

with other express declarations of holy scripture, or with the divine example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who fasted so rigorously, that for forty days he eat of no food, and lived a life of virginity. The religious orders in the Catholic Church, only endeavour to follow the example of Christ, and the declaration of this same S. Paul, that virginity is a more perfect state than matrimony; nor do they condemn in others the use either of matrimony, declared by the church to be a great mystery and sacrament, or of meats. That great light of the Anglican church, Bishop Jeremy Taylor, knew how false and unfounded was this objection. Hark how he expresses himself:—"Virginity is a life of angels, the enamel of the soul, the huge advantage of religion, the great opportunity for the retirements of devotion: and being empty of cares, it is full of prayers; being unmingled with the world, it is apt to converse with God; and by not feeling the warmth of a too forward and indulgent nature, flames out with holy fires, till it be burning like the cherubim, and the most extasied order of holy and unpolled spirits."*

But it will still be contended, that at least the extraordinary penances and fasts which we read of in the lives of the saints, were confined to a later period of the church, and cannot be traced up to the most primitive ages. How false is this assertion, may be shown by appealing again to the learned Mr. Nelson. He had read the primitive fathers, and see what he had drawn from their testimony: "S. Epiphanius tells us, that S. James the Great, and S. John, were very eminent for a mortified life; that they never eat either flesh or fish, and wore but one coat, and a linen garment.† S. Clemens Alexandrinus relates of S. Matthew, that he was so far from indulging his appetite, that he refused to gratify it with lawful and ordinary provisions, eating no flesh; his usual diet being nothing but herbs, roots, seeds, and berries.‡ And it is recorded of S. James the Less, bishop of Jerusalem," (one also of our Lord's apostles) "a man of that divine temper, that he was the love and wonder of the age, that he wholly abstained from flesh, and drank neither wine nor strong drink, nor ever used the bath; and that his whole body was covered with paleness, through fasting."||

Is it not wonderful to read here of the same examples having been given by the apostles of Christ, as has been ever followed by the servants of God in all subsequent ages of the church: and yet that men can be found who will dare to bring

forwards a detached passage of scripture, setting it at variance with innumerable other texts of the sacred volume, and contradicting the testimony of the most ancient and holy writers, in order to show their hatred of Catholic doctrine, and obtain a short-lived triumph with the vulgar and the ignorant? At least such an objection is most inconsistent from those whose Church, in her Common Prayer Book, enjoins precisely the same fasts as those which are observed in the Catholic Church. And let it be remembered, that the remark of the apostle, if it applied to the doctrines of the Catholic Church at all, applies equally to the abstinence from meat, as to that from marriage, and yet the former has been retained in the Anglican Church, and the latter has been praised by some of her most eminent divines. Nor let it here be said, that fasts are seldom observed by members of the Church of England: that only proves that they disobey even their own Church, whilst they admit the principle in acting upon it, when enforced by a decree of the king and parliament.

But to return to the venerable monks of the order of S. Romuald.—It was here that I first was made acquainted with the holy book, of which a translation is now presented to the English reader. So great was the edification I derived from the perusal of it in the original Italian, that I have ever since felt a great desire to translate it into English. I must here apologize to the reader for the very imperfect way in which this has been done. Endeavouring to keep as close to the original expressions as possible, I may have used phrases not according to the genius of the English tongue: and there is, I fear, a certain heaviness of style and wordiness, which may prove wearisome. I can only beg the kind indulgence of the reader, to make allowances for these defects, and to take in good part the pains I have been at in his service. With regard to the book itself, what is now published is but a small part of it; at a future time it may be completed. I need say nothing more in commendation of it, but that it has been greatly approved in Italy and at Rome, and has gone through upwards of thirty editions in the Italian language. It is compiled from the writings almost entirely of canonized saints; and the moving maxims it contains are illustrated by examples out of the most approved histories of the saints' lives.

As this book will perhaps fall into Protestant hands, it may be well here to meet an objection, which will doubtless be made. It will be asked, are we to believe all the miracles here related; all the visions? or are we to imitate all the extraordinary practices recorded to have been used by various saints? In answer to this, it may be replied, the Church obliges us to do neither the

*Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living, on Chastity*, p. 65. London, published by Baldwin, 1824.

†Epiphanius Ep. 53 c. 4. Ep. 30 c. 24.

‡Clementis Alexandrini *Pædag.* lib. 2, c. 1.

§Nelson's *Fasts and Feasts. Concerning Fasting*, pp. 355, 366.