

**The History of The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire**

**By**

**Edward Gibbon**

# HISTORY OF THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

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## VOLUME TWO

Chapter XVI: Conduct Towards The Christians, From Nero To  
Constantine.--Part I.

The Conduct Of The Roman Government Towards The Christians,  
From The Reign Of Nero To That Of Constantine. [1a]

[Footnote 1a: The sixteenth chapter I cannot help considering as a very ingenious and specious, but very disgraceful extenuation of the cruelties perpetrated by the Roman magistrates against the Christians. It is written in the most contemptibly factious spirit of prejudice against the sufferers; it is unworthy of a philosopher and of humanity. Let the narrative of Cyprian's death be examined. He had to relate the murder of an innocent man of advanced age, and in a station deemed venerable by a considerable body of the provincials of Africa, put to death because he refused to sacrifice to Jupiter. Instead of pointing the indignation of posterity against such an atrocious act of tyranny,

he dwells, with visible art, on the small circumstances of decorum and politeness which attended this murder, and which he relates with as much parade as if they were the most important particulars of the event.

Dr. Robertson has been the subject of much blame for his real or supposed lenity towards the Spanish murderers and tyrants in America. That the sixteenth chapter of Mr. G. did not excite the same or greater disapprobation, is a proof of the unphilosophical and indeed fanatical animosity against Christianity, which was so prevalent during the latter part of the eighteenth century.--Mackintosh: see Life, i. p. 244, 245.]

If we seriously consider the purity of the Christian religion, the sanctity of its moral precepts, and the innocent as well as austere lives of the greater number of those who during the first ages embraced the faith of the gospel, we should naturally suppose, that so benevolent a doctrine would have been received with due reverence, even by the unbelieving world; that the learned and the polite, however they may deride the miracles, would have esteemed the virtues, of the new sect; and that the magistrates, instead of persecuting, would have protected an order of men who yielded the most passive obedience to the laws, though they declined the active cares of war and government. If, on the other hand, we recollect the universal toleration of Polytheism, as it was invariably maintained by the faith of the people, the incredulity of philosophers, and the policy of the Roman senate and emperors, we are at a loss to discover what new offence the Christians had committed, what new provocation could exasperate the mild indifference of antiquity, and what new motives could urge the Roman princes, who beheld without

concern a thousand forms of religion subsisting in peace under their gentle sway, to inflict a severe punishment on any part of their subjects, who had chosen for themselves a singular but an inoffensive mode of faith and worship.

The religious policy of the ancient world seems to have assumed a more stern and intolerant character, to oppose the progress of Christianity. About fourscore years after the death of Christ, his innocent disciples were punished with death by the sentence of a proconsul of the most amiable and philosophic character, and according to the laws of an emperor distinguished by the wisdom and justice of his general administration. The apologies which were repeatedly addressed to the successors of Trajan are filled with the most pathetic complaints, that the Christians, who obeyed the dictates, and solicited the liberty, of conscience, were alone, among all the subjects of the Roman empire, excluded from the common benefits of their auspicious government. The deaths of a few eminent martyrs have been recorded with care; and from the time that Christianity was invested with the supreme power, the governors of the church have been no less diligently employed in displaying the cruelty, than in imitating the conduct, of their Pagan adversaries. To separate (if it be possible) a few authentic as well as interesting facts from an undigested mass of fiction and error, and to relate, in a clear and rational manner, the causes, the extent, the duration, and the most important circumstances of the persecutions to which the first Christians were exposed, is the design of the present chapter. [1b]

[Footnote 1b: The history of the first age of Christianity is only found in the Acts of the Apostles, and in order to speak of the first persecutions experienced by the Christians, that book should naturally have been consulted; those persecutions, then limited to individuals and to a narrow sphere, interested only the persecuted, and have been related by them alone. Gibbon making the persecutions ascend no higher than Nero, has entirely omitted those which preceded this epoch, and of which St. Luke has preserved the memory. The only way to justify this omission was, to attack the authenticity of the Acts of the Apostles; for, if authentic, they must necessarily be consulted and quoted. Now, antiquity has left very few works of which the authenticity is so well established as that of the Acts of the Apostles. (See Lardner's Cred. of Gospel Hist. part iii.) It is therefore, without sufficient reason, that Gibbon has maintained silence concerning the narrative of St. Luke, and this omission is not without importance.--G.]

The sectaries of a persecuted religion, depressed by fear animated with resentment, and perhaps heated by enthusiasm, are seldom in a proper temper of mind calmly to investigate, or candidly to appreciate, the motives of their enemies, which often escape the impartial and discerning view even of those who are placed at a secure distance from the flames of persecution. A reason has been assigned for the conduct of the emperors towards the primitive Christians, which may appear the more specious and probable as it is drawn from the acknowledged genius of Polytheism. It has already been observed, that the religious concord of

the world was principally supported by the implicit assent and reverence which the nations of antiquity expressed for their respective traditions and ceremonies. It might therefore be expected, that they would unite with indignation against any sect or people which should separate itself from the communion of mankind, and claiming the exclusive possession of divine knowledge, should disdain every form of worship, except its own, as impious and idolatrous. The rights of toleration were held by mutual indulgence: they were justly forfeited by a refusal of the accustomed tribute. As the payment of this tribute was inflexibly refused by the Jews, and by them alone, the consideration of the treatment which they experienced from the Roman magistrates, will serve to explain how far these speculations are justified by facts, and will lead us to discover the true causes of the persecution of Christianity.

Without repeating what has already been mentioned of the reverence of the Roman princes and governors for the temple of Jerusalem, we shall only observe, that the destruction of the temple and city was accompanied and followed by every circumstance that could exasperate the minds of the conquerors, and authorize religious persecution by the most specious arguments of political justice and the public safety. From the reign of Nero to that of Antoninus Pius, the Jews discovered a fierce impatience of the dominion of Rome, which repeatedly broke out in the most furious massacres and insurrections. Humanity is shocked at the recital of the horrid cruelties which they committed in the cities of Egypt, of Cyprus, and of Cyrene, where they dwelt in treacherous friendship with the unsuspecting natives; [1] and we are tempted to

applaud the severe retaliation which was exercised by the arms of the legions against a race of fanatics, whose dire and credulous superstition seemed to render them the implacable enemies not only of the Roman government, but of human kind. [2] The enthusiasm of the Jews was supported by the opinion, that it was unlawful for them to pay taxes to an idolatrous master; and by the flattering promise which they derived from their ancient oracles, that a conquering Messiah would soon arise, destined to break their fetters, and to invest the favorites of heaven with the empire of the earth. It was by announcing himself as their long-expected deliverer, and by calling on all the descendants of Abraham to assert the hope of Israel, that the famous Barchochebas collected a formidable army, with which he resisted during two years the power of the emperor Hadrian. [3]

[Footnote 1: In Cyrene, they massacred 220,000 Greeks; in Cyprus, 240,000; in Egypt, a very great multitude. Many of these unhappy victims were sawn asunder, according to a precedent to which David had given the sanction of his example. The victorious Jews devoured the flesh, licked up the blood, and twisted the entrails like a girdle round their bodies. See Dion Cassius, l. lxxviii. p. 1145. \* Note: Some commentators, among them Reimar, in his notes on Dion Cassius think that the hatred of the Romans against the Jews has led the historian to exaggerate the cruelties committed by the latter. Don. Cass. lxxviii. p. 1146.--G.]

[Footnote 2: Without repeating the well-known narratives of Josephus, we may learn from Dion, (l. lxxix. p. 1162,) that in Hadrian's war 580,000

Jews were cut off by the sword, besides an infinite number which perished by famine, by disease, and by fire.]

[Footnote 3: For the sect of the Zealots, see Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, l. i. c. 17; for the characters of the Messiah, according to the Rabbis, l. v. c. 11, 12, 13; for the actions of Barchochebas, l. vii. c. 12. (*Hist. of Jews* iii. 115, &c.)--M.]

Notwithstanding these repeated provocations, the resentment of the Roman princes expired after the victory; nor were their apprehensions continued beyond the period of war and danger. By the general indulgence of polytheism, and by the mild temper of Antoninus Pius, the Jews were restored to their ancient privileges, and once more obtained the permission of circumcising their children, with the easy restraint, that they should never confer on any foreign proselyte that distinguishing mark of the Hebrew race. [4] The numerous remains of that people, though they were still excluded from the precincts of Jerusalem, were permitted to form and to maintain considerable establishments both in Italy and in the provinces, to acquire the freedom of Rome, to enjoy municipal honors, and to obtain at the same time an exemption from the burdensome and expensive offices of society. The moderation or the contempt of the Romans gave a legal sanction to the form of ecclesiastical police which was instituted by the vanquished sect. The patriarch, who had fixed his residence at Tiberias, was empowered to appoint his subordinate ministers and apostles, to exercise a domestic jurisdiction, and to receive from his dispersed brethren an annual contribution. [5] New



synagogues were frequently erected in the principal cities of the empire; and the sabbaths, the fasts, and the festivals, which were either commanded by the Mosaic law, or enjoined by the traditions of the Rabbis, were celebrated in the most solemn and public manner. [6] Such gentle treatment insensibly assuaged the stern temper of the Jews. Awakened from their dream of prophecy and conquest, they assumed the behavior of peaceable and industrious subjects. Their irreconcilable hatred of mankind, instead of flaming out in acts of blood and violence, evaporated in less dangerous gratifications. They embraced every opportunity of overreaching the idolaters in trade; and they pronounced secret and ambiguous imprecations against the haughty kingdom of Edom. [7]

[Footnote 4: It is to Modestinus, a Roman lawyer (l. vi. regular.) that we are indebted for a distinct knowledge of the Edict of Antoninus. See Casaubon ad Hist. August. p. 27.]

[Footnote 5: See Basnage, Histoire des Juifs, l. iii. c. 2, 3. The office of Patriarch was suppressed by Theodosius the younger.]

[Footnote 6: We need only mention the Purim, or deliverance of the Jews from the rage of Haman, which, till the reign of Theodosius, was celebrated with insolent triumph and riotous intemperance. Basnage, Hist. des Juifs, l. vi. c. 17, l. viii. c. 6.]

[Footnote 7: According to the false Josephus, Tsepho, the grandson of

Esau, conducted into Italy the army of Eneas, king of Carthage. Another colony of Idumaeans, flying from the sword of David, took refuge in the dominions of Romulus. For these, or for other reasons of equal weight, the name of Edom was applied by the Jews to the Roman empire. \* Note: The false Josephus is a romancer of very modern date, though some of these legends are probably more ancient. It may be worth considering whether many of the stories in the Talmud are not history in a figurative disguise, adopted from prudence. The Jews might dare to say many things of Rome, under the significant appellation of Edom, which they feared to utter publicly. Later and more ignorant ages took literally, and perhaps embellished, what was intelligible among the generation to which it was addressed. Hist. of Jews, iii. 131. ----The false Josephus has the inauguration of the emperor, with the seven electors and apparently the pope assisting at the coronation! Pref. page xxvi.--M.]

Since the Jews, who rejected with abhorrence the deities adored by their sovereign and by their fellow-subjects, enjoyed, however, the free exercise of their unsocial religion, there must have existed some other cause, which exposed the disciples of Christ to those severities from which the posterity of Abraham was exempt. The difference between them is simple and obvious; but, according to the sentiments of antiquity, it was of the highest importance. The Jews were a nation; the Christians were a sect: and if it was natural for every community to respect the sacred institutions of their neighbors, it was incumbent on them to persevere in those of their ancestors. The voice of oracles, the

precepts of philosophers, and the authority of the laws, unanimously enforced this national obligation. By their lofty claim of superior sanctity the Jews might provoke the Polytheists to consider them as an odious and impure race. By disdainng the intercourse of other nations, they might deserve their contempt. The laws of Moses might be for the most part frivolous or absurd; yet, since they had been received during many ages by a large society, his followers were justified by the example of mankind; and it was universally acknowledged, that they had a right to practise what it would have been criminal in them to neglect. But this principle, which protected the Jewish synagogue, afforded not any favor or security to the primitive church. By embracing the faith of the gospel, the Christians incurred the supposed guilt of an unnatural and unpardonable offence. They dissolved the sacred ties of custom and education, violated the religious institutions of their country, and presumptuously despised whatever their fathers had believed as true, or had revered as sacred. Nor was this apostasy (if we may use the expression) merely of a partial or local kind; since the pious deserter who withdrew himself from the temples of Egypt or Syria, would equally disdain to seek an asylum in those of Athens or Carthage. Every Christian rejected with contempt the superstitions of his family, his city, and his province. The whole body of Christians unanimously refused to hold any communion with the gods of Rome, of the empire, and of mankind. It was in vain that the oppressed believer asserted the inalienable rights of conscience and private judgment. Though his situation might excite the pity, his arguments could never reach the understanding, either of the philosophic or of the believing part of

the Pagan world. To their apprehensions, it was no less a matter of surprise, that any individuals should entertain scruples against complying with the established mode of worship, than if they had conceived a sudden abhorrence to the manners, the dress, or the language of their native country. [8] [8a]

[Footnote 8: From the arguments of Celsus, as they are represented and refuted by Origen, (l. v. p. 247--259,) we may clearly discover the distinction that was made between the Jewish people and the Christian sect. See, in the Dialogue of Minucius Felix, (c. 5, 6,) a fair and not inelegant description of the popular sentiments, with regard to the desertion of the established worship.]

[Footnote 8a: In all this there is doubtless much truth; yet does not the more important difference lie on the surface? The Christians made many converts the Jews but few. Had the Jewish been equally a proselyting religion would it not have encountered as violent persecution?--M.]

The surprise of the Pagans was soon succeeded by resentment; and the most pious of men were exposed to the unjust but dangerous imputation of impiety. Malice and prejudice concurred in representing the Christians as a society of atheists, who, by the most daring attack on the religious constitution of the empire, had merited the severest animadversion of the civil magistrate. They had separated themselves (they gloried in the confession) from every mode of superstition

which was received in any part of the globe by the various temper of polytheism: but it was not altogether so evident what deity, or what form of worship, they had substituted to the gods and temples of antiquity. The pure and sublime idea which they entertained of the Supreme Being escaped the gross conception of the Pagan multitude, who were at a loss to discover a spiritual and solitary God, that was neither represented under any corporeal figure or visible symbol, nor was adored with the accustomed pomp of libations and festivals, of altars and sacrifices. [9] The sages of Greece and Rome, who had elevated their minds to the contemplation of the existence and attributes of the First Cause, were induced by reason or by vanity to reserve for themselves and their chosen disciples the privilege of this philosophical devotion. [10] They were far from admitting the prejudices of mankind as the standard of truth, but they considered them as flowing from the original disposition of human nature; and they supposed that any popular mode of faith and worship which presumed to disclaim the assistance of the senses, would, in proportion as it receded from superstition, find itself incapable of restraining the wanderings of the fancy, and the visions of fanaticism. The careless glance which men of wit and learning condescended to cast on the Christian revelation, served only to confirm their hasty opinion, and to persuade them that the principle, which they might have revered, of the Divine Unity, was defaced by the wild enthusiasm, and annihilated by the airy speculations, of the new sectaries. The author of a celebrated dialogue, which has been attributed to Lucian, whilst he affects to treat the mysterious subject of the Trinity in a style of ridicule and contempt,

betrays his own ignorance of the weakness of human reason, and of the inscrutable nature of the divine perfections. [11]

[Footnote 9: *Cur nullas aras habent? templa nulla? nulla nota simulacra!--Unde autem, vel quis ille, aut ubi, Deus unicus, solitarius, desti tutus?* Minucius Felix, c. 10. The Pagan interlocutor goes on to make a distinction in favor of the Jews, who had once a temple, altars, victims, &c.]

[Footnote 10: It is difficult (says Plato) to attain, and dangerous to publish, the knowledge of the true God. See the *Theologie des Philosophes*, in the Abbe d'Olivet's French translation of Tully *de Natura Deorum*, tom. i. p. 275.]

[Footnote 11: The author of the *Philopatris* perpetually treats the Christians as a company of dreaming enthusiasts, &c.; and in one place he manifestly alludes to the vision in which St. Paul was transported to the third heaven. In another place, Triephton, who personates a Christian, after deriding the gods of Paganism, proposes a mysterious oath.]

It might appear less surprising, that the founder of Christianity should not only be revered by his disciples as a sage and a prophet, but that he should be adored as a God. The Polytheists were disposed to adopt every article of faith, which seemed to offer any resemblance, however distant or imperfect, with the popular mythology; and the legends of

Bacchus, of Hercules, and of Aesculapius, had, in some measure, prepared their imagination for the appearance of the Son of God under a human form. [12] But they were astonished that the Christians should abandon the temples of those ancient heroes, who, in the infancy of the world, had invented arts, instituted laws, and vanquished the tyrants or monsters who infested the earth, in order to choose for the exclusive object of their religious worship an obscure teacher, who, in a recent age, and among a barbarous people, had fallen a sacrifice either to the malice of his own countrymen, or to the jealousy of the Roman government. The Pagan multitude, reserving their gratitude for temporal benefits alone, rejected the inestimable present of life and immortality, which was offered to mankind by Jesus of Nazareth. His mild constancy in the midst of cruel and voluntary sufferings, his universal benevolence, and the sublime simplicity of his actions and character, were insufficient, in the opinion of those carnal men, to compensate for the want of fame, of empire, and of success; and whilst they refused to acknowledge his stupendous triumph over the powers of darkness and of the grave, they misrepresented, or they insulted, the equivocal birth, wandering life, and ignominious death, of the divine Author of Christianity. [13]

[Footnote 12: According to Justin Martyr, (Apolog. Major, c. 70-85,) the daemon who had gained some imperfect knowledge of the prophecies, purposely contrived this resemblance, which might deter, though by different means, both the people and the philosophers from embracing the faith of Christ.]

[Footnote 13: In the first and second books of Origen, Celsus treats the birth and character of our Savior with the most impious contempt. The orator Libanius praises Porphyry and Julian for confuting the folly of a sect., which styles a dead man of Palestine, God, and the Son of God. Socrates, Hist. Ecclesiast. iii. 23.]

The personal guilt which every Christian had contracted, in thus preferring his private sentiment to the national religion, was aggravated in a very high degree by the number and union of the criminals. It is well known, and has been already observed, that Roman policy viewed with the utmost jealousy and distrust any association among its subjects; and that the privileges of private corporations, though formed for the most harmless or beneficial purposes, were bestowed with a very sparing hand. [14] The religious assemblies of the Christians who had separated themselves from the public worship, appeared of a much less innocent nature; they were illegal in their principle, and in their consequences might become dangerous; nor were the emperors conscious that they violated the laws of justice, when, for the peace of society, they prohibited those secret and sometimes nocturnal meetings. [15] The pious disobedience of the Christians made their conduct, or perhaps their designs, appear in a much more serious and criminal light; and the Roman princes, who might perhaps have suffered themselves to be disarmed by a ready submission, deeming their honor concerned in the execution of their commands, sometimes attempted, by rigorous punishments, to subdue this independent spirit, which boldly



acknowledged an authority superior to that of the magistrate. The extent and duration of this spiritual conspiracy seemed to render it everyday more deserving of his animadversion. We have already seen that the active and successful zeal of the Christians had insensibly diffused them through every province and almost every city of the empire. The new converts seemed to renounce their family and country, that they might connect themselves in an indissoluble band of union with a peculiar society, which every where assumed a different character from the rest of mankind. Their gloomy and austere aspect, their abhorrence of the common business and pleasures of life, and their frequent predictions of impending calamities, [16] inspired the Pagans with the apprehension of some danger, which would arise from the new sect, the more alarming as it was the more obscure. "Whatever," says Pliny, "may be the principle of their conduct, their inflexible obstinacy appeared deserving of punishment." [17]

[Footnote 14: The emperor Trajan refused to incorporate a company of 150 firemen, for the use of the city of Nicomedia. He disliked all associations. See Plin. Epist. x. 42, 43.]

[Footnote 15: The proconsul Pliny had published a general edict against unlawful meetings. The prudence of the Christians suspended their Agapae; but it was impossible for them to omit the exercise of public worship.]

[Footnote 16: As the prophecies of the Antichrist, approaching

conflagration, &c., provoked those Pagans whom they did not convert, they were mentioned with caution and reserve; and the Montanists were censured for disclosing too freely the dangerous secret. See Mosheim, 413.]

[Footnote 17: Neque enim dubitabam, quodcunque esset quod faterentur, (such are the words of Pliny,) pervicaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem lebere puniri.]

The precautions with which the disciples of Christ performed the offices of religion were at first dictated by fear and necessity; but they were continued from choice. By imitating the awful secrecy which reigned in the Eleusinian mysteries, the Christians had flattered themselves that they should render their sacred institutions more respectable in the eyes of the Pagan world. [18] But the event, as it often happens to the operations of subtile policy, deceived their wishes and their expectations. It was concluded, that they only concealed what they would have blushed to disclose. Their mistaken prudence afforded an opportunity for malice to invent, and for suspicious credulity to believe, the horrid tales which described the Christians as the most wicked of human kind, who practised in their dark recesses every abomination that a depraved fancy could suggest, and who solicited the favor of their unknown God by the sacrifice of every moral virtue. There were many who pretended to confess or to relate the ceremonies of this abhorred society. It was asserted, "that a new-born infant, entirely covered over with flour, was presented, like some mystic symbol of

initiation, to the knife of the proselyte, who unknowingly inflicted many a secret and mortal wound on the innocent victim of his error; that as soon as the cruel deed was perpetrated, the sectaries drank up the blood, greedily tore asunder the quivering members, and pledged themselves to eternal secrecy, by a mutual consciousness of guilt. It was as confidently affirmed, that this inhuman sacrifice was succeeded by a suitable entertainment, in which intemperance served as a provocative to brutal lust; till, at the appointed moment, the lights were suddenly extinguished, shame was banished, nature was forgotten; and, as accident might direct, the darkness of the night was polluted by the incestuous commerce of sisters and brothers, of sons and of mothers." [19]

[Footnote 18: See Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. p. 101, and Spanheim, Remarques sur les Caesars de Julien, p. 468, &c.]

[Footnote 19: See Justin Martyr, Apolog. i. 35, ii. 14. Athenagoras, in Legation, c. 27. Tertullian, Apolog. c. 7, 8, 9. Minucius Felix, c. 9, 10, 80, 31. The last of these writers relates the accusation in the most elegant and circumstantial manner. The answer of Tertullian is the boldest and most vigorous.]

But the perusal of the ancient apologies was sufficient to remove even the slightest suspicion from the mind of a candid adversary. The Christians, with the intrepid security of innocence, appeal from the voice of rumor to the equity of the magistrates. They acknowledge, that

if any proof can be produced of the crimes which calumny has imputed to them, they are worthy of the most severe punishment. They provoke the punishment, and they challenge the proof. At the same time they urge, with equal truth and propriety, that the charge is not less devoid of probability, than it is destitute of evidence; they ask, whether any one can seriously believe that the pure and holy precepts of the gospel, which so frequently restrain the use of the most lawful enjoyments, should inculcate the practice of the most abominable crimes; that a large society should resolve to dishonor itself in the eyes of its own members; and that a great number of persons of either sex, and every age and character, insensible to the fear of death or infamy, should consent to violate those principles which nature and education had imprinted most deeply in their minds. [20] Nothing, it should seem, could weaken the force or destroy the effect of so unanswerable a justification, unless it were the injudicious conduct of the apologists themselves, who betrayed the common cause of religion, to gratify their devout hatred to the domestic enemies of the church. It was sometimes faintly insinuated, and sometimes boldly asserted, that the same bloody sacrifices, and the same incestuous festivals, which were so falsely ascribed to the orthodox believers, were in reality celebrated by the Marcionites, by the Carpocratians, and by several other sects of the Gnostics, who, notwithstanding they might deviate into the paths of heresy, were still actuated by the sentiments of men, and still governed by the precepts of Christianity. [21] Accusations of a similar kind were retorted upon the church by the schismatics who had departed from its communion, [22] and it was confessed on all sides, that the most scandalous licentiousness

of manners prevailed among great numbers of those who affected the name of Christians. A Pagan magistrate, who possessed neither leisure nor abilities to discern the almost imperceptible line which divides the orthodox faith from heretical pravity, might easily have imagined that their mutual animosity had extorted the discovery of their common guilt. It was fortunate for the repose, or at least for the reputation, of the first Christians, that the magistrates sometimes proceeded with more temper and moderation than is usually consistent with religious zeal, and that they reported, as the impartial result of their judicial inquiry, that the sectaries, who had deserted the established worship, appeared to them sincere in their professions, and blameless in their manners; however they might incur, by their absurd and excessive superstition, the censure of the laws. [23]

[Footnote 20: In the persecution of Lyons, some Gentile slaves were compelled, by the fear of tortures, to accuse their Christian master. The church of Lyons, writing to their brethren of Asia, treat the horrid charge with proper indignation and contempt. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. v. i.]

[Footnote 21: See Justin Martyr, Apolog. i. 35. Irenaeus adv. Haeres. i. 24. Clemens. Alexandrin. Stromat. l. iii. p. 438. Euseb. iv. 8. It would be tedious and disgusting to relate all that the succeeding writers have imagined, all that Epiphanius has received, and all that Tillemont has copied. M. de Beausobre (Hist. du Manicheisme, l. ix. c. 8, 9) has exposed, with great spirit, the disingenuous arts of Augustin and Pope Leo I.]

[Footnote 22: When Tertullian became a Montanist, he aspersed the morals of the church which he had so resolutely defended. "Sed majoris est Agape, quia per hanc adolescentes tui cum sororibus dormiunt, appendices scilicet gulae lascivia et luxuria." De Jejuniiis c. 17. The 85th canon of the council of Illiberis provides against the scandals which too often polluted the vigils of the church, and disgraced the Christian name in the eyes of unbelievers.]

[Footnote 23: Tertullian (Apolog. c. 2) expatiates on the fair and honorable testimony of Pliny, with much reason and some declamation.]