

writings, I have, in the two quotations here given, substituted for my own translation that of the Rev. Dr. Pusey, as contained in Vol. I. of the "Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church," published at Oxford, 1840.

Considering the eminent authority which has been attributed to the writings of St. Augustine by the religious world for nearly fifteen centuries, it is proper to speak of them with respect. And indeed it is not necessary to do otherwise. The paragraphs here quoted criticise themselves. No one did more than this Father to bring science and religion into antagonism; it was mainly he who diverted the Bible from its true office—a guide to purity of life—and placed it in the perilous position of being the arbiter of human knowledge, an audacious tyranny over the mind of man. The example once set, there was no want of followers; the works of the great Greek philosophers were stigmatized as profane; the transcendently glorious achievements of the Museum of Alexandria were hidden from sight by a cloud of ignorance, mysticism, and unintelligible jargon, out of which there too often flashed the destroying lightnings of ecclesiastical vengeance.

A divine revelation of science admits of no improvement, no change, no advance. It discourages as needless, and indeed as presumptuous, all new discovery, considering it as an unlawful prying into things which it was the intention of God to conceal.

What, then, is that sacred, that revealed science, declared by the Fathers to be the sum of all knowledge?

It likened all phenomena, natural and spiritual, to human acts. It saw in the Almighty, the Eternal, only a gigantic man.

As to the earth, it affirmed that it is a flat surface, over which the sky is spread like a dome, or, as St. Augustine tells us, is stretched like a skin. In this the sun and moon and stars move, so that they may give light by day and by night to man. The earth was made of matter created by God out of nothing, and, with all the tribes of animals and plants inhabiting it, was finished in six days. Above the sky or firmament is heaven; in the dark and fiery space beneath the earth is hell. The earth is the central and most important body of the universe, all other things being intended for and subservient to it.

As to man, he was made out of the dust of the earth. At first he was alone, but subsequently woman was formed from one of his ribs. He is the greatest and choicest of the works of God. He was placed in a paradise near the banks of the Euphrates, and was very wise and very pure; but, having tasted of the forbidden fruit, and thereby broken the commandment given to him, he was condemned to labor and to death.

The descendants of the first man, undeterred by his punishment, pursued such a career of wickedness that it became necessary to destroy them. A deluge, therefore, flooded the face of the earth, and rose over the tops of the mountains. Having accomplished its purpose, the water was dried up by a wind.

From this catastrophe Noah and his three sons, with their wives, were saved in an ark. Of these sons, Shem remained in Asia and repopled it. Ham peopled Africa; Japhet, Europe. As the Fathers were not acquainted with the existence of America, they did not provide an ancestor for its people.

Let us listen to what some of these authorities say in support of their assertions. Thus Lactantius, refer-

ring to the heretical doctrine of the globular form of the earth, remarks: "Is it possible that men can be so absurd as to believe that the crops and the trees on the other side of the earth hang downward, and that men have their feet higher than their heads? If you ask them how they defend these monstrosities, how things do not fall away from the earth on that side, they reply that the nature of things is such that heavy bodies tend toward the centre, like the spokes of a wheel, while light bodies, as clouds, smoke, fire, tend from the centre to the heavens on all sides. Now, I am really at a loss what to say of those who, when they have once gone wrong, steadily persevere in their folly, and defend one absurd opinion by another." On the question of the antipodes, St. Augustine asserts that "it is impossible there should be inhabitants on the opposite side of the earth, since no such race is recorded by Scripture among the descendants of Adam." Perhaps, however, the most unanswerable argument against the sphericity of the earth was this, that "in the day of judgment, men on the other side of a globe could not see the Lord descending through the air."

It is unnecessary for me to say any thing respecting the introduction of death into the world, the continual interventions of spiritual agencies in the course of events, the offices of angels and devils, the expected conflagration of the earth, the tower of Babel, the confusion of tongues, the dispersion of mankind, the interpretation of natural phenomena, as eclipses, the rainbow, etc. Above all, I abstain from commenting on the Patristic conceptions of the Almighty; they are too anthropomorphic, and wanting in sublimity.

Perhaps, however, I may quote from Cosmas Indicopleustes the views that were entertained in the sixth

century. He wrote a work entitled "Christian Topography," the chief intent of which was to confute the heretical opinion of the globular form of the earth, and the pagan assertion that there is a temperate zone on the southern side of the torrid. He affirms that, according to the true orthodox system of geography, the earth is a quadrangular plane, extending four hundred days' journey east and west, and exactly half as much north and south; that it is inclosed by mountains, on which the sky rests; that one on the north side, huger than the others, by intercepting the rays of the sun, produces night; and that the plane of the earth is not set exactly horizontally, but with a little inclination from the north: hence the Euphrates, Tigris, and other rivers, running southward, are rapid; but the Nile, having to run up-hill, has necessarily a very slow current.

The Venerable Bede, writing in the seventh century, tells us that "the creation was accomplished in six days, and that the earth is its centre and its primary object. The heaven is of a fiery and subtile nature, round, and equidistant in every part, as a canopy from the centre of the earth. It turns round every day with ineffable rapidity, only moderated by the resistance of the seven planets, three above the sun—Saturn, Jupiter, Mars—then the sun; three below—Venus, Mercury, the moon. The stars go round in their fixed courses, the northern perform the shortest circle. The highest heaven has its proper limit; it contains the angelic virtues who descend upon earth, assume ethereal bodies, perform human functions, and return. The heaven is tempered with glacial waters, lest it should be set on fire. The inferior heaven is called the firmament, because it separates the superincumbent waters from the waters be-

low. The firmamental waters are lower than the spiritual heaven, higher than all corporeal beings, reserved, some say, for a second deluge; others, more truly, to temper the fire of the fixed stars."

Was it for this preposterous scheme—this product of ignorance and audacity—that the works of the Greek philosophers were to be given up? It was none too soon that the great critics who appeared at the Reformation, by comparing the works of these writers with one another, brought them to their proper level, and taught us to look upon them all with contempt.

Of this presumptuous system, the strangest part was its logic, the nature of its proofs. It relied upon miracle-evidence. A fact was supposed to be demonstrated by an astounding illustration of something else! An Arabian writer, referring to this, says: "If a conjurer should say to me, 'Three are more than ten, and in proof of it I will change this stick into a serpent,' I might be surprised at his legerdemain, but I certainly should not admit his assertion." Yet, for more than a thousand years, such was the accepted logic, and all over Europe propositions equally absurd were accepted on equally ridiculous proof.

Since the party that had become dominant in the empire could not furnish works capable of intellectual competition with those of the great pagan authors, and since it was impossible for it to accept a position of inferiority, there arose a political necessity for the discouragement, and even persecution, of profane learning. The persecution of the Platonists under Valentinian was due to that necessity. They were accused of magic, and many of them were put to death. The profession of philosophy had become dangerous—it was a state crime. In its stead there arose a passion for the

marvelous, a spirit of superstition. Egypt exchanged the great men, who had made her Museum immortal, for bands of solitary monks and sequestered virgins, with which she was overrun.

CHAPTER III.

CONFLICT RESPECTING THE DOCTRINE OF THE UNITY OF
GOD.—THE FIRST OR SOUTHERN REFORMATION.

The Egyptians insist on the introduction of the worship of the Virgin Mary.—They are resisted by Nestor, the Patriarch of Constantinople, but eventually, through their influence with the emperor, cause Nestor's exile and the dispersion of his followers.

Prelude to the Southern Reformation.—The Persian attack; its moral effects.

The Arabian Reformation.—Mohammed is brought in contact with the Nestorians.—He adopts and extends their principles, rejecting the worship of the Virgin, the doctrine of the Trinity, and every thing in opposition to the unity of God.—He extinguishes idolatry in Arabia, by force, and prepares to make war on the Roman Empire.—His successors conquer Syria, Egypt, Asia Minor, North Africa, Spain, and invade France.

As the result of this conflict, the doctrine of the unity of God was established in the greater part of the Roman Empire.—The cultivation of science was restored, and Christendom lost many of her most illustrious capitals, as Alexandria, Carthage, and, above all, Jerusalem.

THE policy of the Byzantine court had given to primitive Christianity a paganized form, which it had spread over all the idolatrous populations constituting the empire. There had been an amalgamation of the two parties. Christianity had modified paganism, paganism had modified Christianity. The limits of this adulterated religion were the confines of the Roman Empire.

With this great extension there had come to the

Christian party political influence and wealth. No insignificant portion of the vast public revenues found their way into the treasuries of the Church. As under such circumstances must ever be the case, there were many competitors for the spoils—men who, under the mask of zeal for the predominant faith, sought only the enjoyment of its emoluments.

Under the early emperors, conquest had reached its culmination; the empire was completed; there remained no adequate objects for military life; the days of war-peculation, and the plundering of provinces, were over. For the ambitious, however, another path was open; other objects presented. A successful career in the Church led to results not unworthy of comparison with those that in former days had been attained by a successful career in the army.

The ecclesiastical, and indeed, it may be said, much of the political history of that time, turns on the struggles of the bishops of the three great metropolitan cities—Constantinople, Alexandria, Rome—for supremacy: Constantinople based her claims on the fact that she was the existing imperial city; Alexandria pointed to her commercial and literary position; Rome, to her souvenirs. But the Patriarch of Constantinople labored under the disadvantage that he was too closely under the eye, and, as he found to his cost, too often under the hand, of the emperor. Distance gave security to the episcopates of Alexandria and Rome.

Religious disputations in the East have generally turned on diversities of opinion respecting the nature and attributes of God; in the West, on the relations and life of man. This peculiarity has been strikingly manifested in the transformations that Christianity has undergone in Asia and Europe respectively. Accordingly,

at the time of which we are speaking, all the Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire exhibited an intellectual anarchy. There were fierce quarrels respecting the Trinity, the essence of God, the position of the Son, the nature of the Holy Spirit, the influences of the Virgin Mary. The triumphant clamor first of one then of another sect was confirmed, sometimes by miracle-proof, sometimes by bloodshed. No attempt was ever made to submit the rival opinions to logical examination. All parties, however, agreed in this, that the imposture of the old classical pagan forms of faith was demonstrated by the facility with which they had been overthrown. The triumphant ecclesiastics proclaimed that the images of the gods had failed to defend themselves when the time of trial came.

Polytheistic ideas have always been held in repute by the southern European races, the Semitic have maintained the unity of God. Perhaps this is due to the fact, as a recent author has suggested, that a diversified landscape of mountains and valleys, islands, and rivers, and gulfs, predisposes man to a belief in a multitude of divinities. A vast sandy desert, the illimitable ocean, impresses him with an idea of the oneness of God.

Political reasons had led the emperors to look with favor on the admixture of Christianity and paganism, and doubtless by this means the bitterness of the rivalry between those antagonists was somewhat abated. The heaven of the popular, the fashionable Christianity was the old Olympus, from which the venerable Greek divinities had been removed. There, on a great white throne, sat God the Father, on his right the Son, and then the blessed Virgin, clad in a golden robe, and "covered with various female adornments;" on the left sat God the Holy Ghost. Surrounding these

thrones were hosts of angels with their harps. The vast expanse beyond was filled with tables, seated at which the happy spirits of the just enjoyed a perpetual banquet.

If, satisfied with this picture of happiness, illiterate persons never inquired how the details of such a heaven were carried out, or how much pleasure there could be in the ennui of such an eternally unchanging, unmoving scene, it was not so with the intelligent. As we are soon to see, there were among the higher ecclesiastics those who rejected with sentiments of horror these carnal, these materialistic conceptions, and raised their protesting voices in vindication of the attributes of the Omnipresent, the Almighty God.

In the paganization of religion, now in all directions taking place, it became the interest of every bishop to procure an adoption of the ideas which, time out of mind, had been current in the community under his charge. The Egyptians had already thus forced on the Church their peculiar Trinitarian views; and now they were resolved that, under the form of the adoration of the Virgin Mary, the worship of Isis should be restored.

It so happened that Nestor, the Bishop of Antioch, who entertained the philosophical views of Theodore of Mopsuestia, had been called by the Emperor Theodosius the Younger to the Episcopate of Constantinople (A. D. 427). Nestor rejected the base popular anthropomorphism, looking upon it as little better than blasphemous, and pictured to himself an awful eternal Divinity, who pervaded the universe, and had none of the aspects or attributes of man. Nestor was deeply imbued with the doctrines of Aristotle, and attempted to coordinate them with what he considered to be orthodox