at the head of a requisition of the bishops of that province to Cyprian, entreating his interference on a matter in which they had already entreated that of Stephen, to whom their nearer neighbourhood would direct their application in the first instance. He complained of Marcian, bishop of Arles, who had espoused the party of Novatian, and had refused all communion to the lapsed of his Church, in defiance of the remonstrances of his episcopal colleagues. The answer of Cyprian is a most interesting document, not only because it displays the intimate union which now connected the various Churches, and more especially the college of their bishops, but also because it exemplifies the power which arose out of it. A bishop had now to answer not only to his own flock, but also to the Catholic Church. By refusing to hold communion with him, the presidents of the neighbouring Churches, in the first instance, obtained the power of a veto upon his election; and the sanction of the heads of such Churches as Rome and Carthage, in the next place, was found necessary in case of any opposition. This contributed much to the repression of schism. One side was certain to have such a

preponderating weight from external influence as to crush its adversary. But at the same time such compactness of government must press very hard and unfairly in some individual cases. Its certain end is the subjection of the many to the few, and the public peace is maintained at an enormous expense of liberty. In the present instance it is difficult to see how Marcian, with the consent of his flock, had not as much right to acknowledge Novatian, as Cyprian had to reject him, and as much right to exercise in his own Church that discipline which he thought most suitable to the occasion, as Cyprian had in his. It is true that Cyprian urges the excommunication of Novatian by all the bishops of the Catholic Church, having also himself been most anxious that all the Churches should conspire in one treatment of the lapsed; and it is true that universal consent in such a matter was highly desirable. But what was all this to Marcian, if in good conscience and charity he thought otherwise? Had Novatian and his discipline been condemned by vote of even a general council, rather than by the consent of individual bishops, it is not evident how any interference in his administration of his Church could be justified, especially in an occasional matter of discipline. If Cyprian could have foreseen the result of thus subjecting the independence of a particular Church to the general voice, if his mind could have anticipated the assumptions that would be made by that very bishop whom he charged with the execution of what he seems to consider as a decree of the universal Church, he would have been the first to reconsider his opinion. How portentous are some of his sentences,

when read by the light of following ages! His letter is addressed to Stephen, and he says, "Direct letters to the province, and to the people at Arles, that they should appoint another bishop in the place of Marcian, whom you have excommunicated. Let us help the survivors, who groan day and night, and, imploring the Divine and Fatherly mercy, ask the comfort of our assistance. For to this very purpose is there a numerous body of bishops, joined in the cement of mutual concord, and in the bond of unity, that if any one of our college should attempt to set up heresy, and to worry and scatter the flock of Christ, the rest may come to its assistance, and, like useful and merciful shepherds, gather the Lord's sheep into flock. For if a port have become dangerous, must not recourse be had to the nearest that are safe; and if an inn on the road be beset by robbers, must not the traveller seek others which are more safe? So our brethren, who, having been tossed on the rocks of Marcian, seek the safe ports of the Church, and, having been wounded by robbers, seek a secure inn, such as the parable in the Gospel represents, should be received by us with humane hospitality. So let Marcian not give sentence, but receive it, nor act as judge of the college of bishops, when, in fact, he has been judged by all of them. For we must uphold the honour of the blessed martyrs, our predecessors, Cornelius and Lucian, whose vicar and successor you are become. For they, full of the Holy Spirit, and in the glory of martyrdom, granted peace to the lapsed after penance. And this has been the resolution of us all everywhere. For there could not be difference of

opinion among us, in whom is one spirit. And, therefore, it is manifest that he does not hold the truth of the Holy Spirit conjointly with the rest, whom we see to be of a different opinion¹." The whole letter runs in this high and imperious strain, nor is the least reference made to the opinions or feelings of Marcian's own Church. And yet he must have been supported by at least the majority, if we may argue from the silence of Cyprian as to accusation or deposition having been pronounced by its voice, either of which he would have been very ready to mention if they had happened. We find also a difference in the administration of the same Apostolical discipline, termed heresy, because it was contrary to the general opinion of the bishops, and derogatory to the respect due to two martyrs of high rank. And Marcian is accused of destitution of the Spirit because he disagrees with the general voice. According to such argument, the grossest error will become truth at the general voice of the Church of the day, and submission to it may be forced upon any member of that Church which is too weak to resist. What a commentary is made upon this position by the succeeding history of the Church !

(A. D. 255.) When Cyprian met the rest of the African bishops in council next year, a question of great moment was stirred by the application of the Numidian bishops. They desired to know whether they should reckon as valid or not the baptism by heretics and schismatics, and, therefore, should not or should rebaptize persons coming over to the

¹ Ep. 67.

Church from heresies and sects. It was very necessary to determine such a point, because, from the very nature of baptism, as being a sign of regeneration, it must not be repeated; and, therefore, the Church ran the hazard of committing the sin either of repetition, or of withholding so essential a sacrament. The question had been mooted early, especially in the African Church. To say nothing of the opinion of Tertullian, which he expressed both on behalf of his Church and of his sect, condemning heretical baptism, on the ground that heretics held neither the same God nor the same Christ, nor communicated with the Church¹, that Church itself, assembled in council under Agrippinus, bishop of Carthage, had determined, by the voices of the African and Numidian bishops, that all baptism, administered out of the Church, was null and void². The same rule had been laid down in Asia by a council of Cilician, Galatian, Cappadocian, and other bishops assembled at Iconium, when they took into consideration the case of the Montanists, and also by one which met at Synneda³. And the Church of Alexandria seems to have had the same custom, at least as far as heretics were concerned⁴. On the contrary, the Roman Church accepted of any baptism, provided it had been administered, not only in the name of the Trinity, without any reference to the belief of the minister on this point, but even of Christ alone, so that even the baptism of the Mar-

¹ De Baptism. 15. de Pudic. 19. The former was written before he became Montanist.

² Cypr. Ep. 70, 71. ³ Ep. Firmil. and Euseb. E. H. vii. 7.

⁴ Clem. Alex. Strom. i. 96. Euseb. E. H. vii. 7.

cionites was allowed. Hence, while the other party put the candidates under these circumstances in the list of catechumens, she admitted them at once by imposition of hands only¹. The Novatians, whom Cyprian rebaptized, Stephen was content with introducing by this simple rite.

The point really concerned in the controversy was this. Is the gift of the Holy Ghost inseparable or not from the remission of sins in baptism? Imposition of hands was considered to impart the former; immersion, in the name of the Trinity, to confer the latter². Maintaining their inseparability, Cyprian argued that, as no one, according to our Saviour's words in John xx. 22, 23, can have power to remit sin unless he have the Holy Ghost, then, if the immersion of heretics be reckoned valid, they must have the Holy Ghost, and if they have the Holy Ghost, then of course they can confer it³. He, therefore, decided against the validity of their immersion in the very first instance, as comprehending the whole question between them and the Church. If that was allowed, he did not see where the consequences could stop in their favour. The other party did not enter into this argument, but were content to urge tradition in reply⁴. This council confirmed Cyprian's opinion; but so important was the subject considered, that it was again taken up by another council of African and Numidian bishops, to the number of seventy-one, which

¹ Ep. Cypr. 73. 74. Ep. Firmil. Euseb. E. H. vii. 2.

² Cypr. 59. 73. Euseb. E. H. vi. 43.

³ Cypr. Ep. 71. 74. 76.

⁴ Ep. Firmil.

came to the same conclusion¹, adding, that priests and deacons who had gone over to heresy, or been ordained by heretics, should be admitted to lay communion, and ought to be thankful for the indulgence². But as Stephen had entered upon the subject, and disputed it with some of the Eastern Churches, and since Cyprian was always desirous of being in good correspondence with Rome, the Carthaginian bishop, in the name of the council, wrote to inform his Roman brother of the result, sending him also the synodal letter of the former council, and one of his own, explanatory of his views, which he had written to Quintus, a bishop in Mauritania. The conclusion of his letter clearly anticipates a disagreement on Stephen's part, and hints at his obstinacy, of which he had, without doubt, already seen a specimen in the treatment which the Eastern bishops had experienced; and it deprecates, at the same time that it evidently expects, a rupture of that harmony which ought to prevail between them, and a spirit of dictation unsuitable to the independence of those who have to answer to no one but to their Lord³.

He was not disappointed here. Irritated with the quarrel in which he was already engaged in the East, and now finding an opponent, and a most formidable one for weight of character, almost at his own door, and at the head of a Church which had always been desirous of going hand in hand with Rome, the coarse, unlearned, and unmannerly Roman, after having treated his legates with marked contumely,

¹ Cypr. Ep. 73.

² Ibid. 72.

³ Ibid. 36.

refusing them not only the spiritual communion but even the hospitality of himself and the brethren, answered his letter with a tissue of ignorant assertion, impertinent and inconsistent argument, and arrogant assumption. He insisted upon observing that which he maintained to be an Apostolic tradition, vouchsafing to remark that the heretics themselves did not rebaptize each other's converts, and that the Apostles themselves did not rebaptize such as came over to them from the heretics. This specimen of his powers of argument, and depth of learning, was accompanied with no little abuse. He called Cyprian a false Christ, a false apostle, a fraudulent workman. Cyprian however maintained his dignity, and in a calm letter to Pompey, a fellow bishop, makes some observations on the real value of tradition, which are as little to the digestion of Stephen's successors as they were to his. "Custom without truth is antiquity of error," is one of his pithy remarks, which now, more than ever, may be applied to the accumulation of fond errors which time has built up in the Church of Rome. But his patience was severely tried, and to exercise himself the better in this essential quality of the true follower of Christ, he sat down amid his troubles to write a treatise upon it, which accompanied a letter written to Jubaianus, a brother bishop, who had requested his opinion on the subject of the controversy. He there finely describes the examples shown by God, by Christ, and by godly men, besides retailing the usual arguments. To one who would wish to become most readily acquainted with

Cyprian's manner, it presents for perusal a good specimen of his style in a short compass.

(A. D. 256.) This controversy brought him into correspondence with quarters to which the Church of Carthage had never before extended her view. She had formerly been contented to take Rome as her guide, having her in full view from her remote corner, while the Eastern Church, including even Alexandria, on the same continent with herself, was quite lost to her. But now that she had quarrelled with her authority, she was compelled to look round the corner, and desired support and encouragement. At the first glance she found the Eastern churches on her side, engaged in the same quarrel with the same enemy. At the head of their confederacy stood Firmilian, bishop of Cappadocia, a man of remarkable influence in his day. His name has already occurred more than once, and especially as a devoted friend, and almost pupil, of Origen's. From such instruction he would not derive any signal affection towards Rome, or respect either for her authority or pretensions. He had, therefore, already come to an open rupture with Stephen, who had renounced all communion with him, and the churches which, together with him, persisted in maintaining the acts of the council of Iconium¹. It must have been therefore with great joy that this sturdy old Asiatic received letters from Cyprian, and found an ally in a bishop whose name was illustrious in all Christendom, and support in a Church of no mean celebrity ;

¹ Ep. Firmil. Euseb. E. H. vii. 5.

besides that both had hitherto been in close alliance with his enemy, and were among the conspicuous ornaments of the Western Church. His delight would be that of a general who found allies in the enemy's camp. He met Cyprian's advances with warm heartiness, and replied in a letter of which the Latin translation by Cyprian is still extant, the sole survivor of several works. But no ill-treatment, however gross and unmerited, can excuse the bitter spirit which pervades this letter of an eminent Christian bishop. As excluded from his communion he might have been right, had it been but from a principle of conscious dignity, in omitting to give Stephen the usual title of brother. But he goes on to speak in the harshest terms of his incivility, his audacity, his insolence, his folly, and compares his merit in having procured for himself (Firmilian) the benefit of Cyprian's friendship to that of Judas, whose perfidy and treason towards Christ procured such benefits for mankind. He discusses the question in dispute with much acuteness, but with still more violence, with much argument, but with still more personal reflection. The rude and haughty Roman met at least his match in this uncourteous champion. And Cyprian, however gratified he might have been with this accession to his strength, and however disgusted and provoked at the outrageous demeanour of Stephen, could never have allowed his kind and courteous nature to approve of such an exhibition of unrestrained unevangelical temper. It was necessary, however, to lay it before the African bishops, and it was therefore translated, and, as the style shows, by his own hand.

It now seemed necessary to Cyprian to decide the question in the most solemn manner, and with all the authority possible. Another Council therefore was called. Of the foregoing we have seen that the first contained the bishops of one province only, Africa; the second those of two, Africa and Numidia. These now met the bishops of all the three North African provinces, of Africa, of Numidia, and of Mauritania, to the number of eighty-seven, together with priests and deacons, the majority of the laity also being present. This was at Carthage in the month of August of the same year. Cyprian opened the debate, referring them to his correspondence with Jubaianus, a bishop who had consulted him on the question. After proposing that all freedom of opinion and practice should be allowed amongst themselves on the subject, a point which he had all along insisted on, and briefly alluding to the tyrannical conduct of Stephen, who would set himself up as bishop of bishops, whereas they had no one to whom to render account but Christ at the day of judgment,—he called upon each bishop to deliver singly his opinion. One after another they rose up in unanimous determination that all baptism conferred without the Church was null and void. Both heretics, therefore, and schismatics were to be rebaptized before admission to communion. The series of speakers was terminated by Cyprian himself, who again referring for the full explanation of his sentiments to his letter to Jubaianus, ended the debate by pronouncing, that heretics, when they came over to the Church, must receive its one and only real baptism. The acts of this Council are fortunately

preserved, and give us a most interesting insight into these primitive diets, at the same time that they throw some light upon provinces and churches which had otherwise lain in utter darkness. As he reads the mixture of Punic, Numidian, and Roman names of places and persons, the reader is struck with many historical recollections, and reflects deeply on the singular worldly policy of the Roman, which could unite such discordant materials into one political body, and still more deeply on the unworldly efficacy of the wisdom of God, which could cement them as lively stones into one temple through the Spirit. He is then reminded that the one was but the preparation in the designs of God's providence for the other; and in one view he sees the means and the end, and admires the unconscious ministry of selfish man to the merciful designs of a redeeming God.

Here we come to an end of all that has been reported concerning this celebrated controversy. Notwithstanding, however, the imposing appearance and decisive tone of this last Council, its voice never prevailed in the Church; and in the eighth canon of the first Council of Arles, which met only fifty-eight years after this, the Africans are already reckoned singular in their custom. Nor was Stephen's high station and resolute determination more fortunate. His voice was equally disregarded. For, while in its eighth canon the first general Council of Nice, but sixty-nine years after this time, decides, against Cyprian and his African Council, that the ordination of the Novatianist clergy shall be reckoned valid on their coming over to the Church, and much more therefore would their baptism be allowed,—at

the same time in its nineteenth it decides against Stephen in ordering the Paulianists to be rebaptized. The prevalent opinion of the Church took that middle direction which common sense seems to dictate, namely, that such baptism only should stand as had been administered in the name of the Trinity by one who was not known to hold wrong opinions concerning the Trinity¹. In descending towards our own times, in the examination of this point, we cannot but be struck by the decided variation from Stephen's opinion pronounced from the mouth of his own Church at the Council of Trent, which lays an anathema on all "who shall maintain that the baptism which is given even by heretics, *in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*, with the intention of doing what the Church does, is not true baptism²." So much for the tradition of this Church, on which both Stephen and this Council³ insisted. The opinion of our Anglican Church is readily inferred from the questions put after private baptism, however they might not have had immediate reference to this point.

With this question, however, we have comparatively but little concern at this day. But there is another very closely connected with it, in which the whole Western Church has reason to feel a lively interest. And on this also we have the opinion of Cyprian, and are glad to quote his authority. He was consulted upon the validity of clinic baptism, so called because it was administered to a sick person

¹ Sess. vii. de Baptism. Can. 4.

² Ibid.

³ Sess. vii. de Sacram. procem.

in bed, or at all events so circumstanced as to be unable to undergo immersion, and therefore was conveyed by the imperfect means of sprinkling. In his answer, he maintains that grace cannot be hindered by imperfect form where there is perfect faith on the part of the giver and receiver, and quotes passages from the Old Testament in favour of sprinkling as a means of spiritual purification. He denies that the quantity of grace, given as it is without measure, should be measured by the quantity of water; and justly observes that, since it was not lawful to rebaptize the clinic, it would be hard indeed that his baptism should be reckoned defective, and that he should not be fully entitled to the name and privileges of a Christian. Such an opinion, which however he submits with all deference to those who think otherwise, speaks the dictates both of common sense and common charity. Yet in other quarters so strong was the prejudice against this form of baptism, that the Roman clergy most unwillingly, and as by solitary exception, allowed their bishop to ordain the clinic Novatian to the priesthood, crying out with one voice that it was not allowable to admit a clinic to any clerical office². And so lasting was it, that about sixty years after this the Council of Neo-Cæsarea, in its twelfth canon, excludes the clinic from the office of priest, unless in the case of high character, or pressing necessity for his services through a scarcity of clergymen. It should however be observed, that the main objection here was to the spirit in which the clinic most

¹ Cypr. Ep. 76. Euseb. E. H. vi. 43.

² Euseb. Ibid.

commonly requested baptism, having delayed it until he thought death was approaching in order that he may proceed in sinful indulgence, and obtain pardon in the end through the forgiveness conveyed in this sacrament. Were, indeed, the objections to the employment of this form well founded, all legitimate administration must have long since ceased in the Western Church.

(A. D. 257.) But now comes a truce to all questions and differences, and the noisy threats of Stephen are drowned in the storm and whirlwind of persecution. The intolerable calamities which afflicted the empire almost drove men into madness. And whenever they are more especially the cause of their own misfortunes, then they are more especially eager to discover it in others rather than in themselves. And since rational argument always fails them, they purposely lash themselves into a more furious hatred of those whom they accuse, so that they may satisfy their hearts, if not their understandings, with conviction. For feeling has always been found a very convenient substitute for conscience. Hence the Christians were denounced by the public voice of the heathen as the authors of the general calamities, bringing upon the empire the displeasure of the gods whom they so impiously denied. But their persecutors would not see the true cause, which lay in the general degeneracy and corruption whereby moral restraint was relaxed, the bonds of society were dissolved, public confidence was destroyed, public spirit was extinguished, and nothing remained to sustain such authority as was sufficient for public peace but the hand of brute

force, a most dangerous, uncertain, and in the end destructive instrument. The influence of salutary laws, obeyed by healthy minds, is to exalt and strengthen them. But the sword of despotic power, being both capriciously wielded, cunningly eluded, and uncertainly obeyed, degrades the mind, and inures it both to the artifice of the timid, and to the audacity of the desperate, slave. Noble spirits like Cyprian, standing upright amid the general prostration, saw so much the more clearly the miserable wreck of their country, so much the more keenly felt their degradation, and needed all the consolation which hope and faith could supply in the prospect of a better country. Continual war, now civil, now foreign, and now both together, desolated the empire¹, with their usual accompaniments of pestilence and famine, and Cyprian's mind beheld the world staggering in all the debility of old age, saw the day of judgment visibly approaching nearer and nearer, and Antichrist about commencing his career, and ushering in the end and consummation². Amid such ominous tokens arose the persecution of Valerian.

It was on the thirtieth of August this year, that Cyprian was called upon to confess to Christ before the proconsul Paternus, who thus addressed him: "The most sacred emperors Valerian and Gallienus have vouchsafed to write and charge me to see that

¹ Ad Demetrian. p. 391.

² See his expressions at the end of the treatise de Mortalitate, and at the beginning of the letter to Fortunatus on Martyrdom, &c.

they who do not observe the religion of Rome should recognize the ceremonies of Rome. I have made enquiry, therefore, concerning you. What answer do you make me?" -The answer was, "I am a Christian and a bishop. I acknowledge no other gods but the one and true God, who hath made heaven and earth, the sea, and all things that are therein. This God it is whom we Christians serve, to whom we pray day and night for you and for all men, and for the health and wealth of the emperors themselves." The proconsul said to this, "Do you then persevere in this resolution?" The bishop replied, "A good resolution, which recognizes God, cannot be altered." "Can you then, according to the command of Valerian and Gallienus, go in exile to the city of Curubis?" continued the proconsul: "I go," said the bishop. Still the proconsul proceeded to say, "The emperors have vouchsafed to write to me not only respecting bishops, but presbyters also. I wish, therefore, to learn from you, who are the presbyters in this city?" Cyprian's high spirit prompted him to reply, "You have well and wisely enacted by your laws not to admit informers. Therefore they cannot be discovered and denounced by me. But they will be found in their cities." "I make enquiry after them on this day and in this place!" said the magistrate. "Since our discipline," answered the bishop, "forbids that any one should voluntarily come forward and offer himself, and since this is also contrary to your laws, they cannot offer themselves: but on your enquiring after them they will be found." "They shall be found by me," said the magistrate, adding, "the emperors have also

given orders that no assemblies be held in any places, and that none enter the cemeteries. If then any one shall not observe this salutary order, he shall suffer capital punishment." "Do what is bidden you," was the answer of Cyprian, who was then ordered into banishment¹.

The sentence was milder than could have been expected, for Curubis was not one of those dreary solitudes which were commonly assigned for exile. It was pleasantly situated on the sea-shore, had the agreeable accompaniments of verdure and good water, and was of easy access. Nor was he deprived of all society. On the contrary, he was allowed to take with him a train of attendants, among whom was his faithful deacon and biographer Pontius; and this society also was varied by the continual visits of the brethren, who brought him with them not only the enjoyment of their own company, and news concerning his Church, but also supplies to his bodily comforts and convenience from his faithful flock, which would not allow him to feel a single want, or experience a change of fare from change of place. Still all their arts could not avail to disturb the comparative solitude of the spot, and to disperse the inactivity of its inhabitants. It was therefore natural that the ever-active mind of Cyprian, in want of its usual large supply of food from without, would feed deep upon its inward stores of reflection and imagination. Amidst this absorption of his attention he had the visit of visions, in one of which God vouchsafed him a clear and remarkable image of his future

¹ Act. Proconsular. Cyprian.

martyrdom. On the very first day of his sojourn at Curubis, just as he was falling asleep, there appeared to him a young man of gigantic size, by whom he seemed to be led to the hall of the proconsul, who was then sitting in court, and to be placed at the bar. The magistrate looked at him, and then proceeded forthwith to note down his sentence on his tablet, without putting the usual interrogations. Cyprian was therefore unable to ascertain his sentence. The young man however, who stood behind him, with eager curiosity read the writing, and, not being allowed to speak, intimated the contents by gesture : opening his hand wide, and spreading it out flat like the blade of a sword, he imitated the stroke of the executioner. Having thus come to understand his sentence, Cyprian begged hard for the respite but of a single day, for the sake of putting his affairs in order. After he had several times repeated his prayer, the proconsul again noted something upon his tablet ; and from the serenity of his countenance Cyprian gathered that he had been moved by the justice of his petition. This inference was confirmed by the youth, who, by a sign of his fingers, signified that the respite of the next day had been granted. When he had been crowned with martyrdom, it appeared that this respite of a day prophetically represented a year, at the end of which, on the very same day, he suffered the manner of death which had been here predicted ¹.

The peculiar favour of the Lord in ordering him so mild an exile was made more manifest by the

¹ Pontius.

hard fate which befell some of his brother confessors. They were condemned to the mines ; and bishops, priests, and deacons were there made fellow-workers in bodily tasks with the refuse of heathen society ; as formerly at Babylon the precious vessels of God's Church were profanely abused in the filthy service of the world. They had shown a noble example to their flocks, and, before their transportation, had undergone beating with clubs ; and now, having their feet clogged with fetters, the naked rock for their bed, being sparingly fed, scarcely clad, unwashed, unshorn, amid the darkness of the chambers of the mine, amid the stench of the smelting-house, unable to offer the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ, they offered to God by day and by night the hearty sacrifice of a bruised and humbled heart, and presented their bodies, living victims, holy and unspotted upon his altar. This account affected Cyprian much, though it was but a part of the melancholy news which continually poured in, announcing the devastation of his flock by imprisonment and death. He wrote a beautiful letter to console and encourage them, accompanying it with a charitable supply to their wants, and reaped the fruits of his affectionate attention in an answer full of expressions of deep love, of intense regard, and of fervent thanks¹. He received also similar letters from the imprisoned of his flock, whom he had helped with the same exertion of his charity. They also consoled him with the same profession of their patience, and of their devotion to the cause of Christ under all their trials².

¹ Ep. 77, 78.

² Ep. 79.

Amidst all this distressing news and correspondence, Cyprian could not but experience much satisfaction from one quarter. His measures of duly tempered lenity and severity, which he had applied to the cases of the lapsed in the former persecution, were now amply justified by the result. Many had risen up again from that fall, and having fought a good fight had washed out all stain and defect in the blood of martyrdom. So far from there appearing that general cowardice which had so lately prostrated the majority of the Church, there was now displayed a general bold confession. Every age and sex, even boys and girls, supplied the ranks of martyrs and confessors¹. In fact, the hypocrites had left the Church which they had disgraced, and they who had fallen through infirmity and ignorance, having now been strengthened by the remedial process of penance, and brought to a knowledge of their intrinsic weakness, and of God's power, had become good and serviceable soldiers of Christ. Cyprian's intentions therefore had been fully answered, his preaching had been successful, his administration had been profitable. Perhaps his sojourn at Curubis was the happiest period of his life.

(A. D. 258.) In this exile he had remained nearly a year. But scarcely had he returned, when messengers, whom he had sent to Rome to learn accurately what measures were in preparation against the Christians, returned with the news that Valerian had sent a rescript to the senate, ordering bishops, priests, and deacons to execution forthwith, and all

¹ Ep. 77. 81.

senators, knights, and persons of distinction to loss of rank and property, and, if persevering still in the Christian profession, to death. He had also sent letters to the governors of provinces to the same effect, and these were daily expected to arrive at Carthage. Xystus, Stephen's successor, had suffered death in company with four out of his seven deacons, on the sixth of August; and the persecution was hot at Rome. Cyprian made all the preparation he could against the coming storm, and sent notice to the rest of the bishops, that they might lose no time in fortifying the brethren. His own time was close at hand. He had been recalled by a new governor, Galerius Maximus, who had succeeded to Aspasius Paternus, and had been ordered to remain at his country-house, which had again come into his possession after he had sold it to the poor. Here he enjoyed once again the close inspection of his flock, and relieved the poor with his own hands. But the danger grew more imminent, and his arrest was expected every moment. In this hour of his need his friends, both Christian and heathen, for so was he beloved as to have retained the friendships even of his unregenerate days, came around him with earnest entreaties that he would retire from the danger, and accept of the places which they offered for his retreat. They were many, and of the highest rank and family, and therefore unlikely to suggest any conduct inconsistent with honour and courage. This was perhaps a greater trial to Cyprian than all the rest. To resist the request of friends to whom his life is precious, who speak of it as a gift which they beg from him, and urge him with prayers and

embraces which are associated with so many dear recollections, to decline their arguments, or cut them short by an unkindly refusal to listen, to be proof against their flattery, and their well-meant sophistry, which perplexes the understanding, though it affects not the principle, and, instead of accompanying them as they would have him, to tear himself away, and bid the last mournful adieu,—this is indeed a painful part of the martyr's last struggle with the world. But Cyprian's spirit had now soared above the world, and his affections, set on heavenly things, were out of the reach of the seduction of aught of earth. No vision, no warning from the Lord, had come, as on his former retreat, to advise retirement. He stood, therefore, manfully at his post, exhorting his flock on every opportunity to trample under foot the powers of the world, with all its affections and lusts, looking ever to the crown of glory which awaits the conqueror¹. So earnestly did he engage in this good work, that he heartily desired that he might be put to death in the act of preaching.

Circumstances however intervened to help the entreaties of his friends so far as to urge upon him the necessity of a temporary retreat. News came that the proconsul had given orders for bringing him to Utica. This threatened to deprive his own Church of the example, and benefit, and glory of his confession and martyrdom, and to disappoint him of that which he had earnestly desired, and requested of the Lord with continued prayer, namely, that he might

¹ His arguments may be seen in the Exhortation to Martyrdom, p. 474, &c.

be allowed to make his confession, both on his own behalf and on that of his people, amongst his people, and there to suffer, and thence to go to the Lord. He therefore wrote his last letter to his flock, affectionately stating these reasons, and retired¹. We may congratulate them upon this determination, although his suffering at Utica would, through force of association, have suggested a noble lesson. The same place would have witnessed the suicide of the Stoic Cato, and the martyrdom of the Christian Cyprian; the former fleeing before the dread of shame and injurious treatment, as if his wretched body, which he believed that he was about quitting for ever, was something too sacred for such foul contact, and plunging into he knew not what abyss; the latter, cheerfully accepting shame and disgrace for the sake of his heavenly Master, and after his example, not afraid of subjecting to insult that body which, being honoured with the temple of the indwelling Holy Ghost, was inviolable by outward injury, and would rise again a glorious body unto everlasting life.

His absence was short; for as soon as he heard that the proconsul had quitted Utica and arrived at Carthage, his end having been answered, he returned to his country-house, and awaited his fate. There, on the thirteenth of September, he was arrested by two officers of the proconsul. He received them and their message with a cheerful countenance, and was conveyed between them in a chariot to Sexti, where the proconsul was residing for the sake of his health.

¹ Ep. 83.

His trial, however, was put off until the morrow, and he meanwhile was lodged and entertained at the house of one of the officers, who kindly allowed his friends, among whom was his faithful deacon Pontius, to be his guests. How vividly, under such circumstances, would they be reminded of the last supper of their Lord, and hallow these last hours of their bishop's conversation with all that love, faith, and hope could supply! Out of doors was a great crowd of the brotherhood, who had flocked from Carthage on hearing the news of his arrest, and kept watch all night in the street, lest they should lose sight of any thing that might happen to him. Thus they anticipated those vigils which were to usher in the annual commemoration of his passion. The bishop exercised the last act of his superintendence in giving directions to look to the safety of the young women who were mixed in so great a throng of people.

On the next day, the fourteenth of September, Cyprian quitted his lodging to appear on his trial. An immense multitude accompanied him, partly of the heathen, curious to behold his execution, and partly of his own people, desirous to be edified by the example of his last moments. The road lay over the scene of his future martyrdom, and as the distance was not less than a furlong, and as the season was that of the great heats, he was much heated by the walk, and had to wait, thoroughly wet with perspiration, the time of the proconsul. It chanced that the seat which was afforded to him was covered with a linen cloth, so that in his last hours

he enjoyed an episcopal throne¹. A renegade also so far remembered the charity of his abandoned faith as to offer him dry clothes. At length the proconsul came forth, and took his seat, and began the usual interrogation. "You are Thascius Cyprian?" "I am." "You are bishop to a set of sacrilegious men?" "I am." "The most sacred emperors have commanded you to sacrifice." "I do not sacrifice." "Be well advised." "Do as thou art bidden (rejoined Cyprian). A business so just does not admit of advice."

After a conversation with his council, Galerius, with much difficulty, pronounced sentence, reading it from his tablet, and prefacing it with these words, "Long have you lived in impiety, and, gathering to your side a number of wicked conspirators, set yourself up in enmity against the gods of Rome and the sanctity of the laws. Nor have the pious and most sacred princes, Valerian and Gallienus, been able to recall you to the observance of their religion. Since then you have been detected as the author and master-mover of the most wicked crimes, you will be an example to those whom you have associated with you by your wickedness. Discipline will be established by the shedding of your blood." The sentence was, that Thascius Cyprian be beheaded. On hearing it the bishop cried, "God be thanked!" while the crowd of the brethren exclaimed, "And let us too be beheaded with him!"

¹ The bishop's seat was always covered with linen. See Valesius's note on Euseb. E. H. vi. 43.

He was then led away, guarded by a company of soldiers, and escorted on right and left by tribunes and centurions. An immense multitude accompanied them. The place of execution was at Sexti, where a level plain afforded room for the throng, and numerous trees were covered with the spectators who could not obtain a nearer view. Here he first of all stripped off his upper garment, and knelt, and prayed. Then he laid aside his dalmatic (a vest with short sleeves), and, standing in his linen garment, awaited the executioner. The brethren placed clothes and handkerchiefs before him. He then ordered twenty pieces of gold to be given to the executioner, and, binding his eyes with his own hands, assisted by a priest and sub-deacon, endeavoured to hasten the work, which was, however, still delayed from the man's inability to grasp his sword with a sufficiently steady hand. At last he gave the decisive stroke, and Cyprian's spirit was let loose from its fleshly bonds. The body was left exposed to the curious gaze of the heathen until night, when it was brought by torchlight in triumphant procession to the place of interment. He was the first bishop of Carthage that suffered martyrdom ¹.

The character of this exemplary bishop and glorious martyr has been most unblushingly misrepresented by interested writers, some of whom wish to depreciate as much as possible so formidable an authority on the point of ecclesiastical government, and others to depreciate the faith itself through the person of one of its most celebrated martyrs, and, as

¹ Act. Proconsular. and Pontius.

in too many instances, the party-spirit of the former class has administered to the infidelity of the latter. It becomes a duty, therefore, to dwell upon it longer than otherwise, after so long and minute a narrative, would have appeared requisite. He has been taxed with ambition, and even the honour of his martyrdom has been insidiously assailed by a cold-hearted, cowardly infidel, as if it had been but his alternative with the certain infamy of choosing to live¹. No account has been made of the clear information with which his correspondence supplies us upon his notions and measures of ecclesiastical government. They may seem, therefore, peculiar to him. And yet such notices as we can obtain of other bishops testify that they agreed with him fully on this point, and a proper view of the state of the times declares that they were so far from ambitious encroachments upon the rights of the clergy, that they were put continually upon the defensive by the opposition of schism. Are they to be blamed because the character of the government of the Church was brought out by such means, that schism encountered a vigour on which it had not calculated? They would truly have been traitors to their charge if they had not upheld it with a firmness which refused all compromise with the rebellious, and with a dignity which retained the respect of the faithful. Indeed the relaxation of Christian morals, produced by the pride of wealth and the vanity of worldly accomplishments which the higher orders were now bringing with them into the Church, had they not even given birth

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

to schism, could not but compel a stricter definition of episcopal power ; while the continually widening extent of the Church required, in proportion to its dilatation, a stronger union of its parts, and a more frequent and careful reference to a common centre. But there was no innovation on the primitive constitution of the Church. Any political constitution, if a wise and good one, shows itself under different aspects in different circumstances, while it is still the same. In time of war it will appear more arbitrary, in the case of extended dominion more compact, while it is still essentially as free as ever. The principles, therefore, upheld by Cyprian and his contemporaries were not new, but only a development of the system of government which had been established by the foresight of the Apostles ; and they who declaim against them, as being the fruits of the ambition of the episcopal order, not only forget that none but holy characters could obtain sufficient influence to work such a change, and yet would be the last even to desire it, but also are ignorant that there was little indeed to excite the aspirations of a worldly spirit in an office of such extreme danger. It was not likely that men, who lived with the sword continually suspended over their heads, would have either heart or leisure to pursue a systematic course of usurpation.

That Cyprian had enemies, numerous and violent, is much more a mark of the degeneracy of his times than of his own misconduct. When was not the firmness of integrity deeply hated, because deeply feared, by the unprincipled ? But that he was also fervently loved by all men of worth who enjoyed the blessedness of his conversation, and was highly

esteemed by all who took pains to know his character, appears from undoubted testimony. And when we come to look into his correspondence, which was elicited and maintained under harassing circumstances, we fail not to acknowledge in it a spirit lively in faith to God, warm with charity to man, supporting at once a calm vigour, and tempering authority with kind consideration. With a loftiness of tone, dictated by high principle, we find mingled a graceful gentleness; and far from there being the slightest trace of the insolence, or of, what is more offensive still, the condescension of pride; nothing can exceed the sweetness and meekness of disposition which manifests itself throughout his communications with equals and inferiors, or the respect which he shows to such as he considers as his superiors, the martyrs for instance. Here he shows the true mark of a noble mind, which is ever respectful to those above, and meek to those below, while the ignoble is ever crouching to superiors, and insolent to inferiors. The man who can read his letters, and not love, and respect, and admire him, must be either of a singularly cold temperament, or of that perverse disposition which will not admire a thing because it ought to be admired, or of base and grovelling, if not profligate, mind. In short, he was courageous in duty, charitable in distribution, indefatigable in teaching, exhorting, comforting. And, however gratitude, still warm with the sense of his kind administration to their necessities, may be supposed to exaggerate their expressions, the testimony of the martyrs in the Numidian mines, of bishops, priests, and deacons, who were suffering

for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ, cannot be far from the truth. "For you are (say they), beyond all men, great in handling a subject, eloquent in expressing it, wise in counsel, single-minded in patience, bountiful in works, holy in abstinence, meek in obedience, innocent in well-doing¹." Such a man would necessarily be dreaded, and, therefore, assailed with the atrocious calumny which has ever been the favourite weapon of heresy and schism. But his character was proof against it; and they who have sought to depreciate him in latter days have been obliged to be content with noticing pardonable infirmities. Among these is his belief in visions. But before they can charge this against him, they have to prove, and not to surmise, that in his days all extraordinary interference of the great Head of the Church was come to an end, and that an early, and also a most trying and critical, period of its fortunes was left without the benefit of such guidance. Until this point shall have been ascertained, surely the distinct, positive, reiterated claims of the blessed martyr to such supernatural direction, especially as he nowhere discloses the marks of enthusiasm, ought to be received with at least respectful consideration.

As a writer, Cyprian stands high on the list of the Fathers. His matter is interesting, his manner is popular. He suffers, indeed, on the estimate of power, in comparison with him of whom we are naturally reminded by his country, his Church, and the anecdote reported by Jerome². Some have re-

¹ Ep. 88.

² Catalog. in Tertull.

marked with surprise, that they can see no peculiar traces of the style of his master, as, according to that anecdote, he used to call Tertullian, when he daily demanded his works at the hands of his secretary. It would have been surprising if they could. The style of a man of imitative mind may indeed be formed after that of a master, and he may obey the rule, which critics so constantly, and yet so ignorantly, lay down, of forming a style after the best models, when they ought to have enjoined the acquirement of the phraseology of the best models. But in the case of an original mind style is its expression, and is therefore as different as minds are different. Where is the resemblance between Demosthenes and his master Thucydides? All the study in the world, therefore, could not have assimilated the style of Cyprian to that of Tertullian. Their minds were cast in an utterly different mould. On comparing their characters as writers, we shall find that Cyprian never surprises us, as his master often does, with long and lofty flights, nor keeps us poring upon passages which are black, like pools, with depth. But then neither does he elude us with shadows of meaning, nor baulk us with impenetrable obscurity. Great indeed is the change when we put down the master and take up the pupil. It is as when our boat has come out from a rough, headlong torrent, running in various directions, jagged with rocks, eddying with whirlpools, surrounded with savage scenery, into an uniformly flowing stream, amid meadows and green pastures. We are never thrown back for sense like a boat by the rebounding current, nor hurried here and there, and forced to

unintermitting toil, and a sharp look-out. But we go on equally and uninterruptedly down stream, with little labour and with much leisure to contemplate the pleasing scenery. His style is free from all perplexity, whether produced by sententious condensation or tumid redundance. It is clean, and terse, and, saving a few provincialisms, as pure as that of any writer of his age. But it must be owned that it savours strongly of the artifice of the rhetorician. Like his master's, it is too declamatory, and indulges beyond the limits of good taste in the trickery of antithesis and parallelisms. This, however, is owing to the vicious style of oratory of his day, which again is owing not only to a degeneracy from pure taste, but also to the decline of the language. As literature verges towards decay, men lose the free command of the resources of their native tongue in its higher application, and have to choose between the alternatives of colloquial vulgarity and of studied unnatural expression. In the latter case antithesis, parallelism, and the like are the shifts to which they resort for want of the natural turns, and idiomatic phraseology of better days. And these are very much analogous to the straight strokes which the child is taught to make, who has not yet learned to join letters in writing, and which run parallel to each other, instead of flowing into one another. But Cyprian's writings, and more especially, as was to be expected, his epistolary correspondence, is marked with the polish of good society, and their character is strongly contrasted with the disgusting grossness, vulgarity, and vehemence of the clownish Tertullian. He shows that he had been the man of the world,

and exhibits a beautiful result from the gentleness of his Christian profession, mixed with the gracefulness which had been derived from his former conversation. Once or twice, indeed, as in his letter to Pupianus, he loses temper. But then the provocation was very great, under irritating circumstances, and it was difficult to employ the language of self-vindication against such an opponent without venting an expression of angry contempt. But let not the reader stop at this letter, but go on to that which is addressed to the brethren in the Numidian mines, and he will then confess that, if Cyprian could not, any more than other men, "be angry, and sin not," yet that any warmth of temper proceeded not from a naturally bad disposition, but from a heart warm with love and fervent with charity. He must also incur some blame for his love of conceits, which are sometimes intruded into places so improper, that some persons unable to make the requisite allowance for such indulgence, might suspect his sincerity. And there is no person of good taste who does not shrink from the coldness of such impertinences. Thus, for example, in the forementioned letter to the martyrs in the mines, speaking of their having previously been beaten with clubs, he says, "The body of the Christian, whose whole hope is in the wood of the cross, does not turn craven at clubs. The servant of Christ acknowledges the mystical token of his salvation. Redeemed by wood to eternal life, he is advanced by wood to the crown of life. But what wonder, if ye, vessels of silver and gold as ye are, have been consigned to the mine, the house of silver and gold, but that now the nature of the mine is changed,

and the spots which formerly were wont to give silver and gold now receive it. They have placed fetters too on your feet, as if your gold could be soiled by the contact of iron." Any one may perceive that such a style has its origin in the allegorical system of Scriptural interpretation, and, therefore, unnatural as it seems to us, was not so to Cyprian, nor seemed so to the martyrs. And to this abuse of typical application may be ascribed the extraordinary indulgence in such conceits, which has infected Christian literature far more than it ever did Pagan, and more particularly when it has been ecclesiastical, or has immediately flowed from ecclesiastical; as, for instance, in Churchmen who have become writers on subjects foreign to their profession, and in the authors who flourished in the puritanical times.

As there are no writings which throw so much light upon the state of the discipline and doctrine of the Church of this period, it becomes necessary to examine them upon these points. And, indeed, our estimate of Cyprian's character would otherwise be imperfect, since his mind could not but be influenced by them in all its bearings.

Foremost stand his views of Church government. He considers Christ to have bestowed equal power on all his Apostles in his Church, according to John xx. 23. But that he especially, and in the first place, commissioned Peter alone, and built the Church upon him, making him thus the fountain and type of its unity, and bestowing on him a primacy, so as to signify one Church of Christ, and one chair. This chair was expressed by that of the bishop of Rome in particular, and by every bishop's chair in general,

so that what Peter was among other Apostles, the chair at Rome was among other chairs. Thus far Cyprian seems much influenced by the dependence which his Church had upon Rome for apostolical authority. The Eastern Church uses no such language, and Firmilian sneers at such assumption on the part of the Roman bishop. He then goes on to say, that as all the Apostles were one, each of equal authority and rank, so all the bishops were one, each with an equal share in the joint-stock of ecclesiastical rank and power, deriving in succession from the Apostles, Christ being sole head. So much for the Church universal. As to each particular Church, it consisted in the bishop, clergy, and people. The bishop, being vicar and representative of Christ, and therefore one, had the supreme power, but ought to do nothing of importance, not so much as to ordain, without the consent of the other estates, who attended even at the general councils. He being the head, whoever separated from him separated from Christ and from his Church. He was elected by the joint suffrages of the clergy and people, with the consent of the neighbouring bishops, by whom he was consecrated, and was supposed to have been suggested to their choice by Christ himself. Similar seems to have been the election of the inferior orders, the people and clergy choosing, or at least consenting, the bishop ratifying and ordaining. The bishop was responsible to Christ alone, the others to the bishop. Of these, besides the usual orders of priests and deacons, we find at Carthage those of reader, acolyth, sub-deacon, exorcist. They were paid by a monthly salary distributed by the bishop, and thus they were

kept after the example of the Levites from mixture with secular concerns¹. This numerous staff bespeaks a Church well furnished with every means of promoting its grand end, namely, the maintenance of sound doctrine and faithful practice within its fold, and conversion of those that were without. Yet if Cyprian has mentioned all its members, it yielded, as we should have reasonably supposed, to that of the Church of Rome, which was both more wealthy, more numerous, and still more engaged in the work of conversion².

With regard to other questions, we find that infant baptism was at this time an indisputable point. It conferred regeneration, was administered in the name of the Trinity³, and the evil spirit was previously driven out by the exorcist, who used imposition of hands⁴. Questions were put to the catechumen according to a prescribed form. The water was consecrated by the priest, and after immersion chrism was administered from oil which had been previously consecrated⁵. The forehead was signed with the cross⁶, and this, after imposition of hands, conferring the Holy Ghost, concluded the ceremony⁷. He distinguishes between baptismal and spiritual regeneration⁸, and says that the infant, by opposing no

¹ Cyprian would not allow a presbyter to be executor to a will. Ep. 66.

² See Ep. 40. 51. 52. 70. 71. 73. 75, &c. de Unitate Ecclesiæ, and Euseb. E. H. 43. ³ Ep. 73.

⁴ Ep. 75, 76. 3rd Council on baptism of heretics.

⁵ Ep. 70. 75, 76.

⁶ Ep. 56. de Lapsis, sub initio. de Unitate Ecclesiæ, p. 360, &c.

⁷ Ep. 73, &c.

⁸ de Zelo, sub fine.

obstacle, receives both forgiveness and grace in that sacrament ¹. The priest could baptize only by commission from the bishop, whose privileges were baptizing, laying on of hands, ordaining, and offering, which last also he could depute to the priests ².

He by no means makes the difficulties about sin after baptism which occurred to Origen. He considers such stain to be washed away by almsgiving and by martyrdom.

In adverting to these points we must renew our caution, to bear in mind how differently the same doctrine will be expressed before and after a controversy has taken place upon it, and also how practical exhortation very commonly leaves in the background those limiting propositions which are foremost in controversy. For instance, God's preventing grace might, if at all, be but lightly touched in a sermon, while it would be strongly insisted upon in an article. The same may be said of election and predestination. For men must be addressed as having an undoubted freedom of will to do what they are exhorted to do, and the introduction of exceptions and limitations would encumber a discourse with continual explanations, which would suggest continual difficulties, and scepticism would be a much more common result than conviction. They are, therefore, commonly kept in reserve, and not brought forward until some error requires correction. They are, in fact, much more of a negative than of a positive character, and, therefore, serve much more to qualify a result than to lead to it. They are, to borrow an expression, the medicine rather than the daily bread.

¹ Ep. 59, sub fine.

² Ep. 75, 76. 4.

(1.) But, first of all, penance was necessary to sanctify those works of satisfaction which were to cancel past transgressions. The end of this was reconciliation to the Church, without which they could not proceed from faith, and would therefore be unavailing¹. In every case of offence, however private, repentance required the outward expressions of sorrowful humiliation; and the pride of flesh was humbled by fasting, by watching, by lying on the bare ground, by groans, by lamentation, by tears, while satisfaction was sought to be rendered by plentiful almsgivings, and by works of love and justice². The time which the Church demanded for the continuance of such a state varied with the heinousness of the offence, but rigour might be relaxed at the intercession of a martyr³. When the appointed period had expired, and confession had been made, the penitent received absolution through the imposition of the hands of the bishop⁴, or, in the urgent case of approaching dissolution, of a priest or even a deacon, leave having been given by the bishop⁵. But thus he was admitted to nothing further than communion with the Church, and so was put into the way of working out his salvation by works of satisfaction. The Church did not pretend absolutely to remit sins; nor were the prayers of the martyrs, however efficacious through their merits, to prevail towards his pardon from God before the last day⁶. As far as it went, however,

¹ de Opere et Eleemos. p. 432.

² de Laps. p. 345.

³ Ibid. and Ep. 9. 62.

⁴ de Laps. p. 341, &c.

⁵ Ep. 12.

⁶ Ep. 52, p. 125. 75. de Laps. p. 334.

the absolution given by a bishop, although prematurely, was not to be annulled ¹.

(2.) Thus sanctified, almsgiving is considered by Cyprian as saving from the punishment due to sins committed after baptism. He uses strong language, such as we should call at this day very unguarded at least. Sins are purged away by the merits of charity and good works; and the father of a family, instead of stinting his charitable distributions in proportion to the number of his children, should so much the more enlarge them, inasmuch as there are more persons for whom God's wrath is to be deprecated, more sins to be redeemed, more consciences to be purified, more souls to be delivered ².

While upon this point, we must consider also his opinion on the doctrine of merits.

St. Paul describes the Christian as a workman, who is to receive remuneration for his work (Col. iii. 24), as a runner in the race for the prize (1 Cor. ix. 24); and our blessed Lord speaks of a reward to works of love (Luke vi. 35). Such expressions necessarily involve the notion of desert or merit. But its erroneous consequences are corrected by other expressions which deny any inherent claim in a man to such reward. The reward is not such as man could claim, but that which God hath promised (Hebr. x. 36), and the desert is not that of the unaided natural man, but is the work of the grace of God (Phil. ii. 13), and both reward and desert are reckoned for the sake of Jesus Christ (Hebr. ix.

¹ Ep. 59.

² Ep. 52. p. 128. De Op. et Elem. p. 430. 439.

12, &c.). Thus all boasting is excluded. If Cyprian has not sufficiently insisted on these corrective points, he cannot be accused of having omitted them. The reward, he says, is of God's promise¹, and all the means of acquiring it come from God, who prepares the heart by preventive grace, and daily renews it by fresh supplies², so that man renders to God nothing but what he has received³. Such works are the fruits of faith⁴. He also expressly lays down the doctrines of original sin⁵ and of the atonement⁶. Although, however, his doctrine on the points of grace be much more scriptural than that of Origen's, yet it must be allowed that the cast of his language is not sufficiently scriptural. We find a too constant and exclusive stress laid upon man's native exertion, even after making all allowance for the nature of exhortation. Men are addressed as being able to do away their offences, as we have already seen, and to win God's favour by specified works; and the very free use of the word "merits" and of the phrase "winning God's favour by works" shows a departure from the purity of the language, if not of the doctrine, of the Gospel. Still more dissatisfied are we with him when he speaks of man's patience reckoning God a debtor⁷. In short, if any one having read the hortatory passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews, who were in danger of lapse under persecution, will then immediately turn to Cyprian's

¹ De bono Patient. sub fine.

² de Orat. p. 372. 374.

³ Ep. 77.

⁴ de Op. et Eleemos. p. 432.

⁵ Ep. 59, sub fine. de Op. et Eleemos. p. 428.

⁶ Ep. 56, p. 164. Ad Fortunat. p. 475.

⁷ de bono Patient. sub fine.

exhortations to the lapsed, he will feel most acutely how far human eloquence had now supplanted evangelical simplicity, and morality was taking the place of spirituality. Cyprian is clearly of another school than that of St. Paul, and, amidst a profusion of colour and studied posture, his pictures of divine truth are destitute of that living spirit of reality which animates the canvas of the Apostle, and convinces us of the accuracy of his representation.

His opinions on the virtue and efficacy of martyrdom do not fall short of the high pitch of those of Tertullian and Origen. Its baptism washed away all sin as clearly as the baptism of water had done, and its confession qualified the sufferer to be an effectual intercessor in prayer for his brethren¹, both before God, and before his Church. So acceptable did Cyprian esteem his prayers to be, that he says to the martyrs, "For what do you ask of the Lord's indulgence, which you do not deserve to obtain, who have so observed the commandments of God, &c.?"² and lays it down that "the merits of martyrs and the works of just men have very great efficacy with the Judge, though not before the arrival of the day of judgment, when at the end of this world his people shall stand before the tribunal of Christ³." They were admitted immediately from this world to the fruition of the sight of God⁴. After their death a day was appointed for their especial commemoration, when their names were mentioned in the oblations. But all share in such glorious privileges was denied

¹ Ep. 15. 77.² Ep. 15.³ de Laps. p. 334.⁴ Ep. 26. 57. 69. 77.

to the suffering heretic. Although he died for his opinions, it availed him not, for he died without the pale of the Church, beyond which was no salvation. He died in a state of uncharitableness, and therefore, though he gave his body to be burnt, it profited him nothing¹. Glow though he may in flames of fire, and lay down his life under the teeth and claws of beasts, his death instead of being the crown of faith was the penalty of perfidy, and was not the glorious end of religious fortitude, but the exit of despair².

Next to martyrdom in the scale of Christian excellence comes virginity, in the proportion of the crop of sixty-fold to that of a hundred-fold. The virgins were spouses of Christ, solemnly dedicated to him, and the fruitfulnes sand motherly joy of the Church was great in proportion to the number of these vessels of barrenness. Yet we have seen that an occasional shock was given to this high opinion by scandalous conduct, as well as in the case of confessors, and Cyprian found himself compelled to address them with severe admonition on the inconsistency of their lives with their profession. This treatise, entitled "On the Dress of Virgins," is full of curious information respecting the fashions and manners of the day, and shows that the Church of Carthage had not improved since the days of Tertullian, from whose tract on the same subject Cyprian borrows largely. Its last sentence is remarkable, as implying an opinion of the weight which their intercession would have in another world in consequence of their

¹ Ep. 73, p. 243.

² de Unitat. Eccles. p. 357.

merits. "Remember us (he says) then, when your virginity shall begin to receive its due honour ¹."

On the Eucharist, his opinion does not seem obscure respecting the question of the nature of the consecrated elements. Such phrases as "receiving or touching the Lord's body and blood ²" are applicable to their covenanted symbols, according to all the laws of speech, which in so many instances call the sign by the name of the thing signified, and are employed in our own Catechism. The terms "sacrifice" and "altar" need raise no difficulty with us, who do not scruple to use the latter in popular language. But further, he distinctly speaks of the wine *showing* the blood of Christ ³, of Christ *calling* bread his body and wine his blood, saying that that bread by the congregation of many grains of flour indicates the united Christian people whom he was bearing as he bore their sins, and that wine by the agglomeration of drops from many grapes signified the Christian flock mixed in one ⁴. He says also, that the body of the Lord cannot be flour alone, or water alone, but both together; and maintains that as the blood of Christ is shown by the wine, so the people is understood by the water in the same cup, the mixture denoting the union of Christ with his people ⁵. It is impossible that Cyprian could have expressed himself thus, had he believed in a change of the substance of the elements. We have considerable light

¹ To this treatise add Ep. 62. 87.

² de Laps. p. 337. so Firmil. p. 268, &c.

³ Ep. 63, sub initio.

⁴ Ep. 76. p. 275.

⁵ Ep. 63, p. 192.

from him upon the details of this rite, which it is worth while to collect and set before the reader. It was celebrated daily¹, at an early hour in the morning². Oblations were made of bread and wine³, with a prayer for their acceptance, in which were mentioned the names of the offerers⁴, of absent members, whether living or dead⁵, of benefactors⁶, and of all persons in whose behalf the Church thought it proper to pray⁷. The mention of the names of the dead, however, seems to have been reserved for the anniversary of their deaths⁸, and days were especially set apart for the commemoration of the martyrs⁹. This mention was made to signify in a most affecting manner that all, whether present or absent, living or dead, were still one body, still lively members of the Church, still in communion through one spirit. A portion was then taken of the bread and wine, of which the latter was mingled in the cup with water¹⁰, and consecrated by invocation. This became the Eucharist, and the rite now assumed the term "Sacrifice," having been previously called "Oblation¹¹." The deacon administered the cup¹².

¹ Ep. 54. 56. de Orat. p. 376.

² Ep. 63, p. 195.

³ de Op. et Eleemos. p. 436. and Justin Martyr, Apol. i. 65.

⁴ Ep. 9.

⁵ Ep. 66. Tertull. de Coron. Mil. 3.

⁶ Ep. 60.

⁷ Ep. 15. 58.

⁸ Tertul. *ibid.* and de Monogam. 10. de Exhort. Cast. 11.

⁹ Ep. 34. 37.

¹⁰ The whole of Ep. 63 runs on the necessity of mingling wine with water, being directed against some who used water only.

¹¹ Ep. 63, p. 190. Ep. Firmil. p. 262.

¹² de Laps. p. 339.

Infants were admitted to the participation¹. The bread was sometimes superstitiously reserved². The times of prayer were sunrise, sunset, night³.

The doctrine of an intermediate state after death, in which the souls of those who have departed in the faith and fear of God enjoy repose, expecting until the number of the elect shall be accomplished, is maintained by Cyprian as well as by Tertullian. And in consequence prayers were offered for their rest. But while the good were thus taken into a state of refreshment, the bad were taken also to a foretaste of their eternal punishment, and no prayers were ever offered for them⁴.

We briefly noticed, in the life of Tertullian, the expectation of the approaching end of the world, which was so prevalent during the early centuries of the Church⁵. This partly arose from the misapplication of expressions of our Lord which refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, partly from the assertion of St. John that it was the last time and that forerunners of Antichrist were already come, partly from the words of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, whence it was concluded that the Roman empire, now manifestly in decline, was the hindrance to the end of the world and to the coming of antichrist⁶; and the Church, in praying for the powers that be,

¹ de Laps. p. 329. 339.

² Ibid. p. 339.

³ de Orat. p. 387.

⁴ Tertull. c. Marcion. iv. 34. Cypr. Ep. 66. de Mortal. p. 420. But the passage in Ep. 52. p. 127, has evidently nothing to do with a future state, when strictly examined with the context.

⁵ Vol. i. p. 366.

⁶ 1 John ii. 18. 2 Thess. ii. 7.

and for the public peace, prayed also, or was deemed to pray, for the delay of the awful consummation¹. This opinion was strengthened by the typical interpretation of the six days of the creation of the world, which appears in so early a work as the epistle ascribed to Barnabas. One day being with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day², those six days of creation represented six thousand years of duration; the seventh day of rest was an image of the thousand years during which the saints shall reign with Christ, according to the Revelation of St. John; and the eighth day, or first day of the first week of all creation, the day too on which our Lord rose from the dead, typified the commencement of a new world which was to arrive after the millennial Sabbath³. Their chronology being of course that of the Septuagint, they found that about 5500 years had run out by the time of our Saviour's birth, and therefore, when now but about 250 years remained, and the general appearance of things seemed to indicate that the calculation of even this brief respite was too large, especially since the days were to be shortened (Matt. xxiv. 22), Cyprian could pronounce that the 6000 were nearly completed⁴. His writings, accordingly, ring with the warning note of preparation. Is a persecution foreseen or raging? are heresy and schism rampant? are wars and tumults prevalent? are plague, pestilence, and famine doing their dreadful work? Then the end of the world is at hand, and the heathen and loose Christians are

¹ Tertull. Apol. 39.

² 2 Pet. iii. 8.

³ Ep. Barnabas, 15.

⁴ de Exhort. Martyr. sub initio.

threatened with the intolerable calamities of the reign of Antichrist, and the faithful are comforted with the near approach of the kingdom of Christ, which shall supervene. Writing to Demetrianus, a bigoted heathen opponent, he explains to him the signs of the decay of the world. The fostering nature of the seasons had evidently degenerated, the mines were exhausted; the industry of the husbandman, the bravery of the soldier, the hardihood of the sailor, the purity of the judge, the harmony of friends, the skill of the artisans, the morals of society, were all in a state of manifest decline, and betokened the old age and approaching decease of the world. At the same time the continual wars, famines, and plagues were among those accumulated evils which were to usher in the day of judgment. Gehenna was opening its jaws, and the appointed time for repentance was hastening to an end. But to the faithful he writes, congratulating them if they be taken away before the coming of such dreadful times, and says, "The kingdom of God, my dearest brethren, has begun to be at hand. The prize of eternal life, and joy of everlasting salvation, the possession of lost Paradise, are now arriving through the passing away of the world. Heavenly things are now in the course of succeeding to earthly, great to small, eternal to transient¹." The near and sensible prospect of so awful a change must have been indeed a great spur to the Christian. The penitent would be struck with overwhelming fear, the martyr would exult with all joyful expectation.

¹ de Mortal. sub initio.

So frequent and distinct is his acknowledgment of the doctrine of the Trinity that it is needless to specify his opinions on this point. Nor does there remain any thing further worthy of remark respecting his tenets. For although we obtain from his writings large information as to the form which the Christian faith assumed in his day, which is the more satisfactory because we have to do not with a speculative individual like Origen, but with one whose opinions were those of his contemporaries, at least of the Western Church ; yet, considering their number and variety, how that they include a large epistolary correspondence and several laboured treatises, all concerning subjects most eventful to the Church, his works are very deficient in doctrinal matter. His epistolary correspondence is almost exclusively taken up with matters of discipline, in which little reference is made to principles, and his tracts are much more in the style of animated moral essays than of the exhortations of a Christian bishop. He is plentiful, indeed, in scriptural texts, but he thus far more interests us, through our curiosity to know something of the Latin version of his day, than edifies either by sound interpretation or happy application. But whatever fault his reader may find, he will not dismiss him without a sense of pleasure from the agreeable style of his writing, without a deep interest in the fortunes of the Church of his day, without a love and admiration of the man.

NOVATIAN.

Peculiar condition of the schismatic—Novatian converted through an attack of sickness—Is ordained priest—Chosen by the Roman presbytery, during the vacancy of the chair, to write in the name of their Church to Cyprian—Amount of the Clergy of the Roman Church—Novatian is passed over in the election to the bishopric—Enumeration of probable reasons for it—His opinions on the treatment of the lapsed openly avowed—He is ejected by a council from the Church—Instigated by Novatus, forms a party in opposition—Is joined by the martyrs—Procures himself to be ordained bishop—His legates repulsed at Carthage, Antioch, Alexandria, &c.—His party set up rival bishops throughout the Churches—The bearing of his tenets—Abandoned by the martyrs, his party rapidly declines—His writings.

It is not easy to gain a glimpse of the internal affairs of the Church of Rome. Continually referred to her, as we are, it is but seldom that we can actually enter her gates, and converse with the men who are exercising such influence abroad. The distance at which we are thus kept gives to her a mysterious grandeur, and excites our curiosity to explore every approach to a spot so jealously guarded from vulgar observation. But our reverence is somewhat abated

when we consider that all this stateliness is owing, not only to the worldly talent for government which the Church shared with the state of Rome, but also to her little encouragement of learning. As yet neither schism has admitted our eyes through the breach in her walls, nor has a writer told the tale of what has been going on within. Now, however, at length this Church of mystery is compelled to reveal her secrets, and one of her sons, combining the characters of schismatic and writer, compels her bishop to defend himself and his Church in the face of Christendom. Rome is thus discovered to partake in all the human infirmities which we lament in her sisters.

Tertullian displayed to us the first specimen of a schismatic, and in all his native unamiableness. Novatian is not the man to abate the feeling of disgust which was then excited. We have the same sickening exhibition of faith stifled by uncharitableness, of the time due to talent and learning sacrificed to the interests of broils and discord, of a man of very superior character, both intellectual and moral, degrading himself to be the organ of a party contemptible for ignorant fanaticism, if not for the mean spitefulness of spiritual pride. It may be doubted whether the contemplation of the situation of the schismatic be not more full of melancholy than that of the heretic. We lament when the honest man has become a thief, we feel little concern when the thief has become a robber. We regret the loss of the society of one whom we have known. We care little about a man with whom we have never had communication. The heretic, if he could be called a Christian at all, was a most imperfect one. He

denied the fundamental doctrines on which are built the essential Christian graces of pure knowledge, meekness, and charity. But the schismatic affected to hold them in superior purity, and therefore was bound to exhibit their practice in superior excellence. And yet he violated their most obvious and immediate application in his separation from a Church which would not determine a new case according to his opinion, and in his opposition to teachers who had received their charge in uninterrupted succession from the Apostles. He thus became responsible for consequences which are more deplorable than those resulting from heresy, in the degree that a civil war is worse than a foreign. And he had further to answer for the guilt of heresy also, towards which schism invariably leads in the end. Several causes conduct to this melancholy conclusion, manifest enough, except to one who, blinded by passion, shuts his eyes to consequences. When men abandon a body, they gradually grow more and more opposed to its principles, first from the promptings of self-justification, and afterwards from the effects of long and wilful misrepresentation, as well as from a spirit of insult. Thus in the course of their enmity having exhausted their objections to non-essentials, they are induced to go on and attack essentials. Wherever a body maintains the grand principles of truth, its separatists must necessarily thus be driven in time into error. The very rigour with which they at first assume to maintain essentials leads to the same result. Non-essentials are proportionally disregarded. But so indefinite is the line between these two, and so intimately are they connected in many cases, that

laxity, which is much more agreeable to our nature than rigour, is in time extended from the consideration of the latter to that of the former. Besides, truth pushed beyond a certain point becomes error at once. Nor is a distinction, founded upon rigorous observance, maintained without much pain. In time, therefore, this foundation is supplied by another more agreeable and of a more carnal nature. The schismatic has also started with the vital error of the want of charity, and hopeless is the maintenance of truth amongst such as abide by one wilful error. It infects their whole conduct, and makes all their course crooked. The informing spirit of truth is foregone, and they are left to be the sport of error. "One body, one spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism¹," says the Apostle, and shows how necessary he deemed the union of pure faith and true charity. The more rigorous assertion, therefore, of truth by one who fails in charity is like the intemperate exertion of the sick man which he makes to prove to himself, in despite of his own misgivings, that there is nothing the matter with him. He is all the worse for it afterwards. To these causes remain to be added the disorderly spirit introduced by the act of separation amongst the separatists, and the isolated and unsupported position of their pastors. The former party, ignorant, capricious, and passionate as a multitude, the latter compliant and men-pleasers as their slaves. In what can all this end but in confusion and corrupt doctrine, if indeed any thing deserving the name of doctrine be left at

¹ Ephes. iv. 4, 5.

all? The Montanists had become heretics before the time of the first council of Constantinople, and the Puritans are, through direct descent, represented at this day by the Socinians.

It is always a difficult thing to come at the true character of a sectarian leader. If we take his biography at the hands of his own party, we soon find that we are reading nothing better than an offensive and defensive pamphlet on their own side; and that his merits, even when intended to be fairly weighed, are estimated by the arbitrary and conventional standard of the sect. Sometimes the notoriety of the man survives the existence, both in persons and in books, of his sect, and posterity is obliged to have recourse for information to the accounts furnished by powerful and prejudiced enemies. The latter is the case of Novatian. We scarcely know any thing of him but through the evidently distorted representation drawn by his rival, Cornelius, from the occasional mention made by Cyprian, who had sufficient reason to show him no favour, and from his own writings, which, together with the negative evidence of Cyprian, accidentally serve to dispel some serious charges, and move both our justice and charity to be cautious in receiving violent accusations against a professor of severe principles, and a man of eminent talent and learning, who has been left without a witness to speak, or an advocate to plead for him, at the bar of posterity.

His country is not certainly known, but all circumstances, duly considered, seem to point to Rome, or at least Italy. He was born a heathen, and his liberal education is attested both by his own writings

and by the report of his adversaries¹. He appears to have been naturally of a gloomy disposition, and subject to fits of deep mental depression. Such came with aggravated misery upon the heathen, who was without hope, uncheered by heavenly light, undiverted by celestial prospects, unsustained by spiritual comfort. But how manifold and unsearchable are the ways in which God makes his call upon man! A messenger hideous in appearance, painful to the senses, brings to him an invitation to the unbounded spiritual joyfulness of the wedding-feast. Under a severe attack of his complaint he had recourse to the supernatural help of the exorcists, and received relief from them. Whether he sought this resource merely for the sake of bodily cure, as the heathen sometimes did², or, having taken his place among the catechumens, submitted to have the evil spirit expelled previously to baptism, cannot be determined. In the former case a sense of the power of the God of the Christians, and gratitude for such mercy, would be likely to dispose his heart to seek him and know him, and that too at the hands of his healers, through whom alone he could be known. In the latter he would have been led by the intolerable burden of a dejected mind to seek comfort in the Gospel of Christ. However it be, his disease was the cause of his conversion, and gave his enemy occasion to say, that "Satan was the author of his faith, by taking possession of him³." But

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 52. 57, whence some have inferred that he was a Stoic philosopher.

² Tertull. ad Scap. 4. See Dr. Routh's Reliq. Sacr. iii. p. 47.

³ Euseb. E. H. vi. 43.

either the relief which he had obtained was short, or a still more dangerous disease supervened; and being brought to extremities, so that death was momentarily expected, he received baptism in bed, through the imperfect vehicle of sprinkling. It pleased God, however, that he should recover. But whether his rigorous and austere mind entertained scruples concerning the validity of such baptism, or some obstacle, not of his own raising, intervened, he did not receive the completion of the rite through confirmation by the imposition of the hands of the bishop.

Perhaps this was rendered unnecessary, by an imposition of hands, conveying more excellent gifts, supervening shortly after. For, being a man of strict moral character, an accomplished scholar, and endowed with shining talents, he so recommended himself to the favour of the bishop Fabian, that he admitted him to the priesthood, notwithstanding that the whole body of his clergy, joined by many of the laity, remonstrated against such a violation of discipline, insisting on the rule which forbade the recipients of clinic baptism to be admitted to any clerical office. He obtained, however, at last their reluctant consent to dispense with the rule in this one instance. Such accumulated irregularity, as that he should at once leap into the priesthood, not only without having been formally admitted into the Church by confirmation, but also without having ascended up the steps of any of the subordinate clerical offices, was not likely to impress the mind of Novatian, already, perhaps, too much inclining to overlook the distinction between the visible and invisible Church, with any deep respect

for ecclesiastical usage, and prepared him for the violent step which he afterwards took. The good Fabian was prevented by martyrdom from witnessing the painful sight of the ultimate result of such extraordinary marks of favour.

(A.D. 250.) The talents and character of Novatian soon overcame all prejudices. He had risen high in influence and estimation, when the outbreak of persecution under Decius gave him fresh opportunity of distinction. It is true indeed that a temporary seclusion, from some cause or other, gave a handle to his enemies to object to him a charge that, "he shut himself up, and when called upon by the deacons to come forward and do his duty as a priest towards his suffering brethren, he angrily bade them go about their business, for that he did not choose to be a presbyter any longer, being a follower of a different philosophy." But the story, if it be not a gross distortion of some unimportant incident, is quite irreconcilable with the whole tenour of facts which we gather from Cyprian's correspondence, and with his own subsequent conduct. He could not but have manfully stood up for the faith who was selected by the clergy of Rome to write in their name to Cyprian, on a question so nearly connected with the above charge. Two letters of his are still extant in Cyprian's correspondence, being the thirtieth and thirty-first. They are written with much eloquence, and remarkable elegance, both of style and expression¹. Their subject is the treatment of the

¹ For his writing the thirty-first we have the authority of Cyprian himself (Ep. 52. p. 118).

lapsed. The man, described above by Cornelius, would not have been permitted, nor, if permitted, would have dared to write in such language. He would have condemned himself in every line. There is something also remarkably interesting in the circumstances of these letters. Their calm elegance strikes us with deep admiration when we consider that they were dictated in the midst of a tempest of distraction and showers of blood, when the Church, deprived of its helmsman, was reeling about, and such was the confusion, that it was not found possible to elect his successor. It is another example, besides some already noticed, of the manner in which those holy men of earlier times could quite forget the horrors of the surrounding scene in the occupation of their Father's business. The Comforter was indeed among them, and the peace of the Lord was with them. In the world they had tribulation. But they were of good cheer: their Lord had overcome the world.

(A. D. 251.) Such was the fear and hatred which Decius entertained of a bishop of Rome, humble, and subject, and despised though he now was, that he would much sooner have heard of the claims of a new pretender to the empire than of the election of a bishop at Rome¹. He had now, however, gone far away, and with business enough before him. The persecution, therefore, slackened so far that, after an interval of about a year and a quarter, the clergy took courage, and proceeded to elect a head. We are presented, by great good fortune, with an ac-

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 52.

count of the number of officers employed in the Roman Church at this period, when it was reckoned to be in a highly flourishing state, and may estimate the ambition which sought distinction and power in such a society. In addition to the bishop, its clergy consisted of forty-six priests, seven deacons, seven subdeacons, forty-two acolyths, fifty-two exorcists, readers, and door-keepers. The widows also and the poor amounted to fifteen hundred. Corresponding to this grand establishment, as it was then deemed, was the body of the laity, which their bishop reckoned innumerable¹. Adding to this interior flourishing condition, the exterior influence and splendour of the Roman Church, in which it stood at the head of the world, we may confess that there was in it a prize for spiritual pride to aim at, as much as there was in the Roman state for ambitious soldiers to contest. We are, therefore, well prepared to hear of internal broils, and of the civil wars of schism, arising out of contention for so enviable an eminence. They, how-

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 43. Burnett, however, estimates it but at fifty thousand, reckoning how many could well be inspected by one presbyter. A better principle than his would be to consider what proportion the classes of the widows and of the destitute bear to the whole population of a large city. In applying it to the Christians of Rome, the smaller number of the higher classes would be more than compensated by the smaller number of the destitute, since the Christians would support each other in gaining a livelihood to the utmost, and would have no profligates among them. The widows form (I believe) about one-fiftieth of a population. If this population, therefore, were fifty thousand, the destitute would form one-hundredth. Is not Burnett's estimate too low?

ever, began in the first instance ostensibly from purer motives.

A man who had been commissioned to write in the name of the whole Church, a charge which always devolved upon the bishop, and, though now the writer's hand was unacknowledged publicly¹, was still a mark of great regard for his talents and character, could not but be looked upon as a likely successor to the vacant chair. Such a prejudice in his favour must have been interpreted by his friends as a call upon them to urge his claims. Novatian, however, whether from external considerations or from internal motives, deemed it expedient to assure the Church, by the most solemn oaths, that he had not the slightest desire of the office. In this we may suppose him sincere. No man, who was fit for it, desired in those days the office of a bishop. It had been forced upon Cyprian. But might it not also have been forced upon Novatian? He had only disavowed all ambition of it. He had not said that he would refuse. And he was certainly right in reserving this point, which it would have been wrong to maintain after the voice of the Church, which was considered the voice of God, had called him. He was not, however, named. The Church took him at his word, and men in such cases are often, not only most unwilling to be so taken, but even most indignant against their believers. Though ever so determined to refuse, they like to have the compliment of the refusal, and very generally, when they have

¹ It was, however, known to Cyprian. Ep. 52. p. 118.

thought themselves quite indifferent, or even averse to the acquisition of a thing, while it was still in suspense, have seen it with vain longings and regret irrecoverably gone into the possession of another.

Many considerations might have influenced the Roman clergy in passing over Novatian. And, first of all, if his clinic baptism seemed a just impediment to his being made priest, much more so was it to his being elected bishop. And more especially one who stood forward like the bishop of Rome, as the champion of the Church and its truth, and therefore, as the butt of schismatics and heretics, ought to be void of all offence. In the second place, however useful he had shown himself in the literary department in which they had employed him, this formed but an unimportant and occasional part of the bishop's duties, while his very literary habits, especially as they supervened upon a gloomy unsocial disposition, might seem very unsuitable to the active and practical nature of the charge. They might also have reasonably dreaded an arbitrary and tyrannical master in Novatian as bishop. Men of gloomy unsocial temper and of self-denying habits very commonly conceal, if to discerning eyes they can be said to conceal, under this apparently inconsistent mask, minds inordinate in their love of power. Among the other lusts and desires of our nature this stands so elevated, as to appear quite a spiritual one. Men, therefore, who despise all the rest will freely indulge in this, and it is the more excessive because all the mental affection has been thus concentrated in it. Meanwhile it is kept in continual exercise by the continual watchfulness of a rigid self-govern-

ment; and the consciousness of a continual power over ourselves, if uncorrected by other affections, naturally leads to domineering over others. And tyrannical indeed is then our rule. The ascetic thinks, of course, that men should be ruled as he has ruled himself; having extinguished his own affections, he pays no regard whatever to the affections of others; having chained down his own will, he thinks it a duty to chain down that of others; having learned to hate and despise in himself all vulgar desires, he hates, despises, and persecutes them in others. Hence his exercise of power is a contemptuous inexorable tyranny. What a nursery has the cloister been of the worst of despots! But, supposing few thus far to penetrate the real character of Novatian, we may conceive that the great body, however they might esteem his literary and moral character, would prefer to him a man of more popular and practical habits, though of less brilliant pretensions. And, above all, we must not neglect the consideration, that Novatian had already begun to disclose his obnoxious tenets respecting the lapsed, and with five others had been rejected from his communion by the martyr Moses, who died very shortly before the election came on¹. His eloquence, therefore, and philosophy, and rigid morality were neglected, and the choice of the clergy and people fell upon Cornelius, a man of comparatively humble pretensions. Judging from the few remains of his correspondence, we should pronounce him a man of narrow comprehension. His virulent expressions, his greedy reception of charges against his rival,

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 43. 8.

his evident distortion of facts, all denote an inferior and vulgar mind. But these are reconcilable with heartiness of disposition, with practical good sense, with active habits, and with all the qualities which are chiefly concerned in doing the business of the world. He had also the good recommendation of having gone regularly through all the previous steps of the ministry, and of having acquitted himself in each with great credit, whereas Novatian was, comparatively, untried. The truly evangelical piety of both rivals was probably nearly equal, being in both of them destitute of the excellent fruit of charity. If Novatian was pained at the preference shown to such a rival, he would be still more so at the unanimity with which it was displayed. He was elected, almost without a dissenting voice, by the clergy and the people, and by a college of sixteen bishops, and forced, against his will, into the chair. In short, if Novatian's claim had been set up at all, nothing could be more complete than its rejection.

However he might have felt, Novatian was obliged to acquiesce in the appointment, and must soon have been obliged also to confess the merits of Cornelius. The persecution, which had only relaxed, again grew violent, and the bishop displayed such fortitude of mind and strength of faith as to justify all the expectations of his electors¹. But he had not been long seated before he was obliged to take in hand the business which was either the real or pretended origin of Novatian's secession.

This seems to have been a great subject of debate

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 52.

before it came to such an issue. Novatian, in that letter which he wrote in the name of the Roman clergy, had allowed the peace of the Church to be given to the penitent lapsed in the hour of death. His opinion was, however, now openly avowed to the contrary, and his avowal of it at such a crisis has, at least, a suspicious appearance. It may be said that he then uttered, not his own opinion, but that of the majority. But why did he not still submit his private opinion to that of the majority? It is very likely that at that time, being on very good terms with all around, flattered by their attention, if not directing a view to the vacant chair, and not having had time to ponder deeply on the matter, and to come to a decided avowal of opinion, he did not think it worth while to express any reluctance which, as an ascetic, he must have felt. But now, when time had been allowed for deeper consideration, when what had softened his disposition had been removed, and all that could sour it was present, his original misgivings took the shape of decided opposition to the general voice, and of determination to act upon his own opinion. Such a change brings upon him no heavier charge, at the very worst, than human infirmity. But the measures with which he followed it up will not bear so lenient an interpretation.

It was not the first time that Rome was thus accused of excessive indulgence to sinners. Tertullian had directed against her his tract upon chastity, reproaching her with great bitterness for allowing re-admission, through penance, to adulterers and fornicators, whereas she ought to have drawn the line between the venial sins of infirmity, for which Christ

will plead, and sins of wilfulness, as murder, adultery, fornication, denial of Christ, which are mortal and irremissible. The bishops may pronounce pardon for the former; the latter must be left to God alone¹. Novatian now adopted this rule, and, with a stoic indifference, considering the libellatics equally guilty with the sacrificates, put them both without the pale of the pardon of the Church. He indeed strenuously exhorted them to repentance, if, perhaps, it might be forgiven them hereafter, but would not allow any thing to avail them in this world. He bade them plough and sow, but would not let them reap; he bade them build ships, but would not let them sail and traffic. There was no place for them in that glorious Church which has not spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but is holy and without blemish (Eph. v. 27)². Now we have already seen that the Roman clergy had made certain provisional regulations, in which Novatian himself had acquiesced, respecting the manner of treating the lapsed, intending to decide the question when, having elected a head, they should be enabled to act canonically. Every thing was left in suspense, except the case of mortal sickness, to which if a person was reduced, then, after having shown evident tokens of hearty repentance, he should be re-admitted, with due caution and consideration to communion, not that they pretended that restoration to the visible Church necessarily implied the forgiveness of God. That was left to the Searcher of the heart and reins. The question, as to what was to be ultimately done, having now at last come into debate, the opinion of the great ma-

¹ de Pudic. 2. 18. 21.

² Cypr. Ep. 52.

majority was that which we have seen to have prevailed at Carthage, namely, that the libellatics should be received after penance, and that even such as had sacrificed and offered incense should be admissible in the hour of death¹. Thus issue was joined between Novatian and the great body of the clergy, who had the bishop himself at their head.

This opposition made it necessary that the council, which was to decide the question, should be of the most imposing appearance. No less than sixty bishops, together with a still greater number of priests and deacons, were assembled. Novatian found himself in a small minority, and was not only a witness to the ratification of the opinions which he opposed, but also heard sentence pronounced upon himself and his followers, as ejected from the Church. To give all possible sanction and weight to this decree, his opponents took care to make note of all the bishops who assisted in enacting it, and of all, moreover, who, though absent, sanctioned it with their approval. Against this tremendous array he had nothing to oppose but his character, his arguments, and a few, though very select, followers.

With our imperfect acquaintance respecting the detail of this controversy, we are not competent to pronounce any opinion on the determination of this council as regards Novatian. It appears, at first sight, harsh, and strongly marked with that despotic rigour which the Romish Church has displayed from the very first towards all who have dared to dispute her opinion. And that it was injurious to public peace

¹ Ep. 52. 54.

is amply proved by the deplorable consequences. At the same time, if Novatian was determined to bring his opinion into practical operation as a presbyter of the Church, it is difficult to see how he was to be dealt with otherwise. He was head of a schism within the Church, and it is both wise and just, in such a case, to remove the mischief, and expel the disease from the vitals. It was his duty to submit his opinion on that which, after all, was a mere matter of discipline to the general sense of the Church. And through this uncharitable obstinacy he may be said to have cut himself off from the Church, as much as the Church to have cut off him.

He now stood at the head of a party without the Church. Possibly this was a post which he had never contemplated when he began his opposition, and which he would least have coveted. If he had declined the opportunity of being head of the Church, as he had affected to do, he would not be very ambitious of his present pre-eminence without its pale. But circumstances had reduced him to it, and, finding no alternative, he gave himself up to it with all the zeal which could be prompted by the novelty and necessity of his situation, if not by the despair arising from the consciousness of foregone inclinations and fallen rectitude of principle. His elegant learning was now to be turned to the vulgar account of gross calumny, his studious retirement was to be sacrificed to the most busy publicity, his ascetic austerity was to be seen in most inconsistent union with the worldly-minded occupation of faction. And he was not only to endure as companions, but to obey as

counsellors, men whose society he would formerly have shunned. Such is the degradation to which the proudest man must stoop when he is exalted by force of faction. Among such men was his great instigator Novatus, a firebrand, thrown into his bosom by a fury, fresh from the infernal fire of schism. He was a presbyter of the Church of Carthage, where he had long made himself exceedingly troublesome to Cyprian, endeavouring by all means to produce a rupture between the bishop and his flock. He was the mainspring of all the disquiet which Cyprian had experienced in the business of the treatment of the lapsed, working his puppets, Felicissimus and others, whom he put at the head of all his operations, with devilish dexterity, and a fiend-like knowledge of the means of annoyance. His moral misconduct at last gave Cyprian a hold upon him, so that, being afraid of the consequences, he quitted Africa, and went to Rome, where he found a more ample and splendid stage open to his machinations. Their effects were soon visible. The man who had ordained a deacon in despite of Cyprian was now instrumental in setting up a bishop against the bishop of Rome ¹.

This extreme step was indeed unavoidable. Novatian had started with a principle which may be called the very corner-stone of schism, namely, the identity of the visible and invisible Church. The persons, who thus confound what ought to be kept distinct, of course think themselves and their party the only true Church, and regard all others as infi-

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 49.

dels without the pale ; while the pride, presumption, and uncharitableness, which are the necessary fruit of such a principle, being also the very elements of the character of the schismatic, make the rent, thus begun, still wider and more incurable. To these is soon added hypocrisy, the most cunning mischief-maker of all ; since arbitrary and outward standards and symbols of holiness must be set up by those who pretend to its godliness, but have foregone its power. Calumny is all along a necessary instrument. The shades of difference are too gradual for any man to draw the line between the classes of real and nominal Christians. But this is readily done by blackening the characters of such as are not to be admitted among the white-robed indwellers of the sanctuary, and by bleaching thus through force of contrast the yellow sear of the reputations on their own side which are the worse for wear. By this operation a very plain difference is made out in things where no difference were otherwise discernible : a pale is erected : the true Church is fenced out against the trespass of the infidel.

Proceeding upon such a principle ¹, Novatian refused to acknowledge the body from which he was separated as the true Church of Rome, and, consequently, Cornelius as the true bishop. That could not be, he maintained, the spotless and unblemished spouse of Christ which admitted, not only of men who had their consciences defiled by accepting certi-

¹ Ep. Cyprian. 52. It may be observed here, once for all, that the chief part of the materials for an account of Novatian lie in this letter, and also in those inclusive from the forty-first, and in Euseb. E. H. vi. 43.

ficates, but even of men who had sacrificed to idols. Still less could he be a true bishop who communicated with such men. Unfortunately, Cornelius had here given his adversary a handle against him. He could not have been blamed for continuing to sacrifice, after recovery, that communion which had been granted to them in the supposed hour of their death. But he had also yielded to a mere principle of expediency in admitting to laic communion a sacrifice priest, named Trophimus, because he brought over with him a very large number of the people who would not have returned without him. It is true that Cornelius and his council exacted from him the most open and humiliating expression of penitence and satisfaction ; but still this charge, having been once fixed upon Cornelius, was easily magnified, either by Novatian or his followers, into a charge of communicating with bishops who had sacrificed, and ultimately into the calumny that Cornelius had been himself a libellatic. According to these views Novatian's party was exclusively the true Church, and, therefore, the Church of Rome was still without a bishop. It was now thought high time to proceed to an election, and, in so small a number of clergy, the question would be, not who was so fit as Novatian, but who was fit but Novatian. He himself must have found that it was come to this. Willing or unwilling he must accept the offer of such fearful pre-eminence.

Had no such necessity existed, it is not likely that he could have resisted the importunity of the meddling Novatus. An ascetic scholar is the last man to be proof against the artful persuasion and weary-

ing solicitation of the man of the world. He finds him at first agreeable, then necessary, and then his master. But what a melancholy spectacle is that, when we see a man highly gifted in heart and head become, through false principle and its consequent unholy passion, the tool and dupe of a low cunning knave, who uses him as the instrument of his base interest and love of mischief, and whom, in his better mind, he would have spurned from his side. It seems as if his error and evil passion had become embodied in an attendant and imperious fiend. This man was now espousing principles exactly opposite to those which he had so violently professed to the annoyance of Cyprian in Africa. And, alas, the infirmity of human nature! in both places he drew over to his side the illustrious body of martyrs and confessors. But it is natural for men who have distinguished themselves in any way from the rest to consider themselves an exclusive party. Where this distinction is of a dangerous nature they consider themselves the elect, and are fain to show their election visibly to the world, as well as palpably to represent it to themselves, by drawing a line between themselves and the general body. The martyrs, therefore, sometimes as weak in understanding as they were strong in resolution, were a ready prey to the flattery of such as wished to use them for the instruments of schism. In Africa, Novatus had appealed to their perfect faith as a reason for condescending to compassionate their weaker brethren, and to their sufferings as powerful means of intercession in their favour with God and his Church. At Rome he appealed to the same virtues as the glo-

rious example which all ought to have followed, of which all had enjoyed the benefit, and yet had not walked by such shining light. In both cases they were gained over by flattery to the ranks of schism.

This accession of the martyrs gave a great show of strength to the side of Novatian, and at the same time made the demand upon him irresistible, if, indeed, he ever had heartily resisted the offer of the episcopate; and we are willing, in charity, and in deference to his own avowal, to believe that he had. But after his election had been determined, a great difficulty was found in managing his consecration. The bishops had generally throughout Italy, not only concurred in the election of Cornelius, but also agreed in the condemnation of Novatian. Novatus, however, was never at a loss in the work of mischief. Probably, therefore, it was he who turned his eye to a corner of Italy, into which a true statement of what had been going on at Rome had not yet penetrated. It was easy to persuade three bishops, who were simple men and in retired situations, that their presence was necessary at Rome to assist the rest of the bishops in composing a division in the Church. Being hurried up to the capital, and partly deluded, and partly persuaded (and, as Cornelius tells the story, overcome by good cheer), they laid hands upon Novatian, and consecrated him bishop of Rome, at the uncanonical hour of four o'clock in the afternoon.

The invisible Church is, indeed, but a little flock compared with the multitude of the visible. And this reflection would supply very needful consolation to Novatian when he found himself assisted but by five

out of the forty-six presbyters of the Roman Church. His party, however, compensated for want of numbers by activity of measures, and, as their opponents were not idle, a deplorable spectacle was now exhibited, before the whole world, of a famous Church torn asunder by schism, and vexed by the storms of the evil passions to which it gives birth. So quickly had this mock-election of Novatian followed upon that of Cornelius, that the bishops at any distance from Italy had not yet been assured of either. There was now, therefore, a great struggle to be first to win the ear of the presidents of the more eminent Churches. Novatian was so fortunate at Carthage, that though Cyprian had sent legates to Rome that he might be certified in all points of the legitimacy of Cornelius's election, yet his legates arrived both before their return and before those of Cornelius. They experienced, however, in the first instance, a rebuff, and, being followed immediately after by two bishops, who gave a true account of what had passed at Rome, met a decided repulse. When they had thus been denied the opportunity of venting their calumnies against Cornelius, before the assembled Church, as they had demanded, they went among the flock, from door to door, disseminating the poison of their misrepresentations¹. At Antioch he was more successful, though he had little reason to be gratified with the result. The ascetic and rigid notions of Novatian were much more congenial to the temper of the East than of the West, and Fabius, the bishop, was rather inclined at first in his favour. Cornelius,

¹ Ep. 41.

however, soon supplanted him there also, and it is from a fragment of his correspondence with Fabius that we learn the principal facts of Novatian's history¹. These have evidently been received with a greediness which was unwilling to wait a moment for investigation, have been exaggerated by hostile feeling, and distorted by all the force of prejudice. At Alexandria he experienced a firm refusal, but conveyed in such a manner as became its great and good bishop Dionysius. Novatian had represented to him that he had been elected quite against his will. The bishop replied, "Whether you were drawn against your will, you will prove by retiring of your own will; for you ought to undergo any thing for the sake of avoiding a division of the Church of God. And a martyrdom for the sake of not producing schism were not less glorious than one for the sake of not committing idolatry—in my opinion, superior. For, in the latter case, a man is a martyr for his own individual soul; but in the former for the whole Church. And so now, if you shall either persuade or compel the brethren to come to unanimity, your merit will outweigh your offence. The one will not be imputed, the other will be commended. But if you be without power, and cannot command their obedience, save by all means your own soul. Praying that you may seek and ensue peace in the Lord. I bid you farewell²."

He had, however, some countenance from more obscure quarters. We have seen that in Gaul, Marcian of Arles espoused his cause, and in Africa his

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 43.

² Ibid. 45.

representations so shook the firmness of Antonianus, one of the bishops, that Cyprian was compelled to use all his eloquence to disabuse him¹. And it is evident from all accounts, that these are but the representatives to us of many more whom history has not mentioned. Where however he could not find a bishop to his mind, he had no scruple about setting up one; and thus his bishops, pretending to be the only real bishops, and to govern the only real flocks of Christ, were seen in every province and city of the empire². This was quite a novel sight. Heretical bishops there had been, but they had neither Apostolic truth nor succession. These schismatic bishops had both³, and great was the scandal produced upon the minds of the weaker brethren. Its evil effects, however, had some counterbalance in this advantage, that this sect would be the last place of refuge to such as kicked against the discipline of the Church. And therefore the latter was scarcely immediately affected by it. But it would mediate suffer, for a bishop would now and then have to lament the separation of a strict and serious believer, whose good example and influence was thus lost to his flock, and whose efficient help was much missed by himself, while those whom he had left would be but too much disposed to associate laxity with churchmanship, and strictness with schism.

The principles upon which Novatian started, have been already mentioned. The tenets which he maintained are therefore soon stated. In point of doc-

¹ Ep. 52.

² Ibid.

³ Their orders were allowed at the Nicene Council. See Canon 8.

trine he did not differ from the body which he had left. In Church polity he also agreed. It was only in the degree of the rigour of discipline as to offenders that he dissented. This seems a trifling point at first sight; yet how numerous and momentous are its consequences! He regarded all Churches which had received the lapsed back again into communion to have lost, by the contamination, the essential character of true Churches. Their members, therefore, from bishop down to laic, were as much without the pale of Christ's fold as the heathen. Cyprian and Dionysius, the glory of their age, were considered as aliens from the commonwealth of the spiritual Israel, and every one who came over to him was obliged to submit to his baptism, just as if he had been a heathen. Then, and not till then, they belonged to the true Church, and could claim the title of Puritan¹, which was assumed by the sect, as denoting their exclusive purity.

Cyprian has not scrupled to call Novatian a heretic², and indeed it is not easy in such an extreme case to draw the line between heresy and schism. The former is commonly applied to difference in doctrine, the latter to difference in discipline from the orthodox standard. But discipline is so much the effect of doctrine, and so reflects its own effects back upon it, that it will often be difficult to adopt the above definitions, and more so than ever where the charity which is the fruit and evidence of a lively faith in Jesus Christ is so utterly abandoned, that even an ordinance

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 43. Canon. Concil. Nicen. 8. Hieronym. Catalog.

² Ep. 47. 51. So too the penitent confessors in Ep. 46.

of the Lord Himself is abused to the purpose of sectarian exclusiveness, and a fresh confession of faith is required. Whatever may be the articles of faith, however sound and orthodox, yet if they be but a dead letter, and a spirit quite adverse to their spirit inspire their professors, schism becomes too mild a term to apply to such conduct. Well can we estimate the utter disgust which the great Dionysius expresses at this party, when he says, "It is with good reason that we detest Novatian, for rending asunder (as he has done) the Church, drawing some of the brethren into impieties and blasphemies, introducing a novel and most impious doctrine respecting God, traducing our most kind Lord Jesus Christ as devoid of pity, and, in addition to all this, setting at nought the holy laver, subverting the faith and confession which precedes it, and utterly putting to flight from among them the Holy Spirit¹." The miserable result of such uncharitableness is, that it provokes a kindred spirit in those who are the objects of its assault. Indignant self-vindication will carry the best of men into expressions which trespass the limits of Christian forbearance. Yet surely Dionysius could scarcely have said less, with the lamentable effects of this schism before his eyes, producing the most hateful spiritual pride and censorious contempt in some, laxity and unbelief in others, uncharitableness in all. And we can fully enter into the angry grief of Cyprian when he calls Novatian "more hardened by the perverseness of secular philosophy, than softened by the gentleness of the Lord's

¹ Euseb. E. H. vii. 8.

wisdom; a deserter of the Church, an enemy to mercy, a slayer of penitence, a teacher of pride, a corrupter of truth, a destroyer of charity¹." It was not the last time that the truly good and great men of the Church were obliged to answer to the revilings of men, who with the opprobrious term heathen ever ready on their lips for all who would not submit to their dictation, proved themselves to be the more rightful owners of the title.

The great strength of Novatian's party lay, not only in the character and talents of their leader, but also in the countenance afforded to it by the Roman martyrs. Their fellowship was necessarily that of the true Church in the opinion of a large multitude, and we have already seen the difficult situation of Cyprian when he found this host arrayed against him. A handle was here made of them not only at home, but letters, full of calumny against Cornelius, had been sent in their name to Churches in every quarter². They were, however, men of human passions, and when the flattery which had seduced them became either scanty or stale, and they could calmly look around them, and review their situation, there was little indeed upon which they could congratulate themselves. They found themselves severed from the main body of the Church. The clergy, with the paltry exception of five presbyters, was against them; the great body of the people also was on the other side, and they could not but feel much painful humiliation on comparing the hasty and surreptitious ordination of Novatian with that of Cornelius, which had

¹ Ep. 57.

² Ep. 46.

been openly and solemnly conducted according to all the canons of the Church. Instead of receiving that public honour and respect to which they had been accustomed, they had made themselves the tools of a party whose principles put an end, in great measure, if not entirely, to their proud and influential privilege of intercession¹. Their prisons were no longer thronged with petitioners; the visits of their familiar priests and deacons had ceased.

Such probably was their disappointment, when they received from Cyprian his letters entreating them to return into the bosom of the Church². He had previously, as we have seen, held a correspondence with them, which gained him much influence among them. And now every thing conspired to give success to his mediation. They accordingly deputed two of their number, Urbanus and Sidonius, to signify to Cornelius their desire to return into his communion. He demanded to hear this from their own mouth and confession. On coming into the presence of the bishop, and being questioned and upbraided with the part which they had taken, they humbly confessed that they had been imposed upon, and implored that their offences might be forgotten and forgiven. Cornelius was resolved to humble this refractory prætorian guard, and required them to publish this confession in a full assembly of the Church, which he summoned for that purpose. There, in the presence of five bishops and the whole body of presbyters, assisted by a large assembly of laity, these privileged intercessors for others were

¹ Tertull. de Pudic. 22.

² Ep. 44.

reduced to intercede for themselves, and were but too glad to purchase re-admission by the most humble confession of error, and the most unequivocal acknowledgement of the rightful authority of Cornelius ¹.

Novatian thus experienced a blow from which he could scarcely hope to recover. A general defection ensued, as was to be expected. For in a party not inconsiderable, there must have been not only many who afterwards changed their opinions upon calm reflection, and were confirmed by this example, not only many to whom the example alone was sufficient, but many also who were already either tired or affrighted with their situation, and wanted nothing but so fair a pretext for quitting. These would be of that class who are readily caught by the profession and exterior of superior strictness, and much admire both the professors and their rules, but do not long abide in the practice themselves. They like being treated with stern rebuke, and awful threats, but only so long as they are not personal. What preacher knows not such hearers? When he follows them up personally, and to their homes with the same treatment, he finds himself no longer agreeable. He discovers that he has been playing like a grown person with children, who are the more delighted the nearer he has come to catching them. They have enjoyed the thrill of being all but caught, and the triumph of escape. But they do not enjoy being caught. Thus many of Novatian's followers would be disgusted when they felt the actual grasp of that discipline which they had so much admired, while it

¹ Ep. 46.

only rebuked and threatened from a distance. Every day henceforward took away some followers. At Rome his numbers were thinned down to comparative solitude by continual desertion, and so rapid was the decline of his cause in all quarters abroad, that Dionysius of Alexandria, writing a few years after, could assure Stephen of Rome, that all the Churches of the East were enjoying peace and repose after the vexations of this schism¹. It was now, therefore, if ever, that growing desperate by being kept at bay on every side, he lost all temper, and committed those impieties which are imputed to him by Cornelius, who says, that in the administration of the Eucharist, when he had made the oblations, and had come to distribute his share of bread and wine to each, he used to take both hands of the communicant, and not let them go before he had sworn by the body and blood of Jesus Christ our Lord, that he would never forsake him and turn to Cornelius. Overcast by such a cloud of calumny, overborne by such a stream of opposition, Novatian sinks from sight, unless he may be said to emerge with brilliancy in the uncertain report of his martyrdom. He sinks like a drowning man, who raises with his struggles a violent stir of the water. But shortly after, the surface closes over him in its wonted unperturbable stillness. The sect, however, did not become extinct, but occasionally recurs to historic notice for some time after.

We are always sorry to see a manifest contrast between the life and the writings of a man. If we have read the latter first, our disappointment amounts

¹ Euseb. E. H. vii. 5.

to a distrust of human nature ; we are vexed that he should have engaged our sympathy so warmly and so long, and are urged by the re-action of our feelings to condemn him more severely than he deserves. If we have begun with taking up the narrative of his life, we come to his writings warped with prejudice, and scarcely capable of taking a calm and critical review of them. Thus we are in danger of doing injustice both to the author and to ourselves. Something of this we experience in Novatian, whose harsh unsocial character is quite in contrast with the candour, the polished moderation, the clear and elegant expression of his style. In addition to the letters already noticed, he is generally reputed the author of a treatise on the Trinity, entitled, " On the Rule of Faith." It is taken up with stating the nature and relations of the Father and the Son, the discussion on the Holy Ghost occupying a very small and disproportionate part of the volume. It is written with elegance and even eloquence, and sometimes with cogency of argument. But, like the Fathers in general, he is too indiscriminate in his quotations from Scripture. Nor does he lay down his system with that strictness of expression which was introduced by succeeding controversies. Another work commonly ascribed to him, is a treatise " On Jewish Meats." It has the character of an episcopal charge, and the tone of schismatic exclusiveness may be distinguished in his addressing his flock as the people that stand steadfast in the Gospel, who maintain and teach the Gospel in sincerity, and undefiled with any spot of perverse doctrine. And whereas Cyprian and others are content to call their brethren " beloved," this man

must needs call his "most holy." As may be expected from the subject, it smells strongly in parts of the fanciful interpretation of the Fathers upon the ordinances of the Old Testament, but it also contains some good sensible exhortation upon the proper use of food.

In all these works his style, though undoubtedly of a higher polish, strongly reminds us of that of his great contemporary Cyprian; and the reader will not fail to lament, that a man who was capable of expressing the truths of the Gospel in so clear and pleasing a form, should have wasted this precious talent by plunging into a quarrel, which deprived him both of that leisure and of that calmness which is necessary to literary composition. There is enough to assure us that, had he been content to remain in his proper situation, he would have been among the brightest lights of his day; and the philosophy and eloquence, which Cyprian objects to him as the instruments of his mischief¹, might have been the blessed means of conversion to the heathen, and of instruction and edification to the brethren. He might also have vindicated his native Church from the slur which its deficiency in writers has brought upon it, instead of being the first to affix upon it a stain as the cradle of schism. But a gloomy mind, fostering a harsh and unsociable temper, instead of yielding to the comfort and strong injunctions of the Gospel, precipitated him upon a violent and perverse course, which ended in an obscurity that might have been well exchanged for oblivion. Solemnly and

¹ Ep. 57. p. 169.

fearfully are we warned by his example to take heed how we cultivate the understanding without also chastening the feeling; how, making unequal yoke-fellows of these, we surrender our faculties as instruments to the service of carnal passion, instead of exhibiting them as careful expounders of evangelical faith and charity, and become servants to the world rather than to God. Surely, of all worldly-mindedness, that of the churchman is the most disreputable and mischievous. In him it argues a deliberate abandonment of professed principle, and is therefore the most perfidious of all; it operates in a sphere which has been appropriated as the inclosure of God's temple, and is therefore the most iniquitous of all; and it affects minds which ought to be teachers of the spiritual things of the world to come, and to be busied in the work of man's salvation and of God's glory, and is, therefore, the most depraved of all. Alas! that with such a warning, we should have to dismiss the notice of the gifted Novatian ¹.

¹ The references to Cyprian's works in this volume appertain to Oberthür's edition.

DIONYSIUS OF ALEXANDRIA.

Reflections on the past and present state of the African Continent—Dionysius elected to the Catechetical chair—Succeeds Heracles as bishop—Singular state of Alexandrian society—Persecution of Christians by the populace—Persecution by Decius—Dionysius forced into retreat—Difficulties, on his return, concerning the treatment of the Lapsed—His correspondence with Rome concerning Novatian, also concerning heretical Baptism—Persecution by Valerian—Dionysius sent into exile—His communication with his flock—Correspondence with Germanus—His return—An Alexandrian sedition—Followed by a dreadful pestilence—Controversies taken up by Dionysius—Against the Sabellians—Against the Millennarians—Against Paul of Samosata—His writings and character.

To the reflecting Christian of the present day, and especially of this country, nothing is more awful than a glance at the map of Africa, when he views it with the purpose of seeing what proportion of the inhabitants of that vast continent he can call brethren in the Lord. One or two feeble settlements, far removed asunder, make one or two almost imperceptible dents upon the edge of a wide and uniform extent of the most barbarous and apparently irreclaimable heathenism. And this is all the ground that has been regained since the Church was entirely swept away

from the whole northern border. When he considers that all its immense population is descended from forefathers who were once in possession of certain oracles and promises of God; when further he bears in mind how, in the third century, two most celebrated Churches under two most celebrated bishops filled the land from the Nile to the Atlantic, and sent out their boughs unto the sea, and their branches unto the river, he yields to a desponding reflection upon the instability of the abode of even the most excellent and spiritual gifts of God in the society of so reckless a creature as man. He sees how utterly opposed is the natural state of the human heart to divine influence, and how continually heavenly violence is required to force the truth into a bosom which is the passive receptacle of falsehood. At the same time, in the very palmy state of those Churches he sees the seeds of their decline. Be the general prosperity civil or religious, the effect on men is the same. Like spoiled children they know not what they would have. What they have not is always thought preferable to what they have, and to be purchased at any price. The means of their present happiness are despised, in the one case as barbarous, in the other as unspiritual. God is pushed out of all providence over the state, on the pretence that the things concerning him are too pure to be mixed with things so utterly worldly, and out of all inspection of his Church, on the pretence that man and his means are too impure to be agents of his heavenly purposes. Thus can man's perverse heart spiritualize truth into a lie. Amid such thoughts arises the melancholy question, whether his own

country, now so bright with the beams of truth as to riot in them, may not hereafter be added, in one entire mass, to the dominions of the darkness of error, and his anxiety will be by no means allayed by the tokens which our religious society is already manifesting. The wages and scourge of schism was then the Koran. What they will be in future it is not difficult to foresee. To these trains of reflection we have been led from examining the life and character of Dionysius, the other of these bright contemporary luminaries.

Dionysius of Alexandria, surnamed the Great, was born in a good station and of a wealthy family¹. Of this a liberal education was a necessary consequence in such a city. The inquisitive turn of his mind led him to examine all works that came to hand, and thus he fell in with the writings of the Christians, and was convinced and converted². He was then received into the catechetical school, and attended the instructions of Origen³. Under such a master he lost nothing of his original boldness and independence of mind, and no sooner did he feel himself securely grounded in the faith than he took up the works of the heretics. So much did he devote himself to the study, that a brother, one of the presbyters, thought it right to warn him seriously against polluting his mind with such defilement. Dionysius assented to the propriety of this advice, and was throwing up the occupation, when a divine vision confirmed him in it. A voice addressed him, and distinctly charged him,

¹ Euseb. E. H. vii. 11.

² *Ib.* vii. 7.

³ *Ib.* vi. 29.

saying, "Read whatsoever shall come to hand: for you are able to sift and prove all. And this was at the outset the cause of your faith." With this assurance he proceeded, and reaped the double advantage both of enabling himself to refute the writings of the heretics, and of abhorring them more than ever¹. A mind so original, so confident in its strength, so abundant in resources and information, so well furnished both offensively and defensively for the Christian cause, could not but find its suitable situation in a Church so open to the claims of talent as that of Alexandria. When, therefore, Heraclas was elected bishop, Dionysius was chosen to succeed him in the catechetical chair, and enjoyed the pleasurable association of feelings which is experienced by him who teaches upon the spot where himself has learned.

(A. D. 247.) If he did not equal his master in the fame of his pupils, he far surpassed him in worldly success. For after having borne for sixteen years the severe burden of his important and all-engrossing charge, he was once more the successor of Heraclas, and was elevated to the episcopal chair on the death of that prelate², in the very same year that Cyprian was elected bishop at Carthage. He would not receive a diocese in any other state than one of most complete order from such a predecessor, and therefore, as far as its internal relations were concerned, would have experienced a gratifying tranquillity. But very different was the aspect of affairs from without; and he had been seated but a few months

¹ Euseb. E. H. vii. 11.

² Ib. vi. 35.

when all his resources of wisdom and courage were called forth to guide the ship of his Church through such a storm as she had never hitherto encountered.

(A. D. 248.) Almost from the first the civil condition of Alexandria was most singular. Ptolemy Soter had put the Jews upon an equal footing with the Greeks, committing thus a grand political blunder, by which he bequeathed incessant agitation and a long train of seditious outrages to the city. To impart equal rights to a class or sect, which on principle considers all others as their inferiors, if not as unsubdued rebels, which maintains within itself an exclusive organization, which is but a section of a large and firmly associated body without, which body is of course eager on all occasions to render it all assistance by every possible means, clandestine or avowed, as need may require; this is in fact to give it superiority. The consequence here was a fanatical assumption on the part of the Jew, repaid with a hearty and contemptuous hatred by the Greek, and frequent and bloody seditions between them². As if these materials had not been sufficiently numerous and combustible, the meddling and factious Greek, and obstinate and fanatical Jew, were here associated with the sulky and superstitious Egyptian; and to the evils of national and religious distinction were added the capricious discontent of an immense body of artisans, and the unruly habits of a nautical multitude, attendant upon a flourishing state of commerce and manufactures. Thus the seeds of tumult were

¹ Joseph. A. J. xii. 1. 1. xix. 5. 2.

² Ibid. and xviii. 8. 1.

rife indeed, and they were as long and bloody in growth, as they were quick in conception and sudden in birth. In fact, almost from its foundation to its ruin, the city was proverbially infamous for its aptness to sedition. When the Gospel arrived within its walls, the Christians formed a new element of discord, utterly differing however in its quality from all the rest. They were as the rock in the tide, the butt of all the rushing waters, which are lashed into fury by its immoveable passiveness. They were the causes of tumult by their presence, and not by their motion.

The first in which the Christians, as far as we know, were seriously involved, interrupted the calmness of the spiritual rule of Dionysius. A man, pretending to be a prophet, worked upon the fanatical prejudices of the most grossly superstitious populace in the world, by predicting calamities to the city from the Christians. They immediately rose in tumult; every outrage against the brethren was counted for an act of piety; and earnestness of devotion to the cause of heaven was measured by the degree of violence and refinement of cruelty. With the usual cowardly ferocity of a multitude they vented their fury upon helpless women. When they could not prevail upon them either to utter the abominable words which they prompted, or to bow before their gods, they proceeded to beat them with clubs, to prick them in the face and eyes with sharp reeds, to scourge them, to drag them by their feet along the rough pavement, to break their limbs, and then finished their protracted sufferings by stoning some, burning others. But there is generally so much

method in the madness of a riotous populace, that they do not forget their pecuniary interests. The Christians, therefore, suffered also the loss of their property. Their houses were plundered, and such goods as were not worth carrying off, were burned in the streets. The town presented the appearance of a captured city, and no thoroughfare, be it street or lane, by night or by day, was safe to the Christian. Dionysius was immediately surrounded by a throng, who demanded, with savage shouts, that he should instantly pronounce the abominable words of abjuration, or be dragged and burnt. But amidst all the severity of this trial he enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing his flock, with scarcely an exception, persist firmly in the truth. The evil cured itself very shortly. For the populace, having once had the taste of their favourite riot, could not rest until they had drunk to the full measure of one of their notorious and customary seditions. The convulsed state of the empire supplied still graver cause, and more intense fury. The town was distracted with a civil war, and, in their fury against each other, the oppressors forgot the Christian, who in this, as in other instances, found his individual gain in the misfortunes of his country¹.

(A. D. 250.) But this interval was to Dionysius and his flock but as the momentary shelter which we gain amidst a violent storm on our road. It is afforded by a solitary house or rock, against which we hear it spending the fury which we a moment ago experienced, and in a moment after we have to

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 41.

encounter it in greater violence than ever. The news of the death of the emperor Philip had been received at Alexandria with gloomy anticipations of the measures of his successor. And Decius verified them to the utmost. In the former persecution, irregular riot as it was, escape was open to most. The fury of the populace was content with obvious objects, and had neither purpose nor plan sufficiently fixed for following up the chase into the retreats of the Christians. Unless, therefore, evil accident or necessity brought them into the streets, they were safe. But very different were the results of the systematic execution of the decree of government. Its announcement produced a general panic through the Church. The first lapses were among those who, from their office, were obliged to attend at the proclamation of the decree, and were then on the spot summoned to offer sacrifice. Dionysius had also the pain of seeing the most conspicuous in rank foregoing at once their courage and faith. It was a miserable spectacle. Some, overcome by persuasion of friends, and forgetting the only true Friend, advanced as their names were called out, and sacrificed. Pale and trembling, and more like sacrifices than sacrificers, they advanced to the altar amid the contemptuous jeers of the crowd, whom their cowardice had cheated of the agreeable sight of an execution. Others, however, put a bold face upon the matter, and wilfully casting out of mind all thoughts of future judgment, ran up with alacrity, denying that they had ever been Christians. The trials of such as remained firm were unusually long and violent. Several, however, gave way at different stages, some

after imprisonment only, and before they were brought into court, some after having undergone torture. The end of such as persevered through the dreadful torments, which devilish cruelty had devised, was commonly that of being burnt alive¹. Amid the circumstances of this persecution was one which must have as much gratified Dionysius, as it filled with amazement and consternation his opponents. A band of soldiers, stationed on duty in front of the court, ran up to the tribunal, and declared themselves Christians. They underwent a triumphant martyrdom. The sufferings of many of the fugitives were scarcely less than those of the martyrs. They wandered in deserts and in mountains, and lost their lives through hunger, thirst, cold, disease, wild beasts, and robbers. The last bore the ominous name of Saracens, which now for the first time appears in history. On this occasion they offered the first-fruits of their hostility to the Christian name².

It was only the outbreak of the persecution which was witnessed by Dionysius. The moment the decree was issued, Sabinus, the governor, obeying the general instructions, sent to seize the bishop in the first instance. Dionysius resolved to await his fate, and for that purpose stayed four days at home. This, however, was, naturally, the very last place that the officer thought of searching, and he had, therefore,

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 41. Dionysius gives the names of many sufferers. It is curious to see how many of these Christians bore names taken from heathen gods. He names Mercuria, Dionysia, Ammonarium, Isidorus, Dioscorus. Martyrs had no leisure to be squeamish about words.

² Ibid. 42.

spent the time in scouring the roads, the rivers, and the fields. At the end of the fourth day God gave him directions to retire, and at the same time wonderfully opened a way of escape to him. Accompanied by many of the brethren he set forth. Nevertheless, he was seized on the road by soldiers, and, with all his company, was conducted towards nightfall to Taposiris, a small country town. Here he was rescued by a body of countrymen, who were met at a wedding-feast, which, in that country, continues through the night. Taking them at first for robbers, the bishop offered them his raiment. But when he had found out who they were, he earnestly entreated them to leave him to his fate, or put him to death. They would, however, do neither, and compelled him to rise, and accompany them. And when he threw himself on his back on the ground to resist them, they dragged him by hand and foot. They gave him into the hands of his companions Gaius, Faustus, Peter, and Paul, who carried him out of the town, and then, mounting him upon an ass, led him to a retreat¹. This was a spot in a dry and desert part of Libya, distant three days' journey from Parætonium. Here, in the company of only two of his companions, Gaius and Peter, he remained in a melancholy exile².

(A. D. 251.) In the following year, the fury of the persecution having abated, he was enabled to return. His joy was tempered with much grief and perplexity. That he should find his house rifled, his property confiscated, would give him little con-

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 40.

² Ibid. vii. 11.

cern¹. But the joy with which he revisited his Church, now made so illustrious by the numerous band of youths and of old men, of girls and of aged women, of soldiers and citizens, of every age and class, who had won the victory over the power of stripes and fire and sword, and received the crown, this pure joy would be tempered by the sense of the deplorable loss which she had sustained in another quarter. This was not the plunder of her holy vessels of silver and gold. Done by the hand of man, that might have been repaired by the hand of man. But it was the robbery of the much more precious vessels of the Holy Spirit, which the fraud and violence of the Devil had snatched away from her. As we have already seen that the list of the lapsed contained great numbers, and persons high in station; and, as at Carthage, the martyrs, whose judgment as future assessors on his tribunal with Christ, was not to be lightly regarded, had introduced much perplexity into the case, through their merciful and perhaps, hasty indulgence in admitting to their communion some that had even sacrificed. What was to be done? Should he ratify their judgment, and show mercy to them on whom they had compassion? Or should he reverse it, and do violence to their feelings? He put these questions in correspondence with Fabius, bishop of Antioch, to whom and to those of Asia, Phrygia, and Cappadocia, he was a much nearer neighbour than to Cyprian in the next diocese on the same continent². In that quarter, however, he was likely to meet with an extreme

¹ Euseb. E. H. vii. 11.

² Ibid. vi. 42.

opinion, since Fabius was somewhat inclined to the unbending rigour of Novatian. He seems, however, to have come cautiously to the same conclusion with Carthage and Rome. It is certain that he laid down degrees of the offences of the lapsed, and allowed communion with them in their last hour. Indeed he appears to have taken great pains in this matter, both in order to fix his own plans and also to bring about a general agreement of discipline on this point. His correspondence upon it reached as far as Armenia and Rome¹.

Like Cyprian, he had, in addition to domestic difficulties, to compose the troubles of foreign Churches. The statement which Cornelius put forth against Novatian, and seems to have sent as a circular to the bishops of the principal Churches, brought him into correspondence with that pontiff, and his exertions were added to those of Cyprian in endeavouring to draw off the confessors from the party of Novatian. He even wrote, and, as we have seen, unsuccessfully, to the schismatic himself. He had the pleasure of writing two congratulatory letters to the same confessors on their return to the Church. In all he wrote no less than seven letters to Rome about this time, all concerning the questions arising out of the treatment of the lapsed².

(A. D. 256.) Posted as Dionysius was, both by the dignity of his see and by the weight of his own character and talents, in the very front of the host of the Church, he could not but take a leading part in all the questions which were then under agitation.

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 44. 46.

² Ibid.

The controversy on the baptism of heretics brought him again into controversy with Rome, and no fewer than three successive bishops enjoyed the benefit of his moderate counsels¹. With Stephen he had a large and earnest correspondence. That violent man excluded from his communion the most famous bishops and Churches of the East, among whom were Helenus of Tarsus, and Firmilian of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, men who were quite the leaders of the oriental Church. Dionysius entreated Stephen to moderate his counsels. He conjured him not to trouble the repose which the eastern Churches were now enjoying, and that too in a state of things which should be most gratifying to a bishop of Rome, namely, the unanimous rejection of the tenets and pretensions of Novatian. "Know, brother," he says, "that all the Churches throughout the East and beyond, which had previously been divided, have become united. And all their presidents in every quarter are of one mind, rejoicing beyond measure at the unexpected peace which has taken place; Demetrius at Antioch, Theoctistus at Cæsarea, Marinus at Tyre, Mazabanus at Ælia (now that Alexander is dead), Heliodorus at Laodicea (now that Thelymidres is gone to his rest), Helenus at Tarsus and all the Churches of Cilicia, Firmilian and all Cappadocia. I have named the more conspicuous only of the bishops, that I might not add length to my letter and disagreeableness to my subject. All the Syrias, however, and Arabia, whose necessities you are ever relieving as they arise, and to whom you have now sent, and

¹ Euseb. E. H. vii. 4. 5. 7.

Mesopotamia, Pontus, and Bithynia, and, in one word, all every where are exulting in the general unanimity and brotherly love, and glorifying God¹." What a bright gleam is here thrown over the eastern Church! Names, famous in their day, emerge in the fit of uniform splendour, and are lost in the next moment in darkness for ever, except one or two which are caught once or twice again, struggling with their light through the deepening gloom.

This correspondence was continued by Dionysius with Stephen's successor, Xystus, whom he entreats not to follow the precipitate conduct of Stephen, but to have some regard for persons, and some moderation in a matter so important as to have had the sanction of most numerous attended councils, all of which had decreed the rebaptism of heretics. As far as can be judged from fragments, Dionysius exhibited throughout this correspondence a dignified calmness and moderation, which stands in strong contrast, not only with the insolent and weak-minded domineering of Stephen, but also with the eager zeal of Cyprian. His own opinion and that of his Church, was opposed to that of Rome. But he did not reckon it a vital question any more than the African bishop, and, instead of enlisting in its cause as a partisan, he assumed the dignified position of a peace-maker.

To Xystus succeeded his own namesake. But his correspondence with him on this subject took place before his election, while yet he was a priest. Both with him, and with Philemon, another Roman

¹ Euseb. E. H. vii. 5.

priest, he had some correspondence during the episcopate of Stephen, of whose opinion they were strenuous advocates. He had still farther and more ample under Xystus¹. But by the time that his namesake had been seated in the chair, this subject, if it was pursued at all, gave way to one of much more importance, and which much more seriously concerned the peace and character of Dionysius. This will be explained hereafter.

(A. D. 257.) The existence of such disputes is a result and token of outward peace. This was now at an end. God's appointed constringer to unity came, and never was his embrace so tight, and pressure so close. If the former persecution of Decius had been so terrible as to deserve the application of the expression which prophesied the coming of Antichrist², this was the war of the beast with the saints³. It was the more terrible inasmuch as the previous mildness and even favour of Valerian towards the Church had lulled it into a pleasing security. On Egypt it fell particularly heavy, since the tribe, so numerous and influential there, of dealers in magic and similar abominations of the grossest of heathen superstitions, were now led and instigated in their deadly hatred to the Christian name by the powerful patronage of Macrianus. And so suddenly did it come, that Dionysius had not sufficient warning to collect and exhort his flock, and make all the other customary provisions against the day of conflict. He was hurried into the presence of Æmilianus the governor,

¹ Euseb. E. H. vii. 5.

² Ibid. vi. 41. Matt. xxiv. 24.

³ Ibid. vii. 10. Rev. xiii. 5.

together with Maximus, priest, and Faustus, Eusebius, and Chæremon, deacons. On their being brought into court, the governor began, "I have conversed with you, and that without writing, on the subject of the merciful disposition which our masters entertain towards you. For they have granted you the opportunity of saving yourselves, if you will but dispose yourselves towards the dictates of nature, and worship the gods which preserve their empire, and forego all that is contrary to nature. What then say ye to this? I cannot suppose that you will be ungrateful for their humane consideration, when they have counselled you to follow the better course." Dionysius replied, "All men do not worship all gods, but each such as they hold. We then worship and adore the one God and Maker of all things, who hath also committed the empire to the hands of the most beloved of God, Valerian and Gallienus, emperors; and to him we continually pray for their empire, that it may remain unshaken."—"Why! who hinders you," answered Æmilianus, "from worshipping this God, if he is a God, in conjunction with the gods which nature commands? For you have been ordered to worship gods, and whom all acknowledge to be gods." "We worship none other," returned Dionysius. "I see," Æmilianus then said, "that you are at once thankless for and insensible to the kindness of our emperors; therefore you shall not stay in this city. But you shall be sent off to the regions of Libya, and to a place there called Cephro. I have chosen this place according to the imperial orders. But neither you nor any one else shall be allowed either to meet in assembly, or to enter what are

called cemeteries. And if any one of you shall be discovered not to be arrived in the fore-mentioned place, or shall be detected in any assembly, he will bring peril on his own head. For be assured, that you will be well looked after. Begone then, to the place appointed for you."

Again, Dionysius suffered, through confiscation, the loss of his worldly goods; and without being allowed the delay of a single day to arrange his affairs, and gain strength for such a journey, for he was labouring under sickness, he was compelled to start for the place of exile. He found it as wretched as malice could have selected. Cephro was situated on the very edge of the Libyan desert, and was so remote and solitary, that when the name was mentioned, Dionysius knew not where in the world it was. Nevertheless, he did not for a moment lose the courage and cheerfulness with which he had started, and things soon began to wear a very different aspect. He had arrived not unattended by brethren of his own Church of Alexandria, and this number so increased by the conflux of brethren from Egypt, that a numerous congregation was brought together. Besides, as he further conversed with the natives, their savage churlishness gave way. At his first arrival they had persecuted the poor strangers, even to stoning. In the end a number of them received the word of God from their lips, forsook their idols, and turned to the true and living God. It seemed as if God had brought them hither for this very purpose; for no sooner had it been accomplished than they were remanded to a fresh place of banishment.

At the very mention of the name of this new spot,

the heart of Dionysius sank within him. It was Coluthion in the Mareotic district, and was infamous for the character of its inhabitants, and for the robbers with which the neighbourhood was infested. Many a heathen exile, perhaps, had pined in unspeakable misery, or cut short his wretched life in the same situation. To be forced inward by the aspect of every thing without, never to be able to give rest to the working of busy memory, to silence the inward groan, to soothe the torment of foreboding imagination, and, it may be, the pang of affrighted conscience, without being driven inward again, as to prison, by the still deeper depression impressed by gloomy scenes without; happy occupations, dear faces, associated with beautiful spots, and with joyous circumstances, rising up before the mind with a vividness that drives the brain mad.—This is the very depth of human misery. But Dionysius carried in his heart the temple of the Holy Spirit, with all its glorious furniture, with all its bright inhabitants, and to be driven into that was joy. He therefore quickly recovered his serenity, and even became reconciled to its horrors by the consideration of some compensating advantages. The place was by no means so remote and solitary, being so much nearer to the city, that he could enjoy a much more frequent sight of the brethren, who could come and refresh themselves and return. His congregation was, therefore, something like a suburban church. Thus comfort arose on every side.

Meanwhile his mind had sufficient occupation. Throughout his exile he exercised at Alexandria that episcopal inspection which one, “absent in the body,

but present in the spirit," (1 Cor. v. 3.) as he says, could maintain. Head of his Church as he was, he could not for a moment consider himself divided from the body; shepherd as he was, he could not for a moment forget his flock. To share its sympathies, to direct its motions, was his continual care. Every movement of the body proceeded from him, every accident of the body was felt by him. Such was the devotion of these primitive bishops. And their close intimacy was maintained by no less devoted servants. A faithful deacon or two passed along the perilous line of communication, "saluting no man by the way," and, entering the scene of blood and torture, took their share in the dangers and extremity of the persecuted flock, imparted the consolation and counsels of the shepherd, and then, God willing, hurried back again upon their perilous journey, fraught with various news of joy and sorrow, of the martyrdom of this brother, of the apostasy of that, of the general constancy or infirmity of the flock, to their anxious masters. Often were these dovelike messengers intercepted, and shot, as it were, on the wing, and the mournful tale which they were bringing, was spared to the ears and hearts of their employers, until it came at last through another channel accompanied by the aggravated ill news of their misfortune. Dionysius had, besides four presbyters,—Maximus, Dioscorus, Demetrius, Lucius; three deacons,—Faustus, Eusebius, and Chæremon, employed in the city, who entered it at the very height of the persecution, having been the companions of his confession and of his exile. Among these Eusebius distinguished himself by his unflinching attention to the confessors in

prison, and by his dangerous regard for the remains of the martyrs, whom he piously wrapt in their shrouds. Soon after this he was elected bishop of Laodicea. Maximus succeeded Dionysius as bishop of Alexandria. Faustus, who was now conspicuous in a good confession, was reserved to the times of Eusebius the historian, when full of days and saintly glory, he finished his life by martyrdom in the persecution of that period. What a glorious body-guard had this admirable bishop ¹!

In the list of his correspondence at this time are mentioned two Paschal letters, that is, letters concerning the observation of Easter, in one of which he settles the time of that festival, which is to come after the vernal equinox according to a cycle of eight years. He wrote also to the presbyters and others at Alexandria ². But a communication of a very different nature passed between him and Germanus, one of his bishops. This man charged him with fleeing from the persecution in such haste as to have neglected to assemble his Church, and fortify it in the usual manner by the baptism of Catechumens, by the re-admission of penitents, by the communion of the faithful, by advice and exhortation ³. To his indignant refutation of this calumny, we owe the interesting account of his adventures during the two persecutions. But his adversary was by no means so formidable as Cyprian's: he was decked with no wreath of a bold confession, and could not therefore assume the high tone of Pupianus. The con-

¹ Euseb. E. H. vii. 11.

² Ibid. xx.

³ See Cyprian, Ep. 54.

temptuous irony with which Dionysius retorts upon him, shows that he had more vexation than pain from the sting of this troublesome insect¹.

All things considered, such a retirement was an enduring to live from a principle of duty, and not a retreat sought from love of life. Like the Apostle of the Gentiles, both Dionysius and Cyprian must have had a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which had been far better. Nevertheless to abide in the flesh was more needful for their flocks (Phil. i. 23, 24). But be they where they would, whether in the city or in their retreat, they were the never-failing objects of insult and danger from without, of calumny and opposition from within. Where the pursuit of the heathen stopped, the schismatic tenaciously followed up, with Christ in his mouth and Jupiter in his heart. Their feelings were hourly upon the rack, and, when not rent by apostasy in persecution, lacerated by vexatious controversy in peace. There was no rest for their souls, whatever might betide their Church. Yet such men have been accused of ambitious usurpation of the rights of their brethren. The accusation is worthy of the men who make it, of men who are unable to judge of things, except on the ground of naked selfishness, and of its consequent want of principle.

(A. D. 261.) Once more, while yet the storm was but imperfectly lulled, Dionysius returned to his Church. The forty-two months, which he applied to its duration from the Revelation of St. John, were expiring², and he had shortly the gratifying honour

¹ Euseb. E. H. vi. 40. vii. 14.

² Ibid. vii. 10.

of receiving from his sovereign Gallienus a decree which assured to him and the rest of the bishops the freedom of their worship, and the restoration of their cemeteries. The document is remarkable, as showing the important station which the emperors now found the bishops to be filling in the concerns of the empire, and at the same time it particularly testifies to the eminence of Dionysius. But this peace was short-lived. It was broken up by the unspeakable horrors of an Alexandrine sedition, or rather civil war, exasperated by a famine. The city was divided into two parts by the contending parties, between which lay a frightful solitude of ruins. Thus the bishop's inspection of his flock was interrupted. "One may more easily pass," he says, "from east to west than from Alexandria to Alexandria." On the joyful approach, therefore, of the solemnities of Easter the Church was unable to meet, and he was twice compelled to communicate with the brethren, as if still in retirement, by means of a paschal letter. And even this he scarcely knew how to transmit. So deep was his affliction at the calamities which surrounded him, that he declares that he found it impossible, not only to converse by letter with brethren at a distance, but even to converse with and counsel his own soul. Such had been the horrible massacre, that the sea, the ports, the river were red with blood, and covered with the floating corpses of those who had been slain with the sword or purposely drowned.

The horrors of a pestilence of course succeeded. The wind, whether it blew from sea or land, and the exhalations from the river, the ports, and the ground, all came charged with the moisture of putrefying

corpses. Earth, air, and water were all tainted with corruption, and to all these causes, as if they had not been sufficient, were added alternations of excessive drought and excessive flood of the river. Easter arrived for the third time, and this dreadful judgment was so heavy upon the city, that Dionysius was again reduced to the sad necessity of written communication with his flock. "To the rest of mankind," he says, "the present will not appear to be the proper season for a feast. Nor to them is this season, or any other, not to say of sadness only, but of ever so exceeding joy (as they account joy), a proper occasion for it. So now at least all is lamentation, all are in sorrow, and wailings daily echo through the city on account of the multitude of the dying and the dead. For just as it has been written on the occasion of the first-born of the Egyptians, so also now there has been 'a great cry.' For there is not a house wherein there is not one dead. And would to God that this were all; for many and shocking are the events which have preceded. First of all they persecuted us. And we, though then alone of all men hunted and slain by all men, feasted even then. And every spot of individual suffering was to us a place of festival, field, desert, ship, caravansera, prison. But the most joyous feast of all was that celebrated by the perfected martyrs, for they banqueted in Heaven. After this, war and famine came upon us; and while we bore our share of them with the heathen, yet we alone sustained the injuries with which they afflicted us, and, moreover, reaped by the way the fruits of what they did, and suffered at each other's hands. Again we enjoyed

the peace of Christ, which he alone gave us. But after both we and they had gained a very short breathing-time this pestilence visited us, a thing fearful beyond all fear to them, afflicting beyond any calamity whatsoever, and, as a certain writer of theirs has expressed it, a thing which alone surpassed all expectation, and conquered the general hope. To us, though not of that extreme description, still it was an exercise and trial nowise inferior to any previous. For it did not keep even from us, and raged with great violence among the heathen. The majority then of our brethren, inasmuch as, on account of their exceeding love and brotherly affection, they did not spare themselves, but adhered faithfully to one another, visiting the sick without precaution, administering to them incessantly, attending upon them in Christ, took their departure with them in all cheerfulness, infected by their disease, bringing the plague upon themselves from their neighbours, and voluntarily catching their painful complaint. So the flower of our brotherhood departed this life in this way, being priests, and deacons, and men of excellent report among the laity. Insomuch that this sort of death, caused as it was by great piety and strong faith, seemed to fall little short of martyrdom. And not only was all this attention paid to the living, but even after death they took up the bodies of the saints in their hands and arms, closed their eyes and mouth, bore them on their shoulders, laid them out, embraced them, washed them, and dressed them, and thus in a short time were the objects of the same attentions themselves, as the survivors continually followed those

who had gone before. But with regard to the heathen, it was just the contrary. When their people sickened they drove them out of doors, they fled from even their dearest connexions, threw them half-dead into the streets, and left the dead unburied in heaps like dunghills. Thus they endeavoured to keep off the communication of death, which it was far from easy to divert, however many contrivances they might employ."

It is delightful to see from this account, which is given in Dionysius's own words, that the brethren of Alexandria did not come behind the brethren of Carthage in the beautiful contrast which their Christian love afforded to the base selfishness of the heathen. The loss of life to both parties was prodigious. Such had been the destruction that the whole population, from babyhood to extreme old age, was less than the number which was formerly living from forty to seventy. And this latter class was now so reduced, that if all from fourteen to eighty were added to it on the public registers, its numbers would not be replenished. Such was the gap that the youngest seemed contemporaries with the oldest¹. According to this estimate the loss by death or flight amounted to more than three-fourths of the population. The losses suffered by martyrdom were but as chinks in a wall, compared with the wide breaches which were made by this devouring pestilence. But many of the departed were indeed real martyrs. They underwent a much longer and more painful

¹ Euseb. E. H. vii. 21, 22. The population, between the ages of forty and seventy, is about one-fourth of the whole; between fourteen and eighty, about five-sevenths.

agony than many who fell by the sword, and such we have seen was the opinion of their admirable bishop, whose calm good sense and well-regulated feeling led him to think much more of essential excellence than of outward exhibition. He saw quite as much merit in the quiet and unseen exposure to the certain death by pestilence, in the name of Christ, as in the public spectacle of inflicted death amid admiring brethren and a recording Church.

A calm at last relieved his Church, so long tempest-tossed, and the peace enjoyed by Dionysius is betokened in the titles of many compositions which are now lost¹. But his enjoyment was again but short-lived. The field of controversy, on which he had already been forced, was still open, and only closed to him with his death. It is now time to take a review of it.

I. The reconciliation of the unity of the Godhead, which is so constantly and peremptorily insisted upon in the Old Testament, and also maintained in the New, with the divinity assigned to the Son and Holy Ghost, gave rise to two extreme errors². On the one side, as early as the close of the second century, Theodotus and Artemon had broached the doctrine of the pure humanity of Christ. On the other, about the same period, Praxeas had maintained the identity of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in which error he was followed by Noëtus of Smyrna. After them Sabellius also held Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to constitute one person, as there are in

¹ Euseb. E. H. vii. 22.

² Origen. Comm. Joh. Tom. ii. 2. x. 4, &c.

man a body, soul, and spirit, and as in the sun are three energies, the disk, the light, the heat. The Son went forth, he maintained, as a ray from the sun, and, having done all, returned; and the Holy Ghost was sent, as the heat, to warm and cherish¹. This opinion was busily propagated at Ptolemais, one of the cities of the Cyrenaic Pentapolis, some of the bishops even espousing it. The churches in this quarter were under the metropolitan inspection of the bishop of Alexandria. When Dionysius, therefore, heard of it, and that it had reached so frightful an extent, that the Son of God had all but ceased to be preached in those Churches, he wrote with the endeavour to quash it. His counsel, however, was disregarded. The party became more active and violent than ever. Upon this Dionysius took the question up, and stated his opinion in letters to Ammon, bishop of Berenice, and to Euphrator, and to Telesphorus, and to Euporus. The point upon which he would chiefly dwell would of course be the humanity of our Lord, and it would be to his object to demonstrate the distinction of the persons of the Father and Son. For example, to show that it was not the Father who became flesh, he alleged the instance of the husbandman and of the vine. Some of the orthodox, however, misunderstanding his argument, and not giving themselves the trouble to learn from him with what meaning he wrote, went to Rome, and accused him before Dionysius the bishop there, to whose predecessor, Xystus, he had already forwarded copies of his correspondence. They charged him

¹ Epiphan. Hær. 62. 1.

with saying, that the Father was the maker of the Son, and with employing the analogy of the plant and the planter, of the ship and the ship-builder, to describe their mutual relation, and with denying Christ to be consubstantial with the Father. On this the Roman bishop, by the advice and in the name of a synod of his Church, wrote to his namesake for an explanation. An answer came, of which sufficient fragments remain to prove that he had been grossly misrepresented. He therein maintains, that there never was a time when God was not Father. So there cannot have been a time when the Son was not. That God was never without his Word, Wisdom, and Power, and therefore Christ, as being these, always existed; not however deriving his being from himself, but from his Father; that the Father is the light, the Son its radiance, and therefore co-eternal with the Father. He asserts also, that he did not object to the term *Homoïsius*, but only remarked that it did not occur in Scripture. That his opinion was consonant with its use, and that he had illustrated it by the analogy of human generation, saying that parents were other than their children, simply by not being the children, by the analogy also of the plant, and root or seed, of the stream and the fountain, of the word on the lip and the sense in the heart whence it is sent forth, and with which it is one while at the same time they are two; one existing in the other, and yet other than the other. Finally, he says in express terms, that his opinions extend the Unity without division into the Trinity, and again reduce the Trinity without diminution to the Unity. This is very different doctrine from the

positions of Arianism, which has been imputed to him by men desirous of claiming so venerable an authority for their opinions. It is indeed possible, that having the objectionable tenet of the Sabellians too exclusively before his eyes, he might have expressed himself rather unguardedly in relation to some points of the question, and through controversial eagerness pushed his expressions further in the contrary direction than he intended; and the hurry of incessant occupation might also have prevented him from weighing his expressions with the requisite foresight and caution. Severely indeed must this man of moderation, this admirable peace-maker, have repented of having given the slightest occasion for controversy¹.

II. We have had more than one occasion to notice how the early Fathers adopted the literal sense of the twentieth chapter of the Revelations. An opinion so easily and almost imperceptibly liable to gross and dangerous abuse, was not likely to maintain itself after the Alexandrine Church had not only laid down a regular system of spirituality which warred against bodily enjoyment, but had also shown a summary way, through her allegorical interpretation, of disposing of every difficulty in the sacred text. The waning popularity of the doctrine, however, was attempted to be revived by Nepos, an Egyptian bishop of excellent character, both for orthodoxy of faith, laborious diligence in the study of the Scriptures, and for the popularity of his numerous hymns.

¹ For the history of this business, see Euseb. E. H. viii. 6. 26. Athanas. de sentent. Dionys.

His book, entitled a "Refutation of the Allegorists," had no where greater success than in the very dominions of the Alexandrine Church, and the district of Arsinoë supplied Dionysius with a second occasion of interference for the sake of doctrinal correction. To such an extent had the tenet prevailed, that whole churches were separated from the Catholic body. Convoaking a meeting of clergy and laity on the spot, Dionysius held a public conference for three days successively, and from morning to evening was employed in answering questions and solving objections. He had every reason to be satisfied with the result. His opponents showed the utmost willingness to be acquainted with the truth, and were not ashamed to confess where they were wrong. All came over in the end to his side, with their great champion Coracion at their head. Finding, however, the book of Revelations to be so exclusively their authority, that their teachers undervalued the Law and the Prophets, the Gospels and the Epistles, he was not content with this passing and verbal victory, but sought to perpetuate it for the benefit of the Church by a written refutation of the system of Nepos. The pupil of Origen entered the field with hearty good-will against this enemy of allegory. But his controversial eagerness again hurried him too far into the opposite opinion, and betrayed the rashness of his master. For it is impossible to reconcile his positions and arguments either with solid reason or with sound criticism. He supposes the Revelations to be the work, not of John the Apostle and Evangelist, but of another John, an elder of Ephesus. His arguments from internal evidence are very in-

sufficient indeed. They are two : namely ; 1st, The author's mention of his own name, which St. John, in his Gospel and Epistles, always suppresses. 2ndly, The difference of style, thought, and phraseology. It must be confessed, that it does not exalt our opinion of the judgment and sagacity of ancient criticism ¹.

III. He did not live to see the termination of the last controversy in which he engaged, nor did he go far into it. This did not immediately concern his own diocese, like the two preceding, and he was now advanced in years. He was summoned to attend the council against Paul of Samosata. But to a man of his years and infirmities, the journey, whether by sea or land, was too laborious. He therefore pleaded age and sickness. But that he might not leave his see entirely unrepresented on so important an occasion, he sent his opinion on the question in writing, which he still further confirmed, not only by not writing to Paul himself, but also by not deigning to address him in a letter which he wrote to his Church ².

(A.D. 264.) We have now stated the last recorded circumstance of his life, and leave him arrayed on the side of that truth which he was shortly going to see, no longer through a glass darkly, but face to face. In the twelfth year of the reign of Gallienus, he breathed his last, after a pontificate of seventeen years ³, which embraced a larger compass of eventful incidents than commonly falls within the life of one man. And in all of them he bore a conspicuous

¹ Euseb. E. H. vii. 24, 25.

² Ibid. 27. 30.

³ Ibid. 28.

part. In him the Church lost a bright and guiding light on the very eve of a difficult encounter with the powers of darkness.

The name of Dionysius has been most unfortunate in ecclesiastical literature. Three were conspicuous both in the administration of the Church and on the list of its writers; and yet all their writings are lost. It does indeed try the patience of the reader of the works of the Fathers, after having been obliged to content himself with fragments of the writings of him of Corinth, and of him of Rome, and of him of Alexandria, to come in the order of time to the spurious trifling ascribed to him of Athens. How capriciously does the favour of ignorant and reckless man open and shut the mouth of the pit of forgetfulness! The loss of the works of the Alexandrine Dionysius is more especially deplorable, not only on account of their excellence, which we have still some means of appreciating, but also because of the great light which they would have thrown upon the history of the facts, opinions, rites, and customs of the Church of his day. His lofty station gave him wide influence over the events of his time, and his weight of character was felt throughout the Church. His works, therefore, would have supplied us with many and important facts, which now are irrecoverable. He engaged in serious controversies on points both of doctrine and discipline, his Paschal letters would have revealed to us much ritual knowledge, his discussion of Scriptural questions would have been at least indirectly useful to the illustration of the state of the text, if not directly satisfactory as a comment; his defence of his own orthodoxy would have been an

invaluable monument and evidence of the doctrine of the Church on a vital point, as well as serviceable to his own character; and his philosophical work on Nature, if we may form an opinion from fragments, would have pleased and instructed us in no small degree. It would seem, however, that his works were not popularly read in the days even of Eusebius, who would scarcely have produced such large extracts from a writer whose volumes were in the hands of common readers. But this affords no presumption against their excellence, as experience has long taught us. His style is of the florid cast, but the language is pure for its day, and, as might be expected from an Alexandrine, has a sprinkling of obsolete diction. Of the more essential qualities, his clearness of arrangement, and powers of argument, we can scarcely form a fair judgment from mere fragments. On the whole, there is no ecclesiastical author, the loss of whose writings is felt with more regret, and even indignation, than his.

Dionysius has obtained from the Church the honourable title of "the great" added to his name¹. Never was it so worthily bestowed. Other Churchmen have indeed enjoyed the same distinction, but their political prominence in later times, when religion was the large part of politics, earned it for them, and thus gave it too great a resemblance to the blood-stained wreath which adorns the names of Alexander and Pompey. They were not so much spiritual belligerents, as belligerent spiritual characters. But Dionysius practised the most difficult duty of spi-

¹ Euseb. E. H. vii. l.

ritual belligerency, the office of a peace-maker. The mild and benignant lustre of his character was to the Church what the pharos of his native city was to the ship, guiding it into port. Its peculiarity was moderation, to which his reputation for ability, learning, and piety gave great effect. It is indeed a quality which will not be acceptable, or rather will appear contemptible, unless men shall be obliged to confess it to be a voluntary concession from superior strength. Nor can it, however affected, be exercised by one who does not feel conscious of superiority. For it is, in fact, the fortitude of forbearing. And how infinitely more difficult is this to maintain, and, therefore, how very much more uncommon, is this than the more showy fortitude of bearing! Men really possessing this quality can be properly estimated but by few. The quality is sterling rather than brilliant, belongs to weight rather than to measure, is passive rather than active. It not only, therefore, escapes the observation of the many, who estimate only according to the ready impressions of surface and motion, of show and bustle, but is apt to be confounded, even by observers, with the conceding and vacillating spirit of conscious inferiority. Dionysius, however, lived in an age full of men capable of appreciating him. The two Gregories, Firmilian, Helenus of Tarsus, Theotecnus of Cæsarea, and many other leading characters, regarded him with deep reverence. Set among his contemporaries, the earnest Cyprian, the haughty and headlong Stephen, the vacillating Fabius, the sturdy and fiery Firmilian, he appears, with this peculiar quality, set like a precious jewel in its proper place, so as to throw

forth all its brilliancy and colour. His times had (and, alas, what times have not?) need of such a man ; and, trying as they were, he was proved equal to them mentally, morally, spiritually. What more needs to be said ?

PAUL OF SAMOSATA.

Change since the days of Ignatius—Singular position of the native province of Paul—He is chosen bishop of Antioch—Made chancellor by Zenobia—His very indecorous conduct—Endurance of his Church—His heterodoxy—A council summoned against him—Meeting of the final council—Articles of his heresy—He is condemned—Refuses to submit—Ejected by appeal to Aurelian.

IT is long since the illustrious Church of Antioch has engaged any share of our attention. A passing glance is all that the extant history of the times has allowed us. The first close inspection was also the last ; and then we beheld her enjoying the guidance of the blessed Ignatius, who, with the help of the Holy Spirit of God, fought a good fight with the wolves that were roaring round his fold, seeking to devour the souls of his flock, and to swallow them up into the abominable pit of their heretical delusions of filth and greediness. Like his Master, he laid down his life for his sheep. Since then we have gone over a long and wide range, and our eyes have become accustomed to unholy sights, our ears to unsound

doctrine. We have come lower down from the fountain-head of truth, and drunk of the strange waters with which the world has joined and polluted the mainstream of the Gospel. We have lost our delicacy of taste, and have become comparatively indifferent to the nice distinctions with which we set out. Yet with all this preparation we are very insufficiently provided against the shock of dismay, grief, and indignation, which all at once seizes us on our return to inspect this celebrated see. We have indeed seen one or two bishops upholding for truth the doctrines of devils. But they have been followers, and not leaders, of heresy; they have been in very obscure situations, and have been ejected from the Church as soon as detected. But here we find the capital Church of the East enduring for several years the unholy seat of a heretic upon the chair of her Ignatius. That Church, which he had recommended to the immediate care of Christ, was now corrupt enough to tolerate, as her head, a man who impiously derogated from the divine attributes of the Saviour. In the hour of danger to the truth she was either faithless enough, through indifference and respect paid to persons, to allow the sway to the bustling of a factious heretical minority, or was herself heretical in the majority of her members, and had made shipwreck of the faith. Such is the melancholy tale which we now come to unfold. And we shall see in it the melancholy presage of all those errors and divisions which never ceased to distract the Eastern Church, until the sword compelled unity in a heresy, which would have taxed the imagination

of the heretical Paul to conceive, and made even him stand aghast when he heard it.

This Paul began with a very appropriate birth-place. He came from a region which lay on the right bank of the Euphrates, and was notorious for hatching heretics as plentifully as the mud of that river nursed the spawn of her plagues of land and water. There, about sixteen centuries before him, Balaam had risen up to delude God's people, and to exhibit the type of all his successors. It was indeed singularly situated, morally as well as geographically. It was the border-country at once of the Roman and Persian empires, and of European and Asiatic philosophy. The latter of these systems had lately gained much accession of strength from the restoration of the Magian hierarchy in consequence of the revival of the Persian empire, and Manes had already started up in the neighbourhood with a mongrel system, a patch-work of Christian heresy and Magian superstition, when Paul had signaled himself at Antioch. The province, therefore, abounded with professors of the most various and conflicting opinions, and what wonder if here, in his native town of Samosata, Lucian learned betimes to laugh at all religion? Paul was his fellow-townsmen, and, reared in poverty and beggary, could little have dreamed of his future splendid destiny. The desire of every one who sought distinction would be to quit so obscure a corner of the empire, and Paul has proved himself to have had sufficient talent and ambition to induce him to seek a more public stage. But whether design or accident was the cause of his

removal, as also at what period of life he removed, has been left in uncertainty. History has told us little more than the particular line in which he ran the proverbial course of the elevated beggar.

(A. D. 260.) We find him and quit him in the capital of the East. Here, by means with which we are unacquainted, but amongst which we may reasonably reckon specious talents, bustling forwardness, plausible manners, and a quick sight and ready hand for opportunities, he advanced himself so much in the rank and consideration of the Church, that he was elected to succeed Demetrian in the episcopal chair. It was a period of dreadful calamity. The emperor Valerian was defeated, and taken captive by the Persian monarch, who in his victorious invasion of the imperial provinces used his good fortune with all the reckless cruelty of the barbarian. Antioch was surprised and sacked, and the Christians had scarcely time to breathe again, after the overwhelming persecution of Valerian, before they were involved in these dreadful consequences of his overthrow. They had little profited by the severe chastisement of Valerian when they were so blind or so partial as to elect Paul, whose character, whatever cloak he might have used, seems scarcely to have been such as would elude a proper spiritual discernment. And if the invasion of Sapor had followed his election we might have said that he was the instrument of God's vengeance. He seems, however, most probably to have been chosen after this latter disaster; perhaps in the midst of the confusion which ensued. At all events the early part of his ministry was due to the consolation of a most deeply

afflicted Church. How far he was able to console, and how far she was consoled, is but too plainly evident from that which in but a short time the man could dare and the Church could endure. Both seem to have come out of the furnace with all their dross upon them.

The troubles of the East were healed by the victorious arms of Odenathus and Zenobia of Palmyra, who thus raised themselves to the supreme dominion over this portion of the empire, and on the death of her husband the latter still retained her power under the proud title of Queen of the East. Reposing under a monarch of their own, the Orientals joyfully threw aside the stern European simplicity of Rome, and Zenobia complied both with her own vanity and their prejudices when she allowed herself to be adored after the fashion of the Persian kings. The Christians would not be the party least benefited by this change. Abounding in sects as the East did, and not only removed but even abhorred as the action of the peculiar policy of Rome now was, universal toleration would take place of her jealous intolerance, and the Christians would not meet with less favour for having so recently experienced her severity. Nor could the keen eye of Zenobia fail to discern in the good disposition of the Christians towards her, some of those political advantages which presented themselves within half a century after to Constantine, had previously very probably influenced the crafty Philip, and even Valerian at the commencement of his reign, and were at this moment sought by Gallienus in the West. Now, therefore, political circumstances brought out the character of

Paul. The metropolitan of the East received marks of her favour, and her keen perception of his character is discovered in the nature of the gift. She, who to compass her purposes would not scruple to drink with her generals, and with Armenians and Persians¹, bestowed upon this Christian bishop the secular office of chancellor², which, besides its salary of 1600*l.* a year, gave an unscrupulous man many opportunities of enriching himself, especially in the East, where justice has for ages been shamelessly bought and sold, amidst a people demoralized by the frequent revolutions which they have undergone. The offer and acceptance of such an office in the case of a bishop of the Early Church has seemed incredible to almost all. But they do not seem to have regarded the peculiar and local circumstances of this occasion. It is true that strict Christians, and therefore especially the clergy, shrank from all magistracies. But this was not solely on account of their very secular nature, but also, and principally, because the duties of office would necessarily bring them in contact with heathen rites. This latter objection was, without doubt, removed by Zenobia. But ought we not to expect his Church to have remonstrated on the former principle against so startling an innovation? Without doubt, very many were grieved and scandalized: but the sequel of events shows that the majority at least acquiesced. There is a state of religious society, when, having received into its bosom a certain portion of the higher and

¹ Julius Capitol. Zenob. p. 281. Ed. Ald. 1516.

² Euseb. E. H. vii. 30. Procurator Ducenarius is the title.

wealthy classes, it begins to tamper most dangerously with the world. It strives to reconcile Christ and Mammon, and deludes itself into conceiving the means sanctified by the end. It becomes, therefore, well enough contented to see in possession of their own party, which needs must turn them to the account of God's glory, the very means which they have hitherto severely condemned while in the possession of others. And especially when such means have been so long branded under the head of some dominant and glaring objection, that the less obvious, but perhaps really as insurmountable, have come to be forgotten, men are very ready, when that one is removed, to allow the rest to remain forgotten still. Now events had long been tending to make the Christians, in the whole, a party in the empire, and so formidable, that, after Diocletian had tried the vain experiment of extirpating it, Constantine was fain to enlist it in his service by giving it the ascendancy. They, therefore, became influenced also by the usual secular views of party, and, having obtained toleration, were animated, like all other parties, to secure further advantages. Not only the clergy and laity, therefore, of Antioch, but also many of the neighbouring bishops were glad to see their metropolitan represent them, as it were, in the state. They did not nauseate the delightful taste of power, which now, for the first time, imbued their lips; and to every inquiry of conscience, both from their own breast and from that of others, would reply with mentioning the altered state of the means, and the brightening view of the prospects of the kingdom of heaven. It is possible, too, that the Church of

Antioch having been much reduced in wealth by the late calamities, the bishop was very insufficiently paid, considering the high rank which he held, and the demands which were made upon him. The majority, therefore, which in such a city was likely to be as avaricious and mean as all majorities in luxurious cities are, when their bodily comfort or amusement is not concerned, might regard his pension from the government with much complacency. Indeed, the avarice of the flock has been by no means sufficiently taken into consideration by historians of the Church, while they have dwelt at length on that of the clergy, which is but the natural consequence of the other. Origen, however, has revealed to us enough to show that the clergy would often be compelled to worldly traffick for a livelihood¹. The anomalous situation of Paul, therefore, was perhaps anything but condemned by the voice of his own Church. But the Council, which afterwards met, was a very different body; and these holy men, who were lights indeed to their generation, included it in the list of the unworthy acts of the bishop.

Thus invested with secular and spiritual power, Paul, began a career which could be tolerated only in a Church which had fallen far from her original purity. Antioch, which Julian has described as abounding with dancers and musicians, as having more mimes than citizens, and as wallowing in luxury and effeminacy², would at first display a Church of the strictest purity, from the force of

¹ Comm. Matth. tom. xvi. 22, &c.

² Misopogon, p. 63. Ed. Paris, 1630.

reaction and contrast. But as the profession of the faith penetrated further into the deeply contaminated mass, it lost its central and spiritual energy, and instead of piercing and separating the parts, like the sword of the Word of God, entered and mixed like soaking water. Not having much to fear from the voice of such a Church, Paul still further secured his impunity by attaching to himself a party, which a man of popular manners, showy talents, worldly cunning and bustle, can always array around him, and it would increase with the increase of his wealth and power. Thus he was safely carried through the outrageous indecency of his conduct, which almost surpasses belief. In dealing forth justice among the brethren in his court, as bishop, he was open to bribes, and the defeated party had continually to complain of the iniquity of his sentence. With such shameless conduct he still more shamelessly combined a studied pomp and vainglorious display. As chancellor, he went in stately procession through the forum, preceded and followed by a numerous crowd of attendants, ostentatiously reading and dictating letters by the way. As bishop, he played the mime, in this city of mimes, to the great scandal of the truly faithful, by the most fantastic exhibitions, and imposed upon weak minds by the most contemptible artifices. He raised his throne to a stately loftiness, and in his addresses to the congregation used the attitudes of popular haranguers, striking his thigh with his hand, and stamping with his feet. And to all this his partisans responded, as in a theatre, with waving of handkerchiefs, shouting, and leaping up. The true believers who refused to join in such

disgraceful profanation of God's house, and in the worship of this image, were subjected to his reproach and abuse. While he spoke magnificently in his own praise, he at the same time treated with contempt the comments of those interpreters of the Word who had gone to their rest in the Lord. Thus he acted the part of a sophist and mountebank, instead of that of a Christian bishop. He even went so far as to displace the hymns which had been composed and wont to be sung in honour of our Lord Jesus Christ, as modern, and the composition of moderns, and procured women to sing in his own praise in the midst of the Church at the great solemnity of Easter-day. The serious were struck with horror at the sounds. To the same tune were set the notes of the homilies of bishops and priests of the neighbourhood, his flatterers. These, in impious imitation of him, derogated from the glory of the Son of God, denying his descent from heaven, and, in base and blasphemous adulation of him, sang and spoke his praises among the people, declaring that in him an angel had come down from heaven to teach them. So far from putting a stop to such impieties, this vainglorious man was present to accept them.

Disrespect towards others is one of the surest tokens that there is wanting that self-respect which is felt only in the heart which has been crucified to the world with Christ. At the lowest depth of its humiliation, it does not forget that it has been bought with a price, and has been vouchsafed with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Reposed on Christ, it leans not for any support on man. But the applause of fellow-men is the only stay of the

unbelieving heart, and such as refuse it are set down amongst its foes, and treated accordingly. Insincere, unprincipled itself, it cannot estimate sincerity and principle in others, and judges of their disagreement from its views upon its own base motives. We might have presumed, therefore, at the outset, that the life of this petty tyrant would not be strict. Facts confirm the presumption. He indulged in a luxurious diet, such as ill became a man of his awful station, and had so little regard for the good opinion of the strong, and for the stability of the weak among his flock, that he carried to a scandalous pitch the scandalous custom which obtained among some of the clergy, of having women to live with them. It so prevailed at Antioch, that these women were designated by the peculiar title of *Syneisacti*, that is, taken into their houses to live with them. Such conversation was indeed in itself professedly and generally innocent: but assuredly it was both perilous to themselves and scandalous to their neighbours. Paul, as if defying public opinion, dismissed one, and took in her place two others, both young and beautiful, and carried them with him when he journeyed. Of course he could not but indulge the priests and deacons in the same license, and gained moreover the advantage of thus getting a hold upon them: for using means to come to a good knowledge of any lapse which they might commit, he took care to let them understand that he was aware of the offence, however he may omit to notice it, and thus held them so completely under his power, that they dared not accuse him whatever he might do or say. To make his hold doubly sure, he attached them to

him by enriching them from the hoard of his own ill-gotten wealth. By these means he secured friends and admirers, at the expense of the character and discipline of his Church.

Great was the grief and indignation of all true believers in the Church of Antioch at this scandalous conduct of their bishop and his minions. But so strong was his faction, such dread did his tyranny inspire, that they dared not prefer charges against him, but were compelled to groan in secret. He seemed indeed invulnerable. His faction in itself was not only strong, but bound by the strongest link, the mutual consciousness of guilt. The secular power in his hands extended his influence over those carnal worldlings who sought favours from the government, and over those carnal spiritualists who complacently saw represented in that office the power of their party. How small a portion would be left when he had gained all these ! To crown all, he enjoyed the favour of Zenobia, which would be sedulously courted and as easily won by him. He could recommend himself as a man of letters to this patroness of literature, and as a courtier. And where can be found a more supple and accomplished courtier to his superiors than the tyrant to his inferiors ? His talents, his temper, his interest, all lie in the proper direction. His opponents, therefore, were obliged to wait in long-suffering and patient hope for His time whose is vengeance and who will repay. It came at last.

An erroneous practice is inconsistent with a right and lively faith. A brackish stream flows not from a sweet spring. And the effect of the light of the Holy Spirit. which first communicates faith, con-

tinues to act upon the heart, bleaching away its colours and stains, so that the tablet becomes whiter and whiter. It is no objection to say, that it is common enough to see warm and zealous professors of a right faith in men whose lives are quite at variance with it. For such men seldom understand, and never care about, the detailed articles of their creed, but assume the whole as a badge of the side to which their pride, or prejudice, or interest inclines them. Take away these motives, and their heterodoxy will inevitably appear, in no long time, if indeed they pretend to any belief at all, and to run a short course of its practice. We have before now seen two rivers, one of crystal clearness, and another foul with mud, running quite distinct in one channel. But after a short race they mix in one turbid stream. So faith, however pure in profession, soon becomes turbid through corrupt practice, though for a while it may run together with it, apparently unpolluted. Paul's mind was ill-adapted for the hearty reception of the true faith. His vanity and domineering temper would hardly brook the prostration of spirit and meekness of heart which the pure Gospel demands; his showy talents, and superficial, though quick, understanding were averse to profound, comprehensive, and steady views. As soon, therefore, as it was not against his interest, the profession of his false principles came forth. Their tendency was further influenced by a spirit of insolent defiance and contradiction to his opponents within, and of cringing deference to those without. For to conciliate the favour of Zenobia, and make the show of a false liberality, he would be desirous of softening the

rough edge of the peculiarities of the Christian faith, amongst which, first and foremost, came the union of the Godhead and the manhood in the person of Jesus. Thus was Paul stimulated to add himself to the numerous list of heretics which, in his own diocese above all, were the vexation and the disgrace of the Church.

His system contained nothing new, and for the present we shall be content with stating that he followed Theodotus and Artemon in asserting the mere humanity of Jesus, and Sabellius in maintaining the identity of the Father and the Logos. Thus he combined the two extremes of the heretical opinions on the nature of Jesus Christ. According to this system, he was accused of Judaizing, by which term was meant nothing more peculiar than that he did not go beyond Jewish notions in his tenets respecting the Godhead, and was a virtual denier of Christ. The same charge was afterwards brought against Arius¹. In modern language such tenets should rather go by the name of Deism. Similar, as to the essential part, are going the round of Christendom at this day, and their upholders have a mark upon their character quite as strong as the Jew upon his face. They are all, through overweening self-conceit, too ignorant of themselves, and, therefore, also of human nature, to admit the humiliating truths which are implied in the divinity of Jesus Christ. They are

¹ Epiphan. Hær. 65. 2. Athanas. de Synod. p. 685. de Synod. Nicæn. p. 420, 421. (Ed. Commel. 1600.) I have omitted, as not sufficiently attested in proportion to its high improbability, the story of Zenobia being a Jewess, or espousing the Jewish religion.

too worldly-minded, and, therefore, too sensual, to admit any truth which is not referrible to the judgment of the senses, whatever other evidence there may be for it. The same devotion to the world makes them hunters of popularity, livers upon the public breath; and the want of self-respect, which a stable mind alone can possess, haunting them in the intervals of their fits of vanity with a consciousness of innate insignificance, makes them busy meddlers in the affairs of the world, in order that they may disprove to themselves this disagreeable suggestion. Paul possessed also the worldly cunning and tricky elusion of his class. He dared not openly to propound his system, but appears to have disclosed it here and there, sufficiently to alarm the orthodox, but not to give them any fixed points on which they could lay hold. The system, indeed, itself was a cunningly contrived piece of elusion. All at once, when his opponents imagined that they had caught him, he could resort to language of the most rigid orthodoxy, and laugh at them behind his mask. From a side-blow at the divinity of Jesus he could run off to the divine attributes manifested in him, and reconcile his hearer. And, if it suited the occasion, he could use the term Son of God in such a way as to seem to identify the person of Jesus with that of the Logos, and to hold the Logos as a person in the Godhead. The insolent temper of Paul would delight in thus alarming and eluding his opponents, and his knavish mind would exult in the success of his elusions. But how great must have been the contempt of the orthodox, and, at the same time, how deep their grief and indignation, when they saw

the chair of Ignatius filled by this unprincipled trickster, and with that martyr's uncompromising words in their memory, and his throne before their eyes, heard the double-meaning words of this sophistical juggler! How great the scandal to all minds when the metropolitan of the East dealt in the subtrefuges of falsehood in the house of God! The general bearing of his opinions was well known, for it was to his interest that it should be known to his royal patroness. But particulars were kept back, for it was not advisable openly to contradict the Church. Thus the supreme of the teachers of truth was an open example of artful disingenuousness. He was playing a deceitful game of self-interest between his sovereign and his Church, or rather between the prince of this world and the prince of the world to come. To his own party he was a tempter, to the opposite a stumbling-block, to both a false prophet and Antichrist.

(A. D. 264.) But in process of time the unbridled insolence of Paul outran his cunning, and the party of true believers were at length enabled to make charges so definite, and remonstrances so strong, that the eastern bishops found themselves compelled to the painful duty, and novel situation, of sitting in judgment on their metropolitan. We here arrive at a most interesting and critical period. We have already seen the interest which neighbouring Churches, through the multiplied bonds of union, took in each other's affairs, so that a council of their bishops and clergy assumed the power of depriving the bishop of one of them; and we have had examples of whole districts of great extent thus meeting to settle points

of public interest. The three provinces of Africa thus met to decide the point of heretical baptism at Carthage : thus also, and in the same cause, the provinces of Phrygia, Galatia, Cilicia, Cappadocia, at Iconium ¹. But now we reach the step next to a general council of the Catholic Church. For there were summoned to it all the principal eastern bishops, not only such as acknowledged the bishop of Antioch as their primate, but also the head of the Alexandrine Church. Cappadocia, Pontus, Cilicia, Phrygia, Judea, Arabia, and other provinces, came to Antioch, represented in their bishops, priests, and deacons. Such an assembly was worthy of the occasion. But it was a very delicate matter to put on his trial the chief bishop of the East, and to interfere in the affairs of the principal Church. They proceeded, therefore, with great caution, if not with some timidity, and treated Paul with so much deference, as to rest satisfied with his denial of the doctrine imputed to him, and with his protestation of following the teaching of the Apostles. On this they unanimously praised God for so happy a result, and broke up, leaving the faithful once again to the tender mercies of their oppressor ².

The Council were obliged to be content with this answer of Paul. They could not in common prudence, and with the appearance of justice, proceed in defiance of the solemn profession which he had made. Besides, most of them, both from their distance and

¹ Euseb. E. H. vii. 5. 7. Firmil. Ep. 6.

² Euseb. E. H. vii. 27. 28. Theodoret. Hær. Fab. ii. 8. The latter distinctly mentions two councils. But the synodical letter in Euseb. E. H. vii. 30. mentions Firmilian as having attended twice, and as dead at the time of the final meeting.

their character, would be imperfectly acquainted with the mind of Paul, and too ignorant of the sort of person with whom they had to deal. The blunt Firmilian, the generous and candid brothers, Gregory and Athenodorus, friends and pupils of the open-hearted Origen, took the lead. And they of all men were least suitable for the business of detecting a thief. But how great must have been the disappointment and indignation of his opponents in his own Church, who knew him well! His answer was evidently evasive. The charges were probably pressed somewhat too far, or, at all events, did not accurately correspond with the notions in his own mind, about which he had taken care never to be explicit in the presence of strangers. He might therefore think himself justified in giving them his firm denial. As to his assertion of maintaining the doctrine of the Apostles, it is the common language of heretics. The business required a very different mode of treatment.

No sooner, however, was the danger past, than Paul with the returning sense of security, returned to his former preaching, and perhaps the more boldly from the exultation arising from the thoughts of having outwitted his opponents. He must have found his hands strengthened also by the unsuccessful resistance. He therefore soon afforded a fresh handle to his opponents, and, after having in vain tried to remedy the evil by letter ¹, the Fathers again came to

¹ To this correspondence, perhaps, belongs the letter of the orthodox bishops to him, and also that attributed (but wrongly) to the great Dionysius.

Antioch. In a conference with him, they tried personal counsel and exhortation, and reminded him of his former engagements. Firmilian was particularly anxious to avoid the scandal and the calumny attendant upon the debates of another council, and hoping and believing that the business might be settled without it, was content to accept Paul's promise of changing his opinion, condemning it at the same time as novel and false. The advanced age of Firmilian was averse to active and strong measures, and having obtained this assurance from Paul, he returned to his diocese.

But however well satisfied the good bishop of Cappadocian Cæsarea might have been, others were very far from being so, and the urgency of their charges only increased with the vehemence of their opponent's denial. They undertook to prove their charges, and the final council was summoned.

(A. D. 269.) Never had so august an assembly met. It had been exceeded in numbers; for the third African council, upon the question of heretical baptism, contained eighty-seven bishops, whereas here were assembled only seventy. But it does not yield to the Nicene Council itself in the lustre of the characters which composed it. There came Gregory of the Pontic Cæsarea, with his brother Athenodorus; Helenus, a very leading character of his day, from Tarsus; Hymenæus from Jerusalem, Theotecnus from Cæsarea in Palestine, Maximus from the Arabian Bôstra, Nicomas from Iconium; and Firmilian was, for the third time, bringing the weight of his character to the conflict, when he was taken sick on his journey, and died at Tarsus. To these bishops and

several more, were added a number of priests and deacons.

The Council was respectfully awaiting the arrival of Firmilian, when the news of his death came and filled them with grief. But none had greater reason to lament this event than Paul himself. For the field was thus left open to a younger, more acute, and determined champion, who, well inured, from his former vocation of sophist, to all the windings and doublings of his tribe, to all the subterfuges and elusions of the art of verbal juggling, would be a formidable conductor of that cross-examination to which Paul, according to the challenge of his accusers, was now to be subjected. This was Malchion, a presbyter of the Church of Antioch, of high character both for talent and piety. He took his measures with a fearful omen of the tenacity with which he intended to grasp this slippery eel. The dispute was no longer to be submitted solely to the faithless attention of the ear, but that it may be submitted also to the cool judgment of the eye, short-hand writers were engaged to take down minutes of all that passed. We may imagine the situation of Paul when he saw his hunters setting their toils all around his haunt, and closing up every outlet of escape. Malchion made good his worst anticipations. He followed him up through every track, and met him at every hole of escape. The broad assertion of the divine nature in Jesus Christ would not satisfy Malchion, who by pushing his searching questions, and baffling the arts by which he endeavoured to elude a direct interrogation, brought him to a stand, and triumphantly asked him, "Did I not say long ago

that you do not grant that the only begotten Son, who was before every creature, was substantially in the whole Saviour¹?" Brought to bay at last, he fought desperately, and unveiled his heterodoxy to the whole Church. The following are the principal articles of his system. He maintained:—

I. That there was but one person, that of the Father, in the Godhead.

II. That the Logos, being his Wisdom or Reason, and the Holy Ghost, were always in the Father, not as persons, but just as wisdom and reason are in the heart and soul of man².

III. That by the emanation of this Logos, which thus acted merely as an instrument, but not as a distinct person, he made the world³.

IV. That thenceforward this Logos was the Son of God, having been previously such only in God's foreknowledge, but still was no person, nor was God⁴.

V. That this Logos descended from heaven into the man Jesus, the Son of the Virgin Mary, not having been united with his substance in the womb, but dwelling in him as in a temple of God, and as distinct from him as the dweller is from the dwelling: so that there was no communion whatever between the divine and human properties in Jesus, the indwelling Logos exclusively performing the miraculous

¹ Euseb. E. H. vii. 29. Jerome's Catalogue. Fragm. Disput. ap. Routh. Rel. Sacr. vol. ii. p. 476.

² Epiphan. Hær. 65. 1, 2, 3.

³ Epiphan. Præf. tom. ii. lib. ii. Hær. 65. 3. Synod. Antioch. adv. Paul. ap. Routh. Reliq. Sacr. vol. ii. p. 466. 469.

⁴ Ibid.

part, the man exclusively suffering from hunger, thirst, and other accidents¹.

VI. That Jesus, being thus vouchsafed with wisdom and grace beyond other men, forewent, by means of participation and learning, all infirmities, grew in wisdom and holiness, and arrived at that degree of excellence beyond his human nature, that he received, from God's election and good pleasure, the title of Son of God, as a city receives the name of its master, Antioch of Antiochus, and was made God².

VII. That the Logos, having done in Jesus the work assigned, returned to God³.

One advantage, however, Paul was allowed to gain over his opponents, and though it was but verbal, yet the disputes of after-times proved that it was important, and imprudently yielded. He objected to the term Homoïsius, arguing that if Christ did not become God from man, then there must be three substances, one principal, and two derived. Deterred by this sophism, they abandoned the word, and bequeathed some trouble to the great Athanasius at a future day⁴.

Having now completely ascertained his heterodoxy,

¹ Synod. Antioch. p. 481. 484, 485. Fragm. Disput. c. Malch. p. 475. Epiphan. *ibid.* i. 7.

² Syn. Ant. p. 485. Ep. Dionys. ad Paul. p. 273. 276, 277. (Bibliothec. Patrum.) *Ibid.* Quæst. xii. Athanas. de Synod. 26. Gregor. Nyss. ap. Routh. *ib.* p. 487.

³ Epiphan. *ibid.*

⁴ Athanas. de Synod. p. 708. (Ed. Commel.) The passage, with others, is also extracted in Routh's *Rel. Sacr.* vol. ii. p. 488.

the Fathers unanimously agreed in his condemnation. He was called upon to retract, and on his refusal (which now his worldly interests dictated) was excommunicated and deposed, a successor being immediately appointed by the council, in Domnus, son of Demetrian, late bishop. They immediately wrote an account of their proceedings to the heads of the other two great divisions of the Catholic Church, namely, to Dionysius, bishop of Rome, and Maximus, bishop of Alexandria, directing them to write and receive letters of communion to and from him, as the legitimate bishop of Antioch.

(A. D. 272.) But it was found more easy to pronounce sentence, than to carry it into execution. There can be no doubt but that the unanimous decision of so venerable a council detached numbers from Paul's side, and made many stir who had been neutral before. But still there would be left to him an active faction, and the favour of Zenobia was not likely to be diminished. His secular office also gave him means of interference in matters of the courts of law. When therefore he was called upon to quit the "house of the Church," which was probably the bishop's residence and the cathedral under one roof, he refused, and they found themselves without the means of compelling him. Thus he and his faction remained ostensible bishop and Church of Antioch, as far as locality could go, and continued for three years to defy the decrees of the Council, both in spirituals and temporals. But at the end of that period, Zenobia being overthrown by Aurelian, Paul lost his grand support. That emperor was not likely to show favour to her partisans. The

bishops, therefore, now took the opportunity of regaining the property of the Church, and gave the first known example of calling in the temporal power to the aid of spiritual ordinances. But from the moment that the Church has property, be it but the house wherein it meets, or indeed shows its visibility, be it but in a congregation, it becomes subject so far to the state. And he who would separate one from the other, must be content to worship in the open air, and alone; for it belongs to the state also to judge of the expediency of a number of persons congregating, either within or without doors. If he does not choose this, then he admits the general question, and can only dispute upon the degree to which it should be carried into practice. Aurelian received the application of the bishops who petitioned him on the subject, and with great consideration referred the business to the bishop of Rome and his Italian colleagues, and, according to their decision, enforced the ejection of Paul¹.

The mischief done by Paul during the time that the possession of "the house of the Church" against the synodal decree enlisted in his favour all the prejudices of locality, must have been immense, and paved the way to still greater mischief in times to come. Arianism found the Catholic faith already shaken, and faction with arms spread open to receive it. Compared with this the mischief which he did afterwards, when he was no longer Paul of Antioch, but Paul of Samosata, and set up a sect, was but trifling. Its doctrines indeed were most pernicious,

¹ Euseb. E. H. vii. 30. Theodoret. Hær. Fab. ii. 8

as we have already seen, and in the 19th canon of the first Council of Nice, the Paulianists, as his followers are called, are regarded as the worst of heretics, both their baptism and their orders, notwithstanding their Apostolical succession, being disallowed, because of the deep die of the heresy, which denying the Trinity, could only nominally baptize or ordain in that name. But its existence was short. Change of time brought on change in the direction and points of public opinion; and error, shifting with it, took new ground. Not more than two centuries elapsed when the last relic had vanished of the heresy of Paul of Samosata.

Thus we have past in review the prominent characters of the three first centuries, from Clement the disciple of the Apostles, to Paul the apostate from the Apostolical faith, from the successor of the preachers of divine truth in the Church, to the precursor of the teachers of human error, set upon the very chairs of the Apostolical ministry. From this period commences the deplorable æra of Arianism, into which it is impossible to enter, and arrive at a proper resting-point for the narrative, without advancing far into the fourth century¹. This work has, therefore, now reached its destined limits, and the author dismisses it from his hands, thankful that he has been permitted to complete his design, and hoping that it may awake some interest to explore a region which,

¹ The doctrinal history of this important period, has been happily supplied in our language (so miserably destitute of such works) by the Rev. J. H. Newman, in his *History of the Arians of the fourth century*.

although once familiar to the sons of our Church, has for near a century and a half been most disgracefully, and I will venture to add, disastrously, strange.

CONCLUSION.

View of the extreme parties among the Reformed—The true position of a faithful Church at this day—The mind of the primitive Church, how to be regarded—That mind explained on Apostolical succession—On Episcopacy—On the arbiter of doctrine—On the outward mutual relations of Churches—On the visibility of the Church.

THAT a narrator of the eventful history of the three first centuries of the Church, who is also himself living in a most momentous stage of her existence, should close his narrative without offering any reflections upon past and present, would argue either indifference or timidity, and in either case declare his incompetency to the task which he has undertaken. Still, as this duty must bring him at once upon hotly-controverted ground, there may be some excuse for the reluctance with which he goes to the performance of it, especially when uncompromising conviction is sure to be set down to the account of uncharitable bigotry. Of the latter the author does not feel conscious, and will be content to meet the Latitudinarian spirit of the day on the lowest ground that he can in conscience descend to.

Wherever a Reformation has taken place, whether civil or religious, there will always arise among the Reformed two extreme parties, one of which is inclined to think that it has been carried somewhat too far, the other considers that only the first step or two have been made in the desired progress. Such are now existing among ourselves, as concerns the matters of the Church. The former consists of men whose learned studies have imbued their minds with the spirit of the confessors of the primitive Church, whose generous feelings have been captivated by their noble stand for the truth, and have united with their self-respect to prompt them to love and venerate as good, beneficent, and illustrious Fathers those primitive bishops and priests whom God raised up to testify to his Scripture, to maintain his faith, to carry on the building of his Church, and gave them such abundant measure of grace that, as they came next in order of time to the Apostles, so they should also in the bright example of doing and suffering for Christ's sake. These naturally regard with great regret the loss of much which the stern necessity of a Reformation has compelled us to drop, are apt to attach too much consequence to things non-essential, and to establish, as binding and universal, what was only temporary and partial. They do not take sufficiently into account that dearly bought experience which gives our latter days their fair share of advantage in counterbalance to the enviable privileges of nearness to the Apostolical period.

The other party includes, under one and the same sentence of condemnation, all the ages which have preceded the epoch whence they date their new

illumination. The very generations next to the inspired writers of the New Testament are treated with so little ceremony, as to render their testimony to Scripture quite valueless. For any institution to be 400 years old is sufficient proof of its being unscriptural. It is then on the other side of the line which divides the darkened hemisphere from the enlightened. Proximity to their own day is proximity to Scriptural purity. Scripture itself is left but as a tree, of which the fence against the beasts of the field has been removed, and the roots have been so cleared and washed from the surrounding soil, that a child may push it down. All is rendered easy work for the infidel. And many, having done so much for him, are so exceedingly in love with their work, that they cannot refrain their hands from helping him to the end.

Between such extreme tenets of the Reformed lie the opinions of those who maintain the true position of a faithful Church in these days, combining the due reverence for antiquity with the suitable application to the times. These shall now be considered.

The 19th Article of our Church defines the visible Church of Christ to be, "A congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." And the same definition is evidently understood of every particular Church. General though these terms are, and perhaps, under the circumstances, were intended to be, one main point is distinct, namely, a proper provision

for the observation and conservation of God's word and sacraments. Now, this duty bids us look backward for evidence, forward for permanence. On looking backward to the universal reception of the canon of Scripture, we find as, universally prevailing, certain institutions of the utmost importance among the forms of the visibility of the Church, and for which the witnesses vouch the same apostolical authority as they do for their reception of that canon. To set aside these, except under some invincible necessity which rises superior to all considerations about externals, must appear to every sound and candid mind an act of wanton schism, of rebellious wilfulness, as well as of most perilous inconsistency. It may possibly happen to the minister of the wine, betokening our Lord's blood in the sacrament of His supper, that the cup shall suddenly leak, so that he shall be compelled hastily to have recourse to another vessel hitherto unemployed. It will then be his duty to make the necessity manifest to all the recipients, and to ensure, by every possible provision, against the recurrence of such an accident. But what shall we say of him, if he shall wilfully and wantonly make the change, and even lay hold of the first vessel, however improper, that comes to hand? Would not such irreverence argue infidelity? Yet the scandalous consequences would be slight and confined, compared with those which attend the fore-mentioned change. On looking forward we have to take heed that we place no stumblingblock in the way of our successors, that we make them not the interested or ignorant slaves of our own temporary passions and opinions; but commit them in all freedom to the

lasting truth of facts, referring them to those primitive sources whence we ourselves have derived, transmitting with the word what we ourselves have received with the word, bequeathing them no reasonable pretext and precedent for change, but leaving every thing on the firm basis of pure and primitive antiquity. Thus, and not otherwise, we shall fulfil that duty which we owe to our predecessors and successors, no less than to our contemporaries in the Church; namely, that we be "likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind, doing nothing through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind esteeming others better than ourselves: looking not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others, having the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus." (Phil. ii. 2—5.)

The grand object then is to maintain and perpetuate the *mind* of the primitive Church, understanding by this expression not merely doctrine, for this we find necessarily associated with externals; nor including all externals, for some among these are accidental; but extending it with a Catholic spirit, pure conscience, and careful knowledge into our own times, so as to distinguish what she would be positive to retain, and what she would be content to abandon.

That this mind is thus flexible is proved, not only from its indecision in some matters, as with regard to the time of celebrating Easter and the baptism of schismatics and heretics, but also from both its prevailing opinions and practices having been in some cases superseded by those of later times, without reclamation having been heard from any quarter down

to the present day. We may instance among the former the very prevalent opinion respecting the Millennium, which gave way before the opposition of the Alexandrine school in the third century. Also respecting the commerce of angels with women, founded upon the words in Gen. vi. 2. We may add also their interpretation of Psalm xlv. 1, which they apply to the eternal generation of the blessed Word. Of the latter an example may be given in the administration of the eucharist to infants, which has long been disused in all Churches; and that of Rome, notwithstanding her boast of maintaining tradition, has in her council of Trent (Sess. xxi. Can. 4) anathematized all that maintain its necessity.

Among such primitive customs as succeeding ages have liberty to lay aside, we may surely reckon prayer for the dead, although this had nothing superstitious in it, inasmuch as it did not go upon the notion of the possibility of reversing the judicial state of the dead, but only entreated the perfection of their bliss to those who had departed in the faith and fear of the Lord. But since it came to be so inseparably associated in the minds of the people with the corrupt invention of purgatory, with which indeed it is generally confounded by the ignorant at this day, and was appealed to in proof thereof, it would have been inexcusable to retain it; for it has nothing to do with Scripture, either as countenanced by its text or involved in its evidence, and it cannot be necessary for the dead, while it may endanger the salvation of the living. At the same time it is impossible not to feel grief and indignation at the mischievous ignorance of too many whom the studies of

their profession, had they, as fit guardians of the truth in these perilous times, properly pursued them, would have taught better. They stigmatize this as a Popish doctrine, and thus resign to their enemy a vantage-ground, in the primitive Church, of inestimable consequence, from which he had been effectually driven by the pious learning of their predecessors.

But on very different ground stand the questions of apostolical succession and episcopacy. They are, to say nothing more, coeval and coextensive with the period and prevalence of the canon of Scripture.

The assertion of apostolical succession was loud and universal in the primitive Church. It was indeed a vital point. On their proof of it depended the proof of the genuineness of the books of Scripture which the orthodox held in their hands, and thus they confuted the heretic of innovation, forgery, and adulteration. Had they surrendered it, the pure Scripture must have been lost to all future ages. It is true that at this day, owing to the long interval of undisturbed and universal reception which has succeeded to the extirpation of those heresies, the external proof of the genuineness of the books of the New Testament has become the same in kind, though much stronger in quality, as of any other book which has been received for ages. But on the same ground also the orthodox were obliged to vindicate their exclusive claim to lawful ministration; and had they surrendered it on this point they could not have retained it on the other. Now, on the very face of the thing it is not easy to see how a general tenet, vitally important to the Church at one period, should become of no consequence at another. It may still

be asked of those who cannot claim a title in this line, "Where is your mission?" Christ sent forth his Apostles, and they sent forth others, and so on in unbroken succession to the present day. "But who sent you? Your origin is from persons, who, not having received, cannot possibly communicate, and in asserting such powers have gone far beyond schism." The only answer to this is in effect, that the power of mission lies any where, or, in other words, no where. Did we want the argument *à posteriori*, facts would abundantly support us. Look at the utter wreck which has ensued from the desertion of this principle in a large part of the Protestant body. It is broken in pieces like a potter's vessel, and daily being ground into powder by this process of fragmentary disruption. And yet this tenet, which alone can keep us united in one body against the aggressions of popery, has been styled by some, in the infatuated folly and ignorance of the day, by the title of Popish.

But some have recourse to a spiritual succession. They are regular successors, say they, through the successive inspiration of the same Spirit. Who denies such a succession? But how does this distinguish that particular order of men which is necessary in the Church, as in a regular and permanent society? Is every good man *ex officio* a regular minister, if he choose to officiate, of God's word and sacraments? Or will a mere invitation from his brethren qualify him? But how are they to find him out? how shall they judge of their brother's heart? For here lies the proof and the ground of the lawfulness of his ministration. And it must be matter of fact, and not of

belief only. The line of visible succession must indeed be directed, as far as man's judgment upon his fellow can go, according to the line of spiritual succession. But what reliance could be placed on the fact of a mere spiritual succession, when the fact is incapable of proof, and moreover every act of a minister thus presumed, from the very beginning of his ministration, will have been proved to have been ineffective, as soon as he shall have betrayed one token of an unconverted heart? It is strange indeed that in order to designate the officers of a visible society, men should resort to none but invisible signs. Some, however, may propose purity of doctrine as a visible, or rather tangible, test. But yet this is no matter of fact. We are still left to the variety of opinion. And since in these times any doctrine, provided it be *professedly* drawn from Scripture, seems as good as the best, it will be quite impossible to exhibit, on this scheme, any token which shall not be as flatly contradicted by one party as it is vehemently asserted by the other. But visible succession is indisputable matter of fact. Each member in it can prove his legitimate descent with far more certainty than the heir of the most conspicuous line existing.

The question of episcopacy stands upon ground equally firm. No other form of government was ever dreamed of; and it may safely be asserted, that not a single instance can be fairly adduced of a college of presbyters undertaking to ordain a presbyter without the presidency of an apostle or bishop amongst them, from the first such ordination mentioned in the New Testament down to the innovations of the sixteenth

century. But, on the other hand, we find powers committed by Paul to Timothy and Titus which contain the essence of what we understand by episcopal; and in turning to the Revelations we find Churches which had several presbyters, Ephesus for example¹, superintended by an individual². Then again, in the very first moment of our regaining sight of the Church of Smyrna, which at the latest is but about fifteen years after the death of John, we meet with a bishop at the head of priests and deacons³. In short, long before we come to the last author whose testimony completes even the first universal canon of Scripture, we find episcopacy universal, every where ascribed to apostolical institution, and its regular succession referred to in proof of the genuineness of that canon. Can we possibly depart here from the mind of the primitive Church, which is that of the Apostles themselves? Let us, however, even be content with the acknowledgment which the adverse party is compelled by force of facts to make, namely, that episcopacy did prevail every where from the second to the fifteenth century, still we may ask them to prove the irremediable necessity which could justify such a fundamental schism. The result with them has been that they are left defenceless against the weapons of the Romanist. They produce Scripture against him, and he asks them how they know it to be Scripture. They are then forced to the testimony of the primitive Church. Why then, he answers, is not their testimony valid

¹ Acts xx. 17.

² Rev. ii. 24.

³ Ignat. Ep. ad Smyrn. 8.

for episcopacy¹? He may also ask them how, with any consistency, they retain the observation of the Lord's day and the baptism of infants, since these must be rested on the same ground.

Encumbered thus with what is involved in the argument for the external evidence of Scripture, some have played a desperate game, and thinking only of maintaining an impregnable position against their episcopalian controverters, have not cared to surrender essential vantage-ground to the infidel. They insist on the entire sufficiency of the internal evidence of the New Testament. Here is a delusion arising from the habit of considering these Scriptures as a single book, because the several works of different authors which they contain have always been familiar to them in the shape of one volume. But how do they prove that this one volume contains all Scripture? What answer have they ready for him who should maintain that the Epistle of Polycarp ought to be included? Its style approaches at least as near to the prevailing style of Scripture, which, of course, is St. Paul's, as that of Jude. They will say, perhaps, that it is not the critical judgment, but the heart, which has the privilege of distinguishing Scripture from all other writings. Now we will readily grant that the heart acknowledges the truths contained therein. But how can it go farther? How can it affirm that these are the very original docu-

¹ They say, indeed, that the primitive bishops were but *primi inter pares*. How then could these presidencies be so indispensable? and why have they not *primi inter pares*, if it would cost them so little in practice and avail so much in argument?

ments, and not treatises founded upon them? A heart, altogether unacquainted with Scripture, will feel and acknowledge the truths contained in a good Scriptural sermon, but will that thereupon become Scripture itself? Besides, how is the heart to be sure that every part is Scripture, and that there is neither omission nor interpolation? How shall it be sure that such passages as the Prophecy of Enoch (Jude 14), as the injunction to anoint the sick with oil (James v. 14), as Michael contending with the Devil for the body of Moses (Jude 9), are not interpolations? And what answer has it to give to the mutilations of the humanitarians? They also lose sight of one grand point, which is, that this evidence "is for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not." Suppose them therefore to propound our Christian doctrine to the unbeliever. Whether moved or not, he immediately demands their authority. They say, this book. And where is your authority for this book? he further asks. It is the human heart, they say. Why? The Mahometan will assert that for his Koran, he replies, and turns away in contemptuous indignation. The exclusive maintenance then of such an argument is nothing less than quitting both our position and our armour, and descending to fight naked on utterly untenable ground.

In pursuing our reference to the mind of the primitive Church we are led to insist upon Scripture as the only ultimate arbiter of controverted doctrine. That Church could use indeed for a time an independent source of reference. But it is curious to observe how very brief the time was that she thought

fit to use it. In the Epistle of Clement, the earliest uninspired work, and older than the Gospel of St. John, we find reference both to the Old and New Testament, and no appeal made to any other quarter. The same may be said of the Epistle of Polycarp, written within fifteen years of the death of St. John. When we come to the earliest controversial work, that of Irenæus, the spiritual grandson of St. John, we find the testimony of the Scripture not only the paramount, but the sole, where the adversary would accept it. We need not wonder at this. Since all doctrine was in harmony with Scripture before its books had been received in a Church, it followed, of course, that as soon as they were received, their authority would swallow up every other. The indirect authority of Paul, through intermediate teachers, would not be quoted, while the direct could be referred to in his writings. Since then, whencesoever their doctrine came, Scripture was their ultimate source of appeal for its correctness, and they deduce from it (as far as appears) each according to his individual understanding, we are not in the least bound by their deductions, except so far as reverence for such glorious confessors of the truth obliges us to bestow on them a careful consideration, and, where a number of them agree and ourselves are not quite decided, to give them their due weight in the balance. This rule more particularly regards the New Testament. As to the Old, their ignorance of the original language alone makes even their unanimity of inferior consequence. Who in these days would lay any stress on their agreement in interpreting Psalm xlv. 1. of the eternal generation of the Logos, except

to show that they held the tenet, though they urged an irrelative text?

Another notion of the mind of the primitive Church, was the independency of each Church. We have remarked, indeed, that towards the end of the period which this work takes up, the increasing communication between the Churches necessarily gave birth to various relative situations, and settled those of three by universal acknowledgment. These were those of the three great cities of the empire, Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, of which Rome had already made some attempts at supreme sovereignty, and experienced a rebuff as introducing tyrannical novelties. Not, however, that any were independent in the modern sense of the word, which renders all communion impossible. They had centres of unity in their metropolitical Churches and their synods, and so intimate was their union, that a person excommunicated from one Church found himself excommunicated from the whole catholic body. This was a great preventive against unsound doctrine; and so careful were they against admitting unsound members, that every stranger was obliged to produce a certificate from his Church before he could receive the rites of hospitality and communion from another. Thus also the apostolic Churches and their progeny were conspicuously distinguished from the heretical associations¹. This spiritual confederacy was destroyed in the West by the usurped despotism of Rome, and has never revived, though we trust, in despite of appearances, that hereafter it will. But,

¹ See Tertull. Præscr. Hæret. 20. 32.

as an original member of it, the British Church had a right to throw off the yoke imposed upon her; and if Rome refused to communicate with her on the old and legitimate terms, which was guilty of the separation?

This withdrawal of our allegiance from Rome has been a favourite pretext put forward by the sects which have separated from us, whereas no two cases can be more unlike. Ours is that of an ancient, independent, and apostolical Church asserting its independence. Theirs is that of a number of individual members separating from a Church. When it will be sound and good law that any citizen of the United States of America may refuse his allegiance to government on the plea of that government having done the same to the British government, then, but not until then, this argument will be available.

We have seen the close bonds which secured the unity of the primitive Church. It did not forget that it was a visible society composed of visible beings, and must therefore have visible bonds. It judged, according to the Apostle, that for unity of spirit were required the bonds of peace. Men have now-a-days very false notions of these. They mistake for them the interests and influences of mere civil society. But let these constraints be removed, and suppose the members of two different communions to be in earnest upon spiritual matters, it is not difficult to guess the result. Even now it is continually disclosing itself. In fact, peace, at any moment, under such circumstances, is a mere accident, while strife is the essence, being the very origin from which variety of communion has sprung.

Difference is the outward and visible mark. Is it possible that unity can be the inward substance ?

Is it impossible then for men of different communions to unite in any spiritual object? May they not find spiritual unity in the common reception of the Bible, and further, with such common means as their variety of tenets allows, the common object? This is a most important question, and hard to be answered at this day without incurring the imputation of party-spirit. Certain it is that not such, but quite contrary, was the mind of the primitive Church. Let us, however, briefly examine the proposition. By common reception of the Bible every one understands not the common faith, but the common profession of deriving their faith from the Bible; and the most extravagant and pernicious sects make this. A society, therefore, constituted according to this proposition cannot, unless it content itself with the delusion of a name, profess a common faith, or, in other words, professes none. Now, surely a question may be made, whether the evil effects attending these means may not more than counterbalance the end; whether the indifference to truth, which must thus be generated now and here, can be compensated by the spiritual advantage which may arise then and there. If, however, by the above words be meant a common faith, then the society ought to be designated by an express creed. This will obviate the above objection. But at the same time some one may be offended, and ask, why these persons can visibly meet for the promotion of a secondary spiritual object, but cannot for the primary, of rendering joint worship to the one Father of all through the one Mediator.

Ours is the age of associations. But this, instead of being a sign of concord, is just the reverse. They are the coagulated lumps into which the soured mass of society has broken. We must, however, make the best that we can out of this state, and the exertions of associated individuals must do as well as they can what should be the work of national unity. But great care is required in selecting the proper materials of such companies where they profess a spiritual object. The means may utterly defeat the end. For instance, in the struggle to which we have now been brought with the Romanist, it would be madness for the members of our Church to form an alliance for the purpose with her separatists. They have indeed put the matter, not unfortunately for us, out of the question, by siding, in this her hour of need, with the common enemy, who only wants her out the way to swallow them up quick. But let her fight alone the battle which she alone can fight; and if she but use the means which, by the grace of God, she contains within herself, God will give her the victory. Her zeal and dutiful service to the cause of her Master have not been so conspicuous since the days of her reformation. Her only danger, and that is a great one, lies in too prevailing an ignorance, among her sons, of her true position in such a conflict. It is not in the Bible, according to the narrow and abstract sense in which that phrase is commonly used. As well may a man push with a Bible in his hand instead of a bayonet on the field of battle. But it is the Bible, as on cross-examination in such a controversy its true meaning will turn out to be; that is, the doctrine of

the Bible, with all the institutions which must be reasonably accepted together with it by one who has thoroughly sifted its evidence, and wishes to have all the structure of his Church in harmony with that evidence, so that he may stand bold and unconvicted by any tittle of it in the day of trial, that he may not shrink from this point, nor slur over that, but be not only ready to meet all, but even eager to produce all. This it is to be the conservator of the whole truth of God. To maintain less than this will but bring shameful conviction of error. Let every son of our Church remember this his peculiar duty; let him ascertain his proper post, acquaint himself with the ground and nature of the fight which is awaiting him. All these he will find in the records of the primitive Church. Thus prepared, he will have the crown of victory from the God of truth.

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