

gems upon those in whom he observes Christ to dwell. Although, if it should so happen, that one of that wretched company should be seized, he could have no reason to flatter himself with any hopes upon his confession of Christ; since it is an agreed rule, that whoever suffers without the church, is so far from being entitled to the crown of faith, that he continues obnoxious to the punishment of having forsaken it."

### SAINT CYPRIAN, M.,

#### ARCHBISHOP OF CARTHAGE

We have his life written by Pontius, his deacon, an eye-witness to his principal actions; also two-fold genuine copies of extracts from the Precidial Acts of his two examinations, and of his martyrdom. The saint's epistles furnishes us with ample memoirs. See his life compiled by Tillemont, t. 3, and best by Dom. Maran, the Maurist monk, prefixed to the edition of this father's works, prepared by Baluze, before his death, but published by Maran in 1726. The Cyprianic annals of Bishop Pearson, and some of Dodwell's Dissertations, printed in the Oxford edition, are of great service. Maran has corrected several mistakes, particularly relating to the schism of Novatus, into which Pearson, Tillemont, and all who had wrote before him, had been led. See also the life of St. Cyprian compiled in French by M. Lombert, who printed a French translation of all his works in 1672. Another elegant translation of the same was printed at Rouen in 1716, with learned remarks; and Suysken the Bollandist, t. 3, Sept. p. 191.

A. D. 258.

THASCIUS CYPRIAN was a native of Carthage, his father being one of the principal senators of that city. He made great improvements in philosophy and all the liberal arts, applied himself to the study of oratory and eloquence with great success, and was made public professor of rhetoric at Carthage. This employment was anciently most honourable, and all this time he lived suitably to the rank of his birth, in great pomp and plenty; in honour and power, wearing a splendid attire, and never stirring abroad without a pompous retinue, and a crowd of clients and followers waiting upon him. He tells us in his book to Donatus, that he had lived a long time amidst the fasces, which were the Roman emblem of the supreme magistracy; but he deploras that he was then a slave to vice and evil habits. The far greater part of his life he passed in the errors of paganism, and he was upon the borders of old age when he was rescued from the darkness of idolatry, and the servitude of vice and errors.

There resided at Carthage a holy old priest, whose name was Cecilius. With him Cyprian contracted an acquaintance, and by his discourses on the excellency of the Christian religion; he began to relish exceedingly its divine truths, and the sanctity of its precepts; but still his carnal heart made strong efforts in favour of the world and his passions. He describes, in his book to Donatus, the struggle which he felt within himself, as follows: "I lay," says he, "in darkness, and I floated on the boisterous sea of this world a stranger to the light, and uncertain where to fix my feet. I then thought what I was told of a second birth, and the method of salvation by it, propounded by the divine goodness, extremely hard and impracticable. I could not conceive how a man could receive the principles of a new life from the sacred laver of regeneration, cease to be what he was before, become quite a new person, and though still retaining the same bodily constitution, put off the old man, and be entirely renewed in the spirit of his mind; for how (thought I with myself) is so great an alteration possible or practicable? How shall I do to leave off on a sudden, and in an instant, radicated customs, in which I am grown old? How can one who remains still in the midst of those objects which have so long struck and charmed his senses, strip himself of all his former inclinations and inveterate habits? These time and continuance have made natural to me, and they are closely rivetted in the very frame of my being. When is it known that a person is transformed into an example of constant frugality and sobriety, who has been always accustomed to sumptuous and dainty fare, to live in plenty, and to indulge his appetites without restraint? How rarely does a man become content with plain apparel and unornamented dress who hath been used to sparkle in gold and jewels, and embroidered garments! The man of ambitious views, who pleases himself, and glories in the ensigns of power and authority, can never love an inglorious private life. In like manner, there is almost a necessity, that wine should engage, that pride should swell, that anger should inflame, that greediness of gain should devour, that ambition should amuse and please, and that lust should tyrannize over a man who hath long indulged such inclinations. These, and such as these, were frequently my

soliloquies; for, as I was deeply entangled and ensnared in the errors of my former life, which I judged it impossible for me ever to disengage myself from, I gave way to the solicitation of my usual vices, added strength to them by indulgence, and despairing of any possible cure, hugged the chain which had become natural to me, so that I looked upon it as a part of myself; but as soon as the life-giving waters of baptism had washed out the spots of my soul, my heart had received the light of the heavenly truth, the Spirit of God had descended upon me, and I was thence become a new creature, presently all my difficulties were surprisingly cleared, my doubts were resolved, and all my former darkness was dispelled. Things appeared easy to me, which before I looked upon as difficult and discouraging: I was convinced that I was able to do and suffer all that which heretofore had seemed impossible. I then saw that the earthly principle which I derived from my first birth, exposed me to sin and death; but that the new principle which I had received from the Spirit of God, in his spiritual birth, gave me new ideas and inclinations, and directed all my views to God." He goes on professing all this to have been in him the pure gift and mercy of God, and ascribing it wholly to the power of his grace; which, he adds, we are bound continually to ask with earnestness and humility, as by it alone we are enabled to will and to do.

Cecilius, the holy priest, was the happy instrument in the hands of God, of his conversion; and Cyprian ever after revered him as his father and guardian-angel, and to express his gratitude would from that time be called Thascius Cecilius Cyprian, joining the name of his benefactor (whom he acknowledged under God the author of his spiritual life) with his own. Cecilius had, in return, the greatest confidence in his virtue, and on his death-bed recommended his wife and children to his care and protection; for he had been married before he was raised to the priesthood. Cecilius left behind him the most excellent character for all good qualities, and Cyprian became, as it were, the heir of his piety, says Pontius. This author takes notice, that the fervent convert set himself with great eagerness to read the holy Scriptures, and to inform himself of all those lessons which would be of use to him. in his great design of ob-

taining God's favour. Finding the sacred oracles very copious in the commendation of purity and continence, he made a resolution to practise those virtues for the more easy attainment of true perfection. Soon after his baptism he sold his whole estate, and gave almost all the money, and whatever else he possessed, for the support of the poor; by which, says Pontius, he gained two points of principal importance, renouncing and despising all secular views (than which nothing is more fatal to all the true interests of piety and religion) and fulfilling the law of charity, which God himself prefers to all sacrifices. With the study of the holy scriptures St. Cyprian joined that of their best expositors, and in a short time became acquainted with the most approved ecclesiastical writers. He was particularly delighted with the writings of his countryman Tertullian, scarcely passed a day without reading something in them, and when he called for them, used to say: "Reach hither my master," as St. Jerom relates. But though he admired his genius, and the variety of his learning, he was upon his guard not to imitate any of his faults or errors.\* St. Cyprian led a retired penitential

\* St. Cyprian wrote soon after his conversion a long epistle or a treatise to Donatus who had been baptized with him, and who seems to have been a companion of his studies in rhetoric. It is entitled, *On the Contempt of the World*, or, *On the Grace of God*. The style is very pompous, like that of a professor of oratory accustomed to declamations, and seems to show that he came fresh from that employment. In this work, he gives, first, an account of his own conversion; shows that the difficulties, which the passions raise, vanish when resolutely encountered, and exhorts his friend to set no bounds to his fervour, saying: § 4. "You will find your powers of action will be always equal to your desires and progress in faith. For it is not in heavenly, as it is in earthly benefactions. You are stinted to no measure or boundary in receiving the gift of God. The fountain of divine grace is ever flowing, is confined to no precise limitations, hath no determinate channel to restrain the waters of life; let us but in earnest thirst after them; and open our hearts to receive them; and as much will flow in upon us, as our faith will enable us to receive." He says, "We have a sensible proof how the invisible fiends are expelled, and sin cleansed away in our souls by the power which Christians have from God, of compelling those impure and wandering spirits which have got possession of human bodies, to confess who they are; of expelling them thence by mere strength of arms, and of increasing their pains and punishments by various applications of our spiritual weapons." *ib.*

Bishop Fell remarks, that Tertullian, Minutius Felix, Lactantius, and others, mention this miraculous power as publicly notorious, and with such confidence, that there is no room for doubt of the fact. It was promised by Christ, (Mark xvi. 17,) and why should we think he would not perform it? says the bishop of Oxford.

life, and by the fervour of his conversion made such wonderful progress in the exercises of a virtuous life, that whilst he was yet in the rank of the Neophytes or persons lately baptized, at the earnest request of the people he was raised to the priesthood ;

St. Cyprian bids Donatus suppose himself placed upon some very exalted eminence, whence he might take a view of the various motions and agitations of human life over the whole world. "You will," says he, "have a real compassion for the world, and your thoughts will rise in gratitude and praise to God, for having made your escape from its pollutions." The orator sets before his eyes the highways beset with robbers, and the seas with pirates, many countries filled with all the forms of war and bloodshed ; for though a single murder is deemed a crime ; yet, "that crime shall commence a virtue, when committed under the shelter of public authority ; and the more enormous the size of the wickedness is, the much greater is its chance for impunity." He mentions the inhuman sports of the gladiators, and fights with wild beasts, and the lewdness and wickedness of the stage, ministering fuel to every impure passion, and by soothing the affections, and indulging the senses, imperceptibly undermining all the powers of conscience in the spectators, whose applause is given with the loudest peals, to him who can act wickedness most to the life.

Cyprian puts his friend in mind that private families and the most secret recesses, often abound with envy, jealousy, incontinence, and pride ; perjuries, injustices, and oppressions often reign in courts of judicature ; ambition only raises itself by fawning and every action that degrades human nature, and the ends of all its pomp and flutter is generally most shameful : the vanity of riches appears in this, that, though they are called goods, they most frequently serve none but evil purposes, and they usually spread a thick darkness over men's understandings. The close of this work is an exhortation to piety, which is the sure road to happiness, disengages the soul from the entanglements of this perplexing scene of the world, purifies it from the dross of sin, fits it for immortality, and is the harbour of sweet peace and safety. This inestimable treasure, the highest dignity and happiness of human nature, stands not in need of cost or courting, like worldly goods. It is the free gift of God, who is desirous to bestow it upon us. His grace flows into the soul, as the sun of its own accord enlightens the dark corners of the earth ; as an overflowing fountain offers its waters to any who will use them ; or, as the refreshing dews descend upon the thirsty meadows. To be capable of receiving this blessing, a man must raise himself above the world by contemning it, must be diligent in prayer and in reading the word of God, sometimes speaking to him, sometimes hearing him speak : he must diligently apply himself to the exercise of all virtues. A soul in which the Holy Ghost settles his abode, must be fitted up, and adorned with the embellishments of all virtues, with a concern proportioned to the dignity of such a guest.

St. Cyprian was also a layman when he composed his book, On the Vanity of Idols, showing they could not be gods who were once men on earth, and infamous for their crimes. He proves that the heathens often worshipped the devils themselves, the same who sometimes possessed the bodies. For the truth of this he appeals to the senses of their worshippers, who were witnesses to the devils often making this confession, when adjured or exorcised by Christians.

his extraordinary merit being judged sufficient reason for dispensing in the rule laid down by St. Paul against admitting Neophytes to holy orders.

During the short time that he served the church in the

§ 4. Upon this passage Bishop Fell makes this observation: "This is such an appeal to the senses of mankind, that our author must have been out of his senses when he made it, if there had not been notoriety of fact to support it. Let our modern sceptics see what answer they can make to it." St. Cyprian in this book transcribes sometimes the very words of Tertullian and Minutius Felix. His two books to Quirinus (who seems to have been at that time a catechumen) are entitled, *Of Testimonies against the Jews*, and are a collection of texts of the Old Testament, pointing to Christ and his Church. His third book of Testimonies is a like collection of passages, forming a system of morality.

St. Cyprian, just after his entrance upon the episcopal dignity, according to Pamelius, Pearson, and Tillemont, or rather a little before it, according to Dom Maran, (for he exhorts not from any claim of power, but from tenderness of affection, p. 3,) published his book *On the Habit of Virgins*. His master Tertullian had written a book *On the Veiling of Virgins*, in which he says the sanctity of their state is proved "By the scripture of God, by the nature of God, and by the discipline which God has established among men." (C. 15.) St. Cyprian addresses this treatise to virgins "devoted to God, dedicated to Christ," or such "who profess virginity, and a stricter attendance than ordinary upon the service of God." He tells them, that "continence makes a particular profession of following Christ, and chastity hath particularly the kingdom of God in its aim and prospect." He calls them: "The flower of the Church's flock, the ornament and lustre of spiritual grace, her joyful offspring, the very perfection of honour and praise, the image of God copied according to the pattern of his holiness, the more illustrious portion of the flock of Christ." By them, says he, "the glorious fecundity of our Mother the Church richly flourishes, in them she particularly rejoices: and, as their numbers multiply, her joy increases," n. 3. He observes, that "the more sublime their glory is, the greater care is required from them." (Ib.) He says that their reward is sixty fold, and next to that of martyrdom, which is an hundred fold; that if they persevere in their purposes of chastity, they are plainly equal to the angels. But "great attainments," says he, "cannot be reached without much difficulty and struggle. We are content to sweat and take pains in climbing up an high ascent; and shall we complain of weariness in a labour which raiseth us to heaven? You will support your toil with joy, if you look up to the crown which is promised you," &c.

The saint severely condemns all painting of the hair or face (which disguises and pretends to mend the workmanship of God) and all allurements of dress, by which many cause the ruin of others by drawing their eyes after them; he observes that rich attire, and care in dressing, only become prostitutes, and the scripture speaks of them after this manner: "It is accordingly observable," says he, "that none are more sumptuous in their appearances than such whose modesty is cheap, and who are profligate in their character. The more curious persons are in setting off their bodies, the more careless they grow as to the ornaments of their minds. Who would not abhor and shun what has already proved destructive to others? Who would desire or court what hath been found

sacerdotal functions he did many great things; and within less than a year after, Donatus, bishop of Carthage, dying, the clergy and people conspired to demand that he should be raised to that high dignity in the church. At the first news of this mo-

as certainly fatal as a sword or spear is to the man that dies by it? Were you to see a man expire immediately upon eating of such a dish, or drinking of such a liquor, you would conclude that it contained poison, and would by no means touch of the same." Having censured other snares and dangerous occasions, he adds: "These are the arts by which the great enemy, the devil, makes his sly approaches, and at last obtains an entrance. Thus whilst our virgins set off themselves with elegance of dress, and take other liberties, the poison works insensibly, and they perish before they are aware of it." Even if they should not lose their honour themselves, they are at least the murderers of others' souls. "If," says our saint, "you provide fuel for others' lust, and put in their way occasion of sin; if, with pretended safety to yourselves, you prove the destruction of others, and kill them as surely as poison or the sword would do; what professions soever you may make of meaning no evil, your mind is polluted, and you cannot be accounted guiltless." Riches are no excuse for such dressing, because all that is superfluous is due to the poor. "Let the necessitous be sensible of your abundance," says St. Cyprian, "put out your money to God, who will repay your loans with interest. Feed your Redeemer in his destitute and hungry members; engage by your treasure many solicitors to the throne of grace, that you may be enabled to persevere in your purpose of chastity, and attain to the recompense," &c. He concludes with this request to the virgins: "Then remember me, when your virginity shall, by blessed perseverance, open you a passage to the reward assigned to it." Which words clearly show the belief of the Church to have always been, that the saints in heaven intercede for us before God. St. Cyprian, in his 4th ep. (ad Pompon.) says, that a virgin who was accused of having conversed criminally with a young man, is to be ranked in the class of an adulteress, "as having broken her faith which she had plighted to Christ." He will not have such virgins to live under the same roof with young men, saying: "When once a house has taken fire, the goods must be taken out with all possible expedition, or the flames would devour them. A man in the midst of danger will not be safe if he sits down in it: nor will a servant of God be long able to escape the machinations of death, who hath suffered himself to be entangled in his wiles and snares." (Ep. 4, p. 10.)

The book, *On the Unity of the Church*, was composed by St. Cyprian a little before he left his retreat, and returned to Carthage. In it he observes that the devil sows heresy and schisms in order to subvert souls which have escaped the snares of idolatry. After this, he demonstrates that the church of Christ is essentially one. He tells us, that for a visible mark of this unity, Christ built his church upon St. Peter, and gave the power of his keys to him; though he also gave the same power to all his apostles, he would have it take its rise from one, and settled the whole upon that foundation. The general rule which he lays down is: "That in matters of faith, the way to come at the truth is very short and compendious, and fact is instead of all other proof." Then he produces the unity of the church founded upon St. Peter. "He," says our holy doctor, "can never attain the recompense propounded by Christ to his fol-

tion, the humble servant of Christ fled, judging himself unfit for so weighty an employment, and begging that some more worthy person, and one of his seniors, might be chosen to that dignity. His declining it made the people keener in their desires, as it showed him to be the more worthy. A great multitude beset his house, and guarded all the ways that led to it, so that he could not make his escape from them. He attempted to get out at a window, but finding it in vain, he yielded, and showed himself to the people, who were impatiently waiting for him, divided between hope and fear. He was received with great joy, and consecrated with the unanimous approbation of the bishops of the province in the year 248, as bishop Pearson and Tillemont prove. Five priests with some of the people opposed his election, alleging that he was yet a novice in the church.

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lowers, who deserts his church. He becomes thence unsanctified, an alien, and a downright enemy. He cannot have God for his father, who hath not the church for his mother. Could any one escape who was not with Noe in the ark? The coat of Christ was not rent or divided. Being seamless and undivided, it is a lively emblem to us, of that inseparable union which must be maintained among his followers. Who is so profligate and abandoned, so false to the trust reposed in him, as to imagine that the unity which is maintained in heaven may be broken upon earth? that the church of Christ, which is always described to us as one, can be split into more. To believe that this is possible, is gross absurdity; but to make any attempt towards it, is flagrant wickedness. Our Lord tells us, there should be one fold, and one shepherd. John x. 16. St. Paul inculcates this doctrine. 1 Cor. i. 10; Ephes. iv. 2. The church was prefigured by the house of Rahab. Jos. ii. 18, 19; by the lamb which was to be eaten in one house. Exod. xii. 46. Neither is the flesh of Christ to be thrown abroad out of the house, or eaten but in the one, the only church.—If such (heretics or schismatics) should even suffer martyrdom for the name of Christ, they would not expiate their crime. There can be no such thing as a martyr out of the church. Though they should be thrown into the fire, or be exposed to the fury of wild beasts, such a death will never be esteemed a crown of their faith and constancy, but rather a punishment of their perfidy. Such a man may be put to death but cannot be crowned.—If the schismatic should suffer out of the church of Christ, he will never thence become entitled to the recompense which none can claim who are not in it.—There is but one God, one Christ, one church, one faith, and one entire body of Christian people.—Whatever shall be separated from the fountain of life, can have no life remaining in it, after having lost all communication with its vital principle." The addition which is wanting in some copies was quoted by Pelagius II. (ep. 2, ad Episc. Istriæ.) It is indeed suspected by some to have crept from the margin into the text; but Dom. Maran maintains it genuine. The sense of the passage is, however, sufficiently clear without it. See on this controversy D. Maran's note, and *Bibliothèque Francoise*, t. 12, p. 10, ann. 1728.



St. Cyprian treated these persons as if they had been his best friends, and expressed so much goodness towards them, that every body admired him for it. In the discharge of the episcopal functions he showed abundance of piety, charity, goodness, and courage, mixed with vigour and steadiness. His very aspect was reverend and gracious beyond what can be expressed, says Pontius, and no one could look him in the face without a secret awe upon his spirits: his countenance had a happy mixture in it of cheerfulness and gravity; his brow was neither too contracted nor too open, but equally removed from both extremes of gaiety and severity, so that a person who beheld him might doubt whether he should love or respect him most; only this was certain, that he deserved the highest degrees both of respect and love. His dress was of a piece with his countenance, neither affectedly sordid nor pompous. How careful he was of the poor when he was bishop may be judged from his tenderness for them whilst he was only a catechumen.

The church enjoyed peace under the reign of Philip for above a year after St. Cyprian's promotion to the see of Carthage. But Decius, who was sent by that emperor to chastise certain rebels in Pannonia, was proclaimed emperor by them, and advancing towards Italy, gained a great victory over Philip's forces who was killed by his soldiers at Verona, and his son at Rome in 249. Decius began his reign by raising a bloody persecution against the church. The cruel edict reached Carthage in the beginning of the year 250. It was no sooner made public, but the idolaters, in a kind of sedition, ran to the marketplace, confusedly crying; "Cyprian to the lions: Cyprian to the wild beasts." The saint was publicly proscribed by the name of "Cecilius Cyprian, bishop of the Christians;" and every one was commanded not to hide or conceal his goods. By his remarkable conversion and great zeal, his name was so odious to them, that in derision they called him Coprianus, alluding to a Greek word which signifies dung. He was often sought for by the persecutors on this occasion. St. Cyprian consulted God, according to his custom, what he ought to do. It is the part of a hireling to fly when the flock is left destitute in time of danger. But there were at that time many weak ones among the faithful at Carthage, as appeared by the great number of those

that soon after fell; the havoc which the enemy made there would have probably been much greater if providence had not preserved St. Cyprian, that by his active zeal and authority he might maintain discipline, and repair the ruins caused by the persecution. In order to procure to his flock all necessary support and comfort during the storm, the holy bishop was persuaded that the precept of flying from one city to another held good in his case; and during his deliberation he was favoured with a vision, in which Christ commanded him to consult his own safety by a prudent retreat, as Pontius testifies in his life, and as Saint Cyprian himself assures us.(1) The clergy of Rome who by severe glances reflected upon his flight, as if by it he had in some measure forsaken the flock, were not apprised of his motives, or of these circumstances. Moreover, by his staying at Carthage the heathens would have been provoked to fall more severely upon the whole church.

During his recess, though absent in body, yet he was with his flock in spirit, supplying the want of his presence by frequent letters, pious counsels, admonitions, reproofs, exhortations, and hearty prayers to heaven for the welfare and prosperity of his church. He exhorted them to continual prayer to God, saying: "What hath moved me more particularly to write to you in this manner, was an admonition which I received in a vision from heaven, saying unto me: 'Ask and you shall have.'"(2) He assured them that the Christians by falling into sloth and a relaxation of manners during the long peace, had deserved this scourge for their trial and amendment; and that this storm had been discovered by God before it happened, to a devout person at Carthage, by a vision of the enemy under the figure of a netiencer (a kind of gladiator) watching to destroy the faithful, because they did not stand upon their guard.(3) In the same epistle the saint mentions another revelation of God, which he himself, though the last of all his servants, as he styles himself, had received concerning the end of the persecution, and the restoration of the peace of the church.(4) St. Cyprian during his absence committed the care his church to certain vicars, of whom some were bishops, as Caldonius and Herculanius; some

(1) S. Cypr. ep. 10, ed. Pam. p. 30. (2) St. Cypr. ep. 11, ed. Oxon.

(3) Ib. n. 4.

(4) St. Cypr. n. 7

priests, as Rogatian, Numidicus, and Tertullus. By frequent letters he warned and exhorted his flock, encouraged the confessors in the prisons, and took care that priests in turns should visit them, and offer the sacrifice of the altar and give them the holy communion every day in their dungeons. Two affairs at that time gave him much disturbance; the schism of Novatus and Felicissimus, and a controversy about the absolution of the lapsed.

Felicissimus, a turbulent clerk of Carthage, had with five priests opposed the election and ordination of St. Cyprian. During the retreat of that holy pastor, Novatus, a priest of Carthage, formed an open schism. He was a man of an unquiet disposition, covetous, presumptuous, a lover of novelty, and suspected by the bishops in point of faith. He had robbed the widows and orphans, misapplied the revenues of the church, and suffered his aged father to perish with hunger in a certain village, without so much as taking care to bury him. For these and other reasons the brethren were very urgent to have him deposed and excommunicated. The time of his trial was near at hand, when the persecution beginning, no assemblies could be held. In order to prevent his condemnation, he separated himself from his bishop, persuading some others to do the same, and pretending to ordain Felicissimus for his deacon, a man like himself, who had been convicted of several frauds and robberies; they were joined in their schism by five other priests, and held their assemblies upon a mountain. Some among the lapsed and confessors, who were angry at St. Cyprian's severity towards the former, adhered to them; for Novatus received, without any canonical penance, all apostates that desired to return to the communion of the church.<sup>(1)</sup> St. Cyprian, finding other remedies only served to make the schismatics more insolent, sent a commission to the bishops and priests, whom he had appointed to act in his stead, to declare the ring-leaders among them excommunicated; which was done according to his orders. About the beginning of the year 251, St. Cyprian wrote to his flock, exhorting them to beware of being misled by the schism, which he calls more dangerous than the persecutions of the pagans. "There is," says he, "one God,

(1) St. Cypr. ep. 34, Pam. 41, Fello. et seq

and one Christ, and but one episcopal chair, originally founded on Peter, by our Lord's authority. There cannot therefore be erected another altar, or another priesthood. Whatever any man in his rage or rashness shall appoint, in defiance of the divine institution, must be a spurious, profane, and sacrilegious ordinance." (1) Novatian and Novatus having kindled a schism at Rome against Pope Cornelius, St. Cyprian wrote his excellent book, *On the Unity of the Church*, in which he more fully explains the same principles, which overthrow all schisms and heresies which can arise in the church. The case of the absolution of the lapsed who returned penitent to the church, gave more exercise to the zeal of our holy pastor than the schism itself.

Virtue which had stood the fiercest persecutions, is often seen to melt at the first ray of prosperity; so dangerous are its flattering blandishments. St. Cyprian complains in many parts of his works, (2) that the peace which the church had enjoyed\* had enervated in some Christians the watchfulness and spirit of their holy profession, and had opened a door to many converts who had not the true spirit of our faith; from which sources a sensible relaxation was discoverable in the manners of many. Their virtue therefore being put to the test, in the persecution raised by Decius, many wanted courage to stand the trial. The lapsed, whether apostates who had sacrificed to idols, or Libellatici who, without sacrificing, had purchased for money certificates that they had offered sacrifice, were not admitted to assist at the holy mysteries, before they had gone through a most rigorous course of public penance, consisting of four degrees, and of several years' continuance, as is prescribed for much less heinous sins than that of apostacy, in the canonical epistle of

(1) Ep. 49, Felto. 39, Pam.

(2) L. de Unit. Eccles. n. 20, ep. 8, ed. Pam. p. 23, ep. 11, ed. Oxon. tr. de Lapsis, n. 4.

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\* The church had enjoyed a kind of calm from the death of Severus, in 211, to that of Philip in 249, especially during the five years reign of the last emperor; if we except, during this interval, frequent commotions of the people or magistrates in certain places; and the sixth general persecution which raged after the death of Alexander and Mamaea, in 235, during the three years of the usurpation of Maximinus, of whom Capitolinus says, that "never did a more cruel beast tread on the earth."

St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, written about that time. When, during this penitential term, absolution was given in danger of death, if the penitent recovered he was obliged to accomplish his course as to the austerities enjoined him. Relaxations of these penances, called indulgences, were granted on certain extraordinary occasions, as on account of the uncommon fervour of a penitent; of which several instances occur in ecclesiastical antiquity; also, on occasion of a new violent persecution being raised in the church.

Thus St. Cyprian, in 252, when the persecution of Gallus began to threaten the church, decreed, "that all the penitents should receive the peace of the church who professed themselves ready to enter the lists afresh; there to abide the utmost heat of battle, and manfully to fight for the name of the Lord, and for their own salvation." For the reasons of which indulgence he alleged, that it was necessary "to make a general rendezvous of Christ's soldiers within his camp, who are desirous to have arms put into their hands, and seem eager for the engagement. So long as we had peaceable times, there was reason for a longer continuance of penitents under a state of mortification; yet so as to relax it in the case of sickness and danger. Now the living have as much need of communion as the dying then had, unless we would leave those naked and defenceless, whom we are exhorting and encouraging to fight our Lord's battle: whereas we should rather support and strengthen them with the body and blood of Christ. The design of the eucharist being to be a defence and security for those who partake of it, we should fortify those whose safety we are concerned for with the armour of our Lord's banquet. How shall they be able to die for Christ if we deny them the blood of Christ? How shall we fit them for drinking the cup of martyrdom, if we will not first admit them to the cup of the Lord?(1) It was also customary to grant indulgences to penitents who brought tickets from some martyr going to execution, or from some confessor in prison for the faith, containing a request in their behalf, which the bishop and his clergy examined, and often ratified. This practice was established in Africa in Tertullian's time,(2) in Egypt, in the

(1) St. Cypr. ep. 57, ed. Oxon. 54, Pam.

(2) Tertull. De Pudic. c. 22.

days of St. Dionysius of Alexandria,(1) in Asia, as appears from the acts of St. Pionius, and in other places. In St. Cyprian's time this custom degenerated in Africa into a great abuse by the multitude of such tickets, and their often being given in too peremptory terms, and without examination or discernment, to the great prejudice of souls, and the relaxation of the discipline of penance.

St. Cyprian being informed of the mischief which threatened his flock in June, 250, severely condemned it by three letters which he despatched together, one to the martyrs and confessors, the second to the priests and deacons, and a third to his people. In the first(2) he expresses the utmost concern to the confessors that they had not been better instructed by his priests in the rules of the gospel than they appeared to have been, and that by their recommendation "some priests had presumed to make oblations for the lapsed,\* and to admit them to the holy eucharist; that is, indeed, to profane the body of our Lord. And as a further aggravation," says he, "they have admitted these sinners to communion before any submission made by them to penitential discipline, before any confession made of their heinous and crying sin, and before any imposition of hands made by the bishop and his clergy unto penance. Such priests, instead of approving themselves the true shepherds of the sheep, become as bad to them as butchers and murderers. For a mischievous condescension is, in effect, a cheat; nor are those who have fallen raised by such helps, but rather cast down, and pushed upon destruction." He adds: "I beseech you, with all possible earnestness, to set before your eyes the examples of your predecessors, and to consider how careful other martyrs, who are gone before you, were in making such grants; duly weigh the reasonableness and justice of the petitions which you hand to me. I again entreat you, that you see the persons, acquaint yourselves with their circumstances, and be assured that their humiliation comes very near the just measures of a legitimate and full satisfaction." The saint's letter to the priests(3) is a much more severe rebuke, that some of their

(1) Eus. l. 4, 42.

(2) Ep. 11, ed. Oxon.

(3) Ep. 16.

\* All who communicated at mass were admitted by the priests to make their oblation at the beginning of that sacrifice

order (whom he threatens to restrain from offering, that is, to suspend), forgetting the rules of the gospel, as well as the rank which they held in the church, rashly and hastily admitted penitents to communion upon the tickets of confessors; "though," says he, "they have not performed their penance, made no humble confession of their sin, nor received the imposition of hands from the bishop and his clergy; the holy eucharist is administered to them, in defiance of the scripture, which saith: *Whoever shall eat or drink unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*, 1 Cor. xi. 27." Fleury remarks, that St. Cyprian here does not take the word *exomologesis*, with Tertullian, for the whole course of penance, but for a part of it, according to the Greek word, namely, *confession*, which was made either publicly or privately, after penance was ended, before receiving reconciliation by the imposition of hands.(1) The holy bishop, in his letter to his people, recommends to them to restrain by their advice, the forwardness of such confessors within the limits prescribed by the gospel.(2) He, however, dispenses in case of sickness, or other extreme danger, and allows such, with tickets from the martyrs, to be reconciled, "when they have made the humble confession of their sin before any priest or deacon,\* whom they can procure to attend them."(3) Lucian, and certain others among the confessors at Carthage, wrote an imperious letter to St. Cyprian upon this subject,(4) but the holy pastor strenuously maintained his point.(5)

The see of Rome being then vacant, St. Cyprian wrote concerning this affair to the clergy of that church, who, by an excellent answer, confirmed the same law of holy penance, and discipline of the church.(6) They were by that time well satisfied of the just reasons St. Cyprian had for his retreat; and condemn over-hasty absolutions. "God forbid," say they, "that ever the Roman church should be so easy and compliant, or have so little regard to the interests of religion, as to relax

(1) Fleury, l. 6, n. 42. See Gabr. Albaspinæus Observ. Eccles. Obs. 20, l. 1, p. 94, and Baronius, ad an. 253, n. 60

(2) Ep. 17, ed. Oxon.

(3) Ep. 18 et 19

(4) Inter Cypr. ep. 23, ed. Oxon.

(5) Ep. 26.

(6) Ep. 30, inter Cypr. ed. Oxon.

\* A deacon might be deputed to give canonical, but not sacramental absolution.

the severity and rigour of its discipline. The remedy too hastily applied can do those that are fallen no sort of service; but through a mistaken compassion, would fester the wound received by the first offence, and to their greater destruction, deprive the unhappy souls of the advantages they might reap from a true repentance. For how is it possible that the medicinal grace of forgiveness should have its effect, if he who hath the dispensation of it becomes fond of increasing the danger, by contracting the time which should be allowed for the removal of it, by a legitimate and proper penance? If he choose only to skin over the wound, and will not allow due time for the operation of his medicines, nor for closing it by surer and slower degrees? This, if we would speak out plainly, is not to *cure*, but to *kill*. Let penitents knock at the doors of the church; but let them not proceed to violence, nor to break them open. Let their tears and lamentations, coming from the very bottom of their hearts, plead their cause for them, and speak their shame and sorrow for their sin. Nay, if they have really a just horror of their guilt, and would have the deep and dangerous wounds of their consciences handed skilfully, they should even ask with shame. Let them ask, agreeably to the rules of the gospel, with modesty and humility. The mercies of God may be considered; but then his justice should also be remembered. He hath prepared a heaven, but he hath prepared a hell too," &c. A letter also which the confessors at Rome wrote out of prison to those in Africa (much extolled in this and St. Cyprian's letters, though not now extant) contributed very much to the support of discipline.

St. Cyprian writes of a certain priest named Gaius, who admitted the lapsed to communion, and of such others: "Let them be suspended from their monthly dividend."<sup>(1)</sup> For the revenues of the clergy then consisted chiefly of the oblations of the faithful, which were divided every month into four parts, one of which was assigned to the bishop, and one to his clergy, so that the bishop's share equalled that of all his clergy together. The other two parts were allowed to the poor, and the expenses of oratories or churches.<sup>(2)</sup> The

(1) S. Cypr. ep. 34, ed. Oxon.

(2) Ep. 39 et ep. 5. See Bishop Fell's note, *ibid.* and Bingham.



Roman clergy tell St. Cyprian, in another letter, that they hoped the impatience of the lapsed would wear off with time; "and then they will be thankful," say they, "that they have been kept in hand for a season, till their cure could be depended on."<sup>(1)</sup> The schismatics Novatus and Felicissimus supported the cause of the lapsed, and the rebellious clergy and confessors; but Novatus retired to Rome in the beginning of the year 251, where St. Cornelius was chosen pope in June that same year. St. Cyprian congratulated with him upon his election, and they joined their forces against the double schism kindled both at Rome and in Africa.

At the end of the year 250 the persecution was considerably abated at Carthage, upon the expiration of the proconsul's annual authority. It ceased by the death of the two Decii, father and son, who perished together, by the treachery of Gallus, their general, as they were fighting against the Carpi, a Scythian nation, near Abrutum, in Mysia, part of Scythia, in November, 251, the elder Decius having reigned about two years and six months. St. Cyprian was returned to Carthage in April that same year, after an exile which he calls of two years, though it seems only to have continued about fourteen months, as Tillemont observes. Soon after his return he held a numerous council at Carthage, in which the schismatics were condemned, and it was ordered that the lapsed should remain in a course of penance. St. Cyprian granted them afterwards a plenary indulgence in a second council which he held at Carthage soon after Easter the following year, the persecution of Gallus then beginning to threaten the church, as has been already mentioned. Our saint is thought to have read in the first of these councils his treatise, *On the Lapsed*, which he published soon after he came out of his retreat.\*

(1) Ap. Cypr. ep. 36, ed. Oxon.

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\* In his book *On the Lapsed* he extols the crowns of the martyrs, but bitterly deprecates the lamentable fall of those who had apostatized, by which he says his very bowels were rent, and no words could express his grief, which admitted no alleviation but that of tears and sighs. After showing the greatness of the crime of apostacy, he passes to the remedies, and inveighs against a rash and hasty pretended reconciliation. "He," says the saint, "would betray a great ignorance of his profession, who for fear of putting his patient to pain by opening his wound, should

Visions continued very frequent in the church in that age, as the learned Mr. Dodwell(1) has proved, tracing the evidences of this prophetic spirit through almost every writer, from the apostolic age to this period, namely, from the works of Hermas,

(1) Dodwell Diss. Cyprian, 4.

softly handle it, skin it over, and close it up, not cleansing it of the corruption lodged in it; for, by this unskilful management, the malignity would take deep root, and taint the whole mass. The wound, we know, in all such cases, must be opened, the knife must not be spared, all superfluities must be pared away, without regard to the pain occasioned by so sharp a treatment. If the patient complain, and cry out for the present, he will afterwards thank the operator when he finds his recovery has been owing to such a treatment. A new source of destruction is broken out among us; and, as if the persecution had not done sufficient mischief, another evil comes upon us likely not to be less fatal. A delusive absolution is given at random, dangerous to the givers, useless to the receivers. Coming fresh from the altar of the devil, their hands yet reeking with the blood of the sacrifices offered thereon, they would fain approach the highest mysteries. In spite of the divine admonitions, violence is offered to the body and blood of Christ. Their intrusion is not to be interpreted a less affront to our Lord, who presume (unqualified) to receive the holy sacrament into their hands and mouths, than that which they offered him before when they denied and renounced him. All this indulgence is no more beneficial to sinners, than tempestuous weather is to the fruits of the earth, than a murrain to cattle, or a dreadful storm to the mariner. They who dispense it subvert the only true foundation which the lapsed can have of any hope in God; they resemble unskilful pilots, who, instead of conducting their vessel safe into harbour, split it upon the rocks. The peace thus given them is so far from answering its purposes, that it directly thwarts them. By this stratagem the subtle enemy would wipe out of their hearts all remembrance of their past offence, and all sorrow for it. It is none of his interest that they should deprecate the wrath of God or pass through a long and laborious penance."

The zealous pastor shows that penitents deceive themselves, who think that a reconciliation can be given them before they have expiated their crime by penance, and purified their conscience by imposition of hands from the bishop: he says, that the merits and works of the martyrs can prevail much with Christ, and that what they ordain ought to be granted, if it be just and lawful; but not if they demand anything against the law of God and the gospel; nor ought it to be presumed that martyrs for the gospel would attempt anything in derogation from it. To strike a terror into sinners, he relates several examples of persons severely punished by God in a miraculous manner, for being so bold as to receive the body and blood of Christ before they had done condign penance. Such visible chastisements, like that of Ananias and Sapphira, were frequent in the primitive age, (see 1 Cor. xi. 30,) and are sensible tokens of the invisible punishments which God inflicts on such crimes. "What dreadful instances," says St. Cyprian, (n. 13,) "do we see of God's vengeance executed upon many who deny him! How lamentable were the ends they came to! Though this be not the proper time of punishment, they do not escape it even here. It lights for the present upon few only,

Clement, Romanus, Ignatius, Polycarp, Quadratus, Justin, Melito, Tertullian, Origen, Dionysius, Alexandrinus, &c. St. Cyprian mentions several visions with which God had favoured him and many other persons. He assures us, that he received

but the example is designed for all. A woman who, after denying her faith, went immediately to the public baths, there fell down possessed by an evil spirit, and becoming her own executioner in wreaking the vengeance of God upon herself, in her rage bit to pieces her tongue, the instrument of her crime, and being seized with cruel pains in her bowels, in a very little time gave up the ghost." He adds an example to which he had been an eye-witness. The parents of a sucking little girl flying for fear of the persecutors, the nurse carried the child before the magistrates, and as it was not old enough to eat flesh, they gave it some bread dipped in wine which remained of the heathenish libations. As soon as the heat of the persecution was abated the mother returned, and having got her child again, carried it to the church where St. Cyprian was offering the great sacrifice of the eucharist—*Sacrificantibus nobis*. The child cried and grieved all the time of the oblation, as if it were to confess, by all the signs it could give, its unfitness for that holy place. At the communion, when the deacon brought it the cup, the infant turned its head, closed its lips forcibly together, and with all its might refused to touch what was offered. The deacon, however, forced some of the blessed sacrament into the girl's mouth; upon which she was seized with violent convulsions and a fit of vomiting. Christ would not suffer the holy sacrament to stay with her after her bowels had been polluted with the heathenish sacrifices.

A woman, somewhat advanced in years, who had sacrificed to idols, crept in unobserved, whilst St. Cyprian was offering the sacrifice; but she had no sooner received the sacrament, but she began to heave and struggle for her life, as if she had received a mortal wound, and losing her breath, fell down trembling and sobbing. Another woman whose hands had been polluted with heathen sacrifice, as she tried to open her box, in which she kept the body of our Lord (according to the custom of that age for private communion when persons could not assist at religious assemblies in times of persecution,) perceived fire arise thence, by which she was so affrighted that she durst not touch it. A man who had apostatized, having privately received the sacrament from the priest in his hand, opening it, found nothing but ashes. Several in the like circumstances were seized by unclean spirits, and some lost their senses, and ran mad.

St. Cyprian adds a strong exhortation to penance, and says, that some among the faithful, "because they had once sinned only in thought and purpose, confessed this with much grief to the priests of God doing severe penance, unburdening their consciences, and seeking a healing remedy for their wounds: knowing that God is neither to be deceived nor mocked, no arts and stratagems can delude or circumvent him." "*Quoniam de hoc vel cogitaverunt, hoc ipsum apud sacerdotes Dei dolenter et simpliciter confitentes, exomologesim conscientie faciunt, animi sui pondus exponunt,*" &c. n. 14, p. 95. Upon which words the English Protestant editor of St. Cyprian's works makes this remark: "This submission to a solemn exomologesis for their thought is a proof of the esteem which voluntary confession stood in. No one could have called them to account for the purpose of their heart, if they had not of their own accord declared it." p. 131.

from God an express order to fly and lie concealed when he was proscribed or outlawed in the reign of Decius. Pontius, in his life, tells us, that it was purely owing to his fear of offending God, which induced him rather to obey the commands of God

St. Cyprian repeats his pressing solicitations to sinners: "Let every one of you make an humble and solemn confession of his sin whilst he is yet in the world, whilst his confession can be admitted, whilst his satisfaction, and the pardon given him by the priests are available with God." He puts them in mind, that this is not to be obtained without much lamentation and sorrow, and without renouncing diversions, banquets, and vain apparel; that if they would mourn for a friend that was dead, how much more ought they to do it for their souls? "You have lost your soul," says he: "you are dead to all spiritual purposes; you survive this loss; and will you not lament and mourn? will you not secrete yourself for a time from company and diversions? Behold, fresh aggravations of your guilt. Penance here is left as the only remedy. They who would represent this as needless, leave the case incurable and hopeless. Whilst persons rashly trust to salvation against the terms of the gospel, there is left no hope of it upon any reasonable grounds. Let us then mourn and weep in proportion to the greatness of our sin; as the wound is large and deep, let our care of it be suitable, let not the severity of our penitential labours fall short of the heinousness of our guilt. You must ask more fervently, must continue a great while instant in prayer and supplication, must spend whole days in sorrow, whole nights in tears, and every moment of your time in mourning and lamentation. You must prostrate yourselves upon the ground, lie down in sackcloth and ashes, neglect all care of dress and ornament; choose henceforward abstinence and fasting, and be diligent in works of justice and charity. Your riches, which helped to ensnare and ruin you, can no longer be a just object of your love and adherence. You should rather detest them as a mortal enemy, avoid them as you would robbers and cut-throats shrink from them as you would from poison or the sword. They should now be chiefly employed in redeeming your crime and your guilt. Let the remainder of your fortune be spent in seeking relief against the grievous wound you have received. God who is to judge you should be engaged by your loans to him, to become your debtor. If any man will pour out his soul to God in fervent prayer, if he will shed in great abundance penitential tears, if he will labour to pacify the wrath of God by repeated acts of justice and charity, then at length it may be hoped, that he will pity and be moved to pardon, who said: *When thou shalt return and repent thou shalt be saved*, Isa. xxx. 15. He therefore can pardon his humble supplicants, his sincere penitents, such as bring forth suitable fruits of repentance. He can make available whatever either the martyrs shall ask, or the bishop and ministers of his Church shall do on their behalf. Thus the soldier of Christ will rally his broken forces, fight with the more ardour and courage, and being inspired with greater degrees of constancy and firmness from an humble remembrance and sense of his sin, he will derive upon himself the divine assistance, and contribute as much to the joy and triumph of the Church, as he had done to her dejection and grief." This holy pastor always feared lest his indulgence was too great: "I would, as to myself, forgive all that is past even the faults committed against God, I do not rigorously search: nay, I even become myself an offender I fear, by my too great indulgence to

than to be crowned with martyrdom against the will of God, to whom in everything he was entirely devoted. He so firmly depended on the truth of those admonitions which he received from heaven, that he was persuaded he should commit a sin by

the offences of others; and as for those who are desirous of confessing their sin with openness and humility, and making all possible satisfaction for it, these I am ever ready to embrace with the most true and cordial affections."

St. Cyprian's most useful discourse, Of the Lord's Prayer, was written soon after this last treatise, and is strongly recommended by St. Hilary and St. Austin. The latter exhorted the monks of Adrumetum to get it by heart. The author shows the excellency of that divine prayer, and explains in its petitions, what we are to ask of God. He mentions the solemn hours of daily prayer; the first, third, sixth, &c., and lays down the conditions of prayer, especially humility, reverence, attention, fervour, and constant perseverance. "The avenues of our souls," says he, "should be all locked up from our enemy, and God alone should have access to them. It is a strange degree of indolence and sloth to suffer our minds at that time to be alienated from their proper business. This is to offend the majesty of God by our careless approaches whilst we profess to implore his mercy." He takes notice that the priest in the preface to the celebration of the eucharist, said: "Lift up your hearts;" and that the people answered: "We lift them up to the Lord." He says, our prayers ought not to be barren, or to ascend empty and unattended to the throne of grace, but must be accompanied with almsdeeds and good works, which will recommend them to God. Excellent maxims concerning prayer occur in his epistles, especially in the exhortation to continual prayer, which he sent to his clergy with a charge that it should be also communicated to the laity. (Ep. 11, ed. Oxon. 8, Pamel.)

Upon the renewal of the persecution under Gallus and Volusianus, in 252, St. Cyprian wrote his Exhortation to Martyrdom, to fortify his flock against the day of trial. This work is compiled of passages of holy scripture, these being the best arms which a bishop can put into the hands of soldiers of Christ, whom it is his duty to exercise and train to battle. Our saint, to comfort and fortify his flock, in the time of the grievous pestilence, composed his book, On the Mortality or Pestilence. In it he shows, that true servants of God ought to rejoice in calamities, because they afford opportunities to exercise patience, and all heroic virtues, and to merit heaven. As for death, "No man," says he, "can be afraid of it, but he who is loath to go to Christ, nor can any one be loath to go to Christ but he who hath reason to fear that he shall have no part in his kingdom." He describes the happiness of those who are got out of the storms and hurricanes of this world, have made to the haven of everlasting bliss, and have put on a happy immortality, being freed from the dangers of sin, the assaults of the devil, and the conflicts of the passions, of which he draws a pathetic and elegant picture. Too great a fear of death in a Christian he calls a proof of the want of lively faith and hope which fortify the mind, and enable us to despise the king of terrors. "Above all things," says he, "we should bear in mind the obligation we lie under to do, not our own, but our heavenly Father's will, as Christ has taught us to desire in our daily prayer. Now, how inconsistent and absurd is it for us to desire that his will may be done, when upon his summoning us to leave this world, we are backward and reluctant, and loth to answer to his call? With what propriety or truth

suffering, if he had not then concealed himself, when our Lord commanded him to do so. This historian observes, that he was preserved by a merciful Providence, lest his weak flock should have been totally dispersed, and the discipline of penance enervated in it by the persecutions, first of the heathens, and afterwards of the lapsed. During which dangers this skilful manager bound up the wounds of the brethren, and, by his watchfulness, defeated the stratagems by which the cunning enemy sought to impose upon those who were found not to be upon their guard. Such circumstances render the vision more credible at those times when miraculous powers were frequent.

St. Cyprian, in his eleventh epistle to his priests and deacons, (1) mentions several other visions; one by which he was

(1) Ep. 11, ed. Oxon. 8, Pam.

do we beg of him that his kingdom come, when we plainly prefer before it a state of bondage on earth? Wherefore do we so often repeat our desires to him, to *hasten his kingdom*, when it is evident we would rather continue here in a state of subjection to the devil, than reign with Christ in his kingdom and glory?"

He mentions a certain fellow-bishop, who, being almost at the last gasp, was extremely shocked at the thoughts of death. Whilst he earnestly begged for some time of respite, a youth of a majestic presence, and such a venerable aspect as mortal eyes could scarcely endure to behold, appeared standing by him, and said, with a good deal of seeming displeasure, "You are afraid both of suffering and of death; yet you are unwilling to quit the place of suffering. What then shall I do for you, seeing you yourself know not what to ask?" St. Cyprian adds: "I myself have been frequently warned by express revelation from God, to declare, in the most public and pressing manner, that we ought not to mourn for the death of those whom our Lord hath called to himself, and delivered from the troubles of this world; inasmuch, as we know, and should consider, that they are not so properly taken away from us as sent before us; that they have only got the start of us, as it were, in a voyage or a journey; and that, though we may be allowed to miss them, it is not fit we should lament them as if they were lost." He says, our behaviour ought to agree with our words, and avow our belief that our departed friends are in a state of bliss. It is his remark that a wish for longer life for the sake of martyrdom is an illusion of self-love, seeing resignation to the divine will is the most perfect sacrifice of ourselves to God; and adds, "that we ought to show the power of our faith, by bearing the departure of our dearest friends without emotion; and when it shall please God to call us to himself, we should gladly receive his summons, and follow him with cheerfulness and without delay." Lastly, he strongly exhorts all Christians heartily to wish for the happy hour of their death, as it will be their passage to the glory of heaven, their admission into the kingdom of divine love, and into the glorious society of the angels and saints. St. Cyprian's books, *On the Lord's Prayer*, and *On Mortality*, were published in French by the duke of Luynes, under the name of the Sieur de Lavalyn in 1664.

moved to exhort them to continual prayer. "I received," says he, "an admonition from heaven, in a vision, saying, Ask, and you shall receive. Next, my people were directed in the same vision to ask for certain persons; but they could not agree in asking, which exceedingly displeased him who had said, Ask, and you shall receive; because it is written: *God maketh men to be of one mind in a house.*"(1) He subjoins the vision of the net-fencer, representing the devil threatening the people, which pointed out the impending persecution of Decius; and gives an account of a third vision, in which it was shown him that this persecution was drawing towards an end, in the following words: "To the least of all his servants, who hath many sins to account for, and in all respects is unworthy of such a condescension, God, in his infinite mercy, hath been pleased to give the following direction, saying: "Bid him be secure and easy, for settled times are coming: and, as to the intervening delay of them, there is reason for it, seeing there are some yet remaining to be proved in this trial." Even as to the point of spare diet, we have some intimation from above, with a manifest view of preventing any declensions in the vigour of heavenly virtue, through the allurements of the world; and of disengaging the mind from the weight and incumbrance of satiety, that it might more easily and expeditely watch for prayer." The English editor observes, that this letter was written in 250, when there was no human appearance of times growing more peaceable. The departure of the Decii from Rome soon after, upon their expedition, made some abatement in the persecution, and their unexpected death put an end to it. The event proved the author to be neither an enthusiast nor an impostor, who depended with great assurance upon these visions, especially those which promised peace to the church; of which he writes again: (2) "Let us animate one another, and endeavour to make all possible improvements in virtue, that when our Lord shall mercifully vouchsafe that peace to the church which he hath promised, we may return to her new men," &c. When some of the lapsed had written to St. Cyprian, humbly and modestly begging penance and reconciliation, the holy bishop said of them: "The Lord is my witness how much

(1) Ps. xlviii. 6.

(2) Ep. 13, ed. Oxon. n. 4.

I congratulate with them for this regular and Christian conduct, who hath been pleased also to reveal to me how highly acceptable it is in his sight.”(1) He speaks of several other divine revelations which he received:(2) he was often directed by them in promoting persons to holy orders, and in other occurrences. He was forewarned by God of the revival of the persecution under Gallus; of which he wrote to Pope Cornelius as follows: “A storm is coming, and a furious enemy will speedily declare himself against us; the struggle will not be like the late one, (that under Decius,) but more sharp and insupportable. This we have had frequently revealed to us from above, and the merciful providence of God doth often remind us of it; through whose assistance and compassion for us, we trust that he who, in times of peace, hath foretold to his soldiers the approaching battle, will crown them with victory when engaged in it.”(3) Upon these revelations he, by a plenary indulgence, admitted the lapsed, who had entered upon a course of penance, to the benefit of reconciliation and communion.

In the beginning of this persecution, in July, 252, Pope Cornelius made a glorious confession of his faith at Rome, and was banished to Centumcellæ. St. Cyprian congratulated him hereupon by a letter,(4) in which he foretels both his and his own approaching martyrdom. “Since it hath pleased God,” says he, “to advertise me of our approaching trial, I cease not to endeavour by exhorting my people to prepare for it, and to join with me in continual watchfulness, fasting, and prayer. Let us cry to God continually, and avert his wrath: for this is our heavenly armour, which will enable us to stand our ground with constancy and courage. Let us agree in remembering each other at this time of peril and distress—and whichever of us shall first be favoured by our Lord with a removal hence, let our affection still persevere before the Lord for our brethren, in never ceasing prayers for them.” These two great saints lived in the closest and most constant union together; we have eight letters of St. Cyprian to that holy pope, besides a synodal epistle; and it appears by these that he wrote to him many others. After the martyrdom of St. Cornelius, which happened the

(1) Ep. 33, ed. Oxon.

(2) Ep. 7, 39, 63, &amp;c.

(3) Ep. 57, ad Cornel. ed. Oxon.

(4) Ep. 60, ed Oxon. 58, Pam.



same year, 252, on the 14th of September, St. Cyprian wrote a letter of congratulation to his successor, St. Lucius, who was no sooner elected than banished. Being recalled, he died about five months after his election, on the 4th of March, attaining to a "glorious martyrdom," as St. Cyprian assures us.(1)

The pestilence, which broke out first in Ethiopia, in the reign of Decius, and ravaged successively all the provinces of the empire, fell most heavily of all upon Africa. It grew more violent under Gallus; afterwards destroyed the armies of Valerian in Persia, and seemed to redouble its virulence in the reign of Gallien. It is mentioned also under Claudius II. in 270, though its chief havoc is confined to the space of twelve years, from 250 to 262.(2) St. Cyprian describes this distemper, that it began by a sinking of the strength, with colliquative evacuations, and grievous inflammations of the larynx and parts adjacent: these symptoms were followed with an inward heat of the bowels, convulsions of the stomach, violent retchings and vomitings, fiery redness of the eyes, and mortifications in several parts, which required amputations of limbs; a weakness contracted in the whole frame rendered the body almost incapable of motion; a dulness of hearing or a dimness of sight also came upon the patients.(3) This fatal contagious distemper swept away daily vast numbers, seizing whole families one after another, without sparing one individual person in them.(4) All in this dreadful juncture, were in the utmost consternation, every one striving to shift for himself, and get to the greatest distance from the infection. The heathens deserted and exposed their nearest friends, turning the dying patients out of the doors, as if they could shut death out with them. Living carcases rather than men lay destitute up and down the streets, begging the assistance of passengers. Yet many were intent upon an unnatural and cruel plunder of the goods of others.

St. Cyprian, in this time of desolation, assembled the Christians at Carthage, and spoke to them strongly on the duty and advantages of mercy and charity, teaching them that they ought to extend their care not only to their own people, but also to

(1) S. Cypr. ep. 67.

(2) Tillemont, vit. S. Cyprian, art. 33.

(3) S. Cypr. l. de Mortal. n. 9.

(4) Pontius vitâ Cypriani, n. 9.

their enemies and persecutors. The faithful readily offered themselves to follow his directions. Their services were severally distributed; the rich contributed large alms in money the poor gave only their personal labour and attendance, having nothing else to bestow. Every one was ambitious to engage in a service wherein they might so eminently approve themselves to God the Father, and Christ, the Judge of all, and in which they had at their head so great a leader and commander as their good bishop. How much the poor and necessitous were, not only during this pestilence, but at all times, the objects of our saint's most tender care, appears from the concern he expressed for them, and the orders he frequently gave about them in his epistles, even during his absence. It was one of his usual sayings: "Let not that sleep in thy coffers which may be profitable to the poor. That which a man must of necessity part with, some time or other, it is wisdom for him to distribute so, that God may everlastingly reward him."

All orders of men shared the good bishop's attention, but the clergy above the rest. So solicitous was he that they should be wholly taken up in the spiritual function of their charge, that he reckoned it among the great disorders which had crept into the church during the long continuance of peace before Decius, that some bishops, "neglecting their high trust, entered upon the management of secular affairs." (1) In the town of Furnis, one Geminus Victor had, in his last will, appointed Geminus Faustinus, a priest of that church, his executor. The sixth among the apostolic canons (framed in various synods during the three first centuries) and other synodal decrees of the earliest ages forbade any bishop, priest, or deacon to engage himself in secular business under pain of being deposed. Bishop Fell observes that the Roman laws made it penal for any one to refuse the office of executor or guardian when offered. Wherefore, in this case, the synods inflicted the penalty on him who should appoint a bishop, priest, or deacon, either executor or guardian, forbidding "any remembrance of him to be made at the eucharist, (or mass,) or any oblation to be made for him after his death. The reason of which was, that the clergy should not be distracted from their holy ministrations—that

(1) S. Cypr. tr. de Laps. n. 4.

they might attend their altar and their sacrifices without interruption, and fix all their attendance upon religious duties," at Saint Cyprian says. Wherefore he ordered "that the name of the said Victor should not be mentioned at the altar—that no oblation should be made for his repose, nor the customary prayers of the church be offered up on his behalf," as was usually done for the faithful departed. St. Cyprian hoped, by this instance of severity, to prevent any person from calling down to a lower employment the priests and ministers of God, whose whole time and care should be devoted to his altar.(1)

In the persecution of Gallus, some priests, who celebrated the holy eucharist early in the morning, made use of water only in the chalice, for fear of being discovered by the scent of the wine. This abuse St. Cyprian condemned and confuted.(2) He mentions the sign of the cross used at baptism, and on other occasions,(3) and says, "A Christian is fortified by the defensive sign of the cross."(4) Several cities in Numidia having been distressed by an incursion of barbarians, who were not subject to the Romans, a great number of Christians of both sexes were carried into captivity by them. Upon this accident eight bishops wrote to St. Cyprian, imploring his assistance for the redemption of the prisoners. St. Cyprian shed many tears upon reading these letters, and was particularly concerned on account of the danger to which the virgins were exposed. At his recommendation the clergy and people of Carthage raised a sum amounting to a hundred thousand sesterii, that is, about seven hundred and eighty-one pounds English.\* This money St. Cyprian sent to those bishops, charging them to have recourse to him again upon all such occasions.(5)

About the year 255 began the controversy concerning the validity of baptism given by heretics. St. Cyprian having been consulted by eighteen bishops of Numidia concerning that point,

(1) S. Cypr. ep. 1, ed. Oxon.

(2) Ep. 63, ad Cæcilium, ed. Oxon.

(3) Tr. de Laps. n. 2, De Unit. Eccles. n. 15.

(4) L. 2, Testim. n. 16.

(5) Ep. 62, ed. Oxon. S. Aug. ep. 199, n. 95.

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\* At the rate of £7 16s. 3d. the sesterium, or one thousand sestertii. Mr. Smith, in his corrections of Dr. Arbuthnot's tables, makes a sestertius 2d. of our present English coin, and a sestertium £8 6s. 8d.

answered, that such a baptism is null, and to be reiterated; which decree he soon after confirmed in a synod of seventy-two bishops, which he held at Carthage. The pretended reasons for this mistaken notion he sums up in his epistle to Jubaianus.(1) In what manner St. Stephen maintained the tradition of the church upon this head, has been related in the life of that holy pope and martyr. What the behaviour of St. Cyprian would have been had he seen the controversy determined by the decision of the church, cannot be doubted, from the principles which he himself lays down.(2) Nor did he question the superior authority of St. Stephen; though in a point which he thought to belong merely to discipline, not to faith, he thought he might maintain the custom which he found established at Carthage by a predecessor named Agrippinus. Neither was he unacquainted with the dignity of the Roman see, which he calls "The chair of Peter, the principal church, the origin of the sacerdotal unity; whither perfidy cannot find access."(3) If he for some time betrayed a warmth in this controversy, how much he repented of it appears by the book which he afterwards wrote on patience; and, if he offended, this was effaced by his perfect charity and glorious martyrdom, as St. Austin frequently repeats.

Whilst this controversy was carried on, the church enjoyed some tranquillity. For Gallus did not reign full two years, being slain by his own troops. Emilianus, who had revolted against him, met with the like fate after four months, and Valerian, who next stepped into the throne, was favourable to the Christians, till, through the instigation of Macrianus, his general, he raised a most bloody persecution in 257, which raged three years and a half, till that emperor was taken prisoner by the Persians.\* St. Cyprian so effectually encouraged his flock to

(1) Ep. 73, ad Jubaian.

(2) L. de Unit. Eccl. p. 83, et ep. 55, &c. S. Aug. l. 1, de Bapt. c. 18, p. 94, t. 9, &c.

(3) Ep. 59, ad Cornel. n. 10, p. 265. See also ep. 55, ad Antonian. n. 5, p. 243. L. de Unit. Eccl. p. 76, &c. Raymundi Missorii Dissertatio critica in Epistolam ad Pompeium adversus decretum Stephani papæ I. Venetiis, 1733, 4to.

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\* The latter works composed by St. Cyprian are these that follow: The book To Demetrianus, (an inferior heathen magistrate of Carthage, an acquaintance of St. Cyprian's though a great enemy to the Christians,) is an answer to his invectives, showing that the Christian faith

martyrdom, that many who had fallen under Decius, and been by an indulgence reconciled by St. Cyprian, upon the approach of the persecution of Gallus, in it courageously suffered martyrdom; whose example is made use of to confound the harshness

was not the cause of the public calamities of the empire, with an exhortation to repentance. The treatise, *Of Alms and Good Works*, compiled about the year 254, is a moving exhortation to alms-deeds and works of mercy, as commanded in the Holy Scriptures, and as the means to obtain the divine mercy. The author says, it is utterly inexcusable to come to the holy sacrifice, or pretend to celebrate the Lord's day, without making an offering for the poor. In answer to the objections which covetousness suggests, he shows that a number of children to be provided for does not exempt a man from this duty, but enhances the obligation, seeing those betray the true interest of their children, who teach them to misplace their affection, and to prefer mammon before Christ; and who do not procure them the divine protection by religion and almsdeeds. He insists much upon this, that the sentence of the last day will be given according to the abundance or deficiencies of our alms.

St. Cyprian, in order to cool the heats which had been raised in the disputes about rebaptizing heretics, composed about the year 256, his book *On the Advantage of Patience*. This virtue he takes not only for the restraint of resentment and revenge, but for the train of all those virtues which contribute to make a man merciful, mild, gentle, forbearing, and forgiving; and which enable him to endure all sorts of hardships, and to oppose all sorts of temptations. He observes, that the heathen philosophers were strangers to true patience, which supposes in the person possessed of it, meekness and humility; whereas they were conceited and puffed up, exceedingly pleased with themselves, consequently not pleasing God at all, but full of ignorance, presumption, frowardness, and vain boasting. It is the business of a Christian to be in reality, what they sought to be only in appearance, and live up to that pitch of sanctity which they talked of. He recommends the practice of patience from the example of God, from whose illustrious fountain it takes its rise and derives its main honour and dignity; also from the precepts of the gospel, the example of Christ, of St. Peter, "upon whom Christ hath vouchsafed to build his Church," the other apostles and holy patriarchs; and from the consideration of the future judgment.

St. Cyprian mentions the power of exorcising and casting devils out of human bodies in the name of Christ both in this treatise, (n. 4,) in that to Donatus, (n. 4,) and in that of Demetrianus, (n. 9,) to whose senses he confidently appeals, if he would make the trial. Whence the English Protestant editor, in his notes upon this passage to Donatus, says: "This power of Christians in expelling evil demons from the bodies of persons possessed by them, is so often appealed to, and so strongly asserted by the unanimous consent of the ancient fathers, that there is no room to doubt of the fact, either that such bodies were so possessed, or so exorcised."—(P. 4.) St. Cyprian wrote his treatise, *On Jealousy and Envy*, for the same purpose, and soon after the last. He shows in it that envy is the source of numberless evils, and the nursery of manifold sins; for all sorts of vices are grafted upon its root; that it is both a grievous sin, and its own present torment. "If you will not lose your share in the trophies you have gained," says he, "lay aside all perverseness of temper, pursue those courses which lead you directly to the way of salvation,

of Novatian in rejecting such penitents, in the work of a learned contemporary writer against that heresiarch, which has sometimes been ascribed to St. Cyprian. Indefatigable was the zeal of our holy bishop in exhorting the confessors, and in procuring

weed out of your heart those thorns and briars which would choke it, and receive into it the seeds of righteousness which may spring up, and bring forth fruit abundantly; disgorge the gall and venom of malignant contentious humours, cleanse your mind of all its filth, and sweeten the bitterness and rancour of your soul, with a truly Christian and healing medicine. The cross of Christ, by proper applications, will do that for you which the tree did for the Israelites at the waters of Mara. All the bitterness of your soul will be sweetened, if the cross of Christ be applied to it in a proper manner. You will then want no cure nor medicine for any of its distempers; but may derive your remedy, from what originally impaired your health," viz. the tree of the forbidden fruit. Thus does he recommend devotion to Christ's passion, and meditation on that model of all virtue.

Upon the ceasing of the persecution at the death of Gallus, in the beginning of the year 253, St. Cyprian assembled a council at Carthage of sixty-six bishops, to settle the affairs of the church. Whilst the council was sitting he received a consultation from Fidus, an African bishop, whether new-born infants should be baptized before the eighth day from their birth, as was prescribed in the old law with regard to circumcision. St. Cyprian with his council answered, "That no one should be denied access to the grace of God;—particularly infants, who by their tears and deprecations as soon as they are born seem to implore our help in the most moving manner, and to have the best title of any to the mercies of God. If remission of sin be not refused to the most heinous offenders, how much less reason," says he, "is there for denying it to infants, who being but newly born, can be guilty of no sin, this only excepted, that, by being derived from Adam, their birth hath communicated to them the infection and punishment of his offence." (Ep. 64, ed. Oxon.) No difficulty was then moved about the practice of infant-baptism, but about the day: and even as to this, the unanimity of the synod shows what was the general tradition. Even Tertullian, who pleaded for the delay of baptism, pronounces him guilty of murder who should refuse it to any in cases of necessity. See the tradition and practice of infant-baptism both in the Latin and Greek churches, clearly demonstrated from the earliest ages of our holy religion by Count Acami, against the letter of an English Anabaptist upon that point. (*Jacobi Comit̃s Acami de Pædobaptismo solemñi in Ecclesia Latina et Græca. Romæ, 1755.*)

Among the works doubtfully or falsely attributed to St. Cyprian that *Against Public Shows*, was written in the same age by a bishop absent from his flock in the time of persecution. The book *Of Charity*, and the *Discourse against Novation*, seem to agree with the former in style, which differs from that of St. Cyprian; otherwise these three works might do honour to his name. The anonymous book, *On the Celibacy of the Clergy*, is extremely useful; and seems written about the seventh century.

The first edition of St. Cyprian's works (which appeared soon after the invention of printing, without the name of the printer or place where it was printed) is more correct, and freer from faults than those that followed. Among others, Erasmus, Manutius at Rome, Morellus at Paris

them all possible succour. He was also careful in devoutly honouring the memory of the martyrs, after their triumphs, by sacrifices of thanksgiving to God on their annual festivals. For this purpose, in his retirement, during the first of these perse-

Pamelius, and Rigaltius gave new editions of his works. This last author is called by bishop Fell a masked or disguised Calvinist, his notes upon Tertullian and St. Cyprian often most absurdly leaning towards certain principles of that sect; on which see Albaspinæus, H. Grotius, Ep. ad Salmas. p. 323, and Petitdidier, in his excellent *Remarques sur la Bibliothèque de Dupin*, t. i. Pamelius first placed St. Cyprian's letters according to the series of time; which order is changed in almost every edition before and since. The excellent Oxford edition appeared in 1682, with new notes added by doctor Fell, bishop of Oxford, together with the learned bishop Pearson's *Annales Cyprianici*, and Dodwell's thirteen *Dissertationes Cyprianicæ*, to illustrate certain matters of fact and points of discipline. Baluze prepared a new edition of this father's works; after whose death, it was completed, Baluze's notes in some places amended, and new ones added, with a new life of St. Cyprian, by D. Maran. This most exact edition was printed at Paris in 1726.

St. Jerom and Lactantius justly admired the eloquence of St. Cyprian's works. The latter observes, that "he had an easy, fertile, agreeable invention; and what is more, a clearness of understanding and a spirit of perspicuity reign throughout all his writings, which is one of the best qualities belonging to any discourse. He has a great deal of ornament in his narration, an easy turn in his expressions, and force and vigour in his reasonings, so that he had all the three talents required in an orator, which are to please, to teach, and to persuade; and it is not easy to say which of these three he possesses most eminently." His letter to Donatus is too elaborately adorned; yet is both truly eloquent and very serious, though not a model; for we may apply to it the remark of Malebranche concerning Seneca, Tertullian, and Montaigne, that in such writers the most vicious dazzling flashes are most apt to be imitated, to the depravation of taste and true eloquence. (*Recherche de la Vérité*, l. 2, p. 3, c. 3.) St. Austin says, that God permitted some affected ornaments, and strokes of vain oratory to fall from St. Cyprian's pen, in this his first essay after his conversion, to show us how much the spirit of Christian simplicity afterwards retrenched the superfluous ornaments of style, and reduced it within the bounds of a grave true eloquence. This is the distinguishing character of all the letters that St. Cyprian wrote after this, which we may safely admire, and imitate, says Fenelon. Yet, as the same judicious master of style observes, his language has a tang of the African roughness and genius; nor is it quite clear of that studied sublimity that prevailed in his days. This, however, is not such but that his eloquence still appears smooth and natural, and is removed from the style of a declaimer. There is nothing in his writings mean, quaint, or insipid; nothing that has the tincture of ordinary literature. Every where we see a great soul, filled with lofty sentiments, which are expressed in a very noble and moving manner; his tongue always speaks from the abundance of his heart. He sometimes uses certain words not agreeable to the purity of the Latin tongue (as *mortalitas remissa*, &c.) so difficult a matter is it to abstain from words which we daily hear from those with whom we converse. Nevertheless, after Lactantius, St. Cyprian is one of the most eloquent of the Latin fathers.

cutions, he sent this charge to his clergy at Carthage: (1) "As to those confessors who die in prison, observe the days on which they depart this life, that they may be commemorated with honour, as those of the martyrs are.—We offer up here the usual sacrifices and oblations in commemoration of them." He says, in another letter to his clergy, speaking of certain martyrs: "We constantly offer sacrifices for them, upon the yearly return of those days, wherein we celebrate the memorial of the martyrs' sufferings."

The saint describes in his epistles the wonderful constancy with which the martyrs endured the most unheard-of torments. They were scourged, beaten, racked, and roasted; their flesh was pulled off with burning pincers; some were beheaded with swords, others were run through with spears; often more instruments of torment were employed about the same man than his body had limbs. They were plundered and stripped, chained and imprisoned, thrown to wild beasts, or burnt at stakes. When the persecutors had run over all their old methods of tortures and executions, they studied to invent others more barbarous. They not only varied, but repeated the torments, and where one ended, another began. This cruelty they added to all the rest, that they tortured them without leaving them hopes of dying soon, stopping them in their journey to heaven. Many were purposely kept upon the rack, that they might die piecemeal, and that their pains might be lingering: no intervals or times of respite were given them, that the sense of their torments might be without intermission, unless some chanced to give their executioners the slip, by expiring in the midst of their pains. All this did but render the faith and patience of the martyrs more illustrious, and make them more earnestly long for heaven. They tired out their tormentors, overcame the sharpest engines of execution, and smiled at the busy officers that were raking in their wounds; when their flesh was wearied and consumed, their virtue and fidelity to God were unconquerable. The multitude beheld with admiration these heavenly conflicts, and stood astonished to hear the servants of Christ in the midst of all this, with unshaken souls, making a free and bold confession of him, destitute of any ex-

(1) Ep. 12, ed. Oxon.



ternal succour, but armed with a divine power, and the shield of faith. The holy bishop ceased not to prepare his people for the combat, by having this saying often in his mouth: "All present evils are to be endured for the hope of good things to come." He was preserved, by a special providence, during two such violent storms, that he might be the support of a weak flock, and the father of many fervent penitents and holy martyrs. The third storm in which he was involved, was the eighth general persecution raised by Valerian in the fourth year of his reign, of Christ 257.

In that very year St. Cyprian was apprehended at Carthage, and on the 30th of August presented before Aspasius Paternus, the proconsul of Africa, in the council-chamber. This magistrate said to him: "The most sacred emperors Valerian and Gallien have done me the honour to command me by their letter, that I oblige all who follow not the Roman worship immediately to conform to it. What is your name and quality?" Cyprian said: "I am a Christian and a bishop. I know no other gods besides the one true God, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that is therein. This God we Christians serve; his mercies we implore both day and night for ourselves, for all men, and for the safety of these very emperors." When the proconsul further asked him if he persevered in that resolution? He replied that, "A purpose so well founded, and a will which hath once devoted itself to God, can never be altered." The proconsul said: "Go then into banishment to the city Curubus." The martyr answered: "I will go." The proconsul said: "The emperors have done me the honour to write to me to find out not only bishops but also priests. I would therefore know what priests live in this city." Cyprian answered: "The Roman laws wisely forbid us to become informers; and I cannot discover them. But they may be found at home." The proconsul said: "I will find them." He added: "I have orders also to forbid the holding of your assemblies in any place, or entering into the cemeteries. Whoever observes not this wholesome ordinance, shall be put to death." To which Cyprian made answer: "Then obey your orders." The proconsul having commanded that he should be banished to Curubis, the saint arrived there on the 13th or 14th

of September. Carubis was a small town fifty miles from Carthage, situated in a peninsula upon the coast of the Lybian sea, not far from Pentapolis. The place was pleasant and healthy, in a good air, and though situated in a desert country, green meadows, and the conveniency of fresh water (scarce and valuable things in many parts of Africa) were not wanting. The saint was attended by his deacon Pontius, and some others; and met with kind and courteous usage. He was favoured with a vision the night after his arrival, by which God forewarned him of his approaching martyrdom, and which Pontius gives in the very words in which St. Cyprian related it. "Before I went to sleep," said he, "there appeared to me a young man of a very uncommon stature, who led me to the palace, and placed me before the tribunal of the proconsul, who, as soon as he cast his eyes upon me, began to write a sentence in a pocket-book. The young man who stood behind him, and read it, signified to me by signs the substance of it; for stretching out his hands at full length, so as to represent a sword, he made a cross stroke over one hand with the other, imitating the action of beheading a person, so that no words could have made the thing more intelligible. I immediately apprehended that this was to be the death which was prepared for me, and I addressed myself to the proconsul for a short reprieve, till I could settle my affairs. He wrote again in his pocket-book; and I guessed that he granted my request of a reprieve till the morrow, by the evenness of his countenance, and the openness of his brow. This the young man intimated to me by twisting his fingers one behind another." This, says Bishop Fell, was a known mark of the thing in question being postponed; as bending the thumb was a mark of condemnation, and holding it straight a token of acquittal. The reprieve of a day signified a year; and the bishop suffered on the same day in the following year. This warning he took for a divine promise of the honour of martyrdom. The reasons of his desiring a reprieve was for settling the affairs of his church, and, for an opportunity of expressing by a last effort, his tenderness for the poor, upon whom he accordingly bestowed almost all he was then possessed of. Pontius doubts not but God granted him this respite because he desired it for these purposes.

A messenger arrived about that time from Rome, sent by Pope Xystus, to advertise St. Cyprian that new and very bloody edicts were speedily expected. No sooner were they published but St. Xystus was immediately sacrificed, on the 6th of August, 258, somewhat above a month before St. Cyprian. Our saint received from Rome information of his martyrdom, and that the order which Valerian (who was set out upon his Persian expedition) sent to the senate, imported, "that bishops, priests, and deacons should forthwith suffer."<sup>(1)</sup> From that time St. Cyprian lived in the daily expectation of executioners arriving to take off the heads of such as were marked out for victims. Meanwhile divers persons of the first rank and quality, even several pagans met together, and endeavoured to persuade him to secrete himself, with offers of a commodious and safe retirement. But he had so set his affections upon things above, that he utterly neglected all lower interests. He took all opportunities of encouraging the servants of God, and spoke with most ardent affection upon religious subjects, always wishing the moment of his martyrdom might overtake him whilst he was discoursing upon God. He prepared himself for it by those exercises of compunction and penance, the spirit of which he so excellently expressed in his treatise, *On the Lapsed*, and by which he studied to purify his soul more and more, that it might appear without spot or stain before the God of infinite sanctity. He devoted his time to penance, and made heavenly contemplation the favourite employment of his retirement, by which he raised his soul to God by the most inflamed love, and longing desires and prayers to be united to him for evermore, according to the maxim which he lays down in the close of his book *On Mortality*, where he says: "To this delightful society of the blessed, and to Christ who is at the head of it, let us hasten, my brethren, upon the wings of desire, and of an holy love. Let God and Christ be witnesses, that this is the main bent of our wishes, and the sum of our most ardent hopes. Then our rewards will be proportioned to the earnestness of our present desires, if they proceed from his love."

(1) S. Cypr. ep. 80, ad Successum. ed. Oxon. See S. Xystus's life, Aug. 6.

Our saint was still at Curubis when Galerius Maximus succeeded Paternus in the government of Africa. The new proconsul recalled St. Cyprian to Carthage, that he might more readily come at him as soon as he should receive the new edicts which he expected from Rome. The bishop by his order, resided at his own gardens or country-house near the city, which he had sold for the benefit of the poor when he was baptized, but which afterwards fell again into his hands. He desired to give this estate again, with the rest of his fortune, to the poor ; but could not do it at that dangerous season for fear of exasperating the persecutors. The sanguinary order reached Carthage about the middle of August, whilst the proconsul was at Utica, which shared with Carthage the honour of being his residence for part of the year. Maximus despatched a guard to conduct him to Utica ; but St. Cyprian being desirous to suffer in the midst of his own flock, stepped aside, and took shelter in a more private place, till the proconsul being returned to Carthage, he showed himself again in his own gardens. Galerius, upon notice given him, sent the prince (that is, the chief of those who served under the magister Officiorum) with another officer, to seize him by surprise. But nothing could happen suddenly or unexpectedly to the blessed man, who was always ready and prepared for any event. He, therefore, came forth with all imaginable cheerfulness and courage, and all the marks of an undaunted mind. The officers putting him into a chariot between them, carried him to a country seat at Sextus, where the proconsul was retired for his health, six miles from Carthage. The proconsul not being then ready, deferred the trial till the next day, and the martyr was conducted back to the house of the chief officer that had apprehended him, situated in the street of Saturn, between the streets of Venus and Salus. Upon the rumour that Thascius was taken, the city was alarmed ; the very pagans flocked together, and testified their compassion ; for he had been well known among them ; and they remembered the excess of his charity towards all in the late instance of the public distress and pestilence. The multitude that was gathered together was very great, in proportion to the extent of the city of Carthage, which was inferior to none but Rome for the number of its inhabitants.

St. Cyprian was guarded that night by the chief of the officers in a courteous manner, and his friends were allowed to sup with him. The next morning, which the conscience of the blessed martyr, says Pontius, rendered a day of joy to him, he was conducted by a strong guard to the prætorium or court of the proconsul, about a furlong from the officer's house where he had passed the night. The proconsul not being yet sitting, he had leave to go out of the crowd, and to be in a more private place, where the seat he got was accidentally covered with a linen cloth, as if it were to be a symbol of his episcopal dignity, says the deacon Pontius; by which it appears that bishops had then such a badge of distinction, at least at the public divine service. One of the guards who had formerly been a Christian, observing that the sweat ran down the martyr's body, by the length and hurry of his walk, offered to wipe it off, and to give him dry linen in exchange for that he had on, which was wet, linen garments being common in hot countries. This was the soldier's pretence; his meaning was to get into his possession some of the holy man's garments and sweat, as Pontius observes. The bishop excusing himself, replied: "We seek to cure complaints, to which perhaps this very day will put a final period." By this time the proconsul was come out, and being seated on his tribunal, he ordered the martyr to be brought before him, and said: "Art thou Thascius Cyprian?" The martyr answered: "I am." Proconsul: "Art thou the person who hath been bishop and father to men of ungodly minds?" Cyprian: "I have been their bishop." Proconsul: "The most sacred emperors have commanded thee to conform to the ceremonies of the Roman religion." Cyprian: "I cannot." Proconsul: "Consider better of thy own safety." Cyprian: "Obey your orders. In so manifestly just a case there is no need of consideration." Upon this the proconsul consulted with his friends, and coming to the resolution to condemn him, said: "Long hast thou lived with an irreligious heart, and hast joined great numbers with thee in an unnatural conspiracy against the Roman deities, and their holy rites: nor have our sacred and most pious emperors, Valerian and Gallien always august, nor the most noble Cæsar Valerian, been able to reclaim thee to their ceremonies. Since thou hast been a ringleader in crimes of such an heinous nature, thou shalt be

made an example to those, whom thou hast seduced to join with thee; and discipline shall be established in thy blood." Then he read the following sentence written in a tablet: "I will that Thascius Cyprian be beheaded." To which Cyprian subjoined: "Blessed be God for it." The Christians who were present in crowds, said: "Let us be beheaded with him;" and they made a great uproar.

When the martyr went out of the court, a great number of soldiers attended him, and he was guarded by centurions and tribunes marching on each side of him. They led him into the country, into a large plain, thick set with high trees; and many climbed up to the top of them, the better to see him at a distance, by reason of the crowd. St. Cyprian being arrived at the place appointed, took off his mantle, fell upon his knees, and prostrated himself before God. Then he put off his Dalmatic,\* which he gave to the deacons, and remained in a linen vestment, or shirt, expecting the executioner, to whom he ordered a sum of twenty-five golden denarii, amounting to about six pounds English, to be given. He himself bound the napkin over his eyes; and he desired a priest and a deacon to tie his hands. The Christians spread before him napkins and handkerchiefs to receive his body. His head was struck off on the 14th of September, 258. For fear of the insults of the heathens, the faithful conveyed his body for the present into an adjoining field, and they interred it in the night with great solemnity on the Mappalian way. Two churches were afterwards erected to his memory, the one on this place of his burial, called the Mappalia, the other on the spot where he suffered, called Mensa Cypriana, or Cyprian's Table, because there he was made a sacrifice to God. Both are mentioned by Victor.(1) The proconsul Galerius Maximus died a few days after him, but in a very different manner. In the Liberian Calendar, and that published by F. Fronto, his festival is placed on the 14th of September; but since the fifth age has been joined with that of St. Cornelius on the 16th. Certain

(1) De Persec. Vandal. l. 1, c. 5. S. Aug. Conf. l. 5, c. 8, Sermon. 310, &c.

\* A kind of inner garment, so called from Dalmatia, where it was invented.

ambassadors of Charlemagne, returning from Aaron, king of Persia, through Africa, obtained leave of the Mahometan king of that country to open the tomb of St. Cyprian (which they found entirely neglected) and to carry his relics into France, which they deposited at Arles, in 806, according to Ado,(1) or in 802, according to Agobard. Leidrarde, archbishop of Lyons, with the king's consent, removed them to Lyons, and deposited them behind the altar of St. John Baptist; a poem upon this translation was written by Leidrarde's successor, Agobard. Charles the Bald caused them to be translated to Compeigne, and lodged with those of St. Cornelius, in the great abbey which he built, and which is called Saint Corneille. Part of the relics of Saints Cornelius and Cyprian is kept in a shrine in the collegiate church of Rosnay, near Oudenarde, in Flanders.(2)

It is a maxim of our holy faith, which St. Cyprian strongly inculcates, that we must follow the saints now in desire if we hope to reign with them hereafter: "We have solemnly renounced the world," said he, "and therefore whilst we continue in it, should behave like strangers and pilgrims. We should welcome that happy day (of our death) which is to fix us, every one in our proper habitation, to rescue us from the embarrassments and snares of this world, and remove us to the kingdom of heaven. Who amongst us, if he had been long a sojourner in a foreign land, would not desire a return to his native country? What person, when he had begun to sail thither, would not wish for a prosperous wind to carry him to his desired home with expedition, that he might the sooner embrace his friends and relations? We must account paradise our country. There friends, and parents, and brethren, and children without number, wait for us, and long to congratulate our happy arrival. They are in secure possession of their own felicity, and yet are solicitous for ours. How great will be our common joy, upon the transports of our meeting together in those blessed abodes! How unutterable must be the pleasures of that kingdom, which have no allay or intermission, having

(1) Martyr. ad 14, Sept. See Rosweide and Georgi, *ibid.* Ruinart, *Act. Mart.* p. 203.

(2) See Suysken the Bollandist, p. 340. 342, et. p. 760.

eternity added to the highest degrees of bliss ! There we shall meet with the glorious choir of the apostles ; with the goodly company of the prophets ; with an innumerable multitude of holy martyrs ; there we shall be blessed with the sight of those triumphant virgins who have subdued the inordinate lusts of the flesh ; and there we shall behold the rewards of those who, by feeding the hungry and succouring the afflicted, have with their earthly treasure purchased to themselves a treasure in heaven."(1)

### SAINT EUPHEMIA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

THE city of Chalcedon was the theatre of her glorious martyrdom ; she suffered in the persecution continued by the successors of Dioclesian, about the year 307. The eminent sanctity of this holy virgin, loaded with the fruits of all Christian virtues, excited the rage of the devil, and of his instruments, the persecutors ; but all the efforts of their malice only rendered her virtue the more triumphant and glorious. Having embraced the holy state of virginity, she, by the black or dark-coloured garments which she wore, declared to all men her steady purpose of taking no share in the earthly pleasures and amusements which fill the hearts, set an edge on the passions, and take up the most precious part of the time of worldlings. The exercises of penance and religion were the serious occupations to which she totally devoted herself ; and as the love of God reigned in her heart, it was her constant study to walk always before him, to labour in all her actions to please him, and, by the humility of her heart and whole deportment, by the mortification of her senses, by the constancy and fervour of her devotion, by the heavenliness of her conversation, and activity of her zeal and charity, to make continually higher advances towards heaven. Whatever was not God appeared to her empty and contemptible ; she found no pleasure or delight but in what tended to unite her heart more and more to him here by love ; and she thirsted after his presence and fruition in the kingdom of his glory, panting, and longing to be dismissed from the pilgrimage of this world, and from the corruptible tabernacle of the body. God was pleased to hear

(1) L. de Mortal. n. 20.