

at hand. Justin Martyr stood before the Antonines a humble claimant of toleration; Arnobius goes before Constantine as the herald of the imperial standard of the cross.

When Lactantius appears with his "Institutes" it is for constructive work that he comes upon the field. He surveys it as one who must clear it of the wreck and ruin of the war. He buries the dead and prepares for a permanent occupation of the scene by a dominant Christianity. This justly admired defender of the faith makes some comments, however, on his predecessors, which are just what I want for my present purpose. He considers the masterly Tertullian as failing to some extent in his "Apology," not merely because of his rugged diction and obscurity of style, but because his overthrow of error was not sufficiently balanced by the instructive and illuminating process of exhibiting the truth in its substance and proportions, and allowing that to do its work of obliterating the last vestiges of superstition. And now mark what he says of the illustrious Cyprian, who went to the other extreme, perhaps, in his devotion to the Scriptural argument so dear to his own pure spirit. For while Minucius Felix is often blamed for his independence of Scripture, in his eloquent appeal to his friend, and while Methodius and Arnobius are even impeached as hardly deserving the name of Christian apologists because of their indifference to the Scriptural method, Lactantius complains of Cyprian as going too far in the other direction, "carried away by his distinguished knowledge of the sacred writings." For in meeting the assaults of Demetrian, Lactantius argues that he failed in a measure, not considering that he had for his antagonist a man with whom Scripture went for naught. "He should, therefore, have laid aside divine readings for the moment and dealt with the man as one ignorant of the truth, showing him by degrees the beginnings of light. . . . For this man, as not yet capable of receiving divine things, should have been presented with human testimonies, that *e.g.* of philosophers and historians, in order that he might be thoroughly refuted by *his own authorities*."

So then, like a courtier, on the plea of what Cyprian should have done for Demetrian, he undertakes the task for other Demetrians, without telling the emperor, "Thou art the man." He is, in fact, however, doing for Constantine just what that raw and recent convert needed. It was all important to fortify him with "certain of their own poets," and with Orphic and Sibylline sayings. Critics have not sufficiently appreciated the tact of Lactantius in thus feeding his imperial pupil with what, he takes pains to acknowledge, is fitted to the tender digestion of those weak in faith. Those who recall the economy with which the Caesar afterward reconciled his Christian profession with his Roman antecedents, by interpreting the Pollio of Virgil as borrowed from Isaiah, will not be at loss to imagine from what source he derived his illumination.