

by degrees, as in the Corinthian Church (1 Cor. xi. 21, 22), when at these meals that spirit did not prevail, which was in harmony with the holy ordinance that immediately followed, or by local circumstances which hindered altogether the holding of such social repasts. These repasts, especially, fell under the suspicion of the heathen, and occasioned the most marvellous and odious rumors; and this fact may early have given occasion to abandon the *agapæ*, or at least to observe them but seldom.

We come now to speak of these love-feasts as they afterwards, when disconnected with the Eucharist, received the distinct name of *agapæ*. In them it was intended that all differences of earthly relations and conditions should disappear in Christ; all the members should be one in the Lord; the rich and poor, the eminent and obscure, masters and servants, should eat together at *one* table. A love-feast of this kind is described by *Tertullian*:—"Our meal may be known, as to its nature, by its name, for it bears the Greek name of love [*agapê*]; however great the expense may be, it is still a gain to spend money in the name of piety, for we gladden all the poor by means of this refreshment. As this repast springs from a worthy cause, so we should estimate accordingly the rest of the conduct as the religious aim requires it, for this aim admits of nothing common or wicked. A prayer is made to God before we sit down to our repast; we eat as much as hunger demands; we drink as much as conduces to chastity; we are satisfied in such a way that we continue mindful how the night also is consecrated to calling upon God; we carry on among ourselves such conversations that we are fully aware at the time that God is listening. Then, when the meal is over, after our hands have been washed, and the lights prepared, each one is asked to sing, to the praise of

God and the general edification, something out of the Holy Scriptures, or out of his own spirit, according to his ability. Then it appears how each has drunk. The repast breaks up with a prayer." These love-feasts lost by degrees their true original significance, which they could retain only under the first simple church-relations;—they often became a dead form, which was no longer animated with the primitive spirit of brotherly love, which takes away every partition wall between men, and unites all hearts. Many abuses crept in which gave, to the evil-disposed, an opportunity to represent the whole observance in a hateful light. As it usually happens in such cases, some persons set too great a value on the dead form, as on an *opus operatum*, while others unjustly condemned the whole without distinguishing between the proper use and the abuse. Both were mistaken, since they no more understood the simple and child-like spirit from which this repast originated. Individual members of churches, who had wealth, provided such *agapæ* that they fancied themselves to have done thereby something specially meritorious; but in these, where all ought to be equal, a difference of rank was observed, and even the clergy, who, in particular, ought to excel in humility, allowed themselves to be specially distinguished by external preferences unworthy of their calling. An unchild-like, gloomy, ascetic spirit utterly denounced the love-feasts, and gladly seized on the abuses that had taken place, and then described them in extravagant terms for the purpose of making the whole thing quite hateful,—so did the Montanist *Tertullian*. *Clement* of Alexandria expresses himself with greater moderation, although he declares himself against those who thought of buying the promises of God by means of their banquets, and who degraded the celestial name of love by especially