

## LECTURE VIII.

Clemens Alexandrinus the only Ante-Nicene Father charged with disingenuousness by Daillé. His instance from Cardinal Perron. Passages liable to misconstruction in Clemens and in Origen. Inference of Daillé from the illogical reasoning of the Fathers disputed. Their use of the *argumentum ad hominem* explained. Value of their testimony notwithstanding. Instances of inconsistency from Clemens and from Tertullian. Relative importance of different topics not confounded by the Fathers. Daillé's instances to the contrary examined. The early Fathers fair exponents of the sentiments of the early Church; especially where they were identified with their respective Churches; and where they concur with each other. Allowance to be made for the peculiar character of their times.

THE next objection, which Daillé takes to the Fathers, is on the ground of their disingenuousness. What they believe they often suppress, and what they don't believe they often say.<sup>1</sup> This objection has been in part disposed of in a former Lecture, when we considered the reasonable causes there might be, and were, for their exercising some discretion in communicating the mysteries of the Gospel to ill-informed or ill-disposed heathens, a discretion which in part exposed them to this animadversion. But the present indictment goes beyond this, and impugns their honesty, attributing to them an intention of misleading, by interpreting Scripture occasionally *κατ' οἰκονομίαν*, or economicè, as it is called: a germ, it may be considered, of the pious frauds of later times. Daillé gives no sufficient instance of such dishonesty in any Ante-Nicene Father; for the single instance he cites from the Pædagogus of Clemens Alexandrinus, as suggested to him by Cardinal Perron, namely, the expression, "The Flesh and Blood of Christ is faith and the promise,"<sup>2</sup> as though Clemens suppressed the full force of the words in order to cast a mist before the eyes of the Catechumens, who were not yet prepared for the truth, is surely a very unsatisfactory one. It occurs, I conceive, for

<sup>1</sup> Daillé, pp. 150. 153. 160.

<sup>2</sup> p. 157.

Daillé gives no reference, in the sixth chapter of the first book of the *Pædagogue*.<sup>1</sup> Clemens is there employed in adapting St. Paul's phrase, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat," to the argument of this chapter, which is to show that when the Scripture speaks of Christians as children or babes, it does not mean, as the Gnostics would have it, that Churchmen were mere novices in knowledge. But the subject of meat and drink prompting him, he proceeds to remark "elsewhere also the Lord in the Gospel of John hath expressed himself by symbols after another kind, saying, 'Eat my Flesh and drink my Blood,' where he makes the cup an evident symbol of faith and the promise." But surely it is a refinement on Clemens to suppose that he talked in this manner, because his hearers were not prepared for the doctrine of Transubstantiation, which is what Cardinal Perron would insinuate; and which doctrine, though he secretly held it, he would not venture openly to announce. Plain persons would suppose that he meant what he said, and that, having found St. Paul speaking of milk and meat as figures, and wishing further to illustrate the use of such figurative language in Scripture, he adduced the Lord's words in St. John, when He spoke of his Flesh and Blood as another example of *figures*. For it would be singular indeed, on the supposition of the truth of Perron's hypothesis, that Clemens should over and over again express himself on the subject of the Eucharist in terms so clearly opposed to the doctrine of Transubstantiation as these, and sometimes much more clearly,<sup>2</sup> and never indeed once speak of it in terms asserting or even implying his belief or even knowledge of that doctrine, and yet himself have no doubt about it all the while! Surely it is a strange way of dealing with the Fathers, or with any other authors, to contend without any proof whatever, that they believed in this, that, or the other doctrine, only that they were withheld by circumstances from saying so, and then abuse them for disingenuousness. At this rate what doctrine might you not ascribe to them, and what duplicity might you not lay to their charge? And it is a singular instance of the manner in which extremes meet, that Daillé, a foreign Protestant, should thus adopt the argument of Perron, a Romanist, and

<sup>1</sup> Clem. Alex. *Pædag.* I. c. vi. p. 121.    <sup>2</sup> See particularly *Pædag.* II. c. ii. p. 186.

that Calvinists and Romanists should thus be content to hunt in couples, provided they can but run down the Fathers.

Still there do occur to me some passages in Clemens, which are capable of misconstruction. Thus Clemens in one place is engaged in showing that the Greeks derived their knowledge from Moses. "Strategy," says he, "or the art of the general, is comprised in three ideas, the safe, the hazardous, and that which is a combination of both; and each of these elements again is composed of three properties, words, deeds, and the one and the other together. And all these will take effect, if sometimes persuasion, sometimes force, sometimes damage, be resorted to, when reprisals are made; and in the concerns in which we are engaged, if sometimes we act justly, *sometimes with deceit*, sometimes speak the truth, sometimes adopt certain of all these alternatives at one and the same time: now all these matters, and the best manner of turning each of them to account, the Greeks derived from Moses and profited by."<sup>1</sup> And then Clemens proceeds to give instances of Moses' strategies in conducting the Israelites out of Egypt. Still there is here not so much an approval of artifice, even in the service of a good cause, as a matter of fact stated, viz. that the Greeks derived their *tactics*, whatever they might have become in their hands, from Moses—an instance in proof of the general proposition he had announced, that they derived most of their knowledge from him. Again, he says of his Gnostic, "Whatever, therefore, he has in his mind, the same he has on his tongue; both speaking and acting with respect to those who are worthy to be his hearers, in a spirit of concurrence and honest interest. For he at once thinks truth and utters it, unless at any time he prevaricates or repeats a prevarication,<sup>2</sup> as the sophists have it, for the sake of working a cure; as the physician acts by his patients for the sake of recovering them."<sup>3</sup> But then the case by which Clemens goes on to illustrate this principle, viz. St. Paul's circumcision of Timothy in spite of his having said circumcision availeth nothing, and thus to the Jews becoming a Jew, shows the innocent kind of deception, if I may so speak, which

<sup>1</sup> Stromat. I. § xxiv. p. 417.

<sup>2</sup> *Ψεύσεται ἢ ψεύδος ἐρεῖ*, perhaps, "conceives or speaks a prevarication,"

parallel to ἀληθῆ τε γὰρ φρονεῖ ζῆμα  
καὶ ἀληθεύει in the former clause.

<sup>3</sup> Stromat. VII. § ix. p. 863.

Clemens was contemplating, when he used the expression I have quoted. And this view of the subject is confirmed by another passage in the same book of the *Stromata*. "The Gnostic also is cautious in using the principle of accommodation, that he may not be misinterpreted, and that accommodation may not become a habit ;"<sup>1</sup> as though he felt that, even in its most innocent form, it was a principle that required watching.

In a fragment of the *Stromata* of Origen (preserved, however, in the Latin translation of Jerome his adversary<sup>2</sup>) occurs a discussion extremely similar to this of Clemens ; the same startling proposition ; the same qualification of it ; and the same caveat : and of this too, out of candour and a desire to represent the Fathers as they are, I make Daillé a present. It is one, which, probably, both he and Barbeyrac would have advanced, had it suggested itself to them. Having quoted a paragraph from the third book of the Republic of Plato, in which Plato speaks of a lie as unworthy of God, but sometimes profitable to men—still only to be used by them as a medicine is used by physicians, which none but physicians must meddle with—Origen proceeds to remark, that though God may, for the benefit of the hearer, express the truth ambiguously and by parables, thus casting a veil over what might be injurious in it if announced nakedly to the uninformed, "still the man on whom the necessity of telling a lie presses, must be very careful so to use his lie as if it were a medicine ; to make it keep within the bounds which Judith observed when, using it against Holofernes, she prevailed over him by a prudent craft in her words. He must imitate Esther, who, by suppressing all mention of the race she belonged to, changed the sentence of Artaxerxes : and still more, the Patriarch Jacob, who, we read, obtained his father's blessing by an artful lie—whence it is clear, that, unless we so lie, as that some great good is our object in so doing, we shall be condemned as the enemies of Him who said, 'I am the truth,'"<sup>3</sup>—the whole, it will be perceived, resolving itself into a case of casuistry, such as that entertained by Bishop Taylor in the "*Ductor Dubitantium*," Book III., c. ii., Rule V. "Whether it can in any case be lawful to tell a lie"—a question in which

<sup>1</sup> Ασφαλῆς δὲ ἐν συμπεριφορᾷ ὁ

γνωστικὸς μὴ λάθῃ, ἢ ἡ συμπεριφορὰ

διάθεσις γένηται.—*Stromat.* VII. § xii.

p. 881.

<sup>2</sup> Origen, Vol. i. p. 39, Bened. Ed.

he finds much room for discrimination—quoting, in the course of it, the instances of the Israelitish midwives, and of Rahab.

There is another objection akin to this last, which Daillé urges against the Fathers.<sup>1</sup> That in their polemics, in their disputations against heathens, Jews, and heretics, they stuck at nothing, in order to secure to themselves the victory: urging arguments which were in their favour, though they felt them to be faulty, and suppressing others, which were against them, which they knew to be sound. Hence a further difficulty in getting at the real sentiments of the Fathers. There is some truth in this remark; but the fact itself furnishes me with a different conclusion from that which Daillé draws from it. For he once more chimes in with the Romanist, and confesses, that, perplexed by such disputants, he sees nothing for it but to throw oneself on the Church as the interpreter of the Fathers who are so ambiguous, *i. e.* on the Church of Rome<sup>2</sup>; thus implying that the Fathers must be abandoned as an authority, at least by *Protestants*. On the other hand, the conclusion I come to is this; that seeing the Fathers are such writers as they are here represented to be, it is highly necessary not only to read them, but to read them *carefully*, in order to *detect* the complexion of their argument, and the grounds on which it proceeds, and to make the necessary allowance for circumstances: that the true redress of the inconvenience is, not to throw the Fathers away in despair, or apply to Rome for a key to them, but really to investigate them, and not pursue Dr. Priestley's plan of *looking through* books,<sup>3</sup> with which Bishop Horsley taxes him so severely; a plan which is sure to mislead, and the adoption of which is, in fact, the source of so much of the perplexity which people find in them. Certainly, there is no argument more common with the Fathers, as I have often taken occasion to observe in my Lectures on them, than the *argumentum ad hominem*—or, in other words, the argument for victory, as Daillé says—but it is one that creates no difficulty to those who approach it in the course of the regular study of these authors: the context and general drift of the reasoning point it out to be what it is: but select out of the whole some detached passage, and it

<sup>1</sup> Daillé, pp. 158, 159, *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> p. 163. In the Latin translation, which was ab auctore recognitum, auc-

tum et emendatum. In the French the passage is not found.

<sup>3</sup> Horsley's Letters, p. 100.

is not improbable, that a meaning may be assigned to it altogether at variance with the real sentiments of the authors. I believe that the Fathers have been often laid under contribution by Socinians in this manner, and extracts made from them, which, had those extracts been only fragments that had survived their other works, would have infallibly conveyed the impression that *they* were Socinians, though nothing was more untrue. For example, "The Son of God, called Jesus, may well enough be called the Son of God on account of his wisdom, even if he *be but a mere man*, for all writers call God the Father of gods and men,"<sup>1</sup> writes Justin. Suppose this had been the only paragraph in Justin that had come down to us; and it had not, accordingly, been known that, when uttering it, Justin was pleading the Christian cause before heathen Emperors, and was fighting them with their own weapons; would not the Socinian have had very specious reasons for claiming him as a witness on his side? But take all the circumstances into account, and there is no fear of the peculiar nature of the argument misleading. Or take another case, much resembling this, in the Apology of Tertullian. "Suppose him (Jesus Christ) to be a man, if you will: it is God's pleasure to be worshipped through him and in him—so that we reply upon the *Jews*, that they also learned to worship God through Moses, a man—whilst upon the *Greeks* we retort, Orpheus bound mankind by religious obligations in Pieria, Musæus at Athens, Melampus at Argos, Trophonius in Bœotia. And if I look to you, ye rulers of the nations, what was Pompilius Numa, who loaded the Romans with rites the most onerous, but a man?"<sup>2</sup> Here again, we have Tertullian arguing upon his adversaries' principles, not upon his own; for his own undoubted belief in the consubstantial and co-eternal Godhead of the Son we have seen proved in a former Lecture by numberless passages in his writings, which I shall not therefore repeat. Yet how readily might the spirit of Tertullian be misunderstood by one who stumbled upon this passage, and knew little of the author besides. Cases of this kind might be produced out of the Fathers to almost any amount; who in contending with heathens especially, content themselves very frequently with si-

<sup>1</sup> Justin Martyr, Apolog. I. § 22.

<sup>2</sup> Tertullian, Apolog. c. xxi.

lencing their antagonists by arguments which do indeed serve that purpose, but which cannot possibly produce any general conviction—as, that if Christ was the messenger of God to men, *they* cannot stumble at this article of the Christians' creed, for that such was the office of Mercury, according to their own—that if Christ, according to the Christians, ascended into heaven, *they* were not in a condition to resent that point of faith, for that so, according to themselves, did Bellerophon. But in such reasoning there is no danger of mistaking the meaning of your author, if you are reading him in earnest. The context always protects you, and your general knowledge of his principles. Who, for instance, in the examples I have cited, would really run any risk of supposing that, because a Father of the Church placed the Incarnate Word in apposition to the messenger Mercury, he considered the evidence in one case the same as that in the other, or similar to it? And the like remark holds good in other instances of a less glaring character than this. In short, in such circumstances his very speech bewrayeth him; and you see when he is arguing for truth, and when for victory—indeed it is the perception of the difference that must have preceded and suggested the complaint to Daillé.

Another incident, which Daillé alleges against the Fathers as contributing to their obscurity, is their changes of opinion.<sup>1</sup> He produces, indeed, no examples of this defect in the Ante-Nicene Fathers at least, except a confession of Origen's recorded by Jerome,<sup>2</sup> that in his old age he repented of many things which he had taught and written in his youth, a confession which need not, one may think, be deemed peculiar to Origen or to any Father. There is no doubt, however, that instances of such alteration in their sentiments will be found even in the Ante-Nicene Fathers by those who shall be curious in comparing them with themselves. Few writers, indeed, would be proof against such a scrutiny. And often there are peculiar circumstances in the case of the Fathers which would explain some apparent inconsistencies. Thus we find Clemens Alexandrinus, and indeed most of the primitive Fathers at variance with themselves on the subject of the corruption of human nature, sometimes using expressions that argue such

<sup>1</sup> Daillé, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> p. 166.

corruption to be extreme, and sometimes expressions that argue it to be trifling. In one place, for instance, Clemens quotes, in support of his own views, the strong phraseology of Barnabas, that "the heart of the natural man is an habitation of devils."<sup>1</sup> And again he elsewhere says, that "we are not good and virtuous by nature, but by training; as good physicians or good pilots are made by the same."<sup>2</sup> Whilst in other places he speaks of "our evil passions as contrary to nature,"<sup>3</sup> and of "man being by nature a high and lofty animal that seeks after what is good."<sup>4</sup> The truth probably is, that Clemens, as well as others like him, were embarrassed on this subject by the plain declarations of Scripture, and the testimony of their own hearts on the one hand, and by their horror of the heresy of Valentinus, Marcion, and indeed of the Gnostics in general, on the other, who maintained that the world was created evil by the Demiurgus, and indeed alleged this fact of its corruption as their main weapon against the orthodox doctrine, that *God* made it<sup>5</sup>: not to speak of another cause of such inconsistencies to which I have before had occasion to advert, viz. that questions of this kind, however fruitful sources of controversy in later ages of the Church, had not then attracted the attention of religious disputants, nor been stated in precise terms.

Again, Clemens may be thought to be inconsistent with himself on the question of asceticism; sometimes seeming, as he does, to encourage habits of moderation, sometimes habits of extreme mortification and self-discipline. Thus he admits the use of the bath, though he denounces its excess<sup>6</sup>: does not proscribe the wearing of gold, &c., and the putting on of delicate clothing, but only requires a bit and a bridle to be employed to curb the irrational appetites<sup>7</sup>: prescribes plainness of attire for women in general, but says there may be occasion for relaxing this law, and that allowance must be made for those women who have formed imprudent marriages, and who must adorn their persons to please their husbands.<sup>8</sup> All this is said in the spirit of concession. On the other hand, he will have a man discipline himself into knowledge and per-

<sup>1</sup> Stromat. II. § xx. p. 489.

<sup>2</sup> I. § vi. p. 336.

<sup>3</sup> II. § xiii. p. 460.

<sup>4</sup> Pædag. III. c. vii. p. 276.

<sup>5</sup> See especially Stromat. IV. § xiii. p. 605; V. § xiv. p. 731.

<sup>6</sup> Pædag. III. c. ix. p. 282.

<sup>7</sup> c. xi. p. 285.

<sup>8</sup> p. 287.



fection, till he shall be able to live without a lapse.<sup>1</sup> He will have him prepare himself for the conflict, like the wrestler.<sup>2</sup> His whole life must be a holy festival.<sup>3</sup> Sacrifices, and prayers, and praises and Scripture-readings before meals—psalms and hymns at meals, and before bed—prayers again at night—a continued effort to identify himself with the company of heaven by contemplation, which never relaxes<sup>4</sup>; a keen pursuit after the honourable and useful, but an abandonment of pleasure to those who would lead a base and trivial life.<sup>5</sup> But the former sentiments prevail in the *Pædagogus*, the latter in the *Stromata*; and the difference in their character, whatever it may be, is to be accounted for by the different persons with whom those treatises have to deal, the novice and the veteran Christian, rather than by any mutability of opinion in Clemens himself.

In Tertullian certainly the inconsistencies are more numerous and more unequivocal. Now he represents the Christians as willing to suffer, but having no delight in the danger before them<sup>6</sup>: then he represents them as volunteering persecution, and as having greater satisfaction in being condemned than in being acquitted.<sup>7</sup> Now he speaks of the man of sin as hindered in his coming by the existence of the Roman commonwealth, and as about to be let loose on its cessation<sup>8</sup>: then he speaks of the Roman empire as destined to endure, as long as the world itself shall endure.<sup>9</sup> Now he tells of the image of God as destroyed (*elisan*) at the Fall<sup>10</sup>; the spirit of man as transfigured by it<sup>11</sup>; the *entire substance* of man as changed from purity to perverseness<sup>12</sup>: then he tells of the *innocent* age of children—not an accidental expression—but as excusing delay in Baptism.<sup>13</sup> Now he talks of marriage as a *contumelia communis*<sup>14</sup>: then he speaks of that estate as one which is pronounced blessed by God in the words, Increase and multiply,<sup>15</sup> as an estate against which Paul threw out a caution only because the time was short.<sup>16</sup> Now he explains

<sup>1</sup> *Stromat.* VII. § vii. p. 859.

<sup>2</sup> p. 860.

<sup>3</sup> *Πανήγυρις ἁγία*.—*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> p. 861.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Tertullian, *Apol.* c. xlix.

<sup>7</sup> *Ad Scapulam*, c. i. c. ii.

<sup>8</sup> *Apol.* c. xxxii.

<sup>9</sup> *Ad Scapulam*, c. ii.

<sup>10</sup> *De Cultu Fœminarum*, I. c. i.

<sup>11</sup> II. c. v.

<sup>12</sup> *De Spectaculis*, c. ii.

<sup>13</sup> *De Baptismo*, c. xviii.

<sup>14</sup> *De Virgin. Veland.* c. x.

<sup>15</sup> *De Animâ*, c. xxvii.

<sup>16</sup> *Adv. Marcion.* V. c. vii.

St. Paul's expression of being baptized for the *dead*, of having a living person submitted to a vicarious Baptism for a dead one<sup>1</sup>: then he explains it as being baptized for the *body* (which is dead) in order that the resurrection of that body may be implied by it.<sup>2</sup> Now he understands Antichrist to be the man who had denied that Christ had come in the flesh<sup>3</sup>: then he understands him of the persecuting government of imperial Rome.<sup>4</sup> Now he lays down his rule against heretics, who were all of recent date, that "what was true was first, what was spurious afterwards:"<sup>5</sup> then he elsewhere explains St. Paul's phrase of the Church being without spot or wrinkle, *sine rugâ vetustatis*, ut virgo.<sup>6</sup> Now he quotes the Shepherd of Hermas as an authority<sup>7</sup>: then he designates it as "apocryphal and false."<sup>8</sup> Now he contemplates *one pardon* for sin after Baptism<sup>9</sup>: then he does not allow that there is even one.<sup>10</sup> Now he contends for Bishop, Priest, and Deacon, and makes it the very scandal of the heretic that he confounds them with one another, and with laymen<sup>11</sup>: then he is for a spiritual Church regardless of Bishops.<sup>12</sup> Something of this incongruity may doubtless be ascribed to the physical constitution of Tertullian, which was hot and hasty in the extreme, *perfervidum ingenium*—he frequently laments it as a disaster. "I confess to the Lord God," says he, "that I have rashly, not to say audaciously, ventured to compose a work on *Patience*, a virtue which I am myself very ill qualified to recommend;"<sup>13</sup> and he afterwards describes himself as "most miserable" by reason of this defect of temper; and his writings abound in similar strong expressions of self-condemnation, as if it was perpetually betraying him into error,<sup>14</sup> a temperament seldom connected with very fixed sentiments. But his self-contradiction is chiefly to be attributed to his Montanism; those tracts which were written after his adoption of this heresy, as compared with those written before it, furnishing the principal instances of tergiversation. For though a few of his treatises, and only a few, supply no internal evidence on

<sup>1</sup> De Resurrec. Carnis, c. xlvi.

<sup>2</sup> Adv. Marcion. V. c. x.

<sup>3</sup> III. c. viii.; V. c. xvi.

<sup>4</sup> De Fugâ in Persecutione, c. xii.

<sup>5</sup> Adv. Prax. c. ii.

<sup>6</sup> De Pudicitâ, c. xviii.

<sup>7</sup> De Oratione, c. xvi.

<sup>8</sup> De Pudicitâ, c. x.

<sup>9</sup> De Pœnitentiâ, c. v.

<sup>10</sup> De Pudicitâ, c. xviii.

<sup>11</sup> De Præscript. Hæret. c. xli.

<sup>12</sup> De Pudic. c. xxi.

<sup>13</sup> De Patientiâ, c. i.

<sup>14</sup> De Cultu Fœminar. II. c. i.

this subject either way, yet a large number furnish probable evidence of what his condition was when he penned them, and a still larger number certain evidence.<sup>1</sup> So that with this key to them, his inconsistencies need not present to us much difficulty on the score of the *obscurity* at least, which arises from them—and that is Daillé's position—whatever else may be said of them. On the contrary, in the case of Tertullian, as in the case of regular heretics, the doctrines and rites of the orthodox Church are indirectly brought out more vividly by the mere accident of being placed in apposition with those of the seceders from it.

I do not think it necessary to examine other of the Ante-Nicene Fathers on this point, having produced Tertullian by far the strongest case of them all; and had I been content with simply replying to the proposition as Daillé advances it, I needed not have given him an advantage by volunteering the catalogue I have of the contradictions of Tertullian; but I wish to lay before you a candid exposition of the real aspect of the Fathers, be it what it may; and feel that I shall by that means convince you the rather, that Daillé, even when he had some reason for an objection, greatly exaggerates its force; in short, plays the special pleader.

And this character his next objection continues to attach to him; an objection I shall not think it needful to dwell long upon, namely, the difficulty there is in determining what degree of relative importance the Fathers assign to the various propositions they announce, and yet the necessity of knowing this before any practical use can be made of their authority.<sup>2</sup> Who does not see the difference, *e. g.* says Daillé, in importance between the declarations, that "Christ is God," and that "Christ suffered death when he was thirty-four or thirty-five years old," though both declarations may be true? "It is evident," Daillé proceeds, "that the Fathers themselves recognised such difference, for Irenæus writes to Victor, Bishop of Rome, when he was excommunicating whole Churches for observing Easter, as he considered, at an uncanonical time, that Anicetus, his predecessor, had tolerated the like observance of it in Polycarp, and was unwilling to disturb the peace of the Church by insisting on the necessity of such a ritual."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Bishop Kaye's *Tertullian*, p. 52, Third Ed.

<sup>2</sup> Daillé, p. 170.

<sup>3</sup> Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.* v. c. 24.

So Tertullian, in his "De Præscriptione Hæreticorum,"<sup>1</sup> after having laid down his *regula fidei* or creed, containing the cardinal articles of faith, proceeds, "This rule, established, as we will prove, by Christ, has no doubtful or debatable points in it, as we hold, save such as heresies introduce, and such as make heretics. And let but this form stand fast in its proportion, and then you may explore and handle what you will ; you may let loose the whole licence of your curiosity, if there seems to you to be anything left in ambiguity, or anything imperfectly shadowed out." And in a remarkable passage in the Epistle of Firmilianus to Cyprian, we read, "But that the brethren at Rome do not keep primitive tradition themselves in all respects, and that they pretend to the authority of the Apostles without any ground for it, one may know from this ; that with respect to the time of celebrating Easter, and many other mysteries of religion, they seem to observe different customs from others ; from the Church of Jerusalem, for instance ; and so in many other provinces, many other things differ according to different places and names ; and yet there is no departure on this account from the peace and unity of the Catholic Church."<sup>2</sup> From all these passages it is no doubt evident that the Fathers did recognise a great difference in the relative importance of questions they handled from time to time, a point, indeed, which scarcely required proof, if the Fathers were reasonable men, however they might not be prepared to draw up a scale of the exact estimate they took of each. But who could think of making this a ground of charge against them, or plead it in proof of the little value which attaches to their writings, by reason of the difficulty of ascertaining the *emphasis* with which they spoke on any given subject? The Scriptures themselves are open to the same objection. Nay, even Churches, with all their definite Articles, Creeds, and Liturgies, and with the pains they take to circumscribe their sense of Scripture, are still open to it. There must be still a very considerable margin in which individual opinion is left to range. Dr. Waterland, in our own Church, finds room enough for a "Discourse on Fundamentals ;" and there probably are many of its members who might not agree with him after all in his selection, some

<sup>1</sup> c. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> Cyprian, Ep. lxxv.

thinking his catalogue too copious, and some too sparing. The discretion, therefore, which we have to exercise in other cases, we must exercise on the Fathers, and not expect them to be categorical on subjects which do not admit of it. But before I dismiss this head, I must notice the two examples which Daillé adduces from the *Ante-Nicene* Fathers, of the manner in which they confound the relative importance of things, when they sometimes do happen to declare themselves. One of them is on the case of Infant Communion. Having quoted Augustine as saying that "Innocent had laid it down with respect to children, that unless they should eat the Flesh of the Son of man, they could have no life in them," Daillé proceeds, "and long before his time Cyprian spake on the same subject to the same purport; and that opinion, as Maldonatus testifies, prevailed in the Church about 600 years. I omit, are Maldonatus' words, the sentiment of Augustine and of Innocent the First; a sentiment which prevailed in the Church about 600 years, that the Eucharist is necessary even for infants"<sup>1</sup>; the word *necessariam* being printed in the Latin translation of Daillé, which was made from the French, revised, augmented and corrected by the author himself,<sup>2</sup> in capital letters. But Cyprian says nothing of the kind, whatever Maldonatus, as quoted by Daillé, may say for him. Cyprian, who is the first Christian writer that alludes to Infant Communion at all, does so twice; but both times are mere allusions; the fact itself, and no more, transpiring in either case incidentally, and when Cyprian was engaged in other matters with respect to these children.<sup>3</sup> He says nothing of its necessity. It was not the question before him. Nor can his testimony be used for anything else but the bare existence of such a practice in his time. Now surely this proceeding of Daillé's, this shuffling of names and quotations, so as to seem to get the conclusion he desires, and to make those who do not refer to his authorities, believe that he does so fairly, is at least as disingenuous an act as any he can lay to the account of the Fathers. The other instance he produces from an *Ante-Nicene* Father of confounding the relative importance of things, is on the subject of fasting. Who, says he, would not suppose that the whole cause of Christianity

<sup>1</sup> Daillé, p. 176.

| Genève, 1656.

<sup>2</sup> See Titlepage to the Latin edition. | <sup>3</sup> Cyprian, *De Lapsis*, § ix. and § xxv.

was at stake, when Ignatius utters the following tragical words, "Whosoever fasts on the Lord's day or the Saturday (one Saturday only excepted, that before Easter), the same is a murderer of Christ."<sup>1</sup> Now whatever tendency terms so extravagant may have to confound all distinctions of the lighter and weightier matters of the law, and so to render the Fathers of ambiguous value from their want of discrimination, Ignatius is at any rate innocent of the charge. For this Epistle to the Philippians is none of his, it is neither mentioned by Eusebius, who enters into a minute account of the Epistles of Ignatius, nor by Jerome, but is a spurious Epistle, written long after the time of Ignatius, and never included in the collection of his Epistles.<sup>2</sup> Whether Daillé was aware of this when he published his treatise "De Usu Patrum," is more than I can tell; he must have been aware of it eventually, when his attention was expressly turned, as it one day was, to the subject of the Epistles of Ignatius.

But supposing this difficulty disposed of; there is still according to Daillé another. How do we know that the sentiment of a Father was the sentiment of his Church, and not his own merely<sup>3</sup>? It is obvious that this objection is much more easy to make than to refute. It might, perhaps, be enough to reply that it rests with Daillé to show that the Father does not express the opinions of his Church, not with us to show that he does. Is it likely, however, that when so few Christian writings have been preserved by the Church at all, those should have happened to be preserved, which were not on the whole in accordance with her? The Church was their keeper; she saw, therefore, some merit in them which induced her to take on herself that office; she must have considered that in general they did her service. And this argument will be thought to have the more weight, if we recollect that the writings of the heretics properly so called, have been all suffered to perish: nothing of them remains except such fragments as are preserved in the works of their orthodox antagonists. For the treatise of Novatianus on the Trinity, if his, is hardly in doctrine that of a heretic in the ordinary sense of the word, supporting as it does the doctrine

<sup>1</sup> Daillé, p. 177; Ignatius, Ad Philipp., § xiii. | nons, Bk. II. c. vii. § vii. in Cotelerius, vol. ii. p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> See Bishop Beveridge on the Ca- | <sup>3</sup> Daillé, p. 180.

of the Church. Moreover, Eusebius, when composing his Ecclesiastical History, adopts the Fathers as his authority: and what is more, though taking advantage certainly of many other Fathers, whose works were then in existence, he does make very large use of most of those very Fathers, whose volumes have descended to our times: thus showing, that even when the Church was much fuller of such documents, still these which we actually possess were accounted amongst the most valuable, and were selected by the father of early Church History for his vouchers and witnesses. He speaks of the Epistle of Clemens as having great merit, and as read in most Churches.<sup>1</sup> He makes liberal use of the Epistles of Ignatius, and quotes Polycarp's commendation of them (himself a Bishop) "as being profitable to the readers of them; as containing faith and patience, and all edification pertaining to our Lord."<sup>2</sup> He draws much of the history of the Church in Justin's time, from Justin; and describes him as the most noted of those who flourished in his day; and as preaching the truth of God in his writings.<sup>3</sup> He rests a very great part of his account of early heresies on the authority of Irenæus, and quotes him as though he considered him to be the chief writer on that subject. He refers over and over again with the same confidence to Clemens Alexandrinus for the facts which his works supply, and describes those works in detail in terms of praise and approbation.<sup>4</sup> He enters into all the particulars of the life and writings of Origen, as one of the most famous worthies of the Church. And what is more, he speaks even of the two Latin Fathers, Cyprian and Tertullian—of the former, indeed, but as a conspicuous Bishop<sup>5</sup>; but of the latter, as the author of the Apology, of which he translates a passage or two into Greek,<sup>6</sup> a circumstance which renders his testimony to the value of this Latin writer the more weighty, inasmuch as it seems to have been an effort to him to translate from the Latin at all—for he offers a sort of excuse for his manner of doing it on another occasion in the case of the Epistle of Hadrian<sup>7</sup>—as though a notice of the Apology was forced upon him by the celebrity of its author.

I have run through these brief particulars in order to show,

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, Eccles. Hist. iii. c. 16.

<sup>2</sup> iii. c. 36.

<sup>3</sup> iv. c. 11.

<sup>4</sup> vi. c. 13, *et alibi*.

<sup>5</sup> vii. c. 3.

<sup>6</sup> iii. c. 33.

<sup>7</sup> iv. c. 8.

that in the judgment of Eusebius at least, a leading historian of the Church, and one who had to lay under contribution for his annals all the best authorities which existed in his own day, the works of the Fathers we now possess are considered worthy of being taken as exponents of the Church of their respective periods.

Nor is this all. The very position and character of many of these Fathers identify them with their respective Churches. Clemens Romanus was Bishop of his Church, and writes his Epistle in that Church's name. Ignatius was of the same rank. Theophilus of the same. Irenæus of the same. Cyprian of the same. Others among them were not indeed Bishops, but distinguished Presbyters of their respective Churches. And though, no doubt, there may be heterodox persons in high places, yet the presumption has been usually the other way; and in the Primitive Church most exceedingly the other way.

Then, if it be further objected, as it is by Daillé, that even allowing each Father to be in some sort a representative of the particular Church to which he belonged, yet the recognition of a doctrine or an ordinance by the *Universal Church* is the only guarantee for its soundness; it may be observed, that these early Fathers whose claims we have been so long canvassing, are drawn from almost all parts of the Christian world—one from Rome; another from Antioch; a third from the Holy Land; a fourth from Carthage; a fifth from Gaul; so that matters, in which they happen to concur, must have been of very general acceptance in the Church. Now in all, or almost all the substantial questions of Creed and of Ecclesiastical government, they will be found to concur, including many points, which would touch Daillé, and come within his category of controversies; though in some subordinate particulars there may be occasional difference; or, what is more common, one of them may assert a point on which another may be entirely silent; or by implication, may be taken to be even against it. Indeed, there were many differences or contradictions among whole Churches themselves; a whole section of Churches, *e. g.* maintaining one side of the Paschal controversy, and a whole section again, the other side: a large division of them rejecting the Baptism of heretics, and a large division of them again accepting it: incidents these in the



early history of the Church, of which Dailé does not fail to take advantage,<sup>1</sup> turning them to the general disparagement of the testimony of the Fathers, who first as individuals, and next as members of particular Churches, might be involved in differences with the more œcumenical voice of Christendom, and so should be thought less worth listening to. But this should be borne in mind ; that you should regard the Fathers as the raw material out of which General Councils of the Church might be made ; not as equivalent to General Councils. These Fathers, for whom I am pleading, lived before any General Councils, properly so called, had met ; and consequently in an age, when a great many questions were unsettled in the Church : questions, which after the æra of General Councils were finally disposed of ; uniformity and unanimity established by that means. Who can doubt that the several members of such General Councils, when they first met together to confer, however agreeing in the main, brought along with them several different sentiments on several different points ; and that it was not till after long conference and mutual illumination, that they could be reduced to agree upon the sense and wording of the Canons or Constitutions they were met to frame ? The Fathers may be considered in the condition of such members when first they came together—only never having been brought together themselves, they have never of themselves adjusted their respective sentiments ; and you are left to do it for them. You must compare them together, and by drawing deductions from them, fashion for yourselves the most primitive of all Canons. The conference is not at Nice, or Constantinople, or Ephesus, but in your own study. The delegates are not reverend speakers from divers Churches, but stately folios from your shelves : and accordingly, after having compared them patiently and without prejudice, and having heard all that each of them has to say, you will combine their testimony into one. And even as in other Councils, so in this, must allowance be made for the peculiar character of the times in which it assembles, a consideration which would go far to answer the objection, or scoff, or sarcasm of Dailé, that the Millenarians themselves could boast, not of one Father, but of many Fathers on their side—though it would have been only fair in him to say that Justin confesses many did not hold this doctrine,

<sup>1</sup> Dailé, p. 187, *et seq.*

though he and those, whom he considered orthodox, did<sup>1</sup>: and that Eusebius tells us, it was propagated by Papias, who took in a literal sense what the Apostles had said in a mystical one.<sup>2</sup> What, however, if this doctrine has been exploded of late years—quiet times have a tendency to hush all transcendental and mysterious questions, as times of trouble have a tendency to excite them: this very one revived amidst the throes that attended the Reformation, and was denounced in the Articles of King Edward. Still amidst the horrors of the persecutions of Nero and Severus, what wonder that men, who could find no resting-place on the earth they dwelt in, should have cherished visions of a better Jerusalem and a resurrection of the saints? For we have seen that by the time of Eusebius, *i. e.* when the Church was beginning to enjoy peace, the Millenarian doctrine was on the wane. And I will add that the same consideration will account for some other conclusions in the Fathers, which have been urged against their credit without due allowance; particularly the discouraging terms in which they sometimes speak of marriage—it was the “present distress” that in all probability sunk deep in their spirit and tintured their thoughts—and no man can read the history, either of Rowland Taylor’s martyrdom, or of Rogers’, in our own country, without feeling how poignantly the surrender of wife and children, in their cases, must have added to the bitterness of death. But on this subject, I shall have occasion to speak again, and more at length.

<sup>1</sup> Justin Martyr, Dial. § 80.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius, Eccles. Hist. iii. c. 39.