

Eucharist or of some other mystery, they did it in obscure and enigmatical terms."

But how then, you will ask me, did the faithful come to the knowledge of them? & what were the occasions in which the bishops openly explained to them the doctrine of the mysteries? When the catechumens had been sufficiently proved and appeared worthy to receive baptism, the favour of which they preserved in soliciting, for it was only conferred upon those who asked for it, they were collected together at the baptismal font, on the eve of Easter or Pentecost, solemn and splendid nights, generally set apart for the regeneration of adults. It was here, before their immersion in the sacred water, that the bishop explained to them openly and fully the necessity and the effects of the first of the sacraments. On coming out of the baptismal waters, they were conducted, clothed in a white robe, to the assembled faithful, whose number they were from henceforth to augment: the bishop then ascending the pulpit, and drawing away the veil which till then had concealed the mysteries from them, brought them to light before the neophytes; and the instructions, upon the institution, upon the nature and effects of the Eucharist, upon the sentiments of lively faith of piety and love which the participation of these august mysteries required of them, were continued every day of the first week. Such was the general practice of the Churches up to the fifth age, as many monuments of those primitive times testify and suppose.

However true, and conformable this historical account may be with all that we know of antiquity it has nevertheless been contradicted by Protestants particularly by Calvinistic teachers. This I must not conceal from you. They have pretended and you will soon be struck with astonishment at it that this discipline of secrecy and reserve upon the mysteries, far from coming down from the apostles was unknown to the three first ages, and only dates its origin from the fourth. These gentlemen have found it suitable and convenient enough to suppose that the pagans of the three first ages were perfectly acquainted with the doctrine of the Church on the Eucharist, in order to display with greater plausibility a pretended unanswerable objection against the Catholic dogma. But what they have invented against the truth has never been able and never will be able to stand examination. The principle they here suppose is evidently contrary to facts and even to good sense. In effect, how could these gentlemen, with their well known sagacity and talents, imagine, and how can they have the hardihood to attempt to persuade others that what was generally known during the three first ages, ceased all at once to be known in the fourth? that all the bishops and all the members of every christian society should then have formed the project and have been able to accomplish it, to remove away in a day from every thing that was not christian the belief of the Eucharist, which the day before was unknown to no one? Did ever any one think of attempting to conceal from the world what for centuries had been known over all the earth? If

it be a folly to attempt it, is it a less supportable folly to suppose that such a thing was ever undertaken, and above all undertaken with success? The secrecy so religiously observed in the fourth age, demonstrates therefore from this single fact, that it must have been equally observed in anterior times, and up to the days of the apostles. It is very true that the fourth age, abounding more in monuments of every kind, furnishes us with many more proofs of the discipline of secrecy, than the three first which were unceasingly agitated by persecutions. Prayer, and good works were then the great occupation, and they had less leisure for writing, when every moment they were expecting to be called forth to answer for their faith and seal it with their blood.

But, Sir, if the three first ages offer us fewer direct proof than the succeeding one, they present indirect proofs, which perhaps have still more weight and which I doubt not, will excite in you still more interest and admiration for those heroic periods of christianity. In fact, tell me, I pray, if the apostles and their disciples had made no mystery of the Eucharist, if in the three first ages; jews & pagans, unbelievers and catechumens, had known the doctrine and practice of it, would people have ever dreamed of forging, with regard to the celebration of this sacrament, the atrocious calumnies, of which undoubtedly you have heard? Would they have succeeded in gaining credit for them in the world in raising up all nations against the christian name in making these nations demand the punishment and death of the christians, whom they abhorred on account of the erroneous notions they had formed of them, as abominable monsters, unworthy to see the day! Ferocious men had intended these horrors: men probably deceived had circulated them. They ran therefore through the provinces of the empire, every where admonishing the world to guard against a new sect of people, who under the mask of exterior virtues, gave themselves up, in the secrecy of their mysteries to the most shameful acts of cruelty & debauchery, who slaughtered, as they confidently asserted, a new born infant, covered with flour preserved the blood to drink or to dip their bread therein, roasted their paspating victim then divided its limbs among them for a repast and terminated this horrid feast by eating a bit before a dog, which being tied to the lamps overturned and extinguished them by leaping upon its booty: that then men, women, fathers and daughters, mothers and sons were all confusedly and indiscriminately jumbled together in the dark. Do not these imputations framed and accredited upon uncertain and confused notions of the body and blood, of which they had heard that the christians participated, do they not say, shew, on the one hand the ignorance universally existing among the people, and on the other the impenetrable secrecy observed by the christians on what was believed and practised among them! And now, Sir, how far back do you think these calumnies and their bloody consequences may be traced? As far up as the very time of the apostles. We learn from Ori-

gen, that from the birth of christianity, the jews had spread a report through the world that the christians fed upon the limbs of an immolated babe; from Tertullian, that from the reign of Tiberius, these feasts of Atreus & Thyestes had been again conjured up through hatred and detestation of the christians; and in fine from Eusepius, that Simon and his disciples, Carpocrates, Basilides and Saturninus, were the authors of these atrocities. Simon, having received baptism from Philip the apostle, and participated in the mysteries, had returned to his art-magic and impostures, and by these calumnies worthy of an apostate, he thought without doubt, that he should either force the christians to renounce their religious observance of secrecy, or make them sink under the weight of this infamous accusation.

If the apostles and their disciples had made no mystery of the Eucharist: if, in the three first ages, Jews and Pagans, unbelievers and catechumens had known its doctrine and practice, why did the philosophers, who wrote at that time, reproach them with the obscurity in which they kept themselves, and from it pretend to justify the accusations which the voice of the whole world raised against them. In like manner, at the entrance of the third century Cœlius advanced, without hesitation, "that the obscurity in which this religion was concealed proved the truth of a part of the crimes imputed to it. Why this necessity for hiding themselves and concealing their worship from the public eye, since men fear not to expose to light what is fair and good?" So also at the conclusion of the first age or the commencement of the second, Celsus, the philosopher, frequently referred to the secrecy of the mysteries, and bitterly attacked the affected privacy of christianity, &c.

If the apostles and their disciples had made no mystery of the Eucharist, if in the three first ages, Jews and Pagans, unbelievers and catechumens, had been acquainted with its doctrine and practice, what need would there have been to put christians to the torture, in order to extort from them a confession of the crimes imputed to them? And yet Pliny the younger, Governor of Bithynia, in the account he gave to Trajan of the Christians, says, on occasion of the reports which were circulating in the world about them, "that he had on that account deemed it the more necessary to interrogate on the rack, two women who were said to have ministered in their secret assemblies. But I found nothing, adds he, more than an ill regulated and excessive superstition." Do we not know more over from a fragment of Irenæus, that, in the persecution at Lyons, the Roman magistrates upon the irregular deposition of some slaves, persuaded themselves that the christians actually practised what was laid to their charge, and endeavoured by torments to get an acknowledgment to that effect from Blandina? But this christian slave replied with a freedom full of wisdom; "How should those, who through piety abstain from meats otherwise lawful to eat, be capable of doing the things you impute to us?" Be pleased to observe this last instance of concealment in the heroic Blandina: we shall