

soon have occasion to refer to it again. Do we not know also from Eusebius, to whom we are indebted for the admirable letter of the christians of Lyons to those of Asia, that Biblis, one of those who had been weak enough to deny their faith, was put to the torture that she might be forced to confess the impieties imputed to the christians? The torments roused her from a profound sleep: these transitory pangs made her reflect upon the eternal pains of hell: and how, said she, should we eat the flesh of children, we who are not even allowed to eat the blood of beasts! She then confessed herself a christian, and was ranked among the martyrs. Thus the demonstrated ignorance of the Pagans upon the Eucharist restores to the Church a soul, whose overthrow it had for a moment bewailed, and replaces Biblis with honor at the side of the invincible Blandina.

But if our adversaries, after so many convincing proofs, still require some that are direct, with regard to the three first centuries, Tertullian and Origen shall now supply them with proofs most positive. The former, repelling the charges of intemperance and impurities, exclaims, "Who are they who have told the world these pretended crimes? Would it be those who are accused of them? But how could that be, since it is the common law of all the mysteries to keep them secret? If they themselves did not make the discovery, it must have been strangers that did it. But how could strangers have any knowledge of them, since strangers are kept far away from the sight of the most holy mysteries, and a selection is made of those who are permitted to remain as spectators." If the christians made no difficulty about speaking of the Eucharist, how could Tertullian say that "the common law of the mysteries was to keep them secret." If the Pagans were instructed in them, what right had he to ask, "How should strangers become acquainted with these things?" In the work, he addresses to his wife, he supposes as a fact, that the christians believed themselves bound to secrecy, because he employs it as an argument for deterring her from taking an unbeliever to her second husband. "For by this means, says he, people fall into the crime of letting the Pagans come to the knowledge of our mysteries. Might not your husband learn, said he, what it is you taste in secret before all nourishment? and if he perceives that it is bread, will he not imagine it to be that which is so much spoken of?"

Origen in his noble refutation of the work of Celsus, after saying in answer to his reiterated reproaches of secrecy, that in general the doctrine of the christians was better known than that of the philosophers; "It is nevertheless true, he adds, that there are certain points among us, that are not communicated to every one, but this is so far from being peculiar to the christians, that it was observed among the philosophers as well as among us.— In vain then does Celsus undertake to render odious the secrecy observed by the christians, since he does not even know in what it consists." This passage proves at once that the secret was observ-

ed both in the time of Origen and in that of Celsus, who knew not in what it consisted, that is, at the commencement of the third century, and at the end of the first. Thus all kinds of proofs conspire to shew the discipline of the secrecy relative to the Eucharist during the four first ages. The fact is acknowledged by all for the fourth: and good sense demonstrates that it could not then have been established, if it had not existed from the very time of the apostles. The calumnies of unbelievers, the attacks of the philosophers, the tortures employed by governors to extort a confession of the pretended crimes, are indeed but convincing proofs of secrecy, and in addition to this, we have positive testimonies for the first, second and third centuries.

I have been anxious to set this historical fact beyond dispute, and invest it with all the certainty you can desire, because the general discipline of secrecy necessarily supposes the universal belief of the five first ages upon the Eucharist, to be such as the Catholic church has always taught: in fact, if, on the one hand, this discipline agrees exactly with our belief respecting the Eucharist, and if, on the other, it should be found irreconcilable with the opinion which the Calvinists have formed of it, it must of strict necessity be concluded that what was concealed in the primitive Church is not what the reformed, but what we believe. In those times the concealment was made either of the doctrine of the figurative sense, or of that of the reality; there is no medium, and if secrecy excludes the first, it necessarily admits of the second. All that remains therefore is to establish the truth of these two propositions; first, that the discipline of secrecy exactly tallies with the catholic sense of the reality; in the second place, that it cannot be reconciled with the calvinistic sense of the figure. I am persuaded that of yourself you will catch the argument before I explain it, so striking does it appear to me.

I maintain that the ancient discipline of secrecy exactly chimes in with our belief upon the Eucharist. It would be superfluous to enter into a long dissertation to shew the incapability of reason to attain to the inaccessible sublimities which are found in the dogma, such as the Church proposes it to us and as we believe it. The reformed confess this, since they have made it the cause of their rejecting and attacking it. But in the supposition that the primitive Church believed as we do, what was it to do? and how must it manage with regard to the unbelievers? It must before all things, prove to them, the certainty of the revelation, convince them, by the miracles of Jesus Christ and by the sublimity of his morality, of the divinity of his mission, and never attempt to confide to them respecting the Eucharist, dogmas so elevated, so alarming to human comprehension, until they had sufficiently prepared their minds and hearts for it: must have done precisely what it did. If they had begun by bringing forward these mysteries, if they had commenced by speaking openly of the real presence of Jesus Christ upon the altar, and of the miraculous change of the substance which follows from it, they would have shocked the senses and

the imagination of men; and have driven those from their religion whom they were desirous of attracting to it. What language, in fact, and what a strange doctrine for the Jews and Pagans! What, would not their senses and the pretended wisdom on which they prided themselves, have suggested against it? Let us judge what would have been said by men who were not christians, by what we are continually hearing from men, who, unfortunately for them, have ceased to be so. It was necessary then for their interest, charitably to spare their weakness: it was necessary also for the interests of truth, not to expose it to the railleries of those who were not yet in a state to hear it: and on the supposition that the dogma was then the same as it is for us, it cannot be denied that it was reasonable and even necessary to establish this discipline of secrecy.

And to shew still more evidently the analogy of our actual belief with that of the first ages, I observe, that in supposing an exact parity between them, not only must the greatest secrecy have been then recommended, but it must moreover have been recommended from the two kinds of motives just mentioned, the one relative to the weakness of the persons, or if you please, the ignorance and blindness of the unbelievers, the other, to the dignity and divine institution of the mysteries: in order that, on one side, the unbelievers might not be injured or scandalized, and thus driven away from christianity; and on the other, that the mysteries might not be exposed to the railleries, sarcasms and objections of carnal minds. Now, in point of fact, (and this must strike you,) the discipline of secrecy turned exactly upon these two kinds of motives. They are each of them distinctly pointed out by the Fathers. "We make use of obscure expressions before the catechumens, said Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, in order that those who are not instructed may not be injured by them." Now hear the whole synod of Alexandria: "It is not lawful openly to disclose the mysteries to the uninitiated, lest through ignorance they should ridicule them, and lest the catechumens should happen to be scandalized by an indiscreet curiosity." Such is the first kind of motives, relative to the state of the unbelievers or catechumens.

You will recollect the reason alleged by Saint Cyril of Alexandria, for his concealment: "He would have been afraid of being understood by the uninitiated, because, said he, people generally ridicule what they do not understand, and ignorant persons, not aware of the weakness of their own minds, despise what they should most of all admire." An author, anonymous indeed, but of very high antiquity, since we find him translated by Rufinus in the fourth age, proves that it is extremely difficult to preach to a mixed multitude of persons, and often necessary, in their presence, to shroud the mysteries in ambiguous terms. "For what is amongst us cannot be told indiscriminately to all persons exactly as it is, on account of those who lend a captious and malignant ear. What then must be done by one who addresses a crowd of persons strange and unknown to him? Shall he conceal the truth? But in that case how is he to