

History

of the Church of God

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Chapter XI

SECOND, THIRD, AND FOURTH CENTURIES.

S **SECOND CENTURY.**—The last one of the Apostles has passed away from the shores of time, and the Apostolic Age proper has therefore ended. We now descend from the Primitive Apostolic Church, with all its inspiration, signs and wonders, to what may be called the church uninspired, guided by fallible teachers, who in expounding the Scriptures referred back to Christ and the Apostles for their authority, and who expected conquest by the silent and in visible working of God's Spirit within men more than by miracles apparent to the natural eye. "The hand of God has drawn a line of demarcation between the century of miracles and the succeeding ages, to impress us more deeply with the supernatural origin of Christianity, and the incomparable value of the New Testament. Notwithstanding the striking difference, the church of the second century is a legitimate continuation of that of the primitive age. While far inferior in originality, energy and freshness, it is distinguished for conscientious fidelity in preserving and propagating the sacred writings and traditions of the Apostles, and for untiring zeal in imitating their holy lives amidst the greatest difficulties and dangers."—*Schaff*.

As admitted by all standard historians, there is an impenetrable gulf between the close of the New Testament and the beginning of uninspired church history. Mr. Joseph Henry Alien, recent lecturer on church history at Harvard University, remarks: "Any bridge across this wide gulf must be built,

so to speak, 'in the air.' We can erect our two towers, but the cables will not meet." Such is the uniform and destructive testimony of learning and candor against all claims to a material succession from the Apostles made by the Catholic and similar communions. Thus does the God of history direct the minds of candid inquirers beyond all mere human authority to the apostolic writings of the New Testament. "Church history *severed from the New Testament and from the Christ whom that Testament presents,*" says the learned, eloquent and forcible writer, Mr. Wm. E. Williams, of New York, "is a very dismal swamp, a mere morass and pestilent jungle, where trees obstruct on every side the vision and show no pathway, where the foot sinks and the miasma ascends and the snake lurks, where a man learns to plunge forward into passive credulity or to start back into sheer skepticism and despair. But, with the Bible in hand and the eye fixed on Christ, the Lawgiver and Sovereign of the kingdom and the Leader of the sacramental host, order springs out of the tangled mass of seeming confusion."

The persecutions of the second century were unabated, and formed a continuous commentary on the Savior's words: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves;" "I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword." "No merely human religion could have stood such a fire as did the religion of Christ during the first three centuries."i[1]ii It not only suffered, but expanded and became more diffused among the nations, and went directly on towards victory over Judaism and heathenism, without physical force, but by the moral power, patience and perseverance of its votaries, and the omnipotent work of the Holy Spirit, thereby proving to the world the divinity and indestructibility of its nature.

In order to show the bitter persecution endured by Christians early in the second century, and the innocency and purity of their lives, we shall refer to a scene, presented by William Jones in his valuable History of the Christian Church, as having occurred about the year 107. Says Jones: "Trajan ascended the throne of the Caesars in the year 98, and soon afterwards conferred the government of the province of Bithynia upon his friend, the ingenious and celebrated Pliny. The character of the latter is one of the most amiable in all Pagan antiquity. In the exercise of his office as proconsul, the Christians, against whom the severe edicts which had been issued by

preceding emperors seem to have been still in force, were brought before his tribunal. Having never had occasion to be present at any such examination before, the multitude of the criminals, and the severity of the laws against them, seemed to have greatly struck him, and caused him to hesitate how far it was proper to carry them into execution without first consulting the emperor upon the subject. The letter which he wrote to Trajan upon this occasion, as well as the answer of the letter, are happily preserved, and are among the most valuable monuments of antiquity, on account of the light which they throw upon the state of the Christian profession at this splendid epoch. The letter is as follows: 'C. Pliny to the Emperor Trajan wishes health. Sire! It is customary with me to consult you upon every doubtful occasion; for where my own judgment hesitates, who is more competent to direct me than yourself, or to instruct me where uninformed? I never had occasion to be present at any examination of the Christians before I came into this province; I am therefore ignorant to what extent it is usual to inflict punishment or urge prosecution. I have also hesitated whether there should not be some distinction made between the young and the old, the tender and the robust; whether pardon should not be offered to penitence, or whether the guilt of an avowed profession of Christianity can be expiated by the most unequivocal retraction—whether the profession itself is to be regarded as a crime, however innocent in other respects the professor may be; or whether the crimes attached to the name must be proved before they are made liable to punishment. In the meantime, the method I have hitherto observed with the Christians, who have been accused as such, has been as follows: I interrogated them—Are you Christians? If they avowed it, I put the same question a second and a third time, threatening them with the punishment decreed by the law; if they still persisted, *I ordered them to be immediately executed; for of this I had no doubt, whatever was the nature of their religion, that such perverseness and inflexible obstinacy certainly deserved punishment.* Some that were infected with this madness, on account of their privilege as Roman citizens, I reserved to be sent to Rome, to be referred to your tribunal.

“In the discussion of this matter, accusations multiplying, a diversity of cases occurred. A schedule of names was sent me by an unknown accuser; but when I cited the persons before me, many denied the fact that they

were or ever had been Christians; and they repeated after me an invocation of the gods and of your image, which for this purpose I had ordered to be brought with the statues of the other deities. They performed sacred rites with wine and frankincense, and execrated Christ; none of which things, I am assured, a real Christian can ever be compelled to do. These, therefore, I thought proper to discharge. Others, named by an informer, at first acknowledged themselves Christians, and then denied it, declaring that though they had been Christians, they had renounced their profession some three years ago, others still longer, and some even twenty years ago. All these worshiped your image and the statues of the gods, and at the same time execrated Christ. And this was the account which they gave me of the nature of the religion they once had professed, whether it deserves the name of crime or error; namely, that they were accustomed on a stated day to assemble before sunrise and to join together in singing hymns to Christ as to a deity; binding themselves as with a solemn oath not to commit any kind of wickedness; to be guilty neither of theft, robbery nor adultery; never to break a promise, or to keep back a deposit when called upon. Their worship being concluded, it was their custom to separate, and meet together again for a repast, promiscuous indeed, and without any distinction of rank or sex, but perfectly harmless; and even from this they desisted, since the publication of my edict, in which, agreeable to your orders, I forbade any societies of that sort.

“For further information, I thought it necessary, in order to come at the truth, *to put to the torture* two females who were called deaconesses. But I could extort from them nothing, except the acknowledgment of an excessive and depraved superstition; and, therefore, desisting from further investigation, I determined to consult you; for the number of culprits is so great as to call for the most serious deliberation. Informations are pouring in against multitudes of every age, of all orders, and of both sexes, and more will be impeached; for the contagion of this superstition hath spread not only through cities, but villages also, and even reached the farm houses. I am of opinion, nevertheless, that it may be checked, and the success of my endeavors hitherto forbids despondency; for the temples, once almost desolate, begin to be again frequented—the sacred solemnities, which had for some time been intermitted, are now attended afresh; and the sacrificial

victims, which once could scarcely find a purchaser, now obtain a brisk sale. Whence I infer that many might be reclaimed, were the hope of pardon, on their repentance, absolutely confirmed.'"

TRAJAN TO PLINY

"My Dear Pliny: —You have done perfectly right, in managing as you have, the matters which relate to the impeachment of the Christians. No one general rule can be laid down which will apply to all cases. These people are not to be hunted up by informers; but, if accused and convicted, let them be executed; yet with this restriction, that if any renounce the profession of Christianity, and give proof of it by offering supplications to our gods, however suspicious their past conduct may have been, they shall be pardoned on their repentance. But anonymous accusations should never be attended to, since it would be establishing a precedent of the worst kind, and altogether inconsistent with the maxims of my government."

Our author continues: —"It is an obvious reflection from these letters, that at this early period Christianity had made an extraordinary progress in the empire; for Pliny acknowledges that the Pagan temples had become 'almost desolate.' Nor should we overlook the remarkable proof which they afford us of the state of the Christian profession, and the dreadful persecutions to which the disciples of Christ were then exposed. It is evident from them that, by the existing laws, it was a capital offense, punishable with death, for any one to avow himself a Christian. Nor did the humane Trajan and the philosophic Pliny entertain a doubt of the propriety of the law, or the wisdom and justice of executing it in its fullest extent. Pliny confesses that he had commanded such capital punishments to be inflicted on many, chargeable with no crime but their profession of Christianity; and Trajan not only confirms the equity of the sentence, but enjoins the continuance of such executions, without any exceptions, unless it be of those who apostatized from their profession, denied their Lord and Savior, and did homage to the idols of paganism.

"These letters also give us a pleasing view of the holy and exemplary lives of the first Christians. For it appears by the confession of apostates

themselves that no man could continue a member of their communion whose deportment in the world did not correspond with his holy profession. Even delicate women are put to the torture, to try if their weakness would not betray them into accusations of their brethren; but not a word, not a charge can be extorted from them capable of bearing the semblance of deceit or crime. To meet for prayer, praise and mutual instruction; to worship Christ as their God; to exhort one another to abstain from every evil word and work; to unite in commemorating the death of their Lord by partaking of the symbols of his broken body and shed blood in the ordinance of the Supper—these things constitute what Pliny calls the ‘depraved superstition!’ the ‘execrable crimes!’ which could only be expiated by the blood of the Christians!

“We should not overlook the proof, which these letters afford, of the peaceableness of the Christians of those days, and their readiness to submit even to the most unjust requisitions rather than disturb the peace of society. They knew the edicts that were in force against them; and to avoid giving offense they assembled before break of day for the worship of their God and Savior. And when Pliny issued his edict to that effect they, for a while, yielded to the storm, and desisted from the observance of their Agapae, or feasts of charity. This view of things abundantly justifies the encomium of Hegesippus, one of the earliest Christian writers, ‘that the church continued until these times as a virgin, pure and uncorrupted.’

“Considering the character which both the emperor and the pro-consul sustained for mildness of disposition and gentleness of manners, it has occasioned no small perplexity to many, and even to some of our philosophic historians, how to account for the circumstance that such men should be found on the list of persecutors, and at the same time to admit the unoffending deportment of the Christians. Mr. Warburton has given a very satisfactory solution of this difficulty; and, though the passage be rather long, I shall transcribe the substance of it in this place. ‘The Pagan world having early imbibed this inveterate prejudice concerning intercommunity of worship, men were too much accustomed to new revelations, when the Jewish appeared, not to acknowledge its superior pretensions. Accordingly we find, by the history of this people, that it was esteemed by its neighbors

a true one; and therefore they proceeded to join it occasionally with their own; as those did whom the King of Assyria sent into the cities of Israel in the place of the ten tribes. Whereby it happened, so great was the influence of this principle, that, in the same time and country, the Jews of Jerusalem added the Pagan idolatries to their religion, while the Pagans of Samaria added the Jewish religion to their idolatries.

“But when these people of God, in consequence of having their dogmatic theology more carefully inculcated to them, after their return from the captivity, became rigid, in maintaining not only that their religion was true, but *the only true one*, then it was that they began to be treated by their neighbors, and afterward by the Greeks and Romans, with the utmost hatred and contempt for this their inhumanity and unsociable temper. To this cause alone we are to ascribe all that spleen and rancor which appear in the histories of these later nations concerning them. Celsusⁱⁱⁱ[2]^{iv} fairly reveals what lay at the bottom, and speaks out for them all: ‘If the Jews on these accounts,’ says he, ‘adhere to their own law, it is not for *that* they are to blame: I rather blame those who forsake their own country religion to embrace the Jewish. But if these people give themselves airs of sublimer wisdom than the rest of the world, and on that score refuse all communion with it, as not equally pure, I must tell them that it is not to be believed that they are more dear or agreeable to God than other nations.’ Hence, among the Pagans, the Jews came to be distinguished from all other people by the name of *a race of men odious to the gods*, and with good reason. This was the reception the Jews met with in the world.

“When Christianity arose, though on the foundation of Judaism, it was at first received with great complacency by the Pagan world. The gospel was favorably heard, and the superior evidence with which it was enforced inclined men, long habituated to pretended revelations, to receive it into the number of the established. Accordingly, we find one Roman emperor introducing it among his closet religions; and another promising to the senate to give it a more public entertainment. But when it was found to carry its pretensions higher, and, like the Jewish, to claim the title of *the only true one*, then it was that it began to incur the same hatred and contempt with the Jewish. But when it went still further, and urged the

necessity of all men forsaking their own national religions and embracing the gospel, this so shocked the Pagans that it soon brought upon itself the bloody storm that followed. Thus you have the true origin of persecution for religion; a persecution not committed, but undergone, by the Christian Church.

“Hence we see how it happened that such good emperors as Trajan and Mark Antonine came to be found in the first rank of persecutors; a difficulty that hath very much embarrassed the inquirers into ecclesiastical antiquity, and given a handle to the deists, who empoison everything, of pretending to suspect that there must have been something very much amiss in primitive Christianity, while such wise magistrates could become its persecutors. But the reason is now manifest. The Christian pretensions overthrew a fundamental principle of paganism, which they thought founded in nature, namely, the friendly intercommunity of worship. And thus the famous passage of Pliny the younger becomes intelligible. ‘For I did not in the least hesitate, but that whatever should appear on confession to be their faith, yet that their frowardness and inflexible obstinacy would certainly deserve punishment.’ What was the ‘inflexible obstinacy’? It could not be in professing a new religion; that was a thing common enough. It was the refusing all communion with paganism—refusing to throw a grain of incense on their altars. For we must not think, as is commonly imagined, that this was at first enforced by the magistrate to make them renounce their religion; but only to give a test of its hospitality and sociableness of temper. It was indeed, and rightly too, understood by the Christians to be a renouncing of their religion, and so accordingly abstained from. The misfortune was that the Pagans did not consider the inflexibility as a mere error, but as an immorality likewise. The unsociable, uncommunicable temper, in matters of religious worship, was esteemed by the best of them as a hatred and aversion to mankind. Thus Tacitus, speaking of the burning of Rome, calls the Christians ‘persons *convicted* of hatred to all mankind.’ But how? The confession of the Pagans themselves, concerning the purity of the Christian morals, shows this could be no other than a, being ‘convicted’ of *rejecting all intercommunity of worship*; which, so great was their prejudice, they thought could proceed from nothing but hatred towards mankind. Universal prejudice had made men regard a refusal of this

intercommunity as the most brutal of all dissociability. And the Emperor Julian, who understood this matter the best of any, fairly owns that the Jews and Christians brought the execration of the world upon them by their aversion to the gods of paganism, and their refusal of all communication with them.'

"From what took place in the province of Bithynia, under the government of the mild and amiable Pliny, a tolerably correct judgment may be formed of the state of Christianity during the reign of Trajan, *in every other part of the empire.*" One more instance it may suffice to mention. "While Pliny was thus conducting matters in Bithynia, the province of Syria was under the government of Tiberianus. There is still extant a letter which he addressed to Trajan, in which he says: 'I am quite wearied with punishing and destroying the Galileans, or those of the sect called Christians, *according to your orders.* Yet they never cease to profess voluntarily what they are, and to offer themselves to death. Wherefore I have labored by exhortations and threats to discourage them from daring to confess to me that they are of that sect. Yet, in spite of all persecution, they continue still to do it. Be pleased therefore to inform me what your highness thinks proper to be done with them.'"

We have now given a minute description of the character and sufferings of Christians in the early part of the second century, and wish the Primitive Baptists of the nineteenth century to look into this mirror well and see if they do not discover their own image reflected. Were they not there then as they are here now, surrounded by religionists, who hated and persecuted them because they would not consent to an intercommunity of worship? The doctrine of salvation by grace from first to last, as entertained by the Primitive Baptists of the nineteenth century, as entertained by the Primitive Baptists of the nineteenth century, though detested by some of the professed Christian denominations around them and disliked by others—the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, though entirely ignored by some and derided by others—would be no bar to fellowship, by the various denominations around them, if the Baptists desired such fellowship and would sanction and unite in the worship of their neighbors, and aid in building up and endowing the various and numerous societies and

enterprises which they have invented and set up as a means of salvation of human souls from sin and from hell.

It is for their "obstinacy" they are hated, for their "selfishness," for their want of "sociability," for their refusing "intercommunity of worship" with the numerous establishments around them, that they are held to be unchristian, and ignorant and barbarous. It is not only because they refuse connection with all other denominations and will have nothing to do with their religious movements, but because they maintain that all others are *wrong* and they alone are *right*; that all others are *unscriptural* and they alone are *scriptural*; that all others are *disregarding* the pattern given by the primitive saints, and they are the only people *copying and following* that pattern as clearly set forth in the first and second centuries. The early Christians did not believe that Jupiter or Mars, Venus or Diana, or even the image of Caligula or Trajan, could save a sinner from sin and eternal punishment, and would not, therefore, *under forfeiture of their lives, throw one grain of incense upon their altars, or speak one word or make one sign of adoration to them.* The Primitive Baptists of the nineteenth century do not believe that a fair or a festival, a missionary society or a State Convention, a theological seminary or a Sunday School, a tract society or a raffling bag, is a means of grace, or can save a sinner any better or quicker than either of the idols above mentioned; *therefore they refuse to throw one grain of incense upon their altars, or give any sign or speak one word in adoration of them.*

For this *unsociable temper* they would share the fate of their brethren in the days of Trajan and other Roman emperors, but for the civil and religious liberty which God has been pleased to confer upon them in England and the United States and some other portions of the earth. When pressed closely some of these religionists will deny their belief in their numerous societies as a means of salvation; but let no one be deceived by such incidental denial; it is only a subterfuge to entrap the unwary for the moment. They do believe and urge the adoption of the belief by the public that these extraordinary helps and auxiliary societies are the means of grace and of the conversion of dead sinners to God. This is in evidence by their best authors and most profound scholars, their public lecturers and most popular preachers.

We think it quite apparent that most of these people think more of and rely more upon these outside societies and schemes gotten up by themselves and the non-professing world, than they rely upon the special organization of their respective churches, so called, for the conversion of the world.

The *great prototype* of modern Sunday Schools and Theological Seminaries was the so-called "Christian" School, or School of Catechists, of Alexandria, in Egypt, founded about A. D. 180. The first president was a "converted" heathen philosopher, Pantaenus, who was succeeded in 189 by Clement, another "converted" heathen philosopher. The great scholar and universalist, Origen, succeeded Clement in 202, and presided till 232, and is said to have raised the school to the summit of prosperity. Origen's pupils, Heraclas and Dionysius, succeeded him. The last teacher was Didymus, in A. D. 395. The two chief objects of this Alexandrian school were to prepare people, especially the young, for the church, and to prepare talented young men to preach. The number of students was very great, and it is said that many eloquent preachers were sent out from this school. The doctrines inculcated here were certainly fascinating to the natural mind—traditionalism. Arminianism, rationalism and universalism. Religion was gradually blended with and superceded by philosophy. Judaism and paganism were kindly brought in; and a broad, liberal, eclectic system, adapted to accommodate and reconcile all parties, was devised, and this monstrous compound of truth and falsehood, of light and darkness—being mostly falsehood and darkness—was considered the perfection of true religion. One of the most permanent and wide-reaching results of this school was the philosophical invention and establishment of the doctrine of *free-will*, scientifically known as the Greek anthropology and soteriology—the doctrine that the *first* step in every man's salvation must be taken by his own natural will; that Christ's death was not an expiatory sacrifice for sin, and is not of itself sufficient to save sinners; that repentance is a purifying and expiatory principle; that no faith whatsoever can save unless it is followed by works. The learned city of Alexandria contained the greatest library of ancient times, said to have had 700,000 volumes, collected by the Ptolemies, kings of Egypt; and this city was the home of *Gnosticism* and *Neo-Platonism*, and into these fatal errors the teaching of the Catechetical

School shaded off by almost imperceptible gradations. It is thought that Simon Magus, the Nicolaitans, Cerinthus, the Ophites, Sethites and Cainites, in the first century, were precursors of the Gnostics, whose system became fully developed in the second century. The three chief centres of Gnosticism were Alexandria, in Egypt, Antioch, in Syria, and Pontus, in Asia Minor. The most famous Gnostic was the Alexandrian Jew, Valentinus; his system was the most complete and consistent, and effected a fusion between nominal Christianity and the Platonic philosophy, leaving out the humbling ideas of sin, repentance and atonement, and weaving in the proud ideas of Buddhistic pantheism, man being set forth as the most perfect realization of the Divine. This system "left erect the great idol of paganism, humanity, which could behold itself deified upon the naked summits of the Valentinian metaphysics, no less than upon the golden heights of Olympus." The Syrian Gnosis brought in the Persian or Zoroastrian idea of dualism, or the eternal existence of two first principles, one Good and the other Evil; and the system of Mareion, in Asia Minor, was distinguished by its rejection of the Old Testament and of about three-fourths of the New Testament. Gnosticism was a phantasmal philosophy of evolution substituted for religion, pretending to account for *evil* by identifying it with *matter*, and thus annihilating the moral nature of evil, which lies in the *will* of the creature violating the Divine law. Gnosticism flourished in the third century also, and did not finally disappear until the sixth century. -The precursor of the Neo-Platonists was the Alexandrian Jew, Philo, in the first century. He attempted to amalgamate the Platonic philosophy with the Old Testament, and his system is a heathenizing of Judaism. Ammonius Saccas, of Alexandria (who died there A. D. 241), is generally considered the founder of Neo-Platonism. He was born, it is said, of Christian parents, and was himself an apostate from a Christian profession. Neo-Platonism was a revival of Platonism, "a philosophical theology, a pantheistic eclecticism, which sought to reconcile Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy with Oriental religion and theosophy, polytheism with monotheism, superstition with culture, and to hold, as with a convulsive grasp, the old popular (polytheistic) faith in a refined and idealized form." Among the pupils of Ammonius Saccas were *Origen*, the professed Christian, and the most famous president of the Alexandrian Catechetical School or Theological Seminary; and *Plotinus*, the most celebrated of the Neo-Platonic heathen philosophers, and the most

transcendental of all ancient transcendentalists. A pupil of Plotinus was *Porphyry*, the *ablest infidel* of ancient times. —Now, if "*Gnosticism* laid the foundation of *Christian science* or *rational Christian theology*" (as the Encyclopaedia Britannica says), and if *Neo-Platonism* educated the most famous professor in the first Theological Seminary of the "Christian" world, the facts just recited are a most forcible commentary upon the establishment of human institutions for the preparation of people to join the church and to preach the gospel of Christ; and Paul manifested Divine wisdom when he said: "I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ"; (2 Cor. 11:3) "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ"; (Col 2:8) "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science (*gnosis*) falsely so-called, which some professing, have erred concerning the faith"; (1 Tim. 6:20, 21) "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1Cor. 2:1-5). Let it be remembered that the "theological" chairs of the German universities have been the greatest strongholds of infidelity in the nineteenth century.—The chief opposition to the Alexandrian School and to Gnosticism and to the substitution of philosophy for Christianity was, in the second century, made by those called the *Montanists*, of whom Tertullian became, in the third century, the ablest writer. They took their name from Montanus, a native of Phrygia in Asia Minor, and were hence also called Cataphrygians, and Pepuzians, from Pepuza in Phrygia. They sought to emphasize the great importance of the spirituality and purity of the church, and especially the absolute *indispensability* of the work of the *Holy Ghost* and the *dispensableness* of *human philosophy*. "Tertullian calls the Greek philosophers the patriarchs of all heresies, and scornfully asks, 'What has the academy to do with the church? What has Christ to do with Plato—Jerusalem with Athens?' His theology revolves about the great Pauline antithesis of sin and grace, and breaks the road to the Latin anthropology and soteriology, afterwards developed by his like-minded, but clearer,

calmer and more considerate countryman, Augustin."—*Schaff*. He recognized the universal priesthood and equality of believers, and he defended the right of all men to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. Neander traces the anti-Gnosticism of the Montanists to the influence of the Apostle John in Asia Minor. In their reaction against Catholic corruptions some of them wandered off into asceticism, celibacy, prophetic ecstasies, divination and millenarianism. They spread through most of the provinces of the Roman Empire, and were found as late as the sixth century. Their general doctrinal orthodoxy is distinctly affirmed by those writers called the "Fathers."

"The first fifteen Bishops (or pastors) of the church of Jerusalem were all circumcised Jews, and this church united the law of Moses with the doctrine of Christ." Just before the destruction of Jerusalem, A. D. 70, this church retired to Pella, beyond the Jordan, and sojourned there "above sixty years in solitude and obscurity. They still enjoyed the comfort of making frequent and devout visits to the Holy City" until the Jews, revolting under Bar-Cochab, a pretended Messiah, were slaughtered to the number of 580,000, A. D. 132-135, by the Romans, and the Emperor Hadrian planted a Roman colony in Jerusalem, changed the name of the city to AElia Capitolina, after his own family name and the title of the Capitoline Jove, whose temple was now reared on Mount Zion, and forbade all Jews, on pain of death, to enter the city. The Jewish-Christian church (or Nazarenes) then chose a Gentile, Marcus, for their pastor, and renounced the ceremonial law of Moses, in the practice of which they had persevered for more than a century. Some of them and others with them, though acknowledging the messiahship of Christ, denied His Divinity, and considered the Mosaic law to be of universal and perpetual obligation; a part of them were successors of the Judaizing teachers opposed in Paul's letter to the Galatians, and a part were successors of the incipient Gnostics opposed in his letter to the Colossians. They were known as Ebionites (or "the poor"), and vanished from history about the end of the fourth century.

Christianity went on suffering and expanding during the second century. It required its members to deny themselves of all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. It

required of its votaries a high-toned morality, and they knew, when they became Christians, that the decree of death was out against them, and yet they increased in numbers beyond all precedent, and to the utter astonishment and dread of the Pagan world. They were derided by their enemies as being nothing more than weavers, cobblers and fullers—as being the most illiterate persons, preaching an irrational faith; but yet knew how to commend it to women and children. What better is said of Primitive Baptists in the nineteenth century?

The common people among the Pagans, as well as their rulers, were very bitter in their feelings towards the Christians. They abhorred them as supposed atheists and enemies to the gods. They readily gave credit to all the slanderous rumors of all sorts of abominations, even incest and cannibalism, practiced by the Christians at their religious assemblies and love feasts, and regarded the frequent public calamities of that age as punishments justly inflicted by the angry gods for the disregard of their worship. In North Africa arose the proverb: "If God does not send rain, lay it to the Christians." At every inundation or drought or famine or pestilence, the fanatical populace cried: "Away with the atheists! To the lions with the Christians!" They were held responsible for all the earthquakes, also, that occurred in the empire. At a time when the Emperor Trajan was at Antioch in Syria, about entering upon the Parthian war, that city was visited by a dreadful earthquake, so as to be almost entirely ruined. "It was preceded by violent claps of thunder, unusual winds, and a dreadful noise under ground. Then followed so terrible a shock that the earth trembled, several houses were overturned, and others tossed to and fro like a ship at sea. The noise of the cracking and bursting of the timber and of the falling of the houses drowned the cries of the dismayed populace. Those who happened to be in their houses were for the most part buried under their ruins; such as were walking in the streets and in the squares were, by the violence of the shock, dashed against each other, and most of them killed or dangerously wounded. Trajan himself was much hurt, but escaped through a window out of the house in which he was."

Ignatiusv[3]vi was pastor of the church at Antioch at the time of the earthquake, and was said to be a man of great piety. The Christians were of

course charged with being the cause of the earthquake. And the popularity which generally attends superior gifts marked him as the victim of imperial fury on the occasion. "He was accordingly seized, and by the emperor's order sent from Antioch to Rome, where he was exposed to the fury of wild beasts in the theatre and by them devoured."

The emperors who ruled the Roman Empire during this century were Trajan, Adrian, Titus Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurclius Antoninus, Commodus, Pertinax and Severus. Adrian, Titus Antoninus Pius, and even the wicked Commodus, made the condition of things more tolerable to the Christians, but under the others the blood of the saints flowed freely in a great many portions of the empire. One of the most barbarous persecutions broke out in Vienne and Lyons in France, then called Gallia, about the year 177. It seems difficult to ascertain when Christianity first developed itself in those cities, but, when this great onslaught upon them arose, they were found to be quite numerous. The supposition is that the gospel was first introduced there by refugees from Asia Minor -fleeing persecution, and a convenient transit might have been found in merchant vessels navigating the Mediterranean between Lyons and Smyrna, thus providing means of escape from the latter and other cities in Asia. Vienne was an ancient Roman colony; Lyons was more modern; and of this latter church the presbyters, Elders or pastors were Pothinus and Irenaeus, Greek names, and many of those persecuted, mangled and destroyed had Greek names. After the storm abated to some extent, an account of it was transmitted in a letter addressed to the brethren in Asia Propria and Phrygia, and was composed as was supposed by Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp of Smyrna. The letter is lengthy and precise, detailing all the particulars of the persecution, and is pronounced by Lardner "the finest thing of the kind in all antiquity." It was preserved by Eusebius, and appears in his Ecclesiastical History, published in the fourth century.

Its address, simply, must suffice here, and is as follows: "The servants of Christ, sojourning in Vienne and Lyons in France, to the brethren in Asia Propria and Phrygia, who have the same faith and hope of redemption with us; peace and grace and glory, from God the Father and Jesus our Lord." This sounds very apostolical, and then follows the letter, which is too lengthy for insertion in this volume.

In the latter part of the second century large numbers of Christians were found to be in the Roman province of Africa. A numerous church existed at Carthage about this time, and Tertullian was one of its pastors. In the second century Christianity penetrated to Edessa in Mesopotamia, and some distance into Persia, Media, Bactria and Parthia. It reached Spain also, it is supposed, in this century, though no clear traces of churches and pastors there meet us until the middle of the third. Irenaeus speaks of the preaching of the gospel, in this century, among the Germans and other barbarians, who "without paper and ink, have salvation written in their hearts by the Holy Ghost." "According to Tertullian, Britain was also brought under the power of the cross towards the end of the second century."

The second century is especially the age of apologies or defenses of the Christian religion addressed to the emperor of Rome and others. Men pleading for religious liberty before their rulers, who felt it to be their duty to exterminate the Christian profession, were necessarily in earnest, and this earnestness and devotion to the sacred cause of Christ inspired them with rhetorical pathos unknown to calmer times.

We shall here give some extracts from a few authors to show the character of the times that tried men's souls, and the relative position of persecutors and the persecuted.

"The church at this period appears poor in earthly possessions and honors, but rich in heavenly grace, in world-conquering faith, love and hope; unpopular, even outlawed, hated and persecuted, yet far more vigorous and expansive than the philosophies of Greece or the empire of Rome; composed chiefly of persons of the lower social ranks, yet attracting the noblest and deepest minds of the age, and bearing in her bosom the hope of the world; conquering by apparent defeat, and growing on the blood of her martyrs; great in deeds, greater in sufferings, greatest in death, for the honor of Christ and the benefit of generations to come. The condition and manners of the Christians in this age are most beautifully described by the unknown author of the epistle to Diognetus in the early part of the second century. 'The Christians,' says he, 'are not distinguished from other men by country,

by language, nor by civil institutions. For they neither dwell in cities by themselves, nor use a peculiar tongue, nor lead a singular mode of life. They dwell in the Grecian or barbarian cities, as the case may be; they follow the usage of the country in dress, food, and other affairs of life. Yet they present a wonderful and paradoxical conduct. They dwell in their own native lands, but as strangers. They take part in all things, as citizens; and they suffer all things, as foreigners. Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every native land is a foreign. They marry like all others; they have children, but they do not cast away their offspring. They have the table in common, but not wives. They live upon the earth, but are citizens of Heaven. They obey the existing laws, but excel the laws by their lives. They love all, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown, and yet they are condemned. They are killed, and are made alive. They are poor, and make many rich. They lack all things, and in all things abound. They are reproached, and glory in their reproaches. They are calumniated, and are justified. They are cursed, and they bless. They receive scorn, and they give honor. They do good, and are punished as evil doers. When punished, they rejoice as being made alive. By the Jews they are attacked as aliens, and by the Greeks persecuted; and the cause of the enmity their enemies cannot tell. In short, what the soul is in the body, the Christians are in the world. The soul is infused through all the members of the body, and the Christians are spread through the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body, but it is not of the body; so the Christians dwell in the world, but are not of the world. The soul, invisible, keeps watch in the visible body; so also the Christians are seen to live in the world, but their piety is invisible. The flesh hates and wars against the soul, suffering no wrong from it, but because it resists earthly pleasures; and the world hates the Christians with no reason, but that they resist its pleasures. The soul loves the flesh and members, by which it is hated; so the Christians love their haters. The soul is inclosed in the body, but holds the body together; so the Christians are detained in the world as in a prison; but they contain the world. Immortal, the soul dwells in the mortal body; so the Christians dwell in the corruptible, but look for incorruption in Heaven. The soul is the better for restriction in food and drink; and the Christians increase though daily punished. This lot God has assigned to the Christians in the world; and it cannot be taken from them.'"—*Schaff*.

Says Tertullian: "All your ingenious cruelties can accomplish nothing; they are only a lure to this sect. Our number increases the more you destroy us. The blood of the Christians is their seed." And again says this able defender of Christians: "We are a people of yesterday, and yet we have filled every place belonging to you—cities, islands, castles, towns, assemblies, your very camp, your tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum! We leave your temples only. We can count your armies; our numbers in a single province will be greater."

Says Justin Martyr, about the middle of the second century: "There is no people, Greek or barbarian, or of any other race, by whatsoever appellation or manners they may be distinguished, however ignorant of arts or agriculture, whether they dwell in tents or wander about in covered wagons—among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered, in the name of the crucified Jesus, to the Father and Creator of all things."

Again says Tertullian, in his Apology: "We pray for the safety of the emperors to the eternal God, the true, the living God, whom emperors themselves should desire to be propitious to them, above all others who are called gods. We, looking up to Heaven, with outstretched hands, because they are harmless, with naked heads because we are not ashamed, without a prompter because we pray from the heart, constantly pray for all emperors and kings, that they may have a long life, a secure empire, a safe palace, strong armies, a faithful senate, a well moralized people, a quiet state of the world; whatever Caesar would wish for himself in his public or private capacity. I cannot solicit these things from any other than from Him from whom I know I shall obtain them, if I ask agreeably to His will, because He alone can do these things; and I expect them from Him, being His servant, who worships Him alone, and am ready to lose my life in His service. Thus then let the claws of wild beasts pierce us, or their feet trample on us, while our hands are stretched out to God; let crosses suspend us, let fires consume us, let swords pierce our breasts -a praying Christian is in a frame for enduring anything. How is this, ye generous rulers? will ye kill the good subjects who supplicate God for the emperor? Were we disposed to return evil for evil, it were easy for us to avenge the injuries which we sustain. But

God forbid that His people should vindicate themselves by human force, or be reluctant to endure that by which their sincerity is evinced. Were we disposed to act the part, I will not say of secret assassins, but of open enemies, should we want forces or numbers? For what war should we not be ready and well prepared, even though unequal in numbers; we, who die with so much pleasure, were it not that our religion requires us rather to suffer death than to inflict it? If we were to make a general secession from your dominions, you would be astonished at your solitude. We are dead to all ideas of worldly honor and dignity; nothing is more foreign to us than political concerns; the whole world is our republic."

"We are a body united in one bond of religious discipline and hope. We meet in our assemblies for prayer. We are compelled to have recourse to the Divine oracles for caution and recollection on all occasions. We nourish our faith by the word of God; we erect our hope, we fix our confidence, we strengthen our discipline, by repeatedly inculcating precepts, exhortations, corrections, and by excommunication when it is needful. This last, as being in the sight of God, is of great weight, and is a serious warning of the future judgment, if any one behave in so scandalous a manner as to be debarred from holy communion. Those who preside among us are elderly persons, not distinguished for opulence, but worthiness of character. Every one pays something into the public chest once a month, or when he pleases, and according to his ability and inclination, for there is no compulsion. These gifts are, as it were, the deposits of piety. Hence we relieve and bury the needy; support orphans and decrepit persons; those who have suffered shipwreck, and those who, for the word of God, are condemned to the mines or imprisonment. This very charity of ours has caused us to be noticed by some; 'See,' say they, '*how these Christians love one another.*'"

"But we Christians look upon ourselves as one body, informed, as it were, by one soul; and being thus incorporated by love, we can never dispute what we are to bestow upon our own members. And is it any great wonder that such charitable brethren as enjoy all things in common should have such frequent love-feasts? For this it is you traduce us, and reflect upon our little frugal suppers, not only as infamously wicked, but as scandalously excessive. The nature of this supper you may understand by its name, for it

is the Greek word for love. We Christians think we can never be too expensive, but we consider all to be gain that is laid out in doing good. When therefore we are at the charge of an entertainment, it is to refresh the bowels of the needy. We feed the hungry because we know that God takes a peculiar delight in seeing us do it. If therefore we feast only with such brave and excellent designs, I leave you from thence to guess at the rest of our discipline in matters of pure religion. Nothing earthly, nothing unclean, has ever admittance here. Our souls ascend in prayer to God before we sit down to meat. We eat only what suffices nature, and drink no more than is strictly becoming chaste and regular persons. We sup as servants that know we must wake in the night to the service of our Master, and discourse as those who remember that they are in the hearing of God. When supper is ended every one is invited forth to sing praises to God; and by this you may judge of the measure of drinking at a Christian feast. As we begin, so we conclude, all with prayer, and depart with the same tenor of temperance and modesty we came; as men who have not so properly been drinking, as imbibing religion."

"And now, O worshipful judges, proceed with your show of justice, and, believe me, ye will be still more and more just in the opinion of the people the oftener you make them a sacrifice of Christians. Crucify, torture, condemn, grind us all to powder if you can; your injustice is an illustrious proof of our innocence, and it is for the proof of this that God permits us to suffer. Do your worst, and rack your inventions for tortures for Christians. 'Tis all to no purpose; you do but attract the notice of the world, and make it fall the more in love with our religion. The more you mow us down, the thicker we spring up. The Christian blood you spill is like the seed you sow - it springs from the earth again and fructifies the more. That which you reproach in us as stubbornness has been the most instructive mistress in proselyting the world—for who has not been struck with the sight of what you call stubbornness, and from thence prompted to look into the reality and grounds of it; and whoever looked well into our religion that did not embrace it? For this reason it is that we thank you for condemning us, because there is such a happy variance and disagreement between the Divine and human judgment; and when you condemn us upon earth, God absolves us in Heaven." So much for Tertullian's appeal to the heathen Roman judges and

murderers of Christians; and although objections now might be raised to some of the ideas set forth, yet it stands as one of the noblest apologies for Christianity found in all antiquity, and depicts in glowing colors the nature of that faith and practice maintained by the chosen people of God in the second century of the Christian dispensation.

The churches of the second century were democratic in their discipline and order, and were neither Episcopal, Presbyterian nor Monarchical in their government. This is established by ancient authors and confirmed by those of modern times, such as Mosheim and Gibbon.vii[4]

They were Baptist Churches because composed of baptized believers, and because each church was *independent* of other churches in government. Among the writers of this century may be mentioned Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, Tatian, Minucius Felix, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. These authors, so far from *directly* speaking of infant baptism, *never once* utter a syllable upon the subject. It was then entirely unknown. Adults, who were capable of professing faith in Christ, were baptized and became church members. And here is where the Baptists came from.

Third Century.—This century is distinguished for the sufferings of the Christians under cruel emperors, their ambition and worldly mindedness under tolerant emperors, and the more manifest appearance of errors in faith and practice than hitherto discovered.

The names of those who swayed the imperial sceptre of Rome during this century are Severus, Caracalla, Macrinus, Heliogabalus, Alexander Severus, Maximin, Decius, Gallus, Valerian and Diocletian.

From the death of Severus to the reign of Decius, a period of about forty years, the church enjoyed comparative tranquility, and, as a consequence, increased in numbers and increased in disorder. Pastors were now called Bishops generally, and Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons assumed great importance in the churches; each tyrannized over the other in turn, and all tyrannized over the ordinary members, with some exceptions. Metropolitan

Bishops assumed superiority over the country Bishops, and became grasping for worldly honors and emoluments. Eusebius says of them: "They grew negligent and slothful, envying and reproaching one another; waging, as it were, civil wars amongst themselves, Bishops quarreling with Bishops, and the people divided into parties. Hypocrisy and deceit were grown to the highest pitch of wickedness. They were become so insensible as not so much as to think of appeasing the Divine anger; but, like atheists, they thought the world destitute of any providential government and care, and they added one crime to another. The Bishops themselves had thrown off all concern about religion; were perpetually contending with one another; they were full of ambition and tyrannically used their power." This description is high-wrought, but in many cases was true, no doubt, to the letter; while others, the truly broken-hearted and contrite-spirited children of God, mourned these excesses and departures from the course pursued by the earlier ministers of Jesus. But by the rod of blood-thirsty tyrants God brought down these high looks and humbled His people in the dust once more.

Under the reign of Decius and some of his successors "the gates of hell," as one writer terms it, "were once more opened, and merciless executioners were let loose upon the defenseless churches, and deluged the earth with blood." Many cases of eminent ministers, as well as of private persons, are mentioned by various authors as having suffered cruel tortures and deaths in many parts of the Roman Empire about this time. Suffice it to say that "the most excessive and outrageous barbarities were made use of upon all who would not blaspheme Christ and offer incense to the imperial gods. They were publicly whipped, drawn by the heels through the streets of cities, racked until every bone of their body was disjointed, had their teeth beat out, their noses, hands and ears cut off, sharp-pointed spears run under their nails, were tortured with melted lead thrown on their naked bodies, had their eyes dug out, their limbs cut off, were condemned to the mines, ground between stones, stoned to death, burnt alive, thrown headlong from the high buildings, beheaded, smothered in burning limekilns, run through the body with sharp spears, destroyed with hunger, thirst and cold, thrown to the wild beasts, broiled on gridirons with slow fires, cast by heaps into the sea, crucified, scraped to death with sharp shells, torn in pieces by the boughs of trees; and, in a word, destroyed by all the various methods that

the most diabolical subtlety and malice could devise."—*Chandlers History of Persecutions*.

Yet the mystery of iniquity, which began to be developed in the days of the Apostles, increased considerably in this century, especially as lenity was shown the professors of Christianity, at times, by the temporal ruling powers; so that at the close of the century it was very apparent that the order of gospel worship was in an expiring condition, and the simplicity that characterized apostolic institutions was fast passing away. The churches remained independent, a form of godliness was maintained, no radical errors in faith were promulgated, but what were managed by the churches and suppressed in order; yet the officers of the church were aggrandized, their wealth and power augmented, and in most cases luxury and pride superseded frugality and meekness. The door was being opened for the entrance of Antichrist.

"The officer formerly known by the name of Elder, Bishop, or presbyter (terms exactly synonymous in the New Testament), became now distinguished by the elevation of the Bishop above his brethren; and each of the above terms was carried out into a distinction of places in the Christian Church. The minister, whose congregation increased from the suburbs of his town and vicinage around, considered the parts from which his charge emanated as territories marking the boundary of his authority; and all those presbyters sent by him into surrounding stations, to conduct evening or other services, acknowledged the pastor of the mother interest as Bishop of the district; this view of the pastor, connected with his charge, of the baptistery, gave importance to his station and office which entailed an evil. Associations of ministers and churches, which at first were formed in Greece, became common throughout the empire. These mutual unions for the *management* of spiritual affairs led to the choice, of a president, which aided distinction amongst ministers of religion. In those degenerating times aspiring men saw each other in varied elevations; consequently jealousy, ambition and strife ensued, and every work followed. The learning of the philosopher contributed to popularity, and, where the suffrages of the community were to be taken, this acquisition was important to the aspirant; while the Jewish distinctions of ministers gave force and example to place

and power. It was some time before the Bishops, presbyters and Deacons, now very distinct classes of men, could persuade the people that *they* succeeded to the character, rights and privileges of the Jewish priesthood. So far as those ministers were successful they opened a door to the adoption of every abrogated rite; and one evidence of success soon appeared in the *abundance of wealth* conferred on the clergy." London Encyclopaedia. "The Bishops," says Mosheim, "now aspired to higher degrees of power and authority than they formerly possessed; and not only violated the rights of the people, but also made gradual encroachments on the privileges of the presbyters. That they might cover their usurpations with an air of justice and appearance of reason, they published new doctrines concerning the nature of the church and episcopal dignity. One of the principal authors of this change in the government of the church was Cyprian, ^{viii}[5] ^{ix} Bishop of Carthage (A. D. 254), who pleaded for the power of the Bishops with more zeal and vehemence than had ever been hitherto employed in that cause. The change in the form of government was soon followed by a train of vices which dishonor the character and authority of those to whom the administration of the church was committed. For though several yet continued to exhibit to the world illustrious examples of primitive piety and Christian virtue, yet *many were sunk* in luxury and voluptuousness, puffed up with vanity, arrogance and ambition, possessed with a spirit of contention and discord, and addicted to other vices, that cast an undeserved reproach upon the holy religion of which they were the unworthy professors and ministers. The Bishops assumed, in many places, *princely authority*; particularly those who had the greatest number of churches under their inspection, and who presided over the most opulent assemblies. They appropriated to their evangelical functions *the splendid ensigns of imperial majesty*; a throne, surrounded with ministers, exalted above his equals, the servant of the meek and humble Jesus; and sumptuous garments dazzled the eyes and the minds of the multitude into an ignorant veneration for their arrogated authority. The example of the Bishops was ambitiously imitated by the presbyters, who, neglecting the sacredness of their station, abandoned themselves to the indolence and delicacy of an effeminate and luxurious life. The Deacons, beholding the presbyters deserting their functions, boldly usurped their rights and privileges; and the effects of a corrupt ambition were spread through every rank of the sacred order." "The duties of the

sanctuary consequently devolved on new officers, and menials were appointed to do the work of idle Bishops and presbyters; ceremonies were added by Bishops to please the multitude, or the immediate possessors of power; and a disposition prevailed to accommodate the religion of Jesus to the taste of heathens."

During the rise and growth of these corruptions the churches for three centuries remained as originally formed- independent of each other, and were united by no legal authority, for the ruling powers were hostile to Christians. These corrupt practices did not prevail so much in the country as in the cities, and many in the cities were opposed to them. Such members as could not tolerate the abuses were justifiable in casting them out or withdrawing from them. Heathen emperors yet ruled and tyrannized over Christians, and the man of sin had not been fully developed.

After forty years' toleration and a consequent large increase of nominal professors of Christianity, the severe Decian persecution of two years produced not only many *martyrs*, but also many *apostates*, who, after the abatement of the trial, applied for restoration to the churches and were generally re-admitted. Novatian, a very learned and upright Elder in the church at Rome, earnestly opposed such laxity of discipline, maintaining that, as in the days of the Apostles, the church should be a *communion of saints*, and should keep separate from the world both of apostates and of non-professors. Cornelius, another Elder in the church at Rome, was a loose disciplinarian, and favored the re-admission of their lapsed and unworthy members, and he was chosen in March, A. D. 251, by the majority of the church, to be their pastor. Novatian and the minority, who believed in strict church discipline, thereupon withdrew from the majority and established a separate church of their own, in accordance with the emphatic command of God, (2 Cor. 6:14-18; 1 Cor. 5:11; Rev. 18:4) and would receive no members from such loose societies except by re-baptizing them. And the example of Novatian and his brethren was followed all over the Roman Empire by the people of God who contended for the purity of the church. There can be no question that these were *Baptist* churches. And it should be noted that not even their enemies accused them of any heresy either in doctrine or in church constitution; a difference in discipline was the cause of

the separation. They were called *Novations* or *Cathari* (the Pure), and some of them were found as late as the sixth century.—A proof that *immersion was the only baptism* in this century is the fact that great objection was made to the manner in which Novatian was made a member of the visible church. Being, as was supposed, in mortal sickness, he was perfused (*perichuthesis*), that is, water was poured all around and upon him in his bed, it may have been when he was not conscious and not desiring it, but we do not know; it certainly was not scriptural baptism, and this fact was indicated by the wide-spread opposition which was made at that early day to its validity.

The Monarchians, Patripassians (or Unitarians), originated in the third century. Sabellius, a presbyter of Ptolemais, in Egypt, A. D. 250, was their ablest writer, and he seems to have derived his system not so much from the Scriptures as from the apocryphal "Gospel to the Egyptians" and the Alexandrian Jewish theology. He maintained that the distinctions of Father, Son and Holy Spirit were only external, successive and transitory manifestations of God to His creatures, and not internal, simultaneous and everlasting subsistencies of the Divine Being—that there is a trinity of offices, but not a trinity of persons in the Godhead.x[6]

Mani, Manes, or Manichaeus, a Persian (born A. D. 215, died 276), originated a dualistic religious system, deriving its theory chiefly from Parsism, its morals chiefly from Buddhism, and a few elements from a corruption of the New Testament. Manes taught that there were two original and independent principles of Light and Darkness, each presiding over his own kingdom, and in a state of perpetual conflict with the other, the principle of Light being God, and that of Darkness being Demon or Matter; that God created Christ, and Demon created Adam; that Manes was the promised Paraclete, or Comforter; that by obedience to the precepts of Christ and Manes natural men became new men, but had to be additionally purified after death in the fire of the Sun and then in the water of the Moon; that less sanctified souls were to be tortured and purged by successive migrations in other bodies; that those persistently wicked would be chained to the burnt inert mass of the world, while the powers of darkness would be forever confined to their own dismal region; and that the Sun and Moon

were to be revered as the representatives of God. He sent out twelve so-called apostles and seventy-two Bishops, and under them a body of priests, Deacons, and itinerant evangelists. He either forbade or disesteemed baptism with water, and enjoined unction with oil. His followers were divided into two classes, called the "Perfect," who were required to be exceedingly abstemious, and the "Hearers," who enjoyed larger liberties. Manichaeism prevailed over a great deal of the Roman Empire, but lost its most objectionable features as it came westward, and it continued to have adherents till the thirteenth, or, some say, till the sixteenth century. The Catharists, Paulicians, Bogomiles and Albigenses were probably (at least many of them) unjustly suspected of holding its tenets.

Plotinus, the chief Neo-Platonic philosopher, taught at Rome, and died there A. D. 270. Porphyry, of Tyre, a pupil of Plotinus and also of Origen (born 233, died 304), edited and improved the writings of Plotinus, taught that philosophy was the means of the salvation of the soul, and, by a treatise in fifteen books (written in Sicily about A. D. 270), he made the greatest and most determined attempt of the ancient heathen world to disprove and destroy the Christian religion. He was a much more refined and powerful antagonist of Christianity than was Celsus in the second century. *"He is the very prototype of the skeptics of modern times, both in his critical objections and in his professions of respect for the pure teachings of Jesus,* as contrasted with the corrupt doctrines of the apostles." Nothing can be done against the truth, but for the truth. (2 Cor. 13:8) Porphyry has been dead nearly sixteen centuries, and the religion of Christ still survives on earth in indestructible life and vigor, for the gates of hell shall never prevail against it (Matt. 16:18).

By consulting the writers of the third century we shall find that church ordinances had undergone no change, and that baptism was immersion in water, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, administered to adults or such as were capable of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, making a profession of faith in His name, and renouncing all sinful practices.

"During the first three centuries Christian congregations all over the East continued separate independent bodies, unsupported by government and

consequently without any secular power over one another. All this time they were Baptist churches; and though all the 'fathers' of the first four ages down to Jerome were of Greece, Syria and Africa, and though they give great numbers of histories of the baptism of adults, yet there is not (if we except the case referred by Fidus to Cyprian, 256 A. D.) one record of the baptism of a child till the year 370, when Galetes, the dying son of the Emperor Valens, was baptized by order of a monarch, who swore he would not be contradicted (see Rob. Res., p. 55)."—*Orchard*.xi[7]

Here is the order of things at the close of the third century -the faith once delivered to the saints strictly adhered to, and the ordinances of the church primarily established by Christ and His Apostles faithfully observed by a portion of the professed Christian world, in opposition to the many who abounded in luxury and were fertile in innovations. And here from among these faithful adherents to the cause of Christ is where the Baptists came from.

Fourth Century.—This century marks the establishment of the Roman Catholic hierarchy or church, so-called, the development of numerous churches or bodies of Christians who never claimed connection with her, and that of many others who dissented from her corruptions. During this century also, paganism as a religion of State met its death blow, and its cruelties to Christians yielded the palm to professedly Christian Rome. The third, fifth and sixteenth were the great centuries of doctrinal and ecclesiastical controversy.

The emperors who swayed the sceptre over this great empire during the fourth century were Diocletian, Maximian Herculius, Constantius Chlorus, Maximian Galerius, Constantine the Great, Licinius, Constantine II., Constantius II., Constans, Magnentius, Julian the Apostate, Jovian, Valentinian I., Valens, Gratian, Valentinian II., Theodosius the Great, Arcadius, and Honorius. Some reigned for many years alone, others for a very short time, while in several instances two to four—two Augusti and two Caesars under them -reigned at the same time. Early in the century, about 303, the Emperor Diocletian, being instigated thereto by the Pagan priests and his barbarian colleague in authority, Maximian Galerius, set on foot one

of the most cruel and wide-spread persecutions that the churches had ever experienced. It has been called the tenth and last great persecution inflicted on Christians by Pagan Rome. The order was given for all their houses of worship to be pulled down, all their books and writings to be taken from them and burned, all their civil rights and privileges to be taken from them, and they rendered incapable of any honors or civil promotion. Edict followed edict until their ministers were imprisoned, and they and their flocks threatened with death unless they sacrificed to the gods. Vast numbers suffered death throughout the empire, with the exception of Gaul, which was held by Constantius Chlorus, and it began to look as though Christianity would be entirely extinguished. But Diocletian abdicated the throne in 305, on account of his wretched health and his desire for rural retirement; Galerius died in 311 of a loathsome and horrible disease; Constantius Chlorus died in 306, nominating his son Constantine his successor, who was proclaimed emperor by the army, and finally made his way to the throne of the Caesars, and held it undisputedly for many years.

He did not profess conversion; he was not baptized until a few days before his death, but simply declared himself in favor of Christianity, at the outset, adopting the sign of the cross^{xii}**[8]**^{xiii} as his army flag; and, when fairly installed emperor, gave liberty of conscience to all his subjects to worship their deities as they thought proper. This announcement was hailed throughout his empire with rapture and delight by all his professed Christian subjects; and had he gone no further than this, he would have proved, in many respects, a benefactor to his subjects. As time progressed he became, professedly, more attached to Christianity, though he never ceased to reverence the heathen gods; and he set up Christianity by law as the religion of his empire, and for a while offered a white robe and twenty pieces of gold to each person who would join the Catholic "Church." Not only so, but he assumed to be at the head of the church, even "the Bishop of Bishops," and pretended to write and deliver sermons to his courtiers, who loudly applauded him; and, when he could not reconcile the differences between those who adhered to the church in Rome, he called a council of Bishops to settle the difficulty, and presided as their chairman or chief moderator; and, when the council arrived at a conclusion, he anathematized those who did not subscribe to its decisions—deprived them of their

positions, and banished them the country. Not only so, but when he found that he could not conciliate the Donatists and other dissenters by having them adhere to the church of Rome and indorse all her monstrosities, he laid the hand of persecution upon them, sought to obtain possession of their books, forbade their assembling together, and destroyed their places of worship. These "oppressive measures prompted many to leave the scene of sufferings and retire into more sequestered spots. Claudius Seyssel, the popish archbishop, traces the rise of the Waldensian heresy to a pastor named Leo leaving Rome at this period for the valleys."—*Orchard*.

The gladness manifested by the genuine Baptists of that day, upon the ascension of Constantine to the throne, was therefore soon turned into sorrow, when they found he had become their enemy, and persecuted them as the heathen rulers had persecuted Christians before.

A similar scene appeared in after ages, when the voice of Martin Luther and his colleagues shook the thrones of popes and emperors, and proclaimed liberty of conscience to all mankind. The poor persecuted Baptists rallied to his support, and rejoiced to think that the day of their deliverance had come. But they soon went away sorrowful when they discovered that the anathemas of Luther were as violently hurled at them as those of Leo had been against him, and eventually both Catholics and Lutherans joined hands in persecuting Baptists.

During the reign of Constantine many troubles and divisions arose among those who adhered to the Roman Catholic party -none greater perhaps than that which was called the "Arian controversy."

"In an assembly of the presbyters of Alexandria, the Bishop of that city, whose name was Alexander, expressed his sentiments on this subject (the persons in the Godhead, and the Divinity of Christ, etc.) with a great degree of freedom and confidence, maintaining among other things that the Son was not only of the same eminence and dignity, but also of the same essence¹[9]xiv with the Father. This assertion was opposed by Arius, one of

the presbyters, a man of a subtile turn, and remarkable for his eloquence. Whether his zeal for his own opinions or personal resentment against his Bishop was the motive that influenced him, is not very certain. Be that as it may, he first treated as false the assertion of Alexander, on account of its affinity to the Sabellian errors, which had been condemned by the church, and then, rushing into the opposite extreme, he maintained that the Son was totally and essentially distinct from the Father; that he was the first and noblest of those beings whom God had created out of nothing, the instrument by whose subordinate operation the Almighty Father formed the universe, and therefore inferior to the Father, both in nature and in dignity. His opinions concerning the Holy Ghost are not so well known. It is, however, certain that his notion concerning the Son of God was accompanied and connected with other sentiments that were very different from those commonly received among Christians, though none of the ancient writers have given us a complete and coherent system of those religious tenets which Arius and his followers really held."

"The opinions of Arius were no sooner divulged than they found, in Egypt and the neighboring provinces, a multitude of abettors, and, among these, many who were distinguished as much by the superiority of their learning and genius as by the eminence of their rank and station. Alexander, on the other hand, in two councils assembled at Alexandria, accused Arius of impiety, and caused him to be expelled from the communion of the church. Arius received this severe and ignominious shock with great firmness and constancy of mind, retired into Palestine, and thence wrote several letters to the most eminent men of those times, in which he endeavored to demonstrate the truth of his opinions, and that with such surprising success that vast numbers were drawn over to his party; and, among these, Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia, a man distinguished in the church by his influence and authority. The Emperor Constantine, looking upon the subject of this controversy as a matter of small importance, and as little connected with the fundamental and essential doctrines of religion, contented himself at first with addressing a letter to the contending parties, in which he admonished them to put an end to their disputes. But when the prince saw that his admonitions were without effect, and that the troubles and commotions which the passions of men too often mingle with religious

disputes were spreading and increasing daily throughout the empire, he convoked, in the year 325, a great council at Nice in Bithynia, hoping and desiring that the deputies of the church universal (as it was called) would put an end to this controversy. In this general assembly, after many keen debates and violent efforts of the two parties, the doctrine of Arius was condemned; Christ was declared *consubstantial*, or of the same essence, with the Father; the vanquished presbyter was banished among the Illyrians, and his followers were compelled to give their assent to the Creed, or Confession of Faith, which was composed on this occasion."

"The council assembled by Constantine at Nice is one of the most famous and interesting events that are presented to us in ecclesiastical history, and yet, what is most surprising, scarcely any part of the history of the church (Romish) has been unfolded with such negligence, or rather passed over with such rapidity. The ancient writers are agreed with respect neither to the time nor the place in which it was assembled, the number of those who sat in the council, nor the Bishop who presided in it, and no authentic acts of its famous sentence are now extant."—*Mosheim*.

It is now generally agreed that the council was held at Nice; that it convened on the 14th of June, A. D. 325, and ended on the 25th of July following; that it was composed of three hundred and eighteen Bishops, besides a multitude of presbyters, Deacons, acolythists, and others, amounting in the whole to about two thousand and forty-eight persons. This is what is termed the first general council.^{xv}**[10]**^{xvi} It decided the question of Arianism, and also the time for the celebration of Easter.

"Letters were now written to all the churches in Egypt, Lybia and Pentapolis, announcing their decrees and informing them that the holy synod had condemned the opinions of Arius, and had fully determined the time for the celebration of Easter; exhorting them to rejoice for the good deed they had done, for that they had cut off all manner of heresy. When these things were ended Constantine splendidly treated the Bishops, filled their pockets and sent them honorably home, exhorting them at parting to maintain peace among themselves, and that none of them should envy another who might excel the rest in wisdom and eloquence; that they should not carry

themselves haughtily towards their inferiors, but condescend to and bear with their weakness—a convincing proof that he saw into their tempers, and was no stranger to the haughtiness and pride that influenced some, and the envy and hatred that prevailed in others.”

“It requires not the spirit of prophecy to anticipate the effects which must flow from the disgraceful proceedings of this general Council, though Constantine himself wrote letters enjoining universal conformity to its decrees, and urged, as a reason for it, that ‘what they had decreed was the will of God, and the agreement of so great a number of such Bishops was by inspiration of the Holy Ghost.’ This Council laid the foundation for a system of persecution of a complexion altogether new -professing Christians tyrannizing over the consciences of each other, and inflicting torture and cruelties upon each other far greater than they had ever sustained from their heathen persecutors. The emperor’s first letters were mild and gentle, but he was soon persuaded into more violent measures; for, out of his great zeal to extinguish heresy, he issued edicts against all such as his favorite Bishops persuaded him were the authors or abettors of it; and particularly against the Novatians, Donatists, Valentinians, Marcionists and others, whom, after reproaching with being ‘enemies of truth, destructive counsellors,’ etc., he deprived of the liberty of meeting for worship either in public or private places; and gave all their oratories to the orthodox church. And, with respect to the discomfited party, he banished Arius himself; commanded that all his followers should be called Porphyrians (from Porphyry, the heathen philosopher who wrote against Christianity); ordained that the books written by them should be burnt, that there might remain to posterity no vestiges of their doctrine; and, to complete the climax, enacted that if any should dare to keep in his possession any book written by Arius, and should not immediately burn it, he should no sooner be convicted of the crime than he should suffer death. Such were the acts of the last days of Constantine.”—*W. Jones.*

How unreasonable for the Emperor Constantine to suppose that he could keep down pride, envy and jealousy among his Bishops, when at the same time he was enriching them and elevating them to the highest distinctions in

“Church” and State! And how unreasonable to suppose that he could put down and forever extinguish the spirit of free inquiry by a decree of State!

Constantine’s leading motive was evidently one of political expediency and personal aggrandizement. When he undertook to unite “Church” and State, and constitute the kingdom of Christ into a kingdom of this world, he made a great mistake, and was found pandering to Antichrist rather than serving Christ, who most emphatically declared before Pontius Pilate, “*My kingdom is not of this world.*”

For the first three centuries the ministry were *unsalaried*, and received only irregular voluntary contributions from the private members, who were themselves comparatively few and poor. But Constantine instituted the worldly and corrupting practice of paying the Catholic ministry a fixed salary from “church” funds and from imperial and municipal treasuries. This custom, says Prof. Schaff, “favored ease and luxury, allured a host of unworthy persons into the service of the ‘church,’ and checked the exercise of free-giving among the people.”

The Arians, so far from being silenced, continued their agitations during the fourth century, and, while persecuted by some emperors, were favored by others, and when in the ascendancy would persecute the Trinitarians or orthodox party, just as that party when in power persecuted them. And, although Arius was sadly in error in denying divinity to Christ, yet, so far as the acrimony of the controversy was concerned, he was no more to blame than Alexander and Athanasius, the leaders of the opposite party. Each side abounded with language unbecoming the profession they had made of belief in the Savior of sinners; and their bitterness and foul denunciations of each other rose to such a pitch and were so wide-spread throughout the empire that the very heathen mocked them and rebuked them in their theatrical performances.

This one instance goes to show that mankind are prone to make the greater noise about those things they least understand; and that there are scarcely any bounds to the presumption and arrogance of those theologians who, disregarding the limits of scriptural phraseology, make a language of

their own, pretend to know as much about the mode of God's existence as God does Himself, and hurl anathemas against all those who do not agree with them in everything they say. The Scriptures sufficiently prove that the Father, Word and Holy Ghost are each Divine, and that these three are but one, and constitute the one eternal God. Secret things belong to God, but such as are revealed belong to us and to our children. Human knowledge goes no further. No finite intelligence can fathom the infinite depths of the Godhead.

Arianism, or a denial of Christ's divinity, continued to exist in the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church (so-called) for centuries, and has never entirely left it to this day. It has shown itself under many forms from the days of Arius to the present time, and particularly under those of Mohammedanism and Unitarianism.

But to return to some of the glaring corruptions of the Romish Church, so-called, in the fourth century. In the year 366 Liberius, Bishop of Rome, died, and a violent contest arose respecting his successor. The city was divided into two factions, one of which elected Damasus to that high dignity, while the other chose Ursicinnus, a Deacon of the church. The party of Damasus prevailed, and got him ordained. Ursicinnus, enraged that Damasus was preferred before him, set up separate meetings, and at length he also obtained ordination from certain obscure Bishops. This occasioned great disputes among the citizens as to which of the two should obtain the episcopal dignity; and the matter was carried to such a height that great numbers were murdered on either side in the quarrel—no less than one hundred and thirty-seven persons being destroyed in the very 'church' itself!xvii[11]

"But the very detail of such shameful proceedings is sufficient to excite disgust; and enough has been said to convince any unprejudiced mind of the absurdity of looking for the kingdom of the Son of God in the 'Catholic Church,' as it now began to be denominated. 'The mystery of iniquity' which had been secretly working since the very days of the Apostles, (2 Thess. 2: 7) had nevertheless been subject to considerable control, so long as paganism remained the established religion of the empire, and Christians

consequently compelled to bear their cross by patiently suffering the hatred of the world, in conformity to the Captain of their salvation. But no sooner was this impediment removed by the establishment of (a nominal) Christianity under Constantine than the 'Man of Sin,' 'the son of perdition,' began to be manifest. Men were now found professing themselves the disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus, yet walking after the course of this world, 'lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God,'—'having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof (2 Tim. 3:3-5). And, as this state of things continued to increase in progressive enormity, until it ultimately brought forth that monstrous system of iniquity denominated 'MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH'—described by the prophetic pen as 'the habitation of devils—the hold of every foul spirit—the cage of every unclean and hateful bird' (Rev. 17:5, and Rev. 18:2), we may rest fully assured that the sheep of Christ—those who heard His voice and followed His will (John 10:27)—would see it their indispensable duty to separate themselves from such an impure communion, in obedience to the reiterated commands of God (2 Cor. 6:14-18; 2 Tim. 3:5; Rev. 18:4)."—*W. Jones.*

The baptism of youth, it is maintained by many, began in this century. In the year 370 the Emperor Valens sent for Basil to baptize his dying son Galetes; the ground of the request was the illness of the youth. Basil refused to do it, and it was eventually done by an Arian Bishop. If an emperor's son must be baptized before he dies, although destitute of faith, of course the next highest in authority must have the same privilege accorded him, and so on down to the lowest officer and the poorest and most obscure man in the empire. And upon similar grounds it came to be urged that if young men and youths, who were taught to ask for baptism, could receive it and thus escape eternal punishment, the same blessing ought to be conferred on poor helpless infants, who could not even speak for themselves and knew not anything. So that it was agreed eventually that they should also be baptized as soon as born or soon thereafter, so that they also, by this means, in case of death, might escape the flames of hell! And either about 256 A. D. in Africa or 370 A. D. in Rome, is where youths' and children's baptism, without faith, came from; not from Christ or His Apostles. Be it remembered, then,

that 370 years after the birth of our Savior, an emperor's child was baptized by an Arian Bishop;—*having been refused by one of the Athanasian or orthodox party!*

We now propose leaving the mother of harlots for a while, and to turn towards the bride, the Lamb's wife. Long before the degenerate times of which we have been treating, upright, conscientious and God-fearing men were found in opposition to the "churches" of Italy and the empire under the leading strings of Rome. Although, at the command of God, His people have been coming out of Babylon in all ages since her rise, yet it remains true that the original opposition was manifested long before the days of Constantine or the setting up of the Catholic establishment.

"Long before the times of which we now treat some Christians had seen it their duty to withdraw from the communion of the 'church' of Rome."

The first instance of this that we find on record is, after the Montanists, that of Tertullian, who left the "church" at Carthage A. D. 202, on account of its corruptions, and formed another on the plain, simple and sacred principles of the gospel; his followers were for 200 years called Tertullianists. The second instance of importance is that of "Novatian, an earnest, learned man, who had been led to faith through severe disease and inward struggles, and who, in the year 251, was, against his will or seeking, ordained the pastor of a church in the city of Rome, *which maintained no fellowship with the Catholic party.* Novatus quitted Carthage and joined Novatian. Many, called from the latter, Novatians, followed his example; and, all over the empire, *Puritan Churches* were constituted and flourished through the succeeding two hundred years. Afterwards when penal laws (made by the Catholics) obliged them to lurk in corners, and worship God in private, they were distinguished by a variety of names, and a succession of them (it is supposed) continued until the Reformation."—*Robinson's Ecclesiastical Researches.*

"The same author," says Jones, "afterwards adverting to the vile calumnies with which the Catholic writers have in all ages delighted to asperse the character of Novatian, thus proceeds to vindicate him:"

“They say Novatian was the first xviii[12]xix antipope; and yet there was at that time no pope, in the modern sense of the word. They call Novatian the author of the heresy of Puritanism; and yet they know that Tertullian had quitted the church near fifty years before for the same reason, and Privatus, who was an old man in the time of Novatian, had, with several more, repeatedly remonstrated against the alterations taking place; and, as they could get no redress, had dissented and formed separate congregations. They tax Novatian with being the parent of an innumerable multitude of congregations of Puritans all over the empire; and yet he had no other influence over any than what his good example gave him. People everywhere saw the same cause of complaint and groaned for relief; and when one man made a stand for virtue the crisis had arrived; people saw the propriety of the cure and applied the same means to their own relief. They blame this man and all these churches for the severity of their discipline; yet this severe discipline was the only coercion of the primitive churches, and it was the exercise of this that rendered civil coercion unnecessary. Some exclaimed that it was a barbarous discipline to refuse to readmit people into Christian communion because they have lapsed into idolatry or vice. Others, finding the inconvenience of such a lax discipline, required a repentance of five, ten or fifteen years; but the Novatians said: ‘You may be admitted among us by baptism; or, if any Catholic has baptized you before, by re-baptism; but, if you fall into idolatry, we shall separate you from our communion, and on no account readmit you. God forbid we should injure either your person, your property or your character, or even judge of the truth of your repentance or your future state; but you can never be readmitted to our community without our giving up the last and only coercive guardian we have of the purity of our fellowship.’ Whether these persons reasoned justly or not, as virtue was their object, they challenge respect; and he must be a weak man indeed who is frightened out of it because Cyprian is pleased to say, ‘They are the children of the devil.’”

“The doctrinal sentiments of the Novatians appear to have been very scriptural, and the discipline of their churches rigid in the extreme. They were the first class of Christians who obtained the name of (Cathari) Puritans, an appellation which doth not appear to have been chosen by themselves, but applied to them by their adversaries; from which we may

reasonably conclude that their manners were simple and irreproachable. Some of them are said to have disapproved of second marriages, regarding them as sinful; but in this they erred in common with Tertullian and many other eminent persons. A third charge against them was that they did not pay due reverence to the martyrs, nor allow that there was any virtue in their relics!—a plain proof of their good sense. Novatian appears to have been possessed of considerable talents—Mosheim terms him “a man of uncommon learning and eloquence”—and he wrote several works, of which only two are now extant. One of them is upon the subject of the Trinity. It is divided into thirty-one sections; the first eight relate to the Father, and treat of His nature, power, goodness, justice, etc., with the worship due to Him. The following twenty sections relate to Christ, the Old Testament prophecies concerning Him, their actual accomplishment, His nature, how the Scriptures prove His divinity, confutes the Sabellians, shows that it was Christ who appeared to the patriarchs—Abraham, Jacob, Moses, etc. The twenty-ninth section treats of the Holy Spirit, how promised, given by Christ, His offices and operations on the souls of men and in the church. The last two sections recapitulate the arguments before adduced. The work appears to have been written in the year 257—six years after his separation from the Catholic ‘Church’ (or rather the dominant party at Rome). The other tract is upon the subject of ‘Jewish Meats,’ addressed in the form of a letter to his church, and written either during his banishment or retreat in the time of persecution. It opens up the typical nature of the law of Moses, and, while he proves its abolition, he is careful to guard his Christian brethren against supposing that they were therefore at liberty to eat things sacrificed to idols.” W. Jones says: “Lardner, in his *Credibility of the Gospel History* (Chap. 47), has been at considerable pains in comparing the various and contradictory representations that have been given of Novatian and his followers, and has exonerated them from a mass of obloquy cast upon them by the Catholic party. Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, wrote many epistles or treatises respecting the sect of the Novatians, which afford abundant evidence that their rigid discipline was relished by many. Fabius, Bishop of Antioch, in particular, was their friend and favorer. Marcian, Bishop of Arles, was firm in the same principles in the time of Stephen, Bishop of Rome. A church was formed at Carthage for the Novatian party, of which Maximus was the pastor. Socrates, the historian, speaks of their churches at Constantinople,

Nice, Nicomedia, and Cotioeus in Phrygia, all in the fourth century; these he mentions as their principal places in the East, and he supposes them to have been equally numerous in the West. What were their numbers in these cities does not appear, but he intimates that they had three churches in Constantinople.

“Though, therefore, Novatian and his principles were condemned by the Catholic party at the time that Dionysius wrote the forementioned letters concerning them to the Bishop of Rome, he still continued to be supported by a numerous party in various places, separated from the Catholic ‘Church.’ They had among them some persons of considerable note and of eminent talents. Among these were Agelius, Acesius, Sisinnius and Marcian, all of Constantinople. Socrates mentions one Mark, Bishop of the Novatians in Scythia, who died in the year 439. In fact the pieces written against them by a great variety of authors of the Catholic Church—such as Ambrose, Pacian and others -the notice taken of them by Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, and the accounts given of them by Socrates and Sozomen in their ecclesiastical histories, are proofs of their being numerous, and that churches of this denomination were to be found in most parts of the world in the fourth and fifth centuries. ‘The vast extent of this sect,’ says Lardner, ‘is manifest from the names of the authors who have mentioned them or written against them, and from the several parts of the Roman Empire in which they were found.’” —*Jones.xx*[13]

As the Decian persecution, A. D. 250, had produced many *lapsi*, or apostates, whom the NOVATIANS, considering the church to be a communion of saints, were unwilling to admit again to membership, and were thus led to separate themselves from the Catholic or dominant party in the churches; so the Diocletian persecution, A. D. 303, produced many *traditores*, or betrayers, who gave up their Bibles for destruction, and whom the DONATISTS, being of like minds with the Novatians, were unwilling to fellowship, and were thus also led to form separate churches. The Donatists were so called from Donatus, a very learned, eloquent and upright minister, who was chosen pastor or Bishop of the church at Carthage, A. D. 315. These people were found mostly in North Africa, and were quite numerous. When Mensurius, Bishop of the church at Carthage, who was a loose

disciplinarian, died in 311, the majority of the members of the church, being of the same principles as Mensurius, chose Caecilian, a like-minded man, their Bishop. On the ground that Caecilian was consecrated by a *traditor*, Felix, Bishop of Aptunga, the minority withdrew and formed a separate church, and chose Majorinus for their pastor, who, dying in 315, was succeeded by Donatus. The example of this church was followed all over North Africa, and, to some extent, in adjoining countries. In Constantine's first edict (312), professing to give universal religious toleration, he especially excepted the Donatists. Suffering under the consequent persecution, they appealed to him to examine their principles, which he professed to do by a council of twenty Bishops in the Lateran at Rome in 313, and afterwards by a council of two hundred Bishops at Arles, France, in 314, and in 316 by a personal hearing of the Donatist party at Milan. The Donatists were condemned every time, and from 316 to 321 they were treated as rebels resisting the authority of the emperor; and edicts were issued depriving them of their church edifices, and sentencing them to banishment, confiscation and death. They should not in the beginning have appealed to the emperor, although they had been condemned by him without a hearing. It was the significant question of Donatus—" *What has the emperor to do with the church?*" The church of Christ should be a pure spiritual body, having no corrupting connection with the State. The Donatists were not accused of heresy; they, in general, led exemplary and even austere lives; they advocated the purity and unworldliness of the church and the necessity of strict discipline; like the Montanists and the Novatians, they baptized all whom they received into their churches, whether such had previously been professedly baptized or not. Their churches also were independent of each other in government. It is possible that infant baptism was, in the latter part of the fourth or in the fifth century, practiced by a few of them; but it was plainly inconsistent with their principles. In 321 Constantine gave them full liberty of faith and worship. His son and successor, Constans, first tried in 348 to bribe them, as they were very poor, but, having failed, he then severely persecuted them. So did the other emperors of the fourth century, except Julian the apostate, xxi[14]xxii who gave all his subjects free and equal religious toleration. In 411, during a three days' discussion at Carthage, where two hundred and eighty-six Catholic and two hundred and seventy-nine Donatist Bishops were present,

the famous Latin theologian, Augustine, first tried in vain to argue the Donatists into submission and then appealed to the closing command in the parable of the supper (Luke 14:23) to "compel them to come in," as authority for the State to use force to bring them into the fellowship of the Catholic "Church" out of which he, altogether inconsistently with his own principles of predestination, maintained that there was no salvation. The conquest of Africa by the Arian Vandals in 428 terminated the controversy; and a remnant of the Donatists survived until the conquest of North Africa by the Saracens in the seventh century. The Circumcelliones, a species of vicious ascetics and begging banditti and fanatical seekers of martyrdom, who pretended for a while to champion the cause of the Donatists, but were condemned by the great body of those persecuted people, were suppressed by the Roman government in 348.

In remembrance of Christ's resurrection the ancient church, like the apostolic church, observed the first day of the week (or Sunday) as a day of sacred joy and thanksgiving, of public worship of God, and of collections for the poor; but neither the ancient nor the apostolic church ever called that day the Sabbath.xxiii[15]xxiv In the year 321 Constantine appointed the first day of the week, which he called "the venerable day of the sun," in reference both to the Roman sun-god, Apollo, and to Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, as, in some respects, a day of rest. He forbade the sitting of courts, and military exercises, and all secular labor in towns on that day; but allowed agricultural labor in the country. As the fourth century is the source whence were derived the principal Greek and Roman Catholic liturgies or forms of prayer, so Constantine enjoined the following very indefinite form of prayer for all his Pagan and Christian soldiers. On Sunday, in the open field, at a given signal, they were required, with military exactness, to raise their eyes and hands towards Heaven, and say these words: "Thee alone we acknowledge as God; Thee we reverence as King; to Thee we call as our helper; to Thee we owe our victories; by Thee have we obtained the mastery of our enemies; to Thee we give thanks for benefits already received; from Thee we hope for benefits to come. We all fall at Thy feet, and fervently beg that Thou wouldst preserve to us our Emperor Constantine and his divinely beloved sons in long life, healthful and victorious." The so-called prayer, as may be seen, could be addressed to one god as well as another. Formalism

and ritualism can here find an ancient, but not a very good authority. The Council of Laodicea (about 372) condemned the Judaic or Sabbatic observance of Sunday, but directed that labor should be avoided on that day as far as possible. Theodosius prohibited the transaction of civil business and all theatrical and circus performances on Sunday; but the law was not very rigidly or very long enforced, and Sunday is, as it long has been, the chief day for public amusements in almost all the large cities of continental Europe.

During the fourth century pictures were introduced into Catholic houses of worship; sacerdotal marriages were first prohibited by Pope Siricius, A. D. 385; and monasticism and episcopacy were largely advanced. There was also a great increase of burial rites; and, like the funeral orations pronounced by the ancient Greeks and Romans in praise of their distinguished dead, funeral sermons began to be preached over the dead - the first one having been preached by Constantine himself over one of his courtiers, the emperor, in his discourse, speaking "of the immortality of the soul, of the blessings of the righteous, and the misery of the wicked." The next funeral sermons were delivered by Eusebius and other Bishops over Constantine; and others were delivered in this century by Ambrose over the Emperors Valentinian and Theodosius, by Gregory of Nyssa over the Empresses Pulcheria and Placilla, and Bishop Meletius, and by Gregory Nazianzus over his father, brother and sister, and over Basil the Great. At first funeral addresses were mostly panegyrics of the dead, like the old classical funeral orations. In the middle ages funeral services were principally masses and prayers for the dead. In place of such masses the Reformation substituted the practice of funeral *preaching* over the dead. In the apostolic church and for two hundred years afterwards funeral preaching was unknown.xxv[16]

The second so-called Ecumenical Council was held at Constantinople in 381, and reaffirmed and enlarged the Nicene Creed, declaring the perfect humanity and the perfect divinity of Christ, and the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father (*filioque*, and from the Son, was added by the Council of Toledo in 589).

The Emperor Theodosius, who called this Council, enacted the first rigid penalties against both Pagan idolatry and Christian heresy, which were made crimes, punishable with fines, banishment and death. In accordance with these laws, under his colleague Maximus, the Spanish Bishop Priscillian and his six chief adherents were tortured and beheaded with the sword at Treves in 385. This was the first *legal* shedding of blood for heresy in the history of nominal Christianity; but it was afterwards vindicated by those called "the *best fathers of the (Catholic) Church,*" *even Jerome and Augustine.*

In 364 the brothers Valentinian and Valens divided the Roman Empire between them. In 392 Theodosius became sole emperor; but in 395 he divided the empire between his sons Arcadius and Honorius, and this division was permanent.

During the fourth century the Roman Empire assumed, in place of the outer shell of paganism, the outer shell of Christianity; but the great mass of the population not only remained heathens, but were continually becoming more and more corrupt and ready for destruction.

ENDNOTES:

xxvi[1]xxvii From the ten plagues in Egypt, and the ten horns in Revelation, it is commonly recorded that there were ten great or general persecutions of Christians by Pagan Rome as follows: By Nero beginning A. D. 64; by Domitian, A.D. 95, 96; by Trajan, A. D. 106-117; by Marcus Aurelius, A. D, 166-177; by Severus, A. D. 202 and onwards; by Maximin, A.D. 235; by Decius, A.D. 250, 251, continued under Gallus, A.D. 251-253; by Valerian, A.D. 258-260; by Aurelian, A.D. 275; by Diocletian and Maximinian, A. D. 303-305, continued by Galerius and Maximin to A.D. 311. Not all these persecutions, however, were general throughout the Roman Empire. Gibbon estimates that the entire number of Christians slain by Pagan Rome was far less than 100,000, the number of Protestants slain in the Netherlands by the Roman Catholic Emperor Charles V. in five years, A.D. 1550-1555. Probably only the persecutions under Severus and Diocletian were really general throughout the Roman Empire.

xxviii[2]xxix Celsus is the first infidel whose writings are now extant (his arguments against Christianity being preserved in Origen's reply to him). His work entitled "A True Discourse" is referred by Lardner to A. D 176. It is of *profound interest* to know that Celsus, in the second century, used substantially all the strongest arguments against Christianity employed by the infidels of the nineteenth century. He arrays learning, philosophy, science, common sense, wit and sarcasm against the poor, ignorant, superstitious and deceived Christians, as he calls them, and pretends to know everything himself while they know nothing. He is a Platonist, a half Epicurean deist, a pantheist, a universalist, an anti-supernaturalist, a non-resurrectionist, a Darwinian evolutionist: he represents Christ and His Apostles as magicians and imposters; and he points out and ridicules what he considers the inconsistencies and mistakes of the Scriptures. Christianity was not hurt by these venomous missiles of Satan 1,700 years ago; neither will it be harmed by the same old weapons hurled against it in the nineteenth century.

xxx[3]xxxi Of the fifteen pretended epistles of Ignatius, eight, because of their numerous falsehoods and mistakes, and other reasons, are known to be spurious; and the other seven are referred by the latest and best scholarship to the middle of the second century, a considerable period after the death of Ignatius. Lightfoot thinks that the three short Syriac epistles of Ignatius (to Polycarp, to the Ephesians, and to the Romans) are *genuine*. These afford no arguments for that haughty *diocesan* episcopacy which grew up in the third century; in the writings of Ignatius the Bishop presides over but *one* church.

xxxii[4]xxxiii The language of Gibbon is as follows: "The societies (churches) which were instituted in the cities of the Roman Empire were united only by the ties of faith and charity. Independence and equality formed the basis of their internal constitution. Every society formed within itself a separate and independent republic; and although the most distant of these little states maintained a mutual as well as friendly intercourse of letters and deputations, the Christian world was not yet connected by any supreme authority or legislative assembly. Towards the end of the second century the churches of Greece and Asia adopted the useful institutions of

provincial synods." This was evidently *a hundred years too late* to prove the *apostolic* origin of the Presbyterian, Episcopal, or papal form of church government; as before the close of the second century the churches had no outward bond of union.

xxxiv[5]xxxv In his scholarly and elaborate work, in eight volumes, on "Latin Christianity," Mr. H. H. Milman, the learned author of the "History of the Jews" and the "History of Christianity," and the famous critical editor of Gibbon's Rome, makes this profoundly interesting and important and reliable statement, which, if all men loved the truth, would put an everlasting quietus to the pretensions of Roman Catholicism: "*The Decian persecution (A. D. 250) was the birth epoch of Latin Christianity; Cyprian its true parent.*" This was 220 years too late for Roman Catholicism to have been founded by Christ during His ministry, and 150 years too late for it to have been founded by Christ's oldest surviving Apostle, John. What, then, can be the spiritual virtue in tracing back succession to Rome?

xxxvi[6]xxxvii Trinitarianism is essentially distinct from Tritheism, the first affirming the Three-Oneness of God, and the second declaring that there are Three Gods. No Christian can be a Tritheist. The ONENESS of God is the most certain fact and the most prominent article of revelation in all the book of Scripture and the book of Nature; yet the THREE-FOLD nature of this Oneness—the TRINITY or THREE-ONENESS of God—is the second most prominent and important fact revealed in the Scriptures. It would be of no consequence to me that the great body of God's people from the beginning of the Christian era have held this doctrine, that all the oldest Baptist Confessions of Faith declare a belief in the Trinity of God, that ninety-nine-hundredths of the Primitive Baptists in the United States believe it or even that my father believed it—if I did not think the doctrine to be unmistakably taught in the Scriptures. The doctrine of the Trinity is obscurely revealed from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Malachi, and it is clearly revealed from the first of Matthew to the last of Revelation. It underlies and penetrates the whole of Christian experience from its beginning in the past eternity to its consummation in the eternity to come. The entire cause of the poor sinner's salvation is the electing love of God the Father, the redeeming love of God the Son, and the regenerating love of God the Spirit. Thirty

times in the first chapter of Genesis—twenty-two hundred times in the Old Testament—is the plurality of the divine nature declared by the use of the word ELOHIM (which literally means The Mighty Ones) as the name of God (Elohim being the plural form of El, The Mighty One—not the dual form, meaning but two or a pair, but plural, and the simplest plural oneness that is not two-fold is three-fold), and in all these instances, where Elohim, referring to God, is the subject of a verb, or where a pronoun is used in reference to Elohim (except rarely, when there is an allusion to polytheism), the verb and pronoun are in the singular number, proving the unity or oneness of the Divine Plurality, as is also proved by the plural noun Elohim being combined with the singular noun Jehovah (the two names together being translated Lord God), twenty times in the second and third chapters of Genesis, and nearly three hundred times in the Old Testament. The plural unity of the divine nature is further shown by Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Isaiah 6:3, 8; Numbers 6:24, 26, compared with 2 Corinthians 13:14; Exodus 3:2, 6; Psalms 2; 45:6, 7; 110; Isaiah 9:6, Jeremiah 23:6; Zechariah 12:10; 13:7; Malachi 3:1-4, compared with Matthew 3:11-12; Genesis 1:2; 6:3; Psalms 104:30; 139:7; Job 26:13; Isaiah 48:16; Matthew 1:18-25; 3:13-17; 28:19; John 15:26; 1 John 5:7; Revelation 1:5, 6, 10; 22:1, 3, 17. It is not strictly Scriptural language to say that there are three persons in the Godhead, although the primitive meaning of the term person is character, and it seems to me being “wise above what is written” to say that the Three-Oneness of God Is a Three-Oneness, not of inward nature, but only of outward manifestation. God is unchangeably the same in both time and eternity. Christ says that there is an otherness as well as a oneness in the Godhead (John 14:9, 16, 28); and, unless this language of Christ be true, I fail utterly to see how there can be a real Father, a real Son and a real Spirit proceeding from Father and Son; how the Father could send the Son and the Spirit into the world; how the Son could pray to the Father and be answered by the Father; how Christ could use the pronoun “I” in reference to Himself, and “Thou” in reference to the Father, and “He” in reference to the Spirit; how, while Jesus was being baptized in Jordan, the Spirit descended as a dove upon Him, and the Father spoke to Him from heaven; how Christ could require His disciples to baptize believers in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Spirit: and how, after He re-ascended to glory, He could sit down on the right hand of the Majesty on

high. These facts thoroughly satisfy my mind that there is an eternal Threeness as well as an eternal Oneness in the divine nature—that there is something resembling a personal distinction between Father and Son and Spirit, while the distinction is not the same as that generally understood between persons, because Father and Son and Spirit are one. The nature of the Divine Being is the deepest mystery all the universe, and it eminently becomes all finite, fallible, and fallen creatures like ourselves, not to speculate upon the existence of the incomprehensible God—much less to persecute other mortals who cannot exactly pronounce our own favorite shibboleths on this unfathomable subject; but to receive with childlike meekness and faith all that is revealed in the Scriptures in reference to God, our Heavenly Father, our Elder Brother, and our Blessed Comforter. We cannot understand how the Lord Jesus Christ can be at the same time, perfect man and perfect God; yet we believe in this duality of His nature. We cannot understand, though we are quite conscious of the two fold elements of our own nature, soul and body. In our present state, we understand nothing perfectly— we only know in part; but this does not prevent our believing thousands of facts, all of which are perfectly understood. We no more understand the eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience of God than we understand the Trinity of His being: but still we believe all these to be attributes of the Most High. “The doctrine of the Trinity,” says Prof. Philip Schaff, the most accurate and reliable of uninspired church historians, “has been looked upon in all ages as the sacred symbol and the fundamental doctrine of the Christian church, with the denial of which the divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and the divine character of the work of redemption and sanctification, fall to the ground. It distinguishes in the one and indivisible essence of God three hypostases or persons; at the same time allowing for the insufficiency of all human conception and words to describe such an unfathomable mystery. Sabellius is by far the most original, profound and ingenious of the ante-Nicene Unitarians, and his system the most plausible rival of orthodox Trinitarianism (it is also the least objectionable form of Unitarianism.) It revives from time to time in various modifications. It differs from the orthodox standard mainly in denying the trinity of essence and the permanence of the trinity of manifestation; making Father, Son and Holy Ghost only temporary phenomena, which fulfill their mission and return into the abstract monad.” A very few of our highly

esteemed ministers and brethren seem to favor something like this view: but I do not believe that it is the view of one in a hundred of the Primitive Baptists in the United States.

xxxviii[7]xxxix It is of the baptism of children of six years or more, and not of infants, that Tertullian and Origen, in the third century, speak. A letter of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, to Fidus, a rustic African Bishop—regarded by many as spurious—states that a council of sixty-six Bishops had just decided that an infant might be baptized as soon as it was born (A. D. 256 or 258).

xl[8]xli The ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius, says that, in A. D. 312, while Constantine was marching against the Pagan Emperor Maxentius, Constantine and his army saw in the Heavens, just after noon, a bright cross above the sun, and near it the words, *Touto Nika (By this Conquer)*; and that the same night Christ appeared to Constantine while he slept, and directed him to prepare a standard in the form of a cross and told him that thus he would conquer his enemies. Lactantius, an earlier and more credible witness, speaks only of the night-dream, and nothing of the day-vision, which is thought by the best historians either not to have occurred, or to have been some natural phenomenon, as a parhelion, or solar halo, or a cloud, somewhat in the form of a cross, the letters being invented or imagined. Christ does not direct to carnal warfare, but is the Prince of Peace. As Constantine had in 310 slain his father-in-law, Maximian, so in 324 he slew his brother-in-law, Licinius, and his nephew Licinius, and in 326 his own eldest son, Crispus, and, it is thought by many, his own wife Fausta, with whom he had lived twenty years.

xlii[9]xlili The Nicene or Athanasian doctrine of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father was called *Homo-ousianism (sameness of essence)*; the Semi-Arian doctrine was called *Homoi-ousianism (likeness of essence)*; and the Arian doctrine was called *Hetero-ousianism (difference of essence)*.

xliv[10]xlv The seven so-called Ecumenical or Universal Councils were held as follows: 1st. Nicaea, 325; 2nd. Constantinople, 381; 3rd. Ephesus, 431; 4th. Chalcedon, 451; 5th. Constantinople, 553; 6th. Constantinople,

680; and 7th. Nicaea, 787. Their doctrinal decisions are regarded as infallible by both the Greek and Latin Catholics; and Protestants generally receive the creeds of the first four councils as scriptural, these four creeds affirming the divinity and personality of Christ and the Holy Ghost; and the twofold nature of Christ, that He is perfect man and perfect God. The 7th council sanctioned the worship of images. All these seven councils were summoned by the Roman Emperor, and generally presided over by him, and their decisions were ratified by him. Instead of the Elders and brethren taking part (as in *Acts 15*), only "Bishops," the pretended successors of the Apostles, were allowed to vote in them.

xlvi[11]xlvii These diabolical scenes continued several years. Damasus was the chief instigator, he himself at the head of gangs of gladiators, charioteers, and other wild rabbles with axes, swords and clubs, storming so-called churches which had become citadels, and barbarously killing both sexes, on one occasion as many as a hundred and sixty; and the Roman emperor had finally to quell these disastrous tumults by the impartial severity of the heathen Prefect, Praetextatus. And yet men, who lay claim to Christianity, glory in tracing an imaginary and unscriptural apostolical succession through Pope Damasus and numerous others superior to him in vice and crime, and blasphemously pretend that the Holy Ghost has been transmitted through such Satanic channels as these!

xlviiii[12]xlix Some suppose that Hippolytus, in the early part of the third century, was the *first* "Anti-Pope."

l[13]li At this point, after having turned to notice the bride, the Lamb's wife, and while thus dwelling upon the history of these ancient people of God, the Novatians, the hand of my dear father was stayed in death, and his spirit was called by God to join that blessed cloud of witnesses to the truth who had preceded him to glory.—*S. Hassell.*

lii[14]liii This emperor was a nephew of Constantine. Educated mainly by heathen rhetoricians and corrupt professedly Christian teachers, and embittered against a nominal Christianity by the massacre of his nearest kindred by the Emperor Constantius, he professed the Pagan religion of his

ancestors and sought in vain to revive and restore the dying polytheism of the empire. As a means of glorifying his reign and also of warring upon Christianity, he designed and began the restoration of the Jewish temple at Jerusalem; but his death in a war with the Persians, after a short reign of only a year and eight months, defeated his purpose.

liv[15]lv One of the most remarkable features of the "Ecclesia Pressa," or the Persecuted Church of the first three centuries, was their great indifference to so-called sacred times and sacred places. With those spiritual-minded people of God, all times and all places were sacred.

lvi[16]lvii Like some others of our brethren in the ministry, neither of the authors of this volume ever preached funeral sermons. But the most of our ministering brethren do preach on such occasions, and they give as a reason that they feel impressed to preach, not funerals, but the gospel, wherever and whenever an opportunity is presented. Still it should be remembered that Christ and His Apostles never preached on such occasions, so far as the New Testament informs us; and that no minister of Christ ever preached on such occasions until the fourth century, so far as history informs us; and that funeral sermons were the successors of the ancient heathen funeral orations (see *Smith and Cheetham's Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, vol. 1., pp. 253 and 704).
