

Now, as he has revealed to us its essential characteristics — consecration by the use of water — and as he has been careful to cause that no inspired man should utter a word to indicate the mode, are we to suppose that he designed for baptism alone a hard and unbending form? Is it probable that he would here leap, with a wide bound, from all his analogies, and frame this ordinance alone with iron outlines; and intend it to go down through the centuries, as a harsh, unyielding rigidity; and then leave no record indicating what that mode should be? The conclusion is, to our mind, unavoidable, that the mode was purposely left open; and that any form of the use of water, whether by sprinkling, effusion, or immersion, by which one is consecrated to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is, if administered by an authorized person, christian baptism.

ARTICLE IV.

EUSEBIUS AS AN HISTORIAN.

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Eusebius was a native of Palestine. Of his parentage and early education we are in singular ignorance. The date even of his birth is not well defined; but from certain incidental data in his writings, it appears that he must have been born within the period from A. D. 259 to 270. About the year 315 he was chosen bishop of Caesarea, and continued for twenty-five years the incumbent of this office until his death, A. D. 340.

One of the first of his literary labors was a work on history and chronology, entitled *Chronicon*. In this he undertook to describe the origin and progress of all nations from their rise respectively to the age of Constantine, and to

establish the chronological data of their several histories. It was, perhaps, the first compend of universal history. The original work is lost, but some fragments of it yet remain, while other parts have been preserved in a translation by Jerome.

Among the chief works of Eusebius now extant, may be mentioned:

An Evangelical Preparation, or Preparation for the Demonstration of the Truth of the Gospel. His course of argument is extended through *fifteen books*, in which he exposes the folly of heathen theology and worship, Grecian, Phœnician and Egyptian, together with the vanity of their oracles and arts of divination. He answers the objections of Jews and Gentiles against Christianity, and exhibits the superiority of the Jewish above other forms of religion, showing at length that the Greeks borrowed all that was really good in their philosophy from the Jews.

As a sequel to his *Evangelical Preparation*, Eusebius published *A Demonstration of the Truth of the Gospel* in twenty books, ten of which are lost. This *Demonstration* was designed chiefly for the conviction of the Jews. In the course of his argument he shows the superiority of the Christian to the Jewish religion, in that it is not adapted to one people only, but to all nations. He labors to convince the Jews, out of their own Scriptures, that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, evidently foretold and set forth as such by their own prophets. The value of this work and of all the author's expositions of the Scriptures, is greatly impaired by his interpretations, according to which he, like Origen, his great master, considers the *double sense* of all revealed truth.

We have from the same hands a treatise on the *Topography of the Scriptures*, commonly denominated the *Onomasticon* of Eusebius. Living at an age so early, and having passed all his life in Palestine, in familiar acquaintance with the sites of sacred history, he possessed peculiar advantages for establishing the localities of the cities and scenes of the historical portions of the Scriptures.

Eusebius sustained also a conspicuous part in the theological controversies of his age. He was deeply implicated in the Arian controversy; and became a prominent member of the famous council of Nice. The heresies and persecutions of the age also frequently employ his pen. Under this class of his literary efforts may be reckoned three books concerning the martyr Pamphilus. Five books written by himself in defence of Origen, the Book of Martyrs in Palestine, his works against Porphyry, Hierocles, and Sabellius, together with several other treatises.

We have yet to mention the works on which the reputation of Eusebius, as an historian, is chiefly founded, and with which we are more immediately concerned,—his *Ecclesiastical History*, in ten books, and his *History of the Life of Constantine*, in four books. His Life of Constantine is not a biography of the Emperor, but a continued and extravagant panegyric for his support of the Christian Religion, and his various benefits to the clergy and the church. The earlier fathers had written much in explanation and defence of the Christian Religion, but none had attempted a continued history of the church through the vicissitudes of alternate persecution and peace, heretical dissensions, fanatical zeal and steadfast faith which from the beginning had marked her progress. Of those eventful scenes Eusebius was the first and exclusive historian. By the countless multitude of historians who have followed in his footsteps, Eusebius has been generally received as their undisputed, undoubted voucher for the period of the first three centuries of the christian church. By common consent, therefore, he stands accredited as the FATHER OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

This verdict of ages, at once so honorable and so uniform, we would not wantonly impeach. We freely accord to our historian the merit of great learning, of tireless industry, and vast and varied research, the results of which in almost every department of literary labors then known, he has transmitted down to us from that distant age in which he lived and wrote.

We owe to him a debt of gratitude, great beyond expression, for the preservation of many extracts from authors whose works are lost. Eusebius copied much from contemporary and earlier writers; and these collections remain in his works, while the originals from which they were taken, have disappeared successively as they have drifted onward on the troubled tides of ages past. Such as we still possess are but scattered remnants, *rari nantes in gurgite vasto*, which have survived the general wreck. Scanty and few as are these broken fragments, all thanks to the diligent hands that gathered and garnered them up for the instruction of future generations.

Eusebius lived in one of the most eventful periods of the world. The church, just coming out of great tribulation, wasted by persecutions, torn by factions, sects, and heresies without number, ascended the throne of the Cæsars, invested with imperial power, ecclesiastical and secular, to encounter trials infinitely more searching, severe, and disastrous than those of the deepest and darkest oppression. Never could the life of an historian have been cast upon a period more auspicious for the production of an immortal work, a thesaurus of ecclesiastical history for all time to come. The effacing hand of time had not yet erased the choicest records of the past which subsequent historians labor in vain to decipher or restore. The treasures of all recorded history were open to him by imperial wealth and power, and writers of every age, those present or past, waited as willing servitors to lend their contributions to enrich his pages. Had he possessed the patience to sift the wheat from the chaff; the discrimination to separate the fables of that fabulous age from authentic facts and documents; the discernment to discover the religious elements of the heresies and sects of the age which were continually surging up in forms ever new and endlessly diversified; had he entered into the interior of christian life and sketched with a master's hand the portraiture in the strange vicissitudes of light and shade in which it passed before him; or had he faithfully delineated the mysterious character even of Constantine the Great,

“grand, glowing and peculiar, wrapped in the solitude of his own originality,” insomuch that we know not whether he most deserves our execrations as a bloody tyrant, or our admiration as a christian prince graciously leading forth the people of God out of their captivity, and establishing them in the enjoyment of the most enlarged religious liberty; — had he employed all his learning and industry, to produce a just, impartial, discriminating history of the church; how deservedly then would our historian have won for himself in all the earth the honored title which now, with questionable propriety he receives, of the Father of Ecclesiastical History.

With all due deference to the verdict of ages, we must pronounce our author deficient in the essential elements of an original reliable historian, while we lament that this important branch of history has not a parentage more honorable and trustworthy.

The verdict of past ages has not, indeed, been uniformly in favor of Eusebius as an historian. He has been found wanting in accuracy, candor, impartiality, and sound judgment, by men of piety and learning, whose decision is worthy of the highest respect. To say nothing of Epiphanius, Athanasius, Antipater of Bostra, Jerome, and others, Joseph Scaliger, near two centuries since, subjected the works of Eusebius to various severe and searching criticisms. For this service he was singularly qualified, both by his vast and varied learning, and his amazing powers of memory, which enabled him to contrast and compare the writings of Eusebius with all that remains of history, legend, and fable, out of which Eusebius hastily gathered his crude, incongruous compilations. Casaubon, another of the giants of those days, sets forth the qualifications of Scaliger in the following terms: “There was nothing that any one would desire to know which he was not competent to teach; nothing that he had ever read (and what had he not read) which he could not immediately recall; nothing obscure or recondite in any ancient author, whether Latin, Greek, or Hebrew, respecting which, on inquiry, he was not prepared at once to reply. The history of all nations and states, the succession

of their rulers, and all that pertained to the ancient church were to him familiarly known. His acquaintance with the topography and geography of kingdoms, countries, and provinces, with their boundaries, and the variations of their political divisions from age to age, was minute and unapproachable. He left no department of literature or science unexplored; and yet, such was his turn for the languages, that if he had given attention to those alone through life, his attainments would have seemed almost miraculous." ¹

We cannot follow Scaliger at length in his "animadversions," "annotations," and criticisms upon the works of Eusebius. Let the following suffice: "Many are the hallucinations, many the errors of Eusebius. No one has written with less caution, none has presumed more on the indulgence of his readers than our author—time would fail to enumerate his errors."² These animadversions he writes "That those who stand exposed to danger from this author may shun the rocks, which, without such admonition, they will hardly escape."

Among the specific charges of Scaliger against Eusebius may be noticed that of *plagiarism*, in his *Chronicon*. The first book is little else than a transcript, without acknowledgment, from his countryman Julius Africanus. "The writers on this subject, after the age of Constantine, were almost infinite in number; but previous to that, Julius Africanus alone comes to me at present, and Eusebius Pamphilus has followed so closely in his footsteps as to copy his work almost entire in his *Chronicon*. There is in it nothing lucid, graceful, or elegant which was not derived from Africanus. Such, for example, as that admirable and incomparable memorial of the Dynasties of Egypt, of the kings of Assyria, of Sicyonia, of the Greeks, the Athenians and many others which he has furnished in the first book of his *Chronology*. These, all, Eusebius derived from Africanus without mentioning his author except to express some dis-

¹ Ex Isaac Casauboni Præfatione.

² Notæ in Græca Eusebii, p. 417.

sent from his conclusions. Such is the wonderful assurance with which he appropriates to himself the industry of another, regardless of the sentiments of those who were in the habit of perusing daily the writings of Africanus."¹

Eusebius is charged, moreover, by Scaliger, with great carelessness and gross anachronisms. The death of Herod the Great, he dates seven years after the decease of that monarch. The Essenes, a sect of Jewish anchorets, he finds to be an order of Christian monks. He supposes Philo at one time to be discoursing of an order of monks in Egypt, and at another, so far forgets himself as to represent Philo as only speaking of the Essenes, in the same passage. The authority of Josephus he so carelessly cites, as to represent him as saying that the priests in the temple, in the time of *the Pentecost*, succeeding our Lord's crucifixion, perceived certain commotions in the temple, and a rushing sound as of something hastily passing by them, and then a sudden exclamation,—“Let us depart hence!” Whereas, this occurred more than thirty years later, at the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem. At another time he himself cites correctly this very passage from Josephus, alleging that this voice was heard by priests just before the destruction of Jerusalem, as is also reported by Tacitus.²

The prepossessions of Eusebius in favor of prelacy are to be distinctly noticed. He is himself a bishop at an age when prelacy had changed, totally corrupted the government of the church originally established by the Apostles. The apostolical succession, that figment of prelatiical pride and ghostly superstition, was an established canon of the church.

¹ Prolegom. in Euseb., pp. 2, 5. Amst. ed.

² Eusebius ad annum III. Olympiadis CCII. In his Ecclesiastical History Eusebius gives the following account of this prodigy: “Indeed that which I am about to tell would appear a prodigy, were it not related by those who had seen it, and unless the subsequent miseries had corresponded to the signs. For before the setting of the sun there were seen chariots and armed troops on high, wheeling through the clouds around the whole region, and surrounding the cities. And at the festival called Pentecost the priests entering the temple at night, according to their custom, to perform the service, said they first perceived a motion and noise, and after this a confused voice saying ‘Let us go hence.’” — Eccl. Hist., III. c. 8. Comp. Josephus, Wars, VI. c. 5. Tacitus, Hist., V. c. 13.

The clergy had become a mediatory priesthood between God and man, receiving office, authority, and power, not from the church as the servants of the church, but from God as his ministers, and medium of grace to man. The authority of councils, the power, ecclesiastical and civil, of the bishops, the honor due to them and their orders, exclusive episcopal ordination, confirmation, exorcism, the prayers of saints, the power of their intercessions in behalf of the lapsed, the sanctity of the martyrs' tombs, and of the relics of saints;— all are accredited by the approbation and authority of Eusebius. He announces in the first sentence of his history his intention “to record the successions of the holy apostles, together with the times since our Saviour, down to the present; to recount how many and important transactions are said to have occurred in ecclesiastical history; what individuals in the most noted places eminently governed and presided over the church, etc. In the execution of this work, we shall be happy to rescue from oblivion the successions, if not of all, at least of the most noted apostles of our Lord, in those churches which, even at this day, are accounted the most eminent; a labor which has appeared to me necessary in the highest degree, as I have not yet been able to find that any of the ecclesiastical writers have directed their efforts to present any thing complete in this department of writing.”

Confessedly, therefore, we are to receive, at the hands of our ancient historian, a history, not of Christianity, but of the church and the apostolical succession. In accordance with this design, we have the succession of the bishops of the church at Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Caesarea, Laodicea, Rome, and of others more or less in detail.

Simon Magus, who, according to our author, had been acknowledged as the “Supreme God,” and honored with a statue at Rome, was humbled and cast down by the apostle Peter, who was divinely directed to Rome for this very purpose. This is related as an undoubted fact, when there is no reliable evidence that Peter ever visited Rome on any occasion. The whole fable is founded on a mistake of Jus-

tin Martyr, who mistook the inscription on the statue of a Sabine god named *Semo* to indicate a statue to Simon Magus; but of this error has arisen the legend which Eusebius, soaring into the regions of fancy and fiction, relates in the legendary style of monkish superstition, rather than in that of a cautious, authentic historian. This, however, [the supremacy of Simon Magus] did not continue long; for immediately, under the reign of Claudius, by the benign and gracious providence of God, Peter, that powerful and great apostle, who by his courage took the lead of all the rest, was conducted to Rome against this pest of mankind. He, like a noble commander of God, fortified with divine armor, bore the precious merchandise of the revealed light itself and salutary doctrine of the soul, the proclamation of the kingdom of God.”¹

In the same strain, we are told that Mark, as the companion of Peter, is constrained by the Romans to write his gospel as a memorial of the oral instructions of Peter. “So greatly did the splendor of piety enlighten the minds of Peter’s hearers, that it was not sufficient to hear but once, nor to receive the unwritten doctrine of the gospel of God, but they persevered with various entreaties to solicit Mark, as the companion of Peter, whose gospel we have, that he should leave them in writing a monument of the doctrine thus orally communicated.”² The gospel of Mark, then, is not the inspiration of God, but a legend of the public ministrations of Peter at Rome.

The honor set upon bishops by Eusebius, the interpositions of Heaven, at times, in their appointment, all indicate the same prelatial prepossessions. Thus, Fabianus is “advanced in the most remarkable manner by divine and celestial grace” to the episcopal office at Rome. The unanimity respecting him was a special providence, and the election was directed by the Spirit of God: When they were all assembled in the church, “a dove flying suddenly down from on high, sat upon his head, exhibiting a scene like that of

Lib. II. c. 14.

² Ibid. c. 15.

the Holy Spirit descending upon our Saviour in the form of a dove. Upon this the whole assembly exclaimed, with all eagerness and with one voice, as if moved by the Spirit of God, that he was worthy; and without delay they took and placed him upon the episcopal throne."¹

Observe the grace, the dignity, the glory with which the episcopate is invested, to which the emperor himself does homage. Even the implacable contentions of these holy bishops abates not the respect of Constantine. "For indeed he treated the parties with all respect as fathers, nay as prophets of God."² The bishops at the council of Nice assembled from different countries, formed "as it were a vast garland of priests, composed of a variety of the choicest flowers." This garland Constantine "presented to Christ as a thank-offering for his victories, thus exhibiting a similitude of the apostolic company."³ Constantine himself is careful to show all due deference to this "apostolic company" of bishops. On entering into their assembly, "like some heavenly messenger of God, clothed with raiment which glittered as it were with rays of light, at first he remained standing, and when a low chair of wrought gold had been sent for him, he waited until the bishops had beckoned to him, and then sat down."⁴ But when, on the anniversary of the twentieth year of his reign the emperor entertains the bishops "at the imperial banquet, the circumstances of which were splendid beyond description," then our courtly bishop becomes entranced with a vision of more than millennial glories. "One might have thought that a picture of Christ's kingdom was thus shadowed forth, and that the scene was less like reality than a dream."⁵ The glory of the episcopal office, not lost even in death, but after the resurrection, shall grace these dignitaries of the church even in heaven. Thus Melito, bishop of Sardis, "whose walk and conversation was altogether under the influence of the Holy Spirit, now rests at Sardis, await-

¹ Lib. VI. c. 29.

⁴ Ibid. 10.

² Life of Const. III. 23.

⁵ Ibid. 15.

³ Ibid. 6, 7.

ing the *episcopate from heaven*, when he shall rise from the dead."

We may also distinctly notice in the same connection the germ of the pope's infallibility. The bishop himself administers his official duties, *ἐν ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι*, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.¹

The intercessions of the saints is another of the popish delusions of Eusebius. Potamiaena, on being led forth to death by Basilides, promises to him in return for his compassion and kindness towards her "to intercede for him with her Lord, and it would not be long before she would reward him for his kindness towards her." Accordingly, three days after her martyrdom, standing before him at night, [she] placed a crown upon his head, and said that she had entreated the Lord on his account, and had obtained her prayer, and ere long would take him with her. On this the brethren gave him the seal [of baptism] in the Lord; and he, bearing as distinguished testimony to the Lord, was beheaded."² Theodosia of Tyre herself suffers martyrdom in consequence of saluting certain prisoners, confessors of the kingdom of Christ—"as is probable, with a view to entreat them to remember her when they should come before the Lord."³ The intercession of the Virgin Mary is but a ready inference, a resistless conclusion from the efficacy of the prayers of departed saints.

The suicide of martyrs is repeatedly commemorated with evident approbation. Germanicus "eagerly irritated the wild beast against him, all but forcing and stimulating him, that he might the sooner be freed from this unjust and lawless generation."⁴ At Antioch "men and women, with a certain divine and irrepressible alacrity rushed into the fire."⁵ Some of the Christians, "sooner than be taken and fall into the hands of their enemies, cast themselves headlong from lofty houses, considering death an advantage,

¹ Τὸν ἐν ἁγίῳ πνεύματι πάντα πολιτευσάμενον; ὅς κεῖται ἐν Σάρδεσι περιμένων τὴν ἀπὸ τῶν οὐρανῶν ἐπισκοπήν. ἐν ἧ' ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστήσεται. — Lib. V. c. 24.

² Lib. VI. c. 5.

³ Lib. VIII. c. 7.

⁴ Lib. IV. c. 15. Comp. Lib. VIII. c. 6.

⁵ Ibid. c. 6.

compared with the malignity of these impious persecutors.”¹ Two noble young women, when threatened by their persecutors, with violence to their persons, “having requested the guards a little time to retire, on the way decently adjusted their garments and cast themselves into the flowing river.”² Another noble woman of Alexandria, under similar circumstances, requesting a little time to retire to her chamber, “when alone, thrust a sword into her breast.”³ These confessions, evincing more of Roman constancy than of religious consistency, win for themselves, through the encomiums of our historian, the crowns of martyrdom from papal Rome.

Kindred to these suicidal sacrifices is the zeal of Christians for martyrdom, often recorded by Eusebius with similar indications of approval, though but another of the saintly sins which have often been canonized by papacy.

Popish superstition raises abundant encouragement also from our historian’s account of the renovation manifested for martyrs and for holy relics. “The martyrs undeservedly live as the disciples and imitators of our Lord.” This is said by the church of Smyrna, in their account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, which Eusebius considers “it all-important also to record.” They add in conclusion: “Thus, at last, taking up his bones, more valuable than precious stones, more tried than gold, we deposited them where it is proper they should be. There, also, as far as we can, the Lord will grant us to assemble and celebrate the natal day of his martyrdom.”³ The erection of tombs and churches in honor of the martyrs of the churches of the holy sepulchre at Jerusalem, of the nativity at Bethlehem, of the ascension on the mount of Olives, saints’ days and festivals, — these are detailed by our historian as of the gravest importance, who so speaks of them as to commend these superstitions to us by the authority of his venerated name.

The miraculous interpositions of divine power in behalf of saints and martyrs are frequently detailed by Eusebius to the same effect. Whether we receive these narratives as

¹ Lib. VIII. c. 6.² Ibid. c. 12.³ Ibid. c. 15.⁴ Ibid.

pious frauds, or as instances of his overweening credulity, they equally impeach his authority as an historian. "Justus, surnamed Barsabus, though he drank a deadly poison, experienced nothing injurious, through the grace of the Lord."¹ Dionysius was encouraged to read heretical books 'by a vision sent from heaven, when a voice came to him and commanded him in words as follows: ' "Read all that thou takest in hand, for thou art qualified to correct and prove all, and this very thing has been the cause of thy faith in Christ from the beginning." The mouths of lions, leopards, and bears, to which the martyrs were exposed, have been stopped "by a divine and inscrutable power," and a savage bull when he had seized and tossed in air others, rushing upon "the saints with rage and menace — beating with his feet, and pushing with his horns hither and thither," goaded to madness by the spectators, "has been drawn back again by a divine interposition." All this is attested by Eusebius as an eye witness. "At these scenes we have been present ourselves, when we also observed the divine power of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, himself present, and effectually displayed in them; when, for a long time, the devouring wild beasts would not dare either to touch or to approach the bodies of these pious men, but directed their violence against others that were anywhere stimulating them from without. They would not touch the holy masters standing naked and striking at them with their hands as they were commanded in order to irritate the beasts against them. Sometimes, indeed, they would rush upon them, but, as if repulsed by some divine power, again retreated."²

Paul, according to the same venerable authority cited from Clement, had a wife "whom he did not take about with him, in order to expedite his ministry the better,"³ a miserable fiction in favor of celibacy.

Martyr women "who had contemplated a life of perpetual virginity," are subjects of special commendation. Enna-

¹ Lib. III. c. 29.² Lib. VIII. c. 7.³ Lib. III. c. 30.

that is "ennobled also by the virgin's fillet." And Constantine "distinguished with most special honor those who had devoted their lives to the practice of" celibacy, which to our Romanizing author, is "divine philosophy. This he does out of a respect little short of veneration for God's most holy and ever virgin guise."

Monasticism as well as celibacy "belongs to the discipline of the gospel." Persons "under the influence of an inspired and ardent faith instituted this mode of life in imitation of the ancient prophets." Women devoted themselves to celibacy "by a voluntary determination in consequence of that zealous desire of wisdom, in the earnest prosecution of which they disregarded the pleasures of the body." "Philo, when he made these statements, had in view the first heralds of the gospel, and the original practices handed down from the apostles."¹

The power of baptism to purify from sin, and baptismal regeneration, are clearly taught by Eusebius. The lapsed are purified "by baptism." They are "washed and purified from the filth of their old and impure leaven." Baptism is the "seal of immortality," which Constantine delayed for the close of life, that his soul might return to God washed from every sin. "Being at length convinced that his life was drawing to a close, he felt that the time was come at which he should seek to expiate the errors of his past career, firmly believing that, whatever sins he had committed as a mortal man, his soul would be purified from them through the efficacy of the mysterious words and the salutary waters of baptism." He "had thought to do this in the waters of the river Jordan, wherein our Saviour, for our example, is recorded to have been baptized." But God having otherwise ordered, he was baptized at Nicomedia, "the first of all sovereigns, who was regenerated and perfected in a church dedicated to the martyrs of Christ." Thus "renewed, filled with heavenly light," he "rejoiced in spirit," and said: "Now I know that I am truly blessed. Now I feel assured that

¹ Lib. II. c. 17.

I am accounted worthy of immortality, and made a partaker of divine light.”¹

A penitent heretic entreated Dionysius of Alexandria, “that he might have the benefit of this most perfect cleansing, reception and grace; which indeed,” he adds, “I did not dare to do, saying that his lay communion was sufficient for this: For one who had been in the habit of hearing thanksgiving, and repeating the amen, and standing and extending his hand to receive the sacred elements, and after viewing and becoming a partaker of the body and blood of our Lord and Saviour, Christ, for a long time, I would dare to renew again and further.”²

Confirmation, as the means of imparting the Holy Spirit, is another prelatival assumption distinctly recognized by the same authority. Dionysius in exposing the impiety of Novatus in claiming the episcopate, alleges that “he was not sealed (in confirmation) by the bishop,” and then adds: “But as he did not obtain this, how could he obtain the Holy Spirit? This mysterious grace, the power of receiving and imparting the Holy Spirit of God, is conferred by the laying on the hands of the bishop in confirmation.”³

Absolution is another efficacious grace of the sacraments. Even a morsel of sacramental bread absolves Serapion, a dying penitent. After remaining three days speechless, on the fourth he recovers a little, and says to his grandchild: “O son, how long do you detain me? I beseech you, hasten, and quickly absolve me. Call one of the presbyters to me.” He immediately becomes again speechless. It was night, and the presbyter was sick. But the bishop “gave the boy a small portion of the eucharist, telling him to dip it in water and to drop it in the mouth of the old man. The boy returned with the morsel. When he came near, before he entered, Serapion having recovered himself, said: ‘Thou

¹ Lib. VII. c. 2. 3. Life of Const. IV. c. 61, 62, 63.

² Eccl. Hist. Lib. VII. c. 9.

³ Τοῦτο δὲ μὴ τοχῶν πῶς ἂν τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἔτυχε. Ego impositionem manuum intelligo, qua episcopi spiritum Sanctum baptizatis conferebant. — Valerius, in Lib. VI. c. 43.

hast come, my son, but the presbyter could not come. But do thou quickly perform what thou art commanded, and dismiss me.' The boy moistened the bread and at the same time dropped it in the old man's mouth. And he, having swallowed a little, immediately expired. Was he not, then, evidently preserved, and did he not continue living until he was absolved; and his sins being wiped away, he could be acknowledged as a believer for the many good acts he had done?"¹ No doubt! a miraculous restoration, a resuscitation and revelation from heaven to prepare the way for a perfect absolution by a morsel of the eucharist. All this, gravely recorded as historic truth, is hardly exceeded by the most extravagant legends of the papacy herself, and the lying impostures of her priesthood.

The credulity of Eusebius is utterly invincible. Nothing, however incredible, transcends his belief. The flames "form a wall like an oven around the body of Polycarp, unable to consume it," but give off a "fragrant odor like the fumes of incense, or some other precious aromatic drugs;" and when the executioner plunges his sword into the martyr, such a quantity of blood gushed forth that the fire is extinguished; when the body of Apphianus, a noble youth of Cesarea, was cast into the sea, "suddenly a loud and uncommon crashing sound pervaded, not only the sea, but the whole surrounding heavens, so that the earth and the whole city was shaken by it; and, at the same time of this wonderful and sudden shaking, the body of the divine martyr was cast by the sea, before the gates of the city, as if unable to bear it."²

Constantine received direct revelations from God. He was taught to conquer by "a cross of light in the heavens," which he saw about midday as he was engaged in prayer; he was minutely instructed by "the Christ of God" to make his famous Labarum, the standard of the cross by which he won his conquests. Fifty men of "his body guard who were most distinguished for personal strength, valor

¹ Lib. V. c. 44.² Lib. VIII. c. 7.

and piety," were detailed for the sole care of his standard; one "who bore the standard, in an agony of fear," resigned it on a certain occasion to another, and immediately fell dead upon the spot, pierced by a dart from the enemy; but the standard bearer, though he was assailed by a continued shower of darts, remained unhurt, the staff of the standard receiving every weapon!" It was indeed "a truly marvellous circumstance" which might task the credulity even of Eusebius himself, had he not received this and the other details of the cross and the Labarum on the word and oath of Constantine who related them in his hearing.¹ Such are the fictions and falsehoods of the "blessed emperor," a pattern of piety, of faith, and prayer, and every grace, devised, no doubt, to invest with religious awe his sacred character, and his arms with a divine, resistless charm. We forbear to speak of other marvellous fictions and fables thickly strewn over the pages of Eusebius, which justly entitle him to the unhonored distinction of Father of the legendary superstition of papal Rome.

The exaggerated representations and distorted features which our historian every where gives of events and characters sadly detract from his merits, and often leave us in total uncertainty respecting the truth of his narrative. Licinius, whom Constantine honored with an "illustrious marriage" with his favorite sister, is like the most gracious emperor himself" in "great esteem for moderation and piety. These two pious rulers had been excited by God, the universal sovereign, against the two most profane tyrants," Maxentius and Maximin.

This same Licinius, when a little later at war with Constantine, "being himself of a nature hopelessly debased by sensuality, and degraded by the continual practice of adultery and other shameless vices, assumed his own worthless character as a specimen of human nature generally, and denied that the virtue of chastity and continence existed

¹ Life of Const. I. c. 28—30. II. c. 9.

among men.”¹ Was Licinius then a pattern of piety, or an example of shocking profligacy?

Constantine, the pious emperor of our worthy bishop, who labors for language adequately to set forth the exalted religious character of his sovereign; Constantine, this pattern of piety, “the meekest and gentlest and most benevolent of men,” “whose character shone with all the graces of religion,” was the murderer of “his most pious son, Crispus Caesar, resembling in all things his father;” he was the murderer of his own wife Fausta, “the daughter, wife, sister, and mother of so many princes.” He put to death Maximian, his father-in-law, and Licinius, the husband of his sister, after having spared his life for a time by her entreaties. Several others, connected with the court of Constantine, are said to have fallen victims to his anger or his suspicion, among whom we may mention particularly the son of Licinius and Constantia, a youth of amiable manners and great promise. “The stern jealousy of Constantine was unmoved by the prayers and tears of his favorite sister pleading for the life of a son whose rank was his only crime, and whose loss she did not long survive.” It is difficult to estimate the real character of Constantine. He was a bloody man, of mean and merciless jealousy; and if at heart a Christian, the bloodiest of all the saints above we must believe, who “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

But his panegyrist, in contemplating the state of the deceased emperor, loses sight of the sober dignity of the historian in this most extraordinary rhapsody. “When I raise my thoughts even to the arch of Heaven, and there contemplate his thrice blessed soul in communion with God Himself, freed from any mortal and earthy vesture, and shining in a refulgent robe of light; and when I perceive that it is no more connected with the fleeting periods and occupations of mortal life, but honored with an ever-blooming crown, and an immortality of endless and blessed existence;

¹ Hist. IX. c. 9. Life of Const. I. c. 52.

I stand as it were entranced and deprived of all power of utterance; and so while I condemn my own weakness, and impose silence on myself, I resign the task of speaking his praises worthily to one who is better able, even to Him who alone has power, being the immortal God the Word, to confirm the truth of his own sayings.”¹

Making due allowance for the corrupt rhetorical taste of those times, still, when Eusebius becomes so bewildered by what the emperor did, not for a pure spiritual Christianity, but for the outward forms of religion, as to ascribe to the purest motives of piety the tyranny that would not brook a rival, and that was disgraced by the meanest acts of jealousy, revenge, and murder; when he sees the tyrant going, under a divine inspiration, to a war waged only by selfish and sinister motives, and sees him ascend from scenes of carnage and murder, thrice blessed, to the throne of infinite purity; we must withhold from him all confidence as an historian, and all respect as the reputed father of Ecclesiastical History. Whether his exaggerations, legends, and falsehoods are to be received as “pious frauds,” or as the convictions of his credulity and zeal for episcopacy, they are equally an impeachment of his authority as an historian.

¹ Life of Const. I. c. 2.