

VII. We are said to be the most criminal of men, 1
on the score of our sacramental baby-killing and
the baby-eating that goes with it and the incest
that follows the banquet, where the dogs^c are our
pimps in the dark, forsooth, and make a sort of
decency for guilty lusts by overturning the lamps.
That, at all events, is what you always say about us ;
and yet you take no pains to bring into the daylight
what you have been saying about us all this long
time. Then, I say, either bring it out, if you believe
all this, or refuse to believe it after leaving it un-
investigated. Your habit of looking the other way 2

^c The dogs were supposed to be tied to the candles ; food
thrown to them ; and the sudden movement made the room
dark.

constitutes a demurrer in the case, a presumption that the thing is not there at all, which not even you yourselves dare to try to bring out. It is quite a different task that you enjoin on the executioner against the Christians,—not to make them say what they do, but deny what they are.

This way of life dates, as we have already said, 3 from the reign of Tiberius. Truth and hatred of truth start together ; as soon as it has appeared, it begins to be disliked. Count the outsiders, and you count its enemies—the Jews its proper enemies from rivalry, the soldiers for blackmail, while it is nature itself that makes the home circle our enemies.^a Every day 4 we stand siege ; every day we are betrayed ; above all in our gatherings and our assemblies we are surprised. Who yet, I ask, came upon a baby wailing, 5 as they say ? Who ever kept for the judge's sight the jaws of Cyclops and Siren, bloodstained as he had found them ? Who, again, found in our wives the traces of impurity ? Who discovered such crimes and concealed them, or sold his discovery,^b with his hands on the persons of the guilty ? If we always escape detection, when was our wicked conduct betrayed ?

Yes, tell me, by whom the betrayal could have 6 been made ? Not, I should think, by the guilty themselves ; since in all mysteries the very fact that they are mysteries requires the pledge of silence. The mysteries of Samothrace and Eleusis remain unspoken. How much more such mysteries as these, whose betrayal will provoke man's vengeance at once, with God's in reserve ? Well, if 7 they are not their own betrayers, it follows that outsiders must betray them. And where do the outsiders get their information, when initiations, even pious

ones, always bid the profane avaunt, and guard against observers? Or do you suggest that the impious are less afraid?

Everybody knows the nature of Rumour. It is 8 in your literature :

Rumour, a curse, and swiftest of all curses.^a

Why is Rumour a curse? Because she is swift? Because she is an informer? Or because she is generally a liar? Why, Rumour, even when she does bring a bit of truth, does not quite escape from her vice of lying; she subtracts from the Truth, adds to it, alters it. What? Surely the terms of her existence are 9 that she only survives while she lies, and only lives so long as she fails to prove her tale. When she has proved it, she ceases to be Rumour; and, as if she had completed her task of telling, she gives us fact; and, after that, it is fact that is held, and fact it is called; 10 nor does anybody say, for example, "They say this occurred at Rome," or "Rumour is that so and so is assigned the province," but "He has been assigned the province" and "This did occur in Rome." Rumour, a synonym for the uncertain, has no place 11 where there is certainty. Would anybody believe Rumour, except the unthinking? The wise man does not believe uncertainty. It lies with everybody to reflect that, however widely Rumour has been put about, with whatever assurance it has been contrived, it must necessarily have originated at some moment with some single person who started it. After 12 that it creeps through ramifications of tongues and ears; and something wrong in the little seed, whence it sprang, so obscures all else in the rumour, that no one reflects whether that first mouth sowed the lie, as

often happens, from an envious nature, from wanton suspicion, or from that mere pleasure in lying which with some people is no new thing but inborn in them. It is well that time reveals all, as your own proverbs and wise saws witness, and does it by the law of nature, which has so ordained that nothing long lies hid, even when Rumour has not flung it abroad. Very properly, 13 then, Rumour alone all this long time is the authority for the crimes of the Christians. Rumour is the informer you bring forward against us. Yet what she once launched and in all this interval has hardened into general belief, to this hour she has not been able to prove. So I would appeal to the authority of Nature herself to give evidence against those who assume such charges to be credible.

VIII. Look, then; we offer a reward for these 1 crimes; they promise eternal life! For the moment believe it. Then I ask a question on this point—whether even you, sir, who have believed it, count eternal life worth winning at such a price, with all this on your conscience? Come! plunge the knife into the baby, 2 nobody's enemy, guilty of nothing, everybody's child; or, if that is the other man's job, do you just stand by (that is all), by this human creature dying before it has lived; watch for the young soul as it escapes; catch the infant blood; steep your bread with it; eat and enjoy it. Meanwhile, as you recline on your 3 couch, reckon the places where your mother, your sister, may be; make a careful note so that, when the darkness of the dogs' contriving shall fall, you can make no mistake. You will be guilty of a sin, unless you have committed incest. So initiated, so 4 sealed,^a you live for ever. I wish you to answer: Is eternity worth it? Or if it is not, then you must not

believe the tales. Even if you have believed, I deny that you wish it [at the price]; even if you should wish it, I deny that you could *do* the thing. Then how can others do it, if you cannot? Why can't you, if others can? Oh, we have another nature, I suppose! 5 Dog-headed men, perhaps, or Sciapods? ^a A different arrangement of teeth, other muscles for incestuous lust? You, sir, who believe this of any man, you can do it just as easily as believe it. You are a man yourself, and that is just what a Christian is. You, sir, who cannot do the thing, ought not to believe it of another. For a Christian too is a man, and exactly what you are.

“But, of course, the ignorant are trapped into it; 6 the trick is played on them. For they never knew that any such thing is asserted of Christians,—nothing that they should look into, nothing to investigate with all watchfulness.” Yet when men seek initiation, 7 the usual thing, I suppose, is first to approach the “father” of the ritual, to map out what is to be prepared. Then quoth he: “You must have a baby, still tender, that can know nothing of death, that can smile under your knife; *item* a loaf, to catch its juicy blood; add lampstands and lamps, a dog or two, and some sops to set the dogs tumbling the lamps over; above all, you must come with your mother and sister.” But if they won't come, or 8 if you have none? What, Christians with *no* relatives? I suppose, a man is not a regular Christian unless he is a brother or a son. “But, look! what if all this is made ready for people who know nothing about it?” At all events they know afterwards, and bear up under it, and forgive it. “They are afraid 9 of punishment, if they were to tell the story.” They

will deserve to be protected^a; they would prefer to die right out than to live with such deeds on their conscience. Put it that they are afraid—why do they go on with it? For it follows that you would not wish to be any longer what, if only you had known before, you never would have been.

IX. To refute these charges still further, I will show 1 that these very things are done by you, sometimes openly, sometimes in secret, and that perhaps is the reason for your having believed them about us also.

In Africa infants used to be sacrificed to Saturn,^b 2 and quite openly, down to the proconsulate of Tiberius,^c who took the priests themselves and on the very trees of their temple, under whose shadow their crimes had been committed, hung them alive like votive offerings on crosses; and the soldiers of my own country^d are witnesses to it, who served that proconsul in that very task. Yes, and to this day 3 that holy crime persists in secret. Christians are not the only people who defy you; no crime is ever wholly rooted out; nor does any of your gods change his ways. Saturn did not spare his own children; 4 so, where other people's were concerned, he naturally persisted in not sparing them; and their own parents offered them to him, were glad to respond, and fondled their children that they might not be sacrificed in tears. And between murder and sacrifice by parents—oh! the difference is great! Persons of 5 older years used to be sacrificed to Mercury among the Gauls. The plays about the Tauric Chersonese belong to the theatres, and there I leave them.^e But,

^e *Iphigenia in Tauris* may be in his mind, or plays copied from it.

look you! in that most religious of all cities, the city of the pious race of Aeneas, is a certain Jupiter, whom they drench with human blood at his own games. "Yes, but only the blood of a man condemned already to the beasts," you say? That, I take it, makes it something less than a man's blood? Or may it not be so much worse because the blood of a bad man? At all events it is at least the blood of murder. What a Christian Jove, to be sure, his father's only son so far as cruelty goes!^a But since 6 there is no difference as to baby-killing whether you do it as a sacred rite or just because you choose to do it (though we must grant a difference between murder and killing your own child^b), I will turn to the people.

How many, think you, of these persons standing round and panting for Christian blood,—how many of you, most just magistrates and most severe upon us, how many should I touch in their consciences for killing their own children, born to them? Since 7 there is a difference between one kind of death and another, surely your way is more cruel, to choke out the breath in water, or to expose to cold, starvation and the dogs.^c Grown-up people would sooner die by iron. For us murder is once for all forbidden; so even 8 the child in the womb, while yet the mother's blood is still being drawn on to form the human being, it is not lawful for us to destroy. To forbid birth is only quicker murder. It makes no difference whether one take away the life once born or destroy it as it comes to birth. He is a man, who is to be a man; the fruit is always present in the seed.

firmly the charge. The papyrus letter of Hilarion to Alis (A.D. 1) is well known; "If it was a girl, put it out."

As to tasting blood, and such like tragic dishes, 9
 read—wherever it may be told (it is in Herodotus,^a
 I think)—how some tribes have used blood drawn
 from the arms of both parties and taste it to
 seal a treaty. Something of the kind was tasted in
 Catiline's plot.^b They say, too, that among some
 tribesmen of Scythian stock every dead man is eaten
 by his kindred.^c But I go too far afield. To-day 10
 and here, when men are dedicated to Bellona, the
 thigh is cut, the blood is caught in a little shield,^d
 and given them to consume—as a sign. Again,
 those who, when a show is given in the arena,
 with greedy thirst have caught the fresh blood of the
 guilty slain, as it pours fresh from their throats, and
 carry it off as a cure for their epilepsy^e—what of
 them? Again, those who dine on the flesh of wild 11
 animals from the arena, keen on the meat of boar
 or stag? That boar in his battle has wiped the blood
 off him whose blood he drew; that stag has wallowed
 in the blood of a gladiator. The bellies of the very
 bears are sought, full of raw and undigested human
 flesh. Man's flesh goes belching, fattened on man's
 flesh. You who eat these things, how far are you 12
 from those Christian banquets?

Let your error blush^f before the Christians, for we 13
 do not include even animals' blood in our natural
 diet. We abstain on that account from things
 strangled or that die of themselves, that we may
 not in any way be polluted by blood, even if it is

^a Cf. Herodotus, i. 216, the Massagetai eat the aged; iv. 26, the Issedones eat the dead.

^d Or "in the hand."

^e Cf. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xxviii. 1 (2).

^f In less rhetorical language, "blush for your unnatural practices in eating."

buried in the meat.^a Finally, when you are testing 14
 Christians, you offer them sausages full of blood ;
 you are thoroughly well aware, of course, that
 among them it is forbidden ; but you want to make
 them transgress. Now, I ask you, what sort of a thing
 is it, that when you are confident they will turn with
 horror from animals' blood, you should suppose them
 greedy for human blood—unless perhaps you your-
 selves have found it sweeter ? Human blood then 15
 ought to be used as an extra test with the Christians,
 like the brazier and incense-box. They would be con-
 victed as much by their eagerness for human blood
 as by their refusal of sacrifice, and acquitted if they
 did not taste it, just as they would be if they had
 sacrificed. And when your prisoners were being
 tried and condemned, there would, I am very sure,
 be no shortage of human blood.

Then again who are more incestuous than the 16
 disciples of Jupiter ? The Persians according to
 Ctesias consort with their mothers. And the Mace-
 donians are suspected of it too, because when first
 they heard the tragedy of *Oedipus*, they laughed
 at his grief for the incest ; “ he lay with Jocasta,”
 they said. Yet now reflect how far error may go in 17
 promoting incest, as your promiscuous wantonness
 offers occasion. To begin, you expose your children
 to be taken up by the pity of any stray outsider who
 passes—or (shall we say ?) you release them to be
 adopted by better parents. When the family is
 discarded, sometimes memory must be lost ; and when
 once mistake strikes in, then a strain of incest will
 continue as stock and sin creep on together. Then, 18
 in the next instance, whatever the spot, at home,
 abroad, across the sea, lust goes with you, whose sallies

APOLOGETICUS, ix. 18—x. 2

may in every place beget you children without your knowing it ; a very little of the seed will do it ; so that a stock scattered through the range of human travel may fall in with its own source, and, all unaware, fail to recognize an incestuous union.

From such an event we are guarded by a chastity, 19 supremely careful and faithful ; we are safe from random intercourse and from all excess after marriage, and in that degree from the risk of incest. Some indeed, in a much greater security, guard themselves against the violence of this sin by a virgin continence, old in years but still children.^a If you 20 would realize that these sins are found among yourselves, you would see that they are not to be found among the Christians. The same eyes would assure you of both facts. But two sorts of blindness easily meet, so that those, who do not see what is really there, seem to see what is not. So in all the points at issue, as I will show you. But now of our more conspicuous crimes !