

they are employed to explain. The writers are so impressed with the importance and reality of the things they declare, that they are never found to hunt after strange comparisons. Thus when Paul would speak of the resurrection of the body—how appropriate—how beautiful are the figures he employs. “But some man will say, how are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? ‘Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.—And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body—there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead.’” But how meanly does Clement speak of the resurrection, and yet he is one of the best of the apostolic fathers. We would, willingly, pass over the passage for the sake of the many and excellent things the epistle contains, nevertheless even this passage will be found not devoid of instruction, seeing it shews the superiority of the writings of the apostles and prophets, and the folly of those who would reduce them to the level of such as have been penned by cunning men. Clement is speaking of “a future resurrection.” “Let us consider,” he says, “that wonderful sign which occurs in the regions of the east in Arabia. There is a certain bird called a Phoenix. It is the only individual of its kind, and lives five hundred years. When the time of its dissolution draws near, that it must die, it makes itself a nest of frankincense and myrrh, and other spices, into which, when its time is fulfilled, it enters and dies. But, as the body decays, a certain kind of worm is produced, which, nourished by the juices of the dead bird, puts forth feathers. And when it is at length grown to a perfect state, it takes up the nest, in which the bones of its parent lie, and carries it from Arabia into Egypt, to the city called Heliopolis; and in open day, flying in the sight of all men, places them upon the altar of the Sun, and having done this, hastens back to his abode.—The priests then search the records of the time, and find that it hath come at the completion of the five hundredth year. Shall we then think it to be any very great and strange thing for the Maker of all things to raise up those that religiously serve him in the assurance of a good faith, when, even by a bird, he shews us the greatness of his power to fulfil his promise.”*

* Wake's translation.

Milner apologises, by saying, that this would be a very good illustration if true, but the question may still be asked, why one, who teaches truth, should traffic in fables? In this epistle we find the reading of the Scriptures urged upon the Corinthians, and, when it is remembered, that the Church of Rome now forbids them to the people, we have a perfect demonstration that she has forsaken her first espousals, and is the enemy of the truth once delivered to the saints. “Ye are contentious, brethren, and zealous for things which pertain not unto salvation. Look into the Holy Scriptures, which are the true words of the Holy Ghost. Ye know that nothing unjust or counterfeit is written in them.” And again, “Ye know, beloved, ye know full well the Holy Scriptures; and have thoroughly searched into the oracles of God.”

It is a common opinion that the persecutions of the church have originated with the magistracy, but it is not supported always by history. On the contrary we shall frequently find that the persecutions which befel the church, arose from the enmity of the multitude against the truth. This appears to have been the origin of the persecuting edict which Trajan published, A. D. 107. The younger Pliny, who had the government of the province of Bithynia, having written to the emperor, enquiring in what way he should treat the christians, received for answer “that the christians were not to be *officially sought after*, but that such as were accused and convicted of an adherence to christianity were to be put to death as wicked citizens, if they did not return to the religion of their ancestors.” In Pliny's letter we have the following account of the worship of the primitive church, as communicated to him by persons who had lapsed from their profession to heathenism: “And this was the account which they gave of the nature of the religion they once had professed, whether it deserves the name of crime or error, namely, that they were accustomed on a stated day to meet before daylight, and repeat among themselves a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and to bind themselves by an oath, with an obligation of not committing any wickedness, but on the contrary of abstaining from thefts, robberies and adulteries; also, of not violating their promise, or denying a pledge; after which it was their custom to separate, and to meet again at a promiscuous harmless meal, from which last practice they however desisted after the publication of my edict, in which, agreeably to your orders, I forbade any societies of that sort.”—