

the unbeliever is public, yours secret? Know you not that any one may approach his without difficulty, whereas it would be a sacrilege for christians themselves, if they are not consecrated, to contemplate yours?"

FOURTH AGE.

"The time admonishes us now to treat of the mysteries, and to explain the notions of the sacraments. But it, before baptism and the initiation, we had attempted to speak on these subjects we should have appeared to betray rather than explain them."

"Every mystery ought to remain concealed under a faithful silence, for fear that it should be rashly divulged to profane ears."

"And we also have a discipline not to divulge the prayer, but to keep the mysteries concealed." An allusion no doubt to the prayer of consecration.

"There are many things, which, crude, are unpalatable, but dressed, are agreeable. Concoct, then, in your heart these profound mysteries: let no premature discovery of yours confide them too crudely to delicate or perfidious ears: lest he who hears you may take alarm and turn with disgust from the meat, which if better prepared would have enabled him to taste the sweetness of a spiritual nourishment."

"The Lord spoke in parables to his hearers in general; but to his disciples he explained in private the parables and comparisons he made use of in public. The splendour of glory is for those who are already enlightened: obscurity and darkness is the portion of unbelievers. Just so, the Church discovers its sacraments to those who leave the class of catechumens; for we declare not to the gentiles the hidden mysteries of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, nor do we speak openly of the mysteries to the catechumens: but we frequently employ obscure expressions, that they may be understood by those, who are already instructed, and that the uninstructed may not be injured by them."

I now present you with a very curious note which St. Cyril has put to the end of the preface to his *Catechetical discourses*, in which he is known to have explained, in the clearest manner possible, the doctrine of the church on the sacraments, particularly on the Eucharist. They were intended for the instruction of those who were about to receive baptism, and afterwards to participate in the sacrifice and the communion of the altar. The note addressed to the reader, is conceived in these terms: "Procure that these Catechetical Discourses be read, by those for whose instruction they have been composed, viz: by those who are approaching the sacrament of baptism, and by the faithful who have already received it. But do not communicate them to the catechumens and those who are not christians. If you do you will have to answer to God for it. And if you take a copy of them, do it I conjure you, in the presence of God."

They are not ashamed to celebrate the mysteries before the catechumens, and perhaps even before pagans, forgetting that it is, written that we are to conceal the mystery of the king: and regardless of the precept of the Lord, that we must not cast holy things to the dogs, or pearls before swine. For it is unlawful to lay the mysteries open to the uninitiated, lest through ignorance they should turn them to ridicule, and lest the catechumens should become scandalized through an indiscreet curiosity."

"This is what the uninitiated are forbidden to contemplate, and how should it ever be becoming to write and circulate an account of them among the people?"

The Apostles and the Fathers, who, from the

*St. Ambrose, *Book of the mysteries for the uninitiated*, Ch. I. No. 2.—†The same, B. I., on Abraham, Ch. V. No. 38.—‡The same, Ch. ix. No. 35, on Cain and Abel.

beginning, have presented certain rites to the Church, knew how to secure a becoming dignity to the mysteries by the secrecy and silence in which they have enveloped them."* Here we have this discipline of secrecy and silence positively attributed to the apostles by the learned prelate.

Saint Epiphanius reproaches the Marcionites of the island of Cyprus, that they were so rash as to celebrate the mysteries before the catechumens."

St. Gregory Nazianzen says that "the greatest part of our mysteries ought not to be exposed to strangers."|| He says further that "men should rather give their blood than publish them."§

"He who is to receive ordination requests the prayers of the faithful: these give him their suffrage and add the acclamations known by those initiated in the mysteries, and which I here pass over in silence, for it is forbidden to say every thing before the profane.—They who cannot approach the holy table are withheld and banished from the sacred rails."¶

Gaudentius, bishop of Brescia in Italy, contemporary with Cyril of Jerusalem, preaching, on Easter night, before the neophytes, on their return from the baptismal founts, said: "In the lesson you have just heard, I shall select only those parts which may not be explained in the presence of the catechumens, but which must be discovered to the neophytes."

Treating again the same subject, he observes that he had put off until the paschal discourses "to speak of the ceremonies described in Exodus, on the manner of celebrating the paschal solemnity, because, adds he, this splendid night requires our instruction to be adapted rather to the circumstances of the time, than to the lesson of the day. in order that the neophytes may, for the first time, be taught in what manner we partake of the paschal sacrifice."

The author of the Apostolical Constitutions, who assumes the name of Clement, disciple and successor of St. Peter, but whom critics place in the fourth century, expresses himself in the 85th canon as follows: "These constitutions, which I Clement, have drawn up for you bishops, must on no account be communicated to all sorts of persons, because of the mysteries contained in them."

"Ask a catechumen whether he eats the flesh of the Son of man and drinks his blood he knows not what you mean.—The catechumens do not know what the christians receive. The manner in which the flesh of the Lord is eaten is concealed from the catechumens."

"They who know the Scripture understand perfectly well what Melchisedeck offered when he blessed Abraham. We must not here make mention of it, because of the catechumens: the faithful however discover it."

"We have dismissed the catechumens and retained only you, to discourse to you respecting the mysteries, which the initiated alone are allowed to hear spoken of."

What is this God, said Maximus of Medaurus, what is this God which you other christians consider as particularly belonging to yourselves and which you say you see present in your secret places? *Et in locis abditis presentem vos videre compositis?*

The question put to St. Augustine proves that the

*On the holy Ghost, Ch. xxvii, No. 66.—†St. Epiph.: *Heret. xlii.*—‡Died in 339.—||Orat. xlii.—§Orat. xxxv.—¶St. Chrysostom, *Hom. xviii, on ii. Cor.*

essence of the mystery was concealed from the pagans, and that there existed a report among them that the christians adored in their secret assemblies a God as present and visible.

FIFTH AGE.

In the dialogue entitled the *Immutable*, he introduces Orthodoxus speaking thus: "Reply to me, if you please; in mystical and obscure terms: it is possible there may be present some who are not initiated in the mysteries." (He means to say that this writing intended for the public, might fall into the hands of the uninitiated, and, so, betray the secret.) Eranistes: "I shall understand you, and reply to you according to that." And again, a little after; You have clearly proved what you wished, although in mysterious words."

In the second dialogue, Orthodoxus replies to this question. By what name do you call, before the priestly consecration, the gift that is offered? It must not be said openly, because it may happen that we should be heard by uninitiated persons." Eranistes: "Reply then in covert terms, if you please."

"The poor shall eat and shall be satisfied: not all indeed, for all have not obeyed the Gospel; but those who have had the divine love in their heart: it is concerning these that the Royal prophet said that their hunger and thirst should be satisfied, by the immortal nourishment that they should receive. Now, this divine nourishment is known to us with the doctrine of the spirit: and the mystic and immortal repast is well known by all those who have been initiated in the mysteries."

Innocent I. consulted by Decentius, bishop of Eugubio, on the sacraments, replies on the subject of the pax which some priests wished to give one another, before the consecration: "the ceremony of the pax absolutely ought not to take place until after the things which I cannot reveal.—As for the rest, which it is unlawful for me to write, we can discuss them together when you arrive."

LETTER IX.

SECOND GENERAL PROOF, DRAWN FROM THE LITURGIES.

The church has nothing to present us in her public worship so admirable as the sacrament of the Eucharist. The greater part of the other Sacraments have reference to this, and prepare us for it. The greater part of the offices and ceremonies of the church are but so many means or preparations either for the worthy celebration or participation of it. The Eucharist is the principle object here below of the thoughts and desires of the true Christian; it is the nourishment of his piety, the recompence of his labours, the consolation of his exile and earthly pilgrimage, his strength in dangers and afflictions, & even at the approach of death; it is in fine the pledge of his glorious resurrection. By representing our divine Mediator dying for the salvation of the world, it displays the greatest benefit we have received, the benefit on which rests our hope of salvation. His bloody immolation took place on the cross: The oblation is renewed upon our altars, and will to the end of time continue to be the sole sacrifice of the new law, having taken place of all the ancient sacrifices, from hence forth being the only one agreeable to the Supreme Being.

The prayers preparatory to this sublime act of