

I have already said. The hatred of truth commenced with truth itself. no sooner did it appear than it became the object of general detestation. It counts as many enemies as strangers, and each according to their own fashion, the Jews by jealousy, the soldiers by exaction, and all of you by nature."

"One might say that Celsus was desirous of imitating the Jews, who, on the preaching of the Gospel, spread false reports against those who embraced it; that the christians sacrificed a little infant and devoured its flesh in their assemblies; that to perform works of darkness, they put out the lamps, and then each one abandoned himself to his lusts with the first person he met. This most gross calumny for a long time made great impression on the minds of an infinity of persons who, having no intercourse with us, permitted themselves to be persuaded that this portrait of the christians was faithfully drawn: and even to this time there are individuals so prejudiced against us that they will not even enter into conversation with a christian."

Eusebius writes, that "the devil had made use of Carpocrates, Saturninus and Menander, disciples of Simon, who fell after being baptized by Philip, to seduce many of the faithful: and that, by their means, they had furnished to the pagans ample materials for calumniating and blackening the Church; that all the recently invented slanders were circulated by them to the disgrace of the christian name; and by this means has been circulated among the unbelievers an opinion respecting the christians as absurd as it is impious: as if it was our custom to abandon ourselves to shameful excess with our sisters and mothers and feed upon execrable meats."

Tacitus, speaking of the burning of Rome, says that Nero laid it to "a people odious by their crimes who were called christians." He adds: "This name came from Christ, whom Pontius Pilate had put to death under the Emperor Tiberius. And this impious superstition, repressed for the time, appeared again, not only in Judea, the source of the evil, but in Rome itself, where every thing that is black and infamous is collected together and put in practice. At first those only were taken, who confessed, then a great multitude, upon their report, were convicted, not so much of the burning of the city, as of hatred to all mankind." He afterwards mentions them as wretches, who deserved the most exemplary punishments.

Pliny, who belonged to the close of the first century, but who did not enter upon the government of Bithynia before the commencement of the second, wrote to the Emperor, on occasion of the rumors spread abroad respecting the christians, "that he thought it so much the more necessary, for coming at the truth, to question two women on the rack, who were said to have wanted in the secret assemblies. But I discovered nothing, continued he, more than an ill guided and excessive superstition."

Celsus an epicurean philosopher living at the close of the first and commencement of the second centuries, composed and published, under Adrian,

a libel against the christians and Jews under the bold and lying title of *A true narrative*. It has not come down to us, and is only known by the splendid refutation of it from the pen of Origen, who exposes and destroys his calumnies, and, among others, those which regarded the secrecy observed by the christians, and on account of which Celsus most bitterly inveighed against them.

SECOND AGE.

"Were we to ask our accusers whether they ever saw what they report of us, there will not be found one impudent enough to say that he has seen it. How can they accuse those of killing and eating human creatures, who, they are well aware, cannot so much as endure to see a man even justly put to death?"

"It will be said to us: Let every one of you destroy yourselves, and thus you will go to your God and disturb us no more." He replies that their faith in Providence forbade such an action, and he adds: that "to substantiate the calumnies heaped upon the christians, they interrogated slaves, children and women, and put them to excruciating torments to extort from them a confession of the incests and repasts of human flesh, which were laid to the charge of the christians. These who accuse us of these crimes are themselves the perpetrators of them, while they attribute them to their gods, as for us, as we have nothing to do with such abominations, we do not trouble ourselves about them, having God for the witness of our actions and our thoughts."

In the persecutions at Lyons, the magistrates, on the deposition of some slaves, persuaded themselves that the christians actually practised what was imputed to them, and they endeavored, by torments, to extort from Blandina a confession of the deed: but this christian slave boldly and judiciously answered: "How should those who, from religious motives, abstain from meats otherwise permitted, ever be guilty of the crimes you lay to their charge?" Eusebius has preserved this fact in a fragment of Irenæus, an eye witness and soon after Bishop of Lyons and successor to Phouusus, who after having passed his nineteenth year, suffered martyrdom in this persecution.

To this we may add what is told of the slave Biblis, as we find it related by the confessors and christians of Lyons, in a letter written by them to the Churches of Asia to give an account of the persecutions there raging. We owe the preservation of it to Eusebius.

"I designedly omit many things, fearing to write what I could wish prudently to conceal, lest those who may read my writings should understand them in a wrong and perverted sense, and we should be accused, according to the proverb, of putting a sword into an infant's hand. There are certain things discoverable in the holy scripture, altho' they are not clearly expressed. There will be others on which it will insist more explicitly: and others again, which it will merely touch upon: but it will endeavour so to veil, as yet to de-

clare them; so to hide, as yet to reveal them, and so to pass them over in silence, as yet to let them appear."

And not to omit another passage from Tertullian, attend to the language in which he reproaches certain heretics of his time. "Above all they make no distinction between the catechumens and the faithful; for they are both equally admitted to hear and pray together: even the pagans are not excluded, should they happen to be present; and thus no difficulty is made in casting bread before dogs, and pearls, though false ones, to swine." He had already explained the intention of St. Paul, who, in confiding to Timothy the ministry of the Gospel, had commanded him to choose faithful witnesses, capable of instructing others, and not to open himself to every one indiscriminately, but according to the word of our Saviour, to avoid casting bread to the dogs or pearls before swine.

THIRD AGE.

Hear in what strains the Pagan Cecilius spoke of the christians. "A dark and subterraneous people, dumb in public, and speechless but in the most retired corners. Whether all our suspicions respecting them be well founded I know not: certain however it is that a nocturnal and hidden worship well befits such a tribe. And although many things are alleged against them, the obscurity alone of their vile religion proves them entirely or in part at least. How are we otherwise to account for this affectation and studied concealment of their worship, whatever it be? For what is virtuous and laudable courts the day, and wickedness loves darkness."

"As for the mysteries, concealed under secrecy and known to the priests alone, not only is the animal man forbidden to approach, but those also who although exercised and instructed, have yet not attained to the priestly honor by their merits and years; and not only are they prevented from seeing these objects any otherwise than obscurely and enigmatically, but they do not even receive them unless covered and veiled." This passage must allude to the prayers and words of consecration.

And again, "As for any other discourse, which shall contain secret things and treat of the faith of God and the knowledge of things,—that is reserved to the priests alone and confided to the sons of Aaron by a perpetual succession."

In another homily of Origen's on Leviticus, we find this passage: "Stop not at the blood of the flesh (that is of the sheep and oxen spoken of by Moses) but learn rather to discern the blood of the word, and hear him saying: For this is my blood, which shall be shed for you. Whosoever is imbued with the mysteries, knows the flesh and blood of the word of God. Let us not therefore dwell upon a subject known to the initiated, and which the uninitiated ought not to know."

Zeno, bishop of Verona, in a sermon on continence, exhorts the christian wife not to marry an unbeliever, lest such a marriage should cause her to betray the law of secrecy; *ne sis proditoræ legis*. He adds: "And know you not that the sacrifice of

*Origen, Rom. iv. on Ch. iii. of Numbers.—Hom. xiii. on Ch. xxiii. of Leviticus.—Hbm. ix. on Levit. No. 10.