

consistently say that the Bread over which they give thanks is the Body of their Lord, and the Cup His Blood, if they do not call Him the Son of the Creator, that is His Word, by whom the tree bears fruit, and the springs flow, and the earth brings forth, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.*

"Our determined belief is in perfect harmony with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist confirms our belief. For we offer to Him His own, suitably proclaiming the fellowship and union of the flesh and spirit. For just as the bread, which is of the earth, when it receives over it the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two parts, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer destructible, having the hope of the eternal resurrection."

In another passage he continues the same idea. "The oblation of the Eucharist is not a carnal one, but a spiritual; and in this respect it is pure. For we make an oblation to God of the bread and the cup of blessing, giving Him thanks that He has commanded the earth to bring forth these fruits for our nourishment. Then when we have made perfect our oblation, we invoke the Holy Spirit, that He may exhibit this sacrifice, with the Bread as the Body of Christ, and the Cup as the Blood of Christ, in order that the receivers of these exact counterparts may obtain remission of sins and life eternal."

In a passage preserved by Œcumenius, a writer of the tenth century, Irenæus points out how it was that the report was current that Christians ate human flesh. Œcumenius† says that he has condensed the passage. "What Irenæus says is in brief thus: When the Greeks had arrested the slaves of some Christian catechumens, they tortured them to learn from them some abomination about the Christians. These slaves having nothing to say which would please their tormentors, except that they heard from their masters that the divine Communion was the Blood and Body of Christ, told this to their examiners. And they, taking for granted that such things were done by Christians, gave information to the rest of the Greeks. Then they tortured the martyrs Sanctus and Blandina to make them confess. To them Blandina excellently replied in these words: How could they tolerate such things when for the sake of discipline they did not enjoy even meats that were perfectly allowable?"

These passages show that the teaching of our Church in prayer and Catechism is that which

was taught by the Church in the latter part of the second century as testified by Irenæus; the same as recorded (as we have seen) some years earlier by Justin Martyr.

One more extract will be given showing the teaching about the intermediate state.

"Since then the Lord walked through the valley of the shadow of death,‡ where the souls of the dead are, and afterwards rose in the body, and after His resurrection was taken up into Heaven; it is clear that the souls of His disciples also will go away into the unseen place, apportioned to them by God and there abide, awaiting the resurrection. After this receiving their bodies, and rising again in full completeness, that is with their bodies, just as the Lord rose, in this condition shall they be brought into the presence of God. For no disciple is above his master, but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.§ As then our Master did not at once take flight to Heaven, but awaited the time of His resurrection determined by the Father (which had been declared by Jonah), and after the interval of three days rose again, and afterwards was taken up into Heaven; so we must await the time of our resurrection determined by God, and foretold by the prophets, and so rising again be taken up into Heaven, that is, as many of us as shall be counted worthy of this by the Lord Himself."

One more point in connection with the history of S. Irenæus must be here mentioned. The question about the celebration of Easter Day soon became rather important, since the Asiatic Christians kept Easter Day according to the Jewish Passover, and did not always keep it on Sunday. The rest of Christendom kept Easter Day always on Sunday, on whatever day the Passover fell. There was no trouble about this; it did not interfere with perfect intercommunion until Victor, Bishop of Rome, about A. D. 192, tried to persuade Christian Bishops throughout the world to agree with him in excommunicating the Asiatics for not keeping Easter Day on a Sunday. None, however, agreed with him. Synods of Bishops were held in various parts, but while they generally agreed that the Asiatics were wrong, they also agreed that there was not sufficient ground for ceasing to communicate with them. From this it is quite clear that there was no such preponderating weight in the opinion of the Bishop of Rome at that time, as some moderns would persuade us.

At this time S. Irenæus (the man of peace, as his name signifies) wrote to Victor, on behalf of all the Churches of Gaul, remonstrating with him on his harsh attitude; and reminding him that though

*Commentary on I. S. Peter, chap. III., at the end.

†Schack iv., 28.

‡Psalm xxiii., 4.

§S. Luke vi., 40.