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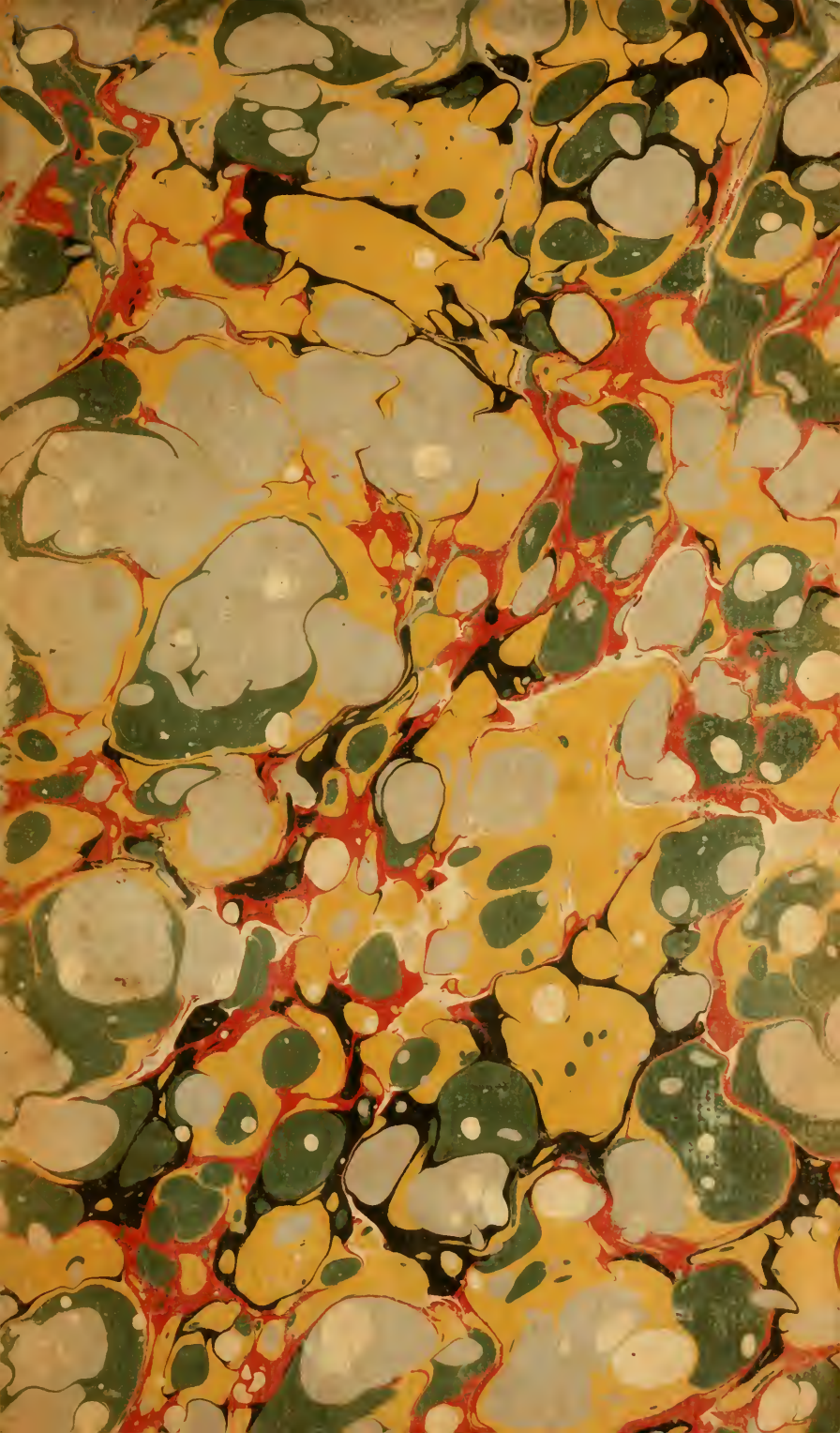


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AN
Ecclesiastical History,
ANCIENT AND MODERN,
FROM
THE BIRTH OF CHRIST,
TO THE
BEGINNING OF THE PRESENT CENTURY.

VOLUME I.

AN
Ecclesiastical History,
ANCIENT AND MODERN,
FROM
THE BIRTH OF CHRIST,
TO THE
BEGINNING OF THE PRESENT CENTURY:
IN WHICH
The Rise, Progress, and Variations of Church Power
ARE CONSIDERED

In their Connexion with the State of LEARNING and PHILOSOPHY, and
the POLITICAL HISTORY OF EUROPE during that Period.

By the late learned

JOHN LAWRENCE MOSHEIM, D. D.
And Chancellor of the University of GOTTINGEN.

*Translated from the ORIGINAL LATIN, and accompanied with NOTES and
CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES,*

By ARCHIBALD MACLAINE, D. D.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

To the whole is added AN ACCURATE INDEX.

First American Edition.

VOLUME I.

PHILADELPHIA:
PRINTED BY STEPHEN C. USTICK, No. 79, NORTH THIRD STREET,
1797.

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ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

American Edition.

THE established reputation of this History has induced the Editors, against every obstacle, and particularly the *magnitude* of the undertaking, to persevere in bringing before the Public eye, this *first* American Edition.

We promise ourselves that the execution will be equal to the expectation of the Public. About five hundred Subscribers have liberally given their encouragement: We hope for further aids, and will endeavour with the favor of Providence, to bring it to a conclusion as speedily as possible.

The Recommendations already published are only *partial*, being

obtained from some of the principal Clergy in Philadelphia: others, throughout the Continent, would, no doubt, freely have contributed their favorable testimony, had circumstances permitted a seasonable application: this conclusion is drawn from the support they have yielded, by their voluntary Subscriptions for the Work.

We conclude it will not be thought impertinent to subjoin some of the testimonies in favor of this History. They are as follow:

HAVING perused Dr. Mosheim's *ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY*, I think that in respect of elegance of style and perspicuity of method it is the best extant. Like all other human compositions, it no doubt has imperfections, and the author some probably: but as this country has not had the means of information from any work of this kind being published in it before, I cannot help entertaining the pleasing hope, that the general interests of the kingdom of Christ will be thereby promoted.

WILLIAM MARSHALL, A. M.

Minister of the Associate Church, Philadelphia.
Philadelphia, Oct. 31st, 1796.

MOSHEIM'S *ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY* has obtained universal approbation and stands in no need of my recommendation.

ROBERT ANNAN, A. M.

Philadelphia, Oct. 31st, 1796.

=

AS I can with *perfect safety*, so I do *most cheerfully* concur with the above recommendations in favour of a very valuable Work.

SAMUEL MAGAW, D. D.

Philadelphia, Oct. 31st, 1796.

=

I HAVE never read any single History of the Christian Church which I esteem as any way equal to that written by Dr. Mosheim.

ASHBEL GREEN, D. D.

Philadelphia, Jan. 2d, 1797.

=

THE interesting Work recommended with so much propriety by the foregoing Ministers of Religion, needs only to be read in order to be admired.

JOHN ANDREWS, D. D. Vice

Provost, and Professor of Moral Philosophy,
&c. in the University of Pennsylvania.

WILLIAM ROGERS, D. D.

Professor of English and Belles Lettres, in the
University of Pennsylvania.

J. HENRY Ch. HELMUTH, D. D.

Minister of the Lutheran Congregation.

JOHN MEDER,

Minister of the Church of the United Brethren.

FRIEDRICH SCHMIDT, A. M.

Minister of the Lutheran Congregation.

WILLIAM HENDEL, D. D.

Minister of the German Reformed Congregation.

Philadelphia, April 26, 1797.

Supported by such authorities, and seconded by the liberal countenance of an enlightened Public, we have only to superadd our fervent wishes that through the smiles of Providence they may be amply remunerated by a perusal of the whole work.

Thomas Ustick.

Stephen C. Ustick.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

Second Edition.

THE favourable reception which the *first* edition of this work met with, has encouraged the Translator to employ his utmost care in rendering the *second* still less unworthy of the acceptance of the Public. He has corrected a passage erroneously translated in the second volume, at the 574th page of the quarto edition; and he has revised the whole with a degree of attention, which he hopes will secure him against the charge of any other inadvertency. He takes this opportunity of acknowledging the goodness of the learned and worthy Dr. NEVE of *Middleton Stoney*, who favoured him with several

Notes, and with some hundreds of Additional Articles and Corrections for the INDEX. Many of these are inserted in this edition, and an N. subjoined to each, to distinguish them from those of the Translator.

T O
HIS MOST SERENE HIGHNESS
WILLIAM V,
PRINCE OF ORANGE AND NASSAU,
HEREDITARY STADTHOLDER,
CAPTAIN-GENERAL AND ADMIRAL OF THE
UNITED PROVINCES, &c.

SIR,

I CANNOT but esteem it the highest honour to be permitted to give your SERENE HIGHNESS a public testimony of my homage and respect, by laying the following work at your feet. Testimonies, indeed, of this kind, when offered to Princes, are generally attended with such high strains of panegyric, as have contributed to render the credibility of *Dedications* more than dubious. The abuse of a custom, originally designed

to pay a just tribute of applause to the great and good, to the patrons of religion, virtue, liberty, and letters, has been so common, and the prostitution of it so notorious, that, if the language of *Dedications* were alone to be consulted, it would be difficult to distinguish a *Nero* from a *Trajan*, a *Philip the Second* from a PRINCE OF ORANGE.

IT is certain, SIR, that we live in an age in which the merit of Princes is not appreciated by the reports of an oracle, whose decisions are so often found to be false and delusive; but by the lustre of their domestic virtues, the wisdom of their public measures, and the general tenor of their conduct and actions: and I know, MOST SERENE PRINCE, that, in the high sphere of action to which Providence is leading you with such distinguished marks of protection and favour, you desire to be judged by no other

Criterion. I know, that both precept and example have pointed out to you the path to true glory; that your virtuous heart has relished their lessons; and that the love of fame, which even Heroes have acknowledged as the sole spring of their conduct, will be, with you, but a subordinate motive to reduce these lessons to practice.

WERE I capable of drawing with the strictest truth the Portrait of your SERENE HIGHNESS, I should scarcely think it expedient to place it here, for the reasons already mentioned. Besides, those (if any such there be) who are yet unacquainted with the *joyful* and *general* hopes this Republic entertains in the prospect of your approaching Government, would look upon the truth as exaggeration, and, not knowing the obscure person that pronounced it, perhaps as flattery;

while those judges of true merit, who have the honour to approach your SERENE HIGHNESS, would certainly find the Portrait defective.

BUT while I with-hold, MOST SERENE PRINCE, that tribute of praise that is due to your early merit, and which, I am persuaded, your virtuous ambition desires rather to deserve still farther than to receive at present, there are certain effusions of the heart, which neither my character as a Christian minister, nor as a citizen of this Republic, will permit me to suppress on this occasion. I cannot conceal those feelings, which so naturally arise from a view of the goodness of the Divine Providence to this Nation, in the maintenance of your Illustrious House, the preservation of your precious days, and the education your SERENE HIGHNESS has received under the tender and wise inspection of that great and good Prince, who bears

with such dignity the glorious name of BRUNSWICK. It is with inexpressible joy, that we see this respectable guide pointing out to you the Heroes that you are more peculiarly called to imitate, in that glorious line of ancestors who have gone before you to immortality, and performing with a truly parental affection that important task, that was for so short a space intrusted with those illustrious Parents, of whom you were deprived in the very dawn of life. But it is with singular feelings of satisfaction and delight, that we behold in your SERENE HIGHNESS the fruits of an excellent education growing to a happy maturity, and promising a new period of prosperity and glory to a Republic, founded by a PRINCE OF ORANGE, whose venerable name and heroic deeds will shine in the annals of public liberty and public

virtue, as long as the sacred names of liberty and virtue shall be known among men.

THE work I here humbly present to your SERENE HIGHNESS, is the *History of the Christian Religion*; that Divine Religion, which you, SIR, have studied with uncommon application, judgment, and success. It is upon good grounds that I make this declaration, as I, myself, had the honour of being a witness to your remarkable progress in religious knowledge on that memorable day, when, before an illustrious assembly of the States of this Nation, you gave publicly *a reason of the faith that is in you*, and excited the admiration of those that were present on this solemn occasion. It is not, therefore, without a certain degree of propriety, that I address to your SERENE HIGHNESS the translation of an important work,

which has the History of Religion for its object. It is true, the language of the original is perfectly familiar to your SERENE HIGHNESS; I would, nevertheless, hope that the Translation may not be entirely unworthy of your attention, if my zealous endeavours to render it still more interesting than the original have not been utterly unsuccessful.

IF YOUR SERENE HIGHNESS deigns to peruse the following work, which is certainly composed with more judgment and freedom than any Ecclesiastical History that has hitherto appeared, you will find in it a great variety of objects, all instructive, though not, indeed, equally pleasing. You will see, on the one hand, the religion of JESUS rising upon a benighted world, striking conviction into the hearts of mortals by the irresistible lustre of its divine truths, con-

quering the passions and prejudices of men, confounding the opposition of Nations and Empires, furnishing new supports to civil and social virtue, and unfolding those sublime doctrines and maxims that tend to the perfection of human nature, and the happiness of human society. But you will also observe, on the other hand, the lamentable changes that have been introduced into the church, in consequence of the corruption of men, the ambition of a licentious and despotic priesthood, and the bigotry and tyranny of ignorant and wicked sovereigns. Your SERENE HIGHNESS will also see, in the following work, the happy events that have arisen, at certain periods, from the efforts of a wise, pious, learned, and moderate clergy, seconded by the influence and authority of religious Princes, whose counsels and examples have

always a commanding power, that enables them to do good with a facility peculiar to them alone. This part of Ecclesiastical History, I am persuaded, SIR, you will read with pleasure, and not without a noble spirit of emulation. But your SERENE HIGHNESS will observe, with a generous concern, that these efforts have not been sufficient to extinguish that unhappy spirit of Fanaticism, of whose deplorable effects the learned author has exhibited such a striking picture; and you will find, in all ages of the church, enthusiastical sects striking out new forms of religion, by working on the passions of the ignorant and unwary, and deriving their rules of faith and manners from the fallacious suggestions of a warm imagination, rather than from the clear and infallible dictates of the word of God. Your SERENE HIGHNESS will see, in the course of this History,

various abuses, which the true and judicious friends of Christianity will seriously lay to heart. You will see one set of men covering religion with a tawdry habit of type and allegory; another converting it into an instrument of dissension and discord; and your discerning mind will easily observe the unhappy consequences of departing from the divine simplicity of the Gospel, and loading its pure and heavenly doctrines with the inventions and *commandments of men*. Finally, SIR, you will see in the following work, the tendency of *true religion* to strengthen the springs of government, by purifying the motives, and animating the zeal of those that govern, to promote those virtues that exalt a nation, by rendering its inhabitants good subjects and true patriots, and by confirming all the respectable bonds and obligations

of civil society. Here more particularly, your SERENE HIGHNESS will be fixed in the belief of one important truth, which no wise and good Prince will ever loose sight of, that *the enemies of religion are the enemies of mankind*; and that it is the *natural tendency of infidelity and licentiousness to dissolve the most sacred obligations, to remove the most powerful motives to virtue, and, by corrupting the principles of individuals, to poison the sources of public order and public prosperity.*

As you are called, SIR, by the voice of Divine Providence, to watch over the prosperity of these United Provinces, to be the guardian of their privileges, and the ornament and defender of their pure and holy Religion, these considerations must naturally make a deep impresson on your mind. They will certainly influence the measures YOUR SERENE HIGHNESS will, one day, employ for promoting

the happiness of the state, increasing the purity and lustre of the church, and advancing the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, which is a kingdom of *righteousness, charity, and truth.*

MAY the God, by whom Kings reign and Princes decree justice, strengthen your hands for performing with dignity this important task! May he prolong your days, and render them ever precious to the people of this land! May you be the illustrious instrument of his wisdom and power, for restraining the growth of impiety, and covering licentiousness and vice with that infamy and confusion which are their just and natural reward! May religion and virtue flourish under your influence, and derive a commanding authority from your pious example! May public spirit, with the arts and sciences, acquire new vigour under your auspicious

protection! And when, after a long course of days, crowned with public prosperity and domestic happiness, you shall be called from the transitory scene of human grandeur, to *a kingdom which shall never be moved*, may our children's children say to their posterity, with tears of grateful sorrow in their eyes, *When the ear heard him, then it blessed him; when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him—because he put on righteousness and it clothed him, and because judgment and equity were his robe and diadem!*

THESE ILLUSTRIOUS PRINCE, are the devout wishes of an affectionate people, and they shall never cease to be the ardent prayer of,

S I R,
 Your SERENE HIGHNESS'S
 most dutiful,
 most obedient, and
 most devoted servant,
 ARCHIBALD MACLAINE.

Translator's Preface.

I CANNOT persuade myself, that the complaints we hear frequently of the frivolous nature of the public taste in matters of literature, are so far to be relied on, as to make me despair of a favourable reception of the following work. A History of the Christian Church, composed with judgment, taste, and candour, drawn, with uncommon discernment and industry, from the best sources, enriched with much useful learning and several important discoveries, and connected with the History of Arts, Philosophy, and Civil Government, is an object that will very probably attract the attention of many, and must undoubtedly excite the curiosity of the judicious and the wise. A work of this nature will be considered by the *Philosopher* as an important branch of the History of the Human Mind, and I need not mention a multitude of reasons that render it peculiarly interesting to the *Christian*. Besides; there has not hitherto appeared, in English, any complete History of the Church, that represents its revolutions, its divisions, and doctrines, with impartiality and truth, exposes the delusions of popish legends, breathes a spirit of moderation and freedom, and, keeping perpetually in the view of the reader the true nature and design of the Christian religion, points out the deviations from its beautiful simplicity, that have been too frequent among all orders of men and in all ages of the world.

The following work has the best claim, of any I know, to these characters [a]; and its peculiar merit is pointed out, as far as modesty would permit, in the ensuing Preface of its justly celebrated author. The reputation of this great man is very well known. His noble birth seemed to open to his ambition a fair path to civil promotion; but his zeal for the interests of religion, his insatiable thirst after knowledge, and more especially his predominant taste for sacred literature, induced him to consecrate his admirable talents to the service of the church. The German universities loaded him with literary honours. The King of DENMARK invited him to settle at *Copenhagen*. The duke of BRUNSWICK called him from thence to *Helmstadt*, where he received the marks of distinction due to his eminent abilities; filled, with applause, the academical chair of divinity; was honoured with the character of ecclesiastical counsellor to that respectable court; and presided over the seminaries of learning in

[a] Some time after I had undertaken this translation, I was honoured with a letter from the learned bishop of GLOUCESTER, in which he was so good as to testify his approbation of my design, and to speak of the work I here offer to the public in an English dress, in the following manner: *MOSHEIM's Compendium is excellent, the method admirable; in short, the only one deserving the name of an Ecclesiastical History. It deserves, and needs, frequent notes.*—I hope this eminent prelate will not take amiss my placing here a testimony that was not designed to be produced in this public manner. It is, however, so adapted to give to those who examine recommendations with discernment a favourable notion of the following work, that I could not think of suppressing it. It is usual, in publishing certain ancient authors, to prefix to them the encomiums they have been honoured with by those whose authority is respected in the republic of letters. I adopt this custom so far as to mention one testimony;—more would be unnecessary; the testimony of a WARBURTON is abundantly sufficient to answer my purpose, and will be justly looked upon as equivalent to a multitude.

the dutchy of *Wolfenbuttle* and the principality of *Blackenburg*. When the late king formed the design of giving an uncommon degree of lustre to the University of *Göttingen*, by filling it with men of the first rank in the literary world, such as a *HALLER*, a *GESNER*, and a *MICHAELIS*, *Dr. MOSHEIM* was deemed worthy to appear at the head of that famous seat of learning, in the quality of chancellor; and here he died, universally lamented, in the year 1755, and in the sixty-first year of his age. In depth of judgment, in extent of learning, in the powers of a noble and masculine eloquence, in purity of taste, and in a laborious application to all the various branches of erudition and philosophy, he had certainly very few superiors. His Latin translation of the celebrated *Dr. CUDWORTH'S Intellectual System of the Universe*, enriched with large annotations, discovered such a profound acquaintance with ancient philosophy and erudition, as justly excited the admiration of the learned world. His ingenious illustrations of the sacred writings, his successful labours in the defence of Christianity, and the light he cast upon the history of religion and philosophy by his uninterrupted researches, appear in a multitude of volumes, which are deservedly placed among the most valuable treasures of sacred and profane literature; and the learned and judicious work, that is here presented to the public, will undoubtedly render his name illustrious in the records of religion and letters.

How far justice has been done to this excellent work, in the following translation, is a point that must be left to the decision of those who shall think proper to peruse it with attention. I can say, with the strictest truth, that I have spared no pains to render it worthy of their gracious acceptance; and

this consideration gives me some claim to their candour and indulgence, for any defects they may find in it. I have endeavoured to render my translation faithful, but never proposed to render it entirely literal. The style of the original is by no means a model to imitate, in a work designed for general use. Dr. MOSHEIM affected brevity, and laboured to crowd many things into few words; thus his diction, though pure and correct, became sententious and harsh, without that harmony which pleases the ear, and those transitions which make a narration flow with ease. This being the case, I have sometimes taken considerable liberties with my author, and followed the *spirit* of his narrative without adhering strictly to the *letter*. Where, indeed, the Latin phrase appeared to me elegant, expressive, and compatible with the English idiom, I have constantly followed it; in all other cases, I have departed from it, and have often added a few sentences, to render an observation more striking, a fact more clear, a portrait more finished. Had I been translating CÆCERO or TACITUS, I should not have thought such freedom pardonable. The translation of a classic author, like the copy of a capital picture, must exhibit not only the *subject*, but also the *manner* of the original; this rule, however, is not applicable to the work now under consideration.

The reader will easily distinguish the *additional* Notes of the Translator from the *original* ones of the Author; the references to the latter being included in *crotchets*, while those that indicate the former are marked with a hand, thus (✍).

When I entered upon this undertaking, I proposed rendering the additional notes more numerous and ample, than the reader will find them. I soon

perceived that the prosecution of my original plan would render this work too voluminous; and this induced me to alter my purpose. The notes I have given, are not, however, inconsiderable in number; I wish I could say as much with respect to their merit and importance.—I would only hope, that some of them will be looked upon as not altogether unnecessary.

Hague, Dec. 4,

1764.

Author's Preface.

THE different editions of the *Elements of the Christian History* [a] met with such a favourable reception from the public, and the demand for them was so great, that they were, in a little time, out of print. Upon this occasion, the worthy person, at whose expence they had been presented to the public, desired earnestly to give a new edition of the same work improved and enlarged, and thus still more worthy of its gracious acceptance. The other occupations in which I was engaged, and a prudent consideration of the labour I must undergo in the correction and augmentation of a work in which I myself perceived so many imperfections, prevented my yielding, for a long time, to his earnest solicitations. The importunities of my friends at length prevailed upon me to undertake this difficult work; and I have employed assiduously my hours of leisure, during the space of two years, in bringing it up to as high a degree of perfection as I am capable of giving it. So that now these *Elements of Ecclesiastical History* appear under a new form, and the changes they have undergone are certainly advantageous in every respect. I have retained still the division of the whole into certain periods; for though a continued narration would have been more agreeable to my own taste, and had

☞ [a] A small work published by Dr. MOSHEIM, many years ago, in two volumes, 12mo.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

also several circumstances to recommend it, yet the counsels of some learned men, who have experienced the great advantages of this division, engaged me to prefer it to every other method. And, indeed, when we examine this matter with due attention, we shall find, that the author, who proposes comprehending in one work all that variety of observations and facts that are necessary to an acquaintance with the state of Christianity in the different ages of the church, will find it impossible to execute this design, without adopting certain general divisions of time, and others of a more particular kind, which the variety of objects, that demand a place in his History, naturally points out.

And as this was my design in the following work, I have left its primitive form entire, and made it my principal business to correct, improve, and augment it in such a manner, as to render it more instructive and entertaining to the reader.

My principal care has been employed in establishing upon the most solid foundations, and confirming by the most respectable authority, the credit of the facts related in this History. For this purpose, I have drawn from the fountain head, and have gone to those genuine sources from whence the pure and uncorrupted streams of evidence flow. I have consulted the best authors of every age, and chiefly those who were contemporary with the events they relate, or lived near the periods in which they happened; and I have endeavoured to report their contents with brevity, perspicuity, and precision. Abbreviators, generally speaking, do little more than reduce to a short and narrow compass, those large bodies of history, that have been compiled from original authors; this method may

be, in some measure, justified by several reasons, and therefore is not to be entirely disapproved. From hence nevertheless it happens, that the errors, which almost always abound in large and voluminous productions, are propagated with facility, and passing from one book into many, are unhappily handed down from age to age. This I had formerly observed in several abridgments; and I had lately the mortification to find some instances of this in my own work, when I examined it by the pure lamp of antiquity, and compared it with those original records that are considered as the genuine sources of sacred history. It was then, that I perceived the danger of confiding implicitly even in those who are the most generally esteemed on account of their fidelity, penetration, and diligence; and it was then also, that I became sensible of the necessity of adding, suppressing, changing, and correcting several things in the small work which I formerly published, and which has been already mentioned. In the execution of this necessary task, I can affirm with truth, that I have not been wanting in perseverance, industry, or attention; and yet, with all these, it is extremely difficult to avoid mistakes of every kind, as those who are acquainted with the nature of historical researches abundantly know. How far I have approached to that inaccessible degree of exactness, which is chargeable with no error, must be left to the decision of those whose extensive knowledge of the Christian history entitles them to pronounce judgment in this matter. That such may judge with the more facility, I have mentioned the authors who have been my guides; and, if I have in any respect misrepresented their accounts or their sentiments, I must confess, that I am much more excusable than some other historians, who have met

with and deserved the same reproach, since I have perused with attention and compared with each other the various authors to whose testimony I appeal, having formed a resolution of trusting to no authority inferior to that of the original sources of historical truth.

In order to execute, with some degree of success, the design I formed of rendering my abridgment more perfect, and of giving the history of the church as it stands in the most authentic records, and in the writings of those whose authority is most respectable, I found myself obliged to make many changes and additions. These will be visible through the whole of the following work, but more especially in the **THIRD BOOK**, which comprehends the history of the Christian, and particularly of the Latin or Western church, from **CHARLEMAGNE** to the rise of **LUTHER** and the commencement of the Reformation. This period of Ecclesiastical History, though it abound with shining examples; though it be unspeakably useful as a key to the knowledge of the political, as well as religious, state of *Europe*; though it be singularly adapted to unfold the origin and explain the reasons of many modern transactions, has nevertheless been hitherto treated with less perspicuity, solidity, and elegance, than any other branch of the history of the church. The number of writers that have attempted to throw light upon this interesting period is considerable, but few of them are in the hands of the public. The barbarous style of one part of them, the profound ignorance of another, and the partial and factious spirit of a third, are such as render them by no means inviting; and the enormous bulk and excessive price of the productions of some of the best of these writers must necessarily render them scarce. It is

further to be observed, that some of the most valuable records that belong to the period of Ecclesiastical History now under consideration, lie yet in manuscript in the collections of the curious (or the opulent, who are willing to pass for such), and are thus concealed from public view. Those who consider these circumstances will no longer be surpris'd, that in this part of Ecclesiastical History, the most learned and laborious writers have omitted many things of consequence, and treated others without success. Among these, the analysts and other historians, so highly celebrated by the church of *Rome*, such as BARONIUS, RAYNALDUS, BZOVIVS, MANRIQUES, and WADDING, though they were amply furnished with ancient manuscripts and records, have nevertheless committed more faults, and fallen into errors of greater consequence, than other writers, who were by far their inferiors in learning and credit, and had much less access to original records than they were favoured with.

These considerations induce me to hope, that the work I here present to the public will neither appear superfluous nor useless. For as I have employed many years in the most laborious researches, in order to acquire a thorough acquaintance with the history of Christianity from the eighth century downwards, and as I flatter myself that, by the assistance of books and manuscripts too little consulted, I have arrived at a more certain and satisfactory knowledge of that period than is to be found in the generality of writers, I cannot but think, that it will be doing real service to Ecclesiastical History to produce some of these discoveries, as this may encourage the learned and industrious to pursue the plan that I have thus begun, and to complete the history of the Latin

church, by dispelling the darkness of what is called the *Middle Age*. And indeed I may venture to affirm, that I have brought to light several things hitherto generally unknown, corrected from records of undoubted authority accounts of other things known but imperfectly and expressed with much perplexity and confusion, and exposed the fabulous nature of many events that deform the annals of sacred history. I here perhaps carry too far that self-praise, which the candour and indulgence of the public are disposed either to overlook as the infirmity, or to regard as the privilege, of old age. Those, however, who are curious to know how far this self-applause is just and well-grounded, have only to cast an eye on the illustrations I have given on the subject of CONSTANTINE'S *Donation*, as also with respect to the *Cathari* and *Albigenses*, the *Beghards* and *Beguines*, the *Brethren* and *Sisters of the Free Spirit* (whose pestilential fanaticism was a public nuisance to many countries in *Europe* during the space of four hundred years), the *Fratricelli*, or *Little Brethren*, the controversies between the *Franciscans* and the *Roman Pontiffs*, the history of BERENGER and the *Lollards*, and other matters. When my illustrations on these subjects and points of history are compared with what we find concerning them in other writers, it will perhaps appear, that my pretensions to the merit of some interesting discoveries are not entirely without foundation.

These accessions to Ecclesiastical History could not be exhibited with the same brevity which I have observed in treating other subjects, that have already been amply enlarged upon by others; for this would have been incompatible with the information of the curious, who would have received but imperfect and confused notions of these subjects, and

would have made me, perhaps, pass for a fabulous writer, who advanced novelties, without mentioning either my guides or my authorities. I have, therefore, not only explained all those points of history, which carry with them an appearance of novelty, or recede considerably from the notions commonly received, but have also confirmed them by a sufficient number of observations and testimonies to establish their credibility on a solid foundation. The illustrations and enlargements, which, generally speaking, carry an air of disproportion and superfluity in an historical abridgment, were absolutely necessary in the present case.

These reasons engaged me to change the plan laid down in my former work, and one peculiar consideration induced me to render the present history more ample and voluminous. The *Elements*, so often mentioned, were designed principally for the use of those who are appointed to instruct the studious youth in the history and vicissitudes of the Christian church, and who stand in need of a compendious text to give a certain order and method to their prelections. In this view I treated each subject with the utmost brevity, and left, as was natural and fitting, much to the learning and abilities of those who should think proper to make use of these *Elements* in their course of instruction. But, in reviewing this compendious work with a design to offer it anew to the public, I imagined it might be rendered more acceptable to many, by such improvements and additions as might adapt it not only to the use of those who teach others, but also of those who are desirous of acquiring, by their own application, a general knowledge of Ecclesiastical History. It was with this view that I made considerable additions to my former work, illustrated

many things that had been there obscurely expressed for the sake of brevity, and reduced to a regular and perspicuous order a variety of facts, the recital of which had been more or less attended with perplexity and confusion. Hence it is, that, in the following work, the history of the calamities, in which the Christians of the first ages were involved, and the origin and progress of the sects and heresies which troubled the church, are exhibited with an uncommon degree of accuracy and precision. Hence the various forms of religion, which have sprung from the excessive love of novelty, are represented without prejudice or partiality, and with all possible perspicuity and truth. It is also in consequence of this change of my original design, that I have taken the utmost pains to state more clearly religious controversies, to estimate their respective moment and importance, and to exhibit the arguments alledged on both sides: nor must I omit mentioning the care and labour I have employed in giving an exact narration of the transactions, wars, and enterprising measures, of the Roman pontiffs, from the reign of CHARLEMAGNE down to the present times.

Those, therefore, who are prevented from applying themselves to a regular study of Ecclesiastical History through want of leisure, or by not having at hand the sources of instruction, and are nevertheless desirous of acquiring a distinct knowledge of certain events, doctrines, or religious rites, may consult the following work, in which they will find the information they want; and those who are inclined to push their enquiries still further, will see the course they must pursue, and the authors mentioned whom it will be proper for them to peruse.

It would betray an unpardonable presumption in me to imagine, that in a work, whose plan is so extensive, and whose contents are so various, I have never fallen into any mistakes, or let any thing drop from my pen, which stands in need of correction. But as I am conscious to myself of having conducted this undertaking with the most upright intentions, and of having employed all those means that are generally looked upon as the best preservatives against the seduction of error, I would hope that the mistakes I may have committed are neither so frequent nor so momentous as to be productive of any pernicious effects.

I might add more ; but nothing more is necessary to enable those to judge of this work, who judge with knowledge, impartiality and candour. I therefore conclude, by offering the just tribute of my gratitude to Almighty God, who, amidst the infirmities of my advanced years and other pressures under which I have laboured, has supplied me with strength to bring this difficult work to a conclusion.

Göttingen,
March 23, 1755.

Received of Mr. J. W. ...
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Introduction.

I. **E**CCLESIASTICAL HISTORY is a Definition of Ecclesiastical History. clear and faithful narration of the transactions, revolutions, and events, that relate to that large community, which bears the name of JESUS CHRIST, and is vulgarly known under the denomination of the CHURCH. It comprehends both the *external* and *internal* condition of this community, and so connects each event with the causes from which it proceeds, and the instruments which have been concerned in its production, that the attentive reader may be led to observe the displays of providential wisdom and goodness in the preservation of the church, and thus find his piety improved, as well as his knowledge.

II. The church, founded by the ministry and death of CHRIST, cannot be represented with more perspicuity and propriety than under the notion of a society subjected to a lawful dominion, and governed by certain laws and institutions, mostly of a moral and spiritual tendency. To such a society many external events must happen, which will advance or oppose its interests, and accelerate or retard its progress towards perfection, in consequence of its unavoidable connexion with the course and revolutions of human affairs. Moreover, as nothing is stable and uniform where the imperfections of humanity take place, this religious society, besides the vicissitudes to which it must be exposed from the influence of external events, must be liable to various changes ~~in~~ in its internal constitution. In this view of things then it appears,

that the history of the church, like that of the state, may be divided, with propriety, into two general branches, which we may call its *External* and *Internal* history.

The External, which comprehends the prosperous and calamitous events that happened to the church.

III. The *External History* of the church comprehends all the changes, vicissitudes, and events, that have diversified the external state and condition of this sacred community. And as all public societies have their periods of lustre and decay, and are exposed to revolutions both of a happy and calamitous nature, so this first branch of Ecclesiastical History may be subdivided into two, comprehending respectively, the *prosperous* and *calamitous* events that have happened to the church.

Prosperous events.

IV. The *prosperous* events that have contributed to extend the limits, or to augment the influence, of the christian church, have proceeded either from its rulers and leaders, or from the subordinate members of this great community. Under the former class, we rank its *public* rulers, such as princes, magistrates, and pontiffs, who, by their authority and laws, their liberality, and even their arms, have maintained its cause and extended its borders; as also its more *private* leaders, its learned and pious doctors, whose wise counsels, pious exploits, eminent examples, and distinguished abilities have contributed most to promote its *true* prosperity and lustre. Under the latter class, we may comprehend the advantages, which the cause of Christianity has derived, from the active faith, the invincible constancy, the fervent piety, and extensive charity of its genuine professors, who, by the attractive lustre of these amiable virtues, have led many into the way of truth, and engaged them to submit themselves to the empire of the MESSIAH.

Calamitous events.

V. Under the *calamitous* events that have happened to the church, may be comprehended the injuries it has received from the vices and passions of its friends, and the bitter opposition and insidious

stratagems of its enemies. The professors of Christianity, and more especially the doctors and rulers of the church, have done unspeakable detriment to the cause of religion, by their ignorance and sloth, their luxury and ambition, their uncharitable zeal, animosities and contentions, of which many shocking examples will be exhibited in the course of this history. Christianity had *public* enemies to encounter, even princes and magistrates, who opposed its progress by penal laws, and blood-thirsty persecution; it had also private and inveterate adversaries in a certain set of philosophers, or rather sophists, who, enslaved to superstition or abandoned to atheism, endeavoured to blast the rising church by their perfidious accusations and their virulent writings.

VI. Such then are the events that are exhibited to our view in the external history of the church. Its *Internal History* comprehends the changes and vicissitudes that have happened in its inward constitution, in that system of discipline and doctrine by which it stands distinguished from all other religious societies. This branch may be properly termed the *History of the Christian Religion*. The causes of these internal changes are to be sought for principally in the conduct and measures of those who have presided and borne rule in the church. It has been too frequently their practice to interpret the truths and precepts of religion in a manner accommodated to their particular systems, nay, to their private interest; and, while they have found in some implicit obedience, they have met with warm opposition from others. Hence have proceeded theological broils and civil commotions, in which the cause of religion has often been defended at the expence both of justice and humanity. All these things must be observed with the strictest attention by an ecclesiastical historian.

Internal
History,
which com-
prehends,

First, the history of the Christian doctors.

VII. The first thing, therefore, that should be naturally treated in the *Internal History* of the church, is the history of its ministers, rulers, and form of government. When we look back to the commencement of the Christian church, we find its government administered jointly by the pastors and the people. But, in process of time, the scene changes, and we see these pastors affecting an air of pre-eminence and superiority, trampling upon the rights and privileges of the community, and assuming to themselves a supreme authority both in civil and religious matters. This invasion of the rights of the people was at length carried to such a height, that a single man administered, or at least pretended a right to administer, the affairs of the whole church with an unlimited sway.—Among the doctors of these early times, there were some who acquired, by their learned labours, a shining reputation and an universal influence; they were regarded as oracles; their decisions were handed down to posterity as sacred rules of faith and practice; and they thus deserve to be mentioned, with particular distinction, among the governors of the church, though no part of its public administration was actually in their hands [a].

Secondly, the ministry of the doctrines and laws of the church.

VIII. After giving an account of the rulers and doctors of the church, the ecclesiastical historian proceeds to exhibit a view of the *laws* that are peculiar to this sacred community, that form, as it were, its center of union, and distinguish it from all other religious societies. These *laws* are of two kinds. The first are properly called *divine*, because they are immediately enacted by God himself, and are contained in those sacred books, which carry

[a] By these our author means the *Fathers*, whose writings form still a rule of faith in the Romish church, while in the Protestant churches their authority diminishes from day to day.

the most striking marks of a divine origin. They consist of those *doctrines* that are the objects of faith and reason, and those *precepts* that are addressed to the heart and the affections. To the second kind belong those *laws* that are merely of human institution, and derive their authority only from the injunctions of the rulers of the church.

IX. In that part of the sacred history which relates to the doctrines of Christianity, it is necessary, above all things, to inquire particularly into the degree of authority that has been attributed to the sacred writings in all the different periods of the church, and also into the manner in which the divine doctrines they contain, have been explained and illustrated. For the true state of religion in every age can only be learned from the point of view in which these celestial oracles were considered, and from the manner in which they were expounded to the people. As long as they were the only rule of faith, religion preserved its native purity; and in proportion as their decisions were either neglected or postponed to the inventions of men, it degenerated from its primitive and divine simplicity. It is further necessary to shew under this head, what was the fate of the pure laws and doctrines of Christianity—how they were interpreted and explained—how they were defended against the enemies of the Gospel—how they were corrupted and adulterated by the ignorance and licentiousness of men. And, finally, it will be proper to enquire here, how far the lives and manners of Christians have been conformable to the dictates of these sacred laws, and the influence that these sublime doctrines ought to have upon the hearts of men; as also to examine the rules of discipline prescribed by the spiritual governors of the church, in order to correct and restrain the vices and irregularities of its members.

Rules necessary to be observed in giving a history of the doctrines of the Christian church.

Thirdly, the history of its ceremonies and worship

X. The *Human Laws*, that constitute a part of ecclesiastical government, consist in precepts concerning the external worship of the Deity, and, in certain rites, either confirmed by custom or introduced by positive and express authority. *Rites* and *ceremonies* regard religion either *directly* or *indirectly*; by the former, we understand those that are used in the immediate worship of the Supreme Being, whether in public or in private; by the latter, such pious and decent institutions as, besides direct acts of worship, have obtained in the church. This part of sacred history is of a vast extent, both on account of the great diversity of these ceremonies, and the frequent changes and modifications through which they have passed. This consideration will justify our treating them with brevity, in a work which is only designed as a compendious view of ecclesiastical history.

Fourthly, the history of the heresies that have divided it.

XI. As bodies politic are sometimes distracted with wars and seditions, so has the Christian church, though designed to be the mansion of charity and concord, been unhappily perplexed by intestine divisions, occasioned sometimes by points of doctrine, at others by a variety of sentiments about certain rites and ceremonies. The principal authors of these divisions have been stigmatized with the title of *Heretics*, and their peculiar opinions of consequence distinguished by the appellation of *Heresies* [b]. The nature therefore and progress of these intestine divisions or *heresies* are to be carefully unfolded; and, if this be done with judgment and impartiality, it must prove useful and interesting in the highest degree, though at the same time it must be observed, that no branch of ecclesiastical

[b] A term innocent in its primitive signification, though become odious by the enormity of some errors, to which it has been applied, and also by the use that has been made of it, to vent the malignity of enthusiasts and bigots.

history is so painful and difficult, on account of the sagacity, candour, and application that it requires, in order to its being treated in a satisfactory manner. The difficulty of arriving at the truth, in researches of this nature, is extreme, on account of the injurious treatment that has been shewn to the heads of religious sects, and the unfair representations that have been given of their tenets and opinions; and this difficulty has been considerably augmented by this particular circumstance, that the greatest part of the writings of those who were branded with the name of heretics have not reached our times. It is therefore the duty of a candid historian to avoid attaching to this term the invidious sense in which it is too often used, since it is the invective of all contending parties, and is employed against truth as frequently as against error. The wisest method here is to take the word *Heretic* in its general signification, as denoting a person, who, either directly or indirectly, has been the occasion of exciting divisions and dissensions among Christians.

XII. After thus considering what constitutes the *matter* of Ecclesiastical History, it will be proper to bestow a few thoughts on the *manner* of treating it, as this is a point of too much importance not to deserve a moment's attention. And here we may observe, that in order to render both the External and Internal History of the Church truly interesting and useful, it is absolutely necessary to trace effects to their causes, and to connect events with the circumstances, views, principles, and instruments that have contributed to their existence. A bare recital of facts can at best but enrich the *memory*, and furnish a certain degree of amusement; but the historian, who enters into the secret springs that direct the course of outward events, and views things in their various relations, connections, and tendencies, gives thus a proper exercise to the *judgment* of the reader, and administers, on many occasions, the

In treating Ecclesiastical History, events are to be considered in connexion with their causes.

most useful lessons of wisdom and prudence. It is true, a high degree of caution is to be observed here, lest, in disclosing the secret springs of public events, we substitute imaginary causes in the place of real, and attribute the actions of men to principles they never professed.

General method of investigating the secret causes of things.

XIII. In order to discover the secret causes of public events, some general succours are to be derived from the *History of the times* in which they happened, and the *Testimonies of the authors* by whom they are recorded. But besides these, a considerable *acquaintance with human nature*, founded on long observation and experience, is singularly useful in researches of this kind. The historian, who has acquired a competent knowledge of the views that occupy the generality of men, who has studied a great variety of characters, and attentively observed the force and violence of human passions, together with the infirmities and contradictions they produce in the conduct of life, will find, in this knowledge, a key to the secret reasons and motives which gave rise to many of the most important events of ancient times. A knowledge also of the *manners and opinions* of the persons concerned in the events that are related, will contribute much to lead us to the true origin of things.

More particular rules for coming to this knowledge in the External history of the church ;

XIV. There are, however, besides these general views, particular considerations, which will assist us still further in tracing up to their true causes the various events of sacred history. We must, for example, in the External history of the church, attend carefully to two things ; *first*, to the political state of those kingdoms and nations in which the Christian religion has been embraced or rejected ; and, *secondly*, to their religious state, *i. e.* the opinions they have entertained concerning the divine nature, and the worship that is to be addressed to him. For we shall then perceive, with more certainty and less difficulty, the reasons of the different

reception Christianity has met with in different nations, when we are acquainted with the respective forms of civil government, the political maxims, and the public forms of religion that prevailed in those countries and in those periods of time in which the Gospel received encouragement, or met with opposition.

XV. With respect to the *Internal History of the Church*, nothing is more adapted to lay open to view the hidden springs of its various changes, than an acquaintance with the *History of learning and philosophy* in the times of old. For it is certain, that human learning and philosophy have, in all times, pretended to modify the doctrines of Christianity; and that these pretensions have extended further than belongs to the province of philosophy on the one hand, or is consistent with the purity and simplicity of the Gospel on the other. It may also be observed, that a knowledge of the forms of civil government, and of the superstitious rites and institutions of ancient times, is not only useful, as we remarked above, to illustrate several things in the *External History* of the church, but also to render a satisfactory account of its *Internal* variations both in point of doctrine and worship. For the genius of human laws and the maxims of civil rulers have undoubtedly had a great influence in forming the constitution of the church; and even its spiritual leaders have, in too many instances, from an ill-judged prudence, modelled its discipline and worship after the ancient superstitions.

XVI. We cannot be at any loss to know the sources from whence this important knowledge is to be derived. The best writers of every age, who make mention of ecclesiastical affairs, and particularly those who were contemporary with the events they relate, are to be carefully consulted; since it is from credible testimonies and

The sources from whence Ecclesiastical History must be derived.

respectable authorities that history derives a solid and permanent foundation. Our esteem for those writers, who may be considered as the sources of historical knowledge, ought not however to lead us to treat with neglect the historians and annalists, who have already made use of these original records; since it betrays a foolish sort of vanity to reject the advantages that may be derived from the succours and labours of those who have preceded us in their endeavours to cast light upon matters that have been for many ages covered with obscurity [c].

The essential qualities of an Ecclesiastical History.

XVII. From all this we shall easily discern the qualifications that are essential to a good writer of Ecclesiastical History. His knowledge of human affairs must be considerable, and his learning extensive. He must be endowed with a spirit of observation and sagacity; a habit of reasoning with evidence and facility; a faithful memory; and a judgment matured by experience, and strengthened by exercise. Such are the intellectual endowments that are required in the character of a good historian; and the moral qualities that are necessary to complete it, are, a persevering and inflexible attachment to truth and virtue, a freedom from the servitude of prejudice and passion, and a laborious and patient turn of mind.

An historian must be free from a fervile attachment to times, men, and opinions.

XVIII. Those who undertake to write the history of the Christian church are exposed to receive a bias from three different sources, from *times, persons, and opinions*. The *times*, in which we live, have often so great an influence on our manner of judging, as to make us consider the events, which happen in our days, as a rule by

[c] The various writers of ecclesiastical history are enumerated by SEVER. WALT. SLUTERUS in his *Propyleum Historiæ Christianæ*, published at Lunenburg in 4to. in the year 1696; and by CASP. SAGITTARIUS, in his *Introductio ad Historiam Ecclesiasticam, singulasque ejus partes*.

which we are to estimate the probability or evidence of those that are recorded in the history of past ages. The *persons*, on whose testimonies we think we have reason to depend, acquire an imperceptible authority over our sentiments, that too frequently seduces us to adopt their errors, especially if these persons have been distinguished by eminent degrees of sanctity and virtue. And an attachment to favourite *opinions* leads authors sometimes to pervert, or, at least, to modify, facts in favour of those who have embraced these opinions, or to the disadvantage of such as have opposed them. These kinds of seduction are so much the more dangerous, as those whom they deceive are, in innumerable cases, insensible of their delusion, and of the false representations of things to which it leads them. It is not necessary to observe the solemn obligations that bind an historian to guard against these three sources of error with the most delicate circumspection, and the most scrupulous attention.

XIX. It is well known nevertheless how far ecclesiastical historians, in all ages, have departed from these rules, and from others of equal evidence and importance. For, not to mention those who lay claim to a high rank among the writers of history in consequence of a happy memory, loaded with an ample heap of materials, nor those whose pens are rather guided by sordid views of interest than by a generous love of truth, it is but too evident, how few in number the unprejudiced and impartial historians are, whom neither the influence of the sect to which they belong, nor the venerable and imposing names of antiquity, nor the spirit of the times and the torrent of prevailing *opinion*, can turn aside from the obstinate pursuit of truth *alone*. In the present age, more especially, the spirit of the times and the influence of predominant opinions, have gained with many an incredible ascendant.

The defects that are visible in the writers of Church history.

Hence we find frequently in the writings even of learned men such wretched arguments as these: *Such an opinion is true; therefore it must of necessity have been adopted by the primitive Christians—Christ has commanded us to live in such a manner; therefore it is undoubtedly certain, that the Christians of ancient times lived so.—A certain custom does not take place now; therefore it did not prevail in former times.*

The advantages that result from the study of Ecclesiastical History. General,

XX. If those who apply themselves to the composition of Ecclesiastical History be careful to avoid the sources of error mentioned above, their labours will be eminently useful to mankind, and more especially to those who are called to the important office of instructing others in the sacred truths and duties of Christianity. The history of the church presents to our view a variety of objects that are every way adapted to confirm our faith. When we contemplate here the discouraging obstacles, the united efforts of kingdoms and empires, and the dreadful calamities which Christianity, in its very infancy, was obliged to encounter, and over which it gained an immortal victory, this will be sufficient to fortify its true and zealous professors against all the threats, cavils, and stratagems of prophane and impious men. The great and shining examples also, which display their lustre, more or less, in every period of the Christian history, must have an admirable tendency to inflame our piety, and to excite, even in the coldest and most insensible hearts, the love of God and virtue. Those amazing revolutions and events that distinguished every age of the church, and often seemed to arise from small beginnings and causes of little consequence, proclaim, with a solemn and respectable voice, the empire of Providence, and also the inconstancy and vanity of human things. And, among the many advantages that arise from the study of Ecclesiastical History, it is none of the least, that we shall see therein the origin and occasions of those ridiculous rites, absurd

opinions, foolish superstitions, and pernicious errors, with which Christianity is yet disfigured in too many parts of the world. This knowledge will naturally lead us to a view of the truth in its beautiful simplicity, will engage us to love it, and render us zealous in its defence; not to mention the pleasure and satisfaction that we must feel in researches and discoveries of such an interesting kind.

XXI. They, more especially, who are appointed ^{and particu-} to instruct the youth in the public universities, as ^{lar.} also such as are set apart for the service of the church, will derive from this study the most useful lessons of wisdom and prudence, to direct them in the discharge of their respective offices. On the one hand, the inconsiderate zeal and temerity of others, and the pernicious consequences with which they have been attended, will teach circumspection; and in the mistakes into which even men of eminent merit and abilities have fallen, they will often see the things they are obliged to avoid, and the sacrifices it will be prudent to make, in order to maintain peace and concord in the church; on the other, illustrious examples and salutary measures will hold forth to them a rule of conduct, a lamp to shew them the paths they must pursue. It may be further observed, that, if we except the arms which scripture and reason furnish against superstition and error, there is nothing that will enable us to combat them with more efficacy than the view of their deplorable effects, as they are represented to us in the history of the church. It would be endless to enumerate all the advantages that result from the study of Ecclesiastical History; experience alone can display these in all their extent; nor shall we mention the benefits that may be derived from it by those who have turned their views to other sciences than that of theology, and its more peculiar utility to such as are engaged in the study of the civil law. All this would lead us too far from our present design.

The method
of treating
Ecclesiasti-
cal History,
in its Exter-
nal and In-
ternal
branches.

XXII. As the history of the church is *External* or *Internal*, so the manner of treating it must be suited to that division. As to the first, when the narration is long, and the thread of the history runs through a great number of ages, it is proper to divide it into certain periods, which will give the reader time to breathe, assist memory, and also introduce a certain method and order into the work. In the following history the usual division into centuries is adopted preferably to all others, because most generally liked; though it be attended with difficulties and inconveniences.

XXIII. A considerable part of these inconveniences will be however removed, if, besides this smaller division into centuries, we adopt a larger one, and divide the space of time that elapsed between the birth of CHRIST and our days into certain grand periods, that are distinguished by signal revolutions or remarkable events. It is on this account that we have judged it expedient to comprehend the following History in FOUR BOOKS, that will take in four remarkable periods: the FIRST will be employed in exhibiting the state and vicissitudes of the Christian church, from its commencement to the time of CONSTANTINE the Great. The SECOND will comprehend the period, that extends from the reign of CONSTANTINE to that of CHARLEMAGNE, which produced such a remarkable change in the face of *Europe*. The THIRD will contain the History of the Church, from the time of CHARLEMAGNE to the memorable period when LUTHER arose in *Germany*, to oppose the tyranny of *Rome*, and to deliver divine truth from the darkness that covered it. And the FOURTH will carry down the the same history, from the rise of LUTHER to the present times.

XXIV. We have seen above, that the sphere of Ecclesiastical History is extensive, that it comprehends a great variety of objects, and embraces

political as well as religious matters, so far as the former are related to the latter, either as causes or effects. But, however great the diversity of these objects may be, they are closely connected; and it is the particular business of an ecclesiastical historian to observe a method that will shew this connexion in the most conspicuous point of view, and form into one regular *whole* a variety of parts that seem heterogeneous and discordant. Different writers have followed here different methods, according to the diversity of their views and their peculiar manner of thinking. The order I have observed will be seen above in that part of this *Introduction*, which treats of the subject-matter of Ecclesiastical History; the mention of it is therefore omitted here, to avoid unnecessary repetitions.

A N
Ecclesiastical History.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CONTAINING

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH,

FROM

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

TO

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT.

AN

Ecclesiastical History.

BOOK I.

CONTAINING THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
FROM ITS FIRST RISE TO THE TIME OF CONSTANTINE
THE GREAT.

PART I.

Comprehending the External HISTORY of the
CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

Concerning the civil and religious state of the world at the
birth of CHRIST.

I. **A** GREAT part of the world was become subject to the Roman empire, when JESUS CHRIST made his appearance upon earth. The remoter nations, which had submitted to the yoke of this mighty empire, were ruled, either by Roman governors invested with temporary commissions, or by their own princes and laws, in subordination to the republic, whose sovereignty was to be acknowledged, and from which the conquered kings that were continued in their dominions, derived their borrowed majesty. At the same time the Roman people and their venerable senate, though they had not lost all shadow of liberty, were yet, in reality, reduced to a state of servile submission to AUGUSTUS CÆSAR, who, by artifice, perfidy, and bloodshed, had proceeded to an enormous degree of power, and united in his own person the pompous

CENT.
I.
PART I.
The state of
the Roman
empire.

CENT. titles of Emperor, Sovereign, Pontiff, Cenfor, Tribune of the people, Proconsul; in a word, all the
 I. great offices of the State [a].
 PART I.

The inconveniences, which proceeded from the corrupt administration of its magistrates.

II. The Roman government, considered both with respect to its form, and its laws, was certainly mild and equitable [b]. But the injustice and avarice of the Prætors and Proconsuls, and the ambitious lust of conquest and dominion, which was the predominant passion of the Roman people, together with the rapacious proceedings of the Publicans, by whom the taxes of the empire were levied, were the occasions of perpetual tumults and unsupportable grievances. And among the many evils that arose from thence we justly reckon the formidable armies, that were necessary to support these extortions in the provinces, and the civil wars which frequently broke out between the oppressed nations and their haughty conquerors.

The advantages which arose from its extent.

III. It must, at the same time, be acknowledged, that this supreme dominion of one people, or rather of one man, over so many kingdoms, was attended with many considerable advantages to mankind in general, and to the propagation and advancement of Christianity in particular. For, by the means of this almost universal empire, many nations, different in their language and in their manners, were united more intimately together in social intercourse. Hence a passage was opened to the remotest countries, by the communications which the Romans formed between the conquered provinces [c].

[a] See for this purpose the learned work of AUGUSTIN CAMPIANUS, entitled, *De officio et potestate Magistratum Romanorum et jurisdictione*, lib. i. cap. i. p. 3, 4, &c. Geneva, 1725, in Quarto.

[b] See MOYLE'S *Essay on the Constitution of the Roman Government*, in the posthumous works of that author, vol. i. p. 1—48. as also SCIP. MAFFAËI *Verona illustrata*, lib. ii. p. 65.

[c] See, for a further illustration of this matter, *Histoire des grands chemins de l'Empire Romain*, par NICOL. BERGIER,

Hence also the nations, whose manners were CENT.
 savage and barbarous, were civilized by the laws I.
 and commerce of the Romans. And by this, in PART. I.
 short, the benign influence of letters and philosophy
 was spread abroad in countries which had lain,
 before, under the darkeſt ignorance. All this
 contributed, no doubt, in a ſingular manner, to
 facilitate the progreſs of the Goſpel, and to crown
 the labours of its firſt miniſters and heralds with
 ſucceſs [*d*].

IV. The Roman empire, at the birth of CHRIST, The Roman
 was leſs agitated by wars and tumults, than it had empire en-
 been for many years before. For, though I joys peace.
 cannot aſſent to the opinion of thoſe, who, follow-
 ing the account of OROSIUS, maintain, that the
 temple of Janus was then ſhut, and that wars and
 diſcords abſolutely ceaſed throughout the world [*e*];
 yet it is certain, that the period, in which our
 Saviour deſcended upon earth, may be juſtly ſtyled
 the *Pacific Age*, if we compare it with the prece-
 ding times. And indeed, the tranquility, that
 then reigned, was neceſſary to enable the miniſters
 of CHRIST to execute, with ſucceſs, their ſublime
 commiſſion to the human race.

V. The want of ancient records renders it impoſ- The ſtate of
 ſible to ſay any thing ſatiſfactory or certain concerning the other
 the ſtate of thoſe nations, who did not receive the nations.
 Roman yoke: nor indeed is their hiſtory eſſential
 to our preſent purpoſe. It is ſufficient to obſerve,
 with reſpect to them, that thoſe who inhabited
 the eaſtern regions were ſtrangers to the ſweets
 of liberty, and groaned under the burthen of an

printed in the year 1728. See alſo the very learned EVERARD
 OTTO, *De tutela viarum publicarum*, part II. p. 314.

[*d*] ORIGEN, among others, makes particular mention of
 this, in the ſecond book of his answer to CELSUS, p. 79. of
 the *Cambridge* edition.

[*e*] See JO. MASSONI *Templum Jani, Chriſto naſcente, refe-*
ratum. Roterodami, 1706.

CENT. oppressive yoke. This, their softness and effeminacy,
 I. both in point of manners and bodily constitution,
 PART I. contributed to make them support with an unmanly
 patience; and even the religion they professed
 rivetted their chains. On the contrary, the northern
 nations enjoyed, in their frozen dwellings, the
 blessings of sacred freedom, which their government,
 their religion, a robust and vigorous frame of body
 and spirit, derived from the inclemency and severity
 of their climate, all united to preserve and main-
 tain [f].

All sunk in
 superstition;

VI. All these nations lived in the practice of the
 most abominable superstitions. For though the
 notion of one Supreme Being was not entirely effac-
 ed in the human mind, but shewed itself frequently,
 even through the darkness of the grossest idolatry;
 yet all nations, except that of the Jews, acknow-
 ledged a number of governing powers whom they
 called Gods, and one or more of which they sup-
 posed to preside over each particular province or
 people. They worshipped these fictitious deities
 with various rights; they considered them as widely
 different from each other in sex, and power, in their
 nature, and also in their respective offices, and they
 appeased them by a multiplicity of ceremonies and
 offerings, in order to obtain their protection and
 favour. So that, however different the degrees of
 enormity might be, with which this absurd and
 impious theology appeared in different countries;
 yet there was no nation, whose sacred rites and
 whose religious worship did not discover a manifest
 abuse of reason, and very striking marks of extrava-
 gance and folly.

[f]. *Fere itaque imperia (says SENECA) penes eos fuere populos,
 qui mitiore calo utuntur: in frigora, septentrionemque vergentibus
 immanueta ingenia sunt, ut ait poeta, suoque simillima cælo.
 SENECA De ira, lib. ii. cap. xvi. tom. i. Opp. Edit. Gronovii.*

VII. Every nation then had its respective gods, CENT.
 over which presided one more excellent than the rest; I.
 yet in such a manner, that this supreme deity was PART I.
 himself controlled by the rigid empire of the fates, but not of
 or what the philosophers called *Eternal necessity*. the same
 The gods of the east were different from those of of kind.
 the Gauls, the Germans, and the other northern
 nations. The Grecian divinities differed widely
 from those of the Egyptians, who deified plants,
 animals, and a great variety of the productions both
 of nature and art [g]. Each people also had their
 own particular manner of worshipping and appea-
 ring their respective deities, entirely different from
 the sacred rites of other countries. In process of
 time, however, the Greeks and Romans grew as
 ambitious in their religious pretensions, as in their
 political claims. They maintained that *their* gods,
 though under different names, were the objects of
 religious worship in all nations, and therefore they
 gave the names of their deities to those of other
 countries [b]. This pretension, whether supported

[g] See the discourse of ATHANASIUS, entitled *Oratio contra Gentes*, in the first volume of his works.

☞ [b] This fact renders a satisfactory account of the vast number of gods who bore the name of Jupiter, and the multitudes that passed under those of Mercury, Venus, Hercules, Juno, &c. The Greeks, when they found, in other countries, deities that resembled their own, persuaded the worshippers of these foreign gods, that their deities were the same that were honoured in Greece, and were, indeed, convinced themselves that this was the case. In consequence of this, the Greeks gave the names of their gods to those of other nations, and the Romans, in this, followed their example. Hence we find the names of Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Venus, &c. frequently mentioned in the more recent monuments and inscriptions which have been found among the Gauls and Germans, though the antient inhabitants of those countries worshipped no gods under such denominations. I cannot think that this method of the Greeks and Romans has introduced so much confusion into mythology as Dr. MOSHEIM here imagines. If indeed there was no resemblance between the Greek and Roman deities, and

CENT. by ignorance or other means, introduced inexpres-
 I. sible darkness and perplexity into the history of the
 PART I. antient superstitions, and has been also the occasion
 of innumerable errors in the writings of the learned.

No wars
 nor dissen-
 sions occa-
 sioned by
 this variety
 of religions.

VIII. One thing, indeed, which, at first sight, appears very remarkable, is, that this variety of religions and of gods neither produced wars nor dissensions among the different nations, the Egyptians excepted [*i*]. Nor is it, perhaps, necessary to except even them, since their wars undertaken for their gods cannot be looked upon, with propriety, as wholly of a religious nature [*k*]. Each nation suffered its neighbours to follow their own method of worship, to adore their own gods, to enjoy their own rites and ceremonies, and discovered no sort of displeasure at their diversity of sentiments in religious matters. There is, however, little wonderful in this spirit of mutual toleration, when we consider, that they all looked upon the world as one great empire, divided into various provinces, over every one of which a certain order of divinities

those of other nations, and if the names of the deities of the former had been given to those of the latter in an arbitrary and undistinguishing manner, the reflexion of our historian would be undeniably true. But it has been alledged by many learned men, and that with a high degree of probability, that the principal deities of all nations resembled each other extremely in their essential characters; and, if so, their receiving the same names could not introduce much confusion into mythology, since they were probably derived from one common source. If the Thor of the antient Celts was the same in dignity, character, and attributes, with the Jupiter of the Greeks and Romans, where was the impropriety of giving the same name?

[*i*] There are ingenious things to be found upon this head in the *Expositio Mensæ Isiacæ* of PIGNORIUS, p. 41.

[*k*] The religious wars of the Egyptians were not undertaken to compel others to adopt their worship, but to avenge the slaughter that was made of their gods, *viz.* Crocodiles, &c. by the neighbouring nations. They were not offended at their neighbours for serving other divinities, but could not bear that they should put theirs to death.

presided; and that, therefore, none could behold with contempt the gods of other nations, or force strangers to pay homage to theirs. The Romans exercised this toleration in the amplest manner. For, though they would not allow any changes to be made in the religions that were publicly professed in the empire, nor any new form of worship to be openly introduced; yet they granted to their citizens a full liberty of observing, in private, the sacred rites of other nations, and of honouring foreign deities (whose worship contained nothing inconsistent with the interests and laws of the republic) with feasts, temples, consecrated groves, and such like testimonies of homage and respect [1].

IX. The deities of almost all nations were either antient heroes, renowned for noble exploits and worthy deeds, or kings and generals who had founded empires, or women become illustrious by remarkable actions or useful inventions. The merit of these distinguished and eminent persons, contemplated by their posterity with an enthusiastic gratitude, was the reason of their being exalted to celestial honours. The natural world furnished another kind of deities, that were added to these by some nations. And as the sun, moon, and stars shine forth with a lustre superior to that of all other material beings; so it is certain that they particularly attracted the attention of mankind, and received religious homage from almost all the nations of the world [m]. From these beings of a nobler kind,

Most of
their gods
were de-
parted
heroes.

[1] See concerning this interesting subject a very curious and learned treatise of the famous BYNCKERSHOECK, entitled, *Dissertatio de cultu peregrinæ religionis apud Romanos*. This dissertation is to be found in the *Opuscula* of that excellent author, which were published at *Leyden* in Quarto, in the year 1719.

[m] The ingenious editor of the *RUINS* of *BALBEC* has given us, in the preface to that noble work, a very curious account of the origin of the religious worship that was offered to the heavenly bodies by the Syrians and Arabians. In those

CENT. idolatry descended into an enormous multiplication
 I. of inferior powers; so that in many countries, moun-
 PART I. tains, trees, and rivers, the earth, the sea, and the
 winds, nay, even virtues, vices, and diseases, had
 their shrines attended by devout and zealous wor-
 shippers [n].

The wor-
 ship paid
 to these
 deities.

X. These deities were honoured with rites and
 sacrifices of various kinds, according to their respec-
 tive nature and offices [o]. The rites used in their
 worship were absurd and ridiculous, and frequently
 cruel and obscene. Most nations offered animals,
 and some proceeded to the enormity of human
 sacrifices. As to their prayers, they were void of
 piety and sense, both with respect to their matter
 and their form [p]. Pontiffs, priests, and ministers,
 distributed into several classes, presided in this
 strange worship, and were appointed to prevent
 disorder in the performance of the sacred rites.
 This *order*, which was supposed to be distinguished
 by an immediate intercourse and friendship with the

uncomfortable desarts, where the *day* presents nothing to the
 view, but the uniform, tedious, and melancholy prospect of
 barren sands, the *night* discloses a most delightful and magnificent
 spectacle, and appears arrayed with charms of the most attractive
 kind. For the most part unclouded and serene, it exhibits to
 the wondering eye the *Host of heaven*, in all their amazing variety,
 and glory. In the view of this stupendous scene, the transition from
 admiration to idolatry was too easy to uninstructed minds; and
 a people, whose climate offered no beauties to contemplate but
 those of the firmament, would naturally look thither for the
 objects of their worship. The form of idolatry, in Greece,
 was different from that of the Syrians; and Mr. WOOD inge-
 niously attributes this to that smiling and variegated scene of
 mountains, vallies, rivers, groves, woods, and fountains, which
 the transported imagination, in the midst of its pleasing astonish-
 ment, supposed to be the seats of invisible deities. See a further
 account of this matter in the elegant work above mentioned.

[n] See the learned work of J. G. VOSSIUS, *De idololatria*.

[o] See J. SAUBERTUS, *De sacrificiis veterum*. Lug. Bat.
 1699.

[p] See M. BROUERIUS a NIEDECK, *De adorationibus veterum
 populorum*, printed at *Utrecht*, in 8vo, in the year 1711.

gods, abused their authority in the basest manner, CENT.
to deceive an ignorant and wretched people. I.

XI. The religious worship we have now been PART I.
considering, was confined to stated *times* and *places*. Confined to stated times and places.
The statues and other representations of the gods were placed in the temples [*q*], and supposed to be animated in an incomprehensible manner. For the votaries of these fictitious deities, however destitute they might be of reason in other respects, avoided carefully the imputation of worshipping inanimate beings, such as brass, wood, and stone, and therefore pretended that the divinity, represented by the statue, was really present in it, if the dedication was duly and properly made [*r*].

XII. But, beside the public worship of the gods, Mysteries.
to which all without exception were admitted, there were certain religious institutions and rites celebrated in secret by the Greeks and several eastern nations, to which a very small number were allowed access. These were commonly called *mysteries*; and the persons who desired to be initiated therein, were obliged previously to exhibit satisfactory proofs of their fidelity and patience, by passing through various trials and ceremonies of the most disagreeable kind. The secret of these institutions was kept in the strictest manner, as the initiated could not reveal any thing that passed in them without exposing their lives to the most imminent danger [*s*]; and that is the reason why, at this time, we are so little acquainted with the true

☞ [*q*] Some nations were without temples, such as the Persians, Gauls, Germans, and Bretons, who performed their religious worship in the open air, or in the shady retreats of consecrated groves.

[*r*] See ARNOBIUS *adv. Gentes*, lib. vi. p. 254, according to the edition of Heraldus. See also AUGUSTIN *De civitate Dei*, lib. vii. cap. xxxiii; and the *Misopogon of the emperor JULIAN*, p. 361, according to the edition of Spanheim.

[*s*] See CLARKSON on the *Liturgies*, § iv. p. 36. as also MEURSIUS, *De mysteriis Eleusiniis*.

CENT. nature and the real design of these hidden rites.

I. It is, however, well known, that, in some of those
 PART 1. *mysterics*, many things were transacted that were
 contrary both to real modesty and outward decency.
 And, indeed, from the whole of the Pagan rites,
 the intelligent few might easily learn, that the
 divinities generally worshipped, were rather men
 famous for their vices, than distinguished by virtuous
 and worthy deeds [t].

No tenden-
 cy in Pa-
 ganism to
 promote
 virtue.

XIII. It is, at least, certain, that this religion
 had not the least influence towards the exciting or
 nourishing solid and true virtue in the minds of
 men. For the gods and goddesses, to whom public
 homage was paid, exhibited to their worshippers
 rather examples of egregious crimes, than of useful
 and illustrious virtues [u]. The gods, moreover,
 were esteemed superior to men in power and immor-
 tality; but, in every thing else, they were confi-
 dered as their equals. The priests were little soli-
 citous to animate the people to a virtuous conduct,
 either by their precepts or their example; nay,
 they plainly enough declared, that all that was
 essential to the true worship of the gods, was con-
 tained only in the rites and institutions which the
 people had received by tradition from their ancestors
 [w]. And as to what regarded the rewards of

[t] See CICERO *Disput. Tusculan.* lib. ii. cap. xiii.

[u] There is a very remarkable passage to this purpose in the
Tristia of OVID, book the second, beginning at line 287.

“ Quis locus est templis augustior? hæc quoque vitet,

“ In culpam si quæ est ingeniosa suam.

“ Cum fletur Jovis æde: Jovis succurret in æde,

“ Quam multas matres fecerit ille Deus.

“ Proxima adoranti Junonia templa subibit,

“ Fellicibus multis hæc doluisse Deam.

“ Pallade conspecta, natum de crimine virgo

“ Sustulerit quare, quæret Eriethonium.”

[w] See BARBEYRAC's Preface to his French translation of
 PUFFENDORF'S *System of the Law of Nature and Nations*, § vi.
 p. 21. of the last edition.

virtue, and the punishment of vice after this present CENT. life, the general notions were partly uncertain, I. partly licentious, and often more proper to admi- PART I. nister indulgence to vice, than encouragement to virtue. Hence, the wiser part of mankind, about the time of CHRIST'S birth, looked upon this whole system of religion as a just object of ridicule and contempt.

XIV. The consequences of this wretched theology were a universal corruption of manners, which discovered itself in the impunity of the most flagitious crimes [x]. JUVENAL and PERSIUS among the Latins, and LUCIAN among the Greeks, bear testimony to the justice of this heavy accusation. It is also well known, that no public law prohibited the sports of the gladiators, the exercise of unnatural lusts, the licentiousness of divorce, the custom of exposing infants, and of procuring abortions, nor the frontless atrocity of consecrating publicly stews and brothels to certain divinities [y].

On the contrary, it promoted corruption of manners.

XV. Such as were not sunk in an unaccountable and brutish stupidity, perceived the deformity of these religious systems. To these the crafty priests addressed two considerations, to prevent their incredulity and to dispel their doubts. The first was drawn from the miracles and prodigies which, they pretended, were daily wrought in the temples, before the statues of the gods and the heroes that were placed there; and the second was deduced

The arguments of the priests in defence of Paganism.

[x] The corrupt manners of those who lay in the darkness of idolatry are described, in an ample and affecting manner, in the first of CYPRIAN'S epistles. See also on this subject CORNEL. ADAMI *Exercitatio de malis Romanorum ante predicationem Evangelii moribus*. This is the fifth discourse of a collection published by that learned writer at Groningen, 1712, in Quarto.

[y] See Dr. JOHN LELAND'S excellent account of the religious sentiments, moral conduct, and future prospects of the Pagans, in his large work entitled, *The Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation*.

CENT. from oracles and divination, by which they maintained that the secrets of futurity were unfolded through the interposition of the gods. In both these points the cunning of the priests imposed miserably upon the ignorance of the people; and if the discerning few saw the cheat, they were obliged, from a regard to their own safety, to laugh with caution, since the priests were even ready to accuse, before a raging and superstitious multitude, those who discovered their religious frauds, as rebels against the majesty of the immortal gods.

The religion of the Greeks and Romans.

XVI. At the time of CHRIST'S appearance upon earth, the religion of the Romans, as well as their arms, had extended itself through a great part of the world. This religion must be known to those who are acquainted with the Grecian superstitions [z]. In some things, indeed, it differs from them; for the Romans, besides the institutions which NUMA and others had invented with political views, added several Italic and Hetrurian fictions to the Grecian fables, and gave also to the Egyptian deities a place among their own [a].

The Romans introduced their own rites among those of the conquered nations.

XVII. In the provinces subjected to the Roman government, there arose a new kind of religion, formed by a mixture of the antient rites of the conquered nations with those of the Romans. These nations, who, before their subjection, had their own gods, and their own particular religious institutions, were persuaded, by degrees, to admit into their worship a great number of the sacred rites and customs of their conquerors. The view of the Romans, in this change, was not only to confirm their authority by the powerful aid of religion, but also to abolish the inhuman rites which were performed by many of the barbarous nations who had received

[z] See DIONYSIUS HALICARN. *Antiq. Rom.* lib. vii. cap. lxxii. p. 460. tom. i. Edit. Hudson.

[a] See PETIT *ad leges Atticas*, lib. i. tit. i. p. 71.

their yoke; and this change was effected partly by CENT. the prudence of the victors, partly by the levity of I. the vanquished, and by their ambition to please PART. I. their new masters.

XVIII. When, from the sacred rites of the antient Romans, we pass to a review of the other religions that prevailed in the world, we shall find, that the most remarkable may be properly divided into two classes, of which the one will comprehend the religious systems which owe their existence to *political* views; and the other, those which seemed to have been formed for *military* purposes. In the former class may be ranked the religions of most of the eastern nations, especially of the Persians, Egyptians, and Indians, which appear to have been solely calculated for the preservation of the state, the supporting of the royal authority and grandeur, the maintenance of public peace, and the advancement of civil virtues. Under the *military* class may be comprehended the religious system of the northern nations; since all the traditions that we find among the Germans, the Bretons, the Celts, and the Goths, concerning their divinities, have a manifest tendency to excite and nourish fortitude and ferocity, an insensibility of danger, and a contempt of life. An attentive enquiry into the religions of these respective nations, will abundantly verify what is here asserted.

XIX. None of these nations, indeed, ever arrived at such an excess of universal barbarity and ignorance, as not to have some discerning men among them, who were sensible of the extravagance of all these religions. But of these sagacious observers, some were destitute of the weight and authority that were necessary to remedy these over-grown evils; and others wanted the will to exert themselves in such a glorious cause. And the truth is, none of them had wisdom equal to such a solemn and arduous enterprize. This appears manifestly

Systems of religion different from that of the Romans,

The wiser among the heathens could not remedy these evils.

CENT. from the laborious, but useleſs efforts of ſome of the Greek and Roman philoſophers againſt the vulgar ſuperſtitions. Theſe venerable ſages delivered in their writings, many ſublime things concerning the nature of God, and the duties incumbent upon men; they diſputed with ſagacity againſt the popular religion; but to all this they added ſuch chimerical notions, and ſuch abſurd ſubtilties of their own, as may ſerve to convince us, that it belongs to God alone, and not to man, to reveal the truth without any mixture of impurity or error.

I.
PART I.

Two kinds of philoſophy prevailed at the time of CHRIST'S birth.

XX. About the time of CHRIST'S appearance upon earth, there were two kinds of philoſophy which prevailed among the civilized nations. One was the philoſophy of the Greeks, adopted alſo by the Romans; and the other, that of the Orientals, which had a great number of votaries in *Persia*, *Syria*, *Chaldaea*, *Egypt*, and even among the Jews. The former was diſtinguiſhed by the ſimple title of *philology*. The latter was honoured with the more pompous appellation of *ſcience* or *knowledge* [*b*], ſince thoſe who embraced this latter ſect pretended to be the reſtorers of the knowledge of God, which was loſt in the world [*c*]. The followers of both theſe ſystems, in conſequence of vehement diſputes and diſſenſions about ſeveral points, ſubdivided themſelves into a variety of ſects. It is, however, to be obſerved, that all the ſects of the oriental philoſophy deduced their various tenets from one fundamental principle, which they held in common; whereas the Greeks were much divided even about the firſt principle of ſcience.

[*b*] Γνωσις (*gnofis*) in the Greek ſignifies *ſcience*, or *knowledge*, and from hence came the title of *Gnoſtics*, which this preſumptuous ſect claimed as due to their ſuperior light and penetration in divine *things*.

[*c*] St. Paul mentions and condemns both theſe kinds of philoſophy; the Greek, in the *Epistle to the Colloſſians*, ii. 8. and the Oriental, or *Gnoſis*, in the *Fiſt Epistle to Timothy*, vi. 20.

As we shall have occasion hereafter to speak of CENT. the oriental philosophy, we shall confine ourselves I. here to the doctrines taught by the Grecian sages, PART. I. and shall give some account of the various sects into which they were divided.

XXI. Among the Grecian sects, there were some which declared openly against all religion; and others, who, though they acknowledged a deity, and admitted a religion, yet cast a cloud over the truth, instead of exhibiting it in its genuine beauty and lustre. Some of the Grecian systems subversive of all piety.

Of the former kind were the Epicureans and Academics. The Epicureans maintained, “That the world arose from chance; that the gods (whose existence they did not dare to deny) neither did, nor could, extend their providential care to human affairs; that the soul was mortal; that *pleasure* [*d*] was to be regarded as the ultimate end of man; and that *virtue* was neither worthy of esteem nor choice, but with a view to its attainment.” The Academics asserted the impossibility of arriving at truth, and held it uncertain, “Whether the gods existed or not; whether the soul was mortal or immortal; whether virtue were preferable to vice, or vice to virtue.” These two sects, though they struck at the foundations of all religion, were the most numerous of all others at the birth of CHRIST, and were particularly encouraged by the liberality of the rich, and the protection of those in power [*e*].

☞ [*d*] The ambiguity of the word *pleasure* has produced many disputes in the explication of the Epicurean system. If by *pleasure*, be understood only *sensual* gratifications, the tenet here advanced is indisputably monstrous. But if it be taken in a larger sense, and extended to intellectual and moral objects; in what does the scheme of Epicurus, with respect to virtue, differ from the opinions of those Christian philosophers, who maintain that self-love is the *only* spring of all human affections and actions?

[*e*] That of the Epicureans was, however, the most numerous of the two, as appears from the testimony of CICERO, *De finibus*,

CENT.

XXII. We observed in the preceeding section,

I.

PART I.

Others corrupted the truth.
The Aristotelians.

that there was another kind of philosophy, in which religion was admitted, but which was, at the same time, deficient by the obscurity it cast upon truth. Under the philosophers of this class, may be reckoned the Platonists, the Stoics, and the followers of ARISTOTLE, whose subtile disputations concerning God, religion, and the social duties, were of little solid use to mankind. The nature of God, as it is explained by ARISTOTLE, is something like the principle that gives motion to a machine; it is a nature happy in the contemplation of itself, and entirely regardless of human affairs; and such a divinity, who differs but little from the God of Epicurus, cannot reasonably be the object either of love or fear. With respect to the doctrine of this philosopher concerning the human soul, it is uncertain, to say no more, whether he believed its immortality or not [f]. What then could be expected from such a philosophy? could any thing solid and satisfactory, in favour of piety and virtue, be hoped for from a system which excluded from the universe a divine Providence, and insinuated the mortality of the human soul?

The Stoics.

XXIII. The god of the Stoics has somewhat more majesty, than the divinity of ARISTOTLE; nor is he represented by those philosophers as sitting above

&c. lib. i. cap. vii. lib. ii. cap. xiv. *Disput. Tusculan.* lib. v. cap. x. Hence the complaint, which JUVENAL makes in his XIIIth Satire, of the Atheism that prevailed at Rome, in those excellent words:

“Sunt in fortunæ qui casibus omnia ponunt,

“Et nullo credunt mundum rectore moveri,

“Natura volvente vices et lucis et anni;

“Atque ideo intrepidi quæcunque altaria tangunt.”

[f] See the notes upon CUDWORTH'S *Intellectual System of the Universe*, which Dr. MOSHEIM subjoined to his Latin translation of that learned work, vol. i. p. 66. 500. vol. ii. p. 1171. See also upon the same subject MOURGUE'S *Plan Theologique du Pythagorisme*, tom i. p. 79.

the starry heavens in a supine indolence, and a perfect inattention to the affairs of the universe. Yet he is described as a corporeal being, united to matter by a necessary connexion, and subject to the determinations of an immutable *fate*, so that neither rewards nor punishments can properly proceed from him [g]. The learned also know that, in the philosophy of this sect, the existence of the soul was confined to a certain period of time. Now it is manifest, that these tenets remove, at once, the strongest motives to virtue, and the most powerful restraints upon vice; and, therefore, the stoical system may be considered as a body of specious and pompous doctrine, but, at the same time, as a body without nerves, or any principles of consistence and vigour.

XXIV. PLATO is generally looked upon as superior to all the other philosophers in wisdom; and this eminent rank does not seem to have been undeservedly conferred upon him. He taught that the universe was governed by a being, glorious in power and wisdom, and possessed of a perfect liberty and independence. He extended also the views of mortals beyond the grave, and shewed them, in futurity, prospects adapted to excite their hopes, and to work upon their fears. His doctrine,

[g] Thus is the stoical doctrine of *fate* generally represented; but not more generally than unjustly. Their *fatum*, when carefully and attentively examined, seems to have signified no more, in the intention of the wisest of that sect, than the plan of government formed originally in the divine mind, a plan all wise and perfect; and from which, of consequence, the Supreme Being, morally speaking, can never depart. So that when Jupiter is said by the Stoics to be subject to immutable *fate*, this means no more than that he is subject to the wisdom of his own counsels, and acts ever in conformity with his supreme perfections. The following remarkable passage of SENECA, drawn from the Vth chapter of his book *De Providentia*, is sufficient to confirm the explication we have here given of the *stoical fate*. “ Ille ipse “ omnium conditor et rector SCRIPSIT quidem FATA, sed sequitur. “ Semper PARET, semel JUSSIT.”

CENT. however, besides the weakness of the foundation on
 I. which it rests, and the obscurity with which it is
 PART I. often expressed, has likewise many other considerable
 defects. It represents the Supreme Creator of the
 world as destitute of many perfections [*b*], and confined to a certain determinate portion of space. Its decisions, with respect to the soul, and dæmons, are too much adapted to beget and nourish superstition. Nor will the moral philosophy of PLATO appear worthy of such a high degree of admiration, if we attentively examine and compare together its various parts, and reduce them to their principles [*i*].

Eclectics.

XXV. As then, in these different sects, there were many things maintained that were highly unreasonable and absurd; and as a contentious spirit of opposition and dispute prevailed among them all; certain men of true discernment, and of moderate characters, were of opinion, that none of these sects were to be adhered to in all matters, but that it was rather wise to chuse and extract out of each of them such tenets and doctrines as were good and reasonable, and to abandon and reject the rest. This gave rise to a new form of philosophy in *Egypt*, and principally at *Alexandria*, which was called the *Eclectic*, whose founder, according to some, was ΠΟΤΑΜΟΝ, an Alexandrian,

☞ [*b*] This accusation seems to be carried too far by Dr. MOSHEIM. It is not strictly true, that the doctrine of PLATO represents the Supreme Being as destitute of *many* perfections. On the contrary, *all* the divine perfections are frequently acknowledged by that philosopher. What probably gave occasion to this animadversion of our learned author, was the erroneous notion of PLATO, concerning the *invincible malignity* and corruption of *matter*, which the divine power had not been sufficient to reduce entirely to order. Though this notion is, indeed, injurious to the omnipotence of God, yet it is not sufficient to justify the censure now under consideration.

[*i*] There is an ample account of the defects of the Platonic philosophy in a work entitled, *Defenses des Peres accusés de Platonisme*, par FRANC. BALTUS: but there is more learning than accuracy in that performance.

though this opinion is not without its difficulties. It appears manifestly from the testimony of PHILO the Jew, who was himself one of this sect, that this philosophy was in a flourishing state at *Alexandria*, when our Saviour was upon the earth. The Eclectics held PLATO in the highest esteem, though they made no scruple to join with his doctrines, whatever they thought conformable to reason in the tenets and opinions of the other philosophers [k].

CENT.
I.
PART I.

XXVI. The attentive reader will easily conclude, from the short view that we have here given of the miserable state of the world at the birth of CHRIST, that mankind, in this period of darkness and corruption, stood highly in need of some divine teacher to convey to the mind *true and certain principles* of religion and wisdom, and to recal wandering mortals to the sublime paths of piety and virtue. The consideration of this wretched condition of mankind will be also singularly useful to those who are not sufficiently acquainted with the advantages, the comforts, and the support, which the sublime doctrines of Christianity are so proper to administer in every state, relation, and circumstance of life. A set of miserable and unthinking creatures treat with negligence, nay sometimes with contempt, the religion of JESUS, not considering that they are indebted to it for all the good things which they so ungratefully enjoy.

The use of
the foregoing
chapter.

[k] See GODOF. OLEARIUS, *De Philosophia Eclectica*, JAC. BRUCKER, and others.

CHAPTER II.

Concerning the civil and religious State of the JEWISH NATION
at the birth of CHRIST.

CENT.

I.

PART I.

The Jews
governed
by Herod
the Great.

THE state of the Jews was not much better than that of the other nations at the time of CHRIST'S appearance in the world. They were governed by HEROD, who was himself a tributary to the Roman people. This prince was surnamed the GREAT (surely from no other circumstance than the greatness of his vices), and his government was a yoke of the most vexatious and oppressive kind. By a cruel, suspicious, and overbearing temper, he drew upon himself the aversion of all, not excepting those who lived upon his bounty. By a mad luxury and an affectation of magnificence far above his fortune, together with the most profuse and immoderate largesses, he exhausted the treasures of that miserable nation. Under his administration, and by his means, the Roman luxury was received in *Palestine*, accompanied with the worst vices of that licentious people [1]. In a word, *Judæa*, governed by HEROD, groaned under all that corruption, which might be expected from the authority and the example of a prince, who, though a Jew in outward profession, was, in point of morals and practice, a contemner of all laws human and divine.

[1] See on this subject, CHRIST. NOLDII *Historia Idumæa*, which is annexed to HAVERCAMP'S edition of *Josephus*, vol. ii. p. 333. See also BASNAGE, *Histoire des Juifs*, tom. i. part I. p. 27. NORIS, *Cenotaph. Pisan.* PRIDEAUX, *History of the Jews*; CELLARIUS his *Historia Herodum*, in the first part of his *Academical Dissertations*, p. 207; and above all, JOSEPHUS the Jewish Historian.

II. After the death of this tyrant, the Romans divided the government of *Palestine* between his sons. In this division the one half of *Judæa* was given to **ARCHELAUS**, with the title of **Exarch**; and the other was divided between his two brothers, **ANTIPAS** and **PHILIP**. **ARCHELAUS** was a corrupt and wicked prince, and followed the example of his father's crimes in such a manner, that the Jews, grown weary of his iniquitous administration, laid their complaints and grievances before **AUGUSTUS**, who delivered them from their oppressor, by banishing him from his dominions about ten years after the death of **HEROD the GREAT**. The kingdom of this dethroned prince was reduced to the form of a province, and added to the jurisdiction of the governor of *Syria*, to the great detriment of the Jews, whose heaviest calamities were owing to this change, and whose final destruction was its undoubted effect in the appointment of Providence.

III. However severe the authority was, which the Romans exercised over the Jews, yet it did not extend to the entire suppression of all their civil and religious privileges. The Jews were, in some measure, governed by their own laws, and they were permitted the enjoyment of the religion they had received from the glorious founder of their church and state. The administration of religious ceremonies was committed, as before, to the high-priest, and to the sanhedrim; to the former of whom the order of the priests and levites was in the usual subordination; and the form of outward worship, except in a very few points, had suffered no visible change. But, on the other hand, it is impossible to express the inquietude and disgust, the calamities and vexations, which this unhappy nation suffered from the presence of the Romans, whom their religion obliged them to look upon as a polluted and idolatrous people, and, in a more

CENT.

I.

PART I.

 The state of
Judæa after
 the death
 of Herod.

 The calamities that
 fell upon
 the Jewish
 nation.

CENT. particular manner, from the avarice and cruelty of
 I. the Prætors, and the frauds and extortions of the
 PART I. Publicans. So that, all things considered, their
 condition, who lived under the government of the
 other sons of HEROD, was much more supportable
 than the state of those, who were immediately
 subject to the Roman jurisdiction.

These cala-
 mities in-
 creased by
 the priests
 and rulers of
 the Jewish
 nation.

IV. It was not, however, from the Romans
 alone, that the calamities of this miserable people
 proceeded. Their own rulers multiplied their
 vexations, and hindered them from enjoying any
 little comforts that were left to them by the Roman
 magistrates. The leaders of the people, and the
 chief priests, were, according to the account of
 JOSEPHUS, profligate wretches, who had purchased
 their places by bribes, or by acts of iniquity, and
 who maintained their ill-acquired authority by the
 most flagitious and abominable crimes. The subor-
 dinate and inferior members were infected with the
 corruption of the head; the priests, and those who
 possessed any shadow of authority, were become
 dissolute and abandoned to the highest degree;
 while the multitude, set on by these corrupt exam-
 ples, ran headlong into every sort of iniquity, and
 by their endless seditions, robberies, and extortions,
 armed against them both the justice of God, and
 the vengeance of men.

The Jewish
 religion
 much cor-
 rupted
 among the
 multitude.

V. Two religions flourished at this time in *Pales-*
tine, viz. the Jewish and Samaritan, whose respective
 followers beheld those of the opposite sect with the
 utmost aversion. The Jewish religion stands exposed
 to our view in the books of the Old Testament;
 but at the time of CHRIST'S appearance, it had
 lost much of its original nature, and of its primitive
 aspect. Errors of a very pernicious kind had
 infected the whole body of the people, and the more
 learned part of the nation were divided upon points
 of the highest consequence. All looked for a deli-
 verer, but not for such a one as God had promised.

Instead of a meek and spiritual Saviour, they expected a formidable and warlike prince, to break off their chains, and set them at liberty from the Roman yoke. All regarded the whole of religion, as consisting in the rites appointed by MOSES, and in the performance of some external acts of duty towards the Gentiles. They were all horribly unanimous in excluding from the hopes of eternal life all the other nations of the world; and, as a consequence of this odious system, they treated them with the utmost rigour and inhumanity, when any occasion was offered them. And besides these corrupt and vicious principles, there prevailed among them several absurd and superstitious notions concerning the divine nature, invisible powers, magic, &c. which they had partly brought with them from the Babylonian captivity, and partly derived from the Egyptians, Syrians, and Arabians, who lived in their neighbourhood.

VI. Religion had not a better fate among the learned than among the multitude. The supercilious doctors, who vaunted their profound knowledge of the law, and their deep science in spiritual and divine things, were constantly shewing their fallibility and their ignorance by their religious differences, and were divided into a great variety of sects. Of these sects three have, in a great measure, eclipsed the rest, both by the number of their adherents, and also by the weight and authority which they acquired. These were the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes [m]. There is frequent mention made of the two former in the sacred writings; but the knowledge of the rites

And also among the doctors, who were divided into various sects.

[m] Besides these more illustrious sects, there were several of inferior note, which prevailed among the Jews at the time of CHRIST'S appearance. The Herodians are mentioned by the sacred writers, the Gaulonites by JOSEPHUS, and others by EPIPHANIUS and HEGESIPPUS in EUSEBIUS; nor is it rational to look upon these sects as fictitious.

CENT. and doctrines of the latter, is to be derived from
 I. JOSEPHUS, PHILO, and other historians. These
 PART I. three illustrious sects agreed in the fundamental
 principles of the Jewish religion, while, at the same
 time, they were involved in endless disputes upon
 points of the highest importance, and about matters
 in which the salvation of mankind was directly con-
 cerned; and their controversies could not but be
 highly detrimental to the rude and illiterate multi-
 tude, as every one must easily perceive.

The three
 famous
 Jewish sects
 divided up-
 on various
 points;

VII. It may not be improper to mention here
 some of the principal matters that were debated
 among these famous sects. One of the main points
 of controversy was: *Whether the WRITTEN LAW*
alone, was of divine authority. The Pharisees added
 to this *law* another, which had been received by
 oral tradition. This the Sadducees and Essenes
 rejected as of no authority, and adhered to the
written law as the only divine rule of obedience.
 They differed also in their opinions concerning the
true sense of the law. For, while the Pharisees
 attributed to the sacred text a double sense, one of
 which was obvious, regarding only the *words*, and
 another mysterious, relating to the intimate nature
 of the *things* expressed; and while the Sadducees
 maintained that nothing further was delivered by
 the law, than that which was contained in the
 signification of the words; the Essenes, at least the
 greatest part of that sect, entertained an opinion
 different from both of these. They asserted, in
 their jargon, that the words of the law were abso-
 lutely void of all power, and that the things expressed
 by them, were the images of holy and celestial
 objects. These litigious subtilties and unintelli-
 gible wranglings, about the nature and sense of the
 divine word, were succeeded by a controversy of the
 greatest moment, concerning the rewards and
 punishments of the law, particularly with respect
 to their extent. The Pharisees were of opinion,

that these rewards and punishments extended both to the soul and body, and that their duration was prolonged beyond the limits of this transitory state. The Sadducees assigned to them the same period that concludes this mortal life. The Essenes differed from both; and maintained that future rewards and punishments extended to the soul alone, and not to the body, which they considered as a mass of malignant matter, and as the prison of the immortal spirit.

VIII. These differences, in matters of such vast consequence, between the three famous sects above mentioned, produced none of those injurious and malignant effects, which are too often seen to arise from religious controversies. But such as have any acquaintance with the history of these times, will not be so far deceived by this specious appearance of moderation, as to attribute it to noble or generous principles. They will look through the fair outside, and see that their mutual fears of each other were the latent reason of this apparent charity and mutual forbearance. The Sadducees enjoyed the favour and protection of the great. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were extremely high in the esteem of the multitude. And hence they were both secured against the attempts of each other, and lived in peace, notwithstanding the diversity of their religious sentiments. The government of the Romans contributed also to the maintenance of this mutual toleration and tranquillity, as they were ever ready to suppress and punish whatever had the appearance of tumult and sedition. We may add to all this, that the Sadducean principles rendered that sect naturally averse to all sorts of altercation and tumult. Libertinism has for its objects ease and pleasure, and chuses rather to slumber in the arms of a fallacious security, than to expose itself to the painful activity, which is required both in the search and in the defence of truth.

CENT.
I.
PART I.
but exercised reciprocal toleration towards each other.

CENT. IX. The Effenes had little occasion to quarrel
 I. with the other sects, as they dwelt generally in a
 PART I. rural solitude, far removed from the view and com-
 merce of men. This singular sect, which was spread
 Effenes. abroad through *Syria*, *Egypt*, and the neighbouring
 countries, maintained, that religion consisted wholly
 in contemplation and silence. By a rigorous abstinence
 also, and a variety of penitential exercises and mortifications,
 which they seem to have borrowed from the Egyptians [n],
 they endeavoured to arrive at still higher degrees of
 perfection in virtue. There prevailed, however, among the
 members of this sect, a considerable difference both in
 point of opinion and discipline. Some passed their lives
 in a state of celibacy, and employed their time in educating
 and instructing the children of others. Others embraced
 the state of matrimony, which they considered as lawful,
 when entered into with the sole design of propagating the
 species, and not to satisfy the demands of lust. Those of
 the Effenes who dwelt in *Syria*, held the possibility of
 appeasing the deity by sacrifices, though in a manner quite
 different from that of the Jews; by which, however, it
 appears that they had not utterly rejected the literal sense
 of the Mosaic law. But those who wandered in the deserts
 of *Egypt* were of very different sentiments: they maintained,
 that no offering was acceptable to God but that of a serene
 and composed mind, addicted to the contemplation of
 divine things; and it is manifest from hence, that they
 looked upon the law of Moses as an allegorical system of
 spiritual and mysterious truths, and renounced in its
 explication all regard to the outward letter [o].

[n] See the annotations of Holstenius to Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras*, p. 11. of the edition published by Kuster.

[o] See MOSHEIM's observations on a small treatise of the learned CUDWORTH's, concerning the true notion of the Lord's supper, p. 4.

X. The Therapeutæ, of whom PHILO the Jew^{CENT.} makes particular mention in his treatise concerning ^{I.} *Contemplative Life*, are supposed to have been a ^{PART I.} branch of this sect. From this notion arose the division of the Essenes into *theoretical* and *practical*. ^{The Thera-} ^{peutæ.} The former of these were wholly devoted to contemplation, and are the same with the Therapeutæ; while the latter employed a part of their time in the performance of the duties of active life. Whether this division be accurate or not, is a matter which I will not take upon me to determine. But I see nothing in the laws or manners of the Therapeutæ, that should lead us to consider them as a branch of the Essenes; nor indeed has PHILO asserted any such thing. There may have been, surely, many other fanatical tribes among the Jews, besides that of the Essenes; nor should a resemblance of principles always induce us to make a coalition of sects. It is however, certain, that the Therapeutæ were neither Christians nor Egyptians, as some have erroneously imagined. They were undoubtedly Jews; nay, they gloried in that title, and styled themselves, with particular affectation, the true disciples of MOSES, though their manner of life was equally repugnant to the institutions of that great lawgiver and to the dictates of right reason, and shewed them to be a tribe of melancholy and wrong-headed Enthusiasts [*p*].

XI. None of these sects, indeed, seemed to have the interests of real and true piety at heart; nor were their principles and discipline at all adapted to the advancement of pure and substantial virtue. The Pharisees courted popular applause by a vain ostentation of pretended sanctity, and an austere ^{The moral doctrine of these sects.}

[*p*] The principal writers, who have given accounts of the Therapeutæ, are mentioned by JO. ALBERT FABRICIUS in the ivth chapter of his *Lux Salutaris Evangelii toto orbe exorients*, p. 55.

CENT. method of living, while, in reality, they were strangers to true holiness, and were inwardly defiled with the most criminal dispositions, with which our Saviour frequently reproaches them. They also treated with more veneration the commandments and traditions of men, than the sacred precepts and laws of God [q]. The Sadducees, by denying a future state of rewards and punishments, removed, at once, the most powerful incentives to virtue, and the most effectual restraints upon vice, and thus gave new vigour to every sinful passion, and a full encouragement to the indulgence of every irregular desire. As to the Essenes, they were a fanatical and superstitious tribe, who placed religion in a certain sort of seraphic indolence, and, looking upon piety to God as incompatible with any social attachment to men, dissolved, by this pernicious doctrine, all the great bonds of human society.

The multitude sunk in superstition, and corruption.

XII. While then such darkness, such errors and dissentions prevailed among those, who assumed the character and authority of persons distinguished by their superior sanctity and wisdom, it will not be difficult to imagine, how totally corrupt the religion and morals of the multitude must have been. They were, accordingly, sunk in the most deplorable ignorance of God, and of divine things; and had no notion of any other way of rendering themselves acceptable to the Supreme Being, than by sacrifices, washings, and the other external rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law. Hence proceeded that dissolution of manners, and that profligate wickedness, which prevailed among the Jews, during CHRIST'S ministry upon earth. And hence the Divine Saviour compares that people to a flock of sheep, which wandered without a shepherd; and their doctors to men, who, though deprived them-

[q] Matt. xxiii. 13, 14, &c.

selves of fight, yet pretended to shew the way to others [r].

XIII. To all these corruptions, both in point of doctrine and practice, which reigned among the Jews at the time of CHRIST's coming, we may add the attachment which many of them discovered to the tenets of the oriental philosophy concerning the origin of the world, and to the doctrine of the CAB-BALLA, which was undoubtedly derived from thence. That considerable numbers of the Jews had imbibed the errors of this fantastick system, appears evidently, both from the books of the New Testament, and from the ancient history of the Christian Church [s]: and it is also certain, that many of the Gnostic sects were founded by Jews. Those among that degenerate people, who adopted this chimerical philosophy, must have differed vastly from the rest in their opinions concerning the God of the Old Testament, the origin of the world, the character and doctrine of MOSES, and the nature and mystery of the MESSIAH; since they maintained, that the creator of this world was a being different from the Supreme God, and that his dominion over the human race was to be destroyed by the MESSIAH. Every one must see that this enormous system was fruitful of errors, destructive of the very foundations of Judaism.

XIV. If any part of the Jewish religion was less disfigured and corrupted than the rest, it was, certainly, the form of external worship, which was established by the law of MOSES. And yet many learned men have observed, that a great variety of rites were introduced into the service of the temple, of which no traces are to be found in the sacred writings. The institution of these additional

I.

PART I.

The CAB-BALLA, a source of many errors among the Jews.

The external worship of God corrupted also by vaiurites and human inventions.

[r] Matt. x. 6. xv. 24, 25. John ix. 39.

[s] See JOH. CHR. WOLF. *Biblioth. Ebraica*, vol. ii. lib. vii. cap. i. § ix. p. 206.

CENT. ceremonies was manifestly owing to those changes and
 I. revolutions, which rendered the Jews more conver-
 PART. I. sant with the nations round about them, than they
 had formerly been. For when they saw the sacred
 rites of the Greeks and Romans, they were taken
 with several of the ceremonies that were used in the
 worship of the heathen deities, and did not hesitate
 to adopt them in the service of the true God, and
 add them as an ornament to the rites which they
 had received by divine appointment [t].

The causes
 of the cor-
 ruption, in
 doctrine
 and morals,
 that reigned
 among the
 Jews.

XV. But whence such enormous degrees of
 corruption in that very nation which God had, in
 a peculiar manner, separated from an idolatrous
 world to be the depository of divine truth? Various
 causes may be assigned, in order to give a satis-
 factory account of this matter. *First*, It is certain,
 that the ancestors of those Jews, who lived in the
 time of our Saviour, had brought from *Chaldæa*,
 and the neighbouring countries, many extravagant
 and idle fancies, which were utterly unknown to
 the original founders of the nation [u]. The
 conquest of *Asia*, by ALEXANDER the GREAT, was,
 also, an event from which we may date a new
 accession of errors to the Jewish system; since, in
 consequence of that revolution, the manners and
 opinions of the Greeks began to spread themselves
 among the Persians, Syrians, Arabians, and like-
 wise among the Jews, who before that period, were
 entirely unacquainted with letters and philosophy.
 We may, further, rank among the causes that
 contributed to corrupt the religion and manners of
 the Jews, their voyages into the adjacent countries,

[t] See the learned work of SPENCER, *De legibus Hebræorum*, in the ivth book of which he treats expressly of those Hebrew rites which were borrowed from the Gentile worship, vol. ii. p. 1086, edition of Cambridge.

[u] See GALE's observations on Jamblichus, *De mysteriis Egyptiorum*, p. 206. JOSEPHUS acknowledges the same thing in his *Jewish Antiquities*, book iii. ch. vii. § 2.

especially *Egypt* and *Phœnicia*, in pursuit of wealth. For, with the treasures of these corrupt and superstitious nations, they brought home also their pernicious errors, and their idle fictions, which were imperceptibly blended with their religious system. Nor ought we to omit, in this enumeration, the pestilential influence of the wicked reigns of *HEROD* and his sons, and the enormous instances of idolatry, error, and licentiousness, which this unhappy people had constantly before their eyes in the religion and manners of the Roman governors and soldiers, which, no doubt, contributed much to the progress of their national superstition and corruption of manners. We might add here many more facts and circumstances, to illustrate further the matter under consideration; but these will be readily suggested to such as have the least acquaintance with the Jewish history from the time of the Maccabees.

XVI. It is indeed worthy of observation, that, corrupted as the Jews were with the errors and superstitions of the neighbouring nations, they still preserved a zealous attachment to the law of *MOSES*, and were extremely careful that it should not suffer any diminution of its credit, or lose any the least degree of that veneration, that was due to its divine authority. Hence *synagogues* were erected throughout the province of *Judæa*, in which the people assembled for the purposes of divine worship, and to hear their doctors interpret and explain the holy scriptures. There were, besides, in the more populous towns, public schools, in which learned men were appointed to instruct the youth in the knowledge of divine things, and also in other branches of science [*w*]. And it is beyond all doubt, that these institutions contributed to maintain

CENT.
I.
PART I.

Amidst this
general cor-
ruption,
some
remains of
piety were
to be found.

[*w*] See *CAMP. VITRINGA, De synagoga veteri, lib. iii. cap. v. p. 667. and lib. i. cap. v. p. 133. vii. p. 156.*

CENT. the law in its primitive authority, and to stem the
I. torrent of abounding iniquity.

PART I. XVII. The Samaritans, who celebrated divine
The Samari- worship in the temple that was built on mount
ritans. *Gerizim*, lay under the burthen of the same evils
that oppressed the Jews, with whom they lived in
the bitterest enmity, and were also, like them, highly
instrumental in increasing their own calamities.
We learn from the most authentic histories of these
times, that the Samaritans suffered as much as the
Jews, from troubles and divisions fomented by the
intrigues of factious spirits, though their religious
sects were yet less numerous than those of the latter.
Their religion, also, was much more corrupted than
that of the Jews, as CHRIST himself declares in his
conversation with the woman of *Samaria*; though
it appears, at the same time, that their notions con-
cerning the offices and ministry of the MESSIAH,
were much more just and conformable to truth, than
those which were entertained at *Jerusalem* [x].
Upon the whole it is certain, that the Samaritans
mixed the profane errors of the Gentiles, with the
sacred doctrine of the Jews, and were excessively

☞ [x] CHRIST insinuates on the contrary, in the strongest
manner, the superiority of the Jewish worship to that of the
Samaritans, John iv. 22. See also, on this head, 2 Kings
xvii. 29. The passage to which Dr. MOSHEIM refers, as a
proof that the Samaritans had juster notions of the MESSIAH
than the Jews, is the 25th verse of the chapter of St. John,
already cited, where the woman of Samaria says to JESUS, *I
know that MESSIAH cometh which is called CHRIST: when he
is come, he will tell us all things.* But this passage seems much
too vague to justify the conclusion of our learned historian.
Besides, the confession of one person, who may possibly have had
some singular and extraordinary advantages, is not a proof, that
the nation in general entertained the same sentiments, especially
since we know that the Samaritans had corrupted the service of
God by a profane mixture of the grossest idolatries.

corrupted by the idolatrous customs of the Pagan nations [y].

XVIII. The Jews multiplied so prodigiously, that the narrow bounds of *Palestine* were no longer sufficient to contain them. They poured, therefore, their increasing numbers into the neighbouring countries, and that with such rapidity, that, at the time of CHRIST'S birth, there was scarcely a province in the empire, where they were not found carrying on commerce, and exercising other lucrative arts. They were maintained in foreign countries, against injurious treatment and violence, by the special edicts and protection of the magistrate [z]; and this, indeed, was absolutely necessary, since, in most places, the remarkable difference of their religion and manners, from those of the other nations, exposed them to the hatred and indignation of the ignorant and bigoted multitude. All this appears to have been most singularly and wisely directed by the adorable hand of an interposing providence, to the end that this people, which was the sole depositary of the true religion, and of the knowledge of one Supreme God, being spread abroad through the whole earth, might be every where, by their example, a reproach to superstition, contribute in some measure to check it, and thus prepare the way for that yet fuller discovery of divine truth, which was to shine upon the world from the ministry and gospel of the Son of God.

I.
PART. I.
The state of
the Jews out
of *Palestine*.

[y] Those who desire an exact account of the principal authors that have written concerning the Samaritans, will find it in the learned work of JO. GOTTLLOB CARPZOVIVS, entitled *Critica S. Vet. Testam.* part II. cap. iv. p. 595.

[z] See the account published at *Leyden* 1712, by JAMES GRONOVIVS, of the Roman and Asiatic edicts in favour of the Jews, allowing them the free and secure exercise of their religion, throughout the cities of the *Lesser Asia*.

CHAPTER III.

Concerning the life and actions of JESUS CHRIST.

CENT. I. THE errors and disorders that we have
 I. now been considering, required something far above
 PART I. human wisdom and power to dispel and remove
 ————— them, and to deliver mankind from the miserable
 The birth of CHRIST. state to which they were reduced by them. There-
 fore, towards the conclusion of the reign of HEROD
 the GREAT, the Son of God descended upon earth,
 and, taking upon him the human nature, appeared
 to men under the sublime characters of an infallible
 teacher, an all-sufficient mediator, and a spiritual
 and immortal king. The place of his birth was
Bethlehem, in the land of *Palestine*. The year, in
 which it happened, has not hitherto been fixed with
 certainty, notwithstanding the deep and laborious
 researches of the learned on that matter. There
 is nothing surprising in this, when we consider that
 the first Christians laboured under the same difficul-
 ties, and were divided in their opinions, concerning
 the time of CHRIST's birth [*a*]. That which
 appears most probable, is, that it happened about
 a year and six months before the death of HEROD,
 in the year of Rome 748 or 749 [*b*]. The uncer-
 tainty, however, of this point is of no sort of conse-
 quence. We know that the SUN OF RIGHTEOUS-
 NESS has shone upon the world. And, though we
 cannot fix the precise period in which he arose, this
 will not hinder us from enjoying the direction and
 influence of his vital and salutary beams.

[*a*] The learned JOHN ALBERT FABRICIUS has collected all the opinions of the learned, concerning the year of CHRIST's birth, in his *Bibliograph. Antiquar.* cap. vii. § ix. p. 187.

[*b*] Matt. iii. 2, &c. John i. 22, &c.

II. Four inspired writers, who have transmitted to us an account of the life and actions of JESUS CHRIST, mention particularly his birth, his lineage, his family, and his parents; but they say very little concerning his infancy and his earlier youth. Not long after his birth, he was conducted by his parents into *Egypt*, that he might be there out of the reach of HEROD's cruelty [c]. When he was but twelve years old, he disputed, in the temple, with the most learned of the Jewish doctors, concerning the sublime truths of religion. And the rest of his life, until the thirtieth year of his age, was spent in the obscurity of a private condition, and consecrated to the duties of filial obedience [d]. This is all that the wisdom of God has permitted us to know, with certainty, of CHRIST, before he entered upon his public ministry; nor is the story of his having followed the trade of his adopted father JOSEPH built upon any sure foundation. There have been, indeed, several writers, who, either through the levity of a wanton imagination, or with a design to attract the admiration of the multitude, have invented a series of the most extravagant and ridiculous fables, in order to give an account of this obscure part of the Saviour's life [e].

CENT.
I.
PART I.
The accounts given of CHRIST during his infancy and youth.

III. JESUS began his public ministry in the thirtieth year of his age; and to render it more solemn and affecting to the Jews, a man, whose name was JOHN, the son of a Jewish priest, a person of great gravity also, and much respected on account of the austere dignity of his life and manners, was commanded by God to proclaim to the people the coming of the MESSIAH, that had been promised to their fathers. This extraordinary man called himself

John, the fore-runner of the Messiah.

[c] Matt. ii. 13.

[d] Luke ii. 51, 52.

[e] See the account, which the abovementioned ALBERT FABRICIUS has given of these romantic triflers, in his *Codex Apocryphus N. T.* tom. i.

CENT. the fore-runner of the MESSIAH. Filled with a holy
 I. zeal and a divine fervour, he cried aloud to the
 PART I. Jewish nation to depart from their transgressions,
 and to purify their hearts, that they might thus
 partake of the blessings, which the Son of God was
 now come to offer to the world. The exhortations
 of this respectable messenger were not without effect;
 and those who, moved by his solemn admonitions,
 had formed the resolution of correcting their evil
 dispositions and amending their lives, were initiated
 into the kingdom of the Redeemer by the ceremony
 of immersion, or baptism [*f*]. CHRIST himself,
 before he began his ministry, desired to be solemnly
 baptized by JOHN in the waters of *Jordan*, that he
 might not, in any point, neglect to answer the
 demands of the Jewish law.

The life of
 CHRIST.

IV. It is not necessary to enter here into a parti-
 cular detail of the life and actions of JESUS CHRIST.
 All Christians must be perfectly well acquainted with
 them. They must know, that, during the space of
 three years, and amidst the deepest trials of affliction
 and distress, he instructed the Jewish nation in the
 will and counsels of the Most High, and omitted
 nothing, in the course of his ministry, that could
 contribute either to gain the multitude, or to charm
 the wise. Every one knows, that his life was a
 continued scene of the most perfect sanctity, and the
 purest and most active virtue; not only without
 spot, but also beyond the reach of suspicion. And
 it is also well known, that by miracles of the most
 stupendous kind, and not more stupendous than
 salutary and beneficent, he displayed to the universe
 the truth of that religion which he brought with
 him from above, and demonstrated the reality of his
 divine commission in the most illustrious manner.

[*f*] Matt. iii. 6. John i. 22.

V. As this divine religion was to be propagated to the utmost ends of the earth, it was necessary that CHRIST should chuse a certain number of persons, to accompany him constantly through the whole course of his ministry; that thus they might be faithful and respectable witnesses of the sanctity of his life and the grandeur of his miracles, to the remotest nations; and also transmit to the latest posterity a genuine account of his sublime doctrines, and of the nature and end of the gospel-dispensation. Therefore JESUS chose, out of the multitude that attended his discourses, twelve persons, whom he separated from the rest by the name of *Apostles*. These men were illiterate, poor, and of mean extraction, and such alone were truly proper to answer the views of the divine Saviour. He avoided making use of the ministry of persons endowed with the advantages of fortune or birth, or enriched with the treasures of eloquence and learning, lest the fruits of this embassy, and the progress of the gospel, should be attributed to human and natural causes [g]. These apostles were sent but once to preach to the Jews during the life of CHRIST [b]. He chose to keep them about his own person, that they might be thoroughly instructed in the affairs of his kingdom. That the multitude, however, might not be destitute of teachers to enlighten them with the knowledge of the truth, CHRIST appointed LXX disciples to preach the glad tidings of life eternal throughout the whole province of *Judæa* [i].

CENT.

I.

PART I.

The election of the apostles, and of the LXX disciples.

VI. The researches of the learned have been employed to find out the reason of CHRIST'S fixing the number of the apostles to *twelve*, and that of the disciples to *seventy*; and various conjectures have been applied to the solution of this question. But since it is manifest, from the words of our

Why the number of the apostles was fixed to XII, and that of the disciples to LXX.

[g] 1 Cor. i. 21.

[b] Matt. x. 7.

[i] Luke x. 1.

CENT. Saviour himself [*k*], that he intended the number of
 1. the XII apostles as an allusion to that of the tribes
 PART I. of ISRAEL; it can scarcely be doubted, that he was
 willing to insinuate by this appointment, that he
 was the supreme lord and high-priest of these twelve
 tribes, into which the Jewish nation was divided.
 And as the number of disciples answers evidently
 to that of the senators, of whom the counsel of the
 people, or the sanhedrim, was composed, there is a
 high degree of probability in the conjecture of those,
 who think, that CHRIST, by the choice of the
seventy, designed to admonish the Jews, that the
 authority of their sanhedrim was now at an end,
 and that all power, with respect to religious matters,
 was vested in him alone.

CHRIST'S
 fame ex-
 tends be-
 yond Ju-
 dea.

VII. The ministry of the divine Saviour was
 confined to the Jews; nor, while he remained upon
 earth, did he permit his apostles or disciples to extend
 their labours beyond this distinguished nation [*l*].
 At the same time, if we consider the illustrious acts
 of mercy and omnipotence, that were performed by
 CHRIST, it will be natural to conclude that his
 fame must have been very soon spread abroad in
 other countries. We learn from writers of no
 small note, that ABGARUS, king of *Edeffa*, being
 seized with a severe and dangerous illness, wrote to
 our blessed Lord to implore his assistance; and that
 JESUS not only sent him a gracious answer, but also
 accompanied it with his picture, as a mark of his
 esteem for that pious prince [*m*]. These letters are
 still extant. But they are justly looked upon as
 fictitious by most writers, who also go yet farther,
 and treat the whole story of ABGARUS as entirely

[*k*] Matt. xix. 28. Luke xxii. 30.

[*l*] Matt. x. 5, 6. xv. 24.

[*m*] EUSEB. *Hist. Eccl.* lib. i. cap. xiii. p. 21. JO. ALBERT FABRIC. *Codex Apocryphus N. T.* tom. i. p. 317.

fabulous, and unworthy of credit [n]. I will not pretend to assert the genuineness of these letters ; but I see no reason of sufficient weight to destroy the credibility of the whole story, which is supposed to have given occasion to them [o].

VIII. A great number of the Jews, struck with those illustrious marks of a divine authority and power, that shone forth in the ministry and actions of CHRIST, regarded him as the SON of GOD, the true MESSIAH. The rulers of the people, and more especially the chief priests and Pharisees, whose licentiousness and hypocrisy he censured with a noble and generous freedom, laboured with

The success
of CHRIST's
ministry.

[n] See BASNAGE, *Histoire des Juifs*, vol. i. cap. xviii. p. 500. As also THEOPH. SIGF. BAYERUS, *Historia Edessena et Osroëna*, lib. iii. p. 104. JOS. SIMON ASSEMANUS, *Biblioth. Oriental. Clement. Vaticane*, tom. i. p. 554.

[o] There is no author who has discussed this question (concerning the authenticity of the letters of CHRIST and ABGARUS, and the truth of the whole story) with such learning and judgment, as the late Mr. JONES, in the second volume of his excellent work, entitled, *A new and full method of settling the canonical authority of the New Testament*. Notwithstanding the opinions of such celebrated names as PARKER, CAVE, and GRABE, in favour of these letters, and the history to which they relate, Mr. JONES has offered reasons to prove the whole fictitious, which seem unanswerable, independent of the authorities of RIVET, CHEMNITIUS, WALTHER, SIMON, DU PIN, WAKE, SPANHEIM, FABRICIUS, and LE CLERC, which he opposes to the three above mentioned. It is remarkable that this story is not mentioned by any writer before EUSEBIUS; that it is but little taken notice of by succeeding writers; that the whole affair was unknown to CHRIST's Apostles, and to the Christians, their contemporaries, as is manifest from the early disputes about the method of receiving Gentile converts into the church, which this story, had it been true, must have entirely decided. As to the letters, no doubt can be made of their spuriousness; since, if CHRIST had written a letter to ABGARUS, it would have been a part of Sacred Scripture, and would have been placed at the head of all the books of the New Testament. See LARDNER'S *Collection of Ancient Jewish and Heathen Testimonies*, vol. i. p. 297, &c. It must be observed in behalf of EUSEBIUS, that he relates this story, as drawn from the archives of EDESSA.

CENT. success, by the help of their passions, to extinguish
 I. in their breasts the conviction of his celestial mission ;
 PART I. or, at least, to suppress the effects it was adapted to
 produce upon their conduct. Fearing also lest the
 ministry of CHRIST should tend to diminish their
 credit, and to deprive them of the advantages they
 derived from the impious abuse of their authority in
 religious matters ; they laid snares for his life, which,
 for a considerable time, were without effect. They
 succeeded, at length, by the infernal treason of an
 apostate disciple, by the treachery of JUDAS, who
 discovered the retreat which his divine master had
 chosen for the purposes of meditation and repose,
 and thus delivered him into the merciless hands of a
 brutal soldiery.

Death of
 CHRIST.

IX. In consequence of this JESUS was first
 brought before the Jewish high-priest and sanhedrim,
 before whom he was accused of having violated the
 law, and blasphemed the majesty of God. Dragged
 from thence to the tribunal of PILATE the Roman
 prætor, he was there charged with seditious enter-
 prises, and with treason against CÆSAR. Both
 these accusations were so evidently false, and desti-
 tute even of every appearance of truth, that they
 must have been rejected by any judge, who acted upon
 the principles of common equity. But the clamours
 of an enraged populace, set on by the impious
 instigations of their priests and rulers, intimidated
 PILATE, and engaged him, though with the utmost
 reluctance, and in opposition to the dictates of his
 conscience, to pronounce a capital sentence against
 CHRIST. The divine Saviour behaved with inex-
 pressible dignity under this heavy trial. As the
 end of his mission was to make expiation for the sins
 of men, so when all things were ready, and when
 he had finished the work of his glorious ministry,
 he placidly submitted to the death of the cross, and,
 with a serene and voluntary resignation, committed his
 spirit into the hands of the Father.

X. After JESUS had remained three days in the sepulchre, he resumed that life which he had voluntarily laid down; and, rising from the dead, declared to the universe, by that triumphant act, that the divine justice was satisfied, and the paths of salvation and immortality rendered accessible to the human race. He conversed with his disciples during forty days after his resurrection, and employed that time in instructing them more fully concerning the nature of his kingdom. Many wise and important reasons prevented his shewing himself publicly at *Jerusalem*, to confound the malignity and unbelief of his enemies. He contented himself with manifesting the certainty of his glorious resurrection, to a sufficient number of faithful and credible witnesses; foreseeing, perhaps, that if he appeared in public, those malicious unbelievers, who had formerly attributed his miracles to the power of magic, would now represent his resurrection, as a phantom, or vision, produced by the influence of infernal powers. After having remained upon earth during the space of time above mentioned, and given to his disciples a divine commission to preach the glad tidings of salvation and immortality to the human race, he ascended into heaven, in their presence, and resumed the enjoyment of that glory which he was possessed of before the worlds were created.

CENT.
1.
PART 1.
His resur-
rection.

CHAPTER IV.

Concerning the prosperous events that happened to the church during this century.

CENT. I. **J**ESUS, being ascended into heaven, soon shewed his afflicted disciples, that, though invisible to mortal eyes, he was still their omnipotent protector and their benevolent guide. About fifty days after his departure from them, he gave them the first proof of that majesty and power to which he was exalted, by the effusion of the Holy Ghost upon them according to his promise [p]. The consequences of this grand event were surprizing and glorious, infinitely honourable to the Christian religion and the divine mission of its triumphant author. For no sooner had the apostles received this precious gift, this celestial guide, than their ignorance was turned into light, their doubts into certainty, their fears into a firm and invincible fortitude, and their former backwardness into an ardent and inextinguishable zeal, which led them to undertake their sacred office with the utmost intrepidity and alacrity of mind. This marvellous event was attended with a variety of gifts; particularly the gift of tongues, so indispensably necessary to qualify the apostles to preach the gospel to the different nations. These holy apostles were also filled with a perfect persuasion, founded on CHRIST's express promise, that the divine presence would perpetually accompany them, and shew itself by miraculous interpositions, as often as the success of their ministry should render this necessary.

CENT.

I.

PART I.

The apostles
filled with
the Holy
Ghost.

[p] Acts ii. 1, &c.

II. Relying upon these celestial succours, the apostles began their glorious ministry, by preaching the gospel, according to CHRIST'S positive command, first to the Jews, and by endeavouring to bring that deluded people to the knowledge of the truth [q]. Nor were their labours unsuccessful, since, in a very short time, many thousands were converted, by the influence of their ministry, to the Christian faith [r]. From the Jews they passed to the Samaritans, to whom they preached with such efficacy, that great numbers of that nation acknowledged the MESSIAH [s]. And after that they had exercised their ministry, during several years, at *Jerusalem*, and brought to a sufficient degree of consistence and maturity the Christian churches which were founded in *Palestine* and the adjacent countries, they extended their views further, carried the divine lamp of the gospel to all the nations of the world, and saw their labours crowned, almost every where, with the most abundant fruits.

CENT.

I.

PART I.

 Preach the gospel first to the Jews and Samaritans.

III. No sooner was CHRIST exalted on high, than the apostles determined to render their number complete, as it had been fixed by their divine master, and accordingly to chuse, in the place of JUDAS, who had desperately perished by his own hands, a man endowed with such degrees of sanctity and wisdom, as were necessary in a station of such vast importance. Having therefore gathered together the small assembly of Christians which had then been formed at *Jerusalem*, two men, remarkable for their piety and faith, were proposed as the most worthy to stand candidates for this sacred office. These men were MATTHIAS and BARNABAS, the former of whom was, either by lot (which is the most general opinion), or by a plurality of voices of the

The election of a new apostle.

[q] Luke xxiv. 47. Acts i. 8. xiii. 46.

[r] Acts ii. 41. iv. 4.

[s] Acts i. 8. viii. 14.

CENT. assembly there present, chosen to the dignity of an apostle [t].

PART I.

Paul called
to be an
apostle.

IV. All these apostles were men without education, and absolutely ignorant of letters and philosophy; and yet in the infancy of the Christian church, it was necessary that there should be, at least, some one defender of the gospel, who, versed in the learned arts, might be able to combat the Jewish doctors and the Pagan philosophers with their own arms. For this purpose, JESUS himself, by an extraordinary voice from heaven, called to his service a thirteenth apostle, whose name was SAUL (afterwards PAUL), and whose acquaintance both with Jewish and Grecian learning was very considerable [u]. This extraordinary man, who had been one of the most virulent enemies of the Christians, became their most glorious and triumphant defender. Independent of the miraculous gifts with which he was enriched, he was naturally possessed of an invincible courage, an amazing force of genius, and a spirit of patience, which no fatigue could overcome, and which no sufferings or trials could exhaust. To these the cause of the gospel, under the divine appointment, owed a considerable part of its rapid progress and surprising success, as the *Acts of the Apostles*, and the *Epistles of St. PAUL*, abundantly testify.

The church
of Jerusalem,

how constituted.

V. The first Christian church, founded by the apostles, was that of Jerusalem, which was the model of all those that were afterwards erected during this first century. This church was, however, governed by the apostles themselves, to whom both the *elders*, and those who were entrusted with the care of the poor, even the *deacons*, were subject. The people, though they had not abandoned the Jewish worship, held, however, separate assemblies, in which they were instructed by the apostles and

[t] Acts i. 26.

[u] Acts ix. 1.

elders, prayed together, celebrated the holy supper CENT. in remembrance of CHRIST, of his death and sufferings, and the salvation offered to mankind through I. him; and, at the conclusion of these meetings, they testified their mutual love, partly by their liberality to the poor, and partly by sober and friendly repasts PART I. [*w*], which from thence were called *feasts of charity*. Among the virtues which distinguished the rising church in this its infancy, that of charity to the poor and needy shone in the first rank, and with the brightest lustre. The rich supplied the wants of their indigent brethren with such liberality and readiness, that, as St. LUKE tells us, among the primitive disciples of CHRIST, all things were *in common* [*x*]. This expression has, however, been greatly abused, and has been made to signify a *community of rights, goods, or possessions*, than which interpretation nothing is more groundless, nothing more false. For from a multitude of reasons, as well as from the express words of St. PETER [*y*], it is abundantly manifest that the community, which is implied in mutual *use* and mutual liberality, is the only thing intended in this passage [*z*].

VI. The apostles, having finished their work at *Jerusalem*, went from thence to employ their labours in other nations, travelled, with this view, over a great part of the known world, and in a short time planted a vast number of churches among the Gentiles. Several of these are mentioned in the sacred

Many churches founded by the apostles in different places.

[*w*] Acts ii. 42.

[*x*] Acts ii. 44. iv. 32.

[*y*] Acts v. iv.

☞ [*z*] This is proved with the utmost evidence by Dr. MOSHEIM, in a dissertation concerning the true nature of that community of goods, which is said to have taken place in the church of *Jerusalem*. This learned discourse is to be found in the second volume of our author's incomparable work, entitled, *Dissertationes ad Historiam Ecclesiasticam pertinentes.*

CENT. writings, particularly in the *Acts of the Apostles* [a];
 I. though these are, undoubtedly, but a small part of
 PART I. the churches, which were founded either by the
 apostles themselves, or by their disciples under their
 immediate direction. The distance of time, and the
 want of records, leave us at a loss with respect to
 many interesting circumstances of peregrinations of
 the apostles; nor have we any certain or precise
 accounts of the limits of their voyages, of the par-
 ticular countries where they sojourned, nor of the
 times and places in which they finished their glorious
 course. The stories that are told concerning their
 arrival and exploits among the Gauls, the English,
 the Spaniards, the Germans, the Americans, the
 Chinese, the Indians, and the Russians, are too
 romantic in their nature, and of too recent a date,
 to be received by an impartial enquirer after truth.
 The greatest part of these fables were forged after
 the time of CHARLEMAGNE, when most of the
 Christian churches contended about the antiquity
 of their origin, with as much vehemence as the
 Arcadians, Egyptians, and Greeks, disputed for-
 merly about their seniority and precedence.

CHRIST
 respected
 among the
 Gentiles.

VII. At the same time, the beauty and excellence
 of the Christian religion excited the admiration of
 the thinking part of mankind, wherever the apostles
 directed their course. Many, who were not willing
 to adopt the whole of its doctrines, were, neverthe-
 less, as appears from undoubted records, so struck
 with the accounts of CHRIST'S life and actions, and
 so charmed with the sublime purity of his precepts,
 that they ranked him in the number of the greatest
 heroes, nay, even of the gods themselves. Great
 numbers kept, with the utmost care, in their houses,

[a] The names of the churches, planted by the apostles in
 the different nations, are specified in a work of PHIL. JAMES
 HARTMAN, *De rebus gestis Christianorum sub apostolis*, cap. vii.
 p. 107; and also in that of F. AKBERT FABRICIUS, entitled,
Lux Evangelii toti orbi exiens, cap. v. p. 83, &c.

pictures or images of the divine Saviour and his apostles, which they treated with the highest marks of veneration and respect [b]. And so illustrious was the fame of CHRIST's power grown, after his resurrection from the dead, and the miraculous gifts shed from on high upon his apostles, that the emperor TIBERIUS is said to have proposed his being enrolled among the gods of *Rome*, which the opposition of the senate hindered from taking effect. Many have doubted of the truth of this story: there are, however, several authors of the first note who have declared, that the reasons alleged for the truth of this fact are such as have removed their doubts, and appeared to them satisfactory and conclusive [c].

CENT.

I.

PART I.

[b] This is particularly mentioned by EUSEBIUS *Hist. Eccl.* lib. vii. cap. xviii. p. 265. and by IRENÆUS, lib. i. c. xxv.

[c] See THEOD. HASÆUS, *De decreto Tiberii, quo Christum referre voluit in numerum Deorum*; as also a very learned letter written, in defence of the truth of this fact, by the celebrated CHRISTOPHER ISELIUS, and published in the *Bibliothèque Germanique*, tom. xxxii. p. 147. and tom. xxxiii. p. 12. [We may add to this note of Dr. MOSHEIM, that the late learned professor Altmann published at *Bern*, in the year 1755, an ingenious pamphlet upon this subject, entitled *Disquisitione Historico-critica de Epistola Pontii Pilati ad Tiberium, qua CHRISTI miracula, mors, et resurrectio recensentur*. This author makes it appear, that though the letter, which some have attributed to PILATE, and which is extant in several authors, be manifestly spurious, yet it is no less certain, that PILATE sent to Tiberius an account of the death and resurrection of CHRIST. See the *Biblioth. des sciences et des beaux arts*, published at the *Hague*, tom. vi. p. 360. This matter has been examined anew with his usual diligence and accuracy by the learned Dr. LARDNER, in the third volume of his *Collection of Jewish and Heathen Testimonies to the truth of the Christian Religion*, &c. p. 310, &c. He thinks that the testimonies of JUSTIN MARTYR and TERTULLIAN, who, in apologies for Christianity, that were presented, or at least addressed to the emperor and senate of *Rome*, or to magistrates of high authority in the empire, affirm, that PILATE sent to TIBERIUS an account of the death and resurrection of CHRIST, deserve some regard; though some writers, and particularly OROSIUS, have made alterations and additions in the original narration of TERTULLIAN, that are too much adapted to diminish the credibility of the whole.]

CENT.

VIII. When we consider the rapid progress of

I.

Christianity among the Gentile nations, and the

PART I.

poor and feeble instruments by which this great

The causes
of the rapid
propagation
of the
gospel.

and amazing event was immediately effected, we must naturally have recourse to an omnipotent and invisible hand, as its true and proper cause. For unless we suppose here a divine interposition, how was it possible that men, destitute of all human aid, without credit or riches, learning or eloquence, could, in so short a time, persuade a considerable part of mankind to abandon the religion of their ancestors? How was it possible that an handful of apostles, who, as fishermen and publicans, must have been contemned by their own nation, and as Jews, must have been odious to all others, could engage the learned and the mighty, as well as the simple and those of low degree, to forsake their favourite prejudices, and to embrace a new religion which was an enemy to their corrupt passions? And, indeed, there were undoubtedly marks of a celestial power perpetually attending their ministry. There was, in their very language, an incredible energy, an amazing power of sending light into the understanding, and conviction into the heart. To this were added, the commanding influence of stupendous miracles, the foretelling of future events, the power of discerning the secret thoughts and intentions of the heart, a magnanimity superior to all difficulties, a contempt of riches and honours, a serene tranquillity in the face of death, and an invincible patience under torments still more dreadful than death itself; and all this accompanied with lives free from all stain, and adorned with the constant practice of sublime virtue. Thus were the Messengers of the divine Saviour, the heralds of his spiritual and immortal kingdom, furnished for their glorious work, as the unanimous voice of ancient history so loudly testifies. The event sufficiently declares this; for without these remarkable and

extraordinary circumstances, no rational account can be given of the rapid propagation of the gospel throughout the world.

CENT.
I.
PART I.

IX. What indeed contributed still further to this glorious event, was, the power vested in the apostles of transmitting to their disciples these miraculous gifts. For many of the first Christians were no sooner baptized according to CHRIST'S appointment, and dedicated to the service of God by solemn prayer, and the imposition of hands, than they spoke languages they had never known or learned before; foretold future events, healed the sick by pronouncing the name of JESUS, restored the dead to life, and performed many things above the reach of human power [d]. And it is no wonder if men, who had the power of communicating to others these marvellous gifts, appeared great and respectable, wherever they exercised their glorious ministry.

Miraculous gifts communicated by the apostles.

X. Such then were the true causes of that amazing rapidity with which the Christian religion spread itself upon earth; and those who pretend to assign other reasons of this surprising event, indulge themselves in idle fictions, which must disgust every attentive observer of men and things. In vain, therefore, have some imagined, that the extraordinary liberality of the Christians to their poor, was a temptation to the more indolent and corrupt part of the multitude to embrace the gospel. Such malignant and superficial reasoners do not consider, that those who embraced this divine religion exposed their lives to the most imminent danger; nor have they attention enough to recollect, that neither lazy nor vicious members were suffered to remain in the society of Christians. Equally vain is the invention of those, who imagine that the

The progress of the gospel attributed to absurd causes.

[d] See PFANNER'S learned treatise, *De charismatibus sive donis miraculosis antiquae ecclesiae*, published at Francfort, 1683.

CENT. profligate lives of the Heathen priests was an occasion of the conversion of many to Christianity. For, I. though this might indeed give them a disgust at the religion of these unworthy ministers, yet it could not, alone, attach them to that of JESUS, which offered them from the world no other prospects, than those of poverty, infamy, and death. The person, who could embrace the gospel, solely, from the motive now mentioned, must have reasoned in this senseless and extravagant manner: “The
 PART I. “ministers of that religion which I have professed
 “from my infancy, lead profligate lives: therefore,
 “I will become a Christian, join myself to that
 “body of men who are condemned by the laws of
 “the state, and thus expose my life and fortune to
 “the most imminent danger.”

CHAPTER V.

Concerning the calamitous events that happened to the church.

The Jews
 persecute
 the Chris-
 tians in
Palestine.

I. **T**HE innocence and virtue that distinguished so eminently the lives of CHRIST'S servants, and the spotless purity of the doctrine they taught, were not sufficient to defend them against the virulence and malignity of the Jews. The priests and rulers of that abandoned people, not only loaded with injuries and reproach the apostles of JESUS, and their disciples, but condemned as many of them, as they could, to death, and executed in the most irregular and barbarous manner their sanguinary decrees. The murder of STEPHEN, of JAMES the son of ZEBEDEE, and of JAMES, surnamed the *Just*, bishop of *Jerusalem*, furnish dreadful examples of

the truth of what we here advance [*e*]. This odious malignity of the Jewish doctors, against the heralds of the gospel, was undoubtedly owing to a secret apprehension, that the progress of Christianity would destroy the credit of Judaism, and bring on the ruin of their pompous ceremonies.

II. The Jews who lived out of *Palestine*, in the Roman provinces, did not yield to those of *Jerusalem* in point of cruelty to the innocent disciples of CHRIST. We learn from the history of the *Acts of the Apostles*, and other records of unquestionable authority, that they spared no labour, but zealously seized every occasion of animating the magistrates against the Christians, and setting on the multitude to demand their destruction. The high-priest of the nation, and the Jews, who dwelt in *Palestine*, were instrumental in exciting the rage of these foreign Jews against the infant church, by sending messengers to exhort them not only to avoid all intercourse with the Christians, but also to persecute them in the most vehement manner [*f*]. For this inhuman order, they endeavoured to find out the most plausible pretexts; and, therefore, they gave out, that the Christians were enemies to the Roman emperor, since they acknowledged the authority of a certain person whose name was JESUS, whom PILATE had punished capitally as a malefactor by a most righteous sentence, and on whom, nevertheless, they conferred the royal dignity. These perfidious insinuations had the intended effect, and the rage of the Jews against the Christians was conveyed from

CENT.

I.

PART I.

And also by those in foreign countries.

[*e*] The martyrdom of STEPHEN is recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles*, vii. 55.; and that of JAMES the son of ZEBEDEE, Acts xii. 1. 2; that of JAMES the *Just*, bishop of *Jerusalem*, is mentioned by JOSEPHUS, in his *Jewish Antiquities*, book xx. ch. viii. and by EUSEBIUS, in his *Eccles. History*, book ii. chap. xxiii.

[*f*] See the Dialogue of JUSTIN MARTYR with TRYPHO the Jew, p. 51, 52, 53. 109. 138. 318.

CENT. father to son, from age to age; so that the church
 I. of CHRIST had, in no period of time, more bitter
 PART I. and desperate enemies than that very people, to
 whom the immortal Saviour was more especially
 sent.

The Jews
 severely
 punished for
 their treat-
 ment of
 CHRIST
 and his
 disciples.

III. The Supreme Judge of the world did not let the barbarous conduct of this perfidious nation go unpunished. The most signal marks of divine justice pursued them, and the cruelties they had exercised upon CHRIST, and his disciples, were dreadfully avenged. The God, who had for so many ages protected the Jews with an outstretched arm, withdrew his aid. He permitted *Jerusalem*, with its famous temple, to be destroyed by VESPASIAN and his son TITUS, an innumerable multitude of this devoted people to perish by the sword, and the greatest part of those that remained to groan under the yoke of a severe bondage. Nothing can be more affecting than the account of this terrible event, and the circumstantial description of the tremendous calamities which attended it, as they are given by JOSEPHUS, himself a Jew, and also a spectator of this horrid scene. From this period the Jews experienced, in every place, the hatred and contempt of the Gentile nations, still more than they had formerly done. And in these their calamities the predictions of Christ were amply fulfilled, and his divine mission further illustrated.

The ten
 Gentile
 persecu-
 tions.

IV. However virulent the Jews were against the Christians, yet, upon many occasions, they wanted power to execute their cruel purposes. This was not the case with the Heathen nations; and therefore from them the Christians suffered the severest calamities. The Romans are said to have pursued the Christians with the utmost violence in ten persecutions [8], but this number is not verified by

[8] The learned J. ALBERT FABRICIUS has given us a list of the authors that have written concerning these persecutions, in his *Lux Evangelii orbi universo exorients*, cap. vii. p. 133.

the ancient history of the church. For if, by these persecutions, such only are meant as were singularly severe and universal throughout the empire, then it is certain, that these amount not to the number above mentioned. And, if we take the provincial and less remarkable persecutions into the account, they far exceed it. In the fifth century, certain Christians were led by some passages of the holy scriptures, and by one especially in the *Revelations* [b], to imagine that the church was to suffer ten calamities of a most grievous nature. To this notion, therefore, they endeavoured, though not all in the same way, to accommodate the language of history, even against the testimony of those ancient records, from whence alone history can speak with authority [i].

V. NERO was the first emperor who enacted laws against the Christians. In this he was followed by DOMITIAN, MARCUS ANTONINUS the philosopher, SEVERUS, and the other emperors, who indulged the prejudices they had imbibed against the disciples of JESUS. All the edicts of these different princes were not, however, equally unjust, nor made with the same views, and for the same reasons. Were they now extant, as they were collected by the celebrated lawyer DOMITIUS, in his book concerning the *duty of a Proconsul*, they would undoubtedly cast a great light upon the history of the church, under the persecuting emperors [k].

Laws made
against the
Christians.

[b] Revel. xvii. 14.

[i] See Sulpitius Severus, book ii. chap. xxxiii. As also Austin, *De civitate Dei*, book xviii. ch. lii.

[k] The Collection of the imperial edicts against the Christians, made by Domitius, and now lost, is mentioned by Lactantius, in his *Divine Institutes*, book v. chap. xi. Such of these edicts, as have escaped the ruins of time, are learnedly illustrated by Franc. Balduinus, in a small treatise, entitled, *Commentarium ad edicta veterum principum Romanorum de Christianis*. Of which a second edition was published by Mr. Gundling, at Hall, 1727.

CENT. be satisfied with probable conjectures for want of
I. more certain evidence.

PART I.

The causes
of the per-
secution of
the Chris-
tians by the
Romans.

VI. Before we proceed further in this part of our history, a very natural curiosity calls us to enquire, how it happened, that the Romans, who were troublesome to no nation on account of their religion, and who suffered even the Jews to live under their own laws, and follow their own method of worship, treated the Christians alone with such severity? This important question seems still more difficult to be solved, when we consider that the excellent nature of the Christian religion, and its admirable tendency to promote both the public welfare of the state, and private felicity of the individual, entitled it, in a singular manner, to the favour and protection of the reigning powers. One of the principal reasons of the severity, with which the Romans persecuted the Christians, notwithstanding these considerations, seems to have been the abhorrence and contempt with which the latter regarded the religion of the empire, which was so intimately connected with the form, and, indeed, with the very essence of its political constitution. For, though the Romans gave an unlimited toleration to all religions, which had nothing in their tenets dangerous to the commonwealth, yet they would not permit that of their ancestors, which was established by the laws of the state, to be turned into derision, nor the people to be drawn away from their attachment to it. These, however, were the two things which the Christians were charged with, and that justly, though to their honour. They dared to ridicule the absurdities of the Pagan superstition, and they were ardent and assiduous in gaining proselytes to the truth. Nor did they only attack the religion of *Rome*, but also all the different shapes and forms under which superstition appeared in the various countries where they exercised their ministry. From hence the Romans concluded, that the Chris-

tian sect was not only unsupportably daring and arrogant, but, moreover, an enemy to the public tranquillity, and every way proper to excite civil wars and commotions in the empire. It is, probably, on this account, that TACITUS reproaches them with the odious character of *haters of mankind* [l], and styles the religion of JESUS a *destructive superstition*; and that SÆTONIUS speaks of the Christians, and their doctrine, in terms of the same kind [m].

CENT.
I.
PART I.

VII. Another circumstance that irritated the Romans against the Christians, was the simplicity of their worship, which resembled in nothing the sacred rites of any other people. The Christians had neither sacrifices, nor temples, nor images, nor oracles, nor sacerdotal orders; and this was sufficient to bring upon them the reproaches of an ignorant multitude, who imagined that there could be no religion without these. Thus they were looked upon as a sort of Atheists; and, by the Roman laws, those who were chargeable with Atheism were declared the pests of human society. But this was not all: the sordid interests of a multitude of lazy and selfish priests were immediately connected with the ruin and oppression of the Christian cause. The public worship of such an immense number of deities was a source of subsistence, and even of riches, to the whole rabble of priests and augurs, and also to a multitude of merchants and artists. And as the progress of the gospel threatened the ruin of this

Other causes
of these per-
secutions.

[l] *Annal.* lib. xv. cap. xliv.

[m] *In Nerone*, cap. xvi. These odious epithets, which TACITUS gives to the Christians and their religion, as likewise the language of SÆTONIUS, who calls Christianity a *poisonous or malignant superstition* (*malefica superstitio*), are founded upon the same reasons. A sect, which not only could not endure, but even laboured to abolish, the religious systems of the Romans, and also those of all the other nations of the universe, appeared to the short-sighted and superficial observers of religious matters, as enemies of mankind, and persons possessed with a mortal hatred of all the human race.

CENT. religious traffic, and the profits it produced, this
 I. raised up new enemies to the Christians, and armed
 PART I. the rage of mercenary superstition against their
 lives and their cause [n].

The most
 odious
 calumnies
 spread
 abroad
 against the
 Christians.

VIII. To accomplish more speedily the ruin of the Christians, those, whose interests were incompatible with the progress of the gospel, loaded them with the most opprobrious calumnies, which were too easily received as truth, by the credulous and unthinking multitude, among whom they were dispersed with the utmost industry. We find a large account of these perfidious and ill-grounded reproaches in the writings of the first defenders of the Christian cause [o]. And these, indeed, were the only arms they had to oppose the truth; since the excellence of the gospel, and the virtue of its ministers and followers, left its enemies no resources but calumny and persecution. Nothing can be imagined, in point of virulence and fury, that they did not employ for the ruin of the Christians. They even went so far as to persuade the multitude, that all the calamities, wars, tempests, and diseases, that afflicted mankind, were judgments sent down by the angry gods, because the Christians, who contemned their authority, were suffered in the empire [p].

The punish-
 ments and
 judicial
 forms used
 against the
 Christians.

IX. The various kinds of punishments, both capital and corrective, which were employed against the Christians, are particularly described by learned

[n] This observation is verified by the story of DEMETRIUS the silver-smith, Acts xix. 25. and by the following passage in the 97th letter of the xth book of PLINY's epistles: "The temples, which were almost deserted, begin to be frequented again; and the sacred rites, which have been long neglected, are again performed.—The victims, which have had hitherto few purchasers, begin to come again to the market," &c.

[o] See the laborious work of CHRIST. KORTHOLT, entitled, *Paganus obtrectator, seu de calumniis Gentilium in Christianos*; to which may be added, JO. JAC. HULDRIcus, *De calumniis Gentilium in Christianos*, published at Zurich, in 8vo. in the year 1744.

[p] See ARNOBIUS *Contra gentes*.

men who have written professedly upon that subject [q]. The forms of proceeding, used in their condemnation, may be seen in the *Acts of the Martyrs*, in the letters of PLINY and TRAJAN, and other ancient monuments [r]. These judicial forms were very different, at different times, and changed naturally according to the mildness or severity of the laws enacted by the different emperors against the Christians. Thus, at one time, we see the most diligent search made after the followers of CHRIST; at another, all perquisition suspended, and positive accusation and information only allowed. Under one reign we see them, upon their being proved Christians, or their confessing themselves such, immediately dragged away to execution, unless they prevent their punishment by apostasy; under another, we see inhuman magistrates endeavouring to compel them, by all sorts of tortures, to renounce their profession.

X. They who, in the perilous times of the church, fell by the hand of bloody persecutions, and expired in the cause of the divine Saviour, were called *martyrs*; a term borrowed from the sacred writings, which signifies *witnesses*, and thus expresses the glorious testimony which these magnanimous believers bore to the truth. The title of *confessors* was given to such, as, in the face of death, and at the expence of honours, fortune, and all the other advantages of the world, had confessed with fortitude, before the Roman tribunals, their firm attachment to the religion of JESUS. The veneration that was paid to both *martyrs* and *confessors* is hardly credible. The distinguishing honours and privileges they enjoyed, the authority with which their counsels and decisions were attended, would furnish ample

CENT. I.
PART I.
Martyrs
and con-
fessors.

[q] See for this purpose ANT. GALLONIUS and GASP. SAGITTARIUS, *De cruciatibus martyrum*.

[r] See BOHMER, *Juris Eccles. Protestant.* tom. iv. lib. v. *Decretal.* tit. i. § 32. p. 617.

CENT. matter for a history apart; and such an undertaking
 I. might be highly useful in many respects. There
 PART I. was, no doubt, as much wisdom as justice in treating
 with such respect, and investing with such privileges,
 these Christian heroes; since nothing was more
 adapted to encourage others to suffer with cheer-
 fulness in the cause of CHRIST. But, as the best
 and wisest institutions are generally perverted, by
 the weakness or corruption of men, from their
 original purpose; so the authority and privileges
 granted, in the beginning, to martyrs and confessors,
 became, in process of time, a support to superstition,
 an incentive to enthusiasm, and a source of innumerable evils and abuses.

Their
 number.

XI. The first three or four ages of the church were stained with the blood of martyrs, who suffered for the name of JESUS. The greatness of their number is acknowledged by all, who have a competent acquaintance with ancient history, and who have examined that matter with any degree of impartiality. It is true, the learned DODWELL has endeavoured to invalidate this unanimous decision of the ancient historians [s], and to diminish considerably the number of those that suffered death for the gospel. And after him, several writers have maintained his opinion, and asserted, that whatever may have been the calamities that the Christians, in general, suffered for their attachment to the gospel, very few were put to death on that account. This hypothesis has been warmly opposed, as derogating from that divine power which enabled Christians to be faithful even unto death, and a contrary one embraced, which augments prodigiously the number of these heroic sufferers. Here, no doubt, it will be wise to avoid both these extremes, and to hold the middle path, which certainly leads

[s] See DODWELL's dissertation, *De paucitate martyrum*, in his *Dissertationes Cyprianicæ*.

nearest to the truth. The martyrs were less in number than several of the ancient and modern writers have supposed them to be; but much more numerous than DODWELL and his followers are willing to believe. And this medium will be easily admitted by such, as have learned from the ancient writers, that, in the darkest and most calamitous times of the church, all Christians were not equally nor promiscuously disturbed, nor called before the public tribunals. Those who were of the lowest rank of the people, escaped the best; their obscurity, in some measure, screened them from the fury of persecution. The learned and eloquent, the doctors and ministers, and chiefly the rich, after the confiscation of whose fortunes a rapacious magistracy were perpetually gaping, these were the persons the most exposed to the dangers of the times.

XII. The actions and sayings of these holy martyrs, from the moment of their imprisonment to their last gasp, were carefully recorded, in order to be read on certain days, and thus proposed as models to future ages. But few, however, of these ancient acts are come down to our times [t]; the greatest part of them having been destroyed during that dreadful persecution which DIOCLETIAN carried on ten years, with such fury, against the Christians. For a most diligent search was then made after all their books and papers; and all of them that were found were committed to the flames. From the eighth century downwards, several Greek and Latin writers endeavoured to make up this loss, by compiling, with vast labour, accounts of the lives and actions of the ancient martyrs. But the most of them have given us little else than a series of fables,

Their lives
and actions.

[t] Such of those acts as are worthy of credit have been collected by the learned RUINARTUS, into one volume in folio, of a moderate size, entitled, *Sele&ta et sincera martyrum acta*, Amstelod. 1713. The hypothesis of DODWELL is amply refuted in a laboured preface which the author has prefixed to this work.

CENT. adorned with profusion of rhetorical flowers, and striking images, as the wiser, even among the Romish. I. doctors, frankly acknowledge. Nor are those PART 1. records, that pass under the name of *martyrology*, worthy of superior credit, since they bear the most evident marks both of ignorance and falsehood. So that, upon the whole, this part of Ecclesiastical History, for want of ancient and authentic monuments, is extremely imperfect, and necessarily attended with much obscurity.

The persecution under Nero.

XIII. It would have been surprising, if, under such a monster of cruelty as NERO, the Christians had enjoyed the sweets of tranquillity and freedom. But this was far from being the case; for this perfidious tyrant accused them of having set fire to the city of *Rome*, that horrid crime, which he himself had committed with a barbarous pleasure. In avenging this crime upon the innocent Christians, he ordered matters so, that the punishment should bear some resemblance to the offence. He, therefore, wrapped up some of them in combustible garments, and ordered fire to be set to them when the darkness came on, that thus, like torches, they might dispel the obscurity of the night; while others were fastened to crosses, or torn to pieces by wild beasts, or put to death in some such dreadful manner. This horrid persecution was set on foot in the month of *November* [u], in the 64th year of CHRIST, and in it, according to some ancient accounts, St. PAUL and St. PETER suffered martyrdom; though this latter fact is contested by many, as being abso-

[u] See, for a further illustration of this point of chronology, two French dissertations of the very learned ALPHONSE de VIGNOLES, concerning the cause and the commencement of the persecution under NERO, which are printed in MASSON's *Histoire critique de la republique des lettres*, tom. viii. p. 74—117. tom. ix. p. 172—186. See also TOINARD, *Ad Lactantium de mortibus persecut.* p. 398.

lutely irreconcilable with chronology [*w*]. The death of NERO, who perished miserably in the year 68, put an end to the calamities of this first persecution, under which, during the space of four years, the Christians suffered every sort of torment and affliction, which the ingenious cruelty of their enemies could invent.

XIV. Learned men are not entirely agreed concerning the extent of this persecution under NERO. Some confine it to the city of *Rome*, while others represent it as having raged throughout the whole empire. The latter opinion, which is also the most ancient [*x*], is undoubtedly to be preferred; as it is certain, that the laws enacted against the Christians, were enacted against the whole body, and not against particular churches, and were consequently in force in the remotest provinces. The authority of TERTULLIAN confirms this, who tells us, that NERO and DOMITIAN had enacted laws against the Christians, of which TRAJAN had, in part, taken away the force, and rendered them, in some measure, without effect [*y*]. We shall not have recourse for a further confirmation of this opinion, to that famous Portuguese or Spanish inscription, in which NERO is praised for having *purged that province from the new superstition*; since that inscription is justly suspected to be a mere forgery, and the best Spanish authors consider it as

The extent
of this per-
secution.

[*w*] See TILLEMONT, *Histoire des empereurs*, tom. i. p. 564. BARATIER, *De successionem Romanor. Pontif. cap. v. p. 60.*

[*x*] This opinion was first defended by FRANC. BALDUIN, in his *Comm. ad edicta imperator. in Christianos*, p. 27, 28. After him LAUNOIVS maintained the same opinion in his *Dissert. quâ Sulpitii Severi locus de prima martyrum Gallie epocha vindicatur*, §. I. p. 139, 140. tom. ii. part I. *opp.* This opinion, however, is still more acutely and learnedly defended by DODWELL, in the xith of his *Dissertationes Cyprianae*.

[*y*] *Apologet. cap. iv. p. 46.* according to the edition of HAVERCAMP.

CENT. such [z]. But we may, however, make one observation, which will tend to illustrate the point in question, and that is, that, since the Christians were condemned by NERO, not so much on account of their religion, as for the falsely-imputed crime of burning the city [a], it is scarcely to be imagined, that he would leave unmolested, even beyond the bounds of *Rome*, a sect whose members were accused of such an abominable deed.

The persecution under Domitian.

XV. Though, immediately after the death of NERO, the rage of this first persecution against the Christians ceased, yet the flame broke out a-new in the year ninety-three or ninety-four, under DOMITIAN, a prince little inferior to NERO in all sorts of wickedness [b]. This persecution was occasioned, if we may give credit to HEGESIPPUS, by the fears that DOMITIAN was under of losing the empire [c]; for he had been informed, that, among the relations of CHRIST, a man should arise, who, possessed of a

[z] This celebrated inscription is published by the learned GRUTERUS, in the first volume of his inscriptions, p. ccxxxviii. n. 9. It must, however, be observed, that the best Spanish writers dare not venture to defend the genuineness and authority of this inscription, as it has not been seen by any of them, and was first produced by CYRIAC of ANCONA, a person universally known to be utterly unworthy of the least credit. We shall add here the judgment which the excellent historian of Spain. JO. DE FERRERAS, has given of this inscription, in his *Histoire générale, d'Espagne*, tom. i. p. 192. “ Je ne puis m’empêcher (says he) d’observer que Cyriac d’Ancone fut le premier qui publia cette inscription, et que c’est de lui que les autres l’ont tirée : mais comme la foi de cet Ecrivain est suspect au jugement de tous les savans, que d’ailleurs il n’y a ni vestige, ni souvenir, de cette inscription dans les places où l’on dit qu’elle s’est trouvée, et qu’on ne sçait où la prendre à present, chacun peut en porter le jugement qui’il voudra.”

[a] See THEOD. RUINART. *Præf. ad acta martyrum sincera et selecta*, f. 31, &c.

[b] Idem, *Præf. ad acta martyrum*, &c. f. 33. THOM. ITTIGIUS, *Selectis Histor. Eccl. Capit. Sæc. i. cap. vi. § II. p. 331.*

[c] EUSEB. *Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. cap. xix, xx.*

turbulent and ambitious spirit, was to excite com-
 motions in the state, and aim at supreme dominion. However that may have been, the persecution renewed by this unworthy prince was extremely violent, though his untimely death put a stop to it not long after it commenced. FLAVIUS CLEMENS, a man of consular dignity, and FLAVIA DOMITILLA his niece, or, as some say, his wife, were the principal martyrs that suffered in this persecution, in which also the apostle JOHN was banished to the isle of *Patmos*. TERTULLIAN and other writers inform us, that, before his banishment, he was thrown into a caldron of boiling oil, from whence he came forth not only living, but even unhurt. This story, however, is not attested in such a manner, as to leave no remaining doubt about its certainty [d].

[d] See MOSHEIM's *Syntagma dissert. ad historiam eccles. pertinentium*, p. 497—546.

P A R T II.

The INTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

Containing an account of the state of LEARNING and
PHILOSOPHY.

CENT. I. **I**F we had any certain or satisfactory
I. account of the doctrines, which were received among
PART II. the wiser of the eastern nations, when the light of
the gospel first rose upon the world, this would
contribute to illustrate many important points in the
ancient history of the church. But the case is quite
otherwise: the fragments of the ancient oriental
philosophy that are come down to us, are, as every
one knows, few in number; and such as they are,
they yet require the diligence, erudition, and saga-
city of some learned man, to collect them into a
body, to arrange them with method, and to explain
them with perspicuity [e].

The state of
philosophy
in the east
not suffi-
ciently
known.

The philo-
sophy of the
Persians,
Chaldeans,
and Ara-
bians.

II. The doctrine of the *magi*, who believed the
universe to be governed by *two principles*, the one
good, and the other evil, flourished in *Persia*. Their
followers, however, were not all agreed concerning

[e] The history of the oriental philosophy by Mr STANLEY, though it is not void of all kind of merit, is yet extremely defective. That learned author is so far from having exhausted his subject, that he has left it, on the contrary, in many places wholly untouched. The history of philosophy, published in Germany, by the very learned Mr. BRUCKER, is vastly preferable to Mr. STANLEY'S work; and the German author, indeed, much superior to the English one, both in point of genius and of erudition.

the nature of these principles [f]; but this did not prevent the propagation of the main doctrine, which was received throughout a considerable part of *Asia* and *Africa*, especially among the Chaldæans, Assyrians, Syrians, and Egyptians, though with different modifications, and had even infected the Jews themselves [g]. The Arabians at that time, and even afterwards, were more remarkable for strength and courage than for genius and sagacity; nor do they seem, according to their own confession [h], to have acquired any great reputation for wisdom and philosophy before the time of MAHOMET.

III. From the earliest times the Indians were distinguished by their taste for sublime knowledge and wisdom. We might, perhaps, be able to form a judgment of their philosophical tenets, if that most ancient book, which they looked upon as particularly sacred, and which they call *veda*, or the law, were brought to light and translated into some known language. But the accounts which are given of this remarkable book, by those who have been in the *Indies*, are so various and irreconcilable with each other, that we must yet wait for further satisfaction on this head [i]. As to the Egyptians, they

CENT.
I.
PART II.

The wisdom of the Indians and Egyptians.

[f] See HYDE's *History of the religion of the ancient Persians*, a work full of erudition and disorder, and interspersed with conjectures of the most improbable kind.

[g] See a treatise of JO. CHRISTOPH. WOLF, published at *Hamburg*, in 1707, under the title of *Manichæismus ante Manichæos*. See also MOSHEIM's *Observations upon CUDWORTH's Intellectual System of the Universe*, p. 328. 423.

[h] See ABULPHARAIUS, *De Moribus Arabum*, published by POCOCK.

[i] I have lately heard that this most important, and long-expected book has been acquired by some French Jesuits, who are missionaries in the *Indies*, and who have sent it over to the King of France's library. It is also said, that it is already translated, or will be so immediately. See *Lettre du P. Calmette à M. de Cartigny, dans les Lettres edifiantes et curieuses des Missions Etrangères*, xxi. *Recueil*, p. 455. as also *Recueil* xxiii. p. 161.

CENT. were divided, as every one knows, into a multitude
 I. of sects and opinions [k]; so that their labour seems
 PART II. exceeding fruitless, who endeavour to reduce the
 philosophy of this people to one system.

The oriental philosophy, properly so called.

IV. But of all the different systems of philosophy that were received in *Asia* and *Africa* about the time of our Saviour, none was so detrimental to the Christian religion, as that which was styled *gnosis*, or science, i. e. *the way to the true knowledge of the deity*, and which we have above called the *oriental doctrine*, in order to distinguish it from the Grecian philosophy. It was from the bosom of this pretended oriental wisdom, that the chiefs of those sects, which in the three first centuries perplexed and afflicted the Christian church, originally issued forth. These supercilious doctors, endeavouring to accommodate to the tenets of their fantastic philosophy, the pure, the simple, and sublime doctrines of the Son of God, brought forth, as the result of this jarring composition, a multitude of idle dreams and fictions, and imposed upon their followers a system of opinions, which were partly ludicrous, and partly perplexed with intricate subtleties, and covered over with impenetrable obscurity. The ancient doctors, both Greek and Latin, who opposed these sects, considered them as so many branches that derived their origin from the Platonic philosophy. But this was pure illusion: an apparent resemblance between certain opinions of PLATO, and some of the tenets of the eastern schools, deceived these good men, who had no knowledge but of the Grecian philosophy, and were absolutely ignorant of the oriental doctrines. Whoever compares the platonic and gnostic philosophy together, will easily perceive the wide difference that there is between them.

[k] See MOSHEIM'S *Observations on the Intellectual System*, &c. in his Latin translation of that work, tom. i. p. 415.

V. The first principles of the oriental philosophy CENT.
 seem perfectly consistent with the dictates of reason; I.
 for its first founder must undoubtedly have argued PART. II.
 in the following manner: “ There are many evils
 “ in this world, and men seem impelled by a natural
 “ instinct to the practice of those things which The first principles of this philosophy.
 “ reason condemns; but that eternal mind, from
 “ which all spirits derive their existence, must be
 “ inaccessible to all kinds of evil, and also of a most
 “ perfect and beneficent nature; therefore the origin
 “ of those evils, with which the universe abounds,
 “ must be sought somewhere else than in the Deity.
 “ It cannot reside in him who is all perfection; and
 “ therefore it must be *without* him. Now, there is
 “ nothing *without* or *beyond* the Deity, but *matter*;
 “ therefore *matter* is the centre and source of all
 “ evil, of all vice.” Having taken for granted
 these principles, they proceeded further, and affirmed,
 that matter was eternal, and derived its present
 form, not from the will of the Supreme God, but
 from the creating power of some inferior intelligence
 to whom the world and its inhabitants owed their
 existence. As a proof of this assertion, they alledged
 that it was incredible, that the Supreme Deity,
 perfectly good, and infinitely removed from all evil,
 should either create or modify matter, which is
 essentially malignant and corrupt, or bestow upon
 it, in any degree, the riches of his wisdom and
 liberality. They were, however, aware of the
 insuperable difficulties that lay against their system;
 for when they were called to explain, in an accu-
 rate and satisfactory manner, how this rude and
 corrupt matter came to be arranged into such a
 regular and harmonious frame as that of the universe,
 and, particularly, how celestial spirits were joined to
 bodies formed out of its malignant mass, they were
 sadly embarrassed, and found that the plainest
 dictates of reason declared their system incapable of
 defence. In this perplexity, they had recourse to

CENT. wild fictions and romantic fables, in order to give
 I. an account of the formation of the world, and the
 PART II. origin of mankind.

The oriental philo-
 sopher's divid-
 ed in their
 sentiments.

VI. Those who, by mere dint of fancy and invention, endeavour to cast a light upon obscure points, or to solve great and intricate difficulties, are seldom agreed about the methods of proceeding; and, by a necessary consequence, separate into different sects. Such was the case of the oriental philosophers, when they set themselves to explain the difficulties mentioned above. Some imagined *two eternal principles* from whence all things proceeded, the one presiding over *light*, and the other over *matter*, and by their perpetual conflict, explained the mixture of good and evil, that appears in the universe. Others maintained, that the being, which presided over matter, was not an eternal principle, but a subordinate intelligence, one of those whom the Supreme God produced from himself. They supposed that this being was moved, by a sudden impulse, to reduce to order the rude mass of matter, which lay excluded from the mansions of the Deity, and also to create the human race. A third sort fell upon a system different from the two preceding, and formed to themselves the notion of a *triumvirate* of beings, in which the *Supreme Deity* was distinguished both from the *material, evil principle*, and from the *creator* of this sublunary world. These, then, were the three leading sects of the oriental philosophy, which were subdivided into various factions, by the disputes that arose, when they came to explain more fully their respective opinions, and to pursue them into all their monstrous consequences. These multiplied divisions were the natural and necessary consequences of a system which had no solid foundation, and was no more, indeed, than an airy phantom, blown up by the wanton fancies of self-sufficient men. And that these divisions did really subsist,

the history of the Christian sects, that embraced this philosophy, abundantly testifies.

VII. It is, however, to be observed, that, as all these sects were founded upon one common principle, their divisions did not prevent their holding, in common, certain opinions concerning the deity, the universe, the human race, and several other subjects. They were all, therefore, unanimous in acknowledging the existence of an eternal nature, in whom dwelt the fulness of wisdom, goodness, and all other perfections, and of whom no mortal was able to form a complete idea. This great being was considered by them as a most pure and radiant *light*, diffused through the immensity of space, which they called *pleroma*, a Greek word, which signifies fulness; and they taught concerning him, and his operations, the following things: “The *eternal nature*, infinitely perfect, and infinitely happy, having dwelt from everlasting in a profound solitude, and in a blessed tranquillity, produced, at length, from *itself*, two minds of a different sex, which resembled their supreme parent in the most perfect manner. From the prolific union of these two beings others arose, which were also followed by succeeding generations; so that, in process of time, a celestial family was formed in the *pleroma* [1]. This divine progeny, being immutable in its nature, and above the power of mortality, was called, by the philosophers, *æon* [m],” a term which

I.
PART II.
Their opinions concerning the deity.

[1] It appears highly probable, that the apostle PAUL had an eye to this fantastical mythology, when, in the first chapter of his *First Epistle to Timothy*, ver. 4. he exhorts him not to give heed to fables and endless GENEALOGIES; which minister questions, &c.

[m] The word, *αιων* or *æon*, is commonly used by the Greek writers, but in different senses. Its signification in the Gnostic system is not extremely evident, and several learned men have despaired of finding out its true meaning. *Αιων*, or *æon*, among the ancients, was used to signify the age of man, or the duration of human life. In after-times it was employed by

CENT. signifies, in the Greek language, an eternal nature.

I. How many in number these *aons* were, was a point

PART II. much controverted among the oriental sages.

Concerning the origin of this world. VIII. "Beyond the mansions of *light*, where
 "dwells the *deity* with his celestial offspring, there
 "lies a rude and unwieldy mass of *matter*, agitated
 "by innate, turbulent, and irregular motions.
 "One of the celestial natures descending from the
 "pleroma, either by a fortuitous impulse, or in con-
 "sequence of a divine commission, reduced to order
 "this unseemly mass, adorned it with a rich variety
 "of gifts, created men, and inferior animals of
 "different kinds, to store it with inhabitants, and
 "corrected its malignity by mixing with it a certain

philosophers to express the duration of spiritual and invisible beings. These philosophers used the word $\chiρονος$, as the measure of corporeal and changing objects; and $αιων$, as the measure of such as were immutable and eternal. And as God is the chief of those immutable beings which are spiritual, and consequently not to be perceived by our outward senses, his infinite and eternal duration was expressed by the term $αιων$, or *aon*, and that is the sense in which that word is now commonly understood. It was however, afterwards attributed to other spiritual and invisible beings; and the oriental philosophers, who lived about the time of CHRIST'S appearance upon earth, and made use of the Greek language, understood by it the *duration* of eternal and immutable things, the *space* or period of time, in which they exist. Nor did the variations, through which this word passed, end here; from expressing only the *duration* of beings, it was by a *metonymy* employed to signify the beings themselves. Thus the Supreme Being was called $αιων$, or *aon*; and the angels distinguished also by the title of *aons*. All this will lead us to the true meaning of that word among the Gnostics. They had formed to themselves the notion of an invisible and spiritual world, composed of *entities* or *virtues*, proceeding from the Supreme Being, and succeeding each other at certain intervals of time, so as to form an *eternal chain*, of which our world was the terminating link; a notion of eternity very different from that of the Platonists, who represented it as stable, permanent, and void of succession. To the beings that formed this eternal chain, the Gnostics assigned a certain term of duration and a certain sphere of action. Their *terms of duration* were, at first, called, $αιωνες$, and they themselves were afterwards *metonymically* distinguished by that title.

“ portion of light, and also of a matter celestial and
 “ divine. This creator of the world is distinguished
 “ from the Supreme Deity by the name of *demiurge*.
 “ His character is a compound of shining qualities,
 “ and insupportable arrogance; and his excessive
 “ lust of empire effaces his talents and his virtues.
 “ He claims dominion over the new world he has
 “ formed, as his sovereign right; and, excluding
 “ totally the supreme deity from all concernment in
 “ it, he demands from mankind, for himself and
 “ his associates, divine honours.”

CENT.
 I.
 PART II.

IX. “ Man is a compound of a terrestrial and
 “ corrupt body, and a soul which is of celestial
 “ origin, and, in some measure, an emanation from
 “ the divinity. This nobler part is miserably weighed
 “ down and encumbered by the body, which is the
 “ seat of all irregular lusts and impure desires. It
 “ is this body that seduces the soul from the pursuit
 “ of truth, and not only turns it from the contem-
 “ plation and worship of the Supreme Being, so as
 “ to confine its homage and veneration to the creator
 “ of this world, but also attaches it to terrestrial
 “ objects, and to the immoderate pursuit of sensual
 “ pleasures, by which its nature is totally polluted.
 “ The sovereign mind employs various means to
 “ deliver his offspring from this deplorable servi-
 “ tude, especially the ministry of divine messengers,
 “ whom he sends to enlighten, to admonish, and
 “ to reform the human race. In the mean time, the
 “ imperious *demiurge* exerts his power in opposition
 “ to the merciful purpose of the Supreme Being,
 “ resists the influence of those solemn invitations by
 “ which he exhorts mankind to return to him, and
 “ labours to efface the knowledge of God in the
 “ minds of intelligent beings. In this conflict, such
 “ souls, as, throwing off the yoke of the creators
 “ and rulers of this world, rise to their Supreme
 “ Parent, and subdue the turbulent and sinful
 “ motions, which corrupt *matter* excites within

Concerning
 the state and
 destination
 of human
 souls.

CENT. “ them, shall, at the dissolution of their mortal
 I. “ bodies, ascend directly to the *pleroma*. Those,
 PART II. “ on the contrary, who remain in the bondage of
 “ servile superstition, and corrupt matter, shall, at
 “ the end of this life, pass into new bodies, until
 “ they awake from their sinful lethargy. In the
 “ end, however, the Supreme God shall come forth
 “ victorious, triumph over all opposition, and, having
 “ delivered from their servitude the greatest part of
 “ those souls that are imprisoned in mortal bodies,
 “ shall dissolve the frame of this visible world, and
 “ involve it in a general ruin. After this solemn
 “ period, primitive tranquillity shall be restored in
 “ the universe, and God shall reign with happy
 “ spirits, in undisturbed felicity, through the ever-
 “ lasting ages.”

Of the
 Jewish phi-
 losophy.

X. Such were the principal tenets of the oriental philosophy. The state of letters and philosophy among the Jews comes next under consideration; and of this we may form some idea from what has been said already concerning that nation. It is chiefly to be observed, that the dark and hidden science, which they called the *kabbala*, was at this time taught and inculcated by many among that superstitious people [n]. This science, in many things, bears a strong resemblance to the oriental philosophy; or, to speak more accurately, it is indeed that same philosophy accommodated to the Jewish religion, and tempered with a certain mixture of truth. Nor were the doctrines of the Grecian sages unknown to the Jews at the period now before us; since, from the time of ALEXANDER the GREAT, some of them had been admitted, even into the Mosaic religion. We shall say nothing concerning the opinions which they adopted from

[n] See JO. FRANC. BUDDEI *Introductio in Historiam Philos. Hebraeorum*; and also the authors which B. WOLF mentions, with encomiums, in his *Bibliotheca Hebraica*, tom. iii.

the philosophical and theological systems of the CENT.
Chaldeans, Egyptians, and Syrians [o].

XI. The Greeks, in the opinion of most writers, were yet in possession of the first rank among the nations that cultivated letters and philosophy. In many places, and especially at *Athens*, there were a considerable number of men distinguished by their learning, acuteness, and eloquence; philosophers of all sects, who taught the doctrines of PLATO ARISTOTLE, ZENO, and EPICURUS; rhetoricians also and men of genius, who instructed the youth in the rules of eloquence, and formed their taste for the liberal arts. So that those who had a passion for the study of oratory, resorted in multitudes to the Grecian schools, in order to perfect themselves in that noble science. *Alexandria*, in *Egypt*, was also much frequented for the same purpose, as a great number of the Grecian philosophers and rhetoricians dwelt in that city.

XII. The Romans also, at this time, made a shining figure among the polished and learned nations. All the sciences flourished at *Rome*. The youth of a higher rank were early instructed in the Greek language and eloquence. From thence they proceeded to the study of philosophy, and the laws of their country; and they finished their education by a voyage into *Greece*, where they not only gave the last degree of perfection to their philosophical studies, but also acquired that refined wit and elegance of taste, that served to set off their more solid attainments in the most advantageous manner [p]. None of the philosophical sects were more in vogue among the Romans than the Epicureans and

[o] See JO. FRANC. BUDDEI *Introductio in Historiam Philos. Hebræorum*; as also the authors recommended by WOLF in his *Bibliotheca Hebraica*, tom. iii.

[p] See PAGANANI GAUDENTII *Liber de Philosophiæ apud Romanos initio et progressu*, in TERTIO FASCICULO *Novæ Collectionis Variorum Scriptorum*. Hæke, 1717.

CENT. the Academics, which were peculiarly favoured by
 I. the great, who, soothed by their doctrines into a
 PART II. false security, indulged their passions without remorse,
 and continued in their vicious pursuits without terror.
 During the reign of AUGUSTUS, the culture of polite learning and of the fine arts was held in great honour, and those that contributed with zeal and success to this, were eminently distinguished by that prince. But after his death, learning languished without encouragement, and was neglected, because the succeeding emperors were more intent upon the arts of war and rapine, than those more amiable arts and inventions that are the fruits of leisure and peace.

In the other nations.

XIII. With respect to the other nations, such as the Germans, Celts, and Bretons, it is certain, that they were not destitute of learned and ingenious men. Among the Gauls, the people of *Marseilles* had long acquired a shining reputation for their progress in the sciences [q]; and there is no doubt, but that the neighbouring countries received the benefit of their instructions. Among the Celts, their druids, priests, philosophers, and legislators were highly remarkable for their wisdom; but their writings, at least such as are yet extant, are not sufficient to inform us of the nature of their philosophy [r]. The Romans, indeed, introduced letters and philosophy into all the provinces which submitted to their victorious arms, in order to soften the rough manners of the savage nations, and form in them, imperceptibly, the sentiments and feelings of humanity [s].

[q] See the *Histoire Littéraire de la France par des Religieux Benedictins*. Dissert. Prelim. p. 42, &c.

[r] JAC. MARTIN, *Religion des Gaulois*, livr. i. cap. xxi. p. 175.

[s] JUVENAL, Satir. xv. ver. 110.

“Nunc totus Graias nostrasque habet orbis Athenas,

“Gallia Caussidicos docuit sacunda Britannos,

“De conducendo loquitur jam Rhetore Thule.”

CHAPTER II.

Concerning the Doctors and Ministers of the Church, and its form of Government.

I. THE great end of CHRIST'S mission was CENT. to form an universal church, gathered out of all the I. nations of the world, and to extend the limits of this PART II. great society from age to age. But in order to this, ————— it was necessary, first, to appoint *extraordinary* The necessity of public teachers. *teachers*, who, converting the Jews and Gentiles to the truth, should erect, every where, Christian assemblies; and then, to establish *ordinary ministers*, and interpreters of the divine will, who should enforce and repeat the doctrines delivered by the former, and maintain the people in their holy profession, and in the practice of the Christian virtues. For the best system of religion must necessarily either dwindle to nothing, or be egregiously corrupted, if it is not perpetually inculcated and explained by a regular and standing ministry.

II. The *extraordinary* Extraordinary teachers. teachers, whom CHRIST employed to lay the foundations of his everlasting kingdom, were the XII apostles, and the LXX disciples, of whom mention has been made above. To these the Evangelists are to be added, by which title those were distinguished whom the apostles sent to instruct the nations, or who, of their own accord, abandoned every worldly attachment, and consecrated themselves to the sacred office of propagating the gospel [*t*]. In this rank, also, we must place those, to whom, in the infancy of the church, the marvellous power of speaking in foreign languages which they had never learned, was communicated from above. For the person to whom the

[*t*] See St. PAUL'S *Epistle to the Ephesians*, iv. 11. As also EUSEB. *Hist. Eccles* lib. iii. cap. xxxvii.

CENT. divine omnipotence and liberality had imparted the
 I. gift of tongues, might conclude, with the utmost
 PART II. assurance, from the gift itself, (which a wise being
 would not bestow in vain,) that he was appointed
 by God to minister unto the truth, and to employ
 his talents in the service of Christianity [u].

The autho-
 rity of the
 apostles.

III. Many have undertaken to write the history
 of the apostles [w], a history, which we find loaded
 with fables, doubts, and difficulties, when we pursue
 it further than the books of the New Testament,
 and the most ancient writers in the Christian church.
 In order to have a just idea of the nature, privileges,
 and authority of the apostolic function, we must
 consider an apostle as a person who was honoured
 with a divine commission, invested with the power
 of *making laws*, of *controlling and restraining the*
wicked, when that was expedient, and of *working*
miracles, when necessary; and sent to mankind, *to*
unfold to them the divine will, to open to them the
paths of salvation and immortality, and to separate from
the multitude, and unite in the bonds of one sacred
society, those who were attentive and obedient to the
voice of God addressed to men by their ministry [x].

The LXX
 disciples.

IV. The accounts we have of the LXX disciples
 are still more obscure than those of the apostles;
 since the former are only once mentioned in the
 New Testament (Luke x. 1). The illustrations
 that we have yet remaining, relative to their

[u] 1 Cor. xiv. 22.

[w] The authors who have written concerning the apostles,
 are enumerated by SAGITTARIUS in his *Introduction to Eccle-
 siastical History*, ch. i. p. 2. and also by BUDDÆUS, in his treatise,
De Ecclesia Apostolica, p. 674.

[x] See FRED. SPANHEIM, *De apostolis et apostolatu*, tom. ii.
 opp. p. 289. It is not without weighty reasons, and without
 having considered the matter attentively, that I have supposed
 the apostles invested with the power of *enacting laws*. I am
 sensible that some very learned men among the moderns have
 denied this power, but I apprehend they differ from me rather in
 words than in any thing else.

character and office, are certainly composed by the more modern Greeks, and, therefore, can have but little authority or credit [y]. Their commission extended no further than the Jewish nations, as appears from the express words of St. LUKE; though it is highly probable, that, after CHRIST's ascension, they performed the function of Evangelists, and declared the glad tidings of salvation, and the means of obtaining it, through different nations and provinces.

V. Neither CHRIST himself, nor his holy apostles, have commanded any thing clearly or expressly concerning the external form of the church, and the precise method, according to which it should be governed [z]. From this we may infer, that the

The external form of the church not determined by CHRIST.

[y] These accounts are to be seen at the end of three books, concerning the life and death of MOSES, which were discovered and illustrated by GILB. GAULMINUS, and republished by JO. ALBERT FABRICIUS, in his *Biblioth. Græc.* p. 474.

[z] Those who imagine that CHRIST himself, or the apostles by his direction and authority, appointed a certain fixed form of church-government, are not agreed what that form was. The principal opinions that have been adopted upon this head may be reduced to the four following: The first is, that of the Roman Catholics, who maintain, "That CHRIST's intention and appointment was, that his followers should be collected into one sacred empire, subjected to the government of St. PETER and his successors, and divided, like the kingdoms of this world, into several provinces; that, in consequence thereof, PETER fixed the seat of ecclesiastical dominion at Rome, but afterwards, to alleviate the burthen of his office, divided the church into three greater provinces, according to the division of the world at that time, and appointed a person to preside in each, who was dignified with the title of patriarch; that the European patriarch resided at Rome, the Asiatic at Antioch, and the African at Alexandria; that the bishops of each province, among whom also there were various ranks, were to reverence the authority of their respective patriarchs, and that both bishops and patriarchs were to be passively subject to the supreme dominion of the Roman pontiff*." This romantic

* See LEON ALLATIUS, *De perpetua concess. Eccles. Orient. et Occident.* lib. i. cap. ii. MORINUS, *Exercitat. Ecclesiast.* lib. i. Exerc. i.

CENT. regulation of this was, in some measure, to be
 I. accommodated to the time, and left to the wisdom
 PART II.

account scarcely deserves a serious refutation. The *second* opinion, concerning the government of the church, makes no mention of a *supreme head*, or of *patriarchs*, constituted by divine authority, but supposes that the apostles divided the Roman empire into as many ecclesiastical provinces as there were secular, or civil ones; that the *metropolitan bishop*, *i. e.* the prelate, who resided in the capital city of each province, presided over the clergy of that province, and that the other bishops were subject to his authority. This opinion has been adopted by some of the most learned of the Romish church*, and has also been favoured by some of the most eminent British divines†. Some Protestant writers of note have endeavoured to prove that it is not supported by sufficient evidence‡. The *third* opinion is, that of those who acknowledge, that, when the Christians began to multiply exceedingly, *metropolitans*, *patriarchs*, and *archbishops* were indeed, created, but only by *human* appointment and authority; though they confess, at the same time, that it is consonant to the orders and intention of CHRIST and his apostles, that, in every Christian church, there should be one person invested with the highest authority, and clothed with certain rights and privileges above the other doctors of that assembly. This opinion has been embraced by many English divines of the first rank in the learned world, and also by many in other countries and communions. The *fourth* and last opinion is, that of the Presbyterians, who affirm that CHRIST's intention was, that the Christian doctors and ministers should all enjoy the same rank and authority, without any sort of pre-eminence or subordination, any distinction of rights and privileges. The reader will find an ample account of these *four* different opinions with respect to church-government in Dr. MOSHEIM's *Larger history of the first century*. This learned and impartial writer, who condemns with reason the *fourth* opinion, as it is explained by those bigoted Puritans, who look upon all subordination, and variety of rank among the doctors of the church, as condemnable and anti-christian, observes, however, with equal reason, that this opinion may be explained and modified so, as to reconcile the moderate abettors of the

* PETRUS DE MARCA, *De concord. sacerdot. et imperii*, lib. vi. cap. i. MORINUS, *Exerc. Ecd.* lib. i. Ex. xviii. PAGI *Critica in annal. Baronii ad A. xxxvii.* tom. i. p. 29.

† HAMMOND, *Diff. de Episcop.* BEVEREGE, *Cod. Canon. Vet. Eccles. Vindic.* lib. ii. cap. v. tom. ii. *Par. Apost.* USSER, *De Origine Episcop.* et *Metropol.* p. 20.

‡ BASNAGE, *Hist. de l'Eglise*, tom. i. livr. i. cap. viii. BÖEHMER, *Annot. ad Petrum de Marca de concordia sacerdot. et imperii*, p. 143.

and prudence of the chief rulers, both of the state CENT.
 and of the church. If, however, it is true, that the I.
 apostles acted by divine inspiration, and in confor- PART II.
 mity with the commands of their blessed Master
 (and this no Christian can call in question), then it
 follows, that that form of government which the
 primitive churches borrowed from that of *Jerusalem*, The form of
 the first Christian assembly established by the apostles the first
 themselves, must be esteemed as of divine institution. church at
Jerusalem.
 But from this it would be wrong to conclude that
 such a form is immutable, and ought to be invari-
 ably observed; for this a great variety of events
 may render impossible. In those early times, every
 Christian church consisted of the *people*, their *leaders*,
 and the *ministers*, or *deacons*, and these, indeed,
 belong essentially to every religious society. The
 people were, undoubtedly, the first in authority;
 for the apostles shewed, by their own example, that
 nothing of moment was to be carried on or deter-
 mined without the consent of the assembly [*a*], and
 such a method of proceeding was both prudent and
 necessary in those critical times.

episcopal discipline with the less rigid Presbyterians. The opi-
 nion modified by Dr. MOSHEIM amounts to this: "That the
 " Christian doctors are *equal* in this sense; that CHRIST has
 " left no positive and special decree which constitutes a distinction
 " among them, nor any *divine* commandment by which those
 " who, in consequence of the appointments of human wisdom,
 " are in the higher ranks, can demand, by a divine right, the
 " obedience and submission of the inferior doctors, &c. their
 " abstaining from the exercise of certain functions," &c.

The truth of the matter is, that CHRIST, by leaving this mat-
 ter undetermined, has, of consequence, left Christian societies a
 discretionary power of modelling the government of the church
 in such a manner, as the circumstantial reasons of times, places,
 &c. may require; and therefore the wisest government of the
 church, is the best and the most divine; and every Christian
 society has a right to make laws for itself, provided that these
 laws are consistent with charity and peace, and with the funda-
 mental doctrines and principles of Christianity.

[*a*] Acts i. 15. vi. 3. xv. 4. xxi. 22.

CENT. VI. It was, therefore, the assembly of the people,
 I. which chose their own rulers and teachers, or received
 PART II. them, by a free and authoritative consent, when
 recommended by others. The same people rejected
 The rights of the people. or confirmed, by their suffrages, the laws, that were
 proposed by their rulers to the assembly; excommunicated profligate and unworthy members of the church, restored the penitent to their forfeited privileges, passed judgment upon the different subjects of controversy and dissension, that arose in their community, examined and decided the disputes which happened between the elders and deacons; and, in a word, exercised all that authority which belongs to such as are invested with the sovereign power.

Their obligations. The people, indeed, had, in some measure, purchased these privileges by administering to the support of their rulers, ministers, and poor, and by offering large and generous contributions, when the safety or interests of the community rendered them necessary. In these supplies each one bore a part proportioned to his circumstances; and the various gifts which were thus brought into the public assemblies, were called *oblations*.

A perfect equality among the primitive Christians. VII. There reigned among the members of the Christian church, however distinguished they were by worldly rank and titles, not only an amiable harmony, but also a perfect equality. This appeared by the *feasts of charity*, in which all were indiscriminately assembled; by the names of *brethren* and *sisters*, with which they mutually saluted each other; and by several circumstances of a like nature. Nor, in this first century, was the distinction made between Christians of a more or less perfect order, which took place afterwards. Whoever acknowledged CHRIST as the Saviour of mankind, and made a solemn profession of his confidence in him, was immediately baptized and received into the church. But, in process of time, when the church began to flourish,

and its members to increase, it was thought prudent and necessary to divide Christians into two orders, distinguished by the names of *believers* and *catechumens*. The former were those, who had been solemnly admitted into the church by baptism, and in consequence thereof, were instructed in all the mysteries of religion, had access to all the parts of divine worship, and were authorized to vote in the ecclesiastical assemblies. The latter were such, as had not yet been dedicated to God and CHRIST by baptism, and were, therefore, admitted neither to the public prayers, nor to the holy communion, nor to the ecclesiastical assemblies.

VIII. The rulers of the church were called either *presbyters* [*b*], or *bishops*, which two titles are, in the New Testament, undoubtedly applied to the same order of men [*c*]. These were persons of eminent gravity, and such as had distinguished themselves by their superior sanctity and merit [*d*]. Their particular functions were not always the same; for while some of them confined their labours to the instruction of the people, others contributed in different ways to the edification of the church. Hence the distinction between *teaching* and *ruling presbyters* has been adopted by certain learned men. But, if ever this distinction existed, which I neither affirm nor deny, it certainly did not continue long; since it is manifest, that St. PAUL requires that all bishops or presbyters be qualified and ready to teach and instruct [*e*].

[*b*] The word *presbyter*, or elder, is taken from the Jewish institution, and signifies rather the venerable prudence and wisdom of old age, than age itself.

[*c*] Acts xx. 17. 28. Phil. i. 1. Tit. i. 5. 7. 1 Tim. iii. 1.

[*d*] 1 Tim. iii. 1. Tit. i. 5.

[*e*] 1 Tim. iii. 2, &c. See, concerning the word *presbyter*, the illustrations given by the learned VITRINGA, *De synagoga veteri*, lib. iii. part I. cap. i. p. 609; and by the venerable JO. BENED. CARPZOVIVS, in his *Exerc. in Epist. ad Hebræos ex*

CENT.

I.

PART II.

Believers
and catechumens.

The rulers
of the
church.

Presbyters
or bishop^s.

CENT.

I.
PART II.The pro-
phets.

IX. Among the first professors of Christianity, there were but few men of learning; few, who had capacity enough to insinuate into the minds of a gross and ignorant multitude, the knowledge of divine things. God therefore, in his infinite wisdom, judged it necessary to raise up, in many churches, extraordinary teachers, who were to discourse, in the public assemblies, upon the various points of the Christian doctrine, and to treat with the people, in the name of God, as guided by his direction, and clothed with his authority. Such were the *Prophets of the New Testament* [f], an order of men, whose commission is too much limited by the writers, who confine it to the interpretation of the books of the Old Testament, and especially the Prophecies [g]. For it is certain, that they, who claimed the rank of *Prophets*, were invested with the power of censuring publicly such as had been guilty of any irregularity. But, to prevent the abuses, that designing men might make of this institution, by pretending to this extraordinary character in order to execute unworthy ends, there were always present, in the public auditories, judges, divinely appointed, who, by certain and infallible marks, were able to distinguish the false prophets from the true. This order of *prophets* ceased, when the want of teachers, which gave rise to it, was abundantly supplied.

Deacons of
the church
at Jerusa-
lem.

X. The church was, undoubtedly, provided from the beginning with inferior ministers or *deacons*.

Philone, p. 499. As to the *presbyters* themselves, and the nature of their office, the reader will receive much satisfaction from the accounts that are given of that order by BUDÆUS, *De Ecclesia Apostolica*, cap. vi. p. 719. and by the most learned PFAFFIUS, *De originibus juris eccles.* p. 49.

[f] Rom. xiii. 6. 1 Cor. xii. 28. xiv. 3. 29. Eph. iv. 11.

[g] See MOSHEIM's dissertation *De illis qui PROPHETÆ vocantur in Novo Fœdere*, which is to be found in the second volume of his *Syntagma Dissertationum ad Historiam Eccles. pertinentium*.

No society can be without its servants, and still less such societies as those of the first Christians were. And it appears not only probable, but evident, that the *young men*, who carried away the dead bodies of ANANIAS and SAPHIRA, were the subordinate ministers, or *deacons*, of the church of *Jerusalem*, who attended the apostles to execute their orders [b]. These first *deacons* of the church, being

CENT.

I.

PART II.

[b] Acts v. 6. 10.

Those who may be surpris'd at my affirming, that the *young men*, mentioned in the passages here referred to, were the *deacons*, or ministers of the church of *Jerusalem*, are desired to consider, that the words νεώτεροι, νεανίσκοι, i. e. *young men*, are not always us'd to determine the age of the persons to whom they are applied, but are frequently employ'd to point out their offices, or functions, both by the Greek and Latin writers. The same rule of interpretation, that diversifies the sense of the word *presbyter* (which, as all know, signifies sometimes the age of a person, and, at other times his function), is manifestly applicable to the word before us. As, therefore, by the title of *presbyters*, the heads or rulers of a society are pointed out, without any regard to their age; so by the term *young men*, we are often to understand *ministers* or *servants*, because such are generally in the flower of youth. This interpretation may be confirm'd by examples, which are not wanting even in the New Testament. CHRIST himself seems to attribute this sense, to the word νεώτερος, Luke xxii. 26. ὁ μείζων ὑμῶν, γενέσθω ὡς ὁ νεώτερος. Our Saviour explains the term μείζων, by the word ἡγούμενος, and it therefore signifies a *presbyter*, or ruler: he also substitutes, ὁ διακονῶν, in the place of νεώτερος, which confirms our interpretation in the most unanswerable manner. So that μείζων and νεώτερος are not here indications of certain ages, but of certain functions, and the precept of CHRIST amounts to this: "He that performs the office of a presbyter or elder among you, let him not think himself superior to the ministers or deacons." The passage of 1 Pet. v. 5. is still more express to our purpose: Ὁμοίως νεώτεροι, ποταγῆτε τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις. It is evident from the preceding verses, that *presbyter* here is the name of an office, and points out a ruler or teacher of the church; and that the term νεώτερος is also to be interpreted, not *young men* in point of age, but the *ministers*, or servants of the church. St. PETER, having solemnly exhorted the presbyters, not to abuse the power that was committed to them, addresses his discourse to the ministers, or *deacons* of the church: "But likewise, ye younger, i. e. ministers and deacons,

CENT. chosen from among the Jews, who were born in
 I. *Palestine*, were suspected by the foreign Jews of par-
 PART II. tiality in distributing the offerings, which were pre-
 sented for the support of the poor [i]. To remedy,
 therefore, this disorder, seven other deacons were
 chosen, by order of the apostles, and employed in
 the service of that part of the church of *Jerusalem*,
 which was composed of the foreign Jews, converted
 to Christianity. Of these new ministers, six were
 foreigners, as appears by their names: the seventh
 was chosen out of the Profelytes, of whom there
 were a certain number among the first Christians at
Jerusalem, and to whom it was reasonable, that
 some regard should be shewn, in the election of the
 deacons, as well as to the foreign Jews. All the
 other Christian churches followed the example of
 that of *Jerusalem*, in whatever related to the choice
 and office of the deacons. Some, particularly the
 eastern churches, elected *deaconesses*, and chose, for
 that purpose, matrons or widows of eminent sanctity,
 who also ministered to the necessities of the poor,
 and performed several other offices, that tended to
 the maintenance of order and decency in the
 church [k].

Bishops.

XI. Such was the constitution of the Christian
 church in its infancy, when its assemblies were

“despise not the orders of the presbyters or elders, but perform
 “cheerfully whatsoever they command you.” In the same
 sense, does St. LUKE employ this term, Acts v. 6. 10. and his
νεώτεροι and *νεανίσκοι* are, undoubtedly, the deacons of the church
 of *Jerusalem*, of whom the Greek Jews complain afterwards to
 the apostles (Acts vi. 1, &c.) on account of the partial distri-
 bution of the alms. I might confirm this sense of the word
young men by numberless citations from Greek and Roman
 writers, and a variety of authors sacred and profane; but this is
 not the proper place for demonstrations of this nature.

[i] Acts vi. 1, &c.

[k] For an ample account of the *deacons* and *deaconesses* of
 the primitive church, see ZEIGLER, *De diaconis et diaconissis*,
 cap. xix. p. 347. BASNAGII *Annal. Polit. Eccles. ad A. xxxv.*
 tom. i. p. 450. BINGHAM, *Orig. Eccles.* lib. ii. cap. xx.

neither numerous nor splendid. Three or four presbyters, men of remarkable piety and wisdom, ruled these small congregations in perfect harmony, nor did they stand in need of any president or superior to maintain concord and order where no dissensions were known. But the number of the presbyters and deacons increasing with that of the churches, and the sacred work of the ministry growing more painful and weighty, by a number of additional duties, these new circumstances required new regulations. It was then judged necessary, that one man of distinguished gravity and wisdom should preside in the counsel of presbyters, in order to distribute among his colleagues their several tasks, and to be a center of union to the whole society. This person was, at first, styled the *angel* [1] of the church to which he belonged, but was afterwards distinguished by the name of *bishop*, or *inspector*; a name borrowed from the Greek language, and expressing the principal part of the episcopal function, which was to inspect into, and superintend, the affairs of the church. It is highly probable, that the church of *Jerusalem*, grown considerably numerous and deprived of the ministry of the apostles, who were gone to instruct the other nations, was the first which chose a president or bishop. And it is no less probable, that the other churches followed by degrees such a respectable example.

XII. Let none, however, confound the bishops of this primitive and golden period of the church with those of whom we read in the following ages. For, though they were both distinguished by the same name, yet they differed extremely, and that in many respects. A bishop, during the first and second century, was a person who had the care of one Christian assembly, which, at that time, was, generally speaking, small enough to be contained

The nature
of the episcopal
dignity in this
century.

[1] Rev. ii. 3.

CENT. in a private house. In this assembly he acted not
 I. so much with the authority of a *master*, as with the
 PART. II. zeal and diligence of a faithful *servant*. He instructed
 the people, performed the several parts of divine
 worship, attended the sick, and inspected into the
 circumstances and supplies of the poor. He charged,
 indeed, the presbyters with the performance of those
 duties and services, which the multiplicity of his
 engagements rendered it impossible for him to fulfil;
 but had not the power to decide or enact any thing
 without the consent of the presbyters and people.
 And, though the episcopal office was both laborious
 and singularly dangerous, yet its revenues were
 extremely small, since the church had no certain
 income, but depended on the gifts or *oblations* of the
 multitude, which were, no doubt, inconsiderable,
 and were moreover to be divided between the bishops,
 presbyters, deacons, and poor.

The origin
 of dioceses
 and chore-
 piscopi.

XIII. The power and jurisdiction of the bishops
 were not long confined to these narrow limits, but
 soon extended themselves, and that by the following
 means. The bishops, who lived in the cities, had,
 either by their own ministry or that of their presby-
 ters, erected new churches in the neighbouring towns
 and villages. These churches, continuing under the
 inspection and ministry of the bishops, by whose
 labours and counsels they had been engaged to
 embrace the gospel, grew imperceptibly into eccle-
 siastical provinces, which the Greeks afterwards
 called *dioceses*. But as the bishop of the city could
 not extend his labours and inspection to all these
 churches in the country and in the villages, so he
 appointed certain suffragans or deputies to govern
 and to instruct these new societies; and they were
 distinguished by the title of *chorepiscopi*, i. e. country
 bishops. This order held the middle rank between
 bishops and presbyters, being inferior to the former,
 and superior to the latter.

XIV. The churches, in those early times, were CENT. entirely independent; none of them subject to any I. foreign jurisdiction, but each one governed by its own PART II. rulers and its own laws. For, though the churches Whether founded by the apostles, had this particular defer- councils and ence shewn them, that they were consulted in diffi- metropoli- cult and doubtful cases; yet they had no juridical tans are to authority, no sort of supremacy over the others, nor be placed in the least right to enact laws for them. Nothing, the first on the contrary, is more evident than the perfect century. equality that reigned among the primitive churches; nor does there even appear, in this first century, the smallest trace of that association of provincial churches, from which *councils* and *metropolitans* derive their origin. It was only in the second century that the custom of holding councils commenced in *Greece*, from whence it soon spread through the other provinces [*m*].

XV. The principal place among the Christian The princi- doctors, and among those also, who by their writings pal writers, were instrumental in the progress of the truth, is the apostles due to the apostles and certain of their disciples, and their who were set apart and inspired by God, to record disciples. the actions of CHRIST and his apostles. The writings of these holy men, which are comprehended in the books of the New Testament, are in the hands of all who profess themselves Christians. Those who are desirous of particular information with respect to the history of these sacred books,

[*m*] The meeting of the church of *Jerusalem*, mentioned in the xvth chapter of the Acts, is commonly considered as the *first Christian council*. But this notion arises from the manifest abuse of the word *council*. That meeting was only of one church; and, if such a meeting be called a *council*, it will follow that there were innumerable councils in the primitive times. But every one knows, that a *council* is an assembly of deputies or commissioners sent from several churches associated by certain bonds in a general body, and therefore the supposition above mentioned falls to the ground.

CENT. and the arguments which prove their divine authority, their genuineness, and purity, must consult
 I. the learned authors who have written professedly
 PART II. upon that matter [n].

The time when the canon was fixed.

XVI. The opinions, or rather the conjectures, of the learned, concerning the time when the books of the New Testament were collected into one volume, as also about the authors of that collection, are extremely different. This important question is attended with great and almost insuperable difficulties to us in these latter times [o]. It is, however, sufficient for us to know, that, before the middle of the second century, the greatest part of the books of the New Testament were read in every Christian society throughout the world, and received as a divine rule of faith and manners. Hence it appears, that these sacred writings were carefully separated from several human compositions upon the same subject, either by some of the apostles themselves, who lived so long, or by their disciples and successors, who were spread abroad through all nations [p]. We are well assured [q], that the *four gospels* were collected during the life of St. JOHN, and that the three first received the approbation of this divine apostle. And why may we not suppose that the other books of the New Testament were gathered together at the same time?

[n] For the history of the books of the New Testament, see particularly JO. ALB. FABRICIUS, *Biblioth. Græc.* lib. iv. cap. v. p. 122—227. The same learned author has given an accurate list of the writers, who have defended the divinity of these sacred books, in his *Delectus Argumentorum et Syllabus Scriptorum pro verit. relig. Christianæ*, cap. xxvi. p. 502.

[o] See JO. ENS, *Bibliotheca S. seu Diatriba de librorum N. T. Canone* published at Amsterdam in 1710; as also JO. MILL. *Prolegomen. ad Nov. Test.* § 1. p. 23.

[p] See FRICKIUS, *De cura Veteris Ecclesiæ circa Canon.* cap. iii. p. 86.

[q] This is expressly affirmed by EUSEBIUS, in the xxivth chapter of the third book of his *Ecclesiastical History*.

XVII. What renders this highly probable is, that the most urgent necessity required its being done. For, not long after CHRIST's ascension into heaven, several histories of his life and doctrines, full of pious frauds and fabulous wonders, were composed, by persons whose intentions, perhaps, were not bad, but whose writings discovered the greatest superstition and ignorance. Nor was this all: productions appeared which were imposed on the world by fraudulent men, as the writings of the holy apostles [r]. These apocryphal and spurious writings must have produced a sad confusion, and rendered both the history and the doctrine of CHRIST uncertain, had not the rulers of the church used all possible care and diligence in separating the books that were truly apostolical and divine from all that spurious trash, and conveying them down to posterity in one volume.

CENT.

I,

PART II.

Apocryphal
and spurious
writings.

XVIII. The writer, whose fame surpassed that of all others in this century, the apostles excepted, was CLEMENS bishop of *Rome*. The accounts which remain of his life, actions, and death, are for the most part uncertain [s]. *Two Epistles to the Corinthians* [t], written in Greek, have been

Clemens,
bishop of
Rome.

[r] Such of these writings as are yet extant have been carefully collected by the learned FABRICIUS, in his *Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti*, which work is published in two volumes. Many ingenious and learned observations have been made on these spurious books by the celebrated BEAUSOBRE, in his *Histoire Critique des dogmes de Munichée*, livr. ii. p. 337, &c.

[s] After TILLEMONT, COTELERIUS and GRABE have given some account of this great man. And all that has been said concerning him by the best and most credible writers, has been collected by RONDININI, in the first of two books published at *Rome*, in the year 1706, under the following title, *Libri duo de S. Clemente, Papa, et Martyre, ejusque Basilica in urbe Roma*.

[t] J. A. FABRICIUS, in the vth chapter of the fourth book of his *Bibliotheca Græca*, mentions the editions that have been given of St. CLEMENT's epistles. To this account we must add the edition published at *Cambridge*, in 1718, which is preferable to the preceding ones in many respects.

CENT. attributed to him, of which the *second* has been
 I. looked upon as spurious, and the *first* as genuine,
 PART II. by many learned writers [u]. But even this latter
 seems to have been corrupted and interpolated by
 some ignorant and presumptuous author, who appears
 to have been displeas'd at observing a defect of
 learning and genius in the writings of so great a
 man as CLEMENS [w].

The writ-
 ings falsely
 attributed
 to him.

XIX. The learned are now unanimous in regard-
 ing the other writings which bear the name of
 CLEMENS, viz. *the Apostolic Canons, the Apostolic
 Constitutions, the Recognitions of CLEMENS and CLE-
 MENTINA* [x], as spurious productions ascribed by

[u] See the ample account that is given of these two
 Greek epistles of CLEMENS by the learned Dr. LARDNER, in the
 first volume of the second part of his valuable work, entitled,
The Credibility of the Gospel History, &c. &c.

[w] See J. BAPT. COTELERII *Patres Apost.* tom. i. p. 133.
 and BERNARDI *Adnotatiuncula in Clementem*, in the last edition
 of these *fathers* published by LE CLERC. The learned WOT-
 TON has endeavour'd, though without success, in his observations
 on the epistles of CLEMENS, to refute the annotations above
 mention'd.

[x] Besides these writings attributed to CLEMENS, we
 may reckon *Two Epistles* which the learned WETSTEIN found
 in a Syriac version of the New Testament, which he took the
 pains to translate from Syriac into Latin, and has subjoin'd both
 the original and the translation to his famous edition of the Greek
 Testament, published at *Amsterdam* in two volumes in folio, in
 the years 1751 and 1752. The title prefix'd to these epistles
 is as follows: *DUÆ EPISTOLÆ S. Clementis Romani, Discipuli
 Petri Apostoli, quas ex Codici Manuscripto Novi Test. Syriaci
 nunc primum erutas, cum versione Latinâ adposita edidit JO.
 JACOBUS WETSTENIUS.* The manuscript of the Syriac version,
 from whence these epistles were taken, was procur'd by the
 good offices of Sir JAMES PORTER, a judicious patron of litera-
 ture and men of letters, who, at that time, was British ambassador
 at *Constantinople*. The authenticity of these epistles is boldly
 maintain'd by WETSTEIN, and learnedly oppos'd by Dr. LARD-
 NER, in a *Dissertation upon the two Epistles ascribed to CLEMENT
 of Rome, lately published by Mr. WETSTEIN, &c.* The cele-
 brated Professor VENEMA of *Franker* suspected also the spuri-
 ousness of these epistles; see an account of his controversy with

some impostor to this venerable prelate, in order to procure them a high degree of authority [y]. The *Apostolical Canons*, which consist of LXXXV ecclesiastical laws, contain a view of the church government and discipline received among the Greek and Oriental Christians in the second and third century. The VIII books of *Apostolical Constitutions* are the work of some austere and melancholy author, who having taken it into his head to reform the Christian worship, which he looked upon as degenerated from its original purity, made no scruple to prefix to his rules the names of the apostles, that thus they might be more speedily and favourably received [z]. The *Recognitions* of CLEMENS, which differ very little from the CLEMENTINA, are the witty and agreeable production of an Alexandrian Jew, well versed in philosophy. They were written in the third century, with a design to answer, in a new manner, the objections of the Jews, Philosophers, and Gnostics, against the Christian religion; and the careful perusal of them will be extremely useful to such as are curious of information with respect to the state of the Christian church in the primitive times [a].

WETSTEIN on that subject, in the *Bibliothèque des Sciences et des Beaux Arts*, tom. ii. p. 51. &c. p. 311.

[y] For an account of the fate of these writings, and the editions that have been given of them, it will be proper to consult two dissertations of the learned IRTIGIUS; the one *De Patribus Apostolicis*, which he has prefixed to his *Bibliotheca Patrum Apostolicorum*; and the other, *De Pseudepigraphis Apostolicis*, which he has subjoined to the Appendix of his book *De Hæresiarbis ævi Apostolici*. See also FABRICIUS'S *Bibliotheca Græca*, lib. v. cap. i. p. 31, &c. and lib. vi. cap. i. p. 4.

[z] BUDÆUS has collected the various opinions of the learned concerning the *Apostolical Canons and Constitutions*, in his *Isagoge in Theologiam*, par. II. ch. v. p. 746.

[a] See, for a full account of this work, MOSHEIM'S dissertation, *De turbatâ per recentiores Platonicos Ecclesiâ*, § 34. p. 174. This dissertation is in the first volume of that learned work, which our author published some years ago under the title of *Syntagma Dissertationum ad Historiam Ecclesiasticam pertinentium*.

CENT. XX. IGNATIUS, bishop of *Antioch*, succeeds

I. CLEMENS in the list of the *Apostolic Fathers*, among

PART II. whom were placed such Christian doctors as had

Ignatius,
bishop of
Antioch.

conversed with the apostles themselves, or their disciples. This pious and venerable man, who was the disciple and familiar friend of the apostles, was, by the order of TRAJAN, brought to *Rome*, and exposed to wild beasts in the public theatre, where he suffered martyrdom with the utmost constancy [b]. There are yet extant several epistles, attributed to him, concerning the authenticity of which there have been, however, tedious and warm disputes among the learned, which still subsist. Of these epistles, seven are said to have been written by this eminent martyr, during his journey from *Antioch* to *Rome*; and these the most of learned men acknowledge to be genuine, as they stand in the edition that was published in the last century from a manuscript in the Medicean library. The others are generally rejected as spurious. As to my own sentiments of this matter, though I am willing to adopt this opinion as preferable to any other, yet I cannot help looking upon the authenticity of the *Epistle to POLYCARP* as extremely dubious, on account of the difference of style; and, indeed, the whole question, relating to the epistles of St. IGNATIUS in general, seems to me to labour under much obscurity, and to be embarrassed with many difficulties [c].

Polycarp.

XXI. The *Epistle to the Philippians*, which is ascribed to POLYCARP bishop of *Smyrna*, who, in the middle of the second century, suffered martyrdom in a venerable and advanced age, is looked upon by some as genuine; by others, as spurious;

[b] See TILLEMONT's *Memoires pour servir à l'Histoire de l'Eglise*, tom. ii. par. II. p. 42—80.

[c] For an account of this controversy, concerning the genuineness of the epistles of IGNATIUS, it will be proper to consult the *Bibliotheca Græca* of FABRICIUS, lib. v. cap. i. p. 38—47.

and it is no easy matter to determine this question CENT.
 [d]. The *Epistle of BARNABAS* was the produc- I.
 tion of some Jew, who, most probably, lived in this PART II.
 century, and whose mean abilities and superstitious
 attachment to Jewish fables shew, notwithstanding
 the uprightnefs of his intentions, that he must
 have been a very different person from the true
 BARNABAS, who was St. PAUL's companion [e].
 The work, which is entitled, *The Shepherd of*
 HERMAS, because the angel, who bears the prin-
 cipal part in it, is represented in the form and habit
 of a shepherd, was composed in the second century
 by HERMAS, who was brother to PIUS bishop of
Rome [f]. This whimsical and visionary writer
 has taken the liberty to invent several dialogues or
 conversations between God and the angels, in order
 to insinuate, in a more easy and agreeable manner,
 the precepts which he thought useful and salutary,
 into the minds of his readers. But indeed the
 discourse, which he puts into the mouths of those
 celestial beings, is more insipid and senseless, than
 what we commonly hear among the meanest of the
 multitude [g].

[d] For an account of this martyr, and of the epistle attri-
 buted to him, see TILLEMONT's *Memoires*, &c. vol. ii. par. II.
 p. 287; as also FABRICII *Biblioth. Græca*, lib. v. cap. i. p. 47.

[e] See TILLEMONT's *Memoires*, &c. vol. i. par. III.
 p. 1043. IRTIGIUS's *Seleã. Hist. Eccles. Capita*, § 1. cap. i.
 § 14. p. 173. and lib. v. cap. i. § 4. p. 4.

[f] This now appears with the utmost evidence from a very
 ancient fragment of a small book, concerning the canon of the
 Holy Scriptures, which the learned LUD. ANTON. MURATORI
 published some years ago from an ancient manuscript in the library
 at *Milan*, and which is to be found in the *Antiq. Italicar. mediæ*
ævi, tom. iii. diss. xliii. p. 853.

[g] We are indebted for the best edition of the *Shepherd of*
 HERMAS, to FABRICIUS, who has added it to the third volume
 of his *Codex Apocryphus N. Testamenti*. We find also some
 account of this writer in the *Biblioth. Græca*, of the same learned
 author, book v. chap. ix. § 9. p. 7. and also in IRTIGIUS's
 dissertation, *De Patribus Apostolicis*, § 55. p. 184, &c.

CENT. XXII. We may here remark in general, that
 I. these apostolic fathers, and the other writers, who,
 PART II. in the infancy of the church, employed their pens
 in the cause of Christianity, were neither remarkable
 for their learning nor their eloquence. On the
 contrary, they express the most pious and admirable
 sentiments in the plainest and most illiterate style
 [b]. This, indeed, is rather a matter of honour
 than of reproach to the Christian cause; since we
 see, from the conversion of a great part of mankind
 to the gospel by the ministry of weak and illiterate
 men, that the progress of Christianity is not to be
 attributed to human means, but to a divine power.

The general
 character of
 the apostolic
 fathers.

CHAPTER III.

Concerning the doctrine of the Christian church in this century,

The nature
 of the
 Christian
 religion.

I. THE whole of the Christian religion is
 comprehended in two great points, of which the first
 regards what we are to believe, and the other
 relates to our conduct and actions; or, to express
 the matter more briefly, the gospel presents to us
 objects of *faith* and rules of *practice*. The former
 are expressed by the apostles by the term *mystery* or
 the *truth*; and the latter by that of *godliness* or
piety [i]. The rule and standard of both are those
 books that contain the Revelation, that God made
 of his will to persons chosen for that purpose,

[b] All the writers mentioned in this chapter are usually
 called *apostolic fathers*. Of these writers, JO. BAPT. COTELE-
 RIUS, and after him LE CLERC, have published a collection in
 two volumes, accompanied both with their own annotations and
 the remarks of other learned men.

[i] 1 Tim. iii. 9. vi. 3. Tit. i. 1.

whether before or after the birth of CHRIST. And these divine books are usually called *The Old and New Testament.*

CENT.
I.
PART II.

II. The apostles and their disciples took all possible care, and that in the earliest times of the church, that these sacred books might be in the hands of all Christians, that they might be read and explained in the assemblies of the faithful, and thus contribute, both in private and in public, to excite and nourish in the minds of Christians a fervent zeal for the truth, and a firm attachment to the ways of piety and virtue. Those who performed the office of interpreters, studied above all things plainness and perspicuity. At the same time it must be acknowledged, that, even in this century, several Christians adopted that absurd and corrupt custom, used among the Jews, of darkening the plain words of the Holy Scriptures by insipid and forced allegories, and of drawing them violently from their proper and natural signification, in order to extort from them certain mysterious and hidden significations. For a proof of this, we need go no further than the *Epistle of BARNABAS*, which is yet extant.

Method of interpreting the scriptures.

III. The method of teaching the sacred doctrines of religion, was, at this time, most simple, far removed from all the subtle rules of philosophy, and all the precepts of human art. This appears abundantly, not only in the writings of the apostles, but also in all those of the second century, which have survived the ruins of time. Neither did the apostles, or their disciples, ever think of collecting into a regular system the principal doctrines of the Christian religion, or of demonstrating them in a scientific and geometrical order. The beautiful and candid simplicity of these early ages rendered such philosophical niceties unnecessary; and the great study of those who embraced the gospel was rather to express its divine influence in their dispositions

Of teaching religion.

CENT. and actions, than to examine its doctrines with an
 I. excessive curiosity, or to explain them by the rules
 PART II. of human wisdom.

The Apostles' Creed. IV. There is indeed extant, a brief summary of the principal doctrines of Christianity in that *form*, which bears the name of the *Apostles' Creed*, and which, from the fourth century downwards, was almost generally considered as a production of the apostles. All, however, who have the least knowledge of antiquity, look upon this opinion as entirely false and destitute of all foundation [k]. There is much more reason and judgment in the opinion of those, who think that this Creed was not all composed at once, but from small beginnings was imperceptibly augmented in proportion to the growth of heresy, and according to the exigencies and circumstances of the church, from whence it was designed to banish the errors that daily arose [l].

The distinction between catechumens and believers. V. In the earliest times of the church, all who professed firmly to believe that JESUS was the only Redeemer of the world, and who, in consequence of this profession, promised to live in a manner conformable to the purity of his holy religion, were immediately received among the disciples of CHRIST. This was all the preparation for *baptism* then required; and a more accurate instruction in the doctrines of Christianity was to be administered to them after their receiving that sacrament. But when Christianity had acquired more consistence, and churches rose to the true God and his eternal Son almost in

[k] See BUDÆUS's *Jfagoge ad Theologiam*, lib. i. cap. ii. § 2. p. 441; as also WALCHII *Introducō in Libros Symbolicos*, lib. i. cap. ii. p. 87.

[l] This opinion is confirmed in the most learned and ingenious manner by Sir PETER KING, in his *History of the Apostles' Creed*. Such, however, as read this valuable work with pleasure, and with a certain degree of prepossession, would do well to consider, that its learned author, upon several occasions, has given us conjectures instead of proofs, and also that his conjectures are not always so happy, as justly to command our assent.

every nation, this custom was changed for the wisest and most solid reasons. Then none were admitted to baptism, but such as had been previously instructed in the principal points of Christianity, and had also given satisfactory proofs of pious dispositions and upright intentions. Hence arose the distinction between *catechumens* who were in a state of probation, and under the instruction of persons appointed for that purpose; and *believers*, who were consecrated by baptism, and thus initiated into all the mysteries of the Christian faith.

VI. The methods of instructing the *catechumens* differed according to their various capacities. Those, in whom the natural force of reason was small, were taught no more than the fundamental principles and truths, which are, as it were, the basis of Christianity. Those, on the contrary, whom their instructors judged capable of comprehending, in some measure, the whole system of divine truth, were furnished with superior degrees of knowledge; and nothing was concealed from them, which could have any tendency to render them firm in their profession, and to assist them in arriving at Christian perfection. The care of instructing such was committed to persons who were distinguished by their gravity and wisdom, and also by their learning and judgment. And from hence it comes, that the ancient doctors generally divide their flock into two classes; the one comprehending such as were solidly and thoroughly instructed; the other, those who were acquainted with little more than the first principles of religion; nor do they deny that the methods of instruction applied to these two sorts of persons were extremely different.

VII. The Christians took all possible care to accustom their children to the study of the scriptures, and to instruct them in the doctrines of their holy religion; and schools were every where erected for this purpose, even from the very commencement of

CENT.

I.

PART II.

The catechumens differently instructed.

The care of the first Christians in the education of their youth.

CENT. the Christian church. We must not, however,
 I. confound the *schools* designed only for children, with
 PART II. the *gymnasia*, or academies of the ancient Chris-
 tians, erected in several large cities, in which per-
 sons of riper years, especially such as aspired to be
 public teachers, were instructed in the different
 branches both of human learning and of sacred eru-
 dition. We may, undoubtedly, attribute to the
 apostles themselves, and their injunctions to their
 disciples, the excellent establishments, in which the
 youth destined to the holy ministry received an edu-
 cation suitable to the solemn office they were to
 undertake [m]. St. John erected a school of this kind
 at *Ephesus*, and one of the same nature was founded
 by POLYCARP at *Smyrna* [n]. But none of these
 were in a greater repute than that which was estab-
 lished at *Alexandria* [o], which was commonly called
 the *catechetical school*, and is generally supposed to
 have been erected by St. MARK [p].

VIII. The ancient Christians are supposed by
 many to have had a *secret doctrine*; and if by this
 be meant, that they did not teach all in the same

The secret
 doctrine, in
 what it
 consisted.

[m] 2 Tim. ii. 2.

[n] IRENÆUS, *adv. Hæres.* lib. ii. cap. xxii. p. 148. ed. Massuet. EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. xx. p. 188.

[o] The Alexandrian school was renowned for a suc-
 cession of learned doctors, as we find by the accounts of EUSE-
 BIUS and St. JEROM; for, after St. MARK, PANTÆNUS, CLE-
 MENS ALEXANDRINUS, ORIGEN, and many others, taught in
 it the doctrines of the gospel, and rendered it a famous seminary
 for Christian philosophy and religious knowledge. There were
 also at *Rome*, *Antioch*, *Cæsarea*, *Edeffa*, and in several other
 places, schools of the same nature, though not all of equal repu-
 tation.

[p] See the dissertation of SCHMIDIUS, *De Schola Cateche-
 tica Alexandrina*; as also AULISIUS, *Delle Scuole Sacre*, book ii.
 ch. i. ii. p. 5—17. and ch. xxi. p. 92. The curious reader will
 find a learned account of the more famous Christian schools in
 the eastern parts, at *Edeffa*, *Nisibus*, and *Seleucia*, and, indeed,
 of the ancient schools in general, in ASSEMANUS's *Biblioth.
 Oriental. Clement. Vaticanæ*, tom. iii. par. II. 7. 914—919.

manner, or reveal all at once, and to all indiscriminately, the sublime mysteries of religion, there is nothing in this that may not be fully justified. It would have been improper, for example, to propose to those, who were yet to be converted to Christianity, the more difficult doctrines of the gospel, which surpass the comprehension of imperfect mortals. Such were, therefore, first instructed in those points which are more obvious and plain, until they became capable of higher and more difficult attainments in religious knowledge. Nay, more; even those who were already admitted into the society of Christians, were, in point of instruction, differently dealt with according to their respective capacities. Those who consider the *secret doctrine* of this century in any other light, or give to it a greater extent than what we have here attributed to it, confound the superstitious practices of the following ages, with the simplicity of the discipline which prevailed at the time of which we write [q].

IX. The lives and manners of the Christians in this century are highly celebrated by most authors, and recommended to succeeding generations as unspotted models of piety and virtue. And if these encomiums be confined to the greatest part of those, who embraced Christianity in the infancy of the church, they are certainly distributed with justice. But many run into extremes upon this head, and estimating the lives and manners of all by the illustrious examples of some eminent saints, or the sublime precepts and exhortations of certain pious doctors, fondly imagine that every appearance of vice and disorder was banished from the first Christian societies. The greatest part of those authors, who

The lives
and man-
ners of the
first Chris-
tians.

[q] Many learned observations upon the *secret discipline* have been collected by the celebrated CHRISTOPH. MATT. PFAFFIUS, in his *Dissert. poster. de Præjudiciis Theolog.* § 13. p. 149, &c. in *Primitiis Tubingensibus.*

CENT. have written concerning the innocence and sanctity
 I. of the primitive Christians, have fallen into this
 P A R T II. agreeable error. And a gross error indeed it is, as
 the strongest testimonies too evidently prove.

Excommu-
 nication.

X. One of the circumstances which contributed chiefly to preserve, at least an external appearance of sanctity in the Christian church, was the right of excluding from thence, and from all participation of the sacred rites and ordinances of the gospel, such as had been guilty of enormous transgressions, and to whom repeated exhortations to repentance and amendment had been administered in vain. This right was vested in the church, from the earliest period of its existence, by the apostles themselves, and was exercised by each Christian assembly upon its respective members. The rulers or doctors denounced the persons whom they thought unworthy of the privileges of church-communion, and the people, freely approving or rejecting their judgment, pronounced the decisive sentence. It was not, however, irrevocable; for such as gave undoubted signs of their sincere repentance, and declared their solemn resolutions of future reformation, were readmitted into the church, however enormous their crimes had been; but, in case of a relapse, their second exclusion became absolutely irreversible [r].

Controver-
 sies among
 Christians.

XI. It will be easily imagined, that unity and peace could not reign long in the church, since it was composed of Jews and Gentiles, who regarded each other with the bitterest aversion. Besides, as the converts to Christianity could not extirpate radically the prejudices which had been formed in their minds by education, and confirmed by time, they brought with them into the bosom of the church more or less of the errors of their former religions. Thus the seeds of discord and controversy

[r] See MORINUS, *Comm. de Disciplina Pœnitentiæ*, lib. ix. cap. xix. p. 670.

were early sown, and could not fail to spring up soon into animosities and dissensions, which accordingly broke out and divided the church. The first of these controversies, which was set on foot in the church of *Antioch*, regarded the necessity of observing the law of *MOSES*, and its issue is mentioned by *St. LUKE* in *The Acts of the Apostles* [s]. This controversy was followed by many others, either with the Jews, who were violently attached to the worship of their ancestors, or with the votaries of a wild and fanatical sort of philosophy, or with such as, mistaking the true genius of the Christian religion, abused it monstrously, to the encouragement of their vices, and the indulgence of their appetites and passions [t]. *St. PAUL* and the other Apostles have, in several places of their writings, mentioned these controversies, but with such brevity, that it is difficult, at this distance of time, to come at the true state of the question in these various disputes.

XII. The most weighty and important of all these controversies was that, which certain Jewish doctors raised at *Rome*, and in other Christian churches, concerning the means of justification and acceptance with God, and the method of salvation pointed out in the word of God. The apostles, wherever they exercised their ministry, had constantly declared all hopes of acceptance and salvation delusive, except such as were founded on *JESUS* the Redeemer, and his all-sufficient merits, while the Jewish doctors maintained the works of the law to be the true efficient cause of the soul's eternal salvation and felicity. This latter sentiment not only led to many other errors extremely prejudicial to Christi-

CENT.

1.

PART. II.

Controversy
about the
terms of
acceptance
and salva-
tion.

[s] Chap. xv.

[t] See, for an illustration of these points, *WITSIUS's Miscellanea Sacra*, tom. ii. *Exercit. xx, xxi, xxii.* p. 668. As also *CAMP. VITRINGA, Observ. Sacrae.* lib. iv. cap. ix, x, xi. p. 952.

CENT. anity, but was also injurious to the glory of the
 I. divine Saviour. For those who looked upon a
 PART II. course of life conformable to the law, as a meritorious
 title to eternal happiness, could not consider CHRIST
 as the son of God, and the Saviour of mankind,
 but only as an eminent prophet, or a divine messenger
 sent from above to enlighten and instruct a darkened
 world. It is not, therefore, surprising, that
 St. PAUL took so much pains in his *Epistle to the
 Romans*, and in his other writings, to extirpate such
 a pernicious and capital error.

Judaizing
 Christians.

XIII. The controversy that had been raised concerning the necessity of observing the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, was determined by the apostles in the wisest and most prudent manner [u]. Their authority, however, respectable as it was, had not its full effect. For the prejudices, which the Jews, especially those who lived in *Palestine*, entertained in favour of the Mosaic law, and their ancient worship, were so deeply rooted in their minds, that they could not be thoroughly removed. The force of these prejudices was indeed somewhat diminished after the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the ruin of the temple, but not entirely destroyed. And hence, as we shall see in its place, a part of the judaizing Christians separated themselves from the rest, and formed a particular sect, distinguished by their adherence to the law of MOSES.

[u] Acts xv.

CHAPTER IV.

Concerning the rites and ceremonies used in the church during this century.

I. THE Christian religion was singularly commendable on account of its beautiful and divine simplicity, which appears from the two great and fundamental principles on which it was built, *viz. faith and charity*. This simplicity was not, however, incompatible with certain external rights, and positive institutions, which, indeed, are necessary, in this imperfect state, to keep alive a sense of religion in the minds of men. The rites instituted by CHRIST himself were only two in number, and these designed to continue to the end of the church here below, without any variation. These rites were *baptism* and the *holy supper*, which are not to be considered as mere ceremonies, nor yet as symbolic representations only, but also as ordinances accompanied with a sanctifying influence upon the heart and the affections of true Christians. And we cannot help observing here, that, since the divine Saviour thought fit to appoint no more than two plain institutions in his church, this shews us that a number of ceremonies is not essential to his religion, and that he left it to the free and prudent choice of Christians to establish such rites as the circumstances of the times, or the exigencies of the church, might require.

II. There are several circumstances which incline us to think that the friends and apostles of our blessed Lord, either tolerated through necessity, or appointed for wise reasons, many other external rites in various places. At the same time we are not to imagine that they ever conferred upon any person a perpetual, indelible, pontifical authority, or that they enjoined the same rites in all churches.

CENT.
I.
PART II.
Baptism
and the
Lord's sup-
per insti-
tuted by
CHRIST.

Rites insti-
tuted by the
apostles.

CENT. We learn, on the contrary, from authentic records,

I. that the Christian worship was, from the beginning,

PART II. celebrated in a different manner in different places, and that, no doubt, by the orders, or at least with the approbation, of the apostles and their disciples. In these early times it was both wise and necessary, to shew, in the establishment of outward forms of worship, some indulgence to the ancient opinions, manners, and laws, of the respective nations to whom the gospel was preached.

The Jewish rites retained in several places.

III. From hence it follows, that the opinion of those who maintain that the Jewish rites were adopted *every where*, in the Christian churches, by order of the apostles, or their disciples, is destitute of all foundation. In those Christian societies, which were totally or principally composed of Jewish converts, it was natural to retain as much of the Jewish ritual as the genius of Christianity would suffer, and a multitude of examples testify that this was actually done. But that the same translation of Jewish rites should take place in Christian churches, where there were no Jews, or a very small and inconsiderable number, is utterly incredible, because such an event was morally impossible. In a word, the external forms of worship used in the times of old, must necessarily have been regulated and modified according to the character, genius, and manners, of the different nations on which the light of the gospel arose.

Public assemblies of Christians.

IV. Since then there was such a variety in the ritual and discipline of the primitive churches, it must be very difficult to give such an account of the worship, manners, and institutions, of the ancient Christians, as will agree with what was practised in all those countries where the gospel flourished. There are, notwithstanding, certain laws, whose authority and obligation were universal and indispensable among all Christians, and of these we shall here give a brief account. All Christians were unanimous

in setting apart the first day of the week, on which the triumphant Saviour arose from the dead, for the solemn celebration of public worship. This pious custom, which was derived from the example of the church of *Jerusalem*, was founded upon the express appointment of the apostles, who consecrated that day to the same sacred purpose, and was observed universally throughout all the Christian churches, as appears from the united testimonies of the most credible writers [*w*]. The seventh day of the week was also observed as a festival [*x*], not by the Christians in general, but by such churches only as were principally composed of Jewish converts, nor did the other Christians censure this custom as criminal and unlawful. It appears, moreover, that all the Christian churches observed two great anniversary festivals; the one in memory of CHRIST'S glorious resurrection; and the other to commemorate the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles [*y*].

[*w*] PHIL. JAC. HARTMANNUS, *De rebus gestis Christianorum sub Apostolis*, cap. xv. p. 387. JUST. HENN. BÖHMER, *Dissert. i. Juris Eccles. Antiqui de stato die Christianor.* p. 20, &c.

[*x*] STEPH. CURCELLIUS, *Diatriba de esu Sanguinis, Operum Theolog.* p. 958. GAB. ALBASPINÆUS, *Observat. Eccles.* lib. i. *Observ.* xiii. p. 53. It is in vain that many learned men have laboured to prove, that in all the primitive churches, both the first and last day of the week were observed as festivals. The churches of *Bithynia*, of which PLINY speaks in his letter to TRAJAN, had only *one stated day*, for the celebration of public worship; and that was, undoubtedly, the first day of the week, or what we call the *Lord's Day*.

[*y*] There are, it is true, learned men, who look upon it as a doubtful matter, whether or no the day of Pentecost was celebrated as a festival so early as the first century. See BINGHAM'S *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, book xx. ch. vi. p. 120. But notwithstanding this, there are many weighty reasons for believing that festival as ancient as that of Easter, which was celebrated, as all agree, from the very first rise of the church. It is also probable, that Friday, the day of CHRIST'S crucifixion, was early distinguished by particular honours from the other days of the week. See JAC. GODOFRED, in *Codicem Theodosii*, tom. i. p. 138. ASSEMAN. *Biblioth. Oriental. Vatican.* tom. i. p. 217. MARTENE, *Thesaur. Anecdor.* tom. v. p. 66.

CENT. To these we may add the days on which the blessed

I. martyrs laid down their lives for the truth, which
 PART II. days were probably dignified with particular solemnities and marks of veneration from the earliest times.

V. The places in which the first Christians assembled to celebrate divine worship, were, no doubt, the houses of private persons. But in process of time it became necessary, that these sacred assemblies should be confined to one fixed place, in which the books, tables, and desks, required in divine service, might be constantly kept, and the dangers avoided, which, in those perilous times, attended their transportation from one place to another. And then, probably, the places of meeting, that had formerly belonged to private persons, became the property of the whole Christian community [z]. These few remarks are, in my opinion, sufficient to determine that question, which has been so long and so tediously debated, *viz*, whether the first Christians had churches, or not [a]? Since if any are pleased to give the name of a *church* to a house, or the part of a house, which, though appointed as the place of religious worship, was neither separated from common use, nor considered as holy in the opinion of the people, it will be readily granted that the most ancient Christians had churches.

The manner of conducting the public worship in these assemblies.

VI. In these assemblies the holy scriptures were publicly read, and for that purpose were divided into certain portions or lessons. This part of divine service was followed by a brief exhortation to the people, in which eloquence and art gave place to

[z] See CAMP. VITRINGA, *De synagoga veteri*, lib. i. par. III. cap. i. p. 432.

[a] See BLONDEL, *De Episcopis et Presbyteris*, § 3. p. 216. 243. 246. JUST. HENN. BÖHMER, *Dissert. ii. Juris Eccles. Antiqui. de Antelucanis Christianorum Cætibus*, § 4. p. 39. BINGHAM'S *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, book viii. ch. i. § 3, 4, 5, 6.

the natural and fervent expression of zeal and charity. If any declared themselves extraordinarily animated by the Holy Spirit, they were permitted to explain successively the divine will, while the other prophets who were present, decided how much weight and authority was to be attributed to what they said [b]. The prayers, which made a considerable part of the public worship, came in at the conclusion of these discourses, and were repeated by the people after the bishop or presbyter, who presided in the service [c]. To these were added certain hymns, which were sung, not by the whole assembly, but by persons appointed for that purpose, during the celebration of the Lord's supper, and the feasts of charity. Such were the essential parts of divine worship, which were observed in all Christian churches, though perhaps the method and order, in which they were performed, were not the same in all [d].

VII. The prayers of the first Christians were followed by *oblations* of bread, wine, and other things; and hence both the ministers of the church, and the poor, derived their subsistence. Every Christian, who was in an opulent condition, and indeed every one, according to their circumstances, brought with them their gifts, and offered them, as it were, unto the Lord [e]. Of the bread and wine, presented in these offerings, such a quantity was separated from the rest, as was required in the

[b] I Cor. xiv. 6.

[c] See JUSTIN MARTYR, his second Apology, p. 98, &c.

[d] This must be understood of churches well established, and regulated by fixed and certain laws. For in the first Christian assemblies, which were yet in an imperfect and fluctuating state, one or other of these circumstances of divine worship may possibly have been omitted.

[e] See the dissertations of the venerable and learned PFAFF, *De oblatione et consecratione Eucharistica*, which are contained in his *Syntagma Dissertation. Theologic.* published at *Stutgard*, in 8vo. in the year 1720.

CENT.
I.
PART II.

CENT. administration of the Lord's supper; this was con-
 I. secrated by certain prayers pronounced by the bishop
 PART II. alone, to which the people assented by saying *Amen*
 [f]. The holy supper was distributed by the
deacons; and this sacred institution was followed by
 sober repasts, which, from the excellent end they
 were designed to promote, were called *agapæ*, or
feasts of charity [g]. Many attempts have been
 made to fix precisely the nature of these social feasts.
 But here it must be again considered, that the rites
 and customs of the primitive Christians were very
 different in different countries, and that consequently
 these feasts, like other institutions, were not every
 where celebrated in the same manner. This is the
 true and only way of explaining all the difficulties
 that can arise upon this subject.

Baptism. VIII. The sacrament of *baptism* was administered
 in this century, without the public assemblies, in
 places appointed and prepared for that purpose,
 and was performed by immersion of the whole body
 in the baptismal font [b]. At first it was usual for
 all who laboured in the propagation of the gospel,
 to be present at that solemn ceremony; and it was
 also customary, that the converts should be baptized
 and received into the church by those under whose
 ministry they had embraced the Christian doctrine.
 But this custom was soon changed. When the
 Christian churches were well established and

[f] JUSTIN MARTYR, *Apologia secunda*, p. 98. The several authors who have written concerning the manner of celebrating the Lord's supper, are mentioned by JO. ALB. FABRICIUS, in his *Bibliograph. Antiquar.* cap. xi. p. 395, &c.

[g] The authors who have written concerning the *Agapæ*, or *Feasts of charity*, are mentioned by ITTIGIUS, in his *Selecta Historiæ Eccles. Capita*, Sæc. ii. cap. iii. p. 180. and also by PFAFF, *De Originibus Juris Eccles.* p. 68.

[b] See the learned dissertation of JO. GERARD VOSSIUS concerning baptism, *Disp. i. Thes. vi.* p. 31, &c. The reader will also find in the xith chapter and xxvth section of the *Bibliogr. Antiquar.* of the celebrated FABRICIUS, an account of the authors who have written upon this subject.

governed by a system of fixed laws, then the right of baptizing the Christian converts was vested in the bishop alone. This right, indeed, he conferred upon the *presbyters* and *chorepiscopi*, or *country-bishops*, when the bounds of the church were still further enlarged, reserving, however, to himself the *confirmation* of the baptism, which was administered by a presbyter [i]. There were, doubtless, several circumstantial rites and ceremonies observed, in the administration of this sacrament, for the sake of order and decency. Of these, however, it is not easy, nor, perhaps, possible, to give a certain or satisfactory account; since, upon this subject, we are too much exposed to the illusion, which arises from confounding the customs of the primitive times with those of succeeding ages.

IX. Those who were visited with violent or dangerous disorders, sent, according to the apostle's direction [k], for the rulers of the church, and, after confessing their sins, were recommended by them to the divine mercy in prayers full of piety and fervour, and were also anointed with oil. This rite has occasioned many debates, and, indeed, they must be endless, since the silence of the ancient writers, upon that head, renders it impossible to decide the matter with any degree of certainty. The anointing the sick is very rarely mentioned in the ancient records of the church, though there is no reason to doubt of its having been an universal custom among Christians [l].

[i] These observations will illustrate and perhaps decide the question, concerning the right of administering baptism, which has been so long debated among the learned, and with such ardour and vehemence. See BÖHMER, *Dissert. xi. Juris Eccles.* p. 500. as also LE CLERC *Biblioth. Universelle et Historique*, tom. iv. p. 93.

[k] James v. 14.

[l] The accounts which the ancient authors have given of this custom, are, the most of them, collected in a treatise published by LAUNOIS, *De sacramentis unctionis infirmorum*, cap. i.

CENT.
I.
PART II.

The sick
anointed.

CENT. X. Neither CHRIST nor his apostles enacted any
 1. law concerning *fasting*. A custom, however, pre-
 PART II. vailed among many Christians of joining abstinence
 with their prayers, especially when they were
 Fasting engaged in affairs of extraordinary moment and
 introduced. importance [m]. As this custom was authorized
 by no public law, the time that was to be employed
 in these acts of abstinence was left to every one's
 private judgment, nor were those looked upon as
 criminal, who contented themselves with observing
 the rules of a strict temperance, without going any
 further [n]. In the most ancient times we find no
 mention of any public and solemn fasts, except upon
 the anniversary of CHRIST'S crucifixion. But, in
 process of time, days of fasting were gradually
 introduced, first by custom, and afterwards by posi-
 tive appointment; though it is not certain what
 those days were, nor whether they were observed in
 the first century. Those, notwithstanding, who affirm
 that, in the time of the apostles, or soon after, the
 fourth and sixth days of the week were observed as
 fasts, are not, it must be acknowledged, destitute of
 specious arguments in favour of their opinion [o].

p. 444. in the first volume of his works. Among these accounts there are very few drawn from the writers of the first ages, and some passages applicable to this subject have been omitted by that learned author.

[m] 1 Cor. vii. 5.

[n] See the *Shepherd of Hermas*, book iii. *Similitud.* v. p. 931. 935. edition of FABRICIUS.

[o] See BEVEREGE'S *Vindication of the Canon*, in the second volume of his edition of the *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 166.

CHAPTER V.

Concerning the divisions and heresies which troubled the church during this century.

I. **T**HE Christian church was scarcely formed, when, in different places, there started up certain pretended reformers, who, not satisfied with the simplicity of that religion which was taught by the apostles, meditated changes of doctrine and worship, and set up a new religion drawn from their own licentious imaginations. This we learn from the writings of the apostles, and particularly from the epistles of St. PAUL, where we find that some were for forcing the doctrines of Christianity into a conformity with the philosophical systems they had adopted [*p*], while others were as studious to blend with these doctrines the opinions, customs, and traditions, of the Jews. Several of these are mentioned by the apostles, such as HYMENÆUS, ALEXANDER, PHILETES, HERMOGENES, DEMAS, and DIOTREPHES; though the four last are rather to be considered as apostates from the truth, than as corrupters of it [*q*].

II. The influence of these new teachers was but inconsiderable at first. During the lives of the apostles, their attempts towards the perversion of Christianity were attended with little success, and the number of their followers was exceeding small. They, however, acquired credit and strength by degrees; and even from the first dawn of the

[*p*] 1 Tim. vi. 20. 1 Tim. i. 3, 4. Tit. iii. 9. Col. ii. 8.

[*q*] 2 Tim. ii. 18. and in other places. See also the accurate accounts given of these men by VITRINGA, *Observ. Sacr.* lib. iv. cap. ix. p. 952. ITTIGIUS *De hæresiarbis ævi Apostol.* § i. cap. viii. p. 84. BUDDIUS, *De Ecclesia Apostolica*, cap. v. p. 292, &c.

CENT. gospel, laid, imperceptibly, the foundations of those
 I. sects, whose animosities and disputes produced after-
 PART II. wards such trouble and perplexity in the Christian
 church. The true state of these divisions is more
 involved in darkness than any other part of ecclesi-
 astical history; and this obscurity proceeds partly
 from the want of ancient records, partly from the
 abstruse and unintelligible nature of the doctrines
 that distinguished these various sects; and, finally,
 from the ignorance and prejudices of those, who
 have transmitted to us the accounts of them, which
 are yet extant. Of one thing indeed we are certain,
 and that is, that the most of these doctrines were
 chimerical and extravagant in the highest degree;
 and so far from containing any thing that could
 recommend them to a lover of truth, that they
 rather deserve to occupy a place in the history of
 human delusion and folly [r].

The sect of
 the Gnostics,

III. Among the various sects that troubled the
 tranquillity of the Christian church, the leading one
 was that of the Gnostics. These enthusiastic and
 self-sufficient philosophers boasted of their being
 able to restore mankind to the *knowledge* (*gnosis*)
 of the true and supreme Being, which had been lost

[r] Certain authors have written professedly concerning the
 sects that divided the church in this and the following century,
 such as ITTIGIUS in his treatise, *De hæresarchis ævi Apostolici
 et Apostolico proximi*, printed at *Leipsick* in 1690, and also in
 the Appendix to the same work, published in 1696. RENATUS
 MASSUET, in his *Dissertations* prefixed to IRENÆUS, and
 TILLEMONT, in his *Memoires pour servir à l'Histoire de l'Eglise*.
 But these authors, and others whom we shall not mention,
 have rather collected the materials, from which an history of
 the ancient sects may be composed, than written their history.
 HINCKELMAN, THOMASIUUS, DODWELL, HORBIUS, and BAS-
 NAGE, have some of them promised, others of them attempted,
 such a history; but none of them have finished this useful design.
 It is therefore to be wished, that some eminent writer, who, with
 a competent knowledge of ancient philosophy and literature, is
 also possessed of a penetrating and unbiassed judgment, would
 undertake this difficult, but interesting, work.

in the world. They also foretold the approaching defeat of the *evil principle*, to whom they attributed the creation of this globe, and declared, in the most pompous terms, the destruction of his associates, and the ruin of his empire. An opinion has prevailed, derived from the authority of CLEMENS the Alexandrian, that the first rise of the Gnostic sect is to be dated after the death of the apostles, and placed under the reign of the emperor ADRIAN; and it is also alleged, that, before this time, the church enjoyed a perfect tranquillity, undisturbed by dissentions or sects of any kind. But the smallest degree of attention to the language of the Holy Scriptures, not to mention the authority of other ancient records, will prevent our adopting this groundless notion. For, from several passages of the sacred writings [s], it evidently appears, that, even in the first century, the general meeting of Christians was deserted, and separate assemblies formed in several places, by persons infected with the Gnostic heresy; though, at the same time, it must be acknowledged, that this pernicious sect was not conspicuous, either for its number or its reputation, before the time of ADRIAN. It is proper just to observe here, that under the general appellation of Gnostics are comprehended all those who, in the first ages of Christianity, corrupted the doctrine of the gospel by a profane mixture of the tenets of the oriental philosophy (concerning the origin of evil and the creation of the world) with its divine truths.

IV. It was from this oriental philosophy, of which the leading principles have been already mentioned, that the Christian Gnostics derived their origin. If it was one of the chief tenets of this philosophy, that rational souls were imprisoned in corrupt matter, contrary to the will of the Supreme

[s] 1 John ii. 18. 1 Tim. vi. 20. Col. ii. 8.

CENT. Deity; there were, however, in this same system,
 I. other doctrines which promised a deliverance from
 PART II. this deplorable state of servitude and darkness. The
 oriental sages expected the arrival of an extraordinary messenger of the Most High upon earth; a messenger invested with a divine authority, endowed with the most eminent sanctity and wisdom, and peculiarly appointed to enlighten, with the knowledge of the Supreme Being, the darkened minds of miserable mortals, and to deliver them from the chains of the tyrants and usurpers of this world. When, therefore, some of these philosophers perceived that CHRIST and his followers wrought miracles of the most amazing kind, and also of the most salutary nature to mankind, they were easily induced to believe that he was the great messenger expected from above, to deliver men from the power of the malignant *genii*, or spirits, to which, according to their doctrine, the world was subjected, and to free their souls from the dominion of corrupt matter. This supposition once admitted, they interpreted, or rather corrupted, all the precepts and doctrines of CHRIST and his apostles, in such a manner, as to reconcile them with their own pernicious tenets.

occasions
 many pernicious
 errors concerning the
 scriptures
 and other
 matters.

V. From the false principle above mentioned arose, as it was but natural to expect, a multitude of sentiments and notions most remote from the tenor of the gospel doctrines, and the nature of its precepts. The Gnostic doctrine, concerning the creation of the world by one or more inferior beings of an evil, or, at least, of an imperfect nature, led that sect to deny the divine authority of the books of the Old Testament, whose accounts of the origin of things so palpably contradicted this idle fiction. Through a frantic aversion to these sacred books, they lavished their encomiums upon the *serpent*, the first author of sin, and held in veneration some of the most impious and profligate persons, of whom mention is made in sacred history. The pernicious

influence of their fundamental principle carried them to all sorts of extravagance, filled them with an abhorrence of MOSES and the religion he taught, and made them assert, that, in imposing such a system of disagreeable and severe laws upon the Jews, he was only actuated by the malignant author of this world, who consulted his own glory and authority, and not the real advantage of men. Their persuasion that *evil* resided in *matter*, as its center and source, prevented their treating the body with that regard that is due to it, rendered them unfavourable to wedlock, as the means by which corporeal beings are multiplied, and led them to reject the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and its future re-union with the immortal spirit. Their notion, that malevolent *genii* presided in nature, and that from them proceeded all diseases and calamities, wars and desolations, induced them to apply themselves to the study of magic, to weaken the powers, or suspend the influences, of these malignant agents. I omit the mention of several other extravagancies in their system, the enumeration of which would be incompatible with the character of a compendious history.

VI. The notions of this sect concerning JESUS CHRIST were impious and extravagant. For, though they considered him as the Son of the Supreme God sent from the *pleroma*, or habitation of the Everlasting Father, for the happiness of miserable mortals; yet they entertained unworthy ideas both of his person and offices. They denied his deity, looking upon him as the Son of God, and consequently inferior to the Father; and they rejected his humanity, upon the supposition that every thing concrete and corporeal is in itself essentially and intrinsically evil. From hence the greatest part of the Gnostics denied that CHRIST was clothed with a *real* body, or that he suffered *really*, for the sake of mankind, the pains and sorrows which he

CENT.

I.

PART II.

Their opinions concerning CHRIST.

CENT. is said to have sustained, in the sacred history. They
 I. maintained that he came to mortals with no other
 PART II. view, than to deprive the tyrants of this world of
 their influence upon virtuous and heaven-born souls, and, destroying the empire of these wicked spirits, to teach mankind, how they might separate the divine mind from the impure body, and render the former worthy of being united to the Father of Spirits.

Their moral
 doctrines.

VII. Their doctrine relating to morals and practice was of two kinds, and those extremely different from each other. The greatest part of this sect adopted rules of life that were full of austerities, recommended a strict and rigorous abstinence, and prescribed the most severe bodily mortifications, from a notion that they had a happy influence in purifying and enlarging the mind, and in disposing it to the contemplation of celestial things. As they looked upon it to be the unhappiness of the soul to have been associated, at all, to a malignant, terrestrial, body; so they imagined, that the more that body was extenuated, the less it would corrupt and degrade the mind, or divert it from pursuits of a spiritual and divine nature: all the Gnostics, however, were not so severe in their moral discipline. Some maintained that there was no moral difference in human actions; and thus, confounding right with wrong, they gave a loose rein to all the passions, and asserted the innocence of following blindly all their motions, and of living by their tumultuous dictates [t]. There is nothing surprising or unaccountable in this difference between the Gnostic moralists. For, when we examine the matter with attention, we shall find that the same doctrine may very naturally have given rise to these opposite sentiments. As they all in general considered the body

[t] See CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, *Stromatum*, lib. iii. cap. v. p. 529. edit. Potter.

as the center and source of evil, those of that sect, who were of a morose and austere disposition, would be hence naturally led to mortify and combat the body as the enemy of the soul; and those who were of a voluptuous turn, might also consider the actions of the body, as having no relation, either of congruity or incongruity, to the state of a soul in communion with God.

VIII. Such extraordinary doctrines had certainly need of an undoubted authority to support them; and as this authority was not to be found in the writings of the evangelists or apostles, recourse was had to fables and stratagems. When the Gnostics were challenged to produce the sources from whence they had drawn such strange tenets, and an authority proper to justify the confidence with which they taught them; some referred to fictitious writings of ABRAHAM, ZOROASTER, CHRIST, and his apostles; others boasted of their having drawn these opinions from certain secret doctrines of CHRIST, which were not exposed to vulgar eyes; others affirmed, that they had arrived at these sublime degrees of wisdom by an innate force and vigour of mind; and others asserted, that they were instructed in these mysterious parts of theological science by THEUDAS, a disciple of St. PAUL, and by MATTHIAS, one of the friends of our Lord. As to those among the Gnostics, who did not utterly reject the books of the New Testament, it is proper to observe, that they not only interpreted those sacred books most absurdly, by neglecting the true spirit of the words and the intention of the writers, but also corrupted them, in the most perfidious manner, by curtailing and adding, in order to remove what was unfavourable, or to produce something conformable, to their pernicious and extravagant system.

IX. It has been already observed, that the Gnostics were divided in their opinions before they embraced Christianity. This appears from the

CENT.

I.

PART II.

How their
doctrines
were sup-
ported.Whence the
dissensions
among this
sect.

CENT. account which has been given above of the oriental
 I. philosophy ; and from hence we may see the reason,
 PART II. why they were formed into so many different sects
 after their receiving the Christian faith. For, as every one endeavoured to force the doctrines of the gospel into a conformity with their particular sentiments and tenets, so Christianity must have appeared in different forms, among the different members of a sect, which passed, however, under one general name. Another circumstance which also contributed to the diversity of sects among this people was, that some being Jews by birth, (as CERINTHUS and others,) could not so easily assume that contempt of MOSES, and that aversion to his history, which were so virulently indulged by those who had no attachment to the Jewish nation, nor to its religious institutions. We observe, in the last place, that the whole religious and philosophical system of the Gnostics was destitute of any sure or solid foundation, and depended, both for its existence and support, upon the airy suggestions of genius and fancy. This consideration alone is a sufficient key to explain the divisions that reigned in this sect; since *uniformity* can never subsist, with assurance, but upon the basis of evident and substantial truth ; and *variety* must naturally introduce itself into those systems and institutions, which are formed and conducted by the sole powers of invention and fancy.

Dositheus. X. As then the Christian religion was, in its first rise, corrupted in several places by the mixture of an impious and chimerical philosophy with its pure and sublime doctrines, it will be proper to mention here the heads of those sects, who, in the first century, cast a cloud upon the lustre of the rising church. Among these, many give the first place to DOSITHEUS, a Samaritan. It is certain, that about the time of our Saviour, a man, so named, lived among the Samaritans, and abandoned that sect ; but all the accounts we have of him tend to shew, that he

is improperly placed among those called *Heretics*, and should rather be ranked among the enemies of Christianity. For this delirious man set himself up for the MESSIAH, whom God had promised to the Jews, and disowning, of consequence, the divine mission of CHRIST, could not be said to corrupt his doctrine [u].

CENT.
I.
PART II.

XI. The same observation holds true with respect to SIMON MAGUS. This impious man is not to be ranked among the number of those, who corrupted, with their errors, the purity and simplicity of the Christian doctrine; nor is he to be considered as the parent and chief of the heretical tribe, in which point of light he has been injudiciously viewed by almost all ancient and modern writers. He is rather to be placed in the number of those who were enemies to the progress and advancement of Christianity. For it is manifest from all the records we have concerning him, that after his defection from the Christians, he retained not the least attachment to CHRIST, but opposed himself openly to the divine Saviour, and assumed to himself blasphemously the title of the *supreme power of God* [w].

Simon Magus not properly an heretic.

XII. The accounts, which ancient writers give us of SIMON the magician, and of his opinions, seem so different, and indeed so inconsistent with each other, that certain learned men have considered them as regarding two different persons, bearing the name of SIMON; the one a magician, and an apostate from Christianity; the other a Gnostic philosopher. This opinion, which supposes a fact without any other proof than a seeming difference in the narration of the ancient historians, ought not to be too lightly adopted. To depart from the

His history

[u] See BASNAGE, *Histoire des Juifs*, lib. ii. cap. xiii. RICH. SIMON, *Critique de la Bibliothèque des Auteurs Ecclesiastiques de Du Pin*, tom. iii. cap. xiii. p. 304.

[w] *Origen adv. Celsum*, lib. v. p. 272. edit. Spenceri.

CENT. authority of ancient writers in this matter is by no means prudent; nor is it necessary to reconcile the different accounts already mentioned, whose inconsistency is not real, but apparent only. SIMON was, by birth, a Samaritan, or a Jew: when he had studied philosophy at *Alexandria* [*x*], he made a public profession of magic, (which was nothing very uncommon at that time,) and persuaded the Samaritans, by fictitious miracles, that he had received from God the power of commanding and restraining those evil beings by which mankind were tormented [*y*]. Having seen the miracles which PHILIP wrought, by a divine power, he joined himself to this apostle, and embraced the doctrine of CHRIST, but with no other design than to receive the power of working miracles, in order to promote a low interest, and to preserve and increase his impious authority over the minds of men. Then St. PETER pointed out to him solemnly the impiety of his intentions, and the vanity of his hopes, in that severe discourse recorded in the viiith chapter of the *Acts of the Apostles*; then the vile impostor not only returned to his former ways by an entire defection from the Christians, but also opposed, wherever he came, the progress of the gospel, and even travelled into different countries with that odious design. Many things are recorded of this impostor, of his tragical end, and of the statue erected to him at *Rome*, which the greatest part of the learned reject as fabulous. They are at least uncertain, and destitute of all probability [*z*].

[*x*] *Clementina Homil.* ii. p. 633. tom. ii. *PP. Apost.*

[*y*] *Acts* viii. 9, 10.

[*z*] See BEAUSOBRE, *Histoire des Manich.* p. 203. 395. Van DALE's dissertation, *De Statua Simonis*, subjoined to his discourse concerning the ancient oracles. DEYLINGIUS, *Observat. Sacr.* lib. i. *Observ.* xxxvi. p. 140. TILLEMONT, *Memoires pour servir à l'Histoire l'Eglise*, tom. i. p. 340. ☞ The circumstances of SIMON's tragical end, viz. his having pretended to fly, by a miraculous power, in order to please the emperor NERO, who was fond

XIII. It is beyond all doubt, that SIMON was CENT. I. in the class of those philosophers, who not only maintained the eternity of *matter*, but also the existence of an *evil being*, who presided, and thus shared, the empire of the universe, with the supreme and beneficent *Mind*. And as there was a good deal of variety in the sentiments of the different members of this sect, it is more than probable that SIMON embraced the opinion of those who held, that matter, moved, from eternity, by an intrinsic and necessary activity, had, by its innate force, produced, at a certain period of time, from its own substance, the *evil principle* which now exercises dominion over it, with all his numerous train of attendants. From this pernicious doctrine, the other errors attributed to him concerning *fate*, *the indifference of human actions*, *the impurity of the human body*, *the power of magic*, and such like extravagancies, flow naturally as from their true and genuine source [a]. But this odious magician still proceeded to more shocking degrees of enormity in his monstrous fictions; for he pretended, that in his person resided the greatest and most powerful of the divine *æons*; that another

I.
PART II.
and doc-
trines.

of magic; his falling to the ground, and breaking his limbs in consequence of the prayers of St. PETER and St. PAUL; and his putting himself to death, through shame and despair, to have been thus defeated by the superior power of the apostles; all these romantic fictions have derived their credit from a set of ecclesiastical writers, who, on many occasions, prefer the *marvellous* to the *truth*, as favourable to a system of religion, or rather superstition, which truth and reason loudly disown.

[a] The dissertation of HORBIUS, concerning SIMON the magician, which was published not long ago, in the *Biblioth. Hæresologica* of VOIGTIUS, tom. i. par. III. p. 511. seems preferable to any thing else upon that subject, though it be a juvenile performance, and not sufficiently finished. He follows the steps of his master THOMASIUS, who, with admirable penetration, discovered the true source of that multitude of errors, with which the Gnostics, and particularly SIMON, were so dismally polluted. VOIGTIUS, in the place above cited, p. 567. gives a list of the other authors who have made any mention of this impostor.

CENT. *æon* of the female sex, the mother of all human
 I. souls, dwelt in the person of his mistress HELENA
 PART II. [b], and that he came, by the command of God,
 upon earth, to abolish the empire of those that had
 formed this material world, and to deliver HELENA
 from their power and dominion.

Menander. XIV. Another wrong-headed teacher, named
 MENANDER, a Samaritan also by birth, appeared
 in this century. He is said to have been instructed
 by SIMON; though this opinion has no other founda-
 tion, than the general notion, that all the various
 sects of the Gnostics derived their origin from that
 magician; and this notion is entirely groundless.
 Be that as it will, MENANDER should rather be
 ranked with the lunatics than with the heretics of
 antiquity, seeing he also took it into his head to
 exhibit himself to the world as the promised Saviour.
 For it appears, by the testimonies of IRENÆUS,
 JUSTIN, and TERTULLIAN, that he pretended to
 be one of the *æons* sent from the *pleroma*, or celestial
 regions, to succour the souls that lay groaning under
 bodily oppression and servitude, and to maintain
 them against the violence and stratagems of the
dæmons that hold the reins of empire in this sublunary
 world. As this doctrine was built upon the same
 foundation with that of SIMON MAGUS, therefore
 the ancient writers looked upon him as the instructor
 of MENANDER.

Nicolaitans. XV. If then we separate these three persons,
 now successively mentioned, from the heretics of the
 first century, we may rank among the chief of the
 Christian sectaries, and particularly of those that
 bear the general name of Gnostics, the Nicolaitans,
 whom CHRIST himself mentions with abhorrence,

[b] Some very learned men have given an allegorical expli-
 cation of what the ancient writers say concerning HELENA the
 mistress of this magician, and imagine that by the name HELENA
 is signified either *matter*, or *spirit*. But nothing is more easy than
 to shew upon what slight foundations this opinion is built.

by the mouth of his apostle [c]. It is true, indeed, that the divine Saviour does not reproach them with erroneous opinions concerning the deity, but with the licentiousness of their practice, and the contempt of that solemn law which the apostles had enacted (Acts xv. 29.) against fornication, and the use of *meats* offered to idols. It is however certain, that the writers of the second and the following centuries, IRENÆUS, TERTULLIAN, CLEMENS, and others, affirm, that the Nicolaitans adopted the sentiments of the Gnostics, concerning the *two principles* of all things, the *æons*, and the origin of this terrestrial globe. The authority of these writers would be entirely satisfactory in this matter, were there not some reason to imagine, that they confounded, in their narrations, two sects very different from each other; that of the Nicolaitans, mentioned in the Revelations; and another founded, by a certain NICOLAUS, in the second century, upon the principles of the Gnostics. But this is a matter of too doubtful a nature to justify a positive decision on either side.

XVI. There is no sort of doubt, but that CERINTHUS may be placed with propriety among the Gnostics, though the learned are not entirely agreed whether he belongs to the heretics of the first or the second century [d]. This man was by birth a Jew, and having applied himself to letters and philosophy at *Alexandria* [e], attempted, at length, to form a new and singular system of doctrine and discipline by a monstrous combination of the doctrines of CHRIST, with the opinions and errors of the

Cerintus
and the
Cerinthians

[c] Rev. ii. 6. 14, 15.

[d] See SAM. BASNAGE, *Annual. Polit. Eccles.* tom. ii. p. 6. FAYDIT, *Eclaircissement sur l'Histoire Eccles. des deux premiers Siècles*, cap. v. p. 64. The opinion of these two learned men is opposed by BUDDÉUS, *De Eccles. Apostolica*, cap. v. p. 412.

[e] THEODORET. *Fabul. Hæret.* lib. ii. cap. iii. p. 219. tom. iii. opp.

CENF. Jews and Gnostics. From the latter he borrowed
 I. their *pleroma*, their *æons*, their *demiurge*, &c. and
 PART II. so modified and tempered these fictions, as to give
 them an air of Judaism, which must have considerably favoured the progress of his heresy. He taught “ that the creator of this world, whom he
 “ considered also as the sovereign and lawgiver of
 “ the Jewish people, was a *being* endowed with the
 “ greatest virtues, and derived his birth from the
 “ *Supreme God*; that this *being* fell, by degrees,
 “ from his native virtue, and his primitive dignity;
 “ that the *Supreme God*, in consequence of this,
 “ determined to destroy his empire, and sent upon
 “ earth, for this purpose, one of the ever-happy
 “ and glorious *æons*, whose name was CHRIST;
 “ that this CHRIST chose for his habitation the
 “ person of JESUS, a man of the most illustrious
 “ sanctity and justice, the son of JOSEPH and MARY,
 “ and, descending in the form of a *dove*, entered
 “ into him, while he was receiving the baptism of
 “ JOHN in the waters of *Jordan*; that JESUS, after
 “ his union with CHRIST, opposed himself with
 “ vigour to the *God of the Jews*, and was, by his
 “ instigation, seized and crucified by the Hebrew
 “ chiefs; that when JESUS was taken captive,
 “ CHRIST ascended up on high, so that the man
 “ JESUS alone was subjected to the pains of an
 “ ignominious death.” CERINTHUS required of
 his followers, that they should worship the father
 of CHRIST, even the Supreme God, in conjunction
 with the son; that they should abandon the law-
 giver of the Jews; whom he looked upon as the
 creator of the world; that they should retain a part of
 the law given by MOSES, but should, nevertheless,
 employ their principal attention and care to regulate
 their lives by the precepts of CHRIST. To encourage
 them to this, he promised them the resurrection
 of this mortal body, after which was to commence a
 scene of the most exquisite delights, during CHRIST’S

earthly reign of a thousand years, which was to be succeeded by an happy and never ending life in the celestial world. For CERINTHUS held, that CHRIST will one day return upon earth, and, renewing his former union with the man JESUS, will reign with his people in the land of *Palestine* during a thousand years.

XVII. It has been already observed, that the church was troubled with early disputes concerning the law of MOSES, and the Jewish rites. Those, however, who considered the observance of the Mosaic rites as necessary to salvation, had not, in this first century, proceeded so far as to break off all communion with such as differed from them in this matter. Therefore they were still regarded as brethren, though of the weaker sort. But when, after the second destruction of *Jerusalem*, under the emperor ADRIAN, these zealots for the Jewish rites deserted the ordinary assemblies of Christians, and established separate meetings among themselves, then they were numbered with those sects who had departed from the pure doctrine of CHRIST. Hence the name Nazarenes and Ebionites, by which the judaizing Christians were distinguished from those who looked upon the Mosaic worship and ceremonies as entirely abolished by the appearance of CHRIST upon earth. We shall only observe further under this head, that though the Nazarenes and Ebionites are generally placed among the sects of the apostolic age, yet they really belong to the second century, which was the earliest period of their existence as a sect.

CENT.

I.

PART II.

The Nazarenes and Ebionites properly belong to the second century.

THE
SECOND CENTURY.

PART I.

The External HISTORY of the CHURCH.

=

CHAPTER I.

Concerning the prosperous events that happened to the church during this century.

I. **I**N this century the Roman sceptre was, for the most part, swayed by princes of a mild and moderate turn. **TRAJAN**, though too eagerly bent upon the pursuit of glory, and not always sufficiently attentive to his conduct, nor prudent in his measures, was nevertheless endowed with many virtues, and the predominant lines of his character were clemency and benevolence. **ADRIAN** was of a more harsh and untractable temper; yet very far from deserving the reputation of a wicked or unjust prince. He was of a mixed character, chargeable with several vices, and estimable on account of many excellent qualities. The **ANTONINES** were illustrious models of humanity, goodness, and sublime virtue. **SEVERUS** himself, in whose character and disposition such an unexpected and disadvantageous change was effected, was, in the beginning of his reign, unjust towards none, and even the Christians were treated by him with equity and mildness.

II. This lenity of the emperors was singularly advantageous to those Christians who lived under the Roman sceptre; it suspended sometimes their sufferings, and alleviated the burthen of their

CENT.

II.

PART I.

The state of the republic.

The progress of Christianity in the Roman empire.

CENT. distresses. For, though edicts of a severe nature
 II. were issued out against them, and the magistrates,
 PART I. animated by the priests and by the multitude, shed
 their blood with a cruelty which frequently exceeded
 even the dictates of the most barbarous laws; yet
 there was always some remedy that accompanied
 these evils, and softened their severity. TRAJAN,
 however condemnable in other respects, on account
 of his conduct towards the Christians, was yet
 engaged by the representations that PLINY the
 younger gave of them, to forbid all *search to be made
 after them*. He also prohibited all anonymous libels
 and accusations, by which the Christians had so often
 been perfidiously exposed to the greatest sufferings
 [a]. ANTONINUS PIUS went so far as to enact
 penal laws against their accusers [b]. And others,
 by various acts of beneficence and compassion,
 defended them from the injurious treatment of the
 priests and people. Hence it came to pass, that in
 this century the limits of the church were considera-
 bly enlarged, and the number of converts to
 Christianity prodigiously augmented. Of the truth
 of this, we have the most respectable and authentic
 testimonies in the writings of the ancients; testi-
 monies, whose evidence and authority are every way
 superior to the vain attempts which some have made
 to obscure and weaken them [c].

What coun-
 tries were
 enlightened
 with the
 gospel.

III. It is not easy to point out particularly the
 different countries on which the light of celestial
 truth first rose in this age. The ancient records
 that yet remain, do not give us information suffi-
 cient to determine that matter with certainty; nor

[a] See PLINY's epistles, book x. let. xcviij.

[b] EUSEBIUS, *Eccles. Histor.* lib. iv. cap. xiii. p. 126.

[c] See MOYLE's letters concerning the thundering legion,
 with the remarks which Dr. MOSHEIM has annexed to his Latin
 translation of them, published at the end of a work, entitled,
Syntagma Dissert. ad Sanctiores Disciplinas pertinent. See also the
 dialogue between JUSTIN MARTYR and TRYPHO the Jew, p.
 341.

is it, indeed, a matter of much importance. We are, however, assured by the most unexceptionable testimonies, that CHRIST was worshipped as God, almost throughout the whole East, as also among the Germans, Spaniards, Celts, Britons, and many other nations [d]; but which of them received the gospel in the first century, and which in the second, is a question unanswerable at this distance of time. PANTÆNUS, the head of the Alexandrian school, is said to have conveyed to the Indians the knowledge of CHRIST [e]. But, after an attentive examination of the account which EUSEBIUS gives of this matter, it will appear, that these Indians were certain Jews, inhabitants of the *Happy Arabia*, whom BARTHOLOMEW the apostle had before instructed in the doctrines of Christianity. For, according to the account of St. JEROM, PANTÆNUS found among this people the gospel of St. MATTHEW, which they had received from BARTHOLOMEW their first teacher.

IV. The Christian religion, having penetrated among the Gauls, seems to have passed from thence into that part of Germany which was subject to the Romans, and from thence into Britain [f]. Certain German churches, indeed, are fondly ambitious of deriving their origin from St. PETER, and from

The conversion of the Germans.

[d] IRENÆUS *contr. Hæres.* lib. i. cap. x. TERTULLIAN *adv. Judeos*, cap. vii. p. 212.

[e] EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* book v. c. x. JEROME *Catal. Scriptor. Eccles.* c. xxxvi.

[f] URSINUS, BEBELIUS, and others, have written learnedly concerning the origin of the German churches, which TERTULLIAN and IRENÆUS mention as erected in this century. Add to these, the ample illustrations of this subject, which are to be found in LIRON'S *Singularités Histor. et Liter.* tom. iv. p. 193. The celebrated DOM. CALMET has judiciously refuted the common and popular accounts of the first Christian Doctors in Germany, in his *Hist. de la Lorraine*, tom. i. *Diff. sur les Evêques de Treves*, par. III. IV. See also BOLLANDUS, *Act. Sanctor.* p. 922. HONTHEIM *Diff. de Æra Episcop. Trevir.* tom. i. *Hist. Trevir.*

CENT. the companions of the other apostles. The Britons
 I. also are willing to believe, upon the authority of
 PART 1. BEDE, that, in this century, and under the reign of
 ——— MARCUS ANTONINUS, their king LUCIUS address-
 ed himself to ELEUTHERUS the Roman Pontiff,
 for doctors to instruct him in the Christian religion,
 and having obtained his request, embraced the
 gospel [g]. But, after all, these traditions are
 extremely doubtful, and are, indeed, rejected by
 such as have learning sufficient to weigh the credi-
 bility of ancient narrations.

Conversion
 of the
 Gauls.

V. It is very possible that the light of Christianity
 may have reached *Transalpine Gaul*, now called
France, before the conclusion of the apostolic age,
 either by the ministry of the apostles themselves, or
 their immediate successors. But we have no records,
 that mention, with certainty, the establishment of
 Christian churches in this part of *Europe* before the
 second century. POTHINUS, a man of exemplary
 piety and zeal, set out from *Asia* in company with
 IRENÆUS and others, and laboured in the Christian
 cause with such success among the Gauls, that
 churches were established at *Lyons* and *Vienne*, of
 which POTHINUS himself was the first bishop [b].

Transla-
 tions of the
 New Testa-
 ment.

VI. The writers of this century attribute this
 rapid progress of Christianity to the power of God,
 to the energy of divine truth, to the extraordinary
 gifts, which were imparted to the first Christians,
 and the miracles and prodigies that were wrought
 in their behalf and at their command; nor do they

[g] See USHER *Antiq. Eccles. Britan.* cap. i. p. 7; as also
 GODWIN, *De conversione Britan.* cap. i. p. 7. and RAPIN'S
History of England.

[b] See the epistle of PETRUS DE MARCA, concerning the first
 rise of Christianity in *France*, published among the dissertations
 of that author; and also by VALESIIUS, in his edition of EUSE-
 BIUS'S *Ecclesiastical History*. See also *Histoire Littéraire de la*
France, tom. i. p. 223. LIRON'S *Singularités Hist. et Lite-*
raires, vol. iv.

ascribe almost any part of the amazing success, that attended the preaching of the gospel, to the intervening succours of human means, or second causes. But this is carrying the matter too far. The wisdom of human counsels, and the useful efforts of learning and prudence, are too inconsiderately excluded from this account of things. For it is beyond all doubt, that the pious diligence and zeal, with which many learned and worthy men recommended the sacred writings, and spread them abroad in translations, which rendered them useful to those who were ignorant of the language in which they were written, contributed much to the success and propagation of the Christian doctrine. Latin versions of these sacred books were multiplied by the pious labours of the learned with particular diligence, because that language was now more universal than any other [*i*]. Among these versions, that which was distinguished by the name of the Italic obtained universally the preference, and was followed by the Syriac, Egyptian, and Æthiopic versions, whose dates it is impossible to fix with certainty [*k*].

VII. Among the obstacles that retarded the progress of Christianity, the impious calumnies of its enemies were the most considerable. The persons, the characters, and religious sentiments of the first Christians were most unjustly treated, and most perfidiously misrepresented to the credulous multitude [*l*], who were restrained by this only from embracing the gospel. Those therefore, who, by their

Christians
defended,
and heretics
refuted-

[*i*] See AUGUSTIN. *De doctrina Christiana*, lib. ii. cap. xi. p. 85. edit. Calixt.

[*k*] See JO. GOTTLOB. CARPZOV. *Critica sacra Vet. Test.* p. 663.

[*l*] Nothing more injurious can be conceived than the terms of contempt, indignation, and reproach, which the Heathens employed in expressing their hatred against the Christians, who were called by them *atheists*, because they derided the heathen polytheism; *magicians*, because they wrought miracles; *self-murderers*, because they suffered martyrdom cheerfully for the

CENT. *apologetic* writings in favour of the Christians,
 II. destroyed the poisonous influence of detraction,
 PART I. rendered, no doubt, signal service to the doctrine
 of CHRIST, by removing the chief impediment that
 retarded its progress. Nor were the writings of
 such as combated with success the ancient Heretics
 without their use, especially in the early periods of
 the church. For the insipid and extravagant doc-
 trines of these sectaries, and the gross immoralities
 with which they were chargeable, were extremely
 prejudicial to the Christian religion, by disgusting
 many at whatever carried the Christian name. But
 when it was known, by the writings of those who
 defended Christianity, that these corrupt heretics
 were held in aversion, instead of being patronized
 by the true followers of CHRIST, then, the clouds
 that were cast over the religion of JESUS were dis-
 persed, and the prejudices that had been raised
 against it were fully removed.

Miracles
 and extra-
 ordinary
 gifts.

VIII. It is easier to conceive than to express,
 how much, the *miraculous powers* and *extraordinary*
gifts, which were displayed in the ministry of the
 first heralds of the gospel, contributed to enlarge
 the bounds of the church. These gifts, however,
 which were given for wise and important reasons,
 began gradually to diminish in proportion as the
 reasons ceased for which they were conferred.
 And accordingly when almost all nations were
 enlightened with the truth, and the number of
 Christian churches increased daily in all places, then
 the miraculous gift of tongues began gradually to
 decrease. It appears, at the same time, from unex-
 ceptionable testimonies, that the other extraordinary

truth; *haters of the light*, because, to avoid the fury of the perse-
 cutions raised against them, they were forced, at first, to hold
 their religious assemblies in the night: with a multitude of other
 ignominious epithets employed against them by TACITUS, SUE-
 TONIUS, CÆLSUS, &c. See BINGHAM'S *Antiquities of the*
Christian Church, book i. cap. ii. p. 5.

gifts with which the omnipotence and wisdom of the Most High had so richly endowed the rising church, were in several places continued during this century [m].

IX. We cannot indeed place, with any degree of certainty, among the effects of a miraculous power yet remaining in the church, the story of the *Christian legion*, who, by their prayers, drew from heaven a refreshing shower upon the army of MARCUS ANTONINUS, ready to perish with thirst, when that emperor was at war with the Marcomanni. This remarkable event (which gave to the Christians, to whom it was attributed, the name of the *thundering legion*, on account of the thunder and lightning that destroyed the enemy, while the shower revived the fainting Romans) has been mentioned by many writers. But whether it was really miraculous or not, has been much disputed among learned men. Some think that the Christians, by a pious sort of mistake, attributed this unexpected and seasonable shower, which saved the Roman army, to a miraculous interposition; and this opinion is indeed supported by the weightiest reasons, as well as by the most respectable authorities [n].

II.
PART I.
The miracle
of the thun-
dering
legion.

[m] PFANNER, *De donis miraculosis*. SPENCER, *Not. ad Orig. contra Celsum*, p. 5, 6. MAMMACHIUS, *Originum et Antiquitat. Christianar.* tom. i. p. 363, &c.

[n] Such readers as are desirous to know what learned men have alleged on both sides of this curious question, may consult WITSIUS's *Dissertat. de Legione Fulminatrice*, which is subjoined to his *Ægyptiaca*, in defence of this miracle; as also what is alleged against it by DAN. LARROQUE, in a discourse upon that subject, subjoined to the *Adversaria Sacra* of MATTH. LARROQUE, his father. But above all, the controversy between Sir PETER KING* and Mr. WALTER MOYLE upon this subject,

[*] It is by mistake that Dr. MOSHEIM confounds Sir PETER KING, lord chancellor of *England*, with the person who carried on the controversy with MOYLE concerning the *thundering legion*. MOYLE's adversary was Mr. KING, a clergyman, rector of *Topsam*, near *Exeter*, which was the place of his nativity, and also of the famous chancellor's who bore his name. See the *Letters* addressed to the Reverend Mr. KING, in the *Posthumous Collection of LOCKE's Letters*, published by COLLINS. See also LARDNER's *Collection of Heathen and Jewish Testimonies*, &c. vol. ii. p. 249, &c.

CENT. X. Let us distinguish what is doubtful in this
 II. story, from that which is certain. It is certain,
 PART I. that the Roman army, enclosed by the enemy, and
 reduced to the most deplorable and even desperate
 condition by the thirst under which they languished
 in a parched desert, was revived by a sudden and
 unexpected rain. It is also certain, that both the
 Heathens and the Christians looked upon this event
 as extraordinary and miraculous; the former attributing it to JUPITER, MERCURY, or the power of magic; the latter to CHRIST, interposing, thus unexpectedly, in consequence of their prayers. It is still further beyond all doubt, that a considerable number of Christians served, at this time, in the Roman army, and it is extremely probable, that in such trying circumstances of calamity and distress, they implored the merciful interposition and succours of their God and Saviour. And as the Christians of these times looked upon all extraordinary events as miracles, and ascribed to their prayers all the uncommon and singular occurrences of an advantageous nature that happened to the Roman empire, it will not appear surprising, that, upon the present occasion, they attributed the deliverance of ANTONINUS and his army to a miraculous interposition which they had obtained from above. But, on the other hand, it must be carefully observed, that it is an invariable maxim, universally adopted by the wise and judicious, that no events are to be esteemed miraculous, which may be rationally attributed to natural causes, and accounted for by a recourse to the ordinary dispensations of Providence; and as

More than
 dubious.

is worthy of the attention of the curious; and likewise the dissertation of the learned JABLONSKI, inserted in the eighth volume of the *Miscellanea Lipsiensia*, p. 417. under the title of *Spicilegium de Legione Fulminatrice*. This last-mentioned author investigates, with great acuteness, the reasons and motives which induced the Christians to place so inconsiderately this *shower* in the list of miracles.

the unexpected shower, which restored the expiring force of the Romans, may be easily explained without rising beyond the usual and ordinary course of nature, the conclusion is manifest; nor can it be doubtful in what light we are to consider that remarkable event.

XI. The Jews were visited with new calamities, first under TRAJAN, and then under ADRIAN, when under the standard of BARCOCHEBA, who gave himself out for the MESSIAH, they rose in rebellion against the Romans. In consequence of this sedition and slaughter of the Jews. In consequence of this prodigious numbers of that miserable people were put to the sword, and a new city, called *Ælia Capitolina*, was raised upon the ruins of *Jerusalem*, into which no Jew was permitted to enter [o]. This defeat of the Jews tended to confirm, in some measure, the external tranquillity of the Christian church. For that turbulent and perfidious nation had hitherto oppressed and vexed the Christians, not only by presenting every where to the Roman magistrates complaints and accusations against them, but also by treating them in the most injurious manner in *Palestine*, and the neighbouring countries, because they refused to succour them against the Romans. But this new calamity, which fell upon that seditious nation, put it out of their power to exercise their malignity against the disciples of JESUS, as they had formerly done.

XII. Among other accessions to the splendor and force of the growing church, we may reckon the learned and ingenious labours of those philosophers and literati, who were converted to Christianity in this century. I am sensible that the advantages arising from hence to the cause of true religion will be disputed by many; and, indeed, when the question is thus proposed, whether, upon the whole, the interests of Christianity have gained or lost by the

[o] JUSTIN MART. *Dial. cum TRYPHONE*, p. 49. 278.

CENT. writings of the learned, and the speculations of
 II. philosophers, that have been employed in its defence,
 PART I. I confess myself incapable of solving it in a satisfactory
 manner. For nothing is more manifest than this
 truth, that the noble simplicity and dignity of religion
 were sadly corrupted in many places, when the
 philosophers blended their opinions with its pure
 doctrines, and were audacious enough to submit that
 divine system of faith and piety to be scrutinized
 and modified by the fallible rule of imperfect reason.

CHAPTER II.

Concerning the calamitous events which happened to the
 church in this century.

The perse-
 cution un-
 der Trajan.

I. **I**N the beginning of this 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. But, notwithstanding
 this, a horrid custom prevailed of persecuting the
 Christians, and even of putting them to death, as
 often as a bloody priesthood, or an outrageous popu-
 lace, set on by them, demanded their destruction.
 Hence it happened, that, even under the reign of
 the good TRAJAN, popular clamours [*p*] were
 raised against the Christians, many of whom fell
 victims to the rage of a merciless multitude. Such
 were the riotous proceedings that happened in *Bitby-*
nia, under the administration of PLINY the younger,
 who, upon that occasion, wrote to the emperor, to
 know in what manner he was to conduct himself
 towards the Christians. The answer which he

[*p*] EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. xxxii. p. 103.

received from TRAJAN amounted to this, “ That CENT.
 “ the Christians were not to be *officiously sought* II.
 “ *after* [q], but that such as were *accused* and *con-* PART I.
 “ *victed of an adherence to Christianity* were to be
 “ put to death, as wicked citizens, if they did not
 “ return to the religion of their ancestors.”

II. This edict of TRAJAN, being registered among The effects
 the public and solemn laws of the Roman empire, of Trajan's
 set bounds, indeed, to the fury of those that per- order to
 secuted the Christians, but was, however, the occa- Pliny.
 sion of martyrdom to many even under the best
 emperors. For, as often as an accuser appeared, and
 the person accused of an adherence to Christianity
 confessed the truth of the charge, the only alterna-
 tive then, was apostasy or death, since a magnani-
 mous perseverance in the Christian faith was, accord-
 ing to the edict of TRAJAN, a capital crime. And
 accordingly the venerable and aged SIMEON, son of
 CLEOPAS, and bishop of *Jerusalem*, was by this very
 law, crucified in consequence of an accusation formed
 against him by the Jews [r]. By the same law
 also was the great and pious IGNATIUS bishop of
Antioch, ordered by TRAJAN himself to expire in
 the Roman theatre, exposed to the rapacity of furious
 beasts [s]; for as the law denounced simply death
 to such as were convicted of an attachment to CHRIST,
 the kind of punishment was left by the legislator to
 the choice of the judge.

III. Such of the Christians as could conceal their Persecution
 profession were indeed sheltered under the law of under
 TRAJAN, which was therefore, a disagreeable Adrian.
 restraint upon the Heathen priests, who breathed
 nothing but fury against the disciples of JESUS. The

[q] See PLINY's letters, book x. lett. xcvi. and xcvi. which have been illustrated by many learned men, such as VOSIUS, BÖHMER, BALDWIN, HEUMAN, and others.

[r] EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. xxxii. p. 103.

[s] See the *Acta Martyrii Ignatiani*, published by RUINART, and also in the Collection of the *Apostolic Fathers*.

CENT. office of an accuser was also become dangerous, and
 II. very few were disposed to undertake it, so that the
 PART. I. sacerdotal craft was now inventing new methods to
 oppress the Christians. The law of TRAJAN was, therefore, artfully evaded under the reign of his successor ADRIAN. The populace, set in motion by their priests, demanded of their magistrates, with one voice, during the public games, the destruction of the Christians: and the magistrates, fearing that a sedition might be the consequence of despising or opposing these popular clamours, were too much disposed to indulge them in their request. During these commotions, SERENUS GRANIANUS, proconsul of *Asia*, represented to the emperor how barbarous and unjust it was to sacrifice to the fury of a lawless multitude, persons who had been convicted of no crime. Nor was his wife and equitable remonstrance without effect; for ADRIAN, by an edict issued out to these magistrates, prohibited the putting the Christians to death, unless they were regularly accused and convicted of crimes committed against the laws; and this edict appears to have been a solemn renewal of the law of TRAJAN [*t*]. The moderation of the emperor, in this edict, may, perhaps, have been owing to the admirable *apologies* of QUADRATUS and ARISTIDES, in favour of the Christians, which were every way proper to dispel the angry prejudices of a mind that had any sense of equity and humanity left. But it was not from the Romans alone, that the disciples of CHRIST were to feel oppression: BARCOHEBAS, the fictitious king of the Jews, whom ADRIAN, afterwards defeated, vented against them all his fury, because they refused to join his standards, and second his rebellion [*u*].

[*t*] Compare EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. ix. with BALDUINUS *ad Ediãa Princip. in Christianos*, p. 73.

[*u*] JUSTIN MART. *Apologia secunda*, p. 72. edit. Colon.

IV. The law of ADRIAN, according to its natural sense, seemed to cover the Christians from the fury of their enemies, since it rendered them punishable on no other account than the *commission of crimes*, and since the magistrates refused to interpret their religion as the *crime* mentioned in the imperial edict. Therefore their enemies invented a new method of attacking them, under the reign of ANTONINUS PIUS, even by accusing them of impiety and atheism. This calumny was refuted in an *apology* for the Christians, presented to the emperor by JUSTIN MARTYR, in consequence of which this equitable prince ordered, that all proceedings against them should be regulated by the law of ADRIAN [w]. This, however, was not sufficient to suppress the rage of blood-thirsty persecution; for, some time after this, on occasion of some earthquakes which happened in *Asia*, the people renewed their violence against the Christians, whom they considered as the authors of those calamities, and treated consequently in the most cruel and injurious manner. The emperor, informed of these unjust and barbarous proceedings, addressed an edict to the whole province of *Asia*, in which he denounced capital punishment against such as should, for the future, accuse the Christians, without being able to prove them guilty of any crime [x].

CENT.

II.

PART I.

 The persecution under Antoninus Pius.

[w] EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. cap. xxvi. p. 148.

[x] EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. xiii. p. 136.

☞ It is proper to be observed, that the word *crime*, in several former edicts, had not been sufficiently determined in its signification; so that we find the enemies of the Christians, and even the Roman magistrates, applying this term to the profession of Christianity. But the equitable edict of this good emperor, decided that point on the side of humanity and justice, as appears from the letter he addressed to the province of *Asia*, in favour of the persecuted Christians, and which concludes with the following words: "If any one, for the future, shall molest the Christians, and accuse them merely on account of their religion, let the person thus accused be discharged, though he is found

CENT. V. This worthy prince was succeeded by MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS the philosopher, whom most writers have celebrated beyond measure on account of his extraordinary wisdom and virtue.

II.
PART I.

The persecution under Marcus Antoninus.

It is not, however, in his conduct towards the Christians, that we must look for the reasons of these pompous encomiums; for here, the clemency and justice of that emperor suffer a strange eclipse. He did not, indeed, revoke the edict of ANTONINUS PIUS, or abrogate the laws which the preceding emperors had enacted in favour of the Christians; but he did what was equally pernicious to them. Without examining impartially their cause, he lent an easy and attentive ear to all the most virulent insinuations of their enemies, and more especially to the malignant calumnies of the philosophers, who accused them of the most horrid crimes and the most monstrous impiety, and charged them with renewing the shocking feast of Thyestes, and the incestuous amours of the Theban prince. So that, if we except that of NERO, there was no reign under which the Christians were more injuriously and cruelly treated, than under that of the wise and virtuous MARCUS AURELIUS; and yet there was no reign under which such numerous and victorious *apologies* were published in their behalf. Those which JUSTIN MARTYR, ATHENAGORAS, and TATIAN drew up, upon this occasion, are still extant.

The calamities suffered by the Christians under him.

VI. This emperor issued out against the Christians, whom he regarded as a vain, obstinate, and vicious set of men, edicts [*y*], which, upon the whole, were very unjust; though we do not know, at this distance of time, their particular contents. In consequence of these imperial edicts, the judges and magistrates received the accusations, which even

“to be a Christian, and the accuser be punished according to the rigour of the law.”

[*y*] See MELITO *ap.* EUSEB. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. xxvi. p. 147.

slaves, and the vilest of the perjured rabble, brought against the followers of JESUS. And the Christians were put to the most cruel tortures, and were condemned to meet death in the most barbarous forms, notwithstanding their perfect innocence, and their persevering and solemn denial of the horrid crimes laid to their charge. The imperial edicts were so positive and express against inflicting punishment upon such of the Christians as were guilty of no crime, that the corrupt judges, who, through motives of interest or popularity, desired their destruction, were obliged to suborn false accusers to charge them with actions that might bring them within the reach of the laws. Hence many fell victims to cruel superstition and popular fury, seconded by the corruption of a wicked magistracy, and the connivance of a prince, who, with respect to one set of men, forgot the principles of justice and clemency which directed his conduct towards all others. Among these victims, there were many men of illustrious piety, and some of eminent learning and abilities, such as the holy and venerable POLYCARP, bishop of *Smyrna*, and JUSTIN MARTYR, so deservedly renowned for his erudition and philosophy [z]. Many churches, particularly those of *Lyons* and *Vienne*, were almost entirely destroyed, during this violent persecution, which raged in the year 177, and will be an indelible stain upon the memory of the prince by whose order it was carried on [a].

VII. During the reign of COMMODUS, the Christians suffered very little; no general persecution raged against them; and any cruelties they endured were confined to a small number, who had newly

Their state
under Com-
modus and
Severus.

[z] A full account of their martyrdom is to be found in the valuable work of RUINART, intitled, *Acta Sincera Martyrum*.

[a] See the letter of the Christians at *Lyons*, concerning this persecution, which is to be found in EUSEBIUS's *Ecclesiastical History*, book v. ch. ii. as also in FOX's *Martyrology*, vol. i.

CENT. abandoned the Pagan superstitions [b]. But the
 II. scene changed towards the latter end of this century,
 PART I. when SEVERUS was declared emperor. Then *Asia*,
 ——— *Egypt*, and the other provinces, were dield with the
 blood of martyrs, as appears from the testimonies of
 TERTULLIAN, CLEMENS of *Alexandria*, and other
 writers. Those, therefore, are not to be followed,
 who affirmed, that the Christians suffered nothing
 under SEVERUS before the beginning of the third
 century, which was distinguished by the cruel edicts
 of this emperor against their lives and fortunes. For,
 as the imperial laws against the Christians were not
 abrogated, and the iniquitous edicts of TRAJAN and
 MARCUS ANTONINUS were still in force, there was
 a door, of consequence, open to the fury and injus-
 tice of corrupt magistrates, as often as they were
 pleased to exercise them upon the church. It was
 this series of calamities, under which it groaned
 towards the conclusion of the second century, which
 engaged TERTULLIAN to write his *Apology*, and
 several other books, in defence of the Christians.

The calum-
 nies em-
 ployed to
 render them
 odious.

VIII. It is very easy to account for the sufferings
 and calamities with which the disciples of JESUS
 were loaded, when we consider how they were
 blackened and rendered odious by the railings, the
 calumnies, and libels of the Heathen priests, and the
 other defenders of a corrupt and most abominable
 system of superstition. The injurious imputations,
 the horrid charges of which we took notice above,
 are mentioned by all those who have written in
 defence of the Christians, and ought, indeed, to
 stand always upon record, as a proof both of the
 weakness and wickedness of their adversaries.
 Nothing can be more frivolous and insignificant than
 the objections which the most famous defenders of
 Paganism opposed to the truth of Christianity at

[b] EUSEBIUS's *Hist. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. xxiv. p. 191. cap.
 xvi. p. 183. cap. xviii. p. 186. cap. xix. p. 187.

this time; and such as desire a convincing proof of this assertion, have only to read the arguments of CELSUS on that subject. This philosopher wrote against the Christians during the reign of ADRIAN, and was admirably refuted, in the following century, by ORIGEN, who represents him as an Epicurean (a mistake which has been almost generally followed), whereas it appears, with the utmost probability, that he was a Platonic philosopher of the sect of AMMONIUS [c]. Be that as it will, CELSUS was a trifling caviller, as is manifest from the answer of ORIGEN; nor do his writings against Christianity serve any other purpose, than to shew his malignant and illiberal turn of mind.

FRONTO the rhetorician, and CRESCENS the Cynic philosopher, made also some wretched attempts against Christianity. The efforts of the former are only known by the mention that is made of them by MINUTIUS FELIX [d]; and the enterprizes of the latter were confined to a vehement zeal for the ruin of the Christians, and a virulent persecution of JUSTIN MARTYR, which ended in the cruel death of that eminent saint [e].

☞ [c] The learned Dr. LARDNER does not think it possible, that CELSUS could have been of the sect of AMMONIUS; since the former lived and wrote in the second century, whereas the latter did not flourish before the third. And indeed we learn from ORIGEN himself, that he knew of two only of the name of CELSUS, one who lived in the time of NERO, and the other in the reign of ADRIAN, and afterwards. The latter was the philosopher who wrote against Christianity.

[d] *Othavius*, p. 266. edit. Heraldii.

[e] JUSTIN MART. *Apologia secunda*, p. 21. TATIAN. *Orat. contra Græcos*, p. 72. edit. Worthii.

 PART II.

 The INTERNAL HISTORY of the CHUKCH.

CHAPTER I.

Concerning the state of letters and philosophy during this century.

CENT. II. I. UNDER the reign of TRAJAN, letters and philosophy came forth from the retreat where they had languished during the savage tyranny of his predecessors, and, by the auspicious protection of this excellent prince, were in some measure restored to their former lustre [f]. This happy revolution, in the republic of letters, was, indeed, but of a short duration, as it was not supported by the following emperors, who were, for the most part, averse to literary pursuits. Even MARCUS ANTONINUS, who surpassed them all in learning, gave protection and encouragement to the Stoics alone, and, after the example of that supercilious sect, treated the arts and sciences with indifference and contempt [g]. And here we see the true reason why the writers of this century are, in general, so much inferior to those of the former, in point of elegance and purity, eloquence and taste.

The state of learning.

Learned men.

II. It must be observed, at the same time, that this degeneracy of erudition and taste did not amount to an utter extinction of the one and the other. For, even in this century, there were, both among the Greeks and Romans, men of eminent genius and abilities, who set off, in the most advantageous

[f] PLIN. epist. lib. iii. ep. 18.

[g] In the first book of his meditations, § 7. 17.

manner, the learning of the times in which they lived. Among the learned Grecians, the first place is due to PLUTARCH, a man of vast erudition, whose knowledge was various, but indigested, and whose philosophical taste was corrupted by the sceptical tenets of the academics. There were, likewise, in all the more considerable cities of the Roman empire, rhetoricians, sophists, and grammarians, who, by a variety of learned exercises, seemed zealous in forming the youth to their arts of eloquence and declamation, and in rendering them fit, by their talents and their acquisitions, to be useful to their country. But the instruction acquired in these schools was more specious than solid; and the youth who received their education in them, distinguished themselves at their entrance upon the active stage of life, more by empty declamation, than by true eloquence; more by pompous erudition, than by wisdom and dexterity in the management of public affairs. The consequence of this was, that the rhetoricians and sophists, though agreeable to the corrupt taste of the times, which was incapable, generally speaking, of perceiving the native charms of truth, yet fell into contempt among the prudent and the wise, who held in derision the knowledge and education that were acquired in their auditories. Besides the schools now mentioned, there were two public academies in the empire; the one at *Rome* founded by ADRIAN, in which all the sciences were taught; and the other at *Berytus* in *Phœnicia*, which was principally destined for the education of the youth in the science of law [b].

III. Many philosophers of all the different sects flourished at this time, whose names we think it not necessary to mention [i]. Two, however, there

[b] See the meditations of M. ANTONINUS, book i. § 7. 10.

[i] JUSTIN MART. *Dialog. cum Tryphone*, opp. p. 218, &c. We find also many of these philosophers mentioned in the meditations of the emperor MARC. ANTONINUS.

CENT. were of such remarkable and shining merit, as rendered them real ornaments to the Stoic philosophy, which the meditations of MARCUS ANTONINUS and the manual of EPICURETUS abundantly testify. These two great men had more admirers than disciples and followers; for, in this century, the Stoical sect was not in the highest esteem, as the rigour and austerity of its doctrine were, by no means, suited to the dissolute manners of the times. The Platonic schools were more frequented for several reasons, and particularly for these two, that their moral precepts were less rigorous and severe than those of the Stoics, and their doctrines more conformable to, or, rather, less incompatible with, the common opinions concerning the gods. But of all the philosophers, the Epicureans enjoyed the greatest reputation, and had undoubtedly the greatest number of followers, because their opinions tended to encourage the indolent security of a voluptuous and effeminate life, and to banish the remorse and terrors that haunt vice, and naturally incommode the wicked in their sensual pursuits [k].

IV. Towards the conclusion of this century, a new sect of philosophers arose of a sudden, spread with amazing rapidity throughout the greatest part of the Roman empire, swallowed up almost all the other sects, and was extremely detrimental to the cause of Christianity. *Alexandria in Egypt*, which had been, for a long time, the seat of learning, and, as it were, the centre of all the liberal arts and sciences, gave birth to this new philosophy. Its votaries chose to be called Platonics; though, far from adhering to all the tenets of PLATO, they collected, from the different sects, such doctrines as they thought conformable to truth, and formed thereof one general system. The reason then, why they distinguished themselves by the title of

The rise of
the new
Platonics in
Egypt.

[k] LUCIAN *Pseudomant.* p. 763. tom. i. opp.

Platonics, was, that they thought the sentiments CENT.
of PLATO, concerning that most noble part of II.
philosophy, which has the Deity, and things invisible, PART II.
for its objects, much more rational and sublime than
those of the other philosophers.

V. What gave to this new philosophy a superior
air of reason and dignity, was, the unprejudiced
spirit of candour and impartiality on which it seemed
to be founded. This recommended it particularly
to those real sages, whose inquiries were accompanied
with wisdom and moderation, and who were
sick of those arrogant and contentious sects, which
required an invariable attachment to their particular
systems. And, indeed, nothing could have a more
engaging aspect than a set of men, who, abandoning
all cavil, and all prejudices in favour of any party,
professed searching after the truth alone, and were
ready to adopt, from all the different systems and
sects, such tenets as they thought agreeable to it.
From hence also they were called Eclectics. It is, Called also
however, to be observed, as we hinted in the former Eclectics.
section, that though these philosophers were
attached to no particular sect, yet they preferred, as
appears from a variety of testimonies, the sublime
PLATO to all other sages, and approved of the most
of his opinions concerning the Deity, the universe,
and the human soul.

VI. This new species of Platonism was embraced Their disci-
by such of the Alexandrian Christians as were desir- pline ap-
ous to retain, with the profession of the gospel, the proved by
title, the dignity, and the habit, of philosophers. It the Chris-
is also said to have had the particular approbation of tians.
ATHENAGORAS, PANTÆNUS, CLEMENS the
Alexandrian, and all those who, in this century, were
charged with the care of the public school [1], which

[1] The title and dignity of philosophers delighted so much
these honest men, that, though they were advanced in the church
to the rank of presbyters, they would not abandon the philoso-
pher's cloak. See ORIGEN, *Epist. ad Eusebium*, tom. i. opp.
p. 2. edit. de la Rue.

CENT. the Christians had at *Alexandria*. These sages were
 II. of opinion, that *true philosophy*, the greatest and
 PART II. most salutary gift of God to mortals, was scattered
 in various portions through all the different sects ;
 and that it was, consequently, the duty of every wise
 man, and more especially of every Christian doctor,
 to gather it from the several corners, where it lay
 dispersed, and to employ it, thus re-united, in the
 defence of religion, and in destroying the dominion
 of impiety and vice. The Christian Ecclesiastics had
 this also in common with the others, that they
 preferred PLATO to the other philosophers, and
 looked upon his opinions concerning God, the
 human soul, and things invisible, as conformable to
 the spirit and genius of the Christian doctrine.

The new
 method of
 teaching
 philosophy
 introduced
 by Ammo-
 nius Saccas.

VII. This philosophical system underwent some
 changes, when AMMONIUS SACCAS, who taught,
 with the highest applause, in the Alexandrian school,
 about the conclusion of this century, laid the foun-
 dations of that sect which was distinguished by the
 name of the New Platonics. This learned man was
 born of Christian parents, and never, perhaps, gave
 up entirely the outward profession of that divine
 religion in which he had been educated [m]. As

☞ [m] PORPHYRY, in his third book against the Christians,
 maintains, that AMMONIUS deserted the Christian religion, and
 went over to Paganism as soon as he came to that time of life,
 when the mind is capable of making a wise and judicious choice.
 EUSEBIUS, on the other hand, denies this assertion ; maintains,
 that AMMONIUS persevered constantly in the profession of Chris-
 tianity, and is followed, in this opinion, by VALESIUS, BAYLE,
 BASNAGE, and others. The learned FABRICIUS is of opinion,
 that EUSEBIUS confounded together two persons, who bore the
 name of AMMONIUS, one of whom was a Christian writer, and
 the other a Heathen philosopher. See FABRIC. *Biblioth. Græca*,
 lib. iv. cap. xxvi. p. 159. The truth of the matter seems to have
 been, that AMMONIUS SACCAS was a Christian, who adopted with
 such dexterity the doctrines of the Pagan philosophy, as to appear
 a Christian to the Christians, and a Pagan to the Pagans. See
 BRUCKET'S *Historia Critica Philosophiæ*, vol. ii. and iii. Since
 the first edition of this work was published, the learned Dr. LARD-
 NER has maintained, not without a certain degree of asperity,

his genius was vast and comprehensive, so were his CENT. projects bold and singular. For he attempted a II. general reconciliation or coalition of all sects, whether PART II. philosophical or religious, and taught a doctrine, which he looked upon as proper to unite them all, the Christians not excepted, in the most perfect harmony. And herein lies the difference between this new sect and the Eclectics, who had, before this time, flourished in *Egypt*. The Eclectics held, that in every sect there was a mixture of good and bad, of truth and falsehood, and accordingly they chose and adopted out of each of them, such tenets as seemed to them conformable to reason and truth, and rejected such as they thought repugnant to both. AMMONIUS, on the contrary, maintained, that the great principles of all philosophical and religious truth

which is unusual in his valuable writings, the opinion of FABRICIUS, against EUSEBIUS, and particularly against Dr. MOSHEIM. See his *Collection of Heathen and Jewish Testimonies*, vol. iii. p. 195, &c. Dr. MOSHEIM was once of the same opinion with FABRICIUS, and he maintained it in a dissertation *De ecclesiæ turbata per recentiores Platonicos*; but he afterwards saw reason to change his mind. These reasons may be seen in his book *De rebus Christianorum ante Const. Mag.* p. 281, &c. They indeed weigh little with Dr. LARDNER, who however opposes nothing to them but mere assertions, unsupported by the smallest glimpse of evidence. For the letter of ORIGEN he quotes from EUSEBIUS, is so far from proving that AMMONIUS was merely a Heathen philosopher, and not a Christian, that it would not be sufficient to demonstrate that there was ever such a person as AMMONIUS in the world; since he is not so much as named in that letter. But, allowing with VALESIIUS that it is AMMONIUS whom ORIGEN has in view, when he talks of the philosophical master from whom he and HERACLAS received instruction, it seems very whimsical to conclude from thence, that AMMONIUS was no Christian. The coalition between Platonism and Christianity, in the second and third centuries, is a fact too fully proved to be rendered dubious by mere affirmations. The notion therefore of two persons bearing the name of AMMONIUS, the one a Heathen philosopher, and the other a Christian writer, of which Dr. LARDNER seems so fond, rests upon little more than an hypothesis formed to remove an imaginary difficulty.

CENT. were to be found, equally, in all sects ; that they
 II. differed from each other, only in their method of
 PART II. expressing them, and in some opinions of little or no
 importance ; and that, by a proper interpretation
 of their respective sentiments, they might easily be
 united into one body. It is further to be observed,
 that the propensity of AMMONIUS to singularity and
 paradox, led him to maintain, that all the Gentile
 religions, and even the Christian, were to be illus-
 trated and explained by the principles of this uni-
 versal philosophy ; but that, in order to this, the
 fables of the priests were to be removed from
 Paganism, and the comments and interpretations of
 the disciples of JESUS from Christianity.

The princi-
 ples of the
 Ammonian
 or Eclectic
 philosophy. VIII. This arduous design, which AMMONIUS
 had formed of bringing about a coalition of all the
 various philosophical sects, and all the different
 systems of religion, that prevailed in the world,
 required many difficult and disagreeable things in
 order to its execution. Every particular sect and
 religion must have several of its doctrines curtailed
 or distorted, before it could enter into the general
 mass. The tenets of the philosophers, the super-
 stitions of the Heathen priests, the solemn doctrines
 of Christianity, were all to suffer in this cause, and
 forced allegories were to be subtly employed in
 removing the difficulties with which it was attended.
 How this vast project was effected by AMMONIUS,
 the writings of his disciples and followers, that yet
 remain, abundantly testify. In order to the accom-
 plishing his purpose, he supposed, that true philo-
 sophy derived its origin and its consistence from the
 eastern nations ; that it was taught to the Egyptians
 by HERMES ; that it was brought from them to
 the Greeks, by whose vain subtilties, and litigious
 disputes, it was rendered somewhat obscure and
 deformed ; but was, however, preserved in its
 original purity by PLATO, who was the best inter-
 preter of HERMES, and of the other oriental sages.

He maintained, that all the different religions that prevailed in the world, were, in their original integrity, conformable to the genius of this ancient philosophy; but that it unfortunately happened, that the symbols and fictions, under which, according to the eastern manner, the ancients delivered their precepts and their doctrines, were, in process of time, erroneously understood both by priests and people in a literal sense; that, in consequence of this, the invisible beings and demons, whom the Supreme Deity had placed in the different parts of the universe as the ministers of his providence, were, by the suggestions of superstition, converted into gods, and worshipped with a multiplicity of vain ceremonies. He therefore insisted, that all the religions of all nations should be restored to their original purity, and reduced to their primitive standard, *viz.* “The ancient philosophy of the east;” and he affirmed, that this his project was agreeable to the intentions of JESUS CHRIST, whose sole view, in descending upon earth, was, to set bounds to the reigning superstition, to remove the errors that had crept into the religions of all nations, but not to abolish the ancient theology from whence they were derived.

IX. Taking these principles for granted, AMMONIUS adopted the doctrines which were received in *Egypt*, the place of his birth and education, concerning the *universe* and the *Deity* considered as constituting one great WHOLE; as also concerning the *eternity of the world*, the *nature of souls*, the *empire of providence*, and the *government of this world by demons*. For it is most evident, that the Egyptian philosophy, which was said to be derived from HERMES, was the basis of that of AMMONIUS; or, as it is otherwise called, of *modern Platonism*; and the book of JAMBlichus, concerning the *mysteries of the Egyptians*, puts the matter beyond dispute. AMMONIUS, therefore, associated the sentiments of the Egyptians with the doctrines of PLATO, which was easily done

CENT. by adulterating some of the opinions of the latter,
 II. and forcing his expressions from their obvious and
 PART II. natural sense. And, to finish this conciliatory scheme,
 ————— he so interpreted the doctrines of the other philo-
 sophical and religious sects, by the violent succours of
 art, invention, and allegory, that they seemed, at
 length, to bear some resemblance of the Egyptian
 and Platonic systems.

The moral
 discipline of
 Ammonius.

X. To this monstrous coalition of heterogeneous
 doctrines, its fanatical author added a rule of life
 and manners, which carried an aspect of high sanctity
 and uncommon austerity. He, indeed, permitted
 the people to live according to the laws of their
 country, and the dictates of nature; but a more
 sublime rule was laid down for the wise. They were
 to raise above all terrestrial things, by the towering
 efforts of holy contemplation, those souls whose
 origin was celestial and divine. They were ordered
 to extenuate, by hunger, thirst, and other mortifi-
 cations, the sluggish body, which confines the activity,
 and restrains the liberty, of the immortal spirit; that
 thus, in this life, they might enjoy communion with
 the Supreme Being, and ascend after death, active
 and unincumbered, to the universal Parent, to live in
 his presence for ever. As AMMONIUS was born
 and educated among the Christians, he set off, and
 even gave an air of authority, to these injunctions,
 by expressing them partly in terms borrowed from
 the sacred Scriptures, of which we find a vast num-
 ber of citations, also, in the writings of his disciples.
 To this austere discipline, he added the pretended art
 of so purging and refining that faculty of the mind,
 which receives the images of things, as to render
 it capable of perceiving the demons, and of per-
 forming many marvellous things by their assistance.
 This art, which the disciples of AMMONIUS called
theurgy, was not, however, communicated to all the
 schools of this fanatical philosopher, but only to those
 of the first rank.

XI. The extravagant attempts of AMMONIUS CENT. II. did not cease here. To reconcile the popular religions of different countries, and particularly the Christian, with this new system, he fell upon the following inventions: *1st*, He turned into a mere allegory the whole history of the gods, and maintained that those beings, whom the priests and people dignified with this title, were no more than celestial ministers, to whom a certain kind of worship was due; but a worship inferior to that which was to be reserved for the Supreme Deity. *2^{dly}*, He acknowledged CHRIST to be a most excellent man, the friend of God, the admirable *theurge*; he denied, however, that JESUS designed to abolish entirely the worship of demons, and of the other ministers of divine Providence; and affirmed, on the contrary, that his only intention was to purify the ancient religion, and that his followers had manifestly corrupted the doctrine of their divine master [n].

II.
PART II.
His opinions concerning GOD and CHRIST.

XII. This new species of philosophy, imprudently adopted by ORIGEN and many other Christians, was extremely prejudicial to the cause of the gospel, and to the beautiful simplicity of its celestial doctrines. For hence it was, that the Christian doctors began to introduce their subtle and obscure erudition into the religion of JESUS, to involve in the darkness of a vain philosophy, some of the principal truths of Christianity, that had been revealed

The pernicious effects of this philosophy.

[n] What we have here mentioned concerning the doctrines and opinions of AMMONIUS, is gathered from the writings and disputations of his disciples, who are known by the name of the Modern Platonics. This philosopher has left nothing in writing behind him; nay, he imposed a law upon his disciples not to divulge his doctrines among the multitude, which law, however, they made no scruple to neglect and violate. See PORPHYR. *Vit. Plotini*, cap. iii. p. 97. edit. Fabricii, lib. iv. *Biblioth. Græca*. At the same time there is no sort of doubt, but that all these inventions belong properly to AMMONIUS, whom all the latter Platonics acknowledge as the founder of their sect, and the author of their philosophy.

CENT. with the utmost plainness, and were indeed obvious
 II. to the meanest capacity, and to add, to the divine
 PART II. precepts of our Lord, many of their own, which
 had no sort of foundation in any part of the sacred
 writings. From the same source arose that melan-
 choly set of men, who have been distinguished by
 the name of Mystics, whose system, when separated
 from the Platonic doctrine concerning the nature
 and origin of the soul, is but a lifeless mass, without
 any vigour, form, or consistence. Nor did the evils,
 which sprung from this Ammonian philosophy, end
 here. For, under the specious pretext of the neces-
 sity of contemplation, it gave occasion to that sloth-
 ful and indolent course of life, which continues to
 be led by myriads of monks retired in cells, and
 sequestered from society, to which they are neither
 useful by their instructions, nor by their examples.
 To this philosophy we may trace as to their source,
 a multitude of vain and foolish ceremonies, proper
 only to cast a veil over truth, and to nourish super-
 stition; and which are, for the most part, religiously
 observed by many, even in the times in which we
 live. It would be endless to enumerate all the
 pernicious consequences that may be justly attri-
 buted to this new philosophy, or rather to this
 monstrous attempt to reconcile falsehood with truth,
 and light with darkness. Some of its most fatal
 effects were, its alienating the minds of many, in the
 following ages, from the Christian religion; and its
 substituting, in the place of the pure and sublime
 simplicity of the gospel, an unseemly mixture of
 Platonism and Christianity.

The state of
 learning
 among
 Christians. XIII. The number of learned men among the
 Christians, which was very small in the preceding
 century, grew considerably in this. Among these
 there were few rhetoricians, sophists, or orators.
 The most part were philosophers attached to the
 Eclectic system, though they were not all of the same
 sentiments concerning the utility of letters and

philosophy. Those, who were themselves initiated CENT.
 into the depths of philosophy, were desirous that II.
 others, particularly such as aspired to the offices of PART. II.
 bishops or doctors, should apply themselves to the
 study of human wisdom, in order to their being
 the better qualified for defending the truth with
 vigour, and instructing the ignorant with success.
 Others were of a quite different way of thinking
 upon this subject, and were for banishing all argu-
 mentation and philosophy from the limits of the
 church, from a notion that erudition might prove
 detrimental to the true spirit of religion. Hence the
 early beginnings of that unhappy contest between
faith and *reason*, *religion* and *philosophy*, *piety* and
genius, which increased in the succeeding ages, and
 is prolonged even to our times with a violence, that
 renders it extremely difficult to be brought to a
 conclusion. Those, who maintained that learning
 and philosophy were rather advantageous, than
 detrimental, to the cause of religion, gained, by
 degrees, the ascendant; and, in consequence thereof,
 laws were enacted, which excluded the ignorant
 and illiterate from the office of public teachers.
 The opposite side of the question was not, however,
 without defenders; and the defects and vices of
 learned men and philosophers contributed much to
 increase their number, as will appear in the progress
 of this history.

CHAPTER II.

Concerning the doctors and ministers of the church, and the form of its government.

CENT.

II.

PART II.

The form of church government.

I. THE form of ecclesiastical government, whose commencement we have seen in the last century, was brought in this, to a greater degree of stability and consistence. One inspector, or *bishop*, presided over each Christian assembly, to which office he was elected by the voices of the whole people. In this post he was to be watchful and provident, attentive to the wants of the church, and careful to supply them. To assist him in this laborious province, he formed a council of *presbyters*, which was not confined to any fixed number; and to each of these he distributed his task, and appointed a station, in which he was to promote the interests of the church. To the bishops and presbyters the ministers, or *deacons*, were subject; and the latter were divided into a variety of classes, as the different exigencies of the church required.

Association of the provincial churches.

II. During a great part of this century, the Christian churches were independent on each other; nor were they joined together by association, confederacy, or any other bonds but those of charity. Each Christian assembly was a little state, governed by its own laws, which were either enacted, or, at least, approved by the society. But, in process of time, all the Christian churches of a province were formed into one large ecclesiastical body, which, like confederate states, assembled at certain times, in order to deliberate about the common interests of the whole. This institution had its origin among the Greeks, with whom nothing was more common than this confederacy of independent states, and the regular assemblies which met, in consequence thereof,

at fixed times, and were composed of the deputies CENT.
of each respective state. But these ecclesiastical II.
associations were not long confined to the Greeks; PART II.
their great utility was no sooner perceived, than
they became universal, and were formed in all places
where the gospel had been planted [o]. To these Origin of
assemblies, in which the deputies or commissioners of councils.
several churches consulted together, the name of
synods was appropriated by the Greeks, and that of
councils by the Latins; and the laws that were
enacted, in these general meetings, were called
canons, i. e. *rules*.

III. These *councils*, of which we find not the The autho-
smallest trace before the middle of this century, riety of the
changed the whole face of the church, and gave it bishops aug-
a new form; for by them the ancient privileges of mented by
the people were considerably diminished, and the these coun-
power and authority of the bishops greatly aug- cils.
mented. The humility, indeed, and prudence of these
pious prelates prevented their assuming all at once
the power with which they were afterwards invested.
At their first appearance in these general councils,
they acknowledged that they were no more than the
delegates of their respective churches, and that they
acted in the name, and by the appointment, of their
people. But they soon changed this humble tone,
imperceptibly extended the limits of their authority,
turned their influence into dominion, and their coun-
sels into laws; and openly asserted, at length, that
CHRIST had empowered them to prescribe to his
people *authoritative rules of faith and manners*.
Another effect of these councils was, the gradual
abolition of that perfect equality, which reigned
among all bishops in the primitive times. For the
order and decency of these assemblies required, that
some one of the provincial bishops met in council,
should be invested with a superior degree of power

[o] TERTULLIAN, *Lib. de Jejuniis*, cap. xiii. p. 711.

CENT. and authority; and hence the rights of Metro-
 II. politans derive their origin. In the mean time, the
 PART II. bounds of the church were enlarged, the custom of
 holding councils was followed wherever the sound
 of the gospel had reached; and the universal church
 had now the appearance of one vast republic, formed
 by a combination of a great number of little states.
 This occasioned the creation of a new order of
 ecclesiastics, who were appointed, in different parts
 of the world, as heads of the church, and whose
 office it was to preserve the consistence and union of
 that immense body, whose members were so widely
 dispersed throughout the nations. Such was the
 nature and office of the *patriarchs*, among whom, at
 length, ambition, being arrived at its most insolent
 period, formed a new dignity, investing the bishop
 of *Rome*, and his successors, with the title and autho-
 rity of prince of the patriarchs.

Metropoli-
 tans.

An artful
 parallel
 drawn be-
 tween the
 Christian
 and the
 Jewish
 priesthood.

IV. The Christian doctors had the good fortune
 to persuade the people, that the ministers of the
 Christian church succeeded to the character, rights,
 and privileges, of the Jewish priesthood; and this
 persuasion was a new source both of honours and
 profit to the sacred order. This notion was propa-
 gated with industry some time after the reign of
 ADRIAN, when the second destruction of *Jerusalem*
 had extinguished among the Jews all hopes of seeing
 their government restored to its former lustre, and
 their country arising out of ruins. And, accord-
 ingly, the *bishops* considered themselves as invested
 with a rank and character similar to those of the
high-priest among the Jews, while the *presbyters*
 represented the priests, and the *deacons* the *Levites*.
 It is, indeed, highly probable, that they, who first
 introduced this absurd comparison of offices so
 entirely distinct, did it rather through ignorance and
 error, than through artifice or design. The notion,
 however, once introduced, produced its natural
 effects; and these effects were pernicious. The

errors to which it gave rise were many; and one of its immediate consequences was, the establishing a greater difference between the Christian pastors and their flock, than the genius of the gospel seems to admit.

V. From the government of the church, let us turn our eyes to those who maintained its cause by their learned and judicious writings. Among these was JUSTIN, a man of eminent piety and considerable learning, who, from a Pagan philosopher, became a Christian martyr. He had frequented all the different sects of philosophy, in an ardent and impartial pursuit of truth; and finding, neither among Stoics nor Peripatetics, neither in the Pythagorean nor platonic schools, any satisfactory account of the perfections of the Supreme Being, and the nature and destination of the human soul, he embraced Christianity on account of the light which it cast upon these interesting subjects. We have yet remaining his two *apologies* in behalf of the Christians, which are most deservedly held in high esteem; notwithstanding that, in some passages of them, he shews himself an unwary disputer, and betrays a want of acquaintance with ancient history.

IRENÆUS, bishop of *Lyons*, a Greek by birth, and probably born of Christian parents, a disciple also of POLYCARP, by whom he was sent to preach the gospel among the Gauls, is another of the writers of this century, whose labours were singularly useful to the church. He turned his pen against its internal and domestic enemies, by attacking the monstrous errors which were adopted by many of the primitive Christians, as appears by his *five books against heresies*, which are yet preserved in a Latin translation [p], and are considered as

[p] The first book is yet extant in the original Greek; of the rest, we have only a Latin version, through the barbarity of which, though excessive, it is easy to discern the eloquence and erudition that reign throughout the original. See *Hist. Litteraire de la France*.

CENT. one of the 'most precious monuments of ancient
II. erudition.

PART II. ATHENAGORAS also deserves a place among the
estimable-writers of this age. He was a philoso-
pher of no mean reputation, and his *apology* for the
Christians, as well as his *treatise upon the resurrection*,
afford striking proofs of his learning and genius.

The works of THEOPHILUS, bishop of *Antioch*,
are more remarkable for their erudition, than for
their order and method; this, at least, is true of
his *three books in defence of Christianity*, addressed to
AUTOLYCUS [q]. But the most illustrious writer
of this century, and the most justly renowned for
his various erudition, and his perfect acquaintance
with the ancient sages, was CLEMENS, the disciple
of PANTÆNUS, and the head of the Alexandrian
school, destined for the instruction of the catechu-
mens. His *Stromata Pedagogue*, and *Exhortation*,
addressed to the Greeks, which are yet extant,
abundantly shew the extent of his learning, and the
force of his genius; though he is neither to be
admired for the precision of his ideas, nor for the
perspicuity of his style. It is also to be lamented,
that his excessive attachment to the reigning philo-
sophy led him into a variety of pernicious errors.

Hitherto we have made no mention of the Latin
writers, who employed their pens in the Christian
cause. And, indeed, the only one of any note, we
find in this century, is TERTULLIAN, by birth a
Carthaginian, who, having first embraced the pro-
fession of the law, became afterwards a presbyter of
the church, and concluded by adopting the heretical

☞ [q] THEOPHILUS was the author of several works,
beside those mentioned by Dr. MOSHEIM, particularly of a *com-
mentary upon the Proverbs*, another upon the *Four Evangelists*,
and of several short and pathetic discourses, which he published
from time to time, for the use of his flock. He also wrote
against MARCION and HERMOGENES, and, refuting the errors
of these heretics, he quotes several passages of the *Revelations*.

visions of MONTANUS. He was a man of extensive learning, of a fine genius, and highly admired for his elocution in the Latin tongue. We have several works of his yet remaining, which were designed to explain and defend the truth, and to nourish pious affections in the hearts of Christians. There was, indeed, such a mixture in the qualities of this man, that it is difficult to fix his real character, and to determine which of the two were predominant, his *virtues*, or his *defects*. He was endowed with a great genius, but seemed deficient in point of judgment. His piety was warm and vigorous, but, at the same time, melancholy and austere. His learning was extensive and profound; and yet his credulity and superstition were such as might have been expected from the darkest ignorance. And with respect to his reasonings, they had more of that subtilty that dazzles the imagination, than of that solidity that brings light and conviction to the mind [r].

[r] It is proper to point out to such as are desirous of a more particular account of the works, as also of the excellencies and defects of these ancient writers, the authors who have professedly written concerning them, and the principal are those who follow: JO. ALB. FABRICIUS, in *Biblioth. Græc. et Latin.* CAVE, *Hist. Litter. Scriptor Eccl.* DU PIN et CELLIER, *Biblioth. des Auteurs Ecclesiastiques.*

CHAPTER III.

Concerning the doctrine of the Christian church, in this century.

CENT. II. I. THE Christian system, as it was hitherto taught, preserved its native and beautiful simplicity, and was comprehended in a small number of articles. The public teachers inculcated no other doctrines, than those that are contained in, what is commonly called, the *Apostles' Creed*: and, in the method of illustrating them, all vain subtilties, all mysterious researches, every thing that was beyond the reach of common capacities, were carefully avoided. This will by no means appear surprising to those who consider, that, at this time, there was not the least controversy about those capital doctrines of Christianity, which were afterwards so keenly debated in the church; and who reflect, that the bishops of these primitive times were, for the most part, plain and illiterate men, remarkable rather for their piety and zeal, than for their learning and eloquence.

Altered by degrees. II. This venerable simplicity was not, indeed, of a long duration; its beauty was gradually effaced by the laborious efforts of human learning, and the dark subtilties of imaginary science. Acute researches were employed upon several religious subjects, concerning which ingenious decisions were pronounced; and, what was worst of all, several tenets of a chimerical philosophy were imprudently incorporated into the Christian system. This disadvantageous change, this unhappy alteration of the primitive simplicity of the Christian religion, was chiefly owing to two reasons; the one drawn from pride, and the other from a sort of necessity. The former was the eagerness of certain learned men, to bring about a union between the doctrines of Christianity,

The simplicity of primitive Christianity,

and the opinions of the philosophers; for they CENT. thought it a very fine accomplishment, to be able to II. express the precepts of CHRIST in the language of PART II. *philosophers, civilians, and rabbins.* The other reason that contributed to alter the simplicity of the Christian religion, was, the necessity of having recourse to logical definitions and nice distinctions, in order to confound the sophistical arguments which the infidel and the heretic employed, the one to overturn the Christian system, and the other to corrupt it. ☞ These philosophical arms, in the hands of the judicious and wise, were both honourable and useful to religion; but when they came to be handled by every ignorant and self-sufficient meddler, as was afterwards the case, they produced nothing but perplexity and confusion, under which genuine Christianity almost disappeared.

III. Many examples might be alleged, which This proved verify the observations we have now been making; by an and, if the reader is desirous of a striking one, he example. has only to take a view of the doctrines which began to be taught in this century, concerning the state of the soul after the dissolution of the body. JESUS and his disciples had simply declared, that the souls of good men were, at their departure from their bodies, to be received into heaven, while those of the wicked were to be sent to hell; and this was sufficient for the first disciples of CHRIST to know, as they had more piety than curiosity, and were satisfied with the knowledge of this solemn fact, without any inclination to penetrate its *manner*, or to pry into its secret reasons. But this plain doctrine was soon disguised, when Platonism began to infect Christianity. PLATO had taught, that the souls of heroes, of illustrious men, and eminent philosophers alone, ascended, after death, into the mansions of light and felicity; while those of the generality, weighed down by their lusts and passions, sunk into the infernal regions, from whence they were not

CENT. permitted to emerge, before they were purified from
 II. their turpitude and corruption [s]. This doctrine
 PART II. was seized with avidity by the Platonic Christians,
 and applied as a commentary upon that of JESUS.
 Hence a notion prevailed, that the *martyrs* only
 entered upon a state of happiness immediately after
 death, and that, for the rest, a certain obscure
 region was assigned, in which they were to be impris-
 oned until the second coming of CHRIST, or, at
 least, until they were purified from their various
 pollutions. This doctrine, enlarged and improved
 upon by the irregular fancies of injudicious men,
 became a source of innumerable errors, vain cere-
 monies, and monstrous superstitions.

Zeal for the
 holy Scrip-
 tures.

IV. But, however the doctrines of the gospel
 may have been abused by the commentaries and
 interpretations of different sects, yet all were unani-
 mous in regarding with veneration the holy Scrip-
 tures, as the great rule of faith and manners; and
 hence that laudable and pious zeal of adapting them
 to general use. We have mentioned already the
 translations that were made of them into different
 languages, and it will not be improper to say some-
 thing here concerning those who employed their useful
 labours in explaining and interpreting them. PAN-
 TÆNUS, the head of the Alexandrian school, was
 probably the first, who enriched the church with a
 version of the sacred writings, which has been lost
 among the ruins of time. The same fate attended
 the *commentary* of CLEMENS the Alexandrian, upon
 the *canonical epistles*; and also another celebrated
 work [t] of the same author, in which he is said to
 have explained, in a compendious manner, almost
 all the sacred writings. The *harmony of the Evan-*

[s] See an ample account of the opinions of the Platonics,
 and other ancient philosophers, upon this subject, in the notes
 which Dr. MOSHEIM has added to his Latin translation of
 CUDWORTH'S *Intellectual System*, tom. ii. p. 1036.

[t] VIZ. CLEMENTIS *Hypotyposes*.

gelsists, composed by TATIAN, is yet extant. But CENT.
 the *exposition of the Revelations*, by JUSTIN MARTYR, II.
 and of the *four gospels* by THEOPHILUS bishop of PART II.
Antioch, together with several illustrations of the
 Mosaic history of the creation by other ancient
 writers, are all lost.

V. The loss of these ancient productions is the The defects
 less to be regretted, as we know, with certainty, of the ancient
 their vast inferiority to the expositions of the holy interpreters.
 Scriptures that appeared in succeeding times. Among
 the persons already mentioned, there was none who
 deserved the name of an eminent and judicious inter-
 preter of the sacred text. They all attributed a *double*
sense to the words of scripture; the one *obvious* and
 literal, the other *hidden* and mysterious, which lay
 concealed, as it were, under the veil of the outward
 letter. The former they treated with the utmost
 neglect, and turned the whole force of their genius
 and application to unfold the latter: or, in other
 words, they were more studious to darken the holy
 Scriptures with their idle fictions, than to investigate
 their true and natural sense. Some of them also
 forced the expressions of sacred writ out of their
 obvious meaning, in order to apply them to the
 support of their philosophical systems; of which
 dangerous and pernicious attempts, CLEMENS of
Alexandria is said to have given the first example.
 With respect to the expositors of the Old Testament
 in this century, we shall only make this general
 remark, that their excessive veneration for the
 Alexandrian version, commonly called the Septuagint,
 which they regarded almost as of divine authority,
 confined their views, fettered, as it were, their critical
 spirit, and hindered them from producing any thing
 excellent in the way of sacred criticism or interpre-
 tation.

VI. If this age was not very fertile in sacred of systematic
 critics, it was still less so in expositors of the doctrinal divinity.
 parts of religion; for hitherto there was no attempt

CENT. made, at least that is come to our knowledge, of
 II. composing a *system*, or complete view of the Christian
 PART II. doctrine. Some treatises of ARABIAN, relative to
 this subject, are indeed mentioned; but as they
 are lost, and seem not to have been much known
 by any of the writers whose works have survived
 them, we can form no conclusion concerning
 them. The books of PAPIAS, concerning the *sayings*
of CHRIST and his apostles, were, according to the
 accounts which EUSEBIUS gives of them, rather
 an historical commentary, than a theological system.
 MELITO, bishop of *Sardis*, is said to have written
 several treatises, one concerning *faith*, another on
 the *creation*, a third concerning the *church*, and a
 fourth concerning *truth*; but it does not appear
 from the titles of these writings, whether they were
 of a doctrinal or controversial nature [*u*]. Several
 of the polemic writers, indeed, have been naturally
 led, in the course of controversy, to explain amply
 certain points of religion. But those doctrines,
 which have not been disputed, are very rarely defined
 with such accuracy, by the ancient writers, as to point
 out to us clearly what their opinions concerning them
 were. And from hence it ought not to appear
 surprising, that all the different sects of Christians,
 pretend to find, in the writings of the fathers,
 decisions favourable to their respective tenets.

The contro-
 versial writ-
 ters.

VII. The controversial writers, who shone in this
 century, had three different sorts of adversaries to
 combat; the Jews, the pagans, and those, who,
 in the bosom of Christianity, corrupted its doctrines,
 and produced various sects and divisions in the

☞ [*u*] MELITO, besides his *apology* for the Christians, and
 the treatises mentioned by Dr. MOSHEIM here, wrote a discourse
 upon Easter, and several other dissertations, of which we have only
 some scattered fragments remaining; but what is worthy of remark
 here, is, that he is the first Christian writer that has given us a
 catalogue of the books of the Old Testament. His catalogue
 also is perfectly conformable to that of the Jews, except in this
 point only, that he has omitted in it the book of *Esther*.

church. JUSTIN MARTYR, and TERTULLIAN, CENT. II. embarked in a controversy with the Jews, which it was not possible for them to manage with the highest success and dexterity, as they were very little acquainted with the language, the history, and the learning of the Hebrews, and wrote with more levity and inaccuracy, than was justifiable on such a subject. Of those who managed the cause of Christianity against the Pagans, some performed this important task by composing *apologies* for the Christians; and others by addressing pathetic exhortations to the Gentiles. Among the former were ATHENAGORAS, MELITO, QUADRATUS, MILTIADES, ARISTIDES, TATIAN, and JUSTIN MARTYR; and among the latter, TERTULLIAN, CLEMENS, JUSTIN, and THEOPHILUS bishop of *Antioch*. All these writers attacked, with judgment, dexterity, and success, the Pagan superstition, and also defended the Christians, in a victorious manner, against all the calumnies and aspersions of their enemies. But they did not succeed so well in unfolding the true nature and genius of Christianity, nor were the arguments they made use of to demonstrate its truth and divinity so full of energy, so striking and irresistible, as those by which they overturned the Pagan system. In a word, both their explication and defence of many of the doctrines of Christianity are defective and unsatisfactory in several respects. As to those who directed their polemic efforts against the heretics, their number was prodigious, though few of their writings have come down to our times. IRENÆUS refuted the whole tribe, in a work destined solely for that purpose. CLEMENS [*w*], TERTULLIAN [*x*], and JUSTIN MARTYR, wrote also against all the sectaries; but the work of the last, upon that subject, is not extant. It would be endless to mention those

[*w*] In his work, entitled, *Stromata*.

[*x*] In his *Præscriptiones adversus hæreticos*.

CENT. who combated particular errors, of whose writings,
 II. also, many have disappeared amidst the decays of
 PART II. time, and the revolutions that have happened in the
 republic of letters.

Good and
 bad qualities
 of the ancient dispu-
 tants

VIII. If the primitive defenders of Christianity were not always happy in the choice of their arguments, yet they discovered more candour and probity than those of the following ages. The artifice of sophistry, and the habit of employing pious frauds in support of the truth, had not, as yet, infected the Christians. And this indeed, is all that can be said in their behalf; for they are worthy of little admiration on account of the accuracy or depth of their reasonings. The most of them appear to have been destitute of penetration, learning, order, application, and force. They frequently make use of arguments void of all solidity, and much more proper to dazzle the fancy, than to enlighten and convince the mind. One, laying aside the sacred writings, from whence all the weapons of religious controversy ought to be drawn, refers to the decisions of those bishops who ruled the apostolic churches. Another thinks, that the antiquity of a doctrine is a mark of its truth, and pleads prescription against his adversaries, as if he was maintaining his property before a civil magistrate; than which method of disputing nothing can be more pernicious to the cause of truth. A third imitates those wrong-headed disputants among the Jews, who, infatuated with their cabalistic jargon, offered, as arguments, the imaginary powers of certain mystic words and chosen numbers [y]. Nor do they seem to err, who are of opinion, that in this century, that vicious method [z] of disputing, which

[y] Several examples of this senseless method of reasoning, are to be found in different writers. See particularly BASNAGE, *Histoire des Juifs*, tom. iii. p. 660. 694.

[z] The *aconomical* method of disputing was that in which the disputants accommodated themselves, as far as was possible, to the taste and prejudices of those whom they were endeavouring to gain over to the truth. Some of the first Chris-

afterwards obtained the name of *æconomical*, was first introduced [a].

IX. The principal points of morality were treated by JUSTIN MARTYR, or, at least, by the writer of the *epistle to ZENA and SERENUS*, which is to be found among the works of that celebrated author. Many other writers confined themselves to particular branches of the moral system, which they handled with much attention and zeal. Thus CLEMENS, of *Alexandria*, wrote several treatises concerning *calumny, patience, continence*, and other virtues, which discourses have not reached our times. Those of TERTULLIAN upon *chastity*, upon *flight in the time of persecution*, as also upon *fasting, shows, female ornaments*, and *prayer*, have survived the waste of time, and might be read with much fruit, were the style, in which they are written, less laboured and difficult, and the spirit they breathe less melancholy and morose.

X. Learned men are not unanimous concerning the degree of esteem that is due to the authors mentioned, and the other ancient moralists. Some represent them as the most excellent guides in the paths of piety and virtue; while others place them in the very lowest rank of moral writers, consider them as the very worst of all instructors, and treat their precepts and decisions as perfectly insipid, and, in many respects, pernicious. We leave the determination of this point to such as are more capable of pronouncing decisively upon it, than we pretend to be [b]. It, however, appears to us incontestable,

tians carried this condescension too far, and abused St. PAUL's example (1 Cor. ix. 20, 21, 22.) to a degree inconsistent with the purity and simplicity of the Christian doctrine.

[a] RICH. SIMON, *Histoire Critique des principaux Commentateurs du N. T.* cap. ii. p. 21.

[b] This question was warmly and learnedly debated between the deservedly celebrated BARBEYRAC and CELLIER a Benedictin monk. BUDDEUS has given us an history of this controversy

CENT.
II.
PART II.
Moral writers.

Of the merit of the fathers, as moral writers.

CENT. that, in the writings of the primitive fathers, there
 II. are several sublime sentiments, judicious thoughts,
 PART II. and many things that are naturally adapted to form
 a religious temper, and to excite pious and virtuous
 affections; while it must be confessed, on the other
 hand, that they abound still more with precepts of
 an excessive and unreasonableness, with stoical
 and academical dictates, vague and indeterminate
 notions, and, what is yet worse, with decisions that
 are absolutely false, and in evident opposition to the
 precepts of CHRIST. Before the question mentioned
 above, concerning the merit of the ancient fathers,
 as moralists, be decided, a previous question must be
 determined, *viz.* What is meant by a bad director in
 point of morals? and, if by such a person be meant,
 one who has no determinate notion of the nature
 and limits of the duties incumbent upon Christians,
 no clear and distinct ideas of virtue and vice: who
 has not penetrated the spirit and genius of those
 sacred books, to which alone we must appeal in
 every dispute about Christian virtue, and who, in
 consequence thereof, fluctuates often in uncertainty,
 or falls into error in explaining the divine laws,
 though he may frequently administer sublime and
 pathetic instruction; if, by a bad guide in morals,
 such a person, as we have now delineated, be meant,
 then it must be confessed, that this title belongs indis-
 putably to many of the fathers.

The double
 doctrine of
 certain mo-
 ralists.

XI. The cause of morality, and, indeed, of
 Christianity in general, suffered deeply by a capital
 error which was received in this century; an error

with his own judgment of it, in his *Isagoge ad Theologiam*, lib. ii. cap. iv. p. 620, &c. BARBEYRAC, however, published after this a particular treatise in defence of the severe sentence he had pronounced against the fathers. This ingenious performance was printed at Amsterdam in 1720, under the title of *Traité sur la Morale des Peres*; and is highly worthy of the perusal of those who have a taste for this most interesting branch of literature, though they will find in it some imputations cast upon the fathers, against which they may be easily defended.

admitted without any evil design, but yet with the utmost imprudence, and which, through every period of the church, even until the present time, has produced other errors without number, and multiplied the evils under which the gospel has so often groaned. CENT. II. PART II.
 JESUS CHRIST prescribed to all his disciples one and the same rule of life and manners. But certain Christian doctors, either through a desire of imitating the nations among whom they lived, or in consequence of a natural propensity to a life of austerity (which is a disease not uncommon in *Syria, Egypt,* and other eastern provinces), were induced to maintain, that CHRIST had established a *double rule of sanctity and virtue*, for two different orders of Christians. Of these *rules* the *one* was ordinary, the *other* extraordinary; the *one* of a lower dignity, the *other* more sublime; the *one* for persons in the active scenes of life, the *other* for those, who, in a sacred retreat, aspired after the glory of a celestial state. In consequence of this wild system, they divided into two parts all those moral doctrines and instructions which they had received either by writing or tradition. One of these divisions they called *precepts*, and the other *counsels*. They gave the name of *precepts* to those laws, that were universally obligatory upon all orders of men; and that of *counsels* to those that related to Christians of a more sublime rank, who proposed to themselves great and glorious ends, and breathed after an intimate communion with the Supreme Being.

XII. This *double doctrine* produced, all of a sudden, a new set of men, who made profession of uncommon degrees of sanctity and virtue, and declared their resolution of obeying all the *counsels* of CHRIST, in order to their enjoying communion with God here; and also, that, after the dissolution of their mortal bodies, they might ascend to him with the greater facility, and find nothing to retard their approach to the supreme centre of happiness. Gives rise to the Ascetics.

CENT. and perfection. They looked upon themselves as prohibited the use of things, which it was lawful for other Christians to enjoy, such as *wine, flesh, matrimony, and commerce* [c]. They thought it their indispensable duty to extenuate the body by watchings, abstinence, labour, and hunger. They looked for felicity in solitary retreats, in desert places, where, by severe and assiduous efforts of sublime meditation, they raised the soul above all external objects, and all sensual pleasures. Both men and women imposed upon themselves the most severe tasks, the most austere discipline; all which, however the fruit of pious intention, was in the issue, extremely detrimental to Christianity. These persons were called Ascetics, *Στυγαδαιοι Εκλεκτοι*, and philosophers; nor were they only distinguished by their title from other Christians, but also by their garb [d]. In this century, indeed, such as embraced this austere kind of life, submitted themselves to all these mortifications in private, without breaking asunder their social bonds, or withdrawing themselves from the concourse of men. But, in process of time, they retired into deserts; and, after the example of the Essenes and Therapeutæ, they formed themselves into certain companies.

Why certain Christians became Ascetics.

XIII. Nothing is more obvious than the reasons that gave rise to this austere sect. One of the principal was, the ill-judged ambition of the Christians to resemble the Greeks and Romans, many of whose sages and philosophers distinguished themselves from the generality by their maxims, by their habit, and, indeed, by the whole plan of life and manners which they had formed to themselves, and by which they acquired a high degree of esteem and authority. It is also well known, that, of all these philosophers,

[c] ATHENAGORAS, *Apologia pro Christianis*. cap. xxviii. p. 129. edit. OXON.

[d] See SALMAS. *Comm. in Tertullianum de Pallio*, p. 7, 8. &c.

there were none, whose sentiments and discipline were so well received by the ancient Christians as those of the Platonics and Pythagoreans, who prescribed in their lessons *two* rules of conduct; *one* for the sage, who aspired to the sublimest heights of virtue; and another for the people, involved in the cares and hurry of an active life [e]. The law of moral conduct, which the Platonics prescribed to the philosophers, was as follows: "The soul of the
 " wise man ought to be removed to the greatest possible distance from the contagious influence of the
 " body. And as the depressing weight of the body, the force of its appetites, and its connexions with
 " a corrupt world, are in direct opposition to this sacred obligation; therefore all sensual pleasures
 " are to be carefully avoided; the body is to be supported, or rather extenuated, by a slender diet;
 " *solitude* is to be sought as the true mansion of virtue; and *contemplation* to be employed as the
 " means of raising the soul, as far as is possible, to a sublime freedom from all corporeal ties, and
 " to a noble elevation above all terrestrial things [f]. The person, who lives in this manner, shall enjoy,
 " even in the present state, a certain degree of communion with the Deity; and when the corporeal
 " mass is dissolved, shall immediately ascend to the sublime regions of felicity and perfection, without
 " passing through that state of purification and trial, that awaits the generality of mankind." It is easy

[e] These famous sects made an important distinction between *living according to nature*, Ζῆν κατὰ φύσιν, and *living above nature*, Ζῆν ὑπὲρ φύσιν. The former was the rule prescribed to the vulgar; the latter that which was to direct the conduct of the philosophers, who aimed at superior degrees of virtue. See ÆNÆAS GAZEUS in *Theophrast.* p. 29. edit. Barthii.

[f] The reader will find the principles of this fanatical discipline, in PORPHYRY'S book περὶ ἀποχρῆσεως, i. e. concerning *abstinence*. That celebrated Platonist has explained at large the respective duties that belong to *active* and *contemplative* life, book i. § 27. and 41.

CENT. to perceive, that this rigorous discipline was a natural
 II. consequence of the peculiar opinions which these
 PART II. philosophers, and some others that resembled them,
 entertained, concerning the *nature of the soul*, the
influence of matter, the *operations of invisible beings or
 demons*, and the *formation of the world*. And as these
 opinions were adopted by the more learned among
 the Christians, it was but natural that they should
 embrace also the moral discipline which flowed from
 them.

The pro-
 gress of this
 discipline.

XIV. There is a particular consideration that
 will enable us to render a natural account of the
 origin of those religious severities of which we have
 been now speaking, and that is drawn from the
 genius and temper of the people by whom they
 were first practised. It was in *Egypt* that this morose
 discipline had its rise; and it is observable, that that
 country has, in all times, as it were by an immu-
 table law, or disposition of nature, abounded with
 persons of a melancholy complexion, and produced,
 in proportion to its extent, more gloomy spirits than
 any other part of the world [g]. It was here that
 the Essenes and the Therapeutæ, those dismal and
 gloomy sects, dwelt principally, long before the
 coming of CHRIST; as also many others of the
 Ascetic tribe, who, led by a certain melancholy turn
 of mind, and a delusive notion of rendering them-
 selves more acceptable to the Deity by their
 austerities, withdrew themselves from human society,
 and from all the innocent pleasures and comforts of
 life [b]. From *Egypt* this sour and unfociable
 discipline passed into *Syria*, and the neighbouring
 countries, which also abounded with persons of the

[g] See MAILLET, *Description de l'Egypte*, tom. ii. p. 57.
 edit in 4to. de Paris.

[b] HERODOT. *Histor.* lib. ii. p. 104. edit. GRONOV. EPIPHAN-
 NIUS, *Exposit. fidei*, § 11. tom. ii. opp. p. 1092. TERTULLIAN,
De exhortatione castitat. cap. xiii. p. 524. edit. PRIORII. ATHA-
 NASIUS, *in vita Antonii*, tom. ii. opp. p. 453.

same dismal constitution with that of the Egyptians CENT.
 [i]; and from thence, in process of time, its infec- II.
 tion reached to the European nations. Hence that PART II
 train of austere and superstitious vows and rites, that
 yet, in many places, cast a veil over the beauty and
 simplicity of the Christian religion. Hence the
 celibacy of the priestly order, the rigour of unpro-
 fitable penances and mortifications, the innumerable
 swarms of monks that refused their talents and
 labours to society, and this in the senseless pursuit of
 a visionary sort of perfection. Hence also that
 distinction between the *theoretical* and *mystical* life,
 and many other fancies of a like nature, which we
 shall have occasion to mention in the course of this
 history.

XV. It is generally true, that delusions travel in The rise of
 a train, and that one mistake produces many. The pious frauds
 Christians, who adopted the austere system, which among
 has been already mentioned, had certainly made a Christians.
 very false step, and done much injury to their excel-
 lent and most reasonable religion. But they did not
 stop here; another erroneous practice was adopted
 by them, which, though it was not so universal as
 the other, was yet extremely pernicious, and proved
 a source of numberless evils to the Christian church.
 The Platonists and Pythagoreans held it as a maxim,
 that it was not only lawful, but even praise-worthy,
 to *deceive*, and even to use the expedient of a *lie*, in
 order to advance the cause of *truth* and *piety*. The
 Jews who lived in *Egypt*, had learned and received
 this maxim from them, before the coming of CHRIST,
 as appears incontestably from a multitude of ancient
 records; and the Christians were infected from both
 these sources with the same pernicious error, as
 appears from the number of books attributed falsely
 to great and venerable names, from the *Sibylline*

[i] Jo. CHARDIN *Voyages en Perse*, tom. iv. p. 197. edit.
 Amsterdam. 1735, 4to.

CENT. *verses*, and several supposititious productions, which
 II. were spread abroad in this and the following century.
 PART II. It does not, indeed, seem probable, that all these

pious frauds were chargeable upon the professors of
real Christianity, upon those who entertained just
 and rational sentiments of the religion of JESUS.
 The greatest part of these fictitious writings, undoubt-
 edly, flowed from the fertile invention of the Gnostic
 sects, though it cannot be affirmed that even true
 Christians were entirely innocent and irreproachable
 in this matter.

Of the lives
 of Chris-
 tians.

Excommu-
 nication.

Penitential
 discipline
 among the
 Christians
 modelled
 impercepti-
 bly accord-
 ing to that
 of the Hea-
 then mys-
 teries.

XVI. As the boundaries of the church were enlarged, the number of vicious and irregular persons, who entered into it were proportionably increased, as appears from the many complaints and censures that we find in the writers of this century. Several methods were made use of to stem the torrent of iniquity. *Excommunication* was peculiarly employed to prevent or punish the most heinous and enormous crimes; and the crimes, esteemed such, were *murder*, *idolatry*, and *adultery*, which terms, however, we must here understand in their more full and extensive sense. In some places, the commission of any of these sins cut off irrevocably the criminal from all hopes of restoration to the privileges of church-communion: in others, after a long, laborious, and painful course of probation and discipline, they were re-admitted into the bosom of the church [k].

XVII. It is here to be attentively observed, that the form used in the exclusion of heinous offenders from the society of Christians was, at first, extremely simple. A small number of plain, yet judicious rules,

[k] By this distinction, we may easily reconcile the different opinions of the learned concerning the effects of excommunication. See MORINUS, *De disciplina Penitent.* lib. ix. cap. xix. p. 676. SIRMOND, *Historia Penitentia publicæ*, cap. i. p. 323. tom. iv. opp. As also JOSEPH. AUGUSTIN. ORSI, *Dissert. de criminum capitulum per tria priora sæcula absolute*, published at Milan, 1730, 4to.

made up the whole of this solemn institution, which, CENT.
 however, was imperceptibly altered, enlarged by an II.
 addition of a vast multitude of rites, and new model- PART II.
 led according to the discipline used in the Heathen _____
 mysteries [1]. Those who have any acquaintance
 with the singular reasons that obliged the Christians
 of those ancient times to be careful in restraining the
 progress of vice, will readily grant, that it was
 incumbent upon the rulers of the church to perfect
 their discipline, and to render the restraints upon
 iniquity more severe. They will justify the rulers
 of the primitive church in their refusing to restore
 excommunicated members to their forfeited privi-
 leges, before they had given incontestable marks of
 the sincerity of their repentance. Yet still it remains
 to be examined, whether it was expedient to borrow
 from the enemies of the truth the rules of this salu-
 tary discipline, and thus to sanctify, in some measure,
 a part of the Heathen superstition. But, however
 delicate such a question may be, when determined
 with a view to all the indirect or immediate conse-
 quences of the matter in debate, the equitable and
 candid judge will consider principally the good
 intention of those from whom these ceremonies and
 institutions proceed, and will overlook the rest from a
 charitable condescension and indulgence to human
 weakness.

[1] See FABRICIUS'S *Bibliograph. Antiquar.* p. 397. and
 MORINUS, *De Potentia.* lib. i. cap. xv, xvi, &c.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the ceremonies used in the church during this century,

CENT. I. **T**HERE is no institution so pure and
 II. excellent which the corruption and folly of man will
 PART II. not in time alter for the worse, and load with addi-
 ————— tions foreign to its nature and original design. Such
 Ceremonies multiplied. in a particular manner, was the fate of Christianity.
 In this century, many unnecessary rites and cere-
 monies were added to the Christian worship, the
 introduction of which was extremely offensive to
 wise and good men [m]. These changes, while
 they destroyed the beautiful simplicity of the gospel,
 were naturally pleasing to the gross multitude, who
 are more delighted with the pomp and splendour of
 external institutions, than with the native charms of
 rational and solid piety, and who generally give
 little attention to any objects but those which strike
 their outward senses [n]. But other reasons may
 be added to this, which, though they suppose no bad
 intentions, yet manifest a considerable degree of pre-
 cipitation and imprudence.

[m] TERTULLIAN, *Lib. de Creatione*, p. 792. opp.

[n] It is not improper to remark here, that this attachment of the vulgar to the pomp of ceremonies, is a circumstance that has always been favourable to the ambitious views of the Romish clergy, since the pomp of religion naturally casts a part of its glory and magnificence upon its ministers, and thereby gives them, imperceptibly, a vast ascendant over the minds of the people. The late Lord *Bolingbroke*, being present at the elevation of the host in the cathedral at *Paris*, expressed to a nobleman, who stood near him, his surprise that the king of *France* should commit the performance of such an august and striking ceremony to any subject. How far ambition may, in this and the succeeding ages, have contributed to the accumulation of gaudy ceremonies, is a question not easily to be determined.

II. And here we may observe, in the first place, CENT. that there is a high degree of probability in the II. notion of those, who think that the bishops augmented the number of religious rites in the Christian worship, by way of accommodation to the infirmities and prejudices both of Jews and Heathens, in order to facilitate thus their conversion to Christianity. Both Jews and Heathens were accustomed to a vast variety of pompous and magnificent ceremonies in their religious service. And as they considered these rites as an essential part of religion, it was but natural that they should behold, with indifference, and even with contempt, the simplicity of the Christian worship, which was destitute of those idle ceremonies that rendered their service so specious and striking. To remove then, in some measure, this prejudice against Christianity, the bishops thought it necessary to increase the number of rites and ceremonies, and thus to render the public worship more striking to the outward senses [*o*].

PART II.

First reasons of the multiplication of ceremonies, viz. A desire to enlarge the borders of the church.

[*o*] A remarkable passage in the life of GREGORY, surnamed THAUMATURGUS, *i. e.* the wonder-worker, will illustrate this point in the clearest manner. The passage is as follows: “Cum animadvertisset (GREGORIUS) quod ob corporeas delectationes et voluptates simplex et imperitum vulgus in simulacrorum cultus errore permaneret—permisit eis, ut in memoriam et recordationem sanctorum martyrum sese oblectarent, & in lætitiâ effunderentur, quod successu temporis aliquando futurum esset, ut sua sponte ad honestiorem et accuratiorem vitæ rationem transirent.” *i. e.* “When GREGORY perceived that the ignorant multitude persisted in their idolatry, on account of the pleasures and sensual gratifications which they enjoyed at the Pagan festivals, he granted them a permission to indulge themselves in the like pleasures, in celebrating the memory of the holy martyrs, hoping, that, in process of time, they would return, of their own accord, to a more virtuous and regular course of life.” There is no sort of doubt, but that, by this permission, GREGORY allowed the Christians to dance, sport, and feast, at the tombs of the martyrs, upon their respective festivals, and to do every thing which the Pagans were accustomed to do in their temples, during the feasts celebrated in honour of their gods.

CENT. III. This addition of external rites was also

II. designed to remove the opprobrious calumnies, which
PART II. the Jewish and Pagan priests cast upon the Chris-

Second rea-
son, To re-
fute calum-
nies and re-
proaches.

tians, on account of the simplicity of their worship, esteeming them little better than Athiests, because they had no *temples, altars, victims, priests*, nor any thing of that external pomp in which the vulgar are so prone to place the essence of religion. The rulers of the church adopted, therefore, certain external ceremonies, that thus they might captivate the senses of the vulgar, and be able to refute the reproaches of their adversaries. ☞ This, it must be confessed, was a very awkward, and, indeed, a very pernicious stratagem; it was obscuring the native lustre of the gospel, in order to extend its influence, and making it lose, in point of real excellence, what it gained in point of popular esteem. Some accommodations to the infirmities of mankind, some prudent instances of condescension to their invincible prejudices, are necessary in ecclesiastical, as well as in civil institutions; but they must be of such a nature, as not to inspire ideas, or encourage prejudices incompatible with just sentiments of the great object of religious worship, and of the fundamental truths which God has imparted by reason and revelation to the human race. How far this rule has been disregarded and violated, will appear too plainly in the progress of this history.

Third rea-
son, The
abuse of
Jewish
rites.

IV. A third cause of the multiplication of rites and ceremonies in the Christian church, may be deduced from the abuse of certain titles that distinguished the sacerdotal orders among the Jews. Every one knows, that many terms used in the New Testament, to express the different parts of the Christian doctrine and worship, are borrowed from the Jewish law, or have a certain analogy with the rites and ceremonies instituted by MOSES. The Christian doctors did not only imitate this analogical manner of speaking, but they even extended it

further than the apostles had done. And, though in this there was nothing worthy of reproach, yet the consequences of this method of speaking, through abuse, detrimental to the purity of the gospel. For, in process of time, many asserted, whether through ignorance or artifice, is not easy to determine, that these forms of speech were not *figurative*, but highly *proper*, and exactly suitable to the nature of the things they were designed to express. The *bishops*, by an innocent allusion to the Jewish manner of speaking, had been called *chief priests*; the *elders*, or presbyters, had received the title of *priests*, and the *deacons* that of *Levites*. But, in a little time, these titles were abused by an aspiring clergy, who thought proper to claim the same rank and station, the same rights and privileges, that were conferred with those titles upon the ministers of religion under the Mosaic dispensation. Hence the rise of *tithes*, *first fruits*, *splendid garments*, and many other circumstances of external grandeur, by which ecclesiastics were eminently distinguished. In like manner the comparison of the Christian *oblations* with the Jewish *victims* and *sacrifices*, produced a multitude of unnecessary rites, and was the occasion of introducing that erroneous notion of the *eucharist*, which represents it as a *real sacrifice*, and not merely as a commemoration of that great *offering*, that was once made upon the cross for the sins of mortals.

V. The profound respect that was paid to the Greek and Roman *mysteries*, and the extraordinary sanctity that was attributed to them, was a further circumstance that induced the Christians to give their religion a *mystic air*, in order to put it upon an equal foot, in point of dignity, with that of the Pagans. For this purpose, they gave the name of *mysteries* to the institutions of the gospel, and decorated particularly the holy sacrament with that solemn title. They used in that sacred institution, as also in that of baptism, several of the terms employed in the

CENT.
II.
PART II.

Fourth reason, The imitation of the Heathen mysteries.

CENT. Heathen *mysteries*; and proceeded so far, at length, as even to adopt some of the rites and ceremonies of which these renowned *mysteries* consisted [p]. This imitation began in the eastern provinces; but after the time of ADRIAN, who first introduced the MYSTERIES among the Latins [q], it was followed by the Christians, who dwelt in the western parts of the empire. A great part, therefore, of the service of the church, in this century, had a certain air of the Heathen mysteries, and resembled them considerably in many particulars.

Fifth reason, The symbolic manner of teaching in use among the eastern nations.

VI. It may be yet further observed, that the custom of teaching their religious doctrines by *images, actions, signs*, and other sensible representations, which prevailed among the Egyptians, and, indeed, in almost all the eastern nations, was another cause of the increase of external rites in the church. As there were many persons of narrow capacities, whose comprehension scarcely extended beyond sensible objects, the Christian doctors thought it adviseable to instruct such in the essential truths of the gospel, by placing these truths, as it were, before their eyes, under sensible images. Thus they administered *milk and honey*, which was the ordinary food of infants, to such as were newly received into the church, shewing them, by this sign, that by their baptism they were born again, and were bound to manifest the simplicity and innocence of infants in their lives and conversations. Certain military rites were borrowed to express the new and solemn engagements, by which Christians attached themselves to CHRIST as their leader and their chief; and the ancient ceremony of *manumission*

[p] See, for many examples of this, ISAAC CASAUBON, *Exercitat. xvi. in Annales Baronii*, p. 478, 9, &c. edit. Genev. 1654. TOLLIVUS, *Insign. itineris Italici Not.* p. 151. 163. SPANHEIM'S Notes to his French translation of JULIAN'S *Cesar's*, p. 133, 134. CLARKSON *on Liturgies*, p. 36. 42, 43.

[q] SPARTIAN, *Hadrian*, c. xiii. p. xv. edit. of Obrecht.

was used to signify the liberty of which they were made partakers, in consequence of their redemption from the guilt and dominion of sin, and their deliverance from the empire of the prince of darkness [r].

VII. If it be considered, in the first place, that the Christians who composed the church, were Jews and Heathens, accustomed, from their birth, to various insignificant ceremonies and superstitious rites; and if it be also considered, that such a long course of custom and education forms prejudices that are extremely obstinate and difficult to be conquered, it will then appear, that nothing less than a continued miracle could have totally prevented the entrance of all superstitious mixtures into the Christian worship. A single example will tend to the illustration of this matter. Before the coming of CHRIST, all the eastern nations performed divine worship with their faces turned to that part of the heavens where the sun displays his rising beams. This custom was founded upon a general opinion, that God, whose *essence* they looked upon to be *light*, and whom they considered as circumscribed within certain limits, dwelt in that part of the firmament, from whence he sends forth the sun, the bright image of his benignity and glory. They, who embraced the Christian religion, rejected, indeed, this gross error, but they retained the ancient and universal custom of worshipping towards the east, which sprung from it. Nor is that custom abolished even in our times, but still prevails in a great number of Christian churches. From this same source arose various rites among the Jews, which many Christians, especially those who live in the eastern countries, observe religiously at this very day [s].

CENT.
II.
PART II.
Sixth reason, Prejudices of converted Jews and Gentiles.

[r] See EDM. MERILLII *Observat.* lib. iii. cap. iii.

[s] See SPENCER, *De legibus ritualibus Hebræorum.* Prolegom. p. 9. edit. Cambridge.

CENT.

VIII. We shall take no more than a brief view

II.
PART II.Of the
Christian
assemblies.

of these rites and ceremonies, since a particular consideration of them would lead us into endless discussions, and open a field too vast to be comprehended in such a compendious history as we here give of the Christian church. The first Christians assembled for the purposes of divine worship, in *private houses*, in *caves*, and in *vaults*, where the dead were buried. Their meetings were on the *first day of the week*; and, in some places, they assembled also upon the *seventh*, which was celebrated by the Jews. Many also observed the *fourth* day of the week, on which CHRIST was betrayed; and the *sixth*, which was the day of his crucifixion. The hour of the day appointed for holding these religious assemblies, varied according to the different times and circumstances of the church; but it was generally in the evening after sun-set, or in the morning before the dawn. During these sacred meetings, prayers were repeated [t], the holy scriptures were publicly read, short discourses, upon the duties of Christians, were addressed to the people, hymns were sung, and a portion of the *oblations*, presented by the faithful, was employed in the celebration of the Lord's supper and the feasts of charity.

Disputes
about the
time of
keeping
Easter, or
the paschal
feast.

IX. The Christians of this century celebrated anniversary festivals in commemoration of the death and resurrection of CHRIST, and of the effusion of the HOLY GHOST upon the apostles. The day which was observed as the anniversary of CHRIST's death, was called the *paschal* day, or *passover*, because it was looked upon to be the same with that on which the Jews celebrated the feast of that name. In the manner, however, of observing

[t] There is an excellent account given of these prayers, and of the Christian worship in general, in TERTULLIAN'S *Apology*, ch. xxxix. which is one of the most noble productions of ancient times.

this solemn day, the Christians of the *Lesser Cent.* *Asia* differed much from the rest, and in a more *II.* especial manner from those of *Rome*. They both, *PART II.* indeed, fasted during the *great week* (so that was called in which CHRIST died), and afterwards celebrated, like the Jews, a sacred feast, at which they distributed a paschal lamb in memory of our Saviour's last supper. But the Asiatic Christians kept this feast on the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month, at the time that the Jews celebrated their passover, and, three days after, commemorated the resurrection of the triumphant Redeemer. They affirmed, that they had derived this custom from the apostles JOHN and PHILIP; and pleaded moreover, in its behalf, the example of CHRIST himself, who held his *paschal feast* on the same day that the Jews celebrated their *passover*. The western churches observed a different method. They celebrated their *paschal* feast on the night that preceded the anniversary of Christ's resurrection, and thus connected the commemoration of the Saviour's crucifixion, with that of his victory over death and the grave. Nor did they differ thus from the Asiatics, without alleging also apostolic authority for what they did; for they pleaded that of St. PETER and St. PAUL, as a justification of their conduct in this matter.

X. The Asiatic rule for keeping the *paschal feast*, The occasion of them, and their progress. was attended with two great inconveniencies, to which the Christians at *Alexandria* and *Rome*, and the whole western churches, refused to submit. For, in the first place, as the Asiatics celebrated their festival the same day that CHRIST is said to have ate the paschal lamb with his disciples, this occasioned an inevitable interruption in the fast of the *great week*, which the other churches looked upon as almost criminal, at least as highly indecent. Nor was this the only inconveniency arising from this rule; for as they celebrated the memory of CHRIST's resurrection, precisely the third day after their

CENT. paschal supper, it happened, for the most part, that
 II. this great festival (which afterwards was called, by
 PART II. the Latins, *pascha*, and to which we give the name
 ——— of *Easter*) was held on other days of the week than
 the *first*. This circumstance was extremely displeasing
 to, by far, the greatest part of the Christians, who
 thought it unlawful to celebrate the resurrection of
 our Lord, on any day but *Sunday*, as that was the
 day on which this glorious event happened. Hence
 arose sharp and vehement contentions between the
 Asiatic and western Christians. About the middle
 of this century, during the reign of ANTONINUS
 PIUS, the venerable POLYCARP came to *Rome* to
 confer with ANICET, bishop of that see, upon this
 matter, with a view to terminate the warm disputes
 it had occasioned. But this conference, though
 conducted with great decency and moderation, was
 without effect. POLYCARP and ANICET were only
 agreed in this, that the bonds of charity were not
 to be broken on account of this controversy; but
 they continued at the same time, each in their
 former sentiments, nor could the Asiatics be engaged
 by any arguments to alter the rule which they
 pretended to have received by tradition from St.
 JOHN [u].

They pre-
 vail princi-
 pally be-
 tween the
 Asiatics and
 Romans.

XI. Towards the conclusion of this century,
 VICTOR, bishop of *Rome*, took it into his head to
 force the Asiatic Christians, by the pretended autho-
 rity of his laws and decrees, to follow the rule which
 was observed by the western churches in this matter.
 Accordingly, after having taken the advice of some
 foreign bishops, he wrote an imperious letter to the
 Asiatic prelates, commanding them to imitate the
 example of the western Christians with respect to
 the time of celebrating the festival of *Easter*. The
 Asiatics answered this lordly summons by the pen of
 POLYCRATES, bishop of *Ephesus*, who declared in

[u] EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. xiv. p. 127. and
 lib. v. cap. xxiv. p. 193.

their name, and that with great spirit and resolution, CENT. that they would by no means depart, in this matter, II. from the custom handed down to them by their PART II. ancestors. Upon this, the thunder of excommunication began to roar. VICTOR, exasperated by this resolute answer of the Asiatic bishops, broke communion with them, pronounced them unworthy of the name of his brethren, and excluded them from all fellowship with the church of *Rome*. This excommunication, indeed, extended no further; nor could it cut off the Asiatic bishops from communion with the other churches, whose bishops were far from approving the conduct of VICTOR [w]. The progress of this violent dissention was stopped by the wise and moderate remonstrances, which IRENÆUS, bishop of *Lyons*, addressed to the Roman prelate upon this occasion, in which he shewed him the imprudence and injustice of the step he had taken, and also by the long letter which the Asiatic Christians wrote in their own justification. In consequence therefore of this cessation of arms, the combatants retained each their own customs, until the fourth century, when the council of *Nice* abolished that of the Asiatics, and rendered the time of the celebration of Easter the same through all the Christian churches [x].

[w] This whole affair furnishes a striking argument, among the multitude that may be drawn from ecclesiastical history, against the supremacy and universal authority of the bishop of *Rome*.

[x] Dr. MOSHEIM, in a note here, refers us for an ampler account of this controversy to his *Commentar. de rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum*, M. p. 435. He had said in that work, that FAYDIT had perceived the error of the common opinion, concerning the disputes that arose in the church about the time of keeping Easter. But here he retracts this encomium, and, after a second reading of FAYDIT's book, finds himself obliged to declare, that that writer has entirely missed the true state of the question. See the account of this controversy, that is given by the learned HEUMAN, in one of the treatises of his *Sylloge*, or collection of small pieces.

CENT.

XII. In these times, the sacrament of the Lord's-

supper was celebrated, for the most part, on Sundays,

PART II.

and the ceremonies observed upon that occasion

The cele-
bration of
the Lord's
supper.

were such as follow: A part of the bread and wine, which was presented among the other *oblations* of the faithful, was separated from the rest, and consecrated by the prayers of the bishop. The wine was mixed with water, and the bread was divided into several portions. A part of the consecrated bread and wine was carried to the sick or absent members of the church, as a testimony of fraternal love, sent to them by the whole society [y]. It appears by many and undoubted testimonies, that this holy rite was looked upon as essential to salvation; and when this is duly considered, we shall be less disposed to censure, as erroneous, the opinion of those who have affirmed that the Lord's-supper was administered to infants during this century [z]. The *feasts of charity*, that followed the celebration of the Lord's-supper, have been mentioned already.

Baptism.

XIII. The sacrament of *baptism* was administered publicly twice every year, at the festivals of Easter and Pentecost, or Whitsuntide, [a], either by the *bishop*, or the *presbyters*, in consequence of his authorization and appointment. The persons that were to be baptized, after they had repeated the *Creed*, confessed and renounced their sins, and particularly the *devil*, in his pompous allurements, were immersed under water, and received into CHRIST'S kingdom by a solemn invocation of *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, according to the express command of our Blessed Lord. After baptism, they received the

[y] HENRICUS RIXNERUS, *De ritibus veterum Christianorum, circa Eucharistiam*, p. 155, &c.

[z] See JO. FRID. MAYER, *Diff. de Eucharistia Infantum*; as also ZORNIUS *Histor. Eucharist. Infantum*, published at Berlin, 1736.

[a] See WALL'S *History of infant Baptism*; and VICECOME'S *De ritibus Baptismi*.

sign of the cross, were anointed, and, by prayers and CENT.
imposition of hands, were solemnly commended to the II.
 mercy of God, and dedicated to his service; in PART II.
 consequence of which they received *milk and honey*,
 which concluded the ceremony [b]. The reasons
 of this particular ritual coincide with what we have
 said in general concerning the origin and causes of
 the multiplied ceremonies that crept from time to
 time into the church.

Adult persons were prepared for baptism by
 abstinence, prayer, and other pious exercises. It
 was to answer for them that sponsors or godfathers
 were first instituted, though they were afterwards
 admitted also in the baptism of infants [c].

CHAPTER V.

Concerning the heresies and divisions that troubled the church
 during this century.

I. **A**MONG the many sects which divided Dissentions
 the Christian church during this century, it is natu- in the
 ral to mention, in the first place, that which an church,
 attachment to the Mosaic law separated from the occasioned
 rest of their Christian brethren. The first rise of by the
 this sect is placed under the reign of ADRIAN. Jews.
 For, when this emperor had, at length, razed *Jeru-*
salem, entirely destroyed even its very foundations,

[b] See TERTULLIAN on Baptism.

[c] See GERH. a MASTRICHT, *De susceptoribus infantium ex*
baptismo; though he is of a different opinion in this matter, and
 thinks that *sponsors* were not used in the baptism of adult persons.
 See also WALL's *History of Infant Baptism*. ☞ See moreover
 upon this subject, ISAACI JUNDT, *Arg. de Susceptorum Baptisma-*
lium origine Commentatio, published at *Strasburg* in the year 1755,
 of which an account may be seen in the *Biblioth. des Sciences et*
des Beaux Arts, tom. vi. part. i. p. 13.

CENT. and enacted laws of the severest kind against the
 II. whole body of the Jewish people; the greatest part
 PART II. of the Christians, who lived in *Palestine*, to prevent
 their being confounded with the Jews, abandoned entirely the Mosaic rites, and chose a bishop named MARK, a foreigner by nation, and consequently an alien from the commonwealth of *Israel*. This step was highly shocking to those, whose attachment to the Mosaic rites was violent and invincible; and such was the case of many. These, therefore, separated themselves from the brethren, and founded at *Pera*, a country of *Palestine*, and in the neighbouring parts, particular assemblies, in which the law of MOSES maintained its primitive dignity, authority, and lustre [*d*].

Origin of
 the Nazarenes and
 Ebionites.

II. This body of judaizing Christians, which set CHRIST and MOSES upon an equal foot in point of authority, was afterwards divided into two sects, extremely different both in their rites and in their opinions, and distinguished by the names of Nazarenes and Ebionites. The former are not placed by the ancient Christians in the heretical register [*e*]; but the latter were considered as a sect, whose tenets were destructive of the fundamental principles of the Christian religion. These sects made use of a *gospel*, or history of CHRIST, different from that which is received among us, and concerning which there have been many disputes among the learned [*f*]. The term

[*d*] Vid. Sulpitius Severus, *Hist. Sacrae*, lib. ii. cap. xxxi. p. 245.

[*e*] EPIPHANIUS was the first writer who placed the Nazarenes in the list of heretics. He wrote in the fourth century, but is very far from being remarkable either for his fidelity or judgment.

[*f*] This gospel, which was called indiscriminately the gospel of the Nazarenes or Hebrews, is certainly the same with the gospel of the Ebionites, the gospel of the XII apostles, and is very probably that which St. PAUL refers to, Galatians, ch. i. ver. 6. Dr. MOSHEIM refers his readers, for an account of

Nazarenes was not originally the name of a sect, CENT. but that which distinguished the disciples of JESUS II. in general. And as those, whom the Greeks called PART II Christians, received the name of Nazarenes among the Jews, this latter name was not considered as a mark of ignominy or contempt. Those, indeed, who, after their separation from their brethren, retained the title of Nazarenes, differed much from the true disciples of CHRIST, to whom that name had been originally given: “ they held, that CHRIST “ was born of a virgin, and was also in a *certain* “ *manner* united to the divine nature ; they refused “ to abandon the ceremonies prescribed by the law “ of MOSES, but were far from attempting to impose “ the observance of these ceremonies upon the “ Gentile Christians ; they rejected also all those “ additions that were made to the Mosaic institutions “ by the Pharisees and the doctors of the law [g] ;” and from hence we may easily see the reason why the greatest part of the Christians treated the Nazarenes with a more than ordinary degree of gentleness and forbearance.

III. It is a doubtful matter from whence the Ebionites, Ebionites, their origin doubtful. derived their name, whether from that of some of their principal doctors, or from their poverty [b]. One thing, however, is certain, and that is, that their sentiments and doctrines were

this gospel, to FABRICIUS, in his *Codex Apocryph. Nov. Test.* tom. i. p. 355. and to a work of his own, intitled, *Vindicia contra Tolandi Nazarenorum*, p. 112. The reader will, however, find a still more accurate and satisfactory account of this gospel, in the first volume of the learned and judicious Mr. JONES's incomparable *Method of settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament*.

[g] See MICH. LE QUIEN, *Adnot. ad Damascenum*, tom. i. p. 82, 83 ; as also a dissertation of the same author, *De Nazarenis et eorum fide*, which is the seventh of those that he has subjoined to his edition of the works of *Damascenus*.

[b] See FABRIC. *ad Philostr. de Hæresibus*, p. 81 ; as also ITTIGIUS, *De Hæresibus ævi Apostolici*.

CENT. much more pernicious than those of the Nazarenes
 II. [i]. For though they believed the celestial mission
 PART II. of CHRIST, and his participation of a divine nature,
 yet they regarded him as a man born of JOSEPH and MARY, according to the ordinary course of nature. They, moreover, asserted, that the ceremonial law, instituted by MOSES, was not only obligatory upon the Jews, but also upon all others; and that the observance of it was essential to salvation. And as St. PAUL had very different sentiments from them, concerning the obligation of the ceremonial law, and had opposed the observance of it in the warmest manner, so of consequence they held this apostle in abhorrence, and treated his writings with the utmost disrespect. Nor were they only attached to the rites instituted by MOSES; they went still further, and received, with an equal degree of veneration, the superstitions of their ancestors, and the ceremonies and traditions which the Pharisees presumptuously added to the law [k].

Sects that
 arose from
 the oriental
 philosophy.

- IV. These obscure and unfrequented heretical assemblies were very little detrimental to the Christian cause, which suffered much more from those sects, whose leaders explained the doctrines of Christianity in a manner conformable to the dictates of the oriental philosophy concerning the origin of evil. The oriental doctors, who, before this century, had lived

☞ [i] The learned Mr. JONES looked upon these two sects as differing very little from one another. He attributes to them both much the same doctrines, and alleges that the Ebionites had only made some small additions to the old Nazarene system. See the *New and full Method of settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament*, vol. i. p. 385.

[k] IRENÆUS, lib. i. *Contra Hæres.* cap. xxvi. p. 105. edit. Massueti. EPIPHANIUS gives a large account of the Ebionites, *Hæres.* xxx. But he deserves little credit, since he confesses (§ 3. p. 127. and § 4. p. 141.) that he had confounded the Sampseans and Elcesaites with the Ebionites, and also acknowledges, that the first Ebionites were strangers to the errors with which he charges them.

in the greatest obscurity, came forth from their retreat under the reign of ADRIAN [1], exposed themselves to public view, and gathered together, in various provinces, assemblies, whose numbers were very considerable. The ancient records mention a great number of these demi-christian sects, many of which are no further known than by their distinguishing names, which, perhaps, is the only circumstance in which they differ from each other. One division, however, of these oriental Christians, may be considered as real and important, since the two branches it produced were vastly superior to the rest in reputation, and made more noise in the world, than the other multiplied subdivisions of this pernicious sect. Of this famous division, one branch, which arose in *Asia*, preserved the oriental doctrine concerning the origin of the world, unmixed with other sentiments and opinions; while the other, which was formed in *Egypt*, made a motley mixture of this philosophy with the tenets and prodigies adopted in the religious system of that superstitious country. The doctrine of the former surpassed in simplicity and perspicuity that of the latter, which consisted of a vast variety of parts, so artfully combined, that the explication of them became a matter of much difficulty.

V. Among the doctors of the Asiatic branch, the first place is due to ELXAI, a Jew, who, during the reign of TRAJAN, is said to have formed the sect of the Elcesaites. This heretic, though a Jew, attached to the worship of one God, and full of veneration for MOSES, corrupted, nevertheless, the religion of his ancestors, by blending with it a multitude of fictions drawn from the oriental philosophy; pretending also, after the example of the Essenes, to give a rational explication of the law of MOSES, he reduced it to a mere allegory. It is, at the same time, proper to observe, that some have doubted,

[1] CLEMENS ALEX. *Stromat.* lib. viii. cap. xvii. p. 898. CYPRIANUS, epist. lxxv.

CENT. whether the Elcefaites are to be reckoned among the
 II. Christian or the Jewish sects; and EPIPHANIUS,
 PART II. who was acquainted with a certain production of
 ELXAI, expreffes his uncertainty in this matter. ELXAI, indeed, in that book mentions CHRIST with the highest encomiums, without, however, adding any circumstance from whence it might be concluded with certainty, that JESUS of Nazareth was the CHRIST of whom he fpoke [m].

Saturninus,
 his extrava-
 gant fancies

VI. If then ELXAI be improperly placed among the leaders of the feft now under confideration, we may place at its head SATURNINUS of *Antioch*, who is one of the first Gnostic chiefs mentioned in history. He held the doctrine of *two principles*, from whence proceeded all things; the one a *wise and benevolent deity*; and the other, *matter, a principle essentially evil*, and which he supposed under the superintendence of a certain intelligence of a malignant nature. “The world and its first inhabitants were (according to the system of this raving philosopher) created by seven angels, which presided over the seven planets. This work was carried on without the knowledge of the *benevolent deity*, and in opposition to the will of the *material principle*. The former, however, beheld it with approbation, and honoured it with several marks of his beneficence. He endowed with rational souls the beings who inhabited this new system, to whom their creators had imparted nothing more than the mere animal life; and having divided the world into seven parts, he distributed them among the seven *angelic architects*, one of whom was the god of the Jews; and reserved to himself the supreme empire over all. To these creatures, whom the *benevolent principle* had endowed with reasonable souls, and

[m] EUSEB. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xxxviii. p. 234. EPIPHANIUS, *Heres.* xix. § 3. p. 41. THEODORETUS, *Fabul. Harc.* lib. ii. cap. vii. p. 221.

“ with dispositions that led to goodness and virtue, CENT.
 “ the *evil being*, to maintain his empire, added another II.
 “ kind, whom he formed of a wicked and malignant PART II.
 “ character ; and hence the difference we see among
 “ men. When the creators of the world fell from
 “ their allegiance to the Supreme Deity, God sent
 “ from heaven into our globe, a *restorer of order*,
 “ whose name was CHRIST. This divine conqueror
 “ came clothed with a corporeal appearance, but
 “ not with a *real* body ; he came to destroy the
 “ empire of the *material principle*, and to point
 “ out to virtuous souls the way by which they
 “ must return to God. This way is beset with
 “ difficulties and sufferings ; since those souls, who
 “ propose returning to the Supreme Being after the
 “ dissolution of this mortal body, must abstain from
 “ wine, flesh, wedlock, and, in short, from every
 “ thing that tends to sensual gratification, or even
 “ bodily refreshment.” SATURNINUS taught these
 extravagant doctrines in *Syria*, but principally at
Antioch, and drew after him many disciples by the
 pompous appearance of an extraordinary virtue [n].

VII. CERDO the Syrian, and MARCION son to Cerdo.
 the bishop of Pontus, belong to the Asiatic sect, Marcion.
 though they began to establish their doctrine at
Rome, and having given a turn somewhat different to
 the oriental superstition, may themselves be con-
 sidered as the heads of a new sect which bears their
 names. Amidst the obscurity and doubts that render
 so uncertain the history of these two men, the follow-
 ing fact is incontestable, *viz.* That CERDO had been
 spreading his doctrine at *Rome* before the arrival of
 MARCION there ; and that the latter having, through
 his own misconduct, forfeited a place to which he
 aspired in the church of *Rome*, attached himself,
 through resentment, to the impostor CERDO, and

[n] IRENÆUS, lib. i. c. xxiv. EUSEB. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv.
 cap. vii. THEODORET. *Fabul. Heret.* lib. i. cap. ii. EPIPHAN.
Heres. xxiii. THEODORET. *Fabul. Her.* lib. i. cap. ii.

CENT. propagated his impious doctrines with an astonishing
 II. success throughout the world. "After the example
 PART II. "of the oriental doctors, they held the existence
 "of *two principles*, the one perfectly *good*, and the
 "other perfectly *evil*. Between these, they ima-
 "gined an *intermediate kind of deity*, neither perfectly
 "good nor perfectly evil, but of a *mixed nature* (so
 "MARCION expresses it), and so far just and power-
 "ful, as to administer rewards and inflict punish-
 "ments. This *middle deity* is the creator of this
 "inferior world, and the *God and legislator of the*
 "*Jewish nation*; he wages perpetual war with the
 "*evil principle*; and both the one and the other
 "aspire to the place of the Supreme Being, and
 "ambitiously attempt subjecting to their authority
 "all the inhabitants of the world. The Jews are
 "the subjects of that powerful *genius* who formed
 "this globe: the other nations, who worship a
 "variety of gods, are under the empire of the
 "*evil principle*. Both these conflicting powers
 "exercise oppressions upon rational and immortal
 "souls, and keep them in a tedious and miserable
 "captivity. Therefore the SUPREME GOD, in
 "order to terminate this war, and to deliver from
 "their bondage those souls whose origin is celestial
 "and divine, sent to the Jews a *being* most like unto
 "himself, even his son JESUS CHRIST, clothed with
 "a certain shadowy resemblance of a body, that
 "thus he might be visible to mortal eyes. The
 "commission of this celestial messenger was to destroy
 "the empire both of the *evil principle*, and of the
 "*author of this world*, and to bring back wandering
 "souls to God. On this account, he was attacked
 "with inexpressible violence and fury by the *prince*
 "*of darkness*, and by the *God of the Jews*, but with-
 "out effect, since, having a body only in appearance,
 "he was thereby rendered incapable of suffering.
 "Those who follow the sacred directions of this
 "celestial conductor, mortify the body by fastings

“ and austerities, call off their minds from the CENT.
 “ allurements of sense, and, renouncing the precepts II.
 “ of the god of the Jews, and of the prince of dark- PART II.
 “ nefs, turn their eyes towards the Supreme Being,
 “ shall, after death ascend to the mansions of felicity
 “ and perfection.” In consequence of all this, the
 rule of manners, which MARCION prescribed to
 his followers, was excessively austere, containing an
 exprefs prohibition of wedlock, of the use of wine,
 flesh, and of all the external comforts of life. Not-
 withstanding the rigour of this severe discipline,
 great numbers embraced the doctrines of MARCION
 of whom LUCAN, or LUCIAN, SEVERUS, BLASTES,
 and principally APELLES, are said to have varied,
 in some things, from the opinions of their master,
 and to have formed new sects [o].

VIII. BARDESANES and TATIAN are commonly Bardeſanes.
 supposed to have been of the school of VALENTINE
 the Egyptian. But this notion is entirely without
 foundation, since their doctrine differs in many things
 from that of the VALENTINIANS, approaching
 nearer to that of the oriental philosophy concerning
 the *two principles*. BARDESANES, native of *Edeſſa*,
 was a man of a very acute genius, and acquired a
 shining reputation by his writings, which were in
 great number, and valuable for the profound erudi-
 tion they contained. Seduced by the fantastic
 charms of the oriental philosophy, he adopted it with
 zeal, but, at the same time, with certain modifi-
 cations, that rendered his system less extravagant
 than that of the Marcionites, against whom he wrote
 a very learned treatise. The sum of his doctrine is
 as follows: “ There is a SUPREME GOD, pure and
 “ benevolent, absolutely free from all evil and im-
 “ perfection; and there is also a *prince of darkness*,

[o] See IRENÆUS, EPIPHANIUS, and particularly TERTUL-
 LIAN's *Five Books against the Marcionites*, with his *Poem against*
 MARCION, and the *Dialogue against the Marcionites*, which is
 generally ascribed to ORIGEN. See also TILLEMONT's *Memoires*,
 and BEAUSOBRE's *Histoire du Manicheisme*, tom. ii. p. 69.

CENT. “ the fountain of all evil, disorder, and misery.

II. “ The Supreme God created the world without any

PART. II. “ mixture of evil in its composition ; he gave existence also to its inhabitants, who came out of his forming hand, pure and incorrupt, endued with subtle ethereal bodies, and spirits of a celestial nature. But when, in process of time, *the prince of darkness* had enticed men to sin, then the SUPREME GOD permitted them to fall into sluggish and gross bodies, formed of corrupt matter by the *evil principle* ; he permitted also the depravation and disorder which this malignant being introduced both into the natural and the moral world, designing, by this permission, to punish the degeneracy and rebellion of an apostate race ; and hence proceeds the perpetual conflict between reason and passion in the mind of man. It was on this account, that JESUS descended from the upper regions, clothed not with a real, but with a celestial and aërial body, and taught mankind to subdue that body of corruption which they carry about with them in this mortal life ; and, by *abstinence, fasting, and contemplation*, to disengage themselves from the servitude and dominion of that *malignant matter*, which chained down the soul to low and ignoble pursuits. Those, who hear the voice of this divine instructor, and submit themselves to this discipline, shall, after the dissolution of this terrestrial body, mount up to the mansions of felicity, clothed with æthereal vehicles, or celestial bodies.” Such was the doctrine of BARDESANES, who afterwards abandoned the chimerical part of this system, and returned to a better mind ; though his sect subsisted a long time in Syria [p].

[p] See the writers that give accounts of the ancient heresies, as also EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. xxx. p. 151. ORIGEN, *Dial. contra Marcionitas*, § 3. p. 70. edit. Wetstenii. FRID. STRUNZII, *Hist. Bardesanis*, &c. BEAUSOBRE, *Hist. du Manich.* vol. ii. p. 128.

IX. TATIAN, by birth an Assyrian, and a disciple of JUSTIN MARTYR, is more distinguished, by the ancient writers, on account of his genius and learning, and the excessive and incredible austerity of his life and manners, than by any remarkable errors or opinions which he taught his followers. It appears, however, from the testimony of credible writers, that TATIAN looked upon *matter* as the fountain of all evil, and therefore recommended, in a particular manner, the mortification of the body; that he distinguished the creator of the world from the Supreme Being; denied the reality of CHRIST'S body; and corrupted the Christian religion with several other tenets of the oriental philosophy. He had a great number of followers, who were, after him, called Tatianists [q], but were, nevertheless, more frequently distinguished from other sects by names relative to the austerity of their manners. For as they rejected, with a sort of horror, all the comforts and conveniencies of life, and abstained from wine with such a rigorous obstinacy, as to use nothing but water even at the celebration of the Lord's-supper; as they macerated their bodies by continual fastings, and lived a severe life of celibacy and abstinence, so they were called Encratites*, Hydroparastates †, and Apotactites ‡.

CENT.
II.
PART II.
Tatian.

X. Hitherto, we have only considered the doctrine of the Asiatic Gnostics. Those of the Egyptian branch differ from them in general in this, that they blended into one mass the oriental philosophy and the Egyptian theology; the former of which

The peculiar sentiments of the Egyptian Gnostics.

[q] We have yet remaining of the writings of TATIAN, an *Oration* addressed to the Greeks. As to his opinions, they may be gathered from CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, *Stromat.* lib. iii. p. 460. EPIPHANIUS, *Heres.* xlvi. cap. i. p. 391. ORIGEN, *De oratione*, cap. xiii. p. 77, of the *Oxford* edition. None, however, of the ancients have written professedly concerning the doctrines of TATIAN.

* Or temperate. † Or drinkers of water. ‡ Renouncers.

CENT. the Asiatics preserved unmixed in its original simplicity. The Egyptians were, moreover, particularly
 II. distinguished from the Asiatic Gnostics, by the following difference in their religious system, viz. 1. That though, besides the existence of a deity, they maintained that also of an *eternal matter*, endued with life and motion, yet they did not acknowledge an *eternal principle of darkness*, or the evil principle of the Persians. 2. They supposed that our Blessed Saviour was a compound of two persons, of the man JESUS, and of CHRIST the son of God; that the divine nature entered into the man JESUS, when he was baptised by JOHN in the river *Jordan*, and departed from him when he was seized by the Jews. 3. They attributed to CHRIST a real, not an imaginary body; though it must be confessed, that they were much divided in their sentiments on this head. 4. Their discipline, with respect to life and manners, was much less severe than those of the Asiatic sect, and seems, in some points, to have been favourable to the corruption and passions of men.

Basilides.

XI. BASILIDES has generally obtained the first place among the Egyptian Gnostics. “He acknowledged the existence of one Supreme God, perfect in goodness and wisdom, who produced from his own substance seven beings, or æons, of a most excellent nature. Two of these æons, called *Dynamis* and *Sophia* (i. e. *power* and *wisdom*), engendered the angels of the highest order. These angels formed an heaven for their habitation, and brought forth other angelic beings, of a nature somewhat inferior to their own. Many other generations of angels followed these, new heavens were also created, until the number of angelic orders, and of their respective heavens, amounted to *three hundred and sixty-five*, and thus equalled the days of the year. All these are under the empire of an omnipotent Lord, whom BASILIDES called *Abraxas*.” This word (which was certainly

in use among the Egyptians before his time) contains CENT. numeral letters to the amount of 365, and thereby II. expresses the number of heavens and angelic orders PART II. above mentioned [r]. “The inhabitants of the
 “lowest heavens, which touched upon the borders
 “of the eternal, malignant, and self-animated *matter*,
 “conceived the design of forming a world from
 “that confused mass, and of creating an order of
 “beings to people it. This design was carried into
 “execution, and was approved by the SUPREME

[r] We have remaining a great number of gems, and receive more from *Egypt* from time to time, on which, beside other figures of Egyptian taste, we find the word ABRAXAS engraved. See, for this purpose, a work entitled, MACARI *Abraxas, seu de gemmis Basilidianis disquisitionis*, which was published at *Antwerp*, with several improvements by JO. CHIFLETIUS, in 4to. in 1657. See also MONTFAUCON, *Paleograph. Græc.* lib. ii. cap. viii. p. 177. All these gems are supposed to come from BASILIDES, and therefore bear his name. Most of them, however, contain the marks of a superstition too gross to be attributed even to an half Christian, and bear also emblematic characters of the Egyptian theology. It is not, therefore, just to attribute them all to BASILIDES (who, though erroneous in many of his opinions, was yet a follower of CHRIST), but such of them only as carry some mark of the Christian doctrine and discipline.—There is no doubt, but that the old Egyptian word ABRAXAS was appropriated to the governor or lord of the heavens, and that BASILIDES, having learned it from the philosophy of his nation, retained it in his religious system. See BEAUSOBRE, *Hist. du Manichéisme*, vol. ii. p. 51. and also JO. BAPT. PASSERI, in his *Dissert. de gemmis Basilidianis*, which makes a part of that splendid work which he published at *Florence*, 1750, *De gemmis stelliferis*, tom. ii. p. 221. See also the sentiments of the learned JABLONSKI, concerning the signification of the word ABRAXAS as they are delivered in a dissertation inserted in the seventh volume of the *Miscell. LEIPS. Nova*. PASSERIUS affirms, that none of these gems relate to BASILIDES, but that they concern only magicians, *i. e.* forcerers, fortune-tellers, and such-like adventurers. Here, however, this learned man seems to go too far, since he himself acknowledges (p. 225.) that *he had sometimes found, on these gems, vestiges of the errors of BASILIDES*. These famous monuments stand yet in need of an interpreter, but of such a one as can join circumspection to diligence and erudition.

CENT. “ GOD, who, to the animal life, with which only
 II. “ the inhabitants of this new world were at first
 PART II. “ endowed, added a reasonable soul, giving, at
 ——— “ the same time, to the angels, the empire over
 “ them.”

The enormous errors
 of his system.

XII. “ These angelic beings, advanced to the
 “ government of the world which they had created,
 “ fell, by degrees, from their original purity, and
 “ manifested soon the fatal marks of their depravity
 “ and corruption. They not only endeavoured to
 “ efface in the minds of men the knowledge of the
 “ Supreme Being, that they might be worshipped
 “ in his stead, but also began to war against one
 “ another, with an ambitious view to enlarge, every
 “ one, the bounds of his respective dominion. The
 “ most arrogant and turbulent of all these angelic
 “ spirits, was that which presided over the Jewish
 “ nation. Hence the Supreme God, beholding
 “ with compassion the miserable state of rational
 “ beings, who groaned under the contests of these
 “ jarring powers, sent from heaven his son NUS, or
 “ CHRIST, the chief of the *æons*, that, joined in a
 “ substantial union with the man JESUS, he might
 “ restore the knowledge of the Supreme God, destroy
 “ the empire of those angelic natures which presided
 “ over the world, and particularly that of the
 “ arrogant leader of the Jewish people. The god
 “ of the Jews, alarmed at this, sent forth his mini-
 “ sters to seize the man JESUS, and put him to death.
 “ They executed his commands, but their cruelty
 “ could not extend to CHRIST, against whom their
 “ efforts were vain [s]. Those souls, who obey the

[s] Many of the ancients have, upon the authority of IRE-
 NÆUS, accused BASILIDES of denying the reality of CHRIST’S
 body, and of maintaining that SIMON the Cyrenian was crucified
 in his stead. But this accusation is entirely groundless, as may
 be seen by consulting the *Commentar. de rebus Christian. ante
 Constant.* p. 354, &c. &c. where it is demonstrated, that BASI-
 LIDES considered the divine Saviour as compounded of the man

“ precepts of the son of God, shall, after the dissolu-
 “ tion of their mortal frame, ascend to the father,
 “ while their bodies return to the corrupt mass of
 “ matter from whence they were formed. Diso-
 “ bedient spirits, on the contrary, shall pass suc-
 “ cessively into other bodies.”

XIII. The doctrine of **BASILIDES**, in point of
 morals, if we may credit the account of most ancient
 writers, was favourable to the lusts and passions
 of mankind, and permitted the practice of all
 sorts of wickedness. But those, whose testimo-
 nies are the most worthy of regard, give a quite
 different account of this teacher, and represent him
 as recommending the practice of virtue and piety in
 the strongest manner, and as having condemned not
 only the actual commission of iniquity, but even
 every inward propensity of the mind to a vicious
 conduct. It is true, there were, in his precepts
 relating to the conduct of life, some things which
 gave great offence to all true Christians. For he
 affirmed it to be lawful for them to conceal their
 religion, to deny **CHRIST**, when their lives were
 in danger, and to partake of the feasts of the
 Gentiles that were instituted in consequence of the
 sacrifices offered to idols. He endeavoured also to
 diminish the glory of those who suffered martyrdom
 for the cause of **CHRIST**; impiously maintained,
 that they were more heinous sinners than others,
 and that their sufferings were to be looked upon
 as a punishment inflicted upon them by the divine
 justice. Though he was led into this enormous
 error, by an absurd notion that all the calamities of
 this life were of a penal nature, and that men never
 suffered but in consequence of their iniquities, yet
 this rendered his principles greatly suspected, and

JESUS, and **CHRIST** the Son of God. It may be indeed, that
 some of the disciples of **BASILIDES** entertained the opinion that
 is here unjustly attributed to their master.

CENT.
 II.
 PART II.
 The Moral
 doctrine of
 Basilides.

CENT. the irregular lives of some of his disciples seemed to
 II. justify the unfavourable opinion that was entertained
 PART II. concerning their master [t].

Carpocrates XIV. But whatever may be said of BASILIDES it is certain, that he was far surpassed in impiety by CARPOCRATES, who was also of *Alexandria*, and who carried the Gnostic blasphemies to a more enormous degree of extravagance than they had ever been brought by any of that sect. His philosophical tenets agree, in general, with those of the Egyptian Gnostics. He acknowledged the existence of a SUPREME GOD, and of the *æons* derived from him by successive generations. He maintained the eternity of a *corrupt matter*, and the creation of the world from thence by angelic powers, as also the divine origin of souls unhappily imprisoned in mortal bodies, &c. But beside these, he propagated other sentiments and maxims of a horrid kind. He asserted that JESUS was born of JOSEPH and MARY, according to the ordinary course of nature, and was distinguished from the rest of mankind by nothing but his superior fortitude and greatness of soul. His doctrine also, with respect to practice, was licentious in the highest degree; for he not only allowed his disciples a full liberty to sin, but recommended to them a vicious course of life, as a matter both of obligation and necessity; asserting, that eternal salvation was only attainable by those who had committed all sorts of crimes, and had daringly filled up the measure of iniquity. It is almost incredible, that one who maintained the existence of a Supreme Being, who acknowledged CHRIST as the Saviour of mankind, could entertain such monstrous opinions as these. One would infer, indeed, from certain tenets of CARPOCRATES, that he adopted the common doctrine of the Gnostics

[t] For a further account of BASILIDES, the reader may consult REN. MASSUET, *Dissert. in Irenæum*, and BEAUSOBRE, *Hist. du Manichéisme*, vol. ii. p. 8.

concerning CHRIST, and acknowledged also the laws which this divine Saviour imposed upon his disciples. But notwithstanding this, it is beyond all doubt, that the precepts and opinions of this Gnostic are full of impiety; since he held that lusts and passions, being implanted in our nature by God himself, were consequently void of guilt, and had nothing criminal in them; that all actions were indifferent in their own nature, and were rendered good or evil only by the opinions of men, or by the laws of the state; that it was the will of God, that all things should be possessed in common, the female sex not excepted; but that human laws, by an arbitrary tyranny, branded those as robbers and adulterers, who only used their natural rights. It is easy to perceive, that, by these tenets, all the principles of virtue were destroyed, and a door opened to the most horrid licentiousness, and to the most profligate and enormous wickedness [u].

XV. VALENTINE, who was likewise an Egyptian by birth, was eminently distinguished from all his brethren by the extent of his fame, and the multitude of his followers. His sect, which took rise at Rome, grew up to a state of consistence and vigour in the isle of Cyprus, and spread itself through Asia, Africa, and Europe, with an amazing rapidity. The principles of VALENTINE were, generally speaking, the same with those of the Gnostics, whose name he assumed, yet in many things he entertained opinions that were particular to himself. "He placed, for instance, in the *pleroma*, (so the Gnostics called the habitation of the deity) thirty *æons*, of which the one half were male, and the other female. To these he added four others, which were of neither sex, viz. *Horus*, who guarded the borders of the *pleroma*, CHRIST, the *Holy Ghost*, and JESUS.

[u] See IREN. *Contra Hæres.* cap. xxv. CLEMENS ALEX. *Stromata*, lib. iii. p. 511.

CENT. “ The youngest of the *æons*, called *Sophia* (i. e.
 II. “ wisdom), conceived an ardent desire of compre-
 PART II. “ hending the nature of the SUPREME BEING,
 ———— “ and, by the force of this propensity, brought forth
 “ a daughter, named *Achamoth*. *Achamoth*, being
 “ exiled from the *pleroma*, fell down into the rude
 “ and undigested mass of matter, to which she gave
 “ a certain arrangement; and, by the assistance of
 “ JESUS, produced the *demiurge*, the lord and creator
 “ of all things. This *demiurge* separated the subtile
 “ or *animal* matter from that of the grosser, or more
 “ *terrestrial* kind; out of the former he created the
 “ superior world, or the visible heavens; and out
 “ of the latter he formed the inferior world, or this
 “ terraqueous globe. He also made man, in whose
 “ composition the subtile and also the grosser matter
 “ were both united, and that in equal portions; but
 “ *Achamoth*, the mother of *demiurge* added to these
 “ two substances, of which the human race was
 “ formed, a *spiritual and celestial substance*.” This
 is the sum of that intricate and tedious fable, that the
 extravagant brain of VALENTINE imposed upon the
 world for a system of religious philosophy; and from
 this it appears, that, though he explained the origin
 of the world and of the human race in a more subtile
 manner than the other Gnostics, yet he did not differ
 from them in reality. His imagination was more
 wild and inventive than that of his brethren; and
 this is manifest in the whole of his doctrine, which is
 no more than Gnosticism, set out with some supernu-
 merary fringes, as will further appear from what
 follows.

His idle
 dreams.

XVI. “ The creator of this world, according to
 “ VALENTINE, arrived, by degrees, to that pitch
 “ of arrogance, that he either imagined himself
 “ to be God alone, or, at least, was desirous that
 “ mankind should consider him as such. For this
 “ purpose, he sent forth prophets to the Jewish
 “ nation, to declare his claim to the honour that

“ is due to the Supreme Being, and in this also the CENT.
 “ other angels that preside over the different parts of II.
 “ the universe immediatly set themselves to imitate PART II.
 “ his ambition. To chastise this lawless arrogance of
 “ *demurge*, and to illuminate the minds of rational
 “ beings with the knowledge of the true and supreme
 “ Deity, CHRIST appeared upon earth, composed of
 “ an animal and spiritual substance, and clothed, more-
 “ over, with an aërial body. This Redeemer, in de-
 “ scending upon earth, passed through the womb of
 “ MARY, as the pure water flows through the un-
 “ tainted conduit. JESUS, one of the supreme *aëons*,
 “ was substantially united to him, when he was bap-
 “ tized by JOHN in the waters of *Jordan*. The creator
 “ of this world, when he perceived that the founda-
 “ tions of his empire were shaken by this divine man,
 “ caused him to be apprehended and nailed to the
 “ cross. But before CHRIST submitted to this pu-
 “ nishment, not only JESUS the son of God, but also
 “ the rational soul of CHRIST, ascended up on high,
 “ so that only the animal soul and the etherial body
 “ suffered crucifixion. Those who, abandoning the
 “ service of false deities and the worship of the
 “ God of the Jews, live according to the precepts
 “ of CHRIST, and submit the animal and sensual soul
 “ to the discipline of reason, shall be truly happy :
 “ their rational and also their sensual souls shall
 “ ascend to those glorious seats of bliss which border
 “ on the *pleroma*; and when all the parts of the
 “ divine nature, or all souls are purified thoroughly
 “ and separated from *matter*, then a raging fire,
 “ let loose from its prison, shall spread its flame
 “ throughout the universe, and dissolve the frame
 “ of this corporeal world.” Such is the doctrine
 of VALENTINE and the Gnostics; such also are
 the tenets of the oriental philosophy, and they
 may be summed up in the following propositions :
This world is a compound of good and evil. What-

CENT. *ever is good in it, comes down from the Supreme God,*
 II. *the father of lights, and to him it shall return: and*
 PART II. *then the world shall be entirely destroyed [ϖ].*

Various
sects of the
Valentini-
ans.
The greater.

XVII. We learn from ancient writers, that the sect of the Valentini-ans was divided into many branches. One of these was the sect of the Ptolemites, so called from their chief PTOLEMY, who differed in opinion from his master VALENTINE, with respect both to the number and nature of the *æons*. Another of these was the sect of the Secundians, whose chief SECUNDUS, one of the principal followers of VALENTINE, maintained the doctrine of two eternal principles, *viz. light and darknes*, from whence arose the good and the evil that are observable in the universe. From the same source arose the sect of HERACLEON, from whose writings CLEMENS and ORIGEN have made many extracts; as also that of the Marcians, whose leaders MARC and COLOBARSUS added many absurd fictions to those of VALENTINE; though it is certain, at the same time, that many errors were attributed to

[ϖ] It is proper to observe, for the information of those who desire a more copious account of the Valentinian heresy, that almost all the ancient writers have written upon this subject, especially IRENÆUS, *Libro primo contra Hæres.* TERTULLIAN, in a particular treatise upon that matter; CLEMENS ALEX. &c. Among the moderns, see JO. FRANC. BUDDÆUS, *Dissert. de hæresi Valentiniana*, in his introduction to his history of the Hebrew philosophers, which dissertation gave occasion to many disputes concerning the origin of this heresy. Some of the moderns have endeavoured to reconcile, with reason, this obscure and absurd doctrine of the Valentini-ans. See, for this purpose, the following authors: SOUVERAIN *Platonisme dévoilé*, ch. viii. p. 68. CAMP. VITRINGA, *Observ. Sacr.* lib. i. cap. ii. p. 131. BEAU-SOBRE, *Histoire du Manichéisme*, p. 548. JAC. BASNAGE, *Hist. des Juifs*, tom. iii. p. 729. PEIR. FAYDIT, *Eclaircissmens sur l'Hist. Ecclesiast. des deux premiers Siècles*. How vain all such endeavours are, might easily be shewn; nay, VALENTINE himself has determined the matter, by acknowledging that his doctrine is absolutely and entirely different from that of other Christians.

them, which they did not maintain [x]. I omit the mention of some other sects, to which the Valentinian heresy is said to have given rise. CENT. II. PART II. Whether, in reality, they all sprung from this source, is a question of a very doubtful kind, especially if we consider the errors into which the ancients have fallen, in tracing out the origin of the various sects that divided the church [y].

XVIII. It is not necessary to take any particular notice of the more obscure and less considerable of the Gnostic sects, of which the ancient writers scarcely mention any thing but the name, and one or two of their distinguishing tenets. Such were the Adamites, who are said to have professed an exact imitation of the primitive state of innocence; the Cainites, who treated as saints, with the utmost marks of admiration and respect, CAIN, CORAH, DATHAN, the inhabitants of SODOM, and even the traitor JUDAS. Such also were the Abelites, who entered into the bonds of matrimony, but neglected to fulfil its principal end, even the procreation of offspring; the Sethites, who honoured SETH in a particular manner, and looked upon him as the same person with CHRIST; the Florinians, who had FLORINUS and BLASTUS for their chiefs [z], and

☞ [x] MARC did not certainly entertain all the opinions that are attributed to him. Those, however, which we are certain that he adopted, are sufficient to convince us that he was out of his senses. He maintained, among other crude fancies, that the *plenitude* and *perfection* of truth resided in the Greek *alphabet*; and alleges that, as the reason why JESUS CHRIST was called the *Alpha* and the *Omega*.

[y] Concerning these sects, the reader will find something fuller in IRENÆUS, and the other ancient writers; and a yet more learned and satisfactory account in GRAËE's *Spicilegium Patr. et Hereticor.* § 2. p. 69. 82. There is an ample account of the *Marcofians* in IRENÆUS, *Contr. Her.* lib. i. cap. xiv. p. 70.

☞ [z] Here Dr. MOSHEIM has fallen into a slight inaccuracy, in confounding the opinions of these two heretics; since it is certain, that BLASTUS was for restoring the Jewish religion,

CENT. several others. It is highly probable, that the
 II. ancient doctors, deceived by the variety of names
 PART II. that distinguished the heretics, may with too much
 precipitation have divided one sect into many; nay,
 it may be further questioned, whether they have,
 at all times, represented accurately the nature and
 true meaning of several opinions concerning which
 they have written.

Ophites.

XIX. The Ophites, or Serpentinians, a ridiculous
 sort of heretics, who had for their leader a man
 called EUPHRATIS, deserve not the lowest place
 among the Egyptian Gnostics. This sect, which
 had its origin among the Jews, was of a more ancient
 date than the Christian religion. A part of its
 followers embraced the gospel, while the other
 retained their primitive superstition, and from hence
 arose the division of the Ophites into Christian and
 Anti-Christian. The Christian Ophites entertained
 almost the same fantastic opinions that were held by
 the other Egyptian Gnostics, concerning the *æons*,
 the *eternal matter*, the *creation of the world* in oppo-
 sition to the will of God, the *rulers of the seven*
planets that presided over this world, the *tyranny of*
demiurge, and also concerning CHRIST united to
 the man JESUS, in order to destroy the empire of
 this usurper. But besides these, they maintained
 the following particular tenet, from whence also
 they received the name of Ophites, *viz.* “ That
 “ the *serpent*, by which our first parents were
 “ deceived, was either CHRIST himself, or *Sophia*,
 “ concealed under the form of that animal;” and
 in consequence of this opinion, they are said to
 have nourished a certain number of serpents, which
 they looked upon as sacred, and to which they
 offered a sort of worship, a subordinate kind of
 divine honours. It was no difficult matter for those,

and celebrated the passover on the fourteenth day; whereas
 FLORINUS was a Valentinian, and maintained the doctrine of
 the *two principles*, with other Gnostic errors.

who made a distinction between the Supreme Being CENT. and the creator of the world, who looked upon II. every thing as divine, which was in opposition to F A R T. II. *demiurge*, to fall into these extravagant notions.

XX. The schisms and commotions that arose in Monarchi- the church, from a mixture of the oriental and ans and Pa- Egyptian philosophy with the Christian religion, tropassians. were, in the second century, increased by those Grecian philosophers who embraced the doctrine of CHRIST. The Christian doctrine, concerning the *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, and the *two natures* united in our blessed Saviour, were, by no means, reconcileable with the tenets of the sages and doctors of *Greece*, who therefore endeavoured to explain them in such a manner as to render them comprehensible. PRAXEAS, a man of genius and learning, began to propagate these explications at *Rome*, and was severely persecuted for the errors they contained. He denied any *real* distinction between the *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, and maintained that the *Father*, sole creator of all things, had united to himself the *human nature* of CHRIST. Hence his followers were called *Monarchians*, because of their denying a plurality of persons in the Deity; and also *Patropassians*, because, according to TERTULLIAN's account, they believed that the FATHER was so intimately united with the man CHRIST, his son, that he suffered with him the anguish of an afflicted life, and the torments of an ignominious death. However ready many may have been to embrace this erroneous doctrine, it does not appear, that this sect formed to themselves a separate place of worship, or removed themselves from the ordinary assemblies of Christians [a].

XXI. An opinion highly resembling that now Theodotus, mentioned was, about the same time, professed at Artemon.

[a] TERTULLIANI Lib. contra Praxeam; as also PETRI WESSELINGII Probabilia, cap. xxvi. p. 223.

CENT. Rome by THEODOTUS, who, though a tanner, was
 II. a man of profound learning, and also by ARTEMAS,
 PART II. or ARTEMON, from whom the sect of the Artemo-
 nites derived their origin. The accounts given of
 these two persons, by the ancient writers, are not
 only few in number, but are also extremely ambi-
 guous and obscure. Their sentiments, however, as
 far as they can be collected from the best records,
 amount to this; "That, at the birth of the man
 "CHRIST, a certain *divine energy*, or portion of the
 "divine nature (and not the *person* of the father,
 "as PRAXEAS imagined), united itself to him."

It is impossible to decide with any degree of
 certainty which of the two was the most ancient,
 THEODOTUS, or ARTEMON; as also whether they
 both taught the same doctrine, or differed in their
 opinions. One thing, indeed, is certain, and that
 is, that the disciples of both applied the dictates of
 philosophy, and even the science of geometry, to the
 explication of the Christian doctrine.

Hermoge-
 nes.

XXII. A like attachment to the dictates of a
 presumptuous philosophy, induced HERMOGENES,
 a painter by profession, to abandon the doctrine of
 Christianity concerning the origin of the world
 and the nature of the soul, and thus to raise new
 troubles in the church. Regarding *matter* as the
 fountain of all evil, he could not persuade him-
 self that God had created it from nothing, by
 an almighty act of his will; and therefore he main-
 tained, that the world, with whatever it contains,
 as also the souls of men, and other spirits, were
 formed by the Deity from an uncreated and eternal
 mass of corrupt *matter*. In this doctrine there
 were many intricate things, and it manifestly jar-
 red with the opinions commonly received among
 Christians relative to that difficult and almost un-
 searchable subject. How HERMOGENES explained
 those doctrines of Christianity, which opposed his

system, neither TERTULLIAN, who refuted it, nor CENT. any of the ancient writers, inform us [b].

II.

PART II.

XXIII. These sects, which we have now been passing in review, may be justly regarded as the offspring of philosophy. But they were succeeded by one in which ignorance reigned, and which was the mortal enemy of philosophy and letters.

The illiterate sects.

It was formed by MONTANUS, an obscure man, without any capacity or strength of judgment, and who lived in a Phrygian village called *Pepuza*. This weak man was foolish and extravagant enough to take it into his head, that he was the *paraclete*, or comforter [c], which the divine Saviour, at his

Montanus.

[b] There is yet extant a book written by TERTULLIAN against HERMOGENES, in which the opinions of the latter, concerning *matter, and the origin of the world*, are warmly opposed. We have lost another work of the same author, in which he refuted the notion of HERMOGENES concerning *the Soul*.

[c] Those are undoubtedly mistaken, who have asserted that MONTANUS gave himself out for the *Holy Ghost*. However weak he may have been in point of capacity, he was not fool enough to push his pretensions so far. Neither have they, who inform us that MONTANUS pretended to have received from above the same *spirit, or paraclete*, which formerly animated the apostles, interpreted with accuracy the meaning of this heretic. It is, therefore, necessary to observe here, that MONTANUS made a distinction between the *paraclete*, promised by CHRIST to his apostles, and the *Holy Spirit*, that was shed upon them on the day of pentecost; and understood, by the former, a divine teacher pointed out by CHRIST under the name of *paraclete*, or comforter, who was to perfect the gospel by the addition of some doctrines omitted by our Saviour, and to cast a full light upon others which were expressed in an obscure and imperfect manner, though for wise reasons which subsisted during the ministry of CHRIST; and, indeed, MONTANUS was not the only person that made this distinction. Other Christian doctors were of opinion, that the *paraclete*, promised by JESUS to his disciples, was a divine ambassador, entirely distinct from the Holy Ghost, which was shed upon the apostles. In the third century, MANES interpreted the promise of CHRIST in this manner. He pretended moreover, that he himself was the *paraclete*; and that, in his person, the prediction was fulfilled. Every one knows, that MAHOMET entertained the same notion,

CENT. departure from the earth, promised to send to his
 II. disciples to lead them to all truth. He made no
 PART II. attempts upon the peculiar doctrines of Christianity,
 but only declared, that he was sent, with a divine
 commission, to give to the moral precepts delivered
 by CHRIST and his apostles the finishing *touch* that
 was to bring them to perfection. He was of opinion,
 that CHRIST and his apostles made, in their precepts,
 many allowances to the infirmities of those among
 whom they lived, and that this condescending indul-
 gence rendered their system of moral laws imperfect
 and incomplete. He therefore added to the laws of
 the gospel many austere decisions; inculcated the
 necessity of multiplying fasts; prohibited second
 marriages as unlawful; maintained that the church
 should refuse absolution to those who had fallen into
 the commission of enormous sins; and condemned
 all care of the body, especially all nicety in dress,
 and all female ornaments. The excessive austerity of
 this ignorant fanatic did not stop here; he shewed
 the same aversion to the noblest employments of the
 mind, that he did to the innocent enjoyments of life;
 and gave it as his opinion, that philosophy, arts,
 and whatever favoured of polite literature, should
 be mercilessly banished from the Christian church.
 He looked upon those Christians as guilty of a most
 heinous transgression, who saved their lives, by flight,
 from the persecuting sword, or who ransomed them,
 by money, from the hands of their cruel and
 mercenary judges. I might mention many other
 precepts of the same teacher, equal to these in
 severity and rigour.

and applied to himself the prediction of CHRIST, concerning the
 coming of the *paraclete*. It was, therefore, this divine messenger
 that MONTANUS pretended to be, and not the Holy Ghost.
 This will appear, with the utmost evidence, to those who read
 with attention the account given of this matter by TERTULLIAN,
 who was the most famous of all the disciples of MONTANUS,
 and the most perfectly acquainted with every point of his
 doctrine.

XXIV. It was impossible to suffer, within the bounds of the church, an enthusiast, who gave himself out for a teacher; whose precepts were superior in sanctity to those of CHRIST himself, and who imposed his austere discipline upon Christians, as enjoined, by a divine authority, and dictated by the oracle of celestial wisdom, which spoke to the world through him. Besides, his dismal predictions concerning the disasters that were to happen in the empire, and the approaching destruction of the Roman republic, were every way proper to render him obnoxious to the governing powers, and also to excite their resentment against the church, which nourished such an inauspicious prophet in its bosom. MONTANUS, therefore, first by a decree of certain assemblies, and afterwards by the unanimous voice of the whole church, was solemnly separated from the body of the faithful. It is, however, certain, that the very severity of his doctrines gained him the esteem and confidence of many, who were far from being of the lowest order. The most eminent among these were, PRISCILLA and MAXIMILLA, ladies more remarkable for their opulence than for their virtue, and who fell with a high degree of warmth and zeal into the visions of their fanatical chief, prophesied like him, and imitated the pretended *paraclete* in all the variety of his extravagance and folly. Hence it became an easy matter for MONTANUS to erect a new church, which was also, in effect, first established at *Pepuza*, a town in *Phrygia*, and afterwards spread abroad through *Asia*, *Africa*, and a part of *Europe*. The most eminent and learned of all the followers of this rigid enthusiast was TERTULLIAN, a man of great learning and genius, but of an austere and melancholy natural temper. This great man, by adopting the sentiments of MONTANUS, and maintaining his cause with fortitude, and even vehemence, in a multitude of books written upon that occasion, has shewn to

CENT.
II.
PART II.
The success
of Montanus
and his
doctrine.

CENT. the world a mortifying spectacle of the deviations of
 II. which human nature is capable, even in those in
 PART II. whom it seems to have approached the nearest to
 ————— perfection [*d*].

[*d*] For an account of the Montanists, see EUSEB. *Eccl. History*, book v. ch. xvi. and in general all the writers ancient and modern (especially TERTULLIAN) who have professedly written concerning the sects of the early ages. The learned Mr. THEOPHILUS WERNSDORF published at *Dantzick*, in the year 1751, a most ingenious exposition of whatever regards the sect of the Montanists, under the following title, *Commentatio de Montanistis Seculi secundi, vulgo creditis Hereticis.*

THE
THIRD CENTURY.

PART I.

The External HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

Which contains the prosperous events that happened to the church during this century.

I. **T**HAT the Christians suffered, in this CENT. century, calamities and injuries of the most dreadful III. kind, is a matter that admits of no debate; nor was PART I. there, indeed, any period in which they were not exposed to perpetual dangers. For not to mention the fury of the people, set in motion, so often, by the craft and zeal of their licentious priests, the evil came from a higher source; the prætors and magistrates, notwithstanding the ancient laws of the emperors in favour of the Christians, had it in their power to pursue them with all sorts of vexations, as often as avarice, cruelty, or superstition roused up the infernal spirit of persecution in their breasts. At the same time, it is certain, that the rights and privileges of the Christians were multiplied, in this century, much more than many are apt to imagine. In the The rights and immunities of the Christians increase army, at court, and, indeed, in all the orders of the nation, there was a considerable number of Christians, who lived entirely unmolested; and, what is still more, the profession of Christianity was no obstacle to public preferment under most of the emperors that reigned in this century. It is also certain, that the Christians had, in many places,

CENT. houses where they assembled for the purposes of
 III. divine worship, and that with the knowledge and
 PART I. connivance of the emperors and magistrates. And
 though it be more than probable, that this liberty
 was, upon many occasions, and even for the most
 part, purchased at a high rate; yet it is manifest,
 that some of the emperors were very favourably
 inclined towards the Christians, and were far from
 having an aversion to their religion.

under vari-
 ous empere-
 rors.

The benign-
 ity of
 Alexander
 towards
 the Chris-
 tians.

II. CARACELLA, the son of SEVERUS, was pro-
 claimed emperor in the year 211, and, during the
 six years of his government, he neither oppressed
 the Christians himself, nor permitted any others to
 treat them with cruelty or injustice. HELIOGA-
 BALUS also, though in other respects the most infam-
 ous of all princes [a], and, perhaps, the most
 odious of all mortals, shewed no marks of bitterness
 or aversion to the disciples of JESUS. His successor,
 ALEXANDER SEVERUS, who was a prince distin-
 guished by a noble assemblage of the most excellent
 and illustrious virtues, did not, indeed, abrogate
 the laws that had been enacted against the Chris-
 tians; and this is the reason why we have some
 examples of martyrdom under his administration.
 It is nevertheless certain, that he shewed them, in
 many ways, and upon every occasion that was
 offered him, the most undoubted marks of benignity
 and favour; nay, he is said to have gone so far as
 to pay a certain sort of worship to the divine author
 of our religion [b]. This his favourable inclina-
 tion towards the Christians was probably owing, at
 first, to the instructions and counsels of his mother
 JULIA MAMMÆA, for whom he had a high degree
 of love and veneration. JULIA had very favourable
 sentiments of the Christian religion; and, being

[a] LAMPRIDIUS *Vita Elagabali*, c. iii. p. 796.

[b] LAMPRID. *De Vita Severi*, cap. xxix. p. 930. Vide
 CAROL. HENR. ZEIBICHII, *Diss. de Christo ab Alexandro in
 arario cultu*, quæ extat in *Miscellani. Lips. nov. tom. iii. p. 42.*

once at *Antioch*, sent for the famous **ORIGEN** from CENT.
Alexandria, in order to enjoy the pleasure and advan- III.
 tage of his conversation and instructions. Those PART I.
 who assert that **JULIA**, and her son **ALEXANDER**,
 embraced the Christian religion, are, by no means,
 furnished with unexceptionable testimonies to
 confirm this fact; though we may affirm, with
 confidence, that this virtuous prince looked upon
 Christianity as meriting, beyond all other religions,
 toleration and favour from the state, and considered
 its author as worthy of a place among those who
 have been distinguished by their sublime virtues,
 and honoured with a commission from above [c].

III. Under **GORDIAN** the Christians lived in Other em-
 tranquillity. His successors the **PHILIPS**, father and perors
 son, proved so favourable and even friendly to them, favourable
 that these two emperors passed, in the opinion of to the
 many, for Christians; and, indeed, the arguments Christians.
 alleged to prove that they embraced, though in a
 secret and clandestine manner, the religion of **JESUS**,
 seem to have a high degree of weight, and render
 this fact extremely probable. But as these argu- Question
 ments are opposed by others equally specious, that concerning
 famous question, relating to the religion of **PHILIP** the religion
 the Arabian, and his son, must be left undecided [d]. of the em-
peror Philip.

[c] Vide **FRID. SPANHEMII**, *Diff. de Lucii, Britonum Regis, Juliae Mammaeae, et Philipporum conversionibus*, tom. ii. opp. p. 400. Item, **PAUL. JABLONSKI**, *Diff. de Alexandro Severo sacris Christianis per Guosticos initiato*, in *Miscellan. Lips. novis*, tom. iv. p. 56.

[d] The authors of the Universal History have determined the question which **Dr. MOSHEIM** leaves here undecided; and they think it may be affirmed, that **PHILIP** and his son embraced the gospel, since that opinion is built upon such a respectable authority as that of **JEROM**, **CHRYSOSTOM**, **DIONYSIUS** of Alexandria, **ZONARAS**, **NICEPHORUS**, **CEDRENIUS**, **RUFFINUS**, **SYNCELLUS**, **OROSIUS**, **JORNANDES**, **AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS**, the learned cardinal **BONA**, **VINCENTIUS LIRINENSIS**, **HUETIUS**, and others. **Dr. MOSHEIM** refers his readers, for an account of this matter, to the following writers: **SPANHEIM**. *De Christianismo Philipp.* tom. ii. opp. p. 400.

CENT. Neither side offers reasons so victorious and unanswerable, as to produce a full and complete conviction; and this is therefore one of those many cases, where a suspension of judgment is both allowable and wise. With respect to GALLIANUS, and some other emperors of this century, if they did not professedly favour the progress of Christianity, yet neither did they oppress its followers, nor retard its advancement.

The number of Christians increased.

IV. This clemency and benevolence, which the followers of JESUS experienced from great men, and, especially, from those of imperial dignity, must be placed, without doubt, among those human means that contributed to multiply the number of Christians, and to enlarge the bounds of the church.

The causes thereof partly divine.

Other causes, however, both *divine* and *human*, must be added here, to render a complete and satisfactory account of this matter. Among the causes which belong to the first of these classes, we do not only reckon the intrinsic force of celestial truth, and the piety and fortitude of those who declared it to the world, but also that *especial* and *interposing providence*, which, by dreams and visions, presented to the minds of many, who were either inattentive to the Christian doctrine, or its professed enemies, touched their hearts with a conviction of the truth, and a sense of its importance, and engaged them, without delay, to profess themselves the disciples of CHRIST [e]. To this may also be added, the healing of diseases, and other miracles, which many Christians were yet enabled to perform by invoking

ENTRETIENS *Historiques sur le Christianisme de l'Empereur Philippe, par. P. De L. F.* MAMMACHI *Origines et Antiqu. Christianæ*, tom. ii. p. 252. Confer FABRIC. *De luce Evang. &c.* p. 252.

[e] See, for an account of this matter, the following authors: ORIGEN, lib. i. *adv. Celsum*, p. 35. *Homil. in Luca* vii. p. 216. tom. ii. opp. edit. Basil; as also TERTULLIAN. *De anima*, cap. xiv. p. 348. edit. Rigaltii, and EUSEBIUS, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. v. p. 208.

the name of the divine Saviour [*f*]. The number GENT. of miracles was, however, much less in this than III. the preceding century; nor must this alteration be PART I. attributed only to the divine wisdom, which rendered miraculous interpositions less frequent in proportion as they became less necessary; but also to his justice, which was provoked to diminish the frequency of gifts, which some did not scruple to pervert to mercenary purposes [*g*].

V. If we turn our view to the human means that Partly hu- contributed, at this time, to multiply the numbers man. of Christians, and to extend the limits of the church, we shall find a great variety of causes uniting their influence, and contributing jointly to this happy purpose. Among these must be reckoned the translations of the sacred writings into various languages, the zeal and labours of ORIGEN in spreading abroad copies of them every where, and the different works that were published, by learned and pious men, in defence of the gospel. We may add also to this, that the acts of beneficence and liberality, performed by the Christians, even towards those whose religious principles they abhorred, had a great influence in attracting the esteem and removing the prejudices of many, who were thus prepared for examining, with candor, the Christian doctrine, and, consequently, for receiving its divine light. The worshippers of the Pagan deities must have been destitute of every generous affection, of every humane feeling, if the view of that boundless charity, which the Christians exercised towards the poor, the love they expressed even to their enemies, the tender care they took of the sick and infirm, the humanity they discovered in the redemption of captives, and the other illustrious virtues, which rendered them

[*f*] ORIGEN, *contr. Celsum*, lib. i. p. 5. 7. EUSEB. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. vii. CYPRIANUS, *Ep. i. ad Donat.* p. 3. and the notes of BALUSIUS upon that passage, p. 376.

[*g*] SPENCER, not. in *Origen. contra Celsum*, p. 6, 7.

CENT. III. fo worthy of universal esteem, had not touched their hearts, dispelled their prepossessions, and rendered them more favourable to the disciples of JESUS. If, among the causes of the propagation of Christianity, there is any place due to *piou: fraud*, it is certain, that they merit a very small part of the honour of having contributed to this glorious purpose; since they were practised by few, and that very seldom.

Several countries receive the light of the gospel.

VI. That the limits of the church were extended in this century, is a matter beyond all controversy. It is not, however, equally certain in what manner, by what persons, or in what parts of the world, this was effected. ORIGEN, invited from *Alexandria* by an Arabian prince, converted, by his assiduous labours, a certain tribe of wandering Arabs to the Christian faith [b]. The Goths, a fierce and warlike people, who inhabited the countries of *Myfia* and *Thrace*, and who, accustomed to rapine, vexed the neighbouring provinces by perpetual incursions, received the knowledge of the gospel by the means of certain Christian doctors sent thither from *Asia*. The holy lives of these venerable teachers, and the miraculous powers with which they were endowed, attracted the esteem even of a people educated to nothing but plunder and devastation, and absolutely uncivilized by letters or science; and their authority and influence grew so great, and produced, in process of time, such remarkable effects, that a great part of this barbarous people became the disciples of CHRIST, and put off, in a manner, that ferocity that was become so natural to them [i].

Among others
Gaul and
Germany.

VII. The Christian assemblies, founded in Gaul by the Asiatic doctors in the preceding century,

[b] EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. xix. p. 221.

[i] SOZOMENUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. ii. cap. vi. PAULUS DIACONUS, *Hist. Miscell.* lib. ii. cap. xiv. PHILOSTORGIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. ii. cap. v. p. 470.

were few in number, and of very little extent; but both their number and their extent were considerably increased from the time of the emperor DECIUS. Under his reign DIONYSIUS, GATIAN, TROPHYMUS, PAUL, SATURNINUS, MARTIAL, STREMONIUS, men of exemplary piety, passed into this province, and amidst dangers and trials of various kinds, erected churches at *Paris, Tours, Arles*, and several other places. This was followed by a rapid progress of the gospel among the Gauls, as the disciples of these pious teachers spread, in a short time, the knowledge of Christianity through the whole country [k]. We must also place in this century the origin of several German churches, such as those of *Cologn, Treves, Metz*, and others, of which EUCHARIUS, VLAERIUS, MATERNUS, and CLEMENS, were the principal founders [l]. The historians of *Scotland* inform us, that the light of Christianity arose upon that country during this century; but, though there be nothing improbable in this assertion, yet it is not built upon incontestable authority [m].

CENT.
III.
PART I.

[k] See the history of the *Fraucks* by GREGORY DE TOURS, book i. ch. xxviii. p. 23. THEODOR. RUINART, *Acta Martyr. sincera*, p. 109.

[l] See AUG. CALMET, *Hist. de Lorraine*, tom. i. dissert. i. p. 7. JO. NICOL. ab HONTHEIM, *Historiæ Trevirensis*, tom. i. ubi *Diss. de æra fundati Episcopatus Trevirensis*.

[m] See USHER et STILLINGFLEET, *Antiquit. et Origin. Ecclesiar. Brit.* See also GEORGE MACKENZIE, *De Regali Scotorum profapia*, cap. viii. p. 119.

CHAPTER II.

Concerning the calamitous events which happened to the church in this century.

CENT.

III.

PART. 1

The perfecution under Severus.

I. IN the beginning of this century, the Christian church suffered calamities of various kinds throughout the provinces of the Roman empire. These sufferings increased in a terrible manner, in consequence of a law made, in the year 203, by the emperor SEVERUS (who, in other respects, was certainly no enemy to the Christians), by which every subject of the empire was prohibited to change the religion of his ancestors for that of the Christian or Jewish [*n*]. This law was, in its effects, most prejudicial to the Christians; for, though it did not formally condemn them, and seemed only adapted to put a stop to the further progress of the gospel, yet it induced rapacious and unjust magistrates to persecute even unto death the poorer sort among the Christians, that thus the richer might be led, through fear of like treatment, to purchase their tranquillity and safety at an expensive rate. Hence many of the disciples of CHRIST, both in *Egypt*, and also in several parts of *Asia* and *Africa*, were put to death in consequence of this law. Among these LEONIDAS the father of ORIGEN, PERPETUA and FELICITAS (those two famous African ladies, whose *acts* [*o*] are come down to our times), POTAMIENA MARCELLA, and other martyrs of both sexes, acquired an illustrious name by the magnanimity and tranquillity with which they endured the most cruel sufferings.

[*n*] EUSEBIUS, *Eccles. Histor.* lib. vi. cap. i. SPARTIANUS in *Severo*, cap. xvi, xvii. p. 617.

[*o*] THEOD. RUINART, *Acta Martyr.* p. 90.

II. From the death of SEVERUS to the reign of MAXIMIN, the condition of the Christians was, in some places, prosperous, and in all, supportable. But with MAXIMIN the face of affairs changed. This unworthy emperor, having animated the Roman soldiers to assassinate ALEXANDER SEV. RUS dreaded the resentment of the Christians, whom that excellent prince had favoured and protected in a distinguished manner ; and for this reason, he ordered the bishops, whom he knew that ALEXANDER had always treated as his intimate friends, to be seized and put to death [p]. During his reign, the Christians suffered in the most barbarous manner ; for though the edict of this tyrant extended only to the bishops and leaders of the Christian church, yet its shocking effects reached much further ; as it animated the heathen priests, the magistrates, and the multitude, against Christians of every rank and order [q].

CENT.
III.
PART I.

That under Maximin.

III. This storm was succeeded by a calm, in which the Christians enjoyed an happy tranquillity for many years. The accession of DECIUS TRAJAN to the imperial throne, in the year 249, raised a new tempest, in which the fury of persecution fell in a dreadful manner upon the church of CHRIST. For this emperor, either from an ill-grounded fear of the Christians, or from a violent zeal for the superstition of his ancestors, published most terrible and cruel edicts ; by which the prætors were ordered, upon pain of death, either to extirpate the whole body of Christians without exception, or to force them, by torments of various kinds, to return to the Pagan worship. Hence, in all the provinces of the empire, multitudes of Christians were, during the space of two years, put to death by the most horrid

Many Christians, in consequence of the cruelty of Decius, become chargeable with defection.

[p] EUSEB. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xxviii. p. 225. OROSIUS. *Hist.* lib. vii. cap. xix. p. 509.

[q] ORIGEN. tom. xxviii. in Matth. opp. tom. i. p. 137. See also FIRMILIANUS in CYPRIANI *Epistolis*, p. 140.

CENT. III. P A R T I. punishments [*r*], which an ingenious barbarity could invent. The most unhappy circumstance of all these cruelties was, their fatal influence upon the faith and constancy of many of the sufferers; for as this persecution was much more terrible than all those that preceded it, so a great number of Christians, dismayed, not at the approach of death, but at the aspect of those dreadful, and lingering torments, which a barbarous magistracy had prepared to combat their constancy, fell from the profession of their faith, and secured themselves from punishment, either by *offering sacrifices*, or by *burning incense*, before the images of the gods, or by purchasing *certificates* from the Pagan priests. Hence arose the opprobrious names of SACRIFICATI, given to those who *sacrificed*; THURIFICATI, to those who *burned incense*; and LIBELLATICI, to those who *produced certificates* [*s*].

Warm contentis occasioned by the defection of Christians.

IV. This defection of such a prodigious number of Christians under DECIUS was the occasion of great commotions in the church, and produced debates of a very difficult and delicate nature. For

[*r*] EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xxxix. p. 234. cap. xli. p. 238. GREGORIUS NYSS. *in vita Thaumaturgi*, tom. iii. opp. p. 568. CYPRIANUS, *De lapsis*, p. 182.

[*s*] These *certificates* were not all equally criminal, nor supposed all a degree of apostacy equally enormous. It is therefore necessary to advertise the reader of the following distinctions omitted by Dr. MOSHEIM: These certificates were sometimes no more than a permission to abstain from sacrificing, obtained by a fee given to the judges, and were not looked upon as an act of apostacy, unless the Christians, who demanded them, had declared to the judges, that they had conformed themselves to the emperor's edicts. But, at other times, they contained a profession of paganism, and were either offered voluntarily by the apostate, or were subscribed by him, when they were presented to him by the persecuting magistrate. Many used certificates, as letters of security, obtained from the priests at a high rate, and which dispensed them from either professing or denying their sentiments. See SPANHEIM. *Historia Christiana*, p. 732, 733. See also PRUD. MARANUS *in vita Cypriani*, operibus ejus præmissa, § 6. p. 54.

the *lapsed*, or those that had fallen from their Christian profession, were desirous to be restored to church-communion, without submitting to that painful course of *penitential* discipline, which the ecclesiastical laws indispensably required. The bishops were divided upon this matter: some were for shewing the desired indulgence, while others opposed it with all their might [t]. In *Egypt* and *Africa*, many, in order to obtain more speedily the pardon of their apostacy, interested the *martyrs* in their behalf, and received from them *letters of reconciliation and peace**, i. e. a formal act, by which they (the martyrs) declared, in their last moments, that they looked upon them as worthy of their communion, and desired of consequence that they should be restored to their place among the brethren. Some bishops and presbyters re-admitted into the church with too much facility, apostates and transgressors, who produced such testimonies as these. But CYPRIAN, bishop of *Carthage*, a man of severe wisdom and great dignity of character, acted in quite another way. Though he had no intention to derogate from the authority of the venerable martyrs, yet he opposed with vigour this unreasonable lenity, and set limits to the efficacy of these letters of reconciliation and peace. Hence arose a keen dispute between him and the martyrs, confessors, presbyters, and *lapsed*, seconded by the people; and yet, notwithstanding this formidable multitude of adversaries, the venerable bishop came off victorious [u].

V. GALLUS, the successor of DECIUS, and VOLUSIANUS, son of the former, re-animated the

The persecutions under Gallus and Volusianus.

[t] EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xlv. CYPRIAN. *Epistola*, in many places.

[u] The whole history of this controversy may be gathered from the epistles of CYPRIAN. See also GABR. ALBASPINÆUS, *Observat. Eccles.* lib. i. observ. xx. p. 94. DALLÆUS, *De panis et satisfactionibus humanis*, lib. vii. cap. xvi. p. 706.

* Libellus Pacis.

CENT. flame of persecution, which was beginning to burn
 III. with less fury [w]. And, besides the sufferings
 3. which the Christians had to undergo in consequence
 of their cruel edicts, they were also involved in the
 public calamities that prevailed at this time, and
 suffered grievously from a terrible pestilence, which
 spread desolation through many provinces of the
 empire [x]. This pestilence also was an occasion
 which the Pagan priests used with dexterity to
 renew the rage of persecution against them, by
 persuading the people that it was on account of the
 lenity used toward the Christians, that the gods
 sent down their judgments upon the nations. In
 the year 254, VALERIAN being declared emperor;
 made the fury of persecution cease, and restored the
 church to a state of tranquillity.

Under Val-
 erian.

VI. The clemency and benevolence which
 VALERIAN shewed to the Christians, continued
 until the fifth year of his reign. Then the scene
 began to change, and the change indeed was sud-
 den. MACRIANUS, a superstitious and cruel bigot
 to paganism, had gained an entire ascendant over
 VALERIAN, and was his chief counsellor in every
 thing that related to the administration of the govern-
 ment. By the persuasion of this imperious minister,
 the Christians were prohibited to assemble themselves
 together, and their bishops and doctors were sent
 into banishment. This edict was published in the
 year 257, and was followed, the year after, by one
 still more severe: in consequence of which a con-
 siderable number of Christians, in all the different
 provinces of the empire, were put to death, and
 that by such cruel methods of execution, as were
 much more terrible than death itself. Of those
 that suffered in this persecution, the most eminent
 were CYPRIAN, bishop of *Carthage*; SIXTUS,

[w] EUSEB. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vii. cap. i. p. 250. CYPRIAN.
Epist. lvii, lviii.

[x] Vid. CYPRIANI *Lib. ad Demetrianum.*

bishop of Rome; and LAURENTIUS, a Roman deacon, who was barbarously consumed by a slow and lingering fire. An unexpected event suspended, for a while, the sufferings of the Christians. VALERIAN was made prisoner in the war against the Persians; and his son GALLIENUS, in the year 260, restored peace to the church [y].

VII. The condition of the Christians was rather supportable than happy, under the reign of GAL- LIENUS, which lasted eight years; as also under the short administration of his successor CLAUDIUS. Nor did they suffer much during the first four years of the reign of AURELIAN, who was raised to the empire in the year 270. But the fifth year of this emperor's administration would have proved fatal to them, had not his violent death prevented the execution of his cruel purposes. For while, set on by the unjust suggestions of his own superstition, or by the barbarous counsels of a bigotted priesthood, he was preparing a formidable attack upon the Christians, he was obliged to march into Gaul, where he was murdered, in the year 275, before his edicts were published throughout the empire [z]. Few therefore suffered martyrdom under his reign; and, indeed, during the remainder of this century, the Christians enjoyed a considerable measure of ease and tranquillity. They were, at least, free from any violent attacks of oppression and injustice, except in a small number of cases, where the avarice and superstition of the Roman magistrates interrupted their tranquillity [a].

CENT.
III.
PART I.

The state
of the
church un-
der Gal-
lienus,
Claudius,
and Aure-
lian.

[y] EUSEB. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vii. cap. x, xi. p. 255. *Acta Cypriani*, as they are to be found in the *Acta Martyrum* RUI- NARTI, p. 216. CYPRIANI *Epist.* lxxvii. p. 158. edit. Baluz. lxxxii. p. 165.

[z] EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vii. cap. xxx. LACTAN- TIUS, *De mortibus Persequutor.* cap. vi.

[a] Among these vexations may be reckoned the cruelty of GALERIUS MAXIMIAN, who, towards the conclusion of this century, persecuted the ministers of his court, and the soldiers of

CENT.

III.

PART 1.

The at-
tempts of
the philo-
sophers
against
Christi-
anity.

VIII. While the Roman emperors and proconsuls employed against the Christians the terror of unrighteous edicts, and the edge of the destroying sword, the Platonic philosophers, who have been described above, exhausted against Christianity all the force of their learning and eloquence, and all the resources of their art and dexterity, in rhetorical declamations, subtle writings, and ingenious stratagems. These artful adversaries were so much the more dangerous and formidable, as they had adopted several of the doctrines and institutions of the gospel, and with a specious air of moderation and impartiality, were attempting, after the example of their master AMMONIUS, to reconcile paganism with Christianity, and to form a sort of coalition of the ancient and the new religion. These philosophers had at their head, in this century, PORPHYRY, a *Syrian*, or, as some allege, a *Tyrian*, by birth, who wrote against the Christians a long and laborious work, which was destroyed afterwards by an imperial edict [b]. He was, undoubtedly, a writer of great dexterity, genius, and erudition, as those of his works that yet remain sufficiently testify. But those very works, and the history of his life, shew us, at the same time, that he was a much more virulent, than a formidable enemy to the Christians. For by them it appears, that he was much more attentive to the suggestions of a superstitious spirit, and the visions of a lively fancy, than to the sober dictates of right reason and a sound judgment. And it may be more especially observed of the fragments that yet remain of his work against the Christians, that they are equally destitute of judgment and

his army, who had professed Christianity. See EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. viii. cap. i. p. 292. iv. p. 295. 317.

[b] See HOLSTENIUS, *De vita Porphyri.* cap. xi. FABRIC *Lux Evang.* p. 154. BUDDIUS, *Isagoge in Theologiam*, tom. ii. p. 1009.

equity, and are utterly unworthy of a wife and a good man [c].

IX. Many were the deceitful and perfidious stratagems by which this sect endeavoured to obscure the lustre, and to diminish the authority, of the Christian doctrine. But none of these were more dangerous than the seducing artifice with which they formed a comparison between the life, actions, and miracles of CHRIST, and the history of the ancient philosophers; and placed the contending parties in such fallacious points of view, as to make the pretended sages of antiquity appear in nothing inferior to the divine Saviour. With this view, ARCHYTAS of *Tarentum*, PYTHAGORAS, of whom PORPHYRY wrote the life, APOLLONIUS TYANÆUS, a Pythagorean philosopher, whose miracles and peregrinations were highly celebrated by the vulgar, were brought upon the scene, and exhibited as divine teachers and rivals of the glory of the Son of God. PHILOSTRATUS, one of the most eminent rhetoricians of this age, composed a pompous history of the life of APOLLONIUS, who was little else than a cunning knave, and did nothing but ape the austerity and sanctity of PYTHAGORAS. This history appears manifestly designed to draw a parallel

CENT.
III.
PART I.
Comparisons drawn between the philosophers and Christ.

☞ [c] This work of PORPHYRY against the Christians was burnt by an edict of CONSTANTINE the GREAT. It was divided into fifteen books, as we find in EUSEBIUS, and contained the blackest calumnies against the Christians. The *first* book treated of the contradictions which he pretended to have found in the sacred writings.—The greatest part of the *twelfth* is employed in fixing the time when the prophecies of DANIEL were written. For PORPHYRY himself found these prophecies so clearly and evidently fulfilled, that, to avoid the force of the argument, deducible from thence, in favour of Christianity, he was forced to have recourse to this absurd supposition, that *these prophecies had been published under the name of DANIEL*, by one who lived in the time of ANTIOCHUS, and wrote after the arrival of the events foretold. METHODIUS, EUSEBIUS, and APOLLINARIS, wrote against PORPHYRY. But these refutations have been long since lost.

CENT. between CHRIST and the philosopher of *Tyana*;
 III. but the impudent fictions, and the ridiculous fables,
 PART I. with which this work is filled, must, one would
 think, have rendered it incapable of deceiving any
 who were possessed of a sound mind; any, but such
 as, through the corruption of vicious prejudices,
 were willing to be deceived [d].

The pernicious consequences of this comparison.

X. But as there are no opinions however absurd, and no stories however idle and improbable, that a weak and ignorant multitude, who are more attentive to the pomp of *words* than to the truth of *things*, will not easily swallow; so it happened, that many were ensnared by the absurd attempts of these insidious philosophers. Some were induced by these perfidious stratagems to abandon the Christian religion, which they had embraced. Others, when they heard that true Christianity (as it was taught by JESUS, and not as it was afterwards corrupted by his disciples) differed almost in nothing from the Pagan religion properly explained and restored to its primitive purity, determined to remain in the religion of their ancestors, and in the worship of their gods. A third sort were led, by these comparisons between CHRIST and the ancient philosophers, to form to themselves a motley system of religion composed of the tenets of both parties, whom they treated with the same veneration and respect. Such was, particularly, the method of ALEXANDER SEVERUS, who paid indiscriminately divine honours to CHRIST, and to ORPHEUS, to APOLLONIUS, and the other philosophers and heroes whose names were famous in ancient times.

The attempts of the Jews against the Christians.

XI. The credit and power of the Jews were now too much diminished to render them as capable of injuring the Christians, by their influence upon

[d] See OLEARIUS's preface to the life of APOLLONIUS, by PHILGSTRATUS; as also MOSHEIM's notes to his Latin translation of CUDWORTH's *Intellectual System*, p. 304. 309. 311. 834.

the magistrates, as they had formerly been. This CENT. did not, however, discourage their malicious efforts, III. as the books which TERTULLIAN and CYPRIAN PART I. have written against them abundantly shew, with several other writings of the Christian doctors, who complained of the malignity of the Jews, and of their perfidious stratagems [e]. During the persecution under SEVERUS, a certain person called DOMNINUS, who had embraced Christianity, deserted to the Jews, doubtless, to avoid the punishments that were decreed against the Christians; and it was to recal this apostate to his duty and his profession, that SERAPION, bishop of *Antioch*, wrote a particular treatise against the Jews [f]. We may, however, conclude from this instance, that when the Christians were persecuted, the Jews were treated with less severity and contempt, on account of their enmity against the disciples of JESUS. And from the same fact we may also learn, that, though they were in a state of great subjection and abasement, yet they were not entirely deprived of all power of oppressing the Christians.

[e] HYPPOLYTUS, *Serm. in Susann. et Daniel.* tom. 1. opp. p. 274. 276.

[f] EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xii. p. 213.

 PART II.

 The INTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

Concerning the state of letters and philosophy during this century.

CENT. III. PART II. **T**HE arts and sciences, which, in the preceding century, were in a declining state, seemed, in this, ready to expire, and had now lost all their vigour, and all their lustre. The celebrated rhetorician LONGINUS, and the eminent historian DION CASSIUS, with a few others, were the last among the Greeks, who stood in the breach against the prevailing ignorance and barbarism of the times. Men of learning and genius were less numerous still in the western provinces of the empire, though there were, in several places, flourishing schools erected for the advancement of the sciences, and the culture of taste and genius. Different reasons contributed to this decay of learning. Few of the emperors patronized the sciences, or encouraged, by the prospect of their favour and protection, that emulation, which is the soul of the republic of letters. Besides, the civil wars that almost always distracted the empire, were extremely unfavourable to the pursuit of science, and the perpetual incursions of the barbarous nations interrupted that leisure and tranquillity which are so essential to the progress of learning and knowledge, and extinguished, among a

people accustomed to nothing almost but the din of CENT. arms, all desire of literary acquisitions [g].

III. II. If we turn our eyes towards the state of PART II. philosophy, the prospect will appear somewhat less desolate and comfortless. There were, as yet, in several of the Grecian sects, men of considerable knowledge and reputation, of whom LONGINUS has mentioned the greatest part [b]. But all these sects were gradually eclipsed by the school of AMMONIUS, whose origin and doctrines have been considered above. This victorious sect, which was formed in *Egypt*, issued forth from thence with such a rapid progress, that, in a short time, it extended itself almost throughout the Roman empire, and drew into its *vortex* the greatest part of those who applied themselves, through inclination, to the study of philosophy. This amazing progress was due to

Plotinus. PLOTINUS, the most eminent disciple of AMMONIUS, a man of a most subtle invention, and endowed by nature with a genius capable of the most profound researches, and equal to the investigation of the most abstruse and difficult subjects. This penetrating and sublime philosopher taught publicly first in *Persia*, and afterwards at *Rome*, and in *Campania*; in all which places the youth flocked in crowds to receive his instruction. He comprehended the precepts of his philosophy, in several books, the most of which are yet extant [i].

III. The number of disciples that were formed in the school of PLOTINUS, is almost beyond credibility. The most famous of them was PORPHYRY

His doctrine universally propagated

[g] See the *Literary History of France*, by the Benedictine monks, vol. i. part II. p. 317.

[b] In his life of PLOTINUS, epitomized by PORPHYRY, ch. xx. p. 128. edit. Fabricii.

[i] See PORPHYRII *vita Plotini*, of which FABRICIUS has given an edition in his *Bibliotheca Græca*, tom. iv. p. 91. BAYLE'S *Diſſion.* tom. iii. at the article PLOTINUS; as also BRUCKER'S *Historia Critica Philoſophiæ*.

CENT. [k], who spread abroad through Sicily, and many
 III. other countries, the doctrine of his master, revised
 PART II. with great accuracy, adorned with the graces of
 flowing and elegant style, and enriched with new
 inventions and curious improvements [l]. From
 the time of AMMONIUS, until the sixth century,
 this was almost the only system of philosophy that
 was publicly taught at Alexandria. A certain
 philosopher, whose name was PLUTACH, having
 learned it there, brought it into Greece, and renewed,
 at Athens, the celebrated academy, from whence
 issued a set of illustrious philosophers, whom we
 shall have occasion to mention in the progress of
 this work [m].

Different
 sects of this
 philosophy.

IV. We have unfolded above the nature and
 doctrines of this philosophy, as far as was com-
 patible with the brevity of our present design. It
 is, however, proper to add here, that its votaries
 were not all of the same sentiments, but thought
 very differently upon a variety of subjects. This
 difference of opinion was the natural consequence
 of that fundamental law, which the whole sect was
 obliged to keep constantly in view, viz. *That truth
 was to be pursued with the utmost liberty, and to be
 collected from all the different systems in which it lay
 dispersed.* Hence it happened, that the Athenians
 rejected certain opinions that were entertained by
 the philosophers of Alexandria. None, however,
 who were ambitious to be ranked among these new
 Platonists, called in question the main doctrines,
 which formed the ground-work of their singular

☞ [k] PORPHYRY was first the disciple of LONGINUS, author of the justly celebrated *Treatise on the sublime*. But having passed from Greece to Rome, where he heard PLOTINUS, he was so charmed with the genius and penetration of this philosopher, that he attached himself entirely to him. See PLOTIN. vit. p. 3. EUNAP. c. ii. p. 17.

[l] HOLSTENIUS vit. *Porphyrii*, republished in the *Bibliotheca Græca* of FABRICIUS.

[m] MARINI *vita Procli*, cap. xi, xii. p. 25.

system; those, for example, which regarded the CENT.
existence of one God; the fountain of all things; the III.
eternity of the world; the dependance of matter upon PART II.
the Supreme Being; the nature of souls; the plurality
of gods; the method of interpreting the popular super-
stitions, &c.

V. The famous question concerning the excel-
 lence and utility of human learning, was now debated The state
 with great warmth among the Christians; and the of learning
 contending parties, in this controversy, seemed among the
 hitherto of equal force in point of numbers, or nearly Christians.
 so. Many recommended the study of philosophy,
 and an acquaintance with the Greek and Roman
 literature; while others maintained, that these were
 pernicious to the interests of genuine Christianity
 and the progress of true piety. The cause of letters
 and philosophy triumphed, however, by degrees;
 and those who wished well to them, gained ground
 more and more, till at length the superiority was
 manifestly decided in their favour. This victory
 was principally due to the influence and authority of
 ORIGEN, who having been early instructed in the
 new kind of Platonism already mentioned, blended
 it unhappily with the purer and more sublime tenets
 of a celestial doctrine, and recommended it, in the
 warmest manner, to the youth who attended his
 public lessons. The fame of this philosopher increased
 daily among the Christians; and, in proportion to
 his rising credit, his method of proposing and
 explaining the doctrines of Christianity gained autho-
 rity, till it became almost universal. Besides, some
 of the disciples of PLOTINUS having embraced
 Christianity, on condition that they should be
 allowed to retain such of the opinions of their master
 as they thought of superior excellence and merit [n],
 this must also have contributed, in some measure,
 to turn the balance in favour of the sciences. These

[n] AUGUSTINUS, *Epistola lvi. ad Dioscor.* p. 260. tom. ii. opp.

CENT. Christian philosophers preserving still a fervent zeal
 III. for the doctrines of their Heathen chief, would
 PART II. naturally embrace every opportunity of spreading
 them abroad, and infilling them into the minds of
 the ignorant and the unwary.

CHAPTER II.

Concerning the doctors and ministers of the church, and its
 form of government, during this century.

Of the form
 of church-
 govern-
 ment.

I. THE form of ecclesiastical government that had been adopted by Christians in general, had now acquired greater degrees of stability and force, both in particular churches, and in the universal society of Christians collectively considered. It appears incontestable from the most authentic records, and the best histories of this century, that, in the larger cities, there was, at the head of each church, a person to whom was given the title of *bishop*, who ruled this sacred community with a certain sort of authority, in concert, however, with the body of *presbyters*, and consulting, in matters of moment, the opinion and the voices of the whole assembly [o]. It is also equally evident, that, in every province, *one* bishop was invested with a certain superiority over the rest, in point of rank and authority. This was necessary to the maintenance of that *association* of churches that had been introduced in the preceding century; and contributed, moreover, to facilitate the holding of *general*

[o] A satisfactory account of this matter may be seen in BLONDELLI *Apologia pro Sententia Hieronymi de Episcopis et Presbyteris*, p. 136. as that author has collected all the testimonies of the ancients relative to that subject.

councils, and to give a certain degree of order and confidence to their proceedings. It must, at the same time, be carefully observed, that the rights and privileges of these *primitive bishops* were not, every where, accurately fixed, nor determined in such a manner as to prevent encroachments and disputes; nor does it appear, that the chief authority, in the province, was always conferred upon that bishop who presided over the church established in the metropolis. It is further to be noticed, as a matter beyond all dispute, that the bishops of *Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria*, considered as rulers of primitive and apostolic churches, had a kind of pre-eminence over all others, and were not only consulted frequently in affairs of a difficult and momentous nature, but were also distinguished by peculiar rights and privileges.

II. With respect, particularly, to the bishop of *Rome*; he is supposed by CYPRIAN to have had, at this time, a certain pre-eminence in the church [p]; nor does he stand alone in this opinion. But it is to be carefully observed, that even those who, with CYPRIAN, attributed this pre-eminence to the Roman prelate, insisted, at the same time, with the utmost warmth, upon the *equality*, in point of *dignity* and *authority*, that subsisted among all the members of the episcopal order. In consequence of this opinion of an *equality* among all Christian bishops, they rejected, with contempt, the judgment of the *bishop of Rome*, when they thought it ill founded or unjust, and followed their own sense of things with a perfect independence. Of this CYPRIAN himself gave an eminent example, in his famous controversy with STEPHEN bishop of *Rome*, concerning the *baptism of heretics*, in which he treated the arrogance of that imperious prelate with

CENT.
III.
PART II.

The power and dignity of the bishop of Rome in this century; what?

[p] CYPRIAN, *Ep.* lxxiii. p. 131. *Ep.* lv. p. 86. *Ib. De Unitate Ecclesie*, p. 195. edit. Baluzii.

CENT. a noble indignation, and also with a perfect contempt.

III. Whoever, therefore, compares all these things together, will easily perceive, that the *pre-eminence* of the bishop of *Rome*, was a pre-eminence of *order* and *association* [q], and not of *power* and *authority*. Or, to explain the matter yet more clearly, the pre-eminence of the bishop of *Rome*, in the universal church, was such as that of CYPRIAN, bishop of *Carthage*, was in the African churches. And every one knows, that the precedence of this latter prelate diminished in nothing the equality that subsisted among all the African bishops, invalidated in no instance their rights and liberties; but gave only to CYPRIAN, as the president of their general assemblies, a power of calling councils, of presiding in them, of admonishing his brethren in a mild and fraternal manner, and of executing, in short, such offices as the *order* and purposes of these ecclesiastical meetings necessarily required [r].

III. The face of things began now to change in the Christian church. The ancient method of ecclesiastical government seemed, in general, still to subsist, while, at the same time, by imperceptible steps, it varied from the primitive rule, and degenerated towards the form of a religious monarchy. For the bishops aspired to higher degrees of power and authority than they had formerly possessed; and not only violated the rights of the people, but also

The government of the church degenerates into a monarchical form.

[q] So I have translated *Principatus ordinis et consociationis*, which could not be otherwise rendered without a long circumlocution. The *pre-eminence* here mentioned, signifies the right of *convening councils, of presiding in them, of collecting voices, and such other things as were essential to the order of these assemblies.*

[r] See STEPH. BALUSH *adnot. ad Cypriani Epistolae*, p. 387. 389. 400. Consult particularly the LXXI. LXXIII. epistles of CYPRIAN, and the LV. addressed to CORNELIUS bishop of *Rome*, in which letters the Carthaginian prelate pleads with warmth and vehemence for the equality of all Christian bishops.

made gradual encroachments upon the privileges of the presbyters. And that they might cover these usurpations with an air of justice, and an appearance of reason, they published new doctrines concerning the nature of the church and of the episcopal dignity, which, however, were, in general, so obscure, that they themselves seem to have understood them as little as those to whom they were delivered. One of the principal authors of this change, in the government of the church, was CYPRIAN, who pleaded for the power of the bishops with more zeal and vehemence than had ever been hitherto employed in that cause, though not with an unshaken constancy and perseverance; for, in difficult and perilous times, necessity sometimes obliged him to yield, and to submit several things to the judgment and authority of the church.

IV. This change, in the form of ecclesiastical government, was soon followed by a train of vices, which dishonoured the character and authority of those to whom the administration of the church was committed. For, though several yet continued to exhibit to the world illustrious examples of primitive piety and Christian virtue, yet many were sunk in luxury and voluptuousness, puffed up with vanity, arrogance, and ambition, possessed with a spirit of contention and discord, and addicted to many other vices that cast an undeserved reproach upon the holy religion, of which they were the unworthy professors and ministers. This is testified in such an ample manner, by the repeated complaints of many of the most respectable writers of this age [s], that truth will not permit us to spread the veil, which we should otherwise be desirous to cast over such enormities among an order so sacred. The *bishops* assumed, in many places, a princely authority, particularly those

CENT.

III.

PART. II.

The vices
of the
clergy.

[s] ORIGEN. *Comm. in Matthæum*, par. I. opp. p. 420. 441, 442. EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. viii. cap. 1. p. 291, &c.

CENT. who had the greatest number of churches under their
 III. inspection, and who presided over the most opulent
 PART II. assemblies. They appropriated to their evangelical
 function the splendid ensigns of temporal majesty. A throne, surrounded with ministers, exalted above his equals the servant of the meek and humble JESUS; and sumptuous garments dazzled the eyes and the minds of the multitude into an ignorant veneration for their arrogated authority. The example of the bishops was ambitiously imitated by the *presbyters*, who, neglecting the sacred duties of their station, abandoned themselves to the indolence and delicacy of an effeminate and luxurious life. The *deacons*, beholding the presbyters deserting thus their functions, boldly usurped their rights and privileges; and the effects of a corrupt ambition were spread through every rank of the sacred order.

Hence the
 lesser
 orders.

V. From what has been now observed, we may come, perhaps, at the true origin of *minor* or lesser orders, which were, in this century, added every where to those of the *bishops*, *presbyters*, and *deacons*. For, certainly, the titles and offices of *sub-deacons*, *acolythi*, *ostiarii*, or door-keepers, *readers*, *exorcists*, and *copiatae*, would never have been heard of in the church, if its rulers had been assiduously and zealously employed in promoting the interests of truth and piety by their labours and their example. But when the honours and privileges of the bishops and presbyters were augmented, the *deacons* also began to extend their ambitious views, and to despise those lower functions and employments which they had hitherto exercised with such humility and zeal. The additional orders that were now created to diminish the labours of the present rulers of the church, had functions allotted to them, which their names partly explain [t]. The institution of *exorcists*

☞ [t] The *sub-deacons* were designed to ease the *deacons* of the meanest part of their work. Their office, consequently, was to prepare the sacred vessels of the altar, and to deliver

was a consequence of the doctrine of the New CENT.
 Platonists, which the Christians adopted, and which III.
 taught that the evil *genii*, or spirits, were continu- PART II.
 ally hovering over human bodies, towards which
 they were carried by a natural and vehement desire;
 and that vicious men were not so much impelled to
 sin by an innate depravity, or by the seduction of
 examp'e, as by the internal suggestions of some evil
 dæmons. The *copiatæ* were employed in providing
 for the decent interment of the dead.

VI. Marriage was permitted to all the various Marriage
 ranks and orders of the clergy, high and low. of the
 Those, however, who continued in a state of celibacy, clergy.

them to the deacons in time of divine service; to attend the doors of the church during the communion-service; to go on the bishop's embassies, with his letters or messages to foreign churches. In a word, they were so subordinate to the superior rulers of the church, that, by a canon of the council of *Laodicea*, they were forbidden to sit in the presence of a *deacon* without his leave.—The order of *acolythi* was peculiar to the Latin church; for there was no such order in the Greek church during the four first centuries. Their name signifies *attendants*; and their principal office was to light the candles of the church, and to attend the ministers with wine for the eucharist. The *ostiarii*, or *door-keepers*, were appointed to open and shut the doors, as officers and servants under the *deacons* and *sub-deacons*; to give notice of the times of prayer and church assemblies, which, in time of persecution, required a private signal for fear of discovery; and that probably was the first reason for instituting this order in the church of *Rome*, whose example, by degrees, was soon followed by other churches.—The *readers* were those that were appointed to read the scripture in that part of divine service to which the *catechumens* were admitted.—The *exorcists* were appointed to drive out evil spirits from the bodies of persons possessed; they had been long known in the church, but were not erected into an ecclesiastical order until the latter end of the third century.—The *copiatæ*, or *fosfarii*, were an order of the inferior clergy, whose business it was to take care of funerals, and to provide for the decent interment of the dead. In vain have BARONIUS and other Romish writers asserted, that these inferior orders were of apostolical institution. The contrary is evidently proved, since none of these offices are mentioned as having taken place before the third century, and the origin can be traced no higher than the fourth.

CENT. obtained by this abstinence a higher reputation of
 III. sanctity and virtue than others. This was owing to

PART II. an almost general persuasion, that they, who took
 wives, were of all others the most subject to the
 influence of malignant dæmons [u]. And as it was
 of infinite importance to the interests of the church,
 that no impure or malevolent spirit entered into the
 bodies of such as were appointed to govern, or to
 instruct others; so the people were desirous that the
 clergy should use their utmost efforts to abstain from
 the pleasures of the conjugal life. Many of the sacred
 order, especially in *Africa*, consented to satisfy the
 desires of the people, and endeavour to do this in
 such a manner as not to offer an entire violence to
 their own inclinations. For this purpose, they formed
 connexions with those women who had made vows
 of perpetual chastity; and it was an ordinary thing
 for an ecclesiastic to admit one of these fair saints to
 the participation of his bed, but still under the most
 solemn declarations, that nothing passed in this com-
 merce that was contrary to the rules of chastity and
 virtue [v]. These holy concubines were called by
 the Greeks, *συνοικητοι*; and by the Latins, *Mulieres
 subintroductæ*. This indecent custom alarmed the
 zeal of the more pious among the bishops, who
 employed the utmost efforts of their severity and
 vigilance to abolish it, though it was a long time
 before they entirely effected this laudable purpose.

Concubines
 introduced
 among the
 clergy

The prin-
 cipal Greek
 and Orient-
 al writers.

VII. Thus we have given a short, though not a
 very pleasing, view of the rulers of the church during
 this century; and should now mention the principal
 writers that distinguished themselves in it by their
 learned and pious productions. The most eminent
 of these, whether we consider the extent of his fame

[u] PORPHYRIUS, *περι αρχῆς*, lib. iv. p. 417.

[v] *Credat Judæus Apella*. See however DODWILL. *Diff.
 tertia Cyprianica*, and LUD. AN. MURATORIUS, *Diff. de Syni-
 factis et Agapetis*, in his *Anecd. Græc.* p. 218.; as also BALU-
 ZIUS *ad Cypriani Epistol.* p. 5. 12, &c.

or the multiplicity of his labours, was ORIGEN, a CENT. III. presbyter and catechist of Alexandria, a man of vast and uncommon abilities, and the greatest luminary of the Christian world that this age exhibited to view. Had the justness of his judgment been equal to the immensity of his genius, the fervor of his piety, his indefatigable patience, his extensive erudition, and his other eminent and superior talents, all encomiums must have fallen short of his merit. Yet such as he was, his virtues and his labours deserve the admiration of all ages; and his name will be transmitted with honour through the annals of time as long as learning and genius shall be esteemed among men [x].

PART II.

The second in renown among the writers of this century was JULIUS AFRICANUS, a native of Palestine, a man of the most profound erudition, but the greatest part of whose learned labours are unhappily lost.

HIPPOLYTUS, whose history is much involved in darkness [y], is also esteemed among the most celebrated authors and martyrs of this age; but those writings, which at present bear his name, are justly looked upon by many as either extremely corrupted, or entirely spurious.

GREGORY, bishop of *New Cæsarea*, acquired, at this time, the title of *Thaumaturgus*, i. e. wonder-worker, on account of the variety of great and signal miracles, which he is said to have wrought during the course of his ministry. Few of his works have come down to our times, and his miracles are

[x] See a very learned and useful work of the famous HUET bishop of *Avanches*, intitled, *Origeniana*. See also DOUCIN, *Histoire d'Origine et des mouvemens arrivés dans l'Eglise au sujet de sa doctrine*; and BAYLE'S *Dictionary*, at the article ORIGEN.

[y] The Benedictine monks have, with great labour and erudition, endeavoured to dispel this darkness in their *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, tom. i. p. 361.

CENT. called in question by many, as unsupported by sufficient evidence [z].

III. PART II. It were to be wished that we had more of the writings of DIONYSIUS, bishop of *Alexandria*, than those which have survived the ruins of time, since the few remaining fragments of his works discover the most consummate wisdom and prudence, and the most amiable spirit of moderation and candour, and thus abundantly vindicate, from all suspicion of flattery, the ancients who mentioned him under the title of DIONYSIUS the GREAT [a].

METHODIUS appears to have been a man of great piety, and highly respectable on account of his eminent virtue; but those of his works, which are yet extant, discover no great degree of penetration and acuteness in handling controversy and weighing opinions.

The Latin
writers.

VIII. CYPRIAN, bishop of *Carthage*, a man of the most eminent abilities and flowing eloquence, stands foremost in the list of Latin writers. His letters, and indeed the most of his works, breathe such a noble and pathetic spirit of piety, that it is impossible to read them without the warmest feelings of enthusiasm. We must however observe, that he would have been a better writer, had he been less attentive to the ornaments of rhetoric; and a better bishop, had he been able to restrain the vehemence of his temper, and to distinguish, with more acuteness, between truth and falsehood.

The *dialogue* of MINUCIUS FELIX, which bears the title of *Octavius*, effaces with such judgment, spirit, and force, the calumnies and reproaches that were cast upon the Christians by their adversaries,

[z] See VAN DALE's preface to his Latin treatise concerning *Oracles*, p. 6.

[a] The history of DIONYSIUS is particularly illustrated by JAC. BASNAGE, in his *Histoire de l'Eglise*, tom. i. livr. ii. chap. v. p. 68.

that it deserves an attentive perusal from those who are desirous to know the state of the church during this century.

CENT.
III.
PART II.

The VII Books of ARNOBIUS, the African, written *against the Gentiles*, are a still more copious and ample defence of the Christians, and, though obscure in several places, may yet be read with pleasure and with profit. It is true, that this rhetorician, too little instructed in the Christian religion when he wrote this work, has mingled great errors with solemn and important truths; and has exhibited Christianity under a certain philosophical form, very different from that in which it is commonly received.

We refer our readers, for an account of the authors of inferior note, who lived in this century, to those who have professedly given histories or enumerations of the Christian writers.

CHAPTER III.

Concerning the doctrine of the Christian church, in this century.

I. THE principal doctrines of Christianity were now explained to the people in their native purity and simplicity, without any mixture of abstract reasonings or subtle inventions; nor were the feeble minds of the multitude loaded with a great variety of precepts [b]. But the Christian doctors, who had applied themselves to the study of letters and philosophy, soon abandoned the frequented paths,

The state
of the
Christian
doctrine.

[b] See ORIGEN, in *Præf. libror. de Principiis*, tom. i. opp. p. 49. and lib. i. *De Principiis*, cap. ii. See also GREGORII NEOCÆSARIENSIS, *Expositio Fidei*, p. 11. of his works, according to the addition of GER. VOSSIUS.

CENT. and struck out into the devious wilds of fancy. The
 III. Egyptians distinguished themselves in this new
 PART II. method of explaining the truth. They looked upon
 it as a noble and a glorious task to bring the doctrines of celestial wisdom into a certain subjection to the precepts of their philosophy, and to make deep and profound researches into the intimate and hidden nature of those truths which the divine Saviour had delivered to his disciples. ORIGEN was at the head of this speculative tribe. This great man, enchanted by the charms of the Platonic philosophy, set it up as the test of all religion; and imagined, that the reasons of each doctrine were to be found in that favourite philosophy, and their nature and extent to be determined by it [c]. It must be confessed, that he handled this matter with modesty and with caution; but he still gave an example to his disciples, the abuse of which could not fail to be pernicious, and under the authority of which they would naturally indulge themselves without restraint in every wanton fancy. And so, indeed, the case was: for the disciples of ORIGEN, breaking forth from the limits fixed by their master, interpreted, in the most licentious manner, the divine truths of religion according to the tenor of the Platonic philosophy. From these teachers the philosophical, or *scholastic theology*, as it is called, derives its origin; and proceeding hence, passed through various forms and modifications according to the genius, turn, and erudition, of those who embraced it.

The rise of
 the mystic
 theology.

II. The same principles gave rise to another species of *theology*, which was called *mystic*. And what must seem at first sight surprising here is, that this *mystic theology*, though formed at the same time, and derived from the same source, with the *scholastic*,

[c] This is manifest from what remains of his *Stromata*; as also from his books *De Principiis*, which are still preserved in a Latin translation of them by RUFFINUS.

yet had a natural tendency to overturn and destroy CENT.
it. The authors of this *mystic* science are not known; III.
but the principles from whence it sprung are manifest. PART II.

Its first promoters proceeded from that known doctrine of the Platonic school, which also was adopted by ORIGEN and his disciples, that *the divine nature was diffused through all human souls*; or, in other words, that *the faculty of reason*, from which proceeds the health and vigour of the mind, was an *emanation from God into the human soul, and comprehended in it the principles and elements of all truth, human and divine.* They denied that men could, by labour or study, excite this celestial flame in their breasts; and therefore they disapproved highly of the attempts of those who, by definitions, abstract theorems, and profound speculations, endeavoured to form distinct notions of truth, and to discover its hidden nature. On the contrary, they maintained, that *silence, tranquillity, repose, and solitude*, accompanied with such acts of mortification as might tend to extenuate and exhaust the body, were the *means* by which the *hidden and internal word* was excited to produce its latent virtues, and to instruct men in the knowledge of divine things. For thus they reasoned: “They who behold with a noble contempt all human affairs, who turn away their eyes from terrestrial vanities, and shut all the avenues of the outward senses against the contagious influences of a material world, must necessarily return to God, when the spirit is thus disengaged from the impediments that prevented that happy union. And in this blessed frame, they not only enjoy inexpressible raptures from their communion with the Supreme Being, but also are invested with the inestimable privilege of contemplating truth undisguised and uncorrupted in its native purity, while others behold it in a vitiated and delusive form.”

CENT. III. This method of reasoning produced strange effects, and drove many into caves and deserts, where they macerated their bodies with hunger and thirst, and submitted to all the miseries of the severest discipline that a gloomy imagination could prescribe. And it is not improbable that PAUL, the first hermit, was rather engaged by this fanatical system, than by the persecution under DECIUS, to fly into the most solitary deserts of *Thebais*, where he led, during the space of ninety years, a life more worthy of a savage animal than of a rational being [*d*]. It is, however, to be observed, that though PAUL is placed at the head of the order of *Hermits*, yet that unfociable manner of life was very common in *Egypt, Syria, India, and Mesopotamia*, not only long before his time, but even before the coming of CHRIST. And it is still practised among the Mahometans, as well as the Christians, in those arid and burning climates [*e*]. For the glowing atmosphere that surrounds these countries is a natural cause of that love of solitude and repose, of that indolent and melancholy disposition, that are remarkably common among their languid inhabitants.

IV. But let us turn away our eyes from these scenes of fanaticism, which are so opprobrious to human nature, and consider some other circumstances that belong more or less to the history of the Christian doctrine during this century. And here it is proper to mention the useful labours of those, who manifested their zeal for the holy scriptures by the care they took to have accurate copies of them multiplied every where, and that at such moderate prices, as rendered them of easy purchase; as also to have them translated into various languages, and published in correct editions. Many of the more opulent among the Christians contributed generously a great

[*d*] The life of this hermit was written by JEROM.

[*e*] See the travels of LUCAS, in the year 1714, second volume, p. 363.

Hence the
rise of
monks and
hermits.

The zeal of
many in
spreading
abroad the
sacred
writings.

part of their substance to the carrying on these pious and excellent undertakings. CENT. III. PART II. **PIERIUS** and **HESYCHIUS** in *Egypt*, and **LUCIAN** at *Antioch*, employed much pains in correcting the copies of the *Septuagint*; and **PAMPHIDUS** of *Cæsarea* laboured with great diligence and success in works of the same nature, until a glorious martyrdom finished his course. But **ORIGEN** surpassed all others in diligence and assiduity; and his famous *Hexapla*, though almost entirely destroyed by the waste of time, will, even in its fragments, remain an eternal monument of the incredible application with which that great man laboured to remove those obstacles which retarded the progress of the gospel [*f*].

V. After the encomiums we have given to **ORIGEN**, who has an undoubted right to the first place among the interpreters of the scriptures in this century, it is not without a deep concern that we are obliged to add, that he also, by an unhappy method, opened a secure retreat for all sorts of errors that a wild and irregular imagination could bring forth. Having entertained a notion that it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, to defend every thing contained in the sacred writings from the cavils of heretics and infidels, so long as they were explained *literally*, according to the real import of the terms, he had recourse to the fecundity of a lively imagination, and maintained, that the holy scriptures were to be interpreted in the same *allegorical* manner that the Platonists explained the history of the gods. In consequence of this pernicious rule of interpretation, he alleged, that the words of scripture were, in many places, absolutely void of sense; and that though in others there were, indeed, certain

Origen's
method of
interpreting
the
scriptures.

[*f*] The fragments that yet remain of **ORIGEN'S** *Hexapla*, were collected and published, by the learned **MONTFAUCON**, in folio, at *Paris*, in 1713. See also upon this head **BUDDEI** *Isagoge in Theolog.* tom. ii. p. 1581; and **CARPZOVII** *Critic. Sacr. Veter. Testam.* p. 574.

CENT. notions conveyed under the outward terms according
 III. to their literal force and import, yet it was not in
 PART II. these that the true meaning of the sacred writers
 was to be sought, but in a mysterious and hidden
 sense arising from the nature of the things themselves
 [g]. This *hidden sense* he endeavours to investi-
 gate throughout his *commentaries*, neglecting and
 despising, for the most part, the *outward letter*; and
 in this devious path he displays the most ingenious
 strokes of fancy, though always at the expence of
 truth, whose divine simplicity is scarcely discernible
 through the cobweb-veil of allegory [b]. Nor did
 the inventions of ORIGEN end here. He divided
 this *hidden sense*, which he pursued with such eager-
 ness, into *moral*, and *mystical* or *spiritual*. The

[g] For a further illustration of this matter, the reader may consult the excellent preface of DE LA RUE, to the second volume of the works of ORIGEN, published in folio at Paris, in the year 1733. An accurate and full account of ORIGEN'S method of interpreting the scripture may be found in the work intitled *Commentar. de rebus Christian. ante Constantinum M.* p. 629; where the philosophy and theology of that great man, and his controversy with DEMETRIUS bishop of Alexandria, are treated of professedly, and at large.

[b] ORIGEN, in his *Stromata*, book x. expresses himself in the following manner: "The source of many evils lies in adhering to the carnal or *external* part of scripture. Those who do so, shall not attain to the kingdom of God. Let us therefore, seek after the spirit and the substantial fruit of the word, which are hidden and mysterious." And again: "The scriptures are of little use to those who understand them as they are written." One would think it impossible that such expressions should drop from the pen of a wise man. But the philosophy, which this great man embraced with such zeal, was one of the sources of his delusion. He could not find in the Bible the opinions he had adopted, as long as he interpreted that sacred book according to its literal sense. But PLATO, ARISTOTLE, ZENO, and, indeed, the whole philosophical tribe, could not fail to obtain, for their sentiments, a place in the gospel, when it was interpreted by the wanton inventions of fancy, and upon the supposition of a *hidden sense*, to which it was possible to give all sorts of forms. Hence all who desired to model Christianity according to their fancy, or their favourite system of philosophy, embraced ORIGEN'S method of interpretation.

moral sense of scripture displays those doctrines that relate to the inward state of the soul, and the conduct of life. The *mystical* or *spiritual* sense represents the nature, the laws, and the history, of the *spiritual* or *mystical* world. We are not yet at the end of the labyrinth; for he subdivided this *mystical* world of his own creation into two distinct regions, the one of which he called the *superior*, i. e. *heaven*; and the other the *inferior*, by which he meant the *church*. This led to another division of the *mystical* sense into an earthly or *allegorical* sense, adapted to the inferior world, and a celestial or *anagogetical* one, adapted to the *superior* region. This chimerical method of explaining the scripture was, before ORIGEN, received by many Christians who were deluded into it by the example of the Jews. But as this learned man reduced it into a system, and founded it upon fixed and determinate rules, he is, on that account, commonly considered as its principal author.

CENT.

III.

PART II.

VI. A prodigious number of interpreters, both in this and the succeeding ages, followed the method of ORIGEN, though with some variations; nor could the few, who explained the sacred writings with judgment, and a true spirit of criticism, oppose, with any success, the torrent of allegory that was overflowing the church. The *commentaries* of HIPPOLYTUS, which are yet extant, shew manifestly, that this good man was entirely addicted to the system of ORIGEN, and the same judgment may be hazarded concerning VICTORINUS's *explications* of certain books of the Old and New Testament, though these explications are, long since, lost. The *translation of the Ecclesiastes* by GREGORY THAUMATURGUS, which is yet remaining, is not chargeable with this reproach, notwithstanding the tender and warm attachment of its author to ORIGEN. The book of *Genesis*, and *the Song of Solomon* were

Other inter-
preters.

CENT. explained by METHODIUS, whose work is lost ;
 III. and AMMONIUS composed a *Harmony of the Gospels*.

PART II. VII. The doctrinal part of theology employed
 the pens of many learned men in this century. In
 his *Stromata*, and his *four books of Elements*, ORIGEN
 illustrated the greatest part of the doctrines of Chris-
 tianity, or, to speak more properly, rather disguised
 them under the lines of a vain philosophy. These
 books of *elements*, or *principles*, were the first sketch
 that appeared of the *scholastic* or *philosophical theo-*
logy. Something of the same nature was attempted
 by THEOGNOSTUS, in his *seven books of Hypotyposes*,
 which are only known at present by the extracts of
 them in PHOTIUS, who represents them as the work
 of one who was infected with the notions of ORI-
 GEN. GREGORY THAUMATURGUS drew up a
 brief summary of the Christian religion, in his *Expo-*
sition of the faith; and many treated, in a more
 ample manner, particular points of doctrine in oppo-
 sition to the enemies and corruptors of Christianity.
 Thus HIPPOLYTUS wrote concerning the *deity*, the
resurrection, *anti-christ*, and the *end of the world*;
 METHODIUS, concerning *free will*; and LUCIAN,
 concerning *faith*. It is doubtful in what class these
 productions are to be placed, as the most of them
 have perished among the ruins of time.

Moral writ-
 ters.

VIII. Among the moral writers, the first place,
 after TERTULLIAN, of whom we have already
 spoken above, is due to CYPRIAN, a prelate of
 eminent merit, who published several treatises con-
 cerning *patience*, *mortality*, *works*, *alms*, as also an
exhortation to martyrdom. In these dissertations,
 there are many excellent things; but there runs
 through them all a general want of order, precision,
 and method; nor do we always find solid proofs in
 favour of the decisions they contain [i]. ORIGEN
 has written many treatises of this kind, and among

[i] See BARBEYRAC, *De la Morale des Peres*, ch. viii.
 p. 104.

others, an *exhortation* to suffer martyrdom for the truth; a subject handled by many authors in this century, but with unequal eloquence and penetration. METHODIUS treated of *chastity*, in a work entitled, *Symposium Virginum*, or, the *Feast of Virgins*; but this treatise is full of confusion and disorder. DIONYSIUS handled the doctrine of *penance* and *temptations*. The other moral writers of this period are too obscure and trivial to render the mention of them necessary.

IX. The controversial writers were exceeding numerous in this century. The Pagans were attacked, and that in a victorious manner, by MINUCIUS FELIX, in his dialogue called *Octavius*; by ORIGEN, in his writings against CELSUS; by ARNOBIUS, in his *seven books against the Gentiles*; and CYPRIAN, in his treatise concerning the *vanity of idols*. The *chronicle* of HIPPOLYTUS, in opposition to the Gentiles; and the work of METHODIUS against PORPHYRY, that bitter adversary of the Christians, are both lost.

We may also reckon, in the number of the Polemic writers, those who wrote against the philosophers, or who treated any subjects that were disputed between different sects. Such was HIPPOLYTUS, who wrote against PLATO, and who also treated the nicest, the most difficult, and the most controverted subjects, such as *fate*, *free-will*, and the *origin of evil*, which exercised, likewise, the pens of METHODIUS and other acute writers. What HIPPOLYTUS wrote against the Jews, is not come down to our times; but the work of CYPRIAN, upon that subject, yet remains [k]. ORIGEN, VICTORINUS, HIPPOLYTUS, attacked, in general, all various sects and heresies, that divided the church,

☞ [k] This work is intituled, *Testimonia contra Judæos*.

CENT. but their labours, in that immense field, have entirely
 III. disappeared; and as to those, who only turned their
 PART II. controversial arms against some few sects, and certain
 particular doctrines, we think it not necessary to
 enumerate them here.

The vicious
 method of
 controversy
 now em-
 ployed.

X. It is, however, necessary to observe, that the
 methods now used of defending Christianity, and
 attacking Judaism and idolatry, degenerated much
 from the primitive simplicity, and the true rule of
 controversy. The Christian doctors, who had been
 educated in the schools of the rhetoricians and
 sophists, rashly employed the arts and evasions of
 their subtle masters in the service of Christianity;
 and, intent only upon defeating the enemy, they
 were too little attentive to the means of victory,
 indifferent whether they acquired it by artifice or
 plain-dealing. This method of disputing, which
 the ancients called *œconomical* [1], and which had
 victory for its object, rather than truth, was, in
 consequence of the prevailing taste for rhetoric and
 sophistry, almost universally approved. The Plato-
 nists contributed to the support and encouragement
 of this ungenerous method of disputing, by that
 maxim of theirs which asserted the innocence of
 defending the truth by artifice and falsehood. This
 will appear manifest to those who have read, with
 any measure of penetration and judgment, the argu-
 ments of ORIGEN against CELSUS, and those of the
 other Christian disputants against the idolatrous
 Gentiles. The method of TERTULLIAN, who
 used to plead prescription against erroneous doctors,
 was not, perhaps, unfair in this century; but they
 must be much acquainted both with the times, and,

[1] SOUVERAIN, *Platonism dévoilé*, p. 244. DAILLE, *De
 vet. usu Patrum*, lib. i. p. 160. JO. CHRÏSTOPH. WOLFII
Casauboniana, p. 100. Concerning the famous rule, *to do a
 thing κατ' ὀικονομίαν*, or *œconomically*: see particularly the ample
 illustrations of GATAKER, *ad Marci Antonini*, lib. xi. p. 330, &c.

indeed, with the nature of things, who imagine that it is always allowable to employ this method [m].

XI. This disingenuous and vicious method of surprizing their adversaries by artifice, and striking them down, as it were, by lies and fictions, produced, among other disagreeable effects, a great number of books, which were falsely attributed to certain great men, in order to give these spurious productions more credit and weight. For, as the greatest part of mankind are less governed by reason than by authority, and prefer, in many cases, the decisions of fallible mortals to the unerring dictates of the divine word, the disputants, of whom we are now speaking, thought they could not serve the truth more effectually than by opposing illustrious names and respectable authorities to the attacks of its adversaries. Hence, the book of *canons*, which certain artful men ascribed falsely to the apostles; hence, the *apostolical constitutions*, of which CLEMENT, bishop of Rome, is said to have formed a collection; hence the *recognitions* and the *clementina*, which are also attributed to CLEMENT [n], and many other productions of that nature, which, for a long time, were too much esteemed by credulous men.

Supposititious or spurious writings.

Nor were the managers of controversy the only persons who employed these stratagems; the Mystics

[m] We scarcely know any case, in which the plea of *prescription* can be admitted as a satisfactory argument, in favour of religious tenets or articles of faith, unless by *prescription* be meant, a doctrine's being established in the time and by the authority of the apostles. In all other cases, *prescription* is no argument at all: it cannot recommend error, and truth has no need of its support.

[n] It is not with the utmost accuracy that Dr. MOSHEIM places the *recognitions* among the spurious works of antiquity, since they are quoted by ORIGEN, EPIPHANIUS, and RUFFIN, as the work of CLEMENT. It is true indeed, that these writers own them to have been altered in several places, and falsified by the heretic; and EPIPHANIUS, particularly, tells us, that the Ebionites scarcely left any thing found in them. As to the *Clementina*, they were undoubtedly spurious.

CENT. had recourse to the same pious frauds to support
 III. their sect. And, accordingly, when they were
 PART II. asked from what chief their establishment took its
 rise, to get clear of this perplexing question, they
 feigned a chief, and chose, for that purpose, DIO-
 NYSIUS the Areopagite, a man of almost apostolical
 weight and authority, who was converted to Chris-
 tianity, in the first century, by the preaching of St.
 PAUL at *Athens*. And to render this fiction more
 specious, they attributed to this great man various
 treatises concerning the *monastic life*, the *mystic theo-
 logy*, and other subjects of that nature, which were
 the productions of some senseless and insipid writers
 of after-times. Thus it happened, through the
 pernicious influence of human passions, which too
 often mingle themselves with the execution of the
 best purposes and the most upright intentions, that
 they, who were desirous of surpassing all others in
 piety, looked upon it as lawful, and even laudable,
 to advance the cause of piety by artifice and fraud.

Controversy concern-
 ing the mil-
 lennium.

XII. The most famous controversies that divided
 the Christians during this century, were those con-
 cerning the *millennium*, or *reign of a thousand years*;
 the *baptism of heretics*, and the *doctrine of ORIGEN*.

Long before this period, an opinion had prevailed
 that CHRIST was to come and reign a thousand
 years among men, before the entire and final disso-
 lution of this world. This opinion, which had
 hitherto met with no opposition, was differently
 interpreted by different persons; nor did all promise
 themselves the same kind of enjoyments in that
 future and glorious kingdom [o]. But in this cen-
 tury its credit began to decline, principally through
 the influence and authority of ORIGEN, who opposed

[o] See the learned *Treatise concerning the true millennium*,
 which Dr. WHITBY has subjoined to the second volume of his
Commentary upon the New Testament. See also, for an account
 of the doctrine of the ancient Millennarians, the fourth, fifth,
 seventh, and ninth volumes of LARDNER'S *Credibility*, &c.

it with the greatest warmth, because it was incompatible with some of his favourite sentiments [p]. NEPOS, an Egyptian bishop, endeavoured to restore this opinion to its former credit, in a book written *against the allegorists*, for so he called, by way of contempt, the adversaries of the Millenarian system. This work, and the hypothesis it defended, was extremely well received by great numbers in the canton of *Arfinoë*; and among others by COLACION, a presbyter of no mean influence and reputation. But DIONYSIUS of *Alexandria*, a disciple of ORIGEN, stopped the growing progress of this doctrine by his private discourse, and also by two learned and judicious dissertations concerning the *divine promises* [q].

XIII. The disputes concerning the *baptism of heretics* were not carried on with that amiable spirit of candor, moderation, and impartiality with which DIONYSIUS opposed the MILLENNIAN doctrine. The warmth and violence that were exerted in this controversy, were far from being edifying to such as were acquainted with the true genius of Christianity, and with that meekness and forbearance that should particularly distinguish its doctors.

As there was no express law which determined the manner and form, according to which those who abandoned the heretical sects were to be received into the communion of the church, the rules practised in this matter were not the same in all Christian churches. Many of the Oriental and African Christians placed recanting heretics in the rank of catechumens, and admitted them, by *baptism*, into the communion of the faithful; while the greatest part of the European churches, considering the

[p] See ORIGEN, *De principiis*, lib. ii. cap. xi. p. 104. tom. i. opp.

[q] See EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vii. cap. xxiv. p. 271; as also GENNADIUS, *De dogmatibus Ecclesiasticis*, cap. lv. p. 32, edit. Elmenhoff.

CENT. baptism of heretics as valid, used no other forms in
 III. their reception than the *imposition of hands*, accom-
 PART II. panied with solemn prayer. This diversity prevailed
 for a long time without kindling contentions or animosities. But, at length, charity waxed cold, and the fire of ecclesiastical discord broke out. In this century, the Asiatic Christians came to a determination in a point that was hitherto, in some measure, undecided; and in more than one council established it as a law, that all heretics were to be re-baptized before their admission to the communion of the true church [r]. When STEPHEN, bishop of *Rome*, was informed of this determination, he behaved with the most unchristian violence and arrogance towards the Asiatic Christians, broke communion with them, and excluded them from the communion of the church of *Rome*. These haughty proceedings made no impression upon CYPRIAN bishop of *Carthage*, who, notwithstanding the menaces of the Roman pontiff, assembled a council on this occasion, adopted, with the rest of the African bishops, the opinion of the Asiatics, and gave notice thereof to the imperious STEPHEN. The fury of the latter was redoubled at this notification, and produced many threatenings and invectives against CYPRIAN, who replied, with great force and resolution, and, in a second council held at *Carthage*, declared the baptism, administered by heretics, void of all efficacy and validity. Upon this, the choler of STEPHEN swelled beyond measure, and, by a decree full of invectives, which was received with contempt, he excommunicated the African bishops, whose moderation, on the one hand, and the death of their imperious antagonist on the other, put an end to the violent controversy [s].

[r] EUSEB. *Hist. Eccl.* lib. vii. cap. v. vii. FIRMILIANUS, *Epistol. ad Cyprianum*, printed among CYPRIAN's *Letters*, Lett. lxxv.

[s] CYPRIAN, *Epist.* lxx. p. 124. lxxiii. p. 129. AUGUSTIN. *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, lib v. vii. tom ix. opp. where are

XIV. The controversy concerning ORIGEN WAS CENT. III. set in motion by DEMETRIUS, bishop of *Alexandria*, animated, as some say, by a principle of envy and hatred against this learned man, with whom he had formerly lived in an intimate friendship. The assertion, however, of those who attribute the opposition of DEMETRIUS to this odious principle, appears something more than doubtful; for in the whole of his conduct towards ORIGEN, there are no visible marks of envy, though many indeed of passion and arrogance, of violence and injustice. The occasion of all this was as follows: In the year 228, ORIGEN having set out for *Achaia*, was, in his journey thither, received with singular marks of affection and esteem by the bishops of *Cæsarea* and *Jerusalem*, who ordained him *presbyter* by imposition of hands. This proceeding gave high offence to DEMETRIUS, who declared ORIGEN unworthy of the priesthood, because he had castrated himself, and maintained, at the same time, that it was not lawful to advance, to a higher dignity, the principal of the *Alexandrian* school, which was under his episcopal inspection, without his knowledge and approbation. A conclusion, however, was put to these warm debates, and ORIGEN returned to *Alexandria*. This calm, was, indeed, but of a short duration, being soon succeeded by a new breach between him and DEMETRIUS, the occasion of which is not known, but which grew to such a height as obliged ORIGEN, in the year 231, to abandon his charge at *Alexandria*, and retire to *Cæsarea*. His absence, however, did not appease the resentment of DEMETRIUS, who continued to persecute him with the utmost violence. To satisfy fully his vengeance against ORIGEN, he assembled two councils, in the first of which he condemned him unheard, and deprived him of his

III.
PART II.
Disputes
concerning
Origen.

to be found the acts of the council of *Carthage*, A. D. 256.
PRUD. MARANI *vita Cypriani*, p. 107.

CENT. office; and in the second, had him degraded from
 III. the sacerdotal dignity. It is probable, that in one
 PART II. of those councils, especially the latter, DEMETRIUS
 accused him of erroneous sentiments in matters of
 religion; for it was about this time that ORIGEN
 published his *book of principles*, which contains several
 opinions of a dangerous tendency [t]. The greatest
 part of the Christian bishops approved of the pro-
 ceedings of the Alexandrian council, against which
 the bishops of the churches of *Achaia, Palestine,*
Phœnicia, and *Arabia,* declared at the same time the
 highest displeasure [u].

[t] This work, which was a sort of introduction to the-
 ology, has only come down to us in the translation of RUFFINUS,
 who corrected and maimed it, in order to render it more
 conformable to the orthodox doctrine of the church than ORIGEN
 had left it. It contains, however, even in its present form,
 several bold and singular opinions, such as the pre-existence of
 souls, and their fall into mortal bodies, in consequence of their
 deviation from the laws of order in their first state, and the final
 restoration of all intelligent beings to order and happiness. RUF-
 FINUS, in his apology for ORIGEN, alleges, that his writings were
 maliciously falsified by the heretics; and that, in consequence
 thereof, many errors were attributed to him, which he did not
 adopt; as also, that the opinions, in which he differed from the
 doctrines of the church, were only proposed by him as curious
 conjectures.

[u] The accounts here given of the persecution of ORIGEN,
 are drawn from the most early and authentic sources, such as
 EUSEB. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xxiv. PHOTIUS, *Bibl. Cod.*
 cxviii. JEROM's *Catalogue of Ecclesiastical Writers*, and from
 ORIGEN himself; and they differ in some respects, from those,
 which common writers, such as DOUCIN, HUGET, and others,
 give of this matter.

CHAPTER IV.

Concerning the rites and ceremonies used in the church during this century.

I. **A**LL the records of this century mention the multiplication of rites and ceremonies in the Christian church. Several of the causes that contributed to this, have been already pointed out; to which we may add, as a principal one, the passion which now reigned for the Platonic philosophy, or rather, for the popular Oriental superstition concerning *demons*, adopted by the Platonists, and borrowed, unhappily, from them, by the Christian doctors. For there is not the least doubt, but that many of the rites, now introduced into the church, derived their origin from the reigning opinions concerning the nature of *demons*, and the *powers* and *operations* of *invisible beings*. Hence the use of *exorcisms* and *spells*, the frequency of *fasts*, and the aversion to *wedlock*. Hence the custom of avoiding all connexions with those who were not as yet baptized, or who lay under the penalty of excommunication, as persons supposed to be under the dominion of some malignant spirit. And hence the rigour and severity of that discipline and penance that were imposed upon those who had incurred, by their immoralities, the censures of the church [w].

CENT.
III.
PART II.
Rites multiplied.

II. In most of the provinces there were, at this time, certain fixed places set apart for public worship among the Christians, as will appear evident to every impartial inquirer into these matters. Nor

Public
worship.

[w] For an ampler account of this matter, the reader may consult PORPHYRY'S treatise concerning *Abstinence*, and compare what that writer has said on the subject, with the customs received among the Christians. Several curious things are also to be found in THEODORET and EUSEBIUS upon this head.

CENT. is it absolutely improbable, that these churches
 III. were, in several places, embellished with images
 PART II. and other ornaments.

With respect to the form of divine worship, and the times appointed for its celebration, there were little innovations made in this century. Two things, however, deserve to be taken notice of here; the first is, that the discourses or sermons, addressed to the people, were very different from those of the earlier times of the church, and degenerated much from the ancient simplicity. For, not to say any thing of ORIGEN, who introduced long sermons, and was the first who explained the scriptures in his discourses, several bishops, who had received their education in the schools of the rhetoricians, were exactly scrupulous, in adapting their public exhortations and discourses to the rules of Grecian eloquence. And this method gained such credit, as to be soon, almost universally followed. The second thing that we proposed to mention as worthy of notice is, that, about this time, the use of *incense* was introduced, at least, into many churches. This has been denied by some men of eminent learning; the fact, however, is rendered evident, by the most unexceptionable testimonies [x].

Admini-
 stration of
 the Lord's-
 supper.

III. Several alterations were now introduced, in the celebration of the Lord's-supper, by those who had the direction of divine worship. The prayers, used upon this occasion, were lengthened; and the solemnity and pomp, with which this important institution was celebrated, were considerably increased; no doubt, with a pious intention to render it still more respectable. Those who were in a *penitential state*, and those also who had not received the sacrament of baptism, were not admitted to this holy supper; and it is not difficult to perceive, that these exclusions were an imitation of what was

[x] See bishop BEVEREGE *ad Canon.* iii. *Apostol.* p. 461; as also another work of the same author, intitled, *Codex Canon. vindicatus*, p. 78.

practised in the heathen mysteries. We find, by CENT.
 the accounts of PRUDENTIUS [y] and others, that III.
 gold and silver vessels were now used in the PART II.
 administration of the Lord's-supper; nor is there
 any reason why we should not adopt this opinion,
 since it is very natural to imagine, that those churches,
 which were composed of the most opulent members,
 would readily indulge themselves in this piece of
 religious pomp. As to the time of celebrating
 this solemn ordinance, it must be carefully ob-
 served, that there was a considerable variation in
 different churches, arising from their different
 circumstances, and founded upon reasons of pru-
 dence and necessity. In some, it was celebrated
 in the morning; in others, at noon; and in others,
 in the evening. It was also more frequently
 repeated in some churches, than in others; but was
 considered in all as of the highest importance, and
 as essential to salvation; for which reason it was
 even thought proper to administer it to infants.
 The sacred feasts, that accompanied this venerable
 institution, preceded its celebration in some churches,
 and followed it in others.

IV. There were, twice a year, stated times, when Baptism.
 baptism was administered to such as, after a long
 course of trial and preparation, offered themselves
 as candidates for the profession of Christianity.
 This ceremony was performed only in the presence
 of such as were already initiated into the Christian
 mysteries. The remission of sins was thought to be
 its immediate and happy fruit; while the bishop,
 by prayer and the imposition of hands, was supposed
 to confer those sanctifying gifts of the Holy Ghost,
 that are necessary to a life of righteousness and virtue
 [z]. We have already mentioned the principal

[y] *περί σείσαν.* Hymn ii. p. 60. edit. Heinsii.

[z] That such was the notion prevalent at this time, is evident
 from testimonies of sufficient weight. And as this point is of
 great consequence in order to our understanding the theology of

CENT. rites that were used in the administration of baptism ;
 III. and we have only to add, that none were admitted
 PART II. to this solemn ordinance, until, by the menacing
 and formidable shouts and declamation of the *exorcist*, they had been delivered from the dominion of the prince of darkness, and consecrated to the service of God. The origin of this superstitious ceremony may be easily traced, when we consider the prevailing opinions of the times. The Christians, in general, were persuaded, that rational souls, deriving their existence from God, must consequently be in themselves pure, holy, and endowed with the noble principles of liberty and virtue. But upon this supposition, it was difficult to account for the corrupt propensities and actions of men, any other way, than by attributing them either to the malignant nature of *matter*, or the influence and impulse of some *evil spirit*, who was perpetually compelling them to sin. The former of these opinions was embraced by the Gnostics, but was rejected by true Christians, who denied the eternity of matter, considered it as a creature of God, and therefore adopted the latter notion, that in all vicious persons there was a certain *evil being*, the author and source of their corrupt dispositions and their unrighteous deeds [a]. The driving out this *demon*

the ancients, which differs from ours in many respects, we shall mention one of these testimonies, even that of CYPRIAN, who, in his lxxiii Letter, expresses himself thus: "It is manifest where, and by whom, the REMISSION OF SINS, which is CONFERRED IN BAPTISM, is administered.—They who are presented to the rulers of the church, OBTAIN, by our prayers and imposition of hands, the HOLY GHOST." See also EUSEB. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vii. cap. viii.

[a] It is demonstrably evident, that *exorcism* was added to the other baptismal rites in the third century, after the introduction of the Platonic philosophy into the church. For, before this time, we hear no mention made of it. JUSTIN MARTYR, in his *second apology*, and TERTULLIAN, in his book concerning the *military crown*, give us an account of the ceremonies used in baptism during the second century, without any mention of

was now considered as an essential preparation for CENT.
 baptism, after the administration of which, the can- III.
 didates returned home, adorned with crowns, and PART II.
 arrayed in white garments, as sacred emblems; the
 former, of their victory over sin and the world;
 the latter, of their inward purity and innocence.

V. *Fasting* began now to be held in more esteem Fasting.
 than it had formerly been; a high degree of fanc-
 tity was attributed to this practice, and it was even
 looked upon as of indispensable necessity, from a
 notion that the *demons* directed their stratagems
 principally against those who pampered themselves
 with delicious fare, and were less troublesome to
 the lean and the hungry, who lived under the seve-
 rities of a rigorous abstinence [*b*]. The Latins,
 contrary to the general custom, fasted the seventh
 day of the week; and as the Greeks and Orientals
 refused to follow their example here, this afforded a
 new subject of contention between them.

The Christians offered up their ordinary prayers Prayers.
 at three stated times of the day, *viz.* at the *third*,
 the *sixth*, and the *ninth hour*, according to the custom
 observed among the Jews. But, besides these stated
 devotions, true believers were assiduous in their
 addresses to the Supreme Being, and poured forth
 frequently their vows and supplications before his
 throne, because they considered prayer as the most
 essential duty, as well as the noblest employment, of
 a sanctified nature. At those festivals, which recalled
 the memory of some joyful event, and were to be
 celebrated with expressions of thanksgiving and praise,
 they prayed standing, as they thought that posture
 the fittest to express their joy and their confidence.

exorcism. This is a very strong argument of its being posterior
 to these two great men; and is every way proper to persuade us,
 that it made its entrance into the Christian church in the third
 century, and probably first in *Egypt*.

[*b*] CLEMENTIN. *Homil ix.* § 9. p. 688. PORPHYR. *De*
abstinentia, lib. iv. p. 417.

CENT. On days of contrition and fasting, they presented themselves upon their knees before the throne of the Most High, to express their profound humiliation and self-abasement. Certain forms of prayer were, undoubtedly, used in many places both in public and in private; but many also expressed their pious feelings in the natural effusions of an unpremeditated eloquence.

The sign of the cross used by Christians.

The *sign of the cross* was supposed to administer a victorious power over all sorts of trials and calamities, and was more especially considered as the surest defence against the snares and stratagems of malignant spirits. And hence it was, that no Christian undertook any thing of moment, without arming himself with the influence of this triumphant sign.

CHAPTER V.

Concerning the divisions and heresies that troubled the church during this century.

Remains of the ancient sects.

I. THE same sects that, in the former ages, had produced such disorder and perplexity in the Christian church, continued, in this, to create new troubles, and to foment new divisions. The Montanists, Valentinians, Marcionites, and the other Gnostics, continued still to draw out their forces, notwithstanding the repeated defeats they had met with; and their *obstinacy* remained even when their *strength* was gone, as it often happens in religious controversy. ADELPHIUS and AQUILINUS, who were of the Gnostic tribe, endeavoured to insinuate themselves and their doctrine into the esteem of the

public, at *Rome*, and in other places in *Italy* [c]. CENT.
 They were, however, opposed not only by the III.
 Christians, but also by PLOTINUS, the greatest PART II.
 Platonic philosopher of this age, who, followed by a
 numerous train of disciples, opposed these two chimerical teachers, and others of the same kind, with as much vigour and success as the most enlightened Christians could have done. The philosophical opinions which this faction entertained concerning the Supreme Being, the origin of the world, the nature of evil, and several other subjects, were entirely opposite to the doctrines of PLATO. Hence the disciples of JESUS, and the followers of PLOTINUS, joined together their efforts against the progress of Gnosticism; and there is no doubt but that their united force soon destroyed the credit and authority of this fantastic sect, and rendered it contemptible in the estimation of the wise [d].

II. While the Christians were struggling with these corrupters of the truth, and upon the point of obtaining a complete and decisive victory, a new enemy, more vehement and odious than the rest, started up suddenly, and engaged in the contest. This was MANES (or MANICHÆUS, as he sometimes is called by his disciples), by birth a Persian; educated among the Magi, and himself one of that number, before he embraced the profession of Christianity. Instructed in all those arts and sciences, which the Persians, and the other neighbouring nations, held in the highest esteem, he had penetrated into the depths of astronomy in the midst of a rural life; studied the art of healing, and applied himself to painting and philosophy. His genius was vigorous and sublime, but redundant and ungoverned; and his mind, destitute of a proper temperature, seemed to border on fanaticism and madness. He

Manes and
the Manichæans.

[c] PORPHYR. *vita Plotini*, cap. xvi. p. 118.

[d] PLOTINUS'S book against the Gnostics is extant in his works, *Ennead.* ii. lib. ix. p. 213.

CENT. was so adventurous as to attempt a coalition of the
 III. doctrine of the Magi with the Christian system, or
 PART II. rather the explication of the one by the other: and, in
 order to succeed in this audacious enterprize, he
 affirmed that CHRIST had left the doctrine of salva-
 tion unfinished and imperfect; and that he was the
comforter, whom the departing Saviour had promised
 to his disciples to lead them to all truth. Many
 were deceived by the eloquence of this enthusiast,
 by the gravity of his countenance, and the innocence
 and simplicity of his manners; so that, in a short
 time, he formed a sect not utterly inconsiderable in
 point of number. He was put to death by VA-
 RANES I. king of the Persians; though historians
 are not agreed concerning the cause, the time, and
 the manner, of his execution [e].

His doc-
 trine of
 two prin-
 ciples.

III. The doctrine of MANES was a motley mixture
 of the tenets of Christianity with the ancient philoso-
 phy of the Persians, which he had been instructed in
 during his youth. He combined these two systems;

[e] Some allege, that MANES having undertaken to cure the
 son of the Persian monarch of a dangerous disease, by his medi-
 cal art, or his miraculous power, failed in the attempt, precipitated
 the death of the prince, and thus incurring the indignation of the
 king his father, was put to a cruel death. This account is scarcely
 probable, as it is mentioned by none of the Oriental writers cited
 by D'HERBELOT, and as BAR HEERÆUS speaks of it in terms
 which shews that it was only an uncertain rumour. The death
 of MANES is generally attributed to another cause by the Oriental
 writers. They tell us, that MANES (after having been protected
 in a singular manner, by HORMIZDAS, who succeeded SAPOR
 on the Persian throne, but who was not, however, able to defer
 him, at length, against the united hatred of the Christians, the
 Magi, the Jews, and Pagans) was shut up in a strong castle,
 which HORMIZDAS had erected between *Bagdad* and *Suza*, to
 serve him as a refuge against those who persecuted him on account
 of his doctrine. They add, that, after the death of HORMIZDAS,
 VARANES I. his successor, first protected MANES, but afterwards
 gave him up to the fury of the Magi, whose resentment against
 him was due to his having adopted the Sadducean principles, as
 some say; while others attributed it to his having mingled the
 tenets of the Magi with the doctrines of Christianity.

applied and accommodated to JESUS CHRIST the CENT. characters and actions which the Persians attributed III. to the god MITHRAS. The principal doctrines of PART II. MANES are comprehended in the following summary:

“ There are two principles from which all things
 “ proceed ; the one is a most *pure and subtile matter*,
 “ called LIGHT ; and the other a *gross and corrupt*
 “ *substance*, called DARKNESS. Each of these are
 “ subject to the dominion of a superintending
 “ BEING, whose existence is from all eternity. The
 “ BEING, who presides over the LIGHT, is called
 “ GOD ; he that rules the *land of DARKNESS*,
 “ bears the title of HYLE, or DEMON. The
 “ RULER OF THE LIGHT is supremely happy ;
 “ and, in consequence thereof, benevolent and
 “ good : the PRINCE OF DARKNESS is unhappy in
 “ himself ; and, desiring to render others partakers
 “ of his misery, is evil and malignant. These Two
 “ BEINGS have produced an immense multitude of
 “ creatures, resembling themselves, and distributed
 “ them through their respective provinces.

IV. “ The PRINCE OF DARKNESS knew not, for Concerning
 “ a long series of ages, that LIGHT existed in the man. <
 “ universe ; and no sooner perceived it, by the
 “ means of a war that was kindled in his dominions,
 “ than he bent his endeavours towards the subjecting
 “ it to his empire. The RULER OF THE LIGHT
 “ opposed to his efforts an army commanded by
 “ the *first man*, but not with the highest success ;
 “ for the generals of the PRINCE OF DARKNESS
 “ seized upon a considerable portion of the celestial
 “ elements, and of the LIGHT itself, and mingled
 “ them in the mass of corrupt matter. The second
 “ general of the RULER OF THE LIGHT, whose
 “ name was the *living spirit*, made war with more
 “ success against the PRINCE OF DARKNESS, but
 “ could not entirely disengage the pure particles of
 “ the celestial matter, from the corrupt mass through

CENT. “ which they had been dispersed. The PRINCE
 III. “ OF DARKNESS, after his defeat, produced the
 PART II. “ first parents of the human race. The beings
 ——— “ engendered from this original stock, consist of a
 “ body formed out of the corrupt matter of the
 “ kingdom of DARKNESS, and of two souls; one
 “ of which is *sensitive* and *lustful*, and owes its exist-
 “ tence to the *evil principle*; the other *rational* and
 “ *immortal*, a particle of that divine LIGHT, which
 “ was carried away by the army of DARKNESS,
 “ and immerfed into the mafs of malignant matter.
 Concerning V. “ Mankind being thus formed by the PRINCE
 CHRIST “ OF DARKNESS, and those minds, that were the
 and the “ productions of the eternal LIGHT, being united
 Holy “ to their mortal bodies, GOD created the earth
 Ghost. “ out of the corrupt mafs of matter, by that *living*
 “ *spirit*, who had vanquished the PRINCE OF DARK-
 “ NESS. The design of this creation was to furnish
 “ a dwelling for the human race, to deliver, by
 “ degrees, the captive souls from their corporeal
 “ prisons, and to extract the celestial elements from
 “ the gross substance in which they were involved.
 “ In order to carry this design into execution, GOD
 “ produced *two beings* of eminent dignity from his
 “ own substance, which were to lend their auspicious
 “ succours to imprisoned souls; one of these sublime
 “ entities was CHRIST; and the other, the HOLY
 “ GHOST. CHRIST is that glorious intelligence,
 “ which the Persians called *Mithras*; he is a most
 “ splendid substance, consisting of the brightness of
 “ the eternal Light: subsisting in, and by himself:
 “ endowed with life; enriched with infinite wisdom;
 “ and his residence is in the sun. The HOLY
 “ GHOST is also a luminous and animated body,
 “ diffused throughout every part of the atmosphere
 “ which surrounds this terrestrial globe. This
 “ *genial principle* warms and illuminates the minds
 “ of men, renders also the earth fruitful, and
 “ draws forth gradually from its bosom the latent

“ particles of celestial fire, which it wafts up on high
 “ to their primitive station. CENT.

III.

PART II.

VI. “ After that the SUPREME BEING had, for
 “ a long time, admonished and exhorted the captive
 “ souls, by the ministry of the angels and of holy
 “ men, raised up and appointed for that purpose,
 “ he ordered CHRIST to leave the solar regions,
 “ and to descend upon earth, in order to accelerate
 “ the return of those imprisoned spirits to their
 “ celestial country. In obedience to this divine
 “ command, CHRIST appeared among the Jews,
 “ clothed with the shadowy form of a human body,
 “ and not with the real substance. During his
 “ ministry, he taught mortals how to disengage
 “ the rational soul from the corrupt body, to
 “ conquer the violence of malignant matter, and
 “ he demonstrated his divine mission by stupendous
 “ miracles. On the other hand, the PRINCE OF
 “ DARKNESS used every method to inflame the
 “ Jews against this divine messenger, and incited
 “ them at length to put him to death upon an igno-
 “ minious cross; which punishment, however, he
 “ suffered not in reality, but only in appearance,
 “ and in the opinion of men. When CHRIST had
 “ fulfilled the purposes of his mission, he returned
 “ to his throne in the sun, and appointed a certain
 “ number of chosen apostles to propagate through
 “ the world the religion he had taught during the
 “ course of his ministry. But, before his departure,
 “ he promised, that, at a certain period of time,
 “ he would send an apostle superior to all others in
 “ eminence and dignity, whom he called the *para-*
 “ *clete, or comforter*, who should add many things
 “ to the precepts he had delivered, and dispel all
 “ the errors under which his servants laboured
 “ concerning divine things. This *comforter*, thus
 “ expressly promised by CHRIST, is MANES, the
 “ Persian, who, by the order of the MOST HIGH,
 “ declared to mortals the whole doctrine of salvation,

Concerning
 the office of
 CHRIST.

Concerning
 the com-
 forter.

CENT. “ without exception, and without concealing any
 III. “ of its truths, under the veil of metaphor, or any
 PART II. “ other covering.

Concerning
 the purifi-
 cation of
 souls, and
 their future
 condition. VII. “ Those souls, who believe JESUS CHRIST
 “ to be the son of GOD, renounce the worship of
 “ the GOD of the Jews, who is the PRINCE OF
 “ DARKNESS, obey the laws delivered by CHRIST
 “ as they are enlarged and illustrated by the *com-*
 “ *forter*, MANES, and combat, with persevering
 “ fortitude, the lusts and appetites of a corrupt
 “ nature, derive from this faith and obedience the
 “ inestimable advantage of being gradually purified
 “ from the contagion of matter. The total purifi-
 “ cation of souls cannot, indeed, be accomplished
 “ during this mortal life. Hence it is, that the
 “ souls of men, after death, must pass through two
 “ states more of probation and trial, by *water* and
 “ *fire*, before they can ascend to the regions of
 “ LIGHT. They mount, therefore, first into the
 “ moon, which consists of benign and salutary
 “ *water*; from whence, after a lustration of fifteen
 “ days, they proceed to the sun, whose purifying
 “ *fire* removes entirely all their corruption, and
 “ effaces all their stains. The bodies, composed of
 “ malignant matter, which they have left behind
 “ them, return to their first state, and enter into
 “ their original mass.

Concerning
 the fate of
 unpurified
 souls.

VIII. “ On the other hand, those souls who
 “ have neglected the salutary work of their purifica-
 “ tion, pass, after death, into the bodies of animals,
 “ or other natures, where they remain until they
 “ have expiated their guilt, and accomplished their
 “ probation. Some, on account of their peculiar
 “ obstinacy and perverseness, pass through a severer
 “ course of trial, being delivered over, for a certain
 “ time, to the power of malignant aerial spirits, who
 “ torment them in various ways. When the greatest
 “ part of the captive souls are restored to liberty,
 “ and to the regions of light, then a devouring fire

“ shall break forth, at the divine command, from CENT.
 “ the caverns in which it is at present confined, and III.
 “ shall destroy and consume the frame of the world. PART II.
 “ After this tremendous event, the PRINCE and
 “ *powers of darkness* shall be forced to return to
 “ their primitive seats of anguish and misery, in which
 “ they shall dwell for ever. For, to prevent their
 “ ever renewing this war in the regions of *light*,
 “ GOD shall surround the mansions of DARKNESS
 “ with an invincible guard, composed of those souls
 “ who have fallen irrecoverably from the hopes of
 “ salvation, and who, set in array, like a military
 “ band, shall surround those gloomy seats of woe,
 “ and hinder any of their wretched inhabitants from
 “ coming forth again to the *light*.” -

IX. In order to remove the strongest obstacles that lay against the belief of this monstrous system, MANES rejected almost all the sacred books in which Christians look for the sublime truths of their holy religion. He affirmed, in the first place, that the Old Testament was not the work of God, but of the Prince of Darkness, who was substituted by the Jews in the place of the true God. He maintained further, that the *Four Gospels*, which contain the history of CHRIST, were not written by the apostles, or, at least, that they were corrupted and interpolated by designing and artful men, and were augmented with Jewish fables and fictions. He therefore supplied their place by a *gospel*, which, he said, was dictated to him by God himself, and which he distinguished by the title of *Erteng*. He rejected also the *Acts of the Apostles*: and though he acknowledged the *epistles* that are attributed to St. PAUL, to be the productions of that divine apostle, yet he looked upon them as considerably corrupted and falsified in a variety of passages. We have not any certain account of the judgment he formed concerning the other books of the New Testament.

The opinion of Manes concerning the Old and New Testament.

CENT. X. The rule of life and manners that MANES
 III. prescribed to his disciples was most extravagantly
 PART II. rigorous and austere. He commanded them to
 mortify and macerate the body, which he looked
 upon as *intrinsically* evil and *essentially* corrupt; to
 deprive it of all those objects which could contri-
 bute either to its conveniency or delight; to extir-
 pate all those desires that lead to the pursuit of
 external objects; and to divest themselves of all
 the passions and instincts of nature. Such was the
 unnatural rule of practice which this enormous
 fanatic prescribed to his followers; but foreseeing,
 at the same time, that his sect could not possibly
 become numerous, if this severe manner of living
 was to be imposed without distinction upon all his
 adherents, he divided his disciples into *two* classes;
 the *one* of which comprehended the perfect Chris-
 tians, under the name of the *elect*; and the other,
 the imperfect and feeble, under the title of *bearers*.
 The *elect* were obliged to a rigorous and entire
 abstinence from flesh, eggs, milk, fish, wine, all
 intoxicating drink, wedlock, and all amorous grati-
 fications; and to live in a state of the sharpest penury,
 nourishing their shrivelled and emaciated bodies
 with bread, herbs, pulse, and melons, and depriving
 themselves of all the comforts that arise from the
 moderate indulgence of natural passions, and also
 from a variety of innocent and agreeable pursuits.
 The discipline, appointed for the *bearers*, was of
 a milder nature. They were allowed to possess
 houses, lands and wealth, to feed upon flesh, to enter
 into the bonds of conjugal tenderness; but this
 liberty was granted them with many limitations,
 and under the strictest conditions of moderation and
 temperance.

The general assembly of the Manicheans was
 headed by a president, who represented JESUS
 CHRIST. There were joined to him *twelve rulers*,
 or *masters*, who were designed to represent the

His rule of
 life severely
 sober.

Division of
 his disciples.

twelve apostles; and these were followed by *seventy*-CENT.
two bishops, the images of the *seventy-two disciples* of III.
 our Lord. These bishops had *presbyters* and *deacons* PART II.
 under them, and all the members of these religious
 orders were chosen out of the class of the *elect* [f].

XI. The sect of the Hieracites was formed in The sect of
Egypt, towards the conclusion of this century, by the Hiera-
 HIERAX of *Leontium*, a bookseller by profession, cites.
 and distinguished eminently by his extensive learning,
 and a venerable air of sanctity and virtue. Some
 have considered this as a branch of the Manichean
 sect, but without foundation; since, notwithstanding
 the agreement of MANES and HIERAX in some
 points of doctrine, it is certain that they differed in
 many respects. HIERAX maintained, that the prin-
 cipal object of CHRIST'S office and ministry was the
 promulgation of a *new law*, more severe and perfect
 than that of MOSES; and from hence he concluded,
 that the use of flesh, wine, wedlock, and of other
 things agreeable to the outward senses, which had
 been permitted under the Mosaic dispensation, was
 absolutely prohibited and abrogated by CHRIST.
 If, indeed, we look attentively into his doctrine, we
 shall find that, like MANES, he did not think that
 these austere acts of self-denial, were imposed by
 CHRIST indiscriminately upon all, but on such only,
 as were ambitious of aspiring to the highest summit
 of virtue. To this capital error he added many
 others, which were partly the consequences of
 this illusion, and were, in part, derived from other
 sources. He excluded, for example, from the king-
 dom of heaven, children who died before they had
 arrived to the use of reason, and that upon the
 supposition that God was bound to administer the
 rewards of futurity, to those only who had fairly
 finished their victorious conflict with the body and

[f] See all this amply proved in the work intitled *Commen-
 tarii de rebus Christianorum aut Constantinum Magnum.*

CENT. its lusts. He maintained also, that MELCHISEDEC,
 III. king of *Salem*, who blessed ABRAHAM, was the
 PART II. Holy Ghost; denied the resurrection of the body,
 ————— and cast a cloud of obscurity over the sacred scrip-
 tures by his allegorical fictions [g].

The Noe-
 tian contro-
 versy.

XII. The controversies relating to the divine
 Trinity, which took their rise in the former century,
 from the introduction of the Grecian philosophy
 into the Christian church, were now spreading with
 considerable vigour, and producing various methods
 of explaining that inexplicable doctrine. One of
 the first who engaged in this idle and perilous
 attempt of explaining what every mortal must
 acknowledge to be incomprehensible, was NOETUS
 of *Smyrna*, an obscure man, and of mean abilities.
 He affirmed, that the Supreme God, whom he
 called the *Father*, and considered as absolutely indi-
 visible, united himself to the man CHRIST, whom
 he called the *Son*, and was born, and crucified with
 him. From this opinion, NOETUS and his followers
 were distinguished by the title of *Patripassians*, *i. e.*
 persons who believe that the Supreme Father of
 the universe, and not any other divine person, had
 expiated the guilt of the human race. And, indeed,
 this appellation belongs to them justly, if the accounts
 which ancient writers give us of their opinions be
 accurate and impartial [b].

Sabellius.

XIII. About the middle of this century arose
 SABELLIUS, an African bishop or presbyter, who,
 in *Pentapolis*, a province of *Cyrenaica*, and in *Ptole-
 mais*, or *Barce*, its principal city, explained, in a
 manner very little different from that of NOETUS,
 the doctrine of scripture concerning the Father,

[g] EPIPHAN. *Hæres.* lxxvii. *Hieracitarum*, p. 710, &c.

[b] See the *Discourse of HIPPOLYTUS against the Heresy of
 NOETUS*, in the second volume of his works, published by FA-
 BRICIUS. AS ALSO EPIPHAN. *Hæres.* lviii. tom. i. p. 479.
 THEODORET. *Hæret. Fabul.* lib. iii. cap. iii. p. 227. tom. 4.
 opp.

Son, and Holy Ghost. This dogmatist had a considerable number of followers, who adhered to him, notwithstanding that his opinions were refuted by DIONYSIUS, bishop of *Alexandria*. His sentiments were, in some respects, different from those of NOETUS; the latter was of opinion, that the *person* of the Father had assumed the human nature of CHRIST; whereas SABELLIUS maintained, that a certain *energy* only, proceeding from the Supreme Parent, or a certain portion of the divine nature, was united to the Son of God, the man JESUS; and he considered, in the same manner, the *Holy Ghost*, as a portion of the everlasting Father [i]. From hence it appears, that the Sabellians, though they might with justice be called Patripassians, were yet called so, by the ancients, in a different sense from that in which this name was given to the Noetians.

CENT.

III.

PART II.

XIV. At this same period, BERYLLUS an Arabian, bishop of *Bozrah*, and a man of eminent piety and learning, taught that CHRIST, before his birth, had no proper subsistence, nor any other divinity, than that of the Father; which opinion, when considered with attention, amounts to this: that CHRIST did not exist before MARY, but that a *spirit* issuing from God himself, and therefore superior to all human souls, as being a portion of the divine nature, was united to him, at the time of his birth. BERYLLUS, however, was refuted by ORIGEN, with such a victorious power of argument

Beryllus.

[i] Almost all the historians, who give accounts of the ancient heresies, have made particular mention of SABELLIUS. Among others, see EUSEB. *Hyst. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. vi. p. 252. ATHANAS. *Libro de sententia Dionysii*. All the passages of the ancient authors, relating to SABELLIUS, are carefully collected by the learned CHRISTOPHER WORMIUS, in his *Historia Sabelliana*, printed in 8vo, at *Francfort* and *Leipsick*, 1696.

CENT. and zeal, that he yielded up the cause, and returned
 III. into the bosom of the church [k].

PART II. XV. PAUL of Samofata, bishop of Antioch, and
 also a magistrate or civil judge, was very different
 Paul of Sa- from the pious and candid BERYLLUS, both in
 mosata. point of morals and doctrine. He was a vain and
 arrogant man, whom riches had rendered insolent
 and self-sufficient [l]. He introduced much confu-
 sion and trouble into the eastern churches, by his
 new explication of the doctrine of the gospel con-
 cerning the nature of GOD and CHRIST, and left
 behind him a sect, that assumed the title of Paulians,
 or Paulianists. As far as we can judge of his doctrine
 by the accounts of it that have been transmitted to
 us, it seems to have amounted to this: "That the
 " Son and the Holy Ghost exist in God in the same
 " manner as the faculties of *reason* and *activity* do
 " in man: that CHRIST was born a mere man;
 " but that the *reason* or *wisdom* of the Father
 " descended into him, and by him wrought miracles
 " upon earth, and instructed the nations: and finally,
 " that, on account of this union of the *divine word*
 " with the *man* JESUS, CHRIST might, though
 " improperly, be called *God*."

Such were the real sentiments of PAUL. He involved them, however, in such deep obscurity, by the ambiguous forms of speech he made use of to explain and defend them, that, after several meetings of the councils held to examine his errors, they could not convict him of heresy. At length, indeed, a council was assembled, in the year 269, in which MALCHION, the rhetorician, drew him

[k] EUSEB. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xx. p. 222. cap. xxxiii. p. 231. HIERONYM. *Catalog. Scriptor. Eccles.* cap. lx. p. 137. SOCRATES, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. vii. p. 174; and among the moderns, LE CLERC, *As Critica*, vol. i. part II. § 1. cap. xiv. p. 293. CHAUFFEPED, *Nouveau Diction. Hist. Crit.* tom. i. p. 263.

[l] EUSEB. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vii. cap. xxx. p. 279.

forth from his obscurity, detected his evasions, and exposed him in his true colours; in consequence of which he was degraded from the episcopal order [m].

CENT.
III.
PART II.

XVI. It was not only in the point now mentioned, that the doctrine of the gospel suffered, at this time, from the erroneous fancies of wrong-headed doctors. For there sprung up now, in *Arabia*, a certain sort of minute philosophers, the disciples of a master, whose obscurity has concealed him from the knowledge of after-ages, who denied the immortality of the soul, believed that it perished with the body, but maintained, at the same time, that it was to be again recalled to life with the body, by the power of God. The philosophers, who held this opinion, were called *Arabians* from their country. *ORIGEN* was called from *Egypt*, to make head against this rising sect, and disputed against them, in a full council, with such remarkable success that they abandoned their erroneous sentiments, and returned to the received doctrine of the church.

Aburdities
of some
Arabian
philosophers.

XVII. Among the sects that arose in this century, we place that of the *Novatians* the last. This sect cannot be charged with having corrupted the doctrine of Christianity by their opinions; their crime was, that by the unreasonable severity of their discipline, they gave occasion to the most deplorable divisions, and made an unhappy rent in the church. *NOVATIAN*, a presbyter of the church of *Rome*, a man also of uncommon learning and eloquence, but of an austere and rigid character, entertained the most unfavourable sentiments of those who had been separated from the communion of the church. He indulged his inclination to severity so far, as to deny that such as had fallen into the commission of grievous transgressions, especially those who had apostized

The troubles excited in the church by the Novatians.

[m] *Epistol. Concil. Antioch. ad Paulum in Bibliotheca Patrum.* tom. xi. p. 302. *Dionysii Alex. Ep. ad Paulum,* ib. p. 273. *Decem Pauli Samosatani Quaestiones* ib. p. 278.

CENT. from the faith, under the persecution set on foot
 III. by DECIUS, were to be again received into the
 PART II. bosom of the church. The greatest part of the
 presbyters were of a different opinion in this matter, especially CORNELIUS, whose credit and influence were raised to the highest pitch by the esteem and admiration which his eminent virtues so naturally excited. Hence it happened, that when a bishop was to be chosen, in the year 250, to succeed FABIANUS in the see of *Rome*, NOVATIAN opposed the election of CORNELIUS, with the greatest activity and bitterness. His opposition, however, was in vain, for CORNELIUS was chosen to that eminent office of which his distinguished merit rendered him so highly worthy. NOVATIAN, upon this, separated himself from the jurisdiction of CORNELIUS, who, in his turn, called a council at *Rome*, in the year 251, and cut off NOVATIAN and his partisans from the communion of the church. This turbulent man, being thus excommunicated, erected a new society, of which he was the first bishop; and which, on account of the severity of its discipline, was followed by many, and flourished, until the fifth century, in the greatest part of those provinces which had received the gospel. The chief person who assisted NOVATIAN in this enterprize, was NOVATUS, a Carthaginian presbyter, a man of no principles, who, during the heat of this controversy, had come from *Carthage* to *Rome*, to escape the resentment and excommunication of CYPRIAN, his bishop, with whom he was highly at variance.

The severity of the Novatians against the lapsed.

XVIII. There was no difference, in point of doctrine, between the Novatians and other Christians. What peculiarly distinguished them was, their refusing to re-admit to the communion of the church, those who, after baptism, had fallen into the commission of heinous crimes, though they did not pretend, that even such were excluded from all possibility or hopes of salvation. They considered

the Christian church as a society where virtue and innocence reigned universally, and none of whose members, from their entrance into it, had defiled themselves with any enormous crime; and, of consequence, they looked upon every society, which re-admitted heinous offenders to its communion, as unworthy of the title of a true Christian church. It was from hence also, that they assumed the title of *Cathari*, i. e. the *pure*; and, what shewed still a more extravagant degree of vanity and arrogance, they obliged such as came over to them from the general body of Christians, to submit to be baptised a second time, as a necessary preparation for entering into their society. For such deep root had their favourite opinion concerning the irrevocable rejection of heinous offenders taken in their minds, and so great was its influence upon the sentiments they entertained of other Christian societies, that they considered the baptism administered in those churches, which received the lapsed to their communion, even after the most sincere and undoubted repentance, as absolutely divested of the power of imparting the remission of sins [n].

[n] EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xliii. p. 242. CYPRIANUS *variis Epistolis*, xlix. lii. &c. ALBASPINÆUS, *Observat. Eccles.* lib. ii. cap. xx, xxi. JOS. AUG. ORSI, *De criminum capital. inter veteres Christianos absolute*, p. 254. KENCKEL, *De hæresi Novatiana*.



A N

Ecclesiastical History.

BOOK THE SECOND.

CONTAINING THE

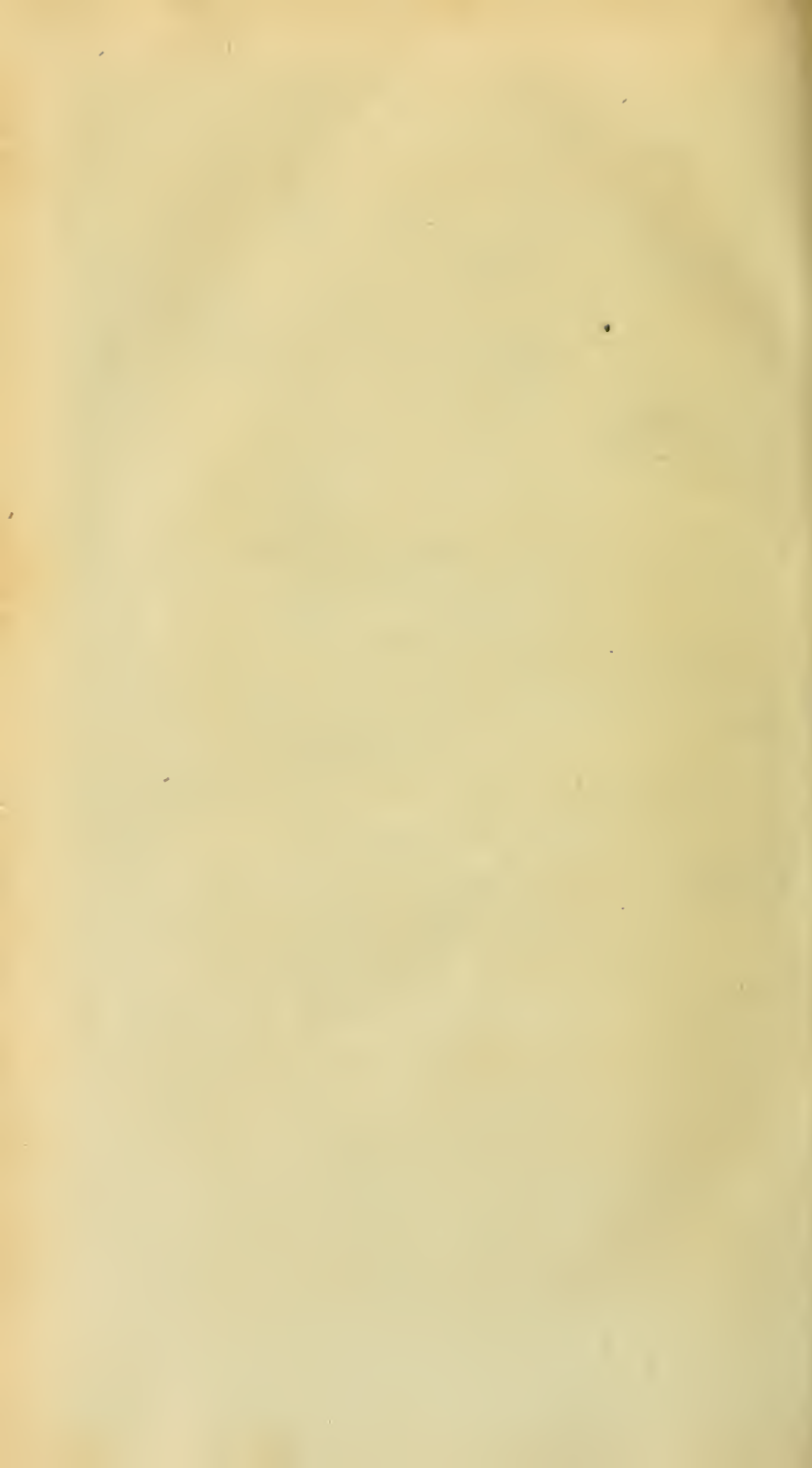
STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

FROM THE TIME OF

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT

T O

C H A R L E M A G N E.



THE
FOURTH CENTURY.

PART I.

The External HISTORY of the CHURCH.

=

CHAPTER I.

Concerning the prosperous and calamitous events which happened to the church during this century.

I. **T**HAT I may not separate facts, which are intimately connected with each other, I have judged it expedient to combine, in the same chapter, the prosperous and calamitous events that happened to the church during this century, instead of treating them separately, as I have hitherto done. This combination, which presents things in their natural relations, as causes or effects, is, undoubtedly, the principal circumstance that renders history truly interesting. In following, however, this plan, the order of time shall also be observed with as much accuracy as this interesting combination of events will admit of.

In the beginning of this century, the Roman empire was under the dominion of four chiefs, of whom two, **DIOCLETIAN** and **MAXIMIAN HERCULEUS**, were of superior dignity, and were distinguished each by the title of **AUGUSTUS**; while the other two, *viz.* **CONSTANTIUS CHLORUS** and **MAXIMINUS GALERIUS**, were in a certain degree of subordination to the former, and were honoured with the appellation of **CÆSARS**. Under these four emperors, the church enjoyed an agreeable calm

CENT.

IV.

PART I.

The church enjoys peace at the entrance of this century.

CENT. [a]. DIOCLETIAN, though much addicted to
 IV. superstition, did not, however, entertain any aversion
 PART I. to the Christians: and CONSTANTIUS CHLORUS,
 who, following the dictates of right reason alone in
 the worship of the deity, had abandoned the absurdities of polytheism, treated them with condescension and benevolence. This alarmed the Pagan priests, whose interests were so closely connected with the continuance of the ancient superstitions, and who apprehended, not without reason, that, to their great detriment, the Christian religion would become daily more universal and triumphant throughout the empire. Under these anxious fears of the downfall of their authority, they addressed themselves to DIOCLETIAN, whom they knew to be of a timorous and credulous disposition, and, by fictitious oracles and other such perfidious stratagems, endeavoured to engage him to persecute the Christians [b].

The persecution under Diocletian.

II. DIOCLETIAN, however, stood, for some time, unmoved by the treacherous arts of a selfish and superstitious priesthood, who, when they perceived the ill success of their cruel efforts, addressed themselves to MAXIMINUS GALERIUS one of the CÆSARS, and also son-in-law to DIOCLETIAN, in order to accomplish their unrighteous purposes. This prince, whose gross ignorance of every thing but military affairs was accompanied with a fierce and savage temper, was a proper instrument for executing their designs. Set on, therefore, by the malicious insinuations of the heathen priests, the suggestions of a superstitious mother, and the ferocity of his own natural disposition, he solicited DIOCLETIAN with such indefatigable importunity, and in

[a] EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. viii. cap. i. p. 291, &c.

[b] EUSEBIUS, *De vita Constantini*, lib. ii. cap. l. p. 467. LACTANTIUS *Institut. divin.* lib. iv. cap. xxvii. p. 393. Idem, *De mortibus persecutor*, cap. x. p. 943. edit. Heumann.

such an urgent manner, for an edict against the Christians, that he, at length, obtained his horrid purpose. For in the year 303, when this emperor was at *Nicomedia*, an order was obtained from him to pull down the churches of the Christians, to burn all their books and writings, and to take from them all their civil rights and privileges, and render them incapable of any honours or civil promotion [c]. This first edict, though rigorous and severe, extended not to the lives of the Christians, for **DIOCLETIAN** was extremely averse to slaughter and bloodshed; it was, however, destructive to many of them, particularly to those who refused to deliver the sacred books into the hands of the magistrates [d]. Many Christians therefore, and among them several bishops and presbyters, seeing the consequences of this refusal, delivered up all the religious books and other sacred things that were in their possession, in order to save their lives. This conduct was highly condemned by the most steady and resolute Christians, who looked upon this compliance as sacrilegious, and branded those who were guilty of it with the ignominious appellation of *traitors* [e].

III. Not long after the publication of this first edict against the Christians, a fire broke out, at two different times, in the palace of **NICOMEDIA**, where **GALERIUS** lodged with **DIOCLETIAN**. The Christians were accused, by their enemies, as the authors of this [f]; and the credulous **DIOCLE-**

[c] **LACTANTIUS**, *De mortibus persecutor*, c. xi. p. 944. **EUSEBIUS**, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. viii. cap. ii. p. 293, &c.

[d] **AUGUSTINUS**, *Breviculo collat. cum Donatistis*, cap. xv. xvii. p. 387. 390. tom. ix. opp. **BALUZII Miscellan.** tom. ii. p. 77. 92.

[e] **OPTATUS MILEVIT.** *De Schismate Donatistar.* lib. i. § xiii. p. 13, &c. edit. Pinian.

[f] **LACTANTIUS** assures us, that **GALERIUS** caused fire to be privately set to the palace, that he might lay the blame

CENT.
IV.
PART I.

The causes
and severity
of this per-
secution.

CENT. TIAN, too easily persuaded of the truth of this
 IV. charge, caused vast numbers of them to suffer at
 PART I. *Nicomedia*, the punishment of incendiaries, and to
 be tormented in the most inhuman and infamous
 manner [g]. About the same time, there arose
 certain tumults and seditions in *Armenia* and in
Syria, which were also attributed to the Christians
 by their irreconcilable enemies, and dexterously
 made use of to arm against them the emperor's fury.
 And accordingly *DIOCLETIAN*, by a new edict,
 ordered all the bishops and ministers of the Christian
 church to be cast into prison. Nor did his inhuman
 violence end here; for a third edict was soon issued
 out, by which it was ordered, that all sorts of tor-
 ments should be employed, and the most insupport-
 able punishments invented to force these venerable
 captives to renounce their profession by sacrificing
 to the heathen gods [b]; for it was hoped, that,
 if the bishops and doctors of the church could be
 brought to yield, their respective flocks would be
 easily induced to follow their example. An immense
 number of persons, illustriously distinguished by their
 piety and learning, became the victims of this cruel
 stratagem throughout the whole Roman empire,
Gaul excepted, which was under the mild and
 equitable dominion of *CONSTANTIUS CHLORUS*
 [i]. Some were punished in such a shameful manner,

of it upon the Christians, and by that means incense *DIOCLE-*
TIAN still more against them; in which horrid stratagem he
 succeeded, for never was any persecution so bloody and inhuman,
 as that which this credulous emperor now set on foot against
 them.

[g] *EUSEB. Hist. Eccles. lib. viii. cap. vi. p. 297. LAC-*
TANT. De mortibus persecut. cap. xiv. p. 948. CONSTAN-
TINUS M. Oratio ad sanctor. cœtum, cap. xxi. p. 601.

[b] *EUSEB. Hist. Eccles. lib. viii. cap. vii. p. 298. Idem,*
De martyribus Palestinae.

[i] *LACTANTIUS, De mortibus persecut. cap. xv. p. 951.*
EUSEBIUS, Hist. Eccles. lib. viii. cap. xiii. p. 309. cap. xviii.
p. 317.

as the rules of decency oblige us to pass in silence; some were put to death after having had their constancy tried by tedious and inexpressible tortures; and some were sent to the mines to draw out the remains of a miserable life in poverty and bondage.

IV. In the second year of this horrible persecution, the 304th of the Christian æra, a fourth edict was published by **DIOCLETIAN**, at the instigation of **GALERIUS**, and the other inveterate enemies of the Christian name. By it the magistrates were ordered and commissioned to force all Christians, without distinction of rank or sex, to sacrifice to the gods, and were authorized to employ all sorts of torments in order to drive them to this act of apostasy [k]. The diligence and zeal of the Roman magistrates, in the execution of this inhuman edict, had liked to have proved fatal to the Christian cause [l].

IV.
PART I.
The affairs
of the
Christians
reduced to
a dangerous
crisis.

GALERIUS now made no longer a mystery of the ambitious project he had been revolving in his mind. Finding his scheme ripe for execution, he obliged **DIOCLETIAN** and **MAXIMIAN HERCULEUS** to resign the imperial dignity, and declared himself emperor of the east; leaving in the west **CONSTANTIUS CHLORUS**, with the ill state of whose health he was well acquainted. He chose colleagues according to his own fancy, and, rejecting the proposal of **DIOCLETIAN**, who recommended **MAXENTIUS**, and **CONSTANTINE** the son of **CONSTANTIUS**, to that dignity, his choice fell upon **SEVERUS** and **DAZA**, his sister's son, to whom he had, a little before, given the name of **MAXIMIN** [m]. This revolution restored peace to those Christians, who lived in the western provinces, under the administration of **CONSTANTIUS** [n]; while those of the east, under the

[k] EUSEBIUS, *De martyribus Palestinae*, cap. iii. p. 321, &c.

[l] LACTANTIUS, *Institut. divin.* lib. v. cap. xi. p. 449.

[m] LACTANT. *De mortibus persecut.* cap. xvii. p. 954. cap. xx. p. 961.

[n] EUSEB. *De martyribus Palestinae*, cap. xiii. p. 345.

CENT. tyranny of GALERIUS, had their sufferings and calamities dreadfully augmented [o].

IV. PART I.

The tranquillity of the church restored, by the accession of Constantine to the empire;

V. The divine providence, however, was preparing more serene and happy days for the church. In order to this, it confounded the schemes of GALERIUS, and brought his councils to nothing. In the year 306, CONSTANTIUS CHLORUS dying in *Britain*, the army saluted with the title of AUGUSTUS, his son CONSTANTINE, surnamed afterwards the GREAT on account of his illustrious exploits, and forced him to accept the purple. This proceeding, which must have stung the tyrant GALERIUS to the heart, he was, nevertheless, obliged to bear with patience, and even to confirm with the outward marks of his approbation. Soon after a civil war broke out, the occasion of which was as follows: MAXIMIN GALERIUS, inwardly enraged at the election of CONSTANTINE by the soldiers, sent him indeed the purple, but gave him only the title of CÆSAR, and created SEVERUS emperor. MAXENTIUS, the son of MAXIMIAN HERCULEUS, and son-in-law to GALERIUS, provoked at the preference given to SEVERUS, assumed the imperial dignity, and found the less difficulty in making good this usurpation, as the Roman people hoped, by his means, to deliver themselves from the insupportable tyranny of GALERIUS. Having caused himself to be proclaimed emperor, he chose his father MAXIMIAN for his colleague, who, receiving the purple from the hands of his son, was universally acknowledged in that character by the senate and the people. Amidst all these troubles and commotions CONSTANTINE, beyond all human expectation, made his way to the imperial throne.

The western Christians, those of *Italy* and *Africa* excepted [p], enjoyed a tolerable degree of tran-

[o] LACTANT. *De mortibus persecut.* cap. xxi. p. 964.

[p] The reason of this exception is, that the provinces of *Italy* and *Africa*, though nominally under the government of

quillity and liberty during these civil tumults. Those of the east seldom continued for any considerable time in the same situation ; subject to various changes and revolutions ; their condition was sometimes adverse and sometimes tolerably easy, according to the different scenes that were presented by the fluctuating state of public affairs. At length however MAXIMIN GALERIUS, who had been the author of their heaviest calamities, being brought to the brink of the grave by a most dreadful and lingering disease [q], whose complicated horrors no language can express, published, in the year 311, a solemn edict, ordering the persecution to cease, and restoring freedom and repose to the Christians, against whom he had exercised such unheard-of cruelties [r].

VI. After the death of GALERIUS, his dominions fell into the hands of MAXIMIN and LICINIUS, who divided between them the provinces he had possessed. At the same time, MAXENTIUS, who had usurped the government of *Africa* and *Italy*, determined to make war upon CONSTANTINE, who was now master of *Spain* and the *Gauls*, and this with the ambitious view of reducing, under his dominion, the whole western empire. CONSTANTINE, apprised of this design, marched with a part of his army into *Italy*, gave battle to MAXENTIUS at a small distance from *Rome*, and defeated totally that abominable tyrant, who, in his precipitate flight, fell into the *Tiber*, and was drowned. After this victory, which happened in the year 312, CONSTANTINE, and his colleague LICINIUS, immediately granted to the Christians a full power of living according to their own laws and institutions ;

SEVERUS, were yet in fact ruled by GALERIUS with an iron sceptre.

☞ [q] See a lively description of the disease of GALERIUS in the *Universal History*, vol. xv. p. 359. of the *Dublin* edition.

[r] EUSEB. *Hist Eccles.* lib. viii. cap. xvi. p. 314. LACTANTIUS, *De mortibus persecut.* cap xxxiii. p. 981.

CENT. which power was specified still more clearly in
 IV. another edict, drawn up at *Milan*, in the following
 PART I. year [s]. MAXIMIN, indeed, who ruled in the east,
 was preparing new calamities for the Christians, and
 threatening also with destruction the western emperors.
 But his projects were disconcerted by the victory which
 LICINIUS gained over his army, and, through distraction and
 despair, he ended his life by poison, in the year 313.

Different
 opinions
 concerning
 the faith of
 Constantine.

VII. About the same time, CONSTANTINE the GREAT, who had hitherto discovered no religious principles of any kind, embraced Christianity, in consequence, as it is said, of a *miraculous cross*, which appeared to him in the air, as he was marching towards *Rome* to attack MAXENTIUS. But that this extraordinary event was the reason of his conversion, is a matter that has never yet been placed in such a light, as to dispel all doubts and difficulties. For the first edict of CONSTANTINE in favour of the Christians, and many other circumstances that might be here alleged, shew, indeed, that he was well disposed to them and to their worship, but are no proof that he looked upon Christianity as the only true religion; which, however, would have been the natural effect of a miraculous conversion. It appears evident, on the contrary, that this emperor considered the other religions, and particularly that which was handed down from the ancient Romans, as also true and useful to mankind; and declared it as his intention and desire, that they should all be exercised and professed in the empire, leaving to each individual the liberty of adhering to that which he thought the best. CONSTANTINE, it is true, did not remain always in this state of indifference. In process of time, he acquired more extensive views of the excellence and importance of

[s] EUSEB. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. x. cap. v. p. 388. LACTANTIUS, *De mortibus persecut.* cap. xlvi. p. 1007.

the Christian religion, and gradually arrived at an entire persuasion of its bearing alone the sacred marks of celestial truth, and of a divine origin. He was convinced of the falsehood and impiety of all other religious institutions; and, acting in consequence of this conviction, he exhorted earnestly all his subjects to embrace the gospel; and at length employed all the force of his authority in the abolition of the ancient superstition. It is not indeed easy, nor perhaps possible, to fix precisely the time when the religious sentiments of CONSTANTINE were so far changed, as to render all religions, but that of CHRIST, the objects of his aversion. All that we know, with certainty, concerning this matter is, that this change was first published to the world by the laws and edicts [t] which this emperor issued out in the year 324, when, after the defeat and death of LICINIUS, he reigned, without a colleague, sole lord of the Roman empire. His designs, however, with respect to the abolition of the ancient religion of the Romans, and the tolerating no other form of worship but the Christian, were only made known towards the latter end of his life, by the edicts he issued out for destroying the heathen temples and prohibiting sacrifices [u].

VIII. The sincerity of CONSTANTINE'S zeal for Christianity can scarcely be doubted, unless it be maintained, that the outward actions of men are, in no degree, a proof of their inward sentiments. It must, indeed, be confessed, that the life and actions of this prince were not such as the Christian religion demands from those who profess to believe its sublime doctrines. It is also certain, that, from his conversion to the last period of his life, he continued

Of Constantine's sincerity in the profession of Christianity.

[t] EUSEB. *De vita Constant.* lib. ii. cap. xx. p. 453. cap. xlv. p. 464.

[u] See GODOFRED *ad codic. Theodosian.* tom. vi. part I. p. 290.

CENT. in the state of a *catechumen*, and was not received
 IV by baptism into the number of the faithful, until a
 PART I. few days before his death, when that sacred rite
 was administered to him at *Nicomedia*, by EUSEBIUS, bishop of that place [*w*]. But neither of these circumstances are sufficient to prove, that he was not entirely persuaded of the divinity of the Christian religion, or that his profession of the gospel was an act of pure dissimulation. For it was a custom with many, in this century, to put off their baptism to the last hour, that thus immediately after receiving by this rite the remission of their sins, they might ascend pure and spotless to the mansions of life and immortality. Nor are the crimes of CONSTANTINE any proof of the insincerity of his profession, since nothing is more evident, though it be strange and unaccountable, than that many who believe, in the firmest manner, the truth and divinity of the gospel, yet violate its laws by repeated transgressions, and live in contradiction to their own inward principles. Another question of a different nature might be proposed here, *viz.* Whether motives of a worldly kind did not contribute, in a certain measure, to give Christianity, in the esteem of CONSTANTINE, a preference to all other religious systems? It is indeed probable, that this prince perceived the admirable tendency of the Christian doctrine and precepts to promote the stability of government, by preserving the citizens in their obedience to the reigning powers, and in the practice of those virtues that render a state

[*w*] EUSEBIUS, *De vita Constantini*, lib. iv. cap. lxi, lxii. Those who, upon the authority of certain records (whose date is modern, and whose credit is extremely dubious) affirm, that CONSTANTINE was baptized in the year 324, at *Rome*, by SYLVESTER, the bishop of that city, are evidently mistaken. Those, even of the Romish church, who are the most eminent for their learning and sagacity, reject this notion. See NORIS, *Hist. Donatist.* tom. iv. opp. p. 650. THOM. MARIE MAMACHII *Origin. et Antiquit. Christian.* tom. ii. p. 232.

happy. And he must naturally have observed, how defective the Roman superstition was in this important point [x].

CENT.
IV.
PART I.]

IX. The doubts and difficulties that naturally arise in the mind, concerning the *miraculous cross* that CONSTANTINE solemnly declared he had seen, about noon, in the air, are many and considerable. It is easy, indeed, to refute the opinion of those, who look upon this prodigy as a cunning fiction invented by the emperor to animate his troops in the ensuing battle, or who consider the narration as wholly fabulous [y]. The sentiment also of those, who imagine that this pretended cross was no more than a natural phenomenon in a solar halo, is, perhaps, more ingenious, than solid and convincing [z]. Nor, in the third place, do we think it sufficiently

A cross seen
by him in
the air.

[x] See EUSEBIUS, *De vita Constant.* lib. i. cap. xxvii. p. 421. ☞ It has been sometimes remarked, by the more eminent writers of the Roman history, that the superstition of that people, contrary to what Dr. MOSHEIM here observes, had a great influence in keeping them in their subordination and allegiance. It is more particularly observed, that in no other nation the solemn obligation of an oath was treated with such respect, and fulfilled with such a religious circumspection, and such an inviolable fidelity. But, notwithstanding all this, it is certain, that superstition, if it may be dexterously turned to good purposes, may be equally employed to bad. The artifice of an augur could have rendered superstition as useful to the infernal designs of a TARQUIN and a CATALINE, as to the noble and virtuous purposes of a PUBLICOLA or a TRAJAN. But true Christianity can animate or encourage to nothing that is not just and good. It tends to support government by the principles of piety and justice, and not by the ambiguous flight of birds, and such like delusions.

[y] HORNBECK. *Comment. ad Bullam Urbani*, viii. de *Imagin. cultu*, p. 182. OISELIUS, *Thesaur. Numism. Antiq.* p. 463. TOLLIUS, *Preface to the French Translation of LONGINUS*, as also his *Adnot. ad LACTANTIUM de Mort. Persequut.* cap. xlv. CHRIST. THOMASII, *Observat. Hallens.* tom. i. p. 380.

[z] JO. AND. SCHMIDIUS, *Diss. de luna in cruce visa.* JO. ALB. FABRICIUS, *Diss. de cruce à Constantino visa*, in his *Biblioth. Græca*, vol. vi. cap. i. p. 8, &c.

CENT. proved, that the divine power interposed here to
 IV. confirm the wavering faith of CONSTANTINE by
 PART I. a stupendous miracle. The only hypothesis then
 [a], which remains, is, that we consider this famous
 cross as a vision represented to the emperor in a
 dream, with the remarkable inscription, HAC VINCE,
 i. e. IN THIS CONQUER; and this latter opinion

☞ [a] This hypothesis of Dr. MOSHEIM is not more credible than the real appearance of a cross in the air.—Both events are recorded by the same authority. And, if the veracity of CONSTANTINE, or of EUSEBIUS, are questioned with respect to the appearance of a cross in the day, they can scarcely be considered in with respect to the truth of the nocturnal vision. It is very surprising to see the learned authors of the *Universal History* adopt, without exception, all the accounts of EUSEBIUS concerning this cross, which are extremely liable to suspicion; which EUSEBIUS himself seems to have believed but in part, and for the truth of which he is careful not to make himself answerable. (See that author *De vita Constant.* lib. ii. cap. ix.)

This whole story is attended with difficulties, which render it, both as a miracle and as a fact, extremely dubious, to say no more.—It will necessarily be asked, whence it comes to pass, that the relation of a fact, which is said to have been seen by the whole army, is delivered by EUSEBIUS, upon the sole credit of CONSTANTINE? This is the more unaccountable, that EUSEBIUS lived and conversed with many that must have been spectators of this event, had it really happened, and whose unanimous testimony would have prevented the necessity of CONSTANTINE's confirming it to him by an oath. The sole relation of one man, concerning a public appearance, is not sufficient to give complete conviction; nor does it appear, that this story was generally believed by the Christians, or by others, since several ecclesiastical historians, who wrote after EUSEBIUS, particularly RUFFIN and SOZOMEN, make no mention of this appearance of a cross in the heavens. The nocturnal vision was, it must be confessed, more generally known and believed. Upon which Dr. LARDNER makes this conjecture, that when CONSTANTINE first informed the people of the reason that induced him to make use of the sign of the cross in his army, he alleged nothing but a dream for that purpose; but that, in the latter part of his life, when he was acquainted with EUSEBIUS, he added, the other particular, of a *luminous cross*, seen *somewhere* by him and his army in the day-time (for the place is not mentioned); and that, the emperor having related this in the most solemn manner, EUSEBIUS thought himself obliged to mention it.

is maintained by authors of considerable weight CENT.
[aa].

IV. PART I.
 Λ. The joy, with which the Christians were The Christians persecuted by Licinius.
 elated on account of the favourable edicts of CON-
 STANTINE and LICINIUS, was soon interrupted by
 the war which broke out between these two princes.
 LICINIUS; being defeated in a pitched battle, in
 the year 314, made a treaty of peace with CON-
 STANTINE, and observed it during the space of
 nine years. But his turbulent spirit rendered him
 an enemy to repose; and his natural violence
 seconded, and still further incensed, by the sugges-
 tions of the Heathen priests, armed him against
 CONSTANTINE, in the year 324, for the second
 time. During this war, he endeavoured to engage
 in his cause all those who remained attached to
 the ancient superstition, that thus he might oppress
 his adversary with numbers; and, in order to this,
 he persecuted the Christians in a cruel manner, and
 put to death many of their bishops, after trying
 them with torments of the most barbarous nature
 [b]. But all his enterprizes proved abortive; for,

[aa] All the writers, who have given any accounts of CON-
 STANTINE the GREAT, are carefully enumerated by J. A. FABRI-
 CIUS, in his *Lux. Solut. Evang. toti orbi exor.* cap. xii. p. 260.
 who also mentions, cap. xiii. p. 237. the laws concerning religious
 matters, which were enacted by this emperor, and digested into
 four parts. For a full account of these laws, see JAC. GODO-
 FRED. *Adnotat. ad Codic. Theodos.* and BALDUINUS, in his
Constantin. Magn. seu de legibus Constantini Eccles. et Civilibus,
 lib. ii. of which a second edition was published, at Hall, by
 GUNDLING, in 8vo, in the year 1727.

[b] EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. x. cap. viii. Id. *De vita*
Constantini, lib. i. cap. xlix. JULIAN himself, whose bitter aversion
 to CONSTANTINE gives a singular degree of credibility to his
 testimony in this matter, could not help confessing that LICINIUS
 was an infamous tyrant, and a profligate, abandoned to all sorts
 of wickedness. See the CÆSARS of JULIAN, p. 222. of the
 French edition, by SPANHEIM. And here I beg leave to make
 a remark, which has escaped the learned, and that is, that
 AURELIUS VICTOR, in his book *de Cæsaribus*, cap. xli. p. 435.

CENT. after several battles fought without success, he
 IV. was reduced to the necessity of throwing himself
 PART I. at the victor's feet, and imploring his clemency ;
 which, however he did not long enjoy ; for he
 was strangled, by the orders of CONSTANTINE, in
 the year 325. After the defeat of LICINIUS, the
 empire was ruled by CONSTANTINE alone until his
 death, and the Christian cause experienced, in its
 happy progress, the effects of his auspicious admin-
 istration. This zealous prince employed all the
 resources of his genius, all the authority of his laws,
 and all the engaging charms of his munificence and
 liberality, to efface, by degrees, the superstitions of
 Paganism, and to propagate Christianity in every
 corner of the Roman empire. He had learned,
 no doubt, from the disturbances continually excited
 by LICINIUS, that neither himself nor the empire
 could enjoy a fixed state of tranquillity and safety
 as long as the ancient superstitions subsisted ; and
 therefore, from this period, he openly opposed the
 sacred rites of Paganism, as a religion detrimental to
 the interests of the state.

The state of
 the church
 under the
 sons of
 Constantine the
 Great.

XI. After the death of CONSTANTINE, which
 happened in the year 337, his three sons, CONSTAN-
 TINE II., CONSTANTIUS, and CONSTANS, were,
 in consequence of his appointment, put in possession
 of the empire, and were all saluted as emperors and
 AUGUSTI by the Roman senate. There were yet
 living two brothers of the late emperor, viz. CON-
 STANTIUS DALMATIUS and JULIUS CONSTANTIUS,

edit. Arntzenii, has mentioned the persecution under LUCINIUS
 in the following terms : " Licinio ne infantium quidem ac nobi-
 " lium philosophorum servili more cruciatus adhibiti modum
 " fecere." The philosophers, whom LICINIUS is here said to
 have tormented, were, doubtless, the Christians, whom many,
 through ignorance, looked upon as a philosophical sect. This
 passage of AURELIUS has not been touched by the commentators,
 who are too generally more intent upon the knowledge of words,
 than of things.

and they had several sons. These the sons of CENT.
 CONSTANTINE ordered to be put to death, lest their IV.
 ambitious views should excite troubles in the empire PART I.
 [c]; and they all fell victims to this barbarous
 order, except GALLUS and JULIAN, the sons of
 JULIUS CONSTANTIUS, the latter of whom rose after-
 wards to the imperial dignity. The dominions
 allotted to CONSTANTINE were *Britain, Gaul, and*
Spain; but he did not possess them long; for, having
 made himself master, by force, of several places
 belonging to CONSTANS, this occasioned a war
 between the two brothers, in the year 340, in which
 CONSTANTINE lost his life. CONSTANS, who had
 received, at first, for his portion, *Illyricum, Italy,*
and Africa, added now the dominions of the deceased
 prince to his own, and thus became sole master of
 all the western provinces. He remained in possession
 of this vast territory until the year 350, when he
 was cruelly assassinated by the orders of MAGNEN-
 TIUS, one of his commanders, who had revolted and
 declared himself emperor. MAGNENTIUS, in his
 turn, met with the fate he deserved: transported
 with rage and despair at his ill success in the war
 against CONSTANTIUS, and apprehending the most
 terrible and ignominious death from the just resent-
 ment of the conqueror, he laid violent hands upon
 himself. Thus CONSTANTIUS, who had, before
 this, possessed the provinces of *Asia, Syria, and*
Egypt, became, in the year 353, sole lord of the

☞ [c] It is more probable, that the principal design of this
 massacre was to recover the provinces of *Thrace, Macedon, and*
Achaia, which, in the division of the empire, CONSTANTINE
 the GREAT had given to young DALMATIUS, son to his brother
 of the same name, and *Pontus and Cappadocia*, which he
 had granted to ANNIBALIANUS, the brother of young DAL-
 MATIUS. Be that as it will, Dr. MOSHEIM has attributed this
 massacre equally to the three sons of CONSTANTINE; whereas
 almost all authors agree, that neither young CONSTANTINE, nor
 CONSTANS, had any hand in it at all.

CENT. Roman empire, which he ruled until the year 361,
 IV. when he died at *Mopsucrone*, on the borders of
 PART I. *Cilicia*, as he was marching against JULIAN. None
 of these three brothers possessed the spirit and genius
 of their father. They all, indeed, followed his
 example, in continuing to abrogate and efface the
 ancient superstitions of the Romans and other idola-
 trous nations, and to accelerate the progress of the
 Christian religion throughout the empire. This
 zeal was, no doubt, laudable; its end was excellent;
 but, in the means used to accomplish it, there were
 many things worthy of blame.

Julian at-
 tempts the
 destruction
 of Chris-
 tianity.

XII. This flourishing progress of the Christian
 religion was greatly interrupted, and the church
 reduced to the brink of destruction, when JULIAN,
 the son of JULIUS CONSTANTIUS, and the only
 remaining branch of the imperial family, was placed
 at the head of affairs. This active and adventurous
 prince, after having been declared emperor by the
 army, in the year 380, in consequence of his exploits
 among the Gauls, was, upon the death of CON-
 STANTIUS, the year following, confirmed in the
 undivided possession of the empire. No event could
 be less favourable to the Christians. For though
 he had been educated in the principles of Chris-
 tianity, yet he apostatized from that divine religion,
 and employed all his efforts to restore the expiring
 superstitions of polytheism to their former vigour,
 credit, and lustre. This apostasy of JULIAN, from
 the gospel of CHRIST to the worship of the gods,
 was owing, partly, to his aversion to the CONSTAN-
 TINE family, who had embrued their hands in the
 blood of his father, brother, and kinsmen; and
 partly, to the artifices of the Platonic philosophers,
 who abused his credulity, and flattered his ambition,
 by fictitious miracles and pompous predictions. It
 is true, this prince seemed averse to the use of vio-
 lence, in propagating superstition, and suppressing
 the truth; nay, he carried the appearances of

moderation and impartiality so far, as to allow his sub-
jects a full power of judging for themselves in religious
matters, and of worshipping the deity in the manner
they thought the most rational. But, under this
mask of moderation, he attacked Christianity with
the utmost bitterness, and, at the same time, with
the most consummate dexterity. By art and stra-
tagem he undermined the church, removing the
privileges that were granted to Christians and their
spiritual rulers; shutting up the schools in which they
taught philosophy and the liberal arts; encouraging
the sectaries and schismatics, who brought dishonour
upon the gospel by their divisions; composing books
against the Christians, and using a variety of other
means to bring the religion of JESUS to ruin and
contempt. JULIAN extended his views yet further,
and was meditating projects of a still more formi-
dable nature against the Christian church, which
would have felt, no doubt, the fatal and ruinous
effects of his inveterate hatred, if he had returned
victorious from the Persian war, which he entered
into immediately after his accession to the empire.
But in this war, which was rashly undertaken and
imprudently conducted, he fell by the lance of a
Persian soldier, and expired in his tent in the 32d
year of his age, having reigned alone, after the
death of CONSTANTIUS, twenty months [d].

XIII. It is to me just matter of surprize to find
JULIAN placed, by many learned and judicious
writers [e], among the greatest heroes that shine

His charac-

ter.

[d] For a full account of this emperor, it will be proper to
consult (besides TILLEMONT and other common writers) *La vie
de Julien, par l'Abbé BLETTERIE*, which is a most accurate and
elegant production. See also *The life and character of JULIAN*,
illustrated in seven dissertations, by DES VOEUX. EZECH. SPAN-
HEM. *Prefat. et adnot. ad opp. JULIANI*; and FABRICII, *Lux
Evangel. toti orbi exoriens*, cap. xiv. p. 294.

[e] MONTESQUIEU, in chap. x. of the xxivth book of his
work, intitled, *L'Esprit des loix*, speaks of JULIAN in the following

CENT. forth in the annals of time ; nay, exalted above all
 IV. the princes and legislators that have been distin-
 PART I. guished by the wisdom of their government. Such
 writers must either be too far blinded by prejudice,
 to perceive the truth ; or, they must never have
 perused, with any degree of attention, those works
 of JULIAN that are still extant ; or, if neither of
 these be their case, they must, at least, be ignorant
 of that which constitutes true greatness. The real
 character of JULIAN has few lines of that uncommon
 merit that has been attributed to it ; for, if we set
 aside his genius, of which his works give no very
 high idea ; if we except, moreover, his military
 courage, his love of letters, and his acquaintance
 with that vain and fanatical philosophy, which was
 known by the name of modern Platonism, we shall
 find nothing remaining that is, in any measure,
 worthy of praise, or productive of esteem. Besides,
 the qualities now mentioned were, in him, counter-
 balanced by the most opprobrious defects. He was
 a slave to superstition, than which nothing is a more
 evident mark of a narrow soul, of a mean and abject
 spirit. His thirst of glory and popular applause were
 excessive even to puerility ; his credulity and levity
 surpass the powers of description : a low cunning, and
 a profound dissimulation and duplicity, had acquired,
 in his mind, the force of predominant habits ; and
 all this was accompanied with a total and perfect
 ignorance of true philosophy [f]. So that, though,
 in some things, JULIAN may be allowed to have
 excelled the sons of CONSTANTINE the GREAT,
 yet it must be granted, on the other hand, that
 he was, in many respects, inferior to CONSTANTINE

terms : “ Il n’y a point eu après lui de Prince plus digne de
 “ gouverner des hommes.”

☞ [f] Nothing can afford a more evident proof of JULIAN’s
 ignorance of the true philosophy, than his known attachment to
 the study of magic, which Dr. MOSHEIM has omitted in his
 enumeration of the defects and extrayagancies of this prince.

himself, whom, upon all occasions, he loads with the most licentious invectives, and treats with the utmost disdain.

CENT.
IV.
PART I.

XIV. As JULIAN affected, in general, to appear moderate in religious matters, unwilling to trouble any on account of their faith, or to seem averse to any sect or party, so to the Jews, in particular, he extended so far the marks of his indulgence, as to permit them to rebuild the temple of *Jerusalem*. The Jews set about this important work; from which, however, they were obliged to desist, before they had even begun to lay the foundations of the sacred edifice. For, while they were removing the rubbish, formidable balls of fire, issuing out of the ground with a dreadful noise, dispersed both the works and the workmen, and repeated earthquakes filled the spectators of this astonishing phenomenon with terror and dismay. This signal event is attested in a manner that renders its evidence irresistible [g], though, as usually happens in cases of that nature, the Christians have embellished it by augmenting rashly the number of the miracles that are supposed to have been wrought upon that occasion. The causes of this phenomenon may furnish matter of dispute; and learned men have, in effect, been divided upon that point. All, however, who consider the matter with attention and impartiality, will perceive the strongest reasons for embracing the opinion of those who attribute this event to the almighty interposition of the Supreme Being; nor do the arguments offered, by some, to prove it the effect of natural causes, or those alleged by others to persuade us that it was the result of artifice and

The Jews attempt in vain to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem.

[g] See JO. ALB. FABRICII *Lux Evang. toti orbi exorients*, p. 124. where all the testimonies of this remarkable event are carefully assembled; see also MOYLE'S *Posthumous Works*, p. 101, &c.

CENT. imposture, contain any thing that may not be refuted
IV. with the utmost facility [b].

PART I. XV. Upon the death of JULIAN, the suffrages
of the army were united in favour of JOVIAN, who,
The state of
the church
after the
death of
Julian. accordingly, succeeded him in the imperial dignity.
After a reign of seven months, JOVIAN died in the
year 364, and, therefore, had not time to execute
any thing of importance [i]. The emperors who
succeeded him, in this century, were VALENTI-
NIAN I., VALENS, GRATIAN, VALENTINIAN II.,
and HONORIUS, who professed Christianity, pro-
moted its progress, and endeavoured, though not
all with equal zeal, to root out entirely the Gentile
superstitions. In this they were all surpassed by the
last of the emperors who reigned in this century,
viz. THEODOSIUS the GREAT, who came to the
empire in the year 379, and died in the year 395.
As long as this prince lived, he exerted himself, in
the most vigorous and effectual manner, in the extir-
pation of the Pagan superstitions throughout all the
provinces, and enacted severe laws and penalties
against such as adhered to them. His sons ARCA-
DIUS and HONORIUS pursued with zeal, and not
without success, the same end; so that, towards the
conclusion of this century, the Gentile religions
declined apace, and had also no prospect left of
recovering their primitive authority and splendor.

[b] The truth of this miracle is denied by the famous BAS-
NAGE, *Histoire des Juifs*, tom. iv. p. 1257. against whom CUPER
has taken the affirmative, and defended it in his *Letters* published
by BAYER, p. 400. A most ingenious discourse has been
published lately, in defence of this miracle, by the learned Dr.
WARBURTON, under the title of *Julian; or, A discourse concern-
ing the earthquake and fiery eruption, &c.* in which the objections
of BASNAGE are particularly examined and refuted.

[i] See BLETTERIE, *Vie de Jovien*, vol. ii. published at
Paris in 1748, in which the *Life of Julian*, by the same author,
is further illustrated, and some productions of that emperor
translated into French.

XVI. It is true, that, notwithstanding all this CENT. zeal and severity of the Christian emperors, there IV. still remained in several places, and especially in the PART I. remoter provinces, temples and religious rites consecrated to the service of the Pagan deities. And, Remains of Paganism. indeed, when we look attentively into the matter, we shall find, that the execution of those rigorous laws, that were enacted against the worshippers of the gods, was rather levelled at the multitude, than at persons of eminence and distinction. For it appears, that, both during the reign, and after the death of THEODOSIUS, many of the most honourable and important posts were filled by persons, whose aversion to Christianity, and whose attachment to Paganism, were sufficiently known. The example of LIBANIUS alone is an evident proof of this; since, notwithstanding his avowed and open enmity to the Christians, he was raised by THEODOSIUS himself to the high dignity of prefect, or chief, of the Pretorian guards. It is extremely probable, therefore, that in the execution of the severe laws enacted against the Pagans, there was an exception made in favour of philosophers, rhetoricians, and military leaders, on account of the important services which they were supposed to render to the state, and that they of consequence enjoyed more liberty in religious matters, than the inferior orders of men.

XVII. This peculiar regard shewn to the philosophers and rhetoricians will, no doubt, appear The efforts of the philosophers against Christianity. surprising when it is considered, that all the force of their genius, and all the resources of their art were employed against Christianity; and that those very sages, whose schools were reputed of such utility to the state, were the very persons who opposed the progress of the truth with the greatest vehemence and contention of mind. HIEROCLES, the great ornament of the Platonic school, wrote, in the beginning of this century, two books against the Christians, in which he went so far as to draw a

CENT. parallel between JESUS CHRIST and APOLLONIUS
 IV. TYANAÆUS. This presumption was chastised with
 PART I. great spirit, by EUSEBIUS, in a particular treatise
 written expressly in answer to HIEROCLES. LAC-
 TANTIUS takes notice of another philosopher, who
 composed three books to detect the pretended errors
 of the Christians [k], but does not mention his
 name. After the time of CONSTANTINE the
 GREAT, besides the long and laborious work which
 JULIAN wrote against the followers of CHRIST,
 HIMERIUS [l] and LIBANIUS, in their public
 harangues, and EUNAPIUS, in his lives of the
 philosophers, exhausted all their rage and bitterness
 in their efforts to defame the Christian religion;
 while the calumnies, that abounded in the discourses
 of the one, and the writings of the other, passed
 unpunished.

The preju-
 dice which
 the Chris-
 tian cause
 received
 from the
 philoso-
 phers.

XVIII. The prejudice, which the Christian cause
 received, in this century, from the stratagems of
 these philosophers and rhetoricians, who were elated
 with a presumptuous notion of their knowledge,
 and prepossessed with a bitter aversion to the gospel,
 was certainly very considerable. Many examples
 concur to prove this; and, particularly, that of
 JULIAN, who was seduced by the artifices of these
 corrupt sophists. The effects of their disputes
 and declamations were not, indeed, the same upon
 all; some, who assumed the appearance of superior
 wisdom, and who, either from moderation or indif-
 ference, professed to pursue a middle way in these
 religious controversies, composed matters in the
 following manner: They gave so far their ear to
 the interpretations and discourses of the rhetoricians,
 as to form to themselves a middle kind of religion,
 between the ancient theology and the new doctrine
 that was now propagated in the empire; and they

[k] *Institut. Divin.* lib. v. cap. ii. p. 535.

[l] See PŒOTIUS *Biblioth. Cod.* cap. lxxv. p. 355.

per-suaded themselves, that the same truths which CHRIST taught, had been, for a long time, concealed, by the priests of the gods, under the veil of ceremonies, fables, and allegorical representations [m]. Of this number were AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, a man of singular merit; THEMISTIUS, an orator highly distinguished by his uncommon eloquence and the eminence of his station; CHALCIDIUS, a philosopher, and others, who were all of opinion, that the two religions, when properly interpreted and understood, agreed perfectly well in the main points; and that, therefore, neither the religion of CHRIST, nor that of the gods, were to be treated with contempt.

§ [m] This notion, absurd as it is, has been revived, in the most extravagant manner, in a work published at *Harderwyk*, in *Guelderland*, in the year 1757, by Mr. STRUCHTMEYER, professor of eloquence and languages in that university. In this work, which bears the title of the *SYMBOLICAL HERCULES*, the learned and wrong-headed author maintains (as he had also done in a preceding work, intitled, *An Explication of the Pagan Theology*), that all the doctrines of Christianity were emblematically represented in the Heathen mythology; and not only so, but that the inventors of that mythology knew that the Son of God was to descend upon earth; believed in CHRIST as the only fountain of salvation; were persuaded of his future incarnation, death, and resurrection; and had acquired all this knowledge and faith by the perusal of a Bible much older than MOSES or ABRAHAM, &c. The Pagan doctors, thus instructed (according to Mr. STRUCHTMEYER) in the mysteries of Christianity, taught these truths under the veil of *emblems, types, and figures*. JUPITER, represented the true GOD; JUNO, who was obstinate and ungovernable, was the emblem of the ancient ISRAEL; the chaste DIANA, was a type of the *Christian church*; HERCULES, was the figure or fore-runner of CHRIST; AMPHITRYON, was JOSEPH; the two *Serpents*, that HERCULES killed in his cradle, were the Pharisees and Sadducees, &c. Such are the principal lines of Mr. STRUCHTMEYER's system, which shews the sad havock that a warm imagination, undirected by a just and solid judgment, makes in religion. It is, however, honourable perhaps to the present age, that a system, from which AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS and other philosophers of old derived applause, will be generally looked upon, at present, as intitling its restorer to a place in *Bedlam*.

CENT. XIX. The zeal and diligence with which CON-
 IV. STANTINE and his successors exerted themselves in
 PART I. the cause of Christianity, and in extending the
 limits of the church, prevent our surprize at the
 number of barbarous and uncivilized nations, which
 received the gospel [n]. It appears highly probable,
 from many circumstances, that both the *Greater* and
 the *Lesser Armenia* were enlightened with the know-
 ledge of the truth, not long after the first rise of
 Christianity. The Armenian church was not, how-
 ever, completely formed and established before this
 century; in the commencement of which, GREGORY,
 the son of ANAX, who is commonly called
 the *Enlightner*, from his having dispelled the dark-
 ness of the Armenian superstitions, converted to
 Christianity TIRIDATES, king of *Armenia*, and all
 the nobles of his court. In consequence of this,
 GREGORY was consecrated bishop of the Armenians,
 by LEONTIUS bishop of *Cappadocia*, and his ministry
 was crowned with such success, that the whole pro-
 vince was soon converted to the Christian faith [o].

Among the
 Abassines or
 Ethiopians.

XX. Towards the middle of this century, a
 certain person, named FRUMENTIUS, came from
Egypt to *Abassia*, or *Æthiopia*, whose inhabitants
 derived the name of Axumitæ from Axuma, the
 capital city of that country. He made known
 among this people the gospel of CHRIST, and admi-
 nistered the sacrament of baptism to their king, and
 to several persons of the first distinction at his court.
 As FRUMENTIUS was returning from hence into
Egypt, he received consecration, as the first bishop

[n] GAUDENTII *vita Philastrii*, § 3. PHILASTRIUS, *De
 heres. Prof.* p. 5. edit. Fabricii. SOCRATES, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i.
 cap. xix. GEORGIUS CEDRENIUS, *Chronograph.* p. 234. edit.
 Paris.

[o] *Narratio de rebus Armenia in FRANC. COMDEFISII Auc-
 tario Biblioth. Patrum Græcor.* tom. ii. p. 287. MICH. LEQUI-
 EN, *Oricus Christianus*, tom. i. p. 419. 1356. JO. JOACH.
 SCHRODERI *Thesaur. linguæ Armenicæ*, p. 149.

of the Axumitæ, or Ethiopians, from ATHANASIUS. CENT. IV. And this is the reason why the Ethiopian church has, even to our times, been considered as the daughter of the Alexandrian, from which it also receives its bishop [p].

The light of the gospel was introduced into *Iberia*, a province of *Asia*, now called *Georgia*, in the following manner: A certain woman was carried into that country as a captive, during the reign of CONSTANTINE the GREAT, and by the grandeur of her miracles, and the remarkable sanctity of her life and manners, she made such an impression upon the king and queen, that they abandoned their false gods, embraced the faith of the gospel, and sent to *Constantinople*, for proper persons to give them and their people a more satisfactory and complete knowledge of the Christian religion [q].

XVI. A considerable part of the Goths, had inhabited *Thrace*, *Mæsia*, and *Dacia*, had received the knowledge, and embraced the doctrines, of Christianity before this century; and THEOPHILUS, their bishop, was present at the council of *Nice*. CONSTANTINE the GREAT, after having vanquished them and the Samaritans, engaged great numbers of them to become Christians [r]. But still a large body continued in their attachment to their ancient superstition, until the time of the emperor VALENS. This prince permitted them, indeed, to pass the *Danube*, and to inhabit *Dacia*, *Mæsia*, and *Thrace*; but it was on condition, that

[p] ATHANASIUS, *Apolog. ad Constantium*, tom. i. opp. par. II. p. 315. edit. Benedi&. SOCRATES et SOZOMEN. *Hist. Eccles.* book i. ch. xix. of the former, book ii. ch. xxiv. of the latter. THEODORET. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. xxiii. p. 54. LUDOLF. *Comment. ad. Hist. Æthiopic.* p. 281. HILK. LOBO, *Voyag d' Abyssinie*, tom. ii. p. 13. JUSTUS FONTANINUS, *Hist. Litter. Aquileiæ*, p. 174.

[q] RUFINUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. x. SOZOMEN, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. ii. cap. v. LEQUIER, *Oriens Chris.* tom. i. p. 1333.

[r] SOCRAT. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. xviii.

CENT. they should live in subjection to the Roman laws,
 IV. and embrace the profession of Christianity [*s*], which
 PART I. condition was accepted by their king FRITIGERN.

The celebrated ULPHILUS, bishop of those Goths, who dwelt in *Mæfia*, lived in this century, and distinguished himself much by his genius and piety. Among other eminent services which he rendered to his country, he invented a set of letters for their peculiar use, and translated the scriptures into the Gothic language [*t*].

Among the
 Gauls.

XXII. There remained still, in the European provinces, an incredible number of persons who adhered to the worship of the gods; and though the Christian bishops continued their pious efforts to gain them over to the gospel, yet the success was, by no means, proportionable to their diligence and zeal, and the work of conversion went on but slowly. In *Gaul*, the great and venerable MARTIN, bishop of *Tours*, set about this important work with tolerable success. For, in his various voyages among the Gauls, he converted many, every where, by the energy of his discourses and by the power of his miracles, if we may rely upon the testimony of SULPITIUS SEVERUS in this matter. He destroyed also the temples of the gods, pulled down their statues [*u*], and on all these accounts merited the high and honourable title of Apostle of the Gauls.

The causes
 of so many
 changes.

XXIII. There is no doubt, but that the victories of CONSTANTINE the GREAT, the fear of punishment,

[*s*] SOCRAT. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. xxxiii. LEQUIEN, *Oriens Chris.* tom. i. p. 1240. ERIC BENZELIUS, *Pref. ad Quatuor Evangelia Gothica, quæ ULPHITÆ tribuuntur*, cap. v. p. xviii. published at Oxford, in the year 1750, in 4to.

[*t*] JO. JAC. MASCOVII *Historia Germanorum*, tom. i. p. 317. tom. ii. *not.* p. 49. *Acta SS. Martii*, tom. iii. p. 619. BENZELIUS, *loc. citat.* cap. viii. p. xxx.

[*u*] See SULPIT. SEVERUS, *Dial.* i. *De Vita Martini*, cap. xiii. p. 20. cap. xv. p. 22. cap. xvii. p. 23. *Dial.* ii. p. 106. edit. HIER. a PRATO, Verona, 1741.

and the desire of pleasing this mighty conqueror, CENT. and his imperial successors, were the weighty argu- IV. ments that moved whole nations, as well as parti- PART I. cular persons, to embrace Christianity. None, however, that have any acquaintance with the transactions of this period of time, will attribute the whole progress of Christianity to these causes. For it is undeniably manifest, that the indefatigable zeal of the bishops, and other pious men, the innocence and sanctity which shone forth with such lustre in the lives of many Christians, the translations that were published of the sacred writings, and the intrinsic beauty and excellence of the Christian religion, made as strong and deep impressions upon some, as worldly views and selfish considerations did upon others.

As to the miracles attributed to ANTONY, PAUL the Hermit, and MARTIN, I give them up without the least difficulty, and join with those who treat these pretended prodigies with the contempt they deserve [*w*]. I am also willing to grant, that many events have been rashly esteemed miraculous, which were the result of the ordinary laws of nature; and also that several pious frauds have been imprudently made use of, to give new degrees of weight and dignity to the Christian cause. But I cannot, on the other hand, assent to the opinions of those who maintain, that, in this century, miracles had entirely ceased; and that, at this period, the Christian church was not favoured with any extraordinary or supernatural mark of a divine power engaged in its cause [*x*].

[*w*] HIER. a PRATO, in his Preface to Sulpitius Severus (p. xiii.) disputes warmly in favour of the miracles of MARTIN, and also of the other prodigies of this century.

[*x*] See Eusebius's book against Hierocles, ch. iv. p. 431, edit. Olearii; as also HENR. DODWELL, *Diff.* ii. in *Irenæum*, § 55. p. 195. ☞ See Dr. MIDDLETON's *Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers, which are said to have subsisted in the*

CENT. XXIV. The Christians, who lived under the
 IV. Roman government, were not afflicted with any
 PART I. severe calamities from the time of CONSTANTINE
 the GREAT, except those which they suffered during
 Persecu- the troubles and commotions raised by LICINIUS
 tions in and under the transitory reign of JULIAN. Their
 Persia. tranquillity however was, at different times, dis-
 turbed in several places. Among others ATHANA-
 RIC, king of the Goths, persecuted, for some time,
 with bitterness, that part of the Gothic nation which
 had embraced Christianity [y]. In the remoter
 provinces, the Pagans often defended their ancient
 superstitions by the force of arms, and massacred
 the Christians, who, in the propagation of their
 religion, were not always sufficiently attentive,
 either to the rules of prudence, or the dictates of
 humanity [z]. The Christians, who lived beyond
 the limits of the Roman empire, had a harder fate.
 SAPOR II. king of *Persia*, vented his rage against
 those of his dominions in three dreadful persecu-
 tions. The first of these happened in the 18th
 year of the reign of that prince; the second, in the
 30th; and the third, in the 31st year of the same
 reign. This last was the most cruel and destructive
 of the three: it carried off an incredible number of
 Christians, and continued during the space of forty
 years, having commenced in the year 330, and ceased
 only in 370. It was not, however, the religion of
 the Christians, but the ill-grounded suspicion of their
 treasonable designs against the state, that drew upon
 them this terrible calamity. For the Magi and
 the Jews persuaded the Persian monarch, that all
 the Christians were devoted to the interests of the

Christian Church, &c. in which a very different opinion is main-
 tained. See, however, on the other side, the answers of
 CHURCH and DODWELL to MIDDLETON'S *Inquiry*.

[y] See THEODOR. RUINARTI *Acta martyr. sincera*, and
 there *Acta S. Sabæ*, p. 598.

[z] See AMBROSIUS, *De Officiis*, lib. i. cap. xlii. § 17.

Roman emperor, and that SYMEON, archbishop of CENT.
Seleucia and Ctesiphon, sent to *Constantinople* intelli- IV.
 gence of all that passed in *Persia* [a]. PART I.

[a] See ZOZOMEN. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. ii. cap. i. xiii. There is a particular and express account of this persecution in the *Bibliothec. Oriental. Clement. Vatican.* tom. i. p. 6. 16. 181. tom. iii. p. 52. with which it will be proper to compare the Preface of the learned ASSEMAN, to his *Acta martyrum oriental. et occidental.* published, in two volumes in folio, at *Rome* in the year 1748; as this author has published the *Persian Martyrology* in Syriac, with a Latin translation, and enriched this valuable work with many excellent observations.

PART II.

The INTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

Which contains the history of learning and philosophy.

I. PHILOLOGY, eloquence, poetry, and history, were the branches of science particularly cultivated, at this time, by those, among the Greeks and Latins, who were desirous to make a figure in the learned world. But though several persons of both nations acquired a certain degree of reputation by their literary pursuits, yet they came all far short of the summit of fame. The best poets of this period, such as *AUSONIUS*, appear insipid, harsh, and inelegant, when compared with the sublime bards of the Augustan age. The rhetoricians, departing now from the noble simplicity and majesty of the ancients, instructed the youth in the fallacious art of pompous declamation; and the greatest part of the historical writers were more set upon embellishing their narrations with vain and tawdry ornaments, than upon rendering them interesting by their order, perspicuity, and truth.

II. Almost all the philosophers of this age were of that sect which we have already distinguished by the title of *Modern Platonics*. It is not therefore surprising, that we find the principles of *Platonism* in all the writings of the Christians. The number, however, of these philosophers was not so considerable in the west as in the eastern countries.

CENT.

IV.

PART II.

The state of
learning.

The progress of the
Platonic
philosophy.

JAMBlichus of *Chalcis* explained, in *Syria*, the CENT. philosophy of PLATO, or rather propagated his own IV. particular opinions under that respectable name. PART II. He was an obscure and credulous man, and his turn of mind was highly superstitious and chimerical, as his writings abundantly testify [b]. His successors were, ÆDESIUS, MAXIMUS, and others, whose follies and puerilities are exposed, at length, by EUNAPIUS. HYPATIA, a female philosopher of distinguished merit and learning, ISIDORUS, OLYMPIODORUS, SYNESIUS, afterwards a Semi-Christian, with others of inferior reputation, were the principal persons concerned in propagating this new modification of Platonism.

III. As the emperor JULIAN was passionately Its fate. attached to this sect (which his writings abundantly prove) he employed every method to increase its authority and lustre, and, for that purpose, engaged in its cause several men of learning and genius, who vied with each other in exalting its merit and excellence [c]. But after his death, a dreadful storm of persecution arose, under the reign of VALENTINIAN, against the Platonists; many of whom, being accused of magical practices, and other heinous crimes, were capitally convicted. During these commotions, MAXIMUS, the master and favourite of JULIAN, by whose persuasions this emperor had been engaged to renounce Christianity, and to apply himself to the study of magic, was put to death

☞ [b] Dr. MOSHEIM speaks here only of one JAMBlichus, though there were three persons who bore that name. It is not easy to determine which of them was the author of those works that have reached our times under the name of JAMBlichus; but whoever it was, he does not certainly deserve so mean a character as our learned historian here gives him.

[c] See the learned Baron EZEKIEL SPANHEIM's *Preface to the works of JULIAN*; and that also which he has prefixed to his French translation of JULIAN's *Cæsars*, p. III. and his Annotations to the latter, p. 234; see also BLETTERIE, *Vie de l'Empereur Julien*, lib. i. p. 26.

CENT. with several others [*d*]. It is probable, indeed,
 IV. that the friendship and intimacy that had subsisted
 PART II. between the apostate emperor and these pretended
 sages were greater crimes, in the eye of VALENTI-
 NIAN, than either their philosophical system or their
 magic arts. And hence it happened, that such of
 the sect as lived at a distance from the court, were
 not involved in the dangers or calamities of this
 persecution.

The state of
 learning
 among the
 Christians.

IV. From the time of CONSTANTINE the GREAT,
 the Christians applied themselves with more zeal
 and diligence to the study of philosophy and of
 the liberal arts, than they had formerly done. The
 emperors encouraged this taste for the sciences, and
 left no means unemployed to excite and maintain a
 spirit of literary emulation among the professors of
 Christianity. For this purpose, schools were estab-
 lished in many cities. Libraries were also erected,
 and men of learning and genius were nobly recom-
 pensed by the honours and advantages that were
 attached to the culture of the sciences and arts [*e*].
 All this was indispensably necessary to the successful
 execution of the scheme that was laid for abrogating,
 by degrees, the worship of the gods. For the
 ancient religion was maintained, and its credit sup-
 ported, by the erudition and talents which distin-
 guished in so many places the sages of paganism.
 And there was just reason to apprehend that the
 truth might suffer, if the Christian youth, for want
 of proper masters and instructors, of their own
 religion, should have recourse, for their education,
 to the schools of the Pagan philosophers and rheto-
 ricians.

[*d*] AMMIAN. MARCELLIN. *Historiarum*, lib. xxix. cap. i.
 p. 556. edit. Valesii. BLETTERIE, *Vie de Julien*, p. 30.—155-
 159. and *Vie de Jovien*, tom. i. p. 194.

[*e*] See GODOFRED. *ad Codicis Theodos. titulos de professoribus
 et artibus liberalibus*. FRANC. BALDUINUS in *Constantino M.* p.
 122. HERM. CONRINGII *Dissert. de studiis Romæ et Constantinop.*
 at the end of his *Antiquitates Academicæ*.

V. From what has been here said concerning the state of learning among the Christians, we would not have any conclude, than an acquaintance with the sciences was become universal in the church of CHRIST. For, as yet, there was no law enacted, which excluded the ignorant and illiterate from ecclesiastical preferments and offices ; and it is certain, that the greatest part, both of the bishops and presbyters, were men entirely destitute of all learning and education. Besides, that savage and illiterate party, who looked upon all sorts of erudition, particularly that of a philosophical kind, as pernicious and even destructive to true piety and religion, increased both in number and authority. The ascetics, monks, and hermits, augmented the strength of this barbarous faction ; and not only the women, but also all who took solemn looks, sordid garments, and a love of solitude, for real piety (and in this number we comprehend the generality of mankind) were vehemently prepossessed in their favour.

CENT.
IV.
PART II.
Many illiterate Christians.

CHAPTER II.

Concerning the government of the church, and the Christian doctors, during this century.

I. CONSTANTINE the GREAT made no essential alterations in the form of government that took place in the Christian church before his time ; he only corrected it in some particulars, and gave it a greater extent. For, though he permitted the church to remain a body-politic distinct from that of the state, as it had formerly been, yet he assumed to himself the supreme power over this sacred body, and the right of modelling and governing it in such

The form of government in the Christian church.

CENT. a manner, as should be most conducive to the public
 IV. good. This right he enjoyed without any opposition,
 PART II. as none of the bishops presumed to call his authority
 in question. The people therefore continued, as
 usual, to chuse freely their bishops and their teachers.
 The bishop governed the church, and managed the
 ecclesiastical affairs of the city or district, where he
 presided, in council with the presbyters, and with a
 due regard to the suffrages of the whole assembly of
 the people. The provincial bishops, assembled in
 council, deliberated together concerning those matters
 that related to the interests of the churches of a
 whole province, as also concerning religious contro-
 versies, the forms and rites of divine service, and
 other things of like moment. To these lesser coun-
 cils which were composed of the ecclesiastical deputies
 of one or more provinces, were afterwards added
œcumenical councils, consisting of commissioners from
 all the churches in the Christian world, and which,
 consequently, represented the church universal.
 These were established by the authority of the
 emperor, who assembled the first of these universal
 councils at *Nice*. This prince thought it equitable,
 that questions of superior importance, and such as
 intimately concerned the interests of Christianity in
 general, should be examined and decided in assen-
 blies that represented the whole body of the Christian
 church; and in this it is highly probable, that his
 judgment was directed by that of the bishops.
 There were never, indeed, any councils held, which
 could, with strict propriety, be called *universal*;
 those, however, whose laws and decrees were
 approved and admitted by the universal church, or
 the greatest part of that sacred body, are commonly
 called *œcumenical* or *general* councils.

Changes in-
 troduced
 with respect
 to the rights
 of the sever-
 al orders of
 the church.

II. The rights and privileges of the several eccle-
 siastical orders were, however, gradually changed
 and diminished, from the time that the church began

to be torn with divisions, and agitated with those violent dissensions and tumults, to which the elections of bishops, the diversity of religious opinions, and other things of a like nature, too frequently gave rise. In these religious quarrels, the weaker generally fled to the court for protection and succour; and thereby furnished the emperors with a favourable opportunity of setting limits to the power of the bishops, of infringing the liberties of the people, and of modifying, in various ways, the ancient customs according to their pleasure. And, indeed, even the bishops themselves, whose opulence and authority were considerably increased since the reign of CONSTANTINE, began to introduce, gradually, innovations into the forms of ecclesiastical discipline, and to change the ancient government of the church. Their first step was an entire exclusion of the people from all part in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs; and afterwards they, by degrees, divested even the *presbyters* of their ancient privileges and their primitive authority, that they might have no importunate protesters to control their ambition, or oppose their proceedings; and, principally, that they might either engross to themselves, or distribute as they thought proper, the possessions and revenues of the church. Hence it came to pass, that, at the conclusion of this century, there remained no more than a mere shadow of the ancient government of the church. Many of the privileges, which had formerly belonged to the presbyters and people, were usurped by the bishops; and many of the rights, which had been formerly vested in the universal church, were transferred to the emperors, and to subordinate officers and magistrates.

III. CONSTANTINE the GREAT, in order to prevent civil commotions, and to fix his authority upon solid and stable foundations, made several changes, not only in the laws of the empire, but also in the

The ecclesiastical government modelled according to the civil.

CENT.
IV.
PART II.

CENT. form of the Roman government [f]. And as there
 IV. were many important reasons, which induced him to
 PART II. suit the administration of the church to these changes
 in the civil constitution, this necessarily introduced,
 among the bishops, new degrees of eminence and
 rank. Three prelates had, before this, enjoyed a
 certain degree of pre-eminence over the rest of the
 episcopal order, viz. the bishops of *Rome*, *Antioch*,
 and *Alexandria*; and to these the bishop of *Constan-*
tinople was added, when the imperial residence was
 transferred to that city. These four prelates answered
 to the four *prætorian præfects* created by CONSTAN-
 TINE; and it is possible that, in this very century,
 they were distinguished by the Jewish title of Patri-
 archs. After these, followed the *exarchs*, who had
 the inspection over several provinces, and answered
 to the appointment of certain civil officers who bore
 the same title. In a lower class, were the Metro-
 politans, who had only the government of one province,
 under whom were the *archbishops*, whose inspection
 was confined to certain districts. In this gradation,
 the *bishops* brought up the rear; the sphere of their
 authority was not, in all places, equally extensive;
 being in some considerably ample, and in others
 confined within narrow limits. To these various
 ecclesiastical orders, we might add that of the
chorepiscopi, or superintendents of the country
 churches; but this order was, in most places, sup-
 pressed by the bishops, with a design to extend their
 own authority, and enlarge the sphere of their power
 and jurisdiction [g].

Patriarchs.

Exarchs

Arch-
bishops.

Bishops.

The admin-
 istration of
 the church
 divided into
 external and
 internal.

IV. The administration of the church was divided,
 by CONSTANTINE himself, into an *external* and an

[f] See Bos, *Histoire de la monarchie Française*, tom. i. p. 64.
 GIANNONE, *Histoire de Naples*, tom. i. p. 94. 152.

[g] This appears from several passages in the useful work of
 LUD. THOMASSINUS, intitled, *Disciplina Ecclesiæ vet. et novæ
 circa beneficia*, tom. i.

internal inspection [b]. The latter, which was committed to bishops and councils, related to religious *controversies*; the forms of *divine worship*; the offices of the *priests*; the vices of the *ecclesiastical orders*, &c. The *external* administration of the church, the emperor assumed to himself. This comprehended all those things that relate to the *outward state* and *discipline* of the church; it likewise extended to all *contests* and *debates* that should arise between the ministers of the church, superior as well as inferior, concerning their *possessions*, their *reputation*, their *rights* and *privileges*, their offences against the laws, and things of a like nature [i]; but no controversies that related to matters purely religious were cognizable by this *external* inspection. In consequence of this artful division of the ecclesiastical government, CONSTANTINE and his successors called councils, presided in them, appointed judges of religious controversies, terminated the differences which arose between the bishops and the people, fixed the limits of the ecclesiastical provinces, took cognizance of the civil causes that subsisted between the ministers of the church, and punished the crimes committed against the laws by the ordinary judges appointed for that purpose; giving over all causes purely ecclesiastical to the cognizance of bishops and councils. But this famous division of the administration of the church was never explained with perspicuity, nor determined with a sufficient degree of accuracy and precision; so that both in this and the following centuries, we find many transactions that seem absolutely inconsistent with it. We find the emperors, for example, frequently determining matters purely ecclesiastical, and that belonged to the *internal* jurisdiction of the church: and, on the

[b] EUSEB. *De vita Constantini*, lib. iv. cap. xxiv. p. 536.

[i] See the imperial laws both in JUSTINIAN'S *Code*, and in the THEODOSIAN; as also GODOFRED. *ad Codic. Theodos.* tom. vi. p. 55. 58. 333, &c.

CENT. other hand, nothing is more frequent than the
 IV. decisions of bishops and councils concerning things
 PART II. that relate merely to the *external* form and govern-
 ———— ment of the church.

The rank
 and dignity
 of the bi-
 shop of
Rome.

V. In the episcopal order, the bishop of *Rome* was the first in rank, and was distinguished by a sort of pre-eminence over all other prelates. Prejudices, arising from a great variety of causes, contributed to establish this superiority; but it was chiefly owing to certain circumstances of grandeur and opulence, by which mortals, for the most part, form their ideas of pre-eminence and dignity, and which they generally confound with the reasons of a just and legal authority. The bishop of *Rome* surpassed all his brethren in the magnificence and splendor of the church over which he presided; in the riches of his revenues and possessions; in the number and variety of his ministers; in his credit with the people; and in his sumptuous and splendid manner of living [k]. These dazzling marks of human power, these ambiguous proofs of true greatness and felicity, had such a mighty influence upon the minds of the multitude, that the see of *Rome* became, in this century, a most seducing object of sacerdotal ambition. Hence it happened, that when a new pontiff was to be elected by the suffrages of the presbyters and the people, the city of *Rome* was generally agitated with dissensions, tumults, and cabals, whose consequences were often deplorable and fatal. The intrigues and disturbances that prevailed in that city in the year 366, when, upon the death of LIBERIUS, another pontiff was to be chosen in his place, are a sufficient proof of what we have now advanced. Upon this occasion, one faction elected DAMASUS to that high

[k] AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS gives a striking description of the luxury in which the bishops of *Rome* lived, *Hist.* lib. xxvii. cap. iii. p. 337.

dignity, while the opposite party chose **URSICINUS**, CENT.
 a deacon of the vacant church, to succeed **LIBERIUS**. IV.
 This double election gave rise to a dangerous schism, PART II.
 and to a sort of civil war within the city of *Rome*,
 which was carried on with the utmost barbarity and
 fury, and produced the most cruel massacres and
 desolations. This inhuman contest ended in the
 victory of **DAMASUS**; but whether his cause was
 more just than that of **URSICINUS**, is a question not
 so easy to determine [1]. Neither of the two, indeed,
 seem to have been possessed of such principles as
 constitute a good Christian, much less of that
 exemplary virtue that should distinguish a Christian
 bishop.

VI. Notwithstanding the pomp and splendor that The limits
of his au-
thority.
 surrounded the Roman see, it is, however, certain,
 that the bishops of that city had not acquired, in this
 century, that pre-eminence of power and jurisdiction
 in the church which they afterwards enjoyed. In
 the ecclesiastical commonwealth, they were, indeed,
 the most eminent order of citizens; but still they were
 citizens as well as their brethren, and subject, like
 them, to the edicts and laws of the emperors. All
 religious causes of extraordinary importance were
 examined and determined, either by judges appointed
 by the emperors, or in councils assembled for that
 purpose, while those of inferior moment were
 decided, in each district, by its respective bishop.
 The ecclesiastical laws were enacted either by the
 emperor or by councils. None of the bishops
 acknowledged, that they derived their authority
 from the permission and appointment of the bishop
 of *Rome*, or that they were created bishops by the
favour of the apostolic see. On the contrary, they
 all maintained, that they were the ambassadors and
 ministers of **JESUS CHRIST**, and that their authority

[1] Among the other writers of the papal history, see **BOWER'S**
History of the Popes, vol. i. p. 180, 181, 182.

CENT. was derived from above [m]. It must, however,
 IV. be observed, that, even in this century, several of
 PART II. those steps were laid, by which the bishops of Rome
 mounted afterwards to the summit of ecclesiastical
 power and despotism. These steps were partly laid
 by the imprudence of the emperors, partly by the
 dexterity of the Roman prelates themselves, and
 partly by the inconsiderate zeal and precipitate
 judgment of certain bishops [n]. The fourth canon
 of the council held at *Sardis* in the year 347, is
 considered, by the votaries of the Roman pontiff,
 as the principal step to his sovereignty in the church;
 but, in my opinion, it ought by no means to be
 looked upon in this point of view. For, not to
 insist upon the reasons that prove the authority of
 this council to be extremely dubious, nor upon
 those which have induced some to regard its laws
 as grossly corrupted, and others, to consider them

[m] Those who desire an ampler account of this matter, may consult *PETR. DE MARCA, De concórdia Sacerdotii et imperii.* *DU PIN, De antiqua Ecclesie disciplina;* and the very learned and judicious work of *BLONDEL, De la Primauté dans l'Eglise.*

[n] The imprudence of the emperor, and the precipitation of the bishops, were singularly discovered in the following event, which favoured extremely the rise and the ambition of the Roman pontiff: About the year 372, *VALENTINIAN* enacted a law, empowering the bishop of *Rome* to examine and judge other bishops, that religious disputes might not be decided by profane or secular judges. The bishops assembled in council at *Rome* in 378, not considering the fatal consequences that must arise, from this imprudent law, both to themselves and to the church, declared their approbation of it in the strongest terms, and recommended the execution of it in an address to the emperor *GRATIAN.*—Some think, indeed, that this law empowered the Roman bishop to judge only the bishops within the limits of his jurisdiction, *i. e.* those of the suburbicarian provinces. Others are of opinion, that this power was given only for a time, and extended to those bishops alone, who were concerned in the present schism. This last notion seems probable: but still this privilege was an excellent instrument in the hands of sacerdotal ambition.

as entirely fictitious and spurious [o], it will be sufficient to observe the impossibility of proving by the *canon* in question, that the bishops of *Sardis* were of opinion, that, in all cases, an appeal might be made to the bishop of *Rome*, in quality of supreme judge [p]. But supposing, for a moment, that this was their opinion, what would follow? Surely, that pretext for assuming a supreme authority must be very slender, which arises only from the decree of one obscure council.

VII. CONSTANTINE the GREAT, by removing the seat of the empire to *Byzantium*, and building the city of *Constantinople*, raised up, in the bishop of this new metropolis, a formidable rival to the Roman pontiff, and a bulwark which menaced a vigorous opposition to his growing authority. For, as the emperor, in order to render *Constantinople* a second *Rome*, enriched it with all the rights and privileges, honours, and ornaments, of the ancient capital of the world; so its bishop, measuring his own dignity and rank by the magnificence of the new city, and its eminence, as the august residence of the emperor, assumed an equal degree of dignity with the bishop of *Rome*, and claimed a superiority over all the rest of the episcopal order. Nor did the emperors disapprove of these high pretensions, since they considered their own dignity as connected, in a certain measure, with that of the bishop of their imperial city. Accordingly, in a council held at *Constantinople*, in the year 381, by the authority of

CENT.
IV.
PART II.

The authority of the bishop of Constantinople is increased.

[o] See MICH. GEDDES. *Diff. de canonibus Sardicensibus*, which is to be found in his *Miscellaneous Tracts*, tom. ii. p. 415.

[p] The fourth canon of the council of *Sardis*, supposing it genuine and authentic, related only to the particular case of a bishop's being deposed by the neighbouring prelates, and demanding a permission to make his defence. In that case, this canon prohibited the election of a successor to the deposed bishop, before that the bishop of *Rome* had examined the cause, and pronounced sentence thereupon.

CENT. THEODOSIUS the GREAT, the bishop of that city
 IV. was, during the absence of the bishop of *Alexandria*,
 PART II. and against the consent of the Roman prelate, placed,
 by the third *canon* of that council, in the first rank
 after the bishop of *Rome*, and, consequently, above
 those of *Alexandria* and *Antioch*. NECTARIUS
 was the first bishop who enjoyed these new honours
 accumulated upon the see of *Constantinople*. His
 successor, the celebrated JOHN CHRYSOSTOM,
 extended still further the privileges of that see, and
 submitted to its jurisdiction all *Thrace*, *Asia*, and
Pontus [q]; nor were the succeeding bishops of that
 imperial city destitute of a fervent zeal to augment
 their privileges, and to extend their dominion.

This sudden revolution in the ecclesiastical govern-
 ment, and this unexpected promotion of the bishop
 of *Byzantium* to a higher rank, to the detriment of
 other prelates of the first eminence in the church,
 were productive of the most disagreeable effects.
 For this promotion not only filled the bishops of
Alexandria with the bitterest aversion to those of
Constantinople, but also excited those deplorable
 contentions and disputes between these latter and
 the Roman pontiffs, which were carried on, for
 many ages, with such various success, and concluded,
 at length, in the entire separation of the Latin and
 Greek churches.

The vices of
 the clergy.

VIII. The additions made by the emperors and
 others to the wealth, honours and advantages of
 the clergy, were followed with a proportionable
 augmentation of vices and luxury, particularly,
 among those of that sacred order, who lived in great
 and opulent cities; and that many such additions

[q] See PETR. DE MARCA, *Diff. de Constantinop. Patriar-
 chatus institutione*, which is subjoined to his book, *De concordia
 Sacerdotii et Imperii*. MICH. LEQUIEN, *Oriens Christianus*, tom. i.
 p. 15. See also *An account of the government of the Christian
 church for the first six hundred years*, by Dr. PARKER, bishop of
Oxford, p. 245.

were made to that order after the time of CONSTANTINE, is a matter that admits of no dispute. The *bishops*, on the one hand, contended with each other, in the most scandalous manner, concerning the extent of their respective jurisdictions, while, on the other, they trampled upon the rights of the people, violated the privileges of the inferior ministers, and imitated, in their conduct and in their manner of living, the arrogance, voluptuousness, and luxury, of magistrates and princes [r]. This pernicious example was soon followed by the several ecclesiastical orders. The *presbyters*, in many places, assumed an equality with the bishops in point of rank and authority. We find also many complaints made, at this time, of the vanity and effeminacy of the *deacons*. Those more particularly of the presbyters and deacons, who filled the first stations of these orders, carried their pretensions to an extravagant length, and were offended at the notion of being placed upon an equal footing with their colleagues. For this reason, they not only assumed the titles of *Archpresbyters* and *Archdeacons*, but also claimed a degree of authority and power much superior to that which was vested in the other members of their respective orders.

IV.
PART II.

IX. Several writers of great reputation lived in this century, and were shining ornaments to the countries to which they belonged. Among those that flourished in *Greece* and in the eastern provinces, the following seem to deserve the first rank :

The famous
Greek writers.

EUSEBIUS PAMPHILUS, bishop of *Cæsarea* in *Palestine*, a man of immense reading, justly famous

[r] See SULPIT. SEVER. *Hist. Sacr.* lib. i. cap. xxiii. p. 74. lib. ii. cap. xxxii. p. 248. cap. li. p. 292. *Dialog.* i. cap. xxi. p. 426. Add to this the account given by CLARKSON, in his *Discourse upon Liturgies*, p. 228. of the corrupt and profligate manners of the clergy, and, particularly, of the unbounded ambition of the bishops, to enlarge the sphere of their influence and authority.

CENT. for his profound knowledge of ecclesiastical history,
 IV. and singularly versed in other branches of literature,
 PART II. more especially in all the different parts of sacred
 erudition. These eminent talents and acquisitions
 were, however, accompanied with errors and defects,
 and he is said to have inclined towards the senti-
 ments of those, who look upon the three persons in
 the godhead as different from each other in rank
 and dignity. Some have represented this learned
 prelate as a thorough Arian, but without foundation;
 if by an Arian be meant, one who embraces the
 doctrines taught by ARIUS, presbyter of *Alexandria*
 [s].

PETER of *Alexandria*, who is mentioned by
 EUSEBIUS with the highest encomiums [t].

ATHANASIUS, patriarch of *Alexandria*, celebrated
 on account of his learned and pious labours, and
 particularly famous for his warm and vigorous oppo-
 sition to the Arians [u].

BASIL, surnamed the GREAT, bishop of *Cæsarea*,
 who, in point of genius, controversial skill, and a

[s] No writer has accused EUSEBIUS of Arianism, with more
 bitterness and erudition, than LE CLERC, in the second of his
Epistola Eccles. et Criticæ, which are subjoined to his *Ars Critica*,
 and NATALIS ALEXANDER, *Hist. Eccles. Nov. T. Sac. iv. Diff.*
 xvii. p. 205. All, however, that these writers prove is, that
 EUSEBIUS maintained, that there was a certain disparity and
 subordination between the persons of the godhead. And suppose
 this to have been his opinion, it will not follow from thence that
 he was an Arian, unless that word be taken in a very extensive
 and improper sense. Nothing is more common than the abusive
 application of this term to persons, who have held opinions quite
 opposite to those of ARIUS, though perhaps they may have
 erred in other respects.

[t] *Hist. Eccles.* lib. ix. cap. vi.

[u] EUSEBIUS RENAUDOTUS, in his *History of the Patriarchs*
of Alexandria, p. 83. has collected all the accounts which the
 Oriental writers give of ATHANASIUS, of whose works the
 learned and justly celebrated Benedictine, BERNARD MONT-
 FAUCON, has given a splendid edition in three volumes in folio.

rich and flowing eloquence, was surpassed by very few in this century [w].

CYRIL, bishop of *Jerusalem*, who has left some catechetical discourses, which he delivered in that city: he has been accused by many of intimate connexions with the Semi-Arians [x].

JOHN, surnamed CHRYSOSTOM, on account of his extraordinary eloquence, a man of a noble genius, governed successively the churches of *Antioch* and *Constantinople* [y], and left behind him several monuments of his profound and extensive erudition; as also discourses [z] which he had preached with vast applause, and which are yet extant.

EPIPHANIUS, bishop of *Salamis*, in the isle of *Cyprus*, who wrote a book against all the heresies that had sprung up in the church until his time. This work has little or no reputation, as it is full of inaccuracies and errors, and discovers almost in every page the levity and ignorance of its author [a].

GREGORY NAZIENZEN and GREGORY of *Nyssa*, who have obtained a very honourable place among the celebrated theological and polemic writers of this century, and not without foundation, as their works sufficiently testify [b]. Their reputation,

[w] The works of BASIL were published, at *Paris*, in three volumes folio, by JULIEN GARNIER, a learned Benedictine.

[x] The later editions of the works of this prelate, are, those published by Mr. MILLES and by AUGUSTUS TOUTTEE, a Benedictine monk.

[y] It must not be understood by this, that CHRYSOSTOM was bishop of both these churches; he was preacher at *Antioch* (a function, indeed, which before him was always attached to the episcopal dignity), and afterwards patriarch of *Constantinople*.

[z] The best edition of the works of CHRYSOSTOM, is that published by MONTFAUCON, in eleven volumes folio.

[a] The works of EPIPHANIUS have been translated into Latin, and published, with notes, by the learned PETAU. His life, written by GERVAS, appeared at *Paris* in 1738, in 4to.

[b] There are some good editions of these two writers, which we owe to the care and industry of two learned French editors

CENT. indeed, would have been yet more confirmed, had
 IV. they been less attached to the writings of ORIGEN
 PART II. [c], and less infected with the false and vicious
 eloquence of the sophists.

EPHRAIM, the Syrian, who has acquired an immortal name by the sanctity of his conversation and manners, and by the multitude of those excellent writings in which he has combated the sectaries, explained the sacred writings, and unfolded the moral duties and obligations of Christians [d].

Besides the learned men now mentioned, there are several others, of whose writings but a small number have survived the ruins of time; such as PAMPHILUS, a martyr, and an intimate friend of EUSEBIUS; DIODORUS, bishop of *Tarsus*; HOSIUS, of *Cordova*; DIDYMUS, of *Alexandria*; EUSTATHIUS, bishop of *Antioch*; AMPHILOCHIUS, bishop of *Iconium*; PALLADIUS, the writer of the *Lausiac History* [e]; MACARIUS the elder and the younger; APOLLINARIUS the elder; and some others, who are frequently mentioned on account of their erudition, and the remarkable events in which they were concerned.

of the last century. ☞ *Viz.* the Abbot BILLY, who published the works of GREGORY NAZIENZEN at *Paris*, in two volumes, folio, in the year 1609, with a Latin translation and learned notes; and Father FRONTON DU DUC, who published those of GREGORY of *Nyssa* in 1605.

☞ [c] The charge of *Origenism* seems to have been brought by the ancient writers only against GREGORY of *Nyssa*.

[d] There is a large and accurate account of this excellent writer, in the *Biblioth. Oriental. Vaticanæ* of JOSEPH SIMON ASSEMAN, tom. i. p. 24. Several works of EPHRAIM have been published, in Greek, at *Oxford*, of which GERARD VOSSIUS has given a Latin edition. An edition in Syriac, of the same works, was published at *Rome*, not long ago, by STEPH. EUOD. ASSEMAN.

☞ [e] This is the history of the *solitaries*, or *hermits*, which derived the name of *Lausiac history* from LAUSUS, governor of *Cappadocia*, at whose request it was composed, and to whom it was dedicated by PALLADIUS.

X. The LATINs also were not without writers of considerable note, the principal of whom we shall point out here :

HILARY, bishop of *Poitiers*, acquired a name by XII books concerning the *Trinity*, which he wrote against the Arians, and several other productions. He was a man of penetration and genius ; notwithstanding which, he has, for the most part, rather copied in his writings TERTULLIAN and ORIGEN, than given us the fruits of his own study and invention [f].

LACTANTIUS [g], the most eloquent of the Latin writers in this century, exposed the absurdity of the Pagan superstitions in his *Divine Institutions*, which are written with uncommon purity and elegance. He wrote also upon other subjects ; but was much more successful in refuting the errors of others, than careful in observing and correcting his own [b].

AMBROSE, prefect, and afterwards bishop of *Milan*, was not destitute of a certain degree of elegance both of genius and style ; his sentiments of things were, by no means, absurd ; but he did

[f] There is a very accurate and ample account of HILARY, in the *Histoire Litteraire de la France*, tom. i. Siecle iv. p. 139 —193. The best edition we have of his works is that published by the French Benedictines.

[g] See a complete account of LACTANTIUS, *Histoire Litteraire de la France*, tom. i. Siecle iv. p. 65.

[b] LACTANTIUS considers CHRIST's mission as having no other end, than that of leading mankind to virtue by the most sublime precepts, and the most perfect example. The charge of Manicheism brought against this eminent writer, is refuted in the most evident and satisfactory manner by Dr. LARDNER, in the seventh volume of his *Credibility of the Gospel History*, where the reader may find an ample and interesting account of his character and his writings. Among those who have been editors of the works of LACTANTIUS, the most reputed are BUNMANN, HEUMANN, WALCHIUS, and LANGUET DE FRESNOY.]

CENT. not escape the prevailing defect of that age, a want
IV. of solidity, accuracy, and order [i].

PART II. JEROME, a monk of *Palestine*, rendered, by his
learned and zealous labours, such eminent services
to the Christian cause, as will hand down his name
with honour to the latest posterity. But this
superior and illustrious merit was accompanied, and,
in some measure, obscured, by very great defects.
His complexion was excessively warm and choleric;
his bitterness against those who differed from him,
extremely keen; and his thirst of glory insatiable.
He was so prone to censure, that several persons,
whose lives were not only irreproachable, but even
exemplary, became the objects of his unjust accusa-
tions. All this, joined to his superstitious turn of
mind, and the enthusiastic encomiums which he
lavished upon a false and degenerate sort of piety
which prevailed in his time, sunk his reputation
greatly, and that even in the esteem of the candid
and the wise. His writings are voluminous, but not
all equally adapted to instruct and edify. His inter-
pretations of the holy scriptures, and his *epistles*, are
those of his productions which seem the most proper
to be read with profit [k].

THE fame of AUGUSTIN, bishop of *Hippo*, in
Africa, filled the whole Christian world; and not
without reason, as a variety of great and shining
qualities were united in the character of that illu-
strious man. A sublime genius, an uninterrupted
and zealous pursuit of truth, an indefatigable applica-
tion, an invincible patience, a sincere piety, and
a subtile and lively wit, conspired to establish his

[i] The works of St. AMBROSE have been published, by the
Benedictines, in two volumes in folio.

[k] The defects of JEROME are exposed by LE CLERC, in
his *Quæstiones Hieronymianæ*, published at *Amsterdam*, in 12mo, in
the year 1700. The Benedictine monks have given an edition
of the works of this father in five volumes, which was republished,
at *Verona*, by VALLARSIVS, with considerable additions.

fame upon the most lasting foundations. It is however certain, that the accuracy and solidity of his judgment were, by no means, proportionable to the eminent talents now mentioned; and that, upon many occasions, he was more guided by the violent impulse of a warm imagination, than by the cool dictates of reason and prudence. Hence that ambiguity which appears in his writings, and which has sometimes rendered the most attentive readers uncertain with respect to his real sentiments; and hence also the just complaints which many have made of the contradictions that are so frequent in his works, and of the levity and precipitation with which he set himself to write upon a variety of subjects, before he had examined them with a sufficient degree of attention and diligence [1].

OPTATUS, bishop of *Milevi*, in *Numidia*, acquired no small degree of reputation, by a work which he wrote in *six books* against the *Schism* of the *Donatists* [m].

PAULINUS, bishop of *Nola*, left behind him some poems and epistles, which are still extant; but are not remarkable either for their excellence or their meanness [n].

RUFINUS, presbyter of *Aquileia*, is famous on account of his Latin translations of ORIGEN and other Greek writers, his commentaries on several passages of the holy scriptures, and his bitter contest

[1] An accurate and splendid edition of the works of St. AUGUSTIN has been given by the Benedictines, since that of the divines of *Louvain*. This elegant edition bears the title of *Antwerp*, where it was published, with some augmentations, by LE CLERC, under the fictitious name of Jo. PHEREPONUS. The Jesuits, however, pretend to have found many defects in this edition.

[m] Since the edition of OPTATUS, published by ALBASPINÆUS, another has appeared, which we owe to the care and industry of DU PIN, doctor of the *Sorbonne*.

[n] The best edition of PAULINUS is that which was published at *Paris*, in the year 1685, by LE BRUN.

CENT. with JEROME. He would have obtained a very
 IV. honourable place among the Latin writers of this
 PART II. century, had it not been his misfortune to have
 had the powerful and foul-mouthed JEROME for his
 adversary [o].

AS TO PHILASTRIUS, DAMASUS, JUVENCUS, and other writers of that obscure class, we refer the reader, for an account of them, to those authors whose principal design is to give an exact enumeration of the Christian writers. We shall add, nevertheless to the list already given, SULPITIUS SEVERUS, by birth a Gaul, and the most eminent historical writer of this century [p]; as also PRUDENTIUS a Spaniard, a poet of a happy and elegant genius.

CHAPTER III.

Concerning the doctrine of the Christian church in this century.

The state of religion.

I. **T**HE fundamental principles of the Christian doctrine were preserved hitherto uncorrupted and entire in most churches, though it must be confessed, that they were often explained and

[o] RUFINUS and JEROME had lived for many years, in the most intimate and tender friendship, which ended in a violent rupture, on occasion of a translation which the former made of some of the works of ORIGEN, particularly his *book of principles*. For an account of RUFINUS, see RICH. SIMON, *Critique de la Bibliotheque des Auteurs Eccles.* par M. DU PIN, tom. i. p. 124, &c. An ample account of the same writer is given by JUSTUS FONTANINUS, *Hist. Literar. Aquileiensis*, lib. v. p. 149.

[p] See *Histoire Litteraire de la France*, tom. ii. p. 95; as also HIERON. a PRATO, who has written, with great accuracy, the life of this historian.

defended in a manner that discovered the greatest CENT. ignorance, and an utter confusion of ideas. The IV. disputes carried on in the council of *Nice*, concerning PART II. the three persons in the Godhead, afford a remarkable example of this, particularly in the language and explanations of those who approved of the decisions of that council. So little light, precision, and order, reigned in their discourses, that they appeared to substitute three Gods in the place of one.

Nor did the evil end here ; for those vain fictions, which an attachment to the Platonic philosophy, and to popular opinions, had engaged the greatest part of the Christian doctors to adopt, before the time of CONSTANTINE, were now confirmed, enlarged, and embellished, in various ways. From hence arose that extravagant veneration for departed saints, and those absurd notions of a certain *fire* destined to purify separate souls, that now prevailed, and of which the public marks were every where to be seen. Hence also the celibacy of priests, the worship of images and relics, which, in process of time, almost utterly destroyed the Christian religion, or, at least, eclipsed its lustre, and corrupted its very essence in the most deplorable manner.

II. An enormous train of different superstitions The increase of superstition. were gradually substituted in the place of true religion and genuine piety. This odious revolution was owing to a variety of causes. A ridiculous precipitation in receiving new opinions, a preposterous desire of imitating the Pagan rites and of blending them with the Christian worship, and that idle propensity which the generality of mankind have towards a gaudy and ostentatious religion, all contributed to establish the reign of superstition upon the ruins of Christianity. Accordingly, frequent pilgrimages were undertaken, to *Palestine*, and to the tombs of the martyrs, as if there alone the sacred principles of virtue, and the certain hope of

CENT. falvation, were to be acquired [q]. The reins being
 IV. once let loofe to fuperftition, which knows no
 PART II. bounds, abfurd notions and idle ceremonies multiplied every day. Quantities of duft and earth brought from *Paleftine*, and other places remarkable for their fupposed fanctity, were handed about as the moft powerful remedies againft the violence of wicked fpirits, and were fold and bought every where at enormous prices [r]. The public proceffions and fupplications, by which the Pagans endeavoured to appeafe their gods, were now adopted into the Chriftian worfhip, and celebrated with great pomp and magnificence in feveral places. The virtues that had formerly been afcribed to the Heathen temples, to their luftrations, to the ftatues of their gods and heroes, were now attributed to Chriftian churches, to water confecrated by certain forms of prayer, and to the images of holy men. And the fame privileges, that the former enjoyed under the darknefs of Paganifm, were conferred upon the latter under the light of the gofpel, or, rather, under that cloud of fuperftition that was obfcuring its glory. It is true, that, as yet, images were not very common; nor were there any ftatues at all. But it is, at the fame time, as undoubtedly certain, as it is extravagant and monftrous, that the worfhip of the *martyrs* was modelled, by degrees, according to the religious fervices that were paid to the gods before the coming of CHRIST [s].

From thefe facts, which are but fmall fpecimens of the ftate of Chriftianity at this time, the difcerning

[q] See GREGOR. NYSSENI, *Orat. ad eos qui Hierofolyman adepti*, tom. iii. opp. p. 568. HIERONYMUS, *Epift. xiii. ad Paulinum de inflituto Monachi*, tom. i. p. 66. JAC. GODOFRED. *ad Codicem Theodofian.* tom. vi. p. 65. PETRI WESSELINGII. *Differtat. de caufis peregrinat. Hierofolymit. quam Itinerario Burdigalenfi præmiffit, inter vetera Romanor. Itineraria*, p. 537.

[r] AUGUSTINUS, *De civitate Dei*, lib. xxii. cap. viii. § 6.

[s] For a full account of this matter, fee BEAUSOBRE, *Hift. du Manicheifm*, tom. ii. p. 642.

reader will easily perceive what detriment the church received from the peace and prosperity procured by CONSTANTINE, and from the imprudent methods employed to allure the different nations to embrace the gospel. The brevity we have proposed to observe in this history, prevents our entering into an ample detail of the dismal effects which arose from the progress and the baneful influence of superstition, now become universal.

III. This, indeed, among other unhappy effects, opened a wide door to the endless frauds of those odious impostors, who were so far destitute of all principle, as to enrich themselves by the ignorance and errors of the people. Rumours were artfully spread abroad of prodigies and miracles to be seen in certain places (a trick often practised by the Heathen priests), and the design of these reports was to draw the populace, in multitudes, to these places, and to impose upon their credulity. These stratagems were generally successful; for the ignorance and slowness of apprehension of the people, to whom every thing that is new and singular appears miraculous, rendered them easily the dupes of this abominable artifice [*t*]. Nor was this all: certain tombs were falsely given out for the sepulchres of saints [*u*] and confessors; the list of the saints was augmented with fictitious names, and even robbers were converted into martyrs [*w*]. Some buried the bones of dead men in certain retired places, and then affirmed, that they were divinely admonished by a dream, that the body of some friend of God lay there [*x*]. Many, especially of the monks, travelled through

[*t*] HENRY DODWELL, *Dissert. ii. in Ireneum*, § 56. p. 196.
LE CLERC, in his *Appendix Augustinian*, p. 492. 550. 575.

[*u*] *Concil. Carthag. v. Canon xiv. tom. i. Conciliorum*, p. 988.
edit. Harduini.

[*w*] Sulpitius Severus, *De vita S. Martini*, cap. viii.

[*x*] AUGUSTIN. *Sermone cccxviii. § 1. tom. v. opp. p. 886.*
edit. Antwerp.

CENT. the different provinces; and not only sold, with
 IV. the most frontless impudence, their fictitious relics,
 PART II. but also deceived the eyes of the multitude with
 ———— ludicrous combats with evil spirits or genii [y]. A
 whole volume would be requisite to contain an
 enumeration of the various frauds which artful knaves
 practised, with success, to delude the ignorant, when
 true religion was almost entirely superseded by horrid
 superstition.

Versions of
 the holy
 scriptures.

IV. Many of the learned in this century, under-
 took translations of the holy scriptures, but few
 succeeded in this arduous enterprize. Among the
 many Latin versions of the sacred books, that of
 JEROME was distinguished by its undoubted supe-
 riority [z]. The same ingenious and indefatigable
 writer, whose skill in the languages was by no means
 inconsiderable, employed much pains upon the Greek
 version of the seventy interpreters, in order to give
 a more correct edition of it than had appeared before
 his time: and it is said, that EUSEBIUS, ATHANASIUS
 and EUTHALIUS, had embarked in an undertaking
 of the same nature [a]. The number of interpreters
 was very considerable, among whom JEROME,
 HILARY, EUSEBIUS, DIODORUS of *Tarsus*, RUFI-
 NUS, EPHRAIM the Syrian, THEODORE of *Heraclea*,
 CHRYSOSTOM, ATHANASIUS, and DIDYMU, are
 generally esteemed worthy of the first rank. It is
 however certain, that, even of these first-rate
 commentators, few have discovered a just discern-
 ment, or a sound judgment, in their labourious
 expositions of the sacred writings. RUFINUS,
 THEODORE of *Heraclea*, and DIODORE of *Tarsus*,
 with some others, have, indeed, followed the natural

[y] See GODOFRED. *ad cod. Theod.* tom. iii. p. 172. AU-
 GUSTIN. *De opere Monachor.* cap. xxviii. § 36. p. 364. tom. vi.
 opp. HIERONYM. *Epist. ad Ruflicum*, tom. i. opp. p. 45.

[z] See JO. FRANC. BUDDEI *Isagoge ad Theologiam*, tom. ii.
 p. 1532.

[a] FRICKIUS, *De Canone N. T.* p. 18.

signification of the words [b]; the rest, after the example of ORIGEN, are laborious in the search of far-fetched interpretations, and pervert the expressions of scripture, which they but half understand, by applying them, or rather straining them, to matters with which they have no connexion [c]. St. AUGUSTIN and TYCHONIUS endeavoured to establish plain and wise rules for the interpretation of scripture, but their efforts were unsuccessful [d].

V. The doctrines of Christianity had not a better fate than the sacred scriptures from whence they are drawn. ORIGEN was the great model whom the most eminent of the Christian doctors followed in their explications of the truths of the gospel, which were, of consequence, explained, according to the rules of the Platonic philosophy, as it was corrected and modified by that learned father for the instruction of the youth. Those who desire a more ample and accurate account of this matter, may consult GREGORY NAZIENZEN among the Greeks, and AUGUSTIN among the Latins, who were followed, for a long time, as the only patterns worthy of imitation, and who, next to ORIGEN, may be considered as the parents and supporters of the *philosophical* or *scholastic theology*. They were both zealous Platonics, and holding, for certain, all the tenets of that philosopher that were not totally repugnant to the truths of Christianity, they laid them down as fundamental principles, and drew from them a great

CENT.
IV.
PART II.

The method of explaining the doctrines of Christianity, followed at this time.

Platonics.

[b] SIMON, *Critique de la Bibliotheque des Auteurs Ecclesiast.* par DU PIN, tom. i. p. 51. 90. 129. tom. iv. p. 335; as also *Hist. Critique des principaux Commentateurs du N. T.* cap. vi. p. 88, &c.

[c] See GREGOR. NAZIANZ. *Carmen de Seipso*, in TOLLIIUS's *Insignia Itineris Italici*, p. 27. 57.

[d] This may be seen in the VI books which AUGUSTIN wrote concerning the *Christian doctrine*, and in the *rules of interpretation* laid down by TYCHONIUS, which are to be found in the *Biblioth. Patr. Maxim.* tom. vi. p. 48.

CENT. variety of subtle conclusions, which neither CHRIST
IV. nor PLATO ever thought of.

PART II. This, however, was not the only sect that flourished
Myftics. at this time. That order of fanatics, who maintained, that the knowledge of divine things was to be acquired, not by reasoning, but by still contemplation, and by turning the eye of the mind upon itself in an entire absence from all external and sensible objects, became now more numerous, and increased every day. This appears from many circumstances, particularly from the swarms of monks that almost overspread the Christian world; and also from the books of DIONYSIUS, the pretended chief of the Myftics, which seem to have been forged, in this century, under that venerable name, by some member of that fanatical tribe.

The didac-
tic writers.

VI. Among the writers of this century, who published expositions of the Christian doctrine, the first place is due to CYRIL of *Jerusalem*, justly celebrated for his *catechetical discourses*, which nothing but a partial blindness to the truth could have induced any to attribute to a more modern author [e]. Some have ranked LACTANTIUS in the class of writers now under consideration, but without reason; since it is well known, that the labours of that eloquent author were rather employed in refuting the errors of idolatry, than in explaining the truths of the gospel. The *system of doctrine addressed to the clergy and laity*, and which, by many, has been attributed to ATHANASIUS, seems to be of a much later date. There are, however, many things in the works of CHRYSOSTOM, ATHANASIUS, the GREGORIES, and others, by which we may be enabled to form a just idea of the manner in which the principal points of the Christian doctrine were explained by learned men in this century. We may more particularly be

[e] See JO. FECHTTI *Comment. de origine missarum in honorem sanctorum*, p. 404.

assisted in this matter, by the XII books of HILARY, CENT. IV. concerning the *Trinity*; the *Ancoratus* of EPIPHANIUS, in which the doctrine of scripture, concerning CHRIST and the *Holy Ghost*, is explained at large; the treatise of PACIAN, concerning *baptism*, addressed to the *catechumens*; and the two books of CHRYSOSTOM upon the same subject. We need not mention here the various works of JEROME and AUGUSTIN, in which appear the laborious and noble efforts of these great men to inspire into the minds of the people just notions of religion, and to detect and refute the errors of those who were enemies of the truth.

VII. The controversial writings, that were levelled against those who were considered as heretics, were entirely destitute of that ancient simplicity, which is the natural and the beautiful garb of truth. That simplicity was now succeeded by logical subtilties, acute sophisms, sharp invectives, and other disingenuous arts, more worthy of the patrons of error, than of the defenders of the *wisdom that is from above*. We find, accordingly, many great and eminent men complaining of this abuse, and endeavouring, in vain, to oppose the muddy torrent of scurrility and dialectic that was overflowing the Christian schools [f]. I pass in silence those rhetorical figures and ornaments, by which many evaded the arguments of their adversaries, and artfully perplexed the true state of the case; that odious custom also, of exciting the popular resentment against those who differed from them, that was observed by some, and that total want of order and perspicuity that was chargeable upon almost all. Several writers of this age are so far from disowning these indecent qualities, that they seem, on the contrary,

The state of
Polemical
divinity.

[f] METHODIUS apud EPIPHANIUM *Heret.* lxiv. tom. i. opp. p. 563. GREGOR. NAZIAN. in many places, and others.

CENT. to glory in them. It must, indeed, be observed,
 IV. that the adversaries of the truth used the same
 PART II. inglorious arms, though this does not in the least
 ——— diminish the reproach that is on this account due to
 its friends.

Difingenu-
 ous methods
 of difputing
 ufed.

VIII. New methods of difputing were alfo added to thofe that were praftifed in former times: for the truth of doctrines was now proved by the number of martyrs that had profefied them, by miracles, by the confeffion of *demons*, i. e. of perfons poffeffed with evil fpirits. The fmalleft degree of difcernment will perfuade any one how ambiguous this method of reasoning was; how dangerous to the truth, by furnifhing innumerable occafions for the exercife of fraud and impofture. And, I fear, that the greateft part of thofe who ufed fuch arguments, however illuftrious and refpectable they may have been, will be found, upon examination, chargeable with the dangerous and criminal defign of impofing upon their brethren. AMBROSE, in his difputes with the Arians, produced men poffeffed with devils, who, upon the approach of the relicks of GERVASIUS and PROTASIUS, were obliged to acknowledge, with loud cries, that the doctrine of the council of *Nice*, concerning the three perfons of the godhead, was true; and that of the Arians not only falfe, but alfo of moft dangerous confequence. This testimony of the prince of darknefs was regarded, by AMBROSE, as an unexceptionable argument in favour of his hypothesis. The Arians, on the other hand, held this prodigy in the utmoft derifion, and maintained that AMBROSE had fuborned thefe infernal witneffes by a weighty bribe [g]; and I make no doubt, but many will be more difpofed to believe the Arians, than to credit AMBROSE,

[g] AMBROS. *Epift.* xxii. p. 878, &c. PAULINUS, *vita Ambrofii*, p. 81.

though he be enrolled in the order of the saints, and they stigmatized in the list of heretics [b].

IX. There were, in this century, several controversialists of considerable note. For besides APOLLINARIS, GREGORY NAZIANZEN, CYRIL of *Alexandria*, and others, who distinguished themselves in the lists against the emperor JULIAN; many others disputed with victorious force and an happy success against the worshippers of the gods. Of this number were, LACTANTIUS, ATHANASIUS JULIUS FIRMICUS MATERNUS, APOLLINARIS the younger, whose excellent writings against PORPHYRY are unhappily lost; AUGUSTIN, in those books of *the City of God*, and in the III books against the Pagans, which have also perished; and above all, EUSEBIUS of *Cæsarea*, in his *Evangelical Preparation*, and his book against HIEROCLES. EUSEBIUS EMESSENUM, DIODORE of *Tarsus*, and St. CHRYSOSTOM, whose treatise on that subject is still extant, employed their learned labours, to bring over the Jews to the profession of Christianity. EPHRAIM of *Syria* [i], JAMES of *Nisibis*, DIDYMUS and AUDANTIUS, attacked the whole body of heretics; as did also EPIPHANIUS, in his voluminous work concerning heresies, intitled, *Panarium*, and GREGORY NAZIANZEN with more brevity in his *discourse concerning faith*. The books of AUGUSTIN and PHILASTRIUS, on the same subject, contain rather a list than a refutation of the several sects.

X. If the growth and perfection of a science were to be estimated by the multitude of writers it

[b] See LE CLERC, *Appendix Augustiniana*, p. 375. GREGOR. NYSS. *vita Gregorii Neocæsariensis*, tom. ii. opp. p. 977, 978. SULPITIUS SEVERUS, *Hist. Sacr.* lib. ii. cap. xxxviii. p. 261.

[i] See JOS. SIM. ASSEMAN. *Biblioth. Oriental Clement. Vatic.* tom. i. p. 118. 125. From the extracts, which this learned compiler has given of the works of EPHRAIM, it appears, that he was more distinguished by his piety and genius, than by his skill in the managing of controversy.

CENT.
IV.
PART II.
The chief
controversialists.

CENT. produces, that of *morals* must have flourished greatly
 IV. at this time, for the number of those was very confi-
 PART II. derable, who applied themselves to that excellent
 study. Among the eastern writers, JAMES, bishop
 of *Nisibis* [*k*], and EPHRAIM, bishop of *Syria*,
 became eminent for their zeal and assiduity in incul-
 cating the precepts of morality. The writings of
 BASIL the GREAT, GREGORY of *Nyssa*, CHRYSOS-
 TOM, AMBROSE, AUGUSTIN, and several others, upon
 moral subjects, are neither worthy of high enco-
 miums, nor of entire contempt, as they contain a
 strange mixture of excellent reflexions, and insipid
 details, concerning the duties of the Christian life.
 Among the productions of these writers, many give
 the preference to the III books of AMBROSE, *con-
 cerning the duty of the ministers of the church*, which
 are written in the manner of CICERO, and are justly
 commended for the pious intention they discover,
 and the beautiful sentiments they contain, though
 there be many things in them worthy of reprehension.
 But MACARIUS, an Egyptian monk [*l*], undoubt-
 edly deserves the first rank among the practical
 writers of this time, as his works displayed, some
 few things excepted [*m*], the brightest and most
 lovely portraiture of sanctity and virtue.

The defects
 of these mo-
 ral writers.

XI. It must, however, be observed, that almost
 all the writers of this class are defective in several
 respects. They have been entirely negligent of
 order in their compositions, and have taken no sort

[*k*] JOS. SIM. ASSEMANN. in the work quoted in the pre-
 ceding note, tom. i. p. 17. thinks, that the writings attributed to
 the bishop of *Nisibis*, belong rather to the bishop of *Saruga*; he
 however corrects, in some measure, this notion in his *Addenda*,
 p. 558,

[*l*] See the *Acta Sanctorum*, tom. i. Januar. p. 1005.

[*m*] The things here excepted by Dr. MOSHEIM, are
 some superstitious tenets that are to be found in the writings of
 MACARIUS, and also certain opinions that seem tainted with
Origenism.

of care to treat with method and precision the subjects they undertook to explain. They seldom define their terms, and pour out their pious, but incoherent, ideas in fortuitous combinations, just as they come uppermost. They, moreover, neglect deducing the the duties of mankind from their true principles, and even sometimes derive them from doctrines and precepts that are either manifestly false, or, at least, whose nature and meaning are not determined with any degree of accuracy. And hence it is, that the greatest part of them are extremely defective, when they come to demonstrate the *obligations* of virtue, and the *incongruity* and *unfitness* of vice. These pretended demonstrations, instead of being deduced by proper conclusions from the reason of things and the divine laws, are nothing more than a collection of airy fancies, cold and insipid allegories, quaint and subtle conceits, which are more proper to afford amusement to the imagination, than light to the understanding, or conviction to the judgment.

XII. But, however defective this method of inculcating the duties of morality may have been, it was much more tolerable than that which was followed by the amphibious disciples of CHRIST and PLATO, those Alexandrian philosophers, of whom AMMONIUS SACCA was the chief. The *double doctrine* of morals which they invented, and which was compounded of two systems, the one surpassing the other in perfection, gained much ground, in this century, to the great detriment of true religion. A circumstance every way proper to convince us of the growth and progress of this fanatical sect is, that those who in former times had inculcated a secret doctrine concerning divine things, totally different from that which was publicly propagated among the multitude, gave now the finishing touch to this doctrine, and formed it into a system. The famous Grecian fanatic, who gave himself out for DIONYSIUS the Areopagite, disciple of St. PAUL,

CENT.

IV.

PART II.

The numbers of the mystics increased, and their doctrine propagated.

CENT. and who, under the protection of this venerable
 IV. name, gave laws and instructions to those that were
 PART II. desirous of raising their souls above all human things,
 in order to unite them to their great source by
 sublime contemplation, lived, most probably, in this
 century, though some place him before, others after
 the present period [n]. No sooner were the writings
 and instructions of this fanatic handed about among
 the Greeks and Syrians, and particularly among the
solitaries and monks, than a gloomy cloud of religious
 darkness began to spread itself over the minds of
 many. An incredible number of profelytes was
 added to that chimerical sect, who maintained, that
 communion with God was to be sought by mortify-
 ing sense, by withdrawing the mind from all external
 objects, by macerating the body with hunger and
 labour, and by a holy sort of indolence, which
 confined all the activity of the soul to a lazy contem-
 plation of things spiritual and eternal.

Monkish
 societies.

XIII. The progress of this sect appears evidently
 from the prodigious number of solitary monks and
 sequestered virgins, which, upon the return of
 tranquillity to the church, had over-run the whole
 Christian world with an amazing rapidity. Many
 of this order of men had, for a long time, been known
 among the Christians, and had led silent and solitary

[n] Those who have written concerning this impostor, are
 enumerated by Jo. FRANC. BUDDEUS, in his *Isagoge ad Theo-*
logiam, lib. ii. cap. iv. p. 175. See also Jo. LAUNII *Judicium*
de scriptis Dyonisii, tom. ii. opp. part I. p. 562. LA CROZE (in
 his *Histoire du Christianisme d'Ethiophe*, p. 10.) endeavours to prove
 that SYNESIUS, an Egyptian bishop, and also the most celebrated
 philosopher of the fifth century, composed the writings attributed
 to DIONYSIUS, in order to defend the doctrine of those who
 held that CHRIST was only possessed of *one nature*. The argu-
 ments, however, of LA CROZE are weak. Nor are those more
 satisfactory, which the learned BARRATIÈRE has employed, in a
 dissertation added to his book *De successione Rom. Episcop.* p. 286.
 to prove that DIONYSIUS of *Alexandria* was the true author of
 the writings in question.

lives in the deserts of *Egypt*; but ANTONY WAS CENT. the first who formed them into a regular body, IV. engaged them to live in society with each other, PART II. and prescribed to them fixed rules for the direction of their conduct [o]. These regulations which ANTONY had made in *Egypt* were, the year following, introduced into *Palestine* and *Syria* by his disciple HILARION. Almost about the same time, AONES, or EUGENIUS, with their companions, GADDANAS and AZYZUS, instituted the monastic order in *Mesopotamia*, and the adjacent countries [p]; and their example was followed with such rapid success, that, in a short time, the whole east was filled with a lazy set of mortals, who, abandoning all human connexions, advantages, pleasures, and concerns, wore out a languishing and miserable life, amidst the hardships of want, and various kinds of suffering, in order to arrive at a more close and rapturous communion with God and angels. The Christian church would never have been disgraced by this cruel and unsociable enthusiasm, nor would any have been subjected to those keen torments of mind and body to which it gave rise, had not many Christians been unwarily caught by the specious appearance, and the pompous sound, of that maxim of the ancient philosophy, “That, in order to the attainment of true felicity and communion with God, it was necessary that the soul should be separated from the body even here below, and that the body was to be macerated and mortified for this purpose.”

XIV. From the east this gloomy institution passed into the west, and first into *Italy*, and its neighbouring islands, though it is utterly uncertain who

The progress of
monkery

[o] For a full account of ANTONY, and the discipline established by him, see the *Acta Sanctorum*, tom. ii. Januar. ad d. 17. p. 107.

[p] See JOS. SIMON. ASSEMAN. *Biblioth. Oriental. Clement. Vatican.* tom. iii. part II. p. 48.

CENT. transplanted it thither [q]. St. MARTIN, the
 IV. celebrated bishop of *Tours*, erected the first mona-
 PART II. steries in *Gaul*, and recommended this religious
 solitude with such power and efficacy, both by his
 instructions and his example, that his funeral is said
 to have been attended by no less than two thousand
 monks [r]. From hence, the monastic discipline
 extended, gradually, its progress through the other
 provinces and countries of Europe.

It is, however, proper to observe, that there was a great difference in point of austerity between the western and oriental monks; the former of whom could never be brought to bear the severe rules to which the latter voluntarily submitted. And, indeed, the reason of this difference may be partly derived from the nature of the respective climates in which they dwelt. The European countries abound not so much with delirious fanatics, and with persons of a morose and austere complexion, as those arid regions that lie towards the burning east; nor are our bodies capable of supporting that rigorous and abstemious method of living, which is familiar and easy to those who are placed under a glowing

[q] Most writers, following the opinion of BARONIUS, maintain, that S. ATHANASIUS brought the *monastic institution* from *Egypt* into *Italy*, in the year 340, and was the first who built a monastery at *Rome*. See MABILLONIUS, *Præf. ad AËta Sanctorum Ord. Bened.* tom. i. p. 9. But the learned LEWIS ANT. MURATORI combats this opinion, and pretends that the first monastery known in Europe, was erected at *Milan*, *Antiq. Italicar. mediæ ævi*, tom. v. p. 364.—JUST. FONTANINUS, in his *Historia Litter. Aquileiens.* p. 155. affirms, that the first society of monks was formed at *Aquileia*. None of these writers produce unexceptionable evidence for their opinions. If we may give credit to the BALLERINI (*Differt. ii. ad Zenonem Veronensem*, p. 115.) the first convent of nuns was erected towards the end of this century, at *Verona*, by ZENO, bishop of that city.

[r] See SULPIT. SEVER. *De vita Martini*, cap. x. p. 17. edit. Veron. where the method of living, used by the Martinian monks, is accurately described. See also *Histoire Litteraire de la France*, tom. i. part II. p. 42.

firmament, and breathe in a sultry and scorching atmosphere. It was, therefore, rather the name only than the thing itself, which was transported into the European countries [s], though this name was, indeed, accompanied with a certain resemblance or distant imitation of the monastic life instituted by ANTONY and others in the east.

XV. The monastic order, of which we have been taking a general view, was distributed into several classes. It was first divided into two distinct orders, of which the one received the denomination of Cœnobites, the other that of Eremites. The former lived together in a fixed habitation, and made up one large community under a chief, whom they called *father*, or *abbot*, which signifies the same thing in the Egyptian language. The latter drew out a wretched life in perfect solitude, and were scattered here and there in caves, in deserts, in the hollow of rocks, sheltered from the wild beasts only by the cover

Different orders of monks.

Cœnobites and Eremites, or Hermits.

[s] This difference between the *discipline* of the eastern and western monks, and the cause of it, have been ingeniously remarked by Sulpitius Severus, *Dial. i. De vita Martini*, p. 65. edit. Veron. where one of the interlocutors, in the dialogue, having mentioned the abstemious and wretched diet of the Egyptian monks, adds what follows: "Placetne tibi prandium, fasciculus herbarum et panis dimidius viris quinque?" To this question the Gaul answers, "Facis tuo more, qui nullam occasionem omittis, quin nos (*i. e.* the Gallic monks) edacitatis fatiges. Sed facis inhumanè, qui nos Gallos homines cogis exemplo Angelorum vivere—Sed contentus sit hoc prandio Cyrenensis ille, cui vel necessitas vel natura est esurire: nos, quod tibi sæpe testatus sum, Galli sumus." The same speaker, in the above-mentioned dialogue, ch. viii. p. 69, 70. reproaches Jerome with having accused the monks of gluttony; and proceeds thus; "Sentio de orientalibus illum potius Monachis, quam de occidentalibus disputasse. Nam edacitas in Græcis et Orientalibus gula est, in Gallis natura." It appears, therefore, that, immediately after the introduction of the monastic order into Europe, the western differed greatly from the eastern monks in their manners and discipline, and were, in consequence of this, accused by the latter of voraciousness and gluttony.

CENT. of a miserable cottage, in which each one lived sequestered from the rest of his species.

PART II. The Anachorites were yet more excessive in the austerity of their manner of living than the Eremites.

Anachorites.

They frequented the wildest deserts without either tents or cottages; nourished themselves with the roots and herbs which grew spontaneously out of the uncultivated ground; wandered about without having any fixed abode, and reposing wherever the approach of night happened to find them; and and all this, that they might *avoid the view and the society of mortals* [t].

Sarabaites.

The last order of monks that come now under consideration were those wandering fanatics, or rather impostors, whom the Egyptians called Sarabaites, who, instead of procuring a subsistence by honest industry, travelled through various cities and provinces, and gained a maintenance by fictitious miracles, by selling relicks to the multitude, and other frauds of a like nature.

Many of the Cœnobites were chargeable with vicious and scandalous practices. This order, however, was not so universally corrupt as that of the Sarabaites, who were, for the most part, profligates of the most abandoned kind. As to the Eremites, they seem to have deserved no other reproach than that of a delirious and extravagant fanaticism [u]. All these different orders were hitherto composed of the *laity*, and were subject to the jurisdiction and the

[t] See Sulpit. Sever. *Dial.* i. *De vita Martini*, cap. x. p. 80. edit. Veron.

[u] Whoever is desirous of a fuller account of the vices of the monks in this century, may consult the above mentioned dialogue of Sulp. Sever. cap. viii. p. 69, 70. cap. xxi. p. 88. where he particularly chastises the arrogance and ambition of those of them, who aspired to *clerical* honours. See also *Dial.* ii. cap. viii. p. 112. *Dial.* ii. cap. xv. p. 144, 145. *Consultat. Appollonii et Zachari*, published by Dacherius *Spicileg.* tom. i. lib. iii. cap. iii. p. 35.

inspection of the bishops. But many of them were now adopted among the *clergy*, and that even by the command of the emperors. Nay, the fame of monastic piety and sanctity became so universal, that bishops were frequently chosen out of that fanatical order [w].

XVI. If the enthusiastic frenzy of the monks exaggerated, in a manner pernicious to the interests of morality, the discipline that is obligatory upon Christians, the interests of virtue and true religion suffered yet more grievously by two monstrous errors which were almost universally adopted in this century, and became a source of innumerable calamities and mischiefs in the succeeding ages. The first of these maxims was, that *it was an act of virtue, to deceive and lye, when by that means the interests of the church might be promoted*; and the second equally horrible though in another point of view, was, that *errors in religion, when maintained and adhered to after proper admonition, were punishable with civil penalties and corporal tortures*. The former of these erroneous maxims was now of a long standing; it had been adopted for some ages past, and had produced an incredible number of ridiculous fables, fictitious prodigies, and pious frauds, to the unspeakable detriment of that glorious cause in which they were employed. And it must be frankly confessed, that the greatest men, and most eminent saints of this century, were more or less tainted with the infection of this corrupt principle, as will appear evidently to such as look with an attentive eye into their writings and their actions. We would willingly except from this charge, AMBROSE, and HILARY, AUGUSTIN, GREGORY NAZIANZEN, and JEROME; but truth, which is more respectable than these venerable fathers, obliges us to involve them in the general

CENT.
IV.
PART II.

Two most pernicious maxims adopted in this century.

[w] See J. GODOFRED. *ad codicem Theodosianum*, tom. vi. part I. p. 76. edit. Ritterianæ.

CENT. accusation. We may add also, that it was, probably,
 IV. the contagion of this pernicious maxim, that
 PART II. engaged Sulpitius Severus, who is far from being
 in the general, a puerile or credulous historian, to
 attribute so many miracles to St. MARTIN. The
 other maxim, relating to the justice and expediency
 of punishing error, was introduced with those serene
 and peaceful times which the accession of CONSTAN-
 TINE to the imperial throne procured to the church.
 It was from that period approved by many, enforced
 by several examples during the contests that arose
 with the Priscillianists and Donatists, confirmed and
 established by the authority of AUGUSTIN, and thus
 transmitted to the following ages.

The lives
 and morals
 of Chris-
 tians.

XVII. When we cast an eye towards the lives
 and morals of Christians at this time, we find, as
 formerly, a mixture of good and evil; some eminent
 for their piety, others infamous for their crimes.
 The number, however, of immoral and unworthy
 Christians began so to increase, that the examples
 of real piety and virtue became extremely rare.
 When the terrors of persecution were totally dis-
 pelled; when the church, secured from the efforts
 of its enemies, enjoyed the sweets of prosperity and
 peace; when the most of the bishops exhibited to
 their flock the contagious examples of arrogance,
 luxury, effeminacy, animosity, and strife, with other
 vices too numerous to mention; when the inferior
 rulers and doctors of the church fell into a slothful
 and opprobrious negligence of the duties of their
 respective stations, and employed in vain wranglings
 and idle disputes, that zeal and attention that were
 due to the culture of piety and to the instruction of
 their people, and when (to complete the enormity
 of this horrid detail) multitudes were drawn into the
 profession of Christianity, not by the power of con-
 viction and argument, but by the prospect of gain
 and the fear of punishment; then it was, indeed,

no wonder that the church was contaminated with shoals of profligate Christians, and that the virtuous few were, in a manner, oppressed and overwhelmed with the superior numbers of the wicked and licentious. It is true, that the same rigorous penitence, which had taken place before CONSTANTINE the GREAT, continued now in full force against flagrant transgressors; but when the reign of corruption becomes universal, the vigour of the laws yields to its sway, and a weak execution defeats the purposes of the most salutary discipline. Such was now unhappily the case: the age was sinking daily from one period of corruption to another; the great and the powerful sinned with impunity; and the obscure and the indigent felt alone the severity of the laws.

XVIII. Religious controversies among Christians were frequent in this century; and, as it often happens in the course of civil affairs, external peace gave occasion and leisure for the fomenting intestine troubles and dissensions. We shall mention some of the principal of these controversies, which produced violent and obstinate schisms, not so much, indeed, by their natural tendency, as by incidental occurrences.

The Meletian controversy.

In the beginning of this century, about the year 306, arose the famous Meletian controversy, so called from its author, and which, for a long time, divided the church. PETER, bishop of *Alexandria*, had deposed, from the episcopal office, MELETIUS, bishop of *Lycopolis*, in the *Upper Egypt*. The reasons that occasioned this violent act of authority have not been sufficiently exposed.

The partisans of PETER allege, that MELETIUS had sacrificed to the gods, and charge him also with various crimes [x]; while others affirm, that his only failing was an excessive severity against the

[x] ATHANASIUS, *Apologia secunda*, tom. i. opp. p. 777.

CENT. *lapsed* [y]. Be that as it will, MELETIUS treated
 IV. the sentence of PETER with the utmost contempt,
 PART II. and did not only continue to perform all the duties of
 the episcopal function, but even assumed the right
 of consecrating presbyters; a privilege which, by
 the laws of *Egypt*, belonged only to the bishop of
Alexandria. The venerable gravity and eloquence
 of MELETIUS drew many to his party, and, among
 others, a considerable number of monks adhered to
 his cause. The council of *Nice* made several inef-
 fectual attempts to heal this breach: the Meletians,
 on the other hand, whose chief aim was to oppose
 the authority of the bishop of *Alexandria*, joined
 themselves to the Arians, who were his irreconcilable
 enemies. Hence it happened, that a dispute, which
 had, for its first object, the authority and jurisdiction
 of the bishop of *Alexandria*, degenerated, gradually,
 into a religious controversy. The Meletian party
 was yet subsisting in the fifth century [z].

The Eusta-
 thian trou-
 bles.

XIX. Some time after this, a certain person,
 named EUSTATHIUS, was the occasion of great
 disorders and divisions in *Armenia*, *Pontus*, and the
 neighbouring countries; and was condemned and
 excommunicated, in consequence thereof, by the
 council of *Gangra*, which was held not long after
 that of *Nice*. Whether this was the same EUSTA-
 THIUS, who was bishop of *Sebastia*, in *Armenia*, and
 the chief of the Semi-arians; or whether the ancient
 historians have confounded together two different
 persons of the same name, is a matter extremely
 difficult to determine [a]. However that be, the
 leader of the Eustathian sect does not seem so much
 chargeable with a corruption of any religious

[y] EPIPHANIUS, *Hæres.* lxxviii. tom. i. opp. p. 716; see
 also DION. PETAVIUS, *Not. in Epiphanium*, tom. ii. p. 274.
 SAM. BASNAGII *Exercitat. de rebus sacris contra Baronium*.

[z] SOCRATES, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. c. vi. p. 14. THEODO-
 RET. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. viii. p. 548.

[u] See SAM. BASNAG. *Annal. Polit. Eccles.* tom. ii. p. 840.

doctrine, as with having set up a fanatical form of sanctity; an extravagant system of practical discipline, destructive of the order and happiness of society. For he prohibited marriage, the use of wine and flesh, feasts of charity, and other things of that nature. He prescribed immediate divorce to those who were joined in wedlock, and is said to have granted to children and servants the liberty of violating the commands of their parents and masters upon pretexts of a religious nature [b].

XX. LUCIFER, bishop of *Cagliari* in *Sardinia*, a man remarkable for his prudence, the austerity of his character, and the steadiness of his resolution and courage, was banished by the emperor CONSTANTIUS, for having defended the Nicene doctrine, concerning the three persons in the Godhead. He broke the bonds of fraternal communion with EUSEBIUS, bishop of *Verceil*, in the year 363, because the latter had consecrated PAULINUS bishop of *Antioch*; and he afterwards separated himself from the whole church, on account of the act of absolution it had passed in favour of those, who, under CONSTANTIUS, had deserted to the Arians [c]. It is, at least, certain, that the small tribe that followed this prelate, under the title of Luciferians, avoided scrupulously and obstinately all commerce and fellowship both with those bishops who had declared themselves in favour of the Arians, and with those also who consented to an

[b] SOCRATES, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. xliii. p. 156. SOZOMENUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. xiv. p. 520. lib. iv. cap. xxiv. p. 581. EPIPHAN. *Heret.* lxvi. p. 910. PHILOSTURGIUS, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. xvi. p. 53. 59. WOLFG. GUNDLING. *Not. ad Concilium Gangrense*, p. 9.

[c] RUFIN. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. xxx. p. 174. SOCRATES, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. ix. p. 181, &c. See also TILLEMONT, *Memoires pour servir à l'Histoire de l'Eglise*, tom. vii. p. 521. edit. Paris.

CENT. IV. absolution for such as returned from this desertion, and acknowledged their error; and thus of consequence they dissolved the bonds of their communion with the church in general [d]. The Luciferians are also said to have entertained erroneous notions concerning the human soul, whose generation they considered as of a carnal nature, and maintained that it was transfused from the parents into the children [e].

The Ærian
controversy

XXI. About this time ÆRIUS, a presbyter, monk, and Semi-arian, erected a new sect, and excited divisions throughout *Armenia*, *Pontus*, and *Cappadocia*, by propagating opinions different from those that were commonly received. One of his principal tenets was, that bishops were not distinguished from presbyters by any divine right; but that, according to the institution of the New Testament, their offices and authority were absolutely the same. How far ÆRIUS pursued this opinion, through its natural consequences, is not certainly known; but we know, with the utmost certainty, that it was highly agreeable to many good Christians, who were no longer able to bear the tyranny and arrogance of the bishops of this century.

There were other things in which ÆRIUS differed from the common notions of the time: he condemned prayers for the dead, stated fasts, the celebration of Easter, and other rites of that nature, in which the multitude erroneously imagine that the life and soul of religion consists [f]. His great purpose seems to have been that of reducing Christianity to its primitive simplicity: a purpose, indeed,

[d] See in the works of SIRMOND, tom. ii. p. 229, &c. *A book of prayers*, addressed to THEODOSIUS by MARCELLINUS and FAUSTINUS, who were Luciferians.

[e] AUGUSTIN. *De heres.* cap. lxxxii. with the observations of LAMB. DANMÆUS, p. 346.

[f] EPIPHANIUS, *Heres.* lxxv. p. 905. AUGUSTIN. *De heres.* cap. liii.

laudable and noble when considered in itself; though the principles from whence it springs, and the means by which it is executed, are generally, in many respects, worthy of censure, and may have been so in the case of this reformer [g].

XXII. The progress of superstition in this century, and the erroneous notions that prevailed concerning the true nature of religion, excited the zeal and the efforts of many to stem the torrent. But their labours only exposed them to infamy and reproach. The most eminent of these worthy opposers of the reigning superstitions was JOVINIAN, an Italian monk, who, towards the conclusion of this century, taught first at *Rome*, and afterwards at *Milan*, that all those who kept the vows they made to CHRIST at their

[g] The desire of reducing religious worship to the greatest possible simplicity, however rational it may appear in itself, and abstractedly considered, will be considerably moderated in such as bestow a moment's attention upon the imperfection and infirmities of human nature in its present state. Mankind, generally speaking, have too little elevation of mind to be much affected with those forms and methods of worship, in which there is nothing striking to the outward senses. The great difficulty here lies in determining the lengths, which it is prudent to go in the accommodation of religious ceremonies to human infirmity; and the grand point, is to fix a medium, in which a due regard may be shewn to the senses and imagination, without violating the dictates of right reason, or tarnishing the purity of true religion. It has been said, that the Romish church has gone too far in its condescension to the infirmities of mankind. And this is what the ablest defenders of its motley worship have alleged in its behalf. But this observation is not just: the church of *Rome* has not so much accommodated itself to *human weakness*, as it has abused that *weakness*, by taking occasion from it to establish an endless variety of ridiculous ceremonies, destructive of true religion, and only adapted to promote the riches and despotism of the clergy, and to keep the multitude still hoodwinked in their ignorance and superstition. How far a just antipathy to the church puppet-shows of the Papists has unjustly driven some Protestant churches into the opposite extreme, is a matter that I shall not now examine, though it certainly deserves a serious consideration.

CENT. baptism, and lived according to those rules of piety
 IV. and virtue laid down in the gospel, had an equal
 PART II. title to the rewards of futurity; and that, conse-
 quently, those who passed their days in unfociable
 celibacy, and severe mortifications and fastings, were
 in no respect more acceptable in the eye of God,
 than those who lived virtuously in the bonds of
 marriage, and nourished their bodies with moderation
 and temperance. These judicious opinions, which
 many began to adopt, were first condemned by the
 the church of *Rome*, and afterwards, by AMBROSE,
 in a council held at *Milan* in the year 390 [b].
 The emperor HONORIUS seconded the authoritative
 proceedings of the bishops by the violence of the
 secular arm, answered the judicious reasonings of
 JOVINIAN by the terror of coercive and penal laws,
 and banished this pretended heretic to the island
Boa. JOVINIAN published his opinions in a book,
 against which JEROME, in the following century,
 wrote a most bitter and abusive treatise, which is still
 extant [i].

Controver-
 sies relating
 to Origen.

XXIII. Among all the religious controversies
 that divided the church, the most celebrated, both
 for their importance and their duration, were those
 relating to ORIGEN and his doctrine.

This illustrious man, though he had been, for a
 long time, charged with many errors, was held, by
 the most part of Christians, in the highest veneration,
 and his name was, so sacred as to give weight to the
 cause in which it appeared. The Arians, who were
 sagacious in searching for succours on all sides to
 maintain their sect, affirmed that ORIGEN had
 adopted their opinions. In this they were believed
 by some, who consequently included this great man
 in the hatred they entertained against the sect of the

[b] HIERONYMUS in *Jovinianum*, tom. ii. opp. AUGUSTIN.
De heres. cap. lxxxii. AMBROS. *Epist.* vi. &c.

[i] *Codex Theodosianus*, tom. iii. p. 218. tom. vi. p. 193.

Arians. But several writers of the first learning and note opposed this report, and endeavoured to vindicate the honour of their master from these injurious insinuations. The most eminent of these was EUSEBIUS, bishop of *Cæsarea*, as appears by his learned work, intitled, *An Apology for Origen*. It is extremely probable, that these clamours raised against the memory and reputation of a man, whom the whole Christian world beheld with respect, would have been soon hushed, had it not been for the rise of new commotions, which proceeded from another source, and of which we shall treat in the following section.

XXIV. The monks in general, and the Egyptian monks in particular, were enthusiastically devoted to ORIGEN, and spared no labour to propagate his opinions in all places. Their zeal, however, met with opposition, nor could they persuade all Christians of the truth and soundness of the notions invented or adopted by that eminent writer. Hence arose a controversy concerning the reasons and foundations of *Origenism*, which was at first managed in a private manner, but, afterwards, by degrees, broke out into an open flame. Among the numerous partisans of ORIGEN, was JOHN, bishop of *Jerusalem*, which furnished EPIPHANIUS and JEROME with a pretext to cast an odium upon this prelate, against whom they had been previously exasperated on other accounts. But the ingenious bishop conducted matters with such admirable dexterity, that, in defending himself, he vindicated, at the same time, the reputation of ORIGEN, and drew to his party the whole monastic body; and also a prodigious number of those who were spectators of this interesting combat. This was but the beginning of the vehement contests concerning the doctrine of ORIGEN, that were carried on, both in the eastern and western provinces. These contests were particularly fomented in the west by RUFINUS, a presbyter of

CENT.
IV.
PART II.

The progress of these controversies.

CENT. *Aquileia*, who translated into Latin several books of
 IV. ORIGEN, and insinuated, with sufficient plainness,
 PART II. that he acquiesced in the sentiments they contained
 [k], which drew upon him the implacable rage of
 the learned and choleric JEROME. But these com-
 motions, seemed to cease in the west after the death
 of RUFINUS, and the efforts which men of the
 first order made to check, both by their authority
 and by their writings, the progress of *Origenism* in
 those parts.

Controversy in the east, concerning the writings of Origen.

XXV. The troubles which the writings and doctrines of ORIGEN excited in the east were more grievous and lasting. THEOPHILUS, bishop of *Alexandria*, irritated, for several reasons, against the Nitrian monks, represented them as infected with the contagion of *Origenism*, and ordered them to give up and abandon all the productions of ORIGEN. The monks refused obedience to this command, and alleged in their defence two considerations; the one, that the passages in the writings of this holy and venerable man, which seemed to swerve from the truth, were inserted in them by ill-designing heretics; and the other, that a few things worthy of censure were not sufficient to justify the condemnation of the rest. Matters were but more exasperated by this refusal of submission to the order of THEOPHILUS; for this violent prelate called a council, at *Alexandria*, in the year 399, in which, having condemned the followers of ORIGEN, he sent a band of soldiers to drive the monks from their residence on mount *Nitria*. The poor monks scattered abroad thus by an armed force, fled first to *Jerusalem*, from whence they retired afterwards to *Scythopolis*; and, finding that they could live here in security and peace, determined, at length, to set sail for *Constantinople*, and there plead their cause in

[k] See JUST. FONTANINUS, *Historia Litterar. Aquileiensis*, lib. iv. cap. iii. p. 177, &c.

presence of the emperor [1]. The issue of these proceedings comes under the history of the following century.

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PART II

It is, however, necessary to observe here, that we must not reduce to the same class all those who are called Origenists in the records of this century. For this ambiguous title is applied to persons who differed widely in their religious notions. Sometimes it merely signifies such friends of ORIGEN, as acknowledged his writings to have been adulterated in many places, and who were far from patronizing the errors of which he was accused; in other places, this title is attributed to those who confess ORIGEN to be the author of the doctrines which are imputed to him, and who resolutely support and defend his opinions; of which latter there was a considerable number among the monastic orders.

CHAPTER IV.

Concerning the rites and ceremonies used in the church during this century.

I. **W**HILE the Roman emperors were studious to promote the honour of Christianity, by the auspicious protection they afforded to the church, and their most zealous efforts to advance its interests, the inconsiderate and ill-directed piety of the bishops cast a cloud over the beauty and simplicity of the gospel, by the prodigious number of rites and

A multitude
of ceremonies
introduced.

[1] See PETER. DANIEL HUET, *Origenianorum*, lib. ii. cap. iv. p. 196. LOUIS DOUCIN, *Histoire de Origenisme*, livr. iii. p. 95. HIER. a PRATO, *Diss. vi. in Sulpitium Severum de Monachis ob Origenis nomen ex Nitria totaque Ægypto pulsus*, p. 273. Veron. 1741, folio.

CENT. ceremonies which they had invented to embellish it.
 IV. And here we may apply that well known saying of
 PART II AUGUSTIN [m], that *the yoke under which the Jews
 formerly groaned, was more tolerable than that imposed
 upon many Christians in his time.* The rites and
 institutions, by which the Greeks, Romans, and
 other nations, had formerly testified their religious
 veneration for fictitious deities, were now adopted,
 with some slight alterations, by Christian bishops, and
 employed in the service of the true God. We have
 already mentioned the reasons alleged for this imita-
 tion, so proper to disgust all who have a just sense of
 the native beauty of genuine Christianity. These
 fervent heralds of the gospel, whose zeal outran
 their candour and ingenuity, imagined that the
 nations would receive Christianity with more facility,
 when they saw the rites and ceremonies to which
 they were accustomed, adopted in the church, and
 the same worship paid to CHRIST and his martyrs,
 which they had formerly offered to their idol deities.
 Hence it happened, that, in these times, the religion
 of the Greeks and Romans differed very little, in its
 external appearance, from that of the Christians.
 They had both a most pompous and splendid ritual.
 Gorgeous robes, mitres, tiaras, wax-tapers, crofiers
 [n], processions [o],* lustrations, images, gold and
 silver vases, and many such circumstances of pageantry,

[m] AUGUSTIN. *Epist. cxix. ad Januarium*, according to
 the ancient division.

☞ [n] The *Lituus*, which, among the ancient Romans, was
 the chief ensign of the augurs, and which derived its name from
 its resemblance of the *military trumpet*, became a mark of episcopal
 dignity. We call it the *crofser*, or bishop's staff.

☞ [o] The word *supplicationes*, which I have rendered by that
 of *processions*, signified, among the Pagans, those solemn and public
 acts of *gratitude* for national blessings, or *deprecation* of national
 calamities, which were expressed by the whole body of the people
 by a religious approach to the temples of the gods, which, by a
 decree of the senate, were open for all without distinction. See
Cic. Catil. iii. 6. Liv. x. 23.

were equally to be seen in the heathen temples and the Christian churches.

II. No sooner had CONSTANTINE the GREAT abolished the superstitions of his ancestors, than magnificent churches were every where erected for the Christians, which were richly adorned with pictures and images, and bore a striking resemblance of the Pagan temples, both in their outward and inward form [p]. Of these churches some were built over the tombs of martyrs, and were frequented only at stated times; while others were set apart for the ordinary assemblies of Christians in divine worship. The former were called Martyria, from the places where they were erected; and the latter Tituli [q]. Both of them were consecrated with great pomp, and with certain rites borrowed, mostly, from the ancient laws of the Roman pontiffs.

But our wonder will not cease here; it will rather be augmented when we learn, that, at this time, it was looked upon as an essential part of religion to have, in every country, a multitude of churches; and here we must look for the true origin of what is called the *right of patronage*, which was introduced among Christians with no other view than to encourage

[p] See EZEK. SPANHEIM, *Preuves sur les Césars de Julien*. p. 47. and particularly LE BRUN's *Explication littéraire et historique des Ceremonies de la Messe*, tom. ii. p. 101. A description of these churches may be found in EUSEBIUS, *De vita Constantini M.* lib. iii. cap. xxxv. and an exact plan of the interior structure of them is accurately engraved in bishop BEVEREGE's *Adnotationes in Pandectas Canonum*, tom. ii. p. 70. and in FREDERICK SPANHEIM's *Institut. Hist. Eccles.* tom. i. opp. p. 860. It must also be observed, that certain parts of the Christian churches were formed after the model of the Jewish temples. See CAMP. VITRINGA, *De synagoga vetera*, lib. iii. p. 466.

[q] JO. MABILLON. *Musei Italici*, tom. ii. in *Comment. ad ordin. Roman.* p. xvi. ☞ The *Tituli* were the smaller churches, so called from this circumstance, that the presbyters, who officiated in them, were called by the names of the places where they were erected, *i. e.* received titles, which fixed them to those particular cures.

CENT. rage the opulent to erect a great number of churches,
 IV. by giving them the privilege of appointing the
 PART II. ministers that were to officiate in them [r]. This
 was a new instance of that servile imitation of the
 ancient superstitions which reigned at this time;
 for it was a very common notion among the people
 of old, that nations and provinces were happy and
 free from danger, in proportion to the number of
 fanes and temples, which they consecrated to the
 worship of gods and heroes, whose protection and
 succour could not fail, as it was thought, to be shed
 abundantly upon those, who worshipped them with
 such zeal, and honoured them with so many marks
 of veneration and respect. The Christians unhappily
 contracted the same erroneous way of thinking.
 The greater the number of temples was, which they
 erected in honour of CHRIST, and his chosen friends
 and followers, the more sanguine did their expecta-
 tions grow of powerful succours from them, and of
 a peculiar interest in the divine protection. They
 were so weak as to imagine, that GOD, CHRIST,
 and celestial intelligences, were delighted with those
 marks and testimonies of respect, which captivate
 the hearts of wretched mortals.

The form of
 public wor-
 ship.

III. The Christian worship consisted in hymns,
 prayers, the reading of the scriptures, a discourse
 addressed to the people, and concluded with the
 celebration of the Lord's supper. To these were
 added various rites, more adapted to please the eyes,
 and strike the imagination, than to kindle in the
 heart the pure and sacred flame of genuine piety
 [s]. We are not however to think, that the same

[r] JUST. HENN. BÖHMER *Jus Eccles. Protestant.* tom. iii.
 p. 466. *Bibliothèque Italique*, tom. v. p. 166.

[s] For a full account of the form of public worship, or the
liturgies of this century, the reader will do well to consult the
 22d *catechetical discourse* of CYRIL of Jerusalem, and the *aposto-
 lical constitutions*, which are falsely attributed to CLEMENT of
 Rome. These writers are most learnedly illustrated and explained
 by PETER LE BRUN, in his *Explication litterale et historique de la
 Messe*, tom. ii. p. 53.

method of worship was uniformly followed in every CENT. Christian society, for this was far from being the IV. case. Every bishop, consulting his own private PART II. judgment, and taking into consideration the nature of the times, the genius of the country in which he lived, and the character and temper of those whom he was appointed to rule and instruct, formed such a plan of divine worship as he thought the wisest and the best. Hence that variety of *liturgies* which were in use, before the bishop of *Rome* had usurped the supreme power in religious matters, and persuaded the credulous and unthinking, that the model both of doctrine and worship was to be given by the mother-church, and to be followed implicitly throughout the Christian world.

IV. It would be almost endless to enter into a minute detail of all the different parts of public worship, and to point out the disadvantageous changes they underwent. A few observations will be sufficient upon this head. The public prayers had now lost much of that solemn and majestic simplicity, that characterised them in the primitive times, and which were, at present, degenerating into a vain and swelling bombast. The psalms of *David* were now received among the public hymns that were sung as a part of divine service [t]. The sermons, or public discourses addressed to the people, were composed according to the rules of human eloquence, and rather adapted to excite the stupid admiration of the populace, who delight in vain embellishments, than to enlighten the understanding, or to reform the heart. Nay, it would seem as if all possible means had been industriously used, to give an air of folly and extravagance to the Christian assemblies. For the people were permitted, nay, even exhorted by the preacher himself, to crown his talents with clapping of hands and loud

Changes introduced into many parts of divine worship.

[t] BEAUSOBRE, *Hist. du Manichéisme*, tom. ii. p. 614.

CENT. acclamations of applause [u]; a recompence that
 IV. was hitherto peculiar to the actors on the theatre,
 PART II. and the orators in the forum. How men, set apart
 ————— by their profession to exhibit examples of the con-
 tempt of vain glory, and to demonstrate to others
 the vanity and emptiness of all temporal things,
 could indulge such a senseless and indecent ambition,
 is difficult to be conceived, though it is highly to be
 deplored.

Festivals, or
 holidays.

V. The first day of the week, which was the
 ordinary and stated time for the public assemblies of
 Christians, was, in consequence of a peculiar law
 enacted by CONSTANTINE, observed with more
 solemnity than it had formerly been [w]. The
 festivals celebrated in most of the Christian churches,
 were five in number, and were appointed in com-
 memoration of the birth, the sufferings and death,
 the resurrection and the ascension, of the divine
 Saviour; and also the effusion of the Holy Ghost
 upon the apostles and first heralds of the gospel on
 the day of Pentecost. Of these festivals, none
 were kept with so much solemnity and respect as
 the XIV days that were appointed for the com-
 memoration of CHRIST'S resurrection [x].

The eastern Christians celebrated the memory
 of CHRIST'S birth and baptism in one festival, which
 was fixed on the sixth of January, and this day
 was by them called the *Epiphany*, as on it the
 immortal Saviour was manifested to the world [y].
 On the other hand, the Christians of the west seem
 to have always celebrated the birth of our Lord on
 the xxvth of December: for there appears to be
 very little certainty in the accounts of those, who

[u] FRANC. BERNH. FERRARIUS, *De veterum acclamationibus*
 & *plausu*, p. 66.

[w] JAC. GODOFRED. *ad codicem Theodos.* tom. i. p. 135.

[x] *Ibid.* tom. i. p. 143.

[y] BEAUSOERE, *Hist. du Manicheisme*, tom. ii. p. 693.

allege that the Roman pontiff, JULIUS I. removed the festival of CHRIST'S birth from the sixth of January to the twenty-fifth of December [z].

CENT.
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PART II.

The unlucky success which some had in discovering the carcasses and remains of certain holy men, multiplied the *festivals* and *commemorations of the martyrs* in the most extravagant manner. The increase of these festivals would not have been offensive to the wise and the good, if Christians had employed the time they took up, in promoting their spiritual interests, and in forming habits of sanctity and virtue. But the contrary happened: these days, which were set apart for pious exercises, were squandered away in indolence, voluptuousness, and criminal pursuits, and were less consecrated to the service of God, than employed in the indulgence of sinful passions. It is well known, among other things, what opportunities of sinning were offered to the licentious, by what were called the vigils of Easter and Whitsuntide, or Pentecost.

VI. *Fasting* was considered, in this century, as the most effectual and powerful means of repelling the force, and disconcerting the stratagems of evil spirits, and of appeasing the anger of an offended Deity. Hence we may easily understand what induced the rulers of the church to establish this custom by express laws, and to impose, as an indispensable duty, an act of humiliation; the observation of which had hitherto been left to every one's choice. The *Quadragesimal*, or *Lent-fast*, was held more sacred than all the rest, though it was not as yet confined to a fixed number of days [a]. We must however remark, that the *fasts* observed in this century, were very different from those that were solemnized in the preceding times. Formerly

[z] See JOS. SIM. ASSEMANN. *Biblioth. Orient. Clement. Vatican.* tom. ii. p. 168. ALPH. DES VIGNOLES, *Diss. dans la Bibliothéque Germanique*, tom. ii. p. 29.

[a] JO. DALLÆUS, *De Jejunii et Quadragesima*, lib. iv.

CENT. those who submitted themselves to the discipline of
 IV. fasting abstained wholly from meat and drink; but
 PART II. now a mere abstinence from flesh and wine was, by
 many, judged sufficient for the purposes of fasting
 [b], and this latter opinion prevailed, from this time,
 and became universal among the Latins.

The admin-
 istration of
 baptism;

VII. *Baptismal* fonts were now erected in the porch of each church, for the more commodious administration of that initiating sacrament. *Baptism* was administered during the vigils of Easter and Whitsuntide, with lighted tapers, by the bishop, and the presbyters commissioned by him for that purpose. In cases however of urgent necessity, and in such only, a dispensation was granted for performing this sacred rite at other times than those now mentioned. In some places *salt* was employed, as a symbol of purity and wisdom, and was thrown, with this view, into the mouth of the person baptized; and a *double unction* was every where used in the celebration of this ordinance, one preceding its administration, and the other following it. The persons who were admitted into the church by baptism were obliged, after the celebration of that holy ordinance, to go clothed in white garments during the space of seven days.

Many other rites and ceremonies might be mentioned here; but, as they neither acquired stability by their duration, nor received the sanction of universal approbation and consent, we shall pass them over in silence.

and of the
 Lord's sup-
 per.

VIII. The institution of *catechumens*, and the discipline through which they passed, suffered no variation in this century, but continued still upon its ancient footing. It appears farther, by innumerable testimonies, that the Lord's supper was administered (in some places two or three times

[b] See BARBEYRAC, *De la Morale des Peres*, p. 250.

a-week, in others on Sunday only) to all those CENT. who were assembled together to worship God. It IV. was also sometimes celebrated at the tombs of PART II: martyrs and at funerals, which custom, undoubtedly, gave rise to the *masses*, that were afterwards performed in honour of the saints, and for the benefit of the dead. In many places, the bread and wine were held up to view before their distribution, that they might be seen by the people, and contemplated with a certain religious respect; and hence, not long after, the *adoration of the symbols* was unquestionably derived. Neither *catechumens*, *penitents*, nor those who were supposed to be under the influence and impulse of evil spirits, were admitted to this holy ordinance; nor did the sacred orators in their public discourses ever dare to unfold its true and genuine nature with freedom and simplicity. The reason of thus concealing it from the knowledge and observation of many, was a very mean and shameful one, as we have already observed: many indeed, offer a much more decent and satisfactory argument in favour of this custom, when they allege, that by these *mysterious* proceedings, the desire of the *catechumens* would naturally burn to penetrate, as soon as was possible, the sublime secret, and that they would thereby be animated to prepare themselves with double diligence for receiving this privilege.

CHAPTER V.

Concerning the divisions and heresies that troubled the church during this century.

CENT.

IV.
PART II.

The re-
mains of the
ancient
sects.

I. **T**HE sects which had sprung up in the preceding ages, transmitted their contagious principles to this century. Many of them remained yet, particularly in the east, and, notwithstanding their absurdity, continued to attract a certain number of followers. The Manichean faction surpassed the rest in its influence and progress. The very turpitude and enormity of its doctrines seemed to seduce many into its snares; and, what is still more surprising, men of genius and penetration were deluded by its enchantments, as the example of AUGUSTIN sufficiently testifies. It is true, the wisest and most learned writers of the times, and among others AUGUSTIN, when he returned from his errors, endeavoured to oppose the growth of this spreading pestilence; nor were their efforts entirely unsuccessful. But the root of this horrible disease was deep; and neither the force of argument, nor the severity of the most rigorous laws, were sufficient to extirpate it thoroughly [c]. For some time indeed it seemed to disappear, and many thought it utterly eradicated; but it gathered force secretly, and broke out afterwards with new violence. To avoid the severity of the laws, the Manicheans concealed themselves

[c] The severe laws enacted by the emperors against the Manicheans, are to be found in the *Theodosian Code*, vol. vi. part I. edit. Ritterian. In the year 372, VALENTINIAN the elder prohibited their assemblies, and imposed heavy penalties on their doctors, p. 126. In 381, THEODOSIUS the GREAT branded them with infamy, and deprived them of all the rights and privileges of citizens, p. 133. Add to these many edicts more dreadful, which may be seen in pages 137, 138. 170. of the above mentioned work.

under a variety of names, which they adopted successively, and changed, in proportion as they were discovered under them. Thus they assumed the names of Encratites, Apotactics, Saccophori, Hydroparastates, Solitaries, and several others, under which they lay concealed for a certain time, but could not however long escape the vigilance of their enemies [d].

II. The state had little danger to apprehend from a sect, which the force of severe laws and of penal restraints could not fail to undermine, gradually, throughout the Roman empire. But a new and much more formidable faction started up in *Africa*, which, though it arose from small beginnings, afflicted most grievously both church and state for more than a century. Its origin was as follows:

MENSURIUS, bishop of *Carthage*, in *Africa*, dying in the year 311, the greatest part of the clergy and people chose, in his place, the archdeacon CÆCILIANUS, who, without waiting for the assembly of the Numidian bishops, was consecrated by those of Africa alone. This hasty proceeding was the occasion of much trouble. The Numidian bishops, who had always been present at the consecration of the bishops of *Carthage*, were highly offended at their being excluded from this solemn ceremony, and, assembling themselves at *Carthage*, called CÆCILIANUS before them, to give an account of his conduct. The flame, thus kindled was greatly augmented by certain Carthaginian presbyters, who were competitors with CÆCILIANUS, particularly BOTRUS and CELESIUS. LUCILLA, also, an opulent lady, who had been reprimanded by CÆCILIANUS for her superstitious practices, and had conceived against him a bitter enmity on that account, was active in exasperating

[d] See the law of THEODOSIUS, *Codex Theod.* tom. vi. p. 134. 136, 137, 138.

CENT. the spirits of his adversaries, and distributed a
 IV. large sum of money among the Numidians to
 PART II. encourage them in their opposition to the new
 bishop. In consequence of all this, CÆCILIANUS,
 Cæcilianus
 condemned. refusing to submit to the judgment of the Numi-
 dians, was condemned in a council, assembled by
 SECUNDUS, bishop of *Tigisis*, consisting of seventy
 prelates, who, with the consent of a considerable
 part of the clergy and people, declared him unworthy
 of the episcopal dignity, and chose his deacon
 MAJORINUS for his successor. By this proceeding,
 the Carthaginian church was divided into two
 factions, and groaned under the contests of two
 rival bishops, CÆCILIANUS and MAJORINUS.

The reasons
 alleged for
 his condem-
 nation.

III. The Numidians alleged two important rea-
 sons to justify their sentence against CÆCILIANUS;
 as *first*, that FELIX of *Aptungus*, the chief of the
 bishops, who assisted at his consecration, was a traditor
 (*i. e.* one of those who, during the persecution under
 DIOCLETIAN, had delivered the sacred writings and
 the pious books of the Christians to the magistrates
 in order to be burnt); and that having thus apos-
 tatized from the service of CHRIST, it was not
 possible that he could impart the Holy Ghost to the
 new bishop. A *second* reason for their sentence
 against CÆCILIANUS was drawn from the harsh-
 ness and even cruelty that he had discovered in his
 conduct, while he was a deacon, towards the Christian
 confessors and martyrs during the persecution above-
 mentioned, whom he abandoned, in the most
 merciless manner, to all the extremities of hunger
 and want, leaving them without food in their prisons,
 and hindering those, who were willing to succour
 them, from bringing them relief. To these accusa-
 tions they added the insolent contumacy of the new
 prelate, who refused to obey their summons, and to
 appear before them in council to justify his conduct.

There was none of the Numidians who opposed
 CÆCILIANUS with such bitterness and vehemence,

as DONATUS bishop of *Casæ nigræ*, and hence the whole faction was called after him, as most writers think; though some are of opinion, that they derived this name from another DONATUS, whom the Donatists surnamed the GREAT [e]. This controversy, in a short time, spread far and wide, not only throughout *Numidia*, but even through all the provinces of *Africa*, which entered so zealously into this ecclesiastical war, that in most cities there were two bishops, one at the head of CÆCILIANUS's party, and the other acknowledged by the followers of MAJORINUS.

IV. The Donatists having brought this controversy before CONSTANTINE the GREAT, that emperor, in the year 313, appointed MELCHIADES, bishop of *Rome*, to examine the matter, and named three bishops of *Gaul* to assist him in this inquiry. The result of this examination was favourable to CÆCILIANUS, who was entirely acquitted of the crimes laid to his charge; but the accusations that had been brought against FELIX of *Aptungus*, by whom he was consecrated, were left out of the question. Hence it was, that the emperor, in the year 314, ordered the cause of FELIX to be examined separately by ÆLIAN, proconsul of *Africa*, by whose decision he was absolved. The Donatists, whose cause suffered necessarily by these proceedings, complained much of the judgment pronounced by MELCHIADES and ÆLIAN. The small number of bishops, that had been appointed to examine their cause

History of
the Donatists.

[e] In the faction of the Donatists, there were two eminent persons of the name of DONATUS; the one was a Numidian, and bishop of *Casæ nigræ*; the other succeeded MAJORINUS, bishop of *Carthage*, as leader of the Donatists, and received from his sect, on account of his learning and virtue, the title of DONATUS the GREAT. Hence it has been a question among the learned, from which of these the sect derived its name? The arguments that support the different sides of this trivial question are nearly of equal force; and why may we not decide it by supposing that the Donatists were so called from them both?

ENT. jointly with MELCHIADES, excited, in a particular
 IV. manner, their reproaches, and even their contempt.
 PART II. They looked upon the decision of seventy venerable
 Numidian prelates, as infinitely more respectable than
 that pronounced by nineteen bishops (for such was
 the number assembled at [f] Rome), who, besides
 the inferiority of their number, were not sufficiently
 acquainted with the African affairs to be competent
 judges in the present question. The indulgent
 emperor, willing to remove these specious complaints,
 ordered a second and a much more numerous assem-
 bly to meet at *Arles* in the year 314, composed of
 bishops from various provinces, from *Italy, Gaul,*
Germany, and Spain. Here again the Donatists lost
 their cause, but renewed their efforts by appealing
 to the immediate judgment of the emperor, who
 condescended so far, as to admit their appeal; and,
 in consequence thereof, examined the whole affair
 himself in the year 316 at *Milan*, in presence of the
 contending parties. The issue of this third trial
 was more favourable to the Donatists than that of
 the two preceding councils, whose decisions the
 emperor confirmed by the sentence he pronounced
 [g]. Hence this perverse sect loaded CONSTANTINE
 with the bitterest reproaches, and maliciously

☞ [f] The emperor, in his letter to MELCHIADES, named
 no more than three prelates, *viz.* MATERNUS, RHETICIUS, and
 MARINUS, bishops of *Cologne, Autun,* and *Arles*, to sit with him
 as judges of this controversy; but afterwards he ordered seven
 more to be added to the number, and as many as could soon and
 conveniently assemble; so that they were at last nineteen in all.

[g] The proofs of the supreme power of the emperors, in
 religious matters, appear so incontestable in this controversy, that
 it is amazing it should ever have been called in question. Certain
 it is, that, at this time, the notion of a supreme judge set over the
 church universal, by the appointment of CHRIST, never had
 entered into any one's head. The assemblies of the clergy at
Rome and *Arles* are commonly called *councils*: but improperly,
 since, in reality, they were nothing more than meetings of judges,
 or *commissaries* appointed by the emperor.

complained that OSIUS, bishop of *Cordoua*, who was honoured with his friendship, and was intimately connected with CÆCILIANUS, had, by corrupt insinuations, engaged him to pronounce an unrighteous sentence. The emperor, animated with a just indignation at such odious proceedings, deprived the Donatists of their churches in *Africa*, and sent into banishment their seditious bishops. Nay, he carried his resentment so far as to put some of them to death, probably on account of the intolerable petulance and malignity they discovered both in their writings and in their discourse. Hence arose violent commotions and tumults in *Africa*, as the sect of the Donatists was extremely powerful and numerous there. The emperor endeavoured, by embassies and negotiations, to allay these disturbances, but his efforts were without effect.

V. These unhappy commotions gave rise, no doubt, to a horrible confederacy of desperate ruffians, who passed under the name of Circumcelliones. This furious, fearless, and bloody set of men, composed of the rough and savage populace, who embraced the party of the Donatists, maintained their cause by the force of arms, and, over-running all *Africa*, filled that province with slaughter and rapine, and committed the most enormous acts of perfidy and cruelty against the followers of CÆCILIANUS. This outrageous multitude, whom no prospect of sufferings could terrify, and who, upon urgent occasions, faced death itself with the most audacious temerity, contributed to render the sect of the Donatists an object of the utmost abhorrence; though it cannot be made appear from any records of undoubted authority, that the bishops of that faction, those, at least, who had any reputation for piety and virtue, either approved the proceedings, or stirred up the violence of this odious rabble. In the mean time, the flame of discord gathered strength daily, and seemed to portend the approaching horrors of a

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PART II.

The origin
of the Cir-
cumcelli-
ones.

CENT. civil war; to prevent which, CONSTANTINE having
 IV. tried, in vain, every other method of accommodation,
 PART II. abolished at last, by the advice of the governors of
 Africa, the laws that had been enacted against the
 Donatists, and allowed the people a full liberty of
 adhering to the party they liked the best.

They are
 defeated.

VI. After the death of CONSTANTINE the GREAT, his son CONSTANS, to whom Africa was allotted in the division of the empire, sent MACARIUS and PAULUS into that province, with a view to heal this deplorable schism, and to engage the Donatists to conclude a peace. DONATUS, surnamed the GREAT, the principal bishop of that sect, opposed all methods of reconciliation with the utmost vehemence, and his example was followed by the other prelates of the party. The Circumcelliones also continued to support the cause of the Donatists by assassinations and massacres, executed with the most unrelenting fury. They were, however, stopt in their career, and were defeated by MACARIUS at the battle of *Bagnia*. Upon this, the affairs of the Donatists declined apace; and MACARIUS used no longer the soft voice of persuasion to engage them to an accommodation, but employed his authority for that purpose. A few submitted; the greatest part saved themselves by flight; numbers were sent into banishment, among whom was DONATUS the GREAT; and many of them were punished with the utmost severity. During these troubles, which continued near thirteen years, several steps were taken against the Donatists, which the equitable and impartial will be at a loss to reconcile with the dictates of humanity and justice; nor, indeed, do the Catholics themselves deny the truth of this assertion [b]. And hence

[b] The testimony of OPTATUS of *Milevi* is beyond exception in this matter; it is quoted from the third book of his treatise, *De Schismate Donatistarum*, § I. and runs thus: "Ab Operariis Unitatis (*i. e.* the emperor's ambassadors MACARIUS

the complaints which the Donatists made of the cruelty of their adversaries [i].

VII. The emperor JULIAN, upon his accession to the throne in the year 362, permitted the Donatists to return to their country, and restored them to the enjoyment of their former liberty. This step renewed the vigour of that expiring sect, who, on their return from banishment, brought over, in a short time, the greatest part of the province of *Africa* to espouse their interest. GRATIAN, indeed, published several edicts against them, and, in the year 377, deprived them of their churches, and prohibited all their assemblies public and private. But the fury of the Circumcelliones, who may be considered as the soldiery of the Donatists, and the apprehension of intestine tumults, prevented, no doubt, the vigorous execution of these laws. This appears from the number of churches which this people had in *Africa* towards the conclusion of this century, and which were served by no less than four hundred bishops. Two things, however, diminished considerably the power and lustre of this flourishing sect, and made it decline apace about the end of this century: the one was a violent division that arose among them, on account of a person named MAXIMIN; and this division, so proper to weaken the common cause, was the most effectual instrument the Catholics could use to combat the Donatists. But a second circumstance which precipitated their decline, was the zealous and fervent opposition of

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PART II.
—————
The state of
the Dona-
tists, under
the emperor
Julian and
Gratian.

“ and PAULUS) multa quidem asperè gesta sunt.—Fugerunt omnes Episcopi cum clericis suis, aliqui sunt mortui: qui fortiores fuerunt, capit & longe relegati sunt.” OPTATUS, through the whole of this work, endeavours to excuse the severities committed against the Donatists, of which he lays the principal fault upon that sect itself, confessing, however, that, in some instances, the proceedings against them were too rigorous to deserve approbation, or admit of an excuse.

[i] See *Collat. Carthag. diei tertiæ*, § 258. at the end of OPTATUS, p. 315.

CENT. AUGUSTIN, first presbyter, and afterwards bishop, of *Hippo*. This learned and ingenious prelate attacked the Donatists in every way. In his writings, in his public discourses, and in his private conversation, he exposed the dangerous and seditious principles of this sect in the strongest manner; and as he was of a warm and active spirit, he animated against them not only the province of *Africa*, but also the whole Christian world, and the imperial court.

The principal crime of the Donatists,

VIII. The doctrine of the Donatists was conformable to that of the church, as even their adversaries confess; nor were their lives less exemplary than those of other Christian societies, if we except the enormous conduct of the Circumcelliones, which the greatest part of the sect regarded with the utmost detestation and abhorrence. The crime, therefore, of the Donatists lay properly in the following things; in their declaring the church of *Africa*, which adhered to CÆCILIANUS, fallen from the dignity and privileges of a true church, and deprived of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, on account of the offences with which the new bishop, and FELIX of *Aptungus*, who had consecrated him, were charged; in their pronouncing all the churches, who held communion with that of *Africa*, corrupt and polluted; in maintaining that the sanctity of their bishops gave their community alone a full right to be considered as the true, the pure, and holy church; and in their avoiding all communication with other churches, from an apprehension of contracting their impurity and corruption. This erroneous principle was the source of that most shocking uncharitableness and presumption that appeared in their conduct to other churches. Hence they pronounced the sacred rites and institutions void of all virtue and efficacy among those Christians who were not precisely of their sentiments, and not only re-baptised those who came over to their party from other churches, but even with

respect to those who had been ordained ministers of CENT. the gospel, they observed the severe custom either IV, of depriving them of their office, or obliging them PART II. to be ordained a second time. This schismatic pestilence was almost wholly confined to *Africa*: for the few pitiful assemblies, which the Donatists had formed in *Spain* and *Italy*, had neither stability nor duration [k].

IX. The faction of the Donatists was not the only The doctrine of this century, concerning the Trinity. one that troubled the church during this century. Soon after its commencement, even in the year 317, a new contention arose in *Egypt*, upon a subject of much higher importance, and with consequences of a yet more pernicious nature. The subject of this fatal controversy, which kindled such deplorable divisions throughout the Christian world, was the doctrine of *three persons in the Godhead*; a doctrine which, in the three preceding centuries, had happily escaped the vain curiosity of human researches, and been left undefined and undetermined by any particular set of ideas. The church, indeed, had frequently decided against the Sabellians and others, that there was a real difference between the *Father* and the *Son*, and that the *Holy Ghost* was distinct from them both; or, as we commonly speak, that three distinct persons exist in the Deity; but the mutual relation of these persons to each other, and the nature of that distinction that subsists between them, are matters that hitherto were

[k] A more ample account of the Donatists will be found in the following writers: HENR. VALESIIUS, *Dissert. de Schismate Donatistarum*. This dissertation VALESIIUS subjoined to his edition of the ecclesiastical history of EUSEBIUS. THOM. ITTIGIUS's *History of Donatism*, which is published in the Appendix to his book concerning the *Heresies of the apostolic age*. HERM. WITSIIUS, *Miscellan. Sacror.* tom. i. lib. iv. p. 742. HENR. NORIS, *Hist. Donatian.* augmented by the BALLERINI opp. tom. iv. p. xlv. LONG's *History of the Donatists*, London 1677, 8vo. These are the sources from whence we have drawn the accounts that we have given of this troublesome sect.

CENT. neither disputed nor explained, and with respect to
 IV. which the church had, consequently, observed a
 PART II. profound silence. Nothing was dictated to the
 faith of Christians in this matter; nor were there
 any modes of expression prescribed as requisite to be
 used in speaking of this mystery. Hence it hap-
 pened, that the Christian doctors entertained dif-
 ferent sentiments upon this subject without giving
 the least offence, and discoursed variously, concern-
 ing the distinctions between *Father, Son, and Holy
 Ghost*; each one following his respective opinion with
 the utmost liberty. In *Egypt*, and the adjacent
 countries, the greatest part embraced in this, as well
 as in other matters, the opinion of ORIGEN, who
 held that the *Son* was *in God*, that which *reason* is *in
 man*; and that the *Holy Ghost* was nothing more
 than the *divine energy*, or active force. This notion
 is attended with many difficulties; and if it is not
 proposed with the utmost caution, tends, in a
 particular manner, to remove all real distinction
 between the persons in the Godhead, or, in other
 words, leads directly to Sabellianism.

The rise of
 Arianism.

X. In an assembly of the presbyters of *Alexandria*,
 the bishop of that city, whose name was ALEXANDER
 expressed his sentiments on this head with a high
 degree of freedom and confidence; and maintained,
 among other things, that the Son was not only of
 the same eminence and dignity, but also of the
 same essence, with the Father [1]. This assertion
 was opposed by ARIUS one of the presbyters, a man
 of a subtle turn, and remarkable for his eloquence.
 Whether his zeal for his own opinions, or personal
 resentment against his bishop, was the motive that
 influenced him, is not very certain. Be that as it
 will, he first treated, as false, the assertion of
 ALEXANDER, on account of its affinity to the

[1] See SOCRATES, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. v. THEODORET.
Hist. Eccles. lib. i. cap. ii.

Sabellian errors, which had been condemned by CENT. the church; and then, running himself into the IV. opposite extreme, he maintained, that the *Son* was P A R T II. totally and *essentially* distinct from the *Father*; that he was the *first* and *noblest* of those beings, whom God the *Father* had created out of nothing, the instrument by whose subordinate operation the almighty Father formed the universe, and therefore inferior to the Father both in *nature* and in *dignity*. His opinions concerning the *Holy Ghost* are not so well known. It is however certain, that his notion concerning the *Son of God* was accompanied and connected with other sentiments, that were very different from those commonly received among Christians, though none of the ancient writers have given us a complete and coherent system of those religious tenets which were really held by ARIUS and his followers [m].

XI. The opinions of ARIUS were no sooner The progress of the Arian sect. divulged, than they found in *Egypt*, and the neighbouring provinces, a multitude of abettors, and

[m] For an account of the Arian controversy, the curious reader must consult the *Life of Constantine*, by EUSEBIUS; the various libels of ATHANASIUS, which are to be found in the first volume of his works; the *Ecclesiastical Histories* of SOCRATES, SOZOMEN, and THEODORET, the 69th *Heresy* of EPIPHANIUS, and other writers of this and the following age. But among all these, there is none to whom the merit of impartiality can be attributed with justice; so that the Arian History stands yet in need of a pen guided by integrity and candour, and unbiassed by affection or hatred. Both sides have deserved reproach upon this head: and those who have hitherto written the history of the Arian controversy, have only espied the faults of one side; *e. g.* it is a common opinion, that ARIUS was too much attached to the opinions of PLATO and ORIGEN (see *Petav. Dogm. Theol.* tom. ii. lib. i. cap. viii.); but this common opinion is a vulgar error. ORIGEN and PLATO entertained notions entirely different from those of ARIUS; whereas ALEXANDER, his antagonist, undoubtedly followed the manner of ORIGEN, in explaining the doctrine of the *three persons*. See CUDWORTH'S *Intellectual System of the Universe*.

CENT. among these many who were distinguished as much
 IV. by the superiority of their learning and genius,
 PART II. as by the eminence of their rank and station in the
 world. ALEXANDER, on the other hand, in two
 councils assembled at *Alexandria*, accused ARIUS of
 impiety, and caused him to be expelled from the
 communion of the church. ARIUS received this
 severe and ignominious shock with great firmness
 and constancy of mind; retired into *Palestine*; wrote
 from thence several letters to the most eminent men
 of those times, in which he endeavoured to demon-
 strate the truth of his opinions, and that with such
 surprising success, that vast numbers were drawn over
 to his party; and among these EUSEBIUS, bishop
 of *Nicomedia*, a man distinguished in the church by
 his influence and authority. The emperor CON-
 STANTINE, looking upon the subject of this con-
 troversy as a matter of small importance, and as
 little connected with the fundamental and essential
 doctrines of religion, contented himself at first with
 addressing a letter to the contending parties, in which
 he admonished them to put an end to their disputes.
 But when the prince saw that his admonitions were
 without effect, and that the troubles and commo-
 tions, which the passions of men too often mingle
 with religious disputes, were spreading and increasing
 daily throughout the empire, he assembled, at
 length, in the year 325, the famous council of
Nice in *Bitbynia*, wherein the deputies of the church
 universal were summoned to put an end to this con-
 troversy. In this general council, after many keen
 debates, and violent efforts of the two parties, the
 doctrine of ARIUS was condemned; CHRIST declared
consubstantial [n], or of the same essence, with the
 Father; the vanquished presbyter banished among
 the Illyrians, and his followers compelled to give

[n] ὁμοουσιος.

their assent to the creed [o], or confession of faith, which was composed by this council.

CENT.
IV.
PART II.
The council of Nice.

XII. The council assembled by CONSTANTINE at *Nice*, is one of the most famous and interesting events that are presented to us in ecclesiastical history; and yet, what is most surprising, there is no part of the history of the church that has been unfolded with such negligence, or rather passed over with such rapidity [p]. The ancient writers are neither agreed concerning the time nor place in which it was assembled, the number of those who sat in council, nor the bishop who presided in it. No authentic acts of its famous sentence have been committed to writing, or, at least, none have been transmitted to our times [q].

The eastern Christians differ from all others both concerning the number and nature of the laws that were enacted in this celebrated council. The latter mention only twenty *canons*; but in the estimate of the former, they amount to a much greater number [r]. It appears, however, by those laws, which all parties have admitted as genuine, and also from

[o] JOHN CHRIST. SUICER has illustrated this famous creed from several important and ancient records, in a very learned book published in 4to. at *Utrecht*, in the year 1718.

[p] See ITTIGII *Historia Concilii Niceni*, which was published after his death. LE CLERC, *Bibliothèque Histor. et Universelle*, tom. x. p. 421. tom. xxii. p. 291. BEAUSOBRE, *Histoire de Manichée, et de Manichéisme*, tom. i. p. 520. The accounts, which the Oriental writers have given of this council, have been collected by EUSEB. RENAUDOT, in his *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, p. 69.

[q] See the *Annotations of VALESIIUS upon the Ecclesiastical History of EUSEBIUS*, p. 223. JOS. SIM. ASSEMAN. *Bibl. Oriental. Clement. Vatican.* tom. i. p. 195. The history of this council was written by MARUTHAS, a Syrian, but is long since lost.

[r] TH. ITTIGIUS, *Supplem. opp. Clement. Alex.* p. 191. JOS. SIM. ASSEMAN. *Biblioth. Orient. Clement. Vatic.* tom. i. p. 22. 195. EUSEB. RENAUDOT. *Histor. Patriarch. Alexandrinor.* p. 71.

CENT. other authentic records, not only that ARIUS was
 IV. condemned in this council, but that some other
 PART II. points were determined, and certain measures agreed
 upon, to calm the religious tumults that had so long
 troubled the church. The controversy concerning
 the time of celebrating Easter was terminated [s];
 the troubles which NOVATIAN had excited, by
 opposing the re-admission of the *lapsæ* to the com-
 munion of the church, were composèd; the Mele-
 tian schism was condemnèd [t]; the jurisdiction of
 the greater bishops precisely definèd and determinèd
 [u]; with several other matters of a like nature.
 But while these good prelates were employing all
 their zeal and attention to correct the mistakes and

☞ [s] The decision, with respect to Easter, was in favour
 of the custom of the western churches; and accordingly all
 churches were ordered to celebrate that festival on the Sunday
 which immediately followed the 14th of the first moon that
 happened after the vernal equinox.

☞ [t] MELETIUS, bishop of *Lycopolis in Egypt*, was accused
 and convicted of having offerèd *incense to idols*; and, in conse-
 quence thereof, was deposèd by PETER, bishop of *Alexandria*,
 whose jurisdiction extended throughout all *Egypt*. MELETIUS,
 upon this, became the head of a schism in the church, by assum-
 ing to himself the power of ordination, which was vested in the
 bishop of *Alexandria*, and exercisèd by him in all the *Egyptian*
churches. EPIPHANIUS attributes the dissensions between ME-
 LETIUS and PETER to another cause (*Hær.* 68.): he alleges,
 that the vigorous proceedings of PETER against MELETIUS were
 occasioned by the latter's refusing to re-admit into the church
 those who had fallen from the faith during DIOCLETIAN'S per-
 secution, before their penitential trial was entirely finishèd. The
 former opinion is maintainèd by SOCRATES and THEODORET,
 whose authority is certainly more respectàble than that of
 EPIPHANIUS.

☞ [u] The confusion that MELETIUS introduced, by pre-
 suming (as was observèd in the preceding note) to violate the
 jurisdiction of PETER, the metropolitan of *Alexandria*, by con-
 ferring *ordination* in a province where he alone had a right to
 ordain, was rectified by the council of *Nice*, which determinèd,
 that the metropolitan bishops, in their respective provinces, should
 have the same power and authority that the bishop of *Rome*
 exercisèd over the *Suburbicarian* churches and countries,

errors of others, they were upon the point of falling into a very capital one themselves. For they had almost come to a resolution of imposing upon the clergy the yoke of perpetual celibacy, when PAPHNUTIUS put a stop to their proceedings, and warded off that unnatural law [17].

XIII. But notwithstanding all these determinations, the commotions excited by this controversy remained yet in the minds of many, and the spirit of dissension and controversy triumphed both over the decrees of the council and the authority of the emperor. For those who, in the main, were far from being attached to the party of ARIUS, found many things reprehensible both in the decrees of the council, and in the forms of expression which it employed to explain the controverted points; while the Arians, on the other hand, left no means untried to heal their wound, and to recover their place and their credit in the church. And their efforts were crowned with the desired success. For a few years after the council of *Nice*, a certain Arian priest, who had been recommended to the emperor, in the dying words of his sister CONSTANTIA, found means to persuade CONSTANTINE the GREAT, that the condemnation of ARIUS was utterly unjust, and was rather owing to the malice of his enemies, than to their zeal for the truth. In consequence of this, the emperor recalled him from banishment in the year 330 [x], repealed the laws that had been

The history of Arianism after the council of *Nice*.

[17] SOCRATES, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. viii. compared with FRANC. BALDUINUS, in *Constant. Magn.* and GEORGE CALIXTUS, *De conjugio clericorum*, p. 170.

[x] The precise time, in which ARIUS was recalled from banishment, has not been fixed with such perfect certainty as to prevent a diversity of sentiments on that head. The annotations of the learned VALESIIUS (or VALOIS) upon SOZOMEN'S *History*, p. 10 and 11. will cast some light upon this matter, and make it probable, that Dr. MOSHEIM has placed the recall of ARIUS too late, at least by two years. VALESIIUS has proved, from the authority of PHILOSTORGIUS, and from other most respectable

CENT. enacted against him, and permitted his chief protector, EUSEBIUS of *Nicomedia*, and his vindictive faction, to vex and oppress the partisans of the *Nicene* council in various ways. ATHANASIUS, bishop of *Alexandria*, was one of those who suffered most from the violent measures of the Arian party. Invincibly firm in his purpose, and deaf to the most powerful solicitations and entreaties, he obstinately refused to restore ARIUS to his former rank and office. On this account he was deposed, by the council held at *Tyre*, in the year 335, and was afterwards banished into *Gaul*, while ARIUS and his followers were, with great solemnity, reinstated in their privileges, and received into the communion of the church. The people of *Alexandria*, unmoved by these proceedings in favour of ARIUS, persisted to refuse him a place among their presbyters; upon which the emperor invited him to *Constantinople* in the year 336, and ordered ALEXANDER, the bishop of that city, to admit him to his communion. But before this order could be put in execution, ARIUS died at *Constantinople* in a very dismal manner [y],

monuments and records, that EUSEBIUS of *Nicomedia*, and THEOGNIS, who were banished by the emperor about three months after the council of *Nice*, *i. e.* in the year 325, were recalled in the year 328. Now, in the writing by which they obtained their return, they pleaded the restoration of ARIUS as an argument for theirs, which proves that he was recalled before the year 330. The same VALESIVS proves, that ARIUS, the first head of the Arian sect, was dead before the council of *Tyre*, which was transferred to *Jerusalem*; and that the letters which CONSTANTINE addressed to that council in favour of ARIUS and his followers, were in behalf of a second chief of that name, who put himself at the head of the Arians, and who, in conjunction with EUZOIUS, presented to CONSTANTINE such a confession of their faith, as made him imagine their doctrine to be orthodox, and procured their reconciliation with the church at the council of *Jerusalem*. See *Annot. Vales. ad Hist. Socrat.* lib. i. cap. xxxiii. p. 16.

[y] The dismal manner in which ARIUS is said to have expired, by his entrails falling out as he was discharging one of the natural functions, is a fact that has been called in question by

and the emperor CONSTANTINE survived him but a CENT. short time.

XIV. After the death of CONSTANTINE the GREAT, one of his sons, CONSTANTIUS, who, in the division of the empire, became ruler of the east, was warmly attached to the Arian party, whose principles were also zealously adopted by the empress, and, indeed, by the whole court. On the other hand, CONSTANTINE and CONSTANS, emperors of the west, maintained the decrees of the council of *Nice* throughout all the provinces where their jurisdiction extended. Hence arose endless animosities and seditions, treacherous plots, and open acts of injustice and violence between the two contending parties. Council was assembled against council, and their jarring and contradictory decrees spread perplexity and confusion throughout the Christian world.

IV.

PART II.

 Under the
sons of Con-
stantine.

In the year 350, CONSTANS was assassinated; and about two years after this, a great part of the western empire, particularly *Rome* and *Italy*, fell into the hands of his brother CONSTANTIUS. This change was extremely unfavourable to those who adhered to the decrees of the council of *Nice*. The emperor's attachment to the Arians animated him against their adversaries, whom he involved in various troubles and calamities, and obliged many

some modern writers, though without foundation, since it is confirmed by the unexceptionable testimonies of SOCRATES, SOZOMEN, ATHANASIUS, and others. The causes of this tragical death have, however, furnished much matter of dispute. The ancient writers, who considered this event as a judgment of Heaven, miraculously drawn down, by the prayers of the just, to punish the impiety of ARIUS, will find little credit, in our times, among such as have studied with attention and impartiality the history of Arianism. After having considered this matter with the utmost care, it appears to me extremely probable, that this unhappy man was a victim to the resentment of his enemies, and was destroyed by poison, or some such violent method. A blind and fanatical zeal for certain systems of faith has, in all ages, produced such horrible acts of cruelty and injustice.

CENT. of them, by threats and punishment, to come over to
 IV. the sect which he esteemed and protected. Among
 PART II. these forced profelytes was LIBERIUS the Roman
 pontiff, who was compelled to embrace Arianism in
 the year 357. The Nicene party meditated reprisals,
 and waited only a convenient time, a fit place, and
 and a proper occasion, for executing their resentment.
 Thus the history of the church, under the emperor
 CONSTANTIUS, presents to the reader a perpetual
 scene of tumult and violence, and the deplorable
 spectacle of a war carried on between brothers,
 without religion, justice, or humanity.

Under Ju-
 lian and
 Jovian.

XV. The death of CONSTANTIUS, in the year
 362, changed considerably the face of religious
 affairs, and diminished greatly the strength and
 influence of the Arian party. JULIAN, who, by
 his principles, was naturally prevented from taking
 a part in the controversy, bestowed his protection
 on neither side, but treated them both with an
 impartiality which was the result of a perfect indif-
 ference. JOVIAN, his successor, declared himself in
 favour of the Nicene doctrine; and immediately the
 whole west, with a considerable part of the eastern
 provinces, changed sides, conformed to the decrees
 of the council of *Nice*, and abjured the Arian system.

Under Va-
 lentinian
 and Valens.

The scene however changed again in the year
 364, when VALENTINIAN, and his brother VALENS,
 were raised to the empire. VALENTINIAN adhered
 to the decrees of the Nicene council; and hence the
 whole Arian sect, a few churches excepted, was
 destroyed and extirpated in the west. VALENS, on
 the other hand, favoured the Arians; and his zeal
 for their cause exposed their adversaries the Nice-
 nians, in the eastern provinces, to many severe trials
 and sufferings. These troubles, however, ended
 with the reign of this emperor, who fell in a battle
 which was fought against the Goths in the year 378,
 and was succeeded by GRATIAN, a friend to the
 Nicenians, and the restorer of their tranquillity.

His zeal for their interests, though fervent and active, was surpassed by that of his successor, THEODOSIUS the GREAT, who raised the secular arm against the Arians, with a terrible degree of violence, drove them from their churches, enacted laws, whose severity exposed them to the greatest calamities [z], and rendered, throughout his dominions, the decrees of the council of *Nice* triumphant over all opposition; so that the public profession of the Arian doctrine was confined to the barbarous and unconquered nations, such as the Burgundians, Goths, and Vandals.

During this long and violent contest between the Nicenians and Arians, the attentive and impartial will acknowledge, that unjustifiable measures were taken, and great excesses committed on both sides. So that when, abstracting from the merits of the cause, we only consider with what temper, and by what means, the parties defended their respective opinions, it will be difficult to determine which of the two exceeded most the bounds of probity, charity, and moderation.

XVI. The efforts of the Arians to maintain their cause, would have been much more prejudicial to the church than they were in effect, had not the members of that sect been divided among themselves, and torn into factions, which regarded each other with the bitterest aversion. Of these, the ancient writers make mention under the names of Semiarians, Eusebians, Aëtians, Eunomians, Acafians, Pfathyrians, and others: but they may all be ranked, with the utmost propriety, into three classes. The first of these were the primitive and genuine Arians, who, rejecting all those forms and modes of expression which the moderns had invented to render their opinions less shocking to the Nicenians, taught

Various
sects of
Arians.

[z] See *Codex Theodosianus*, tom. vi. p. 5. 10. 130. 146; as also GODOFRED'S Annotations thereupon.

CENT. simply, "That the Son *was not begotten of the Father*
 IV. " (i. e. produced out of his substance), *but only*
 PART II. "*created out of nothing.*" This class was opposed by
 the Semi-arians, who, in their turn, were abandoned
 by the Eunomians or Anomæans, the disciples of
 ÆTIUS and EUNOMIUS, of whom the latter was
 eminent for his knowledge and penetration. The
 Semi-arians held, *that the son was ἰσοιοῦσιος, i. e. similar*
to the father in his essence, not by nature, but by a
peculiar privilege; and the leading men of this party
 were, GEORGE of *Laodicea*, and BASILIUS of
Ancyra [a]. The Eunomians, who were also called
 Aëtians and Exucontians, and may be counted in
 the number of pure Arians, maintained, that
 CHRIST WAS στροχσιος, or ανομοιος, *i. e. unlike the*
Father, as well in his essence, as in other respects [b].
 Under this general division, many other subordinate
 sects were comprehended, whose subtilties and refine-
 ments have been but obscurely developed by the
 ancient writers. The Arian cause suffered as much
 from the discord and animosities that reigned among
 these sects, as from the laboured confutations and
 the zealous efforts of the orthodox party.

XVII. The Arian controversy produced new sects,
 occasioned by the indiscreet lengths to which the
 contending parties pushed their respective opinions.
 And such, indeed, are too generally the unhappy
 effects of disputes, in which human passions have so
 large a part. Some, while they were careful in avoid-
 ing, and zealous in opposing, the sentiments of
 ARIUS, ran headlong into systems of doctrine of an

The Apol-
 linarian
 heresy.

[a] See PRUD. MARAN's *Dissert. sur les Semi-arians*, of which
 the learned VOIGT has given a second edition in his *Biblioth.*
Hæresolog. tom. ii. p. 119.

[b] See BASNAGE's *Dissert. de Eunomio*, in the *Lectiones*
Antiquæ of CANISIUS, tom. i. p. 172, where we find the *confession*
and apology of EUNOMIUS yet extant. See also JO. ALB.
 FABRIC. *Bibliotheca Græc.* vol. viii. p. 100—148, and the *Codex*
Theodos. tom. vi. p. 147. 155. 157. 167. 200, &c.

equally dangerous and pernicious nature. Others, in defending the Arian notions, went further than their chief, and thus fell into errors much more extravagant than those which he maintained. Thus does it generally happen in religious controversies: the human mind, amidst its present imperfection and infirmity, and its unhappy subjection to the empire of imagination and the dictates of sense, rarely follows the middle way in the search of truth, or contemplates spiritual and divine things with that accurateness and simplicity, that integrity and moderation, which alone can guard against erroneous extremes.

CENT.
IV.
PART II.

Among those who fell into such extremes by their inconsiderate violence in opposing the Arian system, APOLLINARIS the younger, bishop of *Laodicea*, may be justly placed, though otherwise a man of distinguished merit, and one whose learned labours had rendered to religion the most important services. He defended strenuously the *divinity* of CHRIST against the Arians; but, by indulging himself too freely in philosophical distinctions and subtilties, he was carried so far as to deny, in some measure, his *humanity*. He maintained that the body, which CHRIST assumed, was endowed with a *sensitive*, and not a *rational*, soul; and that the Divine Nature performed the functions of reason, and supplied the place of what we call the *mind*, the spiritual and intellectual principle in man. And from this it seemed to follow as a natural consequence, that the *Divine Nature* in CHRIST was blended with the *human*, and suffered with it the pains of crucifixion and death itself [c]. This great man was led astray, not only by his love of

☞ [c] However erroneous the hypothesis of APOLLINARIS may have been, the consequences here drawn from it are not entirely just; for if it is true, that the human soul does not, in any respect, suffer death by the dissolution of the body, the same must hold good with respect to the divine nature.

CENT. disputing, but also by an immoderate attachment
 IV. to the Platonic doctrine concerning the two-fold
 PART II. nature of the soul, which was too generally adopted
 by the divines of this age; and which, undoubtedly,
 perverted their judgment in several respects, and
 led them to erroneous and extravagant decisions on
 various subjects.

Other errors, beside that now mentioned, are imputed to APOLLINARIS by certain ancient writers; but it is not easy to determine how far they deserve credit upon that head [d]. Be that as it will, his doctrine was received by great numbers in almost all the eastern provinces, though by the different explications that were given of it, its votaries were subdivided into various sects. It did not, however, maintain its ground long; but, being attacked at the same time by the laws of the emperors, the decrees of councils, and the writings of the learned, it sunk, by degrees, under their united force.

Marcellus
 of Ancyra.

XVIII. MARCELLUS, bishop of *Ancyra* in *Galatia*, may be ranked in the same class with APOLLINARIS, if we are to give credit to EUSEBIUS of *Cæsarea*, and the rest of his adversaries, who represent his explication of the doctrine of the Trinity as bordering upon the Sabellian and Samosatenean errors. Many however are of opinion, that EUSEBIUS of *Cæsarea*, and the bishop of *Nicomedia*, who bore the same name, represented with partiality the sentiments of MARCELLUS, on account of the bitterness and vehemence which he discovered in his opposition to the Arians, and their protectors.

[d] See BASNAGE'S *Historia Hæresis Apollinaris*, published a second time by VOIGT, in his *Bibliotheca Hæresiologicala*, tom. i. fascic. i. p. 1—96. and improved by some learned and important additions. See also tom. i. fascic. iii. and p. 607. of this latter work. The laws that were enacted against the followers of APOLLINARIS, are extant in the *Theodosian Code*, tom. vi. p. 144. See an account of APOLLINARIS, and his *Heresy*, in the English edition of BAYLE'S *Dictionary*, at the article APOLLINARIS.

But though it should be acknowledged, that in some particulars, the accusations of his enemies carried an aspect of partiality and resentment, yet it is manifest, that they were far from being entirely groundless. For, if the doctrine of MARCELLUS be attentively examined, it will appear, that he considered the *Son* and the *Holy Ghost* as *two emanations* from the Divine Nature, which, after performing their respective offices, were to return again into the *substance* of the Father; and every one will perceive, at first sight, how incompatible this opinion is with the belief of *three distinct Persons in the Godhead*. Besides this, a particular circumstance, which augmented considerably the aversion of many to MARCELLUS, as also the suspicion of his erring in a capital manner, was his obstinately refusing, towards the conclusion of his life, to condemn the tenets of his disciple PHOTINUS [e].

XIX. PHOTINUS, bishop of *Sirmium*, may, with propriety, be placed at the head of those whom the Arian controversy was the occasion of seducing into the most extravagant errors. This prelate published, in the year 343, his opinions concerning the Deity, which were equally repugnant to the Orthodox and Arian systems. His notions, which have been but obscurely, and indeed sometimes inconsistently, represented by the ancient writers, amount to this, when attentively examined: “ That JESUS CHRIST was born of the HOLY GHOST
 “ and the Virgin MARY: that a certain *divine emanation*, or ray (which he called the *word*)
 “ descended upon this extraordinary man; that, on
 “ account of the union of the *divine word* with his
 “ *human nature*, JESUS was called the *Son of God*,
 “ nay, *God* himself; and that the *Holy Ghost* was

The sect of
Photinus.

[e] See MONTFAUCON'S *Diatriba de Causa Marcelli in Nova Collectione Patrum Græcorum*, tom. ii. p. 51; as also GERVASE, *Vie de S. Epiphane*, p. 42.

CENT. “not a distinct *person*, but a celestial *virtue* proceed-
 IV. “ing from the Deity.” The temerity of this bold
 PART II. innovator was chastised, not only by the Orthodox
 in the councils of *Antioch* [f] and *Milan*, held in
 the years 345 and 347, and in that of *Sirmium*,
 whose date is uncertain, but also by the Arians in
 one of their assemblies held at *Sirmium*, in the year
 351. In consequence of all this, PHOTINUS was
 degraded from the episcopal dignity, and died in
 exile in the year 372 [g].

The heresy
 of Macedo-
 nius.

XX. After him arose MACEDONIUS, bishop of
Constantinople, a very eminent Semi-arian doctor,
 who, through the influence of the Eunomians, was
 deposed by the council of *Constantinople*, in the year
 360, and sent into exile, where he formed the sect
 of the Macedonians, or Pneumatomachians. In
 his exile, he declared with the utmost freedom those
 sentiments which he had formerly either concealed,
 or at least, taught with much circumspection. He
 considered the *Holy Ghost* as “a *divine energy*
 “diffused throughout the universe, and not as a
 “*person* distinct from the *Father* and the *Son* [b].”
 This opinion had many partisans in the Asiatic
 provinces: but the council assembled by THEODO-
 SIUS, in the year 381, at *Constantinople* (to which
 the second rank among the *œcumenical* or general
 councils is commonly attributed), put a stop by its
 authority, to the growing evil, and crushed this
 rising sect before it had arrived at its full maturity.
 An hundred and fifty bishops, who were present

[f] According to Dr. LARDNER’s account, this council
 of *Antioch*, in 345, was held by the Arians, or Eusebians, and
 not by the Orthodox, as our author affirms. See LARDNER’S
Credibility, &c. vol. ix. p. 13; see also ATHANAS. *De Synod. N.*
 vi. vii. compared with SOCRAT. lib. ii. cap. xviii, xix.

[g] Or in 375, as is concluded from JEROME’S *Chronicle*.—
 MATT. LARROQUE, *De Photino, et ejus multiplici condemnatione*.
 THOM. ITTIGIUS, *Historia Photini in App. ad librum de Heresi-*
archis ævi Apostolici.

[b] SOCRATES, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. iv.

at this council, gave the finishing touch to what the council of *Nice* had left imperfect, and fixed in a full and determinate manner, the doctrine of *three PERSONS in one GOD*, which is as yet received among the generality of Christians. This venerable assembly did not stop here; they branded, with infamy, all the errors, and set a mark of execration upon all the heresies, that were hitherto known; they advanced the bishop of *Constantinople*, on account of the eminence and extent of the city in which he resided, to the first rank after the Roman Pontiff, and determined several other points, which they looked upon as essential to the well-being of the church in general [i].

XXI. The frenzy of the ancient Gnostics, which had been so often vanquished, and in appearance removed, by the various remedies that had been used for that purpose, broke out anew in *Spain*. It was transported thither, in the beginning of this century, by a certain person, named *MARC* of *Memphis*, in *Egypt*, whose converts at first were not very numerous. They increased, however, in process of time, and counted in their number several persons highly eminent for their learning and piety. Among others, *PRISCILLIAN*, a layman, distinguished by his birth, fortune, and eloquence, and afterwards bishop of *Abila*, was infected with this odious doctrine, and became its most zealous and ardent defender. Hence he was accused by several bishops, and, by a rescript obtained from the emperor *GRATIAN*, he was banished, with his followers, from *Spain* [k]; but was restored, some time after,

[i] *SOCRATES*, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. viii. p. 624. *SOZOMEN.* *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vii. cap. vii. p. 711.

[k] This banishment was the effect of a sentence pronounced against *PRISCILLIAN*, and some of his followers, by a synod convened at *Saragossa* in the year 380; in consequence of which, *IDACIUS* and *ITHACIUS*, two cruel and persecuting ecclesiastics, obtained from *GRATIAN* the rescript abovementioned.

CENT. by an edict of the same prince, to his country and
 IV. his functions. His sufferings did not end here; for
 PART II. he was accused a second time, in the year 384 [l],
 before MAXIMUS, who had procured the assassination of GRATIAN, and made himself master of Gaul; and by the order of that prince, was put to death, at Treves, with some of his associates. The agents, however, by whose barbarous zeal this sentence was obtained, were justly regarded with the utmost abhorrence by the bishops of Gaul and Italy [m]; for Christians had not yet learned, that giving over heretics to be punished by the magistrates, was either an act of piety or justice [n]. [No: This abominable doctrine was reserved for those times, when religion was to become an instrument of despotism, or a pretext for the exercise of malevolence, vengeance, and pride.]

See SULPIC. SEVER. *Hist. Sacr.* lib. ii. cap. xlvi. p. 283. edit. Leipfick, 8vo.

☞ [l] Upon the death of GRATIAN, who had favoured PRISCILLIAN, towards the latter end of his reign, ITHACIUS presented to MAXIMUS a petition against him; whereupon this prince appointed a council to be held at Bourdeaux, from which PRISCILLIAN appealed to the prince himself. SULP. SEVER. lib. ii. cap. xlix. p. 287.

☞ [m] It may be interesting to the reader to hear the character of the first person that introduced *civil* persecution into the Christian church. "He was a man abandoned to the most corrupt indolence, and without the least tincture of true piety. He was audacious, talkative, impudent, luxurious, and a slave to his belly. He accused as heretics, and as protectors of PRISCILLIAN, all those whose lives were consecrated to the pursuit of piety and knowledge, or distinguished by acts of mortification and abstinence," &c. Such is the character which SULPICIUS SEVERUS, who had an extreme aversion to the sentiments of PRISCILLIAN, gives us of ITHACIUS, bishop of *Soffuba*, by whose means he was put to death.

[n] See SULP. SEVER. *Hist. Sacr.* edit. Leipf. 8vo. 1709. where MARTIN, the truly apostolical bishop of *Tours*, says to MAXIMUS, *Novum esse et inauditum nefas ut causam ecclesiæ judæi seculi judicaret.* See also *Dial.* iii. de *vita Martini* cap. xi. p. 495.

The death of PRISCILLIAN was less pernicious to the progress of his opinions, than might naturally have been expected. His doctrine not only survived him, but was propagated through the greatest part of *Spain* and *Gaul*. And, even so far down as the sixth century, the followers of this unhappy man gave much trouble to the bishops and clergy in these provinces.

XXII. None of the ancient writers have given an accurate account of the doctrine of the Priscillianists. Many, on the contrary, by their injudicious representations of it, have highly disfigured it, and added new degrees of obscurity to a system which was before sufficiently dark and perplexed. It appears, however, from authentic records, that the difference between their doctrine, and that of the Manicheans, was not very considerable. For “they denied the reality of CHRIST’s birth and incarnation; maintained, that the visible universe was not the production of the Supreme Deity, but of some demon, or malignant principle; adopted the doctrine of *æons*, or emanations, from the divine nature; considered human bodies as prisons formed, by the author of evil, to enslave celestial minds; condemned marriage, and disbelieved the resurrection of the body.” Their rule of life and manners was rigid and severe; and the accounts which many have given of their lasciviousness and intemperance deserve not the least credit, as they are totally destitute of evidence and authority. That the Priscillianists were guilty of dissimulation upon some occasions, and deceived their adversaries by cunning stratagems, is true: but that they held it as a maxim, that lying and perjury were *lawful*, is a most notorious falsehood, without even the least shadow of probability [o], however commonly this

[o] See SIMON DE VRIES, *Dissert. Critica de Priscillianistis*, printed at *Utrecht*, in the year 1745, in 4to. The only defect

CENT. odious doctrine has been laid to their charge. In
 IV. the heat of controversy, the eye of passion and pre-
 PART II. judice is too apt to confound the principles and
 opinions of men with their practice.

Inferior
 sects.

XXIII. To what we have here said concerning those famous sects which made a noise in the world, it will not be improper to add some account of those of a less considerable and inferior kind.

ARDÆUS, a man of remarkable virtue, being excommunicated in *Syria*, on account of the freedom and importunity with which he censured the corrupt and licentious manners of the clergy, formed an assembly of those who were attached to him, and became by his own appointment, their bishop. Banished into *Scythia*, by the emperor, he went among the Goths, where his sect flourished and augmented considerably. The ancient writers are not agreed about the time in which we are to date the origin of this sect. With respect to its religious institutions, we know that they differed in some points from those observed by other Christians: and particularly, that the followers of ARDÆUS celebrated Easter, or the Paschal feast, with the Jews, contrary to the express decree of the council of *Nice*. With respect to their doctrine, several errors have been imputed to them [p], and this, among others, that they attributed to the Deity a human form.

in this dissertation is the implicit manner in which the author follows BEAUSOBRE'S *History of the Manicheans*, taking every thing for granted which is affirmed in that work. See also FRANC. GIRVESII *Historia Priscillianistarum Chronologica*, published at *Rome* in the year 1750, in 8vo. We find, moreover, in the twenty-seventh volume of the *Opusculum Scientificum* of ANGELUS CALOGERA, a treatise entitled, *Bachiarus Illustratus, seu de Priscilliana Hæresi dissertatio*; but this dissertation appears rather intended to clear up the affair of BACHIARUS, than to give a full account of the Priscillianists and their doctrine.

[p] EPIPHANIUS, *Hæres.* lxx. p. 811. AUGUSTIN. *De Hæres.* cap. l. THEODORET. *Fabul. Hæret.* lib. iv. cap. ix. p. 671. JO:

XXIV. The Grecian and Oriental writers place, CENT.
 in this century, the rise of the sect of the Messalians, IV.
 or Euchites, whose doctrine and discipline were, PART II.
 indeed, much more ancient, and subsisted, even Messalians
 before the birth of CHRIST, in *Syria, Egypt,* and or Euchites
 other eastern countries, but who do not seem to
 have been formed into a religious body before the
 latter end of the age of which we now write.
 These fanatics, who lived after the monkish fashion,
 and withdrew from all commerce and society with
 their fellow-creatures, seem to have derived their
 name from their habit of continual *prayer*. “ They
 “ imagined, that the mind of every man was inhabited
 “ by an *evil dæmon*, whom it was impossible to
 “ expel by any other means than by constant
 “ prayer and singing of hymns: and that, when
 “ this malignant spirit was cast out, the *pure mind*
 “ returned to God, and was again united to the
 “ *Divine Essence* from whence it had been separated.”
 To this leading tenet they added many other
 enormous opinions, which bear a manifest resemblance
 of the Manichean doctrine, and are evidently
 drawn from the same source from whence the
 Manicheans derived their errors, even from the
 tenets of the Oriental philosophy [*q*]. In a word:
 the Euchites were a sort of Mystics, who imagined,
 according to the Oriental notion, that two souls
 resided in man, the one *good*, and the other *evil*;
 and who were zealous in hastening the return of
 the good spirit to God, by contemplation and
 prayer. The external air of piety and devotion,

JOACH. SCHRODER. *Dissertat. de Ardeanus*, published in VOIGT'S
Bibliotheca Historica Heresiolog. tom. i. part III. p. 578.

[*q*] EPIPHANIUS, *Heret.* lxxx. p. 1067. THEODORET,
Heret. Fabul. lib. iv. cap. x. p. 672. TIMOTHEUS, *Presbyter de*
receptione Hereticor. published in the third volume of COTEL-
 LERIUS'S *Monumenta Ecclesiæ Græcæ*, p. 403. JAC. TOLLII
Insignia itineris Italici, p. 110. ASSEMANNI *Bibliotheca Ori-*
entalis Vaticana, tom. i. p. 128. tom. iii. part II. p. 172, &c.

CENT. which accompanied this sect, imposed upon many ;
 IV. while the Greeks, on the other hand, opposed it
 PART II. with vehemence in all succeeding ages.

It is proper to observe here, that the title of Mes-
 salians and Euchites had a very extensive application
 among the Greeks, and the Orientals, who gave
 it to all those who endeavoured to raise the soul to
 God by recalling and withdrawing it from all ter-
 restrial and sensible objects ; however these enthu-
 siasts might differ from each other in their opinions
 on other subjects.

The Anti-
 dico-maria-
 nites and
 the Colly-
 ridians.

XXV. Towards the conclusion of this century,
 two opposite sects involved *Arabia* and the adjacent
 countries in the troubles and tumults of a new
 controversy. These jarring factions went by the
 names of Antidico-marianites and Collyridians. The
 former maintained, that the Virgin MARY did not
 always preserve her immaculate state, but received
 the embraces of her husband JOSEPH after the birth
 of CHRIST. The latter on the contrary, who were
 singularly favoured by the female sex, running into
 the opposite extreme, worshipped the Blessed Virgin
 as a goddess, and judged it necessary to appease her
 anger, and seek her favour and protection, by
 libations, sacrifices and oblations of *cakes (collyridæ)*,
 and such like services [r].

Other sects might be mentioned here, but they
 are too obscure and inconsiderable to deserve notice.

[r] See EPIPHAN. *Heres.* lxxviii, lxxix. p. 1003 and 1057.



