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LECTURE IX.

Second proposition of Daillé. His charges against the Fathers of inaccuracy, ignorance of Hebrew, use of allegory, examined. Important principle involved in the latter. Why it was so largely resorted to. Excessive use of it by Clemens and Origen. Doctrinal errors of the Fathers insufficient to overthrow their testimony. Daillé's instances of their discrepancies chiefly Post-Nicene. Discrepancies of the Ante-Nicene confined to minor points. Their concurrence in important ones the more striking. Concluding objection of Daillé. The appeal to the Fathers not excluded by the sixth Article. Discretion of our Church in her use of them. Scripture and antiquity the authorities appealed to by our Reformers.

WE have now reviewed the arguments of Daillé contained in his first book, in which he had endeavoured to establish his first proposition, that the testimony of the Fathers is obscure, uncertain, and therefore unfit to decide modern controversies.

His second book is occupied with proving his second proposition, viz. that even supposing the testimony of the Fathers was clearer, it is not of authority to decide such controversies. This book, however, will not detain us so long as the other, having been very much anticipated in the former one. Without staying, therefore, to debate such preliminary questions as that the Fathers are, like other men, liable to error¹; that they have often a bias of their own towards this conclusion or that, which may mislead them in stating what they pretend to be the judgment of the Church²; that their authority must rest on the same ground as that of other teachers³; that we must not put them on the same footing as canonical Scripture⁴;— dismissing, I say, such preliminary matters as these, and considering that they carry along with them their own answers, and only present another instance of those tactics in Daillé, which I have before had occasion to notice, viz. a disposition to create a prejudice before he proceeds to an argument, or else

¹ Daillé, p. 205.² p. 206.³ p. 210.⁴ p. 220.

satisfied that they have been already handled by us in former Lectures, we will go on to examine some of the *errors* which he imputes to them, and by which he reckons their authority to be subverted. It is impossible, he thinks, that parties who wrote with such incaution, carelessness, and negligence, could have regarded themselves as oracles whom we were to listen to.¹ And he then produces examples of some errors of *haste*. Here, however, as elsewhere, Daillé illustrates, for the most part, though not altogether, from the works of the Post-Nicene Fathers. Amongst the Ante-Nicene, there is reason to believe, as he states, that Origen dictated some of his Homilies off-hand; and of course the value of compositions, which were so little studied, must be taken accordingly. Extempore effusions, no doubt, would be poor authority for the doctrines of a Church either in Origen's days or our own. But how small a part of the Ante-Nicene Theology, at least, consists in Homilies. Not that the accuracy of the writers of that period, even in other departments, can in all respects be vindicated. Certainly there are gross mistakes to be found in them. Daillé produces several from Justin. He makes David, *e. g.* live 1500 years before Christ²; and when treating of the Septuagint version, says that Ptolemy, King of Egypt, sent messengers to Herod, King of Judæa, to beg of him copies of the writings of the Prophets; whereas he did send to Eleazar the High Priest, some 200 years before Herod's time.³ He mentions a statue erected under Claudius Cæsar at Rome, to Simon Magus, with the inscription "Simoni Deo sancto,"⁴ on which Daillé observes, that it is now agreed amongst learned men, that it was in truth a statue dedicated Semoni Sanco Deo, one of the minor Deities of Rome, and that Justin misread the legend—a fact, however, not quite so certain. For Justin himself was, like Simon, a native of Samaria, and would, therefore, be likely to make himself master of the particulars of Simon's history beyond another man. Moreover he addresses himself, when speaking of this statue, to the Emperor of Rome himself, who might be supposed, or at least must have had those about him who might be supposed, to be able to test the accuracy of the statement. The fragment of marble, too, dug up in the island of the Tiber, in the year 1574, inscribed Semoni Sanco Deo

¹ Daillé, p. 234.

² Justin Martyr, Apol. I. § 42.

³ § 31. Daillé, p. 238.

⁴ Daillé, p. 240.

Fidio, and the discovery of which, and nothing whatever else, gave occasion to calling Justin's account in question, has been thought by some to be too small to have ever had a statue upon it. And finally, Justin's story has been repeated by most of the early Fathers that followed him, nearly in the same terms¹; so that it is at any rate far from clear that Justin, in this case, at least, was in error. Daillé further takes notice of his quoting Zephaniah for Zechariah,² and Jeremiah for Daniel.³ He might have added that he cites Isaiah for Jeremiah,⁴ and Zechariah for Malachi⁵; that he talks of the Prophets who foretold the coming of Christ some 5000, some 3000, some 2000, some 1000, some 800 years beforehand⁶; that he reads the same passage of Scripture in several ways, in several places⁷; and even yet he would not have exhausted his inaccuracies. Indeed, one of his editors,⁸ losing patience with his author, exclaims in one of his notes, "Incredibilis est Justinini in recitandis Scripturis inconstantia;" and in his Dedication talks of "Incredibilis quaedam scribendo festinatio" in Justin; and yet, in spite of all this, this very editor does not scruple to speak of him in the same Dedication as *ætate antiquissimum, auctoritate gravissimum*. And such, I am confident, would be the impression left on the mind of any man, who read him carefully through in a fair and candid spirit, and considered how accidental the greater part of these lapses are, and how very small a proportion, after all, they bear to the extent of his works. For this is what gives effect to Daillé's criticism in the whole of his second book, that ranging over the writings of the Fathers, he selects nothing whatever from them but their mistakes and defects; and having done this with an air of seeming triumph, he exclaims, these are the authors you are disposed to regard with reverence. What if a Romanist (to avail myself of an illustration of his own) were to collect together all the difficulties contained in the Bible, and then ask in his turn, Is this the book which you Protestants tell us he who runs may read? The inaccuracies of Justin are almost all of a kind that do not materially affect his credit as a witness of the Church of his own time,

¹ See Burton's Bampton Lectures, Notes, p. 374.

² Justin Martyr, Apol. I. § 35.

³ § 51.

⁴ § 53.

⁵ Dial. § 49.

⁶ Apol. I. § 31.

⁷ Compare Apol. I. § 45; Dial. §§ 32, 83.

⁸ Thirlby, p. 75.

whether as to its ordinances or doctrines. They are in general mere slips of memory, perhaps occurring when he was writing under difficulties, and without his references at hand. It is not unreasonable to suppose, that a man who lived in such a day, and who died a martyr's death, did not compose with all the advantages, which appertain to a quiet scholar in peaceful times with his books about him. Indeed, the Apologies bear internal evidence of having been written under persecution; and the Dialogue (if we are not to suppose the scene altogether imaginary) of the author having been on the eve of a voyage when he maintained it.

There is another class of errors on which Daillé animadverts, as shaking the authority of the Fathers—those which beset them through their ignorance of Hebrew—ignorance which he finds betrayed more particularly in their attempts at etymology.¹ Some instances he gives; many more he might have given. Thus Justin derives the word *Satanas* from *Satan* (*σατάν*) an apostate, and *nas* (*νᾶς*) a serpent,² *Israel* from *Isra* (*Ἰσρα*), a man, and *El* (*Ἐλ*) power.³ Irenæus says that in the Hebrew tongue *Jesus* signifies “that Lord who contains heaven and earth.”⁴ He has equally strange interpretations of *Sabaoth* and *Adonai*⁵; the former of which, he says, means “voluntarium,” the latter “nominabile,” or perhaps it should be read “innominabile,” a substitute for the unutterable name, which Irenæus mistook for a word having the actual sense of “innominabile.” Other stumbles of the same kind may be remarked in him. Clemens Alexandrinus tells us that *Jacob* was “called *Israel* because he had seen the Lord God,”⁶ and that *Moses* was so called, because in the language of the Egyptians water is *μῶν*,⁷ and *Hosanna* means “light and glory and praise, with supplication to the Lord,”⁸ and that *Rebecca* is equivalent to “patience” (*ὑπομονή*), where he speaks with *Philo*, from whom he very often borrows his derivations,⁹ yet he else where says that it is equivalent to the “glory of God.”¹⁰ *Theophilus of Antioch*, who had an unhappy taste for etymology, seems to consider the Hebrew word *Sabbath* exactly translated

¹ Daillé, pp. 243, 244.

² Justin Martyr, Dial. § 103.

³ § 125.

⁴ Irenæus, II. c. xxiv. § 2.

⁵ c. xxxv. § 3.

⁶ Clem. Alex. Pædag. I. c. vii. p. 132.

⁷ Stromat. I. § xxiii. p. 412.

⁸ Pædag. I. c. v. pp. 104, 105.

⁹ I. c. v. p. 111, and Stromat. I. § v. p. 334.

¹⁰ Stromat. IV. § xxv. p. 637.

by the Greek word *ἑβδομάς*¹; though certainly in his interpretation of the word Eden,² and of the word³ Noah he is not liable to the same animadversion. There seems some reason to think, I will add, that even Origen, the single one of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, whose works have come down to us, supposed to have had much knowledge of Hebrew, had but a limited amount of it; for though his Hexapla proves that such as he had he turned to the best account, and though the loss of that work is, perhaps, the heaviest of any that biblical criticism ever sustained, still his writings yield incidental evidence that his acquaintance with Hebrew was not profound. Thus his correspondent Africanus having started an objection to the authority of the history of Susanna and the Elders, that it bore internal marks of not having been written in Hebrew—for that when one of the elders said he had seen Susanna in the act of adultery under a holm-tree (*ὑπὸ πρίνον*), Daniel's answer was, that the angel would saw him asunder (*πρίσειν*); and when the other said under a mastic-tree (*ὑπὸ σχίνον*), Daniel's answer again was, that he, too, would be cleft in twain (*σχισθήναι*); the similarity of the Greek words *πρίνον* and *πρίσειν*, *σχίνον* and *σχισθήναι*, suggesting the turn of the sentence, which similarity did not exist in the Hebrew⁴—Origen replies, that “Finding himself at a loss, he had referred the question to Jews not a few, asking them what *πρίνος* was called in their language, and what *πρίζειν*, how they would translate the plant *σχίνος*, and how they would render *σχιζειν*; and though they profess themselves unable to tell him what trees were indicated by these names, and so far Origen might seem not more imperfectly informed in Hebrew than themselves, seeing that what was a difficulty to him was a difficulty to them; yet, no doubt, these Jews could have readily given the meaning of *πρίζειν* and *σχιζειν* in the Hebrew, which Origen, it should appear, could not; and altogether his mode of putting the case argues that he had no confidence in his own judgment on this occasion, or in his possessing the means of forming one. Elsewhere he considers Sabaoth as in itself one of the names of God, and couples it with Adonai as another.⁵ And it is remarkable that though the first two books against Celsus profess to be an answer to the objections of a Jew against

¹ Theophilus ad Autolyicum, II. § 12.² § 24.³ III. § 19.⁴ Origen, Ep. ad Africanum, § 6.⁵ Contra Celsum, I. § 25.

Christianity,¹ not a single argument in them turns upon the Hebrew or touches on it ; and yet this work was written after the greater part of his Commentary on the books of Scripture, perhaps after the whole, except that on certain of the Prophets ; so that we have here proof that the compositions which have come down to us were principally framed by Origen when his Hebrew scholarship was such as I have intimated.² But allowing that the early Fathers, with one or two exceptions, were ignorant of Hebrew, or at least imperfectly acquainted with it, that circumstance does not shake their authority as witnesses of the practices and doctrines of the Primitive Church. It may make them in themselves less able expositors of the Old Testament, but that is not the question. The value of the Primitive Fathers arises chiefly from this, that living soon after our Lord and the Apostles, soon after the times when the Holy Ghost was most active in the Church leading the disciples into all truth, and being themselves trusted by the Church with high offices, they can scarcely fail of reflecting in some considerable measure the impression which the Church had taken, and must in the main communicate the notions of doctrines to be taught and ordinances to be observed, not which they themselves had derived from their Hebrew or other scholarship, but which had been imparted to them from even a higher source.

Another feature in the writings of the Fathers, which Daillé produces as impairing their authority, is their heedless use of allegory.³ Here, again, Daillé's instances are drawn as usual, from the works of Post-Nicene Fathers : but I have no wish to avail myself of that escape from his argument. The same taste exhibits itself in the Ante-Nicene authors so universally, that if any one thing more than another can be predicated of the Primitive Church, it is that in the explanation of Scripture, and especially of the Old Testament, it was governed by a principle of figurative interpretation : but it is

¹ Præfatio, § 6 ; II. § 77 ; III. § 1.

² The work against Celsus was written after the Commentary on Genesis (VI. § 49), after that on the Psalms (VII. § 31), after that on Isaiah and Ezekiel, and some of the twelve prophets (VII. § 11), after that on the Ep. to the Romans (V. § 47), and on the First

Ep. to the Thessalonians (II. § 65).

³ He says of them, "Scripturam in vanos fumos convertunt," p. 248 ; and again, "quos ille (Augustinus) neglectâ literâ, contortis allegoriis sæpe frigidis et dilutis, vexat verius quam interpretatur."—p. 250.

figurative interpretation for one object almost exclusively, viz. to show that the Scriptures from first to last, even in their most ordinary details, are filled with the subject of a Saviour. I shall have a better opportunity of pointing this out by examples at a future time, when I come to speak of the interpretation of Scripture, and of the cast given to it by a knowledge of the Fathers. At present I will content myself with saying, that this allegorical mode of understanding Scripture and the facts recorded in Scripture, however indulged in by the Fathers, and especially by the later Fathers to excess, is certainly in itself of the very earliest date in the Christian Church. For not to speak of the Epistle of Barnabas, written within forty years of our Saviour's death, which is full of it; the "senior quidam," to whom Irenæus refers from time to time (not always, perhaps, the same person, but necessarily contemporary or all but contemporary with the Apostles, indeed called on one occasion "senior apostolorum discipulus")¹ is clearly actuated by it; finding, as he does, in the extension of the arms of Jesus on the Cross, an emblem of the purpose of God to gather unto Himself two people, the Jews and the Gentiles.² So that the principle itself was no weakness in the Fathers, no hallucination of theirs, but, however used by them or even abused, was, as I have said, unquestionably a prominent feature of the theology of the Primitive Church, to which they merely gave expression. The tendency to this peculiar character of exposition in the early Church was augmented, as it should seem, by the reluctance observed in the Jews, at least with the exception of those of Alexandria and of the Alexandrian school, to discover in Scripture any meaning beyond the literal, (whereby they cut themselves off from much of the evidence it contained for a Saviour to come, and hardened themselves in unbelief,³ nay, often involved the Law in positive contradictions, the language of it, when figuratively intended, not answering to a strictly literal sense,⁴) and was further augmented by a similar effect the same adherence to the literal sense was seen to produce on the Ebionites, (for they too disparaged the Saviour,) and by the manner in which it was perceived to pave the way for heretics in general to claim the authority of Scripture for doctrines the

¹ Irenæus, IV. c. xxxii. § 1.

² V. c. xvii. § 4.

³ IV. c. xxvi. § 1.

⁴ V. c. xxxiii. § 3.

most extravagant, (arguing, for example, as they did,¹ against the resurrection of the body from the text "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,") and this not in a few instances, but in so many, that more heresies, it was said, might be referred to the process of expounding Scripture by the letter, than even to the lusts and passions of mankind.² Strong, however, as the appetite of the Fathers certainly was on all these accounts for figures, I do not think any instance can be produced from those before Origen of the literal meaning of a passage of Scripture being evaporated in the figurative. The Epistle of Barnabas, replete as it is with allegory, always betrays that its author regarded the incidents of the Law, on which he founds his figures, as matters of fact. With Justin it is the same. He may have his theory, for instance, of the battle of the Israelites with Amalek, and of the esoteric meaning it conveyed, but he evidently believes that the battle was fought, and was attended by the circumstances recorded in holy Writ.³ Or he may find a deeper sense than the apparent one in the milch kine conveying the cart which contained the ark to the house of Joshua⁴; but he had no suspicion of the transaction itself being ideal.⁵ Theophilus reviews all the details of the Creation as recorded by Moses, and detects a mystical sense under almost every one of them; but he still regards the whole as a substantial history, and rebukes the Greeks for the fabulous nature of their cosmogony.⁶ Irenæus abounds in mystical applications of Scriptural incidents, but still he cannot justly be charged with resolving the fact into the figure. Take the history of Lot and his daughters, a history which he construes allegorically (or rather the Presbyter does so, whose words he adopts); and still it will be discovered, that he considers it as an actual event in that patriarch's life. And this, be it observed, belongs to a class of the most trying cases of all that I could have named; the offensive character of the act putting the commentator under a temptation to refine it into a parable. Still, I say, the transaction is quoted as a real occurrence. It is expressly

¹ Origen, De Princip. IV. § 22; Irenæus, V. c. xiii. § 2.

² Hæreses quoque magis de carnali scripture intelligentiâ, quam de opere carnis nostræ, ut plurimi æstimant.—Origen, Fragment., vol. i. p. 41, Bened.

Ed. See also De Princip. IV. § 8.

³ Justin Martyr, Dial. § 131.

⁴ 1 Sam. vi. 14.

⁵ Justin Martyr, Dial. §§ 132, 133.

⁶ Theophilus ad Autol. II. §§ 11, 12.

branded as a sin ; and we are invited to give God thanks for having provided a pardon for such sins of the patriarchs by the Advent of our Lord. Tertullian has his allegories, but not to the annihilation of the facts they grow out of. The wise men, when they offered Jesus gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, intimated that the curious arts of magic were all to be surrendered, now that the infant Saviour had appeared. And the command given them to return from Bethlehem by another way, was expressive of the better course in which they were to walk for the time to come.¹ But the journey of the wise men is considered to be a fact, for it is argued on as such in the self-same passage.

It is not till we come to Clemens Alexandrinus, that we have any misgivings whatever on the subject before us ; or that our suspicions are awakened of the real being sunk in the allegorical. Alexandria, indeed, was the very focus of the figurative exposition of Scripture ; under the influence of Philo the Alexandrian Jew, to whom Clemens refers, and from whom he largely borrows² ; and of Aristobulus, a commentator on the books of Moses of a still earlier date, he also of Alexandria.³ That Clemens finds mysteries in the incidents both of the Old Testament and of the New, in great abundance, and in very trivial matters, and refines on them to excess, is certain ; but whether he ever actually loses sight of the letter in the spirit, may still be doubted ; though it perhaps may be allowed that he does so write as to pave the way for Origen, who succeeded him in the same school, and who also was a great admirer of Philo, to do so in some instances ; and he is the first of the Fathers, of whom it can be said that he refines the fact away in the allegory ; and even of him it can only be said under great restriction. Origen's general notions upon this question seem to be most fairly represented in his treatise against Celsus, the soberest of his works—viz. that we are to consider the narrative of Scripture as having an obvious sense, but that we are not to rest in the obvious ; nor in interpreting the Law are we to begin and end with the letter⁴—and that in like manner, in contemplating

¹ Tertullian, De Idololatriâ, c. ix.

² Clem. Alex. Stromat. I. c. v. p. 333.

³ Origen, Contra Celsum, IV. § 51.

⁴ *Ὡς μὴ καταπαύοντες τὸν νοῦν τῶν*

λεγομένων ἐν τῇ προφανεί ἱστορίᾳ, μὴδ' ἐν τῇ κατὰ τὰς λέξεις καὶ τὸ γράμμα νομοθεσίᾳ.—Contra Celsum, II. § 6.

the incidents related of Jesus, we shall not arrive at the spectacle of the truth in full, unless we are guided by the same rule.¹

Meanwhile it may be conceded to Daillé, that when the Fathers wrote in the unelaborate manner they did, they could have little idea that they were prescribing for our faith, or settling our controversies.² But they are not the worse qualified for exerting such influence on us, because they had no intention of doing so. We may not be disposed to acquiesce in the reasonableness of every allegory, which every Father discovers or thinks he discovers in Scripture. The Fathers themselves do not expect it. Origen expressly says, that though we may be sure a fact is typical, we cannot be sure that the type we see in it is the right one: we may suppose *e. g.* fearlessly, that the Tabernacle in general is figurative, but in applying the figure in detail we may be more or less mistaken.³ But this general conclusion at least we may draw from testimony so concurrent, that the spirit of the Primitive Church in its interpretation, was to deal largely in allegories by which the text was made continually to point to the Saviour: or in other words, that an evangelical construction of Scripture was the construction sanctioned by the Primitive Church. And though the authority of the Fathers, as individual interpreters, might be damaged by any extravagance in an allegory, whilst they were in pursuit of this leading object; their authority as witnesses, that the interpretation of Scripture went very much upon that principle, would not suffer by it; nay, would be rather promoted. And this, we must always remember, is the matter at issue, what authority is due to the Fathers as witnesses of the character of the Primitive Church. A child may produce more conviction in the minds of a jury than the greatest wit, and certainly would do so, if his

¹ Τὰ συμβεβηκέναι ἀναγεγραμμένα τῷ Ἰησοῦ οὐκ ἐν ψιλῇ τῇ λέξει καὶ τῇ ἱστορίᾳ τὴν πᾶσαν ἔχει θεωρίαν τῆς ἀληθείας.—*Contra Celsum*, II. § 69.

² Daillé, p. 251.

³ Καὶ ὅτι μὲν οἰκονομίαι εἰσὶ τινες μυστικαὶ δηλοῦμεναι διὰ τῶν θείων γραφῶν, πάντες καὶ οἱ ἀκραϊότατοι τῶν τῷ λόγῳ προσιόντων πεπιστεύκασιν· τινες δὲ αὐταί, οἱ εὐγνώμονες καὶ αἰσχυροὶ ὁμολογοῦσι μὴ εἶδέναι

ἐπὶ τὴν κατασκευὴν τῆς σκηνῆς ἀναγινώσκονται, πειθόμενοι τύπους εἶναι τὰ γεγραμμένα, ζητοῦσιν ἂν δυνήσονται ἐφαρμόσαι ἐκάστῳ τῶν κατὰ τὴν σκηνὴν λεγομένων ὅσον μὲν ἐπὶ τῷ πείθεσθαι ὅτι τύπος τινός ἐστιν ἡ σκηνή, οὐ διαμαρτάνοντες ὅσον δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ τῷδὲ τινι ἀξίως τῆς γραφῆς ἐφαρμόξεν τὸν λόγον οὐδὲ ἐστὶ τύπος ἡ σκηνή, ἔσθ' ὅτε ἀποπίπτουτες, κ.τ.λ.—*Origen, De Principiis*, IV. § 9.

position happened to give him advantages, which the other had not, for bearing testimony to the question in dispute. Besides there is another light in which these allegories should be regarded, as has been well observed by Dr. Waterland,¹ viz. that they were probably in most instances not so much intended to be *interpretations* of Scripture, as *uses* or *improvements* of it; pious *meditations* upon Scripture; spiritual exercises, calculated, perhaps, beyond any other lessons to attract attention and win the multitude of hearers. How popular are the Contemplations of Bishop Hall, which are of this character!

Another argument, by which Daillé detracts from the authority of the Fathers is, that in many particulars of their faith they were in acknowledged error.² And then he briefly recounts a list of charges of this kind, which he thinks might be brought against them. Justin believed in the Millennium; regarded, as it should seem, the essence of the Deity to be finite (a view which Daillé imputes to him on very insufficient grounds, and by a technical construction of a loose phraseology, never intended to be taken literally³); understood by the sons of God going in unto the daughters of men, an intercourse of fallen angels with women, of which demons were the issue; imagined that the souls even of the just and of the prophets in the intermediate state, fell under some power of the evil spirits, building his notion (a circumstance which Daillé suppresses, though it qualifies his proposition) partly on the capacity the witch enjoyed of calling up the soul of Samuel⁴; thought that the heathens such as Socrates, who lived up to their reason, (*μετὰ λόγου*, the double sense of *λόγος* being, no doubt, at the bottom of his argument⁵) were in some sort Christians. Irenæus, besides partaking with Justin in some of these errors, contended that our Lord was between forty and fifty years of age when he died; led into this mistake partly, perhaps (as Augustine suspects⁶), by his ignorance of

¹ On the Use and Value of Ecclesiastical Antiquity. Works, vol. v. p. 312. Oxf. Ed.

² Daillé, p. 252.

³ Daillé, p. 255. Justin is employed in convincing Trypho, that he is wrong in supposing all that is said of "the Lord" in the Old Testament appertains to God the Father—*e. g.* "The Lord rained down fire from the Lord"

would imply that God the Father was not himself in heaven at that time, but at Sodom, if it was the God the *Father*, who was there; Justin's object being to force on Trypho a recognition of God the Son.—Dial. §§ 60, 127.

⁴ § 105.

⁵ Apol. I. § 46.

⁶ See Dissert. Præv. p. cxxxviii. Bened. Ed.

the years of the Consulate, in which Christ was born and suffered, and partly by his eagerness to repel the argument of the Gnostics, who found a type of their thirty Æons in the age at which they maintained Christ was crucified, seeing that he began to be about thirty years of age when he was baptized, *i. e.* in their reckoning twenty-nine, and that his teaching lasted twelve months only (the number of another group of their Æons) being the period which was announced for it before by the prophet, when he spake of the "acceptable year of the Lord." Irenæus, therefore, not content with showing, as he does, that Christ's ministry must have extended beyond one year by the fact of his attending at least three Passovers, further impugns their claim to the symbol of thirty years by lengthening the life of Jesus to more than forty, relying upon the reasoning that he had to sanctify every age of man by the corresponding one of his own: infants, by his infancy; boys, by his boyhood; men, by his maturity; and old men, by his incipient decay; upon the text, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?"¹ and upon the tradition of the elders from St. John. Irenæus also maintains that disembodied souls retain the form of the bodies they occupied, so that they may still be recognised, as the soul of Lazarus was by the rich man.² Again, Clemens Alexandrinus teaches that the Gentiles were in some sort justified by philosophy³; meaning, however, no more than that the virtue there was in it, and which was itself supplied by God, trained them for a better faith, as the Law did the Jews; that those who lived before the Advent of the Saviour, could not be justly condemned if they had no option with respect to accepting or rejecting his message; and that therefore, after the crucifixion, he descended into Hades to publish to them the Gospel and its conditions⁴; and that punishments are purgatorial, and therefore not eternal.

Daillé proceeds through the other Fathers in the same way, but I shall not follow him, having now produced a number of specimens of the class of errors into which the Fathers are in the habit of falling, to give you a just idea of them, and to satisfy you that they are not of a kind to invalidate the authority of those writers as witnesses to the great character-

¹ Irenæus, II. c. xxii.

² c. xxxiv. § 1.

³ Stromat. I. § xx. p. 377.

⁴ VI. § vi. p. 763, *et seq.*

istics of the Primitive Church, both with regard to its doctrines and ritual. If we had pretended that the Fathers were infallible, it would have been another thing, but we made no such claims for them. These errors, you will have seen, are almost all of them private conjectures on speculative points of subordinate importance, which do not affect any of the great doctrines of Christianity, for on such all these parties are agreed. It may be a chronological blunder to contend that our Lord was between forty and fifty when he was crucified, but that is all that can be said. It would have been a vital matter to have disputed his crucifixion in the flesh at all, the circumstance that made it availing, the union of the Godhead and Manhood in the Person of the Saviour, and the redemption it wrought for the sins of the whole world; but in these latter positions they are of one consent, and by their unanimity afford us all reasonable assurance that the Primitive Church was agreed on them too. So far from fundamental are the questions here agitated, that it may be doubted whether our own Church, with all her formularies and Articles, would touch the case of one who held any or all of them, so as to exclude him from her communion. When the early Fathers wrote, which was before successive ages, each profiting by the labours of those before it, had sifted theology, before Councils of the Church had been assembled, and before nice and exact Confessions of faith had been framed—all these measures, be it remembered, proceeding upon the principle not of devising what was new, but of determining and fixing what was taught, though not technically expressed, from the beginning—when the early Fathers wrote, I say, before all this investigation into the details of Divinity had occurred, there must have been many lesser points unsettled, and great room for the fancies of individuals dispersed over the world, with not much opportunity of personal conference and with no rail to hold by, to wander into peculiar thoughts. And this consideration only gives greater value to their testimony when it is unanimous, as on all main things it is, and tends even to raise their authority on the subjects for which we use it.

The next circumstance which Dailé represents as invalidating the *authority* of the Fathers, is their disagreement one with another; the old story, in short, of Father against Father. But what are these discrepancies which are supposed to be so

fatal to the credit of the Fathers? None are specified of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, at least one with another, save the tales of Victor's controversy with the Asiatics on the time of keeping Easter, and Cyprian's with Stephanus on the subject of Baptism of heretics,¹ unless it be that other respecting the age of Jesus at his crucifixion, in which Irenæus disagrees with Tertullian²; and that still more minute one respecting the soul of Samuel, which Justin represents as really called up by the witch³; whilst Tertullian regards it as merely a spectral illusion.⁴ The other instances adduced by Daillé are those of Ante-Nicene Fathers differing from Post-Nicene, as Tertullian from Augustine on the nature of the soul's generation, which is nearly the only one of this class; for another of fasting on Saturday, in which Ignatius is described as opposed to the Apostolical Constitutions, is a spurious case, the Epistle of Ignatius to the Philippians, on which it is founded, being, as we have already observed, apocryphal⁵: or of Post-Nicene Fathers, and many of those of quite a late date, differing from one another. With such cases as these I am not careful to engage; the testimony of the Fathers becoming less interesting, and our anxiety to defend it less sensitive in proportion as they are removed from primitive times, and from the Church of which we seek to ascertain the features. But how few and how unimportant are the discrepancies between the Ante-Nicene Fathers, is evident from the perpetual recurrence we find, in the detractors from their worth, of these two cases of the Paschal and Baptismal controversy. These are always put forward as their greatest grievances, as the foremost criminations under this head of which they can bethink themselves. Yet how far from being matters of primary importance are these! And if the peace of the Church was disturbed to the degree in which it *was* disturbed, by two such contests as these, both of them springing out of extreme jealousy of *innovation*, and a determination on either side to adhere to what either party considered to be a primitive usage, how certain may we be that the same persons would not have submitted to any unsound compromise on matters more serious; and how safely may we conclude, that if on such matters they are unanimous, their unanimity is the result of their confidence, that the faith

¹ Daillé, p. 296.² p. 297.³ Justin Martyr, Dial. § 105.⁴ Tertullian, De Animâ, c. lvii.⁵ Daillé, p. 297.

they hold in those particulars was that once delivered to the saints!

Finally, Daillé contends that even supposing the Fathers to be not so *obscure* as they are, and to deserve more *authority* than they have, neither Romanists nor Protestants do acknowledge them as umpires in their disputes, but accept and reject them at pleasure, and in a degree which suits their own convenience. Thus Protestants admit nothing but the canonical Scriptures as their rule of faith, this dogma being the very corner-stone of the Reformation¹; and in confirmation of the fact, he cites Calvin, Bucer, Melancthon, Luther, Beza, though admitting that the chief among them (and the name of Jewel he here introduces) did refer to the books of the Fathers in their disputations. But it will be found, says he, on an accurate examination of their manner of reasoning, that they used them not to establish their own opinions, but to refute those of the Romanists.² I think he would have a difficulty in proving this in the case of Jewel at least. In the beginning of his Apology he proposes to make the works of the Fathers an *element* of his demonstration, that the Reformers had right on their side. “Quod si docemus sacrosanctum Dei Evangelium, et veteres episcopos, atque Ecclesiam primitivam nobiscum facere,”³ is the language which he uses; not simply is against the Romanists, but *nobiscum facere*, is with us; and the whole tenour of his argument is consistent with this exposition of it. Nor does the sixth Article of our Church, which is of much more consequence, speak to the exclusion of all respect for the decisions of the Primitive Church in the manner Daillé understands this maxim of the Reformation; and as his reference to Jewel indicates that he involves the Church of England in this observation, it is proper for us to appeal to the authoritative documents of that Church. There is nothing in that Article which is not perfectly consistent with what we are pleading for. “We allow no doctrine as *necessary*,” to use the words of one of the soundest of our divines, Dr. Waterland, “which stands only on *Fathers* or on *tradition*, oral or written; we admit none

¹ Daillé, p. 306.

² Sed si eorum mentem atque institutum accuratè inspexeris, reperies eos ad refutandum non ad confirmandum, ad evertendas opiniones Romanas, non

ad suas constituendas Patrum uti testimonio.—Daillé, p. 310.

³ Bishop Jewel's Works, vol. iv. p. 12, Oxf. Ed.

for such, but what is *contained* in Scripture, and *proved* by Scripture, *rightly* interpreted. And we know of no way more safe in *necessaries*, to preserve the *right* interpretation, than to take the *ancients* along with us. We think it a good method to secure our *rule of faith* against impostures of all kinds, whether of *enthusiasm* or false *criticism*, or *conceited* reason, or *oral* tradition, or the assuming dictates of an *infallible* chair. If we thus preserve the true sense of Scripture, and upon that sense build our faith, we then build upon Scripture *only*; for *the sense of Scripture is Scripture.*" Suppose a man were to prove his legal title to an estate, he appeals to the *laws*; the true sense and meaning of the laws must be proved by the best rules of interpretation; but after all it is the *law* that gives the title, and that *only*. In like manner, after using all proper means to come at the *sense* of Scripture (which is Scripture), it is that and that only, which we *ground* our faith upon, and *prove* our faith by. We allege not *Fathers* as *grounds*, or *principles*, or *foundations* of our faith, but as *witnesses*, and as *interpreters*, and faithful conveyers."¹ That is the aspect in which the Church of England contemplates the early Fathers. And if the Church of Rome does not hold them in equal honour,—and the numerous examples which Daillé adduces of this in the person of Petau (Petavius), and other Jesuits, tend to show that it does not,—this should only lead us to conclude that their testimony is not lightly to be thrown away by those who would successfully contend with the Church of Rome. For what can have created this distaste for them in the minds of Romanists, but consciousness that they bore witness against them? And we know, in fact, what I have often suggested before, that Bishop Bull, in his defence of the Nicene Creed, is as much engaged in upholding the authority of the primitive Fathers against this same Jesuit Petau, as he is in maintaining it against Zuicker a Socinian, or Sandius an Arian.² Indeed, it is precisely the same feeling which prompts the Romanists to disparage the primitive Fathers, that prompts Daillé and the foreign Protestants to do the same; viz. that their authority is unpropitious to them both.

¹ Waterland, On The Use and Value of Ecclesiastical Antiquity.—Works, vol. v. p. 316, Oxf. Ed.

² Works of Bishop Bull, vol. i. p. 258, Oxf. Ed., and Def. Fid. Nic. sect. 2, c. iv. § 9.

It is true that our Church exercises a certain discretion in the use of the Fathers: some rites or doctrines she may not adopt, because she may think they have only the partial support of primitive testimony; such as Infant Communion, which rests, as we have seen, on a single witness, and that of the third century. Some, however innocent in themselves, she may reject, because she finds no trace of them in Scripture; such as the use of oil, milk and honey at or after Baptism, or of water with the wine in the Eucharist; whereas in most cases, where she follows the Fathers, she sees in them the development of some hint at least in Scripture. Some she qualifies from an experience that they have been the parents of dangerous superstitions; such as the invocation of the Holy Ghost on the elements in the Eucharist, or *ἐπίκλησις*, as it is called, a primitive feature, which, though once distinctly forming a part of her Communion office, and though the parallel prayer is still retained in the office of Baptism for consecrating the water where there could be no abuse, she has not indeed *withdrawn* out of fear of encouraging the error of Transubstantiation, but modified by using the terms, "Hear us, O merciful Father, we most humbly beseech Thee, and grant that we, receiving these thy creatures of bread and wine according to thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood;" such, again, as prayers and offerings for the dead, another primitive custom which she has reduced in her Communion office to a thanksgiving for those that are departed in the faith and fear of God, and a prayer that "with them we may be partakers of God's heavenly kingdom;" not venturing to go further in that office more especially, remembering the masses for the dead of old; but in the Burial Service praying "that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of God's holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul."

I adduce these instances as furnishing an idea of the manner in which the Church of England exercises a judgment of her own in handling the Fathers; now and then, for reasons I have said, walking with them delicately; in general, where their evidence is clear and unanimous, and especially where it responds to some intimation in Scripture otherwise scarcely

intelligible from its brevity, greatly resting upon it. The questions of Infant Baptism, sponsors at Baptism, promises at Baptism, a confession of faith at Baptism; the precise nature of the Eucharist, whether in any sense sacrificial or not, whether to be partaken of in both kinds and by all; a Clergy, whether an order distinct from the Laity, whether distinguished into three ranks; a form of Common Prayer in a language understood by the people; the Apostolical succession; the virtues of absolution, the character of schism—all these are subjects which enter into the composition of the Church of England, and are to be resolved more or less by *antiquity*. Accordingly, to enumerate them, is enough to point out the expediency of abiding by the watch-word of the best champions of our form of faith, and of upholding what it has been the great object of these Lectures to assert—Scripture and the Primitive Church. For we may be quite sure that if the Reformers drew their conclusions from these *two* premises, we shall not be able to defend those conclusions, if we repudiate one of them.