

sermon on the martyrs, the prayer addressed by a Christian of the early days to a saint whose tomb she visited: "Thou didst invoke the martyrs before thou wert thyself a martyr; thou hast sought and found; be then liberal of the blessings which thou hast received."

Eusebius of Cæsarea, who flourished towards the end of the third century, defending our sacred dogmas against the sophisms of the idolaters, rests on the honours which they paid to their ancient heroes to justify the veneration of saints, and continues in these terms: "We honour as friends of God those who have fought for the true religion; we go to their tombs; we offer them our vows, professing to believe that through their intercession with God we are powerfully succoured."\*

These words of Eusebius, who, in his double capacity of bishop and historian, must necessarily have been well informed, clearly indicate an ancient usage, a custom approved by the Church and generally received. On the other hand, Vigilantius and Arius, enemies of the veneration of saints, were openly treated as *innovators* and *heretics* by St. Epiphanius, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine. Now is it to be presumed that these great doctors would have dared to set down as heretics and *innovators* men who laboured but to establish in its native purity the ancient doctrine of the Church? The word *innovators* explains all; and it must not be forgotten that Vigilantius lived at a period so near the times of the Apostles that there was between them and him not more than three generations!

St. Cyprian, who suffered martyrdom in Carthage in the year 261, shows us the Christians of Africa crowding to the glorious tombs of the martyrs, making a funeral repast there on the day of their anniversary, and so eager to invoke them that, not even waiting for their death, they went to solicit the prayers of those imprisoned confessors of the faith who had as yet survived their

combats." St. Polycarp consummated his sacrifice in the year 166, on the 23d of January, on which day the church of Smyrna kept his festival in the middle of the third century, as we see by the acts of St. Peter.

\* *Præpar. Evang.*, b. xiii., ch. 7.

