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A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bib-sacra\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php)

## ARTICLE V.

REVIEW OF CHASE'S EDITION OF THE APOSTOLICAL  
CONSTITUTIONS.

*The work claiming to be the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, including the Canons; Whiston's Version, revised from the Greek; with a prize Essay at the University of Bonn, upon their Origin and Contents; translated from the German, by Iraha Chase, D. D. New-York: D. Appleton & Co. 1844. pp. 496, 8vo. price \$2,50.*

THE literary progress of our country is marked by the increasing demand for such works as this and Neander's Church History. We hope their sale will amply reward the toil and enterprise of the translators and the publishers.

The present work is elegantly printed and is well executed in all its parts. The Constitutions occupy 257 pages; the prize essay on their contents, date, design, etc., 212; and a separate dissertation on the Canons, by the same author, 26 pages. The last work is the same which was presented to our readers in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Feb., 1847.

The Constitutions are divided into eight books, and each book into many short chapters or sections. That part of the work which is called the Canons, eighty-five in number, constitutes the last chapter, which is much longer than any of the others. These Constitutions are all put forth in the name of one or more of the apostles, and embrace a great variety of matter in regard to morals, the forms of divine worship, the rights and ranks and duties of the clergy, etc. The first sentence is as follows: "The apostles and elders to all those who from among the Gentiles have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ; grace and peace from the Almighty God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, be multiplied to you in the acknowledgment of him."

The first book is entitled, "Concerning the Laity; the second, Concerning Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons; book third, Concerning Widows; book fourth, Concerning Orphans; book fifth, Concerning Martyrs; book sixth, Concerning Schisms; book seventh, Concerning Department and the Eucharist and Initiation into Christ; and book eighth, Concerning Gifts and Ordinations and Ecclesiastical Canons."

Book II. c. 11, is as follows: "On this account, therefore, O bish-

op, endeavor to be pure in thine actions, and to adorn thy place and dignity, as sustaining the character of God among men in ruling over all men, over priests, kings, rulers, fathers, children, masters, and in general over all those who are subject to thee; and to sit in the church, when thou speakest, as having authority to judge offenders. For to you, O bishops, it is said, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." The next chapter begins thus: "Do thou, therefore, O bishop, judge with authority, like God; yet receive the penitent."

We select, also, as specimens two or three of the shortest Canons. 7. "Let not a bishop, or a presbyter, or a deacon undertake the cares of this world; but if he do, let him be deposed." 11. "If any one, even privately, pray with a person excommunicated, let him be suspended." 20. "Let a clergyman who becometh surety, be deposed." 55. "If any one of the clergy abuse his bishop, let him be deposed." 69. "If any bishop, or presbyter, or deacon, or reader, or singer, do not keep the holy quadragesimal fast, or do not fast on the fourth day of the week, or on the preparation, let him be deposed, unless he be hindered by weakness of body; but if the offender be a layman, let him be suspended." 58. "If any bishop, or presbyter, or deacon, do not, on festival days, partake of flesh or wine (abominating them, and not for his own exercise) let him be deposed, as *having a scared conscience*, and becoming a scandal to many."

If we find room, we shall be glad to subjoin further specimens; but these may be enough to give some idea of the general character of the Constitutions to those who may need it. We therefore proceed to some remarks which have occurred to us while examining the work.

It is as true as it is paradoxical, that some books, once the most pernicious in their influence, are now among the most salutary;—salutary, too, just in proportion as they were pernicious, and *because* they were pernicious. Stripped of their false guise and convicted of their evil deeds, they become our most trustworthy monitors for all future time. Such, to all Protestant Christendom, is now eminently the fact with the Apostolical Constitutions;—that ancient work of such mysterious origin, but potent and abiding influence. Perhaps neither the time nor the place nor the chief author of this pious fraud, was ever known to more than one man. The secret may have died with the fabricator. Be this, however, as it may, the work itself was early spread; generally if not universally regarded as of apostolical authority; and of course exerted a powerful influence in forming the principles and moulding the institutions of the papal and oriental churches.

The grand moral of the whole complicated production, is twofold, the external unity of the church and the exaltation of her clergy. The first was essential to the highest attainment of the last, though perhaps not so intended by the author. With this general and decided bearing, it is easy to see its influence in preparing the way for prelatical domination. And this influence it would doubtless have continued to exert, with undiminished power in the corrupted churches, had it not been for a further pious fraud, of later date, perpetrated even upon these same Constitutions, by interpolations of an Arian cast. This at length opened the eyes of some of the leaders of the church, and the work was condemned by a council held at Constantinople in 692. From this condemnation, however, the eighty-five Canons, containing most of the prelatical assumptions, were excepted.

Here, by way of counteraction, already appeared some good from one of these frauds. It came, however, too late and was too limited in extent to undo the evil and arrest the tide of usurpation which had so long been flowing and which, on the one hand, was so congenial to human ambition and, on the other, so flattering to the then blinded vision of the best men in the church. For then, indeed, as well as now, good men saw and deplored the evils of prelatical oppression; but strange as it may now seem, instead of removing the source, they were as zealous as the most ambitious prelates themselves for increasing the power of the bishops. From the very origin of these assumptions, in the second or third century, on to their climax under a Hildebrand or an Innocent III., the vain hope was indulged that the *abuse* of power was to be curbed by the erection of a still *higher* power, just as in the delusive dream which has ever beguiled the nations into civil despotism. The process was simply this. First, in order to check discords and abuses among the pastors or bishops of the individual churches, as Jerome suggests, a diocesan was created to preside over and control them. Then, it was found necessary to create an archbishop, to keep the diocesans in order; then a patriarch to curb the archbishop; and finally, a pope, with still greater power, to rule the whole. Till long after all this was done, and much more of the like kind by way of general councils and other devices, even the best and wisest in the church still cherished the delusive hope, that the proper check to an abuse of power, was the erection of a superior power,—not dreaming that the very antidote they prescribed was itself the bane; or rather, insanely imagining, that when they had enthroned a single man as Christ's vicegerent on earth, he would become more like Christ himself in the exercise of unlimited dominion, instead of becoming more like the devil.

Nothing but the fearful experiment of more than a thousand years, could begin to open the eyes of men to this cardinal fallacy. Like honest but desperate empirics, they firmly believed their nostrum a sovereign remedy if it could only be forced down in sufficiently large portions. Their mistake lay in the very nature of sinful man, vainly imagining that there was somewhere a point of elevation in which he would cease to do evil and learn to do well by the removal of personal restraint and by possessing power to restrain others. And right well did the corrupt and ambitious spirits who thus mounted to power, rejoice in this popular delusion—themselves also, perhaps, just as sincerely abating in the general frenzy and hoping for a final good result to so mad a career. Just as in the case of civil usurpers, there was of course always some hideous dragon, real or imaginary, to be crushed beneath the wheels of their mighty car.

In one sense, this whole process was as needless as it was vile and foolish. Christ had given his disciples the clear outlines of a very different polity, and had expressly warned them against the whole spirit of such a movement. Of course they might have known better. But in another view, we may say, there was a moral necessity for the whole sad experiment. In such a world as this, even good men will never learn by mere precept. Our first parents even, though in their pristine purity, did not abide by God's directions. It is a world of experiments, and every imaginable device must be tried. And, what more natural than that of popery? In such a world, nothing short of experience, and that of the hardest, can restrain or recover the church from human inventions, and bring her to the stable practice of Christ's directions. Happy for us, then (if we will only profit by the result) that so much of this experimenting is already done. But in order that we may profit by it, the history of every experiment should be preserved and carefully studied; if not, then all has been suffered in vain, and must be suffered over again. We must know, not only the general result, but also the causes and the process; in short, the beginning and the middle and the end. Then, and then only, shall we be prepared for a thorough reform; and then only, if already reformed, shall we be effectually guarded from all approaches to the like folly.

It is in view of facts and principles like these, that we may venture to assign so high a rank in present and prospective usefulness, to a work once so pernicious as the stupendous forgery now before us. Though not the prime cause of popery—for that is to be found in the depths of human nature—it was among the earliest and most effective agencies in the organization of all the spiritual despotisms that have

existed in the church. And now like an arch-culprit, in chains on the gibbet, it hangs an everlasting memento to the whole world. The history of the detection and the complete proof of the imposture, are most amply detailed in the very learned treatises which accompany the original documents.

In publishing these Constitutions in a new dress, and in his excellent translation of the accompanying dissertations, Dr. Chase has therefore conferred a lasting obligation on the increasing millions who speak the English language. The work will be needed and will therefore be read wherever this language shall be spoken. If sent to all, as we believe it has already been sent to some, of our missionary stations in Western Asia, it will serve as a remedy for the inveterate maladies so early generated by these very Constitutions.

But while we thus speak of the malignant influence of these Constitutions wherever they were regarded or may still be in part regarded as authentic, it is not to be supposed that they bear, on their face, anything of a malign aspect. Precisely the contrary. Nothing could smile more benignly. In his most infernal deeds, Satan always appears as an angel of light. It is his only hope of success. Nor is it any more to be supposed that the man or the men who forged these Constitutions and palmed them on the world as productions of the apostles, were conscious of any sinister purpose. Their motives throughout, so far as appears from the work itself, were not only pure, but of the most exalted kind, aiming at the salvation of men, the glory of God, the best interests of the church, and the support of what they regarded as sound morality. Often, we have chapter after chapter of the most unobjectionable and salutary matter, and all in an air of the most solemn and dignified earnestness. There is no trifling, and not a great deal which can be called trivial. Compared with the more recent fictions of full-blown superstition, there is everywhere a dignity which the rather befits those very apostles whose names they bear. Hence one among the many proofs, that the authors were men of talents, and of some taste, and no little skill, and that they lived at a pretty early period. At all events, they well understood their art. Compared with the silly things we find in the Koran, in the later fictions of the Papists, or of our own Mormon or Shaker prophets of the present hour, their work is purity and dignity itself.

Nor are the authors of the Constitutions to be convicted of any personally ambitious or sinister designs. If laymen, they were most meek and self-denying in prostrating all laymen in the dust before the priesthood. If clergymen, as most probably they were from their thorough acquaintance with ecclesiastical affairs, they were wide awake

to the self-restricting office of guarding equally the purity of clerical life and against the abuse of clerical power. They would compel themselves, as well as their whole order, to a most holy, meek and self-denying life, to the most sedulous discharge of their sacred functions, to a renunciation of the world and all its pomp, to the practice of the most rigid discipline, and to the most equitable use of all their own large powers and the most humble submission to the still higher authority of their own superiors. As before intimated, their grand fault is not to be found in their purpose, but in the fatally mistaken mode for its execution. They saw as clearly and lamented as sincerely as we do, the abuses of power in their day; but they sought to check its abuse in the many by increasing this power in the few. This was but throwing oil instead of water on the incipient volcano. And here is the grand deception of Satan in this movement, so far as it may be attributed to him. For him thus to lead even good and able men into such an error, may well be pronounced a greater achievement than to impel his own ambitious votaries to avail themselves of these facilities in his service. To make the very angels do his work, and on so great a scale as this proved in the end, is something more than transforming himself into an angel of light.

If deemed too charitable towards the authors of so sacrilegious a forgery, we must say, that our charity is the fruit of a patient consideration of their production, in connection with the circumstances of their age, and is, moreover, at the expense of all our prepossessions. We may also say, that the cause of truth has always something to lose and nothing to gain by unduly imputing wrong motives or a bad character to the authors of even the most pernicious movements. It is itself a kind of pious fraud, and must, sooner or later, recoil on its source. Nay, the very idea, so natural to us, that very bad schemes must have originated with bad men, is as fatal to the safety of the church as it is false to her history. It leads her unduly to judge of measures by the religious character of their advocates and not by their intrinsic merits, and thus puts her off her guard, just as in the days of her ancient simplicity, whenever human expedients, of whatever kind, are proposed by men whom she deems eminent saints. Thus does she become prepared, not only to follow blindly in the path of good but imperfect men, but also tamely to resign herself to the dictates of such consummate hypocrites as have the craft and the audacity to palm themselves on her credulity in the garb of sanctity. Even the pope of Rome himself has increased his assumptions and swayed his boundless power over men, partly if not chiefly, by arrogating to himself the appellation of *His Holiness*, and causing himself to be regard-

ed as the very personification of unerring rectitude. And when, by the unutterable wickedness of an Alexander VI. and a Julius II., just before the Reformation, the charm of papal sanctity was broken, a grand impediment was removed to a reform for which the church had been sighing for two hundred years.

It is, then, as much our wisdom as our duty to do full justice to the moral character and purposes of these and all the other early forgers of revered documents, however misguided their policy or baleful their influence.

‘But can it be, that *good* men should ever be left to practise such frauds? to palm on the world, in the very name of “The Holy Apostles,” what themselves had fabricated? Be their design ever so good, could they think it right to promote their designs by falsehood? and that, too, in so awful a transaction as that of a *religious* forgery? Could they think themselves even doing God service while writing spurious gospels and Apostolical Constitutions to bind the church forever as by divine authority?—With all our present light, this does indeed seem too atrocious for belief. But this light, when soon lost after the days of the apostles, has been but very slowly regained, and that by small gradations. Even now, the film is not completely purged from all *protestant* eyes—to say nothing of the state of the papal vision. Do not some pious physicians and pious nurses and pious mothers think it right to lie to sick children for their good; and some pious officers in the army to lie to the enemy? And was not Paley a pious man when he advocated these “white lies?” And if good men can now believe it right to lie in order to save the lives of their fellow mortals, why might not good men, in a darker age, think it right to lie to save men’s souls? and, if right, why not an incumbent duty? nay, a duty just so much the more imperative as the object was vast and the subject awful? If right in principle, even in the smallest things, the most religious awe, arising from the solemn and stupendous nature of the forgery, instead of deterring, would but impel to the deed. It could only warn the fabricator to a greater scrupulosity in the right performance of his momentous office. He must see to it that what he inculcated was right, a truly *pious* fraud; and then, that it was so fabricated as to surpass the power of detection, and thus do the utmost good to the end of time.

The believer, then, in justifiable lying of any kind, at the present day, is guilty of a gross absurdity while uttering his astonishment at the audacity of those early forgers for applying the same principle to things so *sacred*. It was precisely where it *ought* to be applied, if applied at all. They were the brave men whom he ought rather to

commend for acting up to their principles in transactions so perilous to their own souls as well as the souls of others, if not done in a right manner. But if now, on the other hand, the moral absurdity of lying in regard to things so solemn and sacred, and on so vast a scale, glares most frightfully on his half enlightened vision, let him renounce utterly, in theory as well as practice, all lying in whatever case. Till then, he must at least acknowledge their consistency and his own absurdity.

As a matter of fact, the doctrine of pious frauds had long been taught in the world. Plato had himself inculcated it, though with great restrictions. By his followers, the converted Eclectics, it is supposed to have been fostered if not first brought into the church, in the second century. Tertullian, in his work on baptism, written about the close of that century, sec. 17, speaks of a certain presbyter in Asia who had forged a writing in the name of Paul, and who, on being convicted of the fault, pleaded that he had done it out of love to the apostle, and yielded up his place. From this it is manifest, on the one hand, that such frauds had already been commenced, and, on the other, that they were by no means generally approved; nor, indeed, are we to suppose such a thing ever to have been sanctioned by the church at large, however prevalent both the doctrine and the practice may afterwards have become. A multitude of other spurious works were ere long found in circulation, of which we have a brief but interesting notice, by Dr. Chase, in his preface to the present work.

With such a doctrine afloat and such a practice, however discountenanced by the great body of the church, we need not wonder that some good men should be found guilty of it, especially at a period when many in the church were but half converted from their heathenish practices and principles.

With some, the early existence of so many false gospels and other spurious works, may prove a stumbling block to their faith in the genuineness of any of the early records. Indeed, infidels have not unfrequently urged this point with great vehemence. But it can have force only with the half taught in these matters. A great part of the forgeries were detected at a very early period. And in regard to the rest, it is as surprising as it is delightful to see how the increasing skill of criticism is enabled to detect, not only the forgery, but very nearly the period, if not also the country, in which it was perpetrated. And then, the same skill which detects the false, serves also more completely to verify the true; and thus the result of the whole is, if possible, a more complete proof of the genuineness of the true gospels and epistles than if none had ever been forged.

To see this in a strong light, let any candid and intelligent mind take the important and difficult case of these Apostolical Constitutions, including the Canons. When the reader has gone through with the entire volume now before us, he will hardly fail of being impressed with the magical power of criticism in tracing the long hidden footsteps of imposture, and will doubtless conclude, with the author of the essays, that nearly all the Constitutions except the last book, were written in the last half of the third century and somewhere among the oriental churches; and that a few interpolations, together with the whole of the last book, were added by the hand of some Arian, in the latter part of the fourth century,—the Canons being, however, chiefly a compilation of previous forgeries at different times. We have no space for showing how these results are reached.

But we must add that, important as are the main results, they are but a small part of the benefit to the reader. He is, as it were, carried back to that early period of the church, then in her forming or rather her most deplorably transforming state, and seated in the midst of her worshipping and her deliberative assemblies, there to witness, not only her forms of worship, her singing, her prayers, and the minute regulations of her assemblies, but also those blind though honest efforts for reforming abuses, whereby she plunged succeeding generations into tenfold greater evils. In short, it is only by reading such ancient works as these, and with such helps, that one can become master of the ecclesiastical antiquities of the period. And, for this purpose, it is no objection at all, that the work is a forgery, the moment we have detected its real character and date. For, though a fiction in regard to the past, it was a true picture of the existing and forthcoming realities. And by showing us, in the very germ, many of the corruptions in the church, it is the best possible refutation of the high claims of those hoary abuses, and affords, in the end, the highest proof and the highest commendation of those few and plain and simple rites left us in the New Testament, and likewise of that divinely simple and yet most safe and efficient church polity there sketched. We must also say, that if one would gain his crowning conviction, not only of the genuineness but also of the authenticity of our divine records, we know of no surer way than for him candidly to compare them with any or all the spurious works which have claimed a like origin. Such is the glaring contrast that, while the one class is plainly of the earth, the other is as manifestly from heaven.

But while we see much of the evils and mistakes of the early church in these false writings, we see, so far as quantity is concerned, a vast deal more that is highly commendable. There is everywhere, as be-

fore intimated, the same solemn and earnest spirit as in her authentic history; and even in her fictions we should, if we would do her justice, always remember her good intentions; and thus, instead of utterly scorning her person, we shall rather commiserate her disadvantages, and sympathize in those bloody struggles in which she was, at that very period, so gloriously preserving for us the rich legacy bequeathed by our common Lord.

Before closing our remarks we must say, that the translations appear to have been made with skill and fidelity. We have, to some extent, compared the version of the Constitutions with the original Greek, and that of the Essay with the German. Krabbe's shorter Dissertation, which was written in Latin, we have not compared, but have no reason to suspect the fidelity of the translation, while here the English diction is decidedly superior to what we find in the translation of the Essay. This difference may be attributed to the peculiar difficulty of rendering modern German into good English, as both productions are from the same pen and on the same general subject, and both translated by the same hand. So far as diction is concerned, the task of translating is always incomparably more difficult than that of original composition. But in translating German, there seems to be this strange and singular fatality, that the more one is versed in the language and enamored with its forms, the less is he capacitated for writing pure English. Thus an accomplished German scholar may unwittingly speak of his endeavors to *render* a faithful version, or may thank a friend for his invaluable assistance in *overlooking* the proof-sheets. The many and close analogies between the two languages, gradually blinds him to the points of difference, and he unconsciously falls into *Germanisms*, both in the use of terms and the structure of sentences. *Übersetzen*, for example, means to *look over* as well as to *overlook*, and is composed of a preposition and a verb, just like our word *overlook*; and from such close analogies the student of German forgets the slight variations and thus gradually loses his native idiom. So, too, in regard to the import of single words. For instance, *Bewusstseyn*, defined in the dictionaries as meaning *consciousness*, is now very often employed in quite a different sense, and might just about as well be represented by *abracadabra* as by our word *consciousness*. And yet it is indiscriminately rendered by this word in some of our best translations, and the mere English reader is often left to divine the meaning, as best he can, from the connection. If the translator himself cannot divine its meaning or cannot give that meaning in English without a most tedious paraphrase, as may sometimes be the fact, it would be better to transfer the uncouth word itself than to put the

reader on a false scent in quest of its import. Why a like infirmity does not cleave to our scholars when translating from Latin or Greek, is a question of some interest, but we will not enter further on it here.

In the translations before us from the Latin and the Greek, we have noticed no violations of good English either in the use of words or the structure of sentences, while in that from the German, our attention has been frequently arrested by the German tinge in both these respects. Some instances of the kind will be found in the following criticism, by Dr. Krabbe, on the first epistle of Clement of Rome, who was contemporary with the apostles, and to whom the writing of the Constitutions as given by the apostles, was anciently ascribed. The paragraph is worth the reader's attention for higher purposes than that of verbal criticism on the translation.

“In modern times, the genuineness of this first epistle, as a whole, has generally been acknowledged. Still we cannot pronounce it free from considerable interpolations. It seems to be equally unworthy of Clement, and of the whole apostolical simplicity of his letter, if he, from the fable of the bird Phoenix (Ep. I. c. 25 and c. 26), should wish to illustrate the possibility of the resurrection from the dead. Much rather can we hold this narrative to be an interpolation which belongs to a later age, in which the Christian consciousness [Bewusstsein] had reeased, and men were pleased with such argumentations. The conjecture also might not be too adventurous to place these and similar interpolations in the age of our Constitutions. At least, the same account of the bird Phoenix is found also in our Constitutions; and if there is a difference in the account, it is not an essential one. In the epistle to the Corinthians, Clement relates that this bird dies in Arabia; but our Constitutions (V. 7), that it builds itself a funeral pile in Egypt, and consumes itself by fire. On the contrary, the agreement in the cited passage of the Constitutions is very essential, since the account of the bird Phoenix is also here mentioned as presenting a case analogous to the resurrection of men, and as being an account from which also the heathen had argued. Once more; the passage in c. 40, is very much to be suspected, because it transfers the whole Jewish priesthood into the Christian church; while, in the other parts of the letter, the simple relations of the apostolic age prevail, and Clement sets bishops and presbyters or elders on a level, and uses these titles interchangeably. See c. 42 and 44. Here also the same interpolator could [may] have been busy, who composed the Constitutions, and transferred into them the whole Levitical system of priests. This first epistle to the Corinthians might [may], as for

the rest, be [have been] the only genuine document which has come to us, from the historical [real] Clement." p. 348.

We have spoken the more freely on this matter of Germanized English, because we think our language is seriously suffering from this source, in the hands of some of our theological writers, just as it suffered, an age or two ago, from popular essayists who were enamored with French modes and idioms. The present evil, however, has arisen perhaps still more from a fondness for German terminology in philosophy, than from our numerous translations of German authors. We ought also to say, that the foregoing specimen from Dr. Chase is by no means a fair sample of his style; for generally, even when translating from the German, his language is pure and correct; and the reader is, moreover, under great obligations to him for the pains he has taken in breaking up and disentangling the long and complicated sentences of his author.

There is also another and more serious topic on which we must be allowed to remark, lest our silence should be regarded as implying assent. After mentioning the fact that pedobaptism is commended in the Constitutions, Prof. Krabbe says, p. 410: "This is altogether in harmony with the view which, already, we have often indicated in respect to the time of the Constitutions. It is ascertained that pedobaptism does not belong to the apostolic age; and it is difficult to point out its existence before the time of Tertullian, who zealously opposed it. In his time, this practice seems to have been first coming into existence; for the passages in Irenæus,<sup>1</sup> and in Clement of Alexandria, will hardly bear criticism, and can prove the contrary of that for which they have sometimes been adduced. But after the time of Tertullian, it was rapidly introduced, and about the middle and towards the end of the third century, it was received in the Alexandrian and North African church, and only there.<sup>2</sup> Still there were at that time

<sup>1</sup> Neander says, that "Irenæus is the first church teacher in whom we find any allusion to infant baptism," and thinks "it is difficult to conceive how the term regeneration," as applied to infants in the passage from Irenæus, "can denote anything else than baptism." Of course he thinks the passage *will bear criticism*, though he agrees with Krabbe in his general position, that pedobaptism was introduced into the church at some period after the apostles, but when or how or by whom, neither he nor any other writer has told us. See Neander's Church History, translated by Torrey, I. 311.

<sup>2</sup> Neander thinks otherwise, and that it was then practised in Persia, where it can hardly be supposed to have recently spread from Africa. "In the Persian church, infant baptism was, in the course of the third century, so generally recognized that the sect founder Manes thought he could draw an argument from it in favor of a doctrine which seemed to him necessarily presupposed by this applica-

those who, viewing baptism as an *opus operatum*, expected from it a mysterious and magical forgiveness of sins, and therefore deferred it as long as possible. Against these, now, our Constitutions speak most decidedly and warn them not to put off conversion to the hour of death."

The fact that the Constitutions reprobate the practice of postponing baptism to the hour of death, is indeed good proof that they were not composed till after the existence of this culpable practice, which cannot be traced back beyond the age of Tertullian whose doctrine, as we shall soon see, led most directly to the practice. But Prof. K. goes further than this, and seems to suppose that their injunction of *infant* baptism at all, is a proof of their origin in the latter part of the third century. "It is ascertained," says he, "that pedobaptism does not belong to the apostolic age." This is a pretty strong assertion on a question so long and so strenuously disputed. But the author does not tell how or by whom the *biblical* argument for pedobaptism has been "ascertained" to be worthless. He and Gieseler and some other German writers of distinction, first *assume* this fact as proved; and then they proceed to search in the uninspired records of the church, for the origin of the institution, as though it *must* have arisen after the apostles. And the first indubitable trace they can find of it, is in the passage in Tertullian's noted work on Baptism, about the year 200; a work designed neither to support nor to deny infant baptism, but to crush "a certain most venomous serpent of the heresy of the Cainites, lately dwelling in these parts,—that most monstrous woman Quintilla, who had not the right to teach even pure doctrine," and who had begun with denying *all* baptism.

We have here no room for discussing at large the early history of pedobaptism; but, as this single passage of Tertullian is the chief testimony referred to by our author and other German writers whom we have read on the same side, we think it proper to quote the passage, and thus give our readers an opportunity to judge for themselves of its bearing on the main question.

But we must first state most distinctly what the main question is; for by losing sight of this, we are liable to pervert his testimony. Prof. K. says, that 'it is difficult to point out the existence of pedo-

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tion of the rite." See Neander's Ch. Hist. I. 314. Manes was put to death by the Persian king in 377. As he wrote in the Syriac language, he would not be likely to argue from a custom not admitted by the Christians who spoke that language, and therefore the *Syrians* as well as the Persian church may be regarded as then *practising* the rite. And as he resided for a while in India, and even travelled to China, after appearing as a Christian teacher, he must have been extensively acquainted with the Christian rites as practised in the East.

baptism before the time of Tertullian, *who zealously opposed it.* True enough, he did oppose it with all zeal, as the reader will soon see. But the question is not, whether he *opposed* pedobaptism, but in what *sense* did he oppose it? and on what *grounds*? Was it because *wrong* and *unlawful* in itself? Or was it only on the ground of a decided *inexpediency* in most cases? If the former, then his testimony is against the rite itself; if the latter, it is impliedly but just as decisively in its favor. And if the former, so laconic a writer can give his testimony in a word; if the latter, he may deign to reason a little in support of it, especially if in favor of a position entirely new and opposed to the established custom. With these needful remarks as to the question itself, we present his testimony, as translated by Dodgson and printed in the Library of the Fathers.

“But they, to whom the office belongeth, know that baptism must not be rashly entrusted. In every petition there may be both deceit and self-deception. Wherefore the delaying of baptism is more profitable according to the condition, and disposition, and moreover the age of each person, but especially in the case of children. For why is it necessary, if the thing be not so necessary,<sup>1</sup> that the sponsors also be brought into danger? For both they themselves may, from their mortal nature, fail of their promises, and they may be disappointed by the growing up of a bad disposition. The Lord indeed saith, Forbid them not to come unto me. Let them come when they are of riper years; let them come when they are disciples, when they are taught

<sup>1</sup> *Si non tam necesse est*; if it be not so necessary. This is the more exact rendering, and also preserves more exactly a strong Shakespearian element of style everywhere found in the writings of the terse, abrupt, antithetic and obscure Tertullian. Perhaps it was on account of its obscurity that it has ever been omitted in the text of Tertullian. Dodgson has restored it; but does not tell us why or on what authority, or whether himself understands it. But, for both its import and its pertinency, we have only to advert to what Tertullian had just said, in the preceding section, on the necessity for even a layman's baptizing, in case of extreme danger of death. “For then is a boldness, in him that aideth, admissible, when the case of him that is in danger, is urgent. For he will be guilty of destroying a man, if he shall forbear to do that for him which he had free power to do.” A necessity arising from the danger of death, is then the necessity spoken of in the parenthetic clause, and which was to create an exception to Tertullian's general rule. His meaning is simply this: ‘Why is it necessary for the sponsors to incur this peril, provided it be not such a case of life and death as I have just mentioned?’

The clause is exactly one which an ignorant or unreflecting transcriber would be apt to omit, but which no man would be likely to foist into the text; and the whole manner is so much like that of Tertullian as to bear *prima facie* evidence of its genuineness. And if genuine, it casts additional light on Tertullian's views of the *lawfulness* of infant baptism.

whither they are coming; let them become Christians when they are able to know Christ. Why is the age of innocence in haste for the remission of sins? Men will act more cautiously in worldly matters, so that to one, to whom no earthly substance is committed, that which is divine is committed!<sup>1</sup> Let them know how to ask for salvation, that thou mayest seem to give to him that asketh. With no less reason unmarried persons also should be put off, within whom temptation is already prepared, as well in virgins by reason of their riper age, as in widows by reason of their wandering about, until they either marry or be confirmed in continency. *They that understand the weighty nature of baptism will fear its attainment rather than its postponement. Faith unimpaired is assured of salvation.*" De Bap. c. 18.

We think so terse and uncompromising a polemic as Tertullian would not have wasted half these words in dissuading from the then obvious custom of pedobaptism, provided he thought the custom itself unlawful. He would have said so at once, and passed to other matters. But, instead of even saying it all, he only urges prudential considerations against needless haste in this matter, just as also in the case of all unmarried persons. And then, in the last two sentences, which we have put in italics, he assigns the grand reason for this delay. And it embodies precisely the reason mentioned by Prof. K. that *opus operatum*, that "mysterious and magical forgiveness of sins," expected from baptism in the third century, "which led men to defer it as long as possible." This was obviously Tertullian's doctrine. Such, in his view, was "the weighty nature of baptism," that they who had once received it must keep "the faith unimpaired" by sin, if they would be sure of salvation. Hence was it such presumption to have it administered to infants or to unmarried persons,—unless in danger of death. And we make this exception, not merely because of the general tenor of his argument, but also because, in the preceding section, he had taught, that even a layman ought to baptize in a case of extreme danger, and that he would be even guilty of destroying the person by refusing to do it. And that this extended to infants as well as others, is further obvious from his belief in original sin, and that all sin is to be washed away by baptism.

But it is enough for our present purpose thus briefly to have placed before our readers the noted passage so often alleged against pedobaptism. Were we discussing the whole question of its early history, we think it might be shown that all the earlier as well as the later

<sup>1</sup> Tertullian regarded the benefit conferred by baptism in the light of a divine treasure which might be lost, like any other treasure, by a heedless child, or thrown away by a wanton youth.

testimony that is at all relevant, goes only to establish the practice, and that the *lawfulness* of pedobaptism was never then called in question by any but those who, like the female preacher whom Tertullian so fiercely assailed, denied *all* water baptism.

Though Tertullian, in the passage above cited, seems to think, that only a faith *unimpaired* can assure salvation, yet, in his work on Penitence, where he treats the subject much more at large, he says, c. 7, that an offender may once, by repentance and confession, "but only for once, and never again," regain what he acquired by baptism. After he became a Montanist, he denied the possibility of any restoration after the first lapse into sin.

It was obviously from such views of "the weighty nature of baptism," and the peril of losing what it was supposed to confer, that Tertullian and many others judged it expedient to defer the rite, not only in the case of infants but also of other persons who might be peculiarly exposed to temptation;—and thus the emperor Constantine, at a subsequent period, deferred his own baptism almost to the very hour of his death, some twenty years after his complete conversion to Christianity. Indeed, so far did some carry this matter, even in the days of Tertullian, that he charged them with pleading a license for sinning and for postponing repentance, *because* not as yet baptized. De Poenit. 6. And Neander, speaking of the same period and the same view of the power of baptism, says, "Hence it was, that many who meant to embrace Christianity, delayed their baptism for a long time, that they might meanwhile surrender themselves without disturbance to their pleasures, hoping to be made quite pure at last by the rite of baptism." Ch. Hist. I. 252.

It was our intention to subjoin some further extracts from the Constitutions, and especially from that portion which confers the most extravagant prerogatives on the clergy. But our limits forbid; and we close by again commending the whole work to all who would gain a thorough knowledge of the early history of the church.

R. E.