

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

Diocletian had no sooner published his edicts against the Christians, than, as if he had been desirous of committing to other hands the work of persecution, he divested himself of the Imperial purple. The character and situation of his colleagues and successors sometimes urged them to enforce and sometimes inclined them to suspend, the execution of these rigorous laws; nor can we acquire a just and distinct idea of this important period of ecclesiastical history, unless we separately consider the state of Christianity, in the different parts of the empire, during the space of ten years, which elapsed between the first edicts of Diocletian and the final peace of the church.

The mild and humane temper of Constantius was averse to the oppression of any part of his subjects. The principal offices of his palace were exercised by Christians. He loved their persons, esteemed their fidelity, and entertained not any dislike to their religious principles. But as long as Constantius remained in the subordinate station of Caesar, it was not in his power openly to reject the edicts of Diocletian, or to disobey the commands of Maximian. His authority contributed, however, to alleviate the sufferings which he pitied and abhorred. He consented with reluctance to the ruin of the churches; but he ventured to protect the Christians themselves from the fury of the populace, and from the rigor of the laws. The provinces of Gaul (under which we may probably include those of Britain) were indebted for the

singular tranquillity which they enjoyed, to the gentle interposition of their sovereign. [165] But Datianus, the president or governor of Spain, actuated either by zeal or policy, chose rather to execute the public edicts of the emperors, than to understand the secret intentions of Constantius; and it can scarcely be doubted, that his provincial administration was stained with the blood of a few martyrs. [166]

The elevation of Constantius to the supreme and independent dignity of Augustus, gave a free scope to the exercise of his virtues, and the shortness of his reign did not prevent him from establishing a system of toleration, of which he left the precept and the example to his son Constantine. His fortunate son, from the first moment of his accession, declaring himself the protector of the church, at length deserved the appellation of the first emperor who publicly professed and established the Christian religion. The motives of his conversion, as they may variously be deduced from benevolence, from policy, from conviction, or from remorse, and the progress of the revolution, which, under his powerful influence and that of his sons, rendered Christianity the reigning religion of the Roman empire, will form a very interesting and important chapter in the present volume of this history. At present it may be sufficient to observe, that every victory of Constantine was productive of some relief or benefit to the church.

[Footnote 165: Eusebius, l. viii. c. 13. Lactantius de M. P. c. 15.

Dodwell (Dissertat. Cyprian. xi. 75) represents them as inconsistent with each other. But the former evidently speaks of Constantius in the

station of Caesar, and the latter of the same prince in the rank of Augustus.]

[Footnote 166: Datianus is mentioned, in Gruter's Inscriptions, as having determined the limits between the territories of Pax Julia, and those of Eborac, both cities in the southern part of Lusitania. If we recollect the neighborhood of those places to Cape St. Vincent, we may suspect that the celebrated deacon and martyr of that name had been inaccurately assigned by Prudentius, &c., to Saragossa, or Valentia. See the pompous history of his sufferings, in the Memoires de Tillemont, tom. v. part ii. p. 58-85. Some critics are of opinion, that the department of Constantius, as Caesar, did not include Spain, which still continued under the immediate jurisdiction of Maximian.]

The provinces of Italy and Africa experienced a short but violent persecution. The rigorous edicts of Diocletian were strictly and cheerfully executed by his associate Maximian, who had long hated the Christians, and who delighted in acts of blood and violence. In the autumn of the first year of the persecution, the two emperors met at Rome to celebrate their triumph; several oppressive laws appear to have issued from their secret consultations, and the diligence of the magistrates was animated by the presence of their sovereigns. After Diocletian had divested himself of the purple, Italy and Africa were administered under the name of Severus, and were exposed, without defence, to the implacable resentment of his master Galerius. Among the martyrs of Rome, Adauctus deserves the notice of posterity. He was of

a noble family in Italy, and had raised himself, through the successive honors of the palace, to the important office of treasurer of the private Jemesnes. Adauctus is the more remarkable for being the only person of rank and distinction who appears to have suffered death, during the whole course of this general persecution. [167]

[Footnote 167: Eusebius, l. viii. c. 11. Gruter, Inscrip. p. 1171, No.

18. Rufinus has mistaken the office of Adauctus, as well as the place of his martyrdom. * Note: M. Guizot suggests the powerful cunuchs of the palace. Dorotheus, Gorgonius, and Andrew, admitted by Gibbon himself to have been put to death, p. 66.]

The revolt of Maxentius immediately restored peace to the churches of Italy and Africa; and the same tyrant who oppressed every other class of his subjects, showed himself just, humane, and even partial, towards the afflicted Christians. He depended on their gratitude and affection, and very naturally presumed, that the injuries which they had suffered, and the dangers which they still apprehended from his most inveterate enemy, would secure the fidelity of a party already considerable by their numbers and opulence. [168] Even the conduct of Maxentius towards the bishops of Rome and Carthage may be considered as the proof of his toleration, since it is probable that the most orthodox princes would adopt the same measures with regard to their established clergy. Marcellus, the former of these prelates, had thrown the capital into confusion, by the severe penance which he imposed on a great number of Christians, who, during the late persecution, had renounced or

dissembled their religion. The rage of faction broke out in frequent and violent seditions; the blood of the faithful was shed by each other's hands, and the exile of Marcellus, whose prudence seems to have been less eminent than his zeal, was found to be the only measure capable of restoring peace to the distracted church of Rome. [169] The behavior of Mensurius, bishop of Carthage, appears to have been still more reprehensible. A deacon of that city had published a libel against the emperor. The offender took refuge in the episcopal palace; and though it was somewhat early to advance any claims of ecclesiastical immunities, the bishop refused to deliver him up to the officers of justice. For this treasonable resistance, Mensurius was summoned to court, and instead of receiving a legal sentence of death or banishment, he was permitted, after a short examination, to return to his diocese. [170] Such was the happy condition of the Christian subjects of Maxentius, that whenever they were desirous of procuring for their own use any bodies of martyrs, they were obliged to purchase them from the most distant provinces of the East. A story is related of Aglae, a Roman lady, descended from a consular family, and possessed of so ample an estate, that it required the management of seventy-three stewards. Among these Boniface was the favorite of his mistress; and as Aglae mixed love with devotion, it is reported that he was admitted to share her bed. Her fortune enabled her to gratify the pious desire of obtaining some sacred relics from the East. She intrusted Boniface with a considerable sum of gold, and a large quantity of aromatics; and her lover, attended by twelve horsemen and three covered chariots, undertook a remote pilgrimage, as far as Tarsus in Cilicia. [171]

[Footnote 168: Eusebius, l. viii. c. 14. But as Maxentius was vanquished by Constantine, it suited the purpose of Lactantius to place his death among those of the persecutors. * Note: M. Guizot directly contradicts this statement of Gibbon, and appeals to Eusebius. Maxentius, who assumed the power in Italy, pretended at first to be a Christian, to gain the favor of the Roman people; he ordered his ministers to cease to persecute the Christians, affecting a hypocritical piety, in order to appear more mild than his predecessors; but his actions soon proved that he was very different from what they had at first hoped. The actions of Maxentius were those of a cruel tyrant, but not those of a persecutor: the Christians, like the rest of his subjects, suffered from his vices, but they were not oppressed as a sect. Christian females were exposed to his lusts, as well as to the brutal violence of his colleague Maximian, but they were not selected as Christians.--M.]

[Footnote 169: The epitaph of Marcellus is to be found in Gruter, Inscrip. p 1172, No. 3, and it contains all that we know of his history. Marcellinus and Marcellus, whose names follow in the list of popes, are supposed by many critics to be different persons; but the learned Abbe de Longuerue was convinced that they were one and the same. Veridicus rector lapsis quia crimina flere Praedixit miseris, fuit omnibus hostis amarus. Hinc furor, hinc odium; sequitur discordia, lites, Seditio, caedes; solvuntur foedera pacis. Crimen ob alterius, Christum qui in pace negavit Finibus expulsus patriae est feritate Tyranni. Haec breviter Damasus voluit comperta referre: Marcelli populus meritum

cognoscere posset.----We may observe that Damasus was made Bishop of Rome, A. D. 366.]

[Footnote 170: Optatus contr. Donatist. l. i. c. 17, 18. * Note: The words of Optatus are, Profectus (Roman) causam dixit; jussus con reverti Carthaginem; perhaps, in pleading his cause, he exculpated himself, since he received an order to return to Carthage.--G.]

[Footnote 171: The Acts of the Passion of St. Boniface, which abound in miracles and declamation, are published by Ruinart, (p. 283--291,) both in Greek and Latin, from the authority of very ancient manuscripts. Note: We are ignorant whether Aglae and Boniface were Christians at the time of their unlawful connection. See Tillemont. Mem, Eccles. Note on the Persecution of Domitian, tom. v. note 82. M. de Tillemont proves also that the history is doubtful.--G. ----Sir D. Dalrymple (Lord Hailes) calls the story of Aglae and Boniface as of equal authority with our popular histories of Whittington and Hickathrift. Christian Antiquities, ii. 64.--M.]

The sanguinary temper of Galerius, the first and principal author of the persecution, was formidable to those Christians whom their misfortunes had placed within the limits of his dominions; and it may fairly be presumed that many persons of a middle rank, who were not confined by the chains either of wealth or of poverty, very frequently deserted their native country, and sought a refuge in the milder climate of the West. [171a] As long as he commanded only the armies and provinces of

Illyricum, he could with difficulty either find or make a considerable number of martyrs, in a warlike country, which had entertained the missionaries of the gospel with more coldness and reluctance than any other part of the empire. [172] But when Galerius had obtained the supreme power, and the government of the East, he indulged in their fullest extent his zeal and cruelty, not only in the provinces of Thrace and Asia, which acknowledged his immediate jurisdiction, but in those of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, where Maximin gratified his own inclination, by yielding a rigorous obedience to the stern commands of his benefactor. [173] The frequent disappointments of his ambitious views, the experience of six years of persecution, and the salutary reflections which a lingering and painful distemper suggested to the mind of Galerius, at length convinced him that the most violent efforts of despotism are insufficient to extirpate a whole people, or to subdue their religious prejudices. Desirous of repairing the mischief that he had occasioned, he published in his own name, and in those of Licinius and Constantine, a general edict, which, after a pompous recital of the Imperial titles, proceeded in the following manner:--

[Footnote 171a: A little after this, Christianity was propagated to the north of the Roman provinces, among the tribes of Germany: a multitude of Christians, forced by the persecutions of the Emperors to take refuge among the Barbarians, were received with kindness. Euseb. de Vit. Constant. ii. 53. Semler Select. cap. H. E. p. 115. The Goths owed their first knowledge of Christianity to a young girl, a prisoner of war; she continued in the midst of them her exercises of piety; she fasted,

prayed, and praised God day and night. When she was asked what good would come of so much painful trouble she answered, "It is thus that Christ, the Son of God, is to be honored." Sozomen, ii. c. 6.--G.]

[Footnote 172: During the four first centuries, there exist few traces of either bishops or bishoprics in the western Illyricum. It has been thought probable that the primate of Milan extended his jurisdiction over Sirmium, the capital of that great province. See the *Geographia Sacra* of Charles de St. Paul, p. 68-76, with the observations of Lucas Holstenius.]

[Footnote 173: The viiiith book of Eusebius, as well as the supplement concerning the martyrs of Palestine, principally relate to the persecution of Galerius and Maximin. The general lamentations with which Lactantius opens the vth book of his *Divine Institutions* allude to their cruelty.] "Among the important cares which have occupied our mind for the utility and preservation of the empire, it was our intention to correct and reestablish all things according to the ancient laws and public discipline of the Romans. We were particularly desirous of reclaiming into the way of reason and nature, the deluded Christians who had renounced the religion and ceremonies instituted by their fathers; and presumptuously despising the practice of antiquity, had invented extravagant laws and opinions, according to the dictates of their fancy, and had collected a various society from the different provinces of our empire. The edicts, which we have published to enforce the worship of the gods, having exposed many of the Christians to danger and distress,

many having suffered death, and many more, who still persist in their impious folly, being left destitute of any public exercise of religion, we are disposed to extend to those unhappy men the effects of our wonted clemency. We permit them therefore freely to profess their private opinions, and to assemble in their conventicles without fear or molestation, provided always that they preserve a due respect to the established laws and government. By another rescript we shall signify our intentions to the judges and magistrates; and we hope that our indulgence will engage the Christians to offer up their prayers to the Deity whom they adore, for our safety and prosperity for their own, and for that of the republic." [174] It is not usually in the language of edicts and manifestos that we should search for the real character or the secret motives of princes; but as these were the words of a dying emperor, his situation, perhaps, may be admitted as a pledge of his sincerity.

[Footnote 174: Eusebius (l. viii. c. 17) has given us a Greek version, and Lactantius (de M. P. c. 34) the Latin original, of this memorable edict. Neither of these writers seems to recollect how directly it contradicts whatever they have just affirmed of the remorse and repentance of Galerius. Note: But Gibbon has answered this by his just observation, that it is not in the language of edicts and manifestos that we should search * * for the secre motives of princes.--M.]

When Galerius subscribed this edict of toleration, he was well assured that Licinius would readily comply with the inclinations of his friend

and benefactor, and that any measures in favor of the Christians would obtain the approbation of Constantine. But the emperor would not venture to insert in the preamble the name of Maximin, whose consent was of the greatest importance, and who succeeded a few days afterwards to the provinces of Asia. In the first six months, however, of his new reign, Maximin affected to adopt the prudent counsels of his predecessor; and though he never condescended to secure the tranquillity of the church by a public edict, Sabinus, his Praetorian praefect, addressed a circular letter to all the governors and magistrates of the provinces, expatiating on the Imperial clemency, acknowledging the invincible obstinacy of the Christians, and directing the officers of justice to cease their ineffectual prosecutions, and to connive at the secret assemblies of those enthusiasts. In consequence of these orders, great numbers of Christians were released from prison, or delivered from the mines. The confessors, singing hymns of triumph, returned into their own countries; and those who had yielded to the violence of the tempest, solicited with tears of repentance their readmission into the bosom of the church. [175]

[Footnote 175: Eusebius, l. ix. c. 1. He inserts the epistle of the praefect.]

But this treacherous calm was of short duration; nor could the Christians of the East place any confidence in the character of their sovereign. Cruelty and superstition were the ruling passions of the soul of Maximin. The former suggested the means, the latter pointed out the

objects of persecution. The emperor was devoted to the worship of the gods, to the study of magic, and to the belief of oracles. The prophets or philosophers, whom he revered as the favorites of Heaven, were frequently raised to the government of provinces, and admitted into his most secret councils. They easily convinced him that the Christians had been indebted for their victories to their regular discipline, and that the weakness of polytheism had principally flowed from a want of union and subordination among the ministers of religion. A system of government was therefore instituted, which was evidently copied from the policy of the church. In all the great cities of the empire, the temples were repaired and beautified by the order of Maximin, and the officiating priests of the various deities were subjected to the authority of a superior pontiff destined to oppose the bishop, and to promote the cause of paganism. These pontiffs acknowledged, in their turn, the supreme jurisdiction of the metropolitans or high priests of the province, who acted as the immediate vicegerents of the emperor himself. A white robe was the ensign of their dignity; and these new prelates were carefully selected from the most noble and opulent families. By the influence of the magistrates, and of the sacerdotal order, a great number of dutiful addresses were obtained, particularly from the cities of Nicomedia, Antioch, and Tyre, which artfully represented the well-known intentions of the court as the general sense of the people; solicited the emperor to consult the laws of justice rather than the dictates of his clemency; expressed their abhorrence of the Christians, and humbly prayed that those impious sectaries might at least be excluded from the limits of their respective territories. The

answer of Maximin to the address which he obtained from the citizens of Tyre is still extant. He praises their zeal and devotion in terms of the highest satisfaction, descants on the obstinate impiety of the Christians, and betrays, by the readiness with which he consents to their banishment, that he considered himself as receiving, rather than as conferring, an obligation. The priests as well as the magistrates were empowered to enforce the execution of his edicts, which were engraved on tables of brass; and though it was recommended to them to avoid the effusion of blood, the most cruel and ignominious punishments were inflicted on the refractory Christians. [176]

[Footnote 176: See Eusebius, l. viii. c. 14, l. ix. c. 2--8. Lactantius de M. P. c. 36. These writers agree in representing the arts of Maximin; but the former relates the execution of several martyrs, while the latter expressly affirms, *occidi servos Dei vetuit*. * Note: It is easy to reconcile them; it is sufficient to quote the entire text of Lactantius: *Nam cum clementiam specie tenus profiteretur, occidi servos Dei vetuit, debilitari jussit. Itaque confessoribus effodiebantur oculi, amputabantur manus, nares vel auriculae desecabantur. Haec ille moliens Constantini litteris deterretur. Dissimulavit ergo, et tamen, si quis inciderit. mari occulte mergebatur.* This detail of torments inflicted on the Christians easily reconciles Lactantius and Eusebius. Those who died in consequence of their tortures, those who were plunged into the sea, might well pass for martyrs. The mutilation of the words of Lactantius has alone given rise to the apparent contradiction.--G. ----Eusebius. ch. vi., relates the public martyrdom of the aged bishop of Emesa, with

two others, who were thrown to the wild beasts, the beheading of Peter, bishop of Alexandria, with several others, and the death of Lucian, presbyter of Antioch, who was carried to Numidia, and put to death in prison. The contradiction is direct and undeniable, for although Eusebius may have misplaced the former martyrdoms, it may be doubted whether the authority of Maximin extended to Nicomedia till after the death of Galerius. The last edict of toleration issued by Maximin and published by Eusebius himself, Eccl. Hist. ix. 9. confirms the statement of Lactantius.--M.]

The Asiatic Christians had every thing to dread from the severity of a bigoted monarch who prepared his measures of violence with such deliberate policy. But a few months had scarcely elapsed before the edicts published by the two Western emperors obliged Maximin to suspend the prosecution of his designs: the civil war which he so rashly undertook against Licinius employed all his attention; and the defeat and death of Maximin soon delivered the church from the last and most implacable of her enemies. [177]

[Footnote 177: A few days before his death, he published a very ample edict of toleration, in which he imputes all the severities which the Christians suffered to the judges and governors, who had misunderstood his intentions. See the edict of Eusebius, l. ix. c. 10.]

In this general view of the persecution, which was first authorized by the edicts of Diocletian, I have purposely refrained from describing the

particular sufferings and deaths of the Christian martyrs. It would have been an easy task, from the history of Eusebius, from the declamations of Lactantius, and from the most ancient acts, to collect a long series of horrid and disgusting pictures, and to fill many pages with racks and scourges, with iron hooks and red-hot beds, and with all the variety of tortures which fire and steel, savage beasts, and more savage executioners, could inflict upon the human body. These melancholy scenes might be enlivened by a crowd of visions and miracles destined either to delay the death, to celebrate the triumph, or to discover the relics of those canonized saints who suffered for the name of Christ. But I cannot determine what I ought to transcribe, till I am satisfied how much I ought to believe. The gravest of the ecclesiastical historians, Eusebius himself, indirectly confesses, that he has related whatever might redound to the glory, and that he has suppressed all that could tend to the disgrace, of religion. [178] Such an acknowledgment will naturally excite a suspicion that a writer who has so openly violated one of the fundamental laws of history, has not paid a very strict regard to the observance of the other; and the suspicion will derive additional credit from the character of Eusebius, [178a] which was less tinctured with credulity, and more practised in the arts of courts, than that of almost any of his contemporaries. On some particular occasions, when the magistrates were exasperated by some personal motives of interest or resentment, the rules of prudence, and perhaps of decency, to overturn the altars, to pour out imprecations against the emperors, or to strike the judge as he sat on his tribunal, it may be presumed, that every mode of torture which cruelty could invent, or constancy could endure, was

exhausted on those devoted victims. [179] Two circumstances, however, have been unwarily mentioned, which insinuate that the general treatment of the Christians, who had been apprehended by the officers of justice, was less intolerable than it is usually imagined to have been. 1. The confessors who were condemned to work in the mines were permitted by the humanity or the negligence of their keepers to build chapels, and freely to profess their religion in the midst of those dreary habitations.

[180] 2. The bishops were obliged to check and to censure the forward zeal of the Christians, who voluntarily threw themselves into the hands of the magistrates. Some of these were persons oppressed by poverty and debts, who blindly sought to terminate a miserable existence by a glorious death. Others were allured by the hope that a short confinement would expiate the sins of a whole life; and others again were actuated by the less honorable motive of deriving a plentiful subsistence, and perhaps a considerable profit, from the alms which the charity of the faithful bestowed on the prisoners. [181] After the church had triumphed over all her enemies, the interest as well as vanity of the captives prompted them to magnify the merit of their respective sufferings. A convenient distance of time or place gave an ample scope to the progress of fiction; and the frequent instances which might be alleged of holy martyrs, whose wounds had been instantly healed, whose strength had been renewed, and whose lost members had miraculously been restored, were extremely convenient for the purpose of removing every difficulty, and of silencing every objection. The most extravagant legends, as they conduced to the honor of the church, were applauded by the credulous multitude, countenanced by the power of the clergy, and attested by the

suspicious evidence of ecclesiastical history.

[Footnote 178: Such is the fair deduction from two remarkable passages in Eusebius, l. viii. c. 2, and de Martyr. Palestin. c. 12. The prudence of the historian has exposed his own character to censure and suspicion. It was well known that he himself had been thrown into prison; and it was suggested that he had purchased his deliverance by some dishonorable compliance. The reproach was urged in his lifetime, and even in his presence, at the council of Tyre. See Tillemont, *Memoires Ecclesiastiques*, tom. viii. part i. p. 67.]

[Footnote 178a: Historical criticism does not consist in rejecting indiscriminately all the facts which do not agree with a particular system, as Gibbon does in this chapter, in which, except at the last extremity, he will not consent to believe a martyrdom. Authorities are to be weighed, not excluded from examination. Now, the Pagan historians justify in many places the detail which have been transmitted to us by the historians of the church, concerning the tortures endured by the Christians. Celsus reproaches the Christians with holding their assemblies in secret, on account of the fear inspired by their sufferings, "for when you are arrested," he says, "you are dragged to punishment: and, before you are put to death, you have to suffer all kinds of tortures." Origen cont. Cels. l. i. ii. vi. viii. passing. Libanius, the panegyrist of Julian, says, while speaking of the Christians. "Those who followed a corrupt religion were in continual apprehensions; they feared lest Julian should invent tortures still more

refined than those to which they had been exposed before, as mutilation, burning alive, &c.; for the emperors had inflicted upon them all these barbarities." Lib. Parent in Julian. ap. Fab. Bib. Graec. No. 9, No. 58, p. 283--G. ----This sentence of Gibbon has given rise to several learned dissertations: Moller, de Fide Eusebii Caesar, &c., Havniae, 1813. Danzius, de Eusebio Caes. Hist. Eccl. Scriptore, ejusque tude historica recte aestimanda, &c., Jenae, 1815. Kestner Commentatio de Eusebii Hist. Eccles. conditoris auctoritate et fide, &c. See also Reuterdahl, de Fontibus Historiae Eccles. Eusebianae, Lond. Goth., 1826. Gibbon's inference may appear stronger than the text will warrant, yet it is difficult, after reading the passages, to dismiss all suspicion of partiality from the mind.--M.]

[Footnote 179: The ancient, and perhaps authentic, account of the sufferings of Tarachus and his companions, (Acta Sincera Ruinart, p. 419--448,) is filled with strong expressions of resentment and contempt, which could not fail of irritating the magistrate. The behavior of Aedesius to Hierocles, praefect of Egypt, was still more extraordinary. Euseb. de Martyr. Palestin. c. 5. * Note: M. Guizot states, that the acts of Tarachus and his companion contain nothing that appears dictated by violent feelings, (sentiment outre.) Nothing can be more painful than the constant attempt of Gibbon throughout this discussion, to find some flaw in the virtue and heroism of the martyrs, some extenuation for the cruelty of the persecutors. But truth must not be sacrificed even to well-grounded moral indignation. Though the language of these martyrs is in great part that of calm defiance, of noble firmness, yet there are

many expressions which betray "resentment and contempt." "Children of Satan, worshippers of Devils," is their common appellation of the heathen. One of them calls the judge another, one curses, and declares that he will curse the Emperors, as pestilential and bloodthirsty tyrants, whom God will soon visit in his wrath. On the other hand, though at first they speak the milder language of persuasion, the cold barbarity of the judges and officers might surely have called forth one sentence of abhorrence from Gibbon. On the first unsatisfactory answer, "Break his jaw," is the order of the judge. They direct and witness the most excruciating tortures; the people, as M. Guizot observes, were so much revolted by the cruelty of Maximus that when the martyrs appeared in the amphitheatre, fear seized on all hearts, and general murmurs against the unjust judge rank through the assembly. It is singular, at least, that Gibbon should have quoted "as probably authentic," acts so much embellished with miracle as these of Tarachus are, particularly towards the end.--M. * Note: Scarcely were the authorities informed of this, than the president of the province, a man, says Eusebius, harsh and cruel, banished the confessors, some to Cyprus, others to different parts of Palestine, and ordered them to be tormented by being set to the most painful labors. Four of them, whom he required to abjure their faith and refused, were burnt alive. Euseb. de Mart. Palest. c. xiii.--G. Two of these were bishops; a fifth, Silvanus, bishop of Gaza, was the last martyr; another, named John was blinded, but used to officiate, and recite from memory long passages of the sacred writings--M.]

[Footnote 180: Euseb. de Martyr. Palestin. c. 13.]

[Footnote 181: Augustin. Collat. Carthagin. Dei, iii. c. 13, ap.
Tillanant, Memoires Ecclesiastiques, tom. v. part i. p. 46. The
controversy with the Donatists, has reflected some, though perhaps a
partial, light on the history of the African church.]