

A

S U M M A R Y

OF THE

WRITINGS OF LACTANTIUS.

BY THE REV.

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TO THE RIGHT REVEREND
THE LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN,
&c. &c.

MY LORD,

It would be a great boldness to offer this little attempt to your Lordship, if I did not know that your power to criticise severely is exceeded by your disposition to judge indulgently. In that confidence I avail myself thankfully of your very kind permission to dedicate to you the trifling result of some occasional snatches of leisure, and of the opportunity to acknowledge respectfully my many obligations to your Lordship,

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient humble Servant,
and grateful friend,

JACOB H. BROOKE MOUNTAIN.

THE HEATH,
March, 1839.

INTRODUCTION.

FROM the numerous editions of the works of Lactantius¹, and the elaborate commentaries with which several of them are accompanied, it may be inferred that, at the period of the revival of literature, and for many years afterwards, they continued to excite considerable interest; although in modern times they appear to have fallen into neglect. The classical purity and elegance of his style, which gained him the title of the Christian Cicero², the liveliness of his

¹ Dufresnoy enumerates no less than eighty-six Editions of his entire works, besides the separate editions of his different Treatises, from A.D. 1461, to A.D. 1739.

² Trithemius de Scr. Ec. c. 56. Dupin, Bib. i. p. 208.

Dufresnoy says that he derived his name Lactantius à lacteâ eloquentiâ.

Gibbon calls him "the most eloquent of the Christians; a preceptor admirably qualified to form the taste, and to excite the virtues, of his illustrious disciple."—Decline and Fall, c. xviii.

Eusebius bears testimony to his merit as the most eloquent writer of his age.—Chron. Ann. 2330.

See also Testimonia Veterum in the various editions.

wit, and the self-denying integrity of his sentiments, sufficiently account for his popularity with the students of that indefatigable age; while the inaccuracy of his metaphysical and scientific notions, his ignorance of history and chronology, his strange inconsistency and looseness of language on essential points of doctrine, and his want of Scriptural knowledge, appear to justify the lower estimation in which he has since been held.

But the writings of Lactantius possess merits which will amply repay the reader for the time bestowed in the perusal; and they derive a peculiar and important interest from having been composed at one of the most eventful epochs of ecclesiastical history, when the Church, after suffering the utmost severity of despotic persecution and popular hatred, was, by a sudden revolution, received under the protection and patronage of the State, and began, not merely to enjoy tranquillity, and the security of a legal sanction, but to exercise no inconsiderable portion of political influence. The strong opinions maintained by Lactantius respecting the duty of a Christian in renouncing the ambition, the desire of wealth, and the love of pleasure, which formed the ruling motives of the heathen, are edifying remains of the pure spirit of primitive times; and the cordiality with which, in behalf of the Christian body, he accepted the imperial patronage, will not be displeasing to those who consider the alliance of the

Church with the State as part of the original plan for its ultimate establishment throughout the world.

It is not my purpose to excuse his errors, or, as I would rather term them, his ignorance in theology. Whole treatises have been composed in the exposure and refutation of them¹; he has been charged with Manicheism and Arianism; and Jerome² accuses him of expressly denying the personality, if not the existence of the Holy Spirit. But some allowance must be made for the vehemence of Jerome's zeal respecting controverted points of doctrine; and, certainly, as Dufresnoy remarks, no such express denial is extant in the surviving works of Lactantius. Nor is it fair, in brief statements of fundamental truth to confound omission with denial³. It must be admitted, however, that there is a great deficiency of sound doctrine on this, and on other scarcely less important topics; and that Lactantius has no claim to be reckoned among the successful champions of orthodoxy, although, from his avowed intention to compose a work against all heresies, it may be inferred

¹ Antonius Baudensis published three books on the errors of Lactantius: Gallæus gives a formidable catalogue of them; and Le Nourry says, that some critics reckon the number of them at 170, others at 94, and some less still. But the subject is hardly worth discussion, since the real tenets of Lactantius are so indefinitely conveyed in his loose way of writing which does not admit of technical precision.

² — Cujus omnino negat substantiam.—Ep. ad Demetrianum.

³ *E. g.* John xvii. 3; 1 Cor. viii. 6, and particularly the second Catholic Epistle of St. John, in which the doctrine of the

that he considered himself as a sound member of the Church. His object in his great work was the subversion of Pagan idolatry, and the substitution of Christian faith and practice in its stead; and Jerome seems to have formed a just estimate of his attainments when he described him as more happy in attack than in defence¹, and unskilful in the Scriptures².

Lardner agrees with Heuman, that the charge of Manicheism is not proved, and that some of the passages on which it is founded are probably spurious; and he refers to the learned investigations of Bishop Bull³, Petavius, and Le Nourry, in support of his opinion. The truth seems to be that Lactantius was obnoxious to the Augustinian school of theologians from his adoption of what would now be called Arminian tenets⁴; and that Mosheim and Lardner are disposed to undertake his defence for the sake of his testimony in favour of the right of private judgment. With all deference, however, to the great authority of Lardner, I cannot see, in the passage⁵ to which he and Mosheim refer, the doe-

two first Persons is emphatically stated and repeated, without the slightest allusion to the third Person.

¹ Utinam tam nostra confirmare potuisset quam facile aliena destruit.—Ep. ad Pammachum, lib. ii. c. 3.

Instruit ut Hieronymus, *destruit ut Lactantius*, adstruit ut Augustinus.—Sidon. lib. iv. Ep. 3.

² Comment. Galat. ad. c. iv. 6.

³ Nicene Creed, sect. ii. 14.

⁴ Inst. lib. iv. c. 16. —virtus, &c., nec datur cuiquam nec aufertur.

⁵ Inst. ii. 7.

trine of which they are the zealous advocates; the language of Lactantius applies to the violence offered to the consciences of Christians by their heathen persecutors, and cannot fairly be brought to bear upon the question touching the authority of the Church in matters of faith.

Bishop Bull and Dr. Nicholls¹ appear to have successfully vindicated Lactantius from the charge of denying the eternal generation of the Son²; but it is impossible to defend his equivocal doctrine respecting Christ and Satan, of which due notice will be taken in the second chapter. Jerome speaks contemptuously of his millenarian notions; which, however, do not appear to differ materially from those entertained by Irenæus, and Tertullian, and the other divines of the early ages.

The inaccuracy of Lactantius on doctrinal points has been ingeniously converted by the Papists to their own uses, especially with reference to auricular confession, the worship of images, and the use of

¹ Dr. Nicholls (Art. ii.) quotes the following sentence in proof of his orthodoxy: Cum dicimus Deum Patrem, et Deum Filium, non diversum dicimus, nec utrumque secernimus; quia nec Pater sine Filio esse potest, nec Filius à Patre secerni.—Inst. iv. c. 29.

Cf. Inst. vii. c. 20. . . . *idem ipse Rex ac Deus*, cui Summus Pater et judicandi et regnandi dabit maximam potestatem.

² Gallæus supports this charge from Inst. ii. 8, and iv. 6, where it must be owned that the language of Lactantius is remarkably loose and inaccurate.—Cf. lib. iv. 8, 9. 13. 25. 29.

exorcism in baptism. But the opinion of Lactantius would be of little value, on such subjects, even if his expressions would bear the forced interpretation which has been artfully put upon him.

For although Lactantius states that confession of sins and penitence are characteristic practices of the true Church, his language on this point is perfectly consistent with Protestant doctrine, and does not at all imply that he ever heard of auricular confession, or of atoning penances imposed by the priest. As for the passage on the adoration of the Cross in the poem *De Passione*¹, there can be no question that the whole poem is spurious; and, even were it genuine, it would by no means prove their point, as it will be shown in the proper place. The passages respecting exorcism² have no reference whatever to the sacrament of baptism; they refer solely to the power of casting out evil spirits claimed by Tertullian as a privilege of believers, and, I believe, by all the early Latin fathers³.

¹ See Gallæus,—*Synthesis Doctrinæ Lactantii*. The passage in question gave rise to a lengthened controversy between the Popish and Protestant divines of the day.

² *Inst.* iv. 27, and v. 22.

³ See also Justin Martyr,—οἱ προσδιαβεβλημένοι ὑφ' ἡμῶν δαίμονες.—*Apol.* i. c. 14. δαίμονιοιλήπτους γὰρ πολλοὺς κατὰ πάντα τὸν κόσμον καὶ ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ πόλει πολλοὶ τῶν ὑμετέρων ἀνθρώπων τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἐπορκίζοντες κατὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦ σταυρωθέντος ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων πάντων ἐπορκιστῶν καὶ ἐπαστῶν καὶ φαρμακευτῶν μὴ ἰαθέντας ἴασαντο, καὶ ἔτι νῦν ἰώντες αὐτοὶ, καταργοῦντες καὶ ἐκδιώκοντες τοὺς κατέχοντας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους δαίμονας.—*Apol.* ii. c. 6.

Whether St. Peter died at Rome or elsewhere is matter of very little importance¹; Lactantius undoubtedly mentions a volume of sermons by that Apostle, which he appears to have seen, and to have considered as genuine²; as he, in common with most of his contemporaries, did the Sybilline oracles, and the remains of Trismegistus³.

Lactantius is not clear respecting the canon of Holy Scripture⁴, and he appears to quote some books which have always been considered as Apocryphal. Lardner proves at length that he received the four Gospels as now adopted by the Church, and makes it probable that he was also acquainted with the Acts and Epistles. There can be no question that he had read and studied the Apocalypse of St. John. Of his chronological and philosophical errors, carefully enumerated by Gallæus⁵ and other commenta-

¹ Rome is welcome to the credit of his martyrdom on the principle laid down in Luke xi. 47, 48.

² This work is also mentioned in similar terms by Clement of Alexandria, and other early writers.

³ "Clement uniformly speaks of the Sybil as endowed with the gift of prophecy. In the first book of the *Stromata* (358. 7.) he mentions the various accounts which had been given of her birth-place, parentage, &c., and in the same book he enumerates the different Sybils, and the ages in which they lived. *There is in the sixth book a passage in which St. Paul is represented as appealing to the Books of the Sybil and Hystaspes.*"—Bp. Kaye's Clement, p. 406. See Prideaux's *Connection*, part ii. book ix.

⁴ Inst. iv. 16.

⁵ Gallæus enumerates the topics on which the doctrines of Lactantius are sound, as follows :—

De Religione Christianâ.

De Deo in genere.

De

tors, it seems scarcely worth while to take much notice. They prove that the literature of the age was not accurate. His opinions respecting Divine wrath, though approved by Jerome¹, and by some later divines, are contrary to the tenor of the New Testament, and to sound philosophy; and do not appear to have been general even in his own age. It is, at least, certain that Clement of Alexandria entertained very different, and far more enlightened views².

The writings of Lactantius do not throw much light upon the still-vexed question of Constantine's real character. He addresses the emperor in the lan-

De Providentiâ.

De Cultu Dei vero.

All of which are fully treated : of those which follow, his notice is slight and incidental, but his sentiments appear to have been correct.

De Ecclesiâ.

De objecto Invocationis.

De Pœnitentiâ,

De Matrimonio.

De Lege.

De Lapsu hominum.

De novissimo Judicio.

On this last topic, pace Gallæi dixerim, Lactantius is surely very full, and very far from correct. Dufresnoy gives a list of Scripture texts expounded by Lactantius, as he thinks, in a strange manner,—*singulari modo*.

¹ Comment. Ephes. ad cap. iv. 26.

² In punishing us God is not moved by anger, but considers what is just.—Pæd. cxxxix. 11.

He who teaches us to pray for those who insult us, cannot desire to avenge himself.—Ibid.

Bishop Kaye's Clement, p. 61.

guage of respect and loyalty, but not of flattery ; and since it seems probable that he died, and certain that he published the last edition of his *Institutes*, before the disgrace and condemnation of Crispus, which took place in July, A.D. 326¹, he could have had little opportunity of observing the darker shades which obscured the latter part of his patron's life.

Very little is known respecting the life of Lactantius ; and it is most likely that the days of a poor and studious philosopher would afford but few events worthy to be recorded. It has generally been concluded that he was of African extraction, since Jerome² relates that he was in his youth a hearer of Arnobius at Sicca Colonia, and studied under his auspices. Lactantius himself informs us that his parents were heathen ; from which Gallæus naturally concludes³ that he was himself a convert to Christianity, and Dufresnoy fixes the date of his conversion about A.D. 295. It must certainly have taken place some time previous to A.D. 303, for he was undoubtedly a confirmed Christian at the period of the Dioclesian persecution.

He was probably of humble origin, and his poverty, according to the statement of Eusebius⁴, was so ex-

¹ Gibbon, chap. 18.

²Ep. 70, ad Magnum. Sicca is mentioned by Victor Vitensis as a bishop's see. Some writers have fancied from his name Firmianus, that Lactantius must have been a native of Firmium in Italy.

³ This inference seems almost unavoidable ; but Lardner thinks it doubtful.

⁴ Chron. p. 180.

treme that he was frequently in want of the common necessities of life. This circumstance has been considered by some writers as a proof of his magnanimous disdain of worldly wealth, and by others as disgraceful to the character of the Emperor Constantine. There is, however, no ground for either inference. Lactantius was doubtless sincere in his Evangelical sentiments respecting the riches, honours, and pleasures of life ; but his poverty does not appear to have been voluntary ; it was the result of circumstances over which he had no control ; and if it conveys any reproach at all, it must rather be against Dioclesian than Constantine ; since his introduction to the latter emperor was at a late period of his life, and there is, as Le Nourry and Lardner observe, no reason to apprehend that he felt the evils of poverty in his declining years.

It was during his attendance on the lectures of Arnobius that Lactantius composed his *Symposium*, which Jerome¹ describes as a wonderful specimen of precocious talent ; and to the same period of his life is generally referred his *Itinerary*² from Africa to Nicomedia, though it appears improbable that he should have adopted this subject till it was suggested to him by the invitation which he received from Dioclesian to become a teacher of rhetoric in the latter country.

The date of his removal to Nicomedia is uncer-

¹ De Vir. Illust. c. 80.

² ὁδοιπόρον, al. ὁδοιπορικόν, a Road-book in hexameter verse.

tain; but it was probably not far from the year 303¹; for this date has been assigned as the commencement of his celebrity, which was the result of the notice taken of him by Dioclesian. The patronage of this emperor, however, appears to have been confined to exemption from the persecution which at that time raged against the Christians, the horrors of which Lactantius himself states that he witnessed whilst he resided in Bithynia, where he appears to have remained during the whole of the ten years, and probably somewhat longer. If he were the author of the book, "*De Mortibus Persecutorum* ²," he must have become acquainted with Constantine, and have left Nicomedia about the year 314; but the more probable opinion is, that he removed from thence into Gaul. A. D. 317.

We learn from Jerome³ that his success as a teacher of rhetoric was scanty; and being reduced to penury, he commenced as an author by profession, and began to compose his great work against gentile idolatry in seven books, upon which his reputation is principally founded. The date of the publication of this work has been the subject of much discussion. Lardner places it as early as the year 306,

¹ Claruit præcipuè ann. 303, et deinceps. Cave quoted by Lardner, vol. iv. p. 25.

² This question will be noticed in its place. It is sufficient here to state, that it is very doubtful whether the names Lucius Cæcilius belonged to Lactantius at all. Lucius Cæcilius or Cælius seems to have been the author of that work.

³ Ob Græcam scilicet civitatem, loc. cit. .

and he consequently agrees with those critics who regard all the passages in which the Emperor Constantine is addressed as interpolations; but Dufresnoy argues, from strong internal evidence, that the work must have been published subsequently to the year 317, and he is of opinion that Lactantius himself put out two editions; the first in A. D. 320 or 321; and the second, in which he inserted the passages in question, A. D. 324. If this conjecture is correct, most of his shorter works which are still extant, were probably completed and published in the interval between the two editions. The *Epitome* could not have been drawn up till after the appearance of the larger work, since it was done at the request of Pentadius¹, to whom it is inscribed, and who had read and approved the *Institutes*; and the book "*De Irâ Dei*," as Jerome remarks, is mentioned in that work as a task to be undertaken at a future period. His practice indeed of referring to his intended as well as to his published works, is of considerable service in ascertaining the genuineness of those which remain; though it seems probable, that he did not live to complete all which he had contemplated, since they are not mentioned in Jerome's catalogue.

The opinion of Dufresnoy does not differ very materially from that which is maintained in the

¹ Lactantius addresses Pentadius as his *brother*; but whether he was his brother by blood, or merely by Christian brotherhood and affection, is not known.

Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum of Andreas Gallandius, where it is inferred from a passage in the fifth book ¹ of the *Institutes*, that the work was written during the prevalence of the persecution; and from a statement in the beginning of the book, *De Opificio Dei*, that it could not have been published until after the persecution had entirely ceased, at which time, the author thinks, the passages addressed to Constantine were inserted by Lactantius himself.

Lactantius quitted Nicomedia on the invitation of the emperor to become tutor to his eldest son and presumptive heir, Crispus ²; but it is uncertain whether this appointment took place before he had determined upon sending him into Gaul. Crispus was invested with the title of Cæsar, A. D. 317, being then only seventeen years of age; and the active and harassing life which he led in the Gallic provinces, and afterwards in supporting his father against Licinius, must have deprived his tutor of that quiet leisure which he had enjoyed in his Bithynian seclusion; so that it seems likely that the materials of the works which he afterwards finished, had been collected and in part arranged some years before.

Of the remainder of his life we have no authentic account, and the time and place of his death are

¹ Lib. v. c. 3, 4.

² Hic extremâ senectute magister Cæsaris Crispi filii Constantini in Galliâ fuit, qui postea à patre interfectus est. Jerome de Vir. Illust.

equally unknown ; but Andreas Gallandius¹ affirms, that there is some reason to suppose that Lactantius was living in the year 325.

Jerome's catalogue² of the works of Lactantius, is of great importance in assisting to decide respecting the genuineness of several works which have been attributed to him in modern times, and of which, as it has been before intimated, the Papists have attempted to avail themselves, in order to prove the primitive antiquity of their doctrines. Several of the books mentioned by Jerome have been lost ; but it is improbable that he should have omitted any which were genuine productions of Lactantius. He reckons them up as follows ; but it is to be observed, that he certainly does not place them exactly in the order in which he supposed them to have been published ; for he infers, from the mention which occurs in the Institutes, of the author's design to compose a treatise *De Irâ Dei*, that this work must have appeared subsequently to the former ; and he supposes the book, *De Opificio*, which he names last in his catalogue, to have been composed before the Institutes.

1. Symposium³.

¹ Bib. Vet. Pat. in loco.

² De Vir. Ill. c. 80.

³ Heüman published a Symposium in 1722, ascribed to Lactantius, which he supposes to be genuine, and Büneman seems to entertain doubts respecting it ; but Le Brun, Dufresnoy, and all the best critics concur in rejecting it. It consists of ninety-nine

2. Ὀδοιπόρον.
3. Grammaticus.
4. De Irâ Dei ¹.
5. Institutiones Divinæ adversus gentes ². Lib. vii.
6. Epitome ³.
7. Ad Asclepiadem ⁴. Lib. ii.
8. De Persecutione ⁵.
9. Ad Probum. Lib. iv.
10. Ad Severum. Lib. ii.

enigmas of three hexameter verses each, with a few verses by way of introduction, in the monkish style.

¹ Jerome calls this treatise, *Liber pulcherrimus*.

² *Septem libros adversus gentes Arnobius edidit; totidemque discipulus ejus Lactantius; qui de Irâ Dei quoque, et Opificio Dei duo volumina edidit, quos si legere volueris, Dialogorum Ciceronis in eis ἐπιτομὴν reperies.* Ep. ad Magnum.

³ Dr. Pfaff published the lost beginning of this book, which he contends is genuine, and some critics have adopted his opinion; but the weight of authority is decidedly against it. The MS. was certainly imperfect in the time of Jerome, who describes it as ἐπιτομὴ ejusdem operis in libro uno acephalo. Gallandius argues that the fragment now extant is genuine, but that it was "acephalum et truncatum" before the time of Jerome.

⁴ It appears, from a passage in the treatise de *Divino Præmio* (Inst. vii.), that Asclepiades had addressed a work to Lactantius.

⁵ Learned men have been much divided in opinion respecting the book "*De Mortibus Persecutorum*," published as the work of Lactantius in 1679, and printed in the *Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum*. Andreas Gallandius maintains, that it is the identical work enumerated by Jerome and Honorius, and Dufresnoy agrees with him; but Le Nourry, and, after him, the majority of sound critics, have argued that it is the work of Lucius Cæcilius. An elegant edition with notes by Stephen Baluze, was published by Paul Bauldry in 1692. The reasons for doubting the genuineness of this work will be given hereafter.

11. *Ad Demetrianum*. Lib. ii.
12. *De Opificio Dei*, inscribed to *Demetrianus*.

A catalogue of the works of *Lactantius* is also given by *Honorius*¹; but, although it differs from that of *Jerome* in some particulars, it seems probable that it was copied, however carelessly, from it, and it is consequently of little value in the decision of any disputed question.

1. *Africae Itinerarium* (in hexameter verse).
2. *Grammaticus*.
3. *De Irâ Dei*.
4. *Institutiones adversus gentes*. Lib. vii.
5. *Ad Asclepiadem*. Lib. ii.
6. *Ad Demetrium*. Lib. vii.
7. *De Persecutione*.
8. *Ad Probum*. Lib. iv.
9. *Ad Severum*. Lib. ii.
10. *De Opificio, ad Demetrianum*.

It will be observed, that *Honorius* has altogether omitted the *Symposium* and the *Epitome*, and that, instead of two books of *Epistles to Demetrianus*, he mentions seven books addressed to *Demetrius*².

¹ *Honorius Augustod. de Lum. Eccl. Lib. i. c. 81.*

² *Andreas Gallandius* considers this as an erratum, because *Honorius* states, that the treatise *De Opificio*, was inscribed to *Demetrianus*; and he corrects it accordingly.

A

SUMMARY OF THE WRITINGS
OF
LACTANTIUS.

CHAPTER I.

SACRED INSTITUTES, BOOK I.

LACTANTIUS opens the work which he entitles "Sacred Institutes," by paying a just tribute to the zeal and self-denial of the philosophers in their search after truth, in which however they unavoidably failed, since truth is not discoverable by reason without the aid of Divine Revelation. He declares his design to devote his time to the investigation and defence of true religion by this light, and to compose seven books on the subject, which he dedicates to the Emperor Constantine in the language of warm panegyric. He incidentally¹ introduces his opinion

¹ Præfatio. The references are to Dufresnoy's edition, Paris, 1748, which is arranged very nearly as the edition of Gallæus, Lugd. Bat. 1660, and *greatly indebted to it*.

on a very important subject, the effect of education independently of religion, which he affirms to be rather refinement in vice than the practice of virtue¹.

Entering upon his argument, he dismisses the atheistical notions of Democritus and Protagoras, afterwards reduced to a system by Epicurus and Diagoras, as sufficiently refuted by every man's common sense, and proceeds at once to expose, with great acuteness, and occasionally with considerable liveliness, though in a style which betrays the professional rhetorician, the monstrous falsehood and absurdity of the popular creed. He proves the fundamental doctrine of the unity of God from his per-

¹ In quâ diu versati, non ad virtutem, sed planè ad argutam malitiam juvenes erudiebamus, lib. i. Præfatio.

It would be out of place to quote other authorities here on this agitated topic; but I may, perhaps, be pardoned for adducing a curious passage from a very scarce book. It occurs in a preface by H. Stephens, to one of the longer Catechisms, published in the Greek language in 1648.

πολλὰς μὲν καὶ ἄλλας κατὰ τὴν τῶν παιδῶν διδασκαλίαν τε καὶ παιδευσιν νοσοῦσιν οἱ καθ' ἡμῶς χρόνοι νόσους, μίαν δὲ πασῶν χαλεπωτάτην καὶ βαρυντάτην αὐτήν, ὅτι τὸ προνυργιαίτατον τῆς διδασκαλίας μέρος, καὶ ἀφ' οὗ ἀρχὴν ποιεῖσθαι ἐχρῆν, τῶν παιδευόντων οἱ μὲν οὐδ' ἐν λόγῳ, οὐδ' ἐν ἀριθμῷ τίθενται, οἱ δὲ ἐν προσκαταβλήματος ἢ παραρτήματος μοίρᾳ ἄγοντες φαίνονται· τῶν γὰρ χριστιανισμοῦ διδαγμάτων ἄλλοι μὲν τοῖς παισὶ μεταδιδόασιν οὐδὲ γρῦ, ἄλλοι δὲ ἐν τῇ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων διδασκαλίᾳ οὐδὲ μίαν ἀκριβείας ὑπερβολὴν ἀπολείποντες, τὰ θεῖα ὡς ἐν παρόδῳ μόνον καὶ ἐκ παρεργου, καὶ ὥσπερ ἐξ ἀφοσιούμενοι διδάσκουσιν αὐτούς· περὶ ὧν εὔ ἂν ἔχοι τὸ τοῦ Ἀγάθωνος,

τὸ μὲν πάρεργον, ἔργον ὡς ποιούμεθα·
τὸ δ' ἔργον, ὡς πάρεργον, ἐκπονούμεθα.

fection¹; for absolute perfection logically implies unity, as plurality evinces imperfection. A plurality of equal independent deities would necessarily have a plurality of wills, and such degrading contests would follow as Homer describes among his gods; but if one supreme will be called in to preserve order and harmony, then the rest are no longer gods but satellites. Perfect power or virtue can depend only on itself; and that only can be styled self-dependent from which nothing can be taken away, that only perfect to which nothing can be added. And if God be the title of this supreme power, he must be incorruptible, perfect, without passion, and incapable of impressions from without.

The unity of God is indeed the real doctrine of all heathen antiquity; of Orpheus, Hesiod, and the elder poets, as well as of the philosophers; and Lactantius, passing slightly over the testimony of Holy Writ, as an authority not admitted by the opponent², appeals to their writings, and to the historians, in proof of the utter inconsistency of their serious opi-

¹ Deus, qui est æterna mens, ex omni utique parte perfectæ consummatæque virtutis est. Quod si verum est, Unus sit necesse est. Potestas enim, vel virtus absoluta, retinet suam propriam firmitatem. Id autem solidum existimandum est, cui nihil decedere; id perfectum cui nihil possit accedere. Lib. i. c. 3.

Nam si Deus est nomen summæ potestatis, incorruptibilis esse debet, perfectus, impassibilis, nulli rei subjectus. Ibid.

² Prophetæ, qui fuerunt admodum multi, unum Deum prædicant, unum loquuntur. Lib. i. c. 4. By the appellation *prophetæ*, Lactantius designates all inspired writers.

nions with the superstitions which they affected to maintain¹. He shows that the principal deities² of the Heathen Mythology were mortal men, of gross and sensual habits and immoral lives, and of no very remote antiquity. He traces the history of Jupiter, and of the other gods *majorum gentium*, much upon the principle adopted by Montleyard³, Bryant, and Faber, of whose elaborate system he appears to have been the first founder.

In appealing to the testimony of the Sibyls, whose oracles he quotes copiously, in order to show that the original belief of mankind was in one God, Lactantius treats the doubts entertained of their genuineness as mere groundless devices of infidels⁴; and he leaves the impression already noticed, that he, in common with Justin Martyr⁵, and most of the early Fathers, regarded these weird women as having been actually inspired by the prophetic spirit.

I had prepared materials with the design of subjoining an appendix to this chapter, containing an analysis of the Sibylline oracles, with some remarks on the work of Onuphrius, and the elaborate treatise

¹ Cf. Justin Martyr, *Apol.* i. c. 18.

² Among these Lactantius speaks of Cabyrus, a deity worshipped by the Macedonians *summâ veneratione*.

³ The work of this very learned writer, which is now little known, was published in the French language at Paris in 1599.

⁴ Cf. *lib.* iv. c. 15.

⁵ *καὶ Σίβυλλα δὲ καὶ Ὑστασπὶς, γενήσεσθαι τῶν φθαρτῶν ἀνάλωσιν διὰ πυρὸς ἔφασαν.* *Apol.* i. c. 27.

of Gallæus; but I find the subject already treated in the manner which I had proposed to myself, with a clearness and research beyond my ability, in the learned and diffuse work of Mr. Greswell¹, who arrives nearly at the same conclusion to which I had been led with respect to the genuineness of those celebrated remains. I will only remark, that it seems doubtful whether there were any *Sibyls*² so called, before the captivities of Jewish virgins became frequent in the East, and that the Persian Sibyl, whom Lactantius enumerates as the first³, is by some writers called the Hebrew Sibyl, and is mentioned by Justin Martyr⁴ as the Chaldæan Sibyl. And since it is clear⁵ that the little Hebrew maid who waited on Naaman's wife, was endowed with a prophetic spirit, for she could not have anticipated the result of her master's journey to Judæa by any human

¹ Exposition of the Parables, &c. vol. v. part ii. ch. viii.

The reader whose curiosity is interested on this subject, may also consult Lardner's Credibility, part ii. ch. xxix.

² σιβύλλη q. σιοῦ βύλη Æol. πρὸ Θεοῦ βούλη. Al. Heb. rad. à שבל *semita*, quod nomen in sacris Scripturis lumen oraculorum Dei sæpius significat.

³ Onuphrius however states, that Lactantius does not quote the order of the Sibyls from Varro correctly; and he makes the Persian the eighth in order.

⁴ In Parænetico ad Græcos. Bishop Kaye questions the genuineness of this Address. Bp. Kaye's Justin, p. 6.

⁵ That miraculous cures of leprosy had not previously taken place, and consequently could not be expected, is proved by the indignant astonishment of the king of Israel, 2 Kings v. 7, and by our Lord's declaration to that effect, Luke iv. 27.

foresight, it is by no means an improbable conjecture that the original sibyls were Jewish virgins in captivity, and that their predictions were partly founded upon their acquaintance with the books of the Prophets, and partly the result of their own inspiration. It is not unlikely that some short portions of the oracles, now extant, may have been preserved by tradition from this source; but there need be no hesitation in pronouncing them generally to be palpable forgeries by various hands well versed in the New Testament.

Having exposed the fabulous origin, and the degrading profligacy of the ancient Mythology, which he terms the faith of the Barbarians, Lactantius goes on to show, that the worship peculiar to Rome partook of the same low character, and that the objects of it were at least equally despicable; and he attributes the introduction of false religion among the Romans, to the policy of Numa, who considered the enslaving power of superstition as the best security of regal power over a rude people¹.

He argues, that the origin of Pagan idolatry must be comparatively modern, from the fact, which he states on the authority of Theophilus², that Belus

¹ Harum vanitatum apud Romanos auctor et constitutor Sabinus ille rex fuit, qui maximè animos hominum rudes atque imperitos novis superstitionibus implicavit; quod ut faceret aliquâ cum autoritate, simulavit cum Deâ Egeriâ nocturnos se habere congressus. Lib. i. c. 22.

² In libro de temporibus ad Autolyicum scripto. Lib. i. c. 23.

the Assyrian, (the founder of the Heliarkite superstition, according to Faber¹;) flourished only three hundred and twenty-two years before the Trojan war; and that this Belus was the contemporary of Saturn, (whom Montleyard and Faber consider to have been Noah,) the father of all the gods *majorum gentium*. But the fall of Troy², according to Lactantius, happened one thousand four hundred and seventy years before his own time; so that the birth of Saturn, in round numbers, could then be placed only about one thousand eight hundred years back³.

Lactantius depicts the effects of the Polytheism thus introduced, upon the morals of mankind, in very dark colours: "There is, consequently," he says, "no virtue in any man, from the universal prevalence of vice; no integrity, while every man seeks only his selfish ends; no natural affection where avarice spares neither relatives nor parents, and covetousness hesitates not to employ poison and steel; no peace nor concord, while wars rage between

¹ Origin of Pagan Idolatry, vol. i.

² Nam et Agamemnon, qui gessit bellum Troicum, Jovis abnepos fuit, et Achilles Ajaxque pronepotes, &c. Lib. i. c. 23.

³ I have already observed that the chronology of Lactantius is of no value. The common tables place the birth of Noah B. C. 2948, and the fall of Troy, B. C. 1184, leaving an interval of 1764 instead of 322 years; so that, if any argument were to be deduced from such dates, Saturn could not be identified with the Patriarch Noah. If the fall of Troy is rightly placed B. C. 1184, and Lactantius wrote, as he here states, only 1470 years after that event, the date of his work would be A. D. 286.

nations, and the feuds of private life end in bloodshed; no modesty, where unbounded licentiousness regards not any distinction of sex or person ¹."

He concludes his first book with assuming that he has abundantly exposed the monstrous absurdities of Pagan idolatry; and he announces his intention to proceed in due course to the establishment of true principles of faith and duty upon the ruins of the system which he has demolished ². There is, in this portion of his work, no distinct intimation of his own theological views.

He quotes Hermes' Trismegistus, asserting the

¹ Itaque nulla in quoque virtus est, vitii ubique dominantibus; nulla fides, omnia pro se unoquoque rapiente; nulla pietas, nec consanguineis nec parentibus parcente avaritiâ, et cupiditate in venenum et ferrum ruente; nulla pax, nulla concordia, publicè bellis sævientibus, privatim verò inimiciis usque ad sanguinem furentibus; nulla pudicitia, libidinibus effrenatis omnem sexum, et omnes corporis partes contaminantibus. Lib. i. c. 20.

This beautiful complaint is amply borne out in all its parts, not only by contemporary Christian authors, but by the melancholy admissions of almost all the heathen writers themselves, both in poetry and in prose. E. g. Justin Martyr. Apol. i. c. 36.

πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι τοὺς πάντας σχεδὸν ὁρῶμεν ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ προ-
άγοντες οὐ μόνον τὰς κόρας, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἄρσενας· καὶ ὃν τρόπον
λέγονται οἱ παλαιοὶ ἀγέλας βοῶν ἢ αἰγῶν ἢ προβάτων τρέφειν, ἢ
ἵππων φορβάδων, οὕτω νῦν καὶ παῖδας εἰς τὸ αἰσχροῦς χρῆσθαι μόνον·
καὶ ὁμοίως θηλειῶν καὶ ἀνδρογύνων καὶ ἀρρήτοισι πλῆθος κατὰ
πᾶν ἔθνος ἐπὶ τούτῳ τοῦ ἄγους ἔστηκε, &c. See particularly the
second Satire of Juvenal.

Mr. Guizot gives a similar account of the morals of his countrymen at this present day, and ascribes it to the same cause.

² Primus autem sapientiæ gradus est, falsa intelligere; secundus, vera cognoscere. C. 23. fin.

unity of God in these terms: "God is one, and whatsoever is one has no need of a proper name; *the Being* is therefore without a proper name¹."

¹ ὁ Θεὸς εἷς, ὃ δὲ εἷς ὀνόματος οὐ προσδέεται, ἔστι γὰρ ὁ ὢν ἄνθρωπος. C. 6. The same notion that *the Being* requires no proper name, seems intimated in Exod. iii. 14. The name יהוה is derived from יהו the first syllable being *the future*, the second *the present*, and the third *the past* tense of the verb, and it is consequently equivalent to Rev. iv. 8. The mystic inscription in the Delphic temple (εἷ), and the sublime monosyllable (Hoo) of the Orientals convey the same idea. Justin repeats the same notion, Apol. i. 79. 82. ii. 6.

CHAPTER II.

SACRED INSTITUTES, BOOK II.

THE remark of Jerome, that Lactantius is happier in attack than in defence, is strikingly exemplified in the second Book of the Institutes. There is great wit and acuteness displayed in his exposure of the errors and absurdities of heathen mythology, and of the false logic of the philosophers; but in labouring to establish the Divine truth of Revelation, he is too apt to employ sophistry and rhetorical subtilty. He adduces the opinions of Cicero, Horace, Seneca, and other popular gentile writers, to show that men of sense and education could not possibly believe the popular creed; and he passes upon them a just and severe censure for their acquiescence in falsehood which they despised, and for their wilful scepticism in rejecting revealed truth.

He appeals to a secret consciousness of truth betrayed by men in extreme danger, or overwhelmed by calamity, who, forgetting the objects of customary worship, call out upon God for help and deliverance.

“ But when any urgent evil alarms them, they then remember God. If the horrors of war rage; if the fury of pestilence spreads; if a long drought parches up the fruits of the earth; if a dreadful storm, or a tempest of hail falls on them; they have recourse to God; help is sought from God; to God supplications are addressed; to Him the mariner prays amid the violence of the wind; on Him the oppressed calls for deliverance; and he, who is driven by the last distress to solicit alms, begs in the name of *the only God*, and entreats compassion for the sake of His Divine and *sole* Providence. So that men never think of God, unless when they are in trouble. As soon as their fear is removed, and their danger averted, they straightway run to the temples of the (false) gods; to them they pour out libations; to them they offer sacrifices; on their heads they place chaplets; but to God, on whom they had called in their extremity, they offer not even the form of thanksgiving¹. ”

¹ At verò si qua necessitas gravis presserit; tunc Deum recordantur. Si belli terror infremuerit; si morborum pestifera vis incubuerit; si alimenta frugibus longa siccitas denegaverit; si sæva tempestas, si grando ingruerit; ad Deum confugiunt; à Deo petitur auxilium; Deus, ut subveniat, oratur; si quis in mari vento sæviante jactatur, hunc invocat: si quis aliquâ vi afflicatur, hunc protinus implorat: si quis ad extremam mendicandi necessitatem deductus victum precibus exposcit, *Deum solum* obtestatur; et per ejus divinum atque *unicum* numen hominum sibi misericordiam quærit. Nunquam igitur Dei meminerunt, nisi dum in malis sunt. Postquàm metus deseruit, et pericula

He goes on to expose the unreasonableness of making a spiritual and heavenly being, like man, bow down to the mere creatures of earth, and breaks out into a noble expostulation against the degrading superstitions of polytheism.

“O souls laden with thick clay, and destitute of heavenly aspirations!—but rather look up to heaven; to the contemplation of which you were framed by your Creator the true God. He gave you a lofty countenance; you bow yourselves to the earth; you degrade, to the level of lower creatures, your aspiring minds made, like the bodies which they inhabit, erect towards their heavenly Father; as if you repined that you were not created quadrupeds. It is criminal in the heaven-born creature to lower itself to the pursuits of those whose end and objects are on the earth. Why should you voluntarily deprive yourselves of your celestial privileges, and grovel as brutes, on the ground? For it is miserable grovelling to seek that below which you ought to seek above¹.”

recesserunt, tum verò ad deorum templa concurrunt; his libant; his sacrificant; hos coronant; Deo autem, quem in ipsâ necessitate imploraverunt, ne verbo quidem gratias agunt.—Cap. 1.

¹ *O curvæ in terras animæ et cælestium inanes!*

Cœlum potiùs intuemini; ad cujus spectaculum vos excitavit ille artifex verus Deus. Ille vobis sublimem vultum dedit; vos in terram curvamini; vos altas mentes, et ad Patrem suum cum corporibus suis erectas, ad inferiora deprimitis; tamquam vos pœniteat non quadrupedes esse natos. Fas non est cœleste animal cum terrenis, in terramque vergentibus versari. Quid vos

Reverting to the idols of the popular worship, he argues that they must be the images either of the dead, the absent, or the present; and he ridicules the idea of a dead or absent deity, showing that the Omnipresent, who is alone the fitting object of worship, needs no visible representative. Man, he observes, is the maker and parent of the image, and therefore superior to the work of his own hands; and if the statue has neither the qualities, nor the privileges of a man, much less can the power or essence of the Deity be in the image which is made to represent him. Moreover, idols, though the objects of a blind adoration, are completely in the power of their own worshippers, and are liable to be broken and burnt at their pleasure; without possessing any means of self-defence, or any power to punish the insults offered them; and, at the best, like all visible things, they are subject to decay and dissolution¹. He instances the impunity of sacrilege in the cases of Dionysius and Verres; and derides the gross ignorance of mankind in imputing human

beneficiis cœlestibus orbatî, pronique in humum, vestrâ sponte procumbitis? Humi enim miseri volutamini, cùm deorsum quæritis, quod in sublimi quærere debuistis."—Cap. 2.

¹ The Romanists, who are so fond of citing the authority of Lactantius, can hardly be pleased with the decisive language in which he condemns all use of images as objects of veneration. What do they think of the following sentence? *Quare non est dubium, quin Religio nulla sit, ubicunque simulacrum est.* Nam si Religio ex divinis rebus est, divini autem nihil est nisi in cœlestibus rebus, carent ergo religione simulacra.—C. 19.

forms, passions, and appetites, to the heavenly bodies, and to the elements to which they consecrate spoils and offerings, in the blind persuasion that the Deity can be pleased with those things which are acceptable to themselves. He exposes the gross ignorance and immorality of their uncivilized ancestors, whose authority they affected to treat as sacred; and accounts for their pretended miracles, and dreams, the fallacy of which he develops with great acuteness.

In attempting to open the doctrine of Divine truth, after his refutation of error¹, Lactantius displays his ignorance of sound theology; and it is not to be denied, that he makes use of language incompatible with the eternal generation of the Son, and lays himself open to the imputation of Manicheism²; from which he can only be rescued by a careful comparison of these rash statements with other parts of his works, where he expresses himself in terms more consistent with the orthodox opinions. Speaking of the Father as the Creator, he says, “ *Whereas, hitherto, there had existed nothing save himself* . . . he produced a Spirit like unto himself, who should be endowed with the virtues of God the Father. . .

¹ C. 10.

² Cf. lib. vi. c. 6.—Fons autem bonorum Deus est, malorum vero ille, scilicet divini hominis semper inimicus, de quo sæpe diximus. *Ab his duobus principiis bona malaque oriuntur.* The doctrine of the Manichees, however, made God himself the author of evil.

. . . Then he made *another* in whom the character of the divine race did not continue. Therefore, he was infected, as it were, with the venom of his own envy, and changed from good to evil; and by his own free will, which God had bestowed upon him he acquired an opposite nature. . . . For he envied that being *who was before him*, who *by his perseverance* in goodness obtained the approbation of God the Father, and became his beloved. This being, perverted from good to evil by his own malice, the Greeks call the Devil¹. . . .

From such loose expressions, taken singly, it might certainly be inferred that Lactantius believed God the Father to have produced the Son and Satan in the same manner, and originally of equal power and virtue. He goes on,—“God, being about to create this world, which was to consist of things mutually opposed, and discordant, in the first instance constituted diversity, and made, before all things, *two sources of the opposing actions*, in hostility to each other, to wit, *those two Spirits*, the upright,

¹ Cum *præter ipsum nihil adhuc* esset, produxit similem sui spiritum, qui esset virtutibus Dei Patris præditus. . . . Deinde fecit *alterum* in quo indoles divinæ stirpis non permansit. Itaque suapte invidiâ tanquam veneno infectus est, et ex bono ad malum transcendit; suoque arbitrio, quod à Deo illi liberum datum fuerat, contrarium sibi nomen ascivit. . . . Invidit enim *illi antecessori suo*, qui Deo Patri *perseverando* tum probatus, tum etiam carus est. Hunc ergo ex bono per se malum effectum Græci Διάβολον appellant.—C. 9.

and the depraved; of whom one is, as it were, the right hand of God, the other his left hand; in order that those contrary actions might be respectively in *their power*. . . . One of these he loved as a *good son*; the other he renounced as an *evil son*. And afterwards he generated *many more*, as the agents of his operations, whom the Greeks call Angels; . . . of whom *those two* were the respective chiefs¹."

All this is clearly irreconcilable with the equality of the Father and Son, and with the doctrine of the Catholic Church; and it has, not unreasonably, been supposed to savour of Arianism, a heresy elsewhere expressly condemned by Lactantius². It will be observed too that in this same chapter, he states that the Father, in the work of Creation, employed

¹ Fabricaturus Deus hunc mundum, qui constaret ex rebus inter se contrariis, atque discordibus, constituit ante diversa, fecitque, ante omnia, *duos fontes rerum sibi adversantium*, interque se pugnantium, *illos videlicet duos spiritus*, rectum atque pravum; quorum alter est Deo tanquam dextra, alter tanquam sinistra: ut in *eorum* essent *potestate* contraria illa eorum alterum dilexit ut *bonum filium*; alterum abdicavit ut *malum*. Postea autem multos genuit alios operum ministros, quos Græci ἀγγέλους nominant angeli omnes, quorum principes erant *illi duo*.—Ibid.

I have given this passage from the old edition, Venet. Ald., 1535, but it is even there marked as suspected, and Dufresnoy excludes it from his text as spurious. It contains, however, nothing more than is unhappily advanced in the undisputed text.

² Lib. iv. c. 30.

the agency of "his *first* and *greatest* son¹," and speaks of the Son in terms more befitting his Divine Nature as the Counsellor and Contriver of all things.

Lactantius confutes the opinion of Cicero which attributes to God *workmanship*, but not *creation*, and he commends the doctrine of Seneca who affirms, that nature is only another name of God: showing, with admirable logical precision, that matter could never have existed independently of God, but must have been created by Him. He disproves the eternity of matter with a good deal of metaphysical subtilty; and exposes the ridiculous absurdity of the Epicurean theory. Lactantius himself appears to consider the existence of evil as part of the original design of God in the Creation; and his loose manner of expressing himself on this point has been the ground of the most weighty charges against his orthodoxy. In his attempt to give what he considers a correct account of the Creation, he betrays his ignorance of the first principles of natural philosophy, and indulges his fancy in a series of puerile conceits

¹ *Primum et maximum* filium. Dufresnoy remarks on this expression, that we must not suppose Lactantius to have regarded the Angels as begotten sons of God, or as equal in nature to Christ; for that he has expressly asserted Christ to be "the only-begotten Son of God," lib. ii. c. 17; iv. 8, and describes him as "God of God,"—*Deum de Deo*,—lib. iv. c. 8. 18. In other places he calls Christ "Light of Light,"—"of one substance with the Father," and "one with the Father." It is difficult to reconcile such language with the derogatory terms here employed.

unworthy of the dignity of his subject, and tending still further to involve him in the charge of Manicheism. He undertakes to prove in refutation of the opinion of Aristotle, that the world must necessarily have a beginning, and an end; but this part of his argument is too fanciful to produce conviction in the mind of the reader. He gives an account of the Fall, and infers from the language of Holy Scripture, and from the words of the Sibylline verses, which he seems to regard as equally good authority, that the regenerate man will be restored to the same local Paradise from which Adam was expelled¹. In speaking of the wonderfully-long lives of the Patriarchs, Lactantius takes occasion to argue, but I think not so conclusively as he might have done, against the theory of Varro, who accounts for their seeming longevity on the supposition that, in the Scripture chronology, we ought to adopt the old Egyptian mode of computation, and read *months* in-

¹ In eundem locum. The idea that *the Paradise*, or intermediate state of the blessed, is the same locality with that forfeited by Adam, seems to have occurred to other primitive authors. Prudentius says,

—Patet ecce fidelibus ampli
Via lucida jam Paradisi,
Licet et nemus illud adire
Homini quod ademerat anguis, &c.

Hymn. circà Exeg.

Cf. Tert. de Paradiso.

stead of *years*¹. And he adds a brief summary of the Old Testament history.

The doctrine of Lactantius respecting devils and demons, though wholly devoid of any foundation in the Scriptures, appears to have prevailed very generally not only among the early Christians, but among the Jews², with whose Thalmudists it probably had its origin. He tells us that God sent the angels to guard mankind against the wiles of Satan, cautioning them at the same time, lest they should themselves become corrupted with the defilements of earth. He gave them this caution, knowing that they would disregard it, in order that their sin might be unpardonable³. Some of the angels tempted by Satan, and by the charms of women, fell into sin⁴,

¹ So that Methuselah died in his eighty-first year.

² Josephus, lib. i. c. 4, says that "the sons of God" mentioned Gen. vi. 2. 4, were Angels whose illicit intercourse with women produced giants and mighty men of war; and hence he derives the mythological fables of demi-gods and heroes engendered by the gods on women. He might have known, however, that the words "son" and "servant" (Gr. *παῖς*) are used indiscriminately in his own, and in all other ancient languages; and that the "sons of Belial" are only votaries of that idol. Justin Martyr maintains a similar notion, Apol. i. c. 5, and ii. c. 6, and in other passages of his writings; and Clement speaks of apostate angels, who, smitten by the beauty of women, and giving themselves up to their lusts, were cast down from heaven. Yet it is curious enough that in the very next book (Stromat. lib. vi.) he affirms that angels have no bodily organs or members.—See Bp. Kaye's Clement, pp. 358, 359.

³ Scilicet eos facere prohibuit, quod sciebat esse facturos, ut veniam sperare non possent.

⁴ But though Lactantius clearly believed in this alleged inter-

and being excluded from heaven for their offence, they became devils and satellites of the Diabolus. The offspring of their guilt are demons, who partake of a middle nature between men and angels, and are excluded from hell as their fathers are from heaven. Hence arises the division of spirits into separate classes of heavenly demons, and earthly demons. The latter are the authors of criminal actions, and the Diabolus is their chieftain. They inspire the heathen oracles and the poets. He asserts with Tertullian, that evil spirits, being adjured by the true worshippers of God, are compelled to depart from the bodies of possessed persons, and to confess their own demoniacal nature and their names: and he describes them as possessing only a limited pre-science, knowing some future events, but unable to foresee others¹. He speaks of good angels as merely ministers obeying the will of God *and of His Son*, and as doing nothing of their own will or purpose in reference to mankind. But the evil angels are always endeavouring to thwart the designs of Providence, and to lead men into error; and to their agency he attributes the false miracles of the Pagan mythology².

course, he himself confutes the notion of it in arguing on the generation of the Son, lib. iv, where speaking of the sexual intercourse he says, *quod non facit nisi animal corporale, mortique subjectum*.

¹ Lib. ii. c. 15. 17. Cf. lib. iv. c. 27.

² Cf. Justin Martyr, Apol. i. c. 5. δαίμονες φαῦλοι ἐπιφανείας ποιησάμενοι.

On the subject of Divine Wrath, Lactantius impugns the opinion of those theologians who hold that God cannot be angry, because he is not subject to passions¹; referring to his proposed Treatise “de Irâ Dei” for a full confutation of their alleged error, which he regards as subversive of the foundations of Truth and Religion².

He concludes the second Book by showing that the gods of the heathen are merely demons under the semblance of deified heroes; and hence he sums up his threefold argument against the worship addressed to their images: 1. because they are images of deceased mortal men; 2. because the images have neither power nor perception; 3. because the spirits to whom they are subservient are reprobate and accursed of God.

In this book Lactantius makes a remark, which occurs repeatedly in his writings, that the use of water is common to us with the lower animals; but that man alone, being an immortal and celestial creature, makes use of fire³.

He quotes a remarkable passage from Hermes,—

¹ Justin Martyr repeatedly asserts that God is “without passions” (*ἀπαθής*). The doctrine of Clement on this subject has been already mentioned.

² *Quæ persuasio veritatem atque religionem funditus tollit.*—C. 18.

³ The denial of these two great necessities of life, fire and water, is the ancient mode of inflicting exile.

“The only real safeguard is piety. For neither evil genius, nor fate has any power over the pious man ; for God defends the pious man from all evil : so that the sole and only good among men is piety.” And (Lactantius adds) Hermes in another place defines piety in these words, “Piety is the knowledge of God¹.”

He reads the verse in Virgil,

Terrea progenies durum caput extulit arvis.

¹ μία φυλακή εὐσέβεια· εὐσεβοῦς γὰρ ἄνθρωπον οὐ δαίμων κακός, οὔτε εἰμαρμένη κρατεῖ. Θεὸς γὰρ ῥύεται τὸν εὐσεβῆ ἐκ παντὸς κακοῦ, τὸ γὰρ ἓν καὶ μόνον ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἐστὶν ἀγαθὸν εὐσέβεια. Quid sit autem εὐσέβεια alio loco his verbis testatur dicens, ἡ γὰρ εὐσέβεια γνῶσις ἐστὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ.—C. 16.

CHAPTER III.

SACRED INSTITUTES, BOOK III.

HAVING devoted two books to the refutation of false Religion, Lactantius undertakes, in the third book of the Institutes, to examine and confute the false philosophy of the heathen, which he divides into the three departments of physical, logical, and moral. In speaking on the first of these branches he betrays that remarkable ignorance of natural philosophy which characterizes his writings throughout; and in the second department he displays too much of the captious and quibbling temper for which the false school of logicians is conspicuous; but he certainly succeeds, in every point, in showing the utter insufficiency of mere human science as our guide in the conduct of life.

Pursuing his argument, after some trifling respecting the word "Philosophy," which, he alleges, cannot be Wisdom, since, in its etymology, it professes only

to be the pursuit of wisdom, he contends that, no sect of philosophers having attained to any thing like determinate knowledge, and mere opinion being of no value¹, philosophy may be pronounced to have entirely failed in the investigation of truth.

He confutes the doctrine of Arcesilas that "nothing can be certainly known," and exposes the shallow pretensions of that writer at the expense of much needless repetition; and he concludes that the ancient and modern schools of philosophy are equally erroneous, the one in pretending to a knowledge which it does not possess, and the other in destroying the foundations of all knowledge. He observes that physical and logical science have no proper reference to the right conduct of life; and that which is termed ethical can be no sure nor safe guide, since its masters are found to differ respecting its first principles, and even respecting the nature of the summum bonum. In the management of this part of his argument Lactantius displays considerable acuteness. "Epicurus places the chief good in intellectual gratifications; Aristippus, in those of the body; Calliphron and Dinomachus of Cyrene unite moral fitness with pleasure. Diodorus makes the chief good to be the absence of pain; Hierony-

¹ Recte igitur Zeno ac Stoici opinionem repudiarunt. Opinari enim te scire, quod nescias, non est sapientis, sed temerarii potius, ac stulti.—C. 4.

mus, insensibility to pain ; the Peripatetics combine the advantages of person, mind, and fortune to constitute it. The chief good, according to Herillus, is knowledge ; according to Zeno, it is a life agreeable to nature ; with certain Stoics, it consists in virtue ; Aristotle places it in virtue and propriety. These are the opinions of nearly all. In so great a diversity whom are we to follow ? whom to believe ? The authority of all is equal ¹."

He takes occasion from an idle saying of Anaxagoras to show that the true summum bonum is Religion ; and that Euclides and Seneca were correct in asserting the chief good of mankind to be that immortality which is the reward of virtue, though, he observes, these philosophers evidently did not comprehend the full force of their own doctrine. Physical and logical science, therefore, having no effect upon human happiness, and ethics alone conducing to that end, Lactantius proceeds to show that even Socrates and Cicero, the great masters in this department of knowledge, failed to attain the truth ;

¹ Epicurus summum bonum in voluptate animi esse censet ; Aristippus in voluptate corporis ; Calliphron et Dinomachus, Cyrenaici, honestatem cum voluptate junxerunt. Diodorus in privatione doloris summum bonum posuit ; Hieronymus in non dolendo ; Peripatetici autem in bonis animi, et corporis, et fortunæ ; Herilli summum bonum est scientia ; Zenonis cum naturâ congruiter vivere ; quorundam Stoicorum, virtutem sequi ; Aristoteles in honestate ac virtute summum bonum collocavit. Hæ sunt ferè omnium sententiæ. In tantâ diversitate quem sequimur ? Cui credimus ? Par est omnibus autoritas.—C. 7.

and that all the other philosophers fell still more short of it. In proof of the insufficiency of philosophy as the guide to virtue and happiness, he adduces the scandalous lives of many eminent philosophers¹, a mode of argument by no means conclusive, though generally effective.

Rejecting *philosophy* therefore, Lactantius adopts what he calls *sophy*², (or wisdom ascertained by Revelation in opposition to the vain pursuit of wisdom,) as the true light by which mankind are to be directed towards the chief good; and he commends the saying of Lucretius, that the Discoverer of that light is not man but God³; but he does not by any means approve of its application to Epicurus, whose doctrines he refutes with great earnestness and suc-

¹ In this complaint he is anticipated by Cicero himself.—
 alios pecuniæ cupidos, gloriæ nonnullos, multos libidinum servos;
 ut cum eorum vitâ mirabiliter pugnet oratio; quod quidem mihi
 videtur esse turpissimum philosophus in ratione
 vitæ peccans, hoc turpius est, quod in officio, cujus magister esse
 vult, labitur, artemque vitæ professus, delinquit in vitâ.—Tusc.
 ii. 4.

² Nos *philosophiam* tollimus, quia humanæ cogitationis
 inventio est; *sophiam* defendimus, quia divina traditio est.
 Justin notices the distinction of φιλόσοφοι and σοφοί. Apol. i. c. 7.

³ ——— Deus ille fuit, Deus

Qui princeps vitæ rationem invenit eam, quæ
 Nunc appellatur *sapientia*; quique per artem
 Fluctibus è tantis vitam, tantisque tenebris
 In tam tranquillo, et tam clarâ luce locavit.

Rer. Nat. Lib. v. 8.

Cf. Ps. cxviii. 27. This eminently beautiful passage has been often quoted as applicable only to the Author of the Gospel.

cess. He ridicules the notion of the Metempsychosis; and speaks in strong language of the guilt of suicide,—“than which,” he says, “no act can be more wicked. For if the homicide is guilty inasmuch as he is the destroyer of man, he who kills himself is involved in the same guilt; for he also destroys a man: nay, that is surely to be regarded as the more heinous crime, the punishment of which rests with God alone. For as we do not enter into this life of our own accord, so must we retire from this corporeal dwelling which is assigned to our care, only at the command of the same Being who placed us in the body to inhabit in it, until he shall ordain our quitting it. . . . All the philosophers, therefore, as well as Cato himself, the prince of Roman wisdom, are guilty of homicide¹.”

Lactantius attacks certain celebrated sayings of Socrates, Plato, and other noted sages; and, in some instances, with more wit than fairness, taking them

¹ Quo nihil sceleratius fieri potest. Nam si homicida nefarius est, quia hominis extinctor est, eidem sceleri obstrictus est qui se necat, quia hominem necat. Immò verò majus id facinus existimandum est, cujus ultio Deo soli subjacet. Nam sicut in hanc vitam non nostrâ sponte venimus; ità rursus ex hoc domicilio corporis, quod tuendum nobis assignatum est, ejusdem jussu nobis recedendum est, qui nos in hoc corpus induxit, tamdiu habituros, donec jubeat emitti. C. 18. Cf. Justin. Apol. ii. c. 5.

εἰ οὖν πάντες ἑαυτοὺς φονεύσομεν, οὕτως καὶ γεννηθῆναι τινὰ καὶ μαθητευθῆναι εἰς τὰ θεῖα διδάγματα, ἣ δὲ μὴ εἶναι τὸ ἀνθρώπειον γένος, ὅσον ἐφ' ἡμῖν, αἵτιοι ἐσόμεθα, ἐναντίον τῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ βουλῇ, καὶ αὐτοὶ ποιῶντες, ἐὰν τοῦτο πράξωμεν.

à tort et à travers. Nor will the ground of his objection to abstruse inquiries into the secrets of nature, as savouring of impiety, be deemed of much weight in an age when the character of science is self-dependent presumption. "They truly are far more wicked, who labour to desecrate the mysteries of creation, and this heavenly sanctuary, with their impious investigations, than those who have profaned the house of Vesta, or the *bona Dea*, or *Ceres*¹." And he goes on, in a most amusing strain, full of strange ignorance and inconsistencies, to ridicule the opinion of some philosophers that the earth is a globe surrounded by the concavity of the heavens, and that all things are kept in their places by gravity; and he is very facetious at the expense of the antipodes, whom he calls inverted men, with pensile houses, gardens, hills, &c.², and declares that if it were so,

¹ Nimirum multo sceleratiores, qui arcana mundi, et hoc cœleste templum profanare impiis disputationibus quærent, quam qui ædem Vestæ, aut bonæ Deæ, aut Cereris intraverint.—C. 20.

But his objection seems to be confined to physical investigations, for in another part of this book he says, *Naturam hominis hanc Deus esse voluit, ut duarum rerum cupidus et appetens esset, religionis, et sapientiæ; sed homines idè falluntur, quod aut religionem suscipiunt omissâ sapientiâ, aut sapientiæ soli student omissâ religione; cùm alterum sine altero esse non possit verum* (c. 11.). The same sentiment is very elegantly expressed in the first book; *ut neque religio ulla sine sapientiâ suscipienda sit; nec ulla sine religione probanda sapientia.*

² Quid illi qui esse contrarios vestigiis nostris antipodes putant, nam aliquid loquuntur? aut est quisquam tam ineptus, qui credat esse homines, quorum vestigia sint superiora, quam capita?

they would necessarily tumble off; and he concludes by gravely asserting, that if he had time to bestow

aut ibi, quæ apud nos jacent, inversa pendere? fruges et arbores deorsùm versùm crescere? pluvias, et nives, et grandinem sursum versùm cadere in terram?

..... Quod si quæras ab iis quomodo hæc portenta defendunt; quomodo non cadunt omnia in inferiorem illam cœli partem; respondent, hanc rerum esse naturam, ut *pondera in medium ferantur, et ad medium connexa sint omnia, sicut radios videmus in rotâ*; quæ autem levia sunt, ut nebula, fumus, ignis, a medio differantur ut cœlum petant. C. 24. From this passage it would appear, that the general principle of a *centre of gravity* was recognized as explaining the phenomena of nature. Of those who held such doctrines Lactantius adds, Quid dicam de iis nescio, qui, cùm semel aberraverint, constanter in stultitiâ perseverant.

The reader may be curious to see the opinion of St. Augustine on this subject. It is contained in the ninth chapter of the sixteenth Book de Civitate Dei, which is headed thus:—

CAP. ix. *An inferiorem partem terræ, quæ nostræ habitationi contra via est, antipodas habere credendum est?*

Quod verò et antipodas esse fabulantur, id est, homines a contrariâ parte terræ, ubi sol oritur, ponentes vestigia, nullâ ratione credendum est. Neque hoc ullâ historiâ cognitione didicisse se affirmant, sed quasi ratiocinando conjectant, eo quòd intrâ convexa cœli terra suspensa sit, eundemque locum mundus habeat et infimum et medium. Et ex hoc opinantur alteram terræ partem, quæ infrâ est, habitatione hominum carere non posse; nec attendunt, etiamsi figurâ conglobatâ et rotundâ mundus esse credatur, sive aliquâ ratione monstretur, non tamen esse consequens, ut etiam ex illâ parte ab aquarum congerie nuda sit terra. Deinde etiamsi nuda sit, neque hoc statim necesse esse, ut homines habeat. Quoniam nullo modo Scriptura ista mentitur, quæ narratis præteritis facit fidem eò quòd ejus predicta complentur; nimisque absurdum est, ut dicatur aliquos homines ex hac in illam partem, oceani immensitate trajectâ navigare ac pervenire potuisse, ut etiam illic ex uno primo homine genus in-

upon such nonsense, he could easily *demonstrate* the Earth to be a plain, and the Heaven a flat surface, the apparent convexity of which is the effect of its immense magnitude.

His castigation is applied with better effect, as well as more justice, to the wild Platonic dream of a community of goods and of women, in a republic of philosophers; a scheme certainly unworthy of serious argument, though it has been revived and extended by certain sects professing the Christian religion. Nor is his taunt against Cicero and other philosophers, who personified and deified Fortune¹, undeserved: if Fortune, he says, is a person at all, she is certainly the devil.

There is little in this third book from which we can determine the theological views of the writer; but it may be inferred from some passages in it, that he maintained the eternity of future punishments as well as of rewards; that he was strongly impressed with the necessity of good works in order to salvation; and that he considered the *redemption* of man-

stitueretur humanum. Quàpropter inter illos tunc hominum populos qui per septuaginta duas gentes, et totidem linguas colliguntur fuisse divisi, quæramus, si possimus invenire, illam in terris peregrinantem civitatem Dei, quæ usque ad diluvium arcamque perducta est, atque in filiis Noë per eorum benedictiones perseverare monstratur, maximè in maximo, qui est appellatus Sem; quando quidem Japhet ita benedictus est, ut in ejusdem fratris sui domibus habitaret.

¹ _____ Nos te,

Nos facimus, Fortuna, Deam cœloque locamus.—Juv.

kind as universal. Some of these passages are as follows :—

“It is *essential* that *all* men should be *capable* of the chief good¹.”

“Ignorance has led some to the hardihood of asserting, that we were born for this express purpose, that we might pay the penalty of our sins; than which I cannot conceive any thing more preposterous².”

“The Holy Scriptures teach us that souls are never extinguished; but are either recompensed with a reward for their righteousness, or with everlasting punishment for their crimes³.”

In another place he says, “I am of opinion that reason is bestowed upon all animated beings, but to dumb animals for the purpose only of preserving life; whereas to man it is given that this life may generate another⁴.”

¹ *Necesse est universos summi boni capaces esse.*—C. xi.

² Quæ ignorantia efficit, ut quosdam dicere non puduerit, idcirco nos esse natos, ut scelerum pœnas lueremus; quo quid delirius dici possit non invenio.—C. 18.

³ Docent enim divinæ literæ non extingui animas; sed aut pro justitiâ præmio affici, aut pœnâ pro sceleribus *sempiternâ*. C. 19. Cf. Justin, Apol. i. c. 12, where he speaks of future punishment as eternal (*αἰώνιος*) in contradistinction to punishment of a limited duration,—ἐκαστον ἐπ’ αἰωνίαν κόλασιν, ἢ σωτηρίαν κατ’ ἀξίαν τῶν πράξεων πορεύεσθαι.

⁴ Equidem sic arbitror, universis animalibus esse datam rationem; sed mutis tantummodò ad vitam *tuendam*, homini autem ad *propagandam*; that is, I conceive, to make it the source of another life. C. 10.

The sense seems illustrated by a sentence in the second book,

In the sixth chapter there is a sentence which appears to indicate an acquaintance with the Gnostic philosophy. "Knowledge in man is derived from the soul, whose origin is from heaven; ignorance is from the body, which is formed of the earth¹." But Lactantius holds the doctrine of St. Paul, respecting the operating cause which makes men new creatures in Christ Jesus; "the word of God," he says, "so changes the whole man, that, the old man being put off, it makes him a new man, so that you would not know him to be the same²."

"Whoever understands that God is the true object of worship, or has proposed to himself the hope of immortality, has his conversation in heaven; and although he does not see the truth with his bodily sight, he beholds it with the eye of the soul³."

The whole argument is summed up thus: "The sole hope of man, his only safety, rests in this doctrine which we are defending. "All the wisdom of

which is repeated, with a slight variation, in the book de Irâ Dei. *Siquidem hominum atque mutorum solum, vel certè maximum, in religione discrimen est.*

¹ *Scientia in nobis ab animâ est, quæ oritur è cœlo; ignorantia à corpore, quod est è terrâ.—C. 6.*

² *Pauca Dei præcepta sic totum hominem immutant, ut, exposito vetere, novum reddunt, ut non cognoscas eundem esse. C. 26.*

³ *Quisquis enim aut Deum colendum esse intelligit, aut immortalitatis spem sibi propositam habet, mens ejus in cœlo est; et licet id non aspiciat oculis, animæ tamen lumine aspicit. C. 27.*

man consists in this one point, to know and to serve God. This is our maxim ; this our decision ¹."

¹ Una igitur spes homini, una salus, in hâc doctrinâ quam defendimus posita est. Omnis sapientia hominis in hoc uno est, ut Deum cognoscat, et colat. Hoc nostrum dogma, hæc sententia est.—C. 30.

CHAPTER IV.

SACRED INSTITUTES, BOOK IV.

THE fourth book of Institutes opens with a beautiful and eloquent exordium, addressed to the Emperor Constantine, showing the entire failure of man's unassisted reason in the attainment of "*true wisdom*," with which the popular religion of the heathen professed no connection; and on this ground Lactantius undertakes to prove its inseparable connection with "*true religion*." "The worship of the gods," he observes, "as I have shown in a former book, comprises no wisdom; not only because it subjects man, a creature of heavenly nature, to earthly and perishable things; but because it affords no instruction in the culture of manners, or in the conduct of life; nor does it lead to any investigation of truth, but merely to ceremonies of worship, which consist not in spiritual duty but in corporeal services. That, therefore, is not to be esteemed a true religion,

because it neither makes men wiser nor better by the precepts of justice and virtue. In like manner, philosophy, since it is wanting in religion, that is in real piety, is not true wisdom¹." But the case is different with Christianity; for among us the ministers of religion are our philosophers and moral instructors².

Lactantius proceeds to discuss the leading doctrines of Christianity, and to prove them in the first place by authorities, and secondly by reasoning. In both he evinces his usual neatness of style, and shrewdness in argument; but there is a want of method in his arrangement which renders it difficult to give a concise view of his opinions. He begins by asserting the fundamental truth of the unity of God, and remarks the absurdity of bestowing the titles of Father, and of Lord, upon more than one being, who must have existed before mankind, to be entitled their Father, and before the Creation, to be its Lord.

¹ Deorum cultus, ut in priore libro docui, non habet sapientiam non modò quia divinum animal hominem terrenis fragilibusque substernit; sed quia nihil ibi disseritur, quod proficiat ad mores excolendos vitamque formandam; nec habet inquisitionem aliquam veritatis, sed tantummodò ritum colendi, qui non officio mentis, sed ministerio corporis constat. Et ideò non est illa religio vera judicanda; quia nullis justitiæ virtutisque præceptis erudit afficitque meliores. Ita philosophia, quia veram religionem, id est summam pietatem, non habet, non est vera sapientia. C. 3.

² Denique idem sunt doctores sapientiæ, qui et Dei sacerdotes. Ibid.

But the doctrine of Lactantius, in this book, though by no means sound in all points, and seldom expressed in accurate or theological terms, is much less exceptionable, with respect to the Divine nature and atonement of the Son, than that which has been noticed in the second book. Still it is not to be denied, that his language apparently leads to the conclusion, that there was a time when the Son did not exist, but the Father only. “Although he *afterwards created innumerable others* by his agency, whom we call angels, yet he honoured this first-born alone with *the character*¹ of divinity, as filled with the power and majesty of the Father².”

Yet he seems fully to recognize the absolute divinity of Christ; interpreting the title *Hemanuel* he says, that it expresses, *Deum secum esse, id est, in terrâ, et in carne mortali*³; “that God was with them, that is, on earth, and in mortal flesh;” and, in the preceding chapter, after expounding, in his man-

¹ The force of the word *nomen*, in this passage, would not be conveyed by the Angl. *name*. It approaches more nearly to the theological use of *person*. Cf. Cæsar de Bello Gallico, lib. iii. c. 9. Legatos, quod *nomen* (which person, character, or office,) apud omnes nationes sanctum inviolatumque semper fuisset. See Matt. x. 41, &c. xxi. 9. Lactantius uses the word in the same sense in other places.

² Quamvis alios postea innumerabiles *per ipsum* creavisset, quos angelos dicimus, hunc tamen solum primogenitum *divini nominis* appellatione dignatus est, patriâ scilicet virtute ac majestate pollentem.—C. 6.

³ C. 12.

ner, a variety of texts from the Prophets, he accuses the Jews of having rejected, et Dominum, et Deum suum, "their Lord, and their God ¹."

He applies to the Son of God the words of holy Scripture in the eighth chapter of Proverbs ², which have, by many others, been understood of the Spirit; and those of Jeremiah in the fifth verse of the first chapter, respecting which there need be no question; and he tells us, that the name of the Son is known to the Father only ³, though he has a name among

¹ Lactantius seems to have derived some of his inaccurate language on these points of doctrine from Hermes' Trismegistus, and the books of the Sibyls, which, as it has already been observed, he, in common with most of the early Fathers considered as, in some measure at least, divinely inspired. In this book he appeals to Cicero, and Varro, for the authenticity of the Sibylline oracles; and of Hermes he says,—Trismegistus, qui veritatem penè universam, nescio quomodo, investigavit.—C. 8.

Ego verò non dubito, quia ad veritatem Trismegistus hâc aliquâ ratione perveniret, qui de *Deo Filio* locutus est multa, quæ divinis continentur arcanis. C. 27. fin. The passage which he cites in confirmation of his opinion is curious.

ὁ κύριος καὶ τῶν πάντων ποιητής, ὃν Θεὸν καλεῖν νενομίκαμεν, ἐπεὶ τὸν δεύτερον ἐποίησε Θεὸν ὁρατὸν καὶ αἰσθητὸν, (αἰσθητὸν δὲ φημὶ οὐ διὰ τὸ αἰσθῆσθαι αὐτὸν, περὶ δὲ τούτου οὐκ ἔστιν πότερον αὐτὸς αἰσθοίτο, ἀλλ' ὅτι εἰς αἰσθησιν ὑποπέμπει καὶ ἐς νοῦν,) ὅτι οὖν τοῦτον ἐποίησε πρῶτον καὶ μόνον καὶ ἓνα, καλὸς δὲ αὐτῷ ἐφάνη, καὶ πληρέστατος πάντων τῶν ἀγαθῶν, ἡγίασε τε καὶ πάνυ ἐφίλησεν ὡς ἴδιον τόκον.—Λόγος Τέλειος.

The most remarkable of the verses quoted from the Sibyls is,

Αὐτὸν σὸν γίνωσκε Θεὸν Θεοῦ υἱὸν ἑόντα.

² V. 22—30. Lactantius quotes here from the Septuagint.

³ Vide Matt. xi. 27. The Gnostics personified the wisdom (Σοφία) of God, and broached very strange and blasphemous

the angels, and another among men which is *Jesus*; for *Christ*, he adds, is only a title¹ common to all anointed kings; and he remarks on the error of calling him Chrestus (Χρηστὸς), as well as the mistake of some Greek writers who have translated the title by ἡλειμμένος².

He goes on to speak of two nativities of the Son, whom he describes as having lived, “first in the spirit, afterwards in the flesh³,” and in support of this notion, he adduces the authority of Jeremiah, and quotes as from him a text which is not extant in any copy of the Hebrew Scriptures or of the Septuagint version,—“*Beatus qui erat antequàm nasceretur*”⁴

notions respecting her. The ancient Christian writers appear to apply the title indifferently to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, although more frequently to the latter. E. g. *ὅτι νοῦς, λόγος, σοφία νῖὸς τοῦ πατρὸς· καὶ ἀπόρροια, ὡς φῶς ἀπὸ πυρὸς, τὸ πνεῦμα*. Athenagoras, *Legatio*, p. 11. *ὁ Θεὸς διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτοῦ, καὶ τῆς σοφίας, ἐποίησε τὰ πάντα, τῷ γὰρ λόγῳ αὐτοῦ ἐστειρώθησαν οἱ οὐρανοὶ, καὶ τῷ πνεύματι αὐτοῦ πᾶσα ἡ δύναμις αὐτῶν*. Theophilus, *lib. i. p. 74*. See Bishop Kaye's *Justin Martyr*, p. 157.

¹ Justin Martyr justly observes, that *Jesus* is also a title signifying *σωτήρ*, and shared by other deliverers whom God raised up among his people. *Apol. ii. c. 6*. And Lactantius himself makes the same observation in a subsequent chapter, c. 12.

² *Ab αλείφω*, syn. *χρίω*. Justin Martyr notices the confusion of *Χρηστὸς* and *Χριστὸς*, and argues on the hardship of punishing those who bore the former name. *Apol. i. c. 3*. Cf. *Tert. Apol. c. 3*.

³ *In primis enim testificantur illum bis esse natum; primùm in spiritu, postea in carne*.

⁴ Gallæus notes, on this passage, that the Fathers frequently quote texts which cannot be found. Of this every reader has

remarking upon it,—quod nulli alii contigit præter Christum; qui, cum esset à *principio* Filius Dei, regeneratus est denuò secundum carnem.

Lactantius seems here to adopt the language of St. John in stating that the Word, in the beginning was God, and was made flesh; but he condemns as blasphemous the idea of sexual intercourse as the means of the Son's second generation in the flesh, in terms not easily reconcileable with his previous statements respecting the intercourse of the fallen angels with women; such acts, he says, are not performed but by a corporeal and mortal animal; and he asks triumphantly "since it is *notorious*, omnibus notum est, that some female animals conceive by *wind*, or *the air*, why should it be thought incredible that a woman should conceive by *the Spirit*?"

But however indistinctly he expresses his views on these mysterious topics, he is clear in asserting the doctrine of salvation by means of faith in Christ alone. "Wherefore no other hope of attaining immortality is given to man, unless he shall have believed on him, and shall have taken up his cross to

had ample experience; but it is much more probable that the difficulty arises from their loose manner of citing Scripture from memory, than that, as some critics have supposed, portions of the inspired word have been lost in the lapse of time. It is certain, however, that Lactantius, and some other early Christian writers, often refer to Apocryphal Scriptures.

bear, and to suffer it¹." Nor is he less explicit respecting the mediatorial office, and eternal priesthood of the Son: of whom he says that "he became the Son of God through the Spirit, but the Son of Man through the flesh, that is, *both God and Man*. The power of God was manifested in him by the works which he performed, the infirmity of man by his passion which he endured²." He calls the Church the great eternal Temple of God, of which since "Christ is the Builder, he must of necessity exercise in it *a perpetual priesthood; nor can there be any approach to the entrance of the Temple, nor to the presence of God, unless through him who built the temple*³."

He thinks, however, that Christ himself did not expressly assert the doctrine of his own divinity; and he makes this observation in a manner which betrays some confusion in his notions on the subject. "For he taught that there is one God, and that He

¹ Nulla igitur spes alia consequendæ immortalitatis hominì datur, nisi crediderit in eum, et illam crucem portandam, patientiamque susceperit.—C. 19. fin.

² Factus est Dei filius per spiritum, et hominis per carnem, id est, *et Deus, et homo*. Dei virtus in eo ex operibus, quæ fecit, apparuit; fragilitas hominis, ex passione, quam pertulit.—C. 13.

³ Æternum templum Deo quod appellatur Ecclesia cujus templi, et magni et æterni, quoniam Christus fabricator fuit, idem necesse est habeat in eo *sacerdotium sempiternum*. *Nec potest nisi per eum*, qui constituit templum, et ad aditum templi, et ad conspectum Dei, perveniri.—C. 14.

alone ought to be worshipped ; nor did he ever declare himself to be God ; for he would not have been a faithful messenger, if being sent to extirpate polytheism, and to establish the Unity, he had introduced *another beside that one*. This would not have been to preach one God, nor to seek the glory of Him who sent him, but his own ; and to set up an interest separate from his whom he came to reveal. Wherefore, because he proved so faithful, because he arrogated nothing to himself, that he might do the will of him who sent him, he obtained the dignity of *perpetual priesthood*, and the honour of supreme King, and the power of Judge, and the character of God¹." From which it might be inferred that Lactantius conceived the Divine character of our Lord to have been conferred upon him as the reward of his obedience and fidelity ; a notion which might have arisen from a misunderstanding of St. Paul.—*Phil.* ii. 9, 10.

Yet Lactantius in several places speaks of Christ as God, previous to the fulfilment of his ministry ; he calls him "God in the flesh,"—*Deus in carne*, and *Deus Filius*,—and in the ninth chapter, where he remarks the superiority of the Greek term *Λόγος*

¹ — docuit enim quod unus Deus sit ; eumque solum coli oportere ; nec unquam ipse se Deum dixit ; quia non servasset fidem, si missus ut deos tolleretur, et unum assereret, induceret alium præter unum. Hoc erat, non de uno Deo facere præconium, nec ejus, qui miserat, sed suum proprium negotium gerere,

over the Latin *Verbum*, inasmuch as the former conveys the idea of Reason or Mind, whereas the latter is simply equivalent to *Sermo*, or Speech, he uses language which implies that he considered Christ as having the mind of God, and as being the Spirit of God.

On the whole, then, considering the manner in which Lactantius speaks of the principal articles of faith relating to our Saviour, of his sonship, his incarnation¹, his office, his life, and death, and resurrection, on all of which points he is very diffuse, I think that a candid reader will be led to the conclusion already mentioned, that he intended to adopt the creed of the orthodox Church, and that his errors are the result of his ignorance of controversial divinity in an age when even the professed doctors of theology were in the habit of employing very indefinite language.

It is not so easy to account for his total silence respecting the personality of the Holy Spirit². On

ac se ab eo quem illustratum venerat separare. Propterea, quia tam fidelis extitit, quia sibi nihil prorsùs assumpsit, ut mandata mittentis impleret, et sacerdotii perpetui dignitatem, et regis summi honorem, et judicis potestatem, et Dei nomen accepit.—C. 14.

¹ Sicut Pater spiritûs ejus Deus sine Matre, ita Mater corporis ejus Virgo sine Patre. Fuit igitur et Deus, et homo, inter Deum atque hominem medius constitutus.—C. 25.

By the epithet *medius* I understand the mediatorial office to be implied.—1 Tim. ii. 5.

² It would not be reasonable to infer that St. Paul denied the

this subject his doctrine must be acknowledged to be both obscure and suspicious ; and it has been asserted that in some of his writings his incorrectness is more than mere omission. In his extant works, however, there is no positive denial of this essential doctrine ; but the negative evidence unquestionably tends to raise a doubt whether he understood or believed the doctrine of the Trinity. On the other hand, it is clear that he considered membership in the Church ¹ as indispensable to salvation ; and it is not easy to suppose that so early in the fourth century, the maintainer of so grievous a heresy could have been suffered to remain in the pale of the orthodox body.

This inference in his favour is much strengthened by the vehement terms in which he condemns all heretics of every denomination. He argues that it is necessary to define the true doctrine accurately, on account of the manifold sects and heresies which have divided the people of God, and broken the unity of the sacred body. Truth, he adds, is only to be found in the Church ; for the heretics are raised

personality of the Holy Ghost from such passages as Col. ii. 2, where the whole mystery of Faith is made to consist in the knowledge of the two first persons of the Trinity : *εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ*. The particular point to be established must always be borne in mind in estimating the value of inferences from omission.

¹ Hæc (Ecclesia) est domus fidelis, hoc immortale templum, *in quo si quis non sacrificaverit, immortalitatis præmium non habebit.*—C. 14.

up by demons, who take this method of assailing the Gospel, since they find that it is prevailing to the overthrow of polytheism. "Some of our own people, less established in the faith, or less learned, or less cautious, have caused divisions in our unity, and have scattered the Church. . . . These Phrygians, or Novatians, or Valentinians, or Marcionites, or Anthropians, or *Arians*, or by whatever other name they are called, have ceased to be Christians, having laid aside the name of Christ, to assume human and foreign distinctions. *It is the Catholic Church alone, therefore, which retains the true service of God*¹."

With these professions of high Church principles, it is certainly extraordinary that Lactantius, in speaking of the unity of the Godhead, omits to mention the personality of the Holy Ghost, and uses language which has, not without reason, subjected him to the imputation of unsound doctrine respect-

¹ Fuerunt quidam nostrorum vel minùs stabilità fide, vel minùs docti, vel minùs cauti, qui dissidium facerent unitatis, et ecclesiam dissiparent. . . . Phryges, aut Novatiani, aut Valentiniani, aut Marcionitæ, aut Anthropiani, (aut Ariani) seu quilibet alii nominentur, Christiani esse desiêrunt, qui Christi nomine omisso, humana et externa vocabula induerunt. Sola igitur Catholica Ecclesia est, quæ verum cultum retinet.—C. 30. The words (aut Ariani) are considered as spurious by Isæus, not on the authority of any MS. or vet. cod., but on the ground that the Arian heresy was not known at the time when Lactantius wrote, which he places A.D. 302. This date however has been already discussed and the Arians were a well-known sect as early as A.D. 315. So that there is no ground for the rejection of the words.

See the note in Dufresnoy's Edition in *loco*.

ing the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. "Perhaps it may be asked how, since we affirm that we worship one God, we yet speak of two, *God the Father*, and *God the Son* ¹."

He goes on to illustrate the unity of these *two persons* by the identity of the stream with the spring from which it flows, and that of the rays of light with the sun ². This unity of the Father and Son was foreshown by the Prophets, and, he adds, "he who receives the Son, and assumes his name (the title of Christian) honours the Father with the Son; since the Son is the ambassador, and messenger, and priest of the Supreme Father. He is the great door of the temple, the way of light, the captain of salvation, the gate of life ³."

Lactantius supports the doctrines which he adopts as the Catholic Faith, at some length, by an appeal to the Prophecies, which, he argues, are proved to be both genuine and authentic by their high antiquity, and their exact fulfilment in the birth, and life, and miracles, and death of Jesus Christ; but he is far

¹ Fortasse quærat aliquis, quomodo, cùm Deum nos unum colere dicamus, *duos* tamen esse asseveremus, Deum Patrem, et Deum Filium.—C. 29.

² Non separatur, sicut nec rivus à fonte, nec radius à sole; quia et aqua fontis in rivo est, et solis lumen in radio.—Ibid.

³ Qui autem Filium suscipit, et nomen ejus gerit, is verò cum Filio simul et Patrem colit; quoniam legatus, et nuncius, et sacerdos summi Patris est Filius. Hic templi maxima janua est, hic lucis via, hic dux salutis, hic ostium vitæ.—Ibid.

from happy in expounding holy Scripture; and in Dufresnoy's edition there is a collection of sixty-two texts which he is supposed to have interpreted erroneously¹. He adduces also the testimony of Hermes and of the Sibylline Oracles as part of the evidence from Prophecy, and quotes several passages from Apocryphal Scriptures².

He considers Moses, whom he places 900 years before the Trojan war³, as the first of the Prophets⁴, and Zechariah as the last⁵. He mentions David and Solomon as kings well known in history, and reckons them both among the prophets, placing the latter

¹ Singulari modo.

² He cites the following passage from the 19th ode of Solomon:—*Infirmatus est uterus Virginis, et accepit foetum; et gravata est, et facta est in multa miseratione mater Virgo* *.—C. 12.

He also quotes the books of Wisdom and Esdras as authentic, and intimates that they were still in the possession of the Jews; but Lactantius was wholly ignorant of Hebrew, as we may safely infer from his assertion that *Solomon* named the city *Hierosolyma* after himself; and from his etymology of *Pascha* (ΠΑΣΧΑ) ἀπὸ τοῦ πάσχειν.—C. 24.

³ According to the common chronology, Moses was born B.C. 1571, and the Trojan war took place B.C. 1184, making the interval only 387 years.

⁴ Justin Martyr also places Moses at the head of his list of Prophets, Μωσῆς μὲν οὖν πρῶτος τῶν προφητῶν γενόμενος.—Apol. i. c. 40.

⁵ Malachi prophesied B.C. 397, and Zechariah is made to range

* Fabricius published eighteen Apocryphal psalms ascribed to Solomon, but this quotation does not appear among them.

140 years before the fall of Troy¹; and he proves from their writings in the Psalms and Proverbs that the Λόγος was employed in the work of creation, which doctrine he confirms by a reference to the first chapter of St. John; and he states that the incarnation of this Λόγος being the principal point in the attack made by infidels against the truth of the Gospel, it had become necessary to prove it at full length by the testimony of those prophecies which, many ages beforehand, described the manhood, the acts, and the crucifixion of the Son of God².

He briefly traces the history of the Jews from their first origin to the date of the crucifixion³; after which he considers them as having filled up the measure of their iniquities, and that their probation was at an end⁴. He makes the period of the

from B.C. 587 to 518, the least difference being 121 years, and the greatest 190. Yet Lactantius quotes Malachi by name in this book, at c. 24.

¹ According to the common chronology, Solomon began to reign B.C. 1014, that is 170 years before the fall of Troy.

² Justin Martyr adopts the same line of argument. *Ἐν δὲ ταῖς τῶν προφητῶν βίβλοις εὔρομεν προκηρυσσόμενον παραγινόμενον γεννώμενον διὰ παρθένου, καὶ ἀνδρούμενον, καὶ θεραπεύοντα πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ μαλακίαν, καὶ νεκροὺς ἀνεγείροντα, καὶ φθονούμενον, καὶ ἀγνοούμενον, καὶ σταυρούμενον Ἰησοῦν τὸν ἡμέτερον Χριστόν, καὶ ἀποθνήσκοντα, καὶ ἀνεγείρόμενον, καὶ εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀνερχόμενον, καὶ υἱὸν Θεοῦ ὄντα καὶ κεκλημένον, &c.,* Apol. i. c. 39. See also c. 31.

³ C. 8. Cf. Acts, c. viii.

⁴ *Noluit se Judæis ostendere, ne adduceret eos in pœnitentiam,*

sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt 330 years¹. He says that the golden calf made by Aaron was the god Apis²; that the prophet Isaiah was "sawn asunder³;" and that from their return after the Babylonian captivity, the Jews were governed by Tetrarchs till the time of Herod⁴.

Leaving the argument from prophecy and history, which he was thus evidently incompetent to manage with advantage, Lactantius turns to the deductions of reason and sound logic in order to refute the sophistry of those false philosophers, "who," he says, "are too wise to their own detriment, and deter men from belief in Divine truths⁵." And he argues with great force and acuteness in proving the necessity that the Saviour should be both God and man; and that, as man, he should suffer persecution and a shameful death, in order to confirm precept by example, and to show the practicability of moral obedience in a creature made subject to human infirmities. As this point appears to be treated in a

atque impios resanaret.—C. 19. It is unnecessary to observe that this does not agree with the facts recorded in the Gospel, nor with the conduct of the Apostles after the Resurrection.

¹ The common chronology is from B.C. 1706 to B.C. 1491, that is, 315 years.

² C. 10. It appears rather to have been intended as an image of Jehovah. Ps. cvi. 20.

³ C. 11. Cf. Heb. xi. 37.

⁴ Exinde Tetrarchas habuerunt usque ad Herodem.

⁵ Qui nimium, non sine malo suo sapiunt, rebusque divinis fidem detrahunt.—C. 22.

manner extremely applicable to the sceptical objections of later times, I have subjoined at the end of the chapter a translation of this portion of his argument, which is in his best style.

Lactantius maintains an opinion that no prophecy of the Old Testament was capable of being understood and interpreted until after its complete fulfilment¹; and he shows from the testimony of the Prophets that the Ceremonial Law was destined to be abolished at the advent of the Messiah, inasmuch as it was designed to be adumbrative of the Gospel dispensation.

He remarks that the motive of Jesus Christ, in retiring from his persecutors was, not to avoid those sufferings which he had himself decreed to undergo, but to set an example to his followers that they should escape from persecution by flight².

He mentions the preaching of St. Peter and St. Paul at Rome³, as an undisputed fact. He speaks of the sign of the Cross made on the forehead as the characteristic badge of Christianity⁴, and as an im-

¹ — nec ullo modo poterant intelligi . . . nisi fuissent universa completa.—C. 16.

Quæ (prophetarum arcana) antequam pateretur (Christus) perspicui nullo modo poterant; quia ipsum, passionemque ejus annunciabant.—C. 20.

² C. 18. This opinion is directly at variance with that of Tertullian, which he urges so vehemently in his book *De Fugâ in Persecutione*; but it seems more consonant with sound views of Scriptural doctrine. See John vii. 1; Matt. x. 23.

³ C. 21.

⁴ C. 26.

pregnable defence against evil spirits¹: it is not stated whether this sign was impressed at the time of baptism, or afterwards; but from the expression, "Christ . . . is the protection of all who *have inscribed* on their forehead the sign . . . of the cross," I conceive we may infer that it was a ceremony to be performed once for all, and not habitually. Lactantius mentions this power of the Cross over unclean spirits as if it were in his time generally acknowledged²; he asserts that Christians commonly possessed the power of casting out demons, in language similar to that employed by Justin, Tertullian³, and other Fathers, in writing on this perplexing topic: and the argument which he puts into the mouth of the objector undoubtedly admits the fact⁴.

¹ C. 57. Christus . . . saluti est omnibus qui signum . . . crucis in suâ fronte *conscripterint*.

² Ibid. et lib. v. c. 22. Vide lib. ii. c. 18.

³ Consult Justin Martyr, Apol. ii. c. 6*, and Tertullian, Apol. c. 23. 27, and 32.

⁴ Sed *aiunt* hoc deos non metu sed odio facere, &c.

* If we weigh Justin's language carefully, we may perhaps infer that this power had, even in his time, become scarce—*ἰσχυρο*—*καὶ ἐν νῦν ἰσχυραί*—. If this Apology was written A.D. 150, there might be persons still living who had received miraculous gifts from the hands of the Apostles themselves, to whom Cave and Middleton (and apparently Bishops Kaye and Blomfield) think that the privilege of conferring miraculous gifts was confined. Cave grounds his opinion on a passage in Chrysostom, Homil. 18. in Act. Apost. Tertullian's Apology, indeed, was written so late as A.D. 196. But Cave (Chron. Table, A.D. 74. Vespasian 5.) observes from Pliny (lib. viii. c. 49.) that this was a period of unusual longevity.

He also affirms that the heathen oracles were dumb in the presence of every believer who had the sign of the Cross on his forehead, and from this fact he infers in a very forcible manner the identity of the heathen gods with the demons of possession.

He goes on to point out the precise distinction between *Superstition* and *Religion*¹; and he shows that Cicero² was in error both with regard to the etymology of the names, and in his definition of the things. *Religion*, he says, is from “*religo*,” and signifies the *obligation* in which we are bound to God; not, as Cicero supposed, from “*relego*.” *Superstition* is the worship of departed men, and not the universal prayer that our children may survive us. His opinion of vital religion is in accordance with this definition. “The true Temple of God . . . is not enclosed within walls, but in the heart and faith of those men who believe in Him, and are called the faithful³,” and he says that the great obstacle to the prevalence of this principle is in the flesh⁴.

On a comparison of several passages bearing upon

¹ C. 28.

² Nat. Deor. lib. ii. c. 28. Betuleius says, that Jerome agrees with Lactantius, but that Augustine adopts the etymology of Cicero.—Dufresnoy's ed. in loco.

³ Verum templum Dei . . . non in parietibus est, sed in corde, ac fide hominum, qui credunt in eum, ac vocantur fideles.—C. 19.

⁴ —Una enim nobis, et magna, et præcipua cum carne luctatio est.—C. 25.

the question of free will, it appears that Lactantius held mankind to be ἀντεξούσιον with respect to the reception or rejection of moral and religious truth. Expounding a passage in the last chapter of Isaiah, he says, indeed, "God intending to send into the world one who should plan his Temple, thought not good to send him in heavenly power and glory, *that the people who were ungrateful towards God might be led into the greatest error, and pay the penalty of their crimes*, since they would not receive their Lord and their God¹." But the sense in which these expressions must be taken seems to be decided by what follows: "Yet since God is merciful and faithful towards his people, he sent Him even to those whom he hated, that he might not for ever exclude them from the way of salvation; but that he might afford to them *a fair opportunity of following their God*; that they also might obtain the reward of life, if they had followed him, (which many of them do, and have done,) and that they might incur the penalty of death, *by their own fault*, if they had rejected their King²."

¹ Volens igitur Deus Metatorem Templi sui mittere in terram, noluit eum in potestate et claritate cœlesti mittere, ut ingratus in Deum populus in errorem maximum induceretur, ac poenas pro facinoribus suis lueret, qui Dominum ac Deum suum non recepissent.—c. 11.

² Sed tamen quoniam clemens est, et pius ergà suos Deus, ad eos ipsos eum misit quos oderat, ne illis in perpetuum salutis oram clauderet; sed daret his liberam facultatem sequendi Deum; ut et præmium vitæ adipiscerentur, si secuti fuissent,

In a subsequent part of his book he expressly says that "God leaves man the liberty of choice, that a reward might be appointed for the obedient, since they might have disobeyed if they pleased; and punishment for the disobedient, since they might have obeyed if they would¹." Again, soon afterwards, "The Teacher of Virtue was in duty bound to preclude men from this pretext, *that no one may ascribe his sins to necessity rather than to his own fault*²." And a little further on, "Sin is not the result of necessity, but of the purpose and choice³." There is, indeed, in this chapter, one expression to which some Protestants may, perhaps, object, as

(quod plurimi eorum faciunt atque fecerunt,) et culpâ suâ* in pœnam mortis incurrerent, si Regem suum repudiassent.—Ibid.

¹ — libertatem relinquat, ut præmium sit constitutum parentibus, quia poterant non parere si vellent; et non parentibus pœna, quia poterant parere si vellent.—C. 24.

² Doctor itaque virtutis hanc excusationem debuit hominibus auferre, ne quis, quod peccat, necessitati potius ascribat, quam culpæ suæ.—Ibid.

³ — non necessitatis esse peccare, sed propositi, et voluntatis.—C. 25.

* αἰτία ἐλομένου, Θεὸς δὲ ἀναίτιος, quoted from Plato by Justin, Apol. i. c. 57. That such was generally the doctrine of the Greek fathers has been shown by Bishop Kaye in his Work on Justin Martyr. A leaning towards fatalism, on the other hand, may be observed in the writings of many Latin fathers.—Augustin, who is far from consistent on this point, appears to think that God *overrules* moral evil to his own purposes, but does not *cause* it. "Deus ordinator et Creator omnium rerum naturalium, peccatorum autem tantum ordinator."—Confess. lib. i. c. 16.

implying the doctrine of human merit. "Since man consists of body and spirit, and it is fit that the spirit of righteousness should be earned by good works, that it may be eternal¹."

¹ Etenim cùm constet homo ex carne et spiritu, et oporteat spiritum justitiæ operibus emereri, ut sit æternus.—Ibid.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IV.

"It is denied that the Divine nature could undergo any derogation; that it could be compatible with the dignity of God, to become man, and to burden himself with the infirmities of flesh; to subject himself to passions, suffering, and death, as if he could not easily reveal himself to man without the weakness of the body; and teach them righteousness, if that were his will, with greater authority as professing his Divinity. Since in that case all men must have obeyed the precepts of heaven, if enforced by the influence and power of a Divine teacher. Why, say they, did he not come in the character of God, to instruct mankind? Why did he exhibit himself in so degraded and feeble a condition that he could be despised and punished by men? Why did he suffer violence from impotent mortals? Why did he not either resist human force by valour, or avoid it by divine power? Why, at all events, did he not display his own majesty in death itself? But he was apprehended and brought to justice as one who had no means of resistance; he was condemned as a malefactor; he was put to death as a mortal.

"I shall refute these objections carefully, and leave no room for error on the subject; for all these things were done for a weighty and wonderful reason; and whoever understands it, will not only cease to wonder that God suffered at the hands of man, but will readily perceive that He could not have been believed to be God if those very things to which he objects had not taken place.

"I ask whether or not it is fitting that whoever professes to become a teacher of men, and to frame the lives and conduct of others, should himself practise what he preaches? If he does

not practise it, there is an end of his precepts. For if what is taught be good, and calculated to render human life perfect, the preceptor ought not to be distinct from the mass and society of mankind, whom he is to influence; and he must live in the same manner in which he requires others to live; lest by another mode of life he should bring discredit upon his own principles, and render his doctrine ineffectual by denying in deeds what he labours to prove by words. For then every hearer will be unwilling to admit the necessity of obedience, and will look upon it as an encroachment on his natural liberty; and will answer his teacher thus:—I cannot do as you desire me, because it is impossible. You forbid me to be angry, to covet, to be led by passion, to fear pain or death; but this is so contrary to nature, that all living creatures are subject to these affections. Or if you think it possible to resist nature, do you yourself show me that what you require may be done. But since you do not act thus, what assurance is it to attempt to impose rules on a free man, which you do not yourself observe? First learn and then teach; and correct your own morals before you censure others¹.

“Who can deny that this reply is just? Such a teacher would fall into contempt, and himself be mocked in the attempt to impose upon other men. What then should the teacher do, to meet this objection, and to deprive gainsayers of this excuse, but prove at once, by his own actions, the practicability of his doctrine? It is for this cause that no one follows the advice of philosophers. Men prefer example to precept, because it is easy to deliver the one, and difficult to afford the other. It is to be wished that as many acted well as discourse well: but they who preach, but do not practise, gain little credit. If they are men, they are despised for their inconsistency; and to God is opposed the excuse of human frailty. Nothing remains but to confirm precept by example, which the philosophers can never do. Therefore when the preceptors themselves yield to their passions, which, they say, ought to be subdued, they can instruct no one in that virtue which they hypocritically extol. And for this reason they hold that there has been as yet no perfect sage,—that is, no one in whom the perfection of knowledge and learning has concurred

¹ Luke iv. 23.

with perfect righteousness. This is true; for since the creation no such person has appeared except Christ who at once taught true wisdom by his word, and exemplified his doctrine by his virtue.

"Now let us see whether a teacher sent from heaven can be otherwise than perfect. I am not now speaking of Him whose mission from God is denied. Let us suppose some one to be sent from heaven, to regulate human life by the rudiments of virtue and justice. No one can doubt that this teacher sent from heaven must be complete in all knowledge and in all virtue, that the distinction between heavenly and earthly beings be maintained. For there can be no esoteric wisdom proper to man, nor can a mind confined in an earthly frame, and oppressed by the corruption of the body, comprehend the truth by its own effort, nor receive it without being taught. And even if it could, still it would be incapable of complete virtue, and of an entire resistance to those vices, of which the substance exists in the bodily frame; so that the mere earthly teacher could not be perfect. But the heavenly Teacher, whose divinity implies wisdom, and his immortality virtue, must, of necessity, be consummate and perfect in teaching, as in all things else. And yet this cannot be accomplished unless he assume a mortal body; and the reason of this is evident. For if he should come among men as God (to say nothing of the impossibility that mortal eyes could behold and support the brightness of His majesty), God Himself certainly could not teach them virtue, because, being without a body, he could not exemplify his teaching, and consequently his doctrine would be imperfect. Moreover, if the height of virtue is to endure pain patiently in the cause of right and duty; if it be virtue, not to fear death when threatened, and to meet it courageously when inflicted, our perfect teacher should both instruct us in this by precept, and confirm us by example; for he who imposes rules of conduct must leave no pretext for excuses, in order that he may oblige men, not by force, but by conviction, and at the same time, may leave them their liberty of action, so that reward may be adjudged to the obedient, since it was in their power to disobey, if they had so pleased; and punishment to the disobedient, since they might have obeyed if they would. How then can all excuse be precluded unless he, who teaches, prac-

tises his own precepts, and, as it were, shows us the way, and holds out his hand to his followers? But again, how can he practise his own precepts, if he be not of the same nature as his disciples? For if he be subject to no passion, man may reply to his instructions thus : I desire to avoid sin, but I am overcome, because I am clothed with frail and weak flesh ; and it is this (flesh) which covets, and is angry, and repines, and fears death. Wherefore I am drawn against my will, and I sin not wilfully, but from necessity. I myself feel that I err ; but the obligation of my infirmity compels me ; and I cannot resist it. What answer can that teacher of righteousness make to this? How can he refute and convince the man who pleads his fleshly nature as an excuse for his offences, unless he has also himself put on flesh, and shown that flesh is capable of virtue? Contumacy cannot be convicted unless by example ; for your precepts can have no weight unless you are the first to practise them ; since human nature, prone to vice, seeks not only excuses, but justification for its offences.

“It is necessary that the Preceptor and Teacher of mankind should be in the very likeness of men, that by overcoming sin he may prove to man that sin is not invincible by human nature. But if he were immortal, he could by no means afford an example to man. For some resolute person may advance this argument. Thou indeed sinnest not, because Thou art free from this body ; Thou dost not covet, because nothing is wanting to an immortal. But to me many things are needful to preserve life. Thou fearest not death, which has no power over thee ; Thou despisest pain which cannot affect thee. But I, being mortal, fear both, because they inflict on me severe pangs which the infirmity of the flesh cannot endure.

“The Teacher of virtue is bound to deprive men of this excuse, that no man may ascribe his faults to fatal necessity instead of his own will. In order to his being a perfect Teacher, he must leave his disciple no ground of cavil ; so that if he objects, You require impossibilities, The answer may be, Behold I myself perform them, though clothed in that flesh whose nature is sinful. I bear about the same body ; but sin has no dominion over me. If he says,—It is difficult to despise riches, because of the bodily constitution ; the Teacher replies, I also have a body, yet I resist all covetous desires. Or, I cannot endure pain and death in a

just cause, because I am frail;—Behold, pain and death have power over me, and yet I subdue those evils which thou fearest, that I may enable thee to overcome them. I go first through those difficulties which you pretend to be insuperable; if you cannot follow precept, follow example.

“By these means all excuse is anticipated, and man is forced to confess, that he is unrighteous by his own fault, since he neglects to follow a preceptor who is, at the same time, a pattern.

“You see then how much more complete a mortal teacher is, inasmuch as he is a guide to mortals, than an immortal one, who cannot exemplify endurance, since he is exempt from suffering. It is not meant that man is preferable to God, but to prove that man cannot be complete in knowledge unless he be also God, that he may enforce obedience upon men with celestial authority; nor is God (complete as a Teacher) unless He put on a mortal body, that, fulfilling his precepts in his actions, He may bind them to the duty of compliance.

“It follows clearly that he, who is to be the guide of life, and the tutor of righteousness, must be corporeal; nor can his teaching be otherwise complete and perfect, being rooted and grounded, so as to remain fixed and unalterable among mankind; that he himself should undergo the weakness and infirmities of the flesh, and enact that virtue which he is to preach, that he may enforce it by word and deed. Nay, that he become subject to death, and to all sufferings, since the duties of virtue are exercised in endurance of pain and death; all which, as I have observed, the Teacher must bear, in order to show that they may be endured.

“Let men, therefore, learn and understand on what account the most High God, when He sent his Ambassador and Messenger to instruct mortals in the precepts of His righteousness, was willing that he should put on mortal flesh, and endure affliction, and suffer death. For when there was no righteousness in the world, He sent this Teacher, as a living law, to establish a new character and religion, and to disseminate throughout the earth a true and pious worship by precept and example. But that it might be indisputable that he was sent from God, it was necessary that he should not be born like other men from both sexes; but, that he might appear celestial even in his humanity, he was created without a father. For he had a special Father, even God; and as God is the Father of his Spirit without a mother, so the mother

of his body was a virgin without a father¹. He was therefore God and Man, being made the Mediator (*medius constitutus*) between God and man (whence the Greeks term him *Μεσίτης*²); that He may bring man to God, that is, to immortality. For if He had been God only, as was before observed, He could not have set man an example of virtue; if He had been Man only, He could not compel men to righteousness without some authority and power more than human. And since man consists of flesh and spirit, and that the spirit must deserve to become eternal by works of righteousness, the flesh, being earthly, and therefore mortal, draws away the spirit that is joined with it, and leads it from immortality to death. Hence a spirit without a body could by no means become man's guide to immortality, since the flesh hinders the spirit from following God; for the flesh is frail and subject to sin, and sin is the way of death (*pabulum mortis*). On that account therefore the Mediator came, that is, God in the flesh, that the flesh might be enabled to follow Him; and that He might deliver man from death whose power is over the flesh. Therefore he put on flesh, that by vanquishing the desires of the flesh, He might show that sin is not matter of necessity, but of choice and will. Our sole, and great, and principal conflict (*una, et magna, et præcipua*;) is with the flesh, whose endless desires oppress the soul, and will not suffer it to retain the Lord; but enslaving it in pleasures and soft delights render it liable to everlasting death. That we may be enabled to resist these temptations, God has opened to us and exemplified a way to subdue the flesh; which victory being achieved, and every way complete, confers the crown and reward of that desired immortality upon us who conquer."—C. 22—25.

¹ This perhaps is questionably stated. *Sicut Pater spiritus ejus Deus sine matre, ita mater corporis ejus virgo sine patre.*

² 1 Tim. ii. 5.

CHAPTER V.

SACRED INSTITUTES, BOOK V.

LACTANTIUS opens his fifth book, in which he proposes to treat of justice or righteousness, with addressing the Emperor, in terms similar to those employed by other apologists for Christianity, respecting the manifest injustice of condemning the Christians without listening to their defence; which he attributes to a secret apprehension on the part of the authorities, lest truth, if heard, should prevail over the falsehood which they cherished. He admits, however, that literature, such as it had hitherto been, was unfavourable to soundness of faith, though capable, by a right use, of being made subservient to it; and that eloquence is not generally on the side of truth, inasmuch as it is a talent usually accompanied by an overweening worldly ambition. The consequence, he says, is, that, with a few splendid exceptions, there has been a scarcity of learned and able

defenders of Christianity. Among these he mentions, with high commendation, Minucius Felix, Tertullian, and Cyprian. "Of those who are known to me¹, Minucius Felix held no mean rank among the pleaders of his day. His book entitled 'Octavius,' proves what an able advocate of the truth he would have been, had he devoted himself exclusively to this object². Tertullian, too, was versed in every department of literature; but his style is *harsh, inelegant, and very obscure*³; so that he did not attain the celebrity he deserved. Cyprian therefore stood alone in excellence and reputation; since he acquired a great name as a master of the art of oratory, and composed many admirable writings in his own manner. For he was endued with a ready, copious, and elegant talent, and (which is the greatest merit in a

¹ Minucius Felix flourished about A. D. 235, while Tertullian was still living; Lactantius must therefore mean that the writings of these authors were known to him.

² The "Octavius" is an elegant apology for Christianity, still extant.—Dufresnoy, note in loco.

³ In eloquendo parùm facilis, et minùs comptus, et multùm obscurus.—C. 1.

Jerome, however, tells us, on the authority of Paulus, an amanuensis of Cyprian, that this Father made it a rule to read Tertullian's works daily, and used to call him his master. Of Cyprian, Jerome speaks in terms similar to those used here, and says, that it is superfluous to describe his genius, *cùm sole clariora sint ejus opera*. He also mentions Minucius Felix as a distinguished pleader, and the author of a controversial dialogue between a Christian and an heathen, entitled Octavius.—De Vir. Illust. in loco.

style,) he was clear; so that it is difficult to say whether he was more beautiful in his eloquence, or lucid in explaining, or persuasive in enforcing truth¹."

Lactantius remarks, that the principal oppugners of Christianity were men of infamous character; and he alludes particularly to certain persons who published their works at the time when he was a teacher of oratory in Bithynia. One of these persons is by some of his commentators supposed to have been the Philosopher Maximus; by others, Porphyry: but this is uncertain. It is clear, however, that he points at Hierocles², who extolled the juggling tricks of Apollonius Tyaneus above the miracles of the Gospel, to whom he replies with great spirit, contrasting the perfect consistency of the sacred writers, who yet were unlearned and ignorant men, with the gross contradictions which abound every where in the writings of the most learned and accomplished philosophers; from which he concludes that truth guided the one, whereas the others wandered amid the mists of error. He proceeds to enter upon the more immediate subject of the present book, by calling attention to the violation of all justice in such attacks

¹ Lactantius indignantly observes the low scurrility of the great wits of Heathenism, who, by a vile play upon names, called Cyprian, Coprian, à κόπρος.

² Eusebius also replied to the blasphemous publication of Hierocles, entitled Φιλαληθής.

as that of Hierocles ; and he explains that his motive in writing it is, to supply the deficiencies of Tertulian and Cyprian in their manner of treating this important topic.

In speaking on the subject of practical charity, as a branch of righteousness or justice, he observes, that the community of goods among the primitive Christians, is not to be understood as excluding the possession of private property, without which there could be no exercise of liberality by the rich toward their poorer brethren ; but it consists in a system of imparting freely to all who have need, from the possessions of their wealthier brethren ¹ ; and in a public-spirited contribution to the common funds of society. He treats the practice of amassing property, and the state and pomp of the great, as an encroachment on the rights of the people, in language more congenial to the sentiments of a severe republic than of a splendid empire ; and the boldness with which he avows opinions resembling those attributed to the Curii and Camilli of former times, must have been somewhat startling to the courtiers of the palace, though not offensive to the Emperor himself.

He infers, from several passages in the poets, that something like a community of property was adopted in the best and purest state of human society, before the general corruption of manners, and the universal

¹ οἱ εὐποροῦντες δὲ καὶ βουλόμενοι, κατὰ προαίρεσιν, ἕκαστος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ δ βούλεται δίδωσι· &c. Justin. Apol. i. c. 88.

prevalence of selfishness. “Ne signare quidem aut partiri limite campum Fas erat; in medium quærebant—which statement of the poet must be so understood, not as to suppose that there was then no private property, but as expressed poetically to convey the idea that men were so liberal that they did not engross the fruits of the earth as if produced only for themselves, nor hoard them in secret for their own use, but admitted the poor to a participation in the produce of their own labour Nor did avarice, intercepting the divine bounty, spread famine and drought around; but all equally abounded, when they who had plenty, gave freely and willingly to those who had nothing¹.”

But this golden age (which he interprets to be the state of human society previous to the introduction of Polytheism,) would, he argues, be speedily restored in the world, if the worship of the false gods were to be abandoned, and that of the one true God established in its room². For the fable of Justice

¹ Quod poëtæ dictum sic accipi oportet, non ut existimemus nihil omninò tum fuisse privati, sed more poëtico figuratum ut intelligamus tam liberales fuisse homines, ut natas sibi fruges non includerent, nec soli absconditis incubarent, sed pauperes ad communionem proprii laboris admitterent nec avaritia, interceptiens beneficia divina, famem sitimque vulgò faceret; sed omnes æqualiter abundarent, cum *habentes non habentibus* largè copiosèque donarent.—C. 5.

Cf. *habentium* pia et religiosa collatio *non habentibus* subveniret.—C. 8.

² That this result has unhappily not followed in Christendom, is to be attributed to the multitude of false brethren, who con-

taking wing, and leaving the earth, after the reign of Saturn is so far founded in fact, that with the reign of Jupiter and with Polytheism were introduced wars, rapine, and fraud; and righteousness was driven from among men. "But God," he adds, "as a most indulgent parent, on the approach of the last days, sent his Messenger to restore that ancient age, and to bring back fugitive righteousness¹."

In the mean while injustice and selfishness had perverted the manners of mankind, and introduced a host of vices, of all which covetousness is the source. "And since there remained no vestige of righteousness, of which the duties are humanity, equity, and compassion, men delighted in proud and haughty distinctions, and raised themselves above their fellow-men by troops of attendants, and arms, and fine clothing. Hence they invented the honours of rank, *the purple, and the fasces*, that, being supported by the terror of swords and axes, they might rule over those whom fear subjected to them, as if by a right of dominion²."

forming to the profession of Christianity, set up the idols of their abominations in their hearts.

¹ Sed Deus, ut parens indulgentissimus, appropinquante ultimo tempore, nuntium misit, qui vetus illud seculum, fugatamque justitiam reduceret.—C. 7.

² Quoniam nullum in his vestigium justitiæ fuit, cujus officia sunt humanitas, æquitas, misericordia, jam superbâ et tumidâ *inæqualitate* gaudebant, altioresque se cæteris hominibus, satellitum comitatu, et ferro, et insigni veste faciebant. Hinc honores sibi, et purpuras, et fasces invenerunt, ut securium gladiatorumque

And he replies to the objection urged by the adversary, that God has permitted all this unrighteousness to continue in the world, notwithstanding the promulgation of the Gospel, by briefly re-stating his doctrine respecting the origin of evil, and its necessity as an exercise and test of virtue. He makes the essence of righteousness to consist in equality, and he seems to rest his argument in some measure upon the common origin of the words "æquitas" and "æqualitas;" and his sentiments on this subject savour of the old Roman republican.

"With God is no respect of servant or master. For if the same God is the Father of all, we are all free by equality of rights¹. With God no one is poor, but he who is wanting in righteousness; no one is wealthy, but he who is rich in good works; no one is noble, but the bountiful and innocent; no one illustrious, but he who has achieved many deeds of mercy; none perfect, but he who has attained every degree of virtue. Wherefore, neither the Romans, nor the Greeks have been enabled to maintain righteousness; because they have made men to be unequal in various degrees of rank, from poor to rich, from the humble to the powerful, from a private condition to the loftiest dignities of royalty. *For where all are*

terrore subniti, quasi jure dominorum percussis ac paventibus imperarent.—C. 6.

¹ Or, "his children with equal rights." It is not impossible that Lactantius intended to refer to the etymology of the word "*liberi*."

*not equal there can be no equity ; and inequality of itself excludes the idea of righteousness, of which the whole force is to render those equal, who entered upon the state of this life with a natural equality*¹."

He replies to the obvious objection, that the Christians were themselves divided into classes, masters, and servants, rich and poor, by observing that they all consider themselves as spiritually equal, and regard each other as brethren without respect of persons ; but this is hardly a satisfactory answer, since his invective is levelled not merely against the selfish and haughty temper of the world, but against the very existence of inequalities in rank, power, and property.

Lactantius proceeds to show, that the heathen philosophers could not successfully develop nor maintain the virtue of justice or righteousness, because they did not understand the true principle upon which it depends ; a defect sufficiently exemplified

¹ Nemo apud eum (sc. Deum,) servus est, nemo dominus. Si enim cunctis idem Pater est, æquo jure omnes liberi sumus. Nemo Deo pauper est, nisi qui justitiâ indiget ; nemo dives, nisi qui virtutibus plenus est ; nemo denique egregius, nisi qui bonus et innocens fuerit ; nemo clarissimus, nisi qui opera misericordiæ largiter fecerit ; nemo perfectissimus, nisi qui omnes gradus virtutis implevit. Quare neque Romani neque Græci justitiam tenere potuerunt, quia dispares multis gradibus homines habuerunt, à pauperibus ad divites, ab humilibus ad potentes, à privatis denique ad regum sublimissimas potestates. Ubi enim non sunt universi pares, æquitas non est ; et excludit inæqualitas ipsa justitiam, cujus vis omnis in eo est, ut pares faciat eos, qui ad hujus vitæ conditionem pari sorte venerunt.—C. 15.

by the manner in which Cicero attempts to get over the objections raised by Carneades, wherein he makes Lælius reply to Furius rather by evading than by meeting the difficulty; and he undertakes to confute the argument of Furius, possessing, as he alleges, the advantage of a principle in which Lælius was deficient. "The defence is easier to us, to whom, by the Divine blessing, righteousness is familiarly and thoroughly known, and who are acquainted not merely with the name but with the nature of it¹." He adds, that Plato and Aristotle were honest defenders of righteousness, but were unsuccessful because they were not taught of God.

This grace he considers as comprehending in itself all virtues, although many of them may exist separately from it; but piety and equity are its constituent principles, from which it cannot be parted, since in the former is its source, in the latter its power and operation.

Pursuing his argument against the doctrine of Carneades, which he appears somewhat to overstrain, Lactantius uses language from which it may be inferred that he considered it as inconsistent with the Christian character to serve in war, or even to engage in commercial enterprises². Having shown

¹ Nobis autem facilius defensio est, quibus, cœlesti beneficio, familiaris est ac penitus nota justitia, quique illam, non nomine, sed re novimus. —C. 18.

² Cur enim naviget, aut quid petat ex alienâ terrâ, cui sufficit

that the heathen teachers of morality were ignorant of the true principle of righteousness, because they omitted the consideration of a future life, he challenges them to contest the point with him by argument rather than by persecution; and he recurs to his former statement that no moral principles are involved in the popular creed, whereas the object of Christian faith is to make mankind righteous and holy. He again digresses on the gross and ridiculous absurdities of Polytheism, and attributes the persecutions against the Christians to the influence of the demons, who take this method of revenging themselves upon believers for having expelled them by exorcism¹.

Lactantius replies to the common objection of the infidel derived from the apparent prosperity of the enemies of true religion, and the afflictions of the faithful servants of God, by insisting that the real blessings of the Almighty are not temporal, but spiritual; and that poverty and oppression are a necessary exercise of virtue and patience, as well as the means of conversion to those who witness the exemplary conduct of the sufferers.

sua? Cur autem belligeret, ac se alienis furoribus misceat, in cujus animo pax cum hominibus perpetua versetur?—Ibid.

He is in this respect more severe even than Tertullian, who in describing the innocent habits and manners of Christians, says, *Navigamus et nos vobiscum et militamus, et rusticamur, et mercamur, &c.*—Apol. c. 42.

¹ Cf. Justin, Apol. i. c. 5. Tert. Apol. c. 23.

Lactantius appears to interpret literally our Lord's doctrine respecting non-resistance¹; and to hold very nearly the opinion maintained by the Quakers before that sect had sacrificed their principles at the shrine of factious politics². He commends the doctrine of Seneca on this head as not merely wise, but almost as divinely inspired³, and laments that Cicero should have spoiled a noble sentiment by the addition of two words in a sentence from the second book of his Offices, "*Virum bonum esse qui prosit quibus possit, noceat nemini, nisi injuriâ lacessitus*"⁴," an exception which, as he elsewhere remarks, proved fatal to himself by prompting him to utter his celebrated Philippics⁵. But, however strongly he advocated the doctrine of non-resistance, his spirit seems to have animated him with the passive courage of a martyr. "Who shall

¹ Luke vi. 30.

² Cum ergo injuriam nulli faciat, nec aliena cupiat, nec sua quoque, si vi auferantur, defendat, &c.—C. 23.

Cf. Virtus est constantia; non, ut inferentibus injuriam resistamus; his enim cedendum est.—Lib. vi. c. 17.

Quod præceptum non ad hoc tantum valet, ut ipse injuriam non inferat, sed ut illatam sibi non vindicet.—Lib. vi. c. 18.

³ Senecæ librum, cui titulus est: "Quarè bonis viris multa mala accidunt, cum sit Providentia:" in quo ille multa, non planè imperitiâ seculari, sed sapienter, ac penè divinitùs elocutus est.—C. 23.

⁴ De Officiis, lib. ii.

⁵ ———— ridenda poëmata malo

Quum te conspicuæ, divina Philippica, famæ.

Juv. Sat. x.

impose upon me the obligation either of worshipping against my will, or of abstaining from the worship which I choose? What else will be left to us, if the pleasure of another is to enforce even this, which ought always to be voluntary? No man shall effect this, so long as we have virtue enough to despise tortures and death¹."

He complains of the cruel and excessive severity of the persecutions against the Christians; and refers to instances occurring under his own observation²; and he forcibly contrasts the pure and harmless lives of the victims with the abominable profligacy, and the disregard of truth and justice among their heathen oppressors. He argues in favour of the truth of the Christian doctrine from its wonderfully rapid diffusion in despite of all opposition, as well as from the constancy exhibited by the martyrs in enduring their trials, which the philosophers themselves admit to be the highest effort of virtue; but highly as he extols the fortitude of those who suffered for the faith, he not only admits that "the lapsed" may be restored by repentance; but that they often become more zealous and devout than before their apostasy; "since the consciousness of sin, and

¹ — Quis imponat mihi necessitatem vel colendi quod nolim, vel quod velim non colendi? quid jam nobis ulterius relinquetur, si etiam hoc, quod voluntate fieri oportet, libido extorqueat aliena? Nemo istud efficiet, si quid nobis ad contemnendam mortem doloremque virtutis est.—C. 15.

² C. 12.

the fear of punishment renders a man more religious; and that faith is always much stronger which has been restored by repentance¹."

Considering purity as a branch of righteousness, Lactantius lays down the Christian rule respecting the intercourse of the sexes,—*damnari à Deo quicquid appetitur ultra generandi cupidinem*²; but that this is not to be understood in the severest sense of which the words are capable, may be collected from a comparison with some expressions in the following book,—*Nam si libido extra legitimum torum non evagetur, licet sit vehemens, culpâ caret*³,—and, —*Deus cùm cæteras animantes suscepto fœtu, mari-bus repugnare voluisset, solam omnium mulierem patientem viri fecit, scilicet ne fœminis repugnantibus libido cogeret viros aliud appetere*⁴, in direct contradiction to the Popish prohibitio concubitus cum gravidâ uxore.

It is to be remarked, that Lactantius, throughout, speaks of persecution in the present tense, as still

¹ *Peccati enim conscientia, et metus pœnæ religiosiorem facit; et semper multò firmior est fides quam reponit pœnitentia.*—C. 14.

Cf. lib. vi. c. 24. init.

² C. 9.

³ Lib. vi. c. 16.

⁴ Lib. vi. c. 23. Cf. 'Αλλ' ἡ τὴν ἀρχὴν οὐκ ἐγαμοῦμεν, εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ παίδων ἀνατροφῇ, ἢ παραιτούμενοι τὸ γήμασθαι, τέλειον ἐνεγκρατενόμεθα. Justin Martyr, Apol. i. c. 37.

Cupiditate procreandi aut unam scimus, aut nullam.—Minutius Felix.

going on ; from which we may probably infer the correctness of the opinion before noticed, that the work was principally composed some time previous to its publication and dedication to the Emperor Constantine.

There is considerable want of arrangement in the arguments maintained in this book ; but it is instructive from its high tone of morality, and the self-denying severity of its precepts.

CHAPTER VI.

SACRED INSTITUTES, BOOK VI.

LACTANTIUS introduces the subject of his sixth book of Sacred Institutes, on the true method of serving God¹, by contrasting the worship of the false deities, consisting of bloody and costly sacrifices offered by the polluted hands of the most abandoned of mankind, with the only sacrifice acceptable to the true God, which is innocence of life. In some of his observations on this head, he appears to have overlooked the fact that bloody sacrifices were ordained under the law; and that the one great sacrifice of the Gospel is also bloody and costly above all price. He proceeds to inculcate the fundamental doctrine of eternal rewards and punishments, according to the deeds of men,—*quia justis immortalitas, injustis pœna æterna proposita est*²; and in his estimate of moral goodness, he attaches a high value to self-

¹ De vero cultu.

² C. 4.

denial, frugality, and severe habits of life, while he considers luxury, indulgence, and indolence, as the sure road to perdition : on one hand, he says, are temporal evils first, with eternal good, which is the better order ; on the other hand, are temporal good things first, with eternal evil, which is the worse order¹. His opinions on this point will not be acceptable to a wealthy and luxurious generation ; but they arose naturally out of the depressed and suffering condition of Christianity in his time, and the comparative ease, honour, and affluence enjoyed by the profligate heathen ; and it is edifying in the present state of the Church and of the world, to read those sentiments respecting the incompatibility of the two services of God and Mammon², which Christians are too apt to forget in the hour of prosperity³. In the course of this argument Lactantius distinctly asserts that salvation is freely offered⁴ to the whole race of mankind.

He admits that there is elementary truth in the philosophic doctrine of the two ways of life, usually illustrated by the letter Y, one of which, the way of

¹ In unâ enim monstravit (Deus) temporalia prius mala cum æternis bonis ; qui est ordo melior : in alterâ temporalia prius bona, cum æternis malis ; qui est ordo deterior.—Ibid.

² Ad divos adeunto castè ; pietatem adhibento ; *opes amovenlo*.—Cic. de Leg. lib. ii. c. 8.

³ See a striking passage added as an appendix to this chapter.

⁴ Quia Deus, qui ejus viæ dux est, immortalitatem *nulli homini nato* negat.—C. 4.

virtue, leads, through hard exertion and self-denial, to honour and happiness, and the other the way of vice, through flowery paths of pleasure, to disgrace and ruin¹; but, he observes, their view of the matter is very limited and imperfect, since it comprehends only those considerations and inducements which belong to the present life²; and that the poets were in this respect more enlightened, inasmuch as they place their imaginary rewards and punishments in a future and everlasting state of being; but that they are still wide of the truth in their account of the paths through this life which conduct men to the happiness of immortality.

¹ See the Choice of Hercules, in Spence's Polymetis, book iv. dial. x.

² This censure of the philosophers is perhaps too general. There are many noble passages in their writings of a more elevated tendency, which will readily occur to the reader;—*e. g.* *olla propter quæ datur homini adscensus in cælum, mentem, virtutem, pietatem, fidem.*—Cic. loc. cit.

Quòd si quis Deus mihi largiatur ut ex hâc ætate repuerescam, et in cuneis vagiam, valdè recusem: nec verò velim quasi decurso spatio, ad carceres revocari; quid enim habet hæc vita commodi, quid non potiùs laboris? Sed non habeat sanè: habet certè tamen aut satietatem aut molestiam. Non libet enim mihi deplorare vitam, quod multi, et hi docti, sæpe fecerunt. Nec me vixisse pœnitet: quoniam ita vixi, ut frustra me natum non existimem. *Et ex vitâ istâ discedo, tanquam ex hospitio non tanquam è domo. Commorandi enim Natura diversorium nobis, non habitandi dedit. O præclarum illum diem, quum ad illud animorum concilium cætumque proficiscar, et cùm ex hâc turbâ et colluvione discedam!*—Cic. de Senect.

Lactantius undertakes to supply the deficiencies of the philosophers and poets, and to set forth the true doctrine of everlasting rewards and punishments, as respectively dependent on the character and conduct of mankind in the present life. Since the spiritual state of retribution is everlasting, consequently both the good and the evil of it are everlasting; and thus it comes to pass that eternal evil follows brief good, and eternal good succeeds to brief evil¹.

Commending the virtues of poverty and humility, in a strain bordering on asceticism, he uses language which does credit to his own boldness, and to the forbearance of the emperor to whom it is addressed. "He who surrounds himself with the pomp of royalty, or incumbers himself with riches, can neither enter upon, nor keep the narrow way²."—"The ambition of some men runs higher still; so that they do not rule provinces only with the secular

¹ Illa verò spiritalis . . . quoniam sempiterna est, idcirco et bona ejus, et mala sempiterna sunt. Ita fit, ut bonis brevibus mala æterna, et malis brevibus bona æterna succedant.—C. 4.

² Nec enim potest, qui se apparatu regio circumdederit, aut divitiis oneraverit, angustias illas vel ingredi, vel tenere.—Ibid.

Nor is there less independence of spirit displayed in what he says of the Roman people. Quantum autem à justitiâ recedat utilitas, populus ipse Romanus docet; qui per feciales bella indicendo, et legitimè injurias inferendo, semperque aliena cupiendo, atque rapiendo, possessionem sibi totius orbis comparavit. A more just censure was never passed upon that insolent and rapacious nation.—C. 9.

sword, but desire to be called lords of the whole human race, with unlimited power for life¹."

He proceeds to show, that the virtues inculcated by the heathen philosophers are mere lessons of worldly prudence, adopted in ignorance of God and of the truth; and he intimates that some of them occasionally gave utterance to the dictates of a higher Spirit, which they did not themselves understand². All real virtue consists in the acknowledgment of God and of his Divine Will, without which the most plausible assemblage of qualities is delusive³; nor is it a less dangerous delusion to hold the truth in unrighteousness⁴. "The confession of faith in God is necessary as the head, and all the virtues as the body." "In the acknowledgment and in the service of God consists the sum of all. On this rest all the hope and salvation of men: this is the first step to wisdom, that we should know who is our true Father, and follow him only, with due piety; that we obey him, that we devoutly serve him, and em-

¹ *Quorundam cupiditas tendit altius; non ut provincias temporali gladio regant, sed ut infinitâ et perpetuâ potestate dominos se dici velint universi generis humani.*—*Ibid.*

² *Ego verò eos, qui vera imprudenter loquuntur, sic habendos puto, tanquam divinent spiritu aliquo instincti.*—C. 8.

³ *Cùm illud unum, quod est maximum, deest, agnitio Dei, jam illa bona omnia supervacua sunt et inania.*—C. 9.

⁴ *Agnitio Dei necessaria est quasi caput; et omnes virtutes quasi corpus quare non est dubium quin impius sit, quisquis Deum non agnoverit, omnesque virtutes ejus . . . in illâ mortiferâ viâ reperiuntur, quæ est tota tenebrarum.*—*Ibid.*

ploy all our activity, and care, and diligence, in deserving his blessing¹."

This leads him to the discussion of those duties which men owe to their fellow-creatures, as all constituting one great family, under a common Father. He exposes the erroneous notions of the philosophers, and of Cicero in particular, respecting the origin and obligations of the social state, and the mutual duties of humanity, charity, and hospitality. The right discharge of these duties is described and recommended, at some length, as a sacrifice highly acceptable to God, and as propitiating his favour in the pardon of our sins; but not if we sin wilfully, in the expectation of compensating for our offences by our charities². There is, however, a want of doctrinal precision in some of his language on this subject; and those readers who are accustomed to regard theological statements with a controversial eye, will not fail to detect the elements of the fatal error of Popery, in an approach to the doctrine of human merit, where he speaks of sins being covered by bounty; and of their being blotted out if we bestow

¹ Ergo in Dei agnitione, et cultu, summa rerum versatur. In hoc spes omnis ac salus hominis: hic est sapientiæ gradus primus, ut sciamus quis sit nobis verus Pater, eumque solum pietate debitâ prosequamur; huic pareamus, huic devotissimè serviamus, in eo promerendo actus omnis, et cura, et opera collocatur.—Ibid.

² Lactantius enumerates the burial of the dead among the good works of charity which are pleasing and acceptable to God.

our gifts upon God, in consideration of our having offended; and again, of carnal sin as purged away by a course of good works¹. But, incorrectly as he states the doctrine of repentance, it is clearly not his intention to convey the impression, that men may bargain for the purchase of pardon: on the contrary, he expressly declares, that if we commit sins with this expectation, we cannot obtain forgiveness; and he asserts, that “God, in the first place, desires the purification of mankind from sin; and, to this end, requires them to have recourse to repentance. Now to repent, is nothing else than to profess and declare a resolution to sin no more. Wherefore, they who fall into sin through ignorance, inadvertence, and want of caution, are pardoned; but he who sins wilfully, does not obtain pardon².” Lactantius does not mean that wilful sin may not be pardoned, upon sincere repentance; but that, so long as it is wilful,

¹ Nec tamen, *quia peccata largitione tolluntur*, dari tibi licentiam peccandi putes: *abolerentur enim, si Deo largiari quia peccaveras*; nam si fiduciâ largiendi pecces, non abolerentur. . . . Quòd si mortalis conditio non patitur esse hominem ab omni maculâ purum, *debent ergo largitione perpetuâ peccata carnis aboleri*.—C. 13.

Cf. Mens contagione impudicâ corporis inquinata non potest, nisi et longo tempore, *et multis bonis operibus*, ab eâ, quæ inhæserit, colluvione purgari.—C. 23.

² Deus enim purgari homines à peccatis maximè cupit, ideoque agere poenitentiam jubet. Agere autem poenitentiam nihil aliud est quàm profiteri et affirmare se ulterius non peccaturum. Ignoscitur itaque iis, qui ad peccatum ignoranter, imprudenter, incautèque labuntur; veniam non habet, qui sciens peccat.—C. 13.

it places the offender in a state of enmity with God ; whereas the unintentional lapses of human infirmity in true believers, are mercifully overlooked.

He goes on to refute the doctrine of the Stoic school¹, that the natural passions and affections are to be wholly eradicated ; which, he justly observes, if practicable, would be to root up virtue and vice together, and to destroy all the springs of human action. Nor are the Peripatetics correct in their theory, that the passions are vices in their extremes, but innocent when moderated ; for the true doctrine is, that the passions are vicious or virtuous, as we use or abuse them by our choice of their objects. Lactantius labours to prove, at considerable length, that passions may be vehement, and yet virtuous ; that they may be feeble, and nevertheless vicious. "Therefore, the whole system should have been framed on this principle, that, since the force of the passions neither can be nor ought to be repressed, since it is necessarily infused into us for the discharge of the duties of life, they should be directed to proper objects, so that their free course may be exempt from offence and danger²." The argument, if not altogether unexceptionable, is very clearly

¹ Cf. Justin, *Apol.* ii. c. 8.

² *Omnis igitur ratio in eo versari debuit, ut quoniam earum rerum impetus inhiberi non potest, nec debet, quia necessario est insitus ad tuenda officia vitæ, diriguntur potius in viam rectam, ubi etiam cursus offensione ac periculo careat.*—C. 16. fin.

stated, and ably managed. In a Christian point of view, the affections become virtues when they are set on things above; but vices when set on earthly objects. "Let us therefore set aside the philosophers, who are either absolutely ignorant, and make it their highest boast to know their own absolute ignorance; or do not understand even what they know; or, imagining themselves to know things of which they are really ignorant, display a vain and arrogant conceit¹."

In the enumeration of Christian graces and virtues, Lactantius particularly enforces the necessity of the following: to speak the truth strictly to all mankind equally, whether friends or foes²; to lend money without interest, the receiving of which he censures, as both unjust and oppressive³; non-resistance to injuries and insults, on the ground of committing all judgment and all vengeance to the Almighty⁴. "There are three passions," he says, "which drive men headlong into all crimes; anger, covetousness,

¹ Sed omittamus philosophos, qui aut omnino nihil sciunt, idque ipsum pro summâ scientiâ præ se ferunt; aut qui non perspiciunt etiam quæ sciunt; aut qui, quoniam se putant scire quæ nesciunt, ineptè arroganterque desipiunt.—C. 18.

² The observations of Lactantius, on this head at least, cannot be quoted in favour of the system of Popery.

³ Lev. xxv. 35—27. Such an understanding of the Law seems to have prevailed among the primitive Christians; but it can only apply to loans made to persons in distress and difficulties.

⁴ See the preceding chapter.

and lust ; on which account the poets feign that there are three Furies, who distract the minds of men : anger seeks revenge ; covetousness seeks riches ; lust seeks pleasure. But to all these God has set certain limits, which if they transgress and exceed, they necessarily become depraved in their nature, and changed into disorder and vice. Nor is it difficult to show what those limits are¹."

In proceeding to point out the boundaries within which these propensities are salutary, Lactantius falls into some of the mistakes which have been already noticed. He considers it as the legitimate province of anger to prompt us to the chastisement of children ; as he elsewhere argues that the Deity must have the passion of wrath, to induce him to punish sin ; and his language on this subject would lead to the inference that he was a very severe disciplinarian². But towards our equals, *adversum pares*, anger is at once injurious and impious. The proper use of covetousness is to excite us to industry in providing the necessities of life. Sexual desire is

¹ Tres sunt igitur affectus qui homines in omnia facinora præcipites agunt ; ira, cupiditas, libido. Propterea poëtæ tres Furias esse dixerunt, quæ mentes hominum exagitant : ira ultionem desiderat, cupiditas opes, libido voluptates. Sed his omnibus Deus certos limites statuit ; quos si transcenderint, majoresque esse cœperint, necesse est naturam suam depravent, et in morbos ac vitia vertantur. Qui autem isti sunt limites, non est magni laboris ostendere.—C. 19.

² Manus nostras suprâ minores *semper habeamus*, hoc est, ut peccantes eos *assiduus verberibus* corrigamus.—Ibid.

implanted, that we may be stimulated to propagate the species; and, as he avers, it is not criminal, however vehement, so long as it is confined to the bed of lawful wedlock¹. He goes on to describe the abuses of the same passions, when they exceed the boundaries assigned them. "Men employ anger against their equals; and hence arise divisions, expatriations, and unjust wars. They employ covetousness to amass wealth; and hence come frauds, and robberies, and all manner of crimes. They abuse sexual appetite, to the mere purposes of sensual pleasure; whence are derived rape, and adultery, and all the arts of seduction. Whoever, therefore, restrains these affections within their proper bounds, which none can do who knows not God, exercises patience, fortitude, and righteousness²." It will be seen that Lactantius does not allow enough for the effect of a sense of duty operating under the influence of Divine grace.

He extends the same principle to the use and abuse of the "five senses," through the latter of

¹ Cf. 1 Thess. iv. 5.

² Utuntur irâ contra pares; hinc dissidia, hinc expulsiones, hinc bella contra justitiam nata sunt. Utuntur cupiditate ad congregandas opes; hinc fraudes, hinc latrocinia, hinc omnia scelerum genera orta sunt. Utuntur libidine ad capiendas tantùm voluptates; hinc stupra, hinc adulteria, hinc corruptelæ omnes extiterunt. Quicumque igitur illos affectus intra fines suos redegerit, quod ignorantes Deum non possunt, hic patiens, hic fortis, hic justus est.—C. 19.

which they become vicious and deadly. Treating of the sense of *sight*, he severely condemns the love of finery and decoration, and recommends the contemplation of the beauties of nature, as superior to the gratification derived from the noblest works of art. But his strongest objection is urged against all the public shows and spectacles, particularly the exhibitions of gladiators, which he justly censures, as involving all the parties concerned in the guilt of homicide¹. Digressing on the guilt of bloodshed, he expresses sentiments of an extreme tendency, resembling those originally entertained by the Society of Friends. "So that it is unlawful for a righteous man to *serve in the wars*, whose warfare is righteousness itself; nor is it allowable to *accuse any one of a capital offence*; for it makes no difference, whether you kill with the sword, or by your word, since *the prohibition is against killing at all*. Wherefore, there ought to be *no exception whatever* to this commandment of God; but that it should be *always a crime to kill man*, whose life God has made sacred²."

¹ *Æquè spectaculis vestris in tantum renuntiamus, in quantum originibus eorum, quas scimus de superstitione conceptas, cum ipsis rebus, de quibus exiguntur, præterimus. Nihil est nobis dictu, visu, auditu, cum insaniâ circi, cum impudiciâ theatri, cum atrocitate arenæ, cum xysti vanitate.*—Tert. Apol. c. 38. Justin uses similar language.

² *Ita neque militare justo licebit, cujus militia est in ipsâ justitiâ; neque verò accusare quenquam crimine capitali, quia*

To the theatres he objects, on account of the immorality and indecency of the representations; to the circus, the undue degree of excitement which it produces; and to all the public amusements of the time, that they were exhibited in honour of false gods, and were consequently involved with idolatry. On similar grounds he condemns the homicidal practice of exposing children; and he adopts the argument of Justin Martyr¹, in pointing out the licentious and incestuous consequences which must frequently follow in cases where the infant escapes death.

Under the head of *hearing*, besides the theatrical entertainments already condemned, he denounces such a high degree of cultivation in the arts of poetry and eloquence, as renders men too fastidious to relish the simplicity of Divine truth; and he recommends that poetry and music should be confined to sacred subjects. “Beyond which whosoever wanders, and seeks in these pleasures nothing more than the mere gratification of taste, is laying up death for himself; for, as eternal life consists in

nihil distat utrūne ferro, an verbo potius occidas, quoniam occisio ipsa prohibetur. Itaque in hoc Dei præcepto nullam prorsus exceptionem fieri oportet, quin occidere hominem sit semper nefas, quem Deus sanctum animal esse voluit.—C. 20.

¹ Ἡμεῖς δὲ, ἵνα μηδένα διώκωμεν, μηδὲ ἀσεβῶμεν, ἐκτιθέναι καὶ τὰ γεννώμενα, πονηρῶν εἶναι δεδιδάγμεθα· πρῶτον μὲν, ὅτι τοὺς πάντας σχεδὸν ὁρῶμεν ἐπὶ κορνείῳ προάγοντας καὶ τῶν τούτοις χρωμένων τισι, πρὸς τῇ ἀθέῳ καὶ ἀσεβεῖ καὶ ἀκρατεῖ μίξει, εἰ τύχοι, τέκνη, ἢ συγγενεῖ, ἢ ἀδελφῷ μίγνυνται.—Apol. i. c. 36. Cf. Tert. Apol. c. 9.

virtue, so doth death in pleasure. He who chooses temporal delights, will lose those which are eternal; he who prefers earthly pleasures, will not enjoy the heavenly¹."

Discussing the pleasures resulting from the senses of *taste* and *smell*, he replies to the common argument, that the objects of these and other senses were created in order that they might be enjoyed, by the maxim that self-denial is the indispensable exercise of virtue, whereas pleasure is the architect of death—*mortis fabricatrix est voluptas*. "These pleasures, therefore, are to be avoided as so many snares and nets; lest, enthralled by the softness of their allurements, we should be reduced, with our bodies, under the dominion of death, to which we have enslaved ourselves²."

Speaking of the sense of *touch*, he limits himself to the consideration of libidinous propensities, which he censures with severity; and declares the mind to become so polluted by lascivious acts, that it cannot recover its purity unless after a long course of virtuous habits; and some of his expressions, as I have already observed, seem to convey an unsound doctrine respecting the covering of sin by good works.

¹ Cujus terminos si quis excesserit, nihilque aliud ex voluptate petierit, nisi ipsam voluptatem, hic mortem meditatur; quia sicut vita perpetua in virtute est, ita mors in voluptate. Qui enim temporalia maluerit, carebit æternis; qui terrena prætulit, cœlestia non habebit.—C. 21. Cf. 1 Tim. v. 6.

² C. 22.

It is not to be expected, however, that a writer like Lactantius should always preserve the guarded precision of a practised controversialist. He digresses from this point to extol in high terms the merit of celibacy; and he enlarges on the duty and efficacy of repentance and reformation, whereby pardon of past offences is obtained; but it would not be reasonable to impute to him a denial of those higher views of atonement, which, all-important and essential as they are, do not immediately belong to his subject. He exhorts men to the exercise of repentance, by adducing the omniscience of God; and commends the manner in which Cicero and Seneca describe all offences as open and naked before Him, however concealed from the view of mankind. The true service of God, he concludes, is the practice of every virtue. "Whoever, therefore, obeys all these heavenly precepts, is a servant of the true God,—cultor veri Dei,—whose sacrifices are, gentleness of disposition, a harmless life, and good works. He who exhibits all these, offers sacrifice as often as he performs any good and pious action¹."

Lactantius ridicules the absurdity of bestowing upon God such gifts as even wise and magnanimous men despise; and declares that gifts and sacrifices are equally vain, if offered to propitiate his favour; since "the acceptable gift is purity of spirit, the

¹ C. 24.

true sacrifice is praise and thanksgiving¹;" and he sums up his argument in an eloquent description of that state of mind which renders the worshipper an object of the Divine blessing.

¹ C. 24.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER VI.

“As, in the affairs of this world, if a warfare lies before us, we must endure hardships first, that we may enjoy repose afterwards ; we must bear hunger and thirst, heat and cold ; we must sleep on the bare ground, and keep watch, and incur dangers, that, our fidelity being approved, we may return to our homes and families with the fruits of peace and victory ; but, if we prefer present ease to martial labours, we shall bring upon ourselves defeat and ruin ; the enemy will take us unaware ; our lands will be laid waste ; our houses plundered ; our wives and children dragged into captivity ; ourselves slain or loaded with chains ; to escape all which, present comfort must be disregarded, in order to secure a greater and more permanent advantage :—even so, in this state of existence, wherein God hath appointed us an enemy, that we may exercise our virtue, present pleasures must be relinquished, that the adversary may not surprise us ; we must watch, and pray, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ ; we must resist even unto blood, and endure hardships and afflictions ; and the more readily, since the Captain of our salvation has appointed the eternal reward of our labours.

“And whereas, in worldly warfare, men undergo so much fatigue, to obtain objects which may be taken from them in the same manner as they are acquired ; surely we ought to shrink from no efforts, who are to obtain that good part which cannot be taken away from us.”—C. 4.

CHAPTER VII.

SACRED INSTITUTES, BOOK VII.

HAVING, as he congratulates himself, fully refuted the false religions of the heathen, and established the evidence of truth, in his preceding books, Lactantius now proceeds to discuss the rewards of the faithful, without which, the labour which he had bestowed, in laying the foundations of true principles, would have been bestowed in vain. He opens the subject by confuting the opinions of Plato and Aristotle respecting the eternity of the world; and shows that, since all its constituent parts are perishable, the whole must be perishable, and consequently must have had a beginning. Epicurus, he observes, if Democritus has correctly reported his doctrine, was right in his conclusion on this point, although he did not arrive at it from right premises.

The doctrine of a future retribution, to take place at the second advent, can only be rightly understood,

according to Lactantius, by means of Divine revelation ; and it is a doctrine at no time acceptable to the prosperous¹, or the vicious, because it requires of us the renunciation of the world ; a duty of which he speaks in his accustomed strong language, denouncing, as inconsistent with the profession of the Gospel, all pursuit of wealth and honours, and extolling the spiritual blessings which attend a life of poverty and affliction. "Hence it is that the poor and mean, who are unincumbered, trust more readily in God than the rich, who are entangled with their heavy baggage, nay, are chained and fettered to serve at the nod of domineering covetousness, which encloses them in inextricable bonds ; nor are they capable of aspiring to heaven, since their minds grovel on earth, and are fixed upon the ground : whereas, the way of Virtue cannot admit the heavy laden. The path is exceedingly narrow by which Righteousness conducts men to heaven : and no one can keep it, unless he is unincumbered and free. For the rich, loaded as they are with many heavy burdens, go down the way of Death, which is a very broad way ; for wide is the sway of Perdition²."

¹ Cf. *Ecclus.* xli. 1, 2.

² *Eò fit ut pauperes et humiles Deo credant faciliùs, qui sunt expediti, quam divites qui sunt impedimentis plurimis implicati, immo catenati et compediti serviunt ad nutum dominæ cupiditatis, quæ illos inextricabilibus vinculis irretivit ; nec possunt in cælum aspicere, quoniam mens eorum in terram prona, humique defixa est. Virtutis autem via non capit magna onera por-*

“He who wishes to live happily in eternity, must live wretchedly during time, and be afflicted with all manner of troubles and labours as long as he is in this world, that he may possess a divine and heavenly comfort¹.” In the sentence which follows, he appears to assert the eternity of future punishments, as well as the immortality of the soul. “He who chooses to live happily during time, *will live miserably for eternity*; for he will be condemned by the judgment of God to *eternal punishment*, because he has preferred temporal to celestial enjoyment².”

A passage of considerable length follows, in which the writer accounts for the existence of physical evil, on the principle of Virgil,—*curis acuens mortalia corda*,—in opposition to the doctrine of Cicero on this subject; which, however, is marked as doubtful in some old editions³, and is wanting in others, as well as in most of the manuscripts. Isæus remarks that, if it is spurious, it is a cunning and successful

tantes. Angustus admodum trames est per quem Justitia hominem deducit in cœlum : hunc tenere non potest, nisi qui fuerit expeditus et nudus. Nam isti locupletes multis et ingentibus sarcinis onerati, per viam mortis incedunt, quæ latissima est, quoniam latè perditio dominatur.—C. i.

¹ Qui mavult benè vivere in æternum, malè vivet ad tempus; et afficietur omnibus molestiis et laboribus quamadiù fuerit in terrâ, ut habeat divinum et cœleste solatium.—C. v.

² Qui maluerit benè vivere ad tempus, malè vivet in æternum; damnabitur enim sententiâ Dei ad æternam pœnam, quia cœlestibus bonis terrena præposuit.—Ibid.

³ Venet. Ald. 1535.

imitation of the style of Lactantius¹. Dufresnoy passes on it a similar judgment²; but adds that it contains unsound doctrine³, meaning, I conclude, that the author attributes moral evil to matter, and moral good to mind; though he distinctly asserts the freedom of man's will to choose between them. I see nothing in the passage which may not be found in the undoubted writings of Lactantius⁴. There is, perhaps, something questionable in the statement respecting man's immortality, in that portion of the chapter which is allowed to be genuine. Man, he says, is erect, because he is immortal, and therefore designed to look up to heaven; but he is not so from the first, that is in his infancy, because his immortality is not innate, but is the subsequent gift of his Creator. "Which order shows that *man is born mortal, but becomes immortal afterwards*, when he begins to derive life from God, that is, to follow righteousness, which consists in serving God, when He has raised man to the contemplation of heaven, and of Himself⁵." But upon an attentive considera-

¹ Quanquàm profectò valdè ingeniosum illum, et egregiè strenuum veteratorem fuisse oportuit, qui Lactantii stylum tam miro modo fuerit imitatus.—Not. in loco.

² Hanc totam periodum ab aliquo, eoque subtilissimo ac perito Manichæo suppositam.—Not. in loco.

³ Monemus ea non esse apprimè catholica.

⁴ Cf. c. x. Dux vitæ propositæ sunt homini, quarum altera est animæ, altera corporis, &c.

⁵ Quæ ratio docet *mortalem* (subject to death) *nasci hominem*, postea verò *immortalem fieri*, cùm cœperit ex Deo vivere, id est,

tion of the whole passage, we are led to see that Lactantius, by immortality, intends, in this place, that deliverance from the second death¹, which is the gift of God; and that, whatever confusion may arise from using the terms "death" and "immortality" in a double sense, he had no notion that man is born without an imperishable soul; but, on the contrary, he expressly asserts that the sufferings of the wicked are everlasting. It is, however, obvious that they who are not regenerated become as erect in person as the faithful.

He sums up his argument on this head very briefly and clearly at the commencement of the sixth chapter. "We will now comprise the whole system within a short compass. The world was made, that we may be born; we are born in order that we may acknowledge God its Creator and ours; we acknowledge, in order that we may serve Him; we serve Him that we may receive immortality as the reward of our labours, since the service of God consists in the most severe labours; we are gifted with the reward of immortality, in order that, being made like unto the angels, we may for ever worship the supreme Father and Lord, and form the eternal

justitiam sequi, quæ continetur in Dei cultu, cum excitaverit hominem Deus ad aspectum cœli, ac sui.—C. 5.

¹ Æternam pœnam, quam divinæ literæ *secundam mortem* nominant, quæ est perpetua, et gravissimis cruciatibus plena.—C. 10.

kingdom of God. This is the sum of all, this is the secret of God, this is the mystery of creation ¹."

Lactantius then enters upon a digression respecting the various opinions of the philosophers, in whose writings, he observes, the entire truth is to be found, but scattered in detached portions; for no heathen could ever attain to a connected view of the whole: and he ridicules, with considerable effect, the notion of certain Stoic writers, that the Deity is the animating spirit or soul of the mundane system which serves Him for a body; and recurs to the absurdity of the Epicurean doctrine respecting the fortuitous concourse of atoms.

Resuming the thread of his argument, he refutes the common sceptical objection against the immortality of the soul, that we can discern nothing of it after its departure from the body; and appeals to its divine aspirations after immortality in proof of its high destination, repeating his favourite notion that Religion constitutes the principal, if not the sole distinction, between man and the lower animals ², and

¹ Nunc totam rationem brevi circumscriptione signemus. Idcirco mundus factus est, ut nascamur; ideo nascimur, ut agnoscamus Factorem mundi ac nostri Deum; ideo agnoscimus, ut colamus; ideo colimus, ut immortalitatem pro laborum mercede capiamus, quoniam maximis laboribus cultus Dei constat; ideo præmio immortalitatis afficimur, ut similes angelis effecti, summo Patri ac Domino in perpetuum serviamus, et simus æternum Deo regnum. Hæc summa rerum est, hoc arcanum Dei, hoc mysterium mundi.—C. 6.

² The remark occurs in the first book, and again in that de Irâ.

relying somewhat whimsically upon the fact, which he had before noticed, that no other creature makes use of the element of fire; and he maintains that the very natures of virtue and vice necessarily imply a future retribution. He treats with contempt such opponents of his doctrine as Lucretius, and speaks of the metempsychosis as too ridiculous for serious discussion; but he does not appear so much to advantage in metaphysical disquisition, as in the simple statement of his own views.

“He who defiles himself with vice and iniquity, and serves pleasure, will suffer the judgment of an eternal punishment; which the Holy Scriptures call the second death, and which abounds in dreadful torments. For as two modes of life are proposed to man’s choice, one of which concerns the soul, and the other the body; so also two deaths are set before him, one affecting the body, which all must undergo in the course of nature; the other affecting the soul, which is the recompense of sin, but is to be avoided by virtue: and since this life is temporal, and certainly limited, as depending on the body, so is death also temporal, and limited, because it affects the body¹.”

“When the times are fulfilled,” he adds, “which God has allotted to death, death itself shall have an end. And since temporal death follows temporal

¹ C. 10.

life, it follows that souls will rise again to perennial life, because temporal death is no more. Again, since the life of the soul is eternal, in which it receives the divine and indescribable fruits of its immortality, so it must needs be that its death is perpetual, wherein it suffers for its sins perennial punishments, and infinite torments. Therefore the matter stands thus, that they who are prosperous (beati) in this bodily and earthly life, will be for ever miserable, because they have already enjoyed those good things which they preferred; which occurs to those who adore the gods, and neglect God; whereas they who, following after righteousness, have been miserable, and despised, and poor in this life, and, on account of their righteousness itself, have been frequently harassed by insults and injuries, (since virtue cannot otherwise be maintained¹), shall be for ever blessed, inasmuch, as having already suffered evil things, they shall enjoy good things, which are the lot of those who, having despised the gods of this world, and its frail possessions, seek the heavenly religion of God, whose good things, like the Giver, are eternal."

"Virtue," he says further on, "is the architect of immortality, and pleasure of death. But death does not utterly kill and destroy; it afflicts with eternal torments. For the soul cannot possibly become

¹ Acts xiv. 22.

extinct, since it had its origin from the breath (spiritu) of God, who is eternal¹."

The opinion entertained by Lactantius respecting the millennium must be given in his own words². "Be it known, therefore, to the philosophers, who count thousands of ages since the beginning of the

¹ C. 12.

² Dufresnoy's note on this place states that this opinion, which he calls an error, arose out of an old Talmudical tradition, and was entertained by several of the early Fathers, among whom he enumerates Justin, Irenæus, Cyril, and Augustin; but was condemned by others, and renounced by Augustin himself in his commentary on the 89th Psalm. He does not give the passage from Justin, where the opinion is supported on the authority of the Apocalypse, and not on any tradition. παρ' ἡμῖν ἀνὴρ τις ἐξ ὀνόμα Ἰωάννης, εἷς τῶν Ἀποστόλων τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἐν Ἀποκαλύψει γενομένη αὐτῷ, χίλια ἔτη ποιήσειεν ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ τῷ ἡμετέρῳ Χριστῷ πιστεύσαντας, προεφήτευσεν, καὶ, μετὰ ταῦτα, τὴν καθολικὴν καὶ (συνελόντι φάναι) αἰωνίαν ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἅμα πάντων ἀνάστασιν γενήσεσθαι, καὶ κρίσιν.—Quæst. 72.

The passage which he cites from Augustin is as follows :— "Primam resurrectionem suspicati sunt corporalem, inter cætera maximè numero annorum mille permoti sunt, tanquam oporteret in sanctis eo modo tanti temporis fieri Sabbatismum, vacatione scilicet sanctâ *post labores annorum sex millium, ex quo creatus est homo*, et magni illius peccati merito in hujus mortalitatis ærurnis de paradisi felicitate dimissus est; *ut quoniam scriptum est, Unus dies apud Dominum sunt mille anni, et mille anni sicut unus dies, sex annorum millibus tanquam sex diebus impletis, sequatur velut sabbati septimus in annis mille postremis*, ad hoc scilicet Sabbatum celebrandum resurgentibus sanctis."—Civit. Dei, lib. xx. c. 7.

It may be observed, however, that Augustin does not give this interpretation as his own; and, from the close resemblance of his language to that of Lactantius, it seems not unlikely that he refers to this chapter.

world, that the six thousandth year is not yet concluded, at the completion of which number, the consummation *must* take place (*fieri necesse est*) and the condition of human affairs undergo a thorough reformation. And in the first place, I must trace the argument by which this matter is made clear. God completed the world, and this wonderful work of all nature, as we learn from the sacred records of Scripture, in the space of six days; and He hallowed the seventh day, in which he rested from his works. This is the Sabbath-day which, in the Hebrew tongue, derives its name from its number; whence the septenary number is regular (*legitimus*) and complete. For there are seven days which, revolving in turn, complete the cycle of years; and there are seven stars which never set; and seven heavenly bodies which are called wandering stars, whose unequal orbits and irregular movements are believed to occasion the varieties of events and seasons. Wherefore, since all the works of God were completed in six days, it follows that the world must continue in its present state for six ages, that is for six thousand years. For a great day of God comprehends a period of a thousand years, as the prophet informs us, saying, 'In thy sight, O Lord, a thousand years are as one day.' And as God laboured those six days in producing so great works, so must His Religion and Truth labour these six thousand years under the prevalence and dominion of sin.

And, again, since, having finished His works, He rested on the seventh day, and blessed it; it must ensue that at the close of the six thousandth year all sin shall be abolished in the earth, and righteousness shall reign for a thousand years; and there shall be peace and rest from the labours which the world has endured. But to what extent this will take place, I will explain in due order. I have often observed that matters of less pith and moment prefigure and typify greater things; and that this natural day, which is defined by the rising and setting of the sun, affords a semblance of the great day which is comprehended by the revolution of a thousand years. In the same manner the formation of the earthly man formed a type of the heavenly people hereafter. For as when God had finished all things which He made for the use of man, He created man himself last on the sixth day, and placed him in this world, as in a habitation ready furnished; so now, in the sixth great day, the true man is formed by the word of God; that is, the holy people is created to righteousness by the doctrine and precepts of God. And as, then, man was formed of the earth, mortal and imperfect, that he might live in this world a thousand years; so now the perfect man is framed out of this earthly generation, that, being made alive by God, he may reign in this same world a thousand years."

Lactantius considers the deliverance of God's peo-

ple from bondage by the passage through the Red Sea, and the destruction of their oppressors in the attempt to pursue them, as a type of the last age of the world, when every species of wickedness shall abound in an unprecedented degree, and the virtuous shall suffer the most cruel treatment; wars and tumults will abound; and Egypt in particular will again suffer fearfully. "Of which ruin and desolation the cause will be that which my soul shrinks from stating; but I must state it, since it must take place; the Roman name, which now rules the world, will be blotted from the earth; *and the seat of empire will again be in Asia; and the East shall once more rule, and the West be subject to it* ¹."

Lactantius adopts the fancy of Seneca, who considered the birth and infancy of Rome to have been under Romulus; her childhood under the other kings; her youth and maturity during the republic; her decrepitude and second childhood under the

¹ Cujus vastitatis et confusionis hæc erit causa; quod Romanum nomen, quo nunc regitur orbis, (horret animus dicere; sed dicam, quia futurum est,) tolletur de terrâ; et imperium in Asiam revertetur; ac rursus Oriens dominabitur, atque Occidens serviet. —C. 15.

Is it possible that a vague hope of averting this event, by removing the seat of government from Rome to the East, may have been the motive which induced Constantine to transfer the empire to Byzantium?

Tertullian expresses a similar expectation respecting the fall of the Roman empire, as necessarily preceding the coming of the kingdom of God.—See Tracts for the Times, No. 83.

emperors ; and since her decease must naturally conclude this strange eventful history, he proceeds to predict the steps by which so vast and solid a power will be broken and destroyed, borrowing his view apparently from Daniel. " Lest any one should regard this as impossible, I will point out the manner of its accomplishment. In the first place, the heads of the government (regnum) will be multiplied, and the supreme power divided among many hands will become weakened. Then civil discord will be perpetuated, nor will there be any respite from destructive wars, until ten kings arise together, who will apportion the world among them, not to govern, but to consume it. These kings, having gathered together prodigious armies, and withdrawn the men from agriculture, which is the road to decay and ruin, will spend, and waste, and ravage all things. Then suddenly a most powerful adversary will appear against them from the extreme regions of the north, who, having cut off three of them, who will at that time possess Asia, will be taken into alliance by the rest, and will become the chief of them all. This prince will harass the world with intolerable tyranny ; will confound all rights divine and human ; will devise the most detestable and execrable schemes ; will plan vast revolutions in order to establish his own dominion ; will change laws, and enact his own decrees ; will desecrate, plunder, spoil, and slay. At length having changed his title, and removed his

seat of empire, universal confusion and distress will ensue¹." Then follows a dreadful description of the horrors which are to follow, borrowed in part from our Lord's predictions in the Gospels, and partly from the Sibyls. "Then, through the wrath of God against men who have rejected his righteousness, the sword, fire, famine, and pestilence will rage; and above all, perpetual terrors will assail them: then will they call on God, but He will not hear; death will be invoked, but it will not come; night will afford no respite from fear, nor will sleep close their eyes; but anxiety and restlessness will consume the souls of men; they will weep, and groan, and gnash with their teeth; they will congratulate the dead, and lament for the living²."

"But," he continues, "I will explain more at large how this will occur. When the end of all things is at hand, a great prophet will be sent from God, who will convert men to the knowledge of God, and will

¹ C. 16.

² Tum verò per iram Dei adversùs homines, qui justitiam Dei non agnoverunt, sæviet ferrum, ignis, fames, morbus; et super omnia metus semper impendent: tunc orabunt Deum, et non exaudiet; optabitur mors, et non veniet; nec nox quidem requiem timori dabit, nec ad oculos somnus accedet; sed animas hominum sollicitudo ac vigilia macerabit; plorabunt, et gement, et dentibus strident; gratulabuntur mortuis, et vivos plangent.—C. 16.

Let the reader compare this exquisitely beautiful language with the Latinity of the Book de Mortibus Persecutorum.

receive the power of working miracles. Wherever men refuse to hear him, he will shut the heaven, and suppress the rain, and change the water into blood, and torment them with hunger and thirst. And if any one shall attempt to hurt him, fire shall proceed from his mouth, and consume him. By these wonders and powers he will convert many to the worship of God; and when his works are accomplished, another king shall arise from Syria, born of the evil spirit, a subverter and destroyer of the human race, who will destroy whatever is left by the first evil king, and that king himself also at the same time. This second evil king will fight against the prophet of God, and overcome him, and slay him, and suffer him to lie unburied. But after the third day he will revive, and, while all men are looking on, and wondering, he will be caught up into heaven. And that wicked king will also be a prophet, but of lies; and he will proclaim and call himself God; and will command that he should be worshipped as the Son of God, and power shall be given him to do signs and wonders, by the display of which he will entice men to adore him. He will command fire from heaven, and the sun to stand still in his course; and will make an image to speak: and these things will be wrought by his word; through which wonders many, even of the wise, will be enticed by him. Then he will endeavour to overthrow the temple of God, and

will persecute the holy people ; and there shall be tribulation and anguish, such as has never been from the beginning of the world. Whosoever believe on and adhere to him, he will mark them as cattle ; but whoever refuse to receive his mark, will either flee to the mountains, or, if overtaken, will be put to death with exquisite tortures. The same king will overwhelm just men in piles of the prophetic books, and thus burn them ; and he shall have power to lay waste the earth forty-two months. At that time righteousness shall be cast out, and innocence hated ; the wicked shall invade and plunder the just ; neither law, nor order, nor warlike discipline will be observed ; none will respect grey hairs ; none discharge the duties of filial piety ; neither sex nor age will be spared. All will be confusion, and the laws of conscience and nature set at nought. Thus the whole earth will be laid waste in one common and grievous rapine. When these things come to pass, the righteous and the lovers of truth will separate themselves from the wicked, and retire into desert places. On hearing which, the impious king, inflamed with rage, will come with a great army, and drawing together all his forces, will surround the mountain where the righteous reside, to take them prisoners. But they, seeing themselves besieged and shut in on every side, will call upon God with a loud voice, and implore his heavenly aid ; and God will hear them, and send the great King from heaven,

who will save and deliver them, and destroy all the wicked with fire and sword ¹."

His view of prophecy in these passages is certainly curious, and seems to show how a true understanding of divine predictions is impeded by attaching an undue weight to those of the Sibyl, Hermes, and Hydaspes, to whom Lactantius continually refers, as if they were of equal authority with Holy Writ ². It may be observed, however, that his work being addressed to the Gentiles, it was expedient, as far as possible, to appeal to authorities recognised by them.

All the evils which are so fearfully described will be at once set right by the second advent of Christ, which is to take place on the night of the nativity (a night observed as a vigil,—pervigilio). "For He is our Deliverer, and Judge, and Avenger, and King, *and God*, whom we call Christ, who, before his descent, will show this sign. A sword will suddenly fall from heaven, to warn the just that the Captain of the holy warfare is about to descend; and He will come down on the midst of the earth with a company of angels; and inextinguishable fire shall go before Him; and the valour of the angels shall deliver into the power of the just the multitude who besiege the mountain; and they shall be cut in pieces from the

¹ C. 17.

² *E. g.* Ab *humanis* ad *divina* redeamus; Sibylla hæc dicit, &c.—C. 23.

third hour till the evening; and blood shall flow as a torrent; and all his troops being cut off, the wicked one shall escape alone, and his courage die within him. This is he who is called Antichrist, but who falsely pretends to be Christ, and will fight against the true Christ, and when conquered will escape, and repeatedly renew the combat, and as often be defeated; until, in the fourth battle, all the impious being slain, subdued and taken at last he shall suffer the punishment due to his crimes. But the other princes and tyrants, who have oppressed the world, will, together with him, be brought bound before the King, who will rebuke them, and convict them, and reproach them with their misdeeds; and condemn them, and deliver them over to well-merited torments. Thus iniquity being suppressed, and impiety rooted out, the world, which has for so many ages been shamefully enslaved by error and sin, shall at length enjoy repose¹. "After this, hell shall be opened, (inferi, the place of the departed,) and the dead shall rise, on whom the same King, *and God*, shall himself sit in judgment, to whom the Most High Father will give the whole power both to judge and to govern them. Nevertheless, all mankind will not, at that time, be judged of God, but they only who have professed his religion. For they who have not known God, since the judg-

¹ C. 19.

ment cannot absolve them, are already judged and condemned, *holy Scripture bearing witness* that the impious shall not rise again to judgment. They therefore will be judged who have known God ; and their misdeeds, that is, their evil works, compared with their good works, will be weighed in the balance ; so that, if the good works are more in number, or preponderate, they will be justified to eternal life ; but if the evil works exceed, they will be condemned to punishment ¹."

Lactantius meets the metaphysical objection, that if the soul is subject to suffering, it must be liable to perish, by referring to the Divine Omnipotence ; but he adds, that souls condemned for the sins of the body will be made to suffer in the body, although not such a body as the present. *Nam quia peccata in corporibus contraxerunt, rursus carne induentur, ut in corporibus piaculum solvant ; et tamen non erit caro illa quam Deus homini superjecerit, huic terrenæ similis, sed insolubilis, ac permanens in æternum, ut sufficere possit cruciatibus, et igni sempiterno* ².

" But," he continues, " when he shall judge the just, he will try even them by fire. Then they, whose sins exceed in heinousness or in number, will be chastised by fire, and their scum burnt out—(perstringentur igni et amburentur). But they

¹ C. 20.

² C. 21.

whose characters complete righteousness and ripeness of virtue have formed, will not feel that fire; for they derive thence a quality which repels and keeps off the force of the flame. For such is the force of innocence, that that fire shrinks from it innocuous, having received from God this property, to burn the impious, and to respect the righteous. Nevertheless, let no one suppose that souls are judged immediately after death. They are all kept in one common place of custody, till the time come, in which the chief Judge will hold a judgment, according to every one's merits. Then they, whose righteousness is approved, will receive the reward of immortality; but they, whose sins and wickedness are disclosed, will not rise again, but will be consigned to the same darkness with the impious, being doomed to inevitable punishment."

In these passages we trace the germ of those errors, which subsequently grew up into the doctrines of human merit, supererogatory works, and Purgatory. But it is clear that no such doctrines prevailed in the time of Lactantius, who is only chargeable with deviating from the purely Scriptural view of judgment to come, through his partiality to apocryphal prophecies.

Having confirmed his interpretation by quotations from the Sibyl, and other authorities, he goes on:—"Then they who shall be alive in the body shall not die; but during those thousand years, shall beget an

infinite multitude; and their offspring will be holy, and beloved of God. But they who shall be raised from the abode of departed souls (*ab inferis*), will precede the living, like judges. And the Gentiles will not be altogether extinct; but some few will be left to display the victory of God, and that the just may triumph over them, and that they may be subject to perpetual slavery. At the same time, the prince of the devils, who is the author of all evil, shall be bound in chains, and be imprisoned during the thousand years of the celestial empire, wherein justice shall reign throughout the world, that he may contrive no mischief against the people of God. After the coming of which, the just shall be gathered together from all parts of the earth; and the judgment being finished, a holy city shall be established in the middle of the world, in which the Founder, God himself, will dwell with the just reigning (under Him). . . . Then will that darkness be removed from the earth, whereby the heaven is now obscured and concealed; and the moon shall have the brightness of the sun, and shall no more suffer change; and the sun shall be sevenfold brighter than it is now; and the earth shall reveal her fruitfulness, and produce untitled the richest fruits; the rocks of the mountains shall distil honey; wine shall flow in streams, and milk in rivers; the world itself shall rejoice, and all nature shall exult, being freed and delivered from the bondage of evil, and

impiety, and sin, and error. At this period, brutes shall not live by blood, nor birds by prey; but all things shall be peaceful and tranquil; lions and calves will stand together in the stall: the wolf will not seize the sheep; the dog will not hunt; hawks and eagles will do no hurt; the infant shall play with serpents." After adducing the passages from Virgil and the Sibyl, parallel to that of Isaiah here plainly referred to, he proceeds, "Men will lead a life of perfect tranquillity and abundance, and will reign together with God; and the kings of the Gentiles will come from the ends of the earth, with gifts and presents, to adore and honour the Great King; whose name will be famous, and honourable among all nations under heaven, and all kings who rule upon earth. This is what the prophets declare shall come to pass¹."

Lactantius intimates that the period of 6000 years, at the end of which these things are to take place, must be within 200 years of its accomplishment; so that he considered the world in his time to be at least 5800 years old. This chronological error is not surprising, in the confusion which had been introduced by mythological annals, and imperfect calendars; and it harmonised readily with the anxious expectations which had prevailed in the Church from the days of the Apostles.

¹ C. 24.

He winds up the whole system with an account of the final day of judgment, after the millennium.—“I said, a little above, that it would happen in the beginning of the reign of the Holy King, that the prince of the devils should be bound by God. But this same prince, when the thousand years of God’s reign, that is seven thousand years (from the beginning) shall draw to a close, will again be loosed, and set free from prison ; and he will instigate all the nations, which are under the dominion of the just, to wage war against the holy city ; and an innumerable concourse will be gathered from the whole world, and will besiege and surround the city ; and then shall come the last wrath of God upon the nations, and He shall subdue them to a man ; and shall first violently shake the earth, and by its motion the mountains of Syria shall be split, and the hills shall sink down suddenly ; and the walls of all cities shall fall : and God shall make the sun stand still, so that it shall not set for three days, and shall inflame its heat, so that an intense scorching, and vehement burning shall fall upon the rebelling and impious people, with showers of sulphur, and hail of stones, and drops of fire ; and their breath shall faint in the heat, and their bodies shall be bruised by the hail ; and they will themselves slay each other with the sword ; and the mountains shall be full of corpses, and the plains covered with bones. But the people of God, during these three days, shall be hidden in

the caves of the earth, until the wrath of God shall finish his last judgment on the Gentiles. Then will the just come forth from their hiding-places, and find every place covered with corpses and bones. But the whole race of the wicked shall utterly perish; nor shall there be in this world any more any other nation than the people of God. Then for seven years together the woods will remain untouched, nor will fuel be cut in the mountains, but the implements of the Gentiles will be burned¹; and there shall be no more war, but everlasting peace and rest. But when the thousand years shall be complete, the world will be renewed by God, and the heaven rolled together, and the earth changed; and God will transform men into the likeness of angels, and they will be white as snow; and they shall dwell always in the presence of the Almighty, and sacrifice to their Lord, and serve Him for ever. At the same time will take place that second and general resurrection of all men, in which the unrighteous will be raised for eternal torments. These are they who have worshipped the work of their own hands, who have not known, or have denied, the Lord and Father of all the earth. And their master will be taken with his servants, and condemned to punishment, wherein all the multitude of the wicked shall for ever burn in eternal

¹ *Arma gentium comburentur.* Perhaps the sense is, that the military carriages and works will serve for fuel.

fire, for their crimes, in the sight of the angels and the righteous. This is the doctrine of the holy prophets, which we Christians follow¹."

Lactantius then somewhat abruptly addresses Constantine, in terms of high commendation and thankfulness. The passage has been considered as spurious; but it is written in the style and manner of Lactantius, and was in all likelihood inserted by himself, at the time of publishing his work, which, as it has already been shown, was probably some years after its original composition.

He concludes the work with a beautiful and eloquent exhortation to a holy and religious life.

"Wherefore it behoves all men to take heed, and direct their steps into the right path without delay; that having undertaken and performed good works, and patiently endured the trials of life, they may have God for their consolation. For our Father and Lord, who made and established the heaven, who placed therein the sun and other planets, who strengthened with hills the earth, balanced by its own magnitude; and surrounded it with the sea, and divided it by rivers; and who planned and completed, out of nothing, this whole frame of the universe; He, beholding the wanderings of men, sent forth a Leader to guide us into the way of righteousness. Him let us all follow; Him let us hear; Him let us

¹ C. 26.

devoutly obey ; since He alone, to use the words of the poet¹, ‘hath purified the hearts of men by the word of truth ; and set limits to concupiscence and vain fears ; and pointed out true goodness, the object of our search ; and showed the way thereto by pure precepts, and the course of a righteous life.’ Nor did our Guide only point the way ; He went before us, as an example, that no follower might be deterred by its difficulties.

“If it be possible, then, let the ways of unrighteousness and perdition be deserted, where death lies in ambush under the allurements of pleasure. And as men feel, in the approaches of age, that the time of their departure is at hand, let them consider how they may leave the world in purity, and appear before their Judge in innocence ; not like those, whose dark souls are denied the light, who, as their bodily strength fails, are only led, by the shortness of their time, to a more eager and ardent indulgence of their passions. From which destruction let each of us flee whilst it is in his power, whilst grace is given him, and turn to God with his whole heart, that he may calmly expect that day, when the Divine Lord and Governor of the world will judge the thoughts and actions of every man. Let him not merely despise, but shun the objects of worldly desire ; and value his soul above such fabulous advantages,

¹ Lucretius de Rer. Nat. lib. iv. init.

whose tenure is so frail and uncertain, that they daily change their owners, and depart more quickly than they visit us ; and even if we retain them to the end, we must leave them to others at last.

“ We can carry nothing with us but a well-spent innocent life. That man will appear before God rich and abounding in wealth, who possesses continence and compassion, patience, charity, and fidelity. This is our inheritance, which can neither be taken away from us, nor pass to our heirs. And who is he that longs to provide and secure for himself these possessions ? Let those who hunger approach, and partake of heavenly food, and satisfy their appetite for ever ! Let those who thirst draw near, and drink to fulness the water of life, from the perennial and celestial fountain ! Nourished with this divine meat and drink, the blind will see, and the deaf hear ; the dumb shall speak, and the lame walk ; fools shall become wise, and the sick be healed ; and the dead shall be raised to life.

“ For whoever, through grace, spurns the corruptions of the world, shall be raised up to eternal light and life by the Supreme and Just Judge. Let no man trust in riches, honours, or power ; for these cannot confer immortality ; and whosoever, laying aside the true wisdom of man, and following present objects, attaches himself to the earth, will be punished for having forsaken his Lord, and Master, and Father. Let us, therefore, give heed to righteousness,

which alone, if we cleave to it constantly, will bring us into the presence of God ; and whilst we dwell in this body, let us remain good soldiers of our Lord ; let us continue instant in prayer and watching ; let us contend earnestly against the enemy of whom we are warned ; that, being made more than conquerors over sin, we may receive at the hands of our Lord the reward which He has promised to obedience¹."

In this Book Lactantius speaks of the work of Asclepiades, "de Providentiâ Dei" addressed to himself².

He uses the word "Sacramentum" repeatedly in the sense of any holy mystery³, not in the restricted signification in which it has been since employed ; he calls the doctrine of divine revelation "mysterium divini sacramenti⁴," and those who are ignorant of it "profanos à sacramento⁵:" so that his use of the

¹ C. 27*.

² C. 4.

³ C. 3 ; c. 4 ; c. 7.

⁴ C. 22.

⁵ C. 24. init. In the 19th chapter of the book de Opificio "sacramentum" seems to be used for divine grace. *Magna est enim vis hominis, magna ratio, magnum sacramentum.*

* I have been unwilling to swell the size of this little volume by printing the longer extracts with the original Latin. But in translating them, I have felt strongly the impossibility of doing any thing like justice to their eloquence and beauty ; and I can only express my hope that the reader will be induced to consult the work of Lactantius in its own language.

term cannot fairly be adduced in favour of more than two sacraments properly so called.

He uses the word "Traditio" frequently as St. Paul does, παράδοσις, for any doctrine *delivered*, whether orally, or in writing¹.

He adopts "Anastasis" as a Latin word.

¹ C. 1; c. 8.

CHAPTER VIII.

SACRED INSTITUTES. EPITOME.

THE Epitome of the Sacred Institutes is described by Jerome as an incomplete book, the former part of it having been lost before his time. It has been already mentioned that Dr. Pfaff discovered and published a manuscript which he believed to be genuine, containing the short prefatory introduction addressed to Pentadius, and the lost chapters from I to XIV, and from XX to LV, inclusive. This portion of the work is given in Dufresnoy's edition. It consists of a very brief summary of the corresponding portion of the Institutes, and is, at all events, of little value. The weight of critical judgment appears to be against the genuineness of the manuscript; and I think that most readers will be inclined to concur in the opinion, that these chapters do not exhibit the neatness and elegance of style which distinguish the undoubted remains of the Epitome.

That part which was extant when Jerome wrote, and which is in all the old editions, commences in the fifth Book of Institutes, where Lactantius maintains his argument against Carneades; and it proceeds to sum up the remainder of the larger work in very spirited and polished language.

He shows that the famous difficulties involved in the moral paradoxes of the schools¹, all hinge on their leaving out of the calculation a state of future retribution, the consideration of which solves the question by reconciling Prudence with Justice.

The Stoics, he goes on to observe, unreservedly declare for eradicating the three natural passions (or the three Furies), Anger, Covetousness, and Lust, which are combined to make war against Justice, or Righteousness. The Peripatetics maintain that they are not to be eradicated, but reduced under a due government by moderation. Lactantius boldly dissents from both; and argues that these affections need only to be applied to their proper objects, in order to promote the ends of true Righteousness. Since, however, this right application of the passions necessarily implies their being kept within due bounds, the doctrine of Lactantius does not, in effect,

¹ *E. g.* Such as, that it is *unjust*, when shipwrecked, to push a weaker man off from his plank, in order to save your own life; and, on the other hand, that it is *imprudent* to lose your own life rather than do it. To bring Justice and Prudence into this collision, it must be assumed that existence terminates with the present life.

differ very materially from that of the Peripatetic School¹. In the practical application of his principles, he takes occasion to repeat his objections to theatrical exhibitions and public shows, principally on the ground that they were celebrated in honour of the false gods of Pagan idolatry; but also on account of their atrocious cruelty, especially in the instance of Gladiators, and of their abominable licentiousness. He considers it as inconsistent with the principle of true Righteousness to receive interest for the loan of money, because, he alleges, this is to make a profit from the calamity of another; an objection evidently not of general application to the practice. In explaining the various moral duties with which he exemplifies this part of his system, he makes several manifest references to our blessed Lord's discourses, as contained in the Gospels, and particularly to the Sermon on the Mount. Lactantius rises into a strain of noble eloquence in extolling the crown of martyrdom; but it must be acknowledged that his philosophy respecting Creation and Providence is strikingly defective in clearness and soundness. He sums up his view of the subject thus: "The world was created by God, in order that men might be born in it; and men are born that they may acknowledge God as their Father, and

¹ *Exemption from passion, not moderation*, is the characteristic of the Gnostic.—Bishop Kaye's Clement, p. 194.

By the Gnostic, Clement means the perfect Christian.

serve Him, in whom is perfect righteousness; they serve Him that they may receive the reward of immortality; they receive immortality that they may worship God to all eternity¹. On this head he dilates in the language of sincere and fervent piety.

He proceeds to give a summary of his views respecting unaccomplished prophecy, which he has more fully detailed in the seventh Book of Institutes, and he confidently promises the restoration of all things, and the millennium, to take place on the completion of six thousand years from the beginning of the world; which happy consummation is to be preceded by a period of general apostasy, and heinous wickedness, described in language borrowed in part from our Lord's predictions in the Gospels, from the prophecies of Daniel, and from the Apocalypse; and, according to his custom, he confirms these authorities by references to Hermes Trismegistus, to Hydaspes, and to the Sybils, omitting the quotations from their writings which he has given in his larger work.

The doctrine of repentance is perhaps more clearly and unexceptionably stated than in the larger

¹ Factus à Deo mundus, ut homines nascerentur; nascuntur autem homines, ut Deum patrem agnoscant, ut colant, in quo Justitia est; colunt, ut mercedem immortalitatis accipiant; accipiunt immortalitatem, ut in æternum Deo serviant.—C. 69.

Cf. Inst. lib. vii. c. 6.

treatise. "But all these things are difficult to man; nor will the frailty of nature allow any one to be immaculate. The last remedy, therefore, is that we have recourse to repentance, which is not the least among the virtues, since it consists in self-correction; so that, if at any time we have offended in word or deed, we immediately repent, and confess our transgression, and beg for pardon from God, who, of His mercy, will not deny it, unless to such as persist in sin. Great is the help of penitence, great its comfort! It is the healing of wounds and offences; the hope, and the haven of salvation: he who rejects it, cuts off his own way to eternal life, since no man can be so righteous as never to stand in need of repentance¹." We have here no allusion to auricular

¹ Sed hæc enim omnia difficilia sunt homini, nec patitur conditio fragilitatis naturæ, esse quemquam sine maculâ. Ultimum ergò remedium illud est, ut confugiamus ad pœnitentiam, quæ non minimum locum inter virtutes habet, quia sui correctio est; ut quum fortè re, aut verbo lapsi fuerimus, statim resipiscamus, ac nos deliquisse fateamur; oremusque à Deo veniam, quam, pro suâ misericordiâ, non negabit, nisi perseverantibus in errore. Magnum est pœnitentiæ auxilium, magnum solatium. Illa est vulnerum peccatorumque sanatio; illa spes, illa portus salutis: quam qui tollit, viam vitæ sibi amputat, quia nemo esse tam justus potest, ut nunquam sit ei pœnitentia necessaria.—C. 67.

Cf. Qui placari celerius præcipit, est utique ipse placabilis.—De Irâ, c. 21.

He that hath made it our duty, that as often as our brother offends against us, and repents, so often we should forgive him, doth not certainly intend to be outdone by us in mercy, the most glorious of all his attributes.—Goodman's *Penitent Pardoned*, part iii. chap. 1. § 6.

confession, individual absolution, or meritorious penance; the atoning efficacy of the Cross is, indeed, not expressly mentioned; but it would be unreasonable to deny that it is implied as the only source of mercy.

In this book the epithet "fictilis" is applied to temples, in the sense "*made with hands.*"

Agon (ἀγών, certamen) is usurped as a Latin word.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE WORKS OF GOD.

THE little Tract of Lactantius on Natural Theology¹, is addressed to Demetrianus, his former pupil in the science of Rhetoric. Its object is to refute some of the objections, urged by the philosophers of the Epicurean school, against the proofs of design, and of the Divine wisdom and goodness, deduced from the creation and maintenance of the universe; and to support the opposite doctrine by considerations arising from the human anatomy. In the conduct of his argument, he displays considerable ingenuity; and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion, that Paley owed him considerable obligations².

¹ De Opificio Dei.

² See particularly Paley's Natural Theology, chap. 5, and chap. 8, on the joints. The inference of Lactantius, that if design is undeniably displayed in a statue, it must be so, à fortiori, in the original living man, seems to my mind more apposite than

Lactantius readily acknowledges that he is indebted to Varro for his knowledge of anatomy, which, however respectable it may have appeared in his own day, would not, I apprehend, be much more highly esteemed by modern practitioners¹, than his etymologies by modern orthoepists².

He replies to the common-place objection, that man is born in a feeble and helpless condition, as compared with the young of other animals; and observes, that this very circumstance is a mark of our superiority; since our infants are better secured by our reason, and by our supremacy over the other creatures, than the young ones of the most powerful brutes. But, he adds, even in the case of birds, which do not possess this gift of reason, the callow

Paley's celebrated illustration of "the watch." I do not, however, intend to charge Paley with intentional suppression of the source from which some of his arguments may probably have been derived. In a Sermon which I printed, before I had read the sixth book of the Institutes, the whole substance and order of the spiritual application of our Lord's miracles, might almost be considered as a paraphrase from the chapter which treats of that subject.—Advent Sermon 6.

¹ For example, he considers the use of certain principal organs of the body, instancing, among others, the liver and the kidneys, to be unsearchable without an express revelation from the Creator; (*ista prospicere acumen humani sensus non potest. C. 14.*) and he asserts that the office of the digestive organs is to nourish *the body*, and that of the lungs to nourish *the soul*; a notion which may perhaps be traced to the double sense of the word, "*anima*—breath, soul."

² *E. g. Mulier qu. mollior. Ren qu. rivus. Vir à vis. Nares à nando, &c.*

nestlings are protected by the express provision of nature ; a fact which these wise philosophers take care to keep out of sight, because they are aware that it makes against their argument. Their next objection, that man is short-lived, and liable to disease, and to premature death, is answered by an assumption that this liability forms a necessary part of his constitution, and that it conduces to the great ends of human society by the succession which it occasions, and for which it provides. But this argument of Lactantius can only be satisfactory with reference to the lower animals, among whom a succession of lives produces the same amount of animal life and enjoyment, as the prolonged existence of the original individuals would have afforded. In the case of man, an immortal being, the origin of physical evil, and of death, can only be explained by the doctrine of the Fall. His own theory of the origin of evil is here more briefly expressed than in the *Institutes* ; but it is in substance the same. " For since there can be no victory without a conflict, even virtue itself could not subsist without a foe. Wherefore, since God bestowed virtue on man, He appointed him an enemy in opposition to it, lest virtue, becoming torpid through ease, should lose its essence ¹."

Lactantius strenuously objects to the gratuitous

¹ Nam ut victoria constare sine certamine non potest ; sic nec virtus quidem ipsa sine hoste. Ita quoniam virtutem dedit ho-

speculation of Lucretius, or rather of Epicurus himself, that races of huge creatures¹ existed in the early stage of creation, which have since become extinct in consequence of defects in their organization; a supposition manifestly irreconcilable with the perfect wisdom of the Creator.

In the eighteenth chapter, he treats of a question, which he sets out with declaring to be indeterminate², whether the life, and the mind (*anima* and *animus*) are identical. The arguments on both sides, he says, are of some weight. On one hand it is contended that we can neither live without consciousness, nor be conscious without life³; and, since life and consciousness are thus inseparable, they are the same. On the other hand, that the mind may be destroyed whilst the life remains, as in the case of madmen, and in sleep. His theory of dreams is that the soul, or rather the mind, never rests; and that there is an association of the first idea presented to it when the body sleeps, with the last idea that occurs to it whilst it is awake; and, the outward senses being then closed against fresh impressions, the restless mind forms for itself a succession of concatenated ideas with which it has been previously impressed.

mini, statuit ei è contrario inimicum, ne virtus otio torpens naturam suam perderet.—C. 19.

¹ Is it possible that the ancient philosophers had noticed some of the fossil remains of extinct species?

² Inextricabilis.

³ — Quòd neque vivi sine sensu possit, nec sentiri sine vitâ.

Lactantius speaks of the essence and residence of the mind as extremely mysterious, and, in his attempt to discuss the subject, he evinces the shallowness of his metaphysical attainments. He imagines the soul to dwell in the acropolis of the skull, but to retire into the bosom when engaged in reflection; on which account, he says, when we are absorbed by thought, and the mind is no longer in the neighbourhood of the eyes and ears, we cease to perceive the objects of sight and hearing. He is perplexed, however, since there is no passage from the brain into the chest, to discover by what means the mind passes from one into the other. Yet he appears to feel no difficulty respecting the wonderful ease and rapidity, remarked by himself, with which the mind passes, in a moment, to immeasurable distances, and through all corporeal obstacles.

In conclusion, he promises **Demetrianus** that, if life and means are vouchsafed him, he will address to him a larger work against the heathen philosophers, and in illustration of the true principles of Wisdom and Happiness; from which it has been concluded that this book was written before the composition of the *Sacred Institutes*.

CHAPTER X.

ON WRATH.

IN this book, which is inscribed to Donatus¹, the author undertakes to refute the doctrines of the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers respecting Divine Wrath. The former held, as Cicero states, the great

¹ It is uncertain who this person was. Some critics have supposed him to be Donatus, called the Confessor, to whom Cecilius dedicated the Tract de Mortibus Persecutorum; others have thought that he was the celebrated heresiarch. Perhaps the more probable conjecture is, that he might be Alius Donatus the grammarian and tutor of Jerome. This seems strengthened by Jerome's warm approbation of the sentiments of Lactantius on this subject. He mentions this as a most beautiful work (*pulcherimum*) in his Catalogue of Ecclesiastical Authors; and he speaks of it as an eloquent and satisfactory Treatise in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians. *Librum de Irâ Dei docto pariter et eloquenti sermone conscripsit, quem qui legerit, puto ei ad iræ intellectum satis abundèque sufficere.*—Cap. 4.

But, as Isæus observes, the doctrine of Lactantius is obviously unsound, and goes the length of attributing passions to the Deity.

majority of philosophers to have maintained¹ that the Deity is capable of Benevolence, but not of Anger; and consequently that, though He confers benefits, He cannot punish. Epicurus is represented to have taught that the Divine Nature is a tranquil serenity², remote from all emotion, and from every kind of action; so that God does not interfere at all in the affairs of the Creation.

Lactantius, as is usual with him, displays considerable acuteness in detecting the weak points of his adversary's argument; but a deficiency of soundness and clearness in his own views. He describes the steps towards Truth, from each of which he represents the fall into fatal error as prone and easy; and he shows how low were the attainments even of those among the philosophers who made the nearest approaches to right opinions. But in speaking of those who attributed absolute quiescence to the Deity, he himself employs language from which it may not unfairly be inferred that he considered God to have both a body and bodily affections. "They entertain sentiments wide of the Truth, who deny that God has any shape, or can be excited by any feeling³." And he goes on to state the argument

¹ Hoc quidem commune omnium philosophorum
nunquam nec irasci Deum nec nocere.—Cic. Off. iii. 28.

² — Deos aiunt securum agere ævum.—Lucret.

³ Aliter de unicâ illâ majestate sentiunt quàm Veritas habet, qui aut *figuram* negant habere ullam Deum, aut ullo affectu commoveri.—C. 2.

thus: "We must either attribute anger to God, and deny that He is gracious, or equally deny both; or else we must deny that He can be angry, and assert His graciousness; or, lastly, we must attribute to Him both affections: Nature does not admit of any other supposition beside these¹."

The first of these permutations needs little refutation; of the second, Lactantius justly remarks, that it is tantamount to Atheism; but he does not concur in the assertion of Possidonius, reported by Cicero, that Epicurus was, at heart, an atheist, and being apprehensive of the consequences from an open avowal of that doctrine, he had recourse to the equivalent, but safer, statement in question. The third supposition, which he terms the Stoical proposition, he shows to be incompatible with justice; and inquires what would be thought of the wisdom of that philosopher who should treat a faithful servant, and a rogue and vagabond, exactly alike. He then states his own opinion on the subject, which coincides with the fourth of the propositions just mentioned; "the last one alone remains that God is susceptible of Anger, since He is moved by gracious affections²."

¹ Aut Ira tribuenda est Deo, et Gratia detrahenda; aut utrumque pariter detrahendum; aut Ira demenda est, et Gratia tribuenda; aut utrumque tribuendum: aliud amplius præter hæc nihil potest capere Natura.—Ibid.

² Unum illud extremum superest ut irascatur Deus quoniam gratiâ commovetur.—C. 6.

Lactantius here enters upon a pretty wide digression, and recurs to several of his statements in other treatises, in laying the foundation for his main argument. He repeats his favourite notion that Religion constitutes the essential distinction between man and the lower orders of creation¹; and he goes on, with considerable ingenuity, to show that where the brutes

"In punishing us," says Clement of Alexandria, *"God is not moved by anger, but considers what is just: and it is not expedient that what is just should be left undone on our account. God wishes not to look upon that which is evil, for He is good; while He purposely averts his eye, wickedness springs up through man's unbelief. In him who is good, inasmuch as he is essentially good, there must exist hatred of evil. Wherefore, I admit that God punishes unbelievers, (for punishment is for the good and benefit of him who is punished; it is the bringing back to rectitude of that which has swerved from it) but I do not admit that God wishes to avenge himself! for vengeance is the retribution of evil for the benefit of the avenger; and he who teaches us to pray for those who insult us, cannot desire to avenge himself."*—Bishop Kaye's Clement, p. 61.

Clement seems to have adopted the true principle of all punishment cited by Seneca from Plato, *"Nemo prudens punit, quia peccatur, sed ne peccetur."* He considered the perfection of character to consist in the absence of passion (*ἀπάθεια*), and consequently he looked upon the Deity as absolutely exempt from passions (*ἀπαθής*).—Strom. passim.

Θεῷ τῷ ἀγεννήτῳ καὶ ἀπαθεὶ ἑαυτοῦς ἀνεθήκαμεν.—Justin Martyr, Apol. i. c. 33.

"Punishment can proceed only from anger: the Deity is not susceptible of anger: therefore the Deity will not punish." Such appears to have been the reasoning of ancient times; and that reasoning was one of the difficulties with which the Christian doctrine of future punishments for evil doers had to contend.—Turton, Nat. Theol. § 7.

¹ Religio . . . est hominis atque mutorum vel præcipua, vel sola distantia.—C. 7.

do not possess the very same faculties with men, they have others similar in effect ; and, even in the case of speech, that our language is as inarticulate to their perceptions, as their voices seem to us ; but that they certainly have the power of communicating ideas to each other by means of sounds ; for instance, they express resentment, and welcome after absence ; from which he concludes that “ Religion is the only gift of which no trace, nor any indication can be found in dumb animals ; for the characteristic of Religion is righteousness, to which no animal except man attains ¹.” If then, Lactantius argues, the system of Epicurus be true, and Religion left without any foundation, the brutes are right rather than man. He proceeds to urge, with great force and neatness, the argument of the Deists against the theory of atoms ; respecting which he justly observes, “ How much better would it have been to be dumb, than to have the gift of speech employed to such wretched and useless ends ; and truly I am apprehensive lest he should be thought scarcely less absurd who considers such follies as worth a refutation. But, let us reply, as if there were something in the argument ².”

¹ Apparet solam esse Religionem cujus in mutis nec vestigium aliquod, nec ulla suspicio inveniri potest : Religionis enim est propria Justitia, quam nullum aliud animal attingit.—C. 7.

² Quantò melius fuerat tacere, quàm in usus tam miserabiles, tam inanes habere linguam ; et quidem vereor ne non minus delirare videatur, qui hæc putet refellenda : respondeamus tamen, velut aliquid dicenti.—C. 10.

He is evidently well pleased with himself in his conduct of the argument against the Epicureans, which is exceedingly well managed throughout; and possibly this may account for his introducing in this part of his treatise several favourite passages from his other writings, particularly the proof of design in a statue¹, which was noticed in the book "De Opificio;" and the arguments for the unity of the Deity, which he briefly recapitulates from the Divine Institutes. Having proved the design and superintendence of Divine Providence in the creation, and shown that this Providence is in One God, he erects upon this foundation his argument that the fear of God is an indispensable restraint, essential to the very existence of civilized society; and he infers that to be the object of fear, the Governor of the Universe must be capable of Wrath. This leads him again to the perplexing and dangerous question respecting the origin and continuance of physical evil, which he re-

¹ An simulacrum hominis et statuam ratio et ars fingit; ipsum hominem de frustis temere concurrentibus fieri putabimus?—C. 10.

From a subsequent passage, it appears that the famous burning-glasses of the ancients were hollow lenses of glass filled with water. Is it probable that such instruments could have been constructed and employed by scientific men without their ever having, by any accident, discovered their magnifying power? But if the discovery were made, and subsequently lost, it might help to account for their knowledge of some astronomical phenomena, which appear to be beyond the reach of any unassisted eye.

solves, as before, upon the principle of the necessity for trial in order to form and discriminate virtue; and some of his expressions on this point are so little guarded as to have given rise to the doubt, whether he considered Adam in Paradise as a rational being¹. The existence of moral evil is accounted for on similar grounds: "And here, perhaps, it may be inquired, how sin was introduced among mankind, and what depravation of the Divine institution perverted original rectitude; so that, having been created for righteousness, men nevertheless commit iniquity? I have already explained above that God has set before them good and evil; that He loves the good, and hates the evil which is opposed to it; but that He has permitted the existence of evil, in order that good might be brought out by the contrast; since, as I have often observed, we understand that the one cannot subsist without the other: lastly, that the world itself is compounded of two elements alternately conflicting and united, of fire and water; nor could there have been light, if there had not been darkness; since there cannot be a higher without a lower, nor east without the west, nor hot without cold, nor soft without hard²."

¹ Vides ergo, magis propter mala opus bonis esse sapientiâ; quæ nisi fuisset proposita, *rationale animal non essemus*.—C. 13.

Vid. Gallæus in loco. It is clear, however, that this is nothing more than an oversight. Aliquando bona dormitat Gallæus.

² Hic fortasse quærat aliquis, unde ad hominem peccata perve-

Hence, he infers that the Deity must have the affections of Love and Wrath, although He is exempt from the baser passions. "The arguments are, therefore, found to be hollow and inconclusive, whether of those who deny that God is angry, but allow that He is pleased; since this emotion cannot exist without anger; or of those who maintain that there are no affections of mind in the Deity; and because there are some passions which do not belong to Him, as lust, fear, avarice, sorrow, envy, they have asserted that He is altogether without any affection. He is, indeed, exempt from such as these, inasmuch as they are vicious; but He has, in a natural, and just, and proper acceptation, those which are virtuous; that is, Wrath against the wicked, Benevolence towards the good, pity for the afflicted; since these feelings are worthy of the Divine Majesty¹."

nerint, aut quæ pravitas divini instituti regulam ad pejora detorsit; ut cum sit ad justitiam genitus, opera tamen efficiat iniqua? Jam superius explanavi, simul Deum proposuisse bonum, ac malum; et bonum quidem diligere; ac malum, quod huic repugnat, odisse; sed ideo malum permisisse, ut et bonum emicaret; quod alterum sine altero, sicut sæpe docui, intelligimus constare non posse: denique ipsum mundum ex duobus elementis repugnantibus, et invicem copulatis, esse concretum, igneo et humido; nec potuisse lucem fieri, nisi et tenebræ fuissent; quia nec superum potest esse sine infero, nec Oriens sine Occidente, nec calidum sine frigido, nec molle sine duro.—C. 15.

If this reasoning is not very conclusive, it, at least, harmonizes with our proverb, "All things are by comparison."

¹ Inania ergo et falsa reperiuntur argumenta vel eorum, qui, cum irasci Deum nolunt, gratificari volunt, quia ne hoc quidem

In that part of his argument which turns upon the senses of the word *noceo* (*to injure, to be guilty, to hurt, to punish*), Lactantius observes that, if to punish the obnoxious constitutes noxiousness, then the judges, and the laws themselves are noxious; whereas, we admit that they are just and good. But he does not perceive the obvious inference from his own illustration, that the Deity punishes, as the law does, upon fixed principles, and by rules, wholly without passion. A judge, he says, can punish without resentment, because he decides according to law and evidence; but it is different with those who have unlimited and irresponsible power, as we have over our slaves and children: in these cases anger is necessary. But some of his own language is not altogether consistent with this view of the subject; for he admits that “we take vengeance, not because we are provoked, but to preserve discipline, that morals may be corrected, and licentiousness restrained; and this is a just anger¹.” And hence, after stating his objections to the definitions of Wrath (*Ira*) given by

fieri sine irâ potest; vel eorum, qui nullum animi motum esse in Deo putant. Et quia sunt aliqui affectus qui non cadunt in Deum, ut libido, timor, avaritia, mœror, invidia, omni prorsus affectu eum vacare dixerunt. His enim vacat, quia vitiorum affectus sunt; eos autem qui virtutis sunt, id est, ira in malos, caritas in bonos, miseratio in afflictos, quoniam divinâ potestate sunt digna, proprios, et justos, et veros habet.—C. 16.

¹ Ergo surgimus ad vindictam, non quia læsi sumus, sed ut disciplina servetur, mores corrigantur, licentia comprimatur. Hæc ira est justa.—C. 17.

Cicero, and by other philosophers, he deduces his own, that "Wrath is an emotion of the mind, prompting us to coerce offences¹." On this principle, he dissents from the commendation bestowed by the Stoics upon Archytas, who declined to punish a criminal slave, because he was angry; and he justly remarks that the right course would have been, to have waited till his passion had subsided, and then to have inflicted a suitable punishment; a remark which unconsciously implies that punishment should follow offences upon principle, and not from resentment.

To the argument of certain Christian writers, that God prohibits Wrath in man, and that consequently He cannot entertain it in Himself, Lactantius replies by denying the prohibition, and affirming that we are only commanded to subject our anger under due regulation; and he insists that the Deity may safely be trusted with a degree of Wrath which would be mischievous in a fallible creature. God, he adds, is not immediate in giving effect to His vengeance, that men may have opportunity to repent.

He concludes (as he says, after the manner of Cicero), by citing authorities; and in referring to the language of the Holy Scriptures respecting the fierce Anger, and Wrath, and Vengeance of the Almighty, he does not consider these expressions as

¹ *Ira est motus animi ad coercenda peccata insurgentis.*—
Ibid.

adapted to our human capacities, as "the hand," "the arm," "the eye," &c. of God are allowed to be, but he takes them literally as proofs that the Most High is actuated by such affections. He quotes several passages from the Sybilline oracles, to the same purpose, and one from Ovid¹, whom he considers as referring to the same source. He sums up his argument briefly thus². "If no one submits to another but from necessity, all authority depends upon fear, as fear depends upon anger; where, therefore, there is no anger, there can be no authority."

His final exhortation is in a strain of simple unaffected piety. "Him we ought all to love, because He is our Father, and to reverence, because He is our Lord; to honour Him, because He is bountiful, and to fear Him, because He is severe; both attributes in Him are adorable. Who that has any piety can fail to love the Author of his being? or who can safely neglect the Ruler of the universe, whose power over all men is real and eternal? If we regard Him as a Father, He supplies to us the light of life, and raises us to behold it; in Him we live; by Him we

¹ *Esse quoque in fatis reminiscitur, affore tempus,
Quo mare, quo tellus, correptaque regia cœli,
Ardeat, et mundi moles operosa laboret.*

Metam. lib. i. 256.

² *Si enim nullus alteri servit nisi coactus, omne igitur imperium metu constat: metus autem per iram ubi ergo ira non fuerit, imperium quoque non erit.—C. 23.*

enter upon our temporary abode here. If we consider Him as God, He nourishes us with countless abundance, He sustains us, we live in his house, we constitute his Family; and even if we are a family less obedient than we ought to be, less dutiful than the immortal benefits of our Lord and Father require, yet it avails to obtain forgiveness, if we hold fast his service, and the knowledge of Him; if, casting away mean and earthly pursuits and pleasures, we continually meditate on those divine and heavenly things which are eternal. Which that we may be enabled to do, we must follow God; we must adore, and love him; since in Him is the source of all things, the rule of goodness, and the fountain of happiness.

What is greater than God in power, or more perfect in wisdom, or more bright in glory? And, since He begat us for wisdom, and made us for righteousness, it is not to be endured that man, deserting God, who is the Giver of life and feeling, should domesticate himself among earthly and frail creatures, and, in the eager pursuit of temporal advantages, fall away from innocence and piety. Vicious and fatal pleasures do not make man happy, nor wealth the nurse of vain desires, nor empty ambition, nor uncertain honours, by which the mind of man being ensnared, and his body enslaved, he is condemned to eternal death; but innocence and righteousness alone, of which the legitimate and worthy reward is

immortality, designed from the beginning by God for pure and holy spirits, who keep themselves whole and undefiled from sin, and all earthly corruption. They cannot become partakers of this heavenly and eternal reward, who have polluted their consciences with crimes, with fraud, with rapine, with forgery; who, by the commission of atrocious injuries against their fellow-creatures, have branded their souls with inextinguishable guilt. It behoves all, then, who desire the character of wisdom and humanity, to despise transitory things, to spurn earthly things, to disregard mean things, that they may become one with God in the most blessed intimacy.

Let impiety, let discord cease; let turbulent and pestilential dissensions be appeased,—by which human societies, and the divinely-instituted compact of public faith, are severed, are torn asunder, are scattered abroad; let us study to become good and bountiful to the utmost of our power; if we have wealth and abundance, let it not be spent in the indulgence of one, but for the preservation of many. For pleasure is as short-lived as the body which it pampers. But righteousness and charity are as immortal as the soul and spirit, which, through good works, is conformed to the image of God. Let our God be hallowed, not in temples, but in our hearts. All things are perishable which are made with hands. Let us cleanse this temple, which is defiled, not by smoke and dust, but by evil thoughts; which is enlightened,

not by blazing tapers, but by the clear light of wisdom : in which, if we will believe that God is always present, to whose Divinity the secrets of all hearts are open, we shall so live, that we may at all times enjoy his blessing, and never dread his wrath.

Lactantius objects, on etymological grounds, to the common phrase “ *Natura Dei* ;” quia Deus noster nusquam creditur *natus*.—C. 15.

CHAPTER XI.

SPURIOUS WORKS.

It would be difficult to add any additional force to the clear and convincing arguments of Lardner¹, in proof that the Book *de Mortibus Persecutorum*, supposed by Dufresnoy, and some other editors, to be the Treatise of Lactantius *de Persecutione* mentioned by Jerome and Honorius, is erroneously attributed to him, and is the work of a later age: I must confess, however, that, to my mind, the internal evidence alone appears so conclusive, that I can scarcely imagine it possible for any competent scholar, familiar with the classical purity and elegance of his style, and the manly simplicity of his sentiments, which so

¹ The reader is referred to that learned author's account of Lactantius. On the other side is a Disquisition, not without ingenuity, by Nicholas de Lestocq, Doctor of the Sorbonne, reprinted in Dufresnoy's edition. It is written in answer to Le Nourry, who attributes the Tract to Lucius Cecilius.

agreeably surprise us in a writer of the third century, to hesitate in rejecting a composition of a character so entirely different. A perusal of the very voluminous notes which have been written on this worthless production will in some measure explain the matter, by displaying the incompetency of many very learned and laborious editors to form a sound judgment of classical style.

The Treatise in question is a synoptical and very meagre history of the persecuting emperors, designed to show that the manifest judgments of the Almighty followed every attempt to suppress Christianity. The facts, however, are, in many instances, incorrect; and the inferences inconclusive; the sentiments are generally those of an age subsequent to Lactantius; and they are expressed in the manner of a writer unaccustomed to composition, and careless of its principles. It has all the character of the "low Latin," "ill-imitating" the manner sometimes of one ancient author, sometimes of another; and intermingling a strange variety of barbarous phrases, and Gothic idioms. The occasional use of some words and phrases in senses common to the writings of Lactantius, of which Lestocq collects various examples, may render it probable that Cecilius, or whoever compiled this book, was acquainted with his works; but surely no reader who is capable of appreciating him, would suppose him to have retailed the monkish legend in the 49th chapter, or to have penned the

thoroughly popish prayer, said to have been *thrice repeated*¹ in the 46th chapter.

The former of these specimens is as follows: "The tyrant retreated before Licinius, who followed him with his army, and again took refuge in the fastnesses of Mount Taurus; and there erecting fortifications and towers, endeavoured to oppose his advance; but the conquerors forcing all his works on his right flank, he at last fled to Tarsus. Being there beset by land and sea, and having no hope of escape, in terror and agony of mind, he sought in death a remedy for the evils which God had heaped on his head. But first he gorged himself with food, and drowned himself in wine, as they are apt to do, who think that they are doing it for the last time. And so he took poison. The power of which, being counteracted by an overloaded stomach, had no immediate effect, but was diverted to a slow disorder resembling the plague, so that he might feel his torments by the prolongation of his existence. The poison had already begun to act upon him; and his vitals were so inflamed, that the agony of his pain produced delirium, so that, for four days, in a state of insanity, he tore up the earth with his hands, and eagerly devoured it. After many dreadful sufferings, he drove his head against the wall, so that his eyes were forced from their sockets. At length, having

¹ Oratione ter dictâ.

lost his sight, he began to see God amidst his white robed angels passing judgment on him. He cried out as men do when undergoing the torture, alleging that others, not he, had done these things. Then, as if overcome by the torture, he made his confession, deprecating the vengeance of Christ, and imploring mercy. Thus uttering groans as if he were in the flames, he yielded up his guilty spirit by an abominable kind of death¹." One is tempted to fancy, that this must have been written by some one who had

¹ *Sequenti autem Licinio cum exercitu tyrannum, profugus concessit, et rursus Tauri montis angustias petiit: munimentis ibidem ac turribus fabricatis, iter obstruere conatus est; et inde dextrorsum perrumpentibus omnia victoribus, Tarsum postremò confugit. Ibi cùm jam terrâ marique peteretur, nec ullum speraret refugium, angore animi ac metu confugit ad mortem, quasi ad remedium malorum, quæ Deus in caput ejus ingessit. Sed priùs cibo se infersit, ac vino ingurgitavit, ut solent hi, qui hoc ultimò se facere arbitrantur. Et sic hausit venenum. Cujus vis, referto stomacho reperiussa, valere non potuit in præsens, sed in languorem malum versa pestilentiae similem, ut diutiùs protracto spiritu cruciamenta sentiret. Jam sævire in eum coeperat virus; cujus vi cùm præcordia ejus furerent, insustentabili dolore usque ad rabiem mentis elatus est, adeo ut per dies quatuor insaniâ percitus, haustam manibus terram velut esuriens devoravit. Deinde post multos gravesque cruciatus, cùm caput suum parietibus infligeret, exilierunt oculi ejus de caveis. Tunc demùm, amisso visu, Deum videre coepit candidatis ministris de se judicantem. Exclamabat ergò sicut ii, qui torqueri solent; et non se, sed alios fecisse dicebat. Deinde, quasi tormentis adactus, fatebatur, Christum subinde deprecans, et plorans ut suimet misereretur. Sic inter gemitus, quos tanquàm cremaretur edebat, nocentem spiritum detestabili genere mortis efflavit.—*
C. 49.

been a complacent witness to the proceedings of the inquisition.

The prayer of Licinius is given in the same taste. "The next night the angel of God stood by him in his sleep, admonishing him to rise quickly, and to pray with his whole army to the supreme God; and that, if he would comply, he should gain the victory. After these words, he dreamed that he rose up, and stood with the heavenly messenger, who instructed him how, and in what words to pray. Awakening from sleep, he sent for his secretary, and dictated to him these words, as he had heard them. *Highest God, we beseech Thee; holy God, we beseech Thee; we entrust to Thee our just cause; we entrust to Thee our safety; we entrust to Thee our empire; by Thee we live; by Thee we remain conquerors and prosperous: highest, holy God, hear our prayers: we stretch out our arms to Thee; hear us, O highest, holy God*¹."

The only portions of the Treatise which possess

¹ Tunc, proximâ nocte, Licinio quiescenti adsistit Angelus Dei, monens ut ociùs surgeret, atque oraret Deum summum cum omni exercitu suo; illius fore victoriam, si fecisset. Post has voces, cum surgere sibi visus esset, et cum ipso qui monebat, adstaret, tunc docebat eum quomodò, et quibus verbis esset orandum. Discussio deinde somno, notarium jussit accersi, et sicut audierat, hæc verba dictavit: "Summe Deus, te rogamus; sancte Deus, te rogamus; omnem justitiam tibi commendamus, salutem nostram tibi commendamus, imperium nostrum tibi commendamus; per te vivimus, per te victores et felices existimus: summe, sancte Deus, preces nostras exaudi: brachia nostra ad te tendimus; exaudi, summe, sancte Deus."—C. 46.

any value, are the Edict of Galerius¹, preserved in the 36th chapter, but wanting the imperial titles; and the pseudo-liberal letter of Licinius to the governor of Bithynia².

It is unnecessary to take much notice of the poems published under the name of Lactantius, which are generally admitted to be very clumsy forgeries. Had he been their author, he might be said to resemble Cicero, not only in the elegance of his prose writings, but in the failure of his "*ridenda poëmata*." But the verses in question are not merely unpoetical; they are characterised by all the incorrectness and obscurity of a very low age; nor is there any merit in the thoughts to make amends for the absence of grace and harmony in the numbers.

1. The enigmas, ninety-nine in number, are in every respect like the multitude of pointless jokes, and dull riddles, with which the monks were accustomed to beguile the tediousness of the cloister. The Jesuit, Nicholas Caussin, who published them, seems to have thought that the name of the poet was Cælius Firmianus Symposius. And hence has arisen perhaps the notion that this poem is the Symposium of Lactantius.

2. The verses entitled, "*Phoenix*," could not have been composed by Lactantius, after his conversion to

¹ This is more completely given by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* lib. viii. c. 17.

² See Euseb. x. 5.

Christianity, since the respectful mention in them of the idolatrous superstitions of Mythology, is wholly irreconcilable with his severe opinions on that subject.

3. In the couplets on the Resurrection ¹, six lines occur which would go to prove, that the author entertained a sounder view respecting the Divine nature of the Redeemer of mankind, than that which has been generally, but perhaps too hastily, attributed to Lactantius. They may serve as a somewhat favourable specimen of the whole:—

Christe, Salus rerum, bone *Conditor*, atque Redemptor,
Unica progenies ex *Deitate Patris*,
 Irrecitabiliter manans de corde Parentis,
 Verbum subsistens, et Patris ore potens,
Æqualis, concors, socius, *cum Patre coævus*,
 Quo sumpsit Mundus principe principium.—V. 47.

It will readily be observed, that the doctrine is here delivered in a *scholastic* form, utterly unlike the *rhetorical* and *philosophic* language in which Lactantius too generally conveys his opinions; and that it is evidently the concoction of a much later age. This is further confirmed by six very flat lines towards the conclusion, in which the author alludes to the customs observed in his day at the baptism of adult converts, such as could hardly have been in use, at any place, in the third century.

¹ Otherwise entitled “de Pascha.” The poem is attributed by Gallæus to Honorius.

Rex sacer, ecce tui radiat pars magna trophæi,
 Cum puras animas sacra lavacra beant ;
Candidus egreditur nitidis exercitus undis,
 Atque vetus vitium ¹ purgat in amne novo ;
Fulgentes animas vestis quoque candida signat,
 Et grege de niveo gaudia Pastor habet.—V. 89.

The stated ceremonial, the white dress, and the exultation of the priest in his snowy flock, are characteristic of peaceable times, and an established Church.

4. The lines entitled, “de Passione,” have no other interest than what arises from the eager controversy, which it was once thought worth while to carry on for some time with the Papists, respecting the sanction afforded to the worship of the Lignum Crucis by the verse,—

Flecte genu, lignumque Crucis venerabile *adora*.—V. 50.

It is probable enough, that the lines may have been written by a Papist ; but, however this may be, the use of the verb “*adoro*,” especially in the low

¹ Original sin. The doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration seems clearly recognised.

² See Facciolati, v. *Adoro*. Phr. *Adorare* purpuram principis. Pope was a Papist ; but who would ever have inferred the peculiarity of his creed from the well-known distich :—

On her white breast a sparkling *cross* she wore
 Which Jews might kiss, and infidels *adore*.

Rape of the Lock.

Latin, implies nothing more than that feeling of solemn awe and reverence which few Protestants would disavow on beholding the atoning sacrifice offered on the altar of the Cross.

THE END.



