

LECTURE X.

Occasion of Barbeyrac's work. His imperfect acquaintance with the Fathers, and misconstruction of their writings. His charge against Justin, that he encouraged volunteering martyrdom, examined. Sentiments of Clemens, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, on this subject. Warmth of their language accounted for. Martyrdom instrumental in the establishment of Christianity. Language of the Fathers concerning marriage explained by the circumstances of their times. True view of the case given by Tertullian in his treatise *Ad Uxorem*. Extravagances of later times not chargeable on the early Fathers.

THE work which, next to that of Daillé, has produced an unfavourable impression of the Fathers on the minds of a great number of persons, is Barbeyrac's "On the Morality of the Fathers."¹ And to complete my review of the objections which have been brought against these authors, I shall now bestow a short notice upon that treatise. This was originally an incidental attack upon them, made by a Professor of Law at Groningen in the course of a Preface which he wrote to Puffendorf's "Right of Nature and Nations." This Preface, so far as it related to the Fathers, was replied to by Ceillier, a French Benedictine; and Barbeyrac, finding a rejoinder to Ceillier, which he set himself to compose, grew too bulky to be included in a new edition of his Puffendorf, published it as an independent essay, with the title I have given. It will be perceived, therefore, that the treatise originated under jurisprudential rather than ecclesiastical auspices. Moreover, it seems very doubtful whether its author had carefully read the Fathers, on whose morality it comments; or had his mind imbued with the spirit, which the actual perusal of them would have left on it. Indeed the review of them which he

¹ *Traité de la Morale des Pères de l'Eglise*; où en défendant un article de la Préface sur Puffendorf, contre l'Apologie de la Morale des Pères du P. Ceillier, religieux Bénédictin de la Congrégation de St. Vanne et de St. Hydulphe,

on fait diverses réflexions sur plusieurs matières importantes. Par Jean Barbeyrac, Professeur en Droit à Groningue, et Membre de la Société Royale des Sciences à Berlin. Amsterdam, 1728.

takes, extending over the first six centuries, renders it impossible that he should have mastered all the Fathers on his list; or should have known more of many of them than he could get at second hand from indexes, abridgments, and extracts, which others might have furnished him with. Moreover, on his antagonist accusing him of having stolen from Daille's treatise, and from the Bibliothèque Universelle, Barbeyrac's answer is, "Why does he not add M. Dupin, Usher, Bayle, Bernard, Claude, La Placette, Buddeus, Noodt, the Abbé Fleury, Grabe, La Croze, and others, whom I quote, some more, some less often? Why does he not produce my own declaration in the Preface, that 'I had purposely chosen such examples as have been advanced before, and are found cited in very common books?'"¹ And, in fact, on one occasion, he pleads guilty to having been misled by M. Dupin, on whose authority he had relied, to charge Athenagoras wrongfully with teaching the worship of angels²—a confession which may also perhaps lead us of ourselves to conclude that he had not examined for himself Justin any more than Athenagoras; for the passage in Justin, which is singularly parallel to this one cited from Athenagoras, on the same subject, the worship of angels, would, in fact, have offered him very much more plausible reasons for laying that error to the account at least of Justin (and for Barbeyrac's argument it was quite immaterial which of the two was the culprit³), the Romanists having positively laid claim to the paragraph as teaching this doctrine; and though Bishop Bull and other Protestant scholars have successfully resisted their claim to it, yet certainly the Romanists have more to say for themselves in this instance than they often have when referring to antiquity. The place, however, in Justin is so well known, and is so notorious a bone of contention between the two parties, that it is not likely it should have escaped the notice of Barbeyrac (for it does escape it, both when he is speaking of Athenagoras here, and afterwards when animadverting on the defective morality of Justin), had he ever read Justin's works for himself; and it is in relation to this conclusion that I advert to it. Again, from the way in which he asserts dogmatically and of himself, that St. Paul was reprobating the

¹ Barbeyrac, p. 11.

² p. 25.

³ Justin Martyr, Apol. I. § 6.

allegorical spirit adopted by the Fathers¹ from the Jews, when he cautioned Timothy against giving "heed to fables and endless genealogies,"² he would seem to be unconscious of the text being usually applied to the system of Æons of the Gnostic heretics, which Irenæus is engaged in exposing, and that Irenæus himself so understands it, claiming it in that sense in his very first paragraph,³ as he does elsewhere in his work—I say, from the way in which Barbeyrac overlooks all this, it might seem that he was not conversant with the writings of Irenæus, however he might collect together a few paragraphs from him, which furnished the ground of his objection; which, however, in that Father are extremely few. Again, from his manner of speaking of Clemens Alexandrinus, I should be disposed to draw the same inference, viz. that he had not made himself thoroughly acquainted with his works from his own perusal of them. Thus Barbeyrac gives an analysis of the Pædagogus of Clemens, and then concludes, "Now let them show me in this Pædagogus a single virtue of which Clemens has explained the nature and office in such a manner and to such an extent as to enlighten, to convince, to touch, in a word, to put a man in a condition to practise it as he ought. Let them point out to me a single duty, which is there set on its right foundation and developed as it should be."⁴ But what could be more foreign to the purport of Clemens' work than to do this? In his Hortatory Address he had converted his heathen. In his Pædagogus he initiates his new convert into the practical effects which his conversion to Christianity must have on him in all the details, even the most ordinary, of his daily life. And no doubt it was a matter of the first importance, that a strong line of distinction like this should be drawn between the Christian and the Pagan. A person imbued with the writings of Clemens could scarcely have raised against him such an objection as this of Barbeyrac's.⁵ Again, Barbeyrac would have found nothing extraordinary in Clemens making his Gnostic a Stoic by exempting him from all passions,⁶ and yet at other times denouncing the Stoics as holders of impious opinions⁷; nor would have seen any contradiction in this for his admirers to reconcile; had he been aware from the perusal

¹ Barbeyrac, p. 98. ³ 1 Tim. i. 4.

² Irenæus, Pref. ad Lib. I.

⁴ Barbeyrac, p. 53.

⁵ See Bishop Kaye. Clemens, p. 110.

⁶ Barbeyrac, p. 62.

⁷ pp. 63, 64.

of his writings, that Clemens himself over and over again professes his own attachment to an *eclectic* philosophy; a philosophy which enabled him to pick and choose out of all the schools whatever he found to be good in any; holding that whatever was so, was dispersed amongst them by the dispensation of God, from whom all good emanates; and who was thus sowing the world with good principles, which were by degrees to be ripened into a perfect knowledge of his will through direct revelation.¹ Much other internal evidence of the proposition, for which I am contending, viz. that Barbeyrac had taken his information at second hand, and was not master of his authors, will transpire in the course of my remarks on his treatise. I dwell on it in the first instance, because it seems to me to be the key by which the argument of his book is almost always to be turned. He disputes on abstract principles without any allowance for, or, apparently, any sufficient knowledge of the accidents, which were necessarily to be taken into account in the application of them to the writings of the Fathers. Yet what is consistent with morality under certain circumstances, is not so under others. An act that would be wrong in the way of aggression is right in the way of self-defence. David and his men would not have been justified in eating the shewbread under ordinary circumstances, but under the pressure of hunger they were so. St. Paul would not have done well to cast the wheat into the sea, had he been sailing in smooth water; but when the tempest put men's lives in danger, he was right in doing so.² Accordingly, in judging of the morality of the Fathers, before we pronounce our verdict we must know their position. There is no evidence that Barbeyrac had properly acquainted himself with this; rather, evidence that he had not; and it may be presumed that much of the unfairness with which he treats them, is imputable to that cause.

I shall not think it necessary to follow him through the instances he gives of what he considers to be defective morality in the Fathers, according to the order in which he states them, but produce them, as may be most convenient for the illustration of the proposition I have just laid down. And, indeed, many of them seem to be rather cases of misunderstanding

¹ See Clem. Alex. Stromat. I. c. vii. p. 338, *et alibi*.

² Hooker, Eccl. Polity, V. c. ix. § 1.

of Scripture, or errors of judgment, than evidences of bad morality. For example, Irenæus may have given very weak reasons for there being four Gospels, and only four (though, weak as the reasons are, we are very thankful for this early testimony of the fact itself). But how can it serve the purpose of Barbeyrac, who alludes to it, p. 20; his business professing to be with the morality of the Fathers? So again, numerous allegories, particularly those of Origen, might be adduced by Barbeyrac in proof, if he pleased, of want of judgment in the Fathers; but they can scarcely be used by him, as they are,¹ in evidence of their bad morality without great straining of the argument.

I will first advert, then, to the accusation he brings against Justin, and eventually, indeed, against other Fathers, of encouraging in the Christians a disposition to volunteer martyrdom. "Lest any one should say," writes Justin,² "away, then, with you all, and put yourselves to death, and go to God, and do not give us the trouble. I will tell you why we do not do this; and why, when we are questioned, we boldly confess that we are Christians. We have been taught that God did not make the world to no purpose, but for the sake of the human race, and we have already said that he has pleasure in those who imitate his attributes, and is displeased with those who embrace what is wicked, whether in word or deed. If, then, we should all destroy ourselves, we should be the cause, as far as in us lies, of preventing any from being born, or from learning the Divine doctrines, or should even stop the existence of the race of man, herein acting contrary to the will of God. No, being questioned we do not deny, being conscious of nothing wrong, and accounting it impious not to tell the truth in all things, for this we know to be acceptable to God." Here, says Barbeyrac, Justin, so far from expressing any disapproval of the act of self-immolation, rather may seem to commend it.³ But had he considered the circumstances which gave occasion to these reflections of Justin, he would have found that his censure is misplaced. Justin had been calling the attention of the Roman Emperors to the sufferings the Christians had been undergoing at Rome at the hands of Urbicus. He states the case of a woman, her-

¹ Barbeyrac, p. 103.² Justin Martyr, Apol. II. § 4.³ Barbeyrac, p. 18.

self a convert to Christianity, who had a wicked and sottish husband. She wished to separate from him, but was dissuaded for a time by her friends. Eventually, however, she procured a divorce and released herself from him. He then denounced her as a Christian. She appealed to the Emperor ; and whilst the appeal was pending, was safe. He then turned his attack upon Ptolemy, her teacher. Through a friend of Ptolemy's he got at a confession of his own, that he was a Christian ; and on Urbicus charging Ptolemy with the fact he did not deny it. Accordingly Urbicus ordered him away to punishment. Whereupon one Lucius presumed to ask Urbicus, how he could let thieves, adulterers, and murderers go free, whilst he proceeded so severely with a man who bore the name of Christian. Thou, too, art one of them, was the reply of Urbicus. Yes, was the answer ; and he was condemned.¹ It is clear, therefore, that the confession of Lucius was made in a moment of indignation, and that he had no deliberate intention of inviting martyrdom, but that being directly charged with being a Christian, he admitted that a Christian he was ; whilst Justin, having affirmed the unlawfulness of suicide, affirms further the unlawfulness of saving life by telling a lie ; so far justifying Lucius, as he elsewhere does the Christians in general when reduced to that alternative ; and abjuring the evasion,

ἡ γλῶσσ' ὁμώμοκεν, ἡ δὲ φρήν ἀνώματος.²

Would M. Barbeyrac have found better morality in a different course ? Here we see the circumstances of the case entirely alter the complexion of Barbeyrac's argument. Nor, indeed, is there in the Fathers that blind sanction of the merit of martyrdom which has been sometimes ascribed to them. Certainly some strong passages in admiration of the martyrs may be occasionally met with in them ; excused, perhaps, if not defended, by considerations which I will offer by and by. But the language of Clemens Alexandrinus is this, "When the Lord says, when they persecute you in one city, flee into another, he does not encourage us to fly from persecution as though it were an evil ; neither does he command us to escape it by flight, as if we were fearful of death ; but he wishes us not to be the cause, sole or concurrent, of ill to any man,

¹ Justin Martyr, Apol. II. § 2.

² I. § 39.

whether to ourselves, or to the persecutor and murderer. For in some sort he proclaims that we must take care of ourselves; and he who is disobedient (to this precept) is rash and foolhardy: and if he who slays man, who is God's (property), sins against God; so he who offers himself to the tribunal is accounted guilty of slaying man (viz. himself); and such an one would he be, who does not avoid persecution, but allows himself to be taken, out of mere bravado."¹ And again, still more explicitly, "A man is not a Gnostic" (a perfect Christian, in Clemens' sense) "merely because he possesses blind courage; for children are bold through mere ignorance, and will, for instance, touch fire; and wild beasts will rush against a spear. . . . He who is truly brave, when brought into manifest danger through the malignity of the multitude, takes with a good courage whatever befalls him: herein differing from others called *martyrs*, inasmuch as these make the occasion for themselves, throwing themselves into danger's way, I know not how, for we do not wish to speak harshly of them; whereas he taking care of himself, as reason directs, in the first instance, afterwards when God really calls him, gives himself up freely, and confirms the call, conscious that he has not been precipitate on his own part, and plays the man ready to be tested in that fortitude which is according to truth."² In Tertullian we find several passages to the same effect: one in the Apology,³ "Why do you complain that we persecute you," is the taunt put into the mouth of the oppressors of the Christians, "if it is your pleasure to suffer? Certainly we are willing to suffer," is the reply, "but after the fashion of one engaged in war, who does not delight in the danger he is running, but nevertheless fights with all his might; and if he conquers, rejoices in the battle, which has brought him glory and spoil, howbeit he liked it not beforehand:" another in the De Coronâ, where Tertullian, having himself become a Montanist, is sneering at this very *moderation* as characteristic of the Church; and which, therefore, was once his own.⁴ "Sentence," says he, "is passed on him, (*i. e.* on this refractory soldier who would not wear the wreath,) whether by Christians or heathens, I know not, for they would not differ, as on a foolhardy person, who by his scruples was troubling the

¹ Clem. Alex. Stromat. IV. c. x.

² VII. c. xi. p. 871.

³ Tertullian, Apol. c. l.

⁴ De Coronâ, c. i.

Christian name ;” and in his *De Idololatriâ*,¹ he intimates in the same manner that many (multi) Christians were of opinion that no man should volunteer to produce himself. Origen, though more unguarded in his language, in one of his treatises at least, on the subject of martyrdom and its merits than any of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, still administers the same caution to those who would needlessly court it. In commenting on John xi. 54, “Jesus, therefore, walked no more openly among the Jews, but went thence into a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples,” he expresses himself as follows : “This and the like, I suppose, was left on record, because the Word wished to divert us from rushing wildly and unreasonably on a trial to the death for the truth and on martyrdom. For though it is well that one who happens to encounter the trial for the confession of Jesus should not shrink from such confession, nor hesitate to die for the truth, it is no less well that he should not give occasion for any such temptation, but by every means avoid it, not only because the issue of it as regards himself is uncertain, but in order that we may not be the cause of others becoming more wicked who may not actually be guilty of shedding our blood, if we do our best to get out of the way of those who are plotting against our lives, but who would suffer the heavier punishment on our account, if, through self-conceit and a want of consideration for them, we give ourselves up to be slain without any urgent necessity.”² In Cyprian we have still the same language : “Meanwhile, brethren, do ye according to the discipline in which ye have been instructed by me, and agreeably to the Lord’s precepts, keep quiet ; nor let any among you stir up any commotion amongst the brethren, neither *offer himself to the Gentiles of his own accord*. For his turn to speak is when he has been apprehended and delivered up. Since in that hour the Lord who is in us will speak, and who would rather that we should *confess* than *profess*.”³ And, again, in his treatise *De Lapsis* : “Therefore the Lord hath commanded us to *flee in persecution*, instructing us so to do by word and by example. For since the crown (of martyrdom ?) descends by the favour of God, and cannot be received unless the hour for wearing it is come, whosoever with-

¹ *De Idololatriâ*, c. xxii.

² Origen, *Comment. in Joannem*, vol. | iv. p. 397, Benedict. Ed.

³ Cyprian, *Ep. lxxxiii.*

draws himself meanwhile, still, however, abiding in Christ, does not renounce his faith, but only awaits his turn."¹ Moreover, Cyprian sets an example in his own person of declining for a season instead of courting the martyr's lot; removing from Carthage, when persecution was at hand²; writing directions to his clergy from his place of concealment³; waiting to be informed when it is safe to return⁴; and continuing in his retreat more than two years.⁵ Not to say that numerous *Apologies* composed by the Fathers bespeak the same moderation, the very object of them being, by explaining the real tenets of the Christians, and clearing them of the calumnies under which they suffered, to propitiate the magistrates towards them, and abate persecution. There can be no doubt, therefore, that they were as well aware of the duty of not throwing away their lives without a reason, as M. Barbeyrac himself is.

Why then, it may be asked, do we meet in them with so many extravagant eulogies of the virtue of the martyr: so many expressions in them, which would seem to inflame his zeal: and which lay them open to the censure of this critic of morals? Why do we hear Tertullian, *e. g.*, the same Tertullian, exultingly exclaim, "We struggle against all your cruelty, even *volunteering* to present ourselves; and better pleased when we are condemned than when we are acquitted?"⁶ And again, "Be it far from us to take as a hardship those things which we desire to suffer."⁷ Why do we hear him represent martyrdom again and again as a second Baptism, *secunda in-tinctio*,⁸ *secundum lavacrum*⁹? Why have we Origen, the same Origen, in his *Exhortatio ad Martyrium*, as the tract is called by a title likely to mislead, for it is no general exhortation to martyrdom, but an address to two Christians, one of them a man of fortune¹⁰ and conspicuous character in the Church, perhaps, too, a Presbyter; the other certainly one¹¹; encouraging them to stand fast in a persecution that had actually overtaken them? Why, I say, have we Origen calling martyrdom "the cup of salvation,"¹² "the Baptism of martyr-

¹ Cyprian, *De Lapsis*, § x.

² Ep. ii.

³ Ep. xii.

⁴ Ep. xxxvi.

⁵ Ep. xl.

⁶ Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, c. i.

⁷ c. ii.

⁸ *De Patientiâ*, c. xiii.

⁹ *De Baptismo*, c. xvi.

¹⁰ Origen, *Exhort. ad Martyr.* § 14.

¹¹ Ambrosius is called *ἱερός* by Origen, § 36, and *θειοπενέστατος*, § 1; and Protoctetus is expressly called *πρεσβύτερος* by Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.* vi. c. 28.

¹² *Exhort. ad Martyr.* § 27.

dom," which cleanses the sufferer,¹ the act which places him near the altar of heaven, and so fits him like the priests of old for ministering remission of sins²; nay, by a still bolder flight (for I do not wish to keep anything back) which makes his blood, as the blood of the victims under the Law, precious in God's sight to the redemption of others; the martyr regarded as the ram, efficacious through Christ³? And why have we Cyprian, the same Cyprian, using phraseology no less emphatic, describing it as the most glorious Baptism of blood⁴; and elsewhere saying in terms evidently loose and rhetorical, but still to our purpose,⁵ "Let us also, who, by God's permission, have administered Baptism to believers, prepare each and all of them for another Baptism, teaching them that this latter Baptism is greater in grace, more sublime in efficacy, more precious in honour; the Baptism with which the angels baptize; the Baptism in which God and his Christ rejoice; the Baptism after which no one sins again; the Baptism which consummates the growth of our faith; the Baptism which unites us at once, as we depart from the world, unto God. In the Baptism of water is received the remission of sins; in the Baptism of blood the crown of virtue. It is a thing to be desired and sought for in all our prayers and petitions, that being the servants of God we may become his friends." And other passages might be found in him equally strong—whence, I say, comes it, that the same parties, who, as we have seen, were quite alive to the immorality of rushing headlong upon martyrdom, should have still used expressions such as these, which expose them to Barbeyrac's strictures? Doubtless, they did not forget the language of Scripture on this exciting subject—our Lord's words, "Can ye be baptized with the Baptism that I am baptized with"—words to which much of the language I have quoted may be referred⁶—the encouragement addressed to the angel of the Church of Smyrna in the Revelation, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life"—the testimony borne in the same book, that "the souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God" were seen "under the altar"⁷—the high-spirited remonstrance

¹ Exhort. ad Martyr. § 30.

² Ibid.

³ Compare § 50, and Homil. xxiv. in Numeros, vol. ii. p. 362.

⁴ Cyprian, Ep. lxxiii. § 22.

⁵ Epistola ad Fortunatum de Exhortatione Martyrii, Præf. § iv.

⁶ Origen, Exhort. ad Martyr. § 28.

⁷ § 30. Rev. vi. 9.

of St. Paul, "What mean ye to weep and break mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus"—and the sharp rebuke of our Lord himself, when Peter would have heedlessly withdrawn his thoughts from his Passion, "Get thee behind me, Satan." These passages of holy Writ, and many more, which were, or which they considered to be of like import, they did not, I say, forget; but it was the circumstances in which they found themselves placed, that chiefly prompted these glowing eulogies of the martyr. Origen's treatise, abounding in incautious terms beyond any other, as I have remarked, was written on the spur of the moment. So was Cyprian's *De Exhortatione Martyrii*. So probably would it be perceived from internal evidence were all the works of the Fathers which have this subject chiefly for their theme. Their heart was hot within them, and so they spake with their tongue; much in the spirit of Latimer in a like condition, "Be of good comfort, master Ridley, and play the man." Those circumstances, I repeat, Barbeyrac does not allow for; is not, it should seem, adequately acquainted with: his reading had not put him in possession of a minute knowledge of the critical times, in which the Fathers lived—times when the infant Church in the midst of hostile powers was struggling for existence; when, to use the words of Irenæus, "there was a movement of the whole earth against it;"¹ and when under God it mainly owed its survival and growth to the example of its professors, the severity with which they lived, and above all, the courage with which many among them took their deaths. These were days in which the value of the martyr was incalculable. For only look at a few of the many hints to this effect, with which the writings of the Fathers abundantly supply us, and which never could have been permitted to produce their due impression upon the mind of Barbeyrac, or he would have written on this subject of martyrdom in a different spirit. Clemens somewhere remarks² that to see an Indian burn would be worth many treatises on patience. And most truly does Tertullian say in terms which a little altered have become an apophthegm, "the blood of the martyr is the seed of the Church."³ It was the spectacle of the constancy of the Chris-

¹ Irenæus, IV. c. xxxiii. § 13.

² Clem. Alex. Stromat. II. § xx.

³ Semen est sanguis Christianorum.

—Tertullian, Apol. c. 1.

tians under persecution to the death that first moved Justin (a type of thousands no doubt) to examine and adopt their faith.¹ It was a test, Irenæus tells us, which none but Christians could sustain : their faith, such was its force, furnishing a multitude of martyrs at all times and in every place ; whilst that of all other men flinched from this rigorous touch-stone²—a distinction, which could not fail to be observed and to produce its fruits. How strong is the evidence of this in Tertullian's appeal to Scapula, the President of Africa ! “ How will you deal,” says he, “ with so many thousands of either sex, men and women, of all ages, of all ranks ? What fires, what swords will you need ! How will Carthage bear the decimation, when everybody will find included in it some relation or friend ! when there will be numbered in it men and matrons of your own order, chief persons in the state, the kindred perhaps of yours and of you ! Spare then yourself, if you will not spare us. If you will not spare yourself, spare Carthage.” “ Never will this sect fail : but will flourish the more, the more it is cut down. For whoever is a spectator of such sufferings and of such patience under them, will be staggered ; will be led to inquire what there is in this cause ; and when he shall have learned the truth will forthwith become himself a convert.”³ “ I have felt,” says Cyprian, writing to the same effect, but in a yet more graphic manner, “ I have felt, nor has the truth deceived me, when the ruthless hands of the executioner have been tearing the limbs asunder ; when the savage tormentor has been ploughing up the lacerated members, and still been unable to prevail over his victim—I have felt by the words of the bystanders that there was something majestic in not being subdued by pain, in not being broken by penal anguish. Then might be heard the words of those who said, And I think he has children ! for he has a wife, the companion of his home ! and yet he does not yield to the attachment of these pledges ; nor seduced by the influence of affection does he falter in his purpose. His mettle is to be tried ; his virtue is to be proved to the very bowels. That is no light confession, be it what it may, for which a man endures the possibility of dying. And indeed, brethren dearly beloved, such is the power of martyrdom, that by force of it

¹ Justin Martyr, *Apol.* II. § 12.

² Irenæus, *IV.* c. xxxiii. § 9.

³ Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, c. v.

even he who *has undertaken to be thy executioner is constrained to become a believer.*"¹ Such was the effect, the powerful effect of the martyr's death on the cause of the Gospel in those days. What a price would naturally, would justly be set upon it! especially when to this consideration is added on the other hand that of the numbers, who, put to the trial, flinched and fell away²; in many cases too attempting to justify or excuse their lapse by an argument the most jesuitical; that the name of the Deity being merely a matter of convention, it could be of no consequence whether they said, I worship the Supreme God, or whether they called him Jupiter, or Apollo, or any other designation of heathen mythology³—an equivocation, which Origen would not have taken so much pains to expose on so many occasions as he does, idle as it is in itself, unless it had been working much mischief to the Church.⁴ I repeat then, how inevitably would the death of the martyr be held in the highest honour, when numbers, whether thus trifling with their consciences, or at once confessing their fears, fell away; numbers so great, that it became a subject of anxious controversy in the Church how to deal with them, shedding their disastrous influence on the faith they were abandoning; and whose apostacy only rendered the constancy of those who were true to the last still more matter for eulogy and praise: that *they* should have withstood the lash, the club, the hook, the flame, which had shaken the spirits of others who had made up their minds to die, till the instruments of suffering were applied⁵; that *they* should have been proof against the pardon which was still offered them in the face of their danger and distress,⁶ and even against the supplication of the magistrates to have mercy on themselves⁷; nay, sometimes of magistrates who would go so far as to suggest to them how they should shape their answers in order to gain an acquittal!⁸ All these things might well give a tincture to the sentiments of the Fathers, when speaking of their martyrdom: and candid critics, taking them into account, would be slow to censure the *morality* of such men, if after administering due

¹ Cyprian, De Laude Martyrii, §§ xv. xvi.

² Ep. ii. Ad prima statim verba in-
nantis inimici *maximus* fratrum numerus
fidem suam prodidit.—De Lapsis; § vii.

³ Origen, Exhort. ad Martyr. § 46.

⁴ See Contra Celsum, I. § 24 *et seq.*;
IV. § 48; V. § 46.

⁵ Cyprian, De Lapsis, § xiii.

⁶ Ep. xv.

⁷ Tertullian, Ad Scapulam, c. v.

⁸ c. iv.

caution, as we have seen, against volunteering a confession which would cost the parties their life if persisted in, they did applaud in language the most animated and glowing, language perhaps barely to be justified in tranquil times, the maintenance of that confession to the death, when once it had been made.

Another conspicuous charge against the morality of the Fathers, alleged by Barbeyrac, is the unfavourable manner in which they sometimes express themselves on the subject of marriage, and especially of second marriage. Dr. Waterland takes notice of the complaint of M. Barbeyrac against Athenagoras for disallowing *second* marriages. "The fact," says he, "is true in some sense or other ; but what second marriages is the question. Might not Athenagoras mean, marrying again after wrongful *divorce*? A very learned man" (Suicer under the word *δύγαμος* is the one referred to) "has pleaded much and well for that construction ; and it is favoured by Athenagoras's grounding his doctrine upon our Lord's own words relating to *such* second marriages."¹ I think, from expressions that drop from Dr. Waterland in the course of his remarks, that he had some misgivings about the soundness of this defence ; and there are many places in the Fathers which seem to me to indicate in them a distaste for second marriages, without any distinction of the kind here intimated by Dr. Waterland.² And when we combine these with others even commending abstinence from marriage altogether, when it can be abstained from with continence, we may be induced the rather to believe that there was an objection amongst them to second marriages in general.³ I will not affirm that the Fathers do not bring many collateral arguments to support their views on this subject that are feeble and unsatisfactory. It is often their way, when debating a great question, and when they have strong grounds to stand upon, to adduce supplemental reasons for the side they take, which, with readers in these days, would rather weaken their cause than strengthen it—howbeit there was, no doubt, often a peculiarity in the people they were addressing and the times in which they wrote, that caused such arguments to be then very differently appre-

¹ Waterland, On the Use and Value of Ecclesiastical Antiquity. Works, vol. v. p. 297.

² Tertullian, Ad Uxorem, I. c. vii. ; Canon. Apostol. xvii.

³ Adv. Marcion. V. c. xv.

ciated. But again, I say, it was the *circumstances of the times* in which their lot was cast that coloured their sentiments on the question of marriage: that however other adventitious notions might have operated in a subordinate degree, it was the circumstances of the times which constrained them to speak of marriage, whether first or second, in the temper they did—circumstances which, I still repeat, Barbeyrac does not take into account as he should, when pronouncing his opinion—and those circumstances the same which modified St. Paul's own views on the subject, “the present distress.” And this latter consideration appears to have crossed the mind of Barbeyrac himself, who is disposed to qualify the language even of the Apostle, as though, according to the ordinary translation of it, he was himself too hard upon marriage, objecting to the usual translation of *γνώμην δίδωμι*, “I give my judgment,”¹ and alleging that it means no more than “I give you my thoughts,”—“je vous dis ma pensée.”² The very passage indeed which he cites from Athenagoras turns upon these circumstances. It was a notorious slander against the early Christians, a slander arising either from the secrecy with which they found it necessary to hold their assemblies for religious worship,³ or from the reputed profligate practices of certain antinomian heretics who were confounded with them, for the fact does not seem to have been *proved* even against them—it was a notorious charge, I say, against the early Christians that they met for the purpose of the grossest debauchery. The line of argument, which the Fathers in general pursue when replying to this accusation, is to assert the peculiarly pure precepts of the Gospel which governed the Christians; precepts which, so far from allowing any such turpitude, laid even the lawful gratification of the passions under severe restraint, and, not content with regulating the actions, reached even to the very motions of the heart.⁴ The more to enforce this exposition of the chastity required by the Gospel, they, in some instances, call attention to the number of persons of both sexes who lived in a state of celibacy, because they thought that condition favourable to religious impressions⁵; not unnaturally, perhaps, construing our Lord's own words on this subject to that effect, “He that is able to

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 25.

² Barbeyrac, p. 111.

³ Minucius Felix, Octav. c. x.

⁴ Athenagoras, Legat. pro Christianis, § 33.

⁵ Ibid.

receive it, let him receive it.”¹ Such, then, being the jealousy with which the Christians were watched by their heathen enemies, and such one of the most common, popular, and effective of the accusations brought against them, were the Fathers to be blamed if they encouraged, as far as was consistent with the observance of continence in the parties (for they utterly denounce all breach of it), celibacy rather than marriage, and one marriage rather than two? It was the peculiar position of the Christian Church at the time, which instigated them to proclaim this preference; it was a prudential consideration for the good of the Church under existing circumstances: and though, as I have said, they may have supported this preference by other subordinate arguments, feeble and futile in themselves, the main cause of their asserting it at all was what I have alleged, “the present distress.” And Barbeyrac must not condemn their morality in coming to the decision they did, without having more regard to the nature of the case than he displays. The question was not whether celibacy in the abstract was a better estate than marriage, or one marriage better than two; but whether, at that especial crisis, the inculcation of such forbearance from a lawful indulgence was not wholesome.

But a desire to meet this popular calumny was not the only cause which operated on the minds of the Fathers when they encouraged single life and single marriage. There was another which probably moved them yet more powerfully, still connected with the times in which they wrote—a due consideration for the effects of *persecution* on all the domestic relations. “Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days,” says our Lord himself, when anticipating the troubles that were coming on Jerusalem. Age was not a protection: girls and boys were among the victims.² Was it not natural that the Fathers of the Church should not encourage parental ties to be multiplied when liable to such violent disruption? Would they not very reasonably think that love for wife and child would constantly prove too strong a temptation for the courage and constancy of men who would otherwise have borne the cross and flame without a shudder? What a world it was, must any husband or parent have thought, to cast those that were nearest and dearest

¹ Matt. xix. 12.

² Cyprian, Ep. lxxvii. § 6; lxxx. § 3; De Lapsis, § ii.

to him upon ! What a scene of trial and trouble to which to commit them, to struggle through alone ! Look at Tertullian's address to his wife, written on the prospect of her becoming a widow ; written, certainly, after he became a follower of Montanus, but dictated by the feelings, not of a Montanist, but of a Christian man. See the particular sources of anxiety beyond those which would oppress the mind of a husband in ordinary times, when contemplating the future fortunes of his partner, with himself no longer for her guide and guardian—the particular sources of anxiety, I say, he found in the character of his own days and the perils with which they were beset ! It is a document well worth the perusal of those who, with Barbeyrac, discover cause for blame in the sentiments of the Fathers on the subject of marriage. He bequeaths to his wife, he says, the legacy of his recommendation that she should not marry again ; not urging this for his own sake, or out of any jealousy of her, but simply with a view to her own welfare. What were children, but the most bitter of pleasures, (*liberorum amarissima voluptas* ?)¹ so much so, that Christian parents are only anxious that their children should go before them to Heaven, and escape the temptations of a longer life (the dangers and trials to which they were then exposed prompting, no doubt, so unnatural a sentiment as this)—and well they might, for, apart from all fears they might entertain of their becoming the victims of the persecutor, there was the apprehension that they could hardly help becoming the victims of the heathen society amongst which their forlorn lot was in a great measure cast ; and those ecclesiastical constitutions² which have reference to orphans, and which enjoin the brethren (often we may suppose without effect) that they who have no children themselves should adopt such outcasts, and the Bishops that they should endeavour to see to them, giving assistance to such children that they may learn a trade, and so be enabled to buy themselves tools, and be put in a condition to earn their bread, and no longer burden the Church—these regulations, I say, though most humane in themselves, bespeak the aspect of the times, and go but a little way towards relieving a dying father's heart as to the future fortunes of his family. But to return to the tract of Tertullian. What if she should marry

¹ *Ad Uxorem*, I. c. v.

² *Constit. Apostol.* IV. cc. i. ii.

a heathen, forgetting the Apostle's injunction, "only in the Lord"—a thought, which then obviously embittered Tertullian's contemplations of the future, more than any other; and one on which he bestows his advice at great length, appropriating to it a second book of this address. It was in those days no chimerical fear. The Christians were then in a minority; they had to do with heathens intimately in the most ordinary affairs of life. "I wrote unto you," saith the Apostle, "not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world."¹ That was then the state of things; the Christians bearing so small a proportion to the heathens, that they could not avoid mixing with them, and taking the chance of the contamination such society might effect. Tertullian presses on his wife's attention St. Paul's forbiddal of such unhallowed bands: dwells on the excommunication of the party by the Church²; reminds her of the impossibility there would be, under such circumstances, that she should continue to serve God. Is a meeting for prayer appointed (*statio facienda*)? her husband will propose a resort to the bath. A fast? he will have a feast instead. A procession? household matters forbid it. Would he allow her to go from street to street, and from cabin to cabin, to visit the brethren? Would he permit her to take part in the nightly assemblies, when her turn came? Or when Easter called her? To partake of the Lord's Supper; an institution which they suspect? To creep to prison to kiss the chains of the martyrs? To salute the brethren? To wash the feet of the saints? To offer them hospitality? To minister unto them when sick³? Or if he did endure all or any of these proceedings in silence, what else would it be for, but to treasure up in his memory the means of taking revenge on his wife, if at any future time she might happen to provoke him⁴? Would she be prepared for the unseemly scenes in which she would have to participate with him, the tavern revel, the obscene song⁵? He might tempt her by his wealth, trappings, equipage, chamberlains; she was but receiving a husband at the devil's hands.⁶ These were some few of the many sad forebodings

¹ 1 Cor. v. 9, 10.² Tertullian, Ad Uxorem, II. c. iii.³ c. iv.⁴ c. v.⁵ c. vi.⁶ c. viii.

which crossed, it seemed, a Christian husband's mind in those days on the prospect of his own death; forebodings engendered altogether, or almost altogether, by the state of the times; and was it not reasonable and right that the leaders of the Church should not encourage men to contract marriage without carefully beforehand counting the cost, and considering what deep interests, indeed what everlasting interests, were probably concerned in the issue of a marriage? Barbeyrac lived after the temperate recommendation of celibacy dictated by the severity of the times of the early Church had been carried to excess; and the compulsory vow of the convent and the monastery had been the abuse that had grown out of it; but the Fathers could not possibly foresee the practical extravagance to which a principle, innocent in itself, will proceed, and are not answerable for it. Let us not, in our hostility to popish corruptions, be unjust to the memory of those who did not contemplate them; and yet to whom, in some instances, those corruptions, taking their beginning from some harmless or even praiseworthy origin, may be traced.