

Chapter XX: Conversion Of Constantine.--Part III.

The awful mysteries of the Christian faith and worship were concealed from the eyes of strangers, and even of catechumens, with an affected secrecy, which served to excite their wonder and curiosity. [63] But the severe rules of discipline which the prudence of the bishops had instituted, were relaxed by the same prudence in favor of an Imperial proselyte, whom it was so important to allure, by every gentle condescension, into the pale of the church; and Constantine was permitted, at least by a tacit dispensation, to enjoy most of the privileges, before he had contracted any of the obligations, of a Christian. Instead of retiring from the congregation, when the voice of the deacon dismissed the profane multitude, he prayed with the faithful, disputed with the bishops, preached on the most sublime and intricate subjects of theology, celebrated with sacred rites the vigil of Easter, and publicly declared himself, not only a partaker, but, in some measure, a priest and hierophant of the Christian mysteries. [64] The pride of Constantine might assume, and his services had deserved, some extraordinary distinction: and ill-timed rigor might have blasted the unripened fruits of his conversion; and if the doors of the church had been strictly closed against a prince who had deserted the altars of the gods, the master of the empire would have been left destitute of any form of religious worship. In his last visit to Rome, he piously disclaimed and insulted the superstition of his ancestors, by refusing to lead the military procession of the equestrian order, and to offer the public vows to the Jupiter of the Capitoline Hill. [65] Many years

before his baptism and death, Constantine had proclaimed to the world, that neither his person nor his image should ever more be seen within the walls of an idolatrous temple; while he distributed through the provinces a variety of medals and pictures, which represented the emperor in an humble and suppliant posture of Christian devotion. [66]

[Footnote 63: The distinction between the public and the secret parts of divine service, the *missa catechumenorum* and the *missa fidelium*, and the mysterious veil which piety or policy had cast over the latter, are very judiciously explained by Thiers, *Exposition du Saint Sacrament*, l. i. c. 8- 12, p. 59-91: but as, on this subject, the Papists may reasonably be suspected, a Protestant reader will depend with more confidence on the learned Bingham, *Antiquities*, l. x. c. 5.]

[Footnote 64: See Eusebius in *Vit. Const.* l. iv. c. 15-32, and the whole tenor of Constantine's Sermon. The faith and devotion of the emperor has furnished Batonics with a specious argument in favor of his early baptism. Note: Compare Heinichen, *Excursus iv. et v.*, where these questions are examined with candor and acuteness, and with constant reference to the opinions of more modern writers.--M.]

[Footnote 65: Zosimus, l. ii. p. 105.]

[Footnote 66: Eusebius in *Vit. Constant.* l. iv. c. 15, 16.]

The pride of Constantine, who refused the privileges of a catechumen,

cannot easily be explained or excused; but the delay of his baptism may be justified by the maxims and the practice of ecclesiastical antiquity. The sacrament of baptism [67] was regularly administered by the bishop himself, with his assistant clergy, in the cathedral church of the diocese, during the fifty days between the solemn festivals of Easter and Pentecost; and this holy term admitted a numerous band of infants and adult persons into the bosom of the church. The discretion of parents often suspended the baptism of their children till they could understand the obligations which they contracted: the severity of ancient bishops exacted from the new converts a novitiate of two or three years; and the catechumens themselves, from different motives of a temporal or a spiritual nature, were seldom impatient to assume the character of perfect and initiated Christians. The sacrament of baptism was supposed to contain a full and absolute expiation of sin; and the soul was instantly restored to its original purity, and entitled to the promise of eternal salvation. Among the proselytes of Christianity, there are many who judged it imprudent to precipitate a salutary rite, which could not be repeated; to throw away an inestimable privilege, which could never be recovered. By the delay of their baptism, they could venture freely to indulge their passions in the enjoyments of this world, while they still retained in their own hands the means of a sure and easy absolution. [68] The sublime theory of the gospel had made a much fainter impression on the heart than on the understanding of Constantine himself. He pursued the great object of his ambition through the dark and bloody paths of war and policy; and, after the victory, he abandoned himself, without moderation, to the abuse of his fortune.

Instead of asserting his just superiority above the imperfect heroism and profane philosophy of Trajan and the Antonines, the mature age of Constantine forfeited the reputation which he had acquired in his youth. As he gradually advanced in the knowledge of truth, he proportionally declined in the practice of virtue; and the same year of his reign in which he convened the council of Nice, was polluted by the execution, or rather murder, of his eldest son. This date is alone sufficient to refute the ignorant and malicious suggestions of Zosimus, [69] who affirms, that, after the death of Crispus, the remorse of his father accepted from the ministers of christianity the expiation which he had vainly solicited from the Pagan pontiffs. At the time of the death of Crispus, the emperor could no longer hesitate in the choice of a religion; he could no longer be ignorant that the church was possessed of an infallible remedy, though he chose to defer the application of it till the approach of death had removed the temptation and danger of a relapse. The bishops whom he summoned, in his last illness, to the palace of Nicomedia, were edified by the fervor with which he requested and received the sacrament of baptism, by the solemn protestation that the remainder of his life should be worthy of a disciple of Christ, and by his humble refusal to wear the Imperial purple after he had been clothed in the white garment of a Neophyte. The example and reputation of Constantine seemed to countenance the delay of baptism. [70] Future tyrants were encouraged to believe, that the innocent blood which they might shed in a long reign would instantly be washed away in the waters of regeneration; and the abuse of religion dangerously undermined the foundations of moral virtue.

[Footnote 67: The theory and practice of antiquity, with regard to the sacrament of baptism, have been copiously explained by Dom Chardon, *Hist. des Sacremens*, tom. i. p. 3-405; Dom Martenne de *Ritibus Ecclesiae Antiquis*, tom. i.; and by Bingham, in the tenth and eleventh books of his *Christian Antiquities*. One circumstance may be observed, in which the modern churches have materially departed from the ancient custom. The sacrament of baptism (even when it was administered to infants) was immediately followed by confirmation and the holy communion.]

[Footnote 68: The Fathers, who censured this criminal delay, could not deny the certain and victorious efficacy even of a death-bed baptism. The ingenious rhetoric of Chrysostom could find only three arguments against these prudent Christians. 1. That we should love and pursue virtue for her own sake, and not merely for the reward. 2. That we may be surprised by death without an opportunity of baptism. 3. That although we shall be placed in heaven, we shall only twinkle like little stars, when compared to the suns of righteousness who have run their appointed course with labor, with success, and with glory. Chrysos tom in *Epist. ad Hebraeos*, Homil. xiii. apud Chardon, *Hist. des Sacremens*, tom. i. p. 49. I believe that this delay of baptism, though attended with the most pernicious consequences, was never condemned by any general or provincial council, or by any public act or declaration of the church. The zeal of the bishops was easily kindled on much slighter occasion. * Note: This passage of Chrysostom, though not in his more forcible manner, is not quite fairly represented. He is stronger in

other places, in Act. Hom. xxiii.--and Hom. i. Compare, likewise, the sermon of Gregory of Nysea on this subject, and Gregory Nazianzen. After all, to those who believed in the efficacy of baptism, what argument could be more conclusive, than the danger of dying without it? Orat. xl.--M.]

[Footnote 69: Zosimus, l. ii. p. 104. For this disingenuous falsehood he has deserved and experienced the harshest treatment from all the ecclesiastical writers, except Cardinal Baronius, (A. D. 324, No. 15-28,) who had occasion to employ the infidel on a particular service against the Arian Eusebius. Note: Heyne, in a valuable note on this passage of Zosimus, has shown decisively that this malicious way of accounting for the conversion of Constantine was not an invention of Zosimus. It appears to have been the current calumny eagerly adopted and propagated by the exasperated Pagan party. Reitemeter, a later editor of Zosimus, whose notes are retained in the recent edition, in the collection of the Byzantine historians, has a disquisition on the passage, as candid, but not more conclusive than some which have preceded him--M.]

[Footnote 70: Eusebius, l. iv. c. 61, 62, 63. The bishop of Caesarea supposes the salvation of Constantine with the most perfect confidence.]

The gratitude of the church has exalted the virtues and excused the failings of a generous patron, who seated Christianity on the throne of the Roman world; and the Greeks, who celebrate the festival of the

Imperial saint, seldom mention the name of Constantine without adding the title of equal to the Apostles. [71] Such a comparison, if it allude to the character of those divine missionaries, must be imputed to the extravagance of impious flattery. But if the parallel be confined to the extent and number of their evangelic victories the success of Constantine might perhaps equal that of the Apostles themselves. By the edicts of toleration, he removed the temporal disadvantages which had hitherto retarded the progress of Christianity; and its active and numerous ministers received a free permission, a liberal encouragement, to recommend the salutary truths of revelation by every argument which could affect the reason or piety of mankind. The exact balance of the two religions continued but a moment; and the piercing eye of ambition and avarice soon discovered, that the profession of Christianity might contribute to the interest of the present, as well as of a future life.

[72] The hopes of wealth and honors, the example of an emperor, his exhortations, his irresistible smiles, diffused conviction among the venal and obsequious crowds which usually fill the apartments of a palace. The cities which signalized a forward zeal by the voluntary destruction of their temples, were distinguished by municipal privileges, and rewarded with popular donatives; and the new capital of the East gloried in the singular advantage that Constantinople was never profaned by the worship of idols. [73] As the lower ranks of society are governed by imitation, the conversion of those who possessed any eminence of birth, of power, or of riches, was soon followed by dependent multitudes. [74] The salvation of the common people was purchased at an easy rate, if it be true that, in one year, twelve

thousand men were baptized at Rome, besides a proportionable number of women and children, and that a white garment, with twenty pieces of gold, had been promised by the emperor to every convert. [75] The powerful influence of Constantine was not circumscribed by the narrow limits of his life, or of his dominions. The education which he bestowed on his sons and nephews secured to the empire a race of princes, whose faith was still more lively and sincere, as they imbibed, in their earliest infancy, the spirit, or at least the doctrine, of Christianity. War and commerce had spread the knowledge of the gospel beyond the confines of the Roman provinces; and the Barbarians, who had disdained as humble and proscribed sect, soon learned to esteem a religion which had been so lately embraced by the greatest monarch, and the most civilized nation, of the globe. [76] The Goths and Germans, who enlisted under the standard of Rome, revered the cross which glittered at the head of the legions, and their fierce countrymen received at the same time the lessons of faith and of humanity. The kings of Iberia and Armenia [76a] worshipped the god of their protector; and their subjects, who have invariably preserved the name of Christians, soon formed a sacred and perpetual connection with their Roman brethren. The Christians of Persia were suspected, in time of war, of preferring their religion to their country; but as long as peace subsisted between the two empires, the persecuting spirit of the Magi was effectually restrained by the interposition of Constantine. [77] The rays of the gospel illuminated the coast of India. The colonies of Jews, who had penetrated into Arabia and Ethiopia, [78] opposed the progress of Christianity; but the labor of the missionaries was in some measure

facilitated by a previous knowledge of the Mosaic revelation; and Abyssinia still reveres the memory of Frumentius, [78a] who, in the time of Constantine, devoted his life to the conversion of those sequestered regions. Under the reign of his son Constantius, Theophilus, [79] who was himself of Indian extraction, was invested with the double character of ambassador and bishop. He embarked on the Red Sea with two hundred horses of the purest breed of Cappadocia, which were sent by the emperor to the prince of the Sabaeans, or Homerites. Theophilus was intrusted with many other useful or curious presents, which might raise the admiration, and conciliate the friendship, of the Barbarians; and he successfully employed several years in a pastoral visit to the churches of the torrid zone. [80]

[Footnote 71: See Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 429. The Greeks, the Russians, and, in the darker ages, the Latins themselves, have been desirous of placing Constantine in the catalogue of saints.]

[Footnote 72: See the third and fourth books of his life. He was accustomed to say, that whether Christ was preached in pretence, or in truth, he should still rejoice, (l. iii. c. 58.)]

[Footnote 73: M. de Tillemont (*Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 374, 616) has defended, with strength and spirit, the virgin purity of Constantinople against some malevolent insinuations of the Pagan Zosimus.]

[Footnote 74: The author of the *Histoire Politique et Philosophique des deux Indes* (tom. i. p. 9) condemns a law of Constantine, which gave freedom to all the slaves who should embrace Christianity. The emperor did indeed publish a law, which restrained the Jews from circumcising, perhaps from keeping, any Christian slave. (See Euseb. in Vit. Constant. 1. iv. c. 27, and Cod. Theod. 1. xvi. tit. ix., with Godefroy's Commentary, tom. vi. p. 247.) But this imperfect exception related only to the Jews, and the great body of slaves, who were the property of Christian or Pagan masters, could not improve their temporal condition by changing their religion. I am ignorant by what guides the Abbe Raynal was deceived; as the total absence of quotations is the unpardonable blemish of his entertaining history.]

[Footnote 75: See *Acta S Silvestri*, and *Hist. Eccles. Nicephor. Callist.* 1. vii. c. 34, ap. *Baronium Annal. Eccles. A. D. 324*, No. 67, 74. Such evidence is contemptible enough; but these circumstances are in themselves so probable, that the learned Dr. Howell (*History of the World*, vol. iii. p. 14) has not scrupled to adopt them.]

[Footnote 76: The conversion of the Barbarians under the reign of Constantine is celebrated by the ecclesiastical historians. (See *Sozomen*, 1. ii. c. 6, and *Theodoret*, 1. i. c. 23, 24.) But Rufinus, the Latin translator of Eusebius, deserves to be considered as an original authority. His information was curiously collected from one of the companions of the Apostle of Aethiopia, and from Bacurius, an Iberian prince, who was count of the domestics. Father Mamachi has given an

ample compilation on the progress of Christianity, in the first and second volumes of his great but imperfect work.]

[Footnote 76a: According to the Georgian chronicles, Iberia (Georgia) was converted by the virgin Nino, who effected an extraordinary cure on the wife of the king Mihran. The temple of the god Aramazt, or Armaz, not far from the capital Mtskitha, was destroyed, and the cross erected in its place. Le Beau, i. 202, with St. Martin's Notes. ----St. Martin has likewise clearly shown (St. Martin, Add. to Le Beau, i. 291) Armenia was the first nation which embraced Christianity, (Addition to Le Beau, i. 76. and Memoire sur l'Armenie, i. 305.) Gibbon himself suspected this truth.--"Instead of maintaining that the conversion of Armenia was not attempted with any degree of success, till the sceptre was in the hands of an orthodox emperor," I ought to have said, that the seeds of the faith were deeply sown during the season of the last and greatest persecution, that many Roman exiles might assist the labors of Gregory, and that the renowned Tiridates, the hero of the East, may dispute with Constantine the honor of being the first sovereign who embraced the Christian religion Vindication]

[Footnote 77: See, in Eusebius, (in Vit. l. iv. c. 9,) the pressing and pathetic epistle of Constantine in favor of his Christian brethren of Persia.]

[Footnote 78: See Basnage, Hist. des Juifs, tom. vii. p. 182, tom. viii. p. 333, tom. ix. p. 810. The curious diligence of this writer pursues

the Jewish exiles to the extremities of the globe.]

[Footnote 78a: Abba Salama, or Fremonatus, is mentioned in the Tareek Negushti, chronicle of the kings of Abyssinia. Salt's Travels, vol. ii. p. 464.--M.]

[Footnote 79: Theophilus had been given in his infancy as a hostage by his countrymen of the Isle of Diva, and was educated by the Romans in learning and piety. The Maldives, of which Male, or Diva, may be the capital, are a cluster of 1900 or 2000 minute islands in the Indian Ocean. The ancients were imperfectly acquainted with the Maldives; but they are described in the two Mahometan travellers of the ninth century, published by Renaudot, Geograph. Nubiensis, p. 30, 31 D'Herbelot, Bibliotheque Orientale p. 704. Hist. Generale des Voy ages, tom. viii. ---See the dissertation of M. Letronne on this question. He conceives that Theophilus was born in the island of Dahlak, in the Arabian Gulf. His embassy was to Abyssinia rather than to India. Letronne, Materiaux pour l'Hist. du Christianisme en Egypte Indie, et Abyssinie. Paris, 1832 3d Dissert.--M.]

[Footnote 80: Philostorgius, l. iii. c. 4, 5, 6, with Godefroy's learned observations. The historical narrative is soon lost in an inquiry concerning the seat of Paradise, strange monsters, &c.]

The irresistible power of the Roman emperors was displayed in the important and dangerous change of the national religion. The terrors

of a military force silenced the faint and unsupported murmurs of the Pagans, and there was reason to expect, that the cheerful submission of the Christian clergy, as well as people, would be the result of conscience and gratitude. It was long since established, as a fundamental maxim of the Roman constitution, that every rank of citizens was alike subject to the laws, and that the care of religion was the right as well as duty of the civil magistrate. Constantine and his successors could not easily persuade themselves that they had forfeited, by their conversion, any branch of the Imperial prerogatives, or that they were incapable of giving laws to a religion which they had protected and embraced. The emperors still continued to exercise a supreme jurisdiction over the ecclesiastical order, and the sixteenth book of the Theodosian code represents, under a variety of titles, the authority which they assumed in the government of the Catholic church. But the distinction of the spiritual and temporal powers, [81] which had never been imposed on the free spirit of Greece and Rome, was introduced and confirmed by the legal establishment of Christianity. The office of supreme pontiff, which, from the time of Numa to that of Augustus, had always been exercised by one of the most eminent of the senators, was at length united to the Imperial dignity. The first magistrate of the state, as often as he was prompted by superstition or policy, performed with his own hands the sacerdotal functions; [82] nor was there any order of priests, either at Rome or in the provinces, who claimed a more sacred character among men, or a more intimate communication with the gods. But in the Christian church, which intrusts the service of the altar to a perpetual succession of consecrated ministers, the monarch,

whose spiritual rank is less honorable than that of the meanest deacon, was seated below the rails of the sanctuary, and confounded with the rest of the faithful multitude. [83] The emperor might be saluted as the father of his people, but he owed a filial duty and reverence to the fathers of the church; and the same marks of respect, which Constantine had paid to the persons of saints and confessors, were soon exacted by the pride of the episcopal order. [84] A secret conflict between the civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions embarrassed the operation of the Roman government; and a pious emperor was alarmed by the guilt and danger of touching with a profane hand the ark of the covenant. The separation of men into the two orders of the clergy and of the laity was, indeed, familiar to many nations of antiquity; and the priests of India, of Persia, of Assyria, of Judea, of Aethiopia, of Egypt, and of Gaul, derived from a celestial origin the temporal power and possessions which they had acquired. These venerable institutions had gradually assimilated themselves to the manners and government of their respective countries; [85] but the opposition or contempt of the civil power served to cement the discipline of the primitive church. The Christians had been obliged to elect their own magistrates, to raise and distribute a peculiar revenue, and to regulate the internal policy of their republic by a code of laws, which were ratified by the consent of the people and the practice of three hundred years. When Constantine embraced the faith of the Christians, he seemed to contract a perpetual alliance with a distinct and independent society; and the privileges granted or confirmed by that emperor, or by his successors, were accepted, not as the precarious favors of the court, but as the just and inalienable

rights of the ecclesiastical order.

[Footnote 81: See the epistle of Osius, ap. Athanasium, vol. i. p. 840.

The public remonstrance which Osius was forced to address to the son, contained the same principles of ecclesiastical and civil government which he had secretly instilled into the mind of the father.]

[Footnote 82: M. de la Bastiel has evidently proved, that Augustus and his successors exercised in person all the sacred functions of pontifex maximus, of high priest, of the Roman empire.]

[Footnote 83: Something of a contrary practice had insensibly prevailed in the church of Constantinople; but the rigid Ambrose commanded Theodosius to retire below the rails, and taught him to know the difference between a king and a priest. See Theodoret, l. v. c. 18.]

[Footnote 84: At the table of the emperor Maximus, Martin, bishop of Tours, received the cup from an attendant, and gave it to the presbyter, his companion, before he allowed the emperor to drink; the empress waited on Martin at table. Sulpicius Severus, in Vit. S. Martin, c. 23, and Dialogue ii. 7. Yet it may be doubted, whether these extraordinary compliments were paid to the bishop or the saint. The honors usually granted to the former character may be seen in Bingham's Antiquities, l. ii. c. 9, and Vales ad Theodoret, l. iv. c. 6. See the haughty ceremonial which Leontius, bishop of Tripoli, imposed on the empress. Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 754. (Patres Apostol. tom.

ii. p. 179.)]

[Footnote 85: Plutarch, in his treatise of Isis and Osiris, informs us that the kings of Egypt, who were not already priests, were initiated, after their election, into the sacerdotal order.]

The Catholic church was administered by the spiritual and legal jurisdiction of eighteen hundred bishops; [86] of whom one thousand were seated in the Greek, and eight hundred in the Latin, provinces of the empire. The extent and boundaries of their respective dioceses had been variously and accidentally decided by the zeal and success of the first missionaries, by the wishes of the people, and by the propagation of the gospel. Episcopal churches were closely planted along the banks of the Nile, on the sea-coast of Africa, in the proconsular Asia, and through the southern provinces of Italy. The bishops of Gaul and Spain, of Thrace and Pontus, reigned over an ample territory, and delegated their rural suffragans to execute the subordinate duties of the pastoral office. [87] A Christian diocese might be spread over a province, or reduced to a village; but all the bishops possessed an equal and indelible character: they all derived the same powers and privileges from the apostles, from the people, and from the laws. While the civil and military professions were separated by the policy of Constantine, a new and perpetual order of ecclesiastical ministers, always respectable, sometimes dangerous, was established in the church and state. The important review of their station and attributes may be distributed under the following heads: I. Popular Election. II. Ordination of the

Clergy. III. Property. IV. Civil Jurisdiction. V. Spiritual censures.
VI. Exercise of public oratory. VII. Privilege of legislative
assemblies.

[Footnote 86: The numbers are not ascertained by any ancient writer or original catalogue; for the partial lists of the eastern churches are comparatively modern. The patient diligence of Charles a Sto Paolo, of Luke Holstentius, and of Bingham, has laboriously investigated all the episcopal sees of the Catholic church, which was almost commensurate with the Roman empire. The ninth book of the Christian antiquities is a very accurate map of ecclesiastical geography.]

[Footnote 87: On the subject of rural bishops, or Chorepiscopi, who voted in tynods, and conferred the minor orders, See Thomassin, *Discipline de l'Eglise*, tom. i. p. 447, &c., and Chardon, *Hist. des Sacremens*, tom. v. p. 395, &c. They do not appear till the fourth century; and this equivocal character, which had excited the jealousy of the prelates, was abolished before the end of the tenth, both in the East and the West.]

I. The freedom of election subsisted long after the legal establishment of Christianity; [88] and the subjects of Rome enjoyed in the church the privilege which they had lost in the republic, of choosing the magistrates whom they were bound to obey. As soon as a bishop had closed his eyes, the metropolitan issued a commission to one of his suffragans to administer the vacant see, and prepare, within a limited time, the

future election. The right of voting was vested in the inferior clergy, who were best qualified to judge of the merit of the candidates; in the senators or nobles of the city, all those who were distinguished by their rank or property; and finally in the whole body of the people, who, on the appointed day, flocked in multitudes from the most remote parts of the diocese, [89] and sometimes silenced by their tumultuous acclamations, the voice of reason and the laws of discipline. These acclamations might accidentally fix on the head of the most deserving competitor; of some ancient presbyter, some holy monk, or some layman, conspicuous for his zeal and piety. But the episcopal chair was solicited, especially in the great and opulent cities of the empire, as a temporal rather than as a spiritual dignity. The interested views, the selfish and angry passions, the arts of perfidy and dissimulation, the secret corruption, the open and even bloody violence which had formerly disgraced the freedom of election in the commonwealths of Greece and Rome, too often influenced the choice of the successors of the apostles. While one of the candidates boasted the honors of his family, a second allured his judges by the delicacies of a plentiful table, and a third, more guilty than his rivals, offered to share the plunder of the church among the accomplices of his sacrilegious hopes [90] The civil as well as ecclesiastical laws attempted to exclude the populace from this solemn and important transaction. The canons of ancient discipline, by requiring several episcopal qualifications, of age, station, &c., restrained, in some measure, the indiscriminate caprice of the electors. The authority of the provincial bishops, who were assembled in the vacant church to consecrate the choice of the people, was interposed to

moderate their passions and to correct their mistakes. The bishops could refuse to ordain an unworthy candidate, and the rage of contending factions sometimes accepted their impartial mediation. The submission, or the resistance, of the clergy and people, on various occasions, afforded different precedents, which were insensibly converted into positive laws and provincial customs; [91] but it was every where admitted, as a fundamental maxim of religious policy, that no bishop could be imposed on an orthodox church, without the consent of its members. The emperors, as the guardians of the public peace, and as the first citizens of Rome and Constantinople, might effectually declare their wishes in the choice of a primate; but those absolute monarchs respected the freedom of ecclesiastical elections; and while they distributed and resumed the honors of the state and army, they allowed eighteen hundred perpetual magistrates to receive their important offices from the free suffrages of the people. [92] It was agreeable to the dictates of justice, that these magistrates should not desert an honorable station from which they could not be removed; but the wisdom of councils endeavored, without much success, to enforce the residence, and to prevent the translation, of bishops. The discipline of the West was indeed less relaxed than that of the East; but the same passions which made those regulations necessary, rendered them ineffectual. The reproaches which angry prelates have so vehemently urged against each other, serve only to expose their common guilt, and their mutual indiscretion.

[Footnote 88: Thomassin (*Discipline de l'Eglise*, tom, ii. l. ii. c. 1-8,

p. 673-721) has copiously treated of the election of bishops during the five first centuries, both in the East and in the West; but he shows a very partial bias in favor of the episcopal aristocracy. Bingham, (l. iv. c. 2) is moderate; and Chardon (Hist. des Sacremens tom. v. p. 108-128) is very clear and concise. * Note: This freedom was extremely limited, and soon annihilated; already, from the third century, the deacons were no longer nominated by the members of the community, but by the bishops. Although it appears by the letters of Cyprian, that even in his time, no priest could be elected without the consent of the community. (Ep. 68,) that election was far from being altogether free. The bishop proposed to his parishioners the candidate whom he had chosen, and they were permitted to make such objections as might be suggested by his conduct and morals. (St. Cyprian, Ep. 33.) They lost this last right towards the middle of the fourth century.--G]

[Footnote 89: *Incredibilis multitudo, non solum ex eo oppido, (Tours,) sed etiam ex vicinis urbibus ad suffragia ferenda convenerat, &c.* Sulpicius Severus, in Vit. Martin. c. 7. The council of Laodicea, (canon xiii.) prohibits mobs and tumults; and Justinian confines confined the right of election to the nobility. Novel. cxxiii. 1.]

[Footnote 90: The epistles of Sidonius Apollinaris (iv. 25, vii. 5, 9) exhibit some of the scandals of the Gallican church; and Gaul was less polished and less corrupt than the East.]

[Footnote 91: A compromise was sometimes introduced by law or by

consent; either the bishops or the people chose one of the three candidates who had been named by the other party.]

[Footnote 92: All the examples quoted by Thomassin (*Discipline de l'Eglise*, tom. ii. l. iii. c. vi. p. 704-714) appear to be extraordinary acts of power, and even of oppression. The confirmation of the bishop of Alexandria is mentioned by Philostorgius as a more regular proceeding. (*Hist Eccles.* l. ii. ll.) * Note: The statement of Planck is more consistent with history: "From the middle of the fourth century, the bishops of some of the larger churches, particularly those of the Imperial residence, were almost always chosen under the influence of the court, and often directly and immediately nominated by the emperor." Planck, *Geschichte der Christlich-kirchlichen Gesellschafteverfassung*, verfassung, vol. i p 263.--M.]

II. The bishops alone possessed the faculty of spiritual generation: and this extraordinary privilege might compensate, in some degree, for the painful celibacy [93] which was imposed as a virtue, as a duty, and at length as a positive obligation. The religions of antiquity, which established a separate order of priests, dedicated a holy race, a tribe or family, to the perpetual service of the gods. [94] Such institutions were founded for possession, rather than conquest. The children of the priests enjoyed, with proud and indolent security, their sacred inheritance; and the fiery spirit of enthusiasm was abated by the cares, the pleasures, and the endearments of domestic life. But the Christian sanctuary was open to every ambitious candidate, who aspired to its

heavenly promises or temporal possessions. This office of priests, like that of soldiers or magistrates, was strenuously exercised by those men, whose temper and abilities had prompted them to embrace the ecclesiastical profession, or who had been selected by a discerning bishop, as the best qualified to promote the glory and interest of the church. The bishops [95] (till the abuse was restrained by the prudence of the laws) might constrain the reluctant, and protect the distressed; and the imposition of hands forever bestowed some of the most valuable privileges of civil society. The whole body of the Catholic clergy, more numerous perhaps than the legions, was exempted [95a] by the emperors from all service, private or public, all municipal offices, and all personal taxes and contributions, which pressed on their fellow-citizens with intolerable weight; and the duties of their holy profession were accepted as a full discharge of their obligations to the republic. [96] Each bishop acquired an absolute and indefeasible right to the perpetual obedience of the clerk whom he ordained: the clergy of each episcopal church, with its dependent parishes, formed a regular and permanent society; and the cathedrals of Constantinople [97] and Carthage [98] maintained their peculiar establishment of five hundred ecclesiastical ministers. Their ranks [99] and numbers were insensibly multiplied by the superstition of the times, which introduced into the church the splendid ceremonies of a Jewish or Pagan temple; and a long train of priests, deacons, sub-deacons, acolythes, exorcists, readers, singers, and doorkeepers, contributed, in their respective stations, to swell the pomp and harmony of religious worship. The clerical name and privileges were extended to many pious fraternities, who devoutly

supported the ecclesiastical throne. [100] Six hundred parabolani, or adventurers, visited the sick at Alexandria; eleven hundred copiatoe, or grave-diggers, buried the dead at Constantinople; and the swarms of monks, who arose from the Nile, overspread and darkened the face of the Christian world.

[Footnote 93: The celibacy of the clergy during the first five or six centuries, is a subject of discipline, and indeed of controversy, which has been very diligently examined. See in particular, Thomassin, *Discipline de l'Eglise*, tom. i. l. ii. c. lx. lxi. p. 886-902, and Bingham's *Antiquities*, l. iv. c. 5. By each of these learned but partial critics, one half of the truth is produced, and the other is concealed.

---Note: Compare Planck, (vol. i. p. 348.) This century, the third, first brought forth the monks, or the spirit of monkery, the celibacy of the clergy. Planck likewise observes, that from the history of Eusebius alone, names of married bishops and presbyters may be adduced by dozens.--M.]

[Footnote 94: Diodorus Siculus attests and approves the hereditary succession of the priesthood among the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, and the Indians, (l. i. p. 84, l. ii. p. 142, 153, edit. Wesseling.) The magi are described by Ammianus as a very numerous family: "Per saecula multa ad praesens una eademque prosapia multitudo creata, Deorum cultibus dedicata." (xxiii. 6.) Ausonius celebrates the *Stirps Druidarum*, (*De Professorib. Burdigal. iv.*;) but we may infer from the remark of Caesar, (vi. 13,) that in the Celtic hierarchy, some room was left for choice

and emulation.]

[Footnote 95: The subject of the vocation, ordination, obedience, &c., of the clergy, is laboriously discussed by Thomassin (*Discipline de l'Eglise*, tom. ii. p. 1-83) and Bingham, (in the 4th book of his *Antiquities*, more especially the 4th, 6th, and 7th chapters.) When the brother of St. Jerom was ordained in Cyprus, the deacons forcibly stopped his mouth, lest he should make a solemn protestation, which might invalidate the holy rites.]

[Footnote 95a: This exemption was very much limited. The municipal offices were of two kinds; the one attached to the individual in his character of inhabitant, the other in that of proprietor. Constantine had exempted ecclesiastics from offices of the first description. (*Cod. Theod.* xvi. t. ii. leg. 1, 2 Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* l. x. c. vii.)

They sought, also, to be exempted from those of the second, (*munera patrimoniorum*.) The rich, to obtain this privilege, obtained subordinate situations among the clergy. Constantine published in 320 an edict, by which he prohibited the more opulent citizens (*decuriones* and *curiales*) from embracing the ecclesiastical profession, and the bishops from admitting new ecclesiastics, before a place should be vacant by the death of the occupant, (*Godefroy ad Cod. Theod.* t. xii. t. i. de *Decur.*) Valentinian the First, by a rescript still more general enacted that no rich citizen should obtain a situation in the church, (*De Episc* l. lxvii.) He also enacted that ecclesiastics, who wished to be exempt from offices which they were bound to discharge as proprietors, should be

obliged to give up their property to their relations. Cod Theodos 1. xii t. i. lib. 49--G.]

[Footnote 96: The charter of immunities, which the clergy obtained from the Christian emperors, is contained in the 16th book of the Theodosian code; and is illustrated with tolerable candor by the learned Godefroy, whose mind was balanced by the opposite prejudices of a civilian and a Protestant.]

[Footnote 97: Justinian. Novell. ciii. Sixty presbyters, or priests, one hundred deacons, forty deaconesses, ninety sub-deacons, one hundred and ten readers, twenty-five chanters, and one hundred door-keepers; in all, five hundred and twenty-five. This moderate number was fixed by the emperor to relieve the distress of the church, which had been involved in debt and usury by the expense of a much higher establishment.]

[Footnote 98: *Universus clerus ecclesiae Carthaginensis.... fere quingenti vei amplius; inter quos quamplurima erant lectores infantuli.* Victor Vitensis, *de Persecut. Vandal.* v. 9, p. 78, edit. Ruinart. This remnant of a more prosperous state still subsisted under the oppression of the Vandals.]

[Footnote 99: The number of seven orders has been fixed in the Latin church, exclusive of the episcopal character. But the four inferior ranks, the minor orders, are now reduced to empty and useless titles.]

[Footnote 100: See Cod. Theodos. 1. xvi. tit. ii. leg. 42, 43.

Godefroy's Commentary, and the Ecclesiastical History of Alexandria, show the danger of these pious institutions, which often disturbed the peace of that turbulent capital.]