

275The Epistles of Cyprian. .... Epistle I.21122112 In the Oxford edition this epistle is given among the treatises. To Donatus. Argument.·Cyprian Had Promised Donatus that He Would Have a Discourse with Him C Divine, and Now Being Reminded of His Promise, He Fulfils It. Commending at Length the Grace of God Conf Baptism, He Declares How He Had Been Changed Thereby; And, Finally, Pointing Out the Errors of the World Contempt of It and to Reading and Prayer. 1. Cæcilius Cyprian to Donatus sends, greeting. You rightly remind Donatus for I not only remember my promise, but I confess that this is the appropriate time for its fulfilment, wh vintage festival invites the mind to unbend in repose, and to enjoy the annual and appointed respite of the decl year.21132113 Wearying, scil. ·fatigantis.· Moreover, the place is in accord with the season, and the pleasant a the gardens harmonizes with the gentle breezes of a mild autumn in soothing and cheering the senses. In such this it is delightful to pass the day in discourse, and, by the (study of the sacred) parables,21142114 ·Fabulis.· ·Thanksgiving Day· = the ·Vindemia.·] to train the conscience of the breast to the apprehension of the divine pr And that no profane intruder may interrupt our converse, nor any unrestrained clatter of a noisy household dist let us seek this bower.21152115 [A lover of gardens and of nature. The religion of Christ gave a new and loftie to such tastes universally. Vol. ii. p. 9.] The neighbouring thickets ensure us solitude, and the vagrant trailings the vine branches creeping in pendent mazes among the reeds that support them have made for us a porch of leafy shelter. Pleasantly here we clothe our thoughts in words; and while we gratify our eyes with the agreeable upon trees and vines, the mind is at once instructed by what we hear, and nourished by what we see, although present time your only pleasure and your only interest is in our discourse. Despising the pleasures of sight, you is now fixed on me. With your mind as well as your ears you are altogether a listener; and a listener, too, with a eagerness proportioned to your affection. 2. And yet, of what kind or of what amount is anything that my mind I to communicate to yours? The poor mediocrity of my shallow understanding produces a very limited harvest, a the soil with no fruitful deposits. Nevertheless, with such powers as I have, I will set about the matter; for the subject itself on which I am about to speak will assist me. In courts of justice, in the public assembly, in political debate, a copious eloquence may be the glory of a voluble ambition; but in speaking of the Lord God, a chaste of expression strives for the conviction of faith rather with the substance, than with the powers, of eloquence. Therefore accept from me things, not clever but weighty, words, not decked up to charm a popular audience w cultivated rhetoric, but simple and fitted by their unvarnished truthfulness for the proclamation of the divine me Accept what is felt before it is spoken, what has not been accumulated with tardy painstaking during the lapse but has been inhaled in one breath of ripening grace. 3. While I was still lying in darkness and gloomy night, w hither and thither, tossed about on the foam of this boastful age, and uncertain of my wandering steps, knowing of my real life, and remote from truth and light, I used to regard it as a difficult matter, and especially as difficult in respect of my character at that time, that a man should be capable of being born again21162116 [Another N John iii.]-a truth which the divine mercy had announced for my salvation,·and that a man quickened to a new lif laver of saving water should be able to put off what he had previously been; and, although retaining all his bod structure, should be himself changed in heart and soul. ·How,· said I, ·is such a conversion possible, that there be a sudden and rapid divestment of all which, either innate in us has hardened in the corruption of our materia nature, or acquired by us has be276come inveterate by long accustomed use? These things have become dee engrained within us. When does he learn thrift who has been used to liberal banquets and sumptuous feasts? has been glittering in gold and purple, and has been celebrated for his costly attire, when does he reduce hims ordinary and simple clothing? One who has felt the charm of the fasces and of civic honours shrinks from beco private and inglorious citizen. The man who is attended by crowds of clients, and dignified by the numerous as of an officious train, regards it as a punishment when he is alone. It is inevitable, as it ever has been, that the l of wine should entice, pride inflate, anger inflame, covetousness disquiet, cruelty stimulate, ambition delight, lu hasten to ruin, with allurements that will not let go their hold.· 4. These were my frequent thoughts. For as I my was held in bonds by the innumerable errors of my previous life, from which I did not believe that I could by possibility be delivered, so I was disposed to acquiesce in my clinging vices; and because I despaired of better I used to indulge my sins as if they were actually parts of me, and indigenous to me. But after that, by the help water of new birth, the stain of former years had been washed away, and a light from above, serene and pure, infused into my reconciled heart,·after that, by the agency of the Spirit breathed from heaven, a second birth ha

restored me to a new man; then, in a wondrous manner, doubtful things at once began to assure themselves to things to be revealed, dark things to be enlightened, what before had seemed difficult began to suggest a means of accomplishment, what had been thought impossible, to be capable of being achieved; so that I was enabled to see that what previously, being born of the flesh, had been living in the practice of sins, was of the earth earthly, but had now begun to be of God, and was animated by the Spirit of holiness. You yourself assuredly know and recall as well as I do what was taken away from us, and what was given to us by that death of evil, and that life of virtue. You yourself know this without my information. Anything like boasting in one's own praise is hateful, although we cannot reality boast but only be grateful for whatever we do not ascribe to man's virtue but declare to be the gift of God. That now we sin not is the beginning of the work of faith, whereas that we sinned before was the result of human weakness. All our power is of God; I say, of God. From Him we have life, from Him we have strength, by power derived from Him we do, while yet in this world, foreknow the indications of things to come. Only let fear be the keeper of innocence, that the Lord, who of His mercy has flowed into our hearts in the acceptance of celestial grace, may be kept by righteous submissiveness in the hostelry of a grateful mind, that the assurance gained may not beget carelessness, and so the old enemy creep upon us again. 5. But if you keep the way of the way of righteousness, if you walk with a firm and steady step, if, depending on God with your whole strength with your whole heart, you only be what you have begun to be, liberty and power to do is given you in proportion to the increase of your spiritual grace. For there is not, as is the case with earthly benefits, any measure or stint in the dispensing of the heavenly gift. The Spirit freely flowing forth is restrained by no limits, is checked by no closed barriers within certain bounded spaces; it flows perpetually, it is exuberant in its affluence. Let our heart only be athirst, and be ready to receive: in the degree in which we bring to it a capacious faith, in that measure we draw it an overflowing grace. Thence is given power, with modest chastity, with a sound mind, with a simple voice, with unblemished virtue, that is able to quench the virus of poisons for the healing of the sick, to purge out the stain from foolish souls by restored health, to bid peace to those that are at enmity, repose to the violent, gentleness to the unruly, by startling threats to force to avow themselves the impure and vagrant spirits that have betaken themselves into the bodies of men whom they purpose to destroy, to drive them with heavy blows to come out of them, to set out struggling, howling, groaning with increase of constantly renewing pain, to beat them with scourges, to roar with fire: the matter is carried on there, but is not seen; the strokes inflicted are hidden, but the penalty is manifest. Thus, in respect of what we have already begun to be, the Spirit that we have received possesses its liberty of action; while in that we have not yet changed our body and members, the carnal view is still darkened by the clouds of this world. How great is this empire of the mind, and what a power it has, not alone that itself is withdrawn from the mischievous associations of the world, as one who is purged and pure can suffer no stain of a hostile irruption, but that it becomes still greater and stronger in its might, so that it can rule over all the imperious hosts of the attacking adversary with its sway! 6. But in order that the characteristics of the divine may shine more brightly by the development of the truth, I will give you light to apprehend it, the obscurity caused by sin being wiped away. I will draw away the veil from the darkness of this hidden world. For a brief space conceive yourself to be transported to one of the loftiest peaks of some inaccessible mountain, thence gaze on the appearances of things lying below and with eyes turned in various directions look upon the eddies of the billowy world, while you yourself are removed from earthly contacts, you will at once begin to feel compassion for the world, and with self-recollection and increasing gratitude to God, you will rejoice with all the greater joy that you have escaped it. Consider the roads blocked up by robbers, the seas beset with pirates, wars scattered all over the earth with the bloody horror of carnage. The whole world is wet with mutual blood; and murder, which in the case of an individual is admitted to be a crime, is called a virtue when it is committed wholesale. Impunity is claimed for the wicked deeds, not on the plea that they are guiltless, but because the cruelty is perpetrated on a grand scale. 7. And now, if you turn your eyes and your thoughts to the cities themselves, you will behold a concourse more fraught with sadness than any solitude. The gladiatorial games are prepared, that blood may gladden the lust of cruel eyes. The body is fed up with stronger food, and the vigorous mass of limbs is enriched with brawn and muscle, that the wretch fattened for punishment may die a long death. Man is slaughtered that man may be gratified, and the skill that is best able to kill is an exercise and an art. Crime is not only committed, but it is taught. What can be said more inhuman, what more repulsive? Training is given to acquire the power to murder, and the achievement of murder is its glory. What state of things, I pray you, can

be, and what can it be like, in which men, whom none have condemned, offer themselves to the wild beasts-mage, of sufficiently beautiful person, clad in costly garments? Living men, they are adorned for a voluntary death; wretched men, they boast of their own miseries. They fight with beasts, not for their crime, but for their madness. Fathers look on their own sons; a brother is in the arena, and his sister is hard by; and although a grander display and pomp increases the price of the exhibition, yet, oh shame! even the mother will pay the increase in order that she may be present at her own miseries. And in looking upon scenes so frightful and so impious and so deadly, they do not seem to be aware that they are parricides with their eyes. 8. Hence turn your looks to the abominations, not less to be deplored, of another kind of spectacle.<sup>21182118</sup> [Alas, that in the modern theatre and opera all this has been so often reproduced, and Christians applaud!] In the theatres also you will behold what may well cause you grief and shame: the tragic buskin which relates in verse the crimes of ancient days. The old horrors<sup>21192119</sup> Errors, v. l. of parricide and incest are unfolded in action calculated to express the image of the truth, so that, as the ages pass by, any crime that was formerly committed may not be forgotten. Each generation is reminded by what it hears, that whatever has been done may be done again. Crimes never die out by the lapse of ages; wickedness is never abolished by the passage of time; impiety is never buried in oblivion. Things which have now ceased to be actual deeds of vice become examples to the mimes, moreover, by the teaching of infamies, the spectator is attracted either to reconsider what he may have done in secret, or to hear what he may do. Adultery is learnt while it is seen; and while the mischief having public authority panders to vices, the matron, who perchance had gone to the spectacle a modest woman, returns from it immodest. Still further, what a degradation of morals it is, what a stimulus to abominable deeds, what food for vice, to be polluted by histrionic gestures, against the covenant and law of one's birth, to gaze in detail upon the endurance of incestuous abominations! Men are emasculated, and all the pride and vigour of their sex is effeminated in the contemplation of their enervated body; and he is most pleasing there who has most completely broken down the man into the effeminate; he grows into praise by virtue of his crime; and the more he is degraded, the more skilful he is considered to be. So that one is looked upon-oh shame! and looked upon with pleasure. And what cannot such a creature suggest? He excites the senses, he flatters the affections, he drives out the more vigorous conscience of a virtuous breast; nor is there wanting authority for the enticing abomination, that the mischief may creep upon people with a less perceptible approach. They picture Venus immodest, Mars adulterous; and that Jupiter of theirs not more supreme in dominion, vice, inflamed with earthly love in the midst of his own thunders, now growing white in the feathers of a swan, now pouring down in a golden shower, now breaking forth by the help of birds to violate the purity of boys. And now the question, Can he who looks upon such things be healthy-minded or modest? Men imitate the gods whom they see; such miserable beings their crimes become their religion.<sup>21202120</sup> [Compare Tertullian, vol. iii. pp. 87 et seqq.] If placed on that lofty watch-tower you could gaze into the secret places-if you could open the closed doors of such chambers, and recall their dark recesses to the perception of sight, you would behold things<sup>278</sup> done by immo- which no chaste eye could look upon; you would see what even to see is a crime; you would see what people do; the madness of vice deny that they have done, and yet hasten to do, men with frenzied lusts rushing upon men things which afford no gratification even to those who do them. I am deceived if the man who is guilty of such things these does not accuse others of them. The depraved maligns the depraved, and thinks that he himself, though guilty of the guilt, has escaped, as if consciousness were not a sufficient condemnation. The same people who are accused in public are criminals in private, condemning themselves at the same time as they condemn the culprits; they do abroad what they commit at home, willingly doing what, when they have done, they accuse, a daring which assiduously fitted with vice, and an impudence quite in accordance with shameless people. And I beg you not to wonder at things that persons of this kind speak: the offence of their mouths in words is the least of which they are guilty.<sup>21212121</sup> [Rom. i. 26, 27. The enormous extent of this diabolical form of lust is implied in all these patristic rebukes.] 10. But after considering the public roads full of pitfalls, after battles of many kinds scattered abroad over the whole world, after exhibitions either bloody or infamous, after the abominations of lust, whether exposed for sale in brothels or hidden within the domestic walls-abominations, the audacity of which is greater in proportion to the secrecy of the crime, possibly you may think that the Forum at least is free from such things, that it is neither exposed to exasperating wrongs, nor polluted by the association of criminals. Then turn your gaze in that direction there you will discover things more odious than ever, so that thence you will be more desirous of turning away your eyes, although the laws are carved on twelve tables, and the statutes are publicly prescribed on brazen tablets.

wrong is done in the midst of the laws themselves; wickedness is committed in the very face of the statutes; innocence is not preserved even in the place where it is defended. By turns the rancour of disputants rages; and when peace is broken among the togas,<sup>21222122</sup> The dresses of peace. the Forum echoes with the madness of strife. There is the spear and the sword, and the executioner also; there is the claw that tears, the rack that stretches, the fire that burns up, more tortures for one poor human body than it has limbs. And in such cases who is there to help the patron? He makes a feint, and deceives. The judge? But he sells his sentence. He who sits to avenge crimes and the judge becomes the culprit, in order that the accused may perish innocently. Crimes are everywhere common everywhere in the multiform character of sin, the pernicious poison acts by means of degraded minds. One man by will, another by a capital fraud makes a false deposition; on the one hand, children are cheated of their inheritance on the other, strangers are endowed with their estates. The opponent makes his charge, the false accuser attacks the witness defames, on all sides the venal impudence of hired voices sets about the falsification of charges, while meantime the guilty do not even perish with the innocent. There is no fear about the laws; no concern for either the inquisitor or judge; when the sentence can be bought off for money, it is not cared for. It is a crime now among the guilty to be innocent; whoever does not imitate the wicked is an offence to them. The laws have come to terms with crimes, and whatever is public has begun to be allowed. What can be the modesty, what can be the integrity, that prevails there, when there are none to condemn the wicked, and one only meets with those who ought themselves to be condemned? 11. But that we may not perchance appear as if we were picking out extreme cases, and with the disparagement were seeking to attract your attention to those things whereof the sad and revolting view may offend the gaze of a better conscience, I will now direct you to such things as the world in its ignorance accounts good. And in these also you will behold things that will shock you. In respect of what you regard as honours, of what you count the fasces, what you count affluence in riches, what you think power in the camp, the glory of the purple in the magisterial office, the power of licence in the chief command, there is hidden the virus of ensnaring mischief, a pleasant appearance of smiling wickedness, joyous indeed, but the treacherous deception of hidden calamity. Just as some wine in which the flavour having been medicated with sweetness, craftily mingled in its deadly juices, seems, when drunk, to be an ordinary draught, but when it is drunk up, the destruction that you have swallowed assails you. You see, that man distinguished by his brilliant dress, glittering, as he thinks, in his purple. Yet with what baseness has he purchased this glitter! What contempts of the proud has he had first to submit to! what haughty thresholds has he early courtier, besieged! How many scornful footsteps of arrogant great men has he had to precede, thronged with clients, that by and by a similar procession might attend and precede him with salutations, a train waiting not for his person, but upon his power! for he has no claim to be regarded for his character, but for his fasces. Of these things<sup>279</sup> finally, you may see the degrading end, when the time-serving sycophant has departed, and the hanger-on has defiled the exposed side of the man who has retired into a private condition.<sup>21232123</sup> [Confirmed by the Roman satirists, as will be recalled by the reader. Conf. Horace, Sat., vi. book i.] It is then that the mischiefs do not to the squandered family-estate smite upon the conscience, then the losses that have exhausted the fortune are known, expenses by which the favour of the populace was bought, and the people's breath asked for with fickle entreaties. Assuredly, it was a vain and foolish boastfulness to have desired to set forth in the gratification of a disappointing spectacle, what the people would not receive, and what would ruin the magistrates. 12. But those moreover, whom you consider rich, who add forests to forests, and who, excluding the poor from their neighbourhood stretch out their fields far and wide into space without any limits, who possess immense heaps of silver and gold, mighty sums of money, either in built-up heaps or in buried stores, even in the midst of their riches those are tormented by the anxiety of vague thought, lest the robber should spoil, lest the murderer should attack, lest the enemy of some wealthier neighbour should become hostile, and harass them with malicious lawsuits. Such a one enjoys neither in his food or in his sleep. In the midst of the banquet he sighs, although he drinks from a jewelled goblet when his luxurious bed has enfolded his body, languid with feasting, in its yielding bosom, he lies wakeful in the midst of the down; nor does he perceive, poor wretch, that these things are merely gilded torments, that he is held in by his gold, and that he is the slave of his luxury and wealth rather than their master. And oh, the odious blindness of perception, and the deep darkness of senseless greed! although he might disburden himself and get rid of the wealth, rather continues to brood over his vexing wealth, he goes on obstinately clinging to his tormenting hoards. From there is no liberality to dependents, no communication to the poor. And yet such people call that their own moral

they guard with jealous labour, shut up at home as if it were another-s, and from which they derive no benefit except for their friends, for their children, or, in fine, for themselves. Their possession amounts to this only, that they can keep others from possessing it; and oh, what a marvellous perversion of names! they call those things goods, which are absolutely put to none but bad uses. 13. Or think you that even those are secure, that those at least are safe with the stable permanence among the chaplets of honour and vast wealth, whom, in the glitter of royal palaces, the sword and watchful arms surrounds? They have greater fear than others. A man is constrained to dread no less than he is loved. Exaltation exacts its penalties equally from the more powerful, although he may be hedged in with bands of satellites and may guard his person with the enclosure and protection of a numerous retinue. Even as he does not allow his inferiors to feel security, it is inevitable that he himself should want the sense of security. The power of those whose power makes terrible to others, is, first of all, terrible to themselves. It smiles to rage, it cajoles to deceive, it entices to slay, it lifts up to cast down. With a certain usury of mischief, the greater the height of dignity and honours attained, the greater is the interest of penalty required. 14. Hence, then, the one peaceful and trustworthiness, tranquillity, the one solid and firm and constant security, is this, for a man to withdraw from these eddies of a distracting world, and, anchored on the ground of the harbour of salvation, to lift his eyes from earth to heaven, having been admitted to the gift of God, and being already very near to his God in mind, he may boast, that while human affairs others esteem lofty and grand, lies altogether beneath his consciousness. He who is actually greater than the world can crave nothing, can desire nothing, from the world. How stable, how free from all shocks is that state, how heavenly the protection in its perennial blessings, to be loosed from the snares of this entangling world, and purged from earthly dregs, and fitted for the light of eternal immortality! He will see what crafty mischief of the flesh that previously attacked us has been in progress against us. We are constrained to have more love for what we were by being allowed to know and to condemn what we were. Neither for this purpose is it necessary to pay a price, either the way of bribery or of labour; so that man's elevation or dignity or power should be begotten in him with elaborate effort; but it is a gratuitous gift from God, and it is accessible to all. As the sun shines spontaneously, as the day gives light, as the fountain flows, as the shower yields moisture, so does the heavenly Spirit infuse itself into us. When the soul, in its gaze into heaven, has recognised its Author, it rises higher than the sun, and far transcends this earthly power, and begins to be that which it believes itself to be.<sup>21242124</sup> [What a testimony to regeneration! Cyprian speaks from heathen experience, then from the experience of a new birth. Few specimens of simple eloquence surpass this.] 15. Do you, however, whom the celestial warfare has enlisted in the spiritual camp, only observe discipline uncorrupted and chastened in the virtues of religion. Be constant as well in prayer as in reading; speak with God, now let God speak with you, let Him instruct you in His precepts, let Him direct you. Whom He enriches, none shall make poor; for, in fact, there can be no poverty to him whose breast has once been supplied with heavenly food. Ceilings enriched with gold, and houses adorned with mosaics of costly marble, will seem mean when you know that it is you yourself who are rather to be perfected, you who are rather to be adorned, and that the dwelling in which God has dwelt as in a temple, in which the Holy Spirit has begun to make His abode, is of more importance than all others. Let us embellish this house with the colours of innocence, let us enlighten it with the light of justice: this will never fall into decay with the wear of age, nor shall it be defiled by the tarnishing of the colours of its walls, nor of its gold. Whatever is artificially beautified is perishing; and such things as contain no the reality of possession afford no abiding assurance to their possessors. But this remains in a beauty perpetual, vivid, in perfect honour, in permanent splendour. It can neither decay nor be destroyed; it can only be fashioned to greater perfection when the body returns to it. 16. These things, dearest Donatus, briefly for the present. For as what you profitably hear delights your patience, indulgent in its goodness, your well-balanced mind, and your active faith-and nothing is so pleasant to your ears as what is pleasant to you in God,-yet, as we are associated as neighbours, and are likely to talk together frequently, we ought to have some moderation in our conversation; and this is a holiday rest, and a time of leisure, whatever remains of the day, now that the sun is sloping towards the evening,<sup>21252125</sup> [See Cowper, on 'the Sabine bard,' Task, b. iv. But compare even the best of Horatian epistles with this: 'O noctes c-næque Deum,' etc. What a blessed contrast in Christian society!] let us spend it in gladness, and even the hour of repast be without heavenly grace. Let the temperate meal resound with psalms;<sup>21262126</sup> [Hymns for Evening Hymn, vol. ii. p. 298.] and as your memory is tenacious and your voice musical, undertake this office, if it be your wont. You will provide a better entertainment for your dearest friends, if, while we have something spiritual

listen to, the sweetness of religious music charm our ears.