

The Catholic.

Quod semper; quod ubique; quod ab omnibus.

VOL. I.

KINGSTON, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1831.

NO. 46.

SELECTED.

AMICABLE DISCUSSION.

Continued.

LETTER VIII.

EXAMINATION OF TRADITION UPON THE EUCHARIST.

Again it is worthy of observation, that the public calamities were frequently attributed to the christians, as being an impious and detestable race of men. *Away with the christians to the beasts; Christianos ad bestias.* This infuriated and brutal cry was very often resounded in the amphitheatres. Long were the christians persecuted by the Emperors; from the savage Nero, who first drew the sword against them, to the time of Diocletian and Licinius. They were inhumanly put to death at Rome, accused indeed, but never convicted of setting fire to the city. Tacitus asserted their innocence of this crime, when he says that they perished, the victims of popular hatred and execration, which originated not less in calumnious imputations, than in the refusal of the christians to sacrifice to idols and to swear by the genius of the Emperors. The tribunes and governors of provinces put them to the torture, to force from them an acknowledgment of the crimes imputed to them. To this, Justin bears positive testimony, and complains that "to establish these calumnies, slaves, children, and women were put to the rack and tortured in the most horrible manner, to extort from them a confession of the incests and the feasting upon human flesh, of which the christians were accused." Call to mind the women whom Pliny interrogated on the rack after this manner but above all, remember the heroic Blandina and her companion Biblis: Some pagan "slaves in the service of the christians, fearing the torments endured by the faithful, and instigated by the soldiers, falsely accused the christians of Thyestean feasts and incestuous marriages—and of every abomination that decency forbids to mention or to think upon, and which we cannot even believe men capable of committing. These calumnies being spread abroad, the popular fury was excited against us: even those who had hitherto been somewhat friendly disposed towards us, were then filled with the general indignation against us. Then was accomplished the prophesy of our Saviour, that they, who should put his disciples to death, would think that they rendered a service to God." Speaking afterwards of Blandina: "We all of us, and particularly her mistress, he says,

were apprehensive that she would not have the courage to confess, by reason of her bodily weakness. She however, wearied out these, who one after the other tortured her in every way, from morning till night. They acknowledged themselves vanquished, not being able to discover any other way of tormenting her: and were astonished to find her still breathing after the laceration and dislocation of her whole body.—The confession of the name of christian seemed to invigorate her frame: her refreshment and consolation was to exclaim: I am a christian, and no evil is committed amongst us." St. Irenæus, a contemporary, and an eye-witness, mentions that she boldly and judiciously added, "How can they, who from motives of religion abstain from meats otherwise lawful, be capable of perpetrating the crime which you allege against us?"

I have before observed that, in the Zuinglian opinion, the christians would never have suffered these calumnies to gain ground, but would have instantly upset them, by making a public declaration of all their practices and ceremonials, and by inviting the pagans to attend their assemblies and witness the celebration of their harmless repast. But supposing that this simple means of sheltering their name from infamy was overlooked; you must allow that it was high time to think of it, when punishment and tortures stared them in the face. When Blandina and Biblis were interrogated respecting these pretended abominations, why did they not say: "We take indeed a little bread and wine in memory and in figure of our absent Saviour, and also as a mark of our union together. This is our only repast; to which you may, if you please, yourselves bear ocular testimony?" Would they submit to torture and to death, when both might be avoided by a declaration at once so natural and so likely to open the eyes of their judges? Is it consistent with any principle of reason or christianity to maintain an obstinate and unmeaning silence upon that which could innocently be acknowledged, which there was not a shadow of a reason for concealing, and which had it been but named, would have instantly disabused the minds of the people? Does not such conduct render a person guilty of permitting the commission of the enormities and murders, which he might so easily have prevented? Blandina however holds no such language and makes no such disclosure. In the midst of her torments, not a word of the kind escapes her lips. Her constant courageous reply is applauded by the christians for its judiciousness. Zuinglius and his followers would in vain attempt

to explain in what the discretion and judgment of the martyr consisted. It can be satisfactorily shewn in the catholic belief alone, in which, for the honor of Christ, and for the interest and salvation of the persecutors, the mysteries were not permitted to be divulged. As it was impossible to say any thing that might betray the secret, nothing remained for the accused but modestly to repel the calumny, which was, in fact admirably done by this illustrious slave. It is truly noble and even more than human, in the midst of protracted and horrible tortures, thus to bear in mind the wise and charitable discipline of secrecy: and the generous sacrifice of Blandina, crowned in heaven, will be a just subject of admiration to the end of time.

Such, Sir, are the observations I had to submit to your attention respecting the discipline of secrecy. I remember well, the first time I discovered it, the greater part of these same ideas confusedly rushed upon my mind. Since then, it has frequently been to me a subject of serious consideration and deep investigation. I flatter myself that my view of the subject is correct; and, if I am not mistaken, I have convinced you that it is so. For, on the one hand, it is perfectly unintelligible and inexplicable according to the Zuinglian opinion; an unmeaning discipline, rigidly enforced and scrupulously practised, without motive or reason, or rather against every motive and every urgent reason. On the other hand, it accords with the catholic doctrine, and even supposes it; and on the supposition of this belief, is found to be wise, charitable and necessary at a period when religion was proclaimed to a world of unbelievers. In a word, since this general discipline is necessarily interwoven with our belief, and from the fifth century is traced back to the apostolic age, it is most evident, that in these first ages the catholic dogma was both believed and taught in all the Churches of the world.

DISCIPLINE OF SECRECY DURING THE FIVE FIRST AGES.

FIRST AGE.

Proofs drawn from the ignorance of the pagans, respecting the Eucharist.

"We are traduced as the most wicked of men, as capable of murdering infants and feeding on their flesh, and afterwards of abandoning ourselves to shameful incests, having previously employed some dogs, accomplices in our debaucheries, to upset the lamps and thus give darkness and audacity to our abominations.—The imputation of these crimes is to be dated from the reign of Tiberius, es