

In addition to the works already enumerated, Tertullian composed others not now extant :—

A treatise entitled *de Paradiso*.¹

Another, *de Spe Fidelium*.²

Six books *de Ecstasi*,³ and a seventh against Apollonius, mentioned by Jerome in his account of our author.

A tract against the Apelliaci, or followers of Apelles.⁴

A tract against Hermogenes,⁵ entitled *de Censu Animæ*.

In the treatise *de Animâ*, Tertullian mentions his intention of discussing the questions of Fate and Free-Will, upon the principles of the gospel.⁶

Jerome mentions other works of Tertullian :—

One *de vestibus Aaron*.⁷

One *ad Amicum Philosophum* :⁸ Jerome's words are, "Et nunc eadem admoneo, ut, si tibi placet scire quot molestiis virgo libera, quot uxor astricta sit, legas Tertullianum ad Amicum Philosophum, et de Virginitate alios libellos, et beati Cypriani volumen egregium." Among Tertullian's works now extant, there is none entitled *ad Amicum Philosophum*; and I should have supposed that Jerome referred to the tract *de Exhortatione Castitatis*, had he not in his first book *against Jovinian* said that Tertullian wrote upon the subject of celibacy in his youth.

In the index to Tertullian's works given in the *Codex Agobardi* appear the three following titles : *De Animæ Summissione*, *De Superstitione Sæculi*, *De Carne et Animâ*. The tracts themselves are not extant in the MS.; which appears at one time to have contained the tracts *de Paradiso* and *de Spe Fidelium*.

¹ Mentioned in the tract *de Animâ*, c. 55, and in the fifth book *against Marcion*, c. 12.

² Mentioned in the third book *against Marcion*, c. 24, and by Jerome in his account of Papias.

³ There is an illusion to the books *de Ecstasi* in the fourth book *against Marcion*, c. 22.

⁴ Mentioned in the treatise *de Carne Christi*, c. 8.

⁵ Mentioned in the treatise *de Animâ*, cc. 1, 3, 22, 24.

⁶ C. 20.

⁷ *Epistola ad Fabiolam de veste Sacerdotali, sub fine.*

⁸ *Epistola 22, ad Eustochium de Custodiâ Virginitatis.* I am in doubt whether Jerome here alludes to tracts expressly entitled *de Virginitate*, or means only that Tertullian had in various works written on the advantages of the unmarried state.

Mosheim classes the Montanists amongst the illiterate sects ;¹ but this epithet is wholly inapplicable to Tertullian, who appears to have been acquainted with every branch of science and literature that was studied in his day. Eusebius² mentions particularly his knowledge of Roman law,³ which displays itself in his frequent use of legal terms ; and his quotations embrace not only the poetry and history, but also the natural philosophy⁴ and medical science of antiquity.⁵ The Greek language must have been familiar to him, as he composed in it three treatises,⁶ not now extant. So great indeed was his reputation for genius and learning that, notwithstanding his secession from the Church, succeeding ecclesiastical writers always speak of him with high respect. Cyprian, as we have seen, called him his master, and never passed a day without reading some portion of his works. We cannot, however, among the merits of Tertullian, reckon that of a natural, flowing, and perspicuous style. He frequently hurries his readers along by his vehemence, and surprises them by the vigour as well as inexhaustible fertility of his imagination ; but his copiousness is without selection ; and there was in his character a propensity to exaggeration, which affected his language and rendered it inflated and unnatural. He is indeed the harshest and most obscure of writers, and the least capable of being accurately represented in translation. With respect to his Latinity, I know only one critic who has ventured to speak in its commendation—the late Gilbert Wakefield ; between whom and Tertullian, widely as they differed upon doctrinal questions, there appear to have been some points of resemblance. Both possessed great stores of acquired knowledge, which they produced in and out of season ; both were deficient in taste, discrimination, and judgment. In one of his letters to Mr. Fox, Mr. Wakefield complains that the “ words of Tertullian, Arnobius, Apuleius, Aulus Gellius, and Ammianus Marcellinus, are usually marked in dictionaries as inelegant and of suspicious authority, when they are, in reality, the most genuine remains

¹ *Cent. ii. c. 5, sect. 23.*

² *Hist. Eccl. l. ii. c. 2.*

³ See the tract *de Animâ*, c. 6, *sub fine.*

⁴ He appears to have been well acquainted with Pliny.

⁵ See the tract *de Animâ*, cc. 2, 6.

⁶ Those *de Spectaculis* (see *de Coronâ*, c. 6), *de Virginibus velandis*, c. 1, and *de Baptismo*, c. 15. For additional proof of his knowledge of Greek, see *adv. Marcionem*, l. ii. cc. 9, 24. l. iii. cc. 15, 22. l. iv. cc. 8, 11, 14. l. v. c. 17 ; *de Præsript. Hæret.* c. 6 ; *adv. Hermogenem*, cc. 19, 40 ; *adv. Praxeam*, c. 3 ; *ad Scapulam*, c. 4 ; *de Idololatriâ*, c. 3. He sometimes speaks as if he was acquainted with Hebrew. See *adv. Marc.* l. iv. c. 39 ; *adv. Praxeam*, c. 5 ; *adv. Jud.* c. 9.

of pure Roman composition," or as he previously expressed himself, "of the language of the old comedians and tragedians, of Ennius and Lucilius."¹ I am far from intending to assert that this statement is wholly destitute of foundation. When I have myself been obliged to consult the dictionaries for the meaning of some strange and portentous word which crossed me in my perusal of Tertullian's works, I have occasionally found that it had been used by Plautus; but the general opinion which I have formed respecting Tertullian's Latinity cannot be better expressed than in the words of the learned Ruhnken: "Fuit nescio quis—qui se pulchre de Latinâ Linguâ meriturum speraret, si verba et verborum constructiones ex Tertulliano—in Lexicon referret. A cujus sententiâ dici vix potest quanto-pere dissentiam. Sit Tertullianus quam velis eruditus, sit omnis peritus antiquitatis; nihil impedio; Latinitatis certè pessimum auctorem esse aio et confirmo. At usus est sermone eo quo tunc omnes Afri Latinè loquentes utebantur.

Δωρίσδεν δ' ἔξεστι, δοκῶ, τοῖς Δωριέεσσιν.

Ne hoc quidem concesserim. Nam si talis Afrorum sermo fuit, cur, non dicam Apuleius et Arnobius scriptores priscae elegantiae studiosi, sed Cyprianus, etc., aliter locuti reperiuntur? Quid ergo? Fecit hic, quod ante eum arbitror fecisse neminem. Etenim quum in aliorum vel summâ infantiâ tamen appareat voluntas et conatus bene loquendi, hic, nescio quâ ingenii perversitate, cum melioribus loqui noluit, et sibimet ipse linguam finxit duram, horridam, Latinisque inauditam; ut non mirum sit per eum unum plura monstra in Linguam Latinam, quam per omnes Scriptores semi-barbaros, esse invecta."²

In the preceding remarks we have all along taken for granted that the works, the dates of which we have been investigating, were composed by an individual named Tertullian. This fact we conceived to be established by testimony precisely similar to that by which the genuineness of the works of every author is ascertained—by the testimony of writers whose proximity to the times in which he lived, and whose opportunities of information rendered them competent to form a correct opinion on the subject. We are told that Cyprian, who was Bishop of Carthage within forty years after the period at which Tertullian lived there, held his works in the highest estimation; and in confirmation of this statement we find that Cyprian frequently repeats, not only

¹ Letter 54.

² *Præfatio ad Schelleri Lexicon.*

the sentiments, but even the words contained in the writings now extant under his name. We find Eusebius,¹ a diligent inquirer into all points connected with ecclesiastical history, quoting within a century after Tertullian's death one of his works which had been translated into Greek, and speaking of him as well known in the capital of the world.² We find Jerome, who has left us a catalogue of ecclesiastical authors accompanied by succinct accounts of their lives and writings, quoting various works of Tertullian without giving the slightest hint that he entertained a doubt of their genuineness. We find him quoted by Augustine,³ who had resided at Carthage and made inquiries there respecting the sect which bore his name; and by subsequent writers, who may be deemed too far removed from his time to be received as independent witnesses. Here surely is a chain of testimony sufficient to satisfy even a sceptical mind. It did not, however, satisfy that of Semler, who in a dissertation, inserted in his edition of Tertullian's works,⁴ endeavours to fix a mark of spuriousness, not only upon them, but also upon the writings which are extant under the names of Justin Martyr and Irenæus. His theory is, that all those works, though bearing the names of different authors, proceeded from one and the same shop established at Rome; and were the produce of the joint labours of a set of men, who entered into a combination to falsify history and corrupt the Scriptures, principally with the view of throwing discredit upon certain persons, Marcion, Valentinus, etc., whom they thought fit to brand with the title of heretics.⁵ This, it must be allowed, is a theory which, for novelty and singularity, will bear a comparison with the boldest speculations of the German critics. Let us therefore inquire upon what foundations it rests; first observing that we neither profess, nor deem it incumbent upon us, to give a full and complete solution of all the doubts and difficulties which an ingenious mind may frame,

¹ L. ii. c. 2. The only work of Tertullian quoted by Eusebius is the *Apology*, which he states to have been translated into Greek, and with which alone he appears to have been acquainted. He was perhaps little versed in the Latin language, and had never met with the tracts composed by Tertullian himself in Greek, which were of less general interest than the *Apology*.

² If we adopt the interpretation suggested by Valesius, after Rufinus, of the words τῶν μάλιστα ἐπὶ Ῥώμης λαμπρῶν, "inter Latinos Scriptoros celeberrimus," the inference will be strengthened.

³ *Liber de Hæresibus*, 86. *Tertullianistæ*.

⁴ *Halæ Magdeburgicæ*, 1770.

⁵ "Ex unâ atque eâdem officinâ quidam libri videntur prodiisse quos studiosissimè solebant variis et diversis Scriptoribus dividere. Antiquissima fuit hæc Societas et impensa sive ab uno sive a duobus diligentia, quæ cum Romanâ illâ, tam Græcâ quam Latinâ, Societate novâ videtur sic cohærere ut communi consilio operam dederint." Sect. x. See also the concluding section.

in order to disprove the genuineness of works written sixteen centuries ago. Were this requisite, vain would be the attempt to establish the genuineness of any work of great antiquity; for by the mere lapse of time many facts and circumstances are consigned to oblivion, the knowledge of which can alone enable us to dispel all obscurity and to reconcile all seeming contradictions. In these cases we must not expect demonstration, but be content to weigh probabilities and ascertain on which side the evidence preponderates.

To proceed then to Semler's proofs, or rather surmises, for the latter appears the more appropriate term. He first complains that the allusions contained in these books to the life and history of their author are very scanty and obscure, and afford no useful information.¹ He even insinuates that the works themselves, like the writings of the Sophists, were mere exercises of wit, and that the historical facts and marks of time were introduced by the author in order to give his fiction an appearance of reality.² But this insinuation is utterly unsupported by proof. The author, whoever he may be, certainly meant his readers to suppose that he lived in the time of Severus; and his statements in many points accord, in none are at variance with the accounts handed down to us by the historians of that Emperor's reign. The manners and customs which he describes, the transactions to which he alludes, correspond with the information which we derive from other sources. Still his works may be wholly of a fictitious character; he may have invented the circumstances which are supposed to have occasioned them—the calumnies against which he defends the Christians—the persecutions which he exhorts them to bear with constancy—the heretical opinions which he undertakes to confute; and he may have occasionally interspersed historical facts in order to give his inventions an air of probability. All this we may allow to be possible. But what are we to think of the Montanism of our author? was that also fictitious? What could induce a member of Semler's new Roman society, who comes forward at one time as the apologist for Christianity and the vehement champion of orthodoxy, to assume at another the character of a separatist from the Church? This fact appears to be wholly irreconcilable with Semler's

¹ "Solent autem mediocria et parum luculenta esse, quæ horum Librorum Auctor de se et de suis rebus commemorat." Sect. i.

² "Solet enim hic Scriptor *Declamatorum* imitari exemplum qui ipsi *confingunt* argumenti, quod sibi desumpserunt, *tempus*, et omnes illas rerum Appendices quibus tempora solent commodè et studiosè distingui." Sect. i.

theory. It should also be observed that the few notices of Tertullian's personal history which occur in his works are not introduced with any parade, or in order to answer a particular purpose, but in that incidental manner which has usually been deemed most strongly indicative of truth.

Semler next proceeds to consider Jerome's account of Tertullian, on which he remarks that had Jerome been able to discover more particulars of our author's life, he would certainly have inserted them.¹ This is by no means clear; for the extreme conciseness with which he has drawn up his notices of ecclesiastical writers proves that he made no laborious researches into the history of their lives, but contented himself with such information as happened to fall in his way. Semler further conjectures that even the particulars in Jerome's brief account were not derived from independent sources, but collected from Tertullian's works.² This may be partly true; he might have inferred from different passages that Tertullian was born in Africa, resided at Carthage, and flourished during the reigns of Severus and Caracalla. But, not to mention the story respecting Cyprian's admiration of Tertullian, for which he gives his authority, whence did he learn that Tertullian remained a presbyter of the Church until he reached the middle age of life, and was extremely old when he died? It may be doubted whether the generality of readers, unless they had previously learned the fact from some other source, would infer, from the perusal of the works now extant, that Tertullian had ever been admitted to the order of priesthood.

Semler finds another difficulty in Jerome's account, which begins thus: "Tertullianus presbyter nunc demum primus post Victorem et Apollonium Latinorum ponitur." The obvious meaning of these words is that Jerome had at length, after enumerating so many Greek authors, arrived at the place which Tertullian's name was to occupy; he being the first Latin ecclesiastical writer after Victor and Apollonius of whom Jerome had before spoken. Semler thinks that the more accurate statement would have been that Tertullian was the first *presbyter* who used the Latin language, and that this was in fact Jerome's

¹ "Hæc Hieronymus; qui profecto, si plura requirere atque discere potuisset ad historiam Tertulliani facientia, haud dubie hic omnino perscripsisset." Sect. 2.

² "Nisi quidem putemus talia Hieronymum ipsum conjecturis reperisse ex variis horum scriptorum locis." Sect. ii.

meaning ;¹ an assertion in which few of his readers will, I conceive, be disposed to acquiesce. But how, asks Semler, can Tertullian be called the first presbyter who used the Latin language, when he himself says that he composed several treatises in Greek ? I must confess myself at a loss to discover the slightest inconsistency between the two statements. If an author composes three treatises in Greek, and two or three and twenty in Latin, may he not with propriety be classed among Latin writers ? It is probable that Jerome had never met with Tertullian's Greek compositions ; it is nearly certain that Eusebius had not.

“But,” continues Semler, “in the beginning of the treatise *de Testimonio Animæ*, the author alludes to certain Christian writers who had employed profane literature, and appealed to the works of the Gentile poets and philosophers in defence of Christianity. This, he contends, is a mere fiction of the author's brain.² In vain, he says, shall we seek in the history of the Church for a confirmation of this statement ; in vain try to discover any traces of those learned works by which the early apologists for Christianity asserted its cause. Had such writings ever existed, they could not have been unknown to Eusebius and Jerome, who are, however, entirely silent on the subject.” These are bold affirmations. Let us inquire how far they are supported by proof. The ecclesiastical writers whom Tertullian mentions by name are Justin Martyr, Tatian, Miltiades, and Irenæus.³ All of these wrote treatises in defence of Christianity against paganism. The works of Justin and Tatian are still extant, and prove their authors to have been, as Lardner expresses himself respecting the latter, “men of reading and well acquainted with the Greek learning.”⁴ We are also in possession of the *Apology*

¹ “Optare licet, ut Hieronymus scripsisset et narrâset accuratius, Tertullianus *Latinorum* presbyter *primus* est ; nempe id vult Hieronymus eorum hominum, qui Romæ *Latinâ linguâ* uti solebant, Tertullianus fuit *primus presbyter*. At hic idem Tertullianus *Græcarum multarum* *Scriptionum* se auctorem dixit ; quomodo igitur *Latinorum* dicitur *primus* esse Romanus presbyter ?” Sect. x.

² “*Confictum* est hoc argumentum universum declamatorum more ; nisi putamus hujus generis scriptores, tam antiquos, tam frugiferos, adeo oblivioni statim addictos fuisse, neglectosque et deperditos omnino ; ut ne Eusebius quidem vestigium vel notam talium scriptorum reperire potuerit, qui in isto *opere de Preparatione Evangelicâ* id omnino egit, quod hic Tertullianus dicit *suo jam tempore* quosdam instituisse. Eusebius vero nihil quicquam ejus rei didicit, nec Hieronymus aliquid reperire potuit. Audemus, igitur, statuere scriptorem *talia ultro confinxisse*, ex suo ingenio rem illam arbitratum.” Sect. x.

³ *Adversus Valentinianos*, c. 5. He also mentions Clemens Romanus and Hermas, but they do not appear to have written in defence of Christianity.

⁴ *Credibility of the Gospel History*, c. 13.

of Athenagoras, and the work of Theophilus *against Autolycus*; both of which were prior in time to the *Apology* of Tertullian, and contain, especially the former, frequent references to profane literature as well as arguments drawn from the heathen philosophy in defence of Christianity. But the most extraordinary part of Semler's statement is that which respects Jerome; among whose works is an epistle, entitled *ad Magnum Oratorem*,¹ and written expressly to defend his own practice of mixing together profane and sacred literature in his writings. In this epistle he appeals to the authority of preceding ecclesiastical writers who had pursued the same plan, mentioning by name Quadratus and Aristides, who presented their *Apologies* to the Emperor Adrian, and describing the work of the latter as almost entirely composed of opinions taken from the philosophers.² He adds that Apollinarius, Dionysius of Corinth, Tatian, Bardesanes, and Irenæus had carefully pointed out the different philosophical sects to which the origin of each heretical opinion then prevalent might be traced. He states that Cyprian had even been censured, because in his work *against Demetrianus* he had confined himself entirely to scriptural testimonies, the authority of which Demetrianus did not acknowledge, and had not appealed to the poets and philosophers, whose authority a heathen could not have disputed. The apologists for Christianity were well aware that no writings which did not bespeak an acquaintance with the learning and philosophy of the age, would gain a moment's attention from a heathen philosopher; and they accordingly adapted their mode of reasoning to the temper and prejudices of the persons with whom they had to deal. The remarks with which Tertullian prefaces his tract *de Testimonio Animæ* are meant as an apology for deviating from the established course, and appealing, not to the speculations of the philosophers, but to the testimony borne by the soul of man in favour of the doctrines of Christianity.

“But even,” continues Semler, “if such works as those to which Tertullian is supposed to allude had really existed, since they were written in Greek, and at places remote from Rome and Carthage, he could not possibly have procured them.”³ Why not? Was the communication between the different parts of

¹ Ep. 84.

² *Contextum Philosophorum sententiis.*

³ “Pamelii sententiam vel illud evertit; Tertullianus Romæ, Carthagine, tot scriptorum libellos, qui inter Græcos satis remoti ab istis urbibus vivebant, nancisci non potuit.” Sect. x.

the Roman Empire so difficult that years must elapse before a work published in Greece could be known at Rome or Carthage? Let us hear the opinion of Gibbon. Speaking of the public roads as they existed in the time of the Antonines, he says that "they united the subjects of the most distant provinces by an easy and familiar intercourse."¹ With respect to the Christians in particular, he states that, by the institution of provincial synods, which took place towards the end of the second century, a regular correspondence was in the space of a few years established between the most remote Churches.² We find accordingly the Churches of Vienne and Lyons well acquainted with the state of the Asiatic Churches; and Irenæus, the Bishop of Lyons, acting the part of a mediator between the latter and the Roman pontiff, in the dispute which arose respecting the celebration of Easter.

The mention of Irenæus leads me to consider another of Semler's objections. "Who," he asks, "can read the works of Irenæus which are now extant without being convinced that the author was alike deficient in talent and information?"³ Yet Tertullian has designated him as a minute inquirer into all kinds of learning (or doctrine). Does not this grossly inapplicable eulogium clearly bespeak the sophist and declaimer?" To this objection we reply, that we are scarcely competent to form an opinion respecting the talent of Irenæus from a work which, with the exception of part of the first book and some scattered fragments, is extant, not in the original, but in a barbarous Latin translation. From the portions of the original which still remain we should infer that he possessed one of the most useful qualifications of an author — that of being able to write perspicuously upon a very obscure and unpromising subject. What ground, moreover, is there for supposing that Tertullian, in pronouncing this eulogium upon Irenæus, referred only to the single work, now extant, against the Gnostics? Eusebius gives a list of other works written by him, and uniformly speaks of him as a person to

¹ Chap. i. p. 51. Ed. 4to.

² Chap. xv. p. 491.

³ "Quis autem sine tædio et stomacho legat istam declamationem, 'Irenæus, omnium doctrinarum curiosissimus explorator?' Nos certè statuimus, hoc encomium monstro non carere. Ea, quæ nobis supersunt, Irenæi profecto hominis ingenium humile et parum excultum præ se ferunt; ista vero Tertulliani nostri scripta sic turgent rerum fere omnium copiâ et varietate, ut in ipsum hoc maximè conveniat hunc scriptorem id diligenter egisse, ut *omnium doctrinarum curiosissimus explorator* videretur." Sect. x.

whose authority great weight was attached in all ecclesiastical concerns.¹

But Tertullian, it seems, was not content with praising; he also borrowed from Irenæus, and that too without acknowledgment.² His treatise *against the Valentinians* is not merely an imitation; it is in many places a translation of the first book of that author's work; yet he gives not the slightest intimation of the source from which he has drawn so largely. How are we to account for this extraordinary fact? Only, as Semler would persuade us, by adopting his theory, that there existed a club of authors who "sent forth their own productions into the world under borrowed names, and appeared at one time as the Greek Irenæus, at another as the Latin Tertullian." But if this were so, whence arises the great inequality which Semler himself has discovered between them? How comes it that, while the works of Tertullian exhibit such an extent and variety of knowledge, those of Irenæus, according to Semler, betray a miserable poverty of intellect and learning?³

The close resemblance between Tertullian and Irenæus in the case alluded to may, in our opinion, be satisfactorily accounted for. The design of the first book of Irenæus and of Tertullian's treatise is precisely the same—to explain the doctrine of the Valentinians respecting the generation of Æons; and thus the common subject of the two writers would naturally lead them to pursue the same order, and almost to use the same language. Most strange, indeed, is Semler's assertion that Tertullian has not even named Irenæus; whom he has named, even in the very passage which Semler quotes, in conjunction with Justin, Miltiades, and Proculus.⁴ He there states that all these writers

¹ *Hist. Eccl.* l. v. c. 26.

² "Jam novæ rei alius superest observatio, quæ non parum facit ad illustrandam hujus suspicionis rationem. Ista enim Irenæi, quæ sunt nostris in manibus, scripta, si comparantur cum his Tertulliani nostri, mirifice conveniunt. Scimus autem Tertullianum istum esse illorum primum qui Irenæi nomen recitant inter scriptores; nempe *omnium doctrinarum curiosissimum exploratorem* dicebat Irenæum noster Tertullianus. Si vero ille Irenæus Lugduni scripsit istos libros adversus hæreses, quomodo Tertullianus isto jam tempore hoc (l. hos) libros oculis et manibus usurpavit suis? Quo autem jure sic fecit Tertullianus, ut ex Græco illo textu Irenæi sublegeret sua et *Latinè repeteret*, quæ illè creditur scripsisse Græcè? Atque sic quidem, ut ne nominaverit quidem Irenæum, quem tamen Latinè exscribebat? Viderint Lectores quid statuendum putent de istâ causâ: nobis certè non videtur monstro carere." Sect. xii.

³ See the quotation from section x. in note 166.

⁴ "Nec undique dicemur ipsi nobis finxisse materias quas tot jam viri sancti-

had refuted the Valentinians; and declares that it is his earnest wish to imitate them, not only in this work of faith (the refutation of heresy), but in all others. He has therefore told his reader, as plainly as he could, that in this treatise he is only an imitator; and his occasional deviations from the statement of Irenæus convince me that he did not borrow from him alone, but also from the other writers whom he has mentioned.

Semler, however, has other objections in reserve, founded on this very passage from the tract *against the Valentinians*.¹ "How happens it that Tertullian alludes to and speaks respectfully of Miltiades, who, as we learn from Eusebius, composed a work expressly against the prophecy of Montanus?" This question will perhaps be best answered by another. Would not a forger of writings in Tertullian's name carefully have avoided such an appearance of inconsistency? The fact appears to be perfectly reconcilable with the history and character of Tertullian, as far as they can be collected from his writings; since, at the very time when he was defending Montanus against the Church, he constantly professed his agreement with the Church in all fundamental articles of faith.² It is wholly irreconcilable with Semler's theory.

"But what are we to think of the extraordinary reason

tate et præstantiâ insignes, nec solum nostri Antecessores sed ipsorum Hæresiarum contemporales, instructissimis voluminibus et prodiderunt et retulerunt: ut Justinus Philosophus et Martyr, ut Miltiades Ecclesiarum Sophista, ut Irenæus omnium doctrinarum curiosissimus explorator, ut Proculus noster virginis senectæ et Christianæ eloquentiæ dignitas: quos in omni opere fidei, quemadmodum in isto, optaverim assequi. Aut si in totum hæreses non sunt, ut qui eas pellunt finxisse credantur, mentietur apostolus prædicator illarum. Porro si sunt, non aliæ erunt quam quæ retractantur. Nemo tam otiosus fertur stylo, ut materias habens fingat." *Adv. Valentin.* c. 5.

¹ Section iv. note 27. "Miltiades vero? Ecquid tandem illud est, Ecclesiarum Sophista? quid tandem est? Putamusne Tertullianum legisse aliquid hujus Miltiadis? Miltiadis aliquas scriptiones Eusebius" (*Hist. Eccles.* l. v. c. 17) "ex Rhodone nominat contra *Montanum, Priscillam et Maximillam*: contra gentes et Judæos; sed contra Gnosticos aut Hæreticos nihil. Cur ergo hic excitatur, quasi scripserit adversus Valentinianos?" Though Eusebius may not have mentioned or seen any work of Miltiades against the Gnostics, such a work may have been known to Tertullian. So this note stood in the first edition. I have since met with a passage in which Eusebius, on the authority of an anonymous author, speaks of Miltiades as having written against the heretics. *καὶ ἀδελφῶν δὲ τινῶν ἔστι γράμματα πρεσβύτερα τῶν Βίκτορος χρόνων, ἃ ἐκεῖνοι πρὸς τὰ ἔθνη ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ πρὸς τὰς τότε αἰρέσεις ἔγραψαν· λέγω δὲ Ἰουστίνου, καὶ Μιλτιάδου, καὶ Τατιανοῦ καὶ Κλήμεντος, καὶ ἑτέρων πλειόνων ἐν οἷς ἅπασιν θεολογεῖται ὁ Χριστός.* *Eccles. Hist.* l. v. c. 28.

² *De Jejuniis*, c. 1.

assigned by Tertullian for introducing the names of Miltiades and the rest?¹ He supposes that he may be charged with inventing the strange opinions which he imputes to the Valentinians, and thinks it necessary to guard himself against the charge by appealing to the authority of Justin Martyr, etc. Have we not here a strong indication of the mere sophist and declaimer, aware that he is about to advance statements for which there is no foundation in fact, and anxious to anticipate the feeling of incredulity which their improbability would naturally excite?" That this construction should be put upon the passage by Semler is not surprising. His theory required that he should so interpret it. But in me it excites no surprise that an author, who was about to detail opinions so extravagant as those entertained by the Valentinians, should apprehend that his readers might suspect him of attempting to impose upon them the fictions of his own brain as the religious tenets of others. In the tract *de Baptismo*, we find Tertullian offering a similar apology for the extravagance of an opinion which he undertakes to refute, and affirming with great solemnity that he had himself heard it advanced.²

Semler grounds another argument in support of his theory on the fact that a considerable portion of the third book *against Marcion* is repeated almost word for word in the treatise *against the Jews*.³ But the difficulties arising out of this fact are not greater on the supposition that Tertullian was the real author of both the works, than on the supposition that they were composed by others in his name. I know no reason why an author should be precluded from repeating the same arguments in the same words, when an occasion presents itself on which they are equally applicable. Such was the case which we are now con-

¹ Section iv. note 27. Semler introduces the passage quoted in note 170 by the following words:—"Ipse hic scriptor videtur (sicut dici solet) se prodere sicut sorex: nam hoc ipso libro adversus Valentinianos, c. 5, *sic scribit*." He then gives the passage at length, and subjoins, "Totus hic locus videtur aliquid monstri prodere. Si omnino Romæ alibique vivebant homines hæretici, eos igitur non solus Tertullianus noverat: Christiani alii similiter hanc Hæreticorum causam sciebant. Itaque non intelligimus quâ ratione amoliatur hic scriptor eam suspicionem, quâ dici ipse possit sibi finxisse materias."

² The opinion was proposed in the form of a dilemma. The apostles did not receive Christian baptism, inasmuch as they were baptised with the baptism of John. Either, therefore, the apostles have not obtained salvation, or Christian baptism is not of absolute necessity to salvation. After stating the opinion, Tertullian adds, "Audi, Domino teste, ejusmodi, ne quis me tam perditum existimet, ut ultrò exagitem, libidine styli, quæ aliis scrupulum incutiant," c. 12.

³ Sect. ix.

sidering. Both Marcion and the Jews denied, though on different principles, that Jesus was the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament. Both, therefore, were to be refuted by showing that the prophecies respecting the Messiah were actually accomplished in him; and this is the object of the two passages in which we find so close a resemblance. When Tertullian had the argument ready stated and arranged to his hand, it would surely have been an egregious waste of time to amuse himself in varying the language, especially as the passages in question consist entirely of expositions of prophecies. He does, however, make such alterations as the difference of the circumstances under which he is writing appears to require. It should be observed that the treatise *adversus Judæos* is expressly quoted by Jerome as the work of Tertullian.¹

It would be foreign from the immediate object of this volume to discuss the reasons assigned by Semler for asserting that the works now extant under the names of Justin and Irenæus contain manifest plagiarisms from Clemens Alexandrinus, and that they are consequently spurious.² He admits that they are quoted as genuine by Eusebius;³ and this circumstance alone will probably, in the opinion of sober critics, outweigh a thousand conjectures unsupported by positive evidence.

I have devoted so much time to the examination of Semler's *Dissertation*, not on account of its intrinsic value, which I am far from estimating highly, but out of regard to the distinguished place which has been assigned him among Biblical critics.⁴ His object evidently is to destroy the authority of Justin, Irenæus, and Tertullian; but he does not fairly and openly avow it; he envelops himself in a cloud, and uses a dark mysterious language, designed to insinuate more than it expresses. The reader finds his former opinions unsettled, yet is not told what he is to substitute in their place; and is thus left in a disagreeable state of doubt and perplexity.

Had Semler contented himself with saying that Tertullian, in his tract *against the Valentinians*, had done nothing more than copy the statements of preceding writers, and consequently

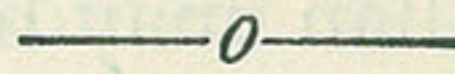
¹ In his comment on the ninth chapter of Daniel.

² Sect. xiv., xv., xvi.

³ *Hist. Eccl.* l. v. c. 8, l. iv. c. 18.

⁴ The most valuable part of Semler's *Dissertation* is, in my opinion, that which relates to Tertullian's quotations from Scripture, and to the Latin version from which he derived them; to this I shall perhaps recur hereafter.

could not be deemed an independent witness to the tenets of those heretics—had he said, with respect to our author's writings in general, that the natural vehemence of his temper betrayed him into exaggeration, and caused him to indulge in a declamatory tone, which renders it often difficult to determine to what extent his expressions are to be literally understood, and his statements received as matters of fact—had Semler even gone further, and contended that there was reasonable ground for suspecting that Irenæus¹ and Tertullian had, either through ignorance or design, occasionally misrepresented the opinions of the Gnostics, and imputed to them absurdities and extravagances of which they were never guilty,—had he confined his assertions within these limits, they would probably have met with the concurrence of all who are conversant with the subject. But when he proceeds, upon surmises such as we have been now considering, and in opposition to the unanimous voice of ecclesiastical antiquity, to denounce the writings of Irenæus and Tertullian as the offspring of fraud and imposture—as the productions of men who had combined together for the purpose of palming forgeries on the world—he overleaps the bounds of sober and rational criticism, and opens a door to universal incredulity.



CHAPTER II.

ON THE EXTERNAL HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

HAVING in the preceding chapter laid before the reader an account of the life and writings of Tertullian, we shall now proceed, in conformity with the arrangement adopted by Mosheim, to collect from his works such passages as serve to illustrate the external history of the Church during the period in which he flourished. In the first place, then, he bears explicit testimony to the wide diffusion of Christianity in his day.² To refute the charges of disloyalty and disaffection to the emperors

¹ We should always bear in mind that far the greater portion of the work of Irenæus is extant only in a barbarous Latin translation, which lies under heavy suspicions of interpolation.

² "Obsessam vociferantur civitatem : in agris, in castellis, in insulis Christianos : omnem sexum, ætatem, conditionem, etiam dignitatem transgredi ad hoc nomen quasi detrimento mœrent." *Apology*, c. 1.

which had been brought against the Christians, he thus appeals to the patience with which they bore the injuries and cruelties inflicted on them. "Not," he says, "that we are destitute of the means of resistance, if our Christian principles allowed us to resort to them."¹ Though we date our existence only from yesterday, we have filled every part of your empire; we are to be found in your cities, your islands, your camps, your palaces, your forum. . . . So great are our numbers that we might successfully contend with you in open warfare; but were we only to withdraw ourselves from you, and to remove by common consent to some remote corner of the globe, our mere secession would be sufficient to accomplish *your* destruction, and to avenge *our* cause. You would be left without subjects to govern, and would tremble at the solitude and silence around you—at the awful stillness of a dead world." In another place Tertullian tells Scapula, the proconsul of Africa, that if the persecution against the Christians were persisted in, the effect would be to decimate the inhabitants of Carthage.² He elsewhere speaks also of the immense revenue which might be collected, if each Christian was allowed to purchase the free exercise of his religion for a sum of money.³

After we have made all reasonable allowance for any exaggeration into which Tertullian may have been betrayed, either by the natural vehemence of his temper, or by his anxiety to enhance in the eyes of the Roman governors the importance of the cause which he is pleading, the above-cited passages will justify the belief that the Christians in his day composed a numerous and respectable portion of the subjects of Rome. Nor were the triumphs of the gospel confined within the limits of the Roman Empire. "Christ is preached among the barbarians"⁴ is the incidental, and therefore less suspicious expression of Tertullian. "We witness," he says, while arguing against the Jews, "the accomplishment of the words of the Psalmist (as applied by St. Paul), 'their sound is gone out

¹ "Quid tamen de tam conspiratis unquam denotâstis," etc.? *Apology*, c. 37.

² *Ad Scapulam*, c. 5. In c. 2, speaking of the Christians, he says, "Quum tanta hominum multitudo, pars pene major civitatis cujusque, in silentio et modestiâ agimus."

³ "Tanta quotidie ærario augendo prospiciuntur remedia censuum, vectigalium, collationum, stipendiorum: nec unquam usque adhuc ex Christianis tale aliquid prospectum est, sub aliquam redemptionem capitis et sectæ redigendis, quum tantæ multitudinis nemini ignotæ fructus ingens meti possit." *De Fugâ in Persecutione*, c. 12.

⁴ "Et apud barbaros enim Christus." *De Coronâ*, c. 12.

into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.' For not only the various countries from which worshippers were collected at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, but the most distant regions have received the faith of Christ. He reigns among people whom the Roman arms have never yet subdued: among the different tribes of Getulia and Mauritania,—in the furthest extremities of Spain, and Gaul, and Britain,—among the Sarmatians, Dacians, Germans, and Scythians,—in countries and islands scarcely known to us by name."¹ The language is declamatory; yet such a representation would not have been hazarded, unless it had been realized to a considerable extent, in the actual state of Christianity.

In speaking of the numerous converts continually added to the Church, and of the extension of its limits, Tertullian contents himself for the most part with simply stating the fact. Convinced of the divine origin of the gospel, he ascribed the triumphs of the cross to the power of God bringing to pass in the fulness of time the events which had been foretold by the prophets, without deeming it necessary to go in quest of secondary causes of the rapid progress of Christianity. But though he has not expressly directed his attention to the development of the means which the Almighty was pleased to employ in the establishment of the empire of the gospel, we may collect from his writings much interesting information on the subject.

The success which attended the preaching of the apostles, and their immediate successors, is doubtless to be principally ascribed to the supernatural powers, by the exercise of which they proved their divine commission. But the writings of Tertullian furnish little reason for supposing that the preachers of the gospel in his day were indebted for their success to the display of similar powers. He asserts indeed that Christians possessed the power of expelling demons,² of curing diseases, of healing the wounds occasioned by the bites of

¹ *Adversus Judæos*, c. 7. "Quem exaudierunt omnes gentes, id est, cui omnes gentes crediderunt, cujus et prædicatores Apostoli in Psalmis David ostenduntur," etc.

² "Edatur hic aliquis sub tribunalibus vestris, quem dæmone agi constat. Jussus a quolibet Christiano loqui, Spiritus ille tam se dæmonem confitebitur de vero, quam alibi Deum de falso." *Apology*, c. 23. See also cc. 37, 43. "Quod calcas Deos nationum, quod dæmonia expellis, quod medicinas facis." *De Spectaculis*, c. 29; *de Testimonio Animæ*, c. 3; *ad Scapulam*, c. 2; *de Coronâ*, c. 11; *de Idololatriâ*, c. 11.

serpents ;¹ but he casts a doubt upon the accuracy of his own statement, by ascribing to Christians in general those extraordinary gifts which, even in the days of the apostles, appear to have been confined to them, and to the disciples upon whom they laid their hands.²

The miraculous powers conferred upon the apostles were the credentials by which they were to prove that they were the bearers of a new revelation from God to man, and thus to mark the commencement of a new era in the order of the divine dispensations. We might, therefore, infer from the purpose for which they were conferred that they would in process of time be withdrawn.³ That they have been withdrawn is a fact which few Protestants will controvert, though great difference of opinion prevails respecting the precise period to which we must refer this important alteration in the circumstances of the Church. Gibbon has endeavoured to convert what he terms the insensibility of the Christians to the cessation of miraculous gifts into an argument against their existence at any period. "So extraordinary an event must," he argues, "have excited universal attention, and caused the time at which it happened to be precisely ascertained and noted. But in vain do we consult ecclesiastical history in the hope of assigning a limit to the period during which supernatural powers subsisted in the Church : we find pretensions to them advanced in every age, and supported by testimony no less weighty and

¹ "Nobis fides præsidium, si non et ipsa percutitur diffidentiâ signandi statim et adjurandi et unguendi bestię calcem. Hoc denique modo etiam Ethnicis sæpe subvenimus, donati a Deo eâ potestate quam Apostolus dedicavit, quum morsum viperæ sprevit." *Scorpiace*, c. 1.

² It is not intended by this remark to convey the idea that all upon whom the Apostles laid their hands were endowed with miraculous powers ; but that the imposition of hands was the mode in which the apostles communicated those gifts to others. See Acts vi. 6 (compared with vi. 8 and viii. 6), viii. 17, 18, xix. 6.

³ A view somewhat similar seems to have been taken by Pascal in the following extract from his *Pensées*, which has been pointed out to me by a learned friend. "Jésus Christ a fait des miracles, et les Apôtres en-suite, et les premiers Saints en ont fait aussi beaucoup : parce que les Propheties n'étant pas encore accomplies et s'accomplissant par eux, rien ne rendoit témoignage que les Miracles. Il étoit prédit que le Messie convertiroit les nations. Comment cette prophétie se fut-elle accomplie sans la conversion des nations ? et comment les nations se fussent-elles converties au Messie, ne voyant pas ce dernier effet des Propheties qui le prouvent ? Avant donc qu'il fût mort, qu'il fût resuscité, et que les nations fussent converties, tout n'étoit pas accompli. Et ainsi il a fallu des miracles pendant tout ce tems-là. Maintenant il n'en faut plus pour prouver la vérité de la Religion Chrétienne : car les Propheties accomplies sont un miracle subsistant." *Diverses preuves de Jésus Christ*, c. 16.

respectable than that of the age which preceded it.”¹ The inference which he manifestly intends his readers to draw, is that, as pretensions to miraculous gifts had been asserted in all ages, and continued to be asserted even at the time when he wrote, and every reasonable man was convinced of their cessation, those pretensions were in all ages equally unfounded.

The argument is plausible, and is urged with the author's wonted ingenuity and address. Yet the supposition that miraculous powers were *gradually* withdrawn from the Church appears in a great measure to account for the uncertainty which has prevailed respecting the period of their cessation. To adopt the language of undoubting confidence on such a subject would be a mark no less of folly than presumption; but I may be allowed to state the conclusion to which I have myself been led, by a comparison of the statements in the book of Acts with the writings of the Fathers of the second century. My conclusion then is, that the power of working miracles was not extended beyond the disciples upon whom the apostles conferred it by the imposition of their hands. As the number of those disciples gradually diminished, the instances of the exercise of miraculous powers became continually less frequent, and ceased entirely at the death of the last individual on whom the hands of the apostles had been laid. That event would, in the natural course of things, take place before the middle of the second century: at a time when, Christianity having obtained a footing in all the provinces of the Roman Empire, the miraculous gifts conferred upon its first teachers had performed their appropriate office—that of proving to the world that a new revelation had been given from heaven. What, then, would be the effect produced upon the minds of the great body of Christians by their gradual cessation? Many would not observe, none would be willing to observe it; for all must naturally feel a reluctance to believe that powers, which had contributed so essentially to the rapid diffusion of Christianity, were withdrawn. They who remarked the cessation of miracles would probably succeed in persuading themselves that it was only temporary, and designed by an all-wise Providence to be the prelude to a more abundant effusion of supernatural gifts upon the Church. Or if doubts and misgivings crossed their minds, they would still be un-

¹ Chap. xv. p. 477, ed. 4to. We have given only the purport of Gibbon's observations.

willing openly to state a fact, which might shake the steadfastness of the friends, and would certainly be urged by the enemies of the gospel as an argument against its divine origin. They would pursue the plan which has been pursued by Justin Martyr, Theophilus, Irenæus, etc.; they would have recourse to general assertions of the existence of supernatural powers, without attempting to produce a specific instance of their exercise. The silence of ecclesiastical history respecting the cessation of miraculous gifts in the Church is to be ascribed, not to the insensibility of Christians to that important event, but to the combined operation of prejudice and policy—of prejudice which made them reluctant to believe, of policy which made them anxious to conceal the truth.

Let me repeat that I offer these observations with that diffidence in my own conclusions which ought to be the predominant feeling in the mind of every inquirer into the ways of Providence. I collect from passages already cited from the book of Acts, that the power of working miracles was conferred by the hands of the apostles only; and consequently ceased with the last disciple on whom their hands were laid. I perceive in the language of the Fathers,¹ who lived in the middle and end of the second century, when speaking on this subject, something which betrays, if not a conviction, at least a suspicion, that the power of working miracles was withdrawn, combined with an anxiety to keep up a belief of its continuance in the Church. They affirm in general terms that miracles were performed, but rarely venture to produce an

¹ In confirmation of this remark, I refer the reader to the following passages of Tertullian's works. In the tract *de Pudicitia* he is contending that the Church possesses not the power of pardoning certain offences; but foreseeing that the example of the apostles, who had pardoned those offences, might be objected to him, he thus anticipates the objection: "Itaque si et ipsos beatos Apostolos tale aliquid indulsisse constaret, cujus venia a Deo, non ab homine, competeret, non ex disciplinâ, sed ex potestate fecisse." The meaning is, that the apostles pardoned those offences, not in the ordinary course of church discipline, but by a peculiar power vested in themselves. "Nam et mortuos suscitaverunt, quod Deus solus: et debiles redintegraverunt, quod nemo nisi Christus: immo et plagas inflixerunt, quod noluit Christus; non enim decebat eum sævire qui pati venerat. Percussus est Ananias et Elymas, Ananias morte, Elymas cæcitate, ut hoc ipso probaretur Christum et hæc facere potuisse. Sic et prophetæ cædem et cum eâ mœchiam pœnitentibus ignoverant, quia et severitatis documenta fecerunt. Exhibe igitur et nunc mihi, apostolice, prophetica (f. legendum *Apostolica et Prophetica*) exempla, et (f. ut) agnoscam divinitatem, et vindica tibi delictorum ejusmodi remittendorum potestatem. Quod si disciplinæ solius officia sortitus es, nec imperio præsidere, sed ministerio, quis aut quantus es indulgere? qui neque Prophetam, nec Apostolum exhibens, cares eâ virtute cujus est indulgere," c. 21. It is evident that the whole argument proceeds on the supposition that the miraculous powers which had been exerted by the prophets and apostles no longer

instance of a particular miracle. Those who followed them were less scrupulous, and proceeded to invent miracles; very different indeed in circumstances and character from the miracles of the gospel, yet readily believed by men who were not disposed nicely to examine into the evidence of facts which they wished to be true. The success of the first attempts naturally encouraged others to practise similar impositions upon the credulity of mankind. In every succeeding age miracles multiplied in number, and increased in extravagance, till at length, by their frequency, they lost all title to the name, since they could no longer be considered as deviations from the ordinary course of nature.¹

But to return to Tertullian. The only specific instances which he mentions of the exercise of supernatural powers relate to the exorcism of demons. He is contending in the *Apology*² that the gods of the heathen are no other than demons; of which assertion he offers the following proof: "Bring," he says, "before your tribunals a man possessed with a demon: the evil spirit, if commanded by a Christian, will speak and confess himself a demon. In like manner, produce a person supposed to be inspired by one of your deities: he, too, will not dare to give a false reply to a Christian, but will confess that his inspiration proceeds from a demon." In the tract *de Spectaculis*³ we find a story of a female who went to the theatre, and returned possessed by a demon. The unclean spirit, when asked by the exorcist how he dared to assault a Christian, replied, "I was justified in so doing, for I found her on my own ground."⁴

subsisted; since, if they did subsist, the individual possessing them might exercise the apostolic or prophetic privilege of pardoning the offences in question. Again, in c. 22: "Sic enim Dominus potestatem suam ostendit: 'quid cogitatis nequam in cordibus vestris? Quid enim facilius est dicere Paralytico, Dimittuntur tibi peccata, aut surge et ambula? Igitur ut sciatis filium hominis habere dimittendorum peccatorum in terrâ potestatem, tibi dico, Paralytice, surge et ambula'" (Matt. ix.). "Si Dominus tantum de potestatis suæ probatione curavit, ut traduceret cogitatus et ita imperaret sanitatem, ne non crederetur posse delicta dimittere; non licet mihi eandem potestatem in aliquo sine iisdem probationibus credere." In the tract *de Præscriptione Hæreticorum*, where Tertullian calls upon the heretics to declare what miracles had been wrought by the founders of their several sects, it is worthy of remark that he does not appeal to any instance of the exercise of miraculous powers in his own day, c. 30. See also c. 44.

¹ Gibbon, c. xxviii. p. 99, ed. 4to.

² C. 23, quoted in note 7.

³ "Nam et exemplum accidit, Domino teste, ejus mulieris quæ theatrum adiit et inde cum dæmonio rediit. Itaque in exorcismo quum oneraretur immundus Spiritus quod ausus esset fidelem adgredi. 'Constanter et justissimè quidem, inquit, feci: in meo eam inveni,'" c. 26.

⁴ See also the tract *ad Scapulam*, c. 4. "Nam et cujusdam notarius, quum a dæmone præcipitaretur, liberatus est; et quorundam propinquus et puerulus. Et quanti honesti viri, de vulgaribus enim non dicimus, aut a dæmoniis aut valetu-

Surely if miraculous powers still subsisted in the Church, the writings of Tertullian would have supplied some less equivocal instances of their exercise.

Gibbon has animadverted on the evasions of Middleton respecting the clear traces of visions to be found in the apostolic Fathers.¹ Yet it appears to me that Middleton might have admitted their existence without any detriment to the main position of his essay. His object was to prove that, after the apostolic age, no standing power of working miracles existed in the Church—that there was no regular succession of favoured individuals upon whom God conferred supernatural powers, which they could exercise for the benefit of the Church of Christ whenever their judgment, guided by the influence of the Holy Spirit, told them that it was expedient so to do. This position is perfectly compatible with the belief that God still revealed Himself in dreams to pious members of the Church, for their especial comfort and instruction. The distinction between the two cases has been expressly pointed out by Middleton himself. When, however, we examine the visions recorded in Tertullian's writings, we shall feel great difficulty in believing that they were revelations from heaven. He mentions a Christian female to whom visions were frequently vouchsafed in the time of divine service.² They related for the most part to points which had formed the subject of previous discussion. On one occasion, a question having arisen respecting the soul, it was exhibited to her in a corporeal state. He tells another story of a female, who saw in a dream a linen cloth, on which was inscribed, with accompanying expressions of reprobation, the name of an actor whom she had heard that very day at the theatre.³ Tertullian adds that she did not survive the dream five days. An unfortunate man, whose servants, on the occasion of some public rejoicing, had, without his knowledge, suspended garlands over his doors, was for this involuntary offence severely chastised in a vision;⁴ and a female, who had somewhat too liberally displayed her person, was thus addressed by an angel in a dream, "Cervices, quasi applauderet, verberans: 'Elegantes, inquit, cervices, et merito nudæ.'"⁵ It should be observed that all these visions are

dinibus remediati sunt!" In the tract *de Exhortatione Castitatis*, c. 12, *sub fine*, is a story of a man who married a second wife under the idea that she was barren; but she proved pregnant; preternaturally, as our author would insinuate. See also two stories in the tract *de Animâ*, c. 51.

¹ Chap. xv., note 71.

² *De Animâ*, c. 9.

³ *De Spectaculis*, c. 26.

⁴ *De Idololatriâ*, c. 15.

⁵ *De Virginibus velandis*, c. 17.

introduced in confirmation of some opinion for which Tertullian is at the time contending. His enthusiastic temper readily discovered in them indications of a divine origin; the unprejudiced reader will probably come to a different conclusion.

But though miraculous gifts might have ceased in the Church, the Almighty might still interpose for its protection, and for the advancement of its interests, by especial and visible manifestations of His power. An instance of such interposition is recorded in the writings of Tertullian, which is generally known by the name of the Miracle of the Thundering Legion. He asserts in the *Apology*,¹ as well as in the *Address to Scapula*,² that Marcus Antoninus became a protector of the Christians, because during his expedition into Germany he, together with his army, was preserved from perishing with thirst by a seasonable shower of rain, procured by the prayers of his Christian soldiers. In support of his assertion, he appeals to a letter of the Emperor, in which the deliverance of the army was ascribed to this cause; he does not, however, affirm that he had himself seen the letter. The story has been repeated by subsequent writers, and has received, as might be expected, considerable additions in the transmission. Not only were the Roman soldiers preserved by the seasonable shower, but the army of the enemy was destroyed by a storm of thunder and lightning which accompanied it.³

That during the German war the Roman army suffered severely from want of water, and was relieved from a situation of great peril by a seasonable shower of rain, is a fact which does not rest on the single authority of Tertullian. It is recorded by several profane writers, and confirmed by the indisputable testimony of the Antonine column. Nor was Tertullian singular in regarding the event as preternatural: the heathen historians did the same. But while Tertullian ascribes the deliverance of the Emperor to the prayers of his Christian soldiers, Dion Cassius gives the credit of it to certain magical rites performed by an Egyptian named Arnuphis;⁴ and on the Antonine column it is attributed to the

¹ "At nos e contrario edimus protectorem, si literæ M. Aurelii gravissimi imperatoris requirantur, quibus illam Germanicam sitim Christianorum forte militum precationibus impetrato imbri discussam contestatur," c. 5.

² "Marcus quoque Aurelius in Germanicâ expeditione, Christianorum militum orationibus ad Deum factis, imbres in siti illâ impetravit," c. 4.

³ *Hist. Eccl. Eusebii*, l. v. c. 5. Apollinarius, who was prior to Tertullian, appears to have mentioned the storm of thunder and lightning.

⁴ See the *Epitome of Dion* by Xiphilinus. Marcus Antoninus, p. 246 C, ed. H. Steph. 1568.

immediate interposition of Jupiter Pluvius. This latter circumstance completely disproves Tertullian's statement respecting the existence of a letter in which the Emperor ascribed his deliverance to the prayers of his Christian soldiers—a statement, indeed, neither reconcilable with his general character, nor with the harsh treatment experienced by the Christians during his reign.

Referring the reader to Lardner¹ for a full account of all that has been said by learned men on the subject of this story, I shall content myself with remarking that, as told by Tertullian, it contains nothing miraculous. The Roman army was reduced to great extremity—the Christian soldiers who were present put up prayers to God for deliverance—and a seasonable shower of rain relieved the army from its perilous situation. Tertullian indeed wishes his reader to infer that the shower was the consequence of the prayers of the Christian soldiers; that, unless they had prayed, the shower would not have fallen. But this is to assume an acquaintance with the designs of Providence, which man can obtain only by immediate revelation. The pious mind, persuaded that the course of this world is ordered by the divine governance, naturally has recourse to prayer in the hour of danger; and after the danger is passed, it pours forth its gratitude to God for having so ordered events as to admit of a compliance with its petitions. But it presumes not to ascribe such efficacy to its prayers as would imply that God had been induced by them to alter the course of His government. To represent events, which are in themselves of a character strictly natural, a storm for instance, or an earthquake, as produced by an especial interposition of divine power, exerted in compliance with the prayers of men, is to speak the language, not of genuine piety, but of superstition. Yet such was the language of Tertullian's day. We find in his writings numerous instances of the same disposition to ascribe events to the immediate interference of the Almighty. The Christians in Africa had been deprived of their burial grounds;² Tertullian represents a total failure of the harvest, which occurred shortly after, as a punishment inflicted upon the pagan inhabitants for this act of injustice. He accounts

¹ *Heathen Testimonies*, Marcus Antoninus, sect. iii.

² "Sicut et sub Hilariano præside, quum de areis sepulturarum nostrarum adclamâssent, '*Areæ non sint*,' Areæ ipsorum non fuerunt; messes enim suas non egerunt," c. 3. Our author plays upon the double meaning of the word *area*, which signifies a threshing-floor as well as an enclosure. *Ad Scapulam*, c. 3.

in a similar manner for an extraordinary quantity of rain which had fallen in the year preceding that in which his *Address to Scapula* was written.¹ He speaks of flames which appeared to hang by night over the walls of Carthage, and of an almost total *extinction* of the sun's light at Utica, and discovers in them infallible presages of the impending wrath of Heaven. To the same wrath he imputes the calamities which had befallen those Roman governors who had been particularly active in their persecution of the Christians.

I shall take this opportunity of offering a few remarks upon another fact, not of a miraculous nature, related by Tertullian. He says, in the *Apology*,² that the Emperor Tiberius, having received from Palestine an account of those supernatural events which proved the Divinity of Christ, proposed to the Senate that He should be received among the deities of Rome—that the Senate rejected the proposal—that Tiberius retained his opinion, and menaced all who brought accusations against the Christians. In a subsequent passage Tertullian states that the account was sent to Tiberius by Pilate, who was in his conscience a Christian ;³ and adds an expression which implies that worldly considerations alone prevented Tiberius from believing in Christ. The story is repeated by Eusebius,⁴ who appeals to Tertullian as his authority for it. Lardner, after a detailed examination of the objections which have been made to its truth, pronounces it deserving of regard.⁵ Mosheim also seems to be of opinion that it ought not to be entirely rejected.⁶ Gibbon treats it as a mere fable, but some of his arguments appear to me far from convincing. One

¹ *Ad Scapulam*, c. 3.

² "Tiberius ergo, cujus tempore nomen Christianum in seculum introivit, annuntiata sibi ex Syriâ Palestinâ, quæ illic veritatem illius divinitatis revelaverant, detulit ad Senatum cum prærogativâ suffragii sui. Senatus, quia non ipse probaverat, respuit. Cæsar in sententiâ mansit, comminatus periculum accusatoribus Christianorum," c. 5. In this passage Pearson would read "quia non *in se* probaverat," for "quia non *ipse* probaverat," and interpret the sentence thus: *The Senate rejected the proposal because Tiberius had not approved a similar proposal in his own case—had himself refused to be deified.* Lardner contends that this must be the meaning, even if *ipse* is retained. But a sentence which precedes, "Vetus erat decretum, ne qui Deus ab Imperatore consecraretur, nisi a Senatu probatus," shows that *ipse* refers to *Senatus*: *the Senate refused because it had not itself approved the proposal*; and so the passage was translated in the Greek version used by Eusebius.

³ "Ea omnia super Christo Pilatus, et ipse jam pro suâ conscientiâ Christianus, Cæsari tunc Tiberio nuntiavit. Sed et Cæsares credidissent super Christo, si aut Cæsares non essent seculo necessarii, aut si et Christiani potuissent esse Cæsares," c. 21.

⁴ *Hist. Eccl.* l. ii. c. 2.

⁵ *Heathen Testimonies*, c. 2.

⁶ *Ecclesiastical History*, Cent. i. c. 4.

is founded on a misrepresentation of Tertullian's statement: "We are required," says Gibbon,¹ "to believe that Tiberius protected the Christians from the severity of the laws many years before such laws were enacted, or before the Church had assumed any distinct name or existence." Now Tertullian says not a word about any protection from the severity of the laws, afforded by Tiberius to the Christians; he merely says that Tiberius threatened all who accused them. This threat appears to me to have referred to the inveterate hostility manifested by the Jews against Christ and His disciples, which had come to the Emperor's knowledge through the account transmitted by Pilate. Tertullian could not intend to say that any laws against the Christians were in force during the reign of Tiberius, since he has declared more than once that Nero was the first Emperor who enacted any such laws.² I must, however, confess my own opinion to be that the story is liable to just suspicion. It rests entirely on the authority of Tertullian. How happened it that so remarkable a fact, as a public proposal from the Emperor to the Senate to receive Christ among the gods of Rome, escaped the notice of every other writer? Justin Martyr, who on two different occasions appeals to what he calls the Acts of Pilate,³ in confirmation of the gospel narrative of our Saviour's sufferings and miracles, is silent respecting the proposal of Tiberius to the Senate.

But to proceed with the information supplied by Tertullian's works respecting the causes which contributed to the rapid growth of Christianity during the latter part of the second century. We have seen that they furnish no ground for ascribing the success of its teachers at that period to the exercise of miraculous powers. They enable us, however, to ascertain that, by the pious zeal and diligence of its professors, powerful engines had been set at work to promote the diffusion of the gospel. Of these, Mosheim has noticed two:⁴ the translation of the New Testament into different languages, and the composition of numerous Apologies for the Christian faith. The writings of Tertullian, which contain quotations from nearly all the books of the New Testament, render it highly probable that a Latin

¹ Chap. xvi. p. 556, ed. 4to.

² *Apology*, cc. 5, 21; *ad Nat.* l. i. c. 7; *Scorpiace*, c. 15.

³ *Apol.* i. pp. 76 C, 84 C. The Acts of Pilate here referred to were the daily transactions of his government, registered in a book, a copy of which was probably sent to Rome.

⁴ *Century* ii. part i, c. i.

translation existed in his day.¹ By such a translation the history and doctrines of the gospel would be rendered accessible to a large portion of the subjects of the Roman Empire, who had previously derived their notions of the new religion only from report, and that perhaps the report of enemies anxious to misrepresent it. They were now enabled to judge for themselves, and to perceive how admirably all its precepts are adapted to promote the well-being of society, and to diffuse universal happiness. The favourable impression produced upon the minds of men by the perusal of the sacred books was doubtless confirmed and increased by the numerous Apologies for Christianity to which Mosheim alludes. Among these the *Apology* of Tertullian has always held a distinguished place, and there is perhaps no better mode of conveying to the mind of the reader an accurate notion of the general condition of the Christians in the second century—of the difficulties with which they had to contend, and of the principles on which they acted—than by laying before him a brief summary of its contents. It will be necessary, however, to offer by way of preface a few remarks respecting what may be called the legal position of the Christians at that period, or the point of view in which they were regarded by the Roman laws.

Mosheim² says that “in the beginning of the second century there were no laws in force against the Christians; for the Senate had annulled the cruel edicts of Nero, and Nerva had abrogated the sanguinary laws of his predecessor Domitian.” Gibbon³ also infers from Pliny’s celebrated letter to Trajan that, when the former accepted the government of Bithynia, “there were no general laws or decrees of the Senate in force against the Christians; and that neither Trajan nor any of his virtuous predecessors, whose edicts were received into the civil and criminal jurisprudence, had publicly declared their intentions concerning the new sect.” If, however, we attach any weight to the statements of Tertullian, the conclusions both of Gibbon and

¹ Semler indeed insinuates that the works, extant under Tertullian’s name, contain the first specimens of a Latin translation. “Itaque videmur hic ipsa *primordia Latinæ Translationis* occupare et deprehendere.” And again, “Aut illud scivit (Tertullianus) *tam pauca esse adhuc Evangelii Latini exemplaria* (nulla forte alia, quam hoc primum, suum ipsius),” etc., sect. iv. Yet he asserts that Tertullian, or whoever the author might be, never used a Greek MS.: “De eo enim satis jam certi sumus, etsi solent viri docti aliter statuere, hunc scriptorem oculis suis manibusque nunquam usurpasse Græcum ullum codicem *Evangeliorum* aut *Epistolarum*,” etc., *ibid.*

² *Century* ii. part i. c. 2.

³ Chap. xvi. p. 540, ed. 4to.

Mosheim are erroneous. In the first book *ad Nationes*,¹ Tertullian expressly says that, while all the other edicts of Nero had been repealed, that against the Christians alone remained in force. In the *Apology*,² after having stated that Nero and Domitian were the only Emperors who had persecuted the Christians, he says, as we have already seen, that Marcus Antoninus became their protector in consequence of the miraculous deliverance of his army in the German expedition.³ "Not," he adds, "that the Emperor abrogated the punishment enacted against them, but he indirectly did away its effect, by denouncing a heavier punishment against their accusers."⁴ What, then," our author proceeds, "are we to think of laws which none but the impious, the unjust, the vile, the cruel, the trifling, the insane enforce? of which Trajan partly frustrated the effect by forbidding all inquiries to be made after Christians? which neither Adrian, though a searcher out of all new and curious doctrines, nor Vespasian, though the conqueror of the Jews, nor Pius, nor Verus, called into operation?" The whole tenor of this passage manifestly assumes the existence of laws which, though generally allowed to slumber by the justice and humanity of the Emperors, might yet at any moment be converted into instruments wherewith to injure and oppress the Christians. It is evident also from Pliny's letter⁵ and Trajan's answer, that the only offence laid to their charge by the informers was their religion; and that, in the estimation both of the Emperor and the proconsul, the mere profession of Christianity constituted a crime deserving of punishment.

¹ "Et tamen permansit, omnibus erasis, hoc solum institutum Neronianum," etc., c. 7. Compare the *Apology*, c. 4. "Sed quoniam, quum ad omnia occurrit veritas nostra, postremo legum obstruitur auctoritas adversus eam," etc.

² C. 5. Tertullian says that Domitian's persecution was of short duration, and that the Emperor himself put a stop to it.

³ P. 106.

⁴ "Sicut non palam ab ejusmodi hominibus pœnam dimovit, ita alio modo palam dispersit, adjectâ etiam accusatoribus damnatione, et quidem tetriore. Quales ergo *leges istæ*, quas adversus nos soli exequuntur impii, injusti, turpes, truces, vani, dementes? quas Trajanus ex parte frustratus est, vetando inquiri Christianos; quas nullus Hadrianus, quanquam curiositatum omnium explorator; nullus Vespasianus, quanquam Judæorum debellator; nullus Pius, nullus Verus impressit." *Apol.* c. 5. "Quoties enim in Christianos desævitis, partim animis propriis, partim *legibus* obsequentes?" c. 37. "Quis denique de nobis alio nomine queritur? quod aliud negotium patitur Christianus, nisi suæ sectæ?" *Ad Scapulam*, c. 4.

⁵ Pliny's words are, "Interrogavi ipsos an essent Christiani; confitentes iterum ac tertio interrogavi, supplicium minatus: perseverantes duci jussi. Neque enim dubitabam, qualecunque esset quod faterentur, pervicaciam certè et inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri." L. x. ep. 97. Trajan answers, "Conquirendi non sunt; si deferantur et arguantur, puniendi sunt."

But whether there were, or were not, any laws in force expressly directed against the Christians, it is certain that their situation was most precarious. It appears indeed to have depended in a great measure on the temper and disposition of the governor of the province in which they lived. If he happened to be rapacious, or bigoted, or cruel, it was easy for him to gratify his favourite passion, by enforcing against the Christians the penalties of laws, originally enacted without any reference to them; such, for instance, as Trajan's¹ edict against companies and associations, and the law² which forbade the introduction of any new deity whose worship had not been approved by the Senate. If, on the contrary, he was just and humane, he discountenanced all informations against them, suggested to them the answers which they ought to return when brought before the tribunals, and availed himself of every pretext for setting them at liberty.³ Thus, while in one part of the empire they were suffering the most dreadful persecution, in another they were at the very same moment enjoying a certain degree of ease and security. For even the power of the governors was not always sufficient to ensure their safety, or to prevent them from falling victims to the angry passions of the populace; at all times difficult to be repressed, but rising to an ungovernable pitch of fury at the celebration of the public games and festivals.⁴ On these occasions the intimidated magistrates too often deemed it expedient to yield to the clamorous demands of the multitude, and to gratify their sanguinary impatience by suspending the tardy forms of law, and delivering the Christians to instant death.

The *Apology* of Tertullian is, as has been already observed,⁵

¹ See Pliny's letter above cited, and the *Apology*, cc. 38, 39, 40, where our author complains of the injustice of classing the Christians among the illegal associations, "illicitæ factiones." See also the tract *de Jejuniis*, c. 13. "Nisi forte in Senatus-consulta et in Principum mandata, coitionibus opposita, delinquimus."

² See the *Apology*, c. 5, quoted in note 2, p. 55 of this chapter.

³ In the *Address to Scapula*, c. 4, are recorded the names of several governors who displayed great lenity in their treatment of the Christians; but the latter appear to have regarded the evasions, suggested by the kindness of their judges, with distrust, as the devices of Satan to shake their steadfastness, and to betray them into a criminal compromise of their faith. See the *Apology*, c. 27; *Scorpiace*, c. 11.

"Quoties etiam, præteritis vobis, suo jure nos inimicum vulgus invadit lapidibus et incendiis?" *Apology*, c. 37. "Neque enim statim et a populo eris tutus, si officia militaria redemeris." *De Fugâ in Persec.* c. 14. "Odisse debemus istos conventus et coetus Ethnicorum, vel quod illic nomen Dei blasphematur, illic in nos quotidiani leones expostulantur, inde persecutiones decernuntur, inde tentationes emittuntur." *De Spectaculis*, c. 27.

⁵ Chap. i. p. 52.

addressed to the governors of Proconsular Africa, and we learn from the commencement that their attention and jealousy had been excited by the increasing number of the Christians;¹ but that, instead of being induced to inquire into the real nature of a religion which attracted so many proselytes, they suffered themselves to be hurried away by their prejudices, and condemned it unheard. So great indeed was their ignorance, that they mistook even the name of the new sect; calling those who belonged to it, not Christiani, but Chrestiani.² Tertullian³ exposes, with great power of argument and eloquence, the injustice of punishing Christians merely because they were Christians, without inquiring whether their doctrines were in themselves deserving of hatred and punishment. He complains that in their case alone all the established forms of law were set aside, and all the rules usually observed in the administration of justice violated.⁴ Other criminals were heard in their own defence, and allowed the assistance of counsel; nor was their own confession deemed sufficient to their condemnation. The Christian, on the contrary, was simply asked whether he was a Christian; and either his sentence was pronounced as soon as he had admitted the fact, or such was the strange infatuation of the judges, the torture was inflicted in order to compel him to retract his confession and deny the truth; whereas in all other cases torture was applied in order to extract the truth, and to compel the suspected party to confess his guilt. Tertullian dwells for some time upon the gross injustice of these proceedings, as well as upon the inconsistency exhibited by Trajan in his letter to Pliny, in which, at the very moment that he forbade all search to be made after the Christians, he ordered them to be punished as malefactors when brought before the tribunals.

The *Apology* furnishes many striking proofs of the unreasonableness and blindness of the hatred which the enemies of the gospel had conceived against its professors. The Christians were accused of the most heinous crimes,—of atheism, infanticide, of holding nocturnal meetings, in which they abandoned themselves to the most shameful excesses.⁵ In vain did they challenge their opponents to make good these horrible charges. In vain did

¹ C. 1.² C. 3.³ C. 1.⁴ C. 2. Compare *ad Scapulam*, c. 4.⁵ Cc. i. 7, 8. One of the opprobrious appellations applied to the Christian was "Tertium Genus," the precise meaning of which Tertullian does not appear himself to have understood. *Ad Nationes*, l. i. cc. 7, 8, 19. See also *Scorpiace*, c. 10; *de Virgin. vel.* c. 7.

they urge the utter improbability that any body of men should be guilty of such atrocious, such unnatural acts, especially of men, the fundamental article of whose belief was that they should hereafter be summoned before the judgment-seat of God, there to give an account of the deeds done in the flesh.¹ "You are determined," says Tertullian, "to close your eyes against the truth, and to persist in hating us without a cause. You are compelled to witness the salutary influence of Christianity in the reformed lives and morals of those who embrace it; but you quarrel with the effect, however beneficial, in consequence of your hatred of the cause from which it proceeds. Even virtue ceases in your estimation to be virtue when found in a Christian; and you are content that your wives shall be unchaste, your children disobedient, and your slaves dishonest, if they are but careful to abstain from all communication with this detested sect."

Tertullian alludes to an ancient law, which prohibited even the Emperor from introducing the worship of any new deity, unless it had been previously approved by the Senate.² As the worship of Christ had not received this preliminary sanction, the Christians, by the profession of their religion, manifestly offended against the law; and Tertullian speaks as if this was the principal ground of the accusations against them. It was not, however, their sole offence: they were charged, not only with introducing a new deity, but with abandoning the gods of their ancestors. Tertullian replies, that the accusation came with an ill grace from men who were themselves in the daily habit of disregarding and violating the institutions of antiquity; but he does not attempt to deny its truth. On the contrary, he boldly maintains that the Christians had done right in renouncing the worship of gods, who were in reality no gods, but mortals to whom divine honours had been ascribed after death, and whose images and statues were the abode of evil spirits, lurking there in ambush to destroy the souls of men.³

The absurdity and extravagance of the heathen mythology open to Tertullian a wide field for the exercise of his eloquence and wit;⁴ and while at one time he ironically apologises for the readiness with which the magistrates and people gave credit to the horrible reports circulated against the Christians, on the

¹ C. 3.

³ Cc. 10, 11, 22, 23, 27.

² Cc. 5, 6. See p. 59.

⁴ Cc. 12, 13, 14, 15.

ground that they believed stories equally horrible respecting their own deities, at another he warmly inveighs against the gross inconsistency of imputing to a Christian as a crime that which was not deemed derogatory to the character of a god.

But the prejudice and bigotry of the enemies of the gospel induced them, not only to believe the most atrocious calumnies against its professors, but also to entertain the most erroneous and ridiculous notions respecting the objects of Christian worship.¹ Not content with falling into the double error, first, of confounding the Christians with the Jews, and next of receiving as true the idle tales related by Tacitus respecting the origin and fortunes of the Jewish people,² they persisted in accusing the Christians of worshipping the head of an ass; although, as our author justly observes, the Roman historian³ had himself furnished the means of disproving his own statement, by relating that, when Pompey visited the temple of Jerusalem, and entered the Holy of Holies, he found there no visible representation of the Deity. Since they could give credit to so palpable a falsehood, we cannot be surprised at their believing that the sun and the cross were objects of worship in the new religion,—a belief to which the forms of Christian devotion might appear to an adversary to lend some countenance. In replying to these calumnies, Tertullian takes the opportunity of stating in spirited and eloquent language the Christian notions of the deity, and of insisting upon the genuineness and antiquity of the Jewish Scriptures, by which the knowledge of the one supreme God, of the creation of the world, and of the origin of mankind, had been preserved and transmitted from age to age.⁴ The superior antiquity of Moses and the prophets to the poets and legislators of Greece is repeatedly urged by our author as an irrefragable proof (weak as the argument may appear to us) of the superior claim of the Mosaic institutions to be received as a revelation from heaven.⁵

It has been remarked that the treatment of the primitive Christians formed a solitary exception to that system of universal toleration which regulated the conduct of the Roman government towards the professors of other religions. Gibbon appears to have assigned the true reason of this deviation from its usual policy, when he observes that, while all other people professed a national religion, the Christians formed a

¹ C. 16.² *Hist.* l. v. c. 4.³ *Hist.* l. v. c. 9.⁴ Cc. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.⁵ C. 47.

*sect.*¹ The Egyptian, though he deemed it his duty to worship the same birds and reptiles to which his ancestors had paid their adorations, made no attempt to induce the inhabitants of other countries to adopt his deities. In his estimation, the different superstitions of the heathen world were not so much at variance that they could not exist together. He respected the faith of others, while he preferred his own. But Christianity was from its very nature a proselyting religion. The convert not only abandoned the faith of his ancestors, and thereby committed an unpardonable offence in the eyes of a Gentile, but also claimed to himself the exclusive possession of the truth, and denounced as criminal every other mode of worship. When we consider this striking distinction between the character of Christianity, and of every other form of religion then existing, we shall feel less surprise that it was regarded by the ruling powers with peculiar feelings of jealousy and dislike, or that it was excepted from the general system of toleration. In vain did Tertullian insist upon the right of private judgment in matters of faith; in vain expose the strange inconsistency of tolerating the absurd superstitions of Egypt, and at the same time persecuting the professors of a religion which inculcated the worship of one pure, spiritual, omniscient, omnipotent God,—a God in every respect worthy to receive the adorations of intelligent beings.² By thus asserting that the God of the Christians was the only true God, he unavoidably destroyed the effect of his appeal to the understanding, the justice, and the humanity of the Roman governors.

Sometimes the Christians fell into an error not uncommon with very zealous advocates; they urged arguments which were easily retorted upon themselves, and were even converted into pretences for persecuting their religion. We have seen that they were in the habit of accounting for events by the immediate interposition of Providence; of ascribing favourable events to their own prayers, and calamities to the divine displeasure, excited by the cruelties inflicted upon them.³ The pagans, in answer, appealed to the continually increasing power and glory of Rome during the seven centuries which preceded the birth of Christ, and contended that this long series of prosperity was to be attributed solely to that piety towards the gods which had always formed a striking feature in the national

¹ Chap. xvi. p. 523, ed. 4to.

² Cc. 24, 28, *ad Scap.* c. 2.

³ P. 54.

character.¹ "But how," they asked, "are we to account for the calamities by which the empire has been visited, since the odious sect of Christians appeared? How, but by their impiety and crimes, which have drawn down upon us the wrath of Heaven? By tolerating their existence we have in fact become partakers of their guilt. Let us then hasten to repair our error, and to appease the anger of the gods by utterly rooting out their enemies from the earth."² The stated returns of the public games and festivals were, as has been already observed,³ the occasions on which the blind and inhuman zeal of the deluded populace displayed itself in all its ferocity. Every feeling of compassion was then extinguished, and the cry of "Christianos ad Leonem" resounded from every part of the crowded amphitheatre.

Another ground of accusation against the Christians was, that they refused to sacrifice to the gods for the safety of the Emperor.⁴ Tertullian admits the fact, but answers that their refusal arose, not from any feeling of disrespect or disaffection, but from the well-grounded conviction that the gods of the heathen were mere stocks and stones, and consequently incapable of affording the Emperor protection. "Far from being indifferent to his welfare, we put up daily petitions in his behalf to the true, the living, the eternal God, in whom kings reign, and through whose power they are powerful. To that God we pray, in full confidence that He will hear our prayers, and grant the Emperor a long life, a peaceful reign, and every public and private blessing." "Do not," Tertullian adds, "trust merely to my assertions: consult our sacred books: you will there find that we are expressly enjoined to pray for kings and those in authority."

As the Christians cautiously abstained from every act which in the least approximated to idolatry, the seasons of public festivity were to them seasons of the most imminent danger.⁵ Their abhorrence of every species of excess, their refusal to join in obstreperous or indecent expressions of joy, to illuminate their houses in the day-time, or to hang garlands over their doors, were construed by their adversaries into certain marks of disloyalty. Tertullian answers this charge by appealing to the uniform tenor of their conduct; "a less equivocal proof," he adds, "of our affection towards our sovereign than those

¹ Cc. 25, 26.² C. 40.³ P. 59.⁴ Cc. 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34.⁵ Cc. 35, 36, 38, 39.

outward demonstrations of joy which have been displayed in our own time by men who at the very moment were plotting his destruction.¹ As our religion teaches us to disregard and despise the honours and riches of this world, we are not liable to be led astray by those feelings of avarice and ambition which impel others to disturb the public tranquillity ; and if you would take the trouble of informing yourselves of what passes in our assemblies, and at our love-feasts, far from finding reason to view them with jealousy as dangerous to the State, you would acknowledge that their necessary tendency is to increase our love towards God and towards our neighbour—to make us better men and better subjects.”

But though the enemies of the gospel might be compelled to allow that a Christian was a peaceable, they still accused him of being an unprofitable citizen.² The charge, however, if we may judge from Tertullian's answer, resolved itself principally into this, that the Christians brought no offerings to the temples, and contributed nothing towards defraying the expenses of the public games, or to the support of those trades which were more immediately connected with the pomps and ceremonies of idolatry. In his remarks upon this charge, Tertullian expressly affirms that the Christians in his day did not affect a life of solitude and abstraction, but dwelt in the world, and laboured in their several callings and occupations, like other men. In like manner they disclaimed all singularity of dress or diet, freely using the gifts of Providence, but careful not to abuse them. “They indeed,” says Tertullian, “who minister to the vicious and criminal passions of mankind—pimps, assassins, and fortune-tellers—may complain with truth that the Christians are unprofitable to them. But all who think that the best man is the most useful citizen, must admit the claim of the Christian to that character, whose religion teaches him that not only his actions, but his very thoughts must be pure, and who regulates his conduct by a reference, not to the imperfect laws of man, the penalties of which he might hope to evade, but to the perfect law of that God, from whom nothing can be hid, and whose vengeance it is impossible to escape.”

Unable either to fix any stain upon the morals of the Christians, or to substantiate the charges of irreligion and disloyalty against them, their enemies proceeded in the last place to

¹ *Ad Scapulam*, c. 2.

² Cc. 42, 43, 44, 45.

undervalue Christianity itself, and to represent it as a mere species of philosophy.¹ “The philosophers,” they said, “inculcate innocence, justice, patience, sobriety, charity; and what do the Christians more?” “Be it so,” is Tertullian’s reply: “why then do you deny to us alone the indulgence which you extend to every other sect? But look at the effects of Christianity, and you will be forced to confess that it is something more than a species of philosophy; how otherwise can you account for the altered lives and morals of its professors—a change which philosophy has never yet produced in its votaries?”

The conclusion of the *Apology* points out to us one cause of the rapid growth of Christianity, which has been overlooked by Mosheim—the admirable courage and constancy with which the Christians bore the torments inflicted upon them by their persecutors.² “Proceed,” says Tertullian to the provincial governors, “proceed in your career of cruelty, but do not suppose that you will thus accomplish your purpose of extinguishing the hated sect. We are like the grass, which grows the more luxuriantly the oftener it is mown. The blood of Christians is the seed of Christianity. Your philosophers taught men to despise pain and death by words; but how few their converts compared with those of the Christians, who teach by example! The very obstinacy with which you upbraid us is the great propagator of our doctrines. For who can behold it, and not inquire into the nature of that faith which inspires such supernatural courage?³ Who can inquire into that faith, and not embrace it? who can embrace it, and not desire himself to undergo the same sufferings in order that he may thus secure a participation in the fulness of the divine favour?”

I cannot quit this part of my subject without briefly noticing Gibbon’s remarks on the Apologies published by the early Christians, in behalf of themselves and their religion.⁴ He admits that they expose with ability the absurdities of polytheism, and describe with eloquence and force the innocence and sufferings

¹ C. 46.

² C. 50. In the *Scorpiace*, our author argues as if sufferings voluntarily endured in the defence of a religion prove not merely the sincerity of the sufferer’s persuasion but also the truth of the religion. “Cæterum pati oportebat omnem Dei prædicatorem et cultorem qui ad Idololatriam provocatus negasset obsequium, secundum illius quoque rationis statum, quâ et præsentibus tunc et posteris deinceps commendari veritatem oportebat, pro quâ fidem diceret passio ipsorum Defensorum ejus, quia nemo voluisset occidi, nisi compos veritatis,” c. 8.

³ Compare *ad Scapulam*, c. 5.

⁴ Chap. xv. near the end.

of their brethren. But when they attempt to demonstrate the divine origin of Christianity, then in his opinion they entirely fail; and the only feeling which they excite in the mind of the reader is regret that the cause was not defended by abler advocates. He particularly blames them for insisting more strongly upon the predictions which announced, than upon the miracles which accompanied the appearance of the Messiah.¹ But in these remarks the historian seems to me to proceed upon the erroneous supposition that the *Apology* of Tertullian, and other works of a similar nature, were designed to be regular expositions of the evidences of Christianity. Such an idea never entered into the writer's mind. His immediate business was to defend Christianity against the attacks of its enemies—to correct their misrepresentations, and to refute their calumnies—to persuade them that it was not that combination of folly and crime which they supposed it to be—that, in a word, they were bound to examine before they condemned it. The object, therefore, at which he principally aimed was not to marshal its evidences, but to give a full and perspicuous account of its doctrines and moral precepts. Yet when he explains the notion of the Supreme Being, entertained by the Christians, he adverts, though concisely, to the grounds on which their belief was founded. He shows that the testimony, borne to the existence of an Almighty Creator of the universe by His visible works without, and by the voice of conscience within us, is confirmed by the Jewish Scriptures; the claims of which to be received as a divine revelation he rests upon their superior antiquity, not only to the literature, but even to the gods of Greece, and upon the actual accomplishment of many of the prophecies contained in them.² When again he proceeds to explain those doctrines which are more peculiarly Christian, he says that Christ was proved to be the Word of God, as well by the miserable state to which, agreeably to the prophecies of the Old Testament, the Jewish nation was reduced in consequence of its rejection of Him, as by the miracles which He wrought during His residence upon earth.³ I know not what further evidence of the divine origin of Chris-

¹ In the third book *against Marcion*, Tertullian assigns the reason why he considers the evidence of miracles as not alone sufficient to establish the truth of Christianity. Christ Himself, he says, warned His disciples that many would come in His name, showing signs and wonders. (Matt. xxiv. 24.) It was therefore necessary to the complete establishment of His pretensions that He should not only work miracles, but should in all respects fulfil the predictions of the prophets respecting His character and office, c. 3.

² *Apology*, cc. 17, 18, 19, 20.

³ C. 21.

tianity Tertullian could be expected to produce in a work designed to explain what it was, not to prove whence it was derived. But had the latter been his professed object, are we competent to decide upon the train of reasoning which he ought to have pursued in order most readily to accomplish it? Arguments, which appear to us the most forcible, might have been thrown away upon the persons whom he was addressing; and we may surely give him credit for knowing by what means he was most likely to produce conviction in their minds. He has frequent recourse to the argument *ad hominem*; which, however lightly it may weigh in the estimation of the dispassionate and reflecting reader of the present day, was not without its effect in silencing the clamours of malice and of ignorance. They who think with Daillé¹ that the exquisite wisdom and transcendent beauty of the rule of life prescribed in the gospel constitute the strongest and surest proof of its divine origin, will also think that Tertullian, by simply stating the doctrines of Christianity, and appealing to the Scriptures in confirmation of his statement, adopted the most efficacious mode of extending its influence.

We have seen that the persecutions inflicted on the Christians, far from retarding, contributed, in the opinion of Tertullian, to accelerate the progress of the gospel. The Church was not insensible to the advantages which its cause derived from the intrepid constancy of its members; but it was too well aware of the infirmity of human nature not to know that even the sincerest conviction of the truth of Christianity might not always be sufficient to support the convert in the hour of danger. In order, therefore, to excite his courage, the sufferings of martyrdom were invested with peculiar privileges and honours. It can scarcely be necessary to remark that the original signification of the word Martyr is "a witness;" and though in later times the appellation has been generally confined to those who proved the sincerity of their faith by the sacrifice of their lives, in the time of Tertullian² it was used with greater latitude, and comprehended all whom the profession of Christianity had exposed to any severe hardship, such as imprisonment or loss of property—those who are now usually distinguished by the name of Con-

¹ "La Sagesse exquise et l'ineestimable beauté de la discipline même de Jésus Christ est, je l'avoue, le plus fort et le plus sûr argument de sa Vérité." Quoted by Dr. Hey in his *Lectures*, Book I. end of c. 13.

² Thus in the tract *de Præscriptione Hæreticorum*, c. 3. "Si etiam Martyr apsus de regulâ fuerit."

fessors.¹ To this lax use of the term *martyr* must be chiefly ascribed the erroneous persuasion which has been so carefully cherished by the Church of Rome respecting the number of martyrs, strictly so called; for though it may have been greater than Dodwell was willing to allow, it is certain that his opinion approaches much nearer to the truth than that of his opponents.²

We shall, however, form a very inadequate idea of the sufferings endured by the primitive Christians, if we restrict them to the punishments inflicted by the magistrates, or to the outrages committed by a blind and infuriate populace. Many who escaped the sword and the wild beasts were destined to encounter trials of the severest kind, though their sufferings attracted not the public attention. When we consider the species of authority exercised by heads of families in those days, and the hatred by which many were actuated against Christianity, we may frame to ourselves some notion of the condition of a wife, a child, or a slave, who ventured to profess a belief in its doctrines.³ This alone was deemed a sufficient cause for repudiating a wife, or disinheriting a son; and Tertullian mentions by name a governor of Cappadocia, who avenged the conversion of his wife by persecuting all the Christians of the province.⁴ So heinous indeed was the offence that it cancelled all obligations.⁵ He who committed it became at once an outcast from society, and was considered to have forfeited his claim to the good offices of his nearest kinsman; nor were instances wanting, if

¹ Tertullian sometimes applies the term Confessor to one who was imprisoned on account of his religion. "Et quum in carcere fratrem vult visitari, Confessoris imperat curam." *Scorpiace*, c. 11.

² Tertullian, we believe, mentions only five martyrs by name: St. Peter, who was crucified, and St. Paul, who was beheaded at Rome during Nero's persecution; *de Præscriptione Hæreticorum*, c. 36; *adv. Marcionem*, l. iv. c. 5; *Scorpiace*, c. ult. Perpetua, of whose martyrdom an account is still extant under the title of *Passio Perpetuæ ac Felicitatis*; *de Animâ*, c. 55. Rutilius, who having for some time avoided persecution by flight, and even, as he conceived, secured his safety by the payment of a sum of money, was suddenly seized, and, after undergoing severe torments, cast into the flames; *de Fugâ in Persecutione*, c. 5, and Justin, *adv. Valentinianos*, c. 5. Tertullian relates also that St. John the Evangelist was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, and came out unhurt. *De Præscript. Hæret.* c. 36.

³ "Uxorem jam pudicam maritus, jam non zelotypus, ejecit: filium jam subiectum pater, retro patiens, abdicavit: servum jam fidelem dominus, olim mitis, ab oculis relegavit: ut quisque hoc nomine emendatur, offendit." *Apology*, c. 3.

⁴ *Ad Scapulam*, c. 3.

⁵ In the first tract *ad Nationes*, Tertullian says that informations were frequently laid against the Christians by their slaves, c. 7. "Quid? quum domestici eos vobis prodant? omnes a nullis magis prodimur: quanto magis, si atrocitas tanta sit quæ justitiâ indignationis omnem familiaritatis fidem rumpit."

Tertullian's expressions are to be literally understood, in which a brother informed against a brother, and even a parent against a child.¹

Yet, amidst the trials and afflictions to which he was subjected, the convert was not entirely destitute even of earthly consolation. The affection and esteem of the *brethren* in some degree compensated the loss of his former friends, the alienation of his kindred, and the contempt and insults of the world. We in the present day can form only a faint conception of the intimacy of that union which subsisted between the primitive Christians, and was cemented by a community of danger as well as of faith and hope. The love which they bore to each other excited the astonishment, though it could not subdue the hostility, of their heathen persecutors.² But they naturally regarded, with feelings of peculiar affection and respect, those members of the Church who were called to suffer in its cause. The Christian, when imprisoned on account of his religion, was supported by the reflection, that his brethren anxiously watched over his fate, and that no exertion would be wanting on their part to mitigate its severity—that he should be maintained during his confinement by their voluntary contributions³—that devout females would flock to his prison to kiss his chains,⁴ and penitents to obtain through his intercession a speedier restoration to the communion of the Church.⁵ If he escaped with life, he knew that he should become the object of the most reverential regard—that he should be held up by the Church as

¹ I speak doubtfully, because there is something in our author's mode of expressing himself which leads me to suspect that no such instances had actually fallen within his own knowledge; but that he inferred that they had occurred, because our Lord had declared that they would occur. "Quum autem subjicit, *Tradet autem frater fratrem, et pater filium in mortem, et insurgent filii in parentes et mortificabunt eos*; manifestè iniquitatem istam in cæteros pronuntiavit, quam in Apostolis non invenimus. Nemo enim eorum aut fratrem aut patrem passus est traditorem, quod plerique jam nostri. Dehinc ad Apostolos revocat: *Et eritis odio omnibus propter nomen meum*: Quanto magis nos, quos a parentibus quoque tradi oportet!" *Scorpiace*, c. 9. "Sed et fratres nostros et patres et filios et socrus et nurus et domesticos nostros ibidem exhibere debebis, per quos traditio disposita est," c. 10.

² *Vide* "inquiunt, ut invicem se diligunt." *Apology*, c. 39.

³ *Apology*, c. 39; *ad Martyres*, cc. 1, 2; *de Jejunis*, c. 12.

⁴ "Quis in carcerem ad osculanda vincula Martyris reptare patietur?" *Ad Uxorem*, l. ii. c. 4.

⁵ "Quam pacem quidam in Ecclesiâ non habentes a Martyribus in carcere exorare consueverunt." *Ad Martyres*, l. i. After Tertullian had seceded from the Church, he denied that it possessed the power of pardoning crimes of a heinous nature, and ridiculed the notion that attention ought to be paid to the intercession of a martyr. *De Pudicitia*, c. 22.

an example to all its members, and possess a prior claim to its dignities and honours.¹ If he was destined to lose his life, he had been taught that martyrdom was a second and more efficacious baptism²—that it washed away every stain³—and that, while the souls of ordinary Christians passed the interval between their separation from the body and the general resurrection in a state of incomplete enjoyment, that of the martyr was secure of immediate admission to the perfect happiness of heaven.⁴

When such were the privileges conferred, both in this and in the next world, by suffering for the faith of Christ, it is not surprising that men of an ardent and enthusiastic temper should aspire to the crown of martyrdom, and eagerly encounter persecution. Nor can it be dissembled that some of the early Fathers, in their anxiety to confirm the faith of the convert, and to prevent him from apostatizing in the hour of trial, occasionally spoke a language calculated to encourage men to make that gratuitous sacrifice of life, to which the sober decision of reason must annex the name and the guilt of suicide.⁵ It may be asked, perhaps, "what surer mark there can be of that love of God, in which consists the perfection of the Christian character, than an earnest desire to be removed from this world of vanity and sin, and to be admitted to the immediate perception of the Divine Presence? When Tertullian says,⁶ that the Christian's only concern respecting this life is that he may as speedily as possible exchange it for another, in what does his language differ from that of St. Paul, who tells the Philippians that he has "a desire to depart, and to be with Christ"?⁷ But this desire was tempered

¹ "Sed alium ex martyrii prerogativa loci potitum indignatus." *Adv. Valentinianos*, c. 4. See *de Fuga in Persecutione*, c. 11.

² *De Patientia*, c. 13; *Scorpiace*, c. 6, *sub fine*; *de Pudicitia*, c. 9, *sub fine*, c. 22; *de Baptismo*, c. 16.

³ *Apology*, *sub fine*. "Omnia enim huic operi delicta donantur."

⁴ "Nemo enim, peregrinatus a corpore, statim immoratur penes Dominum, nisi ex martyrii prerogativa, Paradiso scilicet, non inferis, deversurus." *De Resur. Carnis*, c. 43; *Scorpiace*, c. 12. "Ad ipsum divinæ sedis ascensum." *De Patientia*, c. 13.

⁵ "Denique cum omni sævitiâ vestrâ concertamus, etiam ultrò erumpentes, magisque damnati quam absoluti gaudemus." *Ad Scapulam*, c. 1. "Absit enim ut indigne feramus ea nos pati quæ optamus," c. 2. See also c. 5.

⁶ "In primis, quia nihil nostra refert in hoc ævo, nisi de eo quam celeriter excedere." *Apology*, c. 41.

⁷ C. 1, v. 23. Tertullian refers more than once to this very passage. "Cupidi et ipsi iniquissimo isto sæculo eximi, et recipi ad Dominum, quod etiam Apostolo votum fuit." *Ad Uxorem*, l. i. c. 5. "Ipso Apostolo festinante ad Dominum." *De Exhort. Castitatis*, c. 12. See also *de Spectaculis*, c. 28.

and controlled in the mind of the apostle by a feeling of implicit resignation to the will of God. He must abide in the flesh so long as his ministry could be useful to the Philippians; and it was not for him to determine for how long a period his usefulness would continue. Though he was prepared—though he longed for the summons to depart—he did not venture to anticipate it; and, far from courting martyrdom, he employed all warrantable methods of preserving his life. Tertullian himself, in the *Apology*,¹ discriminates accurately between the case of a Christian who voluntarily denounces himself, and that of one who, when brought before the magistrate, professes his gladness that he is called to suffer on account of his faith. He supposes a heathen to ask, “Why do you complain of being persecuted when it is your own wish to suffer?” His answer is, “No doubt, we wish to suffer; but in the same manner that a soldier wishes for the battle. He wishes to obtain the spoil and glory consequent upon victory, but would gladly avoid the danger to which he will be exposed, though he does not shrink from it. So we, though we endure your persecutions in the hope of finally obtaining the reward of our fidelity, would gladly avoid them, could we do so consistently with our allegiance to Christ.”

While, however, we condemn that immoderate anxiety to obtain the honours of martyrdom which appears to have been too prevalent among the primitive Christians, let us not involve, in one indiscriminate censure, all who either became their own accusers before the magistrates, or refused to save themselves by flight, or by any other innocent means, from the certain death which awaited them. The moral character of the act must depend upon the motive by which it was dictated. The name of suicide is justly applied to that voluntary sacrifice of life which originates in distrust of the goodness or impatience of the visitations of God—in disgust at the world—or in a presumptuous desire to seize, before the appointed time, the rewards reserved in heaven for the faithful followers of Christ. But who can fail to discern the clear distinction between these cases and the noble refusal of Socrates to save his life by escaping from prison?—a refusal dictated by a feeling of reverence for the laws of his country, and a conviction that he was bound to obey them even

¹ “Ergo, inquit, cur querimini quod vos insequamur, si pati vultis, quum diligere debeatis per quos patimini quod vultis? Plane volumus pati; verum eo more, quo et bellum nemo quidem libens patitur, quum et trepidare et periclitari sit necesse; tamen et præliatur omnibus viribus, et vincens in prælio gaudet qui de prælio querebatur, quia et gloriam consequitur et prædam,” c. 50.

unto death. In like manner it may be presumed that, when the primitive Christians voluntarily presented themselves before the tribunal of the magistrate, they were frequently actuated by a more justifiable motive than the desire of securing the honours of martyrdom. They might hope to arrest the violence of an angry governor by convincing him of the inutility of persecuting men who, far from dreading or avoiding any punishments which he could inflict, came forward to meet them. They might hope to excite a feeling, if not of compassion, at least of horror, in his mind, by showing him that he must wade through a sea of blood in order to accomplish his purpose. Such is the construction put by Lardner upon the conduct of the Asiatic Christians,¹ who during a persecution presented themselves in a body before the tribunal of Arrius Antoninus, the proconsul.² He regards as an act of well-timed as well as generous self-devotion, that which Gibbon produces as an instance of the indiscreet ardour of the primitive Christians.³ His view is, in my opinion, confirmed by the context; for Tertullian introduces the story by observing that the Christians voluntarily presented themselves in order to convince the governors that they were not afraid of death;⁴ and afterwards calls upon Scapula, the proconsul of Africa, whom he is addressing, to reflect how many thousands he would destroy, and what utter ruin he would bring upon Carthage, if he persisted in his cruel intentions. Whatever might be the motive which dictated the act, its effect certainly was to put an end to the persecution. Antoninus, after he had ordered a few to be led away to punishment, either influenced by compassion, or observing that the resolution of the survivors was unshaken, dismissed them with the exclamation, "Miserable men! if you wish to die, have you not precipices or halters?"

We find, as we might expect from the change which took place in Tertullian's opinions, some inconsistency in his language respecting the conduct to be pursued by Christians in times of persecution. As he advanced in life, his notions became continually more severe. We have already observed that, in the

¹ *Heathen Testimonies*. Observations on Pliny's letter, sect. vii.

² Learned men are not agreed respecting the individual of whom this story is told. Lardner supposes him to have been the maternal grandfather of Antoninus Pius, who was proconsul of Asia during the reign of Nerva or Trajan. Gibbon supposes him to have been Antoninus Pius himself, who was also proconsul of Asia. Casaubon fixes upon an Arrius Antoninus who was murdered during the reign of Commodus. *Ælii Lampridii Commodus*, p. 870.

³ Chap. xvi. p. 552, ed. 4to.

⁴ *Ad Scapulam*, c. 5.

tract *de Patientiâ*,¹ he speaks as if it were allowable for a Christian to consult his safety by flight. But in the tract *de Fugâ in Persecutione*—which was written after his secession from the Church, and is described, perhaps too harshly, by Gibbon, as a compound of the wildest fanaticism and most incoherent declamation—he denounces flight in time of persecution as an impious attempt to resist the divine will. “Persecutions,” he argues, “proceed from God, for the purpose of proving the faith of Christians;² the attempt, therefore, to avoid them is both foolish and wicked:³ foolish, because we cannot escape the destiny assigned us by God; wicked, because by fleeing from persecution we appear to set ourselves in opposition to His will, and to accuse Him of cruelty. Our Saviour, it is true, said to His disciples, ‘When they persecute you in one city, flee to another.’⁴ But this injunction applied only to their particular circumstances: had they been cut off in the very outset of their ministry, the gospel could not have been diffused throughout the world. The same reason will account for the conduct of Christ in withdrawing Himself from the fury of the Jews.⁵ His bitter agony in the garden, which is urged in defence of flight in time of persecution, was designed to refute by anticipation the heretical notion that He had neither a human body nor soul; and His prayer to God—‘Let this cup pass from me’—will not justify us in endeavouring to flee from danger, since He immediately subjoined, ‘Not my will, but Thine be done.’”

Allusion has already been made to a passage in the tract which we are now considering,⁶ where Tertullian speaks of the immense revenue which might be collected if each Christian was allowed to purchase the free exercise of his religion for a sum of money.⁷ This measure indeed had not been resorted to as a source of revenue to the State, but it had suggested itself to the avarice of the provincial governors as an excellent expedient for replenishing their private coffers; and we find that not only individuals, but whole Churches, were in the habit of purchasing exemption from persecution. Tertullian, as might be expected, condemns this practice in the strongest terms.⁸ “Christians,” he says, “who have been redeemed with the precious blood of

¹ See the passage quoted in chap. ii. note 4, p. 24. Compare *ad Uxorem*, l. i. c. 3. “Etiam in persecutionibus melius est ex permissu fugere de oppido in oppidum, quam comprehensum et distortum negare. Atqui isti beatiore, qui valent beati testimonii confessione non excidere.”

³ C. 4.

⁴ C. 6. Matt. x. 23.

² Cc. 1-5.

⁵ C. 8.

⁶ Note 3, p. 46.

⁷ C. 13.

⁸ C. 11, *ad fin.*

Christ may not redeem their lives with money. If such a practice was to become universal, no instance of martyrdom could occur. God would no longer be glorified by the sufferings of His faithful servants, and thus one end of the Christian dispensation would be defeated."

Two of Tertullian's treatises relate expressly to the subject of martyrdom. One of them, entitled *ad Martyres*, is a brief address to certain Christians who had been cast into prison on account of their religion, pointing out to them various topics of consolation, and exhorting them to courage and constancy under their sufferings. It might be supposed that the duty of preparation for the cruel fate which awaited them would have left them neither time nor inclination to engage in disputes with each other.¹ They appear, however, to have disagreed in prison, and part of Tertullian's address is taken up in warning them not to allow the enemy of their salvation to gain a triumph by their dissensions. Their disputes appear from our author's expressions to have been of a personal character. *Our Reformers* in Queen Mary's days, when confined in prison and expecting to be brought to the stake, wrote and dispersed tracts against each other on the doctrine of Predestination.

With respect to the other tract, entitled *Scorpiace*, we have already observed that it was directed against the Gnostics and Valentinians, who denied that a Christian was under any obligation to encounter martyrdom.² "God," they said, "cannot desire the death of the innocent; nor can Christ, who died for man, wish man to die in turn for Him." The aim, therefore, of our author is to show that it is the bounden duty of Christians to endure the severest sufferings rather than do any act which can be construed into a participation in idolatry. The heinousness of that sin in the sight of God is proved by the numerous denunciations in the Old Testament against it;³ and by the severe punishments inflicted on the Israelites, for adopting the rites of their idolatrous neighbours. But when God forbids us to commit idolatry, He evidently forbids us to shrink from any danger to which we may be exposed by our refusal to commit it;⁴ to shrink, for instance, from martyrdom, if we should be called to so severe a trial of our faith. This conclusion our

¹ C. 1.

² C. 1. See chap. ii. p. 29.

³ Cc. 2, 3.

⁴ C. 4. This notion is carried to the utmost pitch of extravagance in the tract *de Idololatriâ*, c. 22.

author supports by references to the example of Daniel, and the three Jews who were thrown into the fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar, for refusing to bow down to the golden image.¹ He appears, however, to have been aware that these references would have little weight with the Gnostics and Marcionites, who denied that the God of the Old Testament was the supreme God.² He contends, therefore, that when God calls men to suffer for the gospel, far from deserving, as the Valentinians insinuated, on that account to be censured as cruel, He affords a striking proof of His goodness, by enabling us to vanquish in turn the enemy of our salvation by whom Adam was vanquished.³

From the Old Testament Tertullian proceeds to the New, and argues that one principal object of our Saviour's discourses to His disciples was to confirm their faith, and prepare them cheerfully to encounter the persecutions which awaited them.⁴ The interpretation which the apostles put upon the words of Christ is, he adds, manifest both from their writings and their conduct. The former are full of allusions to the dangers and difficulties to which the professors of the gospel would be exposed, and of exhortations to support them with constancy;⁵ and with respect to the latter, the violent deaths of many of the first disciples sufficiently proved that they did not think themselves at liberty to shrink from martyrdom.⁶

Some of the evasions suggested by the Valentinians for the purpose of enabling the convert at once to save his life and satisfy his conscience, afford amusing instances of the deception which men continually practise on themselves.⁷ "Our Saviour's words," they argued, "are, He who denies *me* before men, him will I deny before my Father. Christ does not say, He who denies that he is a Christian; this, therefore, may be denied without incurring the penalty of exclusion from heaven." The heathen magistrates appear to have been aware of this equivocation; for after the party accused had denied that he was a Christian, they compelled him also to deny and blaspheme Christ. The Valentinians also contended that, as St. Paul enjoins Christians to be subject to the higher powers, without limiting the injunction, he meant that they were to obey the magistrate, even when commanded to abjure Christianity.⁸

¹ C. 8.² C. 5.³ C. 6.⁴ Cc. 9-12.⁵ Cc. 12, 13, 14.⁶ C. 15.⁷ C. 9. Matt. x. 33.⁸ C. 14. Rom. xiii. 1.

Another of their fancies was that, when Christ directed His followers to confess Him before men, He alluded to a confession to be made, not before the race of men existing upon earth—the vile work of the Demiurge—but before those to whom the name of men really belongs, the Valentinian Powers and Æons.¹ It must, however, be admitted that Tertullian occasionally displays no less dexterity than his opponents in misinterpreting Scripture and wresting it to his own purpose. Thus he says that the fear which, according to St. John, is cast out by perfect love, is the fear of persecution.²

Though we attempt not to justify the language used by many of the Fathers on the subject of martyrdom, we cannot forbear observing that a reference to the circumstances of the times will probably induce us to moderate our censure of them for using it. They lived when the profession of Christianity was attended with the greatest danger—when the Christian was liable at any moment to be dragged by the malice or avarice of his neighbours before the tribunal of the magistrates, and to be offered the dreadful alternative of renouncing his faith, or dying a cruel and ignominious death. They knew how greatly the cause of the gospel was either promoted or injured by the behaviour of its professors under this severe trial. They resorted, therefore, to every argument which was in their opinion calculated to prepare the mind of the convert for the arduous conflict, and to enable him to subdue the natural apprehension of pain and death. But, unhappily, instead of adhering closely to the example of the apostles,³ and instructing their brethren to encounter persecution, not merely with firmness, as the lot to which they were especially called by their profession, but with cheerfulness and joy, since they thereby became partakers in their blessed Master's sufferings—instead of confining themselves to these sound and reasonable topics of exhortation, they represented martyrdom as an object to be ambitiously sought; forgetting that, although resignation to the will of God, and a patient enduring of the afflictions with which He is pleased to visit us, are the surest signs of a genuine piety, to go as it were in quest of suffering, and to court persecution, is in reality to tempt Him, and bespeaks an impatient and presumptuous temper, most foreign from the Christian character.

¹ C. 10.

² C. 12. 1 John iv. 18. The same interpretation is repeated in the tract *de Fugâ in Persecutione*, c. 9.

³ 1 Pet. iv. 12.

We have seen that Tertullian complains of the total disregard of the established forms of law manifested by the heathen magistrates in their proceedings against the Christians.¹ They appear also, in the punishments which they inflicted, to have been more intent upon gratifying their own ferocity, or that of an exasperated populace, than upon complying with the edicts of the Emperor. From a passage in the *Address to Scapula*, we may conclude that death by the sword was the punishment appointed in the case of the Christians;² but Tertullian says that in many instances they had been burned—"a severity of punishment," he adds, "to which even criminals convicted of sacrilege or treason are not doomed." Nor were the governors content with inflicting bodily sufferings on their unhappy victims. Those more refined and ingenious torments, which Gibbon supposes to have existed only in the inventions of the monks of succeeding ages, were, if we may believe Tertullian, actually resorted to in his day.³ The primitive Christians scrupulously complied with the decree pronounced by the apostles at Jerusalem, in abstaining from things strangled and from blood; when, therefore, they were exhausted by long fasting, food containing blood was offered to them, in the hope that they might be seduced into an act of disobedience.⁴ Tertullian states also that attempts were frequently made to overcome the chastity of the female martyrs; and that, instead of being exposed to the wild beasts, they were consigned to the keepers of the public stews, to become the victims either of seduction or of brutal violence.⁵

I shall proceed to notice some other facts mentioned by Tertullian, which, though they do not relate immediately to the history of his own times, are yet worthy of observation. In the tract *against the Jews*, he says that Christ suffered in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, in the consulship of Rubellius Geminus and

¹ P. 120.

² "Pro tantâ innocentîâ, pro tantâ probitate, pro justitiâ, pro pudicitiâ, pro fide, pro veritate, pro Deo vivo (f. vivi) cremamur, quod nec sacrilegi, nec hostes publici, verum nec tot majestatis rei pati solent. Nam et nunc a Præsîde Legionis et a Præsîde Mauritanîæ vexatur hoc nomen, sed gladio tenus, sicut et a primordio mandatum est animadverti in hujusmodi," c. 4. Compare *ad Nationes*, l. i. c. 18. "Incendiali tunicâ." And *ad Martyres*, c. 5. "In tunicâ ardente."

³ Chap. xvi. p. 544, ed. 4to.

⁴ *Apology*, c. 9; *de Monogamiâ*, c. 5. "Et libertas ciborum et sanguinis solius abstinentia, sicut ab initio fuit."

⁵ "Nam et proxime ad *Leonem* damnando Christianam, potius quam ad *Leonem*, confessi estis labem pudicitie apud nos atrocior omni poenâ et omni morte reputari." *Apology*, *sub fine*. See also *de Pudicitiâ*, c. 1.

Fusius Geminus, in the month of March, at the time of the Passover, on the eighth of the calends of April, on the first day of unleavened bread.¹ He had previously said that Augustus survived the birth of Christ fifteen years; and that Christ suffered in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar, being then about thirty years of age.² It is allowed that the consulship of the Gemini corresponded to the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius; and as we know from St. Luke's Gospel that our Saviour began to preach in that year, those writers who contend that His ministry lasted only for a single year refer to Tertullian as maintaining that opinion. To these passages, however, has been opposed another from the first book *against Marcion*,³ in which it is said that Christ was revealed in the twelfth year of Tiberius. The correct inference, therefore, appears to be that Tertullian believed our Saviour's ministry to have continued for three years, but mistook the year in which He was revealed for the year in which He suffered. As it forms no part of my plan to discuss the difficulties attending the chronology of our Saviour's life, I shall content myself with referring the reader to Mr. Benson's work on that subject.⁴

Tertullian⁵ more than once speaks of a census taken during the reign of Augustus, the documents relating to which were preserved in the Roman archives, and, according to him, afforded

¹ C. 8, *sub fine*. Compare c. 10, *sub fine*.

² "Post enim Augustum, qui supervixit post nativitatem Christi, anni 15 efficiuntur: cui successit Tiberius Cæsar, et imperium habuit annis 22, mensibus 7, diebus 20. Hujus quintodecimo anno imperii passus est Christus, annos habens quasi 30 quum pateretur," c. 8. Tertullian affirms also that Christ was born in the forty-first year of the reign of Augustus, of which he dates the commencement from the death of Cleopatra.

³ C. 15. "At nunc quale est ut Dominus a 12 Tiberii Cæsaris revelatus sit?" In a subsequent chapter Tertullian speaks as if the ministry of Christ had commenced in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar; but he then appears to be stating the opinion of Marcion. "Anno 15 Tiberii, Christus Iesus de cælo manare dignatus est, Spiritus Salutaris," c. 19. So in l. iv. c. 7. "Anno quintodecimo principatûs Tiberiani, proponit (Marcion) eum descendisse in civitatem Galilææ Capharnaum, utique de cælo creatoris, in quod de suo ante descenderat."

⁴ C. vii. sect. i. p. 274.

⁵ "Cujus nemo adhuc certus de tribu, de populo, de domo? de censu denique Augusti, quem testem fidelissimum Dominicæ nativitatis Romana Archiva custodiunt?" *Ad Marcionem*, l. iv. c. 7. We must bear in mind that Tertullian is arguing with a heretic, who affirmed that Christ was not born at all, but descended upon earth a perfect man. Again, c. 19, "Sed et census constat actos sub Augusto nunc (f. tunc) in Judæâ per Sentium Saturninum." And c. 36, "Vel de recentibus Augustianis censibus adhuc tunc fortasse pendentibus." See also *de Carne Christi*, c. 2. "Molestos semper Cæsaribus census." In the treatise *de Pallio*, c. 1, Sentius Saturninus is mentioned as having presided at the ceremonies which attended the admission of Carthage among the colonies of Rome.