

THE CATHOLIC.

QUOD SEMPER, QUOD UBIQUE, QUOD AB OMNIBUS CREDITUM EST.—WHAT ALWAYS, AND EVERY WHERE, AND BY ALL IS BELIEVED.

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THE CATHOLIC

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THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

DEMONSTRATED DIVINE.

Dedicated to our modern Freethinkers.

CHAPTER XVIII.

EXODUS.

CHAPTER xi.—The last, and most dreadful of all the Egyptian plagues; that which affects the life of man, and of all the creatures made for his use; by which the first born of man and beast are slain in one night all over the land of Egypt; is inflicted immediately by God himself, whose mediating ministers Pharaoh had madly banished from his sight. The Almighty therefore puts forth at length his own arm to avenge upon their oppressors the wrongs of his long suffering people; and free them from the thrall of their relentless persecutors.

CHAPTER xii.—But before inflicting that dreadful punishment on the Egyptians, he instructs the Israelites by his chosen ministers, Moses and Aaron, what they must do, in order to avoid being involved in the fate of their enemies. He commands them, "every man by their houses and families, to take," on the tenth day of the month, "a male lamb of one year without blemish; and according to the same rite a kid also;" and after keeping it till the fourteenth day, to sacrifice it in the evening: then to take of the blood thereof, and put it on both the side posts, and on the upper door posts of the houses, wherein they shall eat it; roasted at the fire, together with unleavened bread, and wild lettuce." They are forbidden "to eat it raw, or boiled with water; but only roasted at the fire. They must eat the head with the feet and entrails thereof; and none of it is to remain till morning;" or if ought should remain, "it is to be burnt with fire." They must eat "it in haste, with their loins girt, their shoes on their feet and staves in their hands; for it is the phase, (that is the passage of the Lord)—"a bone of it must not be broken" The blood was to be to them "for a sign;" and the Lord seeing it on the houses where they were assembled, "would pass them over, and not destroy them with the plague, when he struck the land of Egypt." Such was the paschal rite instituted by Almighty God; and ordered to be kept by his people, "as a feast to the Lord in their generations, with an everlasting observance." It was therefore to continue for ever, in the figure and the fulfilment. The use of all, but "unleavened bread," was "for seven days" so strictly prohibited, that whoever eat "any thing leavened," or even kept it in his house, was condemned to death. "That soul," says "Almighty God shall perish out of Israel."

The whole of this paschal ceremonial is full of the deepest mystical meaning. Every one knows however, that the "male Lamb, without blemish," which was to

be sacrificed and eaten in the manner above prescribed, was a figure of Jesus Christ the innocent Lamb of God; whose blood was to be the preservative of those who should, like the Israelites, shut themselves up under the protective virtue of that redeeming blood; in order to feast together, as brethren of one family or household, that is, of one church, on the flesh of their victim. To the Jew, the whole was but "a sign." To the Christian all is a reality, or the fulfilment of the figure.—The kid ordered also to be slain, represented, as we before observed, the Saviour suffering as a criminal; for "he was reckoned among the wicked;" Is. liii, 12; and the goat is the emblem of the sinner.

The "unleavened bread," is explained by Saint Paul, to be the emblem of "innocence, sincerity and truth;" 1 CORINTH v. 7, &c. "Purge out," says he, "the old leaven, that you may become a new lump; for Christ, our pasch, is sacrificed. Wherefore, let us feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." The whole mass of mankind had been infected with sin; which, like a foul and poisonous leaven, vitiates our race; changing its original sincerity and purity; swelling it up with pride; giving it the bitterness of malice, and blending it with every noxious and disgusting ingredient of wickedness. This is the leaven, which we are commanded to cast forth, before we presume to eat our paschal lamb; for they, in whose houses, that is, in whose interior, that leaven is found at the paschal time, are doomed to death; not merely the temporal and "figurative death" of the body to which the offending Jew, who eat but the "figurative paschal lamb," was condemned; but to the eternal, and "real death" of soul and body; because it is "the real paschal lamb," that the Christian is now commanded to eat; and his punishment must be commensurate with the heinousness of his crime in eating it in the state of sin; or without the legal purification in the spiritual reality. "That soul" says Almighty God, "shall perish out of Israel; wherefore," says Saint Paul, when exhorting the Christians to eat his pasch worthily,—"let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice; for he, who eateth, or drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord; 1 Cor. xi. 28; not discerning that it is, not the flesh of the figurative victim, the paschal lamb; but the real flesh of the prefigured victim, the body itself of our Lord, the true Lamb of God, who was sacrificed for us; and the sprinkling of whose sacred blood is our protection against the destroying angel.

The figurative paschal lamb was to be eaten entire; no portion of it was to be left till morning. The real paschal lamb cannot be divided. He is received entire under either of the sacramental forms; under which, to try our faith in his word, he is pleased to disguise himself. For who can deny to him, acknowledged by all the Almighty, the power to take what form he pleases; and be present wherever he pleases. The Holy Ghost took the visible form of a dove, and descended under that appearance upon our Saviour in the Jordan. He again took the visible form of fiery tongues, and descended thus upon the Apostles and first Christians assembled together in prayer at Pentecost. There were many fiery tongues though but one Holy Ghost. Every one present received him under the fiery form; and yet he was but one among all. And is it impossible for the filial

Deity to give himself so to us under the sacramental forms? That he does so, he himself, as we have seen, has most positively and unequivocally assured us.

"The wild lettuce," with which, together with "unleavened bread," the Jews were commanded to eat the Paschal Lamb; is a bitter, but wholesome plant; and, according to the Fathers, and all Catholic spiritual writers, the emblem of that penance and mortification of the senses and passions, which is a necessary ingredient in the true repentance and conversion of the sinner. Therefore did our Saviour say: "except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish;" LUKE xiii. 3. His precursor also came, "preaching the Baptism of penance for the remission of sins;" LUKE iii. 3. All medicine is unpalatable, but necessary to the sick; so is penance to the spiritual patient.

The Paschal Lamb must be eaten not "raw, nor boiled, but roasted;" and the remainder consumed with fire. It must be prepared not in any other element, but the all purifying fire of charity. It must be, like God in the burning bush. God himself is "a consuming fire;" DEUT. iv. 24. "God is charity;" 1 JOHN iv. 8.

"A bone of it must not be broken." This figure was verified at the Saviour's passion on Mount Calvary, where those who suffered with him, not being quite dead, had their bones broken, according to custom; in order to put them out of pain; whereas his were spared, as he had previously expired; JOHN xix. 32, 33, 36.

The Jews were to eat their Paschal Lamb, "in haste; with their loins girt, their shoes on their feet, and their staves in their hands." The Christians are to eat their Paschal Lamb in readiness to quit the Egypt of this sinful world; for the summons of departure may at every moment be given; and woe to him, who is not girt, and shod, and ready to depart, when called! Of this the Saviour warns us, when he bids us, "watch because we know not at what hour our Lord may come;" MATT. xxiv. 42. "Blessed," says he, "are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching!" LUKE xii. 37. And under the simile of the wise and foolish virgins, MATT. xxi. 6, he shews the different lot of those who hold themselves in readiness to depart hence, when summoned, from that of those who remain unprepared against the uncertain and all-decisive call.

Chapter xiii. "Sanctify unto me every first born." First born here, and in the Hebrew style, does not imply, as it would seem in modern languages, that other children of the same parent were born afterwards. And yet in order to lower the Virgin Mother of God to the rank of common married females; and to lessen in our estimation, the virtue of chastity, so cried up by St. Paul; 1 Cor. vii. 8, all Protestant Sectarians, who seem to bear a grudge to this queen of virgins, though a Mother; who take a pleasure on all occasions, to speak villifyingly of her transcendent excellence, tho' attested by an Arch-angel from heaven; by the inspired Saint Elizabeth, and by herself in her Canticle, dictated by the Holy Ghost; all these self-taught, self-confiding, ignorant and profane expounders of the Scriptures, infer from that expression, used by St. Luke, in describing the birth of Christ, ch. ii. v. 7; and from the Hebrew appellation of brethren given to his kinsfolks; that this divinely pure and thrice blessed creature, had other children after the Saviour! Whence all this antipathy towards the most hallowed of creatures, but form the original tempter, whose head she was destined to crush!