

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE

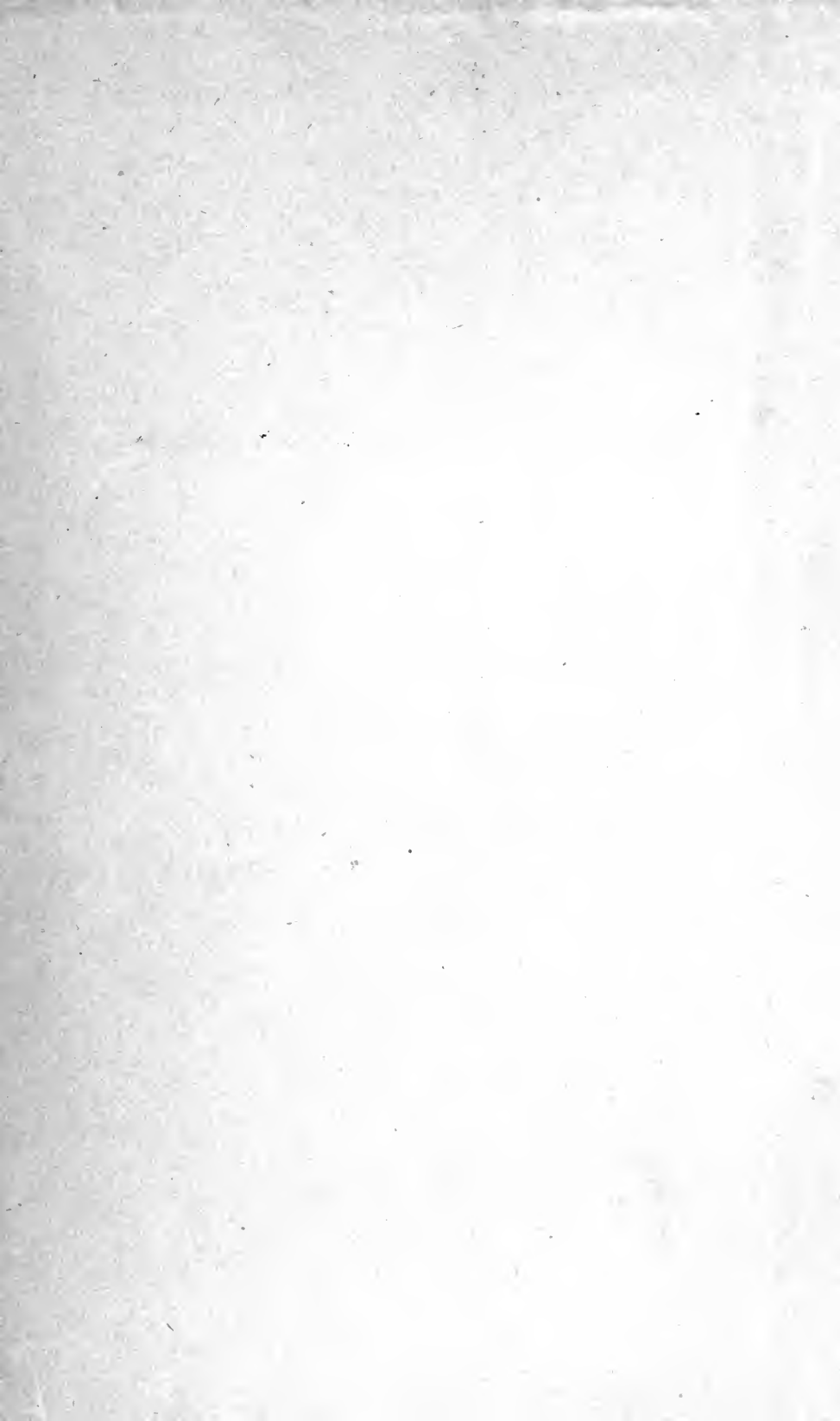


3 1761 01979437 9

---

THE  
CHURCH  
AND THE  
GENTILE WORLD

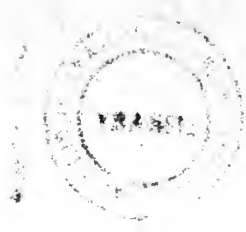
---



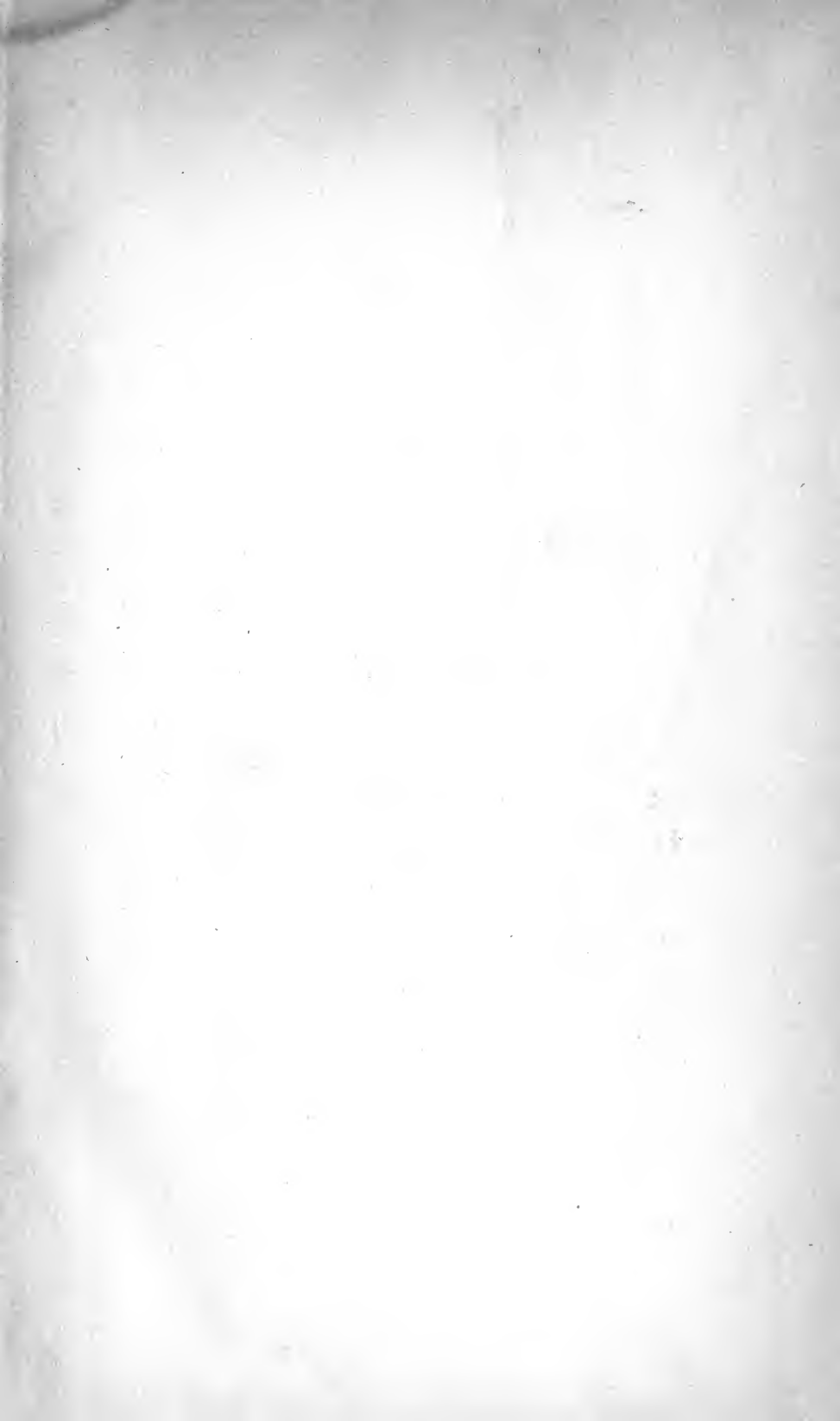
TRANSFERRED

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE  
LIBRARY

LIBRARY













THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD.



THE CHURCH  
AND  
THE GENTILE WORLD  
AT THE  
FIRST PROMULGATION OF THE GOSPEL.

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH SOON  
AFTER HER BIRTH.

BY THE  
REV. AUG. J. THÉBAUD, S. J.

---

VOL. II.

---

DOMINI EST TERRA ET PLENITUDO EJUS.

—(Ps. xxiii, 1.)

NEW YORK:  
PETER F. COLLIER, PUBLISHER,  
24 BARCLAY STREET.  
1878.



JAN 28 1954

COPYRIGHT, 1878,

BY

REV. AUG. J. THÉBAUD, S. J.

New York: J. J. Little & Co., Printers,  
10 to 20 Astor Place.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## TO VOLUME II.

---

### CHAPTER IX.

	PAGE
EARLY SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN INTERIOR ASIA, PERSIA, ARMENIA, AND INDIA.....	1
1. Providential preparation for the evangelization of Asia, by the successors of Alexander.....	1
2. Is there a reliable tradition on the origin of the Patriarchate of Seleucia, and of the Persian Church?.....	14
3. Discussion of the list of the Patriarchs of Seleucia, as written down by Jos. S. Assemani.....	28
4. Further details on the two roads toward the East .....	37
5. St. Bartholomew was probably the first apostle of Armenia.....	41
6. A short history of Gregory the Illuminator.....	47
7. Early bishoprics and metropolitan Sees in Central Asia.....	52
8. Limits within which Nestorianism contributed to the diffusion of Christianity in those countries.....	64
9. Probable relative number of Catholics in Persia at the time of the invasion of Mussulmanism.....	74
10. Christianity conquering Turkish tribes, particularly the Uigurs..	78
11. Extensive commerce of India with the Persian and the Roman Empires.....	84
12. India must have been evangelized very early.....	96
13. The mission of St. Thomas to India is most probable.....	103
14. General conclusions from the whole field of facts surveyed so far..	116

### CHAPTER X.

EARLY AND RAPID SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN GREEK - SPEAKING COUNTRIES.....	126
1. What must be understood by Greek-speaking countries.....	126
2. Greece was not naturally prepared to receive Christianity. Testi- mony of Plutarch and Pausanias.....	135

## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	PAGE
3. Apostleship of St. Paul in Asia Minor. A few words again on criticism.....	160
4. Apostleship of St. Paul in Macedonia.....	192
5. St. Paul in Hellas ; at Athens.....	208
6. St. Paul in Hellas ; at Corinth.....	227
7. The rapid progress of Christianity in Grecian countries is attested by the first persecutions.....	237
8. The formation of the canon of the New Testament is another strong proof of the same fact.....	261
9. The coincidence of the age of doctors with that of martyrs contributed powerfully to the diffusion of Christianity among Greeks.....	272
10. The propagation of Christianity and its process described from the lives of Origen and Gregory Thaumaturgus.....	285
11. The persecution of Diocletian completes the demonstration of the same great fact.....	311
12. The Catholicity of the Church bursts forth at once at the edict of Constantine, proclaiming the end of persecution.....	318

## CHAPTER XI.

EARLY SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN ROME, WESTERN EUROPE, AND AFRICA .....	338
1. St. Peter at Rome. Can we know anything of his ministry in the world's capital?.....	339
2. St. Peter begins to form the unity of the Church in the East, as well as in the Western patriarchate.....	352
3. The early Popes exercised a universal supervision and a paramount authority, in the Churches East and West.....	384
4. A few words on the constitution of the Church.....	410
5. What must have been the labors of Peter in the conversion of Rome .....	417
6. The successors of St. Peter in Rome ascertained by the labors of De Rossi. Cemetery of Callistus.....	432
7. The catacombs afford the proof of the great number of martyrs..	447
8. The lives of the early Popes either in the catacombs or out of them.....	468
9. Authority of the Popes over the whole Church from a very early time.....	483
10. Conclusions from this chapter.....	501

THE  
CHURCH AND THE GENTILE WORLD.

---

CHAPTER IX.

EARLY SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN INTERIOR ASIA : PERSIA, ARMENIA, AND  
INDIA.

1. *Providential preparation for the evangelization of Asia by the  
successors of Alexander.*

THE Christian authors who have written at length on the providential designs by which they say the power of Rome spread on the whole Western world, to prepare the way for the coming kingdom of God, failed to remark that by so doing they fostered the now prevailing prejudice, which confines into a very limited space of the globe the existence of a Church to which, however, "the inheritance of all nations" had been promised. They were certainly right in thinking, as they all did, that there is a divine plan formed in heaven, which must sooner or later prevail against the opposing forces interfering with it temporarily. They undoubtedly fell, although perhaps, unconsciously, on a true view of human history, by giving to Rome—one of the greatest centers of Japhetism in the old world—a leading part to enact in the sequence of events, because of the promise originally made to the last son of Noah, that "God would enlarge Japhet, and he would dwell in the tents of Sem, and Canaan would be his servant."\* But by closing their eyes altogether to the portentous career of Alexander and his Macedonians, they unwittingly deprived the great cause they were gloriously advocating of a most powerful advantage. The record of the destinies

---

\* Gen. ix. 27.

of Asia with respect to Christianity became, by this oversight, a sealed book which no one could read. And this was the occasion of many taunts from the open enemies of Christianity in our age, as if its mission and influence in the world was at all times and would be forever limited to Western Europe. The contributors to the *Westminster Review* in England often come back to this subject, and always in a very triumphant tone. We intend to join issue with them in these considerations.

It is in fact high time to re-establish the truth of history on so important a subject, and show that the Eastern world was not practically left out in the plan of Christ when he sent his apostles to all races of men; and that they actually went to all of them. It is not even too bold to maintain that as Imperial Rome was preparing the way for Christianity in the Western world, so likewise the previous conquests of the Greeks under Alexander, and the subsequent line of Seleucus in Syria, had been intended for an entering wedge into that mysterious Oriental part of mankind, which had scarcely been even known to the West before, and which suddenly opened to view to a far greater extent than is generally supposed. Through the rent produced by this wedge (as it has just been called), was to pour in the effulgence of Christ's kingdom, which really—as will be proved—illuminated very early the Eastern continent to its utmost limits. Recent discoveries of archæologists and travelers, confirmatory of former hints contained in ancient ecclesiastical writers, are most positive on the subject, and enable now the Christian apologist to add many new pages to the previously known history of the Church.

The power of the Persian kings had, from the origin of the monarchy, extended over the greatest part of Asia. The wretched Persia of our day is scarcely a shadow of it. It is curious to read in Herodotus the catalogue of the nations which went to form the army of Xerxes. Those only can interest us here who occupied the central and eastern part of the continent. Among them we remark many Asiatic tribes derived from the Aryan stock. The Medes first, who, "in ancient times," says the Greek historian, "were universally called *Arii*." He states positively that their "military dress," which was called *Persian* in his time, was originally their own, so that the Persians had received it from them, the Medes being really the head-people among them—a new proof, by the by, that the Zends, much older than Herodotus, could not be Persian, nor even Median, but really were Aryan books, and can be called Sanskrit and Vedic,

or whatever you like, but not *Persian* books *originally*. "The Bactrians likewise," continues the Father of History, "in their head-dress most resembled the Medes." From beyond Bactria, "the Sacæ, a Scythian," we would say a Turanian, "nation, had helmets terminating in a point, and wore breeches." These were evidently the ancestors of the Turks, and came from a colder country. From the south appeared tribes that must have belonged to Hindostan, which cannot be but immediately recognized in a few graphic words of Herodotus: "The dress of the Indians was of cotton; their bows were made of bamboos, as were also their arrows, which were pointed with iron." "The *Arii*"—the writer means evidently here that branch of the race which had kept the original name, dropped at this time by the greatest number of tribes, as he mentioned it particularly of the Medes—"The *Arii* had bows like the Medes, but were in other respects equipped like the Bactrians. The Parthians, Chorasmians, Sogdians, Gandarians, and the Dadicæ, had the same armor as the Bactrians."

More might be quoted; this will suffice, to give an idea of the extent of the Persian Empire toward the east, and of some of the most remarkable nations it contained. Alexander conquered the whole of it. Nay, he did not seem satisfied with this; and after having extinguished the dynasty of the Achemenidæ and declared their empire his own, he pushed across the Indus into the heart of Hindostan, and advanced halfway from that river to the Ganges. Henceforth the Greek language and customs were to be known in Asia, for several centuries, over all that immense extent. For it is a very false idea which generally prevails, that at the death of the Macedonian conqueror in Babylon, the labors of a ten years' contest, crowned by so many victories, disappeared like a dream, and left the Greek world reduced to its former dimensions. Nothing of the kind happened; and it is proper to insist upon it, and to show it more in detail, on account of the importance of this particular subject with regard to the main object we have in view.

First, Egypt certainly received then a much greater dose of Hellenism—if such an expression can be used—than it ever possessed since the Carians first entered it under Psammeticus. The Greek idiom and manners did not, under the Ptolemies, remain confined to a few spots around the Delta, as formerly, but penetrated to the utmost limits of the Thebais, and prepared the way for Christianity to cross over, in course of time, to Nubia and Ethiopia. It is a strange fact,

ascertained by reliable travelers, particularly stated openly by Gau, and recognized by Niebuhr, Letronne, and others, that if around Syene and the first cataract, the Greek inscriptions yet preserved are of a mixed character, some of them being pagan and others Christian, a little farther south and from that point down to Meroë and the actual Khartoom, they are all Christian, and are found everywhere along the Nile. The Ptolemies, in fact, even before the existence of Christianity, would have made of Egypt an Hellenist country, had they dared to touch the Pharaonic idolatry, and succeeded in the bold enterprise. They did not attempt it, and restored on the contrary to the native Egyptian priesthood the privileges and wealth taken away by the Persians.

Secondly, it is again beyond contradiction that in consequence of the conquests of Alexander, and on account of the centralized power of the Seleucidæ in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor, all those countries formerly powerfully influenced by the Persians, who had for many centuries held sway over them, became then totally infused with what has just been called Hellenism. It must certainly be maintained with justice that enough of powerful ethnical differences remained in all those regions to create a real difficulty for the dissemination of a universal religion over them all; and in our opinion this obstacle would have been really insurmountable, had it not been for the grace of God. Still, the gradual and very remarkable spread of the Greek idiom, manners, art, and civilization, under the Seleucidæ, over the central part of their dominion, cannot possibly be denied, and we are not aware that any one has endeavored to do so. This power lasted in those countries during several centuries, and exerted a powerful influence over Palestine, Syria proper, Upper and Lower Mesopotamia, as well as in almost the whole of Asia Minor. And when Rome put an end to the political sway of the dynasty, she did not attempt to interfere with the continuance, or even further spread of the Greek peculiarities just mentioned. On the contrary, Rome herself had become half-Greek, and her best and most eminent men found an element congenial to their nature in everything that savored of Greek culture.

Thirdly, there remains the great Eastern world, out of the immediate domains of the Syrian monarchs, in which the rapid passage of the Macedonian hero seems to have been only a transitory event, leaving almost no trace of it. Of this it is our duty to show the fallacy, and as the main strength of our future argumentation de-

pends chiefly on this preliminary matter, it is necessary to describe how far and for how long a time Greek civilization and language influenced Central Asia to its utmost limits, and even went beyond it, at least at the end of the period. For this it will be sufficient to take apart the empire of the Seleucidæ, and consider a moment its importance, its extent, and its duration.

After the first scramble for kingdoms among the generals of Alexander had taken place, Seleucus, one of them, established the center of his hard-won dominions near the decaying city of Babylon, and built Seleucia, which he judged would be more central for his vast projects than Antioch, previously founded by him at the northwestern corner of Syria. These two splendid and populous cities became his capitals: Antioch, for the western part of his empire, which reached on that side as far as the Hellespont, and even for a short time embraced Thracia in Europe; Seleucia for all the eastern conquests of Alexander, which he kept all his life with a firm grasp.

Dismissing from our view the Western world, revolving around the first of those two cities, the immense territory depending on Seleucia must for a moment concentrate our attention, and limit it to the mighty schemes of Seleucus towards the east. The matter even is so important for our main object that a short sketch of his life must be given, since he was in truth the organizer in the Orient of the vast monarchy conquered by Macedonia's greatest king, and without him that renowned expedition of the son of Philip would have totally ended in smoke, as all the conquests of Napoleon I. did in our age.

When, after the death of Alexander, Seleucus set his foot in Lower Mesopotamia, as satrap of Babylon under Antigonus, he soon perceived that he had incurred the hatred of his suzerain, then the most powerful of the successors of Alexander, and who claimed, in fact, a universal dominion over all the possessions of the Macedonian. Seleucus, persuaded that he would be cut down if he did not rebel, formed directly the bold project of upsetting the power of his present master. He fled from Babylon with only fifty horsemen, and went to Egypt, because the magians of Chaldea had foretold him that "should he succeed in reaching the Nile he would become the sovereign of all Asia." Ptolemy, whom he met in Alexandria, eager to find an ally against Antigonus, whose future plans he dreaded, became directly the ardent friend of Seleucus, and enabled him to return to Mesopotamia at the head of a small army. He was received with open arms by the native inhabitants, who were tired of the tyranny

of the lieutenants of Antigonus, and he began immediately a surprising campaign in which he defeated all his enemies one after another. With only a few thousand men he first established firmly his power in Mesopotamia; conquered afterward Media, over Nicanor, one of the generals of Antigonus, and added directly Susiana and some other eastern provinces to his newly acquired dominions.

To complete at once what must be stated of his hard struggle with his greatest enemy, it suffices to state briefly that going back west to Asia Minor and joining in a combined expedition with Ptolemy of Egypt and Lysimachus of Macedonia against Antigonus and his son Demetrius, the three allies defeated, near Ipsus, in Phrygia, the proudest of all the successors of Alexander, and divided among themselves his vast States, the whole Orient falling to the share of him who directly after founded his new capital on the Tigris, to which he gave his name.

Seleucus was thus recognized sovereign of the Eastern world, and he could turn all his attention to the Far Orient. From Media as a basis, he soon occupied Bactriana, and this last province became for him a stepping-stone to attack India. Sandracottus, on the Ganges, had greatly consolidated his power since the departure of Alexander, and a word must be said of this most strange incident. As soon as the Macedonian, or rather Grecian army, had left, the Hindoo supreme monarch induced all the rajahs in whose territories Greek governors had been appointed to remain with a few troops, to kill the detested *Javanas*, and re-enter into possession of their liberty. This was soon accomplished; but the rajahs of the Punjab soon perceived that in freeing themselves from foreign masters, they had helped the ambition of their own supreme monarch. In Hindostan, as well as in all Celtic countries, the nominal head of the confederacy of States never had before any real and substantial authority except so far as his personal qualifications and family connections gave him influence. But Sandracottus took occasion, from the needs of the country, just freed from a foreign yoke, to increase considerably his own preponderance. In what this consisted we do not exactly know. Dom Calmet, the last of the learned men who rendered illustrious the old order of the Benedictines in France, before its destruction by the Revolution of '89, maintains in his *Histoire Universelle sacrée et profane*, this general opinion of a centralized authority resting in the hands of Sandracottus, and he supports it by numerous authorities which he quotes; but he does not state in what particulars the



new situation of India differed from the old, except that it had become considerably more centralized than it had ever been.

From a short phrase of Plutarch (*in Alexandrum*) it is inferred that it was at this very epoch that the Indian monarch, "with an army of six hundred thousand men, subdued all India." The inference is clear from the fact that directly after mention is made of "a present of five hundred elephants offered by him to Seleucus," when they came to an agreement together. Sandracottus would never have been able to have in his possession such a number of those huge animals unless he was really master of the whole country. The opinion of Dom Calmet is thus strongly corroborated.

The Syrian king, therefore, when he reached Hindostan, found a much more compact country than it was fifty years previous, when Alexander first entered it. He must have been surprised to meet, in the rajahs of the Punjab, no more individual and almost independent chieftains, like the former Porus, but princes obeying the superior orders of the Emperor of the *Prasii* at Palibothra on the Ganges. This sudden and unexpected view of the case modified considerably the projects of Seleucus. He understood at once the rashness of his first intention to annex India to his empire, and directly entered into negotiations with Sandracottus,\* who gave him his daughter in marriage, and five hundred elephants, which the Syrian monarch used in his subsequent expeditions. He returned, therefore, to the Hindoo monarch the peaceful possession of the Indian provinces annexed by Alexander, and thus became satisfied with the former limits of the Persian Empire, over which he consolidated the dominion of the Greeks. It is known that one of the chief means used by Seleucus for that object most important in his eyes, was the establishment of Hellenic centers of population, and the building of new cities all over that vast expanse of territory. Thus antiquaries can scarcely agree about the total amount of Greek colonies in those regions, to which he gave the names of Seleucia, Apamea, and Laodicea, so great was their number. It is a real misfortune for the history of that period, that the whole life of Seleucus was so completely absorbed in war, conquests, coalitions, and private quarrels, that the writers who spoke of him scarcely could think of developing

---

\* It seems that the real Indian name of this celebrated sovereign was *Tchandragoupta*, and that Palibothra, his capital, was the modern Patna, called in Sanskrit *Patalipoutra*.

in any satisfactory manner the details of his policy, and, as usual with the ancients, never make us acquainted with anything that really concerned his administration. We must be satisfied with little bits of information, from which alone conclusions of the kind can be safely drawn. Thus we know from a circumstance of his treaty with Sandracottus that Greek commerce must have been one of the main points held in view by Seleucus. This circumstance is the celebrated and new office of resident-ambassador at the court of Palibothra, which he gave to Megasthenes, and which opens suddenly a vista few would have dreamed of, if this at least was not perfectly well ascertained. A word will be quite useful on the subject.

Of Greek commerce and intercourse with the world at large, after the total extinction of the Phœnician colonial power, and the gradual decay of Arabian trade, this can be said without exaggeration, that it engrossed almost all the transactions between the Eastern and Western continents. For many centuries the commerce of the whole world can be said to have been in the hands of Greek-speaking merchants. Thus, from Seleucia—which was then a Greek city, the capital of a Greek Empire—the Persian Gulf became alive with ships trading to and from India; and in the domains of the Ptolemies—Greek likewise—the harbor of Alexandria, the first Greek center of trade, undoubtedly, helped for the same object, and continued long after, under the Romans, to render the whole world subservient to Greek culture and enterprise, and particularly so India, which could be reached easily through the Red Sea, as we are aware, from the Canal of Suez, the mere reproduction of the old canal of the Ptolemies. In concluding, therefore, with Sandracottus (*Tchandragoupta*), a treaty of defensive and offensive alliance, which all ancient historians positively declare was the actual fact, Seleucus' chief object must have been to secure to the Greeks the inland commerce of Hindostan. He could not certainly hope to obtain from this compact with the Indian sovereign, a substantial military help for his projects of western expansion, on account of the distance. The five hundred elephants he had received could not be had every day, and he was on the spot to incorporate them directly into his army; when he would be back in Mesopotamia, or Asia Minor, nothing of the kind could be effected. But it was important that the numerous cities he was then building all over Media, Bactriana, Sogdiana, that is, Transoxiana, should enjoy a peaceful intercourse with Hindostan, which has always been considered as the chief

source of wealth for nations which can trade with it. And this was the great object obtained by that treaty of offensive and defensive alliance.

The old roads made by the Persian kings, from the Hellespont in the west, to the Punjab in the east, and even to the confines of China and Siberia by Samarkand, Balk, and other cities of Transoxiana, had become, in fact, Greek highways, dotted here and there with Greek cities. Thus, all over that immense territory the Hellenic idiom spread, and in many cases replaced the Persian or Sanskrit, at least for the purposes of commerce and general culture. It will soon be proved that this lasted two centuries—a very considerable time in the history of any nation. It could scarcely have been altogether changed at the time of the first propagation of Christianity. Nay, we intend to show that this continued in a great measure under the Parthian domination of the Arsacidæ, which followed the dynasty of Seleucus; and that even under the Sassanidæ, mortal enemies to the Greeks of Constantinople, it went on as before, through the southern route of Egypt and the Red Sea, and was also allowed to continue along the northern route, through the Greek Nestorians, who were not stopped in their commercial operations, even by the Moslem invasions.

As this process had begun and flourished for a long time, much before the heresy of Nestorius could make any impression on the Far East—a point of extreme importance, which will be discussed to correct a very false idea almost universal in our day—it is evident that a way was opened toward the East to the first messengers of Christ, through the Greeks, as Rome had opened one toward the West for the same great object. The numerous bishops' sees that we will soon find, as existing very early, and certainly before Nestorius was born, over these immense regions of the Orient, will render not only probable, but certain, the mission of St. Thomas to India, of which we perceive that the new Bollandists promise to furnish us the demonstration, when they reach in their great work the twenty-first day of December.

The reader perceives that a vast field opens for our researches. But we must return for a moment to the remarkable peculiarity of the embassy of Megasthenes, to Sandracottus, which has given rise to this digression, and which might be a subject of doubt for some readers. What did Seleucus intend to do in sending this Greek philosopher to the Emperor of the Prasii? all modern historians

answer: "It was for the conclusion of the treaty already spoken of." We reply that it was, in our opinion, for nothing of the kind. If this was a part of his mission, it must certainly have occupied him a very short time, and it was the least important object of it. The treaty must have been concluded before Seleucus left with his army the banks of the Indus to return west. No ancient ruler or statesman ever thought of going through the intricacies of diplomacy during years of discussion, for the conclusion of the most important political or commercial compact in the world. Look at those master-strokes of *diplomacy* between Rome and Carthage. They were merely *ultimatums* sent from one side or the other, and agreed to in a few days. The same can be remarked of the conclusion of peace between the Greeks and the Persians under Xerxes; between the Athenians and the Lacedemonians at the end of the Peloponnesian war; etc., etc. It was not then the custom to protract negotiations of this kind during years of discussion. It took fully ten years to conclude the treaty of Westphalia; and this and other examples of the kind in modern Europe may have led recent historians to speak of Megasthenes as if he had been the Talleyrand of antiquity, and established his quarters at Palibothra for the purpose of engaging in a competition of cunning with the diplomatists of Tchandragoupta. It is sure that he remained a long time—several years at least—in the capital of the Indian Empire; long enough, in fact, to become perfectly well acquainted with the country; and he was there on a mission from Seleucus. What must have been the chief object of that mission? All we know is that he wrote a book which, unfortunately, is lost. From the few fragments of it that remain it is safe to conclude that this volume contained the complete revelation to the West of the mysteries of the Orient. Strabo, who has preserved for us several very important passages of it, considered it, it is true, as a tissue of lies, or at least of exaggerations; but Strabo was certainly mistaken, as all modern Orientalists now concede. Fragments of the same work have been likewise transmitted to us by Josephus, Arrian, Elian, Athenæus, and others; and most of the details which Megasthenes gave, and which were strong reasons in the eyes of Strabo for disbelieving him, are precisely as many very strong motives for us for thinking differently. Thus, some astronomical details which the Greek geographer ridiculed, such as the fall of the shadow of the sun at noon toward the south, in a great part of Hindostan; the disappearance of the Polar Star in many points of the peninsula, etc., are for

us so many truisms. Details of Natural History, well ascertained in our day, such as the large size of the Bengal tiger, the extraordinary dimensions of bamboos, the vastness of the mouth of the Ganges, etc., point in the same direction. The number of castes, of which he enumerates seven, offers no difficulty to the modern student of Hindooism. The description of the *Vanaprastas*, or Hindoo penitents, is perfect, as far as a Greek could understand them, looking only at the exterior. But what is far more important than all this, is that Megasthenes has been the only ancient European author who has spoken of the Buddhists, whom he calls *Sarmanes*, no doubt from the word Samana—*Pacificus*—given often to Buddha by the followers of Gautama. These sectarians are often called Shamans in the East, even in our days, and Shamanism is in fact only a northern branch of the Lamaism of Thibet. Megasthenes describes the strange monastic life of his *Sarmanes*, who were certainly at the time very numerous in Hindostan, as we know from the Chinese work of Hoei-Li, translated in French by Stanislas Julien. He not only mentions their asceticism, but likewise their fondness for witchcraft, charms, talismans, and other superstitions of the kind, common among the Buddhists even of our day. He thus reduces to its proper value the opinion of those modern writers who see in all these peculiarities of Lamaism the sure reproduction of *monkish mummeries*, as they say; but we know at this time that these *mummeries* of Christian monks began to be practiced five or six centuries later. It is indeed a misfortune that all we possess of that important work of the Greek philosopher, consists of scraps, unconnected phrases, and a few whole paragraphs. But does all this explain the object of the long sojourn of Megasthenes in Palibothra; and what must have been the motive of Seleucus in investing him with such a mission as this?

None can be imagined other than the intention of acquainting the Greek world with the detailed knowledge of the eastern part of Asia, and rendering travel in those regions more easy for the adventurous children of Hellas. This work of Megasthenes was what we would call a guide-book, although not perhaps so practical and so promotive of comfort as those now published by Mr. Murray in London. Eight hundred years later than Megasthenes, another Greek, Cosmas of Alexandria, traveled for the purposes of trade through the countries described by the ambassador of Seleucus. Had not the good *Indicopleustes* (so Cosmas was called ever since) a copy of the work of his predecessor, when he went to the Malabar coast, to Cochin,

and to Ceylon? We have not the means of knowing; but the library of Alexandria must have at least contained rolls of papyrus on which the information given by Megasthenes was certainly reproduced for the use of the learned public in the walls of the museum, and of the rich merchants of the city. Between both authors—Megasthenes and Cosmas—eight centuries and more intervened, and during these eight centuries there can be no doubt that hundreds of thousands of Greek-speaking merchants had passed from one country to the other, either north along the roads built by the former Persian kings through the continent, which the army of Seleucus had followed, or by ships through the southern seas skirting Africa and Asia, as the simple-minded Cosmas had done at the end of the series.

The monarchy of the Achemenidæ, to which the line of Seleucus had thus succeeded, contained a vast number of nations enumerated by Herodotus, in his *Polymnia*. Among them the Parthians appear from the origin of the dynasty. They were neither Persians nor Medes, and had to follow the lead of these two great tribes, which had expanded by their union into a powerful people. Yet they—the Parthians—were Aryan by blood, belonged primitively to the same stock—although some few ethnographers pretend they were Turanians—and had moved likewise from Central Asia at the time of the great migrations. Their movement, however, had been short, since, starting from Transoxiana, the country between the Oxus and the Jaxartes, they had merely shifted their position somewhat to the southwest, and then occupied during several ages the country bordering on the southeast curve of the Caspian Sea. There they had remained subject to the Persian autocracy from the beginning, and thus they passed naturally under the authority of the Seleucidæ. Let us fully persuade ourselves, since it is an historical fact, that Seleucus and his successors, for nearly two hundred years, had the Parthians under their control, and did not experience from them, at least for a long time, any important attempt at rebellion. No one, it is true, has any means of judging of the interior feelings of all those races, accustomed for so many centuries to the rule of Persia's monarchs, following them willingly in their most distant expeditions, as we know it positively for Greece, yet obliged suddenly to bow under the yoke of these Hellenes, so long considered as enemies, and to obey the mandates issued from Seleucia or even Antioch. It is, we repeat it again, impossible now to ascertain how far they submitted inwardly to so great a revolution. It is a fact, nevertheless,

that none of those nations, no more the Parthians than the others, endeavored in the least to secure their independence at the time of the change, and they did not—rejecting at the same time the fallen authority of the Achemenidæ, and the suddenly emerging power of the Greeks—try to elect their own sovereign, and refuse to pay tribute to any other. Not only did they not do so at the death of Alexander, a most opportune moment certainly ; but when, from the lieutenants of Antigonus, the supreme power passed to the hands of Seleucus, during the campaigns of Mesopotamia and Media, the same apathy continued on their part. Like sheep they consented to be fleeced or slaughtered by the man whom victory had crowned on some battle-field distant or near. This was in fact the great result of the victory of Seleucus at Ipsus, in Phrygia.

Thus he became the master of the Parthians as well as of all the other nations formerly subject to the Persian crown. And his successors after him enjoyed the same extensive authority. From 311 before Christ, the beginning of the era of the Seleucidæ, to about 250, when Arsaces first led the revolt of the Parthians against Antiochus Theos, there is, it is true, only sixty-one years ; but this first rebellion was a very inconsiderable one, which scarcely affected the power of the Syrian monarchs. It was much later on that the former Persian Empire in the East was entirely wrested from the Greeks by the Parthians ; so that there is no exaggeration in stating that the sway of the Hellenes over Asia lasted two full centuries. Nay, after they lost their political power over those countries, they must have continued to possess, after peace was concluded between both nations, what we would call the monopoly of trade, to which the Parthians were never addicted. This certainly remained in the hands of the Greeks until the Moslem invasions.

This historical and geographical discussion may appear to some readers too lengthy for its importance. But it would be a great mistake to think so. If the great object in view, namely, the possibility of the opening of Asia to the first apostles of Christ through the civilization and language of Greece, has been thus rendered more clear and satisfactory, the discussion has been short indeed and far from irrelevant. Few, we suppose, will feel disposed to doubt it, after this brief narrative, which might have been, advantageously perhaps, much further developed. But this is merely preliminary matter. The real story must now begin.

2. *Is there a reliable tradition on the origin of the Patriarchate of Seleucia, and of the Persian Church?*

Cæsar Augustus in his last will had strongly advised his successors never to attempt to carry the frontiers of the empire beyond the Euphrates, and thus not to set their foot on the whole of Mesopotamia, north or south. This advice was disregarded, and the consequence was a series of disastrous wars with the Parthians, who were then in possession of the whole East. The Roman armies, it is true, succeeded in occupying permanently the north of Mesopotamia, but could never wrest for any length of time Seleucia from the grasp of the Parthians. In general, the last city they possessed in that direction was Amida, now called Diarbekir, on the Upper Tigris. All the country beyond toward the south and east can be called Persian or Parthian territory. Our object here is to show how early and extensively Christianity penetrated into that vast Iranian world, which comprised not only the insignificant Persia of our day, but even the whole of Central Asia, and the northwestern part of Hindostan.

But as Edessa was to be the starting-point from which the Christian stream was to flow, though some details have been previously given about it, a word is yet necessary on that important city of Armenia Minor, or rather of Syria. It was included in that part of Asia which permanently belonged to Rome, although it formed at first a small State by itself, with its chieftains or kings, the Abgar dynasty. It soon, however, became a part of the Roman dominion; and on this account does not enter properly in the scope we have in view. The progress of religion, nevertheless, beyond the limits of the great Western Empire, could not be properly understood, without a sufficient knowledge of its introduction in Edessa, and of its early growth in that city.

Every one is acquainted with the story of the correspondence of one of the Abgars with Christ our Lord, of which a word has already been said. The Saviour, it is pretended, promised the king that he would send him one of his apostles after his death and resurrection. According to the same legend, Thomas was commissioned to go. The apostle first deputed Thaddæus, one of the seventy-two disciples, but went there himself afterward on his way to India. This, of course, was ridiculed by many critics of the last century and of this one. Yet the story is vouched for by Eusebius of Cæsarea in his *Ecclesiastical History*, and by Moses of Chorene in his *History of Armenia*.



They both assure us that this correspondence was kept in their time in the archives of Edessa, and they lived only a little more than two hundred years later. This is not the place to discuss this point of erudition. The Bollandists have done it successfully; and few Catholics will be found at present ready to reject altogether this historical fact. In the case of its truth Christianity was as old in Edessa as in Jerusalem. But even independently of it, it is perfectly sure that it was one of the first spots on earth where Christians existed. Bardesanes, who flourished in the middle of the second century—about 150—*was born of Christian parents*; and it is said by very learned men that he was brought up in the Persian school of Edessa, already established before him. This brings us back to the apostolic age. Many other indications point in the same direction; and it was admitted already in the time of Alban Butler that “the church of Edessa was certainly most numerous and flourishing in the *second*, *third*, and *fourth* ages.”\* Many more proofs of it are known at this time, than were even suspected when A. Butler wrote. This is all any one can possibly require in the present investigation; and this preliminary fact will shortly be found of extreme importance, when we have fully entered into the discussion which is now our main object.

Some remarks, however, will not be useless on the vast extent of territory which must be embraced in this inquiry, and on the various roads through which its utmost limits could be easily reached. Then, when we detail the facts of the real spread of religion, the reader will be struck with such a mass of evidence of so verisimilar a character, as to be fully convinced, and never forget the impression.

When speaking of the early development of Christianity in Persia, the word—Persia—is to be supposed to have the extension it obtained under the former monarchs from Cyrus down to Darius Codomanus, and later on under the Arsacidæ and Sassanidæ. To render a more lucid account of the whole state of the case, it is proper to consider apart first the southern portion of this vast country from west to east; and afterward the northern part of it, from the Euphrates to the Oxus. It will thus be easily seen that Christianity radiated in the first (southern) half, from Selucia; in the second (northern) half from Asia Minor through Armenia. These two routes were certainly taken advantage of by the early messengers of Christ. We shall soon have abundant proofs of it. They, moreover, made use,

---

\* Life of St. Thomas, Dec. 21.

on both roads, of the Greek idiom and culture. Not—let the reader remark it well—that the propagation of Christianity in those vast regions reached only Greek populations, and was accepted only by Hellenist converts. The mass of those who there embraced Christianity was composed of the natives of the country, of men of the Iranian race ; but the roads were open to Greek commerce, the Hellenic tongue was mostly used, and a good number of the first missionaries belonged to the Greek and Syrian races. It is proper to define everything clearly.

Of these two routes, we will first consider the southern one, whose starting-point was Seleucia. This city was built by Seleucus Nicator, who made it his eastern capital. Antioch, in Syria, was the western one. In the apostolic age, more than three hundred years after its foundation, it was one of the most important, populous, and magnificent cities in the whole world ; until Ctesiphon, almost adjoining to it, inherited its splendor a few hundred years afterward. Under the Seleucidæ, and for a long time after, as will be shown, the commerce of Seleucia was carried on through Greek vessels. It was in fact at the time a Greek city, Seleucus belonging himself to the Hellenic race, and being the successor of the Macedonian Alexander. From this capital, the Greek fleets of merchant vessels went down the Tigris to Bassorah and the Persian Gulf, and thence to Eastern Arabia and Western India. The Arabian fleets, so enterprising formerly on this ocean, were at the time reduced to a shadow of their former importance in point of number and enterprise ; and the Ethiopian trade of Axum had not yet risen to replace the naval power of the Himyarites of Arabia Felix. It is known at this time that later on Justinus of Constantinople induced Elesbaa of Axum to join with him in a war against the Sassanidæ, not only because these last princes oppressed and persecuted the Christians, whom Elesbaa loved and favored everywhere ; but also because through the Persian Gulf the kings of the Sassan race could send their ships in a few days to India, and thus prevented the Axumite Ethiopians from recovering the former prosperous trade of Arabia in Hindostan. But at the time of the present inquiry, under the Greek Seleucidæ in Mesopotamia, there could be no interference with respect to the Grecian commerce, neither from the Romans of Constantinople nor from the Africans of Axum, because they had the control of both routes, south or north.

Seleucia, therefore, had become a very wealthy city, trading on

the largest scale with the whole Orient. It then contained six hundred thousand inhabitants. Bassorah, at the mouth of both Euphrates and Tigris, united in one large stream, near the Persian Gulf, could be called its harbor, and was the great medium of intercourse between the Persian Empire and India.\* But this *Persian Empire* was under the Seleucidæ a Greek one; and it is thus understood that the commerce of the world was then in the hands of the Hellenic race. It was no more so, politically, it is true, at the period of the first propagation of Christianity, since then the Arsacidæ had by their conquests given to the Parthian dominion the whole extent of ancient Persia, and Greece had lost it. The Arsacidæ were Iranians by race, not Hellenes in any way. At the court of Seleucia there were no more under their rule Hellenist philosophers, statesmen, and generals. All had taken again a most Oriental look, and there is no doubt that the Parthians particularly triumphed at the fact that they were no more in the shadow or under the yoke of Greek predominancy. Still the dynasty which ruled over those vast dominions, until the subsequent Sassanidæ conquered them, never interfered with the religion of its subjects. There is only some doubt about one single case under Chosroes I., if we mistake not; but the thing is at best obscure, and does not invalidate the general statement of the liberality of the Arsacidæ in point of religion. There can be no doubt even—although there is no positive historical proof of it—that Greek merchants were not more molested than Greek Christians. The Parthians, every one knows, were never given to a seafaring life, and preferred always to ride on their swift coursers, “discharging their arrows even in flight” as Horace says, rather than court the dangers of the sea, and give themselves up to trade and navigation. The Hellenes, therefore, must have continued to pursue the road of gain through the Southern Ocean from the Persian Gulf, as we have numerous proofs that they did so likewise from Egypt through the Red Sea. It can be safely concluded that such was in general the fact, even when the government of the country was in the hands of the Parthians.

This being so, how did Christianity reach first Seleucia, and at what time?

---

\* The Arabs, later on, increased Bassorah considerably; and it is supposed that Omar, the second successor of Mahomet, founded and built it. The island on which it yet stands existed certainly before, and there was a harbor in it, which perhaps did not bear the name of Bassorah.

Edessa was early celebrated for its schools. It is in that city that the Syriac literature, so brilliant in the short time of its existence, originated and mostly flourished. A most strange fact is the one that nothing of this literature absolutely is known before Christian times. It expanded at once in all its beauty, under the Christian Abgars, and reached from the start the highest degree of culture and refinement. Bardesanes already, toward 150 of our era, was a most abundant, noble, and profound writer. Pity that at last he turned a Gnostic, after his bosom friend—the Christian Abgar who ruled Edessa in his time—died in his arms, and left him to his own wild direction. The Peshito,\* not only of the Old, but even of the whole New Testament, was written so early, that it is doubtful if the Roman Church possessed a more ancient corrected and critically accurate copy of the Gospels in Latin than the church of Edessa possessed in Syriac. This fact is not sufficiently adverted to, and confirms powerfully in our opinion the genuineness of the correspondence of our Lord with Abgar. At any rate, Edessa can very well be believed to have been evangelized by an apostle, even should we not have other proofs from tradition. Poetry, oratory, philosophy, ascetic literature, were cultivated, as well as theology, with so much success and brilliancy, that the writings of the Greek Fathers of the same epoch cannot be said to surpass what we still possess of the works of Syriac writers. But this is not the place to expatiate on the subject, which has been already touched upon.

Among all the schools of Edessa, there was one which was called “the Persian school.” It had been established in very early times ; but unfortunately the precise epoch is unknown. Its object was to furnish Persia with priests and missionaries. It turned out, it is true, later on, to be a hot-bed of Nestorianism. Undoubtedly, however, it was for a long time a most useful institution for the whole country ; so much the more, that its pupils were not Greek or Syrian youths destined to evangelize a totally heathen country ; they were Persian young men, sent there from the south and east, to drink of the living waters of doctrine and virtue at the purest fountain of both. And this supposes that they belonged to Christian families, which thus appear to have been numerous from very early times in the whole, or at least a great part, of the immense country called then Persia.

---

\* The Syriac translation either of the Old or of the New Testament, is called by scholars *Peshito*.

A remark of König in the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*,\* strengthens these reflections. He quotes the life of Alexander, the founder of the Acœmetes, written by a contemporary of the saint, and admitted to be genuine by the Bollandists † and by Jos. Assemani, ‡ and there he finds a statement about the origin of those schools of Edessa, to the effect that they had been established *jam olim divino nutu*, that is, “a long time before, by a divine inspiration.” This holy man, Alexander, lived at the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century. His biographer, of the same age, could not then say at what exact epoch those scientific and religious institutions had been first founded. They were so old that he could only express it by the short adverb *jam olim*; and as everything of great antiquity, chiefly of so holy a character, must come from God, their origin must be attributed to His inspiration, *divino nutu*.

But König, in the article of which we quote but a word, had no occasion to speak of another passage of the same life of Alexander, which is extremely appropriate to our present object. It is a long description of the remarkable way followed by the saint in founding the monasteries of his order, and it is a very precious testimony, belonging as well to the results of the Persian school of Edessa, as to those of all other religious establishments of that city. The Acœmetes were monks and missionaries at the same time. Every swarm that came out to form a new colony was divided into four groups, each of them using a particular tongue, acceptable to the nation to which they were sent. For they were to labor among Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, and Syrians, and thus four languages were cultivated among them. Something of the kind must have been devised with regard to the Persian school and the Persian monasteries of Edessa; and the reader at once is struck with the powerful efficiency of such a method as this. We can now fully understand how Christianity was propagated along the southern road of the great Persian Empire. For it is of this particular route that we speak at present.

Looking at a good map of Ancient Asia, a road is directly observed starting from Aradus, in Phœnicia, running at first northeast as far as Edessa, and then turning southeast just in the center of Mesopotamia, until it reaches the position of ancient Babylon. At this point it took again an eastern direction to Susa, Persepolis, etc. This is the way the missionaries of the Persian school must have

\* Tom. vii., p. 161.

† 15 January.

‡ Tom. i., p. 204.

traveled to spread Christianity in the far East. After a few hundred miles, they met with the frontiers of the Roman dominion; and directly they were outside of it, in a country of a totally different character. Henceforth the people belonged to the great Iranian race, having a language, customs, habits, and a religion widely apart from those of the West.

The reader is now prepared to appreciate the positive statements of the Catholic tradition on the subject under review; and he will be much better disposed to accept them than were our ancestors of fifty years ago, bewildered on the same subject by so many assertions of ancient writers apparently contradictory to each other, but in reality only misunderstood because imperfectly appreciated. For Persia, in particular, everything appeared so uncertain, that no Ecclesiastical History that we know dared give any details of this portion of the Church before the persecutions of the Sassanidæ in the fourth century. Nay, worse yet, the Chaldean Church, in the eyes of many writers, was from the start a Nestorian, and consequently an heretical body, which could scarcely be accounted as having ever belonged to the great Catholic family. It is time this delusion should be done away with.

St. Jerome, a man certainly of great authority in all matters connected with Christian antiquities, besides the text quoted in the last chapter, says, "Ecclesiastical history tells us that Thaddæus, the apostle, was sent to Abgar, king of Osroene, the same who is called by Luke the Evangelist, Jude, son of James."\* St. Jerome, therefore, asserts that St. Jude, surnamed Thaddæus, went to Edessa to establish Christianity; and he does not mention that another Thaddæus, namely, one of the seventy-two disciples, according to Eusebius of Cæsarea, was also sent there by St. Thomas, as was stated above. He does not say anything even of St. Thomas himself having followed to the same city the disciple Thaddæus. Are both of those traditions to be rejected? We say that both can be accepted, as not conflicting with each other. St. Jerome, who supports the first, has on his side all the Syriac or Chaldaic writers quoted by Joseph S. Assemani, as it shall appear directly; and Eusebius, who gives us the second, is sustained by many Greek ecclesiastical writers, whose traditions were derived from a different source. Who shall pretend, dogmatically, that either or perhaps both are wrong? Can we not suppose that Thaddæus, *the disciple*, and directly after him St. Thomas, went first; but that this holy apostle being destined to

---

\* Comm. ad cap. x. Matt.

evangelize Northern Persia and India, soon left Edessa to go east; and that Thaddæus, *the apostle*, or St. Jude, went to replace him, and was the real apostle of Mesopotamia? St. Jerome and Eusebius were both very respectable writers; they, each of them, had positive documents to support their opinion; they were certainly men of an acute mind, and used to historical and exegetical criticism. Can any German critic of our age be compared in both these regards with the Dalmatian Jerome? The truth of two different statements made by such men as Jerome and Eusebius were, must be admitted when the statements are not irreconcilable; and here they are not, as our previous remark proves sufficiently.

But let us discard, for the time being, the opinion of Eusebius. We may have to return to it when speaking of India, and of the mission of St. Thomas. The tradition on which St. Jerome relied—that of Syriac and Chaldaic writers—is the one most important for us, and fortunately it has been, we may say, demonstrated by Joseph S. Assemani. Of this branch of the subject alone it is sufficient to speak at this moment.

Clement XI. sent the learned Maronite to the monasteries of Egypt, still existing in his time, in order to procure all the manuscripts he could purchase, referring to the old Christian records of the East. Assemani came back loaded with precious relics of antiquity, for which it is said he paid to the Coptic monks their weight in gold—an immense price a hundred and fifty years ago. Among them there was an inappreciable collection that had come from Persia many centuries previous. When the cruelty of the Sassanidæ against the Catholics of that unfortunate country reached its climax, many monks, unable any longer to stand against the fury of the persecution, thought of flying away. Some of them—perhaps many—must have gone to India; but a great number certainly fled to Egypt, then under the rule of the Emperors of Constantinople. Many became inmates of the convents of Nitria and Scetè, which were still very numerous and flourishing. They had brought with them what was most precious in their eyes: the numerous records of the Persian Church, which they saw at the moment of perishing. They gradually died one after another, and other monks of a different race succeeded them, until, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, none of the inmates of those solitudes of Egypt knew the contents of these old pieces of papyrus or parchment. Assemani had thus saved the records of the Patriarchate of Seleucia, and of the



whole Persian Church ; and he placed them where he thought they could be safe for all future time—in the Vatican library.

From that time at least—the beginning of last century—could a positive opinion have been formed on the Christian history of Persia ? Certainly, if criticism had not, in the last age, considerably deviated from its former broad and noble way of establishing truth. The eighteenth century was an age of sophism, and many Catholic writers became unconsciously tinged with its besetting skepticism. Hence the great boon conferred on Europe by Assemani was scarcely appreciated, and soon objections were raised of a kind calculated to deceive ordinary readers.

Let us see first in what consisted the discovery of the Maronite monk ; and it will be perhaps easy to disperse the thin cloud of doubt which appeared at first to be as black as Erebus, and must be admitted now by all to be as aerial as any nebula in heaven. Among the MSS. which he brought with him from Egypt were included a good number written in Persian or Syriac. There were among them writings of the Fathers of the Persian Church, and a long list of all the bishops of Seleucia from the beginning.

Assemani did not translate the whole collection ; and it was never ordered to be printed that we know. An abridgment—which might have been more copious—was made by him in Latin, and printed at Rome with the original text. It is a part of the *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, the most celebrated of his works. It contains at least the substance of many original compositions, with long literal quotations, and on this account it must be considered as most precious. What is of interest to us at the present moment can be compressed in a few paragraphs, and these are most clear and precise in their simplicity. This work of the learned Maronite comprises a most important and full list of the bishops and patriarchs of Seleucia, from the first—Maris—sent from Edessa by St. Jude, to the last, in 1725, when the illustrious orientalist wrote. There is only a short interruption between Achadabues, the fourth in the list, and Sciaclupha, who was the first consecrated at Seleucia itself. Before him they all received their ordination either at Antioch or Jerusalem, according to the records brought from Egypt.

Maris and Aghæus are therein said to have been dispatched south by St. Jude to evangelize the whole of Mesopotamia before he went himself. Maris was created later on first bishop of Seleucia ; and he is said to have extended his labors as far as the Persian Gulf. He



was a Hebrew; and when the critical discussion of this list will be in order, the appropriateness of the choice will clearly appear.

The second bishop of Seleucia was Abres, a Hebrew, like the first, and for the same reasons. All the Chaldaic and Syriac traditions agree about this first point. But they differ with respect to the place of his consecration. Some pretend that it was at Jerusalem, and that he received ordination from Simeon, son of Cleophas, the successor of St. James. Others, with more probability, say that it was at Antioch, and consequently from the successor of St. Peter in that see.

The third was James, a Hebrew, who succeeded to Abres. All authorities state that Jerusalem was the place of his consecration, without discussing the point. Nothing more is known of him.

The fourth was Achadabues. The name is Persian, and it is not stated if he was a Jew. But what is very remarkable, and confirms strongly what we will have to say on the source of the authority possessed by the Patriarchs of Seleucia, is that all agree that he was sent to Antioch for consecration; but on his way thither, finding that he could not reach that city without danger of his life, he turned to the left toward Jerusalem, and was ordained there. Here there is evidently an interruption in the list, although no direct mention of it is made. The fifth bishop is stated to be Sciaclupha; but Assemani shows that it cannot be so.\* Having, however, no documents to supply the deficiency, the learned Maronite was constrained to place as the fifth in the list Sciaclupha, a Persian, who was the first ordained at Seleucia itself, so that henceforth the candidates for that see ceased going either to Jerusalem or to Antioch for consecration. From the same epoch downward no pure Hebrew name that we know can be found any more among the Seleucian bishops and patriarchs.

It is said by some authors that Sciaclupha was the first to enjoy this last dignity; and that before him Seleucia was only a metropolitan see. Others, however, pretend that the change took place only under Papas, successor to Sciaclupha, or even under Simeon Barsabaë, who followed Papas. All nevertheless agree that the Council of Nice, which took place during the last year of Papas, but under the administration of Simeon, settled the question of the Patriarchate of Seleucia, as also similar questions of precedence among various sees.

The sixth, in the regular line of succession, is Papas, from Arak,

---

\* The list is too short for the length of time it must cover. There may be half a dozen names which are altogether omitted.

a Persian city, who was, it is stated, ordained *absque Patrum suffragiis*, and occupied the see seventy years. Here we are altogether on historical ground. Papas is known for his overbearing character, not only in regard to his immediate subordinates, but even with respect to all his suffragan bishops. St. Maruthas relates how, in a synod of the whole province, St. Milles reprehended him with such a vigor that the wretched old man, in a fit of violent anger, was struck with apoplexy, of which, however, he did not die forthwith, but continued to linger twelve years longer. Simeon, his archdeacon, was made *Vicarius* of the Patriarchal See, and it is during his administration and just before the death of Papas that the Nicene Council was convened, to which Simeon was invited. He could not go on account of the impending persecution of Sapor II., which burst out soon after, and in which he died a martyr. He, therefore, sent to the council as his deputy, Sciadust, or Sadoth, who became Patriarch after him, and died a martyr likewise.

These are the main facts which are to be briefly discussed. What follows of the history of the See of Seleucia cannot be matter of controversy, except with regard to some minor details, as happens in the best authenticated annals of nations or institutions. But we admit, as a fact, that the portion of the list just given from Assemani, is not relied upon by many Catholic writers, who are, on this account, altogether unable to indite a single page of the origin of the Christian religion in Persia. Yet a thoughtful man must perforce concede that if, in any hitherto ignored chapter of sacred or profane history, a sudden light had been thrown, such as Assemani brought with him from Egypt in those manuscripts, whose traditional derivation can be so well ascertained, nobody would have thought of raising any objection, and the whole would have been admitted at once as a part and parcel of the primitive annals of the people in question. But, unfortunately, the Maronite came back from Egypt with his treasure in 1715 or 16, if we mistake not. It was the first quarter of the eighteenth century, and men had begun to carry criticism beyond the bounds of fairness.

That there was a Patriarchal See at Seleucia long before Nestorianism arose is a fact above possible contradiction. Assemani gives the list of twenty *Catholic* Archbishops or Patriarchs of Seleucia, from Maris to Acacius, the immediate predecessor of Babæus. It is a well ascertained fact that this last prelate was the introducer of Nestorianism in the See of Seleucia, and it was only in 499 that he was

consecrated. Many of these Catholic predecessors of Babæus are known not by the list of Assemani alone, but by historical events in which they bore their part. Thus, as was seen previously, at the Council of Nice, Sadoth assisted as the deputy of Simeon Bar-Sabaë. Another very remarkable historical fact, intimately connected with the Catholic epoch of Seleucia, and much anterior to Nestorius—the Arab colony of the Benu-Salih—shall be presently alluded to at greater length. This numerous succession of Catholic prelates at Seleucia suggests naturally the question, Who was the first, and at what epoch did the patriarchate originate? Subsequent Nestorian writers give a full list of them, and invariably assign to Maris the first place. They say that he was a converted Jew, and that at his death he requested that his successor should be sent for from Jerusalem, with the evident intention that he should also be a Hebrew by race. In giving these details, true or false, the Nestorian annalists could not have had in view to corroborate their heresy, and make of this first Maris a Nestorian, since all knew at that time that in the Church of Jerusalem, during the apostolic age, there could be no question of Nestorianism. In the history they wrote, abridged by Assemani, there is not the least circumstance which could suggest the idea of such an intention as this. They merely state a universal tradition in their country, connected certainly with the still more universal one among Syriac and Chaldaic writers, that “Maris and Aghæus had been disciples of St. Thaddæus or Jude, and the first preachers of the Gospel in Mesopotamia.”

Another reflection will render this still more evident—and these details must not be considered by the reader as tedious, on account of their extreme importance in the present case: The introduction of heresy in course of time in the Chaldean Church, could no more invalidate this tradition, than the reception of Eutychianism in Egypt could render unreliable the opinion of the Coptic Christians, that St. Mark had been the first Patriarch of Alexandria. Both cases are perfectly alike. Read what Lequien says in his *Oriens Christianus* on the origin of Christianity on the banks of the Nile, and you will find that the mission of St. Mark, although certainly better supported still than that of Maris at Seleucia, rests, however, mainly on tradition, chiefly oral. But the learned Dominican shows triumphantly that although most channels of that tradition became afterward heretical, the fact of the apostleship of St. Mark is not thereby weakened; but, on the contrary, receives a further strength

from the concurrence of all sects in its statement. So likewise with respect to Seleucia. The learned author of the *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, in heading his list of the patriarchs of that city, says, it is true, that it is taken *ex Nestorianis Scriptoribus*, and this probably has been thought by many Catholic writers to be a sufficient reason for throwing discredit on the whole compilation. But it is altogether a mistake; and the parallel case of Egypt shows it to be so. It is, moreover, proper to state that nothing in the list is said of Nestorianism nor of its introduction in Persia. All the metropolitans of Seleucia are merely given out as Christian prelates, and since the quite recent time when real critical history has ascertained many points of this very obscure subject, it is known that it is only in the sixth century that heresy made well-defined inroads in a considerable part of Persia. We have very lately alluded to Babæus, and to several anterior events connected with the subject. The life of St. Maruthas, a contemporary and friend of St. John Chrysostom, will shortly furnish us with additional historical matter of great importance. How could subsequent Nestorian writers have dared to invent a false tradition of their own, when there were in the history of the Church of the whole country such personages as Simeon Bar-Sabaë, Sadoth, Maruthas, and, no doubt, many others? Moreover, the heading given by Assemani to his list seems to us very inappropriate; and he must have written it without due reflection. For, the reader should know that the great objection raised against the list of Assemani is derived from that heading: *Ex Scriptoribus Nestorianis*. Bar-Hebræus, certainly, who is one of the most copious writers he quotes, could not by any means be called a Nestorian, it will soon be clearly proved; and may give to the opinion we advocate almost the strength of a demonstration. Meanwhile, it is evident from all these considerations that the tradition followed even by Nestorian writers in Persia, must have rested first on Catholic ground. The same happened in Egypt for St. Mark and his successors. The two cases are perfectly parallel and alike; no sensible man can see how one consequence should be drawn for the See of Alexandria, and the very reverse for that of Seleucia.

Before leaving off this special subject, however, a few details on the tribe of the Benu-Salih cannot be entirely passed over, because of their coming from a totally different source, and thus giving a great additional strength to the argument. Let the reader remember that the present object is to offer a series of facts proved historically,

belonging to the See of Seleucia, and anterior to Nestorianism by several centuries at least. The greater is the number of those facts—if well ascertained—the nearer will the case of Seleucia come to that of Egypt, and the more evident it will be that the subsequent Nestorian tradition must have rested on anterior Catholic grounds.

Caussin de Perceval, a most recent and very reliable writer, in his *Christianisme en Arabie avant l'Islamisme*, details at length the establishment of the Benu-Salih, who, in 190 of our era, migrated from the Himyarite region in *Arabia Felix*, and came to dwell in Irak-Arabi, that is, in the southwestern part of ancient Chaldea. Something has been said of it in a previous chapter. They placed their head-quarters at Hirta, a few miles southwest of the ruins of old Babylon, very near to Seleucia, consequently. They became directly connected with the Parthian or Persian Empire, with which they generally sided in its contests with the Emperors of Constantinople. The Arabian authors quoted by Caussin merely say that “they were Christians.” The new Bollandists do not seem yet willing to admit that the Benu-Salih had brought Christianity with them from Arabia Felix at so early a period. They forgot probably what they had stated positively in some other part of their admirable compilation, that the apostleship of St. Bartholomew in Arabia Felix, with his Hebrew Testament, found there the following century by St. Pantænus, is very probable. The new Bollandists, we repeat, pretend that those Arabian authors quoted by Caussin merely meant to maintain that the Benu-Salih became Christians later on. This is a mere supposition, absolutely unwarranted by Caussin’s book. Yet as a great respect is certainly due to the authors of the *Acta Sanctorum*, we will suppose that it is so, and that in 190 of our era the Benu-Salih were yet pagans. Still, it is sure *historically* that they professed the religion of Christ in Irak-Arabi a very short time after their establishment, and that they received constantly from Seleucia, *during the whole of the third and fourth centuries*, either monks or priests to take care of their soul. Let the reader ponder on it!

This is positive; and it is positive likewise that from the year 200 after Christ Seleucia had considered the Benu-Salih as her spiritual children; and no mention is ever made of paganism among this tribe from 190, when they came from the south, to the subsequent Nestorian period. There is consequently a great probability that they were not converted at Hirta, but were already Christian when they came; otherwise the name of their first apostle from Seleucia would have

surely come down to us, since those Arabs have always been very tenacious of their traditions, and they could not have forgotten this one. St. Maruthas likewise had dealings with them; and although he was not himself Patriarch of Seleucia, but only bishop of Tekrit, farther north, still he was in his time at the head of the Persian Church, by his zeal, learning, and influence.

These details show conclusively that at a very early period the Church of Persia was a living organization, and that it must have had a tradition concerning the first apostle of Christ who had been sent to them. It is indeed difficult to understand how Nestorianism, which came only in the sixth century, could have substituted to those Catholic channels of truth an erroneous history, for whose pure invention, moreover, they could not have any motive whatever. Should it be asked, in a fair spirit of inquiry, Why the Catholic Church, which for five hundred years directed the spiritual destiny of those countries, left no annals to survive its destruction; so that we have to rely entirely on writers of a subsequent age, and tintured with heresy or schism? a reason of this strange fact can be easily assigned, although, in the supposition that it could not, the previous considerations keep all their strength: In the bloody times of the Sassanidæ, and, later on, during the invasions of the Moslems, the Catholics were subjected to such unheard-of persecutions and tyrannical measures, that in the end they had to fly *en masse* from the country. This did not happen even in the fiercest persecutions of the Roman Empire during pagan times, and this circumstance explains sufficiently the disappearance of all Catholic manuscripts in Persia.

### 3. *Discussion of the list of Patriarchs of Seleucia, as written down by Jos. S. Assemani.*

In the list of patriarchs, as given by Assemani, *ex Scriptoribus Nestorianis*, everything seems to be in the main consistent, simple, and true. There are details, no doubt, which a sound critic will discard; and Assemani says concisely of the author, "he puts together what is false, and what is true;" but the positive statement that the first four bishops of Seleucia were Jews, not only is extremely natural, owing to the very large, influential, and learned Hebrew population of Chaldea at that epoch; but several peculiarities mentioned therein could not have been invented by a long-subsequent writer, and indeed offer all the characters of truth, and tally perfectly with

the times. The successor of Maris, for instance, whom he had requested should be sent for from Jerusalem, did not receive his consecration, according to this account, from Simeon, then bishop of that city and successor of St. James; but it is positively stated, at least by Bar-Hebræus, that he proceeded first to Antioch to receive ordination, before going to take possession of his see; no doubt because Antioch was already the ecclesiastical metropolis of the East, owing to the *Cathedra Petri*, erected there by the Prince of the Apostles. A holy prescription had so early as this consecrated these *rights* of patriarchal churches, long before they were forever sanctioned and regulated by the Council of Nice. The same thing happened, according to the list of bishops of Seleucia, to two other metropolitans, who were Jews likewise, and came from Palestine. It was only the fifth, who, being chosen in Chaldea itself, was consecrated for the first time at Seleucia. It is probable, that then the number of native Christians preponderated considerably over the Jewish proselytes, and required the guidance of a *Persian* bishop. These curious details are vouchers of truth, and they are evidently a strong support of the apostolic origin of the See of Seleucia, as recorded by tradition.

It is likewise the same list which declares that the first bishop of that city who received the title of patriarch was Sciaclupha, or perhaps Papas, the predecessor of the Martyr St. Simeon, as authors do not altogether agree if it was the one or the other. This is certainly a strong presumption in favor of the list. Had it been a fabrication of a later age, all those Chaldean prelates would have been dubbed patriarchs; and the first of them would have been represented as possessing greater honors than all those who followed, as he had been sent by one of the first twelve apostles of Christ. But, on the contrary, the mention of Sciaclupha or Papas being the first titular Patriarch of Seleucia, is perfectly consistent with the general ecclesiastical history of the period, since this happened precisely a short time before the Council of Nice, when the various titles and dignities of the Church became fixed and determined, giving, however, cause to discussions and antagonisms among the several sees of Christendom, so that the Council of Nice had shortly after to interfere, and establish an order which later on made a part of canon law.

But to conclude the discussion of this subject, if possible, by a more direct argument, let us see who were the real Nestorian authors from whom Assemani compiled his short narrative. It is because



he headed his list with the phrase *ex Scriptoribus Nestorianis* that the whole is repudiated by Catholic writers, and it is proper to see if that was a sufficient cause. They were Mar-Solomon, Amru, and Bar-Hebræus ; chiefly the latter. Were these men likely to try to impose on the public, and not give what they promised, namely, the substance of what had been handed down either by tradition or in writing ?

The two first were certainly Nestorians. Mar-Solomon flourished in the twelfth century, and wrote the full history of the See of Seleucia. Amru was merely his abbreviator, and lived in the fifteenth age. These two authors were undoubtedly imbued with Nestorian prejudices ; and many details they give are on this account unacceptable. Yet no sensible man can reject the whole of their writings, and consider them of no value whatever. They published many facts which they had extracted from previous reliable authors. The only difficulty is to pick up the grains of gold out of heaps of dross. No Catholic, for instance, will believe that the first Jewish bishops of Seleucia were consecrated at Jerusalem, as stated by them, and not at Antioch, as reported by Bar-Hebræus.

On account of all those inaccuracies their testimony can be discarded ; but that of the latter author is, in our opinion, unexceptionable, and suffices for establishing solidly the origin of the See of Seleucia. His real name was Gregory Abulfarasdch-ben-Aaron. He was born in 1226 in Melitina, a city of Lesser Armenia. His father, a converted Jew and a renowned physician, educated him with the greatest care, and he soon became celebrated all over the East by his ability and learning. At the age of eighteen he went to Antioch, where he spent more than a year in a cave near the city, devoting all his time to meditation and prayer ; and to his former reputation of varied learning and great activity of mind was added that of deep devotion and asceticism. Ignatius, the Jacobite patriarch residing then at Antioch, consecrated him bishop of Guba when he was only twenty years old ; and twenty years later he was elected *Maphrian*, that is to say Primate of the Syrian Jacobites or Monophysites, the highest dignity after that of patriarch. He fulfilled the duties of this office during the last twenty years of his life, and became one of the greatest men of his time, it may be said, in Church and State, owing principally to the invasion of Hulachu, the grandson of Genghis-Khan. This Tartar chieftain, who subdued at that time the Persian Empire, and founded the Ilkhan dynasty, after having devastated



Armenia, Syria, and Mesopotamia, bowed on different important occasions to the influence of Abulfarasdch, and spared on his account several cities which he had intended to destroy. The services which the Jacobite primate thus rendered to the Christian populations of the whole Orient obtained justly for him the gratitude of millions of people, and extended his reputation to the very limits of the continent. The Mussulmans themselves admired and extolled him ; and they went so far as to pretend that he had embraced the doctrines of Islam on his death-bed.

This was undoubtedly erroneous, and Bar-Hebræus never ceased to be a Christian prelate, devoted to his duties as he understood them, and to the dogmas of religion, as his peculiar theology dictated them. These dogmas were those of monophysism, but clothed in a garb which must for a moment attract our attention. *Firstly*, then, he was not a Nestorian, but the very reverse, since monophysism had been invented by Eutyches precisely in opposition to the doctrines of Nestorius. *Secondly*, he was rather inconsistent in his heretical tenets ; and often spoke and wrote as a Catholic would on the union of the two natures in Christ. He frequently excluded, in proper terms, the *confusio naturarum* which is the distinguishing mark of Eutychianism, and used such clear Catholic expressions, that had he clung to them, he could have been directly admitted in the ranks of orthodoxy. But unfortunately a little farther on the reader is surprised to stumble upon a very different doctrinal ground, and to find himself in the midst of the most rank monophysist errors. The reason of it is that : *Thirdly*, Bar-Hebræus had studied too many things, embraced too great a number of subjects in his investigations, and published learned books on the most heterogeneous themes. With theology he endeavored to ally not only philosophy and philology, but likewise astrology, medicine, and history. He was thought in his time to excel in all branches of knowledge, and what remain yet of his works surprise the modern reader by the copiousness of his erudition and the sprightliness of his thoughts. But theology is a grave matron, and cannot preserve her stateliness in the midst of so many less dignified and strict sisters. This was the chief cause leading to our last remark on the peculiarities of the doctrine of Bar-Hebræus, which is that, *Fourthly*, he was probably the first to turn up a *liberal theologian*, and to declare in almost so many words, as testified by Assemani, “that the radical heresies of Gnosticism, Arianism, etc., which had first spread in the Church, were indeed

subversive of Christianity, and justly excluded their upholders from the benefits of redemption. But all those who admitted the Nicene Creed, who believed in the divinity of Christ, and the distinction of the two natures in his person—let them be monophysites of Syria and Egypt, Nestorians of Mesopotamia and Persia, or Romans and Greeks of the West—were in fact brethren, belonged to the same Catholic Church, and possessed all the means of salvation which Christ brought us from heaven.” These are not precisely his words, but according to Assemani, who was perfectly well acquainted with the writings of Bar-Hebræus, this was his thought; this prompted all the chief actions of his life, and dictated to him what is at the bottom of his most important works.

This being well understood of the character of Abulfarasdch, it will be easy to judge of his reliability when treating of the historical subject now under consideration. The title of the work is : *Chronicle of the Patriarchs and Maphrians of the Orient*. It is a kind of ecclesiastical history of the orthodox Chaldeans, of the Nestorians, and Jacobites, from the Apostle St. Thomas and his disciple Addæus, down to the year 1282. The authorities he consulted must have been numerous and very often reliable. It would be certainly impossible at this time to collect all the ancient authors that must have come to his hands. They have now entirely perished. He knew the previous works of Mar-Solomon and of Amru; but as he often differs from them, he must have had in his possession other writings which he preferred, as not being so much impregnated with the peculiar doctrines of Nestorianism, with which he never sympathized.

It was not he certainly who would have propagated the absurd legend of the preaching of Maris in Mesopotomia, and of his being the first bishop of Seleucia, *with the view* of bringing up Nestorianism to the apostolic age by the confusion of the name of this first apostle of that country with that of Maris, the friend of Ibas, who lived several centuries later. Still, this is the main reason which induced many Catholic writers to reject the list given by Assemani. Bar-Hebræus was fully persuaded that the great see of the capital of Persia had been founded by the Hebrew Maris, sent down south from Edessa by St. Jude himself. He would have spurned the idea of pretending that the first bishop of Seleucia was Maris, the friend of Ibas, one of the founders of Nestorianism. All the predecessors of Babæus, who was the first patriarch to embrace heresy in 499, in

Persia, all those venerable men who had lived and died in communion with the Catholic Church, to the number of twenty, are enumerated in the pages of Abulfarasdch, as the true successors of Maris the Hebrew, and their lives are recorded with impartiality and candor. If some Nestorians in after times made the confusion of the two Maris in order to prop their heresy, this cannot affect the list itself.

All these reasons are powerful enough to secure to the *traditions* on which rest the origin of the Church in Persia, the respect, if not the full adhesion, of all impartial men. Taking it, therefore, for granted, we must hasten on to consider its expansion south, which is the present object of our inquiry. The broad fact can be at once stated: Long before Nestorianism arose, numerous bishops' sees had been founded all over Southern Mesopotomia; easterly all around Susa and Persepolis; in Elymais, the Elam of Scripture; farther south along both sides of the Persian Gulf, as far at least as Ormuz, at its mouth.

When the persecutions of the Christians, that is, of the Catholics under Sapor, began—at the end of the reign of Constantine, nearly two centuries before Nestorianism prevailed in Persia—all the chief cities of those vast countries were presided over by bishops, with a numerous clergy. If at the Council of Nice only the deputy of the Patriarch of Seleucia appeared (as it was recorded previously), it was, no doubt, owing partly to the distance, but chiefly to the expectation of the persecution which soon after burst out. This was certainly the reason which prevented St. Simeon himself from leaving Seleucia, and induced him to send only a deputy to the Council.\* It is easily understood that simple bishops, whose presence was not so necessarily required at Nice as that of the patriarch, had still stronger excuses to allege for not going. Who should pay their expenses for traveling? This simple question must have kept a great number of them in their dioceses. Constantine defrayed those of the bishops of his empire: but not being able to communicate easily with the Christian prelates outside of it, he could not give them the assurance all others had of it.

---

\* In the letter which he wrote at the same time to the Nicene Fathers, he said, according to Assemani, in the Latin translation we have from him: "Nisi ethnici sanguini nostro iniherent venirent utique libentissime. . . . Verum quidquid ab universo episcoporum conventu definitum fuerit, illud ego libenter amplectar."

It is certain that in 314, ten years before the meeting at Nice, a council of bishops met at Seleucia to bring to an end the divisions then existing between the Patriarch Papas and his clergy. So far no open persecution had afflicted the Persian Church. The Arsacidæ had left the Christians perfectly free all over their empire; and the Sassanidæ, whose dynasty began in 226, had not yet adopted that bloody course against the new religion which became later on the characteristic of their policy. More than twenty years were yet to elapse before the beginning of the first persecution under Sapor. It was, therefore, natural that some abuses should have already crept in. In the Roman part of the world a much greater laxity of discipline had been brought on by the universal peace and toleration which preceded the edict of Decius. We must not, consequently, be surprised that Papas, Patriarch of Seleucia in 314, had become intolerable to his clergy by his overbearing and downright tyranny. It was not only toward his priests that he acted thus imperiously; but the bishops themselves, who had to submit to him as their metropolitan, found their own rights every day trampled under foot by the haughty prelate. Open schism was already the consequence; and it was thought that a synod would bring on peace, or at least prevent greater scandals. We have not, it is true, the Acts of this council, and we know only in general that St. Milles, bishop of Susa, took upon himself to rebuke openly the unworthy patriarch, who, in a fit of uncontrollable passion, was struck with palsy, and had to give up the administration of his diocese to St. Simeon, who acted as his *Vicarius* the remainder of the life of Papas, that is to say, twelve years. There was, therefore, already at that epoch a numerous hierarchy in Southern Persia; and although we do not know the names of all those sees, yet many of them are mentioned in the various reliable documents of the period. Thus St. Milles, bishop of Susa, had been consecrated by Gadiabè, bishop of Lapeta. Ilam or Elam, not far from both cities, had then also a bishop. Amida (now Diarbekir), far to the northwest, was a well-known see at that time. Bassorah became one likewise, but perhaps somewhat later. Ormuz, at the entrance of the Indian Ocean, was certainly a bishop's see at a very early age; but it seems that it depended on the Himyarite country, and not on Persia; and that it was occupied by Arab or Cushite prelates, of the stamp of Arith, or Arethas, as the Greeks called him. In fact, from Tekrit in the north to the Persian Gulf, most cities had already bishops of their own. It is related by Amru, the abbreviator

of Mar-Solomon, that the Hebrew Maris, the apostle of Mesopotamia under St. Jude, had at the first preaching of the Gospel in those parts consecrated three hundred bishops; and that the expense of the first establishment of so many sees had been provided by a very rich man living then in the country, and one of the first converts of the apostles. There must be exaggeration in both statements, and the authority of Amru, it is well known, is far from unimpeachable. Yet bishops must have certainly ruled the Persian churches from the apostolic age. In the persecution of Sapor, which soon followed the period under actual investigation, twenty-one bishops are named in the *Acts* brought to Rome from Nitria under Clement XI., as having ended their life by martyrdom. These *Acts* were written by St. Maruthas, of whom more anon. They were Barbasymes, Paulus, Gaddiabes, Sabinus, Marcas, Mocius, Joannes, Hormisdas, Papas, Jacobus, Romas, Maares, Agas, Bochres, Abdas, Abdjesus, Agdelas, Abramius, Sabores, Isaac, and Dausas. The authenticity of these *Acts* cannot be contested. It is ascertained historically that when the Moslems invaded Persia, many Christians left the country, and a number of them withdrew to the monasteries of Egypt, which continued to exist, some even to our times.

Shortly after the death of Sapor, during a period of peace, several synods were held at Seleucia, one of them numbering as many as forty bishops. A word is required on the subject. The illustrious bishop of Tekrit or Maipherkat (Martyropolis) was instrumental in these gatherings of prelates at various epochs of his life. Maruthas was born in the second half of the fourth century. According to several Syriac writers he was present in 380 at the Council of Constantinople which condemned Macedonius, and at that of Antioch, a few years later, where the doctrine of the *Messalienses* was anathematized. He had witnessed the persecution of Sapor, which ended only a very short time before 380. His learning, virtue, and activity soon brought him into notice, he became one of the most celebrated men of his time, the friend of Chrysostom, and he appeared successively at the court of Arcadius in the West, and at that of Theodosius the younger in Constantinople. By this last emperor he was twice honored with an embassy to Isdegerdes, king of Persia, who soon professed a profound veneration for the holy man, and called him usually *The friend of God*. In spite of the Magians, who endeavored to rekindle the fire of persecution against the Christians, Maruthas obtained not only toleration for the Church, but even

favor and help. Thus was he enabled to rebuild many churches destroyed under Sapor, and to bring together the bishops of the country to heal the wounds of the Church. In the second one which met at Seleucia, then called Ctesiphon, in 414, forty bishops condemned Arianism, and various canons of discipline were decreed for the restoration of regular life, always liable to be forgotten in time of persecution. Arianism, as previously noticed, never spread much east of Syria, whatever may have been the cause. Its condemnation at Seleucia, consequently, was merely preventive, and no mention of it is made afterward in the whole Orient, no more than south of Egypt.

All these historical facts testify to the strong vitality of the Church in countries altogether outside of the Roman Empire, in the most primitive ages of Christianity. The reader can easily understand how a door was thus opened, east of Persia and Arabia, for the spread of Christianity farther east, that is to say, in India and even China. From the Red Sea the Greek merchants of Alexandria sent down their ships along the western coast of Arabia, stopping a moment at Socotra, called then the Discorides islands, and launching on the vast Indian Ocean until they reached the neighborhood of Bombay, or the southern cape of Comorin, or, finally, Ceylon itself. This was the route followed by Cosmas, of whom more must be said when speaking, later on, of the evangelization of India in the early ages. From the Persian Gulf, other Greek ships, this time altogether under the control of the Sassanidæ, coming down from Bassorah and the other northern harbors of the gulf, stopped likewise a moment at Ormuz, and in a few days could cross the Indian Ocean, narrow in this latitude, and trade directly for spices, silk, or precious gems. These vessels carried the productions of the interior of Mesopotamia, then almost altogether Christian, and were undoubtedly manned by Christian crews, as the Persians or Parthians, in general, dreaded the sea, and preferred the land service of their king to the perils of navigation, and the gains of a trade to which they never felt inclined. During the persecutions of Sapor, and those that soon after followed, many Christian priests, monks, or laymen must have escaped from the land on those Grecian crafts, and gone abroad to Gedrosia, to the land of the *Icthiophagi*, or even to the mouth of the Indus, and farther on. We have no means of knowing details which have never been written, because the security of those Christian travelers required the most profound secrecy. But from the data

of human nature it can be safely concluded, that as the first persecution at Jerusalem spread the Church all over Palestine; as the first edicts issued from Rome against Christianity carried it directly to Africa, to Spain, and to Gaul; as it happened in all countries in ancient or modern times, when the hatred of truth put the Christians to the sword, or gave them to the wild beasts, as many of the persecuted people as could fly away, did so, and carried their faith with them. Thus, also, in Persia, in the fourth and fifth centuries, the friendly vessels of the Greeks carried the disciples of Christ to countries where they would not have appeared except long afterward. But this movement of expansion had begun long before, and in some cases, from the apostolic age itself.

This must suffice for the southern spread of Christianity from Persia. It is time to turn our eyes to the northern route it took toward the east and north. This was promised a few pages back, and must detain us far longer than the branch of the subject which has just been examined. It is mainly along that route that Christianity penetrated into the interior of Asia.

The new starting-point is Armenia; and strange to say, Edessa scarcely contributed to the general result, which originated, in fact, from Cappadocia, and particularly from the city of Masaca or Cæsarea. We turn our eyes to look at this remarkable development of bishop's sees, advancing northeast, in a very short time, as far as the desert of Gobi, meeting there Buddhism in full sway, and deflecting southward to enter India from the north. This was, perhaps, the road followed by St. Thomas. At any rate, it is a most wonderful panorama, which very recent discoveries only begin to unroll, and which may before long burst out in full view, and astonish particularly those men who imagine that the Roman Empire inclosed altogether the young giant at its birth, and never allowed it to stretch its limbs freely into the outside world.

#### 4. *Further details on the two roads toward the East.*

Armenia was divided into two very unequal parts, the western, called "Lesser Armenia," far smaller in extent than the eastern, or "Greater Armenia." The first has been sufficiently described in its relation to the spread of Christianity. It is toward the second that we must now turn our eyes. It was said that there was a great difference between both sections of the country; the western part being

altogether Greek or Syrian, the eastern mainly Oriental, and chiefly Persian. A remark was made which deserves to be recalled to mind, namely, that in "Lesser Armenia," whose former worship was entirely Greek and Syrian, and thus infected with the grossest idolatry, the spread of the new religion experienced less opposition and was much more rapid than in "Greater Armenia," where the popular cult was yet impregnated with Zoroastrianism, and the social customs with Hindooism. This phenomenon offers a striking aspect in the subject under investigation, and will require an explanation as far as one can be given.

To come back a moment to the strange difference existing between both geographical divisions of Armenia, it is proper to examine what might be the cause of it. A superficial, though real one, may be ascribed to this, that "Lesser Armenia" had been for many ages more in contact with, and subject to the influence of Hellenism, and later on, of Romanism; because, from the time of Sylla and Pompey, Roman influence had extended as far as the Euphrates, which was the limit between both parts of this extensive country. "Greater Armenia," on the contrary, on the eastern and northern side of the same river, had remained almost constantly, during a number of ages, under the control and influence of Persia, even when having its own native kings and rulers. But it would be a superficial view of the subject indeed, if it was confined to these geographical and ethnic terms of east and west, Greek and Persian. A more profound cause lay at the bottom of this strange dissimilarity.

In speaking anteriorly of the rapid extension eastward of Christianity from Palestine, it was remarked that St. Peter must have been well acquainted with two extremely important high-roads, built by the Persians from the time of Cyrus, and by which the most eastern limits of Asia could be reached. One of these roads started from Aradus, an ancient Phœnician city, on the Mediterranean; it crossed the Euphrates near Edessa, and then running south through the center of Mesopotamia, reached finally Babylon, through which travelers could easily go down the Euphrates to the Lower Indus, and the countries beyond. This route was very early under the control of the Greeks, whose language, manners, and customs soon spread eastward along that road, and affected deeply western or Lesser Armenia, through Edessa, one of its most important cities. This route was altogether south of, and at some distance from, any point of eastern or Greater Armenia.



The other road, which certainly St. Peter must have also used often in his apostolic travels through Asia Minor, started from Sardis at first, and later on from Smyrna on the Mediterranean; and running east through the center of Asia Minor, traversed the whole of Cappadocia; and from this wild and central country reached directly Greater Armenia, at a considerable distance from Edessa and the western division of the territory. Smyrna, certainly, and Sardis, and all the cities of the western coast of Asia Minor were deeply imbued with Hellenism from a very early period; the Ionian tribes had, many ages before, made this an altogether Grecian country. Homer was said to have been born in one of the cities along this coast. But Hellenic influence penetrated very late into the wild parts of Cappadocia, although so near to Ionia. The traveler from Smyrna or Sardis soon found himself in a region totally different from his starting-point; and when he had reached the neighborhood of Mazaca or Comana, he saw around him strange temples, with extensive "sacred inclosures," immense territories belonging to priestly corporations, thousands of ministers of religion with their odd-looking garb and dress, all the people speaking a language which was neither Greek nor Syriac, nor pure Persian. Yet, on the whole, Persian influence had been paramount for a long time all over that country. Everything had an Oriental look, and presented the strongest contrast to the Hellenic populations of the South and West. Thus eastern or Greater Armenia was surrounded on all sides, and even deeply penetrated by the idiosyncrasies of Zoroastrianism and Hindooism. Its great god was *Aramazd*, very near to our well-known *Ormuzd* or *Ahura Mazda*. The traditions of its people went up to Thogorma, one of the grandsons of Japhet. Patriarchal manners, akin to those of Vedic times in India, subsisted yet all over the country. Thus we are at once morally, as well as geographically, altogether out of the Roman Empire. It is extremely interesting to find out how was Christianity received among a race so different from those of the South, chiefly from the Cushites of Chaldea and the Persian Gulf; so different likewise from those of the West, that is, from the people of Ionia or Italy. It has been said that the success of Christianity was not so sudden and so complete there as in the West. Yet many facts will surprise us, and oblige even the skeptic to admit that the religion of Christ preached by the apostles to all tribes, was welcomed by all and found ardent disciples in all of them, although it did not spread at first so rapidly among the

Aryan populations of Armenia, Central Asia, and India, as among the Greeks, the Semites, and the Cushites of more western countries.

The great cause of the difference which has just been sketched, lay evidently in the dissimilar character of the races living along either road. The one passing near Edessa, ran among Semite or Cushite nations, although for a much longer time under the Greek or Roman sway. The other was used almost exclusively by eastern Aryan people, preserving yet most of the ancient features which had distinguished their ancestors in the far Orient. The Greek culture had penetrated far less into these last countries than into the others. Still Greek commerce, and numerous Greek colonies planted along both roads, favored equally the propagation of Christianity among them. The Seleucidæ had tried during two centuries to make the whole of it a Greek country. This period of time might have been sufficient to prepare the way for the messengers of Christ; but it had been too short to change the race characteristics of the people.

Must we conclude that the eastern Aryan races were less inclined naturally to adopt the Christian doctrine than people of the West or of Semite and Cushite origin? This would be altogether opposed to the opinion generally received in our day. But it would be too hasty a conclusion. In the course of this narrative more data will be obtained to reach a more exact result. It is yet too early to pronounce on the subject. It was proper, however, to throw this hint at this moment, because the circumstances brought it naturally, and it is good to offer it to the mind of the reader with the intention of coming back to it at a more proper time. It will then be better understood that in the five or six hundred years previous to Christianity, a deep alteration had taken place in those Oriental races, owing to the introduction of Buddhism, which was precisely at that moment enjoying its highest prosperity, and was in almost exclusive possession of the greater part of India. This must have been the greatest obstacle to the expansion of Christianity in India and the surrounding countries.

But these considerations must be deferred for some time. We are merely concerned here with the two roads constructed formerly in the heart of Asia by the Persian kings. The northern one went much farther than eastern Armenia. It ran straight south of it, through Media, Media Magna, and a part of Persia, as far as Susa. But before reaching this last city, a direct road to the East started for a point not far distant from Seleucia, ran all along Media Magna,



then followed the southern frontier of Hyrcania, Parthia, and Bactriana, until it reached the head-waters of the Indus River, to follow the northeast direction and come at last to the desert of Gobi. The maps 1 and 2 of our Atlas can be consulted on the subject.

5. *St. Bartholomew was probably the first apostle of Armenia.*

Was Christianity preached in Greater Armenia by some of the apostles, and by whom? This is the first question to inquire into; and leaving aside a long discussion which the natural obscurity of the subject would require, we must be satisfied with the conclusion that Bartholomew, or Nathanael, as St. John calls him, after having evangelized Southern Arabia, called of old India, went northwest, and penetrated into Asia Minor. Meeting in Phrygia St. Philip, with whom he is always associated in the Gospels, he traveled through Lycaonia and Cappadocia, following probably the northern road described a moment ago. Thus he entered "Greater Armenia," where he spent the remainder of his life. Not only by preaching, but principally by extraordinary miracles he overcame at first all opposition, and converted to the faith twelve cities, with one of the small kings of the country. He thus reached Albania and the shores of the Caspian Sea; but the rage of the idolaters prevailed at last against him; and he terminated his ministry by a glorious martyrdom. This is the usual legend, which if not demonstrated to be true, must be at least considered as very probable, for the following reasons:

*Firstly*, the universal tradition of the Oriental and Western churches on the subject, must be admitted as a strong argument in favor of this probability. Nearly all ancient authors who have spoken of the mission of St. Bartholomew, place Armenia as one of the chief fields of his labors. India is undoubtedly mentioned by them, before all other countries, as the great object of his zeal—and the extent of *India* in ancient times has been explained; but Armenia is likewise enumerated among the various regions which he evangelized, and is in particular stated to have been the place where he died by martyrdom. The tradition chiefly of the Armenian Church must be considered as of great weight in the present discussion. Although the native historians attribute the conversion of the whole nation to Gregory the Illuminator, at the end of the third century and the beginning of the fourth, they never forget to go back to the apostolic

age, and concede to Bartholomew the honor of having first preached the Gospel in their country. It is certain, and it will soon be proved, that there were numerous Christians in Armenia long previous to Gregory. The question is, Who was the first apostle to whom the beginning of the good work ought to be attributed? Tradition answers: Bartholomew. And this answer cannot be set aside except by proving it was some other.

In speaking of the early dissemination of Christianity in Southern Arabia, it was given as extremely probable that the same apostle had preached in Yemen, and brought thither the Hebrew Gospel of St. Matthew. This was, we said, the India evangelized by Bartholomew, although Eusebius and St. Jerome understood it properly of Hindostan. The numerous and very far-apart countries to which the ancients gave the name of India, were thus the origin of a confusion which has been for modern critics the cause of many mistakes and acrimonious controversies. Consequently the apostleship of Bartholomew in the Himyarite region, although firmly grounded in our eyes, is yet subject to difficulties which tradition alone cannot remove, because its language on that subject is uncertain and ambiguous. But there is nothing doubtful and vague in its utterance with respect to Armenia; and many authors go so far as to distinguish the Greater from the Lesser, and state openly that the first is intended, not the second, when Bartholomew is said to have been its apostle.

*Secondly*, the introduction of Christianity in Edessa, ascertained previously as contemporaneous with the apostolic age, requires that the same should be the case with Eastern Armenia. The two operations, it is true, must have followed each a different line. The city of Abgar received the messengers of God directly from Palestine, along the road which started from Aradus in Phœnicia. On the other side the vast country called Greater Armenia saw first their primitive apostle arrive from Cappadocia and Lycaonia, where he had witnessed the martyrdom of his friend and companion Philip, who is almost invariably mentioned wherever the name of Bartholomew occurs in any text of the four gospels. This road is the highway running through the center of Asia Minor, and starts from Sardis, at a considerable distance north of the previous one. And strange to say, it will be by the same road that Gregory the Illuminator will reach his own native country, from which he had been forced to fly; when he is to come back from Cæsarea, the city of Basil and of the

great Thaumaturgus, to establish firmly Christianity among his countrymen.

The precious streams, therefore, which fertilized the Christian seed in both countries, had come from a different starting-point. Yet nothing is more certain than that if Eastern Armenia had not been evangelized by Bartholomew, the missionaries from Edessa would have planted the faith in its soil very early. No one has ever believed and stated that either the Christian Abgar dynasty or any of the great men flourishing under its rule had any agency in the conversion of Greater Armenia ; therefore a different source must be attributed to it, and no other can be supposed than the one herein advocated.

To become more firmly convinced that Edessa would have furnished the first missionaries of the vast regions lying easterly, had not these already received the good news of the Gospel at the very first spread of Christianity, it is proper to consider a moment the interdependence of both divisions of Armenia from very remote ages. The western part of it, it is true, had become in course of time altogether Grecian and Syrian, whilst the eastern remained Oriental and Persian ; the western sent missionaries to the south and southwest, and the eastern to the east and northeast. Yet both were often ruled by the same masters, and had to bow to the same government. This was the usual rule in the great Armenian monarchy, which occasionally rose to the proportions of a mighty empire, and almost always extended much farther than the Armenia of our day. It is only lately that the maze of its history has been unraveled ; but it is now ascertained that its annals, going far up in fabulous times, and derived by many writers from Thogorma, a near descendant of Japhet, became altogether historical from the reign of Tigranes or Dikran I. of the Haiganian race, and a contemporary of the great Cyrus ; and most of the time Edessa was comprised within its limits. It was with the help of Dikran I. that the founder of the Persian Empire subdued the Medes, and obtained his final victory against his grandfather Ajtahag, called by Xenophon Astyages. This occurred in the sixth century before Christ. From that epoch down to the Christian era, Armenia became entangled in alliances or wars with the various powers which succeeded each other east or west ; and thus it was in constant intercourse of friendship or enmity with the Achemenidæ, Arsacidæ, and Sassanidæ, in the Orient, and with the Seleucidæ and Romans in the West.

It is, therefore, easily understood that "Lesser Armenia," or

Edessa's State, was very often in the possession of the monarchs ruling over the "Greater;" and although the particular kings of Edessa, chiefly the Abgar dynasty, were frequently almost independent, still oftener were they subject to their mighty neighbors of the east. This necessarily supposes a constant intercourse between both divisions of the country: and as we know the zeal which burned in the hearts of the early Christians of Edessa and Upper Mesopotamia, there cannot be any doubt that they would not have confined their missionary excursions to the south, through the high-road going to Susa, or down the mighty streams of the Tigris and Euphrates, toward Seleucia and the Persian Gulf. They would, undoubtedly, have also gone east, and followed the direct road to India and Transoxiana, had it not been already occupied by previous missionaries. These could not be others than the companions or immediate successors of Bartholomew and Thomas. On this subject let us state incidentally that the remarkable persistence of the bishops, priests, and monks of Edessa to spread the Gospel south and west of them, never east, would be inexplicable in any other supposition. The reader's memory is invited here to remember what was said in a previous chapter, in particular, of the missionary labors of the monks *Acæmetes*, founded in the neighborhood of Edessa by St. Alexander and Rabulas. In the Acts of the first, written by a disciple and contemporary of the holy man, and having in the opinion of the Bollandists all the marks of genuineness, we see the monks divided in troops of one hundred and fifty, and subdivided according to the Latin, Greek, Syriac, and Persian languages, starting with a holy ardor to "evangelize the whole world," yet forgetting altogether the Oriental part of it. They go to Palmyra, to Antioch, to Jerusalem, to Constantinople; but not to Herat, to Samarkand, to Balk, to Meliapor. This was a line to be pursued by an altogether different branch of evangelical laborers, namely, the disciples and successors of Thomas and Bartholomew. They were themselves the children of St. Jude, and had received a different field to cultivate.

That the last, or northern, route was more directly in the way of apostles starting from "Greater Armenia," is clear from many allusions or statements contained in Armenian history, and discovered lately by modern inquirers. One of the most remarkable facts of this kind happened just at a great turning-point of Oriental history, when the power passed from the Arsacidæ to the Sassanidæ, in 226. Khosroo, or Chosroes I., was then king of Armenia, and favored the conquered

party. In order to retrieve the fortunes of Ardavan, the last of the Arsacidæ, he endeavored to enlist on his side both the Romans in the west and the Bactrians in the east. The scheme failed through its too vast extension; but this very endeavor proves at least how far the kings of Armenia carried their influence toward the east. Another very remarkable fact of the same import relates to Anag, the father of St. Gregory the Illuminator, who was induced, later on, to kill treacherously Khosroo I., at the instance of Ardeschir, with the prospect of obtaining himself the government of Balk, the celebrated city of Central Asia.

Eastern Armenia was thus, throughout the greatest part of its history, connected with the far Orient; but Edessa was rather associated with the south and west. Yet it must be insisted upon that if the missionaries sent by the Christian city of St. Ephrem abstained from taking the direction of Upper Asia, it must have been due to the reason detailed above, that is, the previous establishment of episcopal sees, already existing toward the east and northeast, going back in truth to the apostolic age. And if St. Bartholomew was not the originator of this last mighty movement, some other apostle or contemporary of the apostles has to be named, to whom the honor must be referred.

Our limits do not allow us to discuss the "Acts" of St. Bartholomew, as published by the Bollandists. Everything in them is certainly natural and simple; and if the proper names recorded therein have a Greek look, it is but what was the case until our present age, with all the proper Armenian names contained in history. Was not Khosroo called Chosroes, Dikran Tigranes, Ajtahag Astyages? Our contemporaries have tried to introduce an orthography more consonant with the old Armenian pronunciation; they have surely, it is to be hoped, succeeded better than the Greeks did, who are known to have been rather poor critics in such grammatical labor. But it would require some amount of simplicity to imagine that these proper names, as they are now spelt, have the real genuine ring of the old Armenian pronunciation. At any rate, this peculiarity of the "Acts" of St. Bartholomew cannot be a proof against their genuineness.

But, independently of this venerable document, and even supposing it not to be altogether reliable, the apostleship of Bartholomew in Armenia is sufficiently well established by a constant and universal tradition, to be considered as proof against the modern criticism of

an age so credulous in every branch of science, yet so skeptic with regard to anything connected with religion.

The previous considerations cannot but be strengthened by following a little farther down the stream of Armenian history, to discover, if possible, in it some proofs that its first apostle did not altogether labor in vain. It is generally supposed that the conversion of the great Armenian nation is due altogether to the labors of St. Gregory the Illuminator, at the beginning of the fourth century. Before we come to look at this great Oriental figure of the period of Constantine, it is proper to examine if there are no historical proofs that the Christian religion had disciples in Eastern Armenia before this epoch, and if after the death of Bartholomew all is a blank until the time when King Tiridates became a Christian.

First, there is the well-known case of Bardesanes, who lived, it is true, in Edessa, and belonged consequently to the western part of the country under consideration. But the genius of this great Syriac writer was eminently Oriental, and his mind was oftener turned toward Greater Armenia and the countries beyond, than toward Syria and Greece; and thus he gave way to Eastern Gnosticism. As long as he remained a Catholic he was animated with a true spirit of proselytism, and made the greatest efforts to convert to Christianity, not Western Armenia, already in great part Christian during the second century, but the eastern part of it, which remained still Zoroastrian or pagan. The authors who have studied and written his life, state undoubtedly that he did not succeed fully in his holy project; yet his zeal could not remain entirely abortive, and he must have spread among the Armenians the doctrines of Christ more or less extensively. The reader, consequently, cannot be surprised to read in Eusebius,\* and in Sozomen,† that there were at that time Christians in the country. The celebrated historian of Armenia, Tchamtschenanz,‡ relates that under Khosroo I., in the first half of the third century, consequently long before Gregory the Illuminator, many Christians dispersed throughout the country, were either put to death or condemned to servile labor by the orders of that king, who was thus the only prince of the Arsacide dynasty guilty of persecuting the Christian Church. The authorities which this Armenian writer followed, are not quoted. But he is generally very exact whenever in his great work he speaks of his own country. The fact, therefore, must be con-

---

\* Hist. Eccl. ii. 1.

† VI. 1.

‡ I., p. 359.



sidered as certain, though no other modern author mentions it, and the Acts of the martyrdom of these holy disciples of Christ have not been preserved. It is proper to remark that Tchamtschenanz, called often Tchamtchian, having been a long time a Meckitarist in Venice, was considered at the beginning of this century as one of the most learned among his countrymen, and if his large work on the history of his country contains mistakes when it refers to foreign affairs, it enjoys the reputation of perfect exactness and trustworthiness with regard to the transactions peculiar to Armenia.

Thus St. Gregory was not, by far, as is generally supposed, the first apostle of this country, although he certainly converted the nation. Many individual Armenians before him belonged to Christ, and ever since the apostolic age the Church had faithful children among them. It is, however, certain that Armenia did not at first run to the embrace of Christ with as much ardor as Greece, Egypt, Ethiopia, and other Western countries. When Gregory the Illuminator came, at the beginning of the fourth century, the number of Christians had not much increased, to say the least, from the time of the first preaching of the Gospel. Later on, when India comes under review, where the same thing happened, reasons may be assigned for this difference. But some details in the life of St. Gregory may prepare us for this. His success, nevertheless, was sufficient to prove that the Aryan race was not unfit to receive the religion of Christ, although it never was more adapted to it than any other different race.

#### 6. *A short history of Gregory the Illuminator.*

His father, Anag, a pagan, was related to the first families of the country. The crime of which he became guilty, through ambition, and with the view of obtaining from the Sassan prince Ardeschir the government of Balk, has been previously mentioned. Tiridates, son of Khosroo, whom Anag had poisoned, avenged the death of his father by destroying the assassin and all his race. Gregory, the youngest child of the murderer, was, however, saved by a Christian nurse who fled with him to Cæsarea, or Masaca, in Cappadocia. There he was brought up in the practice of the religion of Christ, for Cappadocia was then almost entirely Christian; and when he reached the adult age he married a pious virgin who soon gave him two boys, Verthanes and Aristages, his future successors on the patriarchal throne of Armenia.

But after three years of a holy and happy union, Gregory and his bride separated by common consent, to live entirely to God. The wife entered a nunnery, and the husband began his career of holiness. His first step seemed to be a strange one, yet was dictated by filial piety and Christian sorrow. His father, Anag, had cruelly killed Khosroo under the garb of friendship; the son thought he had a duty to perform toward Tiridates, the son of the murdered king. He made up his mind to consecrate himself *incognito* to the service of the young monarch, and to repair by his unrequited services the evil done to the family.

Tiridates was then at Rome, at the court of Diocletian. The kings of Armenia, long before this, had had many intimate relations with the Roman emperors; and long after, they continued to entertain for the Western empire sentiments of amity, and occasionally of trust. The Latin historians of the period often refer to this peculiarity, and the names of Tigranes, Tiridates, etc., are found here and there in the pages of Tacitus and other Roman historians, as having spent sometimes years together in the proud capital of the West.

To Rome, therefore, Gregory went; and he succeeded in obtaining service in the suite of the Armenian king, without disclosing his own name and religion. The object of the visit of Tiridates to Diocletian had been to obtain an army with which he could go back to his country, and recover the possessions of which he had been deprived by the Sassanide Ardeschir. His request was granted; and the help he received enabled him to recover at last his kingly rights. Gregory accompanied him, hoping to find many occasions to serve the enemy of his family and the destroyer of his race, and thus repair the treasonable crime of his own father.

The expedition was from the first successful. The Lycaonians and Cappadocians flocked to the standard of Tiridates as soon as he appeared, and he was received in Cæsarea with the greatest enthusiasm and the highest loyalty. But he was a pagan, and that part of the country was already to a great extent Christian; still he determined to offer to the Oriental goddess Analvid a pompous sacrifice, in thanksgiving for past favors, and with a view of obtaining more signal assistance from heaven. History does not tell us how the Christian inhabitants of Cæsarea looked on this display of idolatry among them. They probably concealed their feelings, and did not appear to notice the pagan ceremonies, usual in their midst, in fact, since the rulers in Asia Minor were all then idolaters except in the

city of Edessa. But Gregory belonged to the suite of the king, and was expected to take part in the solemn rites. He could not but refuse, and on the order of Tiridates he was subjected to the most frightful tortures, which ended by his being left to perish in a dry well, of which there are many in all Oriental countries.

The sequel of this most interesting history cannot be detailed in these pages. Suffice it to say that the young martyr did not die then and there ; and after having remained fourteen years in this duration, fed and supported by an excellent woman of the neighborhood, he was taken out of his prison, at the instance of the sister of the king. This lady had embraced the Christian religion, and introduced him into the palace in order to cure Tiridates her brother, afflicted with an incurable disease, and already at the point of death. The holy man succeeded in restoring him to life.

This miraculous deliverance was followed by the conversion of the king himself. Gregory, at his request, appeared at the court of Vagharschabad, then capital of Armenia. It is on the ruins of that ancient city that the celebrated monastery of Etschmiazin was built, and became in course of time the residence of the patriarchs. It exists yet, though shorn of its former splendor.

All the Armenian men of rank followed the example of Tiridates, and embraced Christianity ; but the apostle was yet a layman, as was Frumentius when he first announced Christ to the Ethiopians. And as the great and good Salama thought of Alexandria and of Athanasius to supply the Axumites with bishops and priests, so likewise Gregory's mind reverted to Cæsarea, and Leontius, its metropolitan, to do the same favor to the Armenians. He went thither, and came back clothed with the sacred character, imprinted indelibly on the soul by the rites of consecration ; and on his return he baptized the king, his whole court, and his entire army, in the waters of the Euphrates, at the foot of Mount Nebad.

The remainder of his holy life was occupied in founding episcopal sees, ordaining priests, consecrating bishops, building churches, and covering the country with religious, scientific, and charitable institutions. Monasteries, hospitals, schools, libraries, asylums, sprung up everywhere under his initiative ; and when he died the whole country was almost entirely Christian ; so that he left little to be done after him by his sons Aristages and Verthanes, who succeeded him on the patriarchal throne.

He was yet alive in 325, when Constantine invited Tiridates to

come with Gregory to the Council of Nice. The holy man, unable to respond, sent his son Aristages as his deputy, and the decrees of the first œcumenical council were received with proper respect and enforced in Armenia, where the heresy of Arius probably never had a single partisan.

We do not speak here of that other voyage of the king and the patriarch, not to Nice or Constantinople, but to Rome itself, when, between Constantine and Tiridates on the one side, and Pope Silvester and Gregory on the other, a kind of holy alliance is said to have been formed and sworn to; the Pope confirming to Gregory his patriarchal dignity, with all the rights and privileges of the other patriarchs of the East, namely, those of Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria. This supposed official document, written by Agathangelos, who pretends to have been a contemporary, and a witness of what he wrote, gives rise to serious difficulties. The writers of the *Acta Sanctorum* judge the author severely; yet do not dare call him an impostor. They conclude merely by saying: *vera falsis miscuit*. The Meckitarists of Venice and Vienna have, it is true, republished the document in 1843, and brought in its favor several weighty arguments, which seem to have made an impression on many Catholic writers of our age. Still, all the difficulties suggested by the Bollandists have not been removed, and our special object does not require we should enter into the discussion.

What is indubitable in the history of Gregory the Illuminator is sufficient for our purpose. The spectacle is again offered to the gaze of the reader of a whole nation converted to a new belief and a new life. Idolatry destroyed, error confuted, popular customs entirely changed, new institutions of every kind suddenly established, the full tide of Christianity, such as we know it so well, sweeping on irresistibly in that distant region bordering on Central Asia, at the foot of Mount Ararat, where certainly the ark stood when the waters of the flood subsided. These circumstances offer to the eye a new phase of the universal phenomenon contained in the single phrase: *conversion of nations to Christ*. This must be acknowledged again as a supernatural fact, inexplicable by the common rules which govern human history; particularly as it is so evidently the accomplishment of former prophecies, of which the most remarkable ones have previously passed under our eyes.

The religion preached by Gregory remained conformable to the doctrine of the Catholic Church until the end of the sixth century and

the beginning of the seventh, when unfortunately monophysism—the very reverse of Nestorianism—entirely invaded it. It is important to insist on this last remark, as it proves that the episcopal sees established very early in Upper Asia could never have been infected by Nestorianism. Everything that came to that distant part of the world from the direction of Armenia was certainly Catholic anteriorly to the year 600 ; and after that epoch, instead of the errors of Nestorius, it was those of Eutyches which prevailed.

But even after having adopted monophysism, the Armenians remained strongly attached to Christianity. They withstood all the subsequent efforts of the Persian monarchs and of the Mussulmans who followed, to pervert them and cause them to renounce Christ ; and to this day they have succeeded in their holy resistance. A noble race, whose semi-fabulous annals go back to Thogorma, a grandson of Japhet ; whose undoubted history can be traced to the age of Cyrus ; whose national life was connected with that of the greatest empires that ever existed on earth ; when they received Christianity, it was to keep it forever. Religion gave them a literature, which the learned society founded by the Armenian Meckitar has preserved and revived in the last two hundred years. Of all the old Oriental nations yet in existence they are the nearest to the Catholic Church, which still numbers many children among them. Their full destiny has not yet been accomplished. Who knows if, in spite of some actual appearances, they will not be the means of bringing back the Orient to the center of unity ? At any rate, they were originally instrumental in spreading Catholic Christianity as far almost as the limits of Eastern Asia. It is by the narrative of this great fact that we will conclude the few details our limits enable us to give on their account ; and we will see them using for the purpose of evangelization Hellenist instrumentality, such as it had been prepared in those countries by the Seleucidæ.

This short sketch of the life of Gregory requires a few reflections of importance in order to understand more accurately the sequel of this history. First, it cannot be doubted that at the end of the third century the higher classes of Armenians were still pagans. But this does not prove that there were no Christians in the country. Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History*,\* and Sozomen † are sufficient authorities on the subject ; independently of the fact that Khosroo I.

---

\* II. 1.

† VI. 1.

(from 214 to 259) condemned to death or to the galleys "a great number of Christians dispersed throughout Armenia," as testified to by Tschamtschenanz.\* Secondly, the whole of Western Armenia, including Edessa and its territory, had been very early Christianized, and continued in the main faithful to Christ, as was sufficiently proved in the previous chapter. Although both divisions of the country had often the same rulers, this was not true at all times of the Abgar dynasty, whose possessions were often confined to the western part, or Lesser Armenia. The differences between both have been sufficiently explained. But the truth remains that the Christian State of Edessa must have kept up in the whole of "Greater Armenia" a number of churches, alive, and probably governed by the successors of the first apostle. Thirdly, Gregory the Illuminator received the episcopal consecration from Leontius, metropolitan of Cæsarea, or Masaca, in Cappadocia. This province and the next, called Pontus, were almost entirely converted during the third century, by the zeal chiefly of Gregory Thaumaturgus and his co-bishops. The character of Christianity became then in those parts mostly of a Grecian type; and there is no doubt in our mind that this was intended by Providence to bring on more rapidly the conversion of the vast countries lying east of Armenia. The reader remembers the previous reflections on the Hellenist colonies established by the Seleucidæ all over Central Asia, and the numerous Greek cities built there in particular by Seleucus Nicator. It was proper that the great Armenian apostle should receive his baptism and his ordination from a Greek source, to be able to revive afterward the life of the churches which must have been planted in Hyrcania, Parthia, and Transoxiana, as early as the apostolic age, and perhaps by St. Thomas himself. His legend in the Roman breviary enumerates those countries as the object of his zeal. We turn, therefore, our eyes toward this most interesting part of the Orient.

#### 7. *Early Bishoprics and Metropolitan Sees in Central Asia.*

Although the Armenian kings were, in general, leaning to the side of the Romans in the great contests which raged during so many centuries between Europe and Asia; although they appeared oftener at the courts of Rome and Constantinople than at that of Seleucia and

---

\* I. 356.

Ctesiphon ; yet the Armenian nation was more akin to the Asiatic races than to those of the West. It was, in fact, deeply connected ethnically with the Persians and Hindoos, and at all times felt more inclination toward the Oriental religions and customs, than toward those of the West.

This fact, which is perfectly well ascertained, renders most curious and full of interest the part Armenia was to play in the great work of the evangelization of Asia. To make them fit for it, God gave them the blood of Eastern Aryans, that is, of Persians and Medes, with the mental activity of Western Aryans, that is, of Latins and Greeks.

There has always been in the Armenian character a mixture of both Europeans and Asiatics. They succeed as well among the children of Italy and Greece, as among those of the Levant, of far-off Iran, and of still farther off Turan and Bodh. It is impossible not to be struck with this character of ubiquity they enjoy in the old world, and with their stateliness of manners, and adaptability to every station in life.

It is well known likewise that the Armenians have from a very early epoch been addicted to commerce and to dealing in money. They are, in the East, even in these days, what the Jews have always been in the West, that is, bankers and merchants. At the period of which we speak they were for the north of Asia what the Greeks were for the south ; although this last race traded likewise in Parthia, Bactriana, and even Transoxiana, owing to the Hellenic colonies established in those distant countries by Seleucus Nicator. But if the Greeks followed toward the Orient both the southern and northern routes, of which a full description has been given, the Armenians used invariably the northern, and from their rugged mountains at the foot of the Caucasus, went along the southern coast of the Caspian Sea, and then toward the northeast across Parthia and Bactriana, in the direction of the great markets of Central Asia : Balk, and Samarkand.

There can be no doubt that the messengers of religion followed the track of the men engaged in trade ; and thus, if Christianity was early propagated in the far Orient along the northern route, we must find episcopal sees founded in primitive ages, in those distant regions and along that road. This is precisely the fact which must now engross our thoughts. But before endeavoring to discover a few of the cities which enjoyed that privilege, there is a general remark, calculated to add a great force to the scanty information that

can be expected on the subject. For it cannot be denied that it is not now possible to satisfy, extensively, the critics of this age, and place before them a great number of such favored spots. No true historian, who has studied the transactions that have happened in Asia from the rise of Mahometanism down to a very recent period, can deny that the Moslems in their frequent invasions of that country, chiefly in the central part of it, seem to have been particularly careful not only to efface, if possible, all the marks the Christian religion had left of its passage in those countries; but that in the books they have themselves published, and we still possess, they appear to have done their best to ignore the fact, or at least to speak of it only so as not to attract the attention of the reader, of the immense influence the Christian religion formerly enjoyed in Eastern Asia. They even seem to forget in that regard their great friends, the Nestorians, of whom they very seldom make any mention. This is easily remarked by any thoughtful reader of the *Bibliothèque Orientale* of d'Herbelot, who mainly compiled his very learned work from Turkish and Arabic authors.

We will, therefore, feel ourselves happy if we happen to fall on a few facts bearing testimony to the early existence of Christianity in those immense regions which have been so long under the Moslem rule. A general remark, we said, will give strength and efficiency to whatever may be afterward discovered of that nature. We find it strongly expressed by Michelis, in his remarkable article *Asie*, contained in the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*: "The third direction which the first propagation of the faith took was toward the east and northeast. Commerce between Palestine and the countries watered by the Euphrates and the Tigris had always been extremely active. It is beyond contradiction that one-half at least of the Jewish nation, which, since the captivity of Babylon, lived scattered in Mesopotamia and the countries lying east and north of it, remained there permanently. This alone would give a natural explanation of the direction toward that side which the rapid propagation of the faith took from the very first ages. Armenia, Persia as far as Hyrcania and Bactriana, Hindostan as far as the Ganges, became, in the most remote times, the seats of important bishoprics, and evident vestiges appear of a Christianity, already wide-spread and established from the most ancient epoch all over the vastness of Upper Asia. After such bright beginnings it seemed that this large continent, enlightened so early by the knowledge of the Gospel,



would enter, like Europe, into a new path leading to the most important political and social modifications. Nothing of the kind happened.”\*

The man who penned these few words was one of a good number of learned German Catholics whom the Abbé I. Goschler had gathered around him in Paris, or whom he employed in Germany, for the publication of his most important compilation. From the perusal of its twenty odd volumes, it is manifest that nothing was admitted in its pages which could not bear the strict rule of criticism; and the broad statement of the writer that “Armenia, Persia as far as Hyrcania and Bactriana, Hindostan as far as the Ganges, became in the most remote times the seats of important bishoprics,” etc., would not have been received by the eminent director of the compilation—the Abbé Goschler himself—would not have been admitted and published, unless there were strong grounds to support the assertion. Michelis himself would never have dared to say so much in a single phrase, unless he was fully persuaded of it, and had become convinced of it by his own extensive reading.

Two questions, therefore, naturally present themselves, What motive had he to write that pregnant phrase? and why did he not mention the precise “bishoprics” he had in view? It is necessary to give an answer to both of them. The first is the most important; and as its bearing is universal in ecclesiastical history, and does not affect Armenia only and the other countries beyond, but stares every reader in the face, whenever facts are related which to the eyes of many critics are not sufficiently historical to be entirely relied upon, yet present themselves constantly in the course of all the events which are to be narrated, it is proper to treat the question somewhat *in extenso*. It can be reduced to these general terms: Why is it that Catholic writers assume dogmatically the truth of many facts which it is very difficult or impossible to prove according to the rules of modern criticism? What ground have they for numerous assertions of the nature of the one mentioned above with regard to early bishoprics in Hyrcania, Bactriana, and Hindostan?

To give to this discussion a concrete turn, and make it thus more forcible on the mind of the reader, the large collection of the *Acta Sanctorum* can be taken as an example. An immense number of facts contained in it are no doubt strictly historical, and a professed

---

\* Tom. 2.

skeptic alone could put them in question. But there is also a large array of events of more or less importance, which could scarcely resist, if at all, the dissolvent of criticism, yet are given by the Bollandists as sure and positively certain, and accepted as such by their Catholic readers. An example of it is the mission of St. Jude to Mesopotamia, and the appointment of Maris as first bishop of Seleucia. The reader remembers yet the discussion of this point in this very chapter. When such facts as these are multiplied in any literary collection, they form a sufficient substratum for historical faith; so that, placing them all together in his mind, a subsequent writer can say, as Michelis did in the article previously quoted: "there were many bishoprics erected in such and such country during the apostolic age;" or something to that effect.

To prove that this is perfectly allowable, it is good to examine a moment on what basis this conviction rests. It is well known that the Bollandist Fathers did not begin to write a word of their *Acta* before they had collected an immense number of manuscripts and documents; and the Belgian Fathers who resumed, during this century, the thread of their labors, did so to a still larger amount. These documents were written in every possible language, which they had first to learn, and naturally subject to the critical rules which have been established, particularly in France, during the seventeenth century. The MSS. were of every possible age and character, and even if written several centuries after the occurrences they relate, might be altogether unassailable. There are people, we are sure, who imagine that those productions of a "barbarous epoch," as they say, are not worthy to occupy the attention of a serious mind. But they are greatly mistaken. Who can imagine, for instance, that the many Jesuit Fathers who have been applied during all their life to the writing of the *Acta Sanctorum*—there must have been several hundred of them—frittered away their whole existence in a perfectly useless occupation? Europe has shown more wisdom by applauding their mighty enterprise, and acknowledging herself highly indebted on its account to the Order to which they belonged.

It is, in fact, sufficient to peruse those pages in order to appreciate the immense service rendered thereby to the advancement of historical studies. Yet, we repeat again, many things contained in the compilation would not by themselves satisfy the exigencies of the strict criticism peculiar to the present age. That the monks who mostly wrote those mediæval documents, not only in Latin or Greek,

but also in Syriac, Chaldaic, Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian, etc., were sincere, and firmly convinced of what they said, is evident from the whole narrative. People accustomed so much to hear of "Roman forgeries," would do well to examine the foundation of those accusations, and if they did, they would surely share the conviction of all those who read the admirable paper written on the subject and published in the number of the *American Catholic Quarterly Review* for July, 1877. No doubt the Bollandist Fathers have occasionally—though seldom, we are sure—met on their way with real forgeries and fabrications. But when they do, they speak openly their mind about it, and express their contempt, should even the case present features of extenuation, as, for instance, with regard to the narrative of Agathangelos, briefly mentioned a few pages back. But the eminent writers of the *Acta* meet very seldom with things of the kind, and the MSS. and documents they peruse and illustrate produce on them feelings of respect often akin to veneration. And their readers share in the same feelings with them, because it is impossible not to be deeply moved by the grateful sensation produced by candor, simplicity, and a holy enthusiasm for things divine.

The same is the result of the reading of the Fathers, in which also many facts of the same nature are found embedded in the midst of the highest religious speculations. How many statements of the kind, precious to history, and redolent with the fragrance of antiquity, are not contained in the writings of St. Augustine and of St. Jerome? But what we endeavor to establish at this moment is not so frequently extracted from patristic lore as from hagiology, and we will, on this account, be satisfied with this mere mention.

To come back to the admirable Belgian enterprise, limiting ourselves henceforth to what concerns the early ages of Christianity, how many scattered facts relative to them are contained in the lives of the apostles and holy men of the three or four first centuries? No one could tell; but they are numerous enough, and cannot but make an impression on the reader. Some of those facts, no doubt, perhaps many of them, are problematical; but many more are undoubtedly certain. To distinguish *vera falsis aut dubiis* tradition intervenes; and all solid minds are aware of the great weight of tradition in such cases as these. With these sure guides a basis for conviction and historical faith is obtained, which can resist all the efforts of a false and captious criticism. And this brings back naturally the interesting question from which we started, What motive had Michelis for

writing that "Armenia, Persia as far as Hyrcania and Bactriana, Hindostan as far as the Ganges, became in the most remote time the seats of important bishoprics, and evident vestiges appear of a Christianity already wide-spread and established from the most ancient epoch all over the vastness of Upper Asia"? He had for the support of this assertion all the varied reading of his studious life, and so many facts had remained impressed on his memory by that reading, that he was sure of what he said. He had perhaps studied a great number of documents relative to the apostleship of St. Thomas in India, and may be he shared in this regard the conviction of the new Bollandists, who promise to give in due time the demonstration of it. Every priest who reads his breviary knows that Thomas, *Parthis, Medis*, etc., that is: "To the Parthians, Medes, Persians, Hyrcanians, and Bactrians, he preached first the faith; at last he went to the Indians, whom he instructed in the precepts of the Christian religion." The simple and faithful minister of God has not certainly the same ground of belief in these facts that the Bollandists enjoy with the documents they possess; still, his conviction is far from being groundless. It is the Church of Christ that has placed this book—his breviary—in his hands, and the Church of Christ must know her own history. No doubt, everything contained in the Roman breviary is not of faith, and if a new edition was given at Rome, some legends would be expunged and others modified. But it is rationally much more safe to believe whatever the Catholic liturgy contains than to reject many things embraced in it. These reflections, however, do not belong strictly to the present inquiry, but it is sure that with many documents only partly true, as are some of those which the Bollandists discuss, a true conviction can be arrived at with regard to the events of the most primitive ages.

The second question remains now to be discussed, What motive had Mr. Michelis for not stating precisely which were those "bishoprics" so early established in Central Asia? A few paragraphs will suffice here. What precise motive he had cannot certainly be stated, since he kept it in his mind and did not disclose it. But one thing is certain—namely, that if he had spoken out he would have met with many contradictors even among Catholics, and perhaps this prevented him from allowing his pen from running on his paper. For it cannot be denied that to meet with no contradiction, it is not sufficient to have truth on one's side, but many niceties of language and proofs are necessary which cannot always be indulged in.

Mr. Michelis, for instance, was fully convinced of what he said in the phrase quoted above, and this conviction must have been grounded on many things he had read and compared together. But to expose the whole before his readers would have required perhaps a volume, and he had not time enough for it at his disposal. To give only a few—even important ones—of the facts which had helped to form his own individual belief, would have exposed him to ridicule, and he might have been called an “unscientific” man, which is not pleasant.

Yes, we say, he might have expected it, even from some Catholics, and learned men at that, but too deeply imbued with the sacredness of modern criticism. An example can be given, and by it we will close this discussion. There is no doubt that the learned German Benedictine P. B. Gams has rendered an immense service to the Church by publishing his *Series Episcoporum*, but occasionally he betrays too sensitive a spirit in matter of accuracy. In that admirable book you will look in vain for the list of the Catholic bishops and patriarchs of Seleucia, discussed in this very chapter. For him, evidently, all are Nestorian, and the three first volumes of the *Bibliotheca Orientalis* of Assemani are of no account whatever. Thus the Persian Church, which suffered such terrible persecutions under the Sassan dynasty, is not worthy of a place in the *Series Episcoporum Ecclesie Catholice*. Yet, Father Gams admits the apostleship of St. Thomas the Apostle to Edessa, with Thaddæus the disciple,\* and he places Maris and Agis—whom we have called with Assemani Maris and Aggæus—as the first on the list of Edessa’s bishops. Thus, the apostleship of St. Jude in Mesopotamia is wholly ignored, and there has been no Persian Church worthy of the name.

This explains plainly the state of the case, and shows what treatment the learned Michelis could have expected, had he, for instance, said openly that among those “early bishoprics” of Central Asia, were the sees of Merv, of Tus, of Samarkand, etc. He was a prudent man; still we confess that we would have been more pleased with him, had he forgotten prudence and spoken out.

On leaving out these generalities and coming to the special cases of early bishoprics in Central Asia, it is proper to briefly remind the reader of a few details previously given. From the short sketch of Armenian history laid out a few pages back, it is evident that the nation was often perfectly independent, both from the Roman and

---

\* Page 437.

the Persian empires. It was, undoubtedly, intimately connected with both of them, and occasionally reduced to the inferior state of tributary. But often also it reconquered its free condition, and maintained throughout a life of its own, which entitles it to be considered as autonomous. Its limits varied, no doubt; at times they were more confined and reduced to a smaller area; then they suddenly expanded; and this process went so far on one or two occasions as to give to the country the proportions of an empire, embracing not only the mountainous region between the Euxine and the Caspian, but a great part of Northern Persia, and a vast territory in the direction of the East. It is only long after the first Moslem invasion that Armenia remained habitually restricted to the limits assigned to it in modern times. At the period actually under consideration, particularly during the passage from the Arsacide to the Sassanide dynasties, when the former gradually lost its power, which the second inherited, Armenia became a third power of great influence in Central Asia; and this is precisely the epoch when we think Christianity progressed eastward under the protection of Catholic Armenia.

The country bearing that name embraced, therefore, besides the provinces situated at the foot of the Caucasus, a large slice of the Persia of our day, all along the southern coast of the Caspian Sea, and extending still much farther than its southeast corner. In the history of Armenia at that period, not only the Atropatene, called now the Aderbidjan and Mazenderan, but even Hyrcania, altogether east of the Caspian Sea, were numbered among its provinces. But this carries us directly into the heart of Central Asia, and on the road to Samarkand and Balk. In fact Tus, not far removed from Merv, belonged, we believe, to the province of Hyrcania, a part of the modern Khorassan.

It is precisely of this country that Colonel Yule speaks, in his celebrated work *Cathay and the Way Thither*:\* "The legend of the apostolic activity of St. Thomas," he says, "extending as far as China, as well as the report of the diffusion in the third century of the doctrines of Christ among the Persians, Medes, and Chinese, must not be unconditionally accepted. But that this was partially the case in the following century is proved by the persecutions of the Christians under Sapor, and the existence of the archbishoprics (bishoprics?) of Tus and Merv in 334, of which the latter

---

\* Page lxxxviii.

was raised, in 420, to the dignity of a metropolitan see. Driven from the Byzantine Empire by the bitterness of sectarian animosity, the Nestorian separatists were early led to seek in the far East a field for their feverish activity." This short passage deserves a few words of comment. Colonel Yule, of the British army in India, was not a theologian, and could make mistakes in ecclesiastical history. Still, he shows in this book and his other works on the Orient, particularly in his edition of Marco Polo's travels, that he had deeply studied everything connected with the history, religion, and manners of the Oriental nations. His works have always enjoyed the highest reputation in England. The only objection generally raised against some parts of them regards his derivation of some facts and things from etymology; but, apart from this, his accuracy has never been questioned that we know. Of the apostleship of St. Thomas he does not speak disrespectfully; and he is right in stating that the legend which extends it as far as *China*, must not be unconditionally accepted. But he advocates the truth more pointedly than many Catholic writers, by saying that the diffusion of the doctrines of Christ among the Persians and Medes in the fourth century "is proved by the persecutions of the Christians under Sapor." We intend shortly to come to this striking consideration. He is right also in maintaining the existence of the archbishoprics—he ought to have said bishoprics—of Tus and Merv in 334; and if he is wrong, as we will prove, in attributing the foundation of those sees to "the Nestorian separatists," he has with him a good number of Catholic writers, who imagine yet at this late day that all the early expansion of Christianity in Upper and Central Asia was due to the Nestorians. Some details on the subject have been already touched in the chapter on Chaldea; we will presently settle the question altogether, so that there will be no need of coming back to it.

The mistake of Colonel Yule in pretending that the bishoprics of Tus and Merv were founded by the Nestorians in 334—Nestorius, mind it well, was not yet born—came from not reflecting on the Armenian history of the period. Those cities were then included in Armenia. Perhaps, had he thought of it, he would have nevertheless imagined that these people were then Nestorians. For since Von Humboldt wrote a few groundless paragraphs on the subject, everybody has seen Nestorians everywhere and at all times. But had he thought so he would again have made a mistake in ecclesiastical history. When the Armenians embraced heresy, which happened much later

on than the fourth century, they became monophysites or Euty-chians, the very reverse of the Nestorians.

The conclusion of this discussion is that Armenian missionaries founded most probably the sees of Tus and Merv, if St. Thomas had not already done it in the apostolic age ; for if he did not preach to the *Chinese*, he certainly did so to the Hyrcanians—*Hyrcanis*, as the Roman breviary says—and Tus and Merv were in Hyrcania or its neighborhood.

But we must go farther up and cross over to Transoxiana. Here we have to rely upon Mr. Armenius Vambéry's book on *Bokhara*, which has lately been reviewed with a great deal of acrimony by Mr. Schuyler in his remarkable work on *Turkistan*. The reproaches of the reviewer are, we must say the word, ugly ; and after going over them the reader is scarcely disposed to give much credence to the accuracy of the *celebrated* Professor of the Pesth university. We say *celebrated*, for there is no denying that Mr. Vambéry enjoys a great renown in Europe. We do not think, however, that Mr. Schuyler goes so far as to pretend that there is not in *Bokhara* a single line or paragraph worthy of acceptance. He confesses himself that there are passages where something new has been discovered, although far less than was announced in the preface. He, moreover, does not accuse Mr. Vambéry of any positive want of veracity. What the Pesth professor states he candidly believed. It seems, therefore, perfectly safe to rely on Mr. Vambéry when he quotes his authorities intelligently. For his adversary rebukes him sometimes for misunderstanding entirely the authors he quotes. By following these rules of prudence, and remarking, moreover, that whatever we had noted in the book and wished to use for our purpose has been passed over by the reviewer without a word of contradiction—for such is the fact—we will sparingly use the very interesting book on Bokhara.

“The Christianity of Transoxiana,” it says, \* “had its center at Samarkand, where a bishop's see was established, according to the accounts of the Syrians, about 411-415 ; according to Yule about 503-520.” Nestorianism could not have reached that place so early as this last date ; we will shortly give the proof of it. “Cosmas speaks of Christians on the banks of the Oxus in the middle of the sixth century. That the Arabs found such in Bokhara is plain from the account given by Narshaki of the *Keshkushan*, of whom we are told that they were neither Arabs nor inhabitants of the land,



neither Moslems nor fire-worshippers, but had immigrated from the West, occupied themselves for the most part with commerce, and were held by the Bokhariots in universal esteem." This is certainly a perfect description of Armenians or Greeks.

"From the above it will be easily understood that, as the rule of Islam grew ever stricter in the cities of Transoxiana after the Arab conquest of the country, the Keshkushan (according to the etymology of the word, 'Wanderers') could not long maintain themselves. In the third century of the Hidjra it was only in the mountainous neighborhood of Samarkand that an important Christian community was to be found, named Zerdegird."

On this last occurrence Vambéry quotes Belki's *Geographical Manuscript*, etc.; but the existence of Christians in the ninth and tenth centuries at Zerdegird, near Samarkand, is an historical fact known to everybody. His previous statements, however, require comment. In speaking of early Christianity in Transoxiana he refers to "the foundation of a bishop's see at Samarkand about 411-415, according to the accounts of the Syrians," but does not mention how many of them or who they were. Was it Ephrem or any of the successors of Ephrem in Edessa? Was it any writer from Antioch and Damascus? We are left to conjecture. Colonel Yule, however, places the erection of the see of Samarkand in about 503-520; and we will receive his account, which tallies perfectly well with what we know of the establishment of Christianity in Hyrcania, from whence probably it was carried to the greatest and most renowned city of Transoxiana.

The important question comes next for consideration, could any of those sees in Upper or Central Asia have been founded by Nestorians? At what precise epoch did the Nestorians begin to spread over the continent? Must we consider the whole of interior Asia to have been given up from the beginning to the Nestorian heresy? These questions must necessarily be discussed, because the object of these volumes is to describe the early spread of the Catholic Church, not of heresy. The reader has just been carried through an immense territory in Asia, and facts have been placed before him with a view to force on him the conviction that very early Christians were found living in those extensive countries, and bishops' sees were established as far as the banks of the Oxus, on the road to Tartary. Men who had perused many antique documents relating to those facts have spoken as being fully persuaded that Christian dioceses existed there at that primitive epoch; and several of these sees, al-

though but a few, have been pointed out. It is important to know if those dioceses belonged to the Catholic Church or not. For many learned men imagine that this was the spread of the Nestorian heresy, not of the Church whose destinies we are describing. What does history say of it? It is, after all, only a question of dates, and the matter does not require any abstruse discussion. And since many facts on which the question depends have already been mentioned or discussed in the chapter on Chaldea, and in this very one, what remains to be done is a mere summary of facts and dates, from which the distinction will be fully brought out between what belongs to the Church beyond peradventure, and what must be ascribed to Nestorianism.

8. *Limits within which Nestorianism contributed to the diffusion of Christianity in those countries.*

The year of Nestorius' birth is not known, but it is historically proved that he was made Archbishop and Patriarch of Constantinople in 427. He began to broach his heresy in his sermons shortly after; and at the instance of the whole people, who could not bear to hear him refuse to the Virgin the title of Mother of God, the Council of Ephesus was convened in 431, and he was there condemned and deposed. He had supporters from the first, chiefly among the Syrian bishops; but few dared to openly express their opinion. It was only after the Council of Chalcedon in 450, that the Nestorians showed themselves undisguisedly; as they pretended that the condemnation of Eutyches, by this last council, was an admission of the doctrine of Nestorius, whose body they asked should be brought back with honor to Constantinople from Upper Egypt, where he had died.

The Persian school at Edessa was early inoculated with Nestorianism; and in the very year of the condemnation of the heresiarch, in 431, several of its professors were removed from their chairs on that account and obliged to leave the city. The government at Constantinople insisted on this, as the throne was then occupied by thoroughly Catholic princes—namely, Theodosius the Younger and Pulcheria; afterward by Marcian. The Persian school continued at Edessa for more than half a century longer, alternately Catholic and Nestorian, until, in 489, Zeno the Isaurian finally closed it as irreclaimable. The whole batch of professors left instantly for the

South, and went to Nisibis or Seleucia ; some of them to the first city, the remainder to the second. Both cities were out of the Roman dominion, and under the Persian power. The see of Seleucia had been so far occupied by Catholic prelates only, and several of them had died martyrs in the persecutions of Sapor II. and of Izdegerd I. Acacius was the last Catholic patriarch of that city, and he died in 497 or 498. His successor, Babæus, was the first to embrace Nestorianism, in 499. It was, therefore, just on the last year before the opening of the sixth century that this patriarchate was tainted with heresy and began to labor for its diffusion. In order to keep better the date in memory, let us say that this happened from the year 500 exactly.

It is a fact granted by all writers, even the most opposed to our views, that if later on Nestorianism invaded the whole interior of Asia, and at a time rivaled the Church of Rome in extent—we admit it and intend to show it in detail—the beginning of this diffusion on a large scale cannot be anterior to the year 500 of our era ; because the starting-point of the wholesale invasion of heresy was Seleucia, whose patriarch began to profess Nestorianism only the year before 500. This point must be steadily kept in view.

The route first chosen for the march of heresy was undoubtedly the southern one, described in a previous passage. From Seleucia, down the Tigris to the Persian Gulf, then by sea to Eastern Arabia on the one side, and on the other to India, Ceylon, and the countries beyond as far as China. The careful historian and geographer can easily trace this progress of Nestorianism. The last point, *Se-Gan-Fu* in China, was reached in 620 of our era, according to the celebrated inscription sculptured there in 781, and discovered by Jesuit missionaries in 1625.

Why did not Nestorianism follow at first the northern route, and thus reach in a shorter time the remote countries which have occupied us a few pages back ? Without denying that under the last Sassanidæ and during the sway of the Moslems it followed that route as well as the southern highway, it can be maintained that for a long time it could not follow it. That road was occupied by Armenia, and used chiefly by Armenians, who remained firm Catholics until 527, when the unworthy successor of Gregory the Illuminator, Nerses of Ashtarag, in a synod at Foyin, had the Council of Chalcedon reprobated and its dogmas rejected. Thus it was only after the first quarter of the sixth century that the Armenians became,

not Nestorians, but Eutychians, precisely the reverse. Earnest efforts had been made on several occasions to introduce Nestorianism in that country, but always without success. As to the introduction of Eutychianism it was not to last, for in the succession of ages a part, at least, of the Armenian nation has nearly always remained faithful to the Catholic Church. Nestorianism, therefore, could not easily penetrate by the northern road to the banks of the Oxus, except in the wake of their great friends the Moslems, and consequently only in the seventh century. As positive dates have been assigned previously for the erection of the sees of Tus, Merv, and Samarkand—namely, 334 for Tus and Merv, and at the latest, 503–520 for Samarkand, it remains perfectly certain that these were Catholic bishoprics, not Nestorian.

The question at present comes for discussion, Did Nestorianism replace Catholicity all at once in interior Asia, or did the process require a long time, owing to the resistance of the Catholics? a very important consideration. The conviction may be as well stated at the outset, that the change took so long a period of time to be entirely accomplished, that Catholics may have, in fact, existed in some remote part of this vast country as late as the twelfth century of our era. Let us proceed orderly and cautiously in this weighty discussion.

As a preliminary matter of great import, it must be first mentioned that both under the Sassanidæ and the Arabs, the Nestorians enjoyed a great credit in Persia; and it must be considered as certain that not only they never suffered persecution for the religion they professed, but on the contrary, they always met with an extraordinary consideration from the ruling power in the whole extent of Persia. The princes of the Sassan race received them with open arms when they fled from Edessa to the South, because they had been persecuted under the Emperors of Constantinople, with whom the Persian sovereigns were constantly at war. They found in their new country every facility for propagating their doctrine; and there is no doubt that many bishops, priests, and simple laymen embraced Nestorianism, because they felt sure of living in quiet and peace under the sovereigns of the country. Nay, more, if any favor was ever granted to people who did not belong to the native race of Fire-worshippers, the Nestorians were the first to receive proofs of it. This was so constantly the policy of the Sassanidæ, until the destruction of their power by the Arabs, that it may be considered as certain that

in the numerous persecutions against Christianity which disgraced Persia, not a single drop of Nestorian blood was ever shed. So that whenever mention is made of men suffering for the Christian religion in that vast empire, it must be understood that they were Catholic, not Nestorian. This will directly furnish us a test for judging of the length of time that Catholicity continued in Persia.

In this line of the argument, the Moslems who conquered Persia and succeeded to the Sassanidæ must also enter, because they continued there to favor Nestorianism, as they had always done in countries farther west, wherever they established their new empire. The reader can be referred to the remarkable passage of *Cosmos*,\* where Von Humboldt seems to consider it as a providential design. The high favor always enjoyed by the Nestorians at the court of the Caliphs, and in the retinue of the Arab chieftains who commanded their armies and spread their power, was, in the opinion of Humboldt, a signal advantage for the human race, because he thought that the superior knowledge of the Nestorian Christians became a boon not only for humanity at large, but principally for the Saracens, who were thus initiated in the mysteries of the sciences cultivated in Greece, Syria, and Egypt. It is, in fact, now well known that the celebrated Arabic literature of the Mussulmans received its first impulse from Greek and Syrian authors, whose works were at that time translated in the language of the Moslems.

The consequence of these considerations is irresistible—namely, that whenever the Saracens are found persecuting the Christians and driving them out of the countries they inhabited, these Christians were Catholics, not Nestorians. So that the same test can be applied to discover the existence of Catholics in Asia, under Mussulman rule, which was just hinted at when speaking of their continuance under the Sassanidæ. Let us apply briefly this test under both aspects, and the reader will soon become firmly convinced that it took a very long time, indeed, for Nestorianism to replace entirely Catholicism in Upper Asia, and rule finally in those vast countries, as it did, undoubtedly, at last.

First, let us examine the persecutions of the Christians under Persia's native princes. We begin to hear of them under Sapor II. in 330, the same sovereign to whom Constantine wrote that beautiful letter (of which we quoted a phrase or two) in order to induce him

---

\* Tom. ii., p. 247, French edit.

to favor the Christians as he was himself doing in the Roman Empire. The reader remembers that this very letter is a convincing proof that there were already innumerable worshippers of Christ in Persia, since Constantine speaks of their actual existence in all the provinces of that vast dominion. In 330, under Sapor II., Nestorius was not yet born, and the letter of Constantine was written several years before. All those Christians who were then persecuted were consequently Catholics. We know, moreover, that the patriarchs of Seleucia were at that time in communion with Rome and the West, since they would have gone to the Council of Nice if the persecution had not been impending. The patriarch, for this reason, sent his deputy, who signed the decrees in his name.

The same reflections are suggested by the second persecution under Sapor II. in 341. This was more than eighty years before Nestorius became Patriarch of Constantinople.

Under Izdegerd I. the blood of martyrs began to flow again in torrents for more than twenty years; for his son Bahram did not allow any interruption after the death of his father. This occupied the period between 399 and 420, when Nestorianism did not yet exist; all Persian Christians were still Catholics.

Izdegerd II., directly he ascended the throne in 420, continued the persecution, limiting it, however, mainly to Armenia; and this lasted from 420 to 450. It seems that it was not over before 464. The reader is aware that Nestorianism at this last date did not yet occupy the patriarchal see of Seleucia. It is dreadful to contemplate such a lengthy destruction of life, when the barbarous means employed to shed blood are taken into consideration. The narratives of eye-witnesses, preserved for us by Assemani, can scarcely be read on account of the atrocities they contain. The barbarities practiced against the Christians in the Roman Empire are well known. Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria, and others have written on the subject pages on which human imagination cannot dwell. It seems certain, however, that the persecutors of the Church in Persia went still further, and surpassed the ingenious cruelty of the Roman tormentors.

The reader of the abominable details which can be read now in some modern ecclesiastical histories might be induced to believe that the Persian Church had been altogether destroyed before Babæus established Nestorianism on the see of Seleucia. But the series of events in the subsequent history of Persia proves that this would be a

great mistake, and that the adage of Tertullian held good also for that country, *Sanguis martyrum, semen Christianorum*.

To carefully ascertain the first progress made by Nestorianism in Persia, and the resistance it met originally from the Catholics, it is necessary to consider a moment the life of its most ardent propagator just before it triumphed by ascending the patriarchal throne of Seleucia in the person of Babæus. This man was Barsumas, formerly at the head of the Persian school of Edessa, and one of those who were expelled in 431, half a century previous to the final closing of the establishment under Zeno. He withdrew from Edessa to Nisibis, and was soon consecrated bishop of that city, and made use of his position and talent to organize and secure the predominance of Nestorianism among both Chaldeans and Persians. His chief co-operator was Maanes, bishop of Ardaschir. One of their most effective means of securing partisans among the inferior clergy was to convene a synod at Adri, composed of all the bishops who adhered to their heresy, and promulgate a canon "ordering all bishops to allow the priests and deacons of their dioceses to marry, and even to enjoy the privilege of marrying a second time after the death of their first wives." The Nestorian bishops themselves did not scruple to enter the bonds of matrimony, against the universal custom of all Christian churches, and Barsumas contracted marriage with a nun called Mammea.

These excesses became known in the Grecian world, and reproaches came from the West to Babû—not Babæus—then Patriarch of Seleucia, and a sincere Catholic. Babû replied that he had no power under "an impious civil administration," pronouncing, however, a decree of excommunication against Barsumas. The unworthy bishop of Nisibis obtained possession of one of the letters that passed between the Greek bishops and the patriarch, and took occasion from it to accuse him of treason, as a "spy of the Romans." The Persian emperor was then Firooz, as this happened in 485. By his command the patriarch was apprehended, tried, convicted, and perished under the scourge applied on his body, as he was suspended by his fingers.

Barsumas carried still further his felony against the Church. For, in an interview with the emperor, he made him perceive that as long as there were Catholics in Persia, they would always lean on the side of Constantinople on account of their faith. Nestorians, of course, would never allow their religion to interfere with their loyalty.

Thus he obtained a new decree of proscription against the Catholics ; and accompanied with Persian soldiers, he went through the provinces of the empire, in order to convert the Christians to his heresy ; and it is said that seven thousand seven hundred perished under his barbarous orders. In a single convent—that of Bizuith—he put ninety priests to death.

Meanwhile the Catholics had yet power enough in Seleucia to elect a patriarch. Acacius became the successor of Babù. Under the circumstances he could not but be extremely prudent ; his prudence was called cowardice. The Greek bishops wrote again and threatened him with excommunication. He went purposely to Constantinople to confer with them, and came back with his courage screwed up to the point of martyrdom, resolved to remove Barsumas from his see and excommunicate him. But on his return, he found him dead. It is said that in a convent of nuns where Barsumas had gone probably to *convert* them, they became infuriated against his outrageous conduct, and killed him with no other instrument of death than the iron keys of their house.

All these details were extracted by Assemani from the Syriac documents he brought from Egypt, and of which he wrote, by a strange oversight, that they were taken “from Nestorian writers.” The reader is aware that it was only after the death of Acacius that his successor, Babæus, embraced Nestorianism, in 499. But to conclude what we have to say of Barsumas by another incidental proof of the vitality of the Catholic Church in that country, it is proper to mention that it was only in 605, one hundred and twenty years after the events just recorded, that the Nestorians thought themselves strong enough to have the memory of the infamous bishop of Nisibis rehabilitated. They did so in a synod where they surely predominated in number, and probably dared alone to appear, as at that time Khosroo II. had already the year previous declared war against Constantinople, and Catholic bishops could not in prudence show themselves openly in opposition with the party favored at court. This party was then sufficiently bold to cancel the decree of excommunication against the memory of Barsumas, place his name in the public prayers of the Church, and excommunicate all those who dared oppose his person and writings.

One hundred and six years—from 499 to 605—is, no doubt, a long space of time, and it seems that Nestorianism, so late after taking possession of the see of Seleucia, could very well have put



an end to the existence of the Catholic Church all over Persia. But it must be kept in mind that it is an operation always difficult, and few heretics and rulers of nations have so far succeeded in doing it.

Let us examine, as another step in advance, if it is not possible to prove that numerous Catholics lived still in Persia under the celebrated Khosroo II., with their own churches and hierarchy. It will take but a few moments.

Khosroo II. received in fact his crown from the Emperor of Constantinople, Mauritius, who gave him an army for reconquering his empire. He showed at first such a gratitude that the Christians, that is, the Catholics—such only would Mauritius have acknowledged as his brethren—became the object of his affection. The only one of his wives to whom he was really attached, Irene, a Greek princess, was probably a Catholic. The rumor spread, at the time, that he had been admitted himself into the Church, although the story of his conversion, related by *Paulus Diaconus*, copied at length by Baronius,\* is justly rejected as false by the learned cardinal. But this rumor itself was not entirely an idle one. Domitian, the Catholic bishop of Melitina in Armenia, had indeed gone to see Khosroo with the intention of converting him; but he did not succeed, as is known from the letter of St. Gregory the Great to Domitian, which still exists. A short passage of that letter is graphic, and can be read in a note below.† Thus the bishop of Melitina “had tried to whiten the black soul of Khosroo by baptism, and did no more succeed than would a servant of the public baths who should try to turn a negro white by using the brush on his skin. Both, however, deserved their reward; the bishop from God, the other from the object of his care.” From all this it results that Khosroo II. left the Catholics quiet, at least, at the beginning of his reign, though he never was a Catholic himself.

But during the last four years of his life he changed completely in disposition; and this change is a sure proof that there were still Catholics in Persia with churches, and on this account with a hier-

---

\* Ann. Eccles., tom. viii., p. 47, et seq.

† Imperatorem Persarum etsi non fuisse conversum doleo; vos tamen ei Christianam fidem prædicasse, omnino exulto, quia etsi ille ad lucem venire non meruit, vestra tamen sanctitas prædicationis suæ præmum habebit. Nam et Æthiops in balneum niger intrat, et niger egreditur, sed tamen balneator nummos accipit.

archy. The proof must be given in a few words. There is not perhaps in the whole history of the Lower Empire any short period of so thrilling an interest as the reign of Heraclius. At first the Emperor of Constantinople loses rapidly the best part of his dominion. Khosroo, everywhere victorious, conquers Armenia, the whole of Asia Minor, and lays siege even to the capital of the Greek Empire. Then he falls down on Syria and Palestine, which he annexes to Persia, and finally enters Egypt, which he subdues as far south as Nubia.

Everywhere the insolent conqueror wreaks his vengeance on the Christian Church, destroys religious edifices, kills priests, sends bishops captive to the East, lays down the whole country bare of Christian emblems. Jerusalem is captured, the population is dispersed or destroyed, the Patriarch of the Holy City is sent to a foreign country, the holy Cross falls into the hands of the Fire-worshippers, and is carried to Mesopotamia. If Khosroo does not demolish all the churches, he gives them to the Nestorians. At least history relates that when, later on, Heraclius reconquered his empire from his enemy, on entering Edessa he ordered the churches which had been given by the Persian king to the Nestorians of that city should be returned to the Catholics.

But Heraclius, at first bewildered and apparently deprived altogether of determination and self-reliance, is at last warmed up by the sight of the sacrilegious outrages of his enemy. He sends up to heaven a cry of anguish, and calls on his subjects to follow him boldly, ready to conquer or die. Pushing back gradually the armies of Khosroo out of his own dominion, he finally reaches the Euphrates, which had always divided the two empires, and from Samosata he contemplates the plains of Mesopotamia leading to the capital of Khosroo. In four or five admirable campaigns, in which he kept possession of Armenia as a basis of operations, Heraclius reduces his enemy to the extremity of falling back on Ctesiphon, where his own son Siroes is fated to put him to death with the most cruel and humiliating tortures.

The style of Baronius becomes animated in relating those great events. It assumes an exciting tone very unusual for the reader, accustomed to the dryness of his ordinary annals. The learned cardinal quotes his authorities, which are the only reliable ones on that part of human history. But Theophanes alone would suffice for the satisfaction of those who do not consider an excess of criticism as

the necessary guide in the narrative of human events. Now, it is important to consider what is there related of the wild mind of Khosroo, when, infuriated by his losses, and refusing in his madness to listen to the last overtures of peace sent by Heraclius, he wishes merely to avenge himself against the Church he hates, and to secure if possible her downfall before he perishes himself.

At the moment that Heraclius enters Mesopotamia, and leads his army on Persian soil, Khosroo takes the determination expressed by Baronius in the following words: "Then the king, driven to madness, despoils all the churches existing in the Persian dominion, and in order to wound the feelings of Heraclius, he compels all the Christians to adopt the dogmas of the Nestorian heresy." This phrase requires comment, but a simple and natural one; as it is clear by itself and few could misinterpret it. First, we would offer as a preliminary conjecture extremely probable, and on every account almost certain, that this was merely a solemn decree to be published all over the empire, but which Khosroo had no time to carry into execution. From this moment down to his death he had to devote all his time to military affairs, and could not give any part of it to the details of the administration of his empire, even for the object of satisfying his ruling passion—the destruction of Catholicity. It was, moreover, a vast undertaking, since the Church was not confined to the neighborhood of Ctesiphon, but had yet adherents and numerous possessions as far northeast as Transoxiana—the reader will soon be convinced of it. The project mentioned by Baronius was, therefore, a project on paper, in the form, probably, of a decree, which could not be thoroughly executed, as the whole of Persia was already agitated by interior convulsions. The exactions of Khosroo, who had spent immense sums of money to turn a great part of Mesopotamia into a pleasure-garden, or rather a paradise, had excited against him the ire of all classes of citizens. Political discord was already breaking out; and it is calculated by historians, that after the violent death of this prince nine sovereigns occupied the throne of Persia in the short space of four years.

This is sufficient for this preliminary remark on the subject; the rest is the affair of a moment. Those churches which the decree of the emperor was intended to deprive of all their interior ornaments and wealth, *donaria*, were undoubtedly Catholic temples, since the Nestorian edifices must have been at the time under the special protection of Khosroo, who wished to replace Catholicity by Nestorian-

ism. They all belonged to the Persian dominion—*quæ sub Persis erant*. Khosroo had then lost all his foreign conquests; and could send no decree to be executed out of his native possessions. Finally there must have been a Catholic clergy attached to the edifices that Khosroo wished to despoil; as they would not otherwise have been full of those riches expressed by the word *donaria*, which were merely the adornment of edifices in actual use for the service of God, and the means of performing public worship. When, at last, Baronius adds that the emperor “brought all Christians to the necessity of embracing Nestorianism”—*adegit*—the only acceptable meaning is that he wished to do so, and by his decree did all he could for such an object. That it must be so understood, will result from the consideration of the probable relative number of the Catholics themselves and of their institutions at that very period of history.

9. *Probable relative number of Catholics in Persia at the time of the invasion of Mussulmanism.*

The intention is not to give even approximative figures. It would be folly to attempt it, since there are not any data to form an opinion on the subject. But it is still possible to acquire the conviction that there were at that epoch a great many Catholics and a number of churches and other ecclesiastical establishments.

A few pages back the remark was made that neither the Sassanidæ nor the Moslems afterward ever persecuted the Nestorians; and that whenever history speaks of persecution by either of those two powers, it must be understood of Catholics. It was said that this is a test which can be applied with certainty in both cases. The application has been made to the domination of the first with the result so far obtained; the same must now be attempted with regard to the Moslem rule.

It was only twenty-four years after the death of Khosroo that the Saracens succeeded in subduing Persia in its whole extent. Izdegerd III., after his last defeat, fled to Merv, where he died, and his son, to avoid the same fate, had to take refuge in China. The Moslems, therefore, took possession of the whole country as far as the desert of Gobi, and our actual inquiry is limited to ascertain, if possible, if there were Catholics under their rule and to what extent. Their number must not have been smaller than under Khosroo II., since after him the rulers of Persia were too much occupied in civil broils to be able to think of Catholicity.

The Arabs, in the fury of their onslaught, thought only of their enemies, the Persians, and if they persecuted anybody, it was the Fire-worshippers, who had to fly to the mountains, many of them escaping to India, where their descendants are living in the neighborhood of Bombay under the name of Parsees. It is known that the Nestorians fared still better under their new masters than they had under the Sassanidæ, and we feel convinced that it is precisely under Moslem rule that the adherents of Nestorius obtained the vast spiritual power which we must shortly describe. But it has been seen a moment ago that all the previous attempts of the Nestorians to replace the Catholics everywhere had failed, since Khosroo in his impotent rage had recourse to a decree by which he imagined he could oblige the Catholics to embrace heresy. There was at that time no question of using the fire and the sword, but merely of depriving the Catholic clergy of their churches, by stripping them first of all precious ornaments and sacred vessels, and then handing them over to the sectators of Nestorius. This supposes that there were numerous Catholic churches in the land.

Had this project of Khosroo been carried out thoroughly and persistently, it is manifest that the sway of the Nestorian Patriarch of Seleucia would have directly assumed that universality in Asia which, in our opinion, it obtained only after several centuries of Moslem rule. But Khosroo had no time, and his successors were too deeply engaged in civil wars, and then in conflicts with the Arabs, to be able to do so.

When the Mussulmans, therefore, reached the Oxus and found themselves face to face with the uncouth races of the Northeast, the true progenitors of the Turks, they saw that their task, to propagate Mahometanism, was more difficult than they had thought. They found that the Turks were in general pagans, some of them Buddhists, and a few, but very important tribes, Christians. This last feature of the case will shortly be examined and proved. But there were, besides, around them other Christians, of Greek, Armenian, and Persian race, whom, it seems, they did not persecute at first; although these Christians were very different from their friends the Nestorians. This must attract our attention; although it must be confessed that very few reliable documents have come down to lead us in this inquiry. Often, however, a single one is sufficient to produce conviction; and if the others have perished, the cause of it is well known, namely, the subsequent determination

of the Moslems to destroy as far as possible every record which could make the world acquainted with the previous sway of the Christian religion in the countries they ruled. The document of which we speak is, it is true, by several centuries more recent than the arrival of the Moslems on the banks of the Oxus; but the very remarkable, and altogether reliable information it contains refers evidently to the precise time of our present inquiry. We find it in the learned edition of the *Travels of Marco Polo*, by Colonel Yule: \* “Prince Sempad,” he says, “High Constable of Armenia, in a letter written from Samarkand in 1246, mentions several important things, and among others this one: ‘I tell you that we have found many Christians scattered all over the East, and many fine churches, lofty, ancient, and of good architecture, which have been spoilt by the Turks. Hence when the Christians of these countries came to the presence of the reigning khan’s grandfather (*i. e.*, Genghis), he received them most honorably and granted them liberty of worship, and issued orders to prevent their having any just cause of complaint by word or deed. And so the Saracens, who used to treat them with contempt, have now the like treatment in double measure.’”

Prince Sempad wrote this letter just six hundred years after the coming of the Arabs in Transoxiana; but it is manifest that those “lofty and ancient churches” could not have been built since they arrived. They would never have permitted it. They existed, therefore, in the seventh century, at the time of the downfall of Izdegerd III. They could not be Nestorian churches at the time, for the following reasons: First, Nestorianism began to be propagated from Seleucia only from the beginning of the sixth century. It did not take at first the northern route to the East, which was occupied by Armenians and Greeks opposed to that heresy, but it followed exclusively at first the southern route to India, Ceylon, China, etc. Secondly, if Nestorianism was favored by the Persian emperors of the Sassan race, it was not to the extent of replacing entirely the Catholic Church. We have seen a striking example of it under Khosroo II. There could not be, consequently, at the fall of Izdegerd III., “many fine churches, lofty, ancient,” etc., belonging to the Nestorians so far north as Transoxiana; they must have been built by Armenian or Greek Catholics. Sempad does not say that these edifices were found only around Samarkand, whence he wrote,

---

\* Vol. i., p. 172.

but "they were scattered all over the East," in the north, of course, to which he himself belonged.

In his time, the thirteenth century, there were yet, besides churches, living Christians. He states it positively, and in great number. Were they Catholics in 1246? most probably not, at least there were many Nestorians among them; because under Moslem rule Nestorianism had increased considerably all over Asia. Yet since these Christians were "treated with contempt by the Saracens," those of them who received these marks of "contempt" must have been still Catholics, because the Arabs never did treat the Nestorians with contempt, as is well known. We were right, therefore, in stating at the beginning of these researches that the Catholic Church had still children in those wild regions during the twelfth century, when Genghis-Khan devastated them.

All those remarkable facts are rendered still more probable, or rather certain, when it is taken into consideration that in those very countries of Central Asia there was yet at the arrival of the Moslems an important Grecian State, the last remnant of the former power of the Seleucidæ. The reader must be reminded here of the events belonging to the history of Alexander's successors, recorded at the beginning of this chapter. This fact of a Grecian State at the coming of the Arabs has been recently demonstrated historically, and coins are yet in existence belonging to the dynasty of those Greek princes. Yet we must not confine those Christian, or rather Catholic, churches in Persia to the immediate sphere of that Hellenic colony. There can be no doubt, from our considerations on the reign of Khosroo II., that all over the empire there were still, at the arrival of the Arabs, many Catholic churches in the country, whose ruins the Armenian Sempad had seen.

It is not only by the letter of the High Constable of Armenia that we obtain an insight of the evils inflicted on the Christian population of Upper Asia by the Moslem Arabs. Another valuable document confirms it powerfully. From the description of the times which preceded the great Tartar invasion contained in Galanus' *Historia Armena*, we gather very important details offering the sad spectacle of so many fresh ruins, or of the desecration of so many churches, hospitals, and schools in the same countries of Upper Asia, that it brings back forcibly to the mind what was witnessed in all Protestant countries of the North of Europe, chiefly in England and Ireland, directly after the first outbreak of the so-called Reforma-

tion, and what we have seen in our youth, with our own eyes, in the fairest parts of France, at the end of the first Revolution : churches and monasteries ruined, or turned into hay-lofts, barracks, prostitutes' dens, sugar manufactories, blacksmith forges, carpenter workshops, etc. This is indeed a saddening scene ; and, unfortunately, the same vandalic process is still going on under the eyes of all, in this great and enlightened age, all over the surface of fair Italy, and of stately Spain. The atrocious measure may not be carried on with the same violence and brutality ; but the cold sternness with which the decree of transformation and destruction is executed, renders it yet more repugnant to every honest feeling of the human heart. Still, millions of men look on the whole process either with inward satisfaction or apparently unconscious indifference.

But if this spectacle is calculated to sadden, and excite in every upright soul a feeling of indignation, at least it speaks also of a great former power, against which the passions of men have rebelled. It was because the Church had embellished the world, and spread her munificence on valleys and mountains, plains and highlands, the earth and the sea, that those who grew tired of hearing her called "the just," "the fair," "the holy," rose up against her, and wished to destroy every vestige which could recall her back to the memory of men. If, therefore, Central Asia, in the thirteenth century, was covered with so many ruins of the Church, those very ruins attested her former vitality. The Moslems in five or six hundred years had not succeeded in annihilating her, since there were yet "many Christians scattered all over the East ;" but they had spoiled her beauty and weakened her strength. We must endeavor to find some further proofs of her former greatness in those distant regions ; and although the enemy has done his best to erase her name from the country forever, and to blot it out—if that were possible—from the memory of mankind, we may yet discover many tokens of the power she had to conquer men, and reduce them, in spite of their rudeness, under her mild sway.

#### 10. *Christianity conquering Turkish tribes, particularly the Uigurs.*

When the Arabs had occupied Transoxiana, they found in their midst, but particularly on the eastern side of the two great rivers which inclose the country, a great number of rude tribes entirely



different from the Iranians or Persians, as well as from the Armenians and Greeks. It has been since ascertained that they belonged to the great Turanian race, as it is called by modern ethnographers. This embraces the Tartars, Mongols, Turks, Chinese, etc.; and our present purpose cannot be to describe them and find out their connections or disparities. The great majority of these nations were pagans or Shamans. This last name was given so early as this to those we call Buddhists. It is a strange fact, however, that some of those tribes, and not the least important, were already Christian, and had been so for a length of time. We can give but a few pages to this very obscure subject; but owing to its very strangeness, it is impossible to pass it over entirely.

Professor Vambéry, in many passages of his *Bokhara*, speaks of the Uigurs and Naimans, or Namans, as being Nestorian Christians from a very early epoch. His accuracy in many points has been strongly impeached, we know. But as in several of his assertions he is well supported, not only by the authorities he quotes, which cannot always be easily set aside, but likewise by D'Herbelot in his *Bibliothèque Orientale*, it is yet possible to use his testimony. It is true that with respect to the Uigurs, Mr. Schuyler contradicts point-blank his statement that they first appeared on the banks of the Oxus in the seventh century *before* Christ; Mr. Schuyler maintains that it was not before the sixth century *after* Christ. But as this gentleman does not impeach Vambéry's assertion, repeated more than once—namely, that they professed Christianity very early, we may take it for granted that it is a fact. The testimony of D'Herbelot, moreover, is precise on the subject. To be more exact in whatever relates to this most remarkable Turkish or Tartar tribe, it is proper to mention that the Uigurs were divided into Eastern and Western. This last branch of the family dwelt, for a long time at least, not far east of Transoxiana. There were Christians among them, but the majority embraced Mussulmanism early. For the Arabs set at spreading their religion with the sword as soon as they had finished the conquest of Persia, and it is generally known that all the Turkish nations finally embraced it. But the eastern Uigurs stood firm in their allegiance to Christianity for many centuries. Mr. Vambéry says that they fought for it during five or six hundred years. And, strange to say, they lived from a very early period much further east than their western brethren. All authors agree that they occupied a vast territory east of the desert of Gobi, and north of

China. On this account the way the Gospel reached them is an historical puzzle. D'Herbelot, Vambéry, and others pretend that they received it from the Nestorians, and it may be so; nay, it is certain that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries they were actually Nestorians. There is, however, some reason to doubt that it had been so from the origin, as will soon appear.

In order to avoid all difficulty on their account, we will follow on that subject the statements of D'Herbelot rather than those of Vambéry. The French author is unobjectionable.

The *Bibliothèque Orientale* refers several times to them and calls them *Igours* or *Iguriens*. Their geographical position corresponds with that assigned to them by the author of *Bokhara*, and D'Herbelot states in one place that they had always been Christian. Their chief-tain was in fact *Prester John*. For a long time the Portuguese travelers of the sixteenth and seventeenth century pretended to have found this celebrated personage in Abyssinia, and that the Emperor of the Ethiopians was the Prester John of the thirteenth century. Many men of learning had been led into error by these reports. But it has been clearly proved in our age that the mediæval writers who referred to the fact, alluded to a far different country from Abyssinia, since the Franciscan missionaries, Monte Corvino and Rubruquis, who first acquainted Europe with this strange history, had gone in reality to Tartary, and resided at the court of the Grand Khan, in Pekin, and not at Axum or Gondar, in Ethiopia. D'Herbelot was one of the first to bring back public opinion to a true conception of the case; and the information he communicated to Europe had been found by him in Turkish authors. "Ung-Khan," he says, "is the name of a prince or emperor of the Mongols, who was called by the Europeans Prester John, because he was a Christian, as well as the greatest part of his subjects. His kingdom was situated in the most eastern part of Asia . . . and spread right and left over the country, as far as China, perhaps even as far as Corea and Japan. Tamugin or Genghis-Khan married the daughter of Ung-Khan; yet he did not scruple to deprive his father-in-law of his States; and it is by this conquest that he began his career, before he thought even of attacking Persia."

The proper name of the country which Prester John governed was Kerait, and its exact situation was partly in the desert of Gobi, partly east of it, and north of China. This was precisely the country of the Eastern Uigurs. D'Herbelot, on the word Kerait, or

Kerit, says again : “The people of this country were all Nestorian Christians, and their king was at the same time priest and married. In their liturgical language, which was Chaldaic—owing to their Nestorianism—he was called Malek Ioukanna : King John ; hence the word Prester John.”

The fact is repeated several times by the author of the *Bibliothèque Orientale*, that these Christians were Nestorians, and it was so undoubtedly, at the time of the mission of Monte Corvino among them, since there was an attempt made by Pope Alexander III. to bring them back to Rome ; and this attempt had at first succeeded. The prince then reigning in Kerait had simply requested of the Pope “to have in Rome a church for his nation, and an altar in Jerusalem, so that prudent men of his own subjects might be sent to both cities in order to imbibe the true doctrine at its center.” Baronius published the letter of the Pontiff, containing these details, and it is found in his *Annals*.\*

But if Nestorianism was then prevalent in those distant countries, it had not always been so ; and D’Herbelot could be considered as an authority for this supposition, when he says in his article, *Turc* : “Until the time of Genghis Khan, or even of Tamerlane, there have *always* been Tartar hordes, or nations professing Christianity, and among whom there were bishops, priests, and religious.” We have seen the proofs that Nestorianism was not *always* the prevalent creed of those countries. It had certainly been preceded by Catholicity, and although no certain date can be assigned for the introduction of heresy, since it must have come to the Kerait country along the northern route, which started from Armenia, it could not be anterior to the last princes of the Sassan dynasty, if it reached Tartary so early as this, by that route. It has been seen that Catholicity prevailed along that road.

It may be, however, granted that the Uigurs, who have been the cause of this digression, had not received Christianity at the beginning of its introduction among the Turkish tribes, since, according to D’Herbelot, they were yet pagans at the time of Ogouz, son of Carakhan, who was the first of the Tartars to embrace Mussulmanism. But they became certainly Christians later on, and perhaps received the Gospel from Nestorian missionaries. At the time of Genghis-Khan, they must have been subject to Prester John, because they

---

\* *Ad annum 1177, num. 32, 36.*

lived certainly within his territory, spoke the *Cathaian* language, and used the *Cathaian* calendar. This D'Herbelot positively states.

It cannot be doubted that many particularities contained in the legend of Prester John, as it was handed down to us by mediæval writers, were only flimsy fables. But it would be rash to reject almost the whole of it, under the pretext that it came to us through the channel of the Nestorians, who generally exaggerated every little circumstance into most important facts. The answer to this objection is ready : The Arab and Turkish authors, perfectly disinterested on the subject, sustain the main facts of the story, as well as Nestorian story-mongers. The negotiations carried on by Alexander III., through his physician Philip ; the mission of Monte Corvino, and the universal opinion of the middle ages, cannot be easily set aside, and considered as circumstances of little import. It is true that after Genghis-Khan, no mention is any more made of Prester John, except of a George, an exile in China, at the time of Monte Corvino. But the reason of it is plain : The barbarous conqueror who had been brought up at the court of Ung-Khan, who married his daughter, and owed him, indeed, all the advantages he first possessed, to come out of his obscurity, repaid his benefactor by the blackest ingratitude, destroyed him and his race, annexed his empire to his own very insignificant territory ; and although, on account, perhaps, of his Christian wife, he often appeared to favor the worshipers of Christ, and his grandson after him allowed them breathing-time in the midst of the persecution of the Moslems ; yet he, as well as the barbarous Mongol khans who followed him, were the chief cause of the rapid decline of Christianity in Eastern Asia, which took place from that epoch, and brought on at last the total destruction of it ; so that when Matthew Ricci entered China, and began his apostleship of patience, prudence, and most admirable skill, not a vestige of the previous religion of Christ existed in any part of this vast country.

All this was taking place as late as the thirteenth century ; but it had required all this long time—owing, no doubt, to the constant and well-nigh insurmountable obstacles interposed by the fanatic Moslems—for Christianity to reach this distant part of Asia. When their power was temporarily superseded by that of the Tartars, Nestorianism as well as Catholicity nearly disappeared. But under the rule of the Saracens, that is, from the seventh to the eleventh century, the heresy of Nestorius reigned universally in those vast regions of

Asia. A short sketch of it has been promised and must be given, to enable the reader to understand at what time it is true that the extent of the Nestorian patriarch's dominion embraced as large a territory as that of Rome, and how long it continued to do so. This has been precisely done by Gams in the *Dictionnaire de Théol. Cath.*,\* and it will amply suffice to translate it and place it under the eyes of the reader. It must be premised, however, that anteriorly to the epoch assigned for this immense diffusion of Nestorianism, the same heresy had spread to a great extent in the East, mostly by the southern route, since it reached China, as was seen, toward the middle of the seventh century. The sketch of Gams, in fact, is nearly confined to the countries bordering on the northern route; and this confirms the opinion already expressed, that in the north the Catholicity of the Armenians and the Greeks was an obstacle to Nestorianism, which it did not overcome before the age of the Caliphs of Bagdad, so that the episcopal sees existing in those countries were truly Catholic sees.

“The Nestorians,” says Gams, “protected by the Caliphs, spread their faith on all sides. They made a bishopric of Koufa, a flourishing Arabian city, and soon after they transferred the seat of their patriarchate from Seleucia-Ctesiphon, then in decay, to Bagdad, the capital of the Caliphate. From this center the Nestorians looked toward the Tartars and Turks. They succeeded in winning over to their party a king called Prester John, whose dominion extended over Kerait in Tartary. The metropolitan of the Tartar branch of the Nestorian Church resided at Meru or Merw,”—the Merv mentioned several times already—“a city built on the ruins of Alexandria-Margiana, a colony of Alexander the Great, on the southwestern border of the immense steppe or desert extending from this neighborhood as far as China. This city—of Merv—was the chief station of the long road followed by caravans between Persia and the great cities of Transoxiana, namely, Bokhara, Balk, and Samarkand. The most numerous of the Tartar tribes living in those remote regions was that of the Keraites, whose chief resided in Karakorum, at the foot of the Altai mountains.

“At the time when Hulaku, the grandson of Genghis-Khan, and brother to Mangu and Kublai, conquered Bagdad (1258), twenty-five metropolitan bishops acknowledged the Chaldean patriarch as the

---

\* Vol. xvi., p. 77.

chief of the Oriental Church. The sees of those metropolitans were dispersed throughout the whole of Asia, from the Caspian Sea to the Chinese Ocean, and from the northern frontier of Scythia to the southern extremity of the Indian peninsula. They comprised : 1. Elam, or the actual province of Khusistan ; 2. Nisibis ; 3. Masena (Bassorah, Busrah) ; 4. The Adiabene, with the metropolis Arbila, namely, Arbil or Mossoul ; 5. Beth-Seleucia or Kartscha, in Assyria ; 6. Halawan, on the border of both Assyria and Media ; 7. Persia, with the cities of Ormuz, Salmar, and Wan ; 8. Meru—Merw, in Khorassan ; 9. Hara or Herat ; 10. Razichitea, or Arabia and Kotroba ; 11. China ; 12. India ; 13. Armenia ; 14. Syria or Damascus ; 15. The Azerbaijan ; 16. Raia and Tabristan ; 17. The Dailamites, south of the Caspian Sea ; 18. Samarkand (Transoxiana) ; 19. Kashgar and Turkistan ; 20. Balk and Totscharestan ; 21. Sedschestan in Afghanistan ; 22. Hamadan or Media ; 23. Cambalu or Pekin, in China ; 24. Tanschet-Tanguth, in Tartary ; 25. Chamsegara, in Tartary also.

“The number of dioceses situated in those provinces was in the neighborhood of ninety, to which must be added fifty-six other bishoprics whose metropolitan sees are unknown. The metropolitans of those countries corresponded directly with the Nestorian patriarch. Those who lived at too great a distance to appear personally before him, sent him every six years a report on the situation of their dioceses.”

Thus it was only under the Caliphs of Bagdad, that is, late in the eighth century, that Nestorianism obtained the control of all the churches of Eastern Asia. Their spiritual power dwindled away with the gradual decay of this Caliphate. There were surely Nestorian sees in Asia before the eighth century, but they were comparatively few in number. Several, perhaps many, of those just enumerated remained Catholic sees until the Patriarch of Ctesiphon went to place himself under the protection of the Caliph at Bagdad. This is the conclusion of history in this regard.

#### 11. *Extensive commerce of India with the Persian and the Roman Empires.*

The early spread of Christianity in Persia, Armenia, and Transoxiana or Central Asia, has just been ascertained to have followed two very distinct highways opened previously by Grecian commerce. Both lines converged on India ; and if, in the considerations on which

we enter, we are often reduced to mere conjectures, the reader will at least admit that owing to the remarkable and undeniable facts briefly enumerated in the previous narrative, these conjectures are not without great force. It is important to consider yet apart these two highways of trade ; since, in the absence of positive documents it is impossible at the present day to point out distinctly by which of these roads Christianity first reached the great Ciskangetic peninsula.

The southern road, through Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf, was certainly the most natural and direct, owing to the early evangelization of Edessa, and to the commercial importance of Seleucia, from the time of its foundation by Seleucus Nicator ; but the northern one from Armenia, through Parthia and Bactriana, is not to be neglected, on account of the easy communication of Balk and Samarkand with Cabool and the southeast country. Both, therefore, ought to be again examined briefly. The first acquires a preponderating importance on account of a work published in the first century after Christ, which describes the very country under consideration, and which we still possess in its entirety. It is the celebrated *Periplus Maris Erithræi* attributed to Arrian, and generally acknowledged as a genuine production of this author, although Mr. Vivien de St. Martin is of a slightly different opinion.

Before, however, we discuss the statements of a geographer who was almost a contemporary of the apostles, and is universally admitted to be exact in his descriptions and altogether worthy of credit, the reader must be reminded of the early existence of episcopal sees in Southern Mesopotamia. From Edessa and Nisibis down the Tigris river, through old Assyria ; thence to Sitace, Persabora, Seleucia, and finally Bassorah, on the Persian Gulf, modern researches have established the fact that there were Christian bishops in all those cities long previous to the time of Nestorius. Many other cities of Mesopotamia, no doubt, enjoyed very early the same privilege. At the mouth of the Persian Gulf, toward the Indian Ocean, the island of Ormuz possessed also a bishop's see ; and although the titular was neither a Persian nor a Greek, but a Cushite from the Himyar region, he still formed a link in the chain which extended from the Armenian mountains down to the Indian peninsula.

Arrian, in writing this book of the *Periplus*, as well as his celebrated work on *The Expedition of Alexander*, intended certainly to subserve the interests of Grecian commerce. Seleucus Nicator

had opened the southern highway as well as the northern through Bactriana, in order to secure to his nation the advantages of the commerce with India. It is well known that the European nation that enjoys the monopoly of this trade is necessarily at the head of all other races in point of wealth and enterprise. It has always been so, and it is so to-day. Seleucus Nicator was the first among the ancients to understand it thoroughly; and by this alone he would deserve to be placed among the most remarkable men of antiquity.

It is proper, therefore, to consider more in detail what were, at the time of Arrian, in the first or second century of our era, and likewise five hundred years later, at the time of Cosmas of Alexandria, the products of Hindostan, which Europe needed. A short enumeration of them will render the constant intercourse between Asia and Europe along that line more evident and circumstantial; and the proofs which will be given later on of the Christianization of India will receive from it a far greater power and efficiency. Many are induced to reject altogether the mission of St. Thomas to the far Orient, merely through the belief that India was then altogether closed against Europeans. They imagine that the subsequent efforts required of the Portuguese to reach that country, which continued through so long a time, and consumed the lives of so many heroic men, before Vasco de Gama finally reached Calicut, were likewise necessary fourteen hundred years previous. They do not perceive that in the meanwhile the Moslems had placed themselves, with sword in hand, all over the countries which separate Greece from Hindostan, and that the only road accessible to the Portuguese and other Western nations was that of the ocean around Africa. This sea route had been followed only once by the ancients, under Hanno, and was as difficult in the fifteenth century, during the life and labors of Prince Henry, as it had been to the great Carthaginian navigator. But Seleucus, by merely drawing two lines on the map of his empire, had rendered the problem easy to every individual living at the time in Greece, Asia Minor, Palestine, or Egypt. The question of the trade of India with the West, at that epoch, is, therefore, an important one for us; and it is proper to consider it for a moment.

It embraced precious metals, invaluable gems and pearls, cotton, woolen and silk stuffs, aromatic gums, woods, and spices, and finally, articles of diet, food, and drink. The actual trade of Great Britain with India is far from exhibiting such a variety of commodities as



this. Then, it is true, opium was not known, a deleterious poison, which is at this time the most valuable product of this sadly impoverished country.

Of metals, the chief object of import or export was gold, which is, however, found nowhere in Hindostan. It was procured by the natives for their important manufactures of precious vessels or utensils, in three very remarkable ways. The first was north, from the Upper Ganges through Little Thibet toward the great desert of Gobi. How the Hindoos procured it is yet a problem; that they did it, however, is certain.

The second source from which they obtained the gold required for their commerce and manufactures, was Arabia Felix, or Yemen, as we now call it. This country, known to the Jews under the name of Saba, was rich in precious metals as well as in aromatic gums and perfumes; and the trade of Arabia with India in the oldest time, is for us beyond question.

But the most remarkable way by which the gold of nearly the whole civilized world was attracted toward India was even then the balance of trade. The products of the country were so varied and valuable; the nation was so little in want of those of other countries, that the exports being greatly in excess of the imports, gold and silver came in from all sides in the very reverse order of what takes place in these days. Pliny the Elder complained bitterly in his time \* that India—joined, it is true, with Arabia and China, whose products came to Rome through Hindostan—took away every year from the circulation of coin in the Roman Empire an amount of sesterces equal to ten million of francs.

How did the Hindoos employ such a constant accumulation of the precious metals? When we read the descriptions of the Ramayana, which must have expressed the truth at the time this poem was written, we understand it easily, and we can form of India, as it then was, a conception, which is undoubtedly never to be realized any more for that unfortunate country. Golden chariots, trappings for elephants and horses, of pure gold, utensils of every description made of the same metal; gold in ingots, gold pieces by the measure or bushel, were counted among the nuptial presents given to a bride. According to Herodotus, the Indian subjects of the Persian monarch were the only people who always paid their tribute in gold, not in baser coin nor in kind.

---

\* Hist. Nat., lib. xii. 41.

In this enumeration mention is made of gold pieces; were they coined, or simply subdivisions of ingots? The discussion of this question would lead to some interesting details; but it is incompatible with our necessary limits. It is certain that no coins of the Sanskrit time in India have ever been found. This, however, is only a negative proof. We possess on the other side the positive testimony of the *Periplus*—a later epoch, however—that “pieces of Hindoo gold coin, under the name of *Kaltris*, were exchanged with profit against the Grecian and Roman money.” That they were of the same nature as modern Indian gold pieces, is ascertained by their name, which was then in Greek *καλτῆρις*.

After the precious metals, not only as medium of exchange, but also as a direct object of commerce in Hindostan, we have placed in the list of Indian products, gems and pearls. This was one of the greatest attractions which led Western nations to the banks of the Indus and the Ganges. From the highest antiquity the peninsula was rich in diamonds, rubies, and pearls. The first were found chiefly in the old kingdom of Golconda, celebrated all over the world for the abundant possession of those brilliant gems. These mines have been exhausted, and are no longer worked. Rubies, either of the variety of carbuncle, called by Cosmas *alabandinum*, or of that of precious garnet, to which he gives the name of *hyacinthus*, were abundant; the first, near a city called Caber, whose identity we do not know if the erudite Ritter himself has ascertained; and the second mostly from the shores of Ceylon, which seems to have been the chief mart for that precious stone as late as the time of Cosmas, that is, the sixth century of our era. We do not hear that any spot in Hindostan or Ceylon is now worthy of being worked out for the finding of these splendid jewels. As to pearls, they are the only precious gems, we think, which are yet exported from the country, and the fisheries in the neighborhood of Manar are yet in operation, although only a shadow of what they were formerly. Pearls were in ancient times found, not only around Manar and in the neighborhood of Ceylon, but likewise all along a great part of the Malabar coast. The author of the *Periplus* mentions expressly that in his time the chief market for pearls, in India, was the city of Nelkinda, now Neliceram, north of Calicut.

The trade of Europe with India, however, had it embraced merely gold and gems, would not have required the numerous fleets which sailed over those seas from the age of Seleucus to the eighth century

of our era. But spices, and aromatic gums and woods formed also a great part of the exports from the country. Of gums, frankincense alone is known to have been used extensively in that country, not only in religious services, but also for public and private solemnities. As early as the time of the Ramayana, enormous quantities of this delightful perfume were consumed, particularly on all occasions of public joy. This frankincense was not the Arabian gum, so celebrated even in our time, but it was undoubtedly the sweet-scented exudation of a tree very common, even at this day, in Central India and the coast of Coromandel, known to botanists under the name of *Boswellia serrata*. The exportation of it to the Roman Empire formed the chief part of those cargoes of which Pliny the Elder complained as exhausting the coin of the country, and if it was used for religious solemnities and sacrifices, an enormous amount of the gum was also burned in funeral ceremonies. The description of these costly rites given by Pliny is the most graphic that we know in the works of ancient authors yet extant, although expressed only in a few indignant phrases against the waste of so much treasure.

Sandal-wood was likewise exported to Greece and Rome, although the greatest consumption of it took place, as to-day, among the natives of India. But pepper may be said to have formed of itself an object of trade capable of giving occupation every year to large merchant fleets. The vast amount of this spice used by the Romans in their condiments and ragouts is now well known. In our day it is mostly replaced in Italy and Spain by red pepper or *pimento*, which, as all travelers know, forms an important adjunct to all modern dishes in Southern Europe. The Romans and Greeks of the epoch under consideration used chiefly the berry called then in Sanskrit *pipali*, whence came the Greek word *πέπερι*, and the Latin *piper*. Although in our age the pepper we use comes principally from the Molucca Islands, still the South of India furnishes it in large quantities. But at the beginning of our era, it seems that the bulk of this spice, consumed on the tables of Syrians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, came from a vast district of India, whose chief city was Cochin. C. Ritter has explained satisfactorily the obscure language of Cosmas Indicopleustes on the subject. *Male*, which, according to Cosmas, was the center of the trade in pepper, is certainly, as proved by C. Ritter,\* the place called generally by the ancients Cauca-Mali,

---

\* Erdkunde von Asien, vol. v.

which is for us Cochin. The pepper plant grows yet extensively in this part of Hindostan. The trade in that commodity, in the time of Cosmas, was so important, that five emporiums were required for the numerous vessels which came for it from the West. The good Indicopeustes, who visited the country, calls them Parti, Mangaruth, Salopatana, Nalopatana, and Pudapatana.

Besides the vessels required for this enormous quantity of spices, fleets as numerous at least were needed for the exportation from India of cotton, woolen, and silk stuffs.

Who is acquainted with ancient authors, and has not heard of the glossy, rich, and bright-colored fabrics which issued from the Indian looms? The *Periplus* mentions so many different kinds of them as articles of commerce that the number is not certainly greater in modern times. Heeren, in his work on *Asiatic Nations*, says of them: "We read in the *Periplus* of the finest Bengal muslins; of coarse, middle, and fine cloths, either plain or striped; of coarse and fine calicoes; of colored shawls and sashes; of coarse and fine purple goods, as well as pieces of gold embroidery; of spun silk and furs from Serica." The cotton is an indigenous plant of the country; and the old *richis* of patriarchal times used it for their simple dresses and long, flowing robes. From that time down to this it is impossible to think of a Hindoo without picturing him to one's imagination as a dusk-colored, but well-formed and noble-looking man, clothed from head to foot in a becoming dress of white or party-colored calico. The simple looms out of which issued, four or five thousand years ago, millions of pieces of this stuff, so well adapted to the climate of the country, are yet in use in many parts of the Decan and of Orissa. How many thousand cargoes of this commodious fabric were exported during the whole period when Greek vessels covered the Indian seas and the Arabian and Persian gulfs? No one can say.

Cotton could then be much better cultivated in India than at this time, owing to the much greater number of vast artificial water reservoirs, which have for the most part crumbled down, and are now left in ruins by the present government. Famines are common in this age on account of want of rain. But, besides cotton fabrics, mention is often made in ancient authors of silk, woolen stuffs, and furs. These were not, to a great extent, indigenous to India; yet they formed a large part of its trade. Silk came from *Serica*, the northwest of China. The Hindoo wealthy ladies of the kingdom

of Ayodhya, so celebrated in the great Indian poems, used it for their dresses on all festive occasions. But a great bulk of the silk imported from the East was sold in India for the West, and transported by Greek ships or caravans to the markets of Mesopotamia or Asia Minor.

The woolen stuffs mentioned above were chiefly shawls, from Cashmere, as in our days. And as to the furs, they must have come from Siberia through the desert of Gobi, or from Tartary, north of China.

Finally, the dietary articles which India exported from its rich fields in ancient times consisted mainly of rice, condiments, and palm wine. It is certain that Hindostan produced then more than it could consume; and together with these bulky wares, the precious juice of the sugar-cane, indigenous to the peninsula, the delicious fruits of the country, and the honey distilled by innumerable bees, were eagerly purchased by Western nations.

This rapid enumeration was required to prove that the intercourse between Rome, Greece, Syria, Egypt, Asia Minor, etc., with the country of the Brahmins, must have been frequent and of great importance from the time of Seleucus down to the Moslem invasions. It must have been in its greatest period of activity about the apostolic age; since it had been already of three hundred years' duration; and the Arsacidæ or Parthian dynasty did not interfere with Greek religion, nor with Greek commerce. To thoroughly convince the reader of it, some details must now be culled from the *Periplus Maris Erythræi*. If it was written by Arrian, as the majority of critics until lately believed, the author was contemporary with the Emperor Hadrian. Geographers of great authority, however—among them Vivien de St. Martin—attribute it to an unknown writer older still than Arrian, and consequently of the first century of our era, and of the age of the apostles. W. Vincent, the learned English translator of it, who wrote the most valuable commentaries on the Greek text, thought the author was a Greek merchant. We follow the quarto edition of London, 1800–1805.

The Erythræan Sea, whose entire shores the book describes, is nothing else than our Indian Ocean, from the eastern coast of Africa to the Transgangetic peninsula. The sea voyage whose narrative it contains comprises consequently the whole circumnavigation of Arabia, and the description of the whole Malabar and Coromandel coasts of Hindostan. The vessel is engaged in the coasting trade, and stops at every harbor of any importance on that immense extent

of country. The exports and imports of all those maritime towns are given *in extenso*, and the sketch just drawn by us of the commerce of India at the time gives a very inadequate idea of what it then was. Some further details will have to be presently mentioned. By this book, written probably under Claudius or Nero, the Roman world became acquainted with the whole Orient, considered commercially and ethnographically; for the various races of men inhabiting the countries described are often graphically portrayed. It was just the information that an apostle would want, before starting from the Red Sea or the Persian Gulf, for the most distant regions toward the East.

The facility of reaching Hindostan being the chief object of the present investigation, nothing need be said of the statements contained in the *Periplus* with regard to the coast of Arabia, either on the Red Sea, or along the western limit of the Indian Ocean. For us the ship has reached the mouth of the Indus when the narrative becomes of real interest. On one of the branches by which this great river enters the sea, a large commercial town by the name of Barbarikè flourished, a vast emporium, in fact, of all the rich commodities which came down the stream from beyond the Himalaya Mountains, from Cabool, Cashmere, and even Bactriana and Sogdiana. The articles of trade bought there by the merchants were of the richest kind; fine muslins, bright-colored calicoes, silks and furs from the northeast, gems—and among these not only diamonds and rubies, but likewise sapphires, onyxes, and topazes. All along his narrative the writer enumerates the various places where the merchants had to pay their purchases in specie—*χρῆμα*—and often notes the advantages of exchange. It was the same six hundred years later; and the remark is made both by the author of the *Periplus* and by Cosmas, that the Roman *denarius* was the best coin for exchange, on account of the high value the purity of its silver gave it in the eyes of the natives of Arabia or India.

From the mouth of the Indus the ship reaches the Bay of Cush, where then flourished the city of Barugaza, called at this day Guzerat. The whole country around, nearly as far southeast as modern Bombay, was then under the power of the Parthians. At that time the dynasty of the Arsacidæ ruled over the vast Empire of Persia; but were it not for the *Periplus*, we might be ignorant of the fact that in the south it extended so far east of the Indus as Guzerat or even Bombay. The book mentions expressly that Barugaza was a Parthian

city, as well as the country around ; and many details of the narrative belong more to an Iranian than to a Hindoo race. The luxurious articles alone contained in the long list of imports into Barugaza speak rather of a sensual nation, as the Persians then were, than of a moral and simple Indian people, such as the companions of Alexander found them near the mouth of the Indus. Plates of gold of great value, costly musical instruments, handsome girls for the harem, the *best* wines, the *most fragrant* perfumes, etc., etc., could scarcely have been even imagined as articles of trade so near the place where the simple people, called Porticani and Musicani, lived three or four hundred years before, when Nearchus sailed down the river on his way to the Persian Gulf.

Two remarkable details more of Indian commerce at the time, are of some interest, and can be briefly mentioned ; the first relates to the trade in African slaves, then already existing in the far Orient ; the *Periplus* often enumerates *σώματα*, which a Roman would have called *mancipia*, as a frequent object of commerce between Ethiopia and India. The second relates to vases of porcelain, coming evidently from China by the way of the sea, and sold to Western nations all along the Malabar coast. They are called *μυρρίνη* in the *Periplus*, and thus a difficulty which has puzzled many authors writing on Roman customs seems to be satisfactorily solved. This has reference to what Latin writers, under the first emperors, called *vasa murrhina*, some of which cost large sums of money, and were esteemed chiefly on account of their transparency, brilliant colors, and fragile beauty. It seems, after all, they were only Chinese cups of porcelain.

Before describing the farther southern coast from Calliene to Nelkinda, or as we would say, from Bombay to Goa, the writer of the same book gives some details on the interior of the country, and on several important cities now in ruins. What he relates of them, he must have known only from report, as he seems to have never left his ship, or at least the harbors along the sea-shore. What he says of the difficulty of traveling east of the Malabar coast on account of the mountains, the forests, and many ferocious animals, is perfectly well known to the modern student who is acquainted, by reading, with the topography of the Ghaut mountains, and of the country of the Mahrattas. The cities of Ozene, Plithana, and Tagara, of which he speaks as then existing in the interior of the peninsula, answer perfectly well to the old Oughein, Pultaneh, and Deoghir. The

ruins of the first have been often explored, and have enriched the cabinets of modern antiquaries with coins and other relics. Of Pli-thana—now Pultaneh—little can be said except as a starting-point of geography to determine the position of Tangara, which, the *Periplus* says, was a ten days' journey east of the first. This last place is perfectly identified by W. Vincent, the learned commentator on the Greek work, with the old city of Deoghir, near Ellora. This most celebrated spot of Hindostan must then have been in all its beauty; and the famous monuments of its former greatness are now ascertained to have been among the first built in the whole country, directly after, if not contemporaneously with, the rock temples of Elephanta, near Calliene or Bombay.

After the *Parthian* country of Barugaza, the writer describes the whole Malabar coast from north to south. First comes the province of *Ariakè*—called in more modern times “the pirates' country,” between Bombay and Goa. It is impossible, according to Vincent, to sketch it more accurately. Then follows the province of *Limurikè*, answering to modern Canara. There begins the trade in pepper, described six hundred years later by Cosmas. But Indicopleustes speaks there only of this precious spice, whilst the author of the *Periplus* mentions likewise pearls, ivory, silk, betel or *malabathrum*, diamonds, rubies, and tortoise-shell. The book does not forget here or hereabout the general complaint, which has been already heard from Pliny, namely, that a great part of the specie of the West went thus to India never to return, except in the shape of costly goods and perfumes.

Since a word has just been said of pearls, it is proper to mention that the same book speaks at length of the pearl fisheries between Ceylon and the continent. It states positively that then the divers were all condemned criminals; the process of boring the pearls is briefly described, and many details are given of the greatest interest, although the writer, according to all accounts, seems not to have traveled himself beyond Muziris, which Mr. Vivien de St. Martin thinks was seventy French leagues south of Goa, on the borders of the pepper country.

A last remark will be sufficient for our present purpose, namely, that after a brief description, from hearsay, of the Coromandel coast, the writer carries his reader through the Bay of Bengal and the mouth of the Ganges, to the Golden Chersonesus beyond, which has puzzled all modern geographers. Finally he speaks of a very



distant country in the north, called by him Thinaë, which all agree must be China, whose silks, furs, and other precious commodities, he positively says, were brought to the West, either by the way of the sea southerly to India, or northerly directly toward the west through the desert, to Bactriana and the Persian Empire.

In conclusion, a few phrases of the most exact French geographer of our time—Mr. Vivien de St. Martin—will complete what it is important for us to know of this book: “Sur tout ce vaste développement, depuis le débouché de la Mer Rouge, l’auteur du Périple indique ponctuellement les stations et tous les accidents de la côte, avec les distances, les peuples ou les tribus de l’intérieur, les productions, les besoins et les ressources commerciales de chaque pays, en un mot tout ce qui est d’utilité pratique pour le marchand et pour la navigation.” \*

By this time the reader must be perfectly well aware of the exact and extensive knowledge the Romans and the Greeks had of India, and even of China, as early as the apostolic age. The conviction is also acquired of the facility which travelers, navigators, and it must be said, missionaries enjoyed for reaching the most distant countries of Eastern Asia, which many in our day imagine to have been then not only almost out of reach but even perfectly unknown. A circumstance has been left out in the hurry of composition and the abundance of matter, which, however, must be briefly stated, as of extreme importance for our present object. All the details just cursorily gone through have been supposed to belong only to a coasting traffic; and the object of the writer reduced him to this, as he wished to describe a *Periplus*. But the monsoons blowing regularly between Africa and India were already known and used by navigators, and thus the length of sea voyages was considerably reduced. The words of Mr. Vivien de St. Martin on the subject deserve to be quoted: † “A few years before Pliny completed his *Historia Naturalis*, an event occurred which changed entirely the navigation of the eastern seas, and the conditions of the Indian commerce. A Greek pilot of Egypt, named Hippalus, struck with the regularity of the winds which alternately, during six months, blow from the Gulf of Adulis in Ethiopia toward India, and from India toward the Gulf of Adulis, was the first who dared to intrust his ship to these winds—we call them the monsoons—and thus opened through the high

\* *Histoire de la géographie*, page 190, Paris, 1873.

† Page 189.

seas a way more direct, rapid, and less exposed to accidents than the old coasting route followed until his time. The Roman trade soon adopted it exclusively; and in their gratitude the sailors gave the name of Hippalus to these regular winds of the Indian Ocean." Pliny mentions expressly that already in his time, directly after this discovery, the monsoons were taken advantage of by the sailors.\* Ocelis was a maritime town of Arabia Felix, near the Straits of Babel-Mandeb, and Muziris is thought to have been an Indian city in the vicinity of Calicut. This remarkable passage of the elder Pliny, which has not yet, that we know, attracted the attention of modern writers, proves in a direct and powerful manner, that in his time—the second age of our era—in one of the harbors of Arabia Felix, evangelized by St. Bartholomew, who left there the Gospel of St. Matthew in Hebrew, ships were found every year going direct to Calicut, in India, and accomplishing the journey in a little more than a month: *Inde navigant diebus quadragenta, etc.*

### 12. *India must have been evangelized very early.*

The whole book, the sixth of the *Historia Naturalis* of Pliny, gives, like the *Periplus*, important details on the Indian commerce, and the Indian peninsula, and thus confirms the fact of a constant and easy intercourse existing in the apostolic age between Egypt and Persia on the one side and India on the other. The exact road followed by St. Thomas is not certainly known. This subject must be presently discussed. But it can be asked pertinently, what could have prevented any apostle of Christ, hearing of the success of Bartholomew in Arabia Felix, from going to visit him—as they did so often each other—and help him at first before thinking of a further mission? There were at the time vessels starting frequently from Berenice, on the Red Sea, just on the southeastern frontier of Egypt. Pliny gives in detail the itinerary from Alexandria to this place. Arrived at Berenice, the messenger of God is sure of an early departure on some of the numerous crafts sailing then on the Red Sea. The harbor of Ocelis—near the modern Mocha—is the terminus of this first voyage. But in this harbor numerous vessels are loading for the coast of India; many Greeks can be found in the city who

---

\* "Inde (ab Oceli) vento Hippalo navigant diebus quadraginta ad primum emporium Indiæ Musirim."—Lib. vi. 26.

have already traded with that country, and information can easily be obtained from them. Since the discovery of Hippalus there is no need of going through the whole circle of the *Periplus*, although many merchants still continue to sail along the coast for the sake of the rich trade in which they are engaged. But if you wait for the monsoon, which is sure to come in a short time, you will be able to reach one of the best harbors of India in forty days. This is the whole problem, and every one can judge how easy of solution it was. Should we suppose that the apostle who first evangelized India did not go through the Red Sea, but went to his mission through Edessa and Mesopotamia, then he could certainly embark at Bassorah, near the Persian Gulf. Since Seleucus Nicator had opened that road, it was much frequented; and we know by a letter of Justinus II., Emperor of Constantinople, to Elesbaa, the Ethiopian king of Axum, that later on the Sassanidæ ruined the trade of Arabia with Hindostan by the short-cut their vessels took through the Persian Gulf. This route was in full operation as early as the apostolic age, if not earlier. From Bassorah the island of Ormuz could be reached in a few days, and there also, as well as in the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, the monsoons, after the discovery of Hippalus, could carry you in less than a month to Muziris or any harbor you chose on the Malabar coast.

Why should not, therefore, St. Thomas, who certainly went to Edessa, have proceeded farther on that road so well known to us, and accomplished what a universal tradition tells us he did? Every one believed it when Tillemont, *ce mulet des Alpes*, as we think Joseph de Maistre called him, rendered the task of the critic extremely arduous by denying altogether the mission of St. Thomas to Hindostan. His reason was that the sepulcher of this apostle was known to have been in Edessa, and consequently Tillemont was sure that he suffered martyrdom there, and never went farther East than this city. The story of Meliapor was, therefore, altogether a fabulous legend, and must be repudiated. This was the main cause of all subsequent misunderstandings on the subject, as if the relics of St. Thomas could not have been divided, a part of them kept at Meliapor, where he died a martyr, the other carried to Edessa, which he had first evangelized; and thus his sepulcher was naturally found at both places.

The new Bollandists, who promise to re-establish the truth of history in this case, and consequently to disprove the opinion of Tillemont, will not publish their interesting account of St. Thomas, until they reach the 21st of December, and consequently for many

years to come. The documents they possess are altogether out of our reach ; we cannot promise, therefore, any but lame proofs. Such as they are, however, they may be found not altogether unsatisfactory and groundless.

Our starting-point must be to deny that the Christianity which first reached India was Nestorian, and this task is easy and soon accomplished. After all the details that have been given of the intercourse of the West with India, from the apostolic age down to the time of Cosmas, it is absolutely impossible to suppose that no Christian missionary reached that country before the sixth century. There were Christian, nay, Catholic bishops in Ormuz in the third or fourth age probably. To be sure, they belonged to the bronze-hued Cushite race, and had come from Arabia Felix. But on this very account they might have been more fit to Christianize the dark Hindoos of Nelkinda or Muziris. Can we imagine that during three hundred years—which were to elapse before a single Nestorian monk could come from Seleucia—those bishops succeeded each other in Ormuz, ordained priests, and performed all the functions of their ministry, without knowing or thinking that all this time there were Greek or Arabian ships in the harbor of their own island, waiting for the monsoon, or sailing at the first breath of it, for the cities of Barugaza, or Calliene, or Nelkinda ? If they knew it, or thought of it—it would be absurd to suppose the contrary—is it not equally incredible to imagine that knowing it and thinking of it, it never came to their mind to send at least some of their priests or monks to that rich and populous country, where many of their flock must have gone to trade, and which they could reach in less than a month ?

The same must be said of the harbor of Ocelis, at the mouth of the Red Sea, of that of Adulis, in the kingdom of Axum, of all those harbors of the eastern coast of Arabia described in the *Periplus*, and also—some of them, at least—by Pliny ; all of them rich trading cities, where numerous Christians must have been found at a very early age, and where priests and bishops attended certainly to the spiritual wants of their flock. All the towns which skirt the Ethiopian side of the Red Sea, and the extensive sweeping line of Arabia along the same, were in monthly, if not daily, intercourse with the numerous harbors of India ; yet, if we adopt the modern opinion, we must suppose that no Christian evangelist from Egypt or Ethiopia ever thought of going to India, to a country teeming with every

thing the heart can wish, before the Persian Christians of Lower Mesopotamia had become Nestorians in the sixth century ! It looks thus as if heresy is the sure way of inspiring a man with proselytism.

There is yet an important spot in those seas which has been, by chance only, left aside and neglected in these considerations, and which renders the supposition still more absurd, if that is possible. We mean the Dioscorides Islands, or rather the only large one of the group, called at this time Socotra. It is situated high up in the Indian Ocean, a good distance from both the Cape Guardafui, in Africa, and the coast of Arabia, north of it. It seems, as it were, an advanced sentinel looking forever toward Hindostan, which is in front of it. All ships coming out from the Red Sea, impelled forward by the gentle breath of the monsoons, must pass in its neighborhood ; and if there are in it civilized people given to a seafaring life, the first idea that must present itself to their imagination must be to unfurl their sails to the regular winds constantly blowing around their island, and abandon themselves without effort and labor to the breeze. A few days will surely carry them to any of the numerous harbors of the coast of Malabar. The reader might perhaps suppose that Socotra, having been always, as they think, under the rule of a semi-barbarian master, as it is at present under that of the Imaum of Muscat, it was very unlikely indeed that the people of India could hope to receive the Gospel of Christ from any of its inhabitants. But this would be a great mistake ; and Cosmas must give us on the subject the information he received during a trip which he paid to the island. We give, with full explanations afterward, the Latin translation of the Greek text, as Montfaucon furnishes it in his edition of the *Topographia Christiana*: “ *In insula quæ Dioscoridis vocatur, in mari Indico sita, cujus incolæ Græcè loquuntur, suntque coloni a Ptolemæis Alexandri Macedonis successoribus isthuc deportati, clerici reperiuntur, ex Perside ubi ordinantur eoque transmissi ; ibi etiam Christianorum multitudo versatur. Cui insulæ adnavigavi, neque tamen eo descensum feci ; verum cum quibusdam ejus incolis Græcè loquentibus colloquia miscui, qui in Æthiopiam proficiscebantur.*” This is a most important passage. The reader learns from it that in the time of Cosmas (the sixth century) Socotra was mainly inhabited by Greeks. Their ancestors had been sent there from Egypt by some of the Ptolemies more than six centuries previous. There were among them *clerici*, priests certainly, and a *multitude* of Christians. From the text even it appears that

Socotra was then a Christian island, and it had been the same for several centuries. Who can believe that none of those priests ever thought of going to India, so near to them, to preach the Gospel, or that no missionary had been sent there by the archbishop of Seleucia, on whom they depended ?

But this dependence on the Nestorian metropolitans of Seleucia is a difficulty, which it is our present object to remove. And to render it more serious, Cosmas, in the same passage, and in some others of his book, mentions the presence of Christians in several parts of India in his time, and he always says that their priests and monks came *ex Perside*, namely, from Seleucia. They were consequently Nestorians, in the opinion of modern writers.

This he asserts of the Christian colony of Male (Cochin) in the south ; of Calliene (Bombay) in the north ; of Ceylon, on the Coromandel coast, etc. These statements have perplexed many Catholic writers, even the Bollandists themselves, and have thus helped to create or strengthen the modern opinion that all the earliest Christianity of Hindostan had been an offshoot of Nestorianism. This, however, is altogether a misconception. The exact date of the travels of Cosmas is not known. It has to be extracted from the book itself, which is not perfectly clear on the subject. Montfaucon placed this voyage of Cosmas in the *first* quarter of the sixth century. The Bollandists contend that as the edition of the book passed hurriedly through the press, the learned Benedictine Father made here some mistake, and that Indicopleustes traveled, in fact, in the *second* quarter of the sixth age. But even adopting this last computation, the visit of the Alexandrian merchant to all those Christian colonies of India must have taken place at the latest between 540 and 550. Babæus, the first Nestorian patriarch of Seleucia, entered on his high office in 499. He became a Nestorian only later on. Is it credible that in less than fifty years, he and one or two of his successors had founded all those churches of Hindostan—there must have been others which Cosmas had not visited—and inoculated them with his Nestorian heresy at their very origin ? We know that one of his near successors, at least, was a most wretched prelate, who thought more of lust than of proselytism. Besides, all attempts at a change in religion require great exertions at the very center where the change takes place, and leave little leisure for looking abroad. The first Nestorian patriarchs of Seleucia must have had no time, if they had the zeal, to found new churches in distant countries. All these consid-

erations show evidently that even admitting with Cosmas that the priests of all those colonies came in his time, and had come all the time previous *ex Perside*—from Seleucia, its ecclesiastical center—it had been from Catholic—not from Nestorian—Persia. Cosmas never speaks of Nestorianism, never mentions its name.

At the epoch of his travels it is very doubtful if those distant churches in Hindostan had adopted the new heresy. If the dates of Montfaucon are right, most probably they had not; in the contrary supposition the matter remains in doubt. For the Bollandists themselves, treating of this very subject of Nestorianism, and of what must have happened in Mesopotamia when Babæus declared himself a patron of heresy, remark that always in such cases as this, many of the clergy and the great mass of the people continue to believe as their ancestors had done, and cannot be called heretics. Even when in the course of several generations the faith is finally altered for the great number or the totality of the people, many yet remain in good faith and are really children of the Church, as must be certainly the case, even at this day, for many Russians. This is an example brought forward by the new Bollandists. The reader, besides, remembers the proofs we gave that until the Moslem invasion and later many Catholics remained in the whole extent of Persia. The same must have happened in India.

The people, therefore, that Cosmas met with at Socotra, at Calliene, at Male, at Ceylon, belonged to a Church established in those countries for several ages at least—this is sure of Socotra—and consequently were not offshoots of Nestorianism, and could scarcely deserve the name of Nestorian at the time.

But of the text which has given rise to these considerations, another peculiarity deserves a rapid mention: the Socotra Christians were then a traveling and seafaring people. Cosmas says that he spoke to some of them, who were just going to Ethiopia. He probably traveled with them on his way up the Red Sea to Adulis, where it is known that he landed on his return from India. The Greek-speaking Christians of the Dioscorides Islands were thus given to commerce and a seafaring life. If some went north to Ethiopia or Arabia, others, no doubt, went southeast to India, in greater number, probably, as the attractions were certainly more powerful on the side of this last country. How could they have remained so long in this position without any of them attempting to convert the Hindoos to Christianity?

All the circumstances just narrated prove that Christian proselytism had been going on for a long time in those countries of the far Orient, and consequently India had received the Gospel long before Nestorianism arose, whatever may be thought of the apostleship of St. Thomas.

Before an attempt is made to speak of his great mission, we must yet turn our eyes toward the northern route to India, namely, the one which, starting from Armenia, passes south of Hyrcania, Parthia, and Bactriana toward Cashmere, Cabool, and the head-waters of the Indus. For we must come back to our former assertion that this northern route converges toward India, as well as the southern highway.

This new task cannot long detain the reader. The details given in this very chapter on the line followed by the Christian religion along the road opened formerly by the Persian kings, and later on by the Seleucidæ, carried us up from Armenia to Bactriana and Transoxiana; and on the other side, south, the *Periplus Maris Erythræi* states repeatedly that in the time it took place (and probably long before) precious merchandise brought from the north of China through Tartary to Bactriana, again came down the Indus and passed on to Barugaza and the Malabar coast. It is easy to understand that an apostle of Christ, Bartholomew, for instance, who evangelized Armenia, or Thomas, for all we know, could reach the Indian peninsula down the same mighty river, as easily as merchants did. We will soon see that a very respectable tradition brings Thomas along that northern road, specifying all the various nations inhabiting Hyrcania, Parthia, Bactriana, etc. At this last point we find on the map the head of the Indus River, north of the Paropamisus or Himalaya Mountains, through which a descent to the south is easy in this western branch of their range. Did Thomas follow this road, and not the southern? Did he enter the Indian Ocean at Barbarikè at the mouth of the Indus, to go thence down the Malabar coast, round Cape Comorin, to end his apostleship and his life at Meliapor, on the Coromandel coast? But this is only conjecture. Criticism requires that we should have documents concerning him, and following them, endeavor to ascertain which way he most probably took. The opinion of Tillemont, that he never went farther than Edessa, must occupy us a short time in this discussion, and it is possible that some light may be thrown on a subject necessarily very obscure. For many ages Christians firmly believed that Thomas had evangelized Hindostan; what proofs can be given of this opinion?



13. *The mission of St. Thomas to India is most probable.*

In a previous chapter, treating of the evangelization of Edessa, beside the subsequent mission of St. Jude to Mesopotamia, that of Thaddæus to Abgar, which preceded it, was, we think, firmly established; and it is now a point of ecclesiastical history which can be considered as settled. But Thaddæus was merely one of the seventy-two disciples of Christ, and had been sent by Thomas, the apostle, according to the universal opinion of the East. Did St. Thomas follow this disciple to Edessa? What does tradition relate on the subject? It is so universal in the affirmative that many have believed, on that account, that the mission of St. Thomas never extended farther than Armenia, or perhaps Parthia, on account of a passage of Origen, of which we will speak presently. The Protestant critics of the seventeenth century, for this reason, openly denied the evangelization of India by Thomas. Edessa, according to them, was the main field of his zeal; and Beausobre, in his *History of the Manicheans*, explained the various places mentioned in the Acts of this apostle by the names of Armenian cities, somewhat analogous in point of pronunciation. Tillemont adopted the same opinion, mainly on account of the sepulchre of St. Thomas, which existed certainly at Edessa in the time of St. John Chrysostom; and this idea prevailed among Catholic writers in spite of the sensible remark of Baronius, that the fact of the tomb of the saint being at Edessa did not precisely conflict with the existence of his sepulchre at Meliapoor; his relics might have been divided, and could be honored at the same time in both places.

But this very discussion proved the universality of the tradition concerning the apostleship of Thomas in Armenia. Of his further labors in the East, Origen, in a passage preserved by Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History*,\* mentioned that Parthia was the province assigned him before the departure of the apostles from Jerusalem. It is proper to remark on this important statement of Origen, that in the apostolic age Parthia embraced the whole former Persian Empire, which had fallen into the possession of the Arsacidæ. The Punjab, in India, even belonged to it; since the dynasty of Arsaces claimed the former rights of the Achemenidæ, and did not certainly recognize the cession of their Indian provinces made by Seleucus to Tchandragoupta. It is not, therefore, a matter of surprise that in

---

\* Lib. iii., cap. 1.

the time of St. Jerome, the *tradition* concerning the apostleship of St. Thomas comprised the Parthians, the Medes, the Persians, the Caramanians, the Hyrcanians, and the Bactrians. All these nations belonged then to Parthia. The word *Magians*, added to this list of nations in all modern editions, might be a corrupt text instead of *Indians*. It might be also merely the mention of the priesthood ruling spiritually over all those races, according to the religion of Zoroaster. This passage being of extreme importance, a word on it cannot be but acceptable. It is contained in an appendix *De vitis Apostolorum*, to the celebrated book of St. Jerome, *De viris Illustribus*. No work of the great doctor is more authentic than this last opuscle. But the appendix *De vitis Apostolorum* is not generally found in the MSS. which contain both the Latin text of Jerome and the Greek translation of Sophronius. Manuscripts, however, which give only the Greek text, embrace this *appendix*; and Erasmus was so much struck with their general tenor and style, that he could not but consider it—the appendix—as part and parcel of the work of St. Jerome. He gave it, therefore, a Latin translation, and from his time down to this, the good editions of the great Latin doctor have contained it among his genuine works, not among the *spuria*. Erasmus was not the man to confound too easily a spurious work with a genuine one, either of classical or of ecclesiastical writers. Fairness required of us this explanation before we quote the text itself. But if any one in our age should feel disposed to be more fastidious than the erudite citizen of Rotterdam, we would simply tell him: Suppose this appendix is not really the work of St. Jerome, since we have not his Latin text; it must be as old, nevertheless, since it is, certainly, with respect to the Greek text, the real work of Sophronius, the friend of Jerome. On this point Erasmus could not be mistaken; and this is sufficient for our purpose, which is to ascertain the tradition with respect to the mission of St. Thomas to India.

The following is the literal English translation of the Latin of Erasmus from the Greek text of Sophronius: “Thomas the Apostle, as it was handed down to us, preached the Gospel of the Lord to the Parthians, the Medes, the Persians, the Caramanians, the Hyrcanians, the Bactrians, and the Magians. He slept (or died) in the city of Calamina, which is in India.”

It is impossible to be more explicit in details, and a greater number of passages on the subject from the Fathers of the Church, cannot be possibly required. It is proper, however, to remark that the

Roman breviary transcribes this passage of Sophronius nearly in the same words, in the legend it contains of St. Thomas, and thus endorses its authenticity. This must suffice, and we can pass to another line of argument in this interesting inquiry, by referring to the tradition of the Indian churches themselves, of which so far not a word could yet be said.

When the Portuguese established colonies on the coasts of Hindostan at the beginning of the sixteenth century, they met, near Meliappoor, south of modern Madras, and also on the Malabar coast, a large number of Christians who came to claim their protection against the Mussulmans of the neighborhood. According to the most reliable records, they occupied fourteen hundred villages; and their number could not be less than one hundred and fifty thousand. They had over them a metropolitan whose Chaldaic title was, in literal Latin, *Metropolita Indiæ et Chinæ*, according to Athanasius Kircher, who had received reliable information of them. They said they depended on the Patriarch of Mossul, and it was soon found that they were Nestorians, and received their orders and their dogmas from the Chaldean prelates transferred at the time from Seleucia to Mossul. Their liturgy and rites were all in the Chaldaic language; and the little they knew of religion was deeply tinged with the rankest Nestorianism, which, they thought, was the pure Catholic doctrine.

On one thing, however, they insisted principally, and this was that St. Thomas *the apostle* had first preached to them. Their records of ecclesiastical history were reduced to a few scraps of information; but these were of great importance, and have not been sufficiently examined by the modern Catholic writers who have spoken of them. Reduced to the main particulars they amounted to this: that St. Thomas had come to them from the north; and they knew well the road he had followed. The details we are shortly going to give, contain, we believe, a quasi-demonstration of his mission. They added that he had converted a great number of people in the country, established over them bishops and priests, and had ended his ministry by dying a martyr. They showed his sepulcher, which they honored by peculiar rites and prayers; and no one could see their earnestness on the subject without feeling inclined to believe they spoke the truth.

But their short annals stated, moreover, that after the death of St. Thomas a great decline in religion had taken place; and they were finally threatened with a return to superstition, when another apos-

tle, called by them Mar Thoma, brought them back to their former fervor, by preaching again a pure doctrine. The exact date of this revival of religion cannot now be ascertained ; but if—as there is great reason to believe—Mar Thoma was the false apostle who introduced Nestorianism among them, it could not be before the seventh or eighth century, perhaps later.

This was nearly all the St. Thomè Christians could say of their ecclesiastical annals. The Portuguese had early access to them ; they took copies of them and sent them to Portugal. The missionaries, among them the Jesuits, could also transcribe them. It is thus that in due time Athanasius Kircher, so proficient in the Coptic and Chaldaic languages, received those documents which he used to such advantage in his *China Illustrata*. He obtained, moreover, letters from the Fathers of Goa and Meliapoor ; and John M. Comporei, one of them, who had been many years missionary in this last city, took the trouble of translating into Latin the Chaldaic text of those Indian annals. It is sure, therefore, that the Latin text of Kircher reproduces the Meliapoor documents.

All those details were not sufficiently noticed by subsequent writers who, in good faith certainly, succeeded in forming a false public opinion in Europe on the subject of the St. Thomè Christians. They imagined, on account of several unimportant circumstances, that in the Indian annals the apostle St. Thomas, and the Nestorian Mar Thoma, must have been the same personage, the St. Thomè Christians confounding one with the other. Starting from the assumption, universal but a few years back, that all the first spread of Christianity in Asia, all the bishops' sees established from the beginning in Oriental countries, must have come from the Nestorian see of Seleucia, they concluded that the Christians of St. Thomè could not have received their religion from any other source. Mar Thoma—not St. Thomas—must have been their apostle. Yet this could not be true for the following reasons :

First, it must be inferred from the manuscript copies of the annals of Meliapoor that St. Thomas, who first preached in India, was different from Mar Thoma, who came long after him. This last apostle, they say, merely reformed religion, which had gradually declined in the time which intervened between the two epochs, and would perhaps have entirely disappeared, had it not been for the subsequent preaching of Mar Thoma. That the first messenger of God who evangelized the country was the apostle St. Thomas himself, one of

the twelve, was the universal opinion of the country, attested not only by the archbishops of Goa, the Jesuits, and other missionaries, but likewise by De Barros and Couto, his continuator. These two celebrated authors of *Azia Portugueza* are not common historians; their great work is considered as classic even at this day, and they had certainly the best information the government could furnish them at that time. Moreover, according to the Chaldaic annals of the Church of Meliapor, the first apostle of the country had died martyr, and was buried there; not Mar Thoma, who is never mentioned as having given his life for Christ, and whose sepulcher does not seem to have received any peculiar honor.

Secondly, the positive and detailed road assigned by the Chaldaic annals of Meliapor to St. Thomas on his way to India, and the perfect agreement of this route with the one mentioned in the Greek tradition detailed previously—*Parthis et Medis*, etc.—is a sure proof that the first apostle of India must have been St. Thomas himself. It has been already asserted that this circumstance alone can be said to amount to a quasi-demonstration, and on this account some details on the subject are required.

A remarkable passage of the text given in Latin by Father Kircher will render the subject perfectly clear to any one acquainted with the geography of Central Asia. The effect would be still much more striking, could we place under the eyes of the reader the whole map engraved in the *China Illustrata*, in which both the northern and southern highways to India, so often mentioned previously—are conspicuously given. We have used it as well as the map published by Heeren in his *Asiatic Nations*, for drawing the sketch of it contained in our small Atlas. The Latin text, which Kircher assures us was a translation from the Malabaric annals by Father Comporei, must be first copied entire, or nearly so. It is one of the most striking documents concerning the India of that time that are yet in existence. Only a very few comments will be required to render its meaning clear to those who do not understand Latin.

The apostle starts . . . “*ex Judæa, Syria, Armenia, ad Sol-daniam Persidis urbem . . . Hinc per regnum Candahar et Cabul ad Gavorstan (sic a Mauris dicitur quasi sit regio infidelium) . . . Ex Gavorstan (or Caphurstan) D. Thomas penetrasse dicitur Guzeratam minorem—non longe a regno Cashmir—a Lahore triduo itinere ad Septentrionem suscepto, dissitam. Deinde dicitur per montes Tebeticos . . . versus Bengalam . . . ac*

*tandem per regnum Deccan Melioporam appulisse.*" It can be confidently maintained that this passage carries with it the conviction of its truth. The Chaldean priests who showed this document to the Portuguese could not evidently know any of the geographical details it contains. The Portuguese who copied it were then nearly as ignorant of this road as the custodians of the manuscript. Only the man who had passed over it could have described such an itinerary as this, except as to the names, which were probably unknown in the apostolic age; so that the manuscript was undoubtedly much more recent than the time of St. Thomas, and had been written in a more modern phraseology from an older manuscript. The Indian part of this route from north to south is certainly supposed in several passages of the *Periplus Maris Erythræi*, but correctly given in none of them. And what increases its value is its lucidity. For with the exception of three names of cities, there is no need even of an explanation when you have the map before you. St. Thomas, starting from Judea, passes through Syria and Armenia—this is the direct road—the Hindoos knew nothing of it, yet it was clearly mentioned in a MS. which they possessed. The apostle reaches a city of Persia called Soldania. This could not be any other than Tigranocerta in Eastern Armenia, called also Soltania in writings of the apostolic age. It was alternately in the hands of the Romans and the Parthians; but in the time of St. Thomas' travels it may very well have been in possession of the last, and could be called a city of Persia—*Persidis urbem*. This city was near the northern road built by the former Persian kings; which runs afterward south through Media, and taking an eastern direction passes through *Aria*—as it was then called—and reaches finally Candahar, along a southern branch of it. Cabul, mentioned directly after, is exactly northeast of this last place. The road evidently went round the head-waters of the Indus, to avoid the innumerable streams which cut the country in that district, and form afterward the main bed of the mighty river. Gavorstan or Caphurstan—the name admits of both spellings in Kircher's book—a city unknown in modern times, must have been situated between Cabul and Cashmir, very near the 35th degree of latitude. Details are here given on that city which must refer to its existence subsequently to St. Thomas, and may have been added to the original itinerary of the apostle. The Moors (Mauri) or Arabs were not there at that time. They must have given later on to that city the name of Gavorstan or probably Giaourstan, from Giaour

(infidels), because perhaps when the Arabs conquered that part of the country the city was altogether Christian, and these were infidels in the eyes of the Moslems. This may have been in after time the seat of a bishop's see, as there were many in Central Asia. But in the time of St. Thomas the city must have had another name, unless it did not exist yet but was formed by the agglomeration of numerous converts. This is the only difficulty which the text offers to the reader. For the very position of *Guzerata Minor*—very different from the Guzerat which is situated near the mouth of the Indus—is so clearly given, that there can be no doubt about it. It was on the frontier of the State of Cashmir—spelt in English Cashmere—a three days' journey north of Lahore. There the apostle found himself at the foot of the western branch of the Himalaya Mountains, called here *Tebeticos montes*, because the country itself has the name of Little Thibet. It is precisely in those mountains that the Ganges has its source. Many of its tributaries come very near to those of the Indus. The road from thence was open toward Bengal, mentioned in the text. St. Thomas, however, did not follow the stream to its mouth; but leaving it probably at Palibothra, the capital of the *Prasii*, he crossed over the Deccan to reach Meliapoor, where he finally arrived. Cabul and Cashmir are thus spelt by Kircher.

A real difficulty for the reader consists in the names of places, such as Candahar, Cabul, Cashmire, Lahore, which probably were not used at the time of St. Thomas, although the thing is not sure; so that this manuscript is, in appearance, much more recent. Can it be nevertheless, considered as very old? It was thought to be so by Father Compori, who translated it from the Chaldee; and those names may be in fact very ancient. Modern cyclopedias cannot be trusted on this subject. There is, for instance, one published in New York, which states that Candahar was built in 1754, by Ahmed Schah. According to the much more reliable Atlas (historical and classical) of Dr. Wm. Smith, and Mr. Grove (Murray, 1872), Candahar was built by Alexander the Great, and was called by him, Alexandropolis. The same Atlas-editors call Cashmir Kaspiria, and Lahore Labokla, names almost identical. There is no doubt that all those cities and provinces go back to a high antiquity. The only question is to know when these modern names originated. They may have been used—or something very near it—many centuries ago; the same as Bengal, Deccan, etc. It is sure that Meliapoor was a very ancient city of India, known formerly under the name of Malipuram.

With regard to the writer of the manuscript translated by Father Compori, he may have been a Catholic, anterior to Nestorianism, or he may have been even a Nestorian who made use of an anterior document. The only thing of importance is the striking itinerary of the apostle. The Nestorians do not appear to have used generally the northern road to go to India, at least before the Moslem's times. Although from Seleucia they could easily reach this highway and go straight east, it was much less tedious and perilous for them to follow the road through the sea, and they had not the Greeks and Armenians in their way.

From Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the first seat of the Nestorian patriarchs, the natural road for them was down the Tigris to Bassorah, then through the Persian Gulf to the Malabar coast. Cosmas has told us that on this shore of India there were in his time Christians ruled by priests who came *ex Perside*, that is, from Seleucia, where they were ordained. He mentions it in particular of Calliene (Bombay), and of Male (Cochin). Then passing round Cape Comorin, there were also Christians with priests *ex Perside* in Sielidaba (Ceylon). The first apostle to India did not follow this direction, did not come from Seleucia. He started from Armenia, and took the northern road, which we have seen was open to Christian proselytism long before Nestorianism arose. Even later than the first apostle, the Nestorian missionaries would not have chosen the northern way from Seleucia, their point of departure, not only on account of its being much longer than the other, but particularly because it was already occupied by the Armenians, always opposed to Nestorianism, and favorable only to Eutychianism when they were not Catholics.

It must, however, be conceded that, at a much later epoch, the Nestorians followed likewise this northern road. In the preface to the Acts of the Council of Diamper—of which a word will be said presently—it is stated that Nestorianism reached Meliapoor only in the ninth century, through missionaries coming from Armenia. But this was the epoch of the Caliphs of Bagdad. The Nestorians followed the Arabs everywhere.

Thirdly, there is finally a last reason for denying the identity of St. Thomas with Mar Thoma. It is contained in a statement of Kircher, given, it is true, as a mere report; but the details of it render it very important. We have merely to copy a part of the translation of the Latin text, which is found *in extenso* in *China Illustrata*: "A trustworthy report says that there are still preserved



in the archives of the church of Meliapore, letters written in Syriac, on an antique parchment, in which St. Thomas convoked to a council at Meliapore the bishops whom he had consecrated, namely, from Candahar, Cabul, Caphurstan, and Guzerata Minor." This *relatio fide digna* must have been a report of some Jesuit Father, or some other reliable witness who had seen this very old document. The language of it was not Chaldaic but Syriac; and the difference is not without its weight. But the chief circumstance of great importance is that those bishops' sees which the apostle—it was said—had established, were all of them on the road he had followed. None were convened from Calliene, Male, nor Sielidaba, although this last island is very near Meliapore. All this indicates that the first spread of Christianity in Hindostan had nothing to do with the southern line of proselytism from Seleucia, and must have been much anterior to it. Both sides combined, however, prove that the Christian religion, at a very early epoch, embraced the totality of those vast regions of the East.

It can be suggested, with great probability, that had not this old document been genuine, had it been forged in Nestorian times, the prelates ruling over the churches on the Malabar coast would not have been forgotten in this supposed convocation to a council embracing the whole country. They would, on the contrary, have had a prominent part in it, since they had all come *ex Perside* from this center of enlightenment, as the custodians of the manuscript thought it was, when they exhibited it to the Portuguese.

But can the epoch of the introduction of Nestorianism in India be stated with any amount of probability? This is a very difficult question. The reader, however, must keep before his eyes the fact that it could not have been before the sixth century, since it was only then that Babæus introduced officially heresy in the Patriarchate of Seleucia. It is from this moment alone that heretical missionaries were sent from Seleucia to India. How long was it exactly after the year 500? It is not easy to determine. Cosmas, who visited those churches either in the first or in the second quarter of this sixth century, testifies only that the clergymen residing there had come *ex Perside*. Many remained probably of those who had been sent thither before the change of religion, and these could not be called Nestorians without further proof. Of those who came after the change, it cannot be at all certain that they had ceased to be Catholic. For in such cases as this there are always, thank God!

churchmen attached to the former faith, and who would rather die than adopt and preach heresy. It is not, therefore, in the least sure that those priests of whom Cosmas speaks as having come *ex Perside*, were in fact Nestorians; although it is generally assumed to be the fact by all modern writers. The author of *Topographia Christiana* never mentions the name of Nestorius, and never establishes any distinction between Catholic and Nestorian missionaries. This is certain.

It must be true, however, that in the course of this sixth century, the churches on the Malabar coast, and Ceylon, embraced heresy. The successors of Babæus at Seleucia, Ctesiphon, and Mossul continued to profess it openly, and required its profession from the clergymen and monks under their charge, until the fifteenth century, when Rome obtained the return of most of them to the center of unity. During the nine hundred years, therefore, intervening between the sixth and the fifteenth ages, the churches dependent on Seleucia were Nestorian. But it is very remarkable that the see of Meliapor, on the Coromandel coast, was not embraced among those churches, before the ninth century, according to the Council of Diamper; and consequently during three hundred years remained Catholic when the Christians of Malabar were Nestorians. This being a new and very solid proof that the Christianity first planted at Meliapor was not brought there from Seleucia, but had followed the road assigned to St. Thomas himself in the Chaldaic and Syriac manuscripts of that city, a word on the subject cannot prove uninteresting.

When Philip II. annexed Portugal to Spain, he appointed Alexius de Menezes archbishop of Goa, and sent him to Hindostan. The new prelate felt more deeply, perhaps, than any of his predecessors, the spiritual needs of the native Christians, who had readily accepted the union with Rome offered them by the Portuguese, but were in the main completely ignorant of the differences existing between Catholicity and Nestorianism. He, therefore, among other measures, called a Synod at Diamper, in the province of Cochin, during the year 1599, in which many questions of dogma and ecclesiastical discipline were to be examined and settled. It would be probably impossible to find in this country a copy of the Acts of this Synod, and consequently many important details are necessarily unknown to us. Alban Butler says in his *Life of St. Thomas* (21st Dec.) that those Acts contained "a detail of Nestorian phrases, and other errors, abuses, and superstitions which prevailed among the St. Thomè

Christians." But the point of the greatest interest at the present time would be the proofs of the assertion contained in the preface, where "it is shown that these Christians were drawn into Nestorianism only in the ninth century, by means of certain Nestorian priests who came thither from Armenia and Persia."\*

It cannot certainly be pretended that Alexius de Menezes and the other prelates, priests, and religious who met with him at Diamper were ignorant men, unable to discuss a question of history, when they had yet so many written documents, and when so many traditional facts were still kept in the memory of the Christian inhabitants of the country. That age—the end of the sixteenth century—was undoubtedly one of great mental development among the Portuguese and the Spaniards. Their best writers and most learned historians belong to this epoch. Menezes was one of the most distinguished men of his time, not only in ecclesiastical learning and natural endowments, but likewise in civil and administrative ability. When he was still archbishop of Goa, the whole government of India was intrusted to him by the king of Spain. Did we possess the list of those prelates, clergymen, and monks, who met with him at Diamper, many illustrious names among them perhaps could be pointed out. The archbishop, it seems, wished positively to know the precise time when error was introduced among his flock, and it was found that it must have been during the ninth century, and moreover it had come by the way of Armenia and Persia. This is stated in the preface to the Acts, without hesitation, and in the most positive manner, both as to the time and the way the error had come. Nestorianism existed surely on the Malabar coast, as early as the sixth century; but at Meliapoor, on the Coromandel coast, only three hundred years later. In the first district error had come from the west, that is, from Seleucia, along the way described in the *Periplus Maris Erythræi*. In the second it had come direct from the north, the same way followed long before by the first apostle. For in the ninth century all the roads of the East were wide open to the propaganda of the Nestorians. Armenia was as free for them as Bassorah and the Persian Gulf. The Arabs had received from Nestorians all the knowledge they possessed in philosophy, mathematics, literature, history, etc.—this is to-day a well-ascertained fact—Mahomet himself had received all he knew of

---

\* Lives of the SS., tom. xii.

true religion from a Nestorian monk, Sergius. The Moslems, therefore, persecuted the Catholics worse yet than the Sassanidæ had done before them; but they granted to the followers of Nestorius not only toleration, but all the privileges of the most unbounded freedom. This is all we can know of the precise time when heresy entered the churches of India. All these considerations answer sufficiently to the various questions proposed at the beginning of this chapter. Many conjectures, no doubt, enter into the process by which an effort has been made to reach truth; but this is a necessity of the case, owing to the lack of positive documents. When the new Bollandists shall have communicated to the public those they possess, it is possible that the result will not be very different from what has just been stated, though it will be more to the point.

But, before concluding these inquiries on the early spread of Christianity in India, a word is required on the comparatively small number of adherents it certainly received in the midst of so large a population. There is no doubt that its propagation was rapid and extensive, with regard to the whole territory which it embraced at once; but the number of Christians was always small, considering the extraordinary populousness of this great country. Some reflections on the subject may be interesting; although it must be said plainly that they are merely conjectural, and can only reach a greater or smaller degree of probability, as they will be more or less natural and simple.

The main obstacle in those primitive times must have come from Buddhism. It was just six hundred years after that monstrous system had been set forth by Gautama, and it was the period of its greatest spread over India. The head-waters of the Indus and of the Ganges were altogether in its possession. It may be maintained without exaggeration that the first of these two mighty rivers ran then almost entirely through Buddhist territory; since this sect flourished as far down south as Bombay, where the great subterranean temples of Salsette and Elephanta bear yet witness to it. Was not St. Thomas prevented by this obstacle to his zeal from going down that river, which, according to the *Periplus*, was the usual road for the merchandise coming from China, Tartary, and Cashmere? Did he not hear that the Ganges, on the contrary, was infested with this pest only in its upper course; but farther down and south of it, in the whole peninsula, Buddhism had scarcely penetrated, and was not destined ever to spread extensively. This we know from narratives

of travels by Chinese Buddhists, whose works have been translated or commented upon by Abel Rémusat and Stanislas Julien. But why should St. Thomas fear to offer the claim of his mission first to those sectarians? The reason is plain: they were at the time so proud of their number, and of the success of their philosophy, that they probably would not have listened to him. They denied even the existence of God, whom they blasphemed. How could they be reached by the simple message of Christianity, which rested entirely on the infinite mercy of God?

These are mere conjectures indeed; and they are offered only as such. But they may not be without weight, chiefly remarking that all the success of Christianity in Hindostan, even in modern time, has taken place in the south of the peninsula. It is there yet that the Catholic missions are most numerous and successful, as if the difficulties which St. Thomas met with in the north were of so strong a character that they have continued ever since, and prevented in those parts even an appreciable triumph of truth over error. The intellectual and moral pride of those Buddhists, eighteen hundred years ago, is scarcely conceivable in our day. One begins to understand something of it when he has read the detailed recital of their "spiritual retreats," "philosophical discussions," and "austere practices" of the most strange asceticism, as they are related in the Chinese memoirs, translated and illustrated with notes by the learned French scholars mentioned above. It is hard to say when it will be possible for Christianity to make an impression on those believers in Buddha. The time will surely come, since the religion of Christ is destined to conquer all races of men, even the most proud and stubborn. But it does not seem to have yet arrived, from what is heard of the last attempts in that direction; and it is very probable that the obstinacy and pride of those strange atheists and nihilists was the chief reason why Christianity, which in a few hundred years converted more than one-half of the inhabitants, not only of the Roman and Greek-speaking world, but likewise of the Egyptians, Nubians, Ethiopians, and Iranians, did not produce any impression on the northern half of India. It was much later on that an attack was made on Buddhism with very indifferent success. There were, it seems, some attempts made by the Christian subjects of Prester John in that direction. But the success was not greater than that of our missionaries in the present day. When those deluded Lamaists become finally convinced that there is a God in heaven who will

judge them after death, and that what they call *nirvana* may be for them the fiery torments of hell, then will be the time to announce to them the mercy of Christ, whose only mission was to save sinners.

#### 14. *General Conclusions from the whole field of facts surveyed so far.*

The critical discussions into which we have been drawn by the necessity of establishing firmly the position we had from the start earnestly assumed, have necessitated a great accumulation of details which may have withdrawn the mind of the reader from the main object in view. It is, therefore, proper to take a general survey of the whole field just passed over, with regard to the early spread of Christianity outside of the Roman Empire, before we come to its European conquests to complete the whole circle prescribed to our inquiries. The question recurs now in its vivid actuality: Has Christianity failed out of Europe? When it first presented its claims to the nations, were they rejected by all races except the Western Aryans? The answer is positive, from all the historical details brought together in the previous pages. Still, a cursory review of the whole cannot be without interest; and must establish, without the least fear of contradiction, the mark of a strict, actual Catholicity as belonging to the Church, and having realized at a very early period the prophetic utterances of three or four thousand years ago. The spectacle has been witnessed of a complete triumph over the Cushite races of Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia; over many at least of the Hamite and Semitic tribes of Arabia; over the complex and mixed-up nations of Palestine and Syria; over the totality of the Aryan people in Cappadocia and Armenia, and a great part of it in Iràn; finally, over a not inconsiderable part of the same race in the peninsula of Hindostan, and the country north of it; to which must be added several Turanian tribes of Transoxiana and Tartary.

In those various countries Christianity has continued to exist for the whole people to our very time, with its priesthood, sacramental offices, and the belief in its main mysteries, in Abyssinia and Armenia; for a great number in Palestine, and a part of Syria; for several detached communities of natives in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Nothing is said here of the result of modern missions all over Asia, particularly in the far East, where a multitude of martyrs have sanctified by their blood the land of Anam, of China, of Corea, of Japan.

This rapid sketch would suffice to prove the adaptability of the

Christian religion to all races of men without exception, and to justify amply the declaration of the Apostle of the Gentiles, that henceforth "there is neither Jew nor Greek; neither bond nor free; neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus."\* The question, however, is of extreme importance; its decision must be placed above every possible contradiction, since, otherwise, the prophecies of the Old Testament, the plain utterances of our Lord Jesus Christ, the open assertion of their mission by the apostles themselves, remain in abeyance, subject to the taunts of the enemies of religion. They dare say that Christianity has been a failure out of Europe, and that all races of men, except one, have refused to accept it. Still, they know well all the facts which go counter to their allegations. They must be constrained to acknowledge that these facts are fatal to their system, which tends to circumscribe Christianity within the narrow circle of scarcely one-tenth of the globe.

Yet, at first it conquered one-half of it, starting from the most complex ethnological center (Palestine); the Semitic and Hamite races of this central point embraced it equally with the men of Aryan stock. It directly invaded Egypt, and soon after Nubia, and thus made the conquest of the stronghold of Cushism, going at once to the borders of negro-land. At the same time the long-civilized Iranian races of Central Asia embraced it ardently, so as to furnish to the Christian martyrology a long list of heroes worthy of those of the West; then having reached the eastern frontiers of Iràn, it attracted soon even the wild tribes of far-off Turàn, and made Christians of many Turks long before that extraordinary race became known to Europe.

We maintain that those early conquests of Christianity were not of a transitory character. All those newly-baptized nations became at once strongly attached to the supernatural doctrine which had replaced their fallen idolatry. The fanaticism of the Moslems could not wrest it from them, except by the most extreme oppression, and after a struggle lasting centuries. Thus, the Copts of Egypt would never embrace Islamism, and preferred to dwindle away gradually in the midst of their constantly multiplying oppressors; thus, the dark-complexioned Nubians fought for their altars all along the Nile during at least six centuries; since the historian of Rome, Niebuhr, asserts that in the eleventh century there was yet a Nubian king

---

\* Gal. iii. 28.

fighting for the nationality and religion of his people in the neighborhood of ancient Meroë or modern Khartoum. Meanwhile the Axumite Ethiopians, ardently attached to the worship of Christ, although unfortunately separated from the center of unity, have kept their own until our time, and have never allowed the doctrines of the Koran to be preached within their borders. Placed geographically in the very midst of the great Mussulman Empire; seeing the fanatic followers of the "Prophet" ranged in a complete circle around their devoted country; viewing from the heights of Tigré the very walls of Mecca, on the other side of the Arabian Gulf; they have stood firm for their religion when a multitude of other nations in Africa or Asia succumbed to the cimeter of the Saracens. When this was taking place in the south, the Armenians were for many ages equally successful against the Arabs and the Turks in the north. If in course of time their country was subdued, they at least would not surrender their belief in Christ; and like the Copts of Egypt, the Greeks of the Archipelago, the Chaldeans of Mesopotamia, they have retained to our day the essential sacramental doctrines of their primitive Christianity. All those nations have at least a true priesthood, real sacraments, a firm belief in the Apostles' Creed. They are in those respects far more favored spiritually than the Protestant sects of the highest degree, that is, the supposed enlightened Christians of England or Germany.

To render the phenomenon more striking, and prove most conclusively the reality and solidity of the conquests of the Christian religion at that primitive epoch, we have the spectacle of all those nations surrendering at once their time-honored worship, and all the dear and enticing superstitions in which they were born. Have those men reflected on this, who pretend that it was after all a very tame, limited, and, on the whole, unsuccessful attempt on the part of the apostles of Christ? Let us see this somewhat in detail; for those who hold this language, and speak as if Christianity had been a failure, have in truth studied to very little advantage the great moral and religious revolution which we designate by simply mentioning the era of Christ.

At the very point of origin, in Palestine and Syria, what do we see? Everywhere, except among the Jews, a gross polytheism prevailed; the so-called religion of Melkarth, Astaroth, Mylitta, Baal, etc. The Phœnicians, Canaanites, and Syrians were so deeply buried in the bloody superstitions of their ancient worship, that the



spectacle of the pure adoration of Jehova at Jerusalem could not make any impression on them, during so many centuries of contiguity and intercourse. Even after those old nationalities had disappeared, and there were no more Canaanites, nor Phœnicians, nor Assyrians, the same abominable idolatry continued, or was only unessentially modified. The more refined Hellenist polytheism of Antioch, Cæsarea, and Palmyra, had no effect whatever on Syrian idolatry. Quite the reverse; Greece and Rome, in point of fact, adopted the dark rites of that effeminate country, together with those of the Egyptian Serapis and the Phrygian Cybele. At the time of Christ and his apostles, all the large cities around Jerusalem were still addicted to the so-called religious practices which Elagabalus tried a little later to establish socially and politically in Rome. Are not all these well-ascertained facts? Can it not be said that Palestine and Syria had become a part of the Roman Empire, not by adopting its religion and customs, but by inoculating it with their corruption and foul manners? Was there any human hope that a sudden change could be effected in those devoted countries? Yet, what do we witness under Constantine? All the cities of Palestine and Syria governed spiritually by bishops! The religion of Christ everywhere prevalent; the names of the old deities on the way of being forgotten, and soon after, not a temple standing in the whole country for the rites which had prevailed there during several thousand years.

And this happened—it must be repeated again—in a territory inhabited from the beginning by all races of mankind except the Latin; and if there was at the time a part of the population which could be called Greek, it was but insignificant, and limited to a few cities. Those cities were then influential, it is true, and from them the Greek idiom had spread around, and the custom had been introduced of giving Greek names to places and persons; but not to such an extent as to modify the religion of the country, which, on the contrary, had taken the fancy of the conquerors, and impregnated them with its poison.

Palestine is contiguous to Egypt; and there the difficulty seemed to be still more insurmountable. The Egyptian religion was renowned all over the world. People in general associated it with the ideas of the highest antiquity and the sublimest wisdom. The priests of Memphis and Thebes were supposed to be the depositaries of traditional, and consequently, most respectable knowledge; and

the rites they performed in those stupendous temples with which the country was literally covered all along the Nile, attracted yet those hundreds of thousands of people described so graphically by Herodotus in his Second Book. Their worship must have been yet in all its splendor. For if it had suffered under the few Persian kings that ruled over the country, the long-enduring dynasty of the Ptolemies had not only repaired the old edifices, and granted back to the priesthood the rich property attached to the public worship; they had, moreover, built new temples, paid numerous artists for covering their walls with splendid sculptures and hieroglyphs, and embellished most of the cities in the interior at the same time that they fostered to the best of their ability the commerce with the exterior. Modern researches have demonstrated that a number of edifices, obelisks, inscriptions, etc., which were thought at the beginning of this century to be Pharaonic, belonged in fact to the age of the Ptolemies. The Romans had continued exactly the same policy; so that if there was any change from the old Pharaonic times, it was to the advantage of the country and its religion.

Still, what do we see a short time after the apostleship of St. Mark? as early as the age of Origen, and Clement of Alexandria, a great declension is already visible in the splendor of religious rites. Many passages of those Fathers could be quoted, to prove that if the former ceremonies were yet practiced, it was on a much more humble scale; and nothing is said any more of the wisdom and knowledge of the priests. On the contrary, the former respect of all foreign nations for everything Egyptian, in religion and science, was replaced by the sneers of Romans and Greeks, particularly of these last, on account of the animal-worship yet in use in the country. But a little later on, under the first Christian emperors of Constantinople, the idolatry of Egypt is expiring, and scarcely can be said to exist; until, finally, when the Moslems came, we cannot see any remnant of it. The country is all Christian, and it is Christians alone that are persecuted by the Moslems, and exhorted, at the point of the sword, to adopt the religion of Mahomet.

Yet the Egyptians were neither Romans nor Greeks. They were the descendants of Mesraim, who was himself the son of Ham. For them, as well as for the populations of Nubia, the admission of Christianity involved moral difficulties, far more powerful than those which may be supposed to exist for people of northern countries and of a much more sluggish and lymphatic disposition. The practice of

Christian virtues is never easy for fallen nature ; but there are races of men for whom it is much more difficult to adopt and persevere in them. Should Christianity be really adapted only to a few, this might be one of the greatest reasons which could be assigned. The posterity of Mesraim and Cush, in particular, seems, indeed, to be groaning under a moral curse which renders them almost incapable of appreciating, and chiefly practicing, the most simple Christian virtues. Still, it is precisely in Egypt that the spectacle of an almost angelic life was first given to the world in those truly wonderful monastic establishments. As to Nubia and the Ethiopia of Meroë, it is sufficient to refer to those Greek inscriptions still existing in great number, in some of which at least can still be read the list of those supernatural graces which the world then learned for the first time, and which seem to be above the moral comprehension of these people : faith, hope, charity, self-restraint, control of the base passions, and victory over the senses !

The same remarkable spectacle is witnessed at once in the fourth century over the whole expanse of Axumite Ethiopia. Frumentius, or Salama, conquered to Christ that vast empire in a few years of his life ; and it remains yet Christian to this day, although surrounded altogether by Mussulman populations. Will any one pretend that this was at any time included in the Roman Empire ; and that the Abyssinians of this age must claim kindred with the Latin posterity of the kings of Rome and of *Alba Longa* ?

Turn we to the vast continent of Asia, a great deal more of the same character is certainly discernible. The general opinion of modern Christian writers is adverse, it is true, to the inclusion of the large peninsula of Arabia in this category. For them there has never been any Christianity worth the name in the native country of Mahomet. The reader has seen how much, in point of fact, this opinion must be modified. The modern researches of T. Wright, of Caussin de Perceval, and others, have given quite a new turn to public opinion on the subject. Much more will no doubt be discovered in old Arabic MSS. Meanwhile our own conclusion seems, to us at least, in a fair way of being proved ; namely, that at the appearance of the Arabian impostor, the whole country was on the eve of embracing Christianity ; since there were already numerous flourishing churches in the large Himyarite country south, among the Benu Salih tribes in Irak-Arabi, and the nomad Bedouins of the

northwest, beside the populations swarming at the time between Palestine and Mesopotamia.

But in Asia it is chiefly the Persian Empire which becomes at once a most remarkable proof of the adaptability of Christianity to all races of men. The great mass of the population there was certainly Aryan, but of the Iranian branch, so different from the Western stem of the tree. Look at those solemn Oriental personages, and see how far they are removed from the volatility of the Hellenes, and even from the stern but practical tone of mind of the Romans. The Latins were undoubtedly dignified in their bearing, and we have heard of the majesty of Rome appearing even on the face of her citizens. How different it was, however, from the grave demeanor of those tall but soft Iranian personalities! Both were the offspring of Japhet; but several thousand years of interval, and the totally differing circumstances in which they had lived, during so many centuries, had established between them divergences which amounted almost to antagonism. Yet it is perfectly sure that Christianity spread as rapidly and took root as steadfastly in that Eastern continent, stretching as far as China, as in Western Europe, which is thought by some to be the only place where the religion of Christ can possess a permanent dwelling. We have as a voucher for this assertion the celebrated letter of Constantine to Sapor II., preserved to us by Eusebius, and which he had himself received from the emperor with many other authentic documents, sacredly kept in the public archives. It is important to dwell a moment on this remarkable State paper.

It is thought generally by modern critics that Constantine wrote it to the Persian king, to prevent him from breaking out in open persecution against his Christian subjects. For several years this had been expected in the whole Orient. The reader has seen previously that St. Sabas, then Patriarch of Seleucia, could not go to the Council of Nice on account of this anticipation. The letter of the Roman emperor did not attain its object, and the first violent persecution of the Church in Persia took place shortly after. But all these circumstances give a great value and a precise meaning to various expressions of Constantine. The style, somewhat obscure, would otherwise offer great difficulties; but keeping in view the object of the writer, several important statements become perfectly clear, chiefly after the critical labors of H. Valesius, who attached, with reason, a great importance to this production, and illustrated it in his edition of Eusebius with numerous notes.

A first remark of some weight regards the number of Christians existing at the time in the Roman Empire, and chiefly the virtues they practiced, to which the Roman emperor renders a glorious testimony. Dr. Alzog, in his otherwise excellent *Manual of Church History*, pretends that at the time of the conversion of Constantine, the pagans far outnumbered the Christians in the limits of the Roman dominion; and he thinks that the subsequent attempt of Julian to restore paganism proves it. This last supposition can be disposed of in a moment. The biography of the apostate, instead of *proving* anything of the kind, would go far in the contrary direction. For there is nothing so well attested by his life as the complete prostration of idolatry everywhere. Contemporary historians have preserved his bitter complaints on the subject; particularly with respect to sacrifices to the gods, which had already well-nigh disappeared in the whole extent of the empire. That celebrated *goose* which was offered by a pagan priest somewhere in Greece, at a great festival, and which was the only victim brought that day to the altar by the pagan population of the place, does not speak well for the number and wealth of Greek idolaters at the time. The fury of Julian against the Antiochenians, likewise—a people so piously pagan formerly, but nearly all converted to Christ—is rather against the supposition of Dr. Alzog. Not only the people of Antioch would not come back to the worship of idols at the bidding of Julian, but they dared to sneer at his philosopher's cloak, and chiefly at his beard; so that, to revenge himself, the pedantic pagan wrote against them his *Misopogon*.

But it is certain that many passages of Constantine, not only in this letter to Sapor II., but also in several of his epistles to bishops, magistrates, etc., and chiefly in his *Lex de pietate in Deum, et de Christiana Religione*, offer the positive proof that there was then a large number of Christians in his dominions. To be sure, he lays particularly a great stress on their virtues, to which he attributes his victories, and from which he anticipates numerous blessings for his great nation; he refers also to the same cause the downfall and the miserable end of all the persecutors “whom he had known,” as he says, and “whose wretched death he witnessed.” So that the great reason for which many Protestant critics refuse to acknowledge the genuineness of the book of Lactantius, *De Morte Persecutorum*—namely, the want of proof—is positively contradicted by Constantine, who can certainly be called a sufficient witness on the occasion.

But although all this is particularly true, and deserved mention, still the numerous array of martyrs of whom he speaks, the voluntary exile of so many Christians, who, to avoid persecution and death, fled away to foreign countries, and converted, as he says, many nations even in the wildest regions of the Caucasus; not to mention, finally, several other expressions of the Roman emperor, which go to prove the immense number of Christians, then existing in Europe; there is a phrase, in his letter to Sapor, which deserves to attract attention, and which we give in a note, with its Latin translation.\* There is no denying that this version is faithful literally; yet the words *πάν τὸ ἀνθρώπινον*, in the meaning of Valesius, are evidently restricted to the part of humankind that had embraced the divine law in the Roman Empire; the last part of the phrase, in his opinion, qualifying the first. A far larger and very natural interpretation could be extracted by supposing a real emphasis on the first words of the phrase, *πάν τὸ ἀνθρώπινον*, and we would thus have the bold assertion: "All humankind"—in the Roman Empire—"having embraced the divine law, rejoices at the peace it now enjoys. And I firmly hope . . . that through their sincere and pure religion, and their unanimity in the true worship of the Divine Being, all men"—meaning all nations even outside of the Roman dominion—"will God condescend to gather to himself." This sense can be as well found in the text as that of Valesius. It is true, that in this case the expressions of Constantine are too sweeping, as there were yet pagans, chiefly in the city of Rome. But he could as well say so, as we can maintain that Paris, in France, is a Catholic city, although we know that there are in it many men that are far from being Catholics.

Be this as it may, the affirmation of Constantine, with regard to the number of Christians then existing in the Persian Empire, can

---

\* The Greek text is this: *Διὸ δὴ καὶ πολλὴ χάρις τῷ θεῷ, ὅτι τελεία προνοία πᾶν τὸ ἀνθρώπινον, το θεραπεύον τὸν θεῖον νομον, ἀποδοθεῖσθαι αὐτοῖς τῆς εἰρήνης, ἀγάλλεται καὶ γαυριᾶ . . . Ὅποτε διὰ τῆς ἐκείνων καταρᾶς τε καὶ δοκίμου θρησκείας, ἐν τῆς περὶ τὸ θεῖον συμφωνίας πάντας εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἀγείρειν ἀξιοῖ.* Valesius translates: *Porro maximas Deo gratias ago, cujus singulari providentia cuncti mortales qui divinam legem observant, reddita sibi pace exultant ac gestiunt. Ex quo mihi persuadeo . . . per puram ac sinceram illorum religionem, perque concordem de divino Numine sententiam omnes homines ad seipsum aggregare Deus dignetur.*

offer no difficulty. It follows immediately the paragraph just quoted. There is no need of giving out the Greek text, as the version of Valesius is unexceptionable.\* Constantine here affirms that at the moment when he wrote—the beginning of the fourth century—there was a *multitude* of Christians in Persia, spread all over the country—*longe lateque*; but chiefly in the most important and illustrious cities—*nobilissima loca*. This is all we intended to prove. He could not write this to the prince who ruled over the country without having first well ascertained it; and he had the best means of information in the Vicar of Sabas—namely, Sadoth—whom he had seen and heard at the Council of Nice, in the numerous Romans and Greeks of his dominions who traded with the far Orient, and in his own ambassadors and officials, who certainly resided at the Persian court, owing to the peace and amity which had then continued for a long time between the two powers.

---

\* “Quanta porro voluptate me affici censes, cum audio id quod mihi maxime in votis est, horum hominum multitudine, Christianorum scilicet (de his enim in præsentia loquor) nobilissima quæque Persidis loca, longe lateque esse decorata.”

## CHAPTER X.

## EARLY AND RAPID SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN GREEK-SPEAKING COUNTRIES.

WERE the Greek-speaking countries prepared to receive Christianity when it was first proposed to them? Eusebius of Cæsarea wrote purposely a very remarkable book to prove that they were. Many Greek Fathers likewise thought that the philosophy and poetry of the race had predisposed the Hellenes to embrace the doctrines of Christ. St. Paul, however, was not of this opinion; and said that to them the cross was folly—*Gentibus stultitiam*. Both sentiments can be reconciled by remembering on the one side the texts quoted in *Gentilism* from *traditionalist* philosophers and ancient poets and seers; and, on the other, the constantly increasing corruption of Greek mythology, and the absolute skepticism to which philosophical speculation had finally arrived.

The scope we have in view requires that as faithful a statement of the case as can be made, should be placed under the eyes of the reader, that he may properly appreciate the real enthusiasm with which the cross of Christ was in very truth embraced by all Greek-speaking peoples and tribes, in spite of all counter attractions and opposing predispositions. And first, a preliminary inquiry arises, of great moment in the present discussion, namely, What must be understood by Greek-speaking countries? and did they contain only men of the great Hellenic race? Particularly, What became of their language at last, and how powerfully could it promote the expansion of Christianity? A very important consideration.

1. *What must be understood by Greek-speaking countries?*

The Greek language, in the first diffusion of Christianity, held a rank far above all others, not excepting the Latin. The Roman Church, in the first century, seemed to have adopted it; and al-



though it is not true, as some have pretended, that most of the Popes were then of Greek origin, still it cannot be denied that Greek was at the time the official language of the Universal Church. Curious details on the subject will be forthcoming before long. It is therefore of some importance to consider the countries where the Hellenic was the common idiom originally, and those into which it gradually spread through colonization, until it became, at last, universal.

The opinion that the Pelasgians were the ancestors of the Hellenes, and that the passage from the first to the second was gradual, and the work of a long time, seems now to be gaining ground. In this opinion the Pelasgic language was the original tongue of the inhabitants of those countries where the Greeks settled first, that is, Thrace, Thessaly, Macedonia, the western coast of Asia Minor from north to south, and the islands of the West as far as Sicily. What was exactly that Pelasgic language we have no means of ascertaining. Herodotus and Thucydides call it *γλωσσα βάρβαρος*, which some modern critics translate by "barbarous" and others by "foreign," or different from that of the speaker. This last opinion is the most probable, as is shown in the *Museum Criticum* of Cambridge University.\* The writer of a short article in this collection, "on the language of the Pelasgi," thinks it meant only that it was "bad Greek," and he quotes Strabo on the subject. After reading all the authorities brought forth there, we should call it an *archaic language*, and most probably the real source of the Eolic and Doric *dialects*, which must have followed.

This last word—*dialect*—requires a short explanation: grammarians try to define it, and are often puzzled when they come to practical examples. Without even touching the metaphysics of the subject, it is sufficient to say that when an idiom is spoken by tribes living under diversified circumstances, the original language soon shows differences in various countries, and when these differences have been finally stereotyped by custom, they are called *dialects*. The Greek tribes having settled down in the regions of Europe and Asia mentioned above, their language soon presented varieties which might have become very numerous, had it not been for their literature. As it turned out, grammarians reduce now those dialects to four: the Eolic, Doric, Ionian, and Attic. We shall soon see, however, that there were a number of others which must be

---

\* Tom. ii., p. 234, et seq.

brought into account for the object under consideration. These four principal dialects, however, can be even reduced to two, as the Eolic and the Doric evidently were at first *one*; and the same may be said of the Ionian and the Attic. The first pair (Eolic and Doric) were most probably the primitive outcome from the Pelasgic, as was just stated; and on this account they both belonged to the archaic form, which Strabo—a poor judge—called “bad Greek.”

The Peloponnesus—after the Ionians or Achæans were expelled from it by the Dorians, and the original tribes of the country, called *Autochtones* (such as the Arcadians), were subdued by the same Dorians—became the permanent country of these direct descendants of the Pelasgi. Some branches, however, of the stock settled in Asia Minor, in the midst of the Ionians; and some had remained in their native Thessaly. A few even passed into Sicily; and Syracuse boasted of its Doric dialect as late as the period of the Ptolemies in Egypt. A curious passage of Theocritus is quoted on the subject by Professor Sophocles in the Introduction to his *Greek Lexicon*.\* The Eolians having left no literature of their own, remain insignificant in the general result. But the Dorians, so celebrated in primitive Grecian history, counting the Spartans among their number, became for a long time a ruling race in Hellas, and might have imposed their own dialect on all subsequent Greek-speaking countries, had they ever showed a greater relish than they did for literature and art. Lycurgus, in the stern constitution he gave to his country, purposely left aside all ambition toward wealth, culture, art, and poetry. *Laconism*, a system of almost monosyllabic answers to the most important questions, was all the literary artifice he wished them to cultivate. This peculiarity of the Doric Lacedæmonians became the chief cause of the final predominance everywhere of the Attic idiom; so that at the time of the propagation of Christianity, Greek was the same as spoken in Bactriana and Central Asia on the one side, and on the other in Africa, Italy, Central and even Northern Europe, along the Volga and the Dnieper at least. Thus dialects had ceased to exist, and the language was one. This curious phenomenon will directly engage our attention, and is of great importance.

Before we come to it, however, dismissing from our view the *archaic* Eolic and Doric idioms, we must pause a moment on the Ionian and Attic, and see them absorb many other inferior dialects before

---

\* Page 4.

they became *the* Greek language of the apostolic age. This is a most important fact, which, to our knowledge, has never been insisted upon, but which the researches of Professor Sophocles of Harvard have positively ascertained and forever secured to human, and chiefly Christian history. For that the four dialects spoken of above were not the only ones in Greece, is now proved abundantly by many passages of ancient authors. There were certainly a Macedonian, a Bœotian, an Illyrian idiom, and no doubt many others. Occasionally they differed so much that several Greek tribes could not understand each other. This is mentioned especially of the Macedonians and Illyrians, who in ancient time were contiguous tribes. "It appears from Polybius," says Professor Sophocles,\* "that a native of Macedonia could not converse with an Illyrian without an interpreter." We are sure that this dialectic divergence must have been for a long time in Greece a great obstacle, for the people at least and the uneducated, to a right understanding of each other. The question can be put to any scholar who has been long accustomed to the reading of Homer, for instance, How he could at once understand the Syracusan Theocritus? Yet the differences of pronunciation in the spoken languages must have rendered the task much more hopeless still than the mere reading of written phrases, alternately in the Ionian of the author of the *Iliad*, and in the Doric of the Sicilian. This is so true, that the question is seriously treated by Professor Sophocles, How Alexander spoke to his Macedonians in a language which they could perfectly understand? and this is the way he explains this real difficulty: "Alexander, the son of Philip, was placed under the immediate tuition of Aristotle. And as this philosopher used no other dialect than the Attic, his pupil became acquainted with that dialect and its literature at an early age. Now the language of Alexander must have been also the language of his personal attendants and officers in general. The common soldiers, of course, spoke only their native dialect; but it is natural to suppose that the military terms and expressions used in the army of Alexander remained of Macedonian origin." This statement of the author of the *Greek Lexicon*, places at once the difficulty and its solution before the reader.

But there is yet a more remarkable instance of this peculiarity taken from Pausanias, who proves that although the Doric and Eolic

---

\* Page 3.

to dialects were akin to each other, yet there were between them remarkable differences, which could give to either of the two a singular predominance over the other. In his *Βοιωτικά*,\* the author of the *Rambles in Greece* relates that Corinne was the only native of Tanagra who ever wrote lyric poetry,† and that if she won the crown in her contest with Pindar, it was merely because the great Theban lyric poet wrote in the pure Doric dialect, and Corinne used an idiom that the Eolians of Tanagra could better appreciate. To render the Greek of Pausanias into a more easily understood Latin: *non Dorica lingua, uti Pindarus, cecinit—Corinna—sed ea quam essent facile Eolenses percepturi*. This remarkable text proves that in spite of the near resemblance and almost perfect identity of the Eolic and Doric idioms, the inhabitants of Tanagra, who spoke Eolian, could more easily perceive—*facile percepturi*—the poetical beauties of the odes of Corinne than those of Pindar, who wrote in pure Doric; and on this account they placed their own songstress above the greatest lyric poet of all Greece, and gave her the crown. It is a pity indeed that the songs of Corinne have all perished. Had any of them remained till our time, we might more easily judge of Eolian literature, which we know only from a few phrases preserved in some ancient Greek authors. But this fact, stated by Pausanias, demonstrates the great variety of idioms which existed primitively in Greece, and the consequent difficulty for the various tribes to understand perfectly each other. Many other instances of it could be adduced; these must suffice, and we are now prepared to understand the progressive encroachments of the Attic idiom over all the others, and the facility it offered to the messengers of God to be understood perfectly well in the whole world where the Greek then prevailed, from the confines of China in the East to the Atlantic Ocean in the West. For this is the present object.

Of the pure Ionian little is to be said. It was certainly the primitive language of Athens, and from that city the Ionian tribes, as is well known, spread first over the north of Peloponnesus, and then through the islands of the Ægean Sea, and along the western shores of Asia Minor. Homer and Hesiod wrote in that soft and harmonious dialect, so dear in all ages to the admirers of primitive poetry. But during the various vicissitudes of the race, the original city—

---

\* Cap. xxii. 3.

† ἡ μόνη δὴ ἐν Τανάγρα ἄβματα ἐποίησε.

Athens—increased in wealth, culture, and power; and thus the Attic idiom came to differ considerably from the primitive Ionian. Professor Sophocles has explained the natural growth and progress of this most refined idiom of Greece, better than any other author that we know; and our easy task consists merely in following him and quoting a few passages of his *Introduction*. “Athens was the center of political power during the greater part of the fifth century (before Christ). It was also the great emporium of Greece. All the dialects met there, and the Athenians culled from each of them such forms and expressions as were calculated to add strength and elegance to their own Ionic idiom. This produced the *Attic dialect*, technically so-called. In point of development and in richness of literature, it stood at the head of all the Greek dialects. The natural consequence of this pre-eminence was that Greeks from all the tribes repaired to Athens to obtain a finished education. . . . Persons from whatever part of Greece, educated at Athens, would by preference use its dialect. And it is not difficult to understand that their example would naturally be followed by their kinsmen, pupils, friends, and dependants. Thus the Attic began to force its peculiarities upon the other Greek dialects.”

These remarks can be strongly corroborated by the contrary state of affairs at Sparta. It cannot be doubted that, soon after the Persian wars, Sparta became as pre-eminent in Greece, politically, as Athens ever was. And at the end of the long Peloponnesian struggle, Sparta obtained the political hegemony of Greece. Athens, prostrated to the ground, appeared to have lost all her influence, and could scarcely hope of ever regaining her former proud elevation. Still, the Dorian language of Sparta did not gain ground in Greece. It rather continued to lose, and the Attic idiom to spread wider. This was undoubtedly owing to the policy of Lycurgus, alluded to formerly, by which the Lacedæmonians were really and forever deprived of a literature, and reduced by their false taste for *Laconism* to an impotent and ridiculous sterility in point of works of genius. Nobody that we know has ever pointed out with sufficient force this glaring defect of the extreme Spartan notions. The same result was nearly obtained in France, during the first great revolution, by the barbarous copy of the rude Lacedæmonian opposition to culture, at the hands of a wretched batch of Jacobins and *sans culottes*. A few years more of this rough fanaticism for black broth and ridiculously emphatic jargon, and a very refined nation would have directly sunk

the level of Tartars and Goths. It is not, therefore, surprising that in the midst of their national misfortunes the Athenians, so great in art, literature, and dramatic poetry, ruled still over Greece by the prestige of genius and refined language. The spread of the Attic idiom was not apparently even checked, by the political supremacy of Sparta.

Prof. Sophocles shows that in the third century before Christ the Greek inscriptions engraved in Ionia, or Asia Minor, began to lose their Ionian character to become Attic. The Eolic tribes of the same country, however, resisted the movement for a century longer, and it was only a couple of centuries before our era that the Attic idiom became general among them. Strange to say, all that the victorious Dorians of Sparta could do in Peloponnesus itself, was to keep their own native idiom for something like a hundred years longer. According to Pausanias, "the Messenians of his time (second century) still retained their Doric idiom." Finally—as our limits require the suppression of many details—we must be satisfied with copying the comprehensive phrase of Prof. Sophocles: "In the last half of the second century after Christ, *the Attic had superseded all the other dialects,*" and he quotes here the rhetorician Aristides.\*

The previous details regard only Greece itself; and alone they would furnish matter for serious consideration. But the phenomenon becomes much more striking when the great Greek-speaking countries of Egypt, Syria, Persia, etc., are considered. It is again Prof. Sophocles who says: "In Egypt and in the greater part of *Western Asia*, the Greek was not the native tongue. Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, introduced the Attic dialect into that country. And although the native population spoke the language of their forefathers, the Greek residents followed the example of the king and of his officers and flatterers. Hence the Greek inscriptions found in Egypt are written in Attic. The other dialects were now so little heard in Alexandria, that, whenever they made their appearance there, they would naturally attract notice. And some of the Ptolemies would not tolerate even the idiom of Macedonia."

It is known by this time that Greek inscriptions are found not only all over Egypt, but even south of it, in Nubia and Ethiopia as far as Meroë. Everywhere they are of the same kind, and consequently written in Attic; so that this universal Greek idiom had become, at the very beginning of Christianity, prevalent all over Africa

---

\* I. 395.

as far as the junction of the two Niles, at least among the multitude of foreigners who then flocked to that country. With regard to Asia, Sophocles speaks only of Syria and Asia Minor. He says that "Seleucus and his successors introduced the Attic idiom into Syria; and Eumenes and his successors into the interior of Asia Minor. The two great centers of these parts of the Macedonian Empire were Antioch and Pergamos." He does not say a word in this respect of Persia and Central Asia; but the details given in a previous chapter on Seleucus Nicator and his dynasty, on Greek commerce in those Oriental countries, etc., cannot leave any doubt of the fact that the same Attic dialect penetrated as far as the confines of China, and in India all along the coasts of Malabar and Coromandel. Seleucus and his successors could not introduce the Attic in Syria and another dialect in the more remote parts of their empire.

It is easy now to judge of the extension of those Greek-speaking countries, all over which *one* language finally prevailed among educated people. And without insisting again on this strange providential fact of the disappearance of so many different Greek dialects, to be replaced by one only, in order to render more easy the moral and religious unification of so many Eastern races, we must consider for a moment this gradual development of the powerful and brilliant Hellenic family of nations, destined in the designs of God to spread the true religion over such a vast territory, and among so many different peoples.

The power of expansion had been infused into the Greek blood from the very origin. The Ionian stock was scarcely settled in Athens when shoots of the parent stem spread directly over the northern part of Peloponnesus, and all over the Cyclades and the other groups of islands of the Ægean Sea. On the other side, the Dorians had just occupied a permanent seat in Laconia and its neighborhood, whence they expanded all in a circle, drove the Achæans from the north, passed over into Sicily, and in the East began to disturb the Ionian tribes of Asia Minor. But it is chiefly from the time that the former monarchical governments of the heroic period were changed everywhere into republics, that many cities, disconnected from each other, but each of them eager to become a center and enlarge its sphere of influence, sent colonies abroad toward the four points of the compass, as far as the interior of actual Russia, in the North, the coasts of Gaul and Spain in the West, Cyrenaika and the African Syrtes in the South, and not only Asia Minor, but

already Palestine and Syria in the East. Raoul Rochette, in his *Histoire critique de l'établissement des Colonies Grecques*, shows that the Pelasgians already, previous to the Hellenes, had begun that work of pacific settlement all over the regions embraced later on by their successors, that the Hellenic republics which followed pushed on much farther into the interior of the countries whose coasts only the Pelasgians had occupied; and that the Macedonian conquests came finally, to make of the whole ancient world the universal ground over which might spread Greek culture, language, and art. Heeren, in his *Manual of Ancient History*, gives a succinct but extremely clear and interesting account of Hellenic colonies, beginning by the primitive Eolians, then passing on to the Ionian and Dorian settlements, finally showing all the tribes busy in Italy and Sicily from a very early period. It does not enter into our scope to give even the few details specified by the Gottingen professor. The reader can consult either his work or some other equally competent author on the same subject. The few words just written down must suffice for the present purpose.

Except the early bloody work of the Dorians in Peloponnesus, we do not read that the Greeks anywhere had attempted to destroy or enslave the various races among whom they settled. Their object was trade, and the glory of Greece; and they obtained the aim of both, by spreading their own culture and art among the subjugated nations. But it is chiefly in the last period of those colonies, namely, during and after Alexander's conquests, that the benevolent effect of Greek expansion became prominent. Historians relate not only how the conquered monarchs of Persia and India revered and even loved their Macedonian conqueror; but the nations themselves rejoiced that the moderate yoke of the Greeks under Alexander, had replaced the despotism of their former masters. Even the ambitious and often unprincipled princes of Egypt, Syria, and Persia, who succeeded Alexander, obtained in general the gratitude of those over whom they ruled. If we except the open tyranny and persecution of the Antiochus family in Syria, against the Jews of Palestine, history scarcely records a general complaint against so many despotic rulers and foreign masters. The Hellenic dominion embraced then, it may be said, all the races of mankind, and benefited them. In early times, we see under their control the Celts of Gaul or Spain, the Sarmatians of Scythia, the natives of Sicily and Magna Grecia; at a later epoch, we find the Libyans of Cyrenaika, the Egyptians



along the Nile, the Cushites of Nubia, the mixed races of Syria, Arabia, and Palestine, the Iranians and Hindoos of the Orient, and even the Tartar tribes of Transoxiana, accepting with a sort of gratitude what the Hellenes came to confer, that is, civilization, the advantages of commerce, and the boon of a superior philosophy. The reader has just witnessed how all this was crowned by the immense benefit of a universal language, without any difference whatever, since the previous divergences of dialects and idioms had all been merged in the language of sociable and brilliant Athens.

This may appear to lean to the side of a natural explanation for the diffusion of Christianity. For this is the question we now discuss, and we must be impartial in the statement of all that can bear on the subject. Many considerations will, later on, give conclusive proofs of the contrary, or rather, add considerably to what has already been said on the subject. But we are far from conceding that the details just given resolve themselves into evident inferences in favor of a natural explanation. Providence does not always act miraculously, in the sense which we give to the word miracle. When a long series of events produce, without the intention of man, a great and universal fact of a powerful influence for the future benefit of mankind, we say justly that it is the work of God, and that it shows in all its stages a real providential design, since man, without having ever intended it, sees it at last accomplished, and wonders how it was brought about.

## 2. *Greece was not naturally prepared to receive Christianity—Testimony of Plutarch and Pausanias.*

The previous considerations go to prove to a certain extent the general intervention of God in human affairs. As to the especial fact of the preparation of Greece for receiving naturally the Gospel, how far, namely, the Hellenes were prepared for it by anterior events, and by the preservation of primitive truth, what has just been said scarcely touches the question, which remains yet entire, and must be solved by reasons of a very different nature. It seems, it is true, natural to believe that a great design had been planned in heaven, looking to the restoration of social unity in a great part of the human race, through the spread of the Attic idiom in the three continents of the Old World; still, the object might have been only a social, not altogether a religious one. More proofs have to be

adduced, if we wish to base our assent on certainty. And it is very possible that on considering the question under all its aspects, the conclusion will be reached, that Greece was no more prepared for Christianity than she had ever been in the six previous centuries. It has already been stated that if many Greek Fathers thought that Hellenic philosophy and poetry had been for their race a kind of *προπαιδεία* or introductory education leading to truth, St. Paul seems to have thought the contrary. All that is intended at this moment is to state the probabilities on the one side or on the other, leaving the reader to draw the conclusion, which, however, must directly show itself from the premises.

There can be no doubt that the primitive patriarchal religion was designed to prepare mankind for the final revelation through Christ. Thus every fragment of primeval truth contained in the Greek writers of all previous centuries, could be called a stepping-stone to wade out of the stream of error; and consequently there was in the literature of the Hellenes, and in many of their traditions, innumerable grains of gold which could be turned into substantial coin. But as all this wealth was, in fact, buried in rubbish, and had to be painfully extracted from under a deep layer of dross, and thus brought to light and usefulness; as all this dross, so different in its origin and its nature from the true metal, was thickly laid everywhere, was, in fact, almost the only material that all handled, and admired, and loved; it can scarcely be said that the poor, degenerate Greek race was benefited by a concealed treasure, almost unknown to all, and often regarded by the few acquainted with it as an old, archaic trumpery, worthy only of oblivion. Reference is made here to some observations on the subject in *Gentilism*, when speaking of the two streams which composed, in ante-Christian times, the Hellenic literature.

But to render the sight of it more striking, the question must be treated in a concrete manner, and not confined to general and abstract observations. We, therefore, ask ourselves, Have we any means of knowing exactly the state of Greece in all its details at the time of the propagation of Christianity, and was it in any way favorable to its spread? The answer is plain and emphatic: We can conclude *something* on the subject from the writings of Plutarch, and a *great deal* from those of Pausanias; and the answer in both cases leads certainly rather to the negative than the affirmative side of the question. The scoffer Lucian, living at about the same time, may speak somewhat differently, but not at all in a manner agreeable to what

might be wished. This is the general answer, which must be proved somewhat in detail.

It is by many thought that Plutarch was born under Claudius. But as he reached a very old age, Christ must have had a great number of worshipers in Greece when he died. Although he traveled extensively, and even publicly taught philosophy in Rome, he remained all his life thoroughly a Greek; so that he never could even learn the Latin language. He always was a perfect representative of his country in his time—what Plutarch was, the majority of his countrymen must have been. According to the common opinion of many modern writers he must have felt well-disposed toward Christianity, since his morality is so much praised for its purity, his tastes for moderation, and his religious views for their simplicity and naturalness. It can be, however, maintained that he remained all his life a thorough pagan, and never even felt the need of a superior moral or religious elevation. He certainly admired Rome; and yet he lived in it in the most corrupt age, since he gave there lessons in philosophy during the reign of Domitian. It is remarkable that not a word do we ever read in his writings denunciatory of the frightful scenes he must have witnessed. His biographers tell us that he always “despised the epicurean doctrines, was the admirer of Plato, and his disciple in many things, chiefly with regard to the immortality of the soul, the belief in divine justice, and in the strong objective truth of moral good.” This is very true, and it does honor to Plutarch. But what is added by the same biographers—“that if he taught verities less pure than those of the Christian religion, still, his doctrines were appropriate to the aims and the greatest needs of elevated human nature”—is much more problematical, or rather contrary to the facts in the case, as shall be presently demonstrated.

Our opinion, it is true, goes here counter to that of Joseph de Maistre. It can be shown, however, that De Maistre’s high estimate of the good gossip of Chæronea was adopted by him in a moment of enthusiasm, on reading the treatise *On the Delays of Divine Justice*, which he translated, with interesting notes. Plutarch, in this excellent little book, found opportunely for his guidance the great truths, preserved in Hellenic traditions, of the transmission of guilt, and the moral bond of individuals in families—what the French call *la solidarité des races*. De Maistre must have thought that the Greek writer had obtained these high philosophical and religious views from

some acquaintance with the Christian religion. He consequently takes warmly to task Daniel Wytttenbach, for having said in the preface to his admirable edition of the works of the philosopher of Chæroneæ, that "Theodoretus ranks Plutarch among those who had been acquainted with the Holy Gospel, and had transferred to his own book many things he had read there—an opinion generally held by the Fathers with regard to pagan authors, but certainly false in the case of Plutarch." On this passage the great Catholic writer brings together a number of circumstances, which he thinks must have rendered it very probable that Plutarch had come in contact with Christianity, and profited by it in his writings. But unfortunately there is not the least indication of it in all his works. The truly Christian ideas contained in his treatise *On the Delays of Divine Justice*, came to him from Greek traditions well known in our day. His warm support of the immortality of the soul, of the action of Providence in the world, of the objective and immutable existence of moral good, he had received from Plato, who wrote on those subjects much more eloquently than Plutarch ever did. But as to the pretension that "his doctrines were appropriate to the aims and the greatest needs of elevated human nature"—which, however, is not taken from De Maistre—it can be demonstrated that the good author of the *Parallel Lives* unfortunately never knew the "real aims and the greatest needs of elevated human nature."

The great controversy had already begun in his time between Christians and pagans, on the foolishness of idolatry. Burning words were as early as this being exchanged on this supreme question which was to shake the world, and lay prostrate a few hundred years later all the idols worshiped until that hour by the nations. Not only Plutarch never took part in the controversy on the side of truth, he remained all his life a devout worshiper of all the ridiculous deities of Greece. He was, in fact, nearly as childish on the subject as Herodotus himself.

But to touch the question in a still more concrete manner, let us examine a moment how the few great souls of that epoch, who at the first sight of Christianity opened their eyes and after a short discussion embraced it, how were they brought to it, and what motive chiefly moved them to adopt it? Let us take the example of St. Justin, for instance, certainly a contemporary of Plutarch. After having passed through nearly all the schools of philosophers, including that of Plato himself, feeling yet a void in his mind and in his

heart, he meets on the sea-shore an old man, a Christian, who places in his hands the Holy Scriptures. Justin hears directly, in the words of Moses and the prophets, a voice from heaven. He understands at once that God has created him, and for what purpose. The answers to the three first questions of our catechism strike him vividly, and this alone—he believes it—can fulfill “all the aims and the greatest needs of elevated human nature.” This never took place for poor Plutarch, who continued all his life to waste paper by writing on it the adventures of gods and goddesses, and trying to find satisfactory explanations of those curious feats.

For mind ; he wrote two books of *questions* ; and you will find more of them in his writings than perhaps in any other author of antiquity. But he never puts to himself the question, *Why was I made?* and thus he never could have any inkling into “the aims and greatest needs of elevated human nature.” We have, first, his “Roman questions ;” secondly, his “Greek questions ;” thirdly, “the parallel between both.” For *parallelism*, that is, the childish comparison of this and that as to size, place, name, incidents, etc., was nearly all Plutarch saw in the facts of past history.

In speaking thus the intention is not to depreciate him ; for we have spent delightful hours in reading the artless effusions of the simple-minded gossip ; and when one ceases to reflect deeply on the great questions of the human soul, and consents to amuse himself with looking into the kaleidoscope of small thoughts and small talk, there is no book in the world so inoffensive, and on the whole pleasant, as the moral treatises of good Plutarch. The antiquary particularly finds them to be a mine of curious little facts, sometimes instructive and always interesting. His “Roman questions” particularly are much more remarkable in both ways—that is, in interest and instruction—than his “Greek questions.” As the good man was several years in Rome “teaching philosophy,” under his dread majesty, Flavius Domitianus, having no fear of the tyrant because he did not meddle with politics nor astrology, he found leisure to pore over some old Roman scrolls, and met there with queer notions, particularly on marriage, customs, or religion. The queerest are on this last topic. We will merely quote one, which met our eyes just now on opening again the book—we give the Latin version of Xilander—“*Cur in sacrificio Herculis nullus alius deus nominatur, neque intra sepimenta canis conspicitur?*” The ears of a Roman must have been tickled when he heard that he was going to learn

why "in the sacrifices to Hercules, the name of no other god was ever mentioned, and no dog was allowed to remain in the precincts of the temple." The answer may be found in the book, we have no time to copy it. It is, as is now and then the case with Plutarch, a most ridiculous jumble.

This, however, is not a fair specimen of his "Roman questions." On marriage the reader will find them occasionally of a deep import. Many of the remarkable customs of that great nation are mentioned by the author; and if some of them are merely trifles, others offer a real interest to the philosopher as well as to the antiquary. But it is difficult to meet with anything of the kind in the "Greek questions;" and these are to attract particularly the attention of the reader, since the actual inquiry regards the state of Greece in the time of Plutarch, as affecting the introduction of a new religion such as were the doctrines preached by the apostles of Christ. Were, then, the Hellenic tribes mentally occupied by serious questions? Their æsthetic taste will be shortly considered; and it will be found with some surprise not to have degenerated from the best times; but as it was altogether a pagan taste, it was far from being favorable to so austere a doctrine as the Christian dogmas were; quite the reverse. In this book of Plutarch, however, the questions examined by the author refer chiefly to religion and national customs, and must consequently have a strong bearing on the actual considerations. And the result of this inquiry is on the whole very adverse to the affirmative answer to the proposed question, How far were the Hellenes disposed to the reception of Christianity?

For the local history of Greece, at the time of Plutarch, many of these questions may have been of some interest; but it was "*un pur intérêt de clocher*," as a Frenchman would say, and they scarcely ever allude to things of importance concerning the whole of Greece. No better proof could be adduced of the remarkable fact stated in *Gentilism*, that at the first propagation of Christianity the Hellenes were divided socially and religiously into minute fragments, running rapidly to pure individualism. But it is chiefly in everything relating to religion that the "Greek questions" of Plutarch can be said to be "eloquent." Such an array of childish practices and beliefs can scarcely be imagined by any one who has not read the book. This is, for instance, a great religious "question": "Why do the Elean women invite Bacchus, in a sacred song, to come to them *pede bubulo*?" and Plutarch gives even a few lines of the *sacred* song,

quoted in a note below.\* It was certainly calculated to excite in the worshippers very *religious* feelings, to “invite Bacchus to come with a choir of Graces, leading them in the dance, *fourfooted, and with bovine hoofs.*” The following is undoubtedly a still more interesting question, or rather was, to the Samians in particular: “Why is it allowed to the Samians, when they sacrifice to Hermes Charidotos, to steal and appropriate to their use the clothing of others?” We learn by this very *moral* query that whenever the Samians offered sacrifice to Hermes Charidotos, it was lawful for them to rob whoever they chose, and particularly to appropriate to themselves the wardrobe of strangers. And the reason of it was as edifying as the practice: Ages before, the Samians had been forced by their enemies to leave their island, and to settle on the promontory of Micale, which is quite near. During a whole decade of years they subsisted in their new country merely by plundering the neighbors, and having thus obtained the high approval of Mercury (the god of thieves) they were enabled, by his help (probably), to return to Samos and conquer their enemies.

This is not an invention; every one can read it in Plutarch, with many other facts of like import. These few quotations can certainly suffice for the present purpose. These, then, were the great questions which the philosopher of Chæronea thought proper to discuss for the information of his originally noble race. Were the people, at the time, such as Plutarch makes them, really disposed to receive Christianity? Can the writer himself—certainly the best and highest, at that epoch, in the whole country—be supposed to have had, then, higher aims than those of his countrymen? If such had been the case, as Joseph de Maistre certainly believed, we are authorized to think that he would have proposed to himself and to his readers very different and much mightier questions. Being, as he was, a great reader and admirer of Plato, he would have started some, at least of, the following queries: “Why is *Zεύς* derived from *Ξῆν*, and *Δις* from *δία*?” A long discussion on the high doctrine of monotheism and the folly of the polytheism then existing might have been the consequence. Still, Plutarch would then have only treated an actual, not an idle question; since it is well known that at the time of Plutarch the controversy was already engaged on the subject between

---

\* *Veni heros Bacche maritimum ad templum sanctum cum Gratiis, ad templum, pede bubulo.* This is the literal version of the Greek text.

the new Christians and the old pagans. Or, again, he might have quoted from Plato, his favorite author, the few lines contained in one of his letters on the "sacred accounts of olden time," with respect to the long and heavy chain which the guilty man is obliged to drag in another world during all eternity; and on this occasion he would have met on his way some very interesting questions to discuss. And so of many other points of equal importance.

It is not denied that Plutarch had actually read those passages of Plato, and that he spoke of them with some urgency in several of his moral treatises. But we complain that he never opposes those great truths, known to him, derived from tradition and preserved in Greek writers, to the contemptible mythological nonsense of which his own writings are full. He speaks of both with equal seriousness, and does not seem to perceive that the belief in the one is fatal to the other. It looks as if his object was to conciliate both, as if they were not perfectly incompatible. The admission of what is so grand and true does not appear to incline him in the least to despise and ridicule what is so puny and false. Plato was a very different philosopher. He did not look with the same respect on the doctrine of the supreme God, and on the tales of ordinary Greek mythology. He always spoke with due solemnity of the first, and indulged in evident sneers on the subject of the second. His *Cratylus* is remarkable in this respect. We have no doubt that had he lived in the time of the apostles and known them, he would have openly embraced Christianity, to which he was evidently well disposed. Plutarch, on the contrary, seems to be perfectly indifferent to truth and error. In his *Libellus de occulte vivendo*, for instance, he will describe strongly the torments of hell prepared for the evil-doer; and in his "Greek questions," as was just seen, he will speak seriously and *piously* of the help granted by Mercury to a set of robbers—the true worshipers of his godship. Anything disgraceful in the popular religion of his countrymen, he seems to approve without any qualification. How differently Plato acted and wrote!

Wytttenbach was right, in our opinion, in thinking that Plutarch never heard anything of Christianity, although living in the same age as Lucian, who was so well acquainted with its existence, at least. But had he met in his travels any of the numerous Christians existing in his time, and conversed with them, he would not probably have understood their language, as he seems to have been incapable of discerning the immorality and puerility of polytheism. Still he was



truly the fairest representative of Greece in his age ; and both must be pronounced to have been but poorly prepared for Christianity. Both were too strongly attached to the fables of their mythology to feel any natural inclination for embracing the severe emblem of the Cross.

We cannot, it is true, place the garrulous old philosopher of Chæronea among those Greek sophists, so numerous and influential at that epoch, who opposed Christianity with the last degree of virulence, and sometimes urged on the too-willing Cæsars in their persecuting fury. Very few writers of antiquity show themselves so amiable, kind, and tolerant as the good Plutarch certainly was ; and there cannot be any doubt that had he been in Rome under Nero, when that *multitude* of Christians mentioned by Tacitus perished by the most cruel death, he would have spoken of the event in terms very different from those used by the author of the *Annales*. Still, we are equally sure that he would not have placed himself among the victims, as Justin had the courage to do a very few years afterward.

All things considered, the utmost that can be said by those who really think that the Hellenes were naturally disposed for the adoption of Christianity, is that we can conclude this from Plutarch's writings: The former doctrines of Plato, so well adapted to prepare the way, had not been lost yet in the ever-increasing corruption ; but were kept alive and even popularized by such writers as he of Chæronea. What a few would have extracted with difficulty from the dialogues of the friend of Socrates, could be read with the utmost facility by a great number in the popular style of Plutarch ; and that doctrine which can be called almost sublime when found under the pen of pagan writers, was truly adapted to the understanding of the majority of readers at that epoch. We are not, therefore, disposed to deny altogether that it may have had some influence in individual cases, to impart to the mind of a certain number of men a real leaning toward the new religion. To this must be confined the unconscious action of Plutarch in writing his books.

The real state of Greece, however, at that period of time, and the bias the country must then have felt one side or the other, with respect to Christianity, can be much more safely concluded from the invaluable work of Pausanias than from all Plutarch ever wrote ; and consequently a much greater degree of attention ought to be given to a book which is scarcely known, and yet highly deserves to be. The author was a contemporary of Plutarch, only his junior by a

few years. He mainly wrote under, or very soon after, Hadrian, and very little is known of his life. But the book is sufficient for us, as the interest is all concentrated in the immense number of facts which he briefly relates. The title is merely : *Ἑλλάδος περιηγήσις* — *Rambles through Greece*. It is precisely the work needed to know the physical, social, and artistic state of the country when Christianity was first preached to its inhabitants. Only Hellas, it is true, is comprised in the scope of the writer ; and nothing is said of the vast Greek-speaking regions which have already occupied us. But it is exactly the special object we have now in view, to be thoroughly acquainted with the character, genius, and predispositions of the Hellenic race, which could be found, unmixed with other nations, only in its native territory and within the limits of ancient Greece.

One of the chief purposes of Pausanias was to describe the great works of art which remained yet in the country after the successive plunderings of its previous masters, chiefly the Romans, who had already carried to Italy and Rome, from the time of Mummius down to the age of the Antonines, an immense number of statues, pictures, and gems of art in the line of carving or chiseling. His book is, in fact, the great source where all the modern writers on Greek æsthetics have found the materials for their dissertations and learned tracts. Without it, we would, in particular, have scarcely any exact notion of painting among the ancients. But at the same time that it contains animated descriptions of these beautiful objects, the numerous details of which it is full on the customs of the people, on their religious festivals and rites, on their belief and superstitions, are all of a deep interest ; and no other ancient work that we know gives such a complete idea of the manners and character of that interesting people at that epoch. If they were predisposed to Christianity, and felt then any leaning for a higher, truer, and more rational religion than their own, it would be impossible not to find it at least in some passages of that large volume. It can be stated at once ; nothing of the kind comes out from its thorough perusal ; but this must be seen somewhat in detail.

To dispose at once of what regards art, so as to have henceforth all our attention concentrated on religion and moral characteristics, it is proper to state succinctly that pure taste had not yet degenerated under the Antonines. Pausanias is very exact in stating the degree of real beauty possessed by the various objects he describes ; if it is an archaic statue or drawing, valuable only for its antiquity

and the old traditions associated with it, he does not fail to mention the fact. If the work is of common merit, such as an ordinary artist can effect, a few words tell it to the reader. But when it is the production of the chisel of Phidias or Praxiteles, of the brush of Xeuxis or Polygnotus, or even a mere work in *intaglio* or *basso rilievo* by a master in his art, as the celebrated *λάρναξ Κύψελου*,—Cypselus' casket—described in three full chapters of the fifth book, Pausanias always speaks as the best critic would in a most refined age, and shows that in his time taste was yet what it had been from the era of Pericles. One feature is, however, very remarkable: of more than two hundred artists of various schools, of which he speaks, scarcely any is recorded belonging to a recent epoch. But this does not prove that there were no more good Greek artists at the time. Only they did not work any more for Greece, which was too poor to pay them. They were all in Italy, and filled the peninsula with the beautiful objects which have been unearthed all over it in the last three hundred years. But a conclusive proof that Hellenic art had not then degenerated is derived from the Arch of Titus, yet preserved in Rome, where architects and sculptors admire still the most perfect embodiment of pure æsthetics; so that it can compare with what Greece ever produced of beautiful in architecture or drawing. The degeneracy, however, must have begun soon after, since the Arch of Constantine gives such a painful proof of it, a few steps only from the former.

The reader must, therefore, persuade himself that the Hellenes, at the time of the first propagation of Christianity, possessed yet the supreme good taste which had all along distinguished them during the last four hundred years. He must also not lose sight of the fact that Greece was yet full to the brim of artistic productions of the highest value. After they had been plundered by so many conquerors and proconsuls, their *harvest of beauty* did not seem to have been lessened in the least; and this is a strict conclusion from the book of Pausanias, which must strike the reader with astonishment. The details of the siege and destruction of Corinth by Mummius, and the description of the triumph of this conqueror, leave the reader under the painful impression that whatever the small Corinthian state possessed of precious objects of art, had been absolutely confiscated, sold, and carried away. How different a tale the book of Pausanias unfolds in the long account he gives of the same city and country in his time! It is true, that in the interval between Mum-

mius and the reign of Hadrian, a long period of time had intervened. The city had been rebuilt first by Augustus, and later on Hadrian had again embellished it. But these two restorations can scarcely explain the narrative of Pausanias, when he describes the Corinth of his day. Read chiefly the second and third chapters of the book entitled *Κορίνθιανα*. You will see there\* that, in this age of Hadrian, there were yet in the city many precious works of art which were either valuable remains of ancient times, or the productions of posterior artists, who flourished when Corinth was yet powerful in more modern times. It is not true, consequently, that every valuable object had been destroyed, sold, or carried away at the time of Mummius, or since that celebrated siege, ending, it is pretended, in complete destruction. The subsequent details brought forth by Pausanias are a complete confirmation of all this. But no special mention can be made of them in these pages.

If Corinth was yet so rich in objects of art, the remainder of the country which had not been plundered to the same extent, was still much more profusely adorned with whatever could please the eye, gratify the imagination, or satisfy the taste. Where will the admirer of the beautiful find anything now on earth that could give the least idea of it? Even Italy, with all her known wealth in those admirable productions of genius, can scarcely afford a remote notion of what Greece then was. Our modern cities, so poor in that respect, even in Europe, out of Italy, can only mislead those who would like to picture to themselves a fair representation of Hellas, even after all the wars between Achaia on the one side, and Macedonia, Sparta, and Rome on the other. And let the reader remember it; nearly all those works of art were statues, paintings, and *bassi-relievi* of gods and goddesses, to whom numerous sacrifices were yet daily offered in all cities, towns, and villages of the country. For it is much later, and under Julian only, that the complaint of pagans became common with regard to the niggardliness of worshipers, and the scanty number of victims brought to the altars of this crowd of deities. But these few words on the æsthetics of mythology must suffice. It is time to discuss the much more important social, moral, and religious aspect of the question.

The great feature which everywhere strikes the reader of Pausanias' *Rambles in Greece*, is the incredible multitude of local traditions

---

\* II. 2, 6.

which formed yet the mental food of the Hellenes. Of those venerable memories of past ages which could bring back the mind to the primitive belief of the race, not a word is ever read in the book; but of local stories connected with mythological superstition and a very corrupt religion, there is in the work a far more numerous array than in all the treatises of Plutarch put together. The travels of the writer can be said to be not only national and provincial, but chiefly topographical. There was scarcely a village that he did not visit in the whole country, and on the subject of almost every one of them there are stories, either graceful or vulgar, amusing or dull, rational or absurd, related by the *Rambler*. From the first chapter of the first book (*Αττικά*) to the last paragraph of the last book (*Φωνικά*), it is absolutely the same. These stories alternate everywhere with the descriptions of the works of art. As a specimen, the last tale which closes the whole work can be given; we translate from the Greek: "Of the temple of Æsculapius at Naupactum, nothing remains but a few ruins. It had been long ago built from the foundations by a private citizen of the name of Phalysius. As he was suffering from eye-disease, and even threatened with complete blindness, the god worshiped at Epidaura sent him Anyta—the same female poet who wrote the well-known lyrics—with some sealed tablets she was to give him. This woman had a dream, in which she thought written tablets were given her, and on awakening she found it was so. Going, therefore, to Naupactum, she met with Phalysius, and told him to break the seal and read the message of the god. Phalysius at first doubted he could do it, as from almost total blindness he had been obliged to leave off reading. Thinking, however, that Æsculapius could do him a favor, he began to hope, and breaking the seal he looked on the wax and found that he did not any more suffer from his eyes, and he gave to Anyta the amount mentioned in the tablets, namely, a round sum of two thousand gold stateras."

This was certainly for a pagan edifying reading. All the stories recounted by Pausanias are not so pretty, chiefly not so chaste and pure as this one. They all, more or less, strengthen the prevailing religion; and as the book is full of them, and in fact, is almost totally made up of them, Greece appears in its pages, exactly what she had been almost from the time of Homer; a gossiping country, altogether pagan, and totally devoid of any aspiration to a higher and purer religion. What will soon be said of Lucian, who lived at the same time, may modify somewhat this general statement, but will

not change it, or rather, on the contrary, confirm it, by giving merely the ludicrous aspect of the same universal feature in the Hellas of the period.

The pertinacity of the race in those foolish and often corrupting local traditions was so great, that the most crushing catastrophes, social and political changes, radical revolutions, had no influence on the people in that regard. The reader, for instance, is aware of what all writers of Roman and Greek history have said of the complete destruction of Corinth by Mummius. The city burned; the citizens sold as slaves; the immovable and movable property all confiscated; objects of art of inestimable value sold at auction or sent to Rome, etc. It seems that there is an end of that wealthy and most corrupt little republic of the Peloponnesian isthmus. Indeed, it could be said: *fuit Corinthus*. Yet when, much later on, Augustus rebuilds the city, all the old tales of its former history, and all the memories of its former corruption, revive at once. Read in the second chapter of *Kορινθιακα* the details mentioned as relating to the city in the time of Pausanias. They had restored there even the sepulcher of Laïs. It was, it seems, too precious a monument of the old city to be forgotten. The modern monument is described by Pausanias: a beautiful lioness holding in her forepaws a living ram. The writer takes good care to relate that Laïs in her time had surpassed in beauty all other courtesans. The admiration of the Corinthians for her was so great that they had established public games in her honor; and these were still celebrated, Pausanias says, in the age of the Antonines, so long after St. Paul had established the first Christian church at Corinth. How could it be hoped that so obstinate an ardor for an idolatry which had then lasted a thousand years would finally give way to the simple and austere preaching of the Gospel? For, together with Laïs' sepulcher, all the former temples had been rebuilt, and the ancient superstitions revived. The fane of Poseidon stood again in its old place, with brazen statues of Tritons, of Amphitritè, of Thalassa. "Herodes Atticus," Pausanias relates, "had just then dedicated, inside of the sacred edifice, the four horses of Poseidon, of gilt bronze, except the hoofs, which are of ivory. Near the horses are seen two Tritons of gold, as far down as the umbilic, the hind-part being of ivory. In the chariot stand Amphitritè and Poseidon, and at the right of the dolphin the infant Palæmon is seated. In the front part of the base which bears the chariot, Thalassa is carved, holding her daughter

Venus. On both sides of this group the Nereides play," etc. Can we read in that picture, that polytheism was dead in reviving Corinth, and that her inhabitants longed for a higher religion? Yet at Corinth there was then a bishop, and there had been for many years; and every first day of the week the Corinthian Christians heard the reading of some passages, at least, of the letters they had formerly received from St. Paul, the following one, for instance: \* "As for meats that are offered in sacrifice to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no God but one. . . . Still knowledge is not in every one. For some until the present time, with a conscience of the idol, eat as a thing sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled," etc. Did any Christian of the time of Pausanias go still to the temple of Poseidon and Thalassa, and when a sacrifice was offered, dare yet to eat of the polluted meats? We have no means of knowing; but since, so long after the first preaching of St. Paul, the city was far from being altogether converted, the assertion that there were still *weak* Christians among them could not certainly be disproved, and seems to be rather a consequence from what we read in the *Rambles in Greece*.

And unfortunately these suppositions are rather confirmed by innumerable details in the same work of the Greek traveler. In the Acts of the Apostles we read how St. Paul had to leave Thessalonica to avoid the open persecution of the Jews of that city, and that he embarked from Berea, and sailing through the Ægean Sea he reached Athens. The ship must have landed him at the Piræus, or perhaps rather the Phalerum, whence he reached the still refined and splendid city. His discourse in the Areopagus is well known, as well as the result of it: the formation of a Christian church, which continued to exist ever afterward. He had found the Athenians *more superstitious* than any other people he had yet visited, and preached to them the *unknown god* to whom they had erected an altar. It seems that after such a remarkable fact had been objected to them, and on the occasion of such a strange and childish superstition, the existence, attributes, and power of the only true God had been announced to them so magnificently, even those among them who were not convinced, and did not feel the courage to take so bold a step as did Dionysius, one of their countrymen, ought at least to have made it a point to look around for that altar and inscription, and either remove

---

\* 1 Cor. viii. 4, 10, et seq.

it or add to it the more precise name of some of their innumerable deities. They did nothing of the kind, however, and the same altar and inscription existed yet in the time of Pausanias. It was one of the most conspicuous sights in the Phalerum harbor. It stood in the midst of a large cluster of splendid but idolatrous edifices. The Greek traveler mentions "the temple of Artemis; near it that of Demeter; then that of the Sciradian Athenè; a little farther that of Zeus; finally βωμοὶ θεῶν τε ὀνομαζομένων ἀγνώστων—" "the altars of the gods called unknown." Pausanias, it is true, uses the plural, and St. Paul speaks only of one, "To the unknown god." He could do so without the least violation of truth, as each of the altars bore certainly the inscription mentioned by the apostle, and it was only the group of βωμοὶ in the plural which could be said to be dedicated to *unknown gods*. St. Paul must have met with the strange sight on his first landing in Attica. If the ship that brought him cast anchor in the Piræus, as most of the shipping did at the time, the Phalerum was quite near, and a few steps could bring St. Paul to it. The Phalerum, however, was not then altogether abandoned as a place of landing, and the apostle may very well have first stopped at it, chiefly since Pausanias says that it was somewhat nearer to the city than the Piræus. Thus light is thrown on this passage of the Acts of the Apostles, not precisely to the honor of the Greek race, but proving their disinclination to change.

Space and time do not allow longer details from the *Rambles in Greece*. Attica could furnish still a greater number of them than the territory of Corinth. A general remark, however, is calculated to strike the reader. It is well known that the French Abbé Barthélemy wrote an extensive work on Greece, which was first considered as describing perfectly that celebrated country and its inhabitants in ancient time, or rather, in the time of Pericles. But French critics admit that most of the details it contains are taken from Pausanias' work, and that without it Barthélemy would have been perfectly unable to write the *Travels of Young Anacharsis*. Still, it is certain that Pausanias described the Greece of the second century of our era, such as he saw it himself. The consequence is unavoidable: Greece had not changed from ancient time, and the Hellenes were the same amiable, frivolous, ardent idolaters they had always been from the time of Homer down. They were no more prepared to receive Christianity than in the age of Pericles; and they did not in the main aspire to anything higher than what had been the national, social,



and religious characteristics of their countrymen for many centuries.

A last feature, however, must not be altogether omitted, and a few paragraphs will suffice to show its cogency in the same direction. It is taken from the national passion of the Hellenes for games and friendly contentions in athletic exercises, and feats of skill and bodily strength. Details culled from two large books of Pausanias, under the title of *'Ηλειακα*, must furnish the materials. The Olympic games in Elis may be said to have been the concentration of the Grecian spirit, in all its features, most opposed to aspirations higher than this earth. The place itself and its surroundings; the incredible array of its entrancing objects of a sensual art and brilliant superstition; the most solemn consecration, it may be affirmed, of a noble yet altogether worldly ambition; everything which the imagination of man can conceive, as the most attractive to the senses, and to the earthly aims of our fallen, still not degraded, human nature, was accumulated with profusion on this vast plain to bring man to a complete forgetfulness of a future and nobler life. For a citizen of any of the States of Hellas to have obtained a wreath gathered from the sacred olive-tree near Olympia, was in fact the only supreme happiness which could be the object of his dreams. Henceforth he could not appear in his own native country without honors paid to him as to a hero, nay, a demi-god. Ovations awaited him everywhere; he was considered as having conferred an imperishable glory on the city that gave him birth; poets of the highest renown sang his praises; his statue adorned the noblest spots of his native State, often the very temples of the gods; and he had a right to have one erected on the field of his victory, in some of the innumerable temples of Olympia itself.

And after all, in what pursuit had he illustrated himself? He had, after a long and painful training, been able to surpass his competitors in wrestling, boxing, running, leaping, throwing the quoit, or driving in a chariot. In Christian lands, the *noble* art of prize-fighting has never yet been able to obtain the absolute plaudit of all indiscriminately. There is, there has always been, a large class looking only with disgust on the thrilling exhibition; and in all countries where the custom was introduced and maintained itself, the police has been unaccountably in appearance adverse to granting perfect freedom to the aspirants for fame in the prize ring. This comes, perhaps, or rather undoubtedly, from the fact that in Chris-

tian countries moral virtue is always more highly prized than muscular development or mere physical endurance. But the Greeks, with all their philosophy, could never imagine any higher aim for man than a pleasant and renowned life in this world.

The word *philosophy* brings to the mind a train of ideas which has not been yet suggested, on the bias of the Hellenes toward or against Christianity; and at least a short paragraph on the subject is needed, in answer to a largely prevailing opinion that philosophy was an important factor for or against the introduction of the new religion. In the superior region of the highly educated classes, it had certainly some influence. Our firm conviction on the subject has been already stated in treating of the primitive traditions preserved by what has been called somewhere else traditional philosophy, and, on the contrary, of the rationalistic systems brought on by idolatry, pantheism, or even open atheism. But in the popular bent of the Hellenic nature, philosophy had scarcely any place whatever; it was the imagination, the refined senses, the æsthetic feeling which predominated. This mainly swayed even such men as Plutarch, and made of all Hellenes so many pagans. In an actual, *de facto* description of Greece, such as Pausanias wrote, philosophy could have no place whatever. We doubt if the word itself can be found in the whole book, although we have not read it with the intention of ascertaining it. One thing is sure; it is nowhere question of the thing itself. In the whole long description of the Olympic games, which give such a perfect portraiture of the Greek race, the thing—philosophy—is simply totally absent. We intend to come back later on to the same question.

The two books of Pausanias, entitled *Ἡλεία*, comprise only three great subjects. First, after a short history of Elis, they give a description of the temples which adorned the vast plain of Olympia, beginning by the great fane of Jove, with the celebrated idol, the masterpiece of Phidias. The statues of Zeus and of other gods, enumerated and described by the writer, with the edifices which they embellished, can scarcely be counted, and in fact bewilder the reader by the brilliancy of the sketches, and the number of legendary anecdotes connected with them. Speak of modern Paris, with its churches and palaces, and works of art! The plain of Olympia, as an earthly paradise, was far superior to whatever may line both sides of the Parisian boulevards, old or new. Yet Olympia was not a city, but a plain. All this magnificence was displayed simply

to receive every fourth year the multitude of Greeks that came from the most distant parts of all Hellenic countries, to witness the games.

Secondly, the *'Hλλειακα* of Pausanias describe at length the statues of the conquerors in the Olympic games. Count them if you choose or can. In the time of the writer the series of contests and victories had lasted more than a thousand years. What a crowd of heroes or demi-gods in the midst of the old Olympian pantheon! And mind that many of those splendid works of art, made of gold, silver, bronze, ivory, and other precious material, were standing in the open air, under that beautiful sky of Greece; and not a word is ever said of any attempt at carrying them away. Still, no watchmen are ever mentioned as custodians of such treasures. It was too sacred in the opinion of all to allow even the supposition that a robbery there could have been possible. Did not the Greeks believe yet in their gods?

Thirdly, and finally, the last part of the description, which nevertheless runs also through the two other parts, enumerates the astonishing treasures accumulated at Olympia by the various nations of Hellas, as at Delphi. In the same branch of the subject other places of Elis are enumerated with regard to their statues, their temples, and the treasures contained in them.

The whole existed yet in all its splendor in the second century of our era. All this Pausanias saw, and described as he saw it. All this gives us a vivid idea of the materialized, yet refined, life of the Greeks. Nero had been there half a century before. He had *conquered*, of course, in the games; and Pausanias saw the beautiful objects of art which he left at Olympia as a mark of his gratitude for the olive crown he had received. It was much later, in 394, that Theodosius abolished, by a decree which excited no opposition whatever, the renowned games under the influence of which Greece had lived so many centuries. There was no need any more of their continuance; because the world, already in a great majority Christian, knew that a far brighter crown was offered to man than that of Olympia. St. Paul, who shows himself so well acquainted with the games, had revealed to the new generation the far higher aim proposed to man at his creation, and solemnly explained by Christ himself. "Know you not that they who run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all

things; they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible one."

This abolition of Olympian prize-fighting occurred a little more than two hundred years after the *Rambles in Greece* were written. When Theodosius issued his edict the world was, we may say, Christian. Still, in the time of Pausanias, the first germ of Christianity was not even visible to an outsider. The writer of the *Rambles* does not so much as allude to the new religion. Had we his book alone with the works of Plutarch, it would be with justice the universal belief that the name of the Redeemer had not yet been preached to the Hellenes in the middle of the second century. And if we possessed—as we do indeed—only the Book of Acts, it might be maintained with reason that the appearance of St. Paul, at Athens, had remained perfectly barren of consequences, and that the church he had planted at Corinth had surely perished before the end of the first century.

But besides many other facts proving the contrary, whose narratives have reached us, do we not yet possess the *Legatio* of Athenagoras, which testifies that under Marcus Aurelius the Christians were violently persecuted in *Greece*, and in which he attacks the absurdities of paganism at the time so prominent in the country? Athenagoras was an Athenian, and may be called a contemporary of Pausanias, being his junior, probably, by a few years. The *Rambles in Greece* were not yet all written when the Athenian apologist presented his work to the Roman emperor in 171. Anteriorly to this, Quadratus, a bishop and a disciple of the apostles, had applied to Hadrian that he might put a stop to the persecution raging against the Christians in the East, and particularly in *Greece*. It is known historically that the fury of the enemies of the Church had been kindled anew in 124 of our era, when the emperor was initiated in the Eleusinian mysteries at Athens. Pausanias must have known all those facts, notorious at the time, and which no Greek then living could ignore.

The State of Hellas, in fact, with respect to Christianity, could not be different from that of Bithynia, in Asia Minor, so near to it, and in so constant an intercourse with it. This is what Pliny the Younger wrote from Bithynia at that same epoch, to Trajan, in the well-known letter he addressed him in order to know how he should act with respect to the Christians: "Great are their numbers of both sexes, of every age and rank of life. The fields, the towns, and the

villages swarm with them. At my arrival in the province I could hardly find a man to purchase incense for our altars : the temples of our gods were deserted and their feasts interrupted." All these facts, and many others of the same import, give so different an idea of the state of Greece with respect to Christianity from what the works of Pausanias and Plutarch suggest, that perhaps the only way to explain the anomaly is to attribute to both authors the deliberate intent not to speak of a thing glaringly known to them, but far from pleasant. It grated too much on their feelings; their dear paganism was evidently rejected by many; they at least would not be guilty of apostasy from it. The brilliant description they made of it at the time was *true*, only they did not keep any account of those that demurred. They wished to ignore them, and so they did. They still represented, however, the generality of their countrymen. It was the grace of God that had so early converted so great a number; the nation was yet frivolous, childish, superstitious, pagan. There was, nevertheless, another feature, unimportant yet, and which must be considered for a moment, to form a perfect idea of the Greek bias at the time. This was the scoffing class, created, or at least expressed, by Lucian of Samosata. A word must be said on the subject, and a word will suffice.

Lucian, a contemporary of both Plutarch and Pausanias, knew certainly of Christianity. Convincing proofs of it will presently be given. He perceived early the extreme absurdity of paganism, and the puerility of the fables of its mythology among the Greeks. Yet instead of adopting the sublime philosophy of the new religion, he declared himself one of its most ardent enemies, and did all he could to prevent his countrymen from adopting it. Let us see this a little more in detail, and there may be some consequence to draw from it.

The ridicule he poured out on the popular theology of the Hellenes is well known, and the quiet he enjoyed in spite of what many around him called his atheism, is an argument for those who believe that paganism was dead. But it is not difficult to prove that the privilege of scoffing at the popular fables was not peculiar to this age, and was not even of recent date. It had in fact always existed more or less, and in the time of Aristophanes, when undoubtedly there was not the least indication of a near change of religion, the right of throwing ridicule on the popular mythology was granted with as perfect an impunity as in Lucian's age. The philosopher of Samosata does not indulge in a greater license of witticism against gods

and goddesses than the great Athenian comic writer does, particularly in his *Frogs*, and in *Peace*, in which Jupiter himself is as unsparingly ridiculed as he is by Lucian. A strange reason is generally assigned—but very preposterously in our opinion—to explain the *blasphemous* freedom used by Aristophanes in a most superstitious age, without any injury to himself. They say that he could do what he pleased in the matter, because those plays were performed during Dionysos' festival, and in honor of this god himself; thus the license of the poet was covered by the cloak of religion. But as it happens that this very god is assailed in no measured terms in the plays under consideration, religion, it seems to us, such as it was, would thus have been doubly insulted. The view taken of it by Franz de Champagny in his *Antonins* seems much more rational, and explains the difficulty in a much more satisfactory manner. Religion in Greece, he says, had no acknowledged dogmas, no doctrines presented to the necessary acceptance of the worshippers. The priesthood was not a teaching body, had no right to require of the people its subscription to any formula of faith. Its prerogatives were limited to the performance of exterior rites, and the only thing the priests could complain of and prosecute before the proper tribunal was the public desecration of the exterior worship or of its emblems. Thus Epicurus could openly teach that there were in truth no gods requiring our worship and prayers, and that he came to free mankind from the fear of them. So long as he behaved decently whenever he thought proper to go to the temples, particularly if he occasionally sent to them victims to be sacrificed, no one could reproach him for his atheism whenever he taught philosophy in public or private. The trial and condemnation of Socrates does not go counter to this view of the subject, which is the only one admissible. The scoffs of Lucian, consequently, are not a proof that paganism was dead in Greece when he wrote. Thus, also, the excessive freedom used in the same direction by the Fathers of the age of Lucian and those immediately following him, has nothing calculated to surprise us. The Fathers have certainly said of Greek idolatry harsher things, and sometimes more witty, than the philosopher of Samosata ever did; and it is very remarkable that if their bold writings in that regard excited occasionally the hatred of the pagans against Christianity, they are never found, that we know, among the legal accusations brought before the courts against them. These were invariably reduced to one only, namely, the open profession of Christianity. There were edicts

of the emperors against it, and no one could be a Christian and live. The motives which had induced the lawgiver to issue those edicts needed not to be referred to, as it would have been a derogation to the majesty of the sovereign. But as to scoffing at polytheism, no one could be surprised at it. It had always been the custom for many.

This being well understood, it is plain from Lucian's case that the total want of belief in paganism could not then be a proof of a real inclination toward Christianity; since he hated it so thoroughly himself. He had certainly many followers in his unbelief; there must have been at the same time many sharers in his opposition to the new creed. But a very important consideration in the actual inquiry is the ascertainment of the extent to which the new religion had spread and was known in his time, and how it was appreciated. There are two of his books where he speaks of it; the *Philopatriis* and the *De morte Peregrini*. The first, always printed among the works of Lucian, and believed to be genuine by Fabricius and many other learned men, is, however, rejected among the apocrypha by the greatest number of modern critics; and Boissonade—a very competent authority—says that Gessner “has given the proofs of it in an excellent dissertation.” But in this case the force of our actual reflections is considerably increased. For no one can deny that this short book is exactly written in Lucian's manner, and must have been a production of his age. Consequently it would prove—what was just stated a moment ago—that the scoffer of Samosata had a following; and that his disposition toward Christianity was shared by, at least, some men of note in his time. We cannot, therefore, discard this dialogue of *Philopatriis* from the present investigation.

Critias, a pagan, and Triepion, a Christian, are the two interlocutors. The first one, ignorant of the religion of the other, and having the occasion to bind himself by an oath, after having proposed several Olympian deities, which the other sets aside, exclaims at last: “By what divinity do you want me to swear?” Triepion replies by the verses given in a note below.\* We have not seen the dissertation of Gessner, by which he proves that the *Philopatriis* does not belong to Lucian. But it is very likely that one of his great reasons is derived from the too exact Christian theology con-

---

\* Ὑψιμέδοντα θεόν, μέγαν, ἄμβροτον, οὐρανίωνα,  
 Τίον πατρός, πνεῦμα ἐκ πατρός ἐκπορευόμενον,  
 Ἐν ἐκ τριῶν, καὶ ἐξ ἑνὸς τρία,  
 Ταῦτα νόμιξε Ζήνα, τόνδ ἡγοῦ θεόν.

tained in these lines. Lucian, a pagan scoffer, could not possibly—he may say—have ever obtained so perfect an expression of the Christian Trinity; the dogma was not yet so far developed, etc. We reply that “the dogma” was from the first day as far developed as this. It is contained equivalently in the Gospel. The formula of baptism alone, which came from Christ himself, embraces the whole doctrine of these four lines. The only development consists in the last word of the second line, *ἐκπορευόμενον*, which refers to the “procession” of the Holy Ghost; and in the whole third line, which expresses admirably the unity of nature, and the trinity of persons in God. But we are fully persuaded that all this was well known in the second—nay, in the first—century of our era. Only, owing to the economy of the secret, this was never written, but confided to the memory of the minister of the sacrament, and, no doubt also, of the faithful. Some doubt, however, arises from the improbability that a pagan like Lucian, or one of his followers, could have obtained such a document as these four lines contain; a difficulty easily got over when we know that there were then false brethren among the Christians, and the few words which are shortly to be said on the work, *De morte Peregrini*, will afford of it a convincing proof.

All things considered, these four lines may very well have been in fact one verse of a Christian hymn known and often recited by all baptized persons. In this case we possess here a first specimen of the new Christian poetry sung in Greece from that time down to our own. But a sad reflection comes suddenly to the mind of the reader, confirmatory of the poor preparation of the Greeks for Christianity at the time. Here it is: Either Lucian, or one of his admirers and friends, a man of his school certainly, fully convinced of the folly of paganism, and long accustomed to ridicule it utterly and on all occasions, falls in with some followers of a new religion, who speak of the unity and essential attributes of God in the strain of the highest philosophy and poetry; “Ruling on high, Great, Immortal, Heavenly!” It is the doctrine of Plato, but expressed with a much greater energy, more clearness, and a perfect consistency in all its parts. It is at the same time the reproduction with a much stronger light of ancient dogmas not altogether forgotten; and the awakening of reason in the human mind and of conscience in the human soul. Every man of sense ought to fall down and adore. Yet many did not. If what the new philosophers say is true, if



Christianity was merely the natural explosion of previous beliefs and feelings, this was the time for all well-read pagans to see it, admit it, be convinced of it. Yet that very Lucian, or whoever may be the author of *Philopatris*, seizes only upon an expression which awakens in his realistic fancy an insane idea of the ludicrous, and instead of admiring the doctrine, he exclaims that "henceforth man will be saved by arithmetic, because one is in three, and three are in one!" A joke, indeed, worthy of the philosophers of the present age, and to which Boissonade alludes certainly when he says that in this dialogue, "*le Christianisme et particulièrement le dogme de la Trinité sont amèrement ridiculisés.*" But we are forced to draw from it another conclusion, sad enough in good conscience, namely, that the Greeks were very little prepared *naturally* for the acceptance of the new religion, which they, however—as shall appear—embraced with a real enthusiasm, as soon as they appreciated it fully.

The book *De morte Peregrini* fully confirms all these reflections, and belongs undoubtedly to Lucian; all admit it. There is less question in it of the belief than of the private life of the Christians. Many interesting details, confirmatory of what was already known from ecclesiastical writers, strike the reader at once as calculated to make a deep impression on the pagans. For Peregrinus, who called himself oftener Proteus, on account of the various characters he assumed during his adventurous life, pretended to be a convert to the Christian religion; and for a long time he lived in the midst of pious people of all ages and conditions, and at their expense. His simulated zeal, coupled with the real talent he possessed for all the emergencies of an active life, caused him to rise rapidly in dignity and honor among the simple-minded Christians. He was made even a bishop, and thus is called in Lucian's book, *προστάτης*. In this position he became acquainted with all the secrets of the new religion; and as he was not probably the only impostor of early times, the reader sees at once how outsiders and pagans could know what the Christians kept most hidden; and *a fortiori* the hymn sung by the faithful in their religious meetings could very well be copied and handed over to open enemies like Crescens, who denounced St. Justin, or scoffers like Lucian, who made merry with three and one and one and three.

The chief source of amusement, however, in the little book *De morte Peregrini* is derived from the childish simplicity of the Christians "who expected a future life after this one, and thus suffered

with courage every kind of evils and torments ;” or, what was yet more ridiculous, “who supported their bishops and priests so handsomely, as they did that impostor, Peregrinus.” Imagine, if you please, how funny it was : when one of the priests was taken to jail, directly crowds of friends went to see him : \* Lucian saw only a ludicrous farce in that great number of “old women,” and “widows,” and “orphans,” who besieged the door of the jail early in the morning, to bring some comfort to the “confessors” of Christ. But besides the sneer of the cynic, there is directly the kick of the hater in the graphic picture of those “more respectable” Christians who “corrupted” the jailers with their gold, and thus *infamously* purchased the privilege of spending the night in the prison with the martyrs.

From all these details, and many others which cannot be given, it is manifest that there were then many Christians in Greece, although Plutarch and Pausanias, living at the same time, do not seem to have ever seen a single one of them in their *Rambles*. It is likewise evident that the Hellenes were not directly converted at the first sight of the public and private virtues practiced by the disciples of Christ. Those virtues were often rather a cause of scandal to the unbelievers, because they grew and blossomed at the foot of “the cross,” which was, according to St. Paul, a “folly” for the Greeks.

The reader is now fully prepared to appreciate the conversion of Greece. The narrative of it will be short, as the chief particulars of it are known to almost all readers ; and there are scarcely, in such a subject as this, important details to be rectified, or new views of it to be solidly established, as was the case for nearly all the countries lying outside of the Roman Empire.

### 3. *Apostleship of St. Paul in Asia Minor. A few words again on Criticism.*

The great apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul, was eminently that of the Greeks, who may be said to have then composed mainly the Gentile world. Some remarkable particulars detailed previously must have convinced the reader of it. But a very significant fact

---

\* “Mane quidem statim videres præsto esse ad carcerem vetulas, viduas quasdam et orphanos. Qui vero honoratiores illorum, ii etiam, corruptis carceris custodibus, intra apud ipsum pernoctabant.” We give the Latin translation of the Bpontaine edition.

with regard to the important part St. Paul took in the conversion of the world, is derived from another text of Lucian, with which we were struck at once in preparing the materials of the previous chapter. It is this: St. Paul had made such an impression on the Greek mind that friends and foes knew his physical portrait, and something of his doctrine, several centuries after his death, independently of the New Testament records, merely from a strongly impressed tradition which could not be destroyed by time. In the *Philopatris*, this is what Triephton says of him, without mentioning his name. We give the Latin text: "*Postquam in Galilæum incidi, recalvas-trum, nasonem, qui per aera incedens, in tertium usque cælum penetraverat, resque omnium pulcherrimas ibi didicerat, is per aquam nos renovavit.*" . . .

The only mistake in this text is to make the apostle of the Gentiles a Galilean, but the name was then applied to all the apostles, nay, often to all the disciples of Christ. With this slight qualification, see how well the description of St. Paul agrees with his traditional portrait: the baldness of the forehead, the prominence of the nose, are the two chief features which always attract the attention of the beholder. As to the mention of the "third heaven," where he saw "the finest things that could be seen," the text of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians comes directly to the mind of any one who happens to read this passage of Lucian. It must have been a powerful personality which had made such a deep impression on the vivid Greek mind. Yet St. Paul, in Greece, spoke chiefly to the Jews, whom he found there in their synagogues. Our pleasant duty is now to describe his mission.

Besides the Acts of the Apostles, many details of it are contained in his own epistles; and thus the historian is not reduced to the severe task of constructing laboriously his narrative from many small bits of information contained in ecclesiastical or secular writers, and from the general knowledge we have of the geography, commerce, language, and manners of the ancients. The only particularity which could detain us in our progress forward, would be the intricacy of the exact chronology of those early apostolic times. It seems, however, preferable not to mind this too much; since very often the solution of those points is scarcely of any importance, and the reader cares, in fact, very little to know, for instance, precisely in what year St. Paul wrote his First or his Second Epistle to the Corinthians. It will be only when any point of chronology is pre-  
VOL. II.—11.

nant with some important consequence that it will be the object of discussion. As to the real authorship of the Book of Acts and of the Epistles of St. Paul, we will presume to take it for granted that the Catholic Church has fixed the canon of the New Testament many ages ago, and that the often whimsical labors of a one-sided school of German critics have not yet been able to weaken in the least the grounds of Christian belief in that regard. With respect to the Epistles of St. Paul in particular, there is only the one to the Hebrews which could create a kind of real difficulty, on account of its style, so different from that of the other letters of the apostle. But it happens, fortunately, that few passages of it, if any, will be referred to in these pages, because of the complete absence of historical details by which it is specially distinguished. All know sufficiently that it contains the most sublime theology; and without it the Church would be deprived of the most splendid proof she possesses of her sacramental system, and of the heavenly character of her priesthood. But precisely on that account, probably, no fact of importance connected with the propagation of Christianity, can be found anywhere in it from the first line to the last. Let this be said, however, without conceding the least point adverse to the belief of the Church, by whom this epistle has always been attributed to St. Paul. According to Eusebius of Cæsarea,\* Pantæus, and after him Origen, had already stated in their time that, “with justice the *ancients* have taught us to believe that this is a genuine work of Paul.” The *ancients* in the time of Origen, and chiefly of Pantæus, must have been the near neighbors of St. Paul himself. Enough of this.

There are three clearly marked fields of operation in the missionary labors of Paul of Tarsus. First, that of Syria, confined mainly to Damascus and to Antioch; then that of Greece and Greek-speaking countries, our main subject of inquiry; finally, that of the West, that is, of Italy and Spain; for the apostle went certainly to Spain, since, besides the general tradition of the early Spanish Christians, we have a remarkable and genuine text of St. Clement of Rome, who must have known St. Paul personally, and who says that his apostolic career extended as far as “the extreme limits of the West”—  
*τέρμα τῆς δόσεως.*†

The only points of interest in the life of the Apostle of the Gentiles with respect to Syria, are his conversion, and his labors at Antioch,

---

\* Hist. Eccl. vi. 14, 25.

† I. Clem. 5.

which gave rise to his temporary disagreement with St. Peter. All the details of his conversion are so well known that a new narrative of them would be useless. As to his controversy with the Prince of the Apostles, what has already been said of it is sufficient. St. Paul began his apostleship eight or ten years probably after the day of Pentecost. This date depends on the exact epoch of his conversion, which is not perfectly well ascertained. Thus when he commenced to preach, Palestine and a great part of Syria had already received the Gospel. He had in fact almost nothing to do with the spreading of Christianity in Judea and the neighborhood. His long subsequent labors in Italy and in Spain are, on the other side, completely buried in obscurity, and nothing sure can be said of them, except what regards his martyrdom in Rome. It may be, consequently, assumed that his missionary life, as known to us, is confined to Greece and the Greek-speaking countries.

He began by Asia Minor; but he had most probably been preceded in that field by St. Peter himself. It is true that the epoch of the preaching of this last apostle to the Jews of "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia"—a fact testified to by St. Jerome \* and by Origen †—cannot be properly and strictly assigned; yet, as it is sure ‡ that Peter preached at Antioch before St. Paul appeared there for the first time, and since the tradition of his establishing

\* De Viris Illust. i.

† Hist. Eccl. Euseb. iii. 1.

‡ This expression, *it is sure*, may be considered too bold by some critics who deny altogether the patriarchate of Peter at Antioch; yet it is a strictly historical fact, recorded by Eusebius in his *Chronicon*. In the year 38 of Christ it is there positively stated that *Petrus Apostolus Antiochenan Ecclesiam fundavit*. The Greek text is not given, it is true, and we have only the Latin translation of St. Jerome, as this fragment of the Greek of Eusebius is lost, with many others. The version of St. Jerome suffices, however, as all must be aware. Yet in the year 44 A.D., we read in Latin, with the Greek text at the foot of the page: *Petrus Apostolus, natione Galilæus, Christianorum Pontifex primus, cum primum Antiochenan Ecclesiam fundasset, Romam proficiscitur, etc.*

It is generally believed that this *Chronicon* of Eusebius was mainly taken from Julius Africanus, a still much older Christian writer. The *Chronicon* of Alexandria, it seems, corroborates these two passages of the bishop of Cæsarea; but we could not procure it. As to the genuineness of the text it is sufficient to read the preface of Migne's edition (*Hieronymi Opera, tom. 8*) to be fully persuaded of it. According to Natalis Alexander (*tom. 3*) there is reason to believe that St. Peter founded only a Jewish congregation at Antioch. The establishment of the church afterward by St. Paul and St. Barnabas, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, refers to a Gentile congregation which probably

his see first at Antioch is to be regarded by all Christians as positive, the ten or eleven years employed in this object gave him ample time for visiting Asia Minor from Antioch. The German and English exegetists, of course, will object to this, and bring as a proof of their opinion that the Acts of the Apostles themselves, in which the first labors of St. Paul in Asia are narrated, do not intimate in the least that he found there any Christians, when he first arrived, except those converted by some Jerusalem Christians and Barnabas. But to this apparently triumphant remark it may be answered that a solemn compact had been entered into before between the two apostles, namely, that St. Peter would address himself to the Jews and St. Paul to the Gentiles.\* Any intelligent reader of the first Epistle of St. Peter will easily conclude that those to whom it was addressed were converted Jews and had never been Gentiles. Thus the author of the Acts was not bound to make any mention of the Judeo-Christians whom St. Paul may have met, for instance, in Galatia, where certainly both apostles—Peter first and Paul afterward—preached the Gospel.

This celebrated attribution of the ministry of Paul deserves a moment's consideration. It was not merely the result of a covenant between both apostles; but had been determined by a special revelation, as the 7th and 8th verses of the second chapter to the Galatians intimate. The narrative of the conversion of St. Paul in the Book of Acts, in this connection must be attentively considered. In the 15th verse of the ninth chapter, our Lord is said to have appeared to Ananias in Damascus, and to have declared to him, speaking of St. Paul: "this man is to me a vessel of election, to carry my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." The future ministry of Paul consequently was to embrace all men—Gentiles and Jews. But this was true in general of all apostles; *Ite ad omnes gentes*; and there was no special need of mentioning it with regard to Paul. It is clear, however, from the text, that the first object of his mission was the world of Gentilism, then governed by numerous kings; so that his ministry to the Jews is thrown at the end of the phrase as a mere adjunct. And this is rendered perfectly

---

soon merged with the Jewish. This opinion of Natalis Alexander can scarcely be reconciled with the well-known fact of the dinners of St. Peter with the Greeks at Antioch. His intention was certainly to convert them and make a "congregation" of them.

\* Gal. ii. 7, 8.

clear by the 7th and 8th verses of the second chapter of the *Epist. ad Gal.* The words of St. Jerome on the subject are the most pithy and short that perhaps can be found in the Fathers: \* “Each of the apostles had received a primary mandate for either Jews or Gentiles; so that those who stood for the Law should have a chief to follow, and those who preferred Grace to the Law should not be deprived of a leading teacher. But all of them cared principally to form the Church of Christ from all nations. Thus we read that Cornelius—a Gentile—was baptized by St. Peter; and St. Paul preached often Christ in the synagogues of the Jews.”

St. Jerome is acknowledged to have been, among the Fathers, probably the best expounder of the literal meaning of Scripture. By the expression, “primary mandate,” he means that it was not a mere personal agreement between St. Peter and St. Paul, that *each* of them should address himself principally to either the Jews or the Gentiles; but that it had been imposed upon them as a *mandate*, namely, by Christ himself. The reason of this distinction among them is openly stated by St. Jerome, namely, the good of souls, so that the Gentiles should be more cordially attracted to the Gospel by the prospect of having a leader specially deputed to them, who would keep them free from the burden of the Mosaic law; and the Jewish prejudices should not be too harshly dealt with, but a temporary allowance should be granted to them, by allowing them to consider themselves still as the carnal children of Abraham, and on that account subject to the law of Moses. Meanwhile, however, the universality of the ministry of each apostle should be maintained, so that Paul could continue to address the Jews in their synagogues, and Peter could baptize the Gentiles in their houses, as he did for the Roman Cornelius.

Therefore both Scripture and the patristic tradition agree in securing to St. Paul his high attribution of Apostle of the Gentiles, that is, mainly of the Greeks, since the civilized Gentile world had been universally invaded by Greek language, customs, and religion. Thus the importance of Paul is greatly enhanced by the height and extent of his mission. At the same time nothing is taken away from the attributions of Peter, who remains what Christ had made him from the beginning: the rock on which the Church was built; the pastor of the lambs and the ewes; the one appointed to confirm his brethren in the faith. Nothing of this was taken away from him,

---

\* In *Epist. ad Gal.*, lib. i., cap. 11, 7, 8.

because, as Father Cornelius a Lapide justly remarks on the subject,\* “Peter and Paul divided among themselves, not their power, but their work. Paul, hated by the Jews, preached first and foremost to the Gentiles; Peter to the Jews. Paul, however, preached to the Jews, as the ninth chapter of the Acts proves; Peter to the Gentiles, as the tenth chapter relates.” These preliminaries were required to establish solidly the relative positions of Peter and Paul, and to give a slight general idea of the labors of this last apostle. A sketch of his journeys through Greek-speaking countries can be dispensed with, as all the historians have done it, and the reader may find one in the first volume of Alzog.† It is complete and short at the same time. An oversight, however, at the very beginning of it, must absolutely be corrected. It says that “while Paul was laboring with commendable zeal to establish the Church at Antioch,” etc. He did nothing of the kind, in a strict sense, as Peter had already *established* it several years before, almost directly after the conversion of Cornelius. There is nothing like exactness in matters of such importance as this. To transfer, although but impliedly, the *establishment* of the Church at Antioch from Peter to Paul, is to deny in fact the *foundation* of the patriarchate of Antioch by Peter himself. This is a mighty question, which must by this time be settled in the eyes of a Catholic. Alzog, it is true, later on ‡ condescends to say that “Peter probably presided for a time as *bishop* over the Church of Antioch.” And the italics just used are taken from the book. Did ever the author recite the office of the *Cathedra Sté. Petri Antiochiæ*? The title of this office alone shows the tradition of the Church on the subject. Should he excuse himself by saying that it is not an article of faith, the question may fairly be put: Do you believe only what is thus proclaimed and imposed? In the present case Peter did not only “preside for a time as *bishop* over the Church of Antioch;” but he really *founded* the Church of Antioch, and was its first bishop. This, all the orthodox writers of ecclesiastical history assert; and what is generally called the “historical ground” of their opinion, as was just seen, is solid enough, independently of the positive tradition of the Roman Church. With this qualification the narrative of the journeys of St. Paul in Alzog’s history is faithful, and calculated to make a strong impression on the mind of any intelligent reader. One of the great results of the whole history is

---

\* In Epist. ad Gal., c. ii. 7.

† P. 175, Amer. edit.

‡ P. 179.



that St. Paul attached evidently an immense importance to the conversion of Asia Minor—that celebrated country which is now expiring in the pangs of poverty, war, and hunger, under the barbarous sway of the Turks. St. Paul devoted to it the labors of three great missions: the first, through Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia; the second, through Cilicia and Lycaonia again, and through Phrygia, Galatia, and Mysia. The third and last, a second time in Phrygia and Galatia, and finally through the *Asia* of the Romans. Then he fixed his permanent abode at Ephesus, where he was in near communication with the cities whose early bishops are so admirably described by St. John at the beginning of his *Apocalypse*. This deserves consideration.

Asia Minor was a most conspicuous and central point for the spread of Christianity. Antioch was just at the southeastern corner of it; and the apostle could repair thither whenever the good of the Church required him to do so; either for the sake of consultation with the apostles living yet in Syria and Palestine, or for procuring laborers in the vineyard whom he could not meet among his new converts in the wilds of Lycaonia, Phrygia, or Galatia. He had to find bishops for all the cities he evangelized; traveling missionaries in abundance for so populous a country as Asia Minor then was; money, no doubt, which the Celts of Galatia could scarcely give him, although they were ready to “pluck out their own eyes and give them to him,” as he emphatically declares.\*

This large peninsula, besides extending in a western direction toward Europe, between the Mediterranean Sea in the south and the Euxine in the north, called on that account *anterior Asia*, was the natural link between the Western continent of Europe, which was going to be evangelized, and the vast Oriental continent, where evangelization was already under full sway, through the leadership of Philip, Bartholomew, Jude, and Thomas. The reader is already acquainted with that high road built primitively by the Persian kings, and extending from Sardis, quite near Ephesus, all through the center, west, and east of the peninsula, until it reached Armenia, to run henceforth through Parthia, Hyrcania, Sogdiana, and India.

A word has just been said of the bishops whom St. Paul established certainly everywhere. This may surprise some readers, and be de-

---

\* Gal. iv. 15.

nied by many German critics, including even, perhaps, some Catholic writers of ecclesiastical history. Yet the word has not been said without some reason. First, it is certain that the Book of Acts does not contain a tithe of all that St. Paul did in Asia Minor; the writer does not pretend to give an extended account, neither of the mission of St. Peter, of whom he speaks first, nor of that of St. Paul himself, whom, however, he accompanied. As to the other apostles, he might as well have omitted their names, which he merely mentions at the beginning of his simple narrative.

But fortunately, besides the Acts, the apostle of love, St. John, comes to our help, and gives us an inkling of what must have been Asia Minor in his time. The good Boanerges never was a traveling missionary. He had a special charge of the Blessed Virgin, given him by Christ on the cross. This was enough honor and profit to the whole Church, in good conscience, although Protestants, and other men perhaps, do not appear to think so. St. John, we know, went to reside at Ephesus. But there is something very extraordinary in this circumstance. The writers of his life are obliged to confess, that after his mission with St. Peter to Samaria directly after the day of Pentecost, "he disappears from history; and it is only after the death of St. Paul, that we find him actively employed in a country to which the Apostle of the Gentiles had especially consecrated his cares; then Asia, and Ephesus, its capital, became, as it were, the proper domain of St. John."\*

This is very remarkable indeed, and we can safely conclude that those churches which St. John governed in Asia as metropolitan, had been several years before founded by St. Paul; and even that the good son of Zebedee was so particular about jurisdiction, that he waited for the death of St. Paul, before he went to take charge of them. Although, therefore, the Acts of the Apostles do not say a word of the foundation by St. Paul of the episcopal sees of Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicæa, besides that of Ephesus; yet all these churches owe their origin to the Apostle of the Gentiles, not to St. John, who merely took charge of them after they were founded, and Paul first appointed bishops over them. But if any one looks at the map, this is a very small part of Asia Minor, and all those cities are included in the province called emphatically *Asia* by the Romans. Consequently the labors of Paul in the other

---

\* Dict. de Théol. Cath., tom. 8, art. *Evangile de St. Jean.*

provinces—Pamphylia, Pisidia, Lycaonia, Cilicia, Phrygia, Galatia, and Mysia—are perfectly independent of those cities radiating from Ephesus, and immediately around it. What a number of bishops' sees can we not suppose he founded in the whole peninsula? And it must still be remarked that Pontus, Cappadocia, and Bithynia, other large provinces of Asia Minor, were not evangelized by St. Paul; at least the New Testament does not state it. But the first line of the first epistle of St. Peter shows that Cephas and not Paul had founded sees in those vast districts, which, however, must have been episcopates of Judeo-Christian communities.

Should any one object to this, and say that this is not history, but conjecture only, the answer can very soon be forthcoming: If history is merely confined to the simple statements contained briefly in the New Testament and a few scraps of primitive authors, then we may as well say at once that we know very little, if anything, of the first spread of Christianity in the world. An assertion which might please the rationalists, but very little the true Christians. These, however, may be allowed to say that they cannot be altogether refused to enjoy something, although very little indeed, of a privilege so generously granted to modern writers, of composing a completely new ecclesiastical history of their own, founded on their celebrated canon of criticism, namely, that one called *the canon of intrinsic evidence*. Owing to this most admirable invention, they do not need in the least either facts or testimonies, sacred or not, to write a complete history of the Church. The whims of their imagination—which they pompously call *intrinsic evidence*, are perfectly sufficient for them. But we, defenders of the Church, we must march always with the rule and compass, with the shears and the knife, measuring, curtailing, cutting down all the facts of history previously accepted generally, because, forsooth, critics object to this particular or to that. We are sorry to say that Mr. Alzog himself, although certainly an orthodox writer, is not bold enough to refuse to accept such unfair conditions as these, and to declare openly that whatever is the clear consequence of well-known facts, is as good history as the narrative of the facts themselves. The learned translators and editors of his work in this country have felt it, and applied here and there a remedy to the evil in some excellent notes, which might have been still more numerous without disparaging the book in the least.

To prove yet, in a more satisfactory manner, that the method of treating properly ecclesiastical—as well as any other—history, is the

one proposed and followed here, an observation of great importance must be made at once: In all those countries evangelized by the first apostles, the great feature which strikes everywhere the reader when he comes to the third and fourth centuries, is to meet, as it were suddenly, in every district of Europe and Asia, an immense number of bishops governing quietly, after the great epoch of the persecutions, flourishing churches, and innumerable congregations. These bishops meet in councils by hundreds at a time; they correspond with each other from one end of the world to the other; they are all perfectly well acquainted, not only with the general geography of the period, but even with the most detailed topography of districts scarcely known at this time; etc. How can all this be supposed to have come about? If to solve the problem you look into the most reliable books of what is called *authentic* history, like the *Series Episcoporum Ecclesiæ Catholicæ* of the great Benedictine of our day, Father P. B. Gams, you are suddenly more puzzled than ever. No blame is here intended to be attached to that great work: far from it. It is one of the most invaluable compilations one can wish; but its very object confined the author to *authentic* lists, which cannot possibly be complete, owing to the fatal want of *authentic* documents for the first ages. Were we absolutely obliged to remain stretched on this Procrustean bed, unable to extend our limbs farther than its iron precincts, then might we as well renounce at once to know anything of the origin of our holy religion. Father Gams did not propose to himself to write a history; but only to publish materials against which nothing could be objected; and he fulfilled admirably well his arduous task. But see the consequence: If we look in this massive quarto volume for that part of Asia Minor which occupies us at this moment, there are in the fourth century, in the diocese of Asia (a part only of the province governed by St. John), forty-three episcopal sees, all of them ancient, or rather, belonging to the primitive Church; in the province of Lydia, another slice of the same department of St. John, there are at that epoch, twenty-five sees of the same character; finally, in Phrygia Pacatiana, a part of which belonged originally to the same Apostle John, there are thirty-six ancient dioceses, of the same class as those mentioned above. Of all these sees the good evangelist mentions only seven in his *Apocalypse*. Several of the others, no doubt, were erected after his death; but in the fourth or fifth centuries they were all flourishing. Yet, with the exception of those

named by John, and two or three casually mentioned by ecclesiastical writers, none of those dioceses seem, from the lists of Gams, to have had any existence before the fourth century. They all appear to come out at once from under the ground. Is not this a positive impossibility? Is it not certain that there were bishops in all those towns before the fourth age? Is it not very probable that there were a number of them from the time of the apostles down to the epoch when authentic lists show themselves? From all this results the absurd position in which those writers place themselves, who refuse to speak in their books of anything ancient, if it is not grounded on what they call "historical facts." We say that their histories are romances of the negative nature. They cannot give any idea of the history of those times, because the greatest part of what happened then in the Church is left out of sight. Of course, no writer who respects himself will invent tales, or give to facts a dress altogether fanciful, as did too often that innocent Father Berruyer in his *Histoire du peuple de Dieu*. But it must be clearly understood and stated that whatever flows from well-ascertained facts, and could not have been otherwise, considering all that we know to be certain, must be admitted as belonging to history. Thus, this much-abused and misused art of relating human events will not be reduced for hundreds of years of the life of the Church to a mere skeleton, or rather a shadow, without substance and reality.

And the whole large volume of Father Gams forces us to the same conclusion. For it is not only in the enumeration of the sees contained formerly in the Roman province of Asia, nor in the catalogue of those situated in all the former provinces of Asia Minor, that this follows from the *Series Episcoporum*; but the whole book, and invariably the lists of all ancient sees in the whole universe, exhibit the same gaps from the first to the fourth, fifth, or sixth centuries. We would particularly refer the reader to the dioceses of Gaul; although any part of the ancient world may do perhaps as well.

These considerations can give us some idea of the work of St. Paul in Asia Minor. The narrative of the Acts of the Apostles alone could not do so, because St. Luke did not certainly intend it. There is no stretch of pure imagination in supposing that what the apostle of the Gentiles had done around Ephesus during his protracted sojourn in that city, as will soon be related, he had done previously in Pisidia, Pamphylia, Lycaonia, Galatia, and the other districts of the

same peninsula. St. John, a few years later, found bishops ruling over their flocks in the district whose government he undertook to carry on—a small part of the country evangelized by St. Paul—he distributed among them praise or blame as they deserved it in their administration. He wrote to seven of them, whose sees he pointed out by name. There may have been many more to whom he did not feel bound to address the same admonitions. It is *historically* sure that two hundred years later there were in the district of St. John alone considerably more than a hundred, who must have had predecessors whom it is now impossible to know. How many of those sees had St. Paul really founded in the Roman province of Asia? How many others had he set on foot in the much more extensive remaining districts of this peninsula which he was the first to evangelize? We have no means of knowing. But from the slight glimpse given us by a chapter or two of the prophecy of John, there *must* have been certainly a large number.

We will be better able to judge of this by replying to the following question, which belongs undoubtedly to the history of those times, although it may appear to some critics deprived of an historical basis sufficient to stand upon. Here it is: What was precisely the method followed by St. Paul in his missions throughout Asia Minor? Did he address himself to the Jews only, or to the Greeks likewise, or even to the people of other races, to found Christian churches among them? A very important query, if it is discussed soberly and rationally. Can we find any means of answering it in the slight memorandums contained in the New Testament?

Of these, indeed, a circumstance relating to the very beginning of the mission of St. Paul is very remarkable. He had left Antioch of Syria and passed rapidly through Cyprus, where he converted at once the proconsul Sergius Paulus; but hastening on, he crossed over the small arm of the sea between Cyprus and the continent, and found himself at once in Pamphylia, certainly not one of the most civilized parts of Asia Minor. As if this place was not yet wild enough, and Perge, on the shore of the sea, was too much in contact with what is now called culture, he starts at once for the north, and soon finds himself in Pisidia, at a small place called *Antiochia*, a Greek town consequently, built originally by the Magnesians, enlarged by one of the Seleucidæ, but lying in the heart of the Taurus chain of mountains, which must then have swarmed with the aboriginal tribes of the country. There Strabo, a few years before, had

seen many large priestly estates governed theocratically, and full of the "servants of the goddess," as he calls them.

Paul, however, does not go directly to the pagan archpriest, surrounded with his thousands of "sacred" ministers;\* but he walks straightway to the synagogue of the Jews "on the sabbath-day." From a great many other passages of the Acts, and of his own epistles, it is clear that it became henceforth his almost invariable custom to address himself first to his own countrymen, who, however, repaid him with the blackest ingratitude, were the prime movers of all the persecutions he encountered, and became finally the occasion, if not the cause, of his martyrdom at Rome. His long discourse to them in Antiochia of Pisidia needs not be reported here; the immediate consequence of it is the only thing which really is of interest at this moment. The impression he made on his countrymen appeared at first quite favorable,† and they begged of him and of Barnabas, his companion, to come again the following "sabbath-day" and preach again; but the words of St. Luke must now be given in full:‡ "But the next sabbath the whole city almost came together to hear the word of God. And when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and contradicted those things which were said by Paul, blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas said boldly: To you it behooved us to speak first the word of God; but seeing you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life; behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord hath commanded us: 'I have set thee to be the light of the Gentiles;§ that thou mayst be for salvation unto the utmost part of the earth.' And the Gentiles, hearing this, were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were preordained to life, believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout the whole country."

This, we think, may be considered as good historical ground to stand upon; and there are consequences which evidently follow, not of slight import. The first thing to be remarked is the care of St. Paul to preach to the Jews in countries which St. Peter had not

\* It seems from Strabo (lib. xii., c. 8, § 14) that at this place the multitude of priestly officers had just, in his time, been deprived of their lands by the king; and St. Paul could not have found, at Antioch of Pisidia, a powerful archpriest as ruled formerly; but the people of the country continued, no doubt, to worship in the temple of *Men Ascei*, as it was called. They were worshippers of Cybele.

† Acts, xiii. 42, 43.

‡ Ibid. 44, 45, et seq.

§ Is. xlix. 6.

previously evangelized, and Pisidia was one of them. Paul, as the Apostle of the Gentiles, was not prevented from addressing himself to his own countrymen, whom he loved ardently, and whom he wished to make all partakers in the redemption through Jesus Christ. But the most important circumstance, after all, is the ardor of the Gentiles to come in crowds "to hear the word of God;" so as to excite the "envy of the Jews," and turn them at once from their previous good dispositions toward the preacher. The Gentiles, on the contrary, hearing that Paul—a Jew—was going to speak to them in preference to the Jews, "were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were preordained to life, believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout the whole country."

Although it is not stated here how many were preordained to life, it must be evident to every one that there was a great number of them. It would be perfectly inconsistent with truth in a writer to employ such glowing language for a few converts only. There can be no doubt that St. Paul, before he left Pisidia, had to appoint a bishop at Antiochia, and probably several, perhaps many, in the other towns of this province of Asia Minor; since "the word of God was published throughout the whole country." This will appear clearer in a moment.

Now the question comes, Who were those Gentiles? Strabo, who had shortly before traveled all over the country, describes minutely Antiochia and its neighborhood. "It is," he says, "a Roman colony; but it had been anciently founded by citizens of Magnesia, on the Mæander. Rome freed it from the rule of its kings, when she gave away to Eumenes that part of Asia which lies on this side of the Taurus. The priests of the temple of *Men Ascæi* lived there in great number, in possession of a 'sacred territory;' but their power was upset after the death of Amyntas, by those who succeeded him." It is important to know that this last circumstance took place a few years only before the visit of Strabo, who was a contemporary of the Amyntas mentioned in this paragraph.

To understand well this short passage of the Greek geographer, it is proper to add that Pisidia was in fact a province of Phrygia, the great country, as every one is aware, of the infamous worship of Cybele, the mother of the gods. Each of the temples in which she was worshiped was called a *Μῆν*; hence, to enumerate only those mentioned by Strabo, there was *Μῆν Ασκαίου*, in Antiochia; *Μῆν Καρου*, near Laodicea; *Μῆν Φαρνάκου*, in Ameria. Each of those tem-



ples, comprising several sacred edifices in the midst of a large *τέμενος*, was administered by a large number—generally five or six thousand—of *ἱεροδούλοι*. These ministers of the goddess were called *curetes* in Crete, where it is said the worship originated; *corybantes* in Phrygia, and consequently in Antiochia of Pisidia; and *galli* in Rome, where a temple was built to Cybele as early as the time of the second Punic war. More details are not needed, since those disgusting rites are more known than they deserve to be. They are described at length in many modern books, from a celebrated passage of Apuleius, in his *Asinus Aureus*.

The temple of Men Ascaï, in Antiochia, must have existed yet when St. Paul was there; but the priesthood had just been deprived of its power and influence by the heirs and successors of Amyntas. It cannot be imagined, however, that the worshippers of Cybele had so early disappeared. There had been no persecution against them, and their religion was one of those highly approved by Rome. This must have been the common worship of the primitive inhabitants, who swarmed yet all over the country, with a certain number, in their midst, of Greeks brought over formerly from Magnesia, besides a few hundred Roman colonists who had just arrived a few years before.

This is exactly what the passage of Strabo quoted a few pages back allows to conjecture. And this must have been the multitude which came to hear St. Paul on the second "sabbath-day" of his preaching there; manifesting such a joy at the news that the apostle was going to speak to them, and not to the Jews alone.

St. Paul spoke to them in Greek, which was the tongue he first learned in Tarsus, where he was born, and which he afterward used in all his missions, as well as in his epistles, except perhaps the one "to the Hebrews." Aberlé, in the article *Paul*, of the *Dict. de Théol. Cath.*, pretends that he had not received a Greek education in Cilicia, before his family removed to Jerusalem; but that he spoke merely the popular language used in Greek-speaking countries; "very different," he thinks, "from the classical style of Flavius Josephus, for instance." But Aberlé had evidently not read the learned and very interesting discussion of Prof. Sophocles. From the remarks of the Harvard University Professor, it is clear that St. Paul used the Attic idiom, which was then universally spoken. Only he did not probably polish his style as Flavius Josephus did, to please the refined Greeks of his time, of whom he was the sycophant. No one could expect that St. Paul should have felt himself bound to do the same. This

remark is not without any importance ; and the reader will do well to keep it before his eyes.

Proceeding a step further on in the missions of St. Paul, we see that if in Pisidia he converted a great number of worshipers of Cybele ; in Lycaonia, toward the east, and thus out of Phrygia, he had to convince of their error the adorers of Jove and Hermes. For having in Lystra healed a man "lame from his mother's womb," and making a deep impression on these poor pagans by his earnest and eloquent language, they cried out "in the Lycaonian tongue, saying : The gods in the likeness of men have come down to us. And they called Barnabas, Jove, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. The priest also of Jove, that was before the city, bringing oxen with garlands before the gate, would have offered sacrifice with the people . . ." We are evidently in the Hellenic world, although the men who spoke first "in the Lycaonian tongue," must have belonged to the primitive race of the country.

Then the author of the Acts of the Apostles concludes briefly the recital of the labors of St. Paul in Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia, by the simple words : "Having ordained for them *priests* in every church, and prayed with fasting, he commended them to the Lord in whom they believed." Every student of theology knows that the word *priests* means here *bishops*. The reader is referred to the chapter of Alzog on the "Form and Constitution of the Apostolic Church."\* Not unimportant remarks, however, on the same subject, will naturally present themselves in a future chapter. Here the circumstance is merely pointed out, that St. Paul established and ordained bishops in every church where he had made converts. In these three wild provinces of Asia Minor, the number of them must have been considerable already, since he stopped certainly in other places than those mentioned in the short book of St. Luke. In the fourth or fifth century, according to the great work of Gams, there were of them in Pamphylia thirty-seven ; in Pisidia, twenty-five ; and in Lycaonia, eighteen. How many of these had been established by St. Paul, we have no means of knowing. But the reader will remember our previous remarks : since we cannot imagine that all those bishops' sees started out at once in the fourth or fifth centuries, as if they came suddenly from under the ground ; since most of them certainly had existed before this last epoch, no one

---

\* American edit.

knows how long ; since many expressions of St. Luke in the Acts, show that the conversions effected in this first mission of St. Paul must have been very numerous, and comprised many localities ; since finally he established priests, or rather bishops "in every church ;" it is evident that the number must have been large. It would be, therefore, preposterous to reduce the number of episcopal sees, at the first spread of Christianity, to the few names of which we have authentic lists ; and ecclesiastical history, to be fair, must be so understood. In the system of rigid criticism no right view of it can be obtained : and instead of a real history, we have only an unsubstantial shadow, incapable of enabling us in the least to judge of the reality. The following considerations will render this more evident still.

Of the second great mission of St. Paul, lucidity requires that this part alone should be insisted on at first, whose object was Asia Minor. The voyage to Macedonia and Hellas, included certainly in this mission of Paul, must be delayed a little longer ; because it seems that for the sake of order, the great peninsula of Asia should be first attended to apart. Unfortunately the Acts of the Apostles almost fail us here, as only the last two verses of the fifteenth chapter and the first ten of the sixteenth speak in very general terms of this stupendous labor of St. Paul. We call it stupendous, because it is really so ; even considering only the few lines devoted to it by St. Luke. The reader sees in this short narrative that the apostle, starting afresh from Syria, enters Asia Minor by Cilicia, proceeds diagonally through this entire province, does the same for Lycaonia, stopping at Derbe and Lystra, enters Phrygia Magna, probably at Laodicea, traverses the whole eastern part of it, to come to Galatia, which he evangelizes ; and having reached the confines of Bithynia and Mysia, he is commanded in a vision to cross over immediately to Europe.

This itinerary alone, with its attending labor, could have been the work of a whole well-employed human life. For we know by this time that St. Paul performed thoroughly whatever he had to do. He established solidly the Church in every spot, appointing bishops wherever he had formed a congregation, and looking to the stability of his newest enterprises. And it must be remarked that he had to do so especially for that wild country. For no part of this new mission bordered on the sea, except the two extreme points, of entrance in Cilicia, and of exit in the Troas. The remainder of it comprised a great part of the chain of the Taurus, inhabited yet by the rough

tribes of Lycaonians, Phrygians, Gallogræcians, and Mysians. A part of it, it is true, he had only to confirm in the faith ; since in his first mission he had founded many churches in Lycaonia and the adjacent countries of Pamphylia and Pisidia. But this time he must have evangelized thoroughly the whole of Phrygia Magna and Gallogræcia—this shall soon appear. He did not do the same, it is true, for the Mysians and Bithynians, at the end of this new line of travel, since we read in the sixteenth chapter of the Acts, that when he was preparing to do so, he was commanded to leave off this work, and start directly for Macedonia in Europe.

That the labor of confirming his former converts in the faith was an arduous one, appears from the very expressions used by St. Luke : “He went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches ; commanding them to keep the precepts of the apostles and the ancients. . . . And he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold there was a certain disciple there named Timothy. . . . Him Paul would have to go along with him. . . . And as they passed through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees, for to keep, that were decreed by the apostles and ancients that were at Jerusalem. The churches indeed were confirmed in faith, and increased in number daily.”

Can any one imagine that the apostle, accompanied by his disciple Timothy, ran through those countries he had formerly visited with Barnabas, placing in their hands the decrees of the Council of Jerusalem, and going on to the next place ? It would have been indeed a poor lesson in apostleship, given to his disciple, the holy man who labored afterward so zealously with St. Paul himself, and was in fact his most intimate friend and companion. But the very epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians would suffice to give us a very different idea of this work of “confirmation in the faith” and “reduction to the admission of the decrees of the apostles.” Indeed all the epistles of St. Paul, without almost any exception, are so many proofs of the constant trouble he had with the new Christians after he had converted them. What a sad spectacle could be offered to the reader of the strange obstinacy of many converts who adhered yet to some of their former false ideas, loose notions, and bad practices ! The German critics have gone much farther than this ; and they pretend that the apostles themselves were constantly disagreeing with each other, and quarreling. They have found *parties* among them, chiefly the great and celebrated “Petrine and Pauline parties.” A word

has been said of this calumny previously; and more may be added on the subject, when we come to the establishment of the Church in Rome. But it is sufficient to state in this place, that the only thing which the new German exegetists may fairly pretend, the only thing from which they derive most cases, if not all, of the supposed antagonism between Peter and James on the one side, Paul and John on the other, is, after all, the too real fact of discrepancy and obduracy among the faithful of the primitive Church. And an intelligent reader cannot find anything surprising in this. When we know what the pagans were; when we know particularly what the Jews in general were, before their conversion, one thing only is really hard to understand; and that is the ardor with which many of them embraced the Gospel, and the generosity with which they suffered every possible persecution, often so far as to endure death by martyrdom. This was evidently the effect of the grace of God; and when it is considered that this spectacle was offered suddenly in the whole universe, among tribes and nations so different from each other, and on such an immense, nay, universal scale, no one in his senses can suppose that God had nothing to do with it. Still, the grace of God left full play, as usual, to the free will of man; and it is well ascertained how many of them, soon after their conversion, gave to the rulers of the Church troubles of which we have no ideas in our day. If any one doubted this, he would do well to try to count merely the number of heresies which arose in the two or three first centuries of our era. St. Epiphanius and St. Irenæus will help him for this object.

All things considered, it would be extremely interesting to know how the Christians of Lycaonia and Pisidia received from St. Paul the decree of the recent council of Jerusalem, by which it was enjoined not to lay the burden of the Mosaic law on the Gentile converts. In his first journey the apostle had declared at Antiochia that the Jews rejecting his preaching, he was going "to turn to the Gentiles." Still, he had converted many Israelites in that first journey. It would be indeed curious to know with what reluctance some of them at least, if not many, received the "precept of the apostles." Those new churches, besides, were constantly "increasing in number," as St. Luke states positively; with what earnestness, zeal, and even minuteness, did not the holy apostle inquire about all of them, and addressed them all, that they might "come nearer and nearer to Christ in their lives." Whoever has read his epistles knows how far St. Paul carried his "solicitude for all the churches." There is no need

of enlarging on the subject. St. Paul, indeed, was performing an arduous task.

But our actual main purport regards the new countries he evangelized in this present *mission*; the new tribes he converted, the new churches he founded. These were spread all over Phrygia and Gallogræcia. Of these two large provinces of Asia Minor, it is necessary to say at least what will suffice. The Acts of the Apostles mention only the fact that "he passed through Phrygia and the country of Galatia." We know for certain from his subsequent epistle to the Christians of this last country, that his work there was, as usual with him, thorough and complete. He did not, therefore, only pass rapidly through the country going northwest. He stopped and evangelized the people, whom he loved ever afterward so ardently, as many passages of his letter to them give abundant proofs. He must have done the same in Phrygia, since it was only after having "passed through Phrygia, that he was forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the word of God in Asia."

He was certainly the first to evangelize this country, since it must have been much later that St. Philip the Apostle went to reside with his virgin daughters in the chief city of the province. Philip, it is known, terminated his long ministry in Hierapolis, where he died and was at first buried. He must have been very old when he went to Phrygia, since he had already evangelized many other countries, and according to Eusebius,\* "Polycrates of Ephesus speaks of him as just dead, and had been acquainted with his daughters, one of whom died at Ephesus, and the two others at Hierapolis." There is often a confusion here in modern authors. Thus Gley refers to St. Polycarp of Smyrna, what Eusebius says of Polycrates of Ephesus. Reusch, in the *Dict. de Théol. Cath.*, instead of Polycrates writes Polycarp of Ephesus. Had they consulted the Bollandists for the 1st of May, they would have known the fact more correctly. Gams places this Polycrates at about 196; some other authors at least twenty years earlier. At any rate this bishop of Ephesus died before the end of the second century. He it was who engaged in a controversy with Pope St. Victor on the subject of the celebration of Easter. Rufinus and St. Jerome record the same facts relative to Polycrates.

Papias likewise, who, according to the Bollandists, was bishop of Hierapolis—Gams places him the first in his list—had been person-

---

\* *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 31; v. 24.

ally acquainted with the daughters of St. Philip, as Eusebius relates.\* Thus it is historically certain that there were Christian bishops in Phrygia in the second century, and even in the first; since the presence of St. Philip at Hierapolis must be considered as an historical fact. But still Paul had preceded him, and had been the first to found churches and appoint bishops over them in Phrygia.

But what kind of a country was Phrygia? A few words on this question will enable us to judge of the labors of St. Paul, in that vast central district of Asia Minor.

It would be of little interest to consider it geographically. But the character of the Phrygians and their religion under the first Roman emperors must be well known, to judge intelligently of the obstacles Christianity must have met among them. Their superstition was at the same time of the most lewd and the most boisterous character. It is sufficient to mention the worship of Cybele, the mother of the gods, to bring to the mind what is most loathsome in Grecian, or rather semi-oriental, paganism. See if you can bear it, the description of their disgraceful rites, in Apuleius' *Asinus Aureus*. A few words, however, from the immortal novel of *Callista*, can be quoted, as the pen of Newman knows how to suppress the coarse details, and yet remain faithful to truth. He describes a procession of rioters at Sicca: "There was a band of fanatics, devotees of Cybele, or of the Syrian goddess, if indeed the two rites were distinct. They were bedizened with ribbons and rags of various colors, and smeared over with paint. They had long hair like women, and turbans on their heads. They pushed their way to the head of the procession, being quite worthy of the post of honor, and seizing the baker's ass, put their goddess on the back of it. Some of them were playing the fife, others clashing cymbals, others danced, others yelled, others rolled their heads, and others flogged themselves. Such was the character of the frenzied host, which progressed slowly through the streets."

In other pagan countries this worship was that of a few. All men who kept yet in their conscience a slight remembrance of morality and decency, shrank from a religion so degraded even in its outward form. In the whole of Phrygia it was the universal religion. To it alone were devoted those large establishments of which a word was said, and which numbered, each of them, thousands of ministers, in possession of immense estates. St. Paul had come in contact with

---

\* Lib. iii., cap. 39.

them at the very beginning of his first mission in Asia Minor ; but, as stated, those numerous *Gentiles*, that is, certainly, worshipers of the *goddess*, who came in crowds to him at Antiochia, and expressed such joy when they heard him say that he would preach to them rather than to the Jews, had been previously deprived of their temple and wealth by the heirs and successors of Amyntas. Not so everywhere else. In the heart of Phrygia, to which he devoted a good part of his second mission, St. Paul found himself in the midst of all the fanaticism of this superstition, the priests enjoying an unbounded wealth and influence.

Unfortunately, however, no details have been preserved of his success in attacking and demolishing this fortress—as it may be called—of the most devilish idolatry in the ancient world. It is only known historically, that his conquest remained durable, and that long after Christianity had been planted in that country, the apostle St. Philip came to spend the last years of his life in one of the chief cities of Phrygia, and consolidated the edifice built by the Apostle of the Gentiles.

But a few words of St. Paul himself in his Epistle to the Galatians supply, to a certain extent at least, the dearth of details on the conversion of Phrygia. Galatia was, in fact, a part of the same country. The Gauls had taken possession of it not very long before. The names of the tribes which conquered it have been preserved. They were the Tectosages, the Tolistobogii, and the Trocmi. A large part of the history of Justinus is full of the great deeds performed by these Celts in Asia and Africa. Those of them who settled permanently in Phrygia, had adopted evidently its religion. For Pessinus, or Pessinuntum, as it is sometimes called, was anteriorly, and remained, under the Celts, the chief seat of the worship of Cybele. Yet how eagerly they embraced Christianity as soon as it was offered to them by St. Paul is expressed in his own letter to them, in terms which could not be more glowing and emphatic.

These are some of the words of St. Paul to them :\* “ You know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel to you heretofore. You despised not, nor rejected it ; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. . . . My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you. . . . I bear you witness that, if it could be done, you would have plucked

---

\* Gal. iv. passim.



out your own eyes, and would have given them to me." These words bear repeating, and they surely express as eloquently as it is possible to human language, the ardor with which the Celts of Phrygia preferred at once Christ to Cybele, and the austerity of a Christian life to the most corrupting rites of the mother of the gods.

How many churches did St. Paul found in Gallogræcia? People are apt to imagine that because he wrote only one epistle to them, he had founded in this country but one church. The title of the letter is sufficient to do away with that supposition. It is addressed *ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Γαλατίας*. How many there were, it is impossible to say. But as Asia Minor swarmed with episcopal sees in the fourth century—the compilation of Gams is the sure warrant of it—and as St. Paul found in Galatia more enthusiastic ardor to receive his words than in any other province of the peninsula, it is allowable to presume that he scarcely left any important town in this country without its church and its bishop. The previous reflections showing how unfair it would be to reduce the real apostolic sees, that is, the dioceses erected by the apostles, to those only whose authentic lists we yet possess, must be remembered here, and kept before the mind of the reader all along the following pages. It is the only sure way of understanding aright the history of the first age of Christianity. To be better convinced still of this important supposition, let the reader remember in what state Pliny the younger, under Trajan, found Bithynia, a district contiguous to Galatia. A passage of Pliny's letter was quoted previously; it positively states that when he arrived he found the province full of Christians, in the country as well as in the cities, etc. The reader must mark it well: Trajan, born in 52 of our era, was raised to the imperial throne in 98, and died in 117. Trajan was therefore sixteen years of age when St. Paul suffered death by the sword in Rome. There is nothing like exactness in chronology, when it can be got; and this date is above all possible controversy. The remark must also be attended to, that the apostles invariably placed a bishop over every congregation they formed; priests afterward were ordained by this bishop and composed his "presbytery." This fact, well ascertained at the present time, enables us to understand many expressions of St. Clement of Rome, St. Ignatius of Antioch, and many other early Fathers; and the enormous difficulty raised chiefly by Calvinism disappears like the shadow of a dream. Of this, however, something will be said with more

details and proofs, somewhat later on. As to the Galatians in particular, there is no doubt that the letter of St. Paul sent to one of their churches—the apostle does not state to which of them—was eagerly copied by all the others, since it was addressed to them all, *ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις*—thus a great number of copies of it were preserved, so that it could easily reach us.

Paul, having thoroughly evangelized the whole central part of Asia Minor, was going to pass on to Bithynia and Mysia, thus completing his labors along the diagonal he had begun to follow in Cilicia. But “he was forbidden by the Holy Ghost” to do so; and as he was then in Mysia, and he wished to pass rapidly through Bithynia on his way to Europe, “the spirit of Jesus permitted him not,” † and he had to take a straighter road through Troas itself. But for the sake of lucidity this first mission to Europe is again delayed, in order to complete at once the narrative of St. Paul’s labors in Asia Minor; and thus his *third mission* in that country is directly to be briefly passed in review, although it be really posterior to the first evangelization of Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth—that is, Macedonia, Thessaly, and Hellas.

The great center of this third mission of Paul was Ephesus, where St. John had not gone yet, and was not to go before the death of the Apostle of the Gentiles. From that most important city the new religion was to spread in a vast semicircle through all the province called by the Romans emphatically *Asia*, where those seven churches mentioned in the Apocalypse—and no doubt many others—were situated. Here St. Paul was to meet with pure Hellenism, the worship of Diana—*Ἄρτεμις*—after he had conquered the semi-oriental superstition of the mother of the gods—Cybele—in Phrygia. It is said by some that the Artemis of the Ephesians was a purely Oriental goddess, and her many-breasted statue differed certainly a great deal from the nimble form of the celebrated Arcadian huntress. But it must be remembered that Ephesus became very early an altogether Greek city, was one of the first Ionian colonies in Asia, was thought by many to have given birth even to Homer, and was undoubtedly the birthplace of Parrhasius, of Apelles (according to Strabo), of Heraclitus, Hermodorus, and Hipponax. The temple was altogether Grecian, the largest ever erected of all Greek temples, four times the size of the Parthenon. All the great masters of Hellenic

---

\* Acts, xvi. 6.

† Ibid. 7.

art had embellished its interior, and literally filled it with the productions of their genius. Ephesus, after all, was the most Grecian of all the cities of Asia Minor; and although its commerce extended all over the world, either by sea from its splendid harbor, or through land along that high road, branching off from Sardis, and running at the base of the Taurus Mountain in an easterly direction through Phrygia, Cappadocia, Armenia, as far as the limitless Oriental regions; yet the men who carried on that commerce were Greeks; whether they manned the merchant fleets which sailed to Egypt and Syria, or toward the west to Greece, Italy, or Spain; or whether they advanced slowly in caravans along the highway built ages ago by the Persian kings. Yes, all things considered, Ephesus was a Greek city; her Artemis belonged more to the West than to the East, in spite of the strange form of the statue; and St. Paul found himself altogether in front of Hellenic idolatry when he began to preach to the Ephesians.

At first, as usual, he addressed himself to his countrymen; and when he arrived he found "certain disciples: and he said to them: 'Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?' But they said to him: 'We have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghcst.' And he said: 'In what then were you baptized?' Who said: 'In John's baptism.' Then Paul said: 'John baptized the people with the baptism of penance, saying: That they should believe in him who was to come after him, that is to say, in Jesus.' Having heard these things they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. . . . And all the men were about twelve."\* O most precious detail! We see by it that no one certainly had preached the true and complete Gospel at Ephesus before Paul arrived. These twelve men were Jews, who had most probably been baptized by Apollo of Alexandria, who preceded Paul at Ephesus, where "he spoke . . . knowing only the baptism of John."† They met salvation in a thorough heathen land, and were in truth the first Christians of Ephesus. The sojourn of the apostle in that city and the country around was at first of two years and three months.‡ But after this first long residence in it, he left it and came back several times, so that when he finally quitted it never to return,§ he could say he had been three years among them.||

---

\* Acts, xix. 1, et seq.

† Acts, xix. 8, 10.

‡ Acts, xviii. 25.

§ Acts, xx. 38.

|| Ibid. 31.

Nothing is more simple and natural ; yet some German critics have insisted much on this supposed discrepancy between two years and three months in the nineteenth chapter, and three years in the twentieth, to make of the work of St. Luke an altogether unreliable book.

During this triennial period, St. Paul spent, no doubt, a great part of the time in the city itself ; but he must have, likewise, traveled occasionally all over the province of Asia. His last speech to the "ancients of the Church" proves it abundantly. It is right here to anticipate. These ancients, called in the Vulgate *majores natu*, are said to be, in the Greek version, *πρεσβύτερους*. The same men are called in this very discourse of St. Paul, *ἐπισκόπους*—bishops—"appointed by the Holy Ghost to rule the Church of God." They were evidently the bishops of the whole province of Asia, whom he had himself consecrated. That they were not merely the presbyters of Ephesus—as a Calvinist would say—is vouched for by the 17th verse of the same twentieth chapter of the Acts. It is there stated that "St. Paul having just before come to Miletus, he determined merely to sail by Ephesus. Lest he should be stayed any time in Asia—for he hastened to keep the day of Pentecost at Jerusalem—he sent from Miletus to Ephesus, to call there the ancients of the Church," etc. The meaning is evidently this : As soon as he came to Miletus he sent word to Ephesus to dispatch messengers all around to the bishops of the province of Asia, to meet him in the chief city, that he might see them all at once, and not be delayed on his way to Jerusalem, by going to their various sees. Had he merely wished to meet the presbyters—as they are called—of the church of Ephesus, there was no need of sending them word previously, as he was sure to find them all at their post on his arrival, and the absence of a few among them would not have signified, since, after all, the bishop of Ephesus, Timothy, who was to be placed at their head, could have reported his words to them after his departure. This at least seems to be the most natural way of understanding the passage. This meaning is yet confirmed and almost demonstrated by the 25th verse : "I know that all you, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more." How could he say that "he had gone among them preaching," etc., if he had appointed them merely over the particular church of the city of Ephesus ? This phrase of St. Paul would have been absolute nonsense. He "had gone among them," founding the various churches, appointing bishops to rule over them," etc. This sup-

poses that during his previous stay of three years at Ephesus, he had often left the city, and traveled all over the Roman province of Asia.

This is so clearly the sense of the whole chapter that the good and learned Father Cornelius a Lapide, who had first evidently made a mistake—and, commenting on the 28th verse: “wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops,” thought that this last word meant chief presbyters under the real bishop of Ephesus, namely, Timothy—modified considerably his opinion, or rather changed it altogether when he subsequently reflected on the 25th verse: “among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God.” “In fact,” he says on this line, “Paul had called together many bishops—*plures episcopos*—namely, those who ruled over the cities of the province of Ephesus, since Ephesus was a metropolitan church. And thus St. Irenæus understood it,\* saying: ‘Paul from Miletus had convoked the bishops and priests of Ephesus and of the other cities of the neighborhood.’”

This text of the great Bishop of Lyons is conclusive; and the author of the *Commentaries on Holy Scripture*, by adopting it, gives up evidently his first interpretation, and fixes at once upon the only sensible meaning of the whole chapter.

This being presupposed, the establishment of Christianity in the city of Ephesus itself is in order, and the reader will be able to understand thoroughly the whole process. Twelve Jews were the first members of the Church in the great metropolis of Asia; and St. Paul, as usual, preached at first to the Jews alone, and during three months met them every sabbath-day in the synagogue. He made converts among them, as usual, but met likewise with opposition from many among them. He was thus brought to the measure of addressing himself to the Gentiles, and “separating the disciples, he disputed daily in the school of one Tyrannus.” † This might be the family name of a Greek sophist who had opened a school of philosophy at Ephesus, and allowed St. Paul to use the building for his own purposes. And this is the common understanding of this passage. But Cornelius a Lapide, following Cajetan, Vatable, and others, proposes another meaning much more likely in our opinion to be the true one. Tyrannus is not a family name, but must be understood in the sense of king or prince, *vir potens*, able to protect Paul in his preaching, although probably not a disciple himself. And this interpretation is strongly supported by a remarkable fact mentioned

\* Lib. iii., cap. 14.

† Acts, xix. 9.

by Strabo with regard to Ephesus. The great geographer relates that in his own time, when he visited this city, there was yet in existence a powerful family descended from Androclos, the son of the celebrated Athenian king Codrus, who had ages before led to Asia Minor a colony of Ionians, and made Ephesus an Ionian city. "Even now," says Strabo, "all the members of that family are called kings, and enjoy certain royal privileges; thus, they preside at public spectacles, they can wear purple garments, they carry a staff as a kind of scepter, and have the right of initiation to the Eleusinian mysteries."\* In this case the word *schola* would not mean a school, but a princely hall, where dignity and repose can be enjoyed, from the Greek *σχολάζω*, which signifies really in Latin to enjoy *otium cum dignitate*.

With the adoption of this version, the whole subsequent course of St. Paul at Ephesus becomes the natural consequence of this first step. The apostle could despise, under the protection of this prince, the fury of a great number of the Jews who declared openly against him, and when, later on, the pagans became enraged on account of their goddess, "the great Artemis," the timely interposition of those who are called "some of the rulers of Asia," and of Alexander, even a Jew, saved Paul and Christianity at once.

In order, however, to judge fairly of the real position of the apostle, it is proper to see the elements let loose against him, and compare them with the protection of a single *tyrannus*, and this man most probably not a Christian. At a moment graphically described in the nineteenth chapter of the Acts, the whole city—both the Jews and the pagans—may be said to have risen in fierce opposition to the intruder Paul. But this was the last explosion of a fearful hatred against him, caused by his triumphs over both Judaism and Gentilism. The Hebrews of Ephesus were the first to oppose him. Those of them who "were hardened and believed not, but spoke ill of the way of the Lord before the multitude," † were enraged when they saw that "God wrought special miracles by the hand of Paul." ‡ This feeling increased yet when "some of the Jewish exorcists attempted to invoke over them that had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus . . . But the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaping upon them . . . prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house, naked and wounded." § St. Paul had

---

\* Lib. xiv., cap. i. § 3.

† Acts, xix. 9.

‡ Ib. 11.

§ Ib. 13, et seq.

certainly disciples among the Jews who remained faithful to him, even after he left off preaching in the synagogue, and established his quarters in the halls of the *tyrannus*. But Paul had required of them that they should have no intercourse with their "hardened" countrymen, and he had "separated" those Jews who were his "disciples" from the stubborn Hebrews who "spoke ill of the way of the Lord." Any one acquainted with the Jewish character will easily acknowledge how deep a spirit of revenge must have rankled in their bosom.

And after a while, the Jews were not the only enemies of the apostle. When "this Paul by persuasion had drawn away a great multitude, not only at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, saying: That they are no gods which are made with hands," \* then indeed it was the turn of the pagans to rise in opposition to this new preacher. Demetrius, a silversmith, "who made silver temples for Diana," † was the leader of the final riot which obliged St. Paul to leave Ephesus, for a time at least. The spirited sketch of it written by St. Luke deserves to be read in the book itself. There you see the exciting speech made by Demetrius to his craftsmen, who are roused into fury by the consideration that "their trade was in danger;" then comes the rising of the whole city at the cry usual with them: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." You see directly the whole multitude rushing into the theatre, dragging along with them Gaius and Aristarchus, both Greeks from Macedonia and companions of Paul. The apostle follows at once, to rescue his disciples, who are going evidently to be murdered. But "some rulers of Asia"—probably the *tyrannus* himself among them—"friends of Paul, sent unto him, desiring that he should not venture himself into the theater." ‡

The Jews meanwhile, who had certainly come in great number to this scene of confusion, pushed forward one of their number, undoubtedly with the intention of increasing the rage of the people against Paul and his friends. Alexander is the spokesman selected by the Hebrew rabble for this purpose. But strange to say, he is in secret friendly to Paul; and instead of throwing oil on the fire, stretching his hand toward the multitude, his gesture is evidently one of conciliation and appeasement. But as soon as the crowd perceive that he is a Jew, "all with one voice, for the space of about two hours, cried out: Great is Diana of the Ephesians." §

---

\* Acts, xix. 26.

† Ib. 24.

‡ Ib. 31.

§ Ib. 34.

It is evident from all this that the apostle did not find it an easy task to convert the Greeks. Imagine a shout of two hours' duration! An immense city like Ephesus lashed into fury at the idea that the worship of their goddess was going to be "vilified."\* It does not look as if the Hellenes were tired of their idolatry, and yearned with the strongest longing for a more spiritual religion.

But God indeed was there to support his messengers, and save them from instant destruction. Read the most astonishing termination of such a riot as this: † "When the town clerk had appeased the multitude, he said: Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not that the city of the Ephesians is a worshiper of the great Diana, of Jupiter's offspring? As this cannot be contradicted, you ought to be quiet, and do nothing rashly. For you have brought hither these men—Gaius and Aristarchus—neither guilty of sacrilege, nor of blasphemy against your goddess. But if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a cause against any man, the courts of justice are open, and there are proconsuls; let them accuse one another. And if you inquire after any other matter, it may be decided in a lawful assembly. For we are in danger of being charged with this day's uproar; there being no man guilty (of whom we can give an account) of this concourse. And when he had said these things he dismissed the assembly."

This was due evidently to the friendly intervention of the *tyrannus* and of the other "rulers of Asia," mentioned previously. But this day's doings, as they are described by St. Luke, show in strong colors to what dangers the life of St. Paul was exposed, and by what simple means God often saved him from the most imminent perils. He says himself, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, ‡ "I fought with beasts at Ephesus." Cornelius a Lapide, in his *Commentary*, does not refer this expression to the present riot, but thinks that previously to this the apostle had been actually thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheater of that city, and rescued miraculously. The reasons the learned Father gives for his opinion are certainly of great weight, and have convinced several other Catholic exegetists; but even if it is a mere metaphor, and contains only an allusion to the circumstance under consideration, nothing in the description just given would appear inconsistent with the statement referred to, that he had indeed "fought with wild beasts at Ephesus."

---

\* Acts, xix. 27.

† Ib. 35, et seq.

‡ Ch. xv. 32.



Before concluding this part of our narrative, it is proper to call the reader's attention to the words of Demetrius to his workmen, that "Paul by persuasion had drawn a great multitude not only at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia." Here the word *Asia* must be understood strictly of the Roman province of that name—no Greek of Ephesus, speaking of Asia, could have had another meaning—and strongly confirms the previous considerations on the apostleship of St. Paul in that district of Asia Minor, and on the fact—which must now be considered as historically proved—that from Ephesus, as a center, he had evangelized the whole of proconsular Asia, as it was called, and established bishops, as he always did, over the cities of that vast district. It is proper to come back constantly to this idea, in order to correct the very false notion that the apostolic sees, that is, the dioceses founded by the apostles, were few and far between. We maintain that the greatest part of the vast system of metropolitan and diocesan churches which appear suddenly everywhere in the fourth century, was, in fact, the original work of the apostles themselves, and were merely consolidated and developed by their successors. These holy men who succeeded to the founders increased immensely the number of Christians in every spot; but their sees had been first established, most of the time, by the apostles. Thus we see Gregory Thaumaturgus leaving at his death seventeen pagans in his city of Neo Cæsarea, after he had found in it only seventeen Christians at the beginning of his episcopate. But those original seventeen Christians had not sprung up of their own accord, before Gregory appeared among them, and were not something like the supposed *Autochtones* of the old Greeks. They formed a church which may have been founded long before, but had remained stationary, or perhaps had retrograded, owing to the want of zeal of some lukewarm bishop belonging to the lists now lost. This, we think, must be often repeated, that the reader may conceive a just idea of the real first establishment and gradual spread of Christianity. Thus the religion of Christ appeared almost suddenly everywhere, and the prophecy of David regarding the first messengers of this heavenly doctrine was literally fulfilled: "*In omnem terram exiit sonus eorum, and in fines orbis terræ verba eorum.*" The development came afterward.

It is thus, therefore, that when "the disciple of love" came to live at Ephesus with Mary, the mother of the Saviour, he found the churches first organized by St. Paul, and took quietly the general

supervision of them, as their metropolitan ; and he could say with simplicity to their bishops : “ To the angel of the church of Thyatira write : These things says the Son of God, who has eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass : I know thy works, and thy faith, and thy charity, and ministry, and thy patience, and thy last works which are more than the former. But I have a few things against thee. . . .”

“ And to the angel of the church of Sardis write : These things says he who hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars : I know thy works, that thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die. For I find not thy works full before my God. . . .”

This simple sketch of the labors of St. Paul in Asia Minor must suffice. Later on, the further spread of Christianity in the same country, and the whole conquest of it to Christ by such men as the Gregories, Basil, and so many others, will complete the description given here in its incipient stage. We must hasten on to contemplate the same interesting spectacle in Macedonia and Hellas.

#### 4. *Apostleship of St. Paul in Macedonia.*

Thou art going to hear, O Hellas, the true κήρυξ, the veritable messenger of God. How many heralds of error have come to thee in ages past ! They arrived armed only with the lyre, supposed to have been given them by a son of Zeus—Apollo ; they struck with the ivory plectrum its golden chords ; and enchanted thy ears with graceful tales—but only tales. Had they kept in their songs the holy simplicity of the really ancient seers, they would have given thee the true origin of this beautiful world. They would have told thee that the “ Father of all,” whose supreme name thou hadst remembered so long, had first spread in the limitless space the thing most dear to thee, light, the brilliant ether, first and sweetest emblem of his own true, eternal Son. They would have impressed on thy mind the great truth that on the boundless waters—the second element created by him—his own infinite Spirit came forth brooding, as on the most precious image of his world-embracing grace. And thus thou couldst already have blessed thyself in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The sun, and the moon, and the earth, and all the globes, moving majestically through the heavens,

would have appeared later, and merely as the work of the Triune God. Then, O Hellas, what a divine poetry wouldst thou have heard, and transmitted to us for our everlasting delight !

But no ! Hesiod appeared in thy midst, and inverting the true process, told thee that he had learned from the Muses "how the immortal family of the gods had been, from the beginning (*ἔξ ἀρχῆς*), engendered by the earth and the material heaven (*Γαῖα καὶ Οὐρανός*).” From these, therefore, had originated everything, Zeus himself, who was only the second (*Δεύτερον αὐτε Ζῆνα*), although inconsistently enough he remained "the father of the gods and of men.”\*

Thus, O Greece, Nature became the only divinity thou couldst adore ; and every being in the air above, in the abyss below, on the earth itself, became the object of thy worship. Pity, alas, that thy imagination was so rich, thy love of the beautiful so intense, thy artistic taste so perfect ! What entrancing language thy poets have used ! What graceful forms thy sculptors have chiseled ! What admirable monuments of pure marble thy architects have raised ! Of these we could judge from our own experience. But it is only from report that we have heard of the harmonious strains of thy music, of the truthful delineation and coloring of thy paintings, of the joy and comeliness of thy dances and festivals. Yet all these were wrong, completely wrong.

With all these things, O Hellas, thou hadst intoxicated the world. For we have all, more or less, drank of thy superstitions, and gloried to know something of thy infantile and feminine grace. Have we not all wandered in our youth through thy valley of Tempe, walked in the shade of thy Arcadian groves, and scaled in our fancy the heights of thy Olympus and Taigetos ?

Yet all this was a fearful delusion ; and for thee, O Greece, it was the source of untold miseries ; of sin and passion, of error and shame. It was the cause of the national dishonor which weighed upon thee when Paul arrived. For wert not thou, then, the slave of Rome ? Were not the most corrupt, detestable, and contemptible patricians thy lords and masters ? Couldst thou say that thou hadst a will of thy own ? O listen, listen to that true *κήρυξ*, to that herald of truth and hope. If he brings thee only the Cross, embrace it well ; for it is to be the only emblem of thy salvation on

---

\* Theogonia, v. 43-47.

the fearful day when the bloody Crescent shall be brought to thee, and imposed upon thee at the point of the sword. Thus ends our sad song.

Before the apostle went to Ephesus, when he was evangelizing the Phrygians and Galatians, he was prevented to preach the Gospel in Bithynia and Mysia, and ordered to take the straightest road to Europe through the Troas. During night, he had a vision: "A man of Macedonia standing, and beseeching him, and saying: Pass over into Macedonia, and help us."\* "So sailing from Troas," says St. Luke, "we came in a direct course to Samothracia, and the day following to Neapolis."† Thus Hellas was to be evangelized from the north. The country where St. Paul landed first was on the confines of Thracia, was, in fact, of old, a part of Thracia itself. After remaining "some days" only at Philippi, where he baptized Lydia, and converted the "keeper of the prison" with his family, he directly came over to Thessalonica, at the end of the Thermaic Gulf.

It was in the neighborhood of *Dium*, on the same deep bay, a few miles further south, that Orpheus had sung, and taught men the rites of expiation, and had been torn to pieces by the *Mainadæ*. So at least Strabo tells us in a short passage which deserves quoting: "At the foot of Mount Olympus, on the shores of the Thermaic Gulf, is the city of Dium. A village in its neighborhood, called Pimplea, was the usual place of residence of Orpheus. A Ciconian by birth,"—the *Cicones* occupied the country around the mouth of the Hebrus River, just in front of Samothrace, an altogether Pelasgic district—"he was skillful in performing wonders (*ἄνδρα γόητα*) through his talent in music and the mantic art. In performing the expiatory rites of the *ὀργιασμῶν*, he first collected money by dribblings; then increasing in boldness, he surrounded himself with a crowd of disciples, and obtained power. A number of people surrendered themselves willingly to him and to his projects; but others, suspecting and fearing from him snares and violence, rose against him and put him to death."‡ This passage of Strabo on Orpheus has never been quoted that we know, by modern authors. In our frequent readings of the Greek geographer, we had never remarked it until this time. Yet it is, on the whole, the most satisfactory account we have, perhaps, of the life and office of the old Thracian bard. We have just translated it as accurately as possible; and in doing so several words

---

\* Acts, xvi. 9.

† Ib. 11.

‡ Lib. vii., Fragm. 15.

had to be paraphrased rather than rendered word for word. The expression ὀργιασμῶν was left untouched because to give of it a perfect translation would require longer developments than are meet in this place. To understand the difficulty inherent to this most important passage, it must be remarked that here Strabo shows a consummate skill in the wording of his phrases. Evidently he did not believe in Orpheus and his pretensions. He was too enlightened a writer of the Augustan age to admit anything above jugglery in the wonderful deeds of the great mystagogue. Yet he did not wish to say so pointedly. He adapts, therefore, his phraseology to both the believers in Orpheus and the skeptics of his age. The words ἀνδραγόητα, which have been rendered by the phrase "skillful in performing wonders," may mean simply an impostor, but also a real "Thaumaturgus." Τελεταῖς, translated by "expiatory rites," may mean, after all, a mere ceremony or better mummery. Anacreon used the word for a *holy potation* in honor of Dionysos or Bacchus. The remainder of the story can be adopted both by the ardent followers of the bard or by the enemies who "put him to death."

We are not naturally skeptic, and consequently we are friendly to the mystagogue. The pretension is not certainly to make of him a true prophet of God, although the catacombs of Rome, the first place of burial of Christian martyrs, are full of his image, crowned with laurel and holding the lyre. Thus he was a figure of Christ, of St. Paul certainly. There can be consequently no exaggeration in supposing that the old Pelasgic songster had kept some of the primitive traditions of mankind, and in the wish to preserve them in the midst of increasing error, sang them to the people, and found himself surrounded with a multitude of willing listeners and believers. But the wiseacres, who were afraid of him and of his projects, suspected snares and unholy designs, which they thought would end in violence and despotism over the intellect of mankind. Should this (intellect) be once rendered obedient to the power of truth, and ordered to renounce the faculty of error, of ἀίρεσις—heresy—that is, the power of choosing a belief contrary to the one announced as coming from heaven, then it would be all over with philosophy. *Inde iræ.*

But in the midst of the whole passage there is a curious incidental phrase which must be commented upon for a moment. It is the one which represents Orpheus as collecting money by *dribblings*, yes, penny after penny, from the poor consequently. Ἀργυροτεύοντα is

the word used by Strabo. It is evidently a sneer on his part; and when he wrote it he had perhaps before his eyes the disgraceful spectacle he must have often witnessed in his life, of the procession of the priests of Cybele carrying about the statue of their goddess on a mule's back, and begging alms from the crowd around. But even here a friend of Orpheus can put a totally different construction on the passage, and look on the good man as addressing himself to the poor first, and in order to interest them in his work, which would require money for its completion, receiving thankfully their voluntary offerings, either to distribute them in charity or to establish associations on a large scale, and to defray the expenses of his great enterprise and his agents. This, in particular, Paul was to do when the time should arrive for him to "collect money in Macedonia" for "the poor of Jerusalem."

It is not, therefore, a very violent stretch of fancy to see in Orpheus a kind of—not prototype—but long anterior emblem and figure of the great apostle; and the coming of St. Paul at Thessalonica is, as it were, the explosion of the reality, ages after the Orphic shadow had preceded him. He came really to "perform wonders" through the heavenly harmony of his doctrine, and the astonishing fulfillment of his predictions—music and the mantic art—to teach the Hellenes the true "expiatory rites," and purify them in the *μυστήρια* of the *ὀργιασμῶν*. For this he was to collect money by *dribblings*, as all missionaries have to do, even in our day. But in spite of these details, generally looked upon with disdain by the great and powerful men of every age, he was to obtain before long a large following; and to raise against himself enemies who would *suspect* snares and designs, etc., etc. The result for Orpheus was to be "torn to pieces." The time had not yet arrived for Paul to meet this fate in Thessalonica. Yet he was not to labor among the Macedonians—read Thracians—without opposition and open persecution.

Until the day when his flight on the sea shall arrive,\* we must contemplate him in that great city "where there was a synagogue of the Jews." † It is important to consider it as it was at the time, so different from the wretched Saloniki, where but yesterday Turks were engaged in their traditional occupation of murdering Christians. It was then the capital of Macedonia, whose power had been lately so pre-eminent in the world under Alexander and his successors.

---

\* Acts, xvii. 4.

† Ib. 1.

It contained certainly several hundred thousand inhabitants, mostly Greeks. So late as 904 of our era, when it was captured by the Saracens, it had yet two hundred and twenty thousand souls. At the time of the arrival of St. Paul, the population must have been a medley of all races. The Greeks, no doubt, predominated; but there were many Jews; the original inhabitants must have been yet numerous.

From the narrative of the Acts, the authority of Cæsar was there, as well as at Philippi, more paramount than in any other part of Greece. There must have been a great number of Romans who could easily reach it, not only all the way by sea, but also through the great *Via Egnatia*, built by the Romans themselves, and which, starting from Dyrrachium, now Durazzo, on the Adriatic Sea, ran through the whole extent of Macedonia, and passing through Thessalonica, ended at Cypsela on the Hebrus River. The city was not then celebrated for its population, commerce, and influence only, but it was also one of the most ancient of Thrace. It was called originally Therma, on account of the hot springs existing yet to this day in its neighborhood; and was then inhabited by a mixture of the Thracian tribe of *Edones*, who lived along the eastern shore of the Thermaic Gulf, and of the *Bryges* or *Phryges*, on the western coast of the bay. These two clans, with many others of the same Thracian stock, were gradually subdued by the first Macedonian kings, who succeeded to Perdiccas, the founder of the monarchy. As to the Thracians themselves, who were the first inhabitants of Therma, it is well known that they were Pelasgians, and more, perhaps, than any other nation of antiquity, they had preserved precious relics of their Indian or Persian ancestors. Herodotus says in so many words: \* “The Thracians, after the Hindoos, are the greatest nation existing among men.” Thucydides has modified this general expression of the Father of History by stating † that “Thracia had the greatest revenue, and was in other respects the most flourishing of all the States of Europe between the Gulf of Ionia and the Euxine Sea; but in military strength and numerous armies, it was the second, though at a great distance, from the Scythians.” This we would willingly admit, because the Pelasgians were not distinguished for their warlike spirit, although it is very likely they were not such cowards as Mr. Gladstone represents them to be in his *Juventus*

---

\* V. 3.

† Lib. ii. 97.

*Mundi.* Like the Hindoos, they applied themselves more to poetry and the worship of God than to the art of destroying human life. Hence they had been celebrated of old as the country of Orpheus, Musæus, Tamyris, Eumolpus, and Zamolcis. This is not a bad exhibit in point of real civilization. They remained autonomous until the great Persian expedition, under Xerxes, which landed just on their shore, after crossing the Hellespont from Asia. This invasion of millions of men ravaged certainly the country, as Herodotus relates in so spirited and highly interesting a manner. But after the scourge had passed on its way south to Greece, the Thracians resumed their national life, and became again extremely prosperous, until Lysimachus, one of the generals of Alexander, subjected the country, and made of it a province of Macedonia. It is only about half a century after Christ, under Claudius, that Thrace became a Roman province, and this was just the time when St. Paul evangelized the country.

Thessalonica, therefore, must have numbered among its inhabitants native Thracians, as well as Greeks and Romans, besides the Jews. When St. Paul arrived, however, the name of Rome was great in the country, and as it was lately that the worship of Cæsar as a god had been introduced, the reader will not be surprised to hear that it was at every moment invoked and appealed to in the city, as it always happens on the uprising of a new domination.

The apostle again, as usual, chose first the synagogue of the Jews for making his appearance as a public preacher ; but, as usual also, his countrymen showed the same spirit of opposition as they did later on at Ephesus, as they had already done at Antiochia, and everywhere else. Though some of them became the ardent disciples of the apostle, he felt obliged to leave the synagogue, and went to dwell with a citizen named Jason or Mnason, whose large house became, in fact, the first church of Thessalonica.

The opposition to St. Paul originated thus from the Jews ; but its spirit was soon to be communicated to the Gentiles living in the city. The Acts of the Apostles, whose narrative is always extremely short, speak directly of this opposition ; yet since the apostle gathered a plentiful harvest in Thessalonica before he left it, he must have had time to bring together his new disciples and instruct them, before he was obliged to leave them to the care of Timothy, as he did later on. Of this glorious gathering in of a new church, we have no details whatever to give. Still a few passages of a letter written



afterward by St. Paul to the Christians of Thessalonica do not leave us altogether in the dark, and it is proper to review some lines of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians.

And first St. Paul speaks in it \* of the very beginning of his apostleship among them. "You know, brethren, our entrance unto you, that it was not in vain. For, having suffered before, and being contumeliously treated at Philippi,"—where he was thrown into prison—"we had confidence in our God, to speak to you the gospel in much solicitude. . . . Whereas we might have been burdensome to you, as the apostles of Christ; we became little ones in the midst of you, as if a nurse should cherish her children. So desirous of you, we would gladly have imparted to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives: because you were become most dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil, working night and day, lest we should be burdensome to any of you, we preached among you the gospel of God."

This is a most precious passage, enabling us to make a perfect story of the first weeks, or perhaps months, of the residence of St. Paul at Thessalonica. Just coming from Philippi, where he had suffered persecution, he did not begin by boasting of it, but appeared humbly among this new people "like a little one in the midst of them." It is clear from the same passage that when he took up his quarters with Jason, as we know from the seventeenth chapter of the Acts, he would not consent to be of any expense in his house, and worked "day and night" for his own support, probably at his trade of tent-making. Jason was, no doubt, a rich man; but this was not a reason for St. Paul to eat at his table and live idly when not engaged in his ministry. A great deal of learning and criticism is displayed by Father C. a Lapide on the personality of Jason or Mnason; from which we derive the knowledge that he was a native of Cyprus, that he possessed property and had domestic establishments both at Thessalonica and Jerusalem, and that after having been a companion of St. Paul through Greece, he was made the first bishop of Tarsus in Cilicia, the native place of the apostle. Gams places his name at the head of the list of the bishops of Tarsus. Was he a Jew or a Greek? we should incline for this last supposition, not only on account of his name, which is altogether Hellenic—Hellenist Jews, however, often took Greek names—but chiefly because of his standing and high

---

\* II. 1, et seq.

respectability in the city of Thessalonica, and of the influence he enjoyed over its magistrates and people, as the sequel shows. He was not certainly a Roman.

Jason soon became an ardent friend of Paul, and in fact his house became a church, as was said, and a sure refuge for the Gentile neophytes of the town. No other construction can be placed on the following passage of the Acts : \* "Some of the Jews believed, and were associated to Paul and Silas, . . . and of the Gentiles a great multitude, and noble women not a few." We see by these words that at the first preaching of the apostle his ministry was far from having been barren. St. Luke continues : "The Jews, moved with envy, taking with them some wicked men of the vulgar sort, and making a tumult, set the city in an uproar ; and besetting Jason's house, sought to bring them out to the people. And when they had not found them, they haled Jason and certain brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out : That those who disturb the city are come hither also."

It is allowed here to ask : Why were the Jews moved with envy against Paul ? For no other reason certainly but that, after having preached to them during "three sabbath-days," he had turned toward the Gentiles, and began to announce to them the coming of the Messiah, whom the Jews considered as belonging exclusively to their nation, and not in any way to the Gentile world. They raise a tumult, therefore, besiege the house of Jason, enter it forcibly, and finding in it neither Paul nor Silas, they seize upon Jason and "certain brethren," and "lead them to the magistrates." As we know already that a multitude of Gentiles had been converted, it is manifest that these "certain brethren" were among the new converts, and that at the "rising of the tumult" they had repaired to Jason's house, as to the most sacred place of the city, with a view to protecting it ; but being overpowered by the rabble, they were made prisoners, in the very place that they considered as "their sanctuary." They were certainly citizens of Thessalonica, as well as Jason himself, since, when brought to "the rulers of the city," it was not against them precisely that the accusation was raised, namely, that they were "those who disturbed the city," but merely that the real disturbers of peace "had also come hither," that is, had taken their quarters in the same house, although they could not be found in it at the time of the search.

---

\* XVII. 4, et seq.

The pretended disturbers of peace, in fact, according to the whole passage, were Paul and Silas, strangers to the city, and neither these "certain brethren" nor Jason himself; although they certainly participated in the supposed guilt. And the guilt, the crime of those foreigners, with whom the men carried as captives had associated themselves, consisted in this, that "they all did contrary to the decree of Cæsar, saying, that there is another king, Jesus."

This simple and clear narrative gives a perfect understanding of the situation. It is a Gentile rabble, as at Ephesus, raised to fury against St. Paul, by envious Jews, exactly as at Ephesus again. Only the outcry was not: "The great Diana of the Ephesians;" but as at Jerusalem before Pilate: "We have no king but Cæsar." The Greek pagans preferred thus the Roman yoke, although it was undoubtedly heavy on their neck, to the yoke of the new religion, merely because Rome allowed them to remain idolaters, and Christianity, the new religion preached by Paul, declared open war against all possible idolatry.

That this was really the difficulty for the Gentiles of Thessalonica, and that their attachment to polytheism was the true cause of their hatred of St. Paul, much more than their real love of Cæsar and Rome, is clear from some stray words of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. They are these: \* "You became followers of us and of the Lord; receiving the word in much tribulation, with the joy of the Holy Ghost. So that you were made a pattern to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia. For from you was spread abroad the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and in Achaia; but also in every place, your faith which is toward God is gone forth, so that we need not speak any thing. For they themselves relate of us, what manner of entrance we had unto you; and how you were converted to God from idols, to serve the living and true God."

That this again was the real cause of the hatred of the Gentiles of Thessalonica against Paul and the new Christians, is confirmed by the fourteenth verse of the next chapter of the same epistle, where St. Paul, writing from Corinth in Achaia, says: "You have become, brethren, the followers of the churches of God which are in Judea, in Christ Jesus. For you also have suffered the same things from your own countrymen, even as they have from the Jews." The thing now is perfectly clear: The Jews everywhere who refused to receive

---

\* Ch. i. 6, et seq.

the new Gospel, persecuted their brethren who accepted the teachings of the apostle, because they did not wish to renounce their old religion for the new. So also the Gentiles, who refused to renounce their "idols," persecuted those of their own Gentile countrymen who abandoned polytheism. The attachment to polytheism became thus the great stumbling-block on which many Greeks made shipwreck, and induced them not only to persecute the preachers of the Gospel of Christ, but likewise those Gentiles who opened their eyes to the truth.

Thus we find that the history of St. Paul at Thessalonica is not, after all, an inexplicable enigma, and many clear details of it are known. The only question is, What was the polytheism which the majority refused to renounce? It had evidently nothing to do with the old Thracian pantheism; and the ancient doctrines of Orpheus were by this time entirely forgotten. Thessalonica was then more of a Greek city than many other towns of Thrace. The old Therma had long before passed away. In the fourth century before Christ Cassander had made of it a new city, and had called it Thessalonica after his wife, the daughter of Philip. From this epoch down it became, as it were, the Macedonian capital, and remained ever after the largest city of the country, the pride of Macedonia. Its embellishment had been the greatest care of its kings. The religion of its inhabitants was consequently pure Hellenism. It was not surprising that the Olympian system should prevail in it, since the lofty Mount Olympus, where the Homeric divinities were supposed to dwell, was in fact one of the greatest features of the neighborhood, rising up to heaven not a long distance south of Thessalonica, and perhaps visible even from it.

But which of the Olympian divinities was chiefly honored in that celebrated Greek city? It would be hard to answer the question positively. One thing is sure: There are yet at Saloniki the remains of an old temple of the Thermæan Venus, as it is called. Only it is impossible now to say if it was then the chief religious edifice of Thessalonica. But at least it can be positively stated that Venus received in it the worship of the inhabitants. This temple is now a Mahometan mosque, after having been a Christian church. Thus its antiquity is not problematical. There can be no doubt that it stood in all its glory at the time of St. Paul; and this edifice was certainly one of those whose "idols" the Gentiles of this city had ceased to worship any longer, when they "were converted to God."

But what kind of Venus was worshiped in it? Plato in his *Symposium* mentions two of them: Urania and Aphrodite. Other ancient authors count a greater number. Cicero four, Pausanias three, some even as many as seven or ten. But the celebrated distinction of Plato between the celestial Venus—Urania—who presided over chaste loves, and the Venus born out of the foam of the sea, as Hesiod relates, called, consequently, Aphrodite, the mother of Cupid, is the one most natural, simple, and known to the Greeks. It is also well known that they gave away the first—Urania—to the worship of the Orientals. They said she had fallen from the skies for them in the form of a star, and was a Syrian goddess; the pure Hellenic emblem of beauty was Aphrodite, and to her alone, we may say, they addressed their impure worship, not to Urania.

This divinity, it must be concluded, was at least one of the great objects of the adoration of the Thessalonians, when St. Paul arrived, and there is no need of describing the rites to which they had been used from their birth. These rites a “multitude of Gentiles” and “noble women not a few,” renounced openly to become disciples of “the Crucified.” But the great majority of the Thessalonians, pretending to be zealous for the authority of Cæsar, were only unwilling to give up a worship so dear to the senses, and which covered with the cloak of religion the unholy aspirations of lust. Thus they persecuted the new converts, as the obstinate Jews in Palestine persecuted the Judeo-Christians; \* and St. Paul, in exhorting them to perseverance, insisted particularly on this, that “they should abstain from fornication; that every one of them should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor; not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles who know not God.” † This seems to us a strong reference to what has been just stated of the worship of Venus at Thessalonica.

And why did not the accusers of Paul and Silas, and of Jason and those “certain brethren” previously alluded to, make any mention of this *crime* of the apostle and his new converts in their prosecution before the magistrates? Why did they only accuse them of “disturbing the city,” and of “doing contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying, that there is another king, Jesus”? It seems that it would have been a very nice point made against the Christians to say openly of them that they were guilty of blasphemy against

---

\* 1 Thess. ii. 14.

† Ib. iv. 3, et seq.

Venus, their dear goddess, by preaching chastity and inveighing against "fornication."

The best answer to be given to this strange but forcible objection, is derived from the innate voice of the human conscience, which spoke even to the pagans, and inwardly confuted in their eyes their own absurd religion. The fact is very remarkable, and must be insisted upon here. In the whole range of ecclesiastical history, where all the details of the open persecutions against Christians are set forth, the disciples of the new religion are accused in general of blasphemy against the gods; sometimes even of atheism on that account. Several particular divinities are occasionally mentioned, and the burning of incense to them is imposed as a duty under pain of death. Those divinities are always Zeus, or Apollo, sometimes the chaste Artemis, or any other less objectionable god. We do not remember to have ever read anywhere that on some particular occasion the statue of Venus was brought in for the Christians to burn incense to it, and promise, for instance, the prostitution of their daughters. There would not be, it is true, anything very remarkable if such a fact had happened frequently; it was a manifest consequence of Greek polytheism. But it is indeed wonderful that it never happened. And if for anything, it must have been for the reason that human conscience revolted against such worship as this. The "Diana of the Ephesians" was a very different divinity. We have stated our motives for thinking that she was the Greek Diana, namely, the huntress Artemis, although her statue was so different from that of Apollo's sister. But Artemis was a chaste goddess. Her virtue, it is true, was not of the Christian order; it was not that lovely innocence, the genuine offspring of humility and simplicity, the paragon of feminine grace, and the most heavenly prerogative of redeemed human nature. It was a supercilious, proud, and on that account, repulsive coldness, like that of ice, or rather of a clammy reptile. It was the chastity of those daughters of modern times, who although baptized, and perhaps nominally children of the Church, if questioned in confidence and in the proper place, as to having failed in the least against purity, reply with such an arrogant haughtiness by a contemptuous No, as if they were by nature above it and could not possibly be guilty of it. This was the chastity of Artemis; still it was a great, a noble thing, in the eyes of a pagan. But the moral frailty of Aphrodite could not be considered as a virtue even by an Hellene, in spite of all the poetic beauty connected

with the legend of the goddess. This explanation is given for what it is worth, and we pass on.

The accusation of anti-Cæsarism, which came foremost to the mind of the accusers of St. Paul, was, however, more pithy, forcible, and calculated to attract the attention of the magistrates, who were certainly Roman officials. The country either had just been declared a province of the empire, or was on the eve of being so declared; and although the yoke of Cæsar must not have been very welcome to the Greek citizens of Thessalonica, they were bound, outwardly at least, to show a prominent zeal for the new master, or rather the new god. Such a crime as that of acknowledging another king by the name of Jesus, instead of Cæsar, could not be tolerated; and thus the magistrates had to entertain the accusation with much consideration and respect. This was a charge much more likely to succeed with the magistrates than the contempt of Venus.

It is here that Jason interfered, and was instrumental in saving his master Paul, and the new brethren, by his influence and wealth. From the whole passage it is evident that he was a most respectable citizen of Thessalonica. He must have been known by reputation to the great majority of the people, and perhaps personally and socially to the rulers of the city. The cause he defended was more-over a good one, and he had against him only the mob, to which generally the Romans officials did not bow humbly. Pilate himself in Judea, so weak and so easily led by the multitude, would not probably have given up Jesus to the executioner, if the call for his death had not been first and foremost demanded by the head men of the nation. Jason, besides, could easily prove that in all the doings and speeches of Paul, there had never been either a word or the most insignificant act directed against Roman preponderance and Cæsar's authority. He was, however, requested to furnish security for Paul's behavior. The word used in the Greek of St. Luke is *τὸν ἱκανόν*, on which interpreters disagree. Was it only bondsmen, as in our ordinary processes of law, or a personal bond given by Jason himself, or finally, a sum of money as security? It is of perfect indifference in the present case; but on this being done, Paul and his friends were set free, and the following night, through a motive of prudence, and by the advice of the new converts, the apostle left the city, and went to Berea, not far distant. He had in a few days done already a great deal in Thessalonica. A multitude of Gentiles, among whom were many noble women, some Jews likewise,

and perhaps a few Romans, were his conquests, and the Church was from that moment firmly settled, having passed through the ordeal of a popular sedition, and a kind of persecution. The apostle, however, appointed Timothy as his substitute among the new Christians. The future bishop of Ephesus, however, was not placed permanently at the head of this new diocese; some one else must have been appointed who is not historically known. There is no doubt, moreover, that other bishops were soon consecrated for the neighboring towns. The reader remembers what was said previously on this subject. Finally, Paul did not bid adieu forever to his dear Thessalonians. Not only he was to write to them, but he was to return, perhaps more than once. According to the lists of Gams, the bishops' sees were never as numerous in Macedonia as they became in any district of equal extent in Asia Minor. Still there was historically from the fourth century down to a later epoch a respectable number of them, which proves their existence anteriorly, and in our opinion, for a good part of them at least, from the very apostleship of St. Paul.

The short sojourn of the apostle in Berea was the exact reproduction of what had happened at Thessalonica; only he converted there a greater number of Jews, and these were still of a higher social standing, and became more firmly attached to the Christian religion. The number of Gentiles, particularly of women of noble families, was as great as in the former city. The rage of the Thessalonian Jews was fearfully excited by this new success; so that they arrived in great number to stir up the popular fury against St. Paul, who thought it more prudent to fly before the storm. He was soon on the shores of the Thermaic Gulf, on his way to Athens.

The Gentiles of Berea do not seem, from the Acts of the Apostles, to have participated, as at Thessalonica, in this last outbreak, which looks as if it had been only a Jewish affair. Timothy and Silas did not accompany Paul in his new expedition south; they remained in Macedonia, where their presence was necessary for the solid establishment and greater extension of the new Church. But what must strike the reader of these transactions, is the constantly repeated fact of Christianity taking root at once wherever the apostles remained but a few days; and forever after spreading in all directions, even from the points where their foot had rested only a moment in their rapid passage through the world.

Indeed, is it not most surprising that after a few spots of Thrace



and Macedonia had been simply visited by St. Paul, the reign of "idols" is suddenly on the wane, to crumble away rapidly, and pass away forever? Think of it, dear reader; there is yet in Saloniki an old temple changed once by the sword into a mosque; but it had been anteriorly a Christian church, and still before, it was an edifice devoted to the worship of Aphrodite. Reflect well on this: More than a thousand years previous to Christ, Hesiod had written the tale of this divinity: From the foam of the sea and the blood of Ouranos, shed by Kronos' hand, the most charming of goddesses had appeared on the waters in the neighborhood of Cythera, whence she passed over into Cyprus. The tender herbage sprang up under her soft feet, and accompanied by Cupid, her son, by sports and smiles, and all the wanton train of loves, she became the author of joy and happiness both to gods and men. So Hesiod had sung,\* in harmonious, flowing verse, worthy of Homer, his contemporary; and so the Hellenic world had believed. How many shrines were erected to her! What entrancing festivals had celebrated her beauty! When Paul appeared in Greece her wanton rites were certainly more renowned than ever. From Hellas her worship had early passed into Italy, Africa, Spain, Gaul, and many other countries. Read Strabo, and try to calculate the number of temples built in her honor, which the exact geographer describes accurately, fixing often the precise spots, and adding occasionally a word of praise. And to think that so soon after St. Paul, all those graceful, as they were guilty, festivals had ceased; all her statues and paintings, so numerous and beautiful, had been desecrated; all her temples had been closed or changed into churches! It is known that once, Hadrian, a worthy votary of Aphrodite, dared to place idols in the temple of Jerusalem, called by him *Ælia Capitolina*, and, it is said, he had a statue of the mother of Cupid placed in the most sacred part of what had been the holy edifice. But it was a vain attempt at resuscitating a dying worship; and not long after, a Roman empress, Helen, purified the holy place desecrated by the adorer of Antinous, and erected a Christian altar, which stands yet in the midst of the fanatic Moslems.

But the rapid disappearance of idolatry will look more striking still by following the apostle into Hellas itself. He had, so far, only hovered in the north, and there planted the cross, which was to replace so soon all pagan emblems. He was going straight to Athens, the

---

\* Theog. 190-207.

great city of Minerva ; at the same time the hot-bed of superstitions, and the still resounding palæstra of philosophy.

### 5. *St. Paul in Hellas ; at Athens.*

Did the apostle, after leaving Berœa, take shipping on the coast, and go down the sea through the Thermaic Gulf, and a part of the Cyclades, until he reached the harbor of Athens ? Or did he merely feign to do so, and having reached the bay, followed the coast on land through a part of Macedonia, the whole of Thessaly, and of Hellas, until he reached the city he wished to evangelize ? Most interpreters are of this last opinion ; but we would be inclined to embrace the first, for the reason that St. Paul, before he spoke to the Athenians, had seen in their territory the altar dedicated “to the unknown god,” and according to Pausanias there was one of this kind in the harbor of *Phalerum*, where the apostle might very well have landed. Since, however, there might have been another in Athens itself, although we know nothing of it, the proof is not conclusive, and the text of the author of *Rambles through Greece* gives only something of a probability to the last opinion. But either through the sea or on land, it was certainly along the coast that the voyage was performed, and St. Paul could see distinctly the heights of Olympus, of Pelion, of Ossa, besides the lofty promontory of Athos ; he could notice on the Gulf of Therma the ruins of Dium, near which Orpheus had lived and sung ; he could remark the purity of the waters of the Peneios, and the lovely scenery of the valley of Tempe ; and the Thermopylæ where Leonidas died, and Delphi, the celebrated seat of the lying oracle, now silent. All this, and many other spots enshrined in the memory of the Hellenes, passed under the view of the apostle. No one is authorized to suppose that he closed his eyes on the occasion, or that this spectacle did not speak to his mind and heart, so easily moved at the sight of the works of God, and at the sad contemplation of the errors of men, as we know with certainty from many passages of his epistles. Is not this even indicated by the apparently casual word of St. Luke,\* when he says of the first impression of the apostle on his entrance into Athens, “His spirit was stirred within him, seeing the city wholly given to idolatry.” If thus he felt when he walked through the streets of the city,

---

\* Acts, xvii. 16.

can we imagine that he remained cold and passionless during his long travels through such a country as Greece then was? It was yet at that time undoubtedly the most beautiful portion of this earth; but in the eyes of a believer in Christ, chiefly of a zealous minister of the God-man, all its beauty was defaced by the most foul superstitions. But these were going to give way before the simple preaching of a converted Jew, and Paul felt certainly that he was called by Heaven itself to give the blow. What an astounding mission? How can any reflecting mind think that the rapid establishment of Christianity could be the work of man alone? Who was Paul, after all, humanly speaking, for such a stupendous undertaking? These considerations might be indefinitely developed.

But he has already begun. Let us follow well and most attentively all his doings, and listen to all his words as they are given in the sacred record. There is not an iota that can be omitted here, and the only danger for an impressionable writer on such a subject as this, is to follow too far the train of his thoughts, and to expatiate at too great a length on such a mighty theme. We will try to contain ourselves, and the reader need not fear to peruse an uninteresting narrative. It is of itself eminently attractive, and it requires no particle of art in the writer to carry away the feelings of the listener.

Athens was still celebrated all over the world for two remarkable peculiarities: her deep attachment to Hellenic polytheism, and her pre-eminence in the field of human philosophy. Of this last we must speak first, because the reader may have been already often surprised that scarcely a word of it has been said in these pages, as if philosophy had nothing to do either for or against the establishment or spread of Christianity. The question has been mooted, How far had it prepared the way? But this is a very different one. Some writers suppose that human philosophy had an immense influence in the general result of the great change which then took place in the world; and they consequently indulge in long dissertations on the subject of Greek theories, metaphysical or ethical. We are decidedly of opinion that this influence, one way or another, was nothing like what these authors imagine. During the first ages of our era philosophical questions had a great bearing on the ideas of a certain class of men, and Christianity could not be but either favored or opposed by these speculations. But this took place only among cultivated and highly instructed people. The mass of mankind did not

mind philosophy, which was a closed letter for them. They followed blindly their fabulous traditions and ancient customs, and consequently believed firmly that Zeus was the son of Kronos, had been saved from being devoured by his father, owing to the *ingenious* device of Rhea, who gave to the glutton and cruel parent, a stone to swallow instead of her child, etc., etc., to the end of those absurd stories. Mankind really believed those fables, at least, in Greece and Italy; and it was much later on that Lucian came to laugh at them. But Lucian himself was read only by the educated, whom philosophy had taught to rely more on their reason. The early Greek Fathers, who spoke a great deal of philosophy in the Christian sense, such as Justin Martyr, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, etc., wrote then for the higher classes of society; but in their time the people at large were already high on the road of conversion without a word of philosophy having been said to them. The history of Christ, of his miracles, of his passion, death, resurrection, and future coming with power and majesty, is really the human thing which converted the world; and philosophy has nothing absolutely to do with those facts, unless to say that they were really facts, and must be so accepted by reason. This alone, with the addition of the belief in one God, Creator of heaven and earth, is the only doctrine St. Paul preached to the Athenians of the Areopagus themselves. He had, as shall be abundantly proved, a poor idea of human philosophy, and completely disdained to use its arguments as grounds of faith. The "doctrine of the cross," he thought, was a firmer ground. But of this more anon.

With these few reflections, which will be more and more cleared up as we proceed, the text of the Acts must be now more closely examined. Powerfully excited by what he had seen on his way, and by what he witnessed in the city, Paul felt in himself an ardent zeal. *Παρωξύνοιτο* is the word of the Greek Testament, and according to Pagnini, Vatable, and others, it means *excandescerat, irritabatur*. The word used in the Peshito means, it seems, *mærore afficiebatur*. St. Augustin\* translates *irritabatur Spiritu Sancto*. It is, after all, the same idea: Paul burned with ardor, and felt at the same time a deep sadness, and a kind of nervous irritation, because "he saw that the city was given up to a foul idolatry." The idea of its philosophy does not seem to have as much as crossed his mind. He was, however, soon to meet it.

---

\* Lib. i. contr. crescent.

The first thing he did was to preach *everywhere*. The text is clear and pithy: "He disputed in the synagogue with the Jews, and with them that served God, and in the market place with them that were there." He does not follow any more his previous custom, to speak first exclusively to the Jews; then, on their refusal, to go to the Gentiles. He begins by addressing all at once, "as he finds them." And this, not only in the synagogue to the Jews and proselytes, but in the public square, *in foro*, to the native inhabitants of the city. He employs all his days in that labor, *per omnes dies*. Did he then support himself by working during night at his trade of tent-making, as we are aware he did at Thessalonica, "working at it day and night"? Did he remain fasting, or use only what the good women of the "market," *fori*, may have given him, either olives and figs, always plentiful at Athens, or even onions of Megara, of which the Athenians were so fond, in the time of Socrates and Euclid? There is a beautiful story on the subject, in Plutarch, we think, which we are sorry we cannot give in full here. St. Luke, of course, did not mind such trifles as these; we confess that a word on those homely topics would have mightily pleased us, in this age of little domestic details and realistic descriptions.

St. Paul, however, soon found that besides the popular worshippers at the pagan shrines, there were likewise *philosophers* at Athens. He met chiefly adherents of two great sects, in full vigor at the time, namely, Epicureans and Stoicians.\* Thus are we brought in contact with the subject which must now attract our attention.

Alexandrian philosophy, in St. Paul's time, was not yet born as a particular set of principles and deductions. Neo-Platonism appeared there much later on. Although the Ptolemies had long before built the Museum, founded the library, and established public schools, the pre-eminence of Athens in the teaching of philosophical speculations had not yet been touched. Young men from all parts of Greece, and from Italy and Gaul, did not yet go to Egypt for applying themselves to those studies; the renown of Athens for this development of human thought was still what it had been for several centuries. It was two hundred years later that Basil and Gregory went all the way from the wilds of Cappadocia to study at Athens, not to Egypt. Cicero, it is also known, at least a century before St. Paul, had likewise gone thither from the west for the same purpose.

---

\* Quidam Epicurei, et Stoici philosophi disserebant cum eo.

And it happens precisely that the great questions treated of in so masterly a manner by the great Roman orator in his philosophical works, are those raised by the theories of Epicurus or of Zeno.

There is no need of entering into the details of those theories. To elucidate them more intelligibly than they have been by many writers of philosophical history would not come within the purport of this narrative; and the chief tenets of those two sects are sufficiently well known to all those who are curious in such matters. In our age, as in that of Cicero, Epicurus has yet many followers, Zeno very few. When St. Paul preached, it is of little importance to know which of the two schools had the greater number of adherents. It is generally admitted that in the age of the Antonines, or a little before, the stern doctrines of Stoicism received the approval of all those who were tired of tyranny and corruption. In St. Paul's time, this could not be the case yet, since Caius Caligula alone, so far, had astonished the world by his cruelty. Tiberius himself had been very careful not to shed blood often by personal sentence, leaving the burden of it to his slavish senate.

Be this as it may, the sacred text does not seem to care to admit any difference between the members of the two sects, and to show any apparent preference for either of them. They both present themselves to St. Paul, and both receive the same answer. Why should there be any distinction established between doctrines essentially wrong? If those of Epicurus were more dangerous on account of the paramount importance given to *pleasure*—whatever meaning may be attributed to this word—the doctrines of Zeno were not perhaps less objectionable, on account of the totally false notion they gave of *virtue*—a most abused expression, as understood by the Stoics. If Epicurus degraded the divinity by what he said of his sleepy gods, indifferent to the actions of men, Zeno did not much mend matters, by confounding his own with Fate.

Yet these two systems, with the skepticism of Pyrrho, adopted by a few fancy thinkers, were all the philosophy known to and studied by the Romans and the Greeks of the apostolic age. Of all the previous speculations of the Ionic, Italic, Academic, and Peripatetic schools, almost nothing remained, except a few scraps of intelligence alluded to here and there in the philosophical discussions of which we have yet some records. Read all that Cicero wrote on those speculative questions, and you will be convinced that in his age as well as in that of St. Paul, which followed, philosophy was almost reduced

to discuss the questions of pain or pleasure, virtue or *turpe et vitiosum*. Of the noble conceptions of the ancient Italic school, founded by Pythagoras; of the latter Ionic school of Anaxagoras—the first to admit among the Ionians a spiritual designing Mind in nature—*Noûs*;\* of the sublime affirmations of Plato, the founder of the old Academy; of the exact and clear definitions of Aristotle, the father of the Peripatetic school, almost nothing remained in the memory of men. Read the discussions of Cicero, the treatises of Seneca, the maxims of Marcus Aurelius—we do not refer here to Epictetus, who must have heard of Christian ethics—and the declension of philosophy from anterior times will be at once apparent. Some modern writers, it is true, of a commendable school, think that they perceive an advance in ethics, when comparing the moral precepts of Seneca and of Marcus Aurelius with those of former ages; and they attribute it to some slight influence, already felt, of the maxims of Christianity. In some rare cases, in a few isolated expressions of the preceptor of Nero, and of the great representative of the Antonines, there might be some ground for this opinion. In general, however, there can be no doubt that the moral doctrine of Socrates, as preserved to us by Plato, contains a great deal more of principles akin to those of Christianity than can be found in the others. But even granting on this point all that is claimed by such a writer as Franz de Champagny, for instance, the celebrated French author himself would not deny that the great thoughts which formerly occupied such men as Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle, are nearly absent altogether from the speculations of the best philosophers of the apostolic age. The true originality, besides, of the former Greek thinkers, is totally wanting. No new system, right or wrong, is invented. No fecundity of any sort appears in these more modern and pretentious philosophers. They merely form new combinations out of the old formulas, and all their ability consists in wrangling and disagreeing about what was said before them.

Thus St. Paul found in Athens the “rulers of thought” occupied with discussing the doctrines of Epicurus and Zeno. The “conquests

---

\* Whilst Anaxagoras raised the metaphysical views of the Ionic school so far up as the admission of a spiritual and eternal Designer and Maker of the Universe—the true God—he brought its physical doctrines down to a far lower level than those of Thales, its founder. It was Anaxagoras who pretended that the sun was a mass of incandescent matter as large at least as Peloponnesus.

of human reason," during centuries of deep study in the whole Hellenic world—the sages of Rome merely followed those of Greece—were reduced to a few points concerning death or life, pain or pleasure, virtue or *turpe et vitiosum*—expressions of Cicero which we are not prepared to translate. The thoughtful reader will be convinced of this by perusing only cursorily the works of the Roman orator: *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, *De officiis*, *Tusculanarum Quæstionum*, *Lib. v.*, but chiefly the great, almost incredible, puzzle, called the three books *De natura deorum*. Many passages, no doubt, of these most remarkable productions seem admirable; the Greek doctrines are there elaborated with an apparent solidity worthy of the Roman mind. But, after all, with what result? Read the conclusion of the last work just quoted, and tell me if you ever saw anything so frivolous in Plato: "The doctrine of Epicurus, of course, is *verior*; that of the Stoics is *ad veritatis similitudinem propensior*." What then have we to believe of God and of our own destiny? Never in the long dissertations of Cicero will you find anything like Plato's repeated assertion, that we ought often to bring ourselves to a strict account at the tribunal of our conscience, in order to anticipate the one we will have to render to God, and obtain from Him a favorable sentence at the end of our life. This thought of Plato alone would raise him far above the Roman writer, because it supposes a totally different and far superior system of ethics. With it human conscience is fully alive; without it, it is completely dead.

At the time of St. Paul, in fact, and for a long time previous, philosophy was not more serious than, from that time down, oratory was eloquent. Disputes, dissertations, without any tangible result, was the sum total of the first; as words and phrases constituted the main effort of the second. Such men as Velleius, Brutus, Cotta, were set by Cicero in his dialogues to speak on the most momentous questions; and at the end of their protracted speeches, what one had said was nullified by the reasons of the other; and the grave decision was, That one appeared *verior*, the other was *ad veritatis similitudinem propensior*. But it must be again asserted that, besides this frivolous trifling with human reason and truth, all those great theories, original conceits, and occasionally sublime speculations of former sages were no more heard in the crowd of the noisy and quarrelsome followers of Epicurus and of Zeno.

It is time, however, to come to these new questioners whom St. Paul met at Athens. No better description of them could be given than what is comprised in a few lines of St. Luke.



We quote from the Douai version of the Vulgate : \* “Some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers disputed with Paul, and some said : What is it that this babbler would say ? But others : He seemeth to be a publisher of new gods ; because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.”

This was the first impression that the apostle made on the philosophers of Athens. It was not very likely he should find many disciples among them. They call him directly “a babbler ;” the word in the vulgate is *seminiverbius*—a literal translation of the Greek text, *ὁ σπερματολόγος*—“a sower of words.” Of course nothing but words, vain and empty words, could come from the lips of this Jew, in the eyes of those learned men who considered themselves as “leaders of *thought*” in Athens, or rather in the world. Their doctrine was so profound, explained so perfectly the nature of God and of man, that all mysteries were unveiled, and none could complain of remaining in darkness, but those who wished to remain in it by refusing to admit what they said. It is true that, as it seems philosophers of two opposite schools were at the time in the presence of St. Paul, he might very well have raised between them the question of *summum bonum*, and the by-standers would have been edified by the agreeable harmony of their teaching on the subject. But the apostle had something else to do besides setting them by the ears ; and although the sacred record does not mention what he thought of them when they threw that contemptuous expression in his face, every Christian knows that he would have given his life to obtain their conversion.

The sacred writer, as usual, pens with simplicity the insult without making any remark upon it. We are not bound by the same inflexible rule, so manifest in all the books of the New Testament, and it may be interesting and useful to comment on that remarkable word, *ὁ σπερματολόγος*, which came suddenly to the lips of a witty Epicurean or Stoic philosopher. The text does not say to whom of them it must be attributed. In Athens, at the time, this word belonged to the billingsgate vocabulary. When wheat was brought to market from the country, a crowd of hungry people gathered around the sacks or bags which contained the grain ; and whatever fell on the ground during the act of pouring it out or measuring it, became their prey, for which they had often to exchange blows. These poor men were

---

\* Acts, xvii. 18.

called *σπερματολόγοι*, and they were of course of the lowest and most despised class. The sting of the epigram, in applying it to a speaker like St. Paul, consisted in the ambiguity of the word *λόγος* from *λέγω*, which means at the same time to speak, and to gather; the market loafer *gathered* for himself the spoiled grain, the mean babbler spread out vain words in *speaking*; and the same expression had both meanings. Many arguments against revelation have no more cogency than such pleasant wit as this.

But the second signification of the epigram requires a moment's consideration. Paul was merely a "sower of *words*." Thus had said an Attic leader of *thought*. To sow requires seed; and the words here are the seed. If the words are but empty sounds, the seed is without germ, and the result is nought. But the question is to know if this was the case with St. Paul; if it was not rather the case with the boasting philosopher who dared to insult him. If we analyze well what must be meant here by *words*, we find in fact that there are three kinds of them, and not two only. The word may clothe no idea whatever; it is then a mere empty sound, doing neither harm or good. It is what the philosopher meant, and what he intended to reproach St. Paul with. But the word may cover a false and dangerous idea; and, being not in this case empty, but brimful of an injurious germ, the plant that grows out of it is a *φάρμακον*, a deadly poison, like hemlock or henbane. Should, on the contrary, the word envelop and adorn a true, beneficial, and priceless idea, then indeed the germ is priceless too, and out of it springs up a tree, not only beautiful to look at, but also loaded with delicious and nourishing fruits. This is the true analysis of the word *ὁ σπερματολόγος*. The reader must not imagine that the words of the first kind are the most numerous; it would be a great, a sad mistake; the mistake, namely, of most of the sages, statesmen, publicists, and chiefly journalists of our age, who fondly believe that an intelligent man ought to show himself indifferent to the spread of poisons, because they are in the end harmless, and the good will always prevail over the bad; that, consequently, what may appear at first sight baneful, produces in fact no bad result, so that most of the words that are spread, are in fact empty bags, containing no germs whatever, and unable to bear fruit of any kind, good, bad, or indifferent. This is a very fatal error. It must be strongly insisted upon, that few words are really empty, although there are certainly some few of this class; as, for instance,

the general notion that human life is now longer than it was a hundred years ago, and some other adages of that sort, which men may believe or not as they choose, without any great harm ensuing for society.

But in our age, more perhaps than in that of St. Paul, there is an incredible number of maxims admitted as so many truths by "advanced thinkers," and feebly combated by a few, the rest considering them as harmless doctrines; which, however, cannot bring but fatal results, if they are allowed to expand, blossom, and bring their fruits to maturity. What can be, for instance, the consequence of the *axiom*, now universal out of the Catholic Church, that error can never be a sin, and is at best only a pardonable mistake of the human intellect? Can real faith continue to be the heirloom of our humanity, if such a paradox as this is considered either as a good word, full of good germs, or at least as an empty word, containing no germ whatever, and unable to engender poison? Will not everything be reduced to mere opinion, if this baneful maxim is once admitted? And with mere opinion, without real faith in a certain body of doctrines, can any religion whatever exist? Hundreds of other examples of the same kind might be adduced. But it is time to bring the previous analysis to a bearing on the mute contest between St. Paul and his philosophical antagonist. It is here called mute because, it seems, the apostle did not open his lips at least to repel at once the insult thrown up to his face. What kinds of words uttered, in fact, both the would-be philosopher and St. Paul? It is important to consider this a moment.

It has been said that St. Paul gave the same answer to the Epicurean and to the Stoic. This answer shall soon be considered at some length. But in order to come at once to a speedy and practical conclusion in our actual inquiry, it is as well to throw out the Stoic at once, because, in our age, and in almost all ages, Stoicism has had, and has now, very few followers. Between the irrational and absurd harshness of Zeno's doctrine, and the exact and sweet exhortation of Christianity to virtue, even philosophers, there is no doubt, would incline to the last. But as to Epicureanism the case is very different. The doctrine of the sect has always had ardent followers; and at this time it is openly embraced by a great number of men, not alone on account of its rather loose notions of morality, but particularly because the cosmogonic ideas of Epicurus, as developed by the Roman Lucretius in his poem *De rerum natura*, chime in admirably with the reviving evolutionist theories. It leads evidently to atheism and

materialism ; and these are two powerful reasons for trying another time to give it a *lift* in human speculation. Let the reader forgive us this Saxon word ; it expresses the operation so admirably. Let us consider, therefore, for a moment, what the *words* of the Epicurean philosopher had already produced in Roman society, and what they would have produced for humanity at large, had they been permitted by Providence to bear their fruit to full maturity. It is not pretended here—let the reader mind it well—that the *words* of that sect were empty sounds or bags ; they were indeed brimful of juicy sap, but of the most acrid and toxic kind. This was undoubtedly the doctrine followed by all those infatuated patricians who were at that very time destroying their country, their proud families, and their own life, by the most brutish and shameful excesses. There is no need of expatiating on the subject. Recent researches have thrown a more vivid light than ever on the real degradation of Roman society. Our ancestors did not dare to plunge headlong in those filthy details. Although they knew the classics as well as we do, and better, they had too much self-respect, and they were too much afraid of shocking their readers, to wallow themselves in that mire, and to invite others to enjoy the same pleasure. But in our day, literary men are not so squeamish ; and the number of books which spread before *the general public* the delicacies of the patrician's daily life as it was eighteen hundred years ago, would form already a large catalogue, should a bookseller undertake to deal in that delightful specialty. The same enterprising caterer of good things would not, besides, be in danger of being ever short of new commodities of the same kind, as he would ever find German, English, and French “men of taste” ready to undertake new discoveries in the same line, and make mankind a great deal richer by their publications.

This word is sufficient on this subject. But the remark must not be omitted that if Epicureanism had brought the Roman world to a real state of dry rot and decomposition, the same would have naturally been the universal result, should humanity at large have imbibed the poison. Imagine the whole world plunged into the same foul depravity as the Romans were ; and say if the doctrine out of which this would have sprung, can be called an innocent or indifferent doctrine. Yet these were the *words* of the Epicurean philosopher who found fault with the *words* of Paul, and called him, in fact, “a ragamuffin of a loafer.”

This naturally brings on the consideration of the words of Paul ;

and to know them well, we have to quote a few phrases more of the sacred record, and comment briefly upon them. We take them from the same passage of the Acts: \* "Others said: He seemeth to be a publisher of new gods; because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection." These men did not, like the first, accuse St. Paul of being a babbler, a *seminiverbius*, a sower of words; they merely refused to grant him the privilege of being a philosopher. He was merely the founder of a new religion; and they had enough of those actually in existence, without a new one being brought in. They made the great mistake of separating altogether philosophy from religion, or rather, of opposing one to the other. A philosopher ought not to mind religion in the least; if in the train of his speculations he says anything which saps the foundation of religious belief, it is the fault of the religious belief, not of his strict and close reasoning. If, thus, a real antagonism is created between religion and science, let religion give way, since science must evidently be paramount. It is astonishing how the philosophers of those times agreed well with those of our own. That this was at the bottom of the mind of the speakers, as recorded in the sacred volume, is clear, from what is known of Epicureanism under the first Roman emperors. They continued faithful to the exterior rites of religion, and went like the other citizens to offer sacrifice and incense in the temples, before the statues of the gods. In their halls they spoke only to their adepts, and Lucretius was the first who did not scruple to publish in his poem that the only real object of their philosophy was to free mankind from all superstitious fear. Too long had men been afraid of following openly their inclinations on account of the supposed judgment after death, etc., etc. The lines of Lucretius on the subject are well known; there is no need of quoting them. They admitted, therefore, a true antagonism between philosophy and what religion, such as it was, taught and prescribed. But they proclaimed that in the conflict of both opinions, their own was to be adopted because founded on reason, and the insane fear produced by religion must be from henceforth discarded. With what contempt, therefore, they must have looked on Paul, when they said: "He seemeth to be a publisher of new gods!" And what reason had they to say so? St. Luke tells us directly: "Because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection." This at once places before our eyes the

---

\* V. 18.

general topics on which St. Paul always spoke, and the simple word recorded here is explained superabundantly by all the epistles of St. Paul, and his speeches recorded in the Acts. Had they any ground for declaring that he was not a philosopher? Not only he was not such, in the sense they attached to philosophy; but he was decidedly opposed to it, and he despised and detested in very truth their boasted love of wisdom. This must now engage our attention.

It was before the Areopagus that they wished him to explain his ideas. On the hill of Ares, near the Acropolis, sat a number of judges whose functions were the most important of all in the city. The origin of this tribunal went back to a hoary antiquity. At the time of Solon it existed already, and no one knew when it had begun. Its competency extended not only to criminal or civil cases; but it embraced likewise whatever concerned the morals of the city or its religion. It could sentence to fine, exile, prison, or death. There was no appeal from its decisions; and this had continued in Athens for considerably more than a thousand years. On this occasion it is proper to remark that if Greece had lost the memory of the primitive traditions and social customs of mankind, she kept most faithfully all local traditions and customs. She was in this regard much more tenacious than Rome ever was, and particularly much more than any European nation has ever been. There was scarcely a village in the whole country which had not some festival of its own, some particular and often very strange sacrifice peculiar to it, some local usage unknown elsewhere in Hellas, which the villagers would not have seen abrogated for any consideration. In spite of all political or social revolutions, in spite of invasions, defeats, victories, catastrophes of every kind, the festival, the anomalous sacrifice, the insignificant and occasionally ludicrous usage, continued in force. The treatises of Plutarch are full of such peculiarities as these; and Greece on that account is a most curious country, which has not yet been studied with all the care it deserves.

There is, therefore, nothing surprising in the hoary stability of the renowned tribunal of the Areopagus. It flourished yet long after St. Paul, as late as the close of the fourth century, when Christianity put an end to it as well as to all other national, provincial, or local traditions and customs. Strange indeed, but so it was. Whatever had seen so many ages of duration, vanished at once, like the fabric of a dream.

Some of the philosophers who brought the apostle before the Areopagus had said that "he seemed to be a publisher of new gods, be-

cause he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection." This was evidently a case for which the great Attic tribunal was fully competent. Had Paul been himself a mere "philosopher," the Areopagus could not have taken the affair into consideration, unless it had been an open accusation of atheism.

The apostle was, no doubt, glad that the affair had taken this turn. On the occasion of this, his first public appearance in the city, he would not have with pleasure treated a mere question of philosophy with any Epicurean or Stoic sophist. For being a plain man, he would have at once said what he thought of the whole profession, which would have certainly given offense, and he did not wish it. But as the very presence of those venerable judges required that he should leave philosophy alone, and speak only of things belonging to their office, he directly felt at home, and addressed them as he always did the people on whom he desired to make an impression. His speech, whose chief points are given by St. Luke, is exactly the reproduction of what he said to all men, in all countries, not even excepting the Jews. With this last kind of hearers he spoke of the law of Moses and of the prophets as forerunners of the new dispensation which he announced; with the Gentiles he made a direct appeal to the law of God imprinted in the conscience of all, as directing them also to this new and last dispensation.

This was the only difference he made between the people that he addressed. Here, after a short allusion to that altar he had found in or near Athens, erected ἄγνωστῷ Θεῷ—to the unknown God—he spoke of Him as Creator, as Author of life, as directing mankind by His providence, as speaking to the heart of man, "For in Him we live, and we move, and we are." He showed in a few words the folly of idolatry; and finally came to speak of the great Teacher who not only "declareth to men, that all should everywhere do penance;" but who would one day "judge the world with equity," and meanwhile "gives faith to all," "being raised up from the dead."

This, as was hinted before, is the general speech which has in truth converted mankind. This, not only St. Paul, but St. Peter likewise, St. John, and all the other apostles repeated constantly everywhere they went to. Yes, the belief in one God, Creator and Preserver of mankind; the mission of Christ; his life, labors, miracles, passion, and death; his resurrection, and the universal faith established by the fact of his being risen from the dead; finally, the certainty of his coming one future day to judge the whole world—

these truths, or rather facts, disposed into a symbol of belief, have made of men the adopted children of God, the brothers of Christ through his sacraments, and the members of one universal brotherhood all over the earth. Explain it naturally if you can. By these great truths or facts all the questions treated of by philosophers with more or less success, are not only started anew but resolved. But being facts as well as truths, they are proposed to our faith, not offered to our discussion; except so far as to the reasonableness of the ground on which they stand. This ground must be first admitted by our reason—which is, after all, the foundation of the whole edifice, since we are reasonable beings. This having been first set down firmly under our feet, so that we can stand on it as on a rock, the rest must be left to faith—blind faith, if you wish to call it so—but a faith which replaces pure opinion by conviction; the conclusion of a syllogism by the solemn assertion of the word of God; the efflorescence of our mind, great, it is true, but not infinite, by a real and substantial theological virtue reposing in the essence of God Himself. This is the philosophy of the apostles, not a contemptible one for any man of sense.

But that of the Epicureans and the Stoics was of a very different kind; and it is proper to see what St. Paul thought of it. For although on the present occasion he did not see fit to open his mind on the subject, for very prudential motives, he often did so afterward; and we possess precious jewels of this kind in his epistles. Had he ever written to the Athenians, he would most probably have alluded to their philosophers, of whom he had met such interesting specimens on his first visit to their city. But he never wrote to them. We have, however, two letters of his to the Corinthians, who lived in a close proximity to Athens, and enjoyed, no doubt, the happiness of having among them enlightened philosophers of the same species. And St. Paul speaks of them just at the very beginning of his First Epistle to the Corinthians: \* “When I came to you, brethren, I came not in loftiness of speech or of wisdom.” The first character of that pagan philosophy was, therefore, to be “lofty in speech”—*in sublimitate sermonis*—it is what is called fine style, choice expressions, philosophical phraseology. This was not certainly its worst character. Nay, a Christian orator in a refined age may also aim at using a fine style, choice expressions, etc., provided he imi-

---

\* II. 1, 4, 13, 14.



tates St. Paul, who "judged not himself to know anything but Jesus Christ, and him crucified."\* This is the chief point for a Christian apostle; the "loftiness of speech" must come afterward. But the Corinthian philosophers of the time of St. Paul had only this last quality, and knew nothing of the first. Therefore their philosophy was reduced to words, words, words, as Shakespeare says.

The second character St. Paul remarked in it was the strong type of "human wisdom," and nothing more.† It was reduced to things of this earth. It could not rise to the superior regions. It was a human wisdom, and nothing else. It began with man and ended with man. The questions of virtue, of vice, of *summum bonum*, etc., the highest questions proposed to our meditations, were merely confined to things of this life, and could not have the least reference to a better one. If the Stoic philosopher spoke of virtue, it was a monstrous kind of virtue, neither commanded by God, nor to be rewarded by Him; but only a proud and supercilious feeling of human nature, limited to this life, and perfectly compatible with the annihilation of the soul at the end of it. Fie on such virtue! If an Epicurean spoke of pleasure, the mind directly ran to the line of the Roman poet: *Epicuri de grege porcum*.‡ But of this more anon.

There is, however, something still worse in this philosophy. It is not only "human wisdom," but it is "sensual"—*animalis homo*.§ Cornelius a Lapide quotes several different meanings of the word *animalis*. The second one he mentions is evidently the most natural in the present passage of the epistle. "That man is *animalis* who follows the desires of the *anima*, that is, of concupiscence. Thus St. Jude calls *animales* those who have no spirit." The whole text shows this to be the meaning of the apostle. Hence he says that to such a philosopher the wisdom preached by him, Paul, is folly—*stultitia*. "Sensual" is consequently the word of the Douai version. And is it not perfectly true that the philosophy, chiefly of Epicurus, was that of the senses, and nothing else? If the Stoics appeared to despise everything purely sensual, it was a mere appearance in point of fact, due altogether to their absurd pride. Examine the life of the great Stoic Seneca, go through the inventory of his villas and palaces, count, if you can, his plate and furniture of gold, silver, cedar-wood, ivory, etc. Read his *quæstiones naturales*—a book of physics—if you have a complete edition, not expurgated; open the

\* 1 Cor. ii. 2.

† Ib. 4.

‡ Hor. Ep. iv.

§ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

volume on the chapter which we moderns call "Catoptrics," and if after having read a few lines you do not throw it into the fire, so much the worse for you. Yet this man has been supposed by some good souls to have been a *bona fide* disciple of St. Paul! All those philosophers, without almost any exception, were brutes—*animalis homo*—so St. Paul said. To be more convinced of it read the passage of St. Paul himself in his Epistle to the Romans.\* He speaks there of the philosophers of Greece: "Who called themselves wise, and became fools." † One of the greatest vices of those pretended sages—sodomy—is thrown at their face in clear terms. ‡ But the five last verses of the chapter are the most terrible sentence ever pronounced against them. Not only the previous quotation: *dicentes se*, etc., proves that he speaks there of philosophers; but the last line of the chapter is yet more emphatic: "Who having known the justice of God," etc. After this it is useless to ask what opinion St. Paul entertained of the sophists of his age.

He addressed them, however, with earnestness and zeal. He tried to convert them, but not by philosophical arguments. And in fact these would have been the least efficacious of all, since the greatest obstacle, perhaps, which opposed their conversion, was that they labored under a surfeit of this heavy food. They were thus, distracted by reasoning, worked up to a high mental fever, so as not to be able to recognize truth if presented to them. Certainly the process followed by St. Paul and all the other apostles was the most natural, and calculated to succeed if those whom they addressed were not past recovery in their mad attempts to reach "wisdom." "There is a God in heaven; He has created the world and you; He has given you an immortal soul, and all the aim of your life is to try to save it. To help you He has sent his Son, who was born of a Virgin, lived among men doing good, suffered persecution, and died. But he rose from the grave; we have seen Him and conversed with Him after His resurrection until He went up to heaven. He has commissioned us to preach to you the Gospel of salvation, the true way to lead holy lives, and to reach heaven, for which you have been created." This was the whole eloquence which converted the world. If *signs* and *wonders* accompanied this preaching; if the miracles of the apostles helped a great deal to bring on conviction in the minds of their hearers; the object of faith, after all, was merely

\* Cap. i.

† Ib. 22.

‡ Ib. 27.

the recital of the "Creed," such as we have just penned it. Thus, it was much more by the doctrine than by miracles that men were made Christians.

But in the judgment which St. Paul formed of the philosophers of his time, there is a most remarkable peculiarity which has not been sufficiently attended to ; and yet deserves to be. It has been previously stated that all the sects of that age ignored completely religion in the various speculations they indulged in. Epicurus had, it is true, openly stated that the great object of his philosophy was to free mankind from the fears of superstition ; and by this he meant, from the threats denounced by religion against evil-doers. Yet the pagan priests and the magistrates intrusted with the preservation of the national worship did not think proper to call philosophy to a strict account of its doctrines, because the adepts of those dangerous speculations complied with the exterior forms of religion, and without believing in the gods, they, however, offered them sacrifice and incense. Yet St. Paul asserts in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, that it was idolatry, that is, the popular religion of those days, which had originally been the great cause of all the vices which he reproaches to philosophy. The words are remarkable : \* "They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart, to uncleanness : to dishonor their own bodies among themselves."

The meaning of the apostle is evidently this : Had the Gentiles kept their former pure belief in the Supreme God, Creator and Preserver of mankind, their moral doctrine and practice would have remained likewise pure. But having rejected the worship of the true God to adore idols, God has permitted that their originally pure morality should be replaced by the most abominable vices. Thus, even the sages among them became guilty of the most unnatural crimes ; and the real cause of it was idolatry. Therefore, the best means of bringing them back to a better life, is to open their eyes to the folly of polytheism. To discuss with them the philosophical systems of which they are so proud, would be an interminable process, leading them, in fact, to a greater obduracy. Let them renounce idols first, it will be easy then to bring them back to reason on mere theoretical points.

---

\* I. 23.

There is nothing surprising, therefore, in the expressions we read in the speech of St. Paul to the members of the Areopagus: "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that you are in all things as it were too superstitious. For passing by and seeing your idols, I found an altar also, on which was written: *To the unknown God*. . . . Being ourselves the offsprings of God, we must not suppose the divinity to be like unto gold, or silver, or stone, the graving of art, and the device of man." This the philosophers of every shade were likely to admit, so far at least as they acknowledged the existence of the Godhead, and were not positively atheists. Of these last, the sacred text says: "When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some indeed mocked." Nobody could be surprised at it. "But others said: We will hear thee again concerning this matter." Of this second class of men the majority, probably, dismissed "this matter" entirely from their thoughts. A few, however, may have returned to Paul, heard him again, and received his doctrine. But from even this first day of discussion, "certain men adhered to him, and believed; among whom was also Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them." Thus was formed the first Christian congregation at Athens.

It is universally admitted by all Greek and Latin Fathers, some dating from the earliest times of our era, that Dionysius was the first bishop of that city. Did he afterward follow St. Paul to Italy, and was he sent from Rome to Gaul by St. Clement, to become the first bishop of Paris? After the denial of this by many French critics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, new researches in Christian antiquity have rendered this opinion extremely probable. The Abbé Rohrbacher, in the third edition of his *Ecclesiastical History*,\* gives strong reasons for it; and it seems from the American edition of Alzog's history † that "Mabillon, after stating that there can be no doubt as to Pope Clement having sent St. Denys to Paris, gives it as his opinion that there is some weight in the arguments of those who wish to identify him with Denys the Areopagite." Considering everything we have read on the subject, it seems to us obvious, that since there can be now no possible doubt that the first bishop of Paris was a certain St. Denys, sent thither by St. Clement of Rome, the contemporary and second successor of St. Peter—Mabillon was already convinced of this in the last century—it is hard not to be-

---

\* Tom. v., p. 35, et seq.

† Tom. i., p. 246.

lieve likewise that the same Denys, apostle of Gaul, and first bishop of Lutetia, was in fact Denys of Athens, the Areopagite, the celebrated convert of St. Paul. The great difficulty against this opinion, namely, the assertion of many Greek Fathers that the Areopagite, first Athenian bishop, suffered martyrdom in Greece under Domitian, and consequently could not shed his blood in Paris under Hadrian, can easily be got over, by supposing that he suffered persecution and torture, but not death, at the first epoch; that he really died a martyr in Gaul at the second.

The question of the authorship of the books attributed to the Areopagite is a very different one. Rohrbacher again urges the authenticity of these books as the genuine works of St. Denys; and he answers satisfactorily to some of the objections of the adverse party. It is too early, however, to pronounce on a subject which has not been yet sufficiently elucidated.

Before following St. Paul to Corinth, a great deal more could be said on the question frequently mooted in our day, How far Greek philosophy favored the establishment of Christianity or opposed it. But the unequivocal position of St. Paul is sufficient in our opinion to decide it. Should the reader wish for a more thorough discussion on the subject he will find it in Dr. Fisher's *Beginnings of Christianity*, at least with respect to Stoicism. The modern writers who believe in a real impulse given to the religion of Christ by Hellenic philosophy, rely particularly on the sect of Zeno. The distinguished professor of Yale has completely dispelled the delusion. He has showed in the most masterly manner that not only Stoicism could not give to its adherents any leaning toward it, but was, in fact, a doctrine in radical opposition to anything Christian. It is to be hoped that this discussion, to which we merely refer, will be final, and render henceforth useless any kind of controversy on the subject.

#### 6. *St. Paul in Hellas; at Corinth.*

From Athens St. Paul went to Corinth, a city of Achaia, at a short distance from the first, but of a totally different character. It was then an altogether new and magnificent metropolis. Since its complete destruction by Mummius, it had been rebuilt and restored with a greater splendor than ever. This has been already the subject of some reflections, to which it is now impossible to return. But the apostle remained a much longer time in Corinth than in Athens,

and it may be maintained that from it as from a center he labored for the conversion of the whole of Hellas. It is proper, therefore, to dwell again at length on this new sphere of activity of the apostle, whither he returned several times, and to whose church he wrote two of his most admirable epistles.

Idolatry and moral corruption reigned supreme on that narrow isthmus which connects Peloponnesus with the rest of Greece. In rebuilding the city, none of the former peculiarities which disgraced it had been forgotten; and new edifices and institutions of the same dissolute character replaced the old ones; as if the besom of destruction which had passed over it, had not sufficed to call back the mind and heart of its citizens to better thoughts and a better life. It is sufficient to repeat, in substance, what has already been stated: the name of *Lais* was there as great as ever; and her statue, erected in a splendid temple, recalled to life forever, to all appearance, the lewd woman whom the Corinthians had adored when alive. How would they receive the cross of Christ? Yet it was to men of this city that Paul wrote afterward these very words: "I came not to you in loftiness of speech and of wisdom. For I judged not myself to know any thing among you, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." To say the least, it will be curious to see how the apostle undertook and carried through such a hopeless task.

In Athens he had directly addressed himself to the Greeks, although even there he did not forget the Jews. In Corinth he appeared first to think only of these last, the same as he had done in many other cities. Did he at first despair of making any impression on the corrupt Gentiles of the place? It looks so, chiefly from an expression which will be presently recorded. Hence he walked straight to the house of a "certain Jew, named *Aquila*, a native of *Pontus*, who had lately come from *Italy*, with *Priscilla* his wife"—because *Claudius* had commanded all Jews to depart from *Rome*—"He came to them; and because he was of the same craft, he remained with them and wrought"—they were tent-makers by trade. "And he disputed in the synagogue every sabbath." But the same happened in Corinth which had occurred so often before. The Jews contradicted him, and blasphemed against him; so that "shaking his garments, he said to them: Your blood be upon your own heads. I am clean; from henceforth I will go to the Gentiles."\*

---

\* Acts, xviii. 6.

He left, therefore, Aquila's house ; although from the sequel it is sure that they remained friends ; and Aquila with Priscilla his wife were forever after disciples of St. Paul, and ardent Christians. He went to live with a Roman called Titus Justus, a proselyte. At this moment it is certain that Paul felt a kind of misgiving with respect to his success at Corinth, since heaven had to reassure him, and give him courage. "The Lord said to Paul in the night, in a vision : Fear not, but speak, and hold not thy peace. Because I am with thee ; and no man shall set upon thee to hurt thee. For I have much people in this city." The apostle, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians,\* makes allusion to this feeling of despondency which he experienced when he began to preach to them. "When I came to you," he says, ". . . I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." Why so ? With the strong faith he had in the promises of Our Lord to His Church he could not tremble for the general result. He knew not only that the world would hear the preaching of the Gospel, but that a considerable part of it, among all nations, would receive it thankfully ; and indeed, a mighty change was going to take place in the whole universe. With regard to this he could experience no fear. But with respect to the particular city of Corinth, it was very different. He could not feel the same confidence, unless he received a peculiar assurance of it. God alone could give him this assurance, and it was expressed in the words quoted above : "I have much people in this city." This deserves a special consideration.

It is certainly a very remarkable phrase ; yet people in general pass over it, as if it were the most simple thing in the world. Being struck with it on a particular occasion, we looked for the comments of exegetists, and were surprised to find only the following words, or something to the same effect : "Many Corinthians will be converted by thy preaching, and they will be my people and my Church." This is all you meet with in Menochius, in Cornelius a Lapide, and others. With this, one can scarcely be satisfied. It means merely that at some future day God "*would have* many people" in the city, not that *he had*. And he said *he had*. We must take his words to the letter. Let us try to understand them fully. How could it be said that in a pagan city, and a very corrupt one, like Corinth, God *had* "much people" belonging to Him ? Of old, in Sodom, the

---

\* II. 3.

angel could not find ten persons of that character ; and the reputation of Corinth in antiquity was not much better than that of Sodom. Considering only the exterior circumstances, the metropolis of Achaia was perfectly godless. Except some few men of the race of Abraham, like Aquila, and still fewer Romans, of the type of Titus Justus, who could hope to meet with children of God in those reckless polytheists and shameless votaries of pleasure, who filled the streets of this city ? Poor Paul had been several days, perhaps weeks, in it ; he had looked most earnestly into those Gentile faces, and he could see in them but very little inclination to the love or fear of God. Hence, he said to them later on, that he was with them “in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.” But the Lord Jesus comes to tell him : “I have much people in this city.” How is it ? St. Paul certainly could not see it at first.

It is clear that it supposes *grace*, and an abundant one, on the part of Heaven. This was not granted to the Sodomites, otherwise more than ten of them would have been converted, and the city saved from destruction. But besides that extraordinary help by which God sometimes breaks through all obstacles, and changes suddenly an almost unwilling heart, as he did that of Paul himself on the road to Damascus—besides this—God can read in the soul of man, and often finds there good natural dispositions, which no one else would remark, but which incline heaven to grant more spiritual favors, and convert those who do not even think of conversion. Now the Father of all, in his infinite mercy considered all these poor, blind, and deluded people of Corinth, wandering far from him, and altogether unmindful of him. Knowing that many of them were not radically bad, he looks on them as being already his children, his people ; and he condescends to say : I have much people in this city !

How merciful, O Greece, were those piercing eyes of God, when they penetrated into the dark abyss of the heart of thy citizens, and saw that after all these wretched wanderers needed only a guide ! And that guide so near at hand ! a converted sinner himself ! a wolf turned into a lamb, as St. Augustine says, speaking precisely of the conversion of Paul.\* And what happened in Corinth, happened likewise all through Hellas. If all the cities were not so corrupt as that of Achaia, they were bad enough—we all know it—and num-

---

\* Sermo 14 de Sanctis.



bered very few, if any, real children of God. But the time had arrived when the common Father was to exclaim: "I have much people in all this country." It was, after all, nothing but the realization of the prophecy of *Isaias*, placing those words on the lips of the future Christian Church: "Many are the children of the desolate, more than of her that has a husband."\* And the expressions of the following verse were still more emphatic: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and stretch out the skins of thy tabernacles: lengthen thy ropes, and strengthen thy stakes, . . . for thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and shall inhabit the desolate cities."

Corinth was certainly one of them. What a fearful desolation in the midst of so much apparent beauty and splendor! Every mind occupied with emptiness, if not with untruth, every heart engrossed with unclean pleasures, every imagination satiated with lewdness, every conscience, as it were, seared against remorse. On this account Paul was sad, "weak, in fear and trembling." But cheer up, O apostle, at the good news; in spite of all appearances, God has much people in this city, and it is thy duty, O Paul, to find them out and bring them to God.

This is placed vividly before our eyes, at the mere reading of a few lines of the book of *St. Luke*. And these few, simple words heard in a vision, explain at once how the conversion of Greece was effected. Let rationalists and easily-satisfied theorists try to find explanations of this most remarkable phenomenon which took place nineteen hundred years ago—the conversion of Hellenist nations—and their labors will be perfectly fruitless. Can any reflecting man be convinced by the reasons given by the most skillful of them all in the last age—*Gibbon*, of England? Can all the voluminous writers of this century on the same subject pretend that they have rendered the whole process clear, or at least somewhat easy of comprehension? I defy any of them to bring me anything so satisfactory as was the word of that vision: "I have much people in this city." It is true, the rationalist and the theorist will object that it means thus that it was the work of God; and this, they say, is unscientific. I am bold enough to say that it is the most scientific thing in the world, when there is no other valid reason to give. Corinth, now a mere village, is, however, still Christian; and the former change can only be explained by the inward working of the grace of God in the hearts of her pagan citizens.

---

\* LIV. 1.

There is, consequently, nothing surprising in the assertions of the book of St. Luke, couched in the following simple words, often repeated in the same book : "Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house : and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized." This success encouraging the apostle, "he stayed there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them." This was only his first sojourn in this city. The Second Epistle to the Corinthians informs us that he visited it a second and even a third time.\* Our purport is not to describe in detail all the journeys of St. Paul, and to supply the deficiencies of the Acts of the Apostles, but merely to describe the spread of Christianity, which is perfectly independent of strict chronology and topography. And this spread is thus fully accounted for.

But from the letters of St. Paul it is evident that the establishment of the religion of Christ was a severe labor for the apostles, independently of their long journeys and of the exterior dangers they encountered. If our Lord had declared to St. Paul that he had "much people" in Corinth, even before they were converted, this conversion was far from being effected at a single stroke of the grace of God. Besides the personal exertions of his ministers, the subsequent failings of human nature after instruction and baptism, brought on but too early abuses and backslidings which might have discouraged less zealous men than the apostles were. Read the first epistle to the Corinthians we possess. For it seems another had been sent before, which is lost. Divisions had already sprung among them : some were for Apollo, some for Cephas, others for Paul ; they seemed to have forgotten Christ, in whose name they had been baptized. Immorality, which they ought to have forever abandoned from the very day of their admission into the Church, showed itself again so soon as this time in some of them. One man in particular ought to have been cut off from the communion of the faithful ; and he continued in it without so much as the formality of penance. St. Paul had to excommunicate him openly. They had already forgotten that they formed a holy community in the midst of idolaters ; and if some of them disagreed, they carried their complaints before pagan judges, as if those who had been appointed to rule over them spiritually could not reconcile their differences and decide upon them by

---

\* 2 Cor. xiii. 1.

arbitration. A little further on, the apostle complains of the indecorous manner with which they received the sacrament, of the strange abuses that had crept in the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost among them, and of several other points on which he had to express his disapprobation. In his second epistle, although he acknowledges that something had been done in consequence of what he had written, is he not obliged to justify himself and his ministry because of the absurd objections many of them raised against both? Does it not look as if the faithful of Corinth, so soon after their conversion, when they ought to have felt so deep a gratitude for the great and holy man who had engendered them to Christ, thought and spoke of him exactly as in some of our modern congregations the least edifying of the parishioners dare to speak and think of their pastors? These are certainly less holy and zealous and respectable by far than St. Paul was, yet being invested with a real authority over their flock, this spirit of opposition is always considered as a great evil, even should there be any real ground for it. How disgraceful was it not for the Corinthians to be guilty of such an absurd proceeding as this with regard to St. Paul himself, who had been appointed miraculously—the Corinthians knew it—the Apostle of all the Gentiles, by the Saviour, and who had already given such mighty proofs of his heavenly mission!

Yet in spite of all these obstacles and untoward occurrences, the conversion, not alone of the inhabitants of the city, but of the whole of Achaia, nay, of the whole of Hellas, was going on rapidly. For the reader must not imagine that Corinth alone was evangelized by St. Paul. In his first visit of a year and a half, in the two others, which certainly followed in a short space of time, and of whose length no one is now aware, can any one suppose that the apostle remained immured within the walls of the city, and that he was satisfied with appointing one bishop to rule over the single Corinthian flock. This would be to ignore totally the usual line of conduct of St. Paul in his apostolical labors. If you open the lists of bishops given by Gams, all based on purely historical grounds, you find that the ecclesiastical province of Hellas comprised anciently thirty-five sees, besides the metropolitan church of Corinth. Many others, no doubt, existed in the first ages of our era, of which the author could not meet with any historical proofs. Corinth there appears with a succession of pontiffs, three of them dating from the very time of St. Paul, namely, Apollo, Sosthenes, and Apollonius. Athens, the first

of the suffragan sees, offers also a venerable list headed by St. Denys, the Areopagite. All the other cities of Hellas, of which some bishops are historically known, do not furnish a date anterior to the third or fourth century. Reflections have already been indulged in on this strange phenomenon. The reader is aware that it is not confined to Hellas, but extends universally to all the old cities of Europe and Western Asia, besides the northern shore of Africa. But restricting our remarks on the present occasion to Hellas alone, we will take the liberty to ask, How is it possible that in the third or fourth age—occasionally in the fifth only—bishops suddenly should appear at once in Cenchræa, in Patræ, in Argos, in Megalopolis, in Lacedæmon, in Elis, in Messene, etc., etc., if most of those cities—probably all of them—had not already possessed bishops anteriorly? Can we suppose that none of these sees, except those of Corinth and of Athens, had been really founded by St. Paul? Is it a real, a probable, an acceptable Church History which tells you: St. Paul founded the churches of Athens and of Corinth; all the others which, immediately after Constantine, appear at once full fledged in the whole of Hellas, with bishops, and priests, and congregations, meeting in councils, spreading to all towns and villages the religion of Christ, in the midst of crumbling idolatry, were the growth of a night, appearing in the morning, as mushrooms do in October over our fields and waste places? Who can believe such an incredible story? Yet we have to admit it, or at least to act up to it, and give of the history of Christianity an account in accord with it, if we must reduce ourselves to suppose as having really happened, only what is now historically known. To this limit of absurdity would the critics of this and former ages lead us, were we so unwise as to embrace their theories.

And we have not to wait for the fourth century to see the folly of it. We have, for instance, St. Denys of Corinth, living in the midst of the second age. Gams tells us that he was bishop *circa* 170; this is an historical personage. He flourished under Marcus Aurelius, not long after St. Paul; the critics cannot reject his testimony. We have yet of him several fragments of letters preserved by Eusebius. We know by these that he wrote not only to the Athenians, and the Romans, but also to the Nicomedians, and the Lacedæmonians. In his time, therefore, there was a bishop at Lacedæmon and at Nicomedia, as well as at Athens and at Rome. There could not be a congregation of Christians anywhere at the time, unless there was a

bishop at their head. And this reflection alone shows how many different bishops St. Paul must have consecrated.

It is to be remarked that Corinth is just the central point of Hellas. From it you are as near to Ambracia in the northwest, as to the farthest angle of Cape Malea in the southeast. St. Paul, during his residence in the metropolis of Achaia, could in a few days reach all the cities of that celebrated country and return. Who can affirm that he did not do so? It has been proved, a few pages back, that he did the same during his stay of two years at Ephesus, and that in the Roman province of Asia he had then established *bishops* "among whom he had gone preaching the kingdom of God;"\* not confining himself, consequently, to the precincts of Ephesus, but establishing new churches all around, among which must be enumerated the seven celebrated churches to whose angels or bishops St. John wrote subsequently. Is it not very reasonable to suppose that during his first residence of eighteen months at Corinth, and on his two subsequent visits to the same city mentioned in the last chapter of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, he also made excursions to various parts of Hellas, and founded churches all over the country? At the sight, in the fourth and fifth ages, of so many bishops' sees existing at once all over Greece, we feel authorized to ask the question, Who founded them, if not St. Paul?

From that day forward, "the leaven" of which our Saviour spoke in the Gospel,† began to work "in the three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened." That is, Hellas—since we now speak only of this country—felt the sweet and wholesome fermentation of the new doctrine, which began to quicken the dying limbs of the beautiful organism that we call Greece. For Greece was then dying of atrophy. Swiftly but gently did the creative warmth spread through the fast decaying frame, and produce new movements never before seen in it. A new life ran suddenly from limb to limb, from nerve to nerve, from artery to artery, reaching at last the brain and the heart. The brain bursting with a new mind, enlightened by the *Λόγος*—the Eternal Word. The heart softened by a new love, engendered by the "*Άγιον Πνεύμα*"—the Holy Spirit. These words, and many others of the same purport, the graceful creature began to lisp. In her new cradle yet, how enchanting was already her song! St. Paul had seen the first manifestations of this lovely infantile life. He was

---

\* Acts, xx. 25.

† Matt. xiii. 33.

evidently entranced by it, since he so often repeats in his letters to them, that they are "babes," that he wishes "to feed them with milk like babes," nay, that he has himself become a mother, and actually "given them birth"—*iterum parturio*—and after having done so, he gives them milk to drink, not meat to eat; because "they are not able, as yet." Later on they will become men, on the model of Christ, the great pattern of humanity; but he does not appear to wish this to come on hurriedly; he is so delighted with their childish grace!

It is a pity, indeed, that so few details have reached us of the gradual, yet rapid, spread of Christianity through the whole of Hellas. Would to God we knew, in all the particulars, how it entered not only the large cities, but the smallest villages and hamlets; how it grew apace, so that soon, indeed, "the whole was leavened"! The process was so swift that in Bithynia, where St. Paul was, however, forbidden to preach, the country was full of Christians under Trajan, a few years after the death of Paul and Peter. It must have been so *a fortiori* all over Greece; and before long some precious details we have yet shall convince us of it more than we can be at this moment.

Still we cannot just now omit to mention the preaching of St. Andrew and St. Luke in Achaia, which must have taken place almost directly after the martyrdom of St. Paul. It is important to consider well all we know of it, before leaving off this branch of our subject. That St. Andrew, after having evangelized "Scythia," that is, the country north of the Euxine Sea, passed south into Greece, and finally died martyr, on the cross, at Patræ in Achaia, cannot possibly be controverted. The Muscovites believe firmly that he carried the Gospel as far north as Kiev, on the Dnieper, and even "to the frontiers of Poland." But this may be considered as problematical. Origen, however, quoted by Eusebius, calls him the Apostle of Scythia, meaning the European part of that undefined country; and whatever Origen says of Christian antiquity is worthy of the highest respect. St. Paulinus of Nola, St. Philastrius of Brescia, and the Greeks generally, said that he preached in Greece, at Argos, and elsewhere. In the time of Philastrius, the fourth century, the inhabitants of Sinope, in Pontus, showed to strangers the pulpit in which he had preached among them, and thought that they possessed his true picture. But as to his martyrdom at Patræ, all antiquity was unanimous. Directly after peace was restored to the

Church by Constantine, his body was translated from Achaia to Constantinople. This took place in 357; and the remains of the brother of Peter were entombed with those of St. Luke and St. Timothy in the new Church of the Apostles, built with great magnificence by Constantine.

The question of the death of St. Luke in the same city of Patræ is discussed by the Bollandists, and the affirmative seems to be extremely probable. These facts explain yet better than all the previous considerations, the spread of Christianity, in a very short time, all over Greece. When such men as Paul, Andrew, and Luke had devoted many years of their lives to the conversion of the Hellenes, there is nothing surprising in the rapid dissemination of the religion of Christ over that beautiful and still very refined country at that epoch. From the center, truth radiated through the whole land; and the Greeks soon began to speak of Christ, and of the mysteries of his birth, life, and death, although Plutarch never condescended to say a word of it, after the process had been going on for a hundred years; and although Pausanias, in describing the religious edifices of the country, confined himself to those devoted to idolatry, and did not think proper to speak of the modest houses where Christians met, and of the new pictures and statues which were already enriching the cities and villages, to become later on the devoted objects of the rage of the iconoclast heretics. We are not, however, altogether in the dark, in point of historical details, with regard to the development of the new religion; and it is important to condense in a few pages what is known of the silent yet mighty change going on in Greek-speaking countries, from the end of the apostolic age to the beginning of the fourth century.

7. *The rapid progress of Christianity in Grecian countries is attested by the first persecutions.*

The chief proof of the silent progress of Christianity during the first and at the beginning of the second century, in Greece, is derived from the opposition which it met everywhere, and which culminated in the open persecutions by the Roman emperors. It is important to study well the causes of that antagonism and the way it was first developed; for it is curious to remark, that with the exception of the first persecution at Rome under Nero, when, according to Tacitus, a great multitude—*ingens multitudo*—of Christians perished, and of

the second, under Domitian, which lasted only a very short time, and made a very limited number of victims, those which followed under Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, etc., were mainly brought on by popular fury, and the hatred of pagan philosophers, priests, and Jews; and thus the religion of Christ came into public notice, and soon was known to all, owing to the very rage of its enemies.

That popular opposition, moreover, manifested itself from the very beginning. The apostleship of St. Paul was all along the cause of tumults and civil disorders, instances of which have been already noticed at Antiochia, Ephesus, Thessalonica, and elsewhere. Sometimes the raising of the multitude was caused by the rage of the Jews, but occasionally it was the effect of idolatrous fanaticism. The Jews, in particular, had begun their opposition at the very first preaching of the apostles in Jerusalem, and St. Stephen was stoned to death a few days after that of Pentecost.

The antagonism of Hellenist idolatry is that which concerns us particularly at this moment. As Christians formed congregations everywhere, and St. Paul himself had covered Greece, as well as Asia Minor, with churches governed by bishops and presbyters—this peculiarity will be further insisted upon before long—the Greeks who remained attached to polytheism, headed by their philosophers and priests, soon felt the presence of those organizations in their midst, and considered it as a nuisance and a danger, and they began, with a spirit of hostility, to examine these strange communities, and to listen to rumors which soon took a consistence and a form calculated to excite anger and hatred. The *disciplina secreti*, which is so ancient that its origin cannot be positively ascertained, became the innocent cause of damaging rumors and open calumnies. The Eucharist was thought by many to be a positive act of cannibalism. The “kiss of peace,” a mere emblem of Christian charity, was changed into the most unbridled lasciviousness. Their refusal to worship idols, coupled with the concealment of the doctrine of a Triune God, was for a great number of pagans a positive proof of atheism. Thus the new religion was a tissue of horrors in the eyes of the populace; and many began to entertain the thought that the sooner this superstition was destroyed, the better it would be for mankind. The writings of the first Christian apologists: Quadratus, Athenagoras, Tertullian, Minutius Felix, prove the universality of these absurd prejudices; and consequently the universality likewise of the religion to which such errors, or rather enormities, were attributed. In the



four names just mentioned you have the testimony of Greece, Africa, and Italy.

The facility with which slaves were admitted among the Christians must have appeared very suspicious to politicians and statesmen, who were always justly afraid of the projects of freedom which that multitude of wretched *mancipia* might indulge in. Thus besides the ignorant multitude, all intelligent men, for whom religion was a very secondary consideration, became to a certain degree alarmed; and the colleges of priests, and the sects of philosophers, combining with the rulers of the state, formed a threatening cloud ready to burst on the impotent Church of Christ. But if the sight of a new religion spreading so fast among the slaves—in the dregs of society, as a politician of that age would say—inspired fear, the aspect of venerable chiefs whom that detested society presented everywhere, was not calculated to allay it. There can be no doubt that directly after the apostolic age, the authority of bishops at the head of each congregation was already an extraordinary feature, unknown entirely until then. Without anticipating what shall be said on the subject later on, it must be, so early as this, insisted on that the spiritual rulers of the new religion took a prominent position in every city. What the apostles had been, then the bishops became. As the Jews and the silversmiths of Ephesus had denounced Paul and called for his death, so the Gentiles of Smyrna cried out that Polycarp should be given to the lions. It is impossible to read the genuine letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch without feeling how important was already the episcopal office in the eyes of all. This alone would prove what gigantic strides Christianity had made a few years only after the death of St. John. The persecutions which soon began not only in large cities, but in the most secluded parts of the country, in wretched little towns and villages, are the sure index of the universality of the Christian religion at that early age.

The fear of bloody edicts alone can explain the total disappearance of the lists of bishops in the immense majority of places where they had been appointed by the apostles themselves. This universal fact, attested by the learned work of Gams—*Series Episcoporum Ecclesiæ Catholicæ*—and several times referred to in the previous pages, can be explained only by the peculiar dangers which threatened the bishops everywhere as soon as a persecution arose. The measure taken by Diocletian, in the last and fiercest of all, cannot alone furnish that explanation. For it is proved by the Acts of

councils preserved by St. Augustine—of which a few passages were quoted in a previous chapter—that the work of destruction of records and books, due to the infamy of the *traditores*, so graphically described by the holy Bishop of Hippo, could not have been a thorough one, and many copies of the Scriptures and records of churches must have survived, and survived in reality the fatal measure of the greatest persecutor the Church ever met. The total disappearance of the lists of bishops, therefore, must have been a prudential measure, taken everywhere by the rulers of the Church themselves, and this must have begun long before the time of Diocletian. It was important not to let the pagans acquire positively and easily the proof that there were *hetæriæ*, or *collegia illicita*, presided over by well-known and universally respected men, in all cities and towns of the country. These *collegia illicita* had been forbidden long before. The law is mentioned by Cicero.\* The Roman magistrates for a long time had not enforced it; the Roman emperors before Trajan never thought, that we know, of doing it. Yet the law existed, and was well known; and the Christians had many motives for not bringing on the Church and on themselves the terrible consequences of an open violation of it. The Romans at the time had found so many advantages in being liberal in its interpretation, by the quiet annexation to the empire of so many countries with quaint religions and customs, that they appeared to shut their eyes to the importance of an enactment which was good enough under the ancient republic, when the old Latin gods enjoyed yet the veneration of almost all people. The same appeared excessive in an empire which had allowed the primitive Etruscan and Latin deities to disappear first before the absurd mythology of Homer; and afterward the wild religions of Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt to possess quietly their temples in Rome. It must be remarked again here that the two first persecutions under Nero and Domitian were merely excesses committed by two monsters, who acted of course as barbarously on a *sect* just appearing in the city, as they did toward the senate and the rich citizens. The epoch when those persecutions became a part and parcel of the imperial policy dates only from the Antonines; and our object here is to prove that it was brought on by popular outbreaks, which of themselves show the mighty extension of Christianity at that period of time.

---

\* De Leg. ii. 8, et seq.

Still, although the tolerance of Roman rulers seemed to have adopted the maxim, *quieta non movere*, and they were inclined at first to let the progress of the new *superstition* take its course, imagining, no doubt, that like all other absurd novelties it would soon be on the wane; nevertheless the rulers of the Church, who knew well that there were laws provided ages before so as to meet their case, were not so foolhardy as to expose uselessly the interests committed to their charge, merely for the sake of keeping records. It is well known that then they wrote nothing. They had no written liturgy, and every priest had to commit to memory the formulas of prayers, rites, and ceremonies instituted, no doubt, by the apostles themselves, to give already some splendor to the public service of God. They would not even put on paper either the formulary of faith—the Apostles' Creed—nor even the Lord's Prayer. The catechumens had to learn them by heart, as well as everything else connected with religion; and when the sacraments were administered, those who received them merely heard the words of the ministers, and when they had anything to answer, it was merely repeated to them first, several times, until their memory could be trusted to retain them. These are now well-ascertained facts. It seems also proved that the books of the New Testament, comprising the few epistles written by the apostles to some particular churches, were the only religious documents kept in writing; but no one can imagine that even the copies of these were indefinitely multiplied, and that each of the faithful kept one of them in his pocket. They were placed reverently in the tabernacles, together with the Holy Eucharist. There the deacons found them on Sundays to read from them to the people. In times of a severe persecution, as there was then always some fear that the sacred edifices, even when underground, might be forcibly entered and desecrated by the pagans, some more safe measures were taken by the bishops, of certainly a strange character. St. Augustine has acquainted us with many curious details on the subject, relating to the doings of some Donatist *traditores*. The sacred volumes were withdrawn from the recesses of the tabernacles, and confided to the safe custody of the most pious of the faithful; exactly as in France, during the great revolution, precious objects, as relics or records, were placed in the hands of devoted families, who exposed themselves to death in order to keep for better times what could not be any more exposed to view. We remember to have seen in our youth a venerable peasant layman who had the privilege of sitting

on Sundays and holidays during his life in the sanctuary itself of one of the churches of Nantes, in the midst of the clergy, for having kept concealed in his house the authentic relics of Donatian and Rogatian, the first martyrs of the city, under Diocletian, and this during the whole reign of Carrier and his followers.

This enables us to understand perfectly why we possess so few authentic records of the three first centuries of our era, and why in particular we know nothing of the bishops who then governed the innumerable churches already in existence. This became a more strict rule yet, when the persecutions began in earnest under Trajan. The first mention made of them comes from Bithynia, and it is curious to look a little in detail at that letter of Pliny the younger, asking advice from the emperor.

This Roman gentleman was a pattern of good breeding, and at the same time very fond of good living. In one of his letters which we read long ago, when those details were of great interest to us, he describes one of his villas on the Gulf of Baiæ. There he had apartments for the winter and the summer. In the first he could enjoy the warmth of the sun ; and in the second the breeze from the sea of Naples kept him cool at noon-time, whilst the fierce rays of the bright luminary were carefully excluded by thick curtains from the southern part of his princely mansion. But what struck us most at the time, was the way his table was provided. The whole world contributed to his tastes, almost worthy of a Lucullus or an Apicius. There were, particularly, shell-fish brought to him from the shores of farther Spain, beyond the Pillars of Hercules, which were most pleasant to his palate ; and he must have made a large consumption of the delicious *conchyliæ*, as, we think, he called them.

This refined patrician was sent by Trajan to Bithynia as governor, and instead of enjoying quietly the delicacies of his table along the Tyrrhenian Sea, he was, as soon as arrived, pounced upon by a number of unwelcome messengers of bad news. People came to tell him that the majority of the temples were closed, and the sacrifices interrupted or altogether neglected. Many did not believe any more in the Roman or Greek gods. A strange superstition had spread not only in the cities, but even in the country, yes, in farm-houses or hamlets. Not satisfied with a general denunciation, *libelli* were presented to him, without signature, it is true, yet evidently coming from respectable citizens, in which were found the names of a great number of persons who were said to be Christians. The thing looked

certainly serious. There were evidently religious associations unauthorized by the State—*collegia illicita*. As he wished to send official information to his majesty the emperor, he had called before his tribunal a number of those who had been denounced. Some denied the accusation, and having unhesitatingly offered incense and libations of wine to the image of Trajan and of the other gods; having, moreover, proclaimed openly their hatred of Christ, Pliny was too knowing a man to condemn those exemplary citizens to any penalty; he had set them free.

He did the same with others who confessed openly that they had been Christians, but said they had come to a better way of life, when they heard that this was disapproved by the sacred majesty of the emperor. Pliny asked them in what consisted this profession of Christianity, and they simply answered that on a certain day of the week they met together before daylight to sing together some hymns in honor of Christ, as if he had been a god. They were bound under oath, not to any criminal act, as thieving, house-breaking, adultery, etc., but to the very reverse; so that it was forbidden them even to break their promises, or to keep for themselves the money intrusted to their care as a mere deposit. After this, they could leave the meeting-house. If they came back in the evening, it was merely to partake of a friendly meal, unobjectionable and altogether irreprehensible. Some of them, hearing that the governor of the province had forbidden those meetings in the name of the emperor, they said they had not gone there ever since.

It seems, however, that all had not been so obedient to the edicts. There were women, particularly, who did not appear so willing to withdraw entirely from such assemblies. Pliny selected two of them. They were mere slaves, and had been deaconesses in the Church. A little show of power, and touch of the torture-screw on their unprivileged limbs could not signify, since they were by their birth out of the pale of humanity. He, therefore, put them cool questions when they were writhing in agony; and whilst their tender limbs—they were women—were stretched on the rack. He could elicit nothing from them but exclamations denoting a peculiar, strange, and excessive superstition.

This was sufficient for this Roman gentleman and Epicurean good-liver to make up his mind as to what he had to do whenever a Christian was brought before him. Should this person simply deny that he was one, he was set free. Should he acknowledge the fact,

he was exhorted to renounce that odious name. In case he refused once, twice, three times, he was directly sent to death for his obstinacy. And Trajan found that his friend had acted exactly as he would have done himself. He enjoined him, however, *not to look for Christians, but to wait until they should be brought before him.* The meaning of all this is plain; the good sense of both emperor and governor told them that the act of being a Christian could not be a moral or social offense; hence: don't look for them. But the pagan pressure against them, the denunciation of zealous citizens, as we know by this very letter of Pliny, afraid as they were for their religion and country, had to be given satisfaction to. It is evident that the persecutions were thus brought on by popular malignity, and that this was prompted by the great number of Christians existing already everywhere. Nothing could be clearer on this subject than what the governor of Bithynia wrote to Trajan.

But, meanwhile, who were those slave women exquisitely tortured on the rack? who were those simple Christians? All those of them who were *Roman citizens* were sent to Rome—according to the same letter—who, on refusing to renounce, were instantly taken by the first soldier met with, brought by him to some secluded spot, there stripped, struck with the rattan, that is, the hard and thick stem of the grape-vine, and if life did not ebb away under the heavy strokes, were finally stabbed in the back by the large two-edged sword known to all students of Roman antiquity, or beheaded. Who were they? They were Greeks; at least, to all intents and purposes. For although, under the successors of Alexander, Thracian troops, crossing the Bosphorus, seized upon Bithynia and made of it a Thracian kingdom, which endured until it passed over to the Romans, still the people of the country had been so long in communication with Greece, which had planted colonies among them, that everything belonged to the Hellenic race in the country. The Thracians themselves were, after all, but Greeks at that time; and Byzantium, the Thracian spot nearest to Bithynia, was and had been from the beginning a most important Greek colony. There can be no doubt that the first Christian churches in Bithynia were mainly composed of Hellenes, as it seems the Jews were never numerous in that remote part of Asia Minor.

We begin, therefore, to see the Greek nation already shedding its blood for Christ; and we hear Greek lips asserting with heroism their belief in him, and love for him. But those who are the main

cause of their death, who have to denounce and prosecute them before the governor, since *he does not look for them*, are Greeks also, and form yet the majority of the nation. The consequences to draw from all these facts are, first, that the greatest number of the Hellenes not only refused then to receive Christianity, but bitterly opposed it; and secondly, that the smaller number, already, however, a respectable one, which was soon gradually to swell and become at last the totality, were truly Greeks likewise, and can be called the first-fruits of that immense multitude of martyrs, doctors, saints of the highest excellence, whose records, known to us in all their details, form one of the brightest pages of human history. Consequently, if the Greek nations in general were not first naturally predisposed to the Christian religion and prepared for it, as many have maintained, yet, when they once embraced it, they carried at once their conviction to the highest pitch of heroism.

But there is another great fact, belonging undoubtedly to history, of the same import as the previous one, which requires a moment's attention. This is the narrative of the death of Polycarp, of which a rapid mention has been made; of too great an importance, however, in the present considerations, to be thus lightly passed over, and on which at least a few words must be added. Alzog, speaking of the reign and policy of Trajan, ascribes, in part at least, the origin of persecution under him, to a law passed at the time against secret associations or *hetæriæ*; yet he is obliged to confess that the chief measure taken by Trajan against the Christians was "to place them at the mercy of the populace." There is little consistency in this complex opinion. A law had been in truth enacted by Trajan, against *hetæriæ*; but had it been with a view to apply it against Christians, the emperor would not have recommended to Pliny not to look for them, and to wait until they should be denounced. It would certainly have been the duty of the governor to look for Christians, as against a set of law-breakers. The Romans knew that the law ought to be enforced. But this is more visible yet from the martyrdom of Polycarp, which proves clearly that it was popular pressure which brought on the persecutions, more than any pre-existing law. This took place under Marcus Aurelius, much later than Trajan, and has consequently a greater force on the present occasion.

To understand the case perfectly, the general policy of this emperor and philosopher with regard to the Christians must be clearly stated. It was not at all times the same. Comparatively mild at

first, it became in the end outrageously cruel. Hadrian and Antoninus Pius, before him, had spared the new religion; the latter prince, chiefly. Marcus Aurelius could not decently begin by bloody edicts. Alzog states of him that "As he had made up his mind that the religion of the State should be maintained, he was not over-solicitous about suppressing those outbursts of popular violence against the Christians, which were of frequent occurrence both in Asia Minor and in the cities of Lyons and Vienne in Southern Gaul." This is a sufficiently fair statement of the case, only it is yet mixed up, and lacks the usual clearness of Roman policy. It is more simple and true to say that Marcus Aurelius did not, any more than Trajan, wish to invoke the existing laws, if there were any, against the Christians; but he preferred to be subjected to a kind of pressure on the part of the populace, in order to appear to be acting in accord with public opinion. He, therefore, followed still the advice of Trajan to Pliny: he did not look for Christians, but waited until they should be openly attacked by the ardent friends of the state-religion. And it is thus that the death of Polycarp was really prepared and accomplished. This results from the substance of the circular letter of the clergy of Smyrna, addressed to all the churches, in which a narrative is given of the whole affair. It is a strictly historical document, and on this account of extreme value, as giving us a faithful statement both of public opinion, as we should say, and of the policy of the governors of provinces at that epoch of Marcus Aurelius' reign. Dom Calmet, in his *Histoire universelle sacrée et profane*,\* has given an exact compendium of the letter. We translate a few passages: "In the sixth year of Marcus Aurelius, 166th of Jesus Christ, the people of Smyrna, exasperated by the courage of the Christians, began at once to shout in the theatre: 'Death to the impious, let Polycarp be found out.' The holy man, although informed of it, wished to remain in the city; but he gave way finally to the entreaties of his friends, and withdrew to the country, whilst they were looking for him everywhere else, in order to give him to the beasts before the end of the games. . . . Those who were sent after him came to his first hiding-place—a Christian farmhouse—when he had just left it. Meeting there with two young boys, they flogged one of them so cruelly that he let them know the house the holy man had fled to. Polycarp was in bed, in a room of the upper

---

\* Tom. v., 1731, Strasbourg.



story, when they arrived. He might yet have escaped, but did not wish to do it. He came down, therefore, spoke to them, ordered supper for them; and with their permission withdrew to a corner, where he stood praying during the space of two hours. He prayed aloud for all those he had known during his life, high and low, rich and poor, and in general for the welfare of the whole Catholic Church.

“When he had done, they placed him on an ass, and started for the city, which they reached the following morning, just on the dawn of the great Easter-eve. The *Irenarkos* Herodes, and his son, Nicetas, came to meet him outside the gate, and invited him to sit with them in their chariot. Their object was to persuade him to escape death by being *reasonable*: ‘What evil could it be to say, Lord God Cæsar; to offer sacrifice, and thus to live?’ But as Polycarp answered obstinately that he would do nothing of the kind, they loaded him with insults, and threw him down from their chariot. In falling the holy man hurt his leg; yet he followed his guardians cheerfully until they reached the place where the people were assembled.

“Here the tumult was so great that no word could be distinctly perceived. On arriving, however, a voice was heard crying out, ‘Have courage, Polycarp; fear nothing.’ To the Christians alone was this voice audible. The proconsul, Statius Quadratus, could finally put him questions; and after having inquired if his name was Polycarp, ‘Swear,’ he said, ‘by the fortune of Cæsar; think of thyself, and cry out like the others, Down with the impious.’ Polycarp, looking toward the assembly of the people, then raising his eyes to heaven, said with sadness, ‘Down with the impious,’ praying meanwhile for their conversion.

“The proconsul wished him to add an insulting word for Christ. ‘There are,’ said Polycarp, ‘eighty-six years that I serve him; I have received from him only blessings, how could I blaspheme my Saviour?’ ‘Swear at least by the fortune of Cæsar,’ said the proconsul. ‘I tell you plainly that I am a Christian, and should you wish to know what it is to be one, appoint a day for both of us to converse alone; then you may be enlightened.’ ‘It is the people thou hast to enlighten and persuade, not me,’ exclaimed at last the proconsul. ‘This people,’ replied instantly Polycarp, ‘is not worthy to hear what I have to say. With you alone can I undertake to speak, because God commands us to honor those in power, who have received from him their authority.’”

The remainder of this exciting drama, and the death by fire of Polycarp, are known to all ; but the dialogue just quoted suffices to establish the truth of the previous remarks. It was the people that first shouted in the theater : " Let Polycarp be found ;" it was the people that called for his death when he was brought in. It was to the people that the proconsul told Polycarp to apply. Had he " satisfied" the people, and been set free by them, the proconsul declared he would have been himself perfectly satisfied. Polycarp said substantially that he preferred to leave his fate to be decided by the authorities of the State, rather than be left to the mercy of the people ; because he knew that popular fury was then goading on the State authorities to an open persecution, and he thought with reason that the proconsul would be more just than the mob.

The details of this remarkable story give us a very fair representation of those times, so soon after the death of St. John, whom Polycarp himself had well known. The whole of Asia Minor, and, it may be said likewise, the whole of Greece, Italy, and Gaul, was already astir with the wonderful spread of the Christian religion. The pagan Hellenes were calling, in many places, on their Roman governors, for the destruction of this new superstition ; and the Christians were numerous enough to attract everywhere the attention of the polytheist majority. Sensible people, indifferent to it, were asking themselves, What all this meant ? and many interesting inquiries were made and answered, such as are contained, for instance, and discussed in the celebrated *Letter to Diognetes*. A word on it is required here ; and it will completely satisfy the reader, how consistent are, in fact, all the documents—few though they be—which we possess of this most interesting epoch, namely, the beginning of the second century. The change effected, in so short a time, by the apostles themselves and their first successors, will appear wonderful, indeed ; and show how the prophets of the old law had spoken truly so many ages beforehand. The reader is aware that the present remarks are confined to the Hellenic world, that is, to Greek-speaking countries, though they might be applied to all others.

The *Letter to Diognetes* has wonderfully exercised the skill of many critics, since it was first discovered and published by Henry Etienne, in 1592. No ancient Christian writer has ever spoken of it, at least in any work, or fragment of work, that we still possess. Yet it bears such evident marks of antiquity, that even German theorists had to respect it, and to say, This is too sacred for us to touch. Being

ascribed to Justin, the martyr, in the manuscript where Etienne found it, learned men first thought that it was really the work of the good Christian philosopher; but a closer inspection proved that Justin was not the author. The discussion of this question lies outside of our scope. It remains for us only to admit what all critics now concede, that it is the work of an author considerably older than Justin. Some even go so far as to state that it was written before the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, that is, before the year 70 of our era. The common opinion, however, is that it belongs to the very beginning of the second century, to the time, namely, of the martyrdom of Ignatius of Antioch, long before that of Polycarp. Its exact date must coincide with that of the letter of Pliny to Trajan. The last apostle was just dead, and buried at Ephesus.

A very remarkable character of this letter is the strong anti-Jewish feeling which pervades it. It is on this subject on a par with the letters of St. Ignatius and that of Barnabas. The author belonged to the Pauline party, a man of Tübingen would say. The author, we would reply, shared in all the feelings of the true Christians of the epoch, on account of the excessive violence of the Ebionite heresy raging at that precise period. But the present object is not to discuss again the Tübingen theory of the Petrine and Pauline theologies. The only thing of importance, which must be insisted upon here, is the insight it gives us of the real state of human thought in Greek-speaking countries, at that very remarkable but obscure epoch, say, the year 105 of our era. The very statement of the case points out at once the importance Christianity had already assumed.

Diognetes—a perfectly unknown personage, but evidently a philosopher, a man possessed of a deeply reflective mind—inquires of a Christian friend about the solution of three questions, most important in his eyes: First, Who is the God, what is the religion of the Christians, who at this moment are subjected everywhere to so much obloquy, and exposed to so much ill-treatment; yet who despise the world and death, and refuse both to honor the gods of the polytheists, and to admit the dogmas of the Jews? Secondly, What is that brotherly love by which the Christians are bound to each other? Thirdly, Why is it that the Christian religion came so late; why was it never known before? Three most important questions indeed! and which must have then agitated many minds. The answers may be read in the document itself; and are simple, plain, but cogent,

may, irresistible, such as a Catholic would in this age give them. They are contained in ten short chapters, or rather paragraphs. The eleventh and the twelfth, found in the manuscript, and printed with the first ten, appear with justice to have been added later on, and not to have been, at least, the work of the same author. But the only thing of importance here, is the deep impression made then on the Greek mind both by the purity of the Christian life, which is admirably described in the letter, and by the spectacle of the fortitude of so many men and women undergoing already exquisite torments either from the violence of the mob, or from the cruelty of magistrates anxious to curry favor with the multitude. Thus the axiom put on paper at a later period by Tertullian, had become already of frequent application at the beginning of the second century: *Sanguis martyrum, semen Christianorum*. Thus all those old documents agree, and suppose an immense progress already made by Christianity.

The history of the martyrdom of St. Ignatius of Antioch concurs to the same effect, though the persecution in which he died is not positively ascribed to popular fury. Trajan seems to be alone concerned in his death, at least in the wording of the Acts of the holy bishop. But this very interesting document speaks, in fact, the same language as the previous one. Nothing is more remarkable in it than the details it gives on many bishops' sees existing already on the coast of Asia Minor. Not only this holy man states in general, in his letter to the Ephesians, that "Christ is united to his Father, as the bishops, *established in the whole universe*, are united in feeling with Jesus Christ"—but, in the recital of his travels, he meets bishops everywhere. During his visit to Polycarp at Smyrna, he receives a deputation of bishops who come to salute the captive, and ask of him his prayers. They were: Onesimus of Ephesus, evidently the disciple of Paul, with Burrhus his deacon; Damas of Magnesia, with the presbyters Bassus and Apollonius; Polybius of Tralles, and the bishop of Philadelphia. Does it not look as if old Ionia was already a thoroughly Christian country? Are not the remarks justified which were previously made on the great number of sees established by the apostles themselves? Does not our opinion rest on truly historical foundations?

German and English critics pretend that the ecclesiastical history of the two or three first centuries is made up of mere assumptions; but we have already discussed many historical documents of the earliest

epoch, without certainly exhausting the subject. Still there are others which cannot possibly be omitted. There is, for instance, a certain Athenian by the name of Quadratus, who, about this very time—that of the death of St. John—wrote an apology in favor of the Christian religion, which was already severely attacked and persecuted everywhere. He must have lived before Plutarch and Pausanias, who in their voluminous writings do not appear to be aware that there was in the world anything of the kind. What about Quadratus?

What we know of him is, in appearance, very slight, yet in reality, important, and confirms powerfully the train of thought just insisted upon. First, he belongs certainly to the very beginning of the second century, and flourished under Trajan and Hadrian. Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History*,\* is positive on the subject. He speaks of it again in his Fourth Book (3d ch.), where he gives the only fragment we possess of Quadratus' *Apology* to Hadrian. St. Jerome holds the same language in his *Epistola 84 ad Magnum Oratorem Romanum*. The martyrologies of Ado, of Usuard, of Bede, etc., repeat the same. All critics acknowledge it, and confine their labors to clearing up some confusion created in his biography, by mixing it up with those of Quadratus of Magnesia, who lived more than a hundred years later, and of another Quadratus, much more problematical, who is supposed to have been a bishop of Philadelphia, in Asia. Secondly, Quadratus was certainly an Athenian, and must have been a bishop of Athens itself. Eusebius quotes on the subject the testimony of Denys of Corinth, who lived in the middle of the same century, and consequently a few years later than Quadratus. They must, in fact, have been contemporaries; and the words of St. Denys are so important that they must be given here from the text of Eusebius: "Denys, who held the episcopal office over the church of the Corinthians, wrote several letters to various churches, and particularly one to the Athenians, in order to revive their faith, and induce them to live according to the pure precepts of the Gospel. He openly rebukes them for their negligence, and reproaches them for having almost abandoned the faith after the death of Publius, their bishop, who perished by martyrdom in one of the persecutions which broke out at that time. He speaks also, in the same letter, of Quadratus, who was consecrated bishop after the demise of Publius, labored assiduously to bring back the Athenians to the Church they had

---

\* Lib. iii., cap. 37.

forsaken, and succeeded finally in setting ablaze again the primitive ardor of their faith." Thirdly, the precious fragment of the Apology of Quadratus, preserved by the bishop of Cæsarea, deserves to be quoted entire: "The works of our Saviour were done in open light, because they were true. Thus it was of those whom he healed of diseases, or restored to life when dead. And it was not only at the moment of their restoration to health or to life itself, that all could witness the prodigy, but for the whole following time. And this did not continue only as long as our Saviour himself remained on earth, but many survived after his departure, so that some of them are yet living at the present time."

These facts, so well established historically, offer us again vividly the spectacle of the spread of Christianity in Greece, at an epoch generally considered as altogether obscure and unknown. This Publius, who died martyr, probably in some popular outbreak at the beginning of the reign of Trajan, must have been one of the first—if not the very first—successor of Denys the Areopagite. The Athenians continued, therefore, after Paul had left them, to have in their midst a Christian church with a bishop at its head. The pagan inhabitants of the city of Minerva found fault with their Christian fellow-citizens, whose life, at first animated by an ardent faith, was assuredly a reproach to the worshipers at the Parthenon and at the temple of Theseus. The bishop, Publius, was a conspicuous personage in the crowd of ordinary Christians. They fell upon him; and he was put to death. No name of emperor or Roman governor is mentioned by the bishop of Corinth, because it was altogether a popular outbreak. The Gentile hatred is at once so violent that the Christians think it more prudent not to meet publicly in church any more; and thus their faith cools off, and their lives are scarcely worthy of their profession. But finally Quadratus, who, to judge from the small fragment of his Apology we have, must have been acquainted previously with some of those who had seen our Saviour, and been healed by him, is consecrated bishop. Perhaps he may have seen Paul in his youth, or at least Denys the Areopagite. At any rate he revives the faith among his countrymen, brings them to church again, and in order, probably, to prevent their falling off anew, in another popular persecution, he makes up his mind to address the emperor himself, in whom he has, like Polycarp, more confidence and hope than in the people. Thus he presented his short book to Hadrian, when this emperor visited the country to

be initiated in the Eleusinian mysteries, in the year 126 of our era.

This Apology obtained a complete success: and this fact is a most convincing proof that persecution at the time originated always with the people, who were evidently exasperated at the surprising daily increase of the number of Christians. Alzog says: \* “Although no decree of proscription was passed against the Christians during the reign of Hadrian, still the popular hatred against them was so violent, that Serenius Granianus, proconsul of Asia, at a loss what course to pursue, asked that a law might be enacted by which his conduct toward them should be guided, and that the accusation should, in every instance, be brought before the ordinary tribunals. The imperial rescript in answer to this was received by his successor, Minucius Fundanus. It was favorable to the Christians; but this was probably owing to the representations made to the emperor by *Quadratus* and *Aristides*, the first Christian writers who addressed to him apologies in their behalf.” There is no need of discussing the question any longer. The German author of the *Manual of Universal Church History*, after having supposed on several occasions that laws existed against the Christians which were the real cause of the persecutions, here admits that a proconsul of Asia applied for the enactment of such a law, because certainly none existed at the time, and was answered by a refusal, or rather a decree openly favorable to the Church. Alzog admits besides that the cause of the application of Serenius Granianus for the enactment of such a law, was that “the popular hatred against the Christians was extremely violent.” This is precisely the view taken here of the subject; and there is only to add that this “popular hatred” was due to the rapid increase of the Christian religion, already looming up in point of numbers, and for the zeal of its bishops all over Asia. In fact, the first apologies were nothing but open recourses of their authors from the fury of the rabble to the more just and merciful authority of the emperors.

Of this holy man mentioned a moment ago by Alzog, namely, *Aristides*, an Athenian like *Quadratus*, but not a bishop, living exactly at the same time, nothing need be said, because we know only the fact of his having written this apology which St. Jerome had read and admired. But not a single phrase of it has reached us,

---

\* Vol. i., p. 264, Amer. edit.

although some bibliographers pretend that a MS. copy of it exists yet in a monastery near Athens.

The literary world is still in possession of another Apology, written by Athenagoras, known under the title of *Legatio pro Christianis*, of a most pure Attic style, and replete with the best arguments in defense of the despised and hated religion. Athenagoras lived a little time after Quadratus and Aristides; but he was also an Athenian, like both of them. The Athenian Church, therefore, must not be considered as obscure and unknown during the second century. If its faith was the object of the hatred of a great number of polytheist Athenians, if it was on that account pursued by the mob, and its adherents were exposed to martyrdom, it still counted among its members such men as Publius, Quadratus, Aristides, Athenagoras, and no doubt many others. Religion was progressing in Attica, as well as at Corinth, where Denys flourished; as at Argos, Thebæ, Philippi, and several other cities, on whose account the tables of Gams can be consulted. But even where those tables are altogether silent, there is no doubt that religion was alive, and bishops preached, wrote, presided at the holy mysteries, and propagated Christianity by erecting new bishops' sees, and increasing the number of presbyters and deacons, all meanwhile waiting for the day when all Greeks would be Christians.

Of the bishops and of the simple Christians who lived at the time, a great number had seen some of the apostles, or even had been acquainted, like Quadratus, with some of the men whom Christ had restored to life or health. On this account, one of the passages of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius, where he speaks of the Athenian bishop, is of extreme importance, although seldom quoted, and remains one of the most interesting remarks made by any ancient author on the real state of the Church at the beginning of the second century. Here it is: \* “ Besides Quadratus, many others lived at the same time, who were the chiefs among the successors of the apostles. All of them, admirable and almost divine disciples of such great men as the apostles were, they continued to build and completed the edifice whose foundations the first had laid. They promoted more and more the extension of the Gospel's doctrines, and they spread all over the world the salutary seed of the heavenly kingdom. Many of the disciples of those times, inspired by the



words of Christ with the most ardent desire for the practice of true wisdom, sold their property, and divided it among the poor. Then, leaving even their country, they fulfilled the office of evangelists; preached Christ to those who had not yet heard of him, and placed in the hands of the faithful the books of the holy Gospels."

Had not Eusebius acquainted us with this general fact of that period, we might have conjectured it. Still, it is much more striking to see it expressed so vividly; and nothing is more calculated to place before our eyes the admirable way that Christianity increased, and how in a very short space of time it filled entirely the immense Greek-speaking world.

It was this constant activity of holy men that enraged the pagans, and inspired them with that fury which at last set the Roman emperors themselves at the head of the persecuting mob. For a long time they hesitated, occasionally refused point blank, as it was just proved was the case with Hadrian. But finally they understood that paganism was in danger, and made use of all their power to save it. Until that time the Christian world presented the spectacle which has been just described. As Pliny the younger has so well pictured it for Bithynia, men and women of all ranks in society vied with each other to be received among the new converts; the temples of the gods did not witness any longer those crowds of worshippers who before were seen in front of them at all great festivals. Gradually desertion increased; and but a few votaries came. How often did not already the case happen, or something like it, which raised the bile of Julian when he saw, on one occasion, an old priest coming to the temple alone, with a goose under his arm, which the forlorn minister of the god or of the goddess intended to sacrifice? This may have been already going on in Bithynia more than two centuries before Julian.

After an exact study of the period, an impartial mind must come to the conclusion that at the time of Trajan there was not precisely any law against Christianity. The enactment against *hetæriæ*, attributed to this prince, had not any strict bearing on the subject, since Serenius Granianus under Hadrian asked for one. The Apology presented to Titus Antoninus Pius by Justin, was yet more successful than the one addressed to Hadrian by Quadratus. Antoninus, moved by what the good Christian philosopher had written him, "sent orders to several cities of Greece, to quell instantly the seditious commotions against the blameless Christians." Eusebius gives

in part the text of the one sent to the people in general of Asia Minor. The emperor boldly takes upon himself the defense of the worshippers of Christ; commends their fidelity to their God, their courage in contempt of death, and even turns his praises of their virtues into reproaches against the vices of their persecutors. He concludes his decree by declaring that the name of Christian is not a crime, and if any one is brought before the courts upon no other charge, he must be acquitted and his prosecutor punished.

The genuineness of this edict, it is true, is contested. Yet all antiquity has believed in its existence. Eusebius unfortunately attributes it falsely to Marcus Aurelius; but there are so many reasons for believing that Antoninus Pius issued it, that a number even of German critics openly admit its genuineness. This must be sufficient for every man of sense. At any rate, the truth becomes more and more unequivocal, that the Antonines were adverse to persecution, that the fury of the pagans alone induced several of them to give way; and the reason of that popular fury must by this time be known to the reader.

But when, finally, Severus came, what a terrible ordeal these Greek Christians had to go through, before they reached those overwhelming numbers which in the end became their safety? How could we give an adequate idea of those atrocious persecutions which extended certainly to the whole of Greek-speaking countries? It was Severus who truly went at it spontaneously. Marcus Aurelius himself, who undoubtedly acted toward the Christians more cruelly than any other Antonine prince, still never issued any edict against them. The first express decree, in fact, against the new religion, which we meet in the history of Imperial Rome, is that issued by Severus, probably in 202, on which occasion Tertullian wrote his celebrated *Apologeticus adversus Gentes pro Christianis*. But it is not time yet to describe the beginning of the third century, when it was issued. There is a great deal more to say of the expansion of Christianity in Greece from 125 to 200. Yet it is proper to add here that neither Tertullian, almost a contemporary of the Antonines, nor Lactantius, in his book *De morte persecutorum*—who lived, it is true, two hundred years later, yet must have had sure documents on all previous persecutions—attribute any actual decree against the Christians to all those *good princes*, as they call the Antonines. They are positive on the subject; and if Lactantius in particular has erred negatively by not mentioning the atrocious persecution of Severus, probably be-

cause he was not punished in this world for it, and thus did not come within the scope of his work, at least his positive testimony in favor of the Antonines cannot be put aside. No modern ecclesiastical historian can pretend the contrary, because two testimonies such as those of Tertullian and Lactantius render of no account whatever any possible surmise or conjecture derived from documents of a far inferior importance. The conclusion, therefore, is strict : that with the exception of the monstrous and anomalous dealings of Nero and Domitian, no decree against the Christian religion can be ascribed to any Roman emperor before Severus. All the partial persecutions in; Bithynia under Pliny; in Syria by Trajan, who condemned Ignatius; in Athens, when Publius perished; in proconsular Asia, at the death of Polycarp, etc., to speak only of the Greek world, were the result of popular tumult, the effect of pagan rage at the sight of Christian progress. Yet these outbreaks were fearful, though they had not the terrible character of universality which the following persecutions obtained, from 200 down to Constantine. They deserve, however, to be insisted upon as having been fierce; and not belittled as Dodwell did in his *Dissertations on St. Cyprian*. This author, by his subsequent sophisms on religious subjects, proved that he was not a safe judge of Christian antiquity. It is important on this account to dwell a short time on the heroism displayed in Greek-speaking countries by the followers of Christ, during the whole of the second century.

To set it more forcibly yet fairly before the eyes of the reader, there is a preliminary remark to be made, to which no writer, that we know, has ever alluded. The punishment of crime in the Latin world was always of a much more severe character than in Greek speaking countries. The criminal legislation of Rome may be said to have been atrocious; that of Greece essentially merciful. This general observation is sufficient; a detailed comparison of both would be lengthy, and can be omitted. Indeed, it is puzzling to the thoughtful reader to understand how Greece, after its annexation to the Roman Empire, could accept the cruel adjuncts of the pretorian or proconsular judgment-seat. Few Greeks were Roman citizens, and consequently entitled to the privileges of more humane proceedings during the trial, and punishment after conviction. We have no doubt that in Greece Rome did not dare at first to display the barbarity of her legislation. The several decrees of *freedom* granted to the country by numerous governors and emperors, must have been

particularly welcome to the Hellenes, because of the autonomy that was thus left them of their judicial system in civil or criminal proceedings. Researches in such a field as this would be most interesting, if undertaken by a thorough Hellenist scholar. But when the time of general persecutions came, and even previously, when the mob forced the Roman magistrates to act against the Christians, the most cruel details of the most barbarous legislation were naturally selected, as more likely to effect the desired object, namely, the destruction of the new religion. Yet this was precisely to introduce in religious controversy a way of proceeding most opposed to the natural mildness of the Hellenes. For a long time in Greece the accusation and conviction of atheism itself subjected the criminal either to banishment only or to death by poison. Let the reader place before his eyes the barbarous armory of murderous weapons displayed in the Roman courts of justice, as a part and parcel of the array with which the judge himself was surrounded; and it will be easy to fancy what must have been the feelings of nervous, delicate, tasteful, artistic people, when, having listened to a Christian friend, or to a Christian apostle, they had been regenerated by the waters of baptism, and they were called on to burn incense to the gods. This frightful position in which they were placed must have been shocking to every refined sentiment inherent to their nature or developed by education. What fortitude, what heroism, what greatness of soul does it not suppose in them to have remained firm, and persevered to the end in a confession necessarily followed by such consequences!

The pen of John H. Newman has described, in a few words, the horrors which surrounded the last moments of the Christian martyr. Although *Callista* is but a novel, every phrase, every picture, every word of it is true to the letter:

“Then the procurator entered into the secretary, and drew the veil; and dictated the sentence from the tabella. Then he came out, and the præco read it:—Callista, a senseless and reprobate woman, is hereby sentenced to be thrown into the Tullianum; then to be stretched on the equuleus; then to be placed on a slow fire; lastly, to be beheaded, and left to the dogs and birds.

“Callista said: Thanks to My Lord and King.”

To understand thoroughly the atrocity of these proceedings, and the heroism of the Greek martyrs who went through them, would require that all the details which follow in the work of Newman

should be copied. And there is no need of it, since they must be known to the reader. The last words of Callista, however, as they are given by the writer, cannot be omitted; because they give so graphic and true a picture of the Christian greatness of those heroes: "For Thee, my Lord and Love, for Thee! . . . Accept me, O my Love, upon this bed of pain! . . . And come to me, O my Love, make haste and come!"

Yet this was one of the less cruel manners of putting the Christians to death. What terrible spectacle the writer would have placed under our eyes, had he represented Callista perishing in the amphitheater, under the teeth and within the claws of the wild beasts! It would be too heart-rending to go merely through the details, so familiar to those who have read the last moments of the martyrs of Carthage and of Lyons. It is probably for this reason that Newman chose for Callista the sentence coldly pronounced by the procurator at Sicca, and reported above. In the execution even he spared the reader the most intolerable part of it, by supposing that the martyr expired at the first screwing upon of the equuleus, so that the scorching by fire, and the beheading was unnecessary. Thus the gifted writer thought he had said enough, and could rely on the imagination of the reader. But he did not even attempt to describe the necessary preparations and details of the absolutely unutterable sentence "to the beasts." Cardinal Wiseman has tried it in his *Fabiola*; but he was compelled to disguise the most unbearable circumstances of the games by brilliant fictitious details, which really distract the attention of the reader from the shocking aspect of the naked truth. Newman would have felt obliged to draw a picture altogether unrelieved by these artificial proceedings.

There is, however, a way of obtaining a fair representation of this incredible though but too true atrocity of the Roman legislation; and this consists merely in reading several passages of the Latin historians of the imperial period, Tacitus, for instance, where mention is made of this ferocity, in cases where Christians are not concerned. Several texts present themselves to our mind, which it would be tedious to look for with a view to a strict quotation, unnecessary in this case, as no Latin scholar can controvert the fact. Tacitus, we think, relates somewhere the atrocious crimes of an abominable Roman lady, such as we know were but too common at that epoch. Her guilt finally becomes known; all the details of her misdeeds are brought forward at the trial; and the conclusion of the

whole, is a sentence by the judge condemning her *ad bestias*. In cases connected with Christianity, such a termination of judicial proceedings in Rome, produce scarcely on us any sensation, on account of the proverbial matter-of-fact that such was the usual way followed at that time in the case of Christians. And, in fact, the atrocities of the amphitheater are as it were sanctified, purified, raised, we may say, to a high atmosphere of holiness, by their necessary association with the heroism of the martyrs. So that we lose sight almost entirely of every shocking circumstance connected with them. But when we read that an ordinary woman, really guilty of crimes such as human justice has always severely punished, was actually sentenced to the same fate as was undergone by so many martyrs; then all the details of the barbarous games, as related chiefly by Seneca, are brought vividly to our mind, and we can scarcely understand that a civilized nation, as the Romans were undoubtedly, could have disgraced the very sanctuary of its justice by such an unheard-of barbarity, even for the punishment of the greatest crimes.

All these reflections have been made in order that the heroism of Greek martyrs may be estimated at its just value. And although the fact has been insisted upon that no precise Roman law existed until the reign of Severus, extending to the whole empire the fatal results of an atrocious persecution; still, it is undeniable that those popular outbreaks, as have been described, to which must be attributed the willing concurrence of Roman emperors, proconsuls, and magistrates generally, were repeated, in fact, in an almost unbroken succession, in all the provinces, besides those of Italy in the center. In the Greek-speaking countries, which at this moment are particularly under consideration, the popular tumults of this kind became more frequent and ferocious in Asia Minor than in the other districts of what has been called the Greek world. Yet the undeniable testimony of Denys of Corinth proves the same for Athens previous to the episcopate of Quadratus; the history of Trajan, at least as reported by ecclesiastical writers of the period, is the sure voucher of it for Antioch and the northern part of Syria; according to St. Melito of Sardis in Lydia, quoted by Eusebius, the persecution, under Marcus Aurelius, in 170, extended far beyond proconsular Asia, excited everywhere by the popular assemblies.\* The same was also taking place

---

\* Dom Calmet, Hist. Univ., tom. v. 32.

in Phrygia, as testified by Apollinaris, bishop of Hierapolis. Had we a greater number of Christian authors of that period, it is sure that the historical proofs of similar facts could be generalized, and many expressions contained in precious fragments of antiquity which we still possess can in truth be considered as sufficient vouchers of it. But many more convincing examples of the heroic fortitude of Grecian martyrs will soon be furnished, when the beginning of the third century is reached, and a stronger evidence is afforded of the expansion of the Christian Church at that early epoch. We are still in the second age at this moment; and it is proper to look for some other line of demonstration of the same truth, if any can be found. It happens precisely that just when the first apologists of the Christian religion were presenting to the emperors or governors of provinces those short but beautiful writings of which a word only could be said, another very remarkable fact was taking place all over the world, which cannot be explained without supposing for the Christian Church an existence already co-extensive with the world itself. This is the formation of the canon of the New Testament.

8. *The formation of the Canon of the New Testament is another strong proof of the same fact.*

This took place particularly during the whole length of the second century, and extended far down in the third. At the beginning of that period, the quotations from Scripture by the early Fathers prove the imperfection of the canon, and what it would have most probably become, had it not been intrusted to the hands of an infallible Church. Yet, at the end of the second century, Origen presents us with nearly the same canon of Scripture which the Catholic Church admits at this day. We maintain that this supposes in the new religion, at that time, a compactness and universality, far above what people generally imagine, and altogether inconsistent with the loose notions of the German and English critics, not only on the extent of Christianity at that early epoch, but likewise on the Christian Scripture, with all the apparent array of science which they display. This, if considered a little in detail, and in conjunction with the *apocrypha* which inundated Europe and Asia, together with the genuine gospels, will appear truly a stupendous phenomenon, calculated to give us a most elevated idea of the Christian Church at that time. And the effect produced on any reflective mind will be greatly

increased, when it is considered that the formation of this *canon* was taking place, in fact, on the surface of the whole civilized world: not only in the Western continent and in the Latin part of it, revolving around Rome, then the capital of the universe; not only in the Greek world, where the New Testament was destined to lay the seeds of a new civilization and literature, powerful enough to kill outright the ancient one, and to exist forever after in the writings of the Fathers and ecclesiastical writers. This is not yet the whole astounding process—but in the Peshito or Syriac version of the same New Testament, we have still the more strange fact of a canon of the identical Holy Scriptures in process of formation at the same time as the Greek and Latin ones; and throwing at the end of this period, on the surface of the far Orient, the very same books of the Scriptures for the use of the remotest countries of Eastern Asia. It is good to enter into some details on so remarkable a fact as this. A *profound* critic, mentioned in a previous chapter of this work, but whose name escapes us at this very moment, thought he had made a most fatal discovery against the Christian religion, by finding out that there is a space of fifty years somewhere within the second century, during which the actual New Testament is never quoted by any author known to us; and, consequently, we suppose, this same New Testament might have been elaborated at that epoch, in the same way that the *apocrypha* were concocted by forgers and impostors. Other critics, however, more impartial, although not much better Christians, proved that those celebrated fifty years were not altogether a blank; and that some quotations could yet be found in the fragments of works of that period now existing. But spurning to look for subterfuges, and disdaining to bring forward little bits of texts more or less curious and genuine, we say: “How could it be that forgers and impostors, like the authors of the apocrypha, could have produced the writings of the New Testament, when there are authentic facts proving that during the whole of the second century the question of the canon of the New Testament must have been a serious one for all Christians, East and West; and at the end of that period of one hundred years, the Christians—except the heretics—were all agreed, unless in the case of a few books which the Council of Nice finally recognized as admitted by the whole Church?” Yes, how could this be the case at the same time in Spain, Proconsular Africa, Gaul, Italy, Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Persia? The brood of apocrypha, which at the same time in-



fested the same extensive territory, almost as the plague of frogs in Egypt, will become a strong confirmation of the truth advocated at the present moment ; instead of being the reverse, as a very playful German critic has pretended, in his *Hist. des livres sacrés du Nouv. Testament*.\* Yes, Reuss gave birth to the very pleasant imagination, that if anybody in the second century thought of the canon of Holy Scriptures, it was the heretics, who took the trouble of collecting the apostolic writings, as a basis for the elucubration of their strange systems. The Church merely took the hint from them, and thus looked for Scripture likewise, when, unfortunately, the "sacred books" were well-nigh spoiled. We will take the liberty of being of another opinion, after discussing the point briefly.

Something has already been said of the care the Christians took, from the very beginning, of the books of the New Testament. Naughty writers—we cannot call them otherwise—have pretended that the loose way the sacred text is quoted by the apostolic Fathers in particular, proves that there was in fact no canon, no original text, no authentic copies, nothing of what must be the basis of any strict belief, such as that of Christianity. Everything, according to them, was left to chance. "Such a text of Matthew,"—so they speak—"quoted by Barnabas, reads so and so ; quoted by Ignatius of Antioch, it has quite a different reading." Not that they can point to glaring discrepancies and dogmatic differences of a serious character ; it is nothing of the kind ; but the phraseology is different. That is all. They suppose that there were not at the time copies of those books in existence, where the authentic text was preserved ; so that when the time would come for exercising criticism on the said texts, none of any authority could be found, and everything would then depend on chance. This, we aver, is not true. There were copies written with care ; all agreeing mainly together ; placed with respect in the tabernacles of Christian altars, or given in charge to deacons or lectors ; and by them kept as most sacred things, not to be in the least retouched with the pen or altered in any way. And this was the fact for all the countries enumerated above.

No doubt several books, epistles, etc., of the New Testament, had been sent by the apostles or evangelists who wrote them, only to some particular churches. The four gospels were certainly communicated by the four evangelists to all the countries where they

---

\* Halle, 1842.

preached ; and the copies were multiplied, as at that epoch of extreme intellectual activity it was usually done, with dispatch. In a previous chapter, the question has been discussed, How far was there at that time an easy communication of thought and information ? We need not come back to the subject, to which we only refer. But people had then a mind as we have, and more heart, perhaps. They knew the importance of anything written by apostles and evangelists ; and they had such high idea of religion that everything connected with it was sacred in their eyes. Hence the extreme care they took of the Holy Scriptures, as testified to in all the passages of ancient writers we still possess. But a few pages back, a word was said on the *disciplina secreti*, and of the way the sacred writings were kept from the knowledge of the multitude, on account of the fear they had of profanation. In their works, on this account probably, the Fathers of that epoch, when they addressed the faithful, gave only the sense of Scripture, which they studied constantly. They did not think it necessary to go to the only copy, perhaps, kept in the church near which they lived, in order to quote the text *verbatim*. The faithful did not require it. Whenever they wrote for the pagans, for the world outside, they did not think it prudent to say that they had private books ; and it would have been useless to refer to them, when speaking to those who did not admit their authority. This is the simple explanation of a fact which becomes distorted by critics who do not take any account of all these circumstances. But to pretend that the sacred Scriptures of the New Testament did not then exist, and were gradually elaborated, the heretics chiefly taking the lead, is to ignore completely the whole history of those times. St. Peter himself referred to the writings of St. Paul. The Apostolic Fathers quote them often. It is true that in general when they do so, they merely refer to some word of Our Lord related by one of the four evangelists, and simply say *Dominius dixit*, or something to that effect. It is, however, easy to find out the name of the evangelist they quote, by a simple reference to our text. Toward the end of the second century we see the various books of the New Testament specially referred to. Tatian speaks certainly of the four gospels ; and St. Irenæus too. It is important to say a few words of the first. Tatian, born probably in 130, was about thirty years old when he went to Rome, and became a Christian under the instruction of Justin Martyr. After the death of his holy friend and teacher, he went back East, where he became

a heresiarch. He certainly wrote a book on the *Harmony of the Four Gospels* (*Διὰ τεσσάρων*). This work, quoted by Eusebius, existed yet at the time of Theodoretus, who found two hundred copies of it in his diocese—that of Cyrrhus in Mesopotamia—and took them away, to place the very text of Scripture in the hands of his flock, because Tatian had altered it. This was toward the middle of the fifth century. It seems that he had left aside the genealogies of Our Lord, according to St. Matthew and St. Luke, and perhaps other passages where Jesus is called the Son of David. But it is clear that his book was not derived from the *apocrypha*. Therefore what is ascertained of the life and labors of Tatian prove that toward the middle of the second century, say about 160, the four gospels were so well known that he thought of writing what we call in our day a “Harmony” of them, and executed his project so acceptably, in spite of some suppressions, that three hundred years later the faithful used it yet for their instruction.

The strange fancy of Reuss, that it was from the *apocrypha* that the idea was taken by the Christian Church, to look for whatever scraps of pretended gospels were then in existence, to collect them, arrange them, and give them the shape they now have, cannot bear the least touch of criticism. We possess still many of those forgeries, and it requires a very moderate share of perspicacity to discover that they all suppose the existence of the true gospels, of which they are mostly distorted and exaggerated falsifications; whilst, on the contrary, the sacred books of the New Testament do not suppose the existence of those forgeries. What is simple, clear, and natural, always precedes what is the very reverse; and the best way of proving the absurdity of the system of Reuss, is to read St. Luke first, and then to try to peruse the celebrated *Evangelium infantie*. The trial would be more telling yet, if the Gospel of St. Matthew being perused, one would try to go through any of the pretended gospels written in support of gnosticism, as, for instance, that of Basilides, of Marcion, or that of Life—*Evangelium vitæ*. But if the true can be thus easily distinguished from the false, the existence of those numerous forgeries is a sure test of the positive fact that the sacred books of the New Testament were known at that time, and could be obtained in their entirety. For there is scarcely any detail contained in our New Testament, which is not either positively stated, or alluded to, or distorted in some of the *apocrypha*. A fact stated by *Movers* in the *Dict. de théol. Cath.* (Art. *apocryphes*), deserves a

special mention, and is certainly of great importance. We quote his very words : "*Les plus anciens Evangiles apocryphes embrassaient tout le cercle de l'histoire évangélique, et se distinguent par là des Evangiles postérieurs qui ne contiennent que l'histoire de la jeunesse de J. C., ou l'histoire des derniers jours et de la glorification du Rédempteur.*" If this means anything, it is certainly this : When the first *apocrypha* were written, the true gospels existed already in their entirety, and the desire, on the part of heretics or impostors, to replace them by forgeries, took first the shape of compositions as similar as possible to the authentic Christian books. In course of time only, some fanciful forger thought of developing a particular point of the life of our Lord, and thus we had the *Evangelium infantiae*, the *Evangelium Nativitatis S. Mariæ*, etc. This may be called a very important observation.

The reader, however, must not imagine that all the *apocrypha* were the works of heretics, impostors, or men *ejusdem farinae*. Some of them were written by Catholics, with a view to public edification and the fostering of piety. They were precisely what are called now Christian novels, and the readers no doubt knew they were not inspired writings, but the effusion of a pious fancy. Some of them which have been published lately in the edition of the Ante-Nicene Fathers\* are in fact most delightful reading for the Christian. The Proto-Evangel of James the Less is one of the most interesting specimens of that class of books. In concluding this short dissertation a word more must suffice, but is not without weight : many of the *apocrypha* belong certainly to the second century of our era ; therefore, the true gospels, such as we have them, were known, read, and appreciated during that age, that is, directly after the death of the apostles. Let German and English critics of the modern stamp endeavor to weaken and reduce to nought this simple observation.

The assertion has been made a few pages back that the diffusion of the holy gospels and apostolical epistles so early as the second century, proves the compactness and universality of the Church at that early age. This must be discussed briefly, yet in a sufficiently satisfactory manner. Nothing can demonstrate it more thoroughly than the labors of Origen on the canon of Scripture. This great man was born, most probably at Alexandria, before the end of the second

---

\* Edinburgh.

century, in 185. He came just in time to make a collection of the sacred books of the Christians, scattered as they were over the whole surface of the civilized universe, and ascertain their authenticity and value. No critic has ever existed of so powerful a mind for such an object. A fact is curious in this regard which it is good to mention. Although he appeared so early in this field, not only he far surpassed all the great interpreters of the first four centuries; but perhaps the two greatest critics in exegesis, and editors of the Bible that ever lived, namely, St. Jerome and Erasmus, can scarcely be said to go on a par with him. We have just named Erasmus in connection with St. Jerome and Origen, and this may startle some Catholic readers. The intention is not to place on the same footing with those truly great men the author of *Ἐγκώμιον Μωρίας* and many other lampoons of the same sort. His mind was shallow indeed, since he did not perceive, but very late, the danger and crime of the so-called Reformation; and when he did, he continued to laugh at it and dally with it. But with all this, as Origen was the first to establish the laws of criticism in the Eastern world, with respect to the canon of Holy Writ; as St. Jerome was the first to do it later on for the Western or Latin world, so Erasmus may be said to have done likewise, to revive the same laws when they were entirely forgotten. He was the first to publish the entire New Testament in Greek, in 1516—the Alcala Polyglot appeared only in 1522, although printed in 1514—Leo X. consented to receive the dedication of the book of Erasmus; and approved highly of it, although the Latin version of the second edition, in 1518, was objected to by several Catholic doctors. But it is a fact that the *Paraphrase* written by Erasmus is considered even at this time as a work of great merit, critically. The remark, therefore, is striking, that the critical genius of Origen is truly wonderful, since, writing so early as the beginning of the third century, St. Jerome in the fifth, and Erasmus in the sixteenth, not only could not do better, but in fact remained behind him, though they had the advantage of possessing his works, of which the humanist of Rotterdam was the first to give a complete edition.

What has just been said refers to the superiority of Origen as editor, not as interpreter. It is known that his exegesis is of a very peculiar kind. He not only admits in every passage of Holy Writ, several different meanings; the literal, mystical, tropical, and spiritual (or pneumatic), as he calls it; but he pretends that the literal

meaning is always inferior in weight to the others, which must be looked to in every passage rather than the first. This opinion has certainly given rise to an interpretation based often on conjectures or even dreams ; and the subsequent school of Antioch, headed by St. John Chrysostom, must be considered as much safer in exegesis than that of Alexandria in general. Yet it is a very rash attempt of modern exegetists, to throw away every meaning of Scripture except the literal one. All truly Catholic authors admit that the Holy Spirit, in inspiring the sacred writers, had often in view to give to humanity the knowledge of exalted mysteries under the veil of facts or of mere material things. It is indubitable, for instance, that many passages in the old law were merely typical, as the whole Mosaic dispensation was figurative, and contained the promise of Christ under some emblems. St. Paul speaks plainly enough on the subject. Yet the author of *Gentile and Jew*, writing a whole volume on Judaism, scarcely says a word of this temporary and figurative character of the Old Law. In the New Testament there are likewise many passages which contain a higher sense than the literal one ; and Our Lord directed us to believe it by explaining several of his parables, and drawing us up to an order of ideas far superior to the one indicated by the mere grammatical meaning of his words. Origen was, therefore, right in the main, in his theory. He only went too far on several points which our scope does not require us to develop.

But it is important to speak of the office of this great man as editor. Unfortunately his labors in that field have perished. St. Jerome, from whom the Christian world has received nearly all that is known of them, speaks particularly of what he did for the Old Testament in his Hexapla, Octapla, and Tetrapla. On the subject of this part of his work we are acquainted with the care he took of collecting copies of all the sacred books, collating them one with the other, finding out the mistakes and errors which had crept in, and thus establishing a true text, which could be relied upon as genuine and authentic.

That he did the same for the New Testament is indubitable, from the commentaries he wrote on most of its books ; yet details on the subject are altogether wanting. We are thus reduced to have recourse to his labors as exegetist in order to judge of his office as editor. But the result is truly surprising, when we reflect that no one before him had written true commentaries of the Bible. He trans-

lated and commented upon nearly the whole of it ; on the New Testament as well as on the Old. We possess still a considerable part of what he wrote on the subject : and we are thus enabled to see that he had first established a true text, before attempting an interpretation. The idea of it alone is almost overpowering. Before him most of the Christian writers were merely apologists of the new religion in presence of paganism, and had scarcely had occasion to allude to the Bible, except as to the prophecies it contained, and their fulfillment under the new dispensation. There was scarcely any need of criticism for such an object. Theophilus of Antioch, and a few writers of note in the Christian schools of Alexandria, were almost the only authors who had, before Origen, supported their opinions with texts of the Bible ; and they merely mentioned briefly some passages of the Old or New Testament with regard to the doctrines they advocated. But this did not require much of a critical knowledge of the sacred books. Origen was the first who wrote real commentaries, as all ecclesiastical writers have done since. That is to say, he was the first to consider in his exegesis, first, the relation of each part of Scripture to the whole ; secondly, the solid establishment of the literal meaning of each passage, as a basis for the understanding of the other meanings, which he thought were yet of a higher import. He had therefore to enter into the history and the grammatical sense of each phrase, as it were. It was as completely and thoroughly the work of a modern exegetist as can be imagined. What we still possess of that immense work, presents him to us like an intellectual giant, who had not only invented exegesis as it has been understood ever since, but carried it at once to perfection.

How can any one suppose that the copies of the New Testament, which he collected for such an arduous enterprise, were not of a character to satisfy his great and exact mind ? Would he have even begun such an appalling labor, had he not been beforehand fully persuaded that it was possible, namely, that he could make a sure text out of the elements which he possessed ? It is said that he spent the most of twenty-eight years of his life in the accomplishment of this gigantic project ; and though this rumor is not based on any positive testimony, still it must have been so ; for indeed a much shorter space of time than this would be altogether inadequate for so stupendous an undertaking.

Yet he employed for his object only Greek copies ; at least it is not said that in his voyage to Rome, at the end of the persecution of

Severus, toward 112, he found there any Latin version of which he could procure some copies, though the old Italic already existed. He certainly knew nothing of the Syriac version, which was nevertheless at the time widely spread in Northern Mesopotamia, and probably Persia. Thus in the West the old Italic must have been already known, and in the East the Peshito or Syriac version was undoubtedly in the hands of a considerable number of Christians. All those versions have been, since that early epoch, found to agree wonderfully. Let the reader put together all those circumstances; and the conclusion will surely be that the Christian Church, which thus had spread such a book as this on so immense an extent of country, was indeed a compact as well as universal body!

Is it not curious—not to use a harsher term—to read in our age the long and most learned dissertations in which the rationalist critics of the nineteenth century prove, to their own satisfaction, that for fifty years before 190—we think—the books of the New Testament were perfectly unknown, and on this account never quoted! The object of this *learned* and *profound* remark is to conclude that the canon of Scripture was elaborated in the dark, and by chance, out of the forgeries of heretics and impostors, at least in the opinion of Reuss and his many followers. Yet we find that Origen, born in 185, five years before the end of that celebrated period of fifty, found—when he reached the adult age, and as soon as he thought of commenting on the sacred records of the New Testament—reliable copies in sufficient number to enable him to undertake an almost universal and complete commentary, of which we possess yet a considerable part, and which presents us with a context preferable to the *Paraphrase* of Erasmus. Let the admirers of modern criticism imagine, if they choose, that twenty years before Origen began his great work, the books of the New Testament did not exist—except, perhaps, through oral tradition, as Mr. Matthew Arnold pretends—we will merely say with the Latin satirist: *Credat Judæus Apella; non ego.*

But those gentlemen will contradict our broad and general assertion; they will aver that the canon of Origen was not our canon; they will say that that of Gaius, of the same age, was yet more imperfect; and thus they will convict us of a real untruthfulness, or at least unreliableness. We were aware of something of this, when the argument was presented in the form of an apparent universality; as if there had been no difference whatever between the canons of



Origen or of Gaius and our own. But the reader will soon admit that the unimportant differences which must certainly be granted, leave to the argument its whole strength. In spite of them, the same books we have of the New Testament must have been generally used by Christians at the very time they are supposed by modern critics to have been unknown, except perhaps as tales passing from mouth to mouth, with all the divergences necessary to those airy and light creatures of fancy. Some details must, however, be forthcoming. In a few words, the truth of the matter is simply this: Origen, in his seventh homily on the Book of Josuah, § 1, gives out the actual names of twenty-seven books of the New Testament as integral parts of Scripture; but in his commentary on St. John's Gospel, he states that the Second Epistle of St. Peter, and the Second and Third of St. John, *were not generally admitted*; that, moreover, the Epistle to the Hebrews was not, in his opinion, the work of St. Paul, although the ancients—*ἀρχαῖοι ἄνδρες*—had thought so. Redepenning, in his *Monography of Origen*—the most reliable German author on the subject—explains still better the whole difficulty by stating that Origen *held* that the Second Epistle of St. Peter, and the Second and Third of St. John, were really authentic; but he hesitated in placing them in the canon—in what he called *διαθήκη*—because they were not yet universally recognized. It is right, consequently, to say that the canon of the New Testament as received by Origen personally, was exactly the one we have, except that he thought the Epistle to the Hebrews not to be the work of St. Paul. Eusebius, later on, hesitated yet to accept the real authenticity of the Epistle to the Hebrews, of the Apocalypse, of the Second Epistle of St. Peter, and the Second and Third of St. John. These were the only books which offered any divergence of opinion. But the general Council of Nice, having better ascertained the tradition of the Church on the subject, consecrated the opinion of Origen, and from the time of Athanasius the canon remained what it is for us. There is nothing more to be said on the subject for the Greek world. As to the text falsely ascribed to Gaius or Caius, and discovered by Muratori—a fragment dating certainly from the beginning of the third century, and consequently of the age of Origen—it seems to say that the West had not yet recognized the authenticity of the books which formed a doubtful matter for Eusebius in the East, besides the Epistle of St. James and the First of St. Peter. But all these divergences of opinion consisted merely in this, that

the authenticity of a few books of the New Testament was yet *doubtful* for some writers ; for it is to be remarked that the same books were recognized as authentic by other authors, who were proved to be right by the subsequent decision of the Church.

The striking fact, therefore, relied upon by us a few pages back, as illustrating powerfully the compactness and universality of the Church in the second age of our era, remains in all its strength such as it has been described ; and the few hesitations of ancient writers on the subject do nothing but confirm it, and render it less assailable. To this must be limited our observations.

9. *The coincidence of the age of doctors with that of martyrs contributed powerfully to the diffusion of Christianity among the Greeks.*

The doctrine of the Church is based on the life and teaching of Christ. On this account the books of the New Testament were at all times, if not absolutely necessary, at least extremely useful. They were not absolutely necessary, since it can be easily understood that the doctrine of Christ might have been transmitted only by oral tradition handed down from the time of the apostles ; since they had received the mission to teach orally. Still, a sure and well-ascertained text, chiefly if written with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, could not but be of immense advantage for the diffusion and preservation of the Christian doctrine. But what particularly gives to this reflection a great weight are the following considerations, or rather facts.

As soon as the authentic text of Scripture, both of the Old and the New Testament, had been fully and authoritatively determined by the Church, on the basis of the labors of Origen and the other exegetists of the earliest ages, the foundation was laid on which was to be raised the sublime monument to be erected by the great men who received subsequently the title of Doctors. Of this it is proper now to speak, and nothing can better serve than this to depict at once the extraordinary and brilliant diffusion of the Christian Church, the constant object of these pages. At the same time, however, a few words on the general persecutions which began from the time of Severus are necessary. It must be only *a few words* ; because the present object is not to describe the Church as attacked by a hostile world—this may be done subsequently—but only as to its universality in the ubiquitous ethnical world. Yet a slight allusion is *necessary*,

because the Age of Doctors, understood in a general sense, began really during the great persecutions. Irenæus, Cyprian, Tertullian, etc., in the West, and in the Greek world an immense array of great and learned men, beginning by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Theophilus of Antioch, appear at once as soon as rivers of blood are shed by infuriated emperors. A French apologist of the Christian religion has said with great force: *Je crois volontiers des témoins qui se laissent égorger*; and thus it was proper that, when the time came for this universal testimony of blood—when persecutions were not partial outbreaks only of the popular rage, but general State measures extending over the whole Roman Empire, the testimony of faith, asserting the truth of the life and teaching of Christ, should at the same time come prominently forward. This was done under the providence of God, by the Christian Doctors, who all mainly wrote on the Bible, and mostly on the New Testament. Both testimonies of blood and of faith appeared chiefly conspicuous in Alexandria of Egypt, as will be directly stated; still, the same was true also of the remainder of the world. Everywhere the New Testament was explained, the life of Christ was given out in all its details, and in confirmation of it, myriads of martyrs—that is, of witnesses—expired. The reader perceives how, from the time of Severus down to Constantine, the age of martyrs coincided with that of Doctors. Both, therefore, must go together at this period of the Christian Church.

The text of the edict of Severus has not been preserved, but that it was issued as a general measure of persecution, is indubitable. Alzog says \* that, “a terrible persecution raged throughout Egypt, Africa, Gaul, and Italy.” He means to say, probably, that it is from those countries that we mainly possess accounts of its horrors, and appalling historical details, which the most captious critic cannot gainsay. But that it “raged” likewise all over Greece, Syria, and Asia Minor, is sure, as the measure extended certainly to the whole empire. Contemporary writers assure us that the reason of the edict was the universal spread of Christianity, which began to alarm the rulers of Rome. Syria and Greece, therefore, could not have been excluded from the measure, no more than Asia Minor. Tertullian, who wrote his Apology about this time, was bold enough to acknowledge, and even proclaim that the Christian religion’s sway

---

\* Vol. i., p. 268.

was then universal. His words are known to all, yet they always bear repeating: "We are but of yesterday, and we have filled every place among you, cities, islands, fortresses, towns, market-places, the very camp, tribes, companies, the palace, senate, forum; we have left nothing to you but the temples."\* Alzog remarks that, "the bitter and caustic style of Tertullian was but ill adapted to the work of conciliation." It is much to be doubted if a different style could have induced Severus to adopt a milder conduct toward the Christians. Some go so far as to imagine that the great African apologist "was imprudent in calling the public attention to the great number of Christians." These "moderate" writers suppose, no doubt, that if Tertullian had held his peace, the pagans would have remained in a happy ignorance of the multitude of those who worshiped Christ. This is all an idle fancy. The Roman pagans of that epoch knew it as well as Tertullian himself. To try to conceal it would have been merely a childish attempt at hiding the head of the bird, when the body was thrusting itself out everywhere under the eyes of all.

A few details of this frightful persecution are necessary for a proper understanding of the office of witness, joined with that of doctor, in those who attracted the eyes of the whole world. Clement was then, or had been just before, at the head of the Christian schools of Alexandria; Origen, seventeen years old, was his disciple, and destined to be his successor in teaching; Leonides, the father of Origen, was one of the first to be imprisoned and to suffer. The son, full of a holy ardor, wished to share in the dangers and the glory of Leonides, and prepared to go and denounce himself as a Christian. It is known that his mother had to take away from him all means of appearing decently in public. Unable to leave the house, the devout youth was reduced to writing burning words, in order to strengthen his father in his holy resolution. "Do not fear for us," he said, "and let not any human consideration unman you in your present position." By the death of Leonides, Origen found himself the head of a family of six brothers, besides the heroic woman who had given them birth. He sufficed for their most indispensable needs by teaching grammar. Meanwhile he had every day under his eyes the spectacle of men and women tortured, and put to death for their faith. "We behold daily," Clement of Alexan-

---

\* Apol., c. 37.

dria could say,\* “many martyrs burned and crucified before our very eyes.” The last moments of Potamicœna enable us to judge of this terrible ordeal by fire, alluded to by Clement.† “Among the other instruments of torture of which the heroic virgin had to undergo the bitter infliction, one more cruel than any other was invented by the judge himself. He ordered a large caldron to be filled with tar and heated to the boiling point. ‘Choose,’ said the barbarous magistrate; ‘either obey thy master, and submit to his lust, or expect to be thrown into this caldron.’ Potamicœna answered: ‘How can a judge carry injustice so far as to make of me a victim of lubricity?’ But *he*, bursting with rage, commands her to be stripped and thrown into the caldron. Then the virgin: ‘By the head of the emperor whom thou fearest, if thy intention is to kill me, tell thy executioners to let me down with my dress, as slowly as they choose, into that boiling tar, and thou shalt see how marvelous is the power of endurance inspired by Christ, whom thou dost not know.’ And so it was done; the executioners employed three hours to immerse her slowly, slowly; and when the tar reached her neck she died.”

Carthage, in Western Africa, and Lyons, in Gaul, were at the same time the daily witnesses of heroic deeds such as human history has seldom embalmed in its records. Who has ever read a more touching narrative than that of the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas? In Gaul, a few years later, but certainly under Severus, Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, originally a Greek from Asia Minor, and a disciple of Polycarp, united in himself the two great characters of doctor and martyr. Unfortunately his Acts have been lost; but it is certain that a great multitude of Christians shed their blood with him, for the faith. Father Colonia of Lyons, a competent critic, certainly, says that according to an old inscription which he had seen and believed to be genuine, “nine thousand persons of all ages and conditions in life suffered at the same time with their bishop.” †

On this subject a few reflections are naturally suggested, of great importance, but generally altogether overlooked by both authors and readers. The genuine Acts of Martyrs are not very numerous, owing to several circumstances which need not be pointed out in detail. The chief one is this, perhaps, that the second or third cen-

---

\* Strom. ii.

† Palladius, Hist. Laus., cap. i.

‡ Biographie Universelle, art. Irénée.

turies of our era were not ages of newspapers, like our own. Latin and Greek literature was perishing at the time, and Christian letters were just lisping their first words in an almost inaudible whisper. Great events then happened which, for years together, were never recorded by a single author. The history of those times has to be written now of scraps, and hints, and sometimes even of innuendoes. The great occupation of the pagan world was then the persecution of Christians, and it was not, on the whole, a pleasant subject for the pagan authors themselves to write upon. The Christians for the most part remained as quiet as possible, and had no interest in making much noise. On this account Tertullian is generally accused at this time, of having been too bold and too stiff in his *Apologeticus*. The only information of the kind, the Christians thought themselves obliged to record in full, was the extraordinary and most brilliant deeds of some of their heroes. Hence the names of Ignatius of Antioch, of Polycarp of Smyrna, of Pothinus and Blandina of Lyons, became conspicuous; their sufferings and deaths were recorded at length as pages full of edification and exhortation, addressed to the whole Church. But it is only by chance that a word or two may be met here and there, opening directly a vista which could not otherwise have been suspected, on the real number of martyrs. Many readers are thus apt to be deceived by such writers as Dodwell, and to believe that a complete list of Christian martyrs could be written, amounting to a few hundred, or perhaps thousand names. Nothing could be more erroneous. The whole truth will burst upon us, when the time comes to speak of the spread of Christianity in the West, or rather in Rome, and when details are given on the Catacombs and the late discoveries made in this most interesting field. But the remark must not be left aside entirely, that the records of our most complete martyrologies cannot give any adequate idea of the number of those of our ancestors who perished for the faith.

It has just been said that to reform our judgments on the subject, we have often only a word, a hint, even an innuendo, to guide us in forming a right estimate of the prodigious phenomenon. Such an one is a simple remark of Eusebius: \* “The edict of Severus was carried out with such merciless rigor that it was thought that the days of Antichrist were at hand.” Who would have imagined that

---

\* Hist. Eccl., vi. 1, 7.

even in the time of Nero, a great multitude of Christians had perished with Peter and Paul, if Tacitus had not, by chance, as it were, let fall almost unconsciously from his pen the very words, *immensa multitudo*, or if the line containing these two words had not reached us. Surely any Christian author of a subsequent age who would have asserted it, would now be pronounced to have spoken at random, as it was evidently impossible that such a thing as this could then have happened. So likewise, if the Lyonese Colonia had not met with a genuine inscription in Lyons, stating that nine thousand Christians perished with Irenæus, who could have imagined it? Thus again, had not Eusebius told us in his great history that under Severus the number of martyrs, in a great part of the Roman world, was so extraordinary, that the Christians thought that the days of Antichrist had already arrived, forerunning and foretelling the end of the world, who could have been fanciful enough as an historian, to say that thousands had perished at Alexandria alone, merely because Clement had stated that "he beheld daily martyrs burned and crucified under his very eyes"?

These general considerations were necessary, and must suffice. But it is important to lay some stress on the great development of genius which then took place in the whole Church, but particularly in the Greek-speaking part of it. This grew out of the title of teachers or doctors, which the rulers of the Church had first received from Christ in the persons of the apostles, and which passed naturally to their successors, the bishops of the Catholic Church. This title obliged them to look seriously into the deposit of faith, in order to impart it, in its purity, to mankind. That deposit, it is known, it contained both in Scripture and in tradition, and tradition itself is both oral and written. Thus, Scripture, and particularly that of the new dispensation, and the apostolic belief transmitted by tradition, either from mouth to mouth, or in written documents, as the symbols, or the decisions of councils, or finally, the constant doctrine of the Fathers, became a gushing well-spring of belief, which was to fertilize the mind of man, and create for it a new intellectual world, destined to replace the old. It is very curious to see how soon this magnificent process took place in the Church of Christ. The writings of the New Testament form the chief basis of this great doctrinal development. Many truths, however, not contained, or only obscurely, in those writings, are clearly stated in symbols of faith, decisions of councils, or positive and constant declarations by those

intrusted with the right of teaching. These various processes form the ground-plan on which is to be raised the whole edifice. Then the Apostolic Fathers come first; among them, as leaders, appear Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch. The most important question for them is the constitution of the infant Church, and they establish solidly the various ecclesiastical orders, and the submission of the lay element. Those who immediately follow them, continue their work on a larger scale, by detecting and unvailing the characters of heresy—*αἵρεσις*—and supporting the authority and unity of the Church, *καθ' ὅλην*. This part of the doctrinal office chiefly devolved on the Fathers of the West: Clement of Rome, Irenæus, Tertullian, Cyprian, and the Popes. Nearly at the same moment the great dogmas founded on the mission, nature, life, and death of Christ begin to be discussed and established, mostly in the East, by Justin, Theophilus of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria, Gregory Thaumaturgus, and Methodius. Hesitations, no doubt, appear, until the infallible voice of the Church, superior in authority to any particular doctor, shall settle forever the question.

But our object is not to discuss the Christian dogmas, except so far as they established the rapid and universal spread of the Church, as comprised in her title of Catholic. And certainly one of the greatest proofs of this characteristic results from that brilliant array of great names so peculiar to the second and third centuries. The Church is evidently at once one as well as universal; and her great title of Catholic would have been a sorry one, and without almost any value, had it not been for the compactness and oneness visible in her, even before her language was altogether formed, and could express in perfection her ideas, which were from the first the divine reflection of infallible truth. Hence, the long discussions on the ante-Nicene Fathers.

Let any one look at this strange peculiarity, and he will be entranced with admiration, if he has a mind. A body of doctrine is in the act of formation, which will forever endure, and rule mentally the most logical, philosophical, and acute nations of the whole world. This body of doctrine is based only on the nature, character, and mission of Christ, as ascertained both by some particular writings, and a few points of traditional belief. As soon as those writings have been critically settled as to their authenticity and authority; and as soon as the apostolic teaching has reached the utmost bounds of the earth, and become a real and substantial tradition; directly a number of



men appear everywhere proclaiming those truths, and insisting that they must be the basis of human life, and form the only salvation for the individual and for the whole human society. At the same moment those teachers, doctors, rulers—by whatever title you may choose to call them—find a ready response in millions of human hearts, all over the earth; and thousands upon thousands of men, women, and children are ready to die, and in fact do die, in attestation of those truths, and in confirmation of their firm belief that they contain the only hope of salvation for themselves and the whole world.

And this happened when the world had reached the acme of culture and knowledge, and when men were rather suffering from a surfeit of both! More strange yet: The doctrine, then developed, and firmly established, became in a short time strong enough to put an end to the old knowledge and culture, and to replace it by a far superior one, which has ruled mankind ever since! Let any one reflect seriously on this, and draw the conclusion. It will surely be this: The diffusion and establishment of Christianity in those circumstances, and with such characteristics as these, is evidently superhuman, and cannot be explained in any other supposition.

Let us consider in particular those Greeks, who then renounced their philosophy and paganism, and embraced Christianity at the peril of life. For we are actually occupied with the Hellenic world, which underwent at that time such a wonderful and sudden change. When they were turning their back, in such great numbers, on the worship of Jove, of Apollo, and of Athenè, to prostrate themselves at the feet of Christ as to those of a God—Pliny said of them, “They sing hymns of praise in honor of Christ as their God”—Greece was yet the beautiful and idolatrous country Pausanias has described at the very same epoch. There is no need of commenting here on the *Rambles in Greece*, which the reader has not certainly forgotten by this time. The Greek teachers of the infant Christian Church; including not those of Hellas alone, but likewise of Asia Minor, Egypt, Syria; even some of Gaul, in Lyons and Vienne, and in many other less celebrated countries, as Cyrenaika, the north of the Euxine, as far as the Caucasus, and many islands of the Mediterranean Sea, were precisely engaged in the solemn and well-laid scheme of destroying the Hellenic culture to replace it by one founded on the life of Christ alone. The scheme, in their eyes, was a divine one; and they knew they were merely the ministers of God for the regeneration of mankind, and the welfare of their beautiful Greece, which

they loved intensely. Consider what a different view they took of everything dear to man, from that of their ancestors. Truth, virtue, religion, customs, civilization, and art, were to have a completely different meaning from the one attached to those words by the former Greeks. It was the creation of a new world they were attempting. And they set to work with an ardor, an alacrity, a contempt of all consequences, truly heroic and supernatural. Hear them speak; see them act; penetrate if you can in their inmost thoughts, and admire there a sublimity of ideas never before imagined by the greatest of the former Hellenic writers.

And these rulers, teachers, doctors, gathered around them ardent followers, of every station and degree. Their zeal did not confine itself to the particular flock intrusted to their care; but embraced often the whole of Greece, and even went beyond.

The fragments of Denys of Corinth, preserved by Eusebius, are an illustration in point. This holy and learned bishop, who lived under Marcus Aurelius, inflamed by the same zeal which had burned in the heart of St. Paul, whose letters to his people he, no doubt, knew by heart, wrote also epistles to the churches of Greece and Italy. Thus he exhorted the Lacedæmonians to union and faith; the Athenians to follow strictly the doctrine of Dionysius the Areopagite, their first bishop; the Nicomedians to oppose the heresy of Montanus, which was at the time spreading over Asia Minor; the Romans finally, in order to thank Pope Soter for the abundant alms he had sent to the Corinthians. "We have read," he said, "your letter, and we read it constantly, as well as the one sent us long ago by Clement." What a pity that the correspondence of this great man has perished nearly altogether. Yet had we only similar fragments of other bishops of Greek cities in his time, or in that immediately following, it would be possible, at least, to form a correct idea of the spread of religion in Greek-speaking countries, in the second and third centuries. As it is, we are reduced to mere conjectures; yet these are not delusive; and this most interesting process can very well be imagined from what we know for certain. One thing is sure, namely, that as soon as the epoch of Constantine is reached, the Roman world, but chiefly Greece, are ripe for Christianity, and polytheism is already nearly dead. None of the decrees of this emperor, in favor of the new religion—and a great number were issued, which are generally overlooked by historians\*—met with any opposition. The reader may

---

\* See the collection in Migne's *Works of Constantine* in the *Latin Fathers*.

be somewhat surprised at it when the narrative reaches that period. And not only the new religion is favored, as intimated ; but paganism is directly attacked. Not only nocturnal sacrifices and ceremonies are positively forbidden ; but the text of the subsequent laws of Theodosius against the worship of idols, prove that they had, in fact, been enacted by Constantine.\* Even temples were demolished by his orders, as that of Venus and Adonis on Mount Lebanon, and of Serapis in Egypt. There is no doubt that this emperor inaugurated the aggressive policy against paganism, of many princes who followed him ; and not a word is said of it by any contemporary pagan writer registering a single protest on the part of the great number of idolaters who yet existed. This proves the decrepit condition of polytheism. And it cannot be answered to this, that the awe inspired by the title of emperor alone can account for that apparent torpidity. When Julian, a few years later, endeavored to restore paganism, he met with a high degree of opposition from the Christians, in spite of his imperial dignity ; and the taunts, sneers, positive ridicule, indulged in on the subject against him, by the inhabitants of Antioch, who were nearly all followers of the new religion, prove sufficiently that human conscience could not be any more trampled upon by an imperial decree. If, therefore, the Romans threw, under Constantine, no obstacles in the way of the religious revolution effected by his legislation, it was due to the little hold paganism had really on the souls of men at the time. This proves, at least, the universal favor enjoyed by the new religion.

And this was just said to have then been particularly true of Greece, more still than of Rome. The opinion of historians differs a great deal as to the motives which induced the first Christian prince to leave Italy and Rome, and to establish the seat of his dominion at Byzantium, to which he gave his name. But it is very probable that one of the chief reasons Constantine had for adopting this very strange measure, was the deep attachment he knew many Romans felt yet for paganism. It is now well ascertained that Rome was the last great city of the Western world to be thoroughly converted to Christianity. The opposition of its senate to the abolition of idolatry is well known ; and Constantine must have been aware of it, and probably wished to turn the difficulty by founding a city altogether Christian on the Bosphorus. This supposes, of course,

---

\* See Migne, *ibidem*.

that his conversion was sincere, and not the result of policy, as many still think, and will continue most probably to believe. We are fully persuaded of the contrary, and many proofs of it will be forthcoming at the proper time.

Yes, the son of Constantius Chlorus knew intimately that the Hellenes were already deeply and almost universally attached to the new religion; and he was sure that the projects he had formed in his great soul for the firm establishment of this divine philosophy, as he called it, would find a more hearty response among the people of Greek origin than in Italy itself, chiefly in Rome. It is strange, but it is so. The glorious city where so many Popes had already, during three hundred years, labored and died for Christ; where an immense number of men and women had shed their blood for the God-man; where so many people of the highest rank had rendered illustrious the Christian name; which was destined to be forever the true center of religion not for Europe alone, but for the whole world, was yet a pagan city, at least in its upper classes. The prophecies of the Apocalypse were to be fulfilled in its regard. It was to be destroyed by barbarians; and only after having received this baptism of blood, was it to be born again, and recover the name of the "Eternal City," after having lost it more than once in the fifth century. In Greece, on the contrary, the religion of Christ was already, under Constantine, that of the people. Hellenism was dead, so soon after Pausanias had eloquently described its last glories. One hundred and fifty years after his *Rambles* were written, there remained scarcely a vestige of that pagan splendor which the book reflects everywhere. A few years more, and Theodosius would by a simple decree close all its temples, and turn at once that splendid plain of Olympia in Elis into that deadly desert, where English and German antiquaries are at this moment unearthing whatever may remain of the former masterpieces of Grecian artists. All this must have been passing before the mental vision of Constantine when he went to live at Byzantium, where from the first moment of his residence he did not suffer a single monument of paganism to remain standing. All this will soon be confirmed by the description of the burst of Christian glory which suddenly broke forth on Greek-speaking countries, as soon as religion was free. Then we will witness at once numerous bishops meeting in councils; the celebrated Christian schools of Athens, Antioch, Cæsarea, Alexandria, shedding their brilliant light over the intellectual world; splendid

churches built and consecrated everywhere ; a new literature of the highest order springing up at once in prominence ; the whole Hellenic world changed, transformed, or rather transfigured under the influence of a religion which is destined never to perish.

How are we to account for all this, when we start from the comparatively humble position the Church had yet under Marcus Aurelius ? At that time Theophilus was bishop of Antioch, Denys of Corinth, Domitius of Heraclea in Thrace, Æl. Pub. Julius in Debel-tum, near Hadrianopolis, Sotas in Anchialus, Maris in Cilicia, Theocritus in Cæsarea of Cappadocia, Evander in Nicomedia of Bithynia, Theocritus in Chalcedon, Polycrates in Ephesus, Polycarp in Smyrna, Claudius Apollinaris in Hierapolis of Phrygia, Melito in Sardis of Lydia, Zoticus in Comana of Pamphylia, Julianus in Celænæ of Pisidia. This seems already a long array of bishops' sees under the Antonines ; yet many more flourished at that time which are not known historically. But considering the immense extent of territory over which they were spread, this is, in fact, a very small exhibit when compared with the spectacle offered suddenly to the view, when, a little more than a century later, we are struck with the innumerable bishops whom Constantine met everywhere at the publication of his "edict of toleration." The change cannot be satisfactorily accounted for, unless we suppose that meanwhile immense accessions to the flock of Christ had taken place in all Greek-speaking countries. It was really the accomplishment of the parable of the Gospel : the small and scarcely appreciable lump of leaven had penetrated gently into the whole mass of that celebrated "measure of meal," "until the whole of it was fermented." The process must be studied with care.

In every city, small town, or even village, over that immense extent of territory, the operation had been steadily going on, which we know in all its details, in the case of some more celebrated conversions to Christianity ; like that, for instance, of Justin Martyr, of Cyprian of Carthage, of many officers of the court of Diocletian at Nicomedia. The important and interesting letter of Theonas, Patriarch of Alexandria, to Lucian, who was instrumental in the conversion of these last influential men, shows at once how ingenious was the spirit of proselytism which animated the Christians of that epoch. Every member of the Church thought himself called upon to evangelize and bring to Christ those of his friends over whom he had any influence. And the motives for abjuring idolatry and professing the new faith, were so well calculated to win over the most

obdurate pagans, that few resisted the arguments used to open their eyes and convert their hearts.

Some reflections of Albert de Broglie in his *L'Eglise et l'Empire Romain au IV. Siècle*,\* will enable the reader to understand easily the whole process. He speaks of the smooth task of Constantine in abolishing gradually polytheism: "As soon," he says, "as the question of immorality came to be considered in the account paganism had to render of itself, the list of items to its charge assumed directly proportions which did not promise an early closing of the account. There was scarcely any pagan temple which did not contain in its mysterious dens some lewd or bloody tokens. Polytheism, to speak the truth, offered everywhere the loathsome spectacle of a regular and consecrated immorality, on whose filthiness the so-called religious prestige could only set human conscience to sleep, without, however, destroying it entirely. As soon as the prestige was taken away, the scandalous form appeared in all its deformity. From the day that worshipers ceased to approach with closed eyes the altars of Venus, of Priapus, of Cybele, no one could look at them without indignation and shame. The Gospel, as the sun at its rising, pierced through with its rays the thick veils of the temples and the dark recesses of their sacred groves, and laid open to the eyes of all their impure idols, obscene ceremonies, the stupendous jumble of their orgies and outrages which a refined society was surprised to have tolerated during so many ages."

This is said, by the noble author, of the times of Constantine, but is true likewise of the whole century which preceded it. As soon as a Greek was made aware of the morality of the decalogue as accepted and explained by the Christian Church, he had only to consult the voice of his own conscience to approve of it, and wish to practice it. His next step was to enter one of the numerous temples or places consecrated to the popular religion which encumbered the ground around him, to judge of the radical opposition existing between the new doctrine and that of polytheism. There was no city, no town, no village where the lesson could not be practically learned. Every Greek had only to lift up his eyes, and see what his ancestors had believed and practiced, to abominate it, and wish the delusion to be destroyed. And the teachers of the new belief belonged to the same race as he did; they knew all the details of the profligate wor-

---

\* Part 1st, ch. iii., p. 348.

ship, and of the absurd superstition ; they could point out the innumerable follies of daily occurrence in every village and town, and let him infer the conclusion. This is the task which all Christian apologists undertook in their published works, and which they, no doubt, carried to perfection in their daily intercourse with their pagan friends. This last means of proselytism must have been yet the most efficacious.

There is no possible doubt that this was the case not only all over Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, Thrace and Sarmatia, but particularly so all over Hellas during the precise time that Plutarch and Pausanias were traveling in all its different States, and celebrating the glory of its dying traditions, and of its gradually forsaken temples.

It would be wrong to conclude from this that the conversion of Greece was brought about by a purely natural process ; and it is known that Dom Guéranger has severely taken to task M. de Broglie for the tendency of such a nature as this somewhat visible in the celebrated work from which the last quotation has been taken. There is no doubt that the grace of God was paramount in effecting the stupendous change produced by the establishment of Christianity, and the main object of these volumes is precisely to furnish the proof of it. Still, even in the supernatural works of God among men, there is always a human side, and it is not right to ignore it altogether. The mind of the Hellenes was convinced by rational motives before they embraced the Christian faith ; but it is known to everybody that this conviction is never sufficient for men to take the last step. God must attract them to himself, and to Him at last their conversion is due, as they all acknowledge it.

10. *The propagation of Christianity and its process described from the lives of Origen and of Gregory Thaumaturgus.*

From the death of Severus in 211, to the edict of Decius against the Christians in 249, the Church enjoyed an almost universal peace, with the exception of the short reign of Maximinus the Thracian (235-238). To this long period of tranquillity, according to St. Cyprian,\* and to Origen in several passages of his numerous writings, must be attributed the serious abuses which crept in the Church both in the West and in the East. But though modern ecclesiastical writers quote

---

\* De lapsis, vi.

several texts of this kind, and consider this epoch as one of decline, it is easy to prove that they fall under a great mistake. This period of forty years was in fact one of intense activity among the Christians, and of a most remarkable progress foreshadowing the entire conversion of the Roman world. Being now occupied with Greek-speaking nations only, we must set aside the complaints of Cyprian, and consider apart those of Origen and of Eusebius, who likewise thought that "the Divine Providence had sent a fresh persecution (under Decius) to chasten and try his Church." Had the Christians already so far degenerated from their former fervor, that they had become merely worldly men, not to be distinguished from the pagans? Had the rulers of the Church so far forgotten their sacred character that they could not any more be called the ministers of Christ, but rather hirelings and tyrants over the flock? For many writers do not scruple to make these assertions. The various passages of Origen quoted from his homilies,\* do not represent the evil as general; but he merely says that a number of the faithful were not sufficiently detached from this world, and they gave too much importance to temporal things such as trade, agriculture, lawsuits; even to profane amusements, as race-courses, the wrestling of athletes, or the swift running of charioteers. As to the rulers of the Church, he complains that there were *some among them* who had reached the degree of deacons, or presbyters, or even bishops, by unworthy means; who tried to convey their ecclesiastical dignities after their death to their relatives and friends; who acted in their office as if they were placed at the head of the faithful to domineer over them, and not to be in reality their servants, etc.

The sum total of the complaints of Origen consists, therefore, in lamenting that neither all laymen were saints, nor all ecclesiastics really apostolic men. Not a word is said either reproaching any of them with immorality, or supposing that the majority of them were such as he deplores was the case for a certain number.

And to prove this to be really his meaning, the reader has only to look to various texts of his great work *Contra Celsum*,† chiefly, where he says emphatically: "The Christian churches, compared with the popular assemblies in the same cities, shine indeed like stars in the firmament. Who is not obliged to confess that the worse people in

---

\* In Exod. 12 et 13; in Leviticum, 9; in Josue, 10 et 21; in Matt. 24 et 25; in Num. 22; in Levit. 6; in Matt. 12, etc.

† Lib. iii., n. 29 et 30.



the Church are better than the multitude out of it? Place side by side the Church of Athens and the Assembly of the people in Athens: the first is peaceful and well ordered, intent chiefly on pleasing God; the other is full of turbulence, and cannot be compared to it. The same is the case with regard to the Church and the people of Corinth; to the Church and the people of Alexandria. Should you compare the senate of the Church in any particular locality with the civil magistracy of the same city, you will find in the first men worthy to administer the city of God, if there is one in the world; whilst the senators to be seen everywhere else show nothing in their life in keeping with their apparent pre-eminence over their fellow-citizens. Again, compare in every city from another standpoint the ecclesiastical with the civil magistrates, you will find that among the senators and magistrates of the Church of God, those who are most neglectful of their duty are far more virtuous than the mass of civil magistrates and officials."

In the same work *Contra Celsum*,\* he proves with more power still, that the Christian ministers had not degenerated, but on the contrary, were most zealous, both in keeping the faithful in the path of duty, and in bringing the pagans to the knowledge of God and of Christ. This celebrated book of Origen, *Contra Celsum*, it must be remembered, was written under the reign of Philip (Dom Calmet), precisely at the end of that long period of peace which is supposed by many writers to have entirely disorganized the Christian Church.

This objection being removed out of our way, the true picture of this time of tranquillity must be sketched out of scanty materials, it is true, yet with no fanciful colors. First, there can be no doubt that during those forty years of peace, the new worship being universally tolerated, numerous churches were openly built everywhere in the Greek-speaking world. According to Origen again,† one of the main features of the short-lived persecution of Maximinus, was everywhere the burning of churches. The Christians, in fact, had always places of public meeting above the ground. It was only in Rome, Naples, and a few other cities that they dug catacombs under the earth, where they both buried their dead and celebrated their holy rites. Everywhere else they worshiped in private houses, which in course of time became well known to many pagans. Thus did St. Peter in Rome, where the first church was, it seems, the house

---

\* Lib. viii., n. 75.

† In Matt. 28.

of the Senator Pudens. Occasionally, from the apostolic age even, buildings were used exclusively for Christian worship ; but this must have very seldom happened. St. John Chrysostom, however,\* speaks of a church at Antioch, called *ἡ Παλαιά*, existing yet in his time, and which was said to have been built in the age of the apostles, if not by them.

But it is certain that the open construction of churches in the East dates from the peace enjoyed almost everywhere in the Roman Empire, between the reigns of Severus and Decius. Nothing must have contributed more efficaciously to the spread of Christianity. These sacred buildings, it is true, must have been very unpretentious, and offered, no doubt, exteriorly few signs of note capable of attracting the attention of the passers-by. None of them, perhaps, equaled in architectural beauty the basilicas already used by the Christians within the dark precincts of the catacombs, some of which have been lately restored by the care of recent archæologists. Probably they were simply ordinary dwellings, arranged interiorly for the various uses of Christian worship as carried on at the time. Still they were known to be places of meeting for the disciples of the new religion. No pagans were certainly allowed to enter them during the holy sacrifice. The catechumens themselves were excluded from the sacred precinct from the beginning of what is called the "offertory." Still everybody knew that they were devoted to the adoration of the Eternal God and of his Son, Jesus Christ. Henceforth there was no fear that the calumnies so prevalent during the second century should again raise the mob against the Christians. From the beginning of the third we do not hear any more of the absurd rumors spread previously all over the Roman world, and firmly believed by the most enlightened pagans. The reader understands that we speak here of the pretended worship of an ass's head, of the bloody sacrifice of infants, and the sacrilegious eating of their flesh, finally of the promiscuous intercourse of deluded fanatics, after the lights were put out, and the room given over to darkness and crime. These atrocious imputations could not be any more believed by any sensible pagan, who saw Christian edifices open all around, and who began to consider the Christian doctrine as a sublime philosophy, if not as revealed truth. It was precisely the same reaction which took place in this country when the number of

---

\* T. v., Orat. 12, p. 152, Bened. ed.

Catholics having powerfully increased, and churches having been built in many places, no fanatical preacher could any more reproach priests and bishops with the immorality, superstition, and gross ignorance so liberally bestowed upon them during the last century. If the number of converts effected by this alteration of circumstances was not so remarkable in this country as it became in the Roman Empire at the beginning of the third century, it was merely owing to the fact that honest men in the first case were then generally tired of polytheism, and in the other, all did not yet loathe the errors of Protestantism.

It was at the end of this period, likewise, that Christians were openly allowed legally to possess, as corporate bodies, places of common sepulture. This was granted them by Gallienus, who at the same time restored to them the property in churches, and houses confiscated by his predecessor Valerian. Alzog justly remarks on this subject, that "as only such communities and corporations as were legally recognized could hold property, the Church now (260–268) being acknowledged by the State as a *lawful religious body*, though the religion itself was not so regarded (*collegium licitum*, but not *religio licita*), she came into the enjoyment of this privilege." And this alone, according to Alzog, can explain the conduct of Aurelian, the successor of Claudius II., toward the Church. This emperor, who published an edict of proscription against Christianity in the year 275, the last of his reign, had, however, anteriorly respected the right of the Church, as a corporate body, to hold property, by his decision against Paul of Samosata, whom he obliged to vacate the episcopal residence at Antioch.

All these particularities could not certainly have taken place, unless we suppose a powerful development of the Christian Church at the time. And this will become more evident still from the number of great personages who either embraced openly Christianity, as Philip the predecessor of Decius on the imperial throne, or at least became friendly to and admirers of the new religion, as Zenobia the great queen of Palmyra, Mammæa the mother of Alexander Severus, the governor of Arabia who begged of Origen to come and confer with him on the subject of religion and science, and other illustrious persons of that age. More details will be given on the subject presently.

A *second* proof of the great development of Christianity at that epoch is the extraordinary number of bishops whose existence is as-

certained historically, and the councils which began openly to meet. Of this no better evidence can be adduced than the three successive meetings of bishops held at Antioch for the condemnation of the errors of Paul of Samosata, which ended by his deposition in 270. At this last council, St. Athanasius relates that seventy bishops were present; and St. Hilary of Poitiers—perhaps better informed, because in his exile of four years in Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, during the following century, he was in daily intercourse with Asiatic prelates of all provinces—enumerates as many as eighty. When one reflects that fifty-five years later Constantine, calling together the bishops of the whole world, and defraying their traveling expenses and those of their retinue, could see only three hundred and eighteen of them meet at Nice, when however the religion of Christ was already universal, it becomes a matter of wonder that long previously, after so many bloody persecutions, and almost on the eve of the edict of Aurelian, such a number of prelates could go at their own expense from distant countries, to decide an affair which had not yet taken huge proportions and was merely confined to a part of Northern Syria. But it is particularly the publicity of their meeting which is most surprising, and their boldness in addressing the emperor himself and obtaining from him the dispossession of the heresiarch, because “he was no more in communion with the bishops of Italy and Rome.” The reader sees at once that we are coming near to those times when, even had not Constantine been sincere in his conversion, it would have been for him a political necessity to acknowledge publicly the existence of the Christian religion, so universal and powerful it had become.

Several other councils held publicly a few years before render the fact more striking still. They were those of Iconium, in 256, on the subject of the baptism of heretics, and of Antioch again, in 251, against the Novatian schism. Our actual purpose confines us to the East, and prevents any mention being made of the numerous meetings of bishops in Africa and Italy, at the same epoch.

But, after all, nothing can give a better idea of the extraordinary spread of the Church throughout the Greek-speaking countries, in the third age, than the whole life of Origen, and the sudden expanse of intellectual power she gained at once in all the regions where he dwelt for any length of time. Egypt, Palestine, Arabia, Hellas, Asia Minor, and Italy itself, must be passed in a rapid review, when the great personality of Origen is concerned. A word

of it only can be said here, but it is the *third* and last great proof of the remarkable fact under consideration.

Being born in 185, he was seventeen years old when the persecution of Severus broke out, and he began his career of Christian catechist directly after. It is known that he died soon after the end of the Decian persecution. Thus his active life comprised precisely the forty years of peace which we describe. Since the life of Origen is so well known in all its details, an exact appreciation of the history of the Church in the East, at the same time, can be derived from it without fear of error. In doing this we have not to consider this great man as a writer, an editor, or expounder of Holy Scripture, but as a man of action, influencing first his countrymen of Egypt, and afterward those of Palestine, of Arabia, of Asia Minor, of Syria, of Hellas, and finally of the West, although to a far less degree. It is seen at a glance that all the Hellenic countries are included in the scheme; and this must consequently furnish us an exact picture of the state of the Christian churches in the East, with respect to the hierarchy of bishops, the inferior clergy, the morals of the faithful, and the appreciation of Christianity on the part of great personages, men and women of note, outside of it. Thus will the reader be able to judge of the immense progress accomplished in a little more than one hundred years since the death of St. John.

The first particularity to be examined is the influence Origen obtained at once directly over the Alexandrian Church, and in an indirect manner over the pagan schools of the *Museum*. There seems to be no doubt that he had been the disciple of Ammonius Saccas, who is habitually called the Founder of the Eclectic philosophy, although Potamo before him seems to have really inaugurated it. Few men among the ancients have exercised modern critics to the same extent as Ammonius Saccas did. Was he a Christian, and did he remain one? Could his doctrine be acceptable to the Christians of his time, or was it really the barbing of the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus, Iamblicus and Porphyry, all of them haters of Christianity? These questions must be briefly examined, because they may enable us to discover that Origen was in fact very near effecting an early union between the great University of the Museum and his own Catechetical School; and although for some reason not known to us it failed, nothing can give us a greater idea of the influence of Pantænus and Origen at the time, and of the pre-eminence that Christianity had already acquired.

It is admitted by all that Saccas was born of Christian parents ; that he was originally the disciple of Pantænus, the predecessor of Clement of Alexandria at the head of the Christian School, and that Origen became his disciple. The great majority of ancient authors were besides fully convinced that he remained Christian all his life. Many modern writers also admit or suppose it. Dom Calmet\* goes so far as to make of him a saint and a martyr.

But Brucker in his *Historia critica philosophiæ—de secta eclecticâ*—pretends that the opinion of the ancients who thought that he persevered in the religion of his youth, was the result of a confusion of names. There have been, he says, more than one Ammonius. Jerome, Eusebius, Augustine, and others, confounded Saccas with one of them. As to his doctrine, Brucker thinks that it was the same as that of Porphyry, Plotinus, etc., who were his disciples as well as Origen. Thus he is represented to be a hater of Christianity as violent as became afterward the leaders of Neo-Platonism. All this Brucker maintains mainly because Porphyry has said so.

Eusebius, however, has stated more than fifteen hundred years ago, that this assertion of Porphyry was a lie prompted by his hatred of Christianity. This unworthy disciple of Ammonius Saccas could not prove that the doctrine of his master was identical with his own, because Saccas, as is well known, has left no writings whatever. We have to judge of his doctrine by what the ancients have said of it. Dom Calmet, resuming their opinion, says in so many words—the text here must be given exactly: *Il insinuait insensiblement la vérité du Christianisme en montrant la conformité de ce que dit Platon de la Sagesse incréée et de la vérité éternelle avec ce que la religion Chrétienne nous en apprend.* This is one of the main arguments developed by the Fathers of the Alexandrian Christian School. Porphyry himself, according to Brucker, † said that “his disciples in listening to him conceived an ardent desire to study the Oriental philosophy of the Persians and Hindoos.” It looks as if Saccas had already dimly perceived the line of reasoning followed very inadequately in *Gentilism*.

De Laulnaye in *Michaux' Biogr. Univ.*, may not be far from the truth in stating that “the doctrine of Saccas was vague, and he was rather a theosophist than a philosopher. His object was to systematize a real syncretism of all philosophies and religions rather than establish a scheme of pure Eclecticism.”

---

\* Hist. Univ., tom. v.

† Tom. ii., p. 213, Leips. ed. 1742.

It cannot, however, be said that he was a hater of Christianity, not only on account of all that is known of him, but particularly for the reason that Origen followed his lessons and was truly his disciple, which he would not have done in Brucker's supposition. Eusebius relates,\* that after the martyrdom of his father, Origen, reduced to poverty, accepted the hospitality of a lady who harbored likewise a gnostic by the name of Paul. This man, admired for his eloquence, was giving lessons of his philosophy, and Origen was invited to go and hear him. But he refused, although other orthodox Christians did not feel any scruple about it.

Origen might go occasionally to the Museum and listen to some eloquent enemy of Christ in order to refute him. But that he had inscribed his name among the pupils of an open enemy of religion, and thus declared himself in favor of his doctrines, is simply inadmissible. Still this is the relation—of disciple toward his master—which all ancient writers maintain Origen held with respect to Saccas.

It seems therefore extremely probable that at this early time, when Eclecticism and Neo-Platonism had not yet assumed the shape given to them later on by the Alexandrian philosophers, and when the Greek Fathers, particularly Pantæus and Clement of Alexandria, firmly believed that the Hellenic philosophy had prepared the way for Christianity, the schools of the Museum and of the Alexandrian Church had not yet assumed an attitude of antagonism to each other, but lived in a kind of semi-amity and concord. There might be occasionally among the renowned professors of the great pagan university, some unguarded lecturer who would speak of the new religion with disrespect and a sort of contumely; but others may at the same time have preserved a dignified bearing toward it, and showed even a secret leaning to it.

Clement of Alexandria was known to be a powerful advocate of Eclecticism in the proper and right sense. Origen was not opposed to the same system of philosophy. There must not have been, therefore, at first, any conflict of importance between the Museum and the Church. It came later on, probably after the death of Saccas, and ended certainly by the complete triumph of Christianity.

This view of the case is strongly confirmed by the success of Pantæus, Clement, and Origen in attracting to their catechetical school

---

\* Hist. Eccl. vi. 2.

pupils from the Museum in great numbers. Had the antagonism between both establishments been remarkable from the start, it is not probable that this should have been the case. But Ammonius Saccas had taken lessons from Pantæus, and Origen from Saccas. What reason could there be to prevent the pupils of the Museum from going to the Christian school as soon as Pantæus announced that they would be welcome to it? Everybody knows that he was the first to inaugurate this measure, with the most willing consent of the Alexandrian patriarch. Until that time the school was open only to those who wished to receive instruction in order to become Christians. A new policy was then adopted, which is in itself a proof of the good understanding existing between both schools.

We may therefore take it for granted that Providence opened then a large door for the spread of Christianity in the upper regions of the intellectual world. And Origen was particularly instrumental in corresponding with the divine designs. The Church at once stepped on an elevated position, from whence she could call to herself the men of science and the leaders of thought. For they were then brought together in greater number at Alexandria than anywhere else. That many of the pupils from the Museum did not rest satisfied with listening intently to the lessons of the new teachers, but were truly converted and openly embraced Christianity, is proved beyond doubt by what Eusebius relates of the persecution of Severus at Alexandria. He states in so many words that several converts of Origen and members of his school went so far as to seal their religion with their blood. The Bollandists quote the passage at length, in giving the Acts of those martyrs on the 28th of June. Plutarch was one of them—a man of such renown in the city for his extraordinary accomplishments that many Alexandrians turned bitterly against Origen, because they attributed his death to the exhortations of Adamantius, and such was, in fact, the case.

Thus the Christian Church placed herself first deliberately at Alexandria, in the midst of world-renowned teachers, who were then attracting the attention of mankind, until by gradual steps she took the most prominent position, and finally appeared alone at the head of the intellectual world. And this took place in so short a time after Christ that the mind, in considering it, is bewildered.

After having secured this immense advantage to Christianity in Egypt, Origen began his travels, although with no precise intention of the kind, and obtained the same result in several most important



centers of the human intellect at that epoch. In the sketch required for this purpose the strict rules of biography as to the succession of events, appear to be of a very secondary importance; and thus a strict chronology can be set aside, and the various points of interest to be considered can very well be examined in the simple order of their individual importance. Cæsarea of Palestine consequently is the next city worthy of attention, since Origen spent in it a great part of his active life. He was induced to go thither first in 212, when Caracalla entered Alexandria with an army, and began a horrible massacre of the inhabitants, chiefly of the learned classes and of the students, because they had indulged in satires against the emperor on account of his fratricide on the person of Geta. The privileges of the schools of the Museum were withdrawn, and even literary reunions among citizens were forbidden on this occasion.\*

In 230 Origen left Alexandria again, and went back to Cæsarea on account of the displeasure of his archbishop, Demetrius, who in fact cut him off from the Alexandrian Church and deprived him of his position as teacher. It is not our object nor purpose to enter into the merits of this difference between the patriarch and Origen; but it is sufficient to state that, deprived of his chair in Alexandria, Adamantius was henceforth placed at the head of the schools of Cæsarea by Theoctistes, the bishop of that city, with the full concurrence of Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem. We must consider him a moment in that new field of intellectual labor which gave an immense impulse to the influence of Christianity all over Palestine and the East.

The author of *Christian Schools and Scholars* justly remarks † that “the Christian seminaries took their origin in the episcopal and monastic schools, and these again grew out of that system of community life which, being first embraced by the faithful at Jerusalem, was afterward established by the apostles, who lived with their immediate followers as they themselves had lived with their Divine Master. The apostolic origin of the canonical rule of life has never been denied. When St. Augustine was accused by Petilianus the Donatist of introducing a novelty into the Church by establishing his community of regular clergy, he defended himself by appealing to the example of the first Christians, and showing that if the name of monastery was new, the manner of life which he and his

---

\* Cantù, Hist. Univ., chap. xxii.

† Page 7.

brethren followed was as old as Christianity itself." Thus from the beginning episcopal schools were established everywhere; and no doubt that of Cæsarea in Palestine had the same origin. But it never took a prominent position in the intellectual world until the bishops Alexander and Theoctistes placed Adamantius at the head of it. From the information conveyed by the writings of Origen himself, and by the celebrated *Discourse of Thanksgiving*, written and delivered by Gregory Thaumaturgus, it is clear that the school of Cæsarea, as Origen organized it, was a combination of the episcopal seminary and the catechetical school, so that ecclesiastics and laymen could both profit by it. The life of Gregory Thaumaturgus, written by Gregory of Nissa, and his well-known intimate relations with the great Alexandrian teacher, give us precious details which account perfectly for the great intellectual development given to the Church by such a scheme of studies. Gregory, or Theodorus, as he was first called, was born in Neo-Cæsarea of Pontus, of pagan parents, and was himself a pagan at first. His native city had adopted Roman manners and used the Latin language more perhaps than any other in the interior of Asia Minor. The study of law, as is well known, was one of the most important parts of a Roman education, and the young Theodorus wished to acquire a thorough knowledge of it. Berytus, in Phœnicia, possessed the most renowned schools of Latin jurisprudence in the whole Orient. He therefore made up his mind to repair thither, and his brother Athenodorus consented to go with him. But they had a sister who wished to go to Cæsarea for some unexplained reason; and the two young men volunteered to accompany her before going themselves to Berytus, which, as is well known, was not far from Cæsarea. In this last city they happened to come just when Origen was beginning to teach; and the consequence was that they entirely forgot Berytus and its law schools, and, becoming enamored of Christian learning, they shortly after received baptism. What was then this Christian learning? It is no more a subject of mere conjecture. The details given both by Gregory and Origen are complete, and we have only to examine them a moment, to judge of the effect these studies produced immediately in the Eastern world. The author of *Christian Schools and Scholars* has perfectly well expressed it, and we have only to copy:\* "Origen began by mercilessly rooting out the weeds and briars of bad habits

and false maxims which he found choking up the soil, a process which at first, as his pupils acknowledged, cost them not a little. Then he taught them in succession the different branches of philosophy: logic, in order to exercise their minds and enable them to discern true reasoning from sophistry; physics, that they might understand the works of God; geometry, which by its clear and undisputable demonstrations serves as a basis to the science of thought; astronomy, to lift their hearts from earth to heaven; and finally, philosophy, which was not limited, like that taught in the pagan schools, to empty speculations, but was conveyed in such a way as to lead to practical results. All these were but steps to ascend to that higher science which teaches us the existence and the nature of God. He permitted his pupils freely to read whatever the poets and philosophers had written on this subject; himself watching and directing their studies, and opening their eyes to distinguish those sparks of truth which are to be found scattered in the writings of the pagans, however overlaid by a mass of fable. And then at last he presented them with the sacred Scriptures, in which alone the true knowledge of God is to be found. In one of his letters to Gregory he explains in what light he wishes him to regard the profane sciences: 'They are to be used,' he says, 'so that they may contribute to the understanding of the Scriptures; for just as philosophers are accustomed to say that geometry, music, grammar, rhetoric, and astronomy all dispose us to the study of philosophy, so we may say that philosophy, rightly studied, disposes us to the study of Christianity. We are permitted when we go out of Egypt to carry with us the riches of the Egyptians wherewith to adorn the tabernacle. Only let us beware how we reverse the process, and leave Israel to go down into Egypt, and seek there for treasures: that is what Jero-boam did in old time, and what heretics do in our own.'"

The ministry of Gregory Thaumaturgus in Asia Minor will soon enlighten us on the way the true apostolic men of the time—those of whom Origen said, they were worthy to be at the head of the city of God on earth, if there was one—proceeded to convert the mass of the Hellenic populations, and the immense success they met with in this third century, now under consideration. But we have yet to stop a moment at the intellectual development witnessed at the same time in the Church.

The Christian schools of Cæsarea became from henceforth a center of enlightenment for the whole Eastern world, nearly on a par with

those of Alexandria. At the end of this third century, Pamphilius, a Gentile, educated in the public schools of Berytus, fell in with Pierius, the successor of Origen, and became in his turn a bright luminary in the schools of Cæsarea. Eusebius, the author of the *Ecclesiastical History*, one of his pupils, has preserved for us most interesting details on his vast erudition, his love for books, of which he formed a library of more than thirty thousand volumes, and finally his ardent love of Christ, for whom he died a martyr, in 309. From this time out Cæsarea became an intellectual center for a great part of the Eastern world. Pity it is that our limits prevent us from entering into more details. But it must be to all a matter of surprise that so soon after the preaching of the apostles the Church was already looming up all over the East, and calling the Greek-speaking countries to come to her for the intellectual food they craved, which they could not find any more in Hellenism.

The same glorious mission of Origen has to be briefly considered in various other countries of great importance for the same object. The persecution of Maximinus obliged him to fly from Palestine, and he took refuge with his friend Firmilian, the bishop of Mazaca, called oftener Neo-Cæsarea of Cappadocia. Firmilian was the same prelate who had presided over the Council of Antioch which condemned Paul of Samosata. The great Basil was to be one of his successors a hundred years later. Firmilian was one of the most eminent prelates of the Eastern world for learning and piety. It seems that he was already bishop in 231, took part in all the great events which interested the universal Church in the third century, wrote many learned works, which unfortunately are lost, and became connected by correspondence at least with the greatest men of the West, among them St. Cyprian of Carthage and Stephen of Rome. He was, with Origen, most instrumental in the conversion of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, and gave to the see of Neo-Cæsarea in Cappadocia its first great illustration. From henceforth it became the source of Christian learning and piety for the countries east of it, as far as Central Asia. This happened chiefly after the time of Gregory the Illuminator, first Patriarch of Armenia, who lived a hundred years after Firmilian; but it was the previous celebrity of the see of Neo-Cæsarea which induced the holy apostle of the Armenians to receive his episcopal consecration from Leontius, then its archbishop.

It is true that the persecution which had obliged Origen to leave precipitately Cæsarea of Palestine followed him to Cappadocia; and

soon he had to hide himself in the house of a Christian lady of the name of Juliana. But during the two years he thus lived in concealment he did not remain idle. Having found in the house of Juliana the manuscripts of Symmachus on Holy Scripture, he spent his time in literary labor; and although we do not possess any positive information on the subject, there is no doubt that with Firmilian he gave to this part of Asia Minor the first impulse toward the intellectual eminence the capital of Cappadocia enjoyed for several centuries.

The same he, no doubt, effected previously in Arabia, where he was called by the governor of that part of the country which belonged to Rome; and most probably to this sojourn of Origen must be attributed in part at least the momentary repute of Bostra, which every one is surprised to find, for a short time at least, a literary city in the midst of a sandy desert. To this the great Adamantius must have certainly contributed more than the Roman garrison, which since the time of Trajan occupied it. And it is rendered still more probable from the fact that the governor who called him wished to confer with him not only on religion, but likewise on science. From the details given previously the meaning of this word is fully known as comprising the whole *curriculum* of studies then followed in the Greek world.

And this brings us to the consideration of some of the high personages, outside of the Church, with whom Origen became acquainted, and over whom he exercised a great influence. Philip, the emperor, was certainly one of them. A native of a village in the neighborhood of Bostra, he certainly became a Christian long before he rose to the imperial power. All Christian antiquity is unanimous on the subject. No one has ever stated who brought him to this determination. Had not Origen anything to do with it in his previous visit to the governor of Roman Arabia, or when he went again to Bostra to bring back to orthodoxy Beryllus, its bishop? It is a mere conjecture, but seems very probable, from the fact that Adamantius wrote him a letter after he had stepped on the throne through the murder of Gordianus. This letter existed yet in the time of St. Jerome.\* The very learned author of the biography of Philip in *Michaux'* collection, says that the object of Origen was to reproach him with his crime. If so, our conjecture would be almost

---

\* De Viris illustribus.

proved. At any rate, the influence of the great Alexandrian teacher over the Emperor Philip is admitted by all ancient writers.

It is known, likewise, that as Eusebius relates in his *Ecclesiastical History*,\* Mammæa, the illustrious mother of Alexander Severus, called Origen to Antioch, probably in 223, to learn from him the doctrines of Christianity, and compare them with the eclectic philosophy which she had studied. She did not, it is true, become openly a Christian, but her son, over whom she always had a great influence, was henceforth, as is well known, an admirer of the doctrines of Christ, which he always highly favored during the whole of his reign. This short sketch alone would suffice to demonstrate the spread and influence of Christianity in the third century. Yet the life of Origen only is considered in it; and many circumstances of this life are not even mentioned. For instance, not a word has been said of two voyages undertaken by him to Achaia, as it was then called, that is, to Hellas, as we should prefer to say. On the first of these occasions the motive of Origen was to call back to their primitive fervor the bishops of Athens, Corinth, and other cities. No details are given to enable us to judge in what particulars these prelates had fallen off from the zeal of their predecessors. But Origen has precisely told us in a passage from his great work, *Contra Celsum*, written at the end of his life, that the ecclesiastical rulers of Athens and of Corinth were far more virtuous than the civil magistrates of the same cities; and that the assembly of the people composing their churches was much more peaceful and fearing God, than the people forming their municipal corporations. It seems also that great divisions had taken place in the Christian communities of Achaia, and the contest against heretics was at its height. Still, from the passage of the work *Contra Celsum*, alluded to before, the agitation among the Christians of that country *could not be compared with the turbulence of the popular assemblies* in the same places.

Not a word also can be said of the voyage of Origen to Rome under Zephyrin, except that his object, as he himself states, was to see "the most venerable and ancient of all churches, that of Rome." But all these particularities, so well calculated to impress us with the rising power of the Church in that age, are mostly concerned with the learned part of the population, and the ruling classes in State affairs. What influence did Christianity exert then

---

\* Lib. vi. 21.

on the people itself in Greek-speaking countries? How far was the Grecian world moved and transformed morally by the spread of the new doctrine? To answer these questions, nothing better can be done than give some details of the remarkable life of Gregory Thaumaturgus. The reader, after examining fairly the chief circumstances of it, will easily conclude that what then took place in and around Neo-Cæsarea of Pontus, must have likewise happened in the whole East, although not perhaps everywhere to so remarkable an extent.

A word has already been said of the youth of Gregory, and of his conversion, with that of his brother Athenodorus, at Cæsarea of Palestine, under the instruction of Origen. Returning to his native city, his science, virtue, and modesty attracted the attention of all. In him, in fact, all the culture of the time shone most conspicuous. He is undoubtedly the first of the Greek Fathers who carried eloquence to the highest point; and his *Discourse of Thanksgiving* to Origen, which we still possess, places him among the best of Greek writers of any age. Thus the Church, rich already in the immense talent of Clement of Alexandria, of Origen, of Theophilus of Antioch, and many others, was taking her position at the head of the intellectual world. Had Gregory Thaumaturgus devoted his life to study and composition, he would certainly have produced masterpieces worthy of an immortal renown. But his inclination led him to a different sort of life, and had he followed altogether his bent, since he became a Christian, he would undoubtedly have labored in solitude to his own sanctification, and embalmed the Church with the perfume of his holiness. But Phedimus, metropolitan of Amasea, a few miles west of Cæsarea, thought he was just the man wanted for the evangelization of those wild countries of Northern Asia Minor; and he directly pointed out to him the rich field which offered itself in his own native city. Neo-Cæsarea, with its polished upper classes composed of Hellenist philosophers and Roman jurisconsults, all pagan or indifferent to religion, contained in its suburbs and in all the country around multitudes given up to every kind of superstition, that had stood so far proof against Christian proselytism. At his death Gregory thanked God that having found only seventeen Christians in the city, he was leaving after him only seventeen pagans, for whose conversion he ardently prayed.

What was the cause of this want of success on the part of those who first evangelized the country? It is impossible to know it at this time. St. Peter had undoubtedly preached in it. But his own

epistle to the Christians he had gathered in Pontus, shows that he spoke there only to the Jews. The Douai version says, "To the strangers dispersed in Pontus," etc. The Vulgate's expression is more pointed, *Electis advenis dispersionis Ponti, etc.* The Greek word is *διασπορά*. It is known that among the Hebrews of that age the word *dispersio* in Latin meant that part of their people that had left Palestine and dwelt in Gentile countries. Some idea of it may be obtained by reading the second chapter of the Acts. St. Paul never went to that part of Asia Minor. The doctrines of Christ must have spread among the pagans of these regions from Galatia, not very distant, to the west of it. There were very few bishops' sees in the vast tract of land which extends from Gallogræcia toward the northeast. Phedimus, however, then metropolitan of Amasea, had had at least a predecessor in Nicetius, whose name is found in the lists of Gams.

That the country people were yet barbarous there can be no doubt, although Tertullian's description of it\* is a most absurd flight of fancy. The great African writer wished to make absolutely a savage of Marcion, who was born at Sinope, on the frontiers of Pontus, and thus he gathered from relations of travelers and geographers all the most exaggerated details of barbarism then attributed to the people of the coasts of *Pontus Euxinus* and the neighboring mountains of Caucasus. Nevertheless, with the exception of Greek and Roman foreigners established in large cities, the natives of that part of Asia Minor were then certainly far from having yet obtained the high degree of civilization which Gregory of Nyssa, a century and a quarter after this time, attributed to it. For his description † is exactly the reverse of that of Tertullian.

Phedimus, as soon as he became acquainted with Gregory and his brother Athenodorus, thought immediately of employing them for the noble work of conversion which was so much needed among these native tribes. He immediately gave the episcopal consecration to the elder brother, in spite of his violent opposition, and placed him again in the city where he was born, and where the influence of his family gave him a better chance of doing good. But all those exterior circumstances of family connection, recognized talent, and refined manners, would not have been of any avail, had it not been for the solid virtue and apostolic zeal of the young man. Soon, what

---

\* Lib. i. Contra Marc., cap. 1.

† De Vita Gregorii Thaumaturgi.



had taken place everywhere at the first preaching of the apostles was re-enacted on the wild field of those mountainous and yet savage countries.

The interesting little work of St. Gregory of Nyssa\* is not, unfortunately, a biography, but merely a discourse in praise of the saint. It contains consequently very few details of places, private manners, and social customs. The speech was addressed to a people of nearly the same country, who had preserved all the traditions of that holy life, as it is sufficiently indicated by the last lines of the opuscle. There was no need of calling back to their memory that of which it was full, and the manners of the country were so familiar to them that their mention would have been perfectly superfluous. This is unfortunate for us, and has deprived us of many interesting particularities. It is sufficient, however, to go through those pages cursorily to understand the immensity of the labor of the Thaumaturgus, and the completeness of his success. Many passages furnish the proof of the gross superstitions of those tribes. Gregory of Neo-Cæsarea lived constantly among the people, and although he soon obtained their respect, nay, their most unbounded veneration, still their absurd religion and uncouth practices appear often very plainly through the narrative.

Read, for instance, the passage in which the saint, going to take possession of his episcopal city—probably directly after his consecration at Amasea by Phedimus—sees with sorrow that “whilst there is not a single temple erected to the true God in the whole country, there is scarcely a rood of it which is not covered with altars, statues, shrines, and edifices, where the whole nation is nearly all the time employed in idle or impure ceremonies.”

Just before reaching the city, a storm obliges him to take refuge in a temple. “This was a notorious edifice ; one of those whose demon-gods appeared often to the ministers of those impious rites, and through the art of divination uttered their oracles.” The remainder of the story deserves to be read in the original. Our modern critics would certainly object to the power over devils attributed here by Gregory of Nyssa to the Thaumaturgus, who could exclude them from their own shrines, or allow them to come back and recover possession of them by a bit of parchment on which he had written ; “Gregory to Satan : enter.” But in spite of these objec-

---

\* De Vita Greg. Thaumat.

tions, the fact is too universal in all pagan countries at the time of their conversion, to permit the least doubt in the mind of an impartial reader. What is there related of the Thaumaturgus is also asserted of all apostles and evangelizers of pagan countries, not only in ancient, but likewise in modern times. Our own friends, the Dacotahs, or Sioux, were, a few years ago, if they are not still at the present time, openly addicted to the practices of the black art. The daily papers have lately spoken of the interviews of Sitting Bull with Father de Smet; and it was there maintained that he positively refused to embrace Christianity. Who knows if that refusal was not chiefly owing to his secret leanings for the medicine-lodge, with its shaking poles and dread apparitions? The Sioux, not long ago, were certainly famous for those devilish rites, besides the not less devilish custom of offering occasionally some poor Pawnee girl to their blood-thirsty demon-gods.

In the discourse of Gregory of Nyssa, on the life of the Thaumaturgus, the reader can find several other conflicts of the holy man with the demons worshiped by the coarse pagans of Pontus. It is to be remarked that if at the time of the propagation of Christianity all the gods of the Gentiles were called demons by the Christian apostles, in those parts of the Hellenic world where real culture had penetrated, and where philosophy and poetry had preserved some, at least, of the old traditions of mankind, the devilish rites of which we are speaking were not there at least so prevalent and obvious as they were in barbarous districts, where nearly everything belonging to primitive times had disappeared. St. Paul in Athens, and particularly before the Areopagus, did not speak as Gregory did to the *Ἀρχιερεύς* of the temple near Neo-Cæsarea. Yet the difference did not proceed from either of the two apostles. Both of them were as refined as holy; and the second reflected in his person, as it has been just seen, all the graces of a polite age and a superior education. The difference came from those they addressed. The members of the Areopagus were enlightened Greeks, the inhabitants of the rural districts in Pontus were often half-savages. Gregory had to tame them; and to do this, he had first to drive away the devil from their heart and their country. He did this in the most handsome and complete manner.

But he was not satisfied with making a clean sweep of the impurities of polytheism in the places which he evangelized, he soon began to build churches. And the first he raised to God was, of

course, in his episcopal city. He had found only seventeen Christians when he arrived; but he was soon surrounded by crowds of people eager to hear him; and the miracles he performed—of which a word shall be said presently—brought him a multitude of disciples, for whom a religious edifice was absolutely needed. His new friends, it seems, wished first to build him a house. It looks as if he positively refused to occupy apartments in the mansion of his ancestors; and the wish of the people was as determinedly opposed. This is a part of the speech Gregory of Nyssa puts upon his lips on that occasion: "Are we so far deprived of the protection of God as to require a special place for the refection and care of our body? Do you think it is a small house that in which God resides, that God through whom 'we move, and live, and are'? Is the whole expanse of heaven so contracted and narrow, that another place to live in is required? The only house we ought to care for, is that which is the inalienable property of each of us, namely, the edifice constructed of our own virtues, rising constantly toward heaven! . . ." The people did not speak any more of building him a house; but one of them, named Musonius, hurried forward, afraid that others would be ahead of him, begged of the holy man to accept the hospitality of his house; "and since that time, a century ago," adds Gregory of Nyssa, "that house has become a venerable landmark, is one of the famous spots of the city, and will, no doubt, transmit to posterity the honor the saint conferred on its owner by accepting it."

But meanwhile the multitude that followed him remained under the canopy of heaven. They would have, no doubt, consented forever to listen to him in the open air, and to receive the rites of the new religion under the eyes of God and his angels in the vast expanse of the country. Here we deplore the necessity of being brief, and the impossibility of quoting *in extenso* the narrative of Gregory of Nyssa, when he condenses himself in as short a compass as he can, the admirable description he makes of the charity, the doctrine, and the prodigies of the saint. The only thing allowed us is to say, in conclusion, that the enthusiasm of the new disciples was raised to such a pitch that "they all came offering their money, or their help, or both, to construct the first temple erected among them to the true God." Gregory of Nyssa adds, that "this edifice could be seen by everybody in his time; and shortly before he delivered his discourse, it remained alone, standing in the midst of the ruins of all other edifices destroyed by a frightful earthquake."

From the whole narrative it is evident that this part at least of the Greek-speaking world was then under the spell of a powerful emotion, carrying everything in its wake. And the Thaumaturgus took advantage of it to travel all over the province of Pontus, building churches, forming congregations of Christians, appointing and consecrating bishops, and laying, in fine, the foundations of that deep religious spirit which was undoubtedly the great characteristic of the inhabitants of that part of the world, until the Turks came to spread over those beautiful regions the universal desolation which now prevails in them. The history of Alexander, the collier, whom he made bishop of Comana, could furnish us with as delightful a page as the primitive annals of Christianity can offer at any epoch. But the general details of it are sufficiently well known; and duty compels us to hasten on. It must be said, however, that after having perused all that the modern authors of ecclesiastical history tell on the subject, when one goes back to the original little book of St. Basil's brother, the impression made on the reader is exactly like the following: Throw your eyes on a landscape painting of some nook and corner in the highlands of the Hudson. Then, full of admiration for what you think to be a faithful portraiture of it, go by steam to some railroad station in the neighborhood, and alighting, with a simple stick in your hand, walk leisurely in a pleasant afternoon to the very spot you have admired on the canvas. You may recognize the spot if the painter was a skillful one; but what a difference! How cold and dull what you saw yesterday was compared with what you find around you to-day. How much purer is the light in which you are all bathed! How much sweeter is the azure of the sky, and the whiteness of the fleecy clouds! Then the freshness of the leaves, and the mildness of the air, and the song or twittering of the birds, and the really living cattle and sheep; and, finally, the glimpse of the noble river occasionally seen through the boughs of tall trees! Tell me, then, if you saw yesterday the real representation of this enchanted world. The same will undoubtedly happen to you if, after having read the history of Alexander the collier, or any other episode pertaining to the life of the Thaumaturgus, in Fleury, or Tillemont, or Rohrbacher, you finally make up your mind to peruse the Greek of the Bishop of Nyssa, and go through his narrative from beginning to end.

But the very name of the Thaumaturgus speaks of miracles. What of them? What the Apostle of the Gentiles tells us of the

miracle of tongues in the primitive Church,\* is true of all miracles in general: "Tongues are for a sign, not to believers, but to unbelievers." Thus they were very important for the conversion of the heathen. We are convinced, however, that without any signs and wonders the good Gregory of Neo-Cæsarea would have converted a number of pagans. But to produce the sudden effect which his preaching accomplished nothing could be more potent than the control over nature attributed to him by his biographer. It is important to consider a moment the ground on which this entirely rests. There was not, of course, at the death of Thaumaturgus, nor shortly after, any inquest on the subject for the purpose of his canonization. Gregory of Nyssa himself tells us in so many words, at the end of his opusculè, that the narrative of the prodigies he relates came to him by the oral tradition of the people. He lived in the following century, a little more than one hundred years after. He was bishop of Nyssa on the Halys, in Cappadocia, southwest of Neo-Cæsarea, which was situated on the Lycus in Pontus. But the whole region around, in the central part of Asia Minor, was still full of the wonderful renown which gave to Gregory the name of Thaumaturgus. What he had done in this regard was in their opinion on a par with the prodigies performed by Moses and Elias in the Old Testament, and by the apostles in the New. This, the biographer tells us, the whole country asserted. He had moved mountains; interdicted to impetuous rivers the overflowing of their banks; he had changed a lake into a smiling plain, to put an end to the crazy and bloody contentions of two brothers. Other wonderful deeds of the holy man were reported and firmly believed, all over the country, at the time of Gregory of Nyssa, that is, late in the fourth century. Was all this a delusion? Had the *immense* population which witnessed the deeds of the Thaumaturgus merely imagined that they saw all this, and reported as actual facts to their children the wild fancies of a disordered mind? If those narratives had been merely vague stories the critics of this age might in safety, perhaps, call them amplifications, or exaggerations, or simply dreams. But many of them are accompanied in the opusculè of St. Basil's brother with circumstances which entirely preclude such assertions as these. Take, for an instance, the command given by the saint to the Lycus River, after a fearful inundation which had devastated the country, not to

---

\* I. ad Cor. xiv.

overflow its banks any more, and to respect the property and the lives of the inhabitants. If in his *Discourse* Gregory of Nyssa had spoken only in these general terms, it would have been curious enough had the property and lives of the inhabitants been respected by the river during the whole century which elapsed between the Thaumaturgus and his biographer. But he goes much farther. He relates that, before uttering that solemn command, the holy man went on foot, with a multitude of people, supported on a staff—freshly cut, no doubt, from the bough of some tree—until they all reached the dangerous spot of the stream.\* For, according to the narrative, the Lycus was subject to frequent freshets, and the greatest danger to the surrounding country came from this very bend of the river. The Thaumaturgus then issues that command we have mentioned, but at the same time sets firmly in the soft ground the staff he had brought with him. It is a very common occurrence, known to all students of botany, that the bough of a tree, almost of any kind except the firs, merely stuck in wet soil, will naturally grow and become a tree. This happened with the staff of Gregory. The tree grew up, and in the time of Gregory of Nyssa—so he said—it had assumed huge proportions; but the country people unanimously maintained that the stream had never since risen in that spot higher than the root of the tree.

The readers of French newspapers, about twenty years ago, may remember that several rivers, having their head-waters in the center of the country, overflowed their banks, and were the cause of deplorable losses of property and human lives. Napoleon III. himself left Paris and went to the various places of the greatest disasters, humanely relieved the people in their distress, and in this deserved and obtained the gratitude of many Frenchmen. But he thought he could go much farther, if we remember aright; and he promised that the question of those periodical overflowings would be studied by himself and other competent men, and he was sure that science would apply a remedy. The question was studied, measures were taken in consequence, and it was solemnly announced that there would be henceforth very little, if any, danger of such wide-spread calamities. We think, however, that two or three years ago, the President of the new republic, General McMahan himself, had to visit nearly the same spots, after a very similar occurrence, and did

---

\* κατά τι μέρος ὑπερῆται τῆς ὄχθης.

all he could to assuage the misfortunes of the inhabitants. But he was wise enough not to say that science would soon apply a remedy. Being a better Christian, and knowing perhaps the chief events at least of ecclesiastical history, he may have remembered the *staff* of Gregory Thaumaturgus, which he himself had not, and which not even the saints of our age—although it is not entirely deprived of them—could wield. But this question of miracles may require some more elucidation at the end of this work, and thus we leave it in the present unsatisfactory state.

The previous considerations refer only to a part of the Hellenic countries, and the object in view was universal. Would it be possible to prove that the activity and far-spread power, so well ascertained in the Church, both in Alexandria and in Asia Minor, toward the middle of the third century—say in 250—was also in full sway all over the Greek-speaking countries? Is it thus a positive fact that there was a powerful development of Christianity at that time and in those regions? In answer to these questions, it must be said that the details are few; yet conjectures in the affirmative are so probable that they may be said to amount almost to a demonstration. First, had we the full details of the two voyages of Origen to Achaia, and in particular to Athens, the case might be proved historically, at least for Hellas. But all that is known of them is a phrase or two to which an allusion has already been made. A fact, however, of great importance is the one mentioned by St. Dionysius of Alexandria: that before Macrian, the pretorian prefect of Valerian, induced him to issue an edict of persecution against the Christians in 257, this emperor was favorable to the new religion, and “his immediate household resembled a Christian community rather than a pagan palace.”\* If this were so in the surroundings of a heathen prince, we may be sure that it was better still among country people, and inhabitants of small cities, wherever Christianity extended. And this, no doubt, a few years before, had been the cause of the violent persecution of Decius. Alzog, without quoting his authorities, thinks that “the policy pursued by Decius arose . . . from his firm conviction that the genius of Christianity was directly opposed to the spirit and tendency of the Roman Empire.” He had seen under Philip, his immediate predecessor but one, the Christians favored everywhere, though it seems that pagans

---

\* Alzog.

never suspected Philip to be one of them. The new religion had so far conquered the higher classes of society that the imperial palace, in a few years more, was destined to "resemble a Christian community." Evidently the whole Roman world, the East in particular, was undergoing a deep change, which must be attributed mainly to the grace of God, and which prepared the near coming of a universal religion, such as the ancient prophets had announced and the first apostles had openly heralded.

But some cogent proofs of this rapid spread of the new worship are taken from the well-known life of St. Dionysius of Alexandria, in all respects an historical personage, called by Athanasius the "Doctor of the Catholic Church." He was a contemporary of Origen, being born a few years later than Adamantius, and dying just ten years after him. But his biography proves much better than that of Origen, the intimate connection then existing between the East and West, and consequently the solid compactness and perfect unity of the Church. Dionysius was all his life well acquainted with Christian affairs in Rome, and was in frequent communication with several popes. He openly opposed the Novatian schism, and knew all the peculiarities of its history. This fact alone, which could scarcely have happened fifty years previous, would go to prove a reciprocal dependence of the various parts of the Church inconsistent with scarcely any other supposition than a universal growing up toward a well-connected unity. The contest on the baptism of heretics, until that time confined to Africa and Rome, extended at the same epoch to Asia. Everything was preparing for the controversies of the following age, which by themselves would show that the Church was really Catholic or universal, in the fourth century; even had we not an incredible number of proofs of detail to which alone the vulgar gives its attention. Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Carthage, were great cities far distant from each other; yet the communication between bishops becomes henceforth continuous, because all the intervening countries are already full of Christians. This seems to us as amounting to a direct demonstration.

Dionysius of Alexandria, again, when the persecution of Decius began, was apprehended by the order of Sabinus, prefect of Egypt, tried, together with a number of his flock, and condemned with them all to a rigorous exile in the village of Taposiris in Libya. But scarcely arrived, he is set free by the wild population of the country, which, being all Christian, defied the authority of the emperor,



and dispersed the soldiers who held him captive. What a change from the time previous to Severus, when the people everywhere rose against the Christians and put them to death! Yet scarcely more than fifty years had intervened.

When St. Alexander of Jerusalem took possession of his see—probably as early as 212—*Multitudo fratrum plurima*, says Rufinus, *in occursum ejus egressa est*; that is, “a great multitude of brethren went to meet him outside of the gates.” The Church could already show herself in public.

Many other facts of the same nature might be brought forward, but these, we think, are sufficient.

11. *The persecution of Diocletian completes the demonstration of the same great fact.*

The origin and the issue of the last grand effort made by the Roman emperors in order to destroy root and branch the Christian religion, is probably the strongest argument that can be adduced in proof of its strength and universality. The simple reflection that, so soon after the apostles, the whole energy of the Roman power was employed, all over the extent of the empire, to extirpate it, and yet completely failed, suffices for the conviction of the most incredulous. The cause of this last persecution was undoubtedly the persuasion on the part of the Roman rulers that Christianity was fundamentally opposed to the empire, and the fear naturally excited at the sight of such a mighty power rising up against them. The end of it, that is, the gross amount of its result, was a complete failure on the part of the tormentors, and as complete a success on that of the victims. It is difficult to find a mightier proof of the strength Christianity had already acquired, since all the terrible engines set to work by the most powerful tyrants, were not only unable to crush it, but even to check its progress, and prevent it from spreading all the time farther and farther. Christianity actually grew up when so many thousands, nay, millions of its adherents were destroyed; and it is then chiefly that the celebrated adage of Tertullian became true, “The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians.” To these considerations we must turn for a moment. The intention cannot be to describe in detail those shocking horrors. There will be another occasion, later on, to come back to the subject, when speaking of the spread of Christianity in the west of Europe, particularly at Rome. Then we

will meet with more authentic details on the number of those primitive martyrs, discovered lately in the catacombs. There are not the same uncontested records with regard to the extent of the persecution in Greece during the third century. When you read the best ecclesiastical histories written by even Catholic writers, such as Alzog, you are surprised to find that the recital of the persecution of Decius, and that of Valerian, which soon after followed, brings forward so few names of people who then died for Christ. It looks almost as if the Protestant authors were right who reduce their number to a few hundreds. The cause of the mistake comes from this, that modern writers are bound by the laws of criticism now universally adopted, to mention only authentic details, and unfortunately the *acta sincera martyrum* which have reached us give us very few names compared with the number of those who perished. It is exactly as if in the narrative of the wars of the first Anglo-Saxons in Great Britain, which almost destroyed entirely the Celtic race in the island, rules of criticism prescribed to the reader not to admit the wholesale recital of the early chronicles, as being an evident exaggeration, but to believe that only those whose names are mentioned in those narratives, perished in reality. Yet it is a positive fact that, after the country had been ravaged for a long period of time, the miserable remnants of the former swarms of Celts were finally cooped up in the small peninsula included between the Severn and the Dee, beside the roughest mountainous tracts of Cornwall. Not to fall, therefore, under the same mistake with regard to the primitive times of Christianity, the reader must pay a great deal of attention to some general statements of most respectable and reliable Christian authors of the period, which have not been sufficiently insisted upon by modern historians. There is, for instance, the short phrase of Tertullian,\* who, speaking of Severus' persecution, says that the edict was carried out with such merciless rigor that "it was thought the advent of Antichrist was at hand." And of the same terrible time, Clement of Alexandria, an actual witness of those horrors, could tell his contemporaries without fear of contradiction, "We behold daily many martyrs burnt or crucified before our very eyes." † Both texts are quoted by Alzog. Again, we are confined in our remarks here to the Eastern part of the empire. Still, it is not useless to refer to the letters and other writings of St. Cyprian,

---

\* Ad Scapul., c. 4.

† Strom., lib. ii.

who perished himself under Valerian ; and this, because what took place in Proconsular Africa, must have happened likewise in Proconsular Asia, in fact, in all the provinces of the empire. The great number of those who apostatized, or saved their life by some unworthy subterfuge, and on whose account so many councils were afterward held, is also a strong proof of the severity of the persecution. It would have certainly been easy to escape without open apostasy, or pretexts equivalent to lies, had the execution of the imperial edicts been of the mild nature supposed naturally and necessarily in the contrary opinion. But Rome was fighting for her existence as a pagan commonwealth, and Rome was not used to any moderate assertion of authority when such a thing as her existence was at stake.

It is proper to remark that from the time of Severus down to Constantine, her view of Christianity was not such as it had been at first. Till the end of the Antonine dynasty, she despised the new religion. She allowed the populace to persecute its adherents ; she looked on the spectacle with satisfaction, no doubt, and allowed the mob to have its way. Yet as it did not seem to her an absolutely necessary measure for her own safety, she did not throw her whole soul into the scheme of persecution. Often her magistrates tried to a certain extent, good-naturedly, to save the Christians, as the reader has seen in the narrative of St. Polycarp's martyrdom. Henceforth nothing of the kind shall appear. It is a mortal combat between the Empire and the Church ; and the supposition of Dodwell and his followers becomes a most ridiculous opinion, altogether inconsistent with any knowledge of Rome's spirit. Voltaire, on the subject, is one of the most silly among Dodwell's partisans. This came, probably, in great measure from his hatred of Christianity, which made him adopt any opinion favorable to the enemies of the Church, and opposed to anything of a supernatural character in her first establishment. Still much of it may have been the result of his real ignorance of history. He knew as little of Rome's real spirit as of the greatness of Hebrew inspiration, which he ridiculed ; and he seemed really to believe that the Roman sway was a mild one, under which he might have himself held the position of Tibullus, or better, of Horace. Those who have a perfect understanding of the age of the Cæsars entertain a very different opinion, and firmly think that never, since the world exists, has there been such an overbearing pride and crushing tyranny to weigh down on everything opposed to her supposed eternal dominion. This is the key to open the seem-

ingly inexplicable secret of those untold horrors which deluged with Christian blood the fairest regions of our globe during more than a hundred years ; but which proclaim at the same time that Christianity possessed then, indeed, an immense power, since it was undisputedly the adversary of the mighty pagan queen who was supposed to hold a universal and eternal dominion. To form, consequently, a right opinion of the last great persecutions under the Roman emperors from Decius to Diocletian and Galerius, inclusively, they have to be considered as a supreme contest between two powerful giants, each of them bent on throwing down and throttling his antagonist. But here the giants are seen fighting over the whole continent of Europe, and farther ; since the whole of Northern Africa and Western Asia form a part of the battle-field. This alone suffices to prove what enormous strides Christianity had made during the third century.

It is chiefly the last persecution under Diocletian, Maximian, and Galerius, which bore this remarkable character. It may be said that the changes then introduced in the constitution of the empire and in its administration were merely previous steps, to prepare the ground for the following contest. This might not have been in the mind of the emperor when he made those changes ; but they turned out to be so in the end. Unable to play the Oriental sovereign in Rome, Diocletian removed his own seat of power to the East, and made Nicomedia his capital. There he directly assumed the pomp of a Persian despot, including prostrations before his throne, bending of the knee in his presence, and all the other marks of servility in use in purely Asiatic countries. He added the surname of *Jovius* to his proper name as a kind of assumption of divine nature. But he did not keep to himself alone the title of Augustus. He gave it likewise to Maximian, to whom he assigned the West, with Rome as a capital. Maximian, to follow suit, assumed the title of *Herculeus*, placing the West under the God of strength, as Diocletian had placed the East, or Greece, under Jove, the supreme Olympian god. This was a new consecration of idolatry which was to bear its fruit. To each Augustus a Cæsar was assigned. Diocletian took for himself Galerius, to whom he gave Illyria and Greece, and Constantius Chlorus was made the co-partner of Maximian, and placed at the head of Britain and Spain.

The supreme master of the empire intended certainly that the result of these measures should be only political ; and he most prob-

ably wished merely to oppose four heads of armies to the numerous foreign enemies of the Roman name. But the consequence turned out to be very different ; and if Constantius Chlorus had chimed in with the other three monsters, the Christians would have found themselves in the presence of four execrable tyrants, living in their almost immediate vicinity, whilst previously there was only one, sitting in general at Rome. As it was, when the edicts of persecution came, their execution was urged from three points at once ; namely, from Nicomedia in Asia Minor, from Sirmium in Pannonia, and from Milan in Italy. The Christians of Great Britain alone, not numerous certainly at the time, could enjoy real peace when all the other Roman provinces, that is, nearly their totality, were convulsed by the bloody rage of three monsters. The origin and cause of the struggle has been ascribed to various causes. According to Eusebius it was chiefly the malignity of Cæsar Galerius, inflamed himself by the idolatrous superstition of his mother Romula. It is more probable that Diocletian was chiefly moved to it by the power of the Church, so directly opposed to the spirit and tendency of Rome, and which at the time struck the eyes of every beholder. Eusebius himself, speaking of the time previous to it, rejoices, in his *Ecclesiastical History*,\* “in the increasing numbers and influence of the Christians, who, not satisfied with their ancient edifices, had erected in every city more stately and spacious structures, and who were so powerful at court that their services were more valued and more acceptable to the emperor than those of their pagan associates.” †

It is beyond our scope to describe the various steps through which the persecuting spirit gradually passed, until finally it stalked forth in all the horrors of its grim aspect. But during a full decade and more, its rage went almost beyond the limits of human imagination. Eusebius of Cæsarea, a witness of its fury, has described it in imperishable colors. It is impossible to read without a thrill of horror what he writes of this blood-thirsty madness. Yet the author of the *Ecclesiastical History* is generally sparing of emotional touches in his style. In his time writers had not yet learned to pile up details over details in narrating events even of the greatest importance. Still, the tortures he briefly describes are such as it requires the most ingenious and at the same time barbarous imagination, to invent. Often, in one day, and in a single place or city, thirty, sixty, a hun-

---

\* Lib. viii. and ix.

† Alzog, tom. i.

dred Christians were literally butchered. And these cities or places comprised, we may say, all those of the empire where Christians lived in numbers. Often the executioners, tired and weary, had to give up their bloody work; the knives, swords, and iron hooks were at last blunted and unserviceable; still, the rage of the persecutors did not abate. When, practiced apart on each Christian, the operation would have been long and tedious, the victims were thrown together on a burning pyre; or they were bound with cords and left to perish on barks launched without pilots or rudders on the sea; they were thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheater, or dispatched by troops of gladiators, with whom they were in mockery matched as combatants.

The only resistance of the Christians consisted in coming before their tormentors in an ever-increasing number of victims. When hundreds, nay, thousands of them had disappeared, it looked as if their ranks had not suffered the least diminution. The project, at first sternly decreed by the emperors, appeared at last what they did not expect at the beginning, namely, the determination to destroy barbarously the majority of the subjects of the empire. And so it was, in fact, owing to the immense progress of the new religion during the last hundred years. From that day forth, the triumph of Christianity could be surely proclaimed, as no Roman emperor, however barbarous, could entertain such an idea as this. Consequently Diocletian himself issued a new decree, by which he declared that "his heart was inclined to mercy, and henceforth all those who should profess the Christian faith would only be deprived of one eye, or made lame of one lower limb, and in that mutilated state would be sent to the public mines, where, buried under the ground, they would be at the mercy of those who had them in charge."\* It was a mere subterfuge to cover the emperor's defeat. The Christians had really conquered.

These few paragraphs are not given as containing an adequate description of those mighty events. This description, in fact, cannot be now written; because the few pages of Eusebius and Lactantius which contain almost all that we know, added to some scanty details peculiar to St. Cyprian and to the genuine Acts of martyrs, comprise nearly all the materials we possess, which a writer could use, for an elaborate history of that hideous epoch. It is at least certain that

---

\* Art. Dioclétien, Dict. de Théol. Cath., tom. vi., p. 367.

all the ecclesiastical historians we have, even the most Catholic and best disposed, have not so far given us anything comprehensive and satisfactory on the subject. Rohrbacher is undoubtedly the best; yet his limits prevented him from doing full justice to this extraordinary part of ecclesiastical history. A young, able, and painstaking author, collecting here and there in all the writers of that age, bits of information, and incidental facts mentioned without purpose, as it were, could perhaps give us a monograph far superior in interest to all that has yet appeared. It might not be yet comprehensive enough and exhaustive. Still it would be a worthy object of study for a man of talent and good will.

The *milder* decree of Diocletian produced scarcely any relaxation in the rigors of these atrocious proceedings. For Galerius soon obliged the head of the empire to abdicate, and taking his place as the first of the four Augusti and Cæsars, he followed naturally his fell inclinations, which were far worse than those of Diocletian. It is, in fact, from that moment that the persecution took the frightful proportions of which a word only could be said. And the same blood-thirsty rage would have lasted at least as long as his life, had not the arm of God finally struck him a blow, which even his obduracy could not but acknowledge came from heaven. "He was stricken," says Alzog, "with a loathsome and painful distemper, and felt death rapidly approaching, so that he became convinced of the uselessness of shedding so much blood, and resolved to put an end to a persecution which had proved so ineffectual. He published, on the 30th day of April, 311, an edict in his own name, and those of Licinius and Constantine," etc. We would take the liberty of going farther than this, and of stating that Galerius was not moved to publish that celebrated *edict* only on account of the "uselessness of shedding so much blood." But he felt actually convinced that his sickness was a heavenly visitation. Lactantius declares it positively.\* There is also a very curious anecdote on the same topic related by Rufinus.† Finally Constantine was entirely persuaded that in general all the persecutors of the Christians had been punished in this world, and this must have been one of the chief motives of his very sincere conversion. This shall be proved before long.

It looks as if in these last pages, the narrative went far beyond the limits of Greek-speaking countries, and embraced the whole

---

\* De morte pers. xxxiii.

† Lib. viii., c. 18.

Roman world, which is not the object of the actual inquiry. But in such matters as these, it is impossible wholly to dissociate subjects so closely connected; and, moreover, there is no doubt that in the East, in Greece chiefly, where Galerius had supreme command, the persecution was far fiercer than in any other part of the world. Consequently, a short description of it, embracing the whole Roman world, and containing features of it in the West as well as the East, could not well be avoided. At the end of it, the Church would have appeared in a state of complete exhaustion, had not the number of her children been then such as it has been described. The whole body, deprived almost totally of its life's blood, would have required long nursing to recuperate; and only immense additions to its ranks would have restored to it an appearance of ubiquity. The reverse was the case. It directly loomed up in full vigor, as if this terrible ordeal had only increased its strength. It showed itself instantly at work, repairing the material damage, building churches everywhere, intoning a chant of triumph, and renewing the vigor of its youth, as the eagle. This was chiefly the case in Greek-speaking countries, where Constantine went to build his capital. Then indeed was the Greek world the scene of a dazzling effulgence of Christian glory. A universal enthusiasm burst forth in an ecstasy of poetry and eloquence. Pagan art, pagan science, until then embodied in the expression of a sensuous idolatry, disappeared like a mist in the morning, and the joyful, entrancing, and sublime figure of Christianity was alone seen hovering above the fair fields of Hellas and her surrounding daughters. A short sketch of this wonderful change will naturally conclude this chapter.

12. *The Catholicity of the Church bursts forth at once, at the edict of Constantine, proclaiming the end of persecution.*

The victories of Constantine over Maxentius and Licinius, and his conversion, gradually and thoughtfully elaborated in his mind and heart by the grace of God, no doubt, but likewise by his reflections over the wonderful events he had himself witnessed, were the harbingers of that glorious peace which God sent to his Church at the end of so many heart-rending afflictions. We must, therefore, consider a moment the great individuality of Constantine, not only as a political ruler, but likewise as a sincere Christian, and consequently as a remarkable unit in that immense crowd of new converts. His



character has been defamed in more than one sense. He has been represented as a cruel man by inclination, even after he became a catechumen. It has been supposed that he remained in his heart a pagan, embracing his new faith only through political motives. To speak plainly, he has been made a hypocrite pure and simple, requiring likewise hypocrisy from others. It will not be difficult to prove that, with all his faults—it is not intended to disguise them here—he was sincere in his conversion, a warm admirer of virtue, if at times he failed to practice it, and an immense benefactor to the Christian religion; in this almost on a par with Charlemagne. He was, therefore, a fair son of the Church, an almost unexceptionable honor to her, and a proof that Christianity could command the conviction and the love of the highest in the land, as well as of the poor and the slave.

In his subsequent exhortations to his people, to embrace the new faith, he insisted on this: "That the Christian religion was not a new one, but had existed from the beginning of the world. Mankind, unfortunately, had been seduced by erroneous doctrines, until, in order that the evil should not increase still, and become worse than it then was, God had sent us through His Son the bright light of faith, exhorting all to address their worship to the true God alone."\* This clear enunciation of the true religious history of mankind proves alone how well grounded was the faith of Constantine. But besides this short passage, preserved to us by Eusebius in his *Life of Constantine*, can we ascertain what were the true motives of his conversion? There can be no doubt about it for any one who reads the whole of that *edictum* of which this short passage has just been quoted. But as it was published after his last victory over Licinius, and was addressed particularly to the Eastern provinces of the empire, in the midst of which he had already, very probably, taken his residence by the building of Constantinople; as, consequently, he had before this been a Christian by conviction for a long time, it is proper to examine by what steps he was brought to it. His father, Constantius Chlorus, who always preferred Christians to pagans at his court, although he never embraced Christianity himself, must have left on him an impression most favorable to the new doctrines. But perhaps a more efficacious incentive to receive the truth was the spectacle of the heroism of the Christians, which he

---

\* Constantini edictum ad provinciales de falso cultu multorum deorum. C. x.

must certainly have witnessed during several years at Nicomedia, at the beginning of the persecution of Diocletian and Galerius. He was kept there as a kind of a hostage for his father, by Galerius chiefly, after the abdication of Diocletian. The historians relate in detail the expedient he used for escaping and flying away to Great Britain, when the news of his father's illness reached him. But what did he see in the East, when kept away from his father by compulsion? This he relates at length in an edict previous to the one we have just quoted, and directed *Provincialibus Palestinæ*.\* In the last of these decrees, he tries to repair the evil inflicted on the martyrs, the confessors, and the Church; and his very language is a proof of the deep impression he had received during his long exile at Nicomedia. He knew that what he saw was also witnessed all over the empire, except in the Western part of it, preserved from the scourge under the mild sway of his father. He knew that it was for their belief in one God, and their rejection of idolatry that the Christians were subjected to such atrocious proceedings as were enacted under his eyes; and he knew, moreover, that the worship of one God had been the religion of all mankind before idolatry was introduced, since he states it so clearly in this *edictum*. Was not all this calculated to inspire him with a deep veneration for so many heroic men, who boldly confronted the Roman power, and refused to obey its mandates because these were opposed to the voice of human conscience?

But there was another conviction which grew up at the same time in his mind, and at last burst forth in a flood of convincing light, namely, that the powerful men who had undertaken to wipe out Christianity, and for this had shed torrents of innocent blood, were all finally struck by the hand of God, and punished even in this world for their hateful crimes. Of this retribution of divine justice, few men in our age care to hear. "This belief," they say, "belongs to a school of history which has now but few followers. The designs of Providence are forever concealed from us; and the action of God in the world is no longer taken into account by historians; because the ordinary and extraordinary events taking place in the world can all be sufficiently explained by natural causes." Consequently, the books written of old by men convinced that God has always kept his eye on human affairs, and often avenges the violation of his laws,

---

\* Cap. vi. vii. viii. ix. x. xi. xii.

are set aside as scarcely worthy of any consideration. Thus, as Lactantius was a man of taste, talent, and sense, he cannot have written the work, *De mortibus persecutorum*, and forthwith it is placed among the *apocrypha* of Latin literature. This probably was not precisely the reason which induced Dom Le Nourry—a learned Benedictine of the eighteenth century—to reject the book as a genuine work of Lactantius. He was the first to do so. But it is not to be doubted that in our age the great number of those who have embraced his opinion are powerfully actuated in so doing by their invincible repugnance for everything which bears a supernatural character.

To these men may be proposed the deliberate belief of Constantine the Great, expressed in several passages of his *Decreta et Constitutiones*; and the result may be also that in vain do they refuse to Lactantius the authorship of the book *De mortibus persecutorum*, since Constantine himself shared entirely the opinion of the man who was called *Cicero Christianus*. Yes, this deliberate conviction of the son of Helena, a conviction expressed in very strong terms, as we shall see presently, was certainly one of the motives which induced him to reject the worship of idols, and is of itself sufficient to vouch for the sincerity of his conversion.

In the *Constitutio*, called *Lex Constantini de Christiana religione*, c. iii., he attributes the various defeats of the emperors opposed to him to the fact that they all “had dared to subject to the most excruciating tortures those who were guilty of no other crime but of worshipping God”—whom he calls there *το Κρεῖττον*. In chapter iv. he does not confine himself to the assertion that those impious princes had been defeated in battle, but he declares that, “They were overwhelmed by misfortune, and perished miserably; or, if they survived, they confessed that life was for them more bitter than the most cruel death, and their iniquities were punished by a fate not unlike that inflicted on their victims.”

As to himself, read in chapter v. with what heartfelt humility he acknowledges that all his success was due “to the benevolent designs of Providence, who wished to put an end, through him, to all the distempers of the State,” etc. His style reaches the height of sublimity, and can be compared to that of the best passages of Bossuet, when he describes his own triumphant march through the world “from that far-distant British Ocean . . . , armed with a superhuman courage, he was able to drive away and scatter

the cloud of evils which was then darkening the whole globe of the earth."

The same persecuting fury and the same punishment of it he describes in several passages of his second *Edictum Provincialibus Orientis*. The universality of the scourge is expressed in the fifth chapter by the words quoted in a note.\* The partisans of Dodwell's opinion will surely say that this is the exaggeration of poetry. We reply that Constantine did not intend to write a *poem*, but an *edict*; and when a text of law is couched in such terms as these are, the social calamities which it describes must have been fearful. There is also a remarkable passage on the same subject in the letter written by Constantine to the Persian king Sapor II., in which, alluding to the miserable death of Valerian, who had also persecuted the Christians before he was taken prisoner and subjected in the East to the most abject ignominy even after his death, he expressly declares that *all* those Roman princes who had been guilty of the same excesses against good and holy men, had experienced in their death the effect of the same vindictive anger of God.

In enumerating the most probable motives of the conversion of Constantine, the miraculous appearance of the Cross in the heavens on the eve of his contest with Maxentius cannot be forgotten. This very remarkable occurrence has been, it is true, denied, or at least pronounced doubtful, by many modern historians. But after the last-discovered proofs of this pretended legend, it must be admitted as an historical fact. The chief reasons for believing it can be read in Alzog's first volume, and with more details in the sixth volume of Rohrbacher. It is sufficient to state that Eusebius, in his *Life of Constantine*, relates that he heard the story from the lips of the emperor, who declared himself prepared to swear to it.

But this is enough to all intents and purposes, although many more proofs could be given of the sincerity of the faith of Constantine. It is now in order to speak briefly of what he did for the Catholic Church; and this might be considered likewise as a sufficient evidence of his real conviction. It has been maintained previously that he must be considered as a benefactor to the Christian religion almost on a par with Charlemagne, and this assertion must

---

\* "Ea tempestate tellus quidem ipsa procul dubio lacrymas edidit, cœlum vero quod universa suo ambitu complectitur cruore inquinatum ingemuit. Ipsa quoque diei lux præ luctu atque horrore tanti prodigii obscurata est."

be made good. First, therefore, the comprehensive edict of toleration which, in 313, he issued at Milan, after his victory over Maxentius, in his own name and in that of the other Augustus, can be considered as the greatest boon that a Roman emperor could confer on the Church. From that day forth she was free to build churches, to openly convert pagans, to proclaim the dogmas of the new religion, to open schools and dazzle the eyes of the intellectual world by the creation of a new and fascinating literature, fresh as the dew of the morning, grand as the expanse of the skies, deep as the mysteries of heaven, of earth, and of the heart of man can be. This alone was sufficient to secure the victory to truth, by giving it at last a resting-place, and covering with an everlasting roof the head of the heavenly pilgrim, who had, until that day, preached it in deserts and solitudes, in the darkness of the catacombs, or in the horrors of pagan prisons, not excepting the *barathrum* and the *tullianum*. And in placing the name of Licinius with his own at the head of the edict, he compelled him to treat the Christians of the Greek-speaking world over whom he ruled, with at least a show of mercy. Licinius was at heart as great an enemy of Christianity as any of the other emperors who preceded Constantine; yet he appeared to have personally approved the measures of justice and humanity inaugurated by his colleague. Henceforth he was compelled to look for other reasons besides the name of Christians, to persecute the children of the Church. It is known that his hatred of the new faith broke out at last, and raised later on, between him and Constantine, a cause of war, in which he was finally twice worsted, and perished at last. But for several years he had to play the hypocrite, to appear to be a friend of the Church, and witness in spite of himself the burst of joy which, chiefly in the Greek-speaking world, welcomed the gladsome news that finally every one was allowed to worship God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

But soon after this first edict of toleration, other decrees followed which went far beyond. The ruler of the empire declared openly that he was himself a Christian, exhorted all to follow his example, and at the same time that he announced freedom for all to remain attached to the old paganism, he did not conceal that he would prefer in his court to see himself surrounded only by Christians. It is said that this open or covert declaration was the origin of pretended conversions, caused rather by hypocrisy than by conviction. It is to be supposed it was so for a certain number, and their return *en*

*masse* to idolatry under Julian is given as a proof that Constantine had gone too far. Yet, in the opinion of all sensible men, he could scarcely do less. If he were a sincere Christian, he must have wished it should be known; and in this case he must have really felt a desire to see his subjects and courtiers follow his own example. That which is reproached to Constantine was, after all, merely the effect of his sincerity and earnestness. Had his conversion been purely a political one, he might and probably would have been really indifferent to the conversion of others. It is certainly beyond human comprehension that in following the only path open before him in the supposition of his sincerity, he was unwise, according to many, and in fact acted, as they say, the part of a bigot. The strict meaning of this much-abused English word cannot be synonymous with that of a sincere and true Christian, as, unfortunately, it seems to be in French, and the whole conduct of the first Christian emperor is certainly a proof that he was one. That all those whom his example and exhortations converted returned *en masse* to paganism under Julian, is not proved. Some did, no doubt; but it could not have been the greater number, since many must have been well disposed toward Christianity before the action of Constantine, which merely gave them the last impulse toward it. Thus they embraced Christianity really through conviction, although, without the example of the emperor, they might have felt unable, through want of courage, to take the last step. It is very doubtful if these men returned in a compact body to polytheism, particularly as we know that the Antiochians, *en masse*, were neither awed nor rendered tractable by the wish of the apostate when he passed through their city. On the contrary, they mocked him, defied him, and gave a friendly and warm reception to the relics of St. Babylas, their former bishop, when, on the command of Julian, these were disinterred from the grove of Daphne, where they prevented the oracle from speaking out. All these are historical facts.

In a third place, Constantine took from the start such an unpretending attitude toward the Catholic Church that his conduct in this regard deserves to be praised, as being on a par with that of Charlemagne, five hundred years later. It was to be feared, when he embraced the new religion, that he would place himself at the head of the Church, as he was already at the head of the State. This was natural to a former pagan prince, since in Rome the title of *Pontifex Maximus* was always attached to that of *Augustus*. But

he understood at once, as it were intuitively, the superiority of the priesthood in spiritual matters. He never in all his life undertook to dictate to popes and bishops what he thought to be their duty in dogmatic and ethical matters. If he sat in the Council of Nice, he never opened his mouth to influence in the least the decisions of the Fathers on dogmas. He was only the first to receive that decision, as all Christians are bound to do, and reserved to himself as emperor merely the right of enforcing the decrees of the Council. In this his conduct differed *in toto* from that of many of his successors on the throne of Constantinople, and was, we are sure, the beacon light which subsequently guided the policy of Charlemagne. On this subject Alzog says with great propriety and justice: \* “Constantine was ambitious of the honor of being regarded by the Christians as a sort of bishop, in the *external* and temporal affairs of the *Church*, as one designated by God to watch over her political interests, which he regarded as something entirely distinct from her internal constitution and government. But although he showed a disposition to participate in ecclesiastical affairs, his motives for so doing were prompted by the lively interest he took in the Church’s welfare, and not by a desire to meddle in questions which properly came within her *jurisdiction* and competence. Whenever his actions seemed to indicate a line of conduct at variance with this rule his course may be justified either by the provocation he received from the Donatists, or by the crafty and deceitful representations of the Arians.”

On this subject it is but just to bear in mind that the exact, fair, and always proper conduct of Constantine with respect to the Church is so much the more remarkable, that no sooner had he given peace to the Christians, and to the bishops honor and wealth, than the bishops themselves, to his great surprise, began to quarrel, and the Arian party, then comprising many of them, threatened the disruption of Christianity itself. All sagacious men must admit that he gave proofs of an almost superhuman virtue in the prudence, zeal, and tender consideration he invariably displayed in those trying circumstances. He endeavored first to reconcile the bishops together, and bring them to a real unanimity of belief and feeling. When he saw the impossibility of it, he adhered to the decision of the majority under the Pope’s legates, and considered the Arians as heretics,

---

\* Vol. i., p. 469.

enemies of truth, and unworthy of occupying places of trust. Thus he had the ecclesiastical decrees enforced by expelling from their sees those who refused to comply, and recognizing as true bishops only those who had signed the symbol of Nice. He was thus instrumental in giving a first example which all truly Christian princes might afterward follow. But he had himself no pattern which he might copy; and it was from his own sense of right and of true religion that he adopted those principles of action which became henceforth the guides of the subsequent Christian rulers.

It would go far beyond our limits to give a full list of all the benefits Constantine conferred on the Church. Alzog mentions some of them in the first volume of his history. The curious reader will find a far greater number of them in the long array of *Decreta et Constitutiones* of Constantine, published by Migne in his large collection of Latin Fathers, vol. viii. Before concluding, however, a word must be said on the severe reproaches addressed to Constantine by many modern writers, who might have been more considerate in their fierce accusations against a man so truly great as a general, a prince, and a founder of remarkable institutions. But it is sufficient to state in general that most of these censures, or rather invectives, are derived from Voltaire, who did not scruple to represent Constantine as a weak prince, cruel, superstitious, improvident, etc., precisely the reverse of his character, merely because he was a Christian. The only blame that can truly be cast upon him refers to his conduct toward his son Crispus and his wife Fausta. But much might be said in his defense on this occasion. The atrocity of the crime imputed to Crispus blinded him, and thus he acted too precipitately. It was natural that, on the discovery of his error, he should treat severely his wife, the cause of it, who was indeed a monster. As to the other acts of cruelty, of which they say he was guilty about the same time, there is a want of definiteness about them, which may very well induce an impartial judge to doubt. He certainly put to death the young son of Licinius. Many emperors before him had done worse, and historians scarcely speak of those occurrences. But suppose all that is said on the subject is true; then Constantine paid his tribute to human weakness; and no one has ever pretended that he was more than a man.

This discussion on the personal character of the founder of Constantinople must not be considered of little importance in the actual investigations. The conversion of Constantine being thus ascer-



tained to have been sincere, and his life, prompted, as it was, mainly by the principles of his new religion, being proved to have been, in general, pure, and actuated by the highest motives, renders easy to the reader the admission of the immense impulse thus imparted at that epoch to the spread of Christianity. Not only the conspicuous example of the monarch must have acted powerfully on the subjects of the empire; but the highest in the land could not but be prompted by the same motives to embrace the new faith. What acted on the mind and heart of Constantine must have likewise influenced all thoughtful and clear-sighted men. We know by many authentic documents preserved until our days, what deep reasons Constantine had for taking the great step he took. A few passages alone of these documents could be quoted in these pages. The reading of them all in the collection of Migne, makes still a much more powerful impression. These motives suppose the Christian religion to have been, in the eyes of those on whom they acted, supernatural and heavenly. The absolute divinity of its founder is not only admitted, but strongly and successfully defended against all those who rejected it, or merely entertained any doubt about it. The decree of Nice and the rejection of Arianism by the whole Roman world, is the sure proof of this, and indicates at once the true cause of its conversion. It is important, therefore, before concluding this chapter, to give a look at the solemn assembly of Nice, and to consider a moment the burst of enthusiasm which arose particularly from the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. It was the consecration of the acknowledgment of Christ's divinity replacing in Greece the adoration of idols and the worship of men and heroes. Too long had the Hellenes prostrated themselves at the feet of Jove and of Apollo. Henceforth there would be but one God, Triune in Heaven, clothed in our flesh on earth, and adored in the whole universe. The Trinity of the persons in the Godhead, the Divinity of the incarnate Son of the Father, were to replace forever the delusions of an ancient mythology.

It must be first clearly stated that we have not any Acts of the Council of Nice, and that, in fact, the Fathers who then met together never left, of their whole proceedings, any authentic document, except the symbol or creed, the twenty canons then enacted, and the synodical Decree. This Hefélé positively affirms in his *History of Councils*.\* But the chief circumstances of that great

---

\* Tom. i., p. 256, French edit.

assembly are historically known from the works of Eusebius, Sozrates, Sozomenes, Theodoretus, and Rufinus; besides several points derived from the writings of Athanasius and other contemporary authors. A Coptic history of it, written a short time after the holding of the Council, was found at the beginning of this century by the learned Dane, George Zoega, and published in 1852 by Pitra, in his *Spicilegium Solesmense*. In none of these documents is it mentioned how the council was convened, except by an occasional remark that Constantine had called the bishops together. This gave rise to the general opinion, eagerly embraced by all Protestant writers, that the emperor alone had taken the initiative in the matter, and, as he sat at it, that he alone likewise presided there. This brought out the belief entertained by many, a hundred years ago, that in the first centuries the popes had nothing, or almost nothing to do in the convocation or direction of councils, even if they were ecumenical; and it is yet, at this moment, the apparent conviction of all Protestant historians. These hesitations or false notions, on such an important matter as this, were still strengthened by some peculiarities attending the second Ecumenical Council, that of Constantinople in 381. It is now ascertained, contrary to the opinion of Baronius, that the Pope had no participation in calling the bishops to it; and in fact Hefélé proves that it was not at first ecumenical, but only a general assembly of the Greek Church. It became subsequently universal or ecumenical by the open admission of its decrees by the Pope and the West.

But from the Council of Ephesus down to our own time, the necessity of the convocation by the Sovereign Pontiff becomes so evident that the blind only can hesitate. It is important, therefore, to ascertain if the Pope had any leading authority in the meeting at Nice; since the subsequent one at Constantinople has no bearing on the question. The want of public acts bearing an official character with regard to the Council of Nice, makes it impossible to determine the question peremptorily by authoritative documents. The Catholic side, however, is strongly supported by the sixth Ecumenical Council, the third of Constantinople, which states positively, in a short reference to previous councils, contained in the *Actio xviii.*, that "Arius had made himself the open adversary of the dogma of the Trinity, and directly Constantine and Sylvester convoked (*συνέλεγον*) the great Synod of Nice." The *Pontifical* of Damasus has a phrase to the same effect. Hefélé justly remarks on the sub-

ject that "had the sixth Ecumenical Council been held at Rome, or at least in the West, its clear statement might appear suspicious to some critics; but it took place at Constantinople, at a time when precisely the bishops of that city were assuming the attitude of rivals to those of Rome. The Greek bishops formed the great majority of this sixth council; and consequently their testimony in favor of Rome, especially in favor of the leading co-operation of Sylvester, is grave and important." These words of the present Bishop of Rottenburgh are the most moderate which can be said on the subject. We would ourselves affirm that the fact here examined amounts to a positive demonstration, when it is taken in connection with the other more general fact, that the Greeks have invariably admitted, at least since the Council of Ephesus, that the popes, conjointly with the emperors, have always convoked the ecumenical councils; and if we have not the text of this admission for the first and the second councils, the reason is that there have never been public and authentic acts of the first, and the second was not originally ecumenical.\* With this we close our reflections on the subject.

But what a spectacle was given to the world, when the emperor, having "entreated by the most respectful letters—*τιμητικοῖς γράμμασι*—the bishops of all countries—*ἀπανταχόθεν*—to repair promptly to Nice," † the conveyances carrying them with their retinue could be seen on all public roads! It was the first recognition by the State of Christian spiritual authority; and it was given in the sight of all, at public expense, with all the circumstances which could attract the attention, and suggest to the people ideas of respect and veneration. A few years before, the only relation bishops could expect to have with rulers and officials, was that of the victim under the persecuting scourge. Now they were honored, called deferentially for a great public office, that of settling the religious belief of millions of Roman citizens or subjects. They were thus esteemed the only ones who could do it, even preferably to the emperor; because they had received the power to this effect from heaven, which the emperor had not. It was, therefore, the public and solemn admission that there was an authority superior to that of Cæsar, at least in spiritual matters, and that in the conflict which had been

---

\* Every person interested in the matter can easily ascertain this admission of the Greeks in early ages, by consulting the authentic Acts of the Council of Ephesus and the subsequent ones.

† Euseb. Vit. Const., iii. 6.

waged during more than two hundred years between the pagan *Pontifex Maximus* and his Christian namesake, the first had been worsted, and the second had won the day. This simple reflection can give us an almost adequate idea of the feelings of exultation and joy then rising all over the earth in the hearts of Christians of every age and condition. For at least from three hundred and eighteen episcopal centers, all over the empire, the faithful saw their chief pastors leave temporarily their flock at the voice of the emperor and the Pope, to go and decide the highest points of belief and administration for a new society, which was already universally called the *Catholic Church*. From her mankind was henceforth to receive all the articles of faith and morals, called from that day *credenda et agenda*. Those who were to declare them had derived their jurisdiction from the apostles, and their authority from Christ. The universal society presided over by such heaven-sent rulers, had been until that day crushed under the weight of an oppression never before seen on earth. What torrents of blood had gushed forth from their veins! What floods of ignominy had overwhelmed them! And now Cæsar himself called them with honor, to decide what even he could not decide; to determine for the generality of men what all ought to believe or do. Can we sufficiently appreciate what Christians must have felt, and what tributes of gratitude they must have sent to heaven? For heaven alone could have brought about what they witnessed, and with still more justice than David, they could exclaim, *Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed nomini tuo da gloriam*. There was no need at this moment to prove to them the supernatural character of their religion. They saw it, they felt it; it was to them clearer than any human evidence.

And what must have been the feelings of the pagans of those days? For there were yet many pagans—although we cannot share the opinion of those who divide the world, as it then was, into two nearly equal parts, and toss indifferently the names of the old and the new creed to find out on which side to place them—there were yet many pagans; but in the East, at least, in that Greek-speaking world now under consideration, after all the numerous details previously given, the thoughtful reader will easily admit that the Christian society was already considerably more numerous than the pagan. Constantine was aware of it; and for this, most probably, he discarded from his counsels and his court his former pagan friends; for this he paved the way to Theodosius by decreeing the destruction of pagan temples—not

only of the infamous ones, as all historians admit—but all absolutely, in a decree which is still preserved in the Theodosian code, which he did not, it is true, enforce during his life, but which later on Theodosius carried out, assigning to it its true author, namely, Constantine.\* For this, in fine, this last emperor, at least most probably, left Rome altogether, because he found its upper classes too much attached to the old superstition; and went to give a new name and a new shape to Byzantium. There he refused to see any longer the faintest trace or vestige of paganism around his person; so that Constantinople has the honor of being the first city in the world which ever was totally Christian, totally Catholic. Let our Turkish contemporaries think of it at this solemn moment, when it is very likely to be surrendered again to the Christian name, which it ought never to have lost.

This digression may be thought too long. It is time to revert to the previous train of thought. The feelings of the pagans can sufficiently well be imagined at this convocation of bishops from every corner of the earth—*ἀπανταχόθεν*—as Eusebius has it. Those of them who were then twenty-five years old had all witnessed in their early youth the dreadful doings of Galerius and Maximinus in the whole Roman part of Asia and Africa, besides Eastern Europe, that is, in the whole Greek-speaking world. They had seen the excess of persecution carried so far that they must then have really thought that the Christian name had been effectually blotted out. A Latin inscription—whose authenticity was at first doubted, but is now universally admitted—has been preserved to our day, and most assuredly many other inscriptions of the same import then existed, whose text is plain enough, and expresses the strong conviction of the author. † This was at the time the common opinion of all pagans. They did not expect to hear of Christianity any more, except as a forgotten *superstition*, which had been drowned forever in the blood of its upholders. This they had often heard from their parents and friends, when they were eight or ten years old: and what they witnessed themselves at the time was a sufficient voucher for the supposition. But how different had not the whole affair turned out to be? The Christians were more numerous than ever; the Christian name was held in honor all over the empire; and it was to their dear pagan-

\* This is the positive assertion of Villenave, a very competent man, in a note to the article *Constantin* in Michaux' *Biographie Universelle*.

† "Nomine Christianorum deleto, qui rempublicam evertabant; Superstitione Christiana ubique deleta."

ism that the word *superstition* was applied. Whenever Constantine exhorted his subjects to follow his own example, he told them that in doing this they would merely abjure a relatively new *superstition*. The Christian belief in the unity of God, in all the great truths approved by human conscience, had been at first the creed of the whole of mankind ; polytheism had come much later on to obscure those divine truths, and replace the former holy religion by a superstitious and detestable idol-worship. This Constantine never tired of repeating ; and he thus merely re-echoed what all Christian apologists and writers had said before. Pagans were obliged to listen to this language, and to see the proof of it given by the very success of Christianity, which could not but strike their bewildered vision.

Can we wonder that many pagans were then converted ? Some of them, no doubt, increased in obstinacy, and conceived something of that concentrated rage, which, soon after, distinguished one of them—namely, Julian the Apostate. But this certainly was the small number. The others followed rather the natural inclination of the human heart, which, on such occasions as these, is prone to conclude that such strange vicissitudes in human belief and morals could not have originated but in the designs of Providence itself—*Numine Divino* ; this was the word then in vogue, and it was a very true, although profound, word. For it meant that God can act on the soul of man ; and change his heart. This was introducing among mankind the idea of divine grace, perfectly unknown until then. For it was the usual prayer of *pious* people among pagans to ask of their gods long life, prosperous days, wealth and health, everything, in fine, exterior to man ; as to virtue, they added : “ I will take care of it myself.” They began to be enlightened on the subject ; and were brought finally to believe that one by his own exertions can to a great degree acquire precisely the material things they previously asked of heaven, whilst the fulfillment of duty toward God or the neighbor, that is to say, the practice of virtue, depends almost altogether on the grace of God. They began, therefore, to have their eyes open as to the true supernatural action of heaven, which does not consist so much in the obtention of worldly favors from God, as in the effect of this action on our heart and soul, by which we are made partakers of his real gifts, and, as an apostle has said, of “ his very divine nature”—*Divinæ consortes naturæ*.\* It was, as the reader perceives, the open-

---

\* 2 Petr. i. 4.

ing of a new world of which men could have no idea before. There is, therefore, nothing wonderful in the fact that, soon after, under the reign of Theodosius, all the pagan temples were closed or given to the Christians, all the superstitious rites and sacrifices were abolished, without almost any opposition, nay, at the universal applause of the Greek world. It could be said indeed that "the finger of God was there."

But more details must be given of the remarkable enthusiasm with which the Hellenic race—the whole of it without exception—turned its back on idolatry, and worshiped henceforth God, the eternal Father, His Son made man for us, and the Holy Spirit, source of inspiration and grace. It first appeared conspicuously in the building and consecration of innumerable churches throughout the whole length and breadth of the Greek world. To give a full idea of it would require the translation of many chapters in the *Life of Constantine*, by Eusebius. The only thing possible is a mere list of the principal edifices raised most sumptuously to the honor of God and of Christ, either by the care and under the supervision of the emperor himself, or at least by congregations and bishops at his instigation. The long description of the magnificent temple erected at Jerusalem on the spot of the Holy Sepulchre, and consequently of the resurrection of the Saviour, would fill many pages, and can be read in Eusebius. It is enough to say that in his letters to Macarius, bishop of Jerusalem, the emperor said positively he wished this religious edifice to be the finest and most magnificent that could be seen anywhere on earth. He gave orders to several of the governors of provinces in the East to send to the Holy City all the materials of the most precious kind to be found anywhere: metals, marbles, woods, gems, textile fabrics, anything, in fine, which would be required to give to the world the proof of the deepest love and adoration on the part of man toward God.

Not satisfied with the construction of this splendid edifice, others, almost without number, were erected with a profuse liberality, although with less splendor; the first of them over the Bethlehem grotto, the place of the Saviour's birth. It was Helen, the emperor's mother, then in Palestine, who took the charge of it, and this is sufficient to understand the care bestowed not only on the edifice itself, but also on all its interior adornments, in gold, silver, precious tapestries, and needleworks of the most delicate kind, such as a refined woman alone can imagine and superintend. The same she

did on Mount Olivet, as it was proper that the spot where Christ had given his last instructions and the highest faculties to his apostles, should be forever designated to the wayfarer and pilgrim by a structure worthy of commemorating such a benefit conferred on mankind.

To show the intimate connection of Christianity with the patriarchal age, and consequently to testify to its antiquity—a deep truth in the mind of Constantine—he directed the holy bishop of Jerusalem to construct a Christian temple in the arid plain of Mambre, where Abraham had worshiped the Trinity under the emblem of three angels. Yes, near the traditional oak, green yet, it seems, in the fourth century of our era, the various governors of Palestine, the successors of the Pilates and Herods of the Augustan age, had to employ their ministry and care for procuring the most costly materials to be used in the construction of the new temple. After this the mind of this great prince, passing rapidly from the memory of the oldest times to the circumstances of his day, found a village near Gaza where the inhabitants had all recently become Christians, and showed a great zeal in destroying their former idols—who knows if old Chamos was not yet one of them?—Forthwith the emperor makes of the village a city, gives it the name of his sister Constantina, and enables the inhabitants to build to the true God a temple worthy of his name.

But what description would be adequate with regard to the great church of Tyre, to whose dedication so many bishops of Palestine and Phœnicia were present? On this occasion Eusebius delivered that eloquent oration which he has transmitted to us in his *History*. There you can read it in full; and see in that splendid piece of oratory what not alone the speaker himself, but all his hearers likewise, nay, all Christians at that time living, must have felt in their heart of heart, when he exclaimed, addressing the Church of Christ: “Stand up, stand up! Put on thyself garments of strength and glory! Shake off the dust that tarnished them, and stand up! Raise thine eyes, and look all around thee: all these people have met together to come to thee. ‘As true as I live,’ says the Eternal, ‘thou shalt be clothed with them as with a brilliant attire; as a bride they shall adorn thee.’ The vastest plains, the boundless solitudes, the entire earth covered so far with thy ruins, shall be too small and contracted for the number of thy inhabitants. Those who encompassed thee before in a narrow circle shall be



driven afar off. The children thou shalt then have, after all those thou hast lost, shall raise their voice and call out to thee: 'This place is too narrow; enlarge it.' And thou shalt exclaim in thine heart: 'Who is it that has given me these children, when I seemed barren and forsaken, exiled and a prisoner? And these others which woman has fed them with her milk? When I remained alone where could they all possibly dwell?' Thus speaketh the Lord God: 'Behold, I shall stretch my hand toward the nations, and I shall raise my standard among the peoples; and they shall bring thee thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters on their shoulders; and kings shall be for thee foster-fathers, and queens, foster-mothers; and they all shall kiss the dust of thy feet.'"

Thus every one saw the evident fulfillment of those prophecies which at first detained us so long, on account of their importance in the great question of the catholicity of the Church. The simple comparison of their text with the daily events witnessed by all in the age of Constantine, was sufficient to place before the eyes of everybody the divine scheme then in full tide of accomplishment. This alone must convince sensible people that the conversion of the world was a heavenly agency, not a natural event. Those, consequently, who anxiously look for natural causes to it, commit the same blunder that a man would perpetrate, who, finding a watch lost on the public highway, would never conclude that a watchmaker made it, but, relying on his perfect knowledge of metals, and glass, and machinery, would try to find out how those materials had of themselves taken their actual shape and position, in order to give the exact measure of time.

God had certainly used for that wonderful change which then took place in the world many material and human agencies; and the faithful historian is not forbidden to examine these secondary and most subordinate causes, when he wishes to place before his readers a perfect picture of real history. But he must never forget that all those natural things were only *secondary* and *subordinate* causes, completely governed and used as mere *materials* by the great Designer of the whole scheme. Of this the Romans and the Greeks of the time of which we are now speaking were perfectly aware, and on that account many of them were sincerely converted to God, whilst the readers of those great events in our day, if their intellect has been blurred and dimmed by the naturalism of this age, are perfectly incapable of seeing the truth; but look in the dark for natural causes,

when the real divine cause of those events blinds them by its very dazzling light.

So far the building of churches in Palestine alone has been described, and this was confined to a few of the most remarkable. But at the time of the Council of Nice, this phenomenon was not limited to so small a part of the world. The same work of Eusebius, *De Vita Constantini*, although it is far from being exhaustive of the subject, still furnishes abundant proofs that the same activity in erecting temples to the true God, extended to the whole Greek world. A more extensive view of the case would indeed include the whole civilized world at the time; we must, however, limit ourselves to the portion indicated.

Eusebius, in the second book of this work, speaks first of Constantinople, which the emperor was at the time building. It is there stated that he almost literally filled the city with Christian churches, which the Bishop of Cæsarea calls *oratories, martyrs' shrines*, and other *sacred edifices* of the greatest splendor. He seems to establish a distinction between those various constructions; it cannot be now exactly known what this distinction was. Previous to this architectural development, Constantine had ordered the destruction of the few pagan temples of Byzantium, or their conversion into churches; and he had decreed that "the statues of the former gods should not be any more worshiped, nor the blood of victims shed on any altar, nor, in fine, the pagan festivals should be any more kept."

Constantinople, consequently, was the first city in point of time which worshiped God and Christ alone, and adopted exclusively the Christian new calendar; since "the pagan festivals could not be any more kept in it." In the other cities of the Roman Empire, the former calendar and that of the Church were henceforth kept simultaneously. Particularly in Rome was this the case: and it continued to be so until the complete destruction of this great city by the successive and devastating waves of barbarians in the fifth and following centuries. Not so in the new Rome built by Constantine. And this is suggestive of many thoughts: We cannot therefore be surprised to hear that within its walls, the Cross was most particularly honored. When will it replace there the Crescent? Soon, we hope. Constantine, who had already graced with it the Labarum, the new Roman flag, set up this glorious emblem in the noblest hall of his new palace. Eusebius says that it was most honorably exposed by the emperor on a vast framework, in a gilded compartment of the wall.

This Cross, or rather, as Eusebius calls it, this instrument of our Lord's passion, was highly elaborated, and covered with gold plates or precious gems. The most pious prince placed his empire under its protection and guardianship.

Besides Constantinople, the new seat of government ; in Nicomedia likewise, where Diocletian had established formerly the imperial palace, and where the general persecution had begun by the destruction of the principal church, Constantine wished to repair the evil by the erection of a most splendid basilica. It was dedicated to the Saviour, and was to be a kind of memorial church and trophy, in thanksgiving for the victories which God had granted him over all his enemies.

In Antioch also, where the population was already most enthusiastic for the new religion, a very remarkable structure was raised in honor of the true God. The Bishop of Cæsarea makes the description of it in a few phrases, and it must have been a wonderful edifice from the brief but extraordinary expressions he uses.

Finally, the biographer of Constantine, unable to go through all the monuments then constructed in honor of Christianity, uses the following very comprehensive words, with which the reader must remain satisfied : "In all the other provinces Constantine embellished the chief cities by the magnificent oratories he constructed." And it must be remarked here that the author of the *Ecclesiastical History* speaks only of the churches in the construction of which the emperor took the chief part. How many other temples and shrines, in the whole extent of the empire, were the work of the people alone, with their bishops and priests ? No one can say, since Eusebius was confined by his subject to speak only of those which were the result of the zeal of Constantine.

This narrative of the conversion of Hellenic nations is felt by the author as being far below the noble theme. A large volume would not exhaust the subject. The reader must rest satisfied with the few details which have been given in this chapter. They can be, however, considered as a demonstration of the object in view.

## CHAPTER XI.

## EARLY SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN ROME, WESTERN EUROPE, AND AFRICA.

A CATHOLIC may at last complain that the first establishment and growth of Christianity has been so far represented in these pages as a phenomenon, remarkable certainly, and reaching the proportions of a real universality or catholicity, yet consisting of a multitude of units almost disconnected from each other, because of their being apparently without any center. At the very start, Jerusalem was declared to have been a starting-point, not a center; and in all the countries that have been passed in review, we have not yet found a single one invested with that character. But this followed necessarily from the plan adopted from the beginning; which was to represent this mighty event as it really happened. The East was certainly evangelized before the West; and although a few years only separated the planting of the Christian religion in Rome from the first preaching of the apostles in Jerusalem, still in these few years it overstepped undoubtedly the limits of Palestine, reached in the north the very center of Asia Minor, and took possession of the great Eastern continent by crossing the Euphrates and Christianizing Lesser Armenia.

Nevertheless a considerable inconvenience was the consequence of this plan. For in this manner the spread of the religion of Christ looks as if it had taken place without any design, and as if it was destined to remain without unity, because of its being totally deprived of a visible head. This undoubtedly would give a great advantage to the ordinary Protestant view of ecclesiastical history—an advantage which it cannot be the intention to grant. Particularly as there is no need of it whatever; and, in fact, did we do so we should be derelict of our duty toward truth.

An idea can even be suggested that this temporary inconvenience could not be avoided, because, in fact, the question of the center was at first suspended in the designs of God. Christ waited before

sending the first of his apostles to take possession of Rome, until the Jews, by refusing a last time to acknowledge their true Messiah, decided the fate of Jerusalem, destined henceforth to destruction, as Christ had foretold. The divine plans for their realization required the co-operation of man; and although they are certainly predetermined in heaven, they are unfolded to us only gradually, and according to the free determination of the human will to submit humbly or proudly run counter to the holy designs of Providence. Thus, although the Saviour had positively announced the siege of Jerusalem and its destruction by the Romans, yet he had determined to offer a last opportunity to the Jews. Consequently the apostles made still an effort to overcome their resistance: and the reader has had occasion to remark the persistence of St. Paul in particular to overcome their stubborn opposition, by addressing them first in all places where he preached the Gospel, before he went to the Gentiles. Had the Hebrew race submitted at the last moment to the entreaties of the messengers of God, Jerusalem would have been saved, and Rome would never have been the center of the new religion. This was most probably the cause of the delay, and this may have been, later on, the fatal occasion for the East to break the bonds of its union with the West.

1. *St. Peter at Rome. Can we know anything of his ministry in the World's Capital?*

When did St. Peter leave Palestine to go West, and most probably to Rome? The Acts of the Apostles \* say that after he was delivered from prison by an angel, and was with some difficulty admitted into "the house of Mary, the mother of John who was surnamed Mark," he ordered all those who were present—for "many were gathered together and praying"—"to tell these things to James and to the brethren." Then the same Acts add directly, "Going out he went into another place." This was according to the most probable chronology of this part of the New Testament, A.D. 42. Which was that "other place"? This is quite an unusual way of speaking on the part of the author. When some person passes from one place to another, the writer everywhere else tells you where he went. If on this occasion he had actually not known it, it is most probable that

---

\* C. xii. 17.

he would have said so. It would certainly have been for him the most natural way of expressing himself. The phrase he uses has an air of mystery about it. What renders it more remarkable is that, henceforth, St. Luke, who certainly wrote this book, speaks only of St. Paul, whose companion he was—with the exception of the fifteenth chapter, which refers to the Council of Jerusalem. If this assembly, in which all the apostles took part, but where St. Peter occupied the first rank, is taken out of the book, the whole remainder is occupied with the apostleship of St. Paul alone. St. Peter is afterward entirely forgotten. What can be the reason of it? It is not certainly the total ignorance on the part of St. Luke of the whereabouts of St. Peter. He must have known a great deal of the subsequent incidents of his apostleship. If, therefore, he does not speak of him any more, with the exception of his apparition at the Council of Jerusalem, it was because he had some reason for not speaking of it. The same motive must have been at the bottom of the mysterious manner with which he expressed himself, when he said merely that “he went to another place.” He must have known that other place, but did not think proper to reveal it.

There is something more strange still, and calculated to excite the same kind of surprise, in the very last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. When St. Paul had appealed to Cæsar and was sent to Rome, the only particularity mentioned in the whole book which intimates that there were Christians in Italy is contained in the 14th and 15th verses of this last chapter, where it is said that in Puteoli, on his way to the capital, he found “brethren” and “tarried with them seven days.” And when “the brethren” (evidently of Rome) had heard of Paul and his companions, “they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and the Three Taverns.” In the verses which follow something is said of his dealings with the unconverted Jews of Rome, whom he tries to bring to Christ. Of the congregation of Christians already numerous there, nothing more is said. The same silence is kept with respect to them as with respect to St. Peter. If from this critics conclude that St. Peter was not in Rome, the same critics must likewise conclude that there was no Christian church in the great city, except a few “brethren,” who went to meet Paul at the Three Taverns. But we know that this was far from being the case. Several years before—some say as many as twelve years—when St. Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans, he stated that already “their faith was spoken of in the whole world.”

There must have been, consequently, a deep reason to induce St. Luke to write so mysteriously.

Some Catholic writers of ability explain this silence of St. Luke with regard to the presence of Peter at Rome, merely by the dissimilarity of the mission of both Peter and Paul; the first being the apostle of the Judeo-Christians and the other of the Gentiles. But such complete dissimilarity of their mission as this would suppose—comparable to that of the missionaries of India, who devoted themselves either to the conversion of the *Brahmins* or to that of the *pariahs*—never existed in the case of the two apostles of Rome. Both often overstepped their particular mission; and Peter was the first who converted a Gentile, in the person of Cornelius. That silence must, therefore, be found in some more profound reason involved in a kind of mystery. The two apostles evidently had agreed about it; and St. Peter had probably no other reason for calling Rome Babylon in his first Epistle\* but to conceal his presence there. The true solution of the difficulty is given in the *Dictionnaire de Théol. Cath.* (art. Pierre); and this is the substance of it: The last part—say one-third—of this book of St. Luke, written at Rome, was intended to be a kind of memoir in vindication of the conduct of St. Paul toward his countrymen the Hebrews, and in his various dealings with Roman magistrates in the East. To make it effective it was proper to reduce it to these simple proportions of a memoir, and take good care not to bring on anything connected with the Christian Church in Italy, chiefly in Rome. Thus, if the criminal proceedings pending against Paul terminated fatally against himself, at least nobody else should be compromised, and the conversion of many Romans might continue to go on, in spite of the misadventure of one of the apostles.

Any fair-minded man must be satisfied with this most natural explanation. As to the testimony of ancient writers with respect to the long-continued presence of St. Peter at Rome and of his death by martyrdom, it is so convincing that many learned Protestant writers have been compelled to admit both. In fact, all Christian antiquity is unanimous on the subject. When, therefore, Velenus, and after him Flacius, Salmasius, and finally Spanheim, attacked the universal belief in the presence and death of Peter at Rome, the great mass of their co-religionists opposed them, namely, Junius,

---

\* C. v. 13.

Scaliger, Pearson, Casaubon, Usher, etc. ; more recently Bertholdt, Neander, Olshausen, Gieseler, etc., continued to consider the presence of Peter at Rome as an incontrovertible fact.

But quite recently Baur undertook to prop the sophism by other arguments. As, however, these arguments suppose that the apostles were only ambitious knaves, we may as well pass them over, as beneath the notice of a Christian. The unanimity of the early Fathers on the subject cannot be explained away. The single text of St. Clement of Rome would suffice. We will soon have occasion to speak of it.

Peter, therefore, went to Rome, and when he wrote his first epistle and said to those to whom he forwarded it: "The Church in Babylon salutes you," he meant the Church in Rome. Every Christian at the time gave this meaning to the word Babylon. St. John certainly does it in his Apocalypse ; Papias, the disciple of John, did it likewise. Peter never went to Babylon, neither to the Egyptian place of that name, which was then a simple castle, without the least importance, nor to the old city on the banks of the Euphrates, replaced at the time by Seleucia. The traditions of Christian Egypt or Christian Mesopotamia would have preserved the name of the Prince of the Apostles on their list of bishops, had he been the first to evangelize either of these countries ; they never speak of it. We have said, a few pages back, that perhaps Peter, in dating his letter from *Babylon*, wished merely to conceal his presence in *Rome*. This conjecture will, of course, be taken by the reader for what it is worth. It is, however, much more plausible than many surmises coming from Germany or England, and given out as absolute truths, able to support the wildest fancies.

It is very probable that St. Peter did not go only once to Rome ; he did so at least twice.\* But in a subject so full of obscurity, a detailed history of his voyages is not one of our purposes. To have a date, however, for the beginning of his pontificate in Rome, the old belief, universally admitted by Christendom, that he arrived for the first time in the great city in the year 42 A. D., and, consequently at the beginning of the reign of Claudius, is yet the most probable supposition, and we will all along suppose it. Did he find Christians in Rome when he

---

\* He certainly left Rome once to go to Jerusalem, where he undoubtedly held the first rank in the first Christian Council there ; so that the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome can claim a pretty high antiquity.



first arrived? It is very likely, although no positive proof can be given of it. A page, however, of the speculations of the Rev. J. Spencer Northcote in his *Roma Sotterranea*,\* on the subject, is not deprived of a great probability, and can be considered as true: "The first sowing of the seed of the Gospel in the metropolis of the ancient pagan world is involved in some obscurity. It is certain, however, that it must have been almost simultaneous with the birth of Christianity. For we know that among the witnesses of the miracle of Pentecost were 'strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,' and on the return of these strangers to their homes, the wonderful sight they had witnessed would be at once communicated to others, and the solemn tidings they had heard would be circulated from mouth to mouth among the Jews of the capital. Moreover, the Gentile converts in the 'Italian band,' of which Cornelius was a centurion, probably returned to their native city soon after the appointment of Herod Agrippa to the kingdom of Judea, at the accession of Caligula; and these too would have given a fresh impulse to the movement. If St. Peter, who had been about the same time miraculously released from prison, accompanied them from Cæsarea, this would agree with the tradition which assigns A.D. 42 as the date of the coming of the Prince of the Apostles to Rome. At any rate, the faith of the Roman Christians was 'spoken of in the whole world,' as early as A.D. 57; and it is the opinion of learned and impartial judges that, even from the first, there were several persons of noble blood and high rank who made profession of this faith." And here Rev. J. S. Northcote quotes a passage from Merivale's *History of the Romans under the Empire*, vii. 380.

Since Mr. Merivale wrote his *History*, many important discoveries have been made, particularly in the burial-places of the Romans, prior to those of the Christian catacombs, which render still much more prominent in Rome at that time the standing of the Jews, with whom the first Christians were confounded. That a great number of Gentiles, that is, Greeks or Romans, adopted the Jewish faith, and became proselytes, there cannot be the least doubt. A number of inscriptions recently found, establish the fact beyond possible contradiction. And the Jewish faith was accepted by the Roman government as a respectable religion, tolerated at least by the State. In several instances these inscriptions leave some doubt

---

\* London, 1869.

if they record the death of Jews or Christians. But occasionally there can be no hesitation on the subject, and lately the proofs have been forthcoming, that among the first Christians in Rome, in point of time, were persons belonging to the highest patrician families, chiefly among the Cornelii, Flavii, Cecillii, Pomponii, and others. The details which go to prove that the centurion Cornelius, baptized by Peter at Cæsarea, belonged really to the great *Cornelia gens*, are not to be despised by an impartial critic. Dom Guéranger, in the second edition of his work on St. Cecilia, Virgin and Martyr, is so profuse on the subject that he draws from all the circumstances of the story most interesting particularities on the state of Roman society in apostolic times, and on the great number of Christians who belonged to the real aristocracy of the country. We are not, consequently, reduced any longer to the phrase of St. Paul, who in his epistle to the *Phil.* iv. 22 says: "All the saints salute you; especially they who are of Cæsar's household."

What reason, therefore, can people have to deny the remarkable history of Peter, after his first arrival in Rome, as transmitted to us by the "tradition of the Roman Church"? If there is a tradition at the source of the history of any great nation or institution, so simple and natural as this is, of St. Peter living in the house of the senator Pudens, whose dwelling became the first place of worship of the Roman Christians, no sane man will refuse to admit it as a true portraiture of original events in that particular nation or institution. Why should it be rejected on the sole question of the establishment of the Christian Church in Rome? Cornelius, though belonging to a still more distinguished family than Pudens, was merely a centurion. He must have been one of those young Romans of patrician blood who, several historians tell us, weary of the immorality ripe in their class at that time in Rome, had preferred to enter the army, and obtained in it positions rather inferior to their own social standing, in order not to witness any longer the scenes of depravity everywhere apparent in Roman society. If his strange step in adopting in Palestine a new religion yet worse than that of the Jews, had been bruited abroad, and became known to the authorities of the State, it was not calculated to obtain for him a higher rank in the army. Be this as it may, and whatever was the cause which prevented him from receiving Peter in his own lodgings, he might have been instrumental in introducing into the house of Pudens the knowledge of the strange events which had lately occurred in Judea. Who knows

that Pudens was not induced by what he heard from him of the life of Jesus, of his death and resurrection, to embrace the new faith, and place his house at the disposal of Peter on his arrival? There is nothing incredible or even improbable in all these suppositions. We will, therefore, admit them, since they are supported by a clear and simple Roman tradition coming from a high antiquity. We will suppose even that not only Peter celebrated the holy mysteries in the house of this senator, but that he went occasionally to other parts of Rome, or to the country around, made disciples in those various places, and might even have said mass there, using on these occasions the wooden altar kept still in the most honorable part of the Lateran basilica, given by Constantine to Sylvester. We have had the happiness of looking at this modest wooden chest and table, which a carpenter with some pine boards would construct in a few hours, and we say emphatically, that all this is perfectly natural and must be true.

There is, undoubtedly, a remarkable history of a senator Pudens connected with Pope Pius I., who lived a century later than St. Peter. This one was the husband of Priscilla, and the father of Pudentiana and Praxedes, who opened likewise in their house a Christian church *titulo Pastoris*. The Bollandists treat at length this question on the 19th of May. On the discovery of this last fact, the story of Pudens as the harbinger of St. Peter became discredited, and another link of the "Roman tradition" seemed to have parted, and been lost. But why should it be so? Why could not two men of the name of Pudens have existed in Rome, the first on the arrival of the Prince of the Apostles, the second a century later, probably the grandson or grand-nephew of the other? It is now certain that the second, the friend of Pope Pius I., the father of Pudentiana and Praxedes, lived in Rome toward the end of the second century. The Bollandists have published the *Acts* of those saints, which appear truly genuine. But there was certainly another Pudens living in Rome at the time of St. Peter and St. Paul. This cannot be denied, since the Apostle of the Gentiles, in his Second Epistle to Timothy,\* writes thus from Rome: "Eubulus, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren salute thee." The tradition, therefore, which makes Peter the guest of Pudens must not be rejected, but only altered so as to make Paul live also in this senatorial house,

---

\* Cap. iv. 21.

*ad radices Collis Viminalis*, not in the Jewish quarters of the Transtevere, as Dr. Milman flippantly supposes, in his *Latin Christianity*.

The natural consequence of this is that the first Bishop of Rome did not live in such a total obscurity as Dr. Milman thus pleasantly describes: "The dimness which veiled the growing Church, no doubt threw its modest concealment over the person of the bishop. He was but one man, with no recognized function in the vast and tumultuous city. He had his unmarked dwelling, perhaps in the distant Transteverine region, or in the then lowly and unfrequented Vatican. By the vulgar he was beheld as a Jew, or as belonging to one of those countless Eastern religions, which, from the commencement of the empire, had been flowing, each with its strange rites and mysteries, into Rome. The emperor, the imperial family, the court favorites, the military commanders, the consulars, the senators, the patricians by birth, wealth, or favor, the pontiffs, the great lawyers, even those who ministered to the public pleasures, the distinguished mimes and gladiators, when they appeared in the streets, commanded more public attention than the Christian bishop, except when sought out for persecution by some politic or fanatic emperor."

There may be some truth in this; yet the impression it creates is exaggerated. Previous to the arrival of Paul, who spent only two years in Rome before his martyrdom, Peter had converted an immense number of Romans, and must have been known personally to all those at least whom he had made Christians. That this is literally true Tacitus proves, who relates that those alone who were put to death by Nero, formed, in his own words, *immensa multitudo*. Yet many no doubt survived. And not only was Peter known to these disciples; but it is not unlikely that many others were acquainted with the fact that he was the pastor of the Christians. Peter had not been slow to make himself known in the twenty-four or twenty-five years that he resided in the city. He could not do much good unless pagans understood who he was; and his well-known character prevented him from remaining in the shade.

This is the exact truth with respect to Peter. But there is something stranger still, which Cavaliere De Rossi found out to his great surprise, although it may not be of so ancient a date as the pontificate of St. Peter. The origin of it, in fact, is unknown; and it may go as far up as the early successors of the first Pope, if not to himself. It is contained in one of the *Ancient Records* which

were of great help to De Rossi in his investigations, namely, in the Almanac of Furius Dionysius Filocalus, published first in the year 336, and a second time in 354; and giving the lists of the deaths of the popes from Lucius to Julius—*i. e.*, from 225 to 352. "It contains likewise the list of the principal Christian festivals celebrated during the year, especially of martyrs, but including also Christmas-day, *Cathedra Petri*, and other immovable feasts; finally, a catalogue of the popes from St. Peter to Liberius. In this last catalogue the deaths of the popes begin to be registered only from the time of St. Antherus (235), which would seem to show that the earlier portion of the document had been probably compiled from some older work, such as the *Chronicon* of Hippolytus. But the most important of these documents of Filocalus is undoubtedly the first of the three. It follows immediately upon the lists of prefects of the city, and this list, evidently compiled with great accuracy from contemporary records, begins in like manner from the year 254. Is this synchronism purely accidental? or were the two lists derived from State documents, the public registers of the government? At first sight it might seem an almost extravagant conjecture to suppose that the names of the popes should have been known to the civil governors of pagan Rome, and officially taken cognizance of. Yet it is certain, that even as early as the beginning of the third century, many churches used to pay a tribute to the government that they might escape from persecution, and for this purpose they were enrolled on the registers of the police (so to speak), where they found themselves, as Tertullian takes care to remind them (*De fuga in persec.*), in very strange company."\* From this discovery of Cavaliere De Rossi it follows that in Rome the state authorities began very early to take cognizance of the Church and the popes. Only it is impossible now to determine when this kind of police supervision began; and although it is not probable that something of it already existed in the time of St. Peter, still, not long after him, the State had to look after the Church. It would be wrong, consequently, to imagine that Peter himself was, during his life, an altogether unimportant man in the city of Rome, since so soon after him the police began to inquire about the Christians.

Have we any evidence, or at least strong conjectures, concerning the apostolic times in Rome, from monuments still existing? and

---

\* Northcote, Roma Sotterranea, p. 19.

what idea do they convey to us of the status of the Christians in the great city at that epoch? The discoveries of Cavaliere De Rossi in this respect may be called invaluable; and it seems a subject of wonder that those who pretend to write the early history of the Christian Church in Rome, if they are Germans or English, do not seem to take them into account, as if they were altogether without any value. Owing to these discoveries, nevertheless, the history of the catacombs is now perfectly well ascertained, and the age of the various monuments which they contain cannot offer any difficulty to the archæologist. Is the history of Senator Pudens connected with the catacombs, as it was with the dwelling of Peter in the Roman capital? There is a well-known *cæmeterium Priscillæ*, and the reader has not forgotten that Senator Pudens, at least the friend of Pius I., had a wife called Priscilla. Can there be any connection between both? and can this connection be carried as far up as the time of the first Pudens, the friend and harbinger of Peter? These are interesting questions.

All are acquainted with the Cemetery of St. Priscilla on the Via Salaria Nova in Rome. A Roman tradition says that it was dug in the property of the family of Pudens, namely, of the first one, whose guest St. Peter was; and there exists still a particular chapel in it called the *Cappella Greca*, because the inscriptions it contains are Greek. The "tradition" adds that St. Pudentiana, St. Praxedes, and other members of the family had been buried there. Can this be substantiated, or at least countenanced, by the remains of antiquity contained in it? Mr. J. S. Northcote says of these: \* "The classical style of the frescoes; the scenes depicted in most of them; . . . the beautiful ornaments in stucco, like those in the baths of Titus; a special family of inscriptions traced in vermilion on the tiles, and unlike later Christian epigraphs in their language (being sometimes bare names, sometimes the apostolic salutation PAX TECUM, very often the symbol of the anchor); the classic forms of the characters of the inscriptions on marble; the name TITO FLAVIO FELICISSIMO; the construction of the principal crypt; . . . all these variations from the uniformity of Christian subterranean cemeteries, such as we find them in the third century, point to a date anterior to any such systematic arrangement, and confirm in a remarkable manner the high antiquity assigned to this cemetery by tradition."

---

\* Pp. 66, 67.

This is perfectly clear ; this place is all redolent of the age of the Flavian family, more than half a century before the second Pudens, who may very well have been buried in it, with his daughters Pudenciana and Praxedes. It must, however, have been dug and used as a burial-place long before him ; since it was in full operation as a cemetery under the Flavian dynasty. Thus, most probably, the first Pudens, the friend of Peter and Paul, may very well have been the owner of it in his time, as the tradition asserts. Real property of this kind remained a long time in the hands of the same families. It was not there, nevertheless, that Peter and Paul were buried. "Tradition" says that the first was entombed on the Vatican precisely where his basilica now exists, and the second on the *Via Ostiensis*, where St. Paul's Church was built later on. Have researches been made in these two localities, and do these researches confirm the tradition ? It has been said, with justice, that the history of the catacombs probably dates from the burial of the first Roman Christian. If Peter was buried on the Vatican, many more must have shared this sepulture with him, as an immense multitude of Christians—to use the words of Tacitus—perished with him in the Neronian persecution. Unfortunately, when St. Peter's Church was built, the whole ground, to a great depth, was disturbed and turned over for establishing solidly the foundations of the mighty edifice. No one at that time thought of looking for proofs of early Christianity in the bowels of the earth, as no one could anticipate the future skepticism of critics, and all believed then firmly what the *Liber Pontificalis* asserted. This book says that "Anacletus, the successor of Clement in the Apostolic See, had built and adorned the sepulchral monument of blessed Peter ;" and that from Linus, who followed immediately the Prince of the Apostles, to Victor, who died in 203, all the Roman Pontiffs had been buried in the same place. The *Liber Pontificalis* was written, it is true, only in the ninth century, by Anastasius, the Librarian of the Vatican ; but the learned author of the *Origines de l'Eglise Romaine*, and Dr. Hefélé, in the *Tubingen Review*,\* have demonstrated that Anastasius had written only the lives of some of the popes, his contemporaries, the remainder of the book being much more ancient, and in fact a compilation of old authors. Muratori had already proved its value and authority. It is a great pity, however, that not a single inscription

---

\* 1845, p. 320, et seq.

has been preserved to raise the belief in those traditions to the height of demonstration. Rev. J. S. Northcote says : \* “It is worth mentioning that De Rossi believes that the sepulcher of St. Linus was discovered in this very place in the seventeenth century, bearing simply the name of LINUS.” And he quotes the *Bulletino*. †

Researches made on the *Via Ostiensis*, near St. Paul’s basilica, could not be much more successful than those made under St. Peter’s, for the same reason : the disturbance of the ground at the time of building those two immense piles. Boldetti, however, “read within this catacomb the most ancient inscription, with a consular date, that has come down to us. It was scratched on the mortar of one of the *loculi*, and the consulate of *Sura et Senecio* marks the year A.D. 107. A second was found in the same place, on marble, recording the names *Piso et Bolano*, consuls A.D. 110. The same explorer discovered here also a third inscription, which De Rossi considers one of the most ancient in Rome. . . . The place where it was found—the cemetery of St. Lucina—and certain symbols rudely carved at the bottom (apparently intended to represent loaves and fishes), show this inscription to be Christian ; while the style, the ancient nomenclature, differing from that of the usual Christian epitaphs, and the prenomen T. Flavius, point to the age of the Flavian emperors, *i. e.*, the end of the first century. It can hardly be a mere accident that these rare and contemporaneous dates should have been discovered in the same place, and precisely in the cemetery where less than forty years before had been deposited the body of the apostle Paul. They may be taken as certain proofs that a catacomb was begun here not long after his martyrdom.” ‡

The general impression left from all the discoveries of Cavaliere De Rossi in the catacombs, is that with respect to their antiquity, some of them reach certainly the apostolic times, and as to the status of the Christians which they attest, it was certainly very different from that represented by critics of last century, and by the Protestant writers of this age. St. Peter, during the twenty-four years of his pontificate, had converted a great number of people, and among them men of the first rank. Soon after his death, and under the Flavian dynasty, many members of the imperial family embraced the new religion, and several of them died by martyrdom. The Roman “traditions,” therefore, concerning the life of Peter at Rome,

---

\* Page 65.

† 1864, p. 50

‡ Roma Sotterranea, p. 65, 66.



agree perfectly well with all the signs of early Christianity preserved yet in the catacombs. The Epistle of St. Clement to the Corinthians corroborates them in the most striking manner. The genuineness of this letter cannot be questioned. It is, likewise, now demonstrated that the author was a disciple of St. Peter, his third successor, and a Roman, although this last point, far less weighty than the two others, is denied by some. Two things of great importance for us are clearly testified to in this epistle: first, the presence and martyrdom of Peter at Rome, and second, the great number of martyrs in the first persecution under Nero. A few words on both these subjects will complete the demonstration which, until this moment, amounted only to a great probability. In the fifth chapter or paragraph of his letter, Clement speaks thus of Peter, whom he names personally: "Peter, victim of an unjust hatred, was subjected not once, nor twice, but often, to great torments, and thus becoming a martyr, he reached the abode of glory he had merited." It is impossible to declare more openly that he died by martyrdom; yet many writers of this age, Baur in particular, pretend that Clement is altogether silent not only on the presence of Peter at Rome, but "on his death by martyrdom in general." The word *death* is certainly not mentioned in the passage, but we always supposed that to go to glory a man must die first. It seems this is a matter of doubt to Baur and his followers. In the same passage Clement does not expressly say that this "martyrdom" of Peter took place at Rome; but the author writes from Rome, and relates what he saw; directly afterward he describes the death of Paul, which certainly took place in Rome; then he goes on speaking of a great number of Christians put likewise to death at Rome. There was, consequently, no need whatever to mention that what he said of Peter occurred likewise at Rome.

But the testimony of the same apostolic writer on the number of martyrs, in his time, at Rome, deserves an instant's attention, and will at the same moment corroborate again the belief in the presence of Peter at Rome, if there was any need of such corroboration. It is just the beginning of the sixth chapter or paragraph of this epistle of Clement: "With those heroes," ἀνδράσιν, namely, Peter and Paul, "whose life, private and public"—πολιτευσάμενοις—"was so holy, a large number of elects, banded together, suffered many tortures, and became among us—ἐν ἡμῖν—the brightest exemplar." It is manifest from this phrase that all these events happened in Rome at

about the same time, namely, the martyrdom of St. Peter, that of St. Paul, and finally that of a multitude of elects—*πολὸν πλῆθος ἐκλεκτῶν*. All this Clement saw, since all this took place *ἐν ἡμῖν*, “among us;” and he related to the Corinthians in these few words what he had witnessed in Rome. In the Oxford edition of the *Patres Apostolici* of 1847,\* the editor, William Jacobson, makes on this passage the remark that “Russell infers from these words that St. Peter had been at Rome, and had suffered martyrdom there.” It is a pity that the Christian name of this Russell is not given in the note. For he deserves the high esteem of all sensible men for this plain observation, which William Jacobson himself registers down indeed, but does not seem to indorse. The fact is that this short Latin phrase is sufficient to end forever the controversy under consideration. We, therefore, dismiss the subject with the simple remark that the *πολὸν πλῆθος* of Clement answers exactly to the *ingens multitudo* of Tacitus. Thus the great Roman historian’s testimony is corroborated by that of the first Father of the Church in point of time, and an eye-witness of the glorious event. It is to be hoped that henceforth all critics will consider that multitude of martyrs under Nero as a strictly historical fact.

But it gives of the life of Peter in Rome an idea that few men dare to entertain. That a fisherman of Galilee, transported from the Lake of Genezareth to the polished society of Rome, should have made so many thousand proselytes that an immense multitude of them—this must mean at least several thousands—died with him for the same faith, is a new fact corroborative of many other facts already registered down in these pages. The first establishment of Christianity was so rapid, brilliant, and permanent that no other event of human history has ever furnished anything like it. This is true of Rome, as of Jerusalem, of Antioch, of Alexandria, and of all great cities of the East. This process must be studied with more attention.

## 2. *St. Peter begins to form the unity of the Church in the East as well as in the Western Patriarchate.*

In the previous chapters allusions have frequently been made to the agency of Peter in establishing the first foundation of the Church in all countries. This is true of the conversion of the Jews at Jeru-

---

\* Vol. i., p. 30.

salem directly after the day of Pentecost. The conversion of Gentiles at Antioch, on a large scale, was primarily the work of the same St. Peter, who was there already, and had dealt with Jews and Gentiles when Paul arrived, and rebuked him for a trifling fault. According to a tradition, which must be admitted—otherwise the subsequent history of the patriarchate of Antioch remains full of difficulties—he spent eight or nine years in that northern part of Syria, and founded the episcopal chair of the chief city. Since that time Greece and the Orient have admitted the claim of Peter to a real primacy over the Church, and their chief reasons for it were his personal work in the East, chiefly at Antioch, as well as his being the first bishop of Rome, after he had received from Christ the prerogative of governing the whole flock. If the various texts of the early Greek Fathers, when they speak of the primacy of Peter, are canvassed, it will be found that some one of those reasons or all of them together, are generally assigned. This prerogative in the East was finally developed in full when the Church of Alexandria was founded by Mark, the disciple of Peter, sent on this mission to Egypt by the Prince of the Apostles, then residing permanently at Rome. All this has been sufficiently established by clear details previously given at length. But it is proper, here, to see how the primacy of the same apostle in the West was still more prominent than in the East, after the See of Rome had been founded in the manner just described a few pages back. This last fact, which was never for a moment left in doubt or obscurity during the first fifteen or sixteen centuries, was, at last, momentarily obscured by over-critical writers of the seventeenth age and the one that followed. Can we, at this late moment, restore it to its primitive purity and simplicity? No doubt many props of it have been lost, others have been dimmed by the usual intricacies of sophism. We are not left, however, without props and supports on which truth can be firmly set up again. But before we come to these points of detail, it is proper to consider first the rapid diffusion of Christianity over the whole of Western Europe and Africa—a diffusion which few suspect, and yet which can be demonstrated strictly—and thus show that in apostolic times, during the pontificate of Peter himself, it was really Catholic or universal, particularly in that part of the world. The oneness of the Church through the popes will be better understood afterward.

First, there is the assertion of the apostles themselves, at least of

St. Mark, who having reported in his Gospel—called anciently the Gospel of Peter—the well-known words of Christ: “Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature,” adds directly after: “They, going forth, preached everywhere.” The sacred writer, no doubt, did not mean to say that the apostles personally and absolutely went to all villages and towns of the whole world; but he certainly meant that during their life they either traveled themselves in all countries, or at least sent missionaries invested with their own authority, to the chief territories and kingdoms of the whole world. And if they all did so, Peter must have been at the head of all in this regard, since to him was intrusted the chief mission. St. Paul said,\* that the Roman faith was announced “in the whole world.” Since the proofs have been given a few moments ago that Peter was the first Apostle of the Romans, and was there certainly the founder of the faith, he must have contributed to its diffusion “in the whole world.”

Profane authors confirm those statements. Seneca says that “a religion which began under Tiberius, had spread over the whole Roman Empire under Nero.” Hermas, nearly as old as Seneca, declares in the *Pastor*: † “All nations under heaven have heard and believed, and they were called in the only name of the son of God.”

Forty years only after the death of St. John, in 140, Justin Martyr, in his celebrated *Dialogue with Tryphon*, defied the Jews, who were his chief opponents, “to name a single race of mortals, let them be Greeks or barbarians; and among these last let them be *Hamaxiobii*, spending their life in wagons; or *Nomads*, to whom a house is unknown; or *Scenites*, who drive before them flocks of sheep, and live under tents; yes, to name a single tribe of them all in which there are not worshipers of the universal Father and Creator, through the mediation and in the name of the crucified Jesus.”

It would be useless to quote other texts of subsequent writers, whose language could not be stronger, and who did not live so near the time of the apostles as those just cited. Still, some phrases of Irenæus, of Bardesanes, of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Arnobius, Tertullian, particularly in his *Apologeticus* and *Adversus Judæos*, cannot but make a deep impression on those who have never seen them collected together, and forming a strange and powerful chorus,

---

\* Ad Rom. i.

† Lib. iii., Simil. ix.

intoning the same song, and proclaiming the same truth. This is generally received, however, by modern critics, as a tissue of exaggerations not worthy of being taken into account by the historical student. It is undoubtedly true that if the texts of Tertullian, for instance, were unsupported by other authors, the reader might hesitate, as his well-known impulsive nature might have warped his judgment, and given a high color to facts which did not really require it. He would have, it is true, defeated his own purpose, and his exaggerations in this regard would soon have been discovered. This consideration might have cooled down his ardor, for he was no fool, and could judge of the purport and fate of an argument. But what is conclusive on the subject is that Tertullian was not alone; but literally *all* the early authors, profane as well as sacred—the list could be made a great deal longer than the one just set forth—all those early writers who had an occasion of speaking of Christians at the very beginning of the second century, consequently just after the death of the last apostle, have intoned the same song, proclaimed the same truth, and used nearly the same language as Tertullian did in his apparently highest flights of fancy. This strange unanimity supposes truth; it could not be so complete and absolute, if it were not entirely true.

From this general statement the conclusion can be drawn directly that before Peter died, Italy, Gaul, Spain, and Proconsular Africa contained a large number of Christians; but several texts and facts must corroborate this general conclusion, as far as monuments have been preserved, or a respectable tradition sufficiently indicates. Without these last proofs, the general inference from the texts adduced would certainly suffice. For if all early writers assert that Christianity spread even in apostolic times over all countries and among all nations, surely the Western part of Europe, so near Rome, and then in constant communication with the center of the empire, could not be supposed to have remained closed against Christianity, particularly since, in many of those remarkable enumerations, when details are given, Gaul, Spain, Africa, etc., are especially mentioned. But it is proper to examine each of those countries in particular to see if the general conclusion is supported or not by special facts bearing closely on the subject, and indicating, even at that very early age, the action of the supreme head of the Church over all his surroundings.

The general history of Rome teaches that under Claudius, Cali-

gula, and Nero, all those countries, conquered long before, formed an integral part of the empire. Roman citizens, either as statesmen, governors, officials, military commanders or soldiers, merchants, finally, and tradesmen of every degree, were established in all those regions where the Latin language had in many places superseded the native idioms. Rome, the mistress of the world, the immense and brilliant city, was almost always present to the thoughts and memories of those far-distant citizens who were often brought thither by their interests, their official duties, or their family connections. The immense Roman roads constructed through those distant provinces all centered at the foot of the Capitol, in the *Forum Romanum* itself. Who will believe that Peter alone did not look from the very center, where he resided most of the time for twenty-five years, farther than the limits of the city? Had he not received the mission to evangelize the world? And after he had so well understood his mission, at first, and he had left Palestine and the East, to take his position where he could more easily establish the great *unity* the Son of God had in view, could he suddenly forget the main object of his apostleship as soon as he had taken precisely the step required for the full accomplishment of his mission? This is incredible on the face of it; yet it is necessary to believe it in the system of those who pretend that the evangelization of Gaul, for instance, took place much later than the apostolic age. And since the materials we possess on this particular subject are most abundant, owing to the long discussion carried on in France, from the time of Launoy, it is proper to speak first of that country. As a preliminary, the general observation is not deprived of weight; that Spain and Great Britain having certainly received the Gospel long previous to the third century—the epoch assigned by the school of Launoy for the evangelization of Gaul—they must suppose that the missionaries sent from Rome to those two distant countries, passed through Gaul, which was on the way, without preaching Christ to the natives. This is altogether improbable, and directly opposed to the invariable custom of the first apostles. Without insisting on this preliminary remark, and coming at once to the direct proofs, they are found most abundant, and some even belong to the first century. There is a text of St. Paul himself (at first sight doubtful, but sufficiently explained by some very early Fathers), which ought not to be neglected.\*

---

\* 2 Tim. iv. 9, 10, 11.

“Demas has left me . . . and is gone to Thessalonica ; Crescens into Galatia, Titus into Dalmatia ; only Luke is with me.” Galatia here can be understood, either of the country which Paul himself evangelized in Phrygia, or of Gaul. Many Greek authors call openly and without qualification Gaul *Γαλατία*. Diodorus Siculus attributes the first colonization of that country to *Galatus*, son of Hercules. Philostratus, in his *Lives of Philosophers*, expresses his surprise that Phavorinus of Arles, in Western *Galatia*, spoke so well the Greek language. Strabo says, in general, that Greek writers called the Gauls *Γαλαται*. Plutarch, in his *Life of Cæsar*, calls always Gaul *Γαλατία*. Epiphanius and Theodoretus say that in the text we are commenting upon, St. Paul speaks of Gaul, not of Galatia in Asia Minor. Eusebius,\* Sophronius, and the Chronicle of Alexandria expressly assert that Crescens, the disciple of St. Paul, exercised his ministry in Gaul. If other ecclesiastical writers understood St. Paul to speak of Galatia in Asia Minor, they were induced into this mistake probably by the title of his Epistle to the Galatians.

This proof of the evangelization of Gaul in the first century, does not seem at first sight to belong to Peter, of whom we are all along speaking. But St. Paul cannot be separated from the first apostle and bishop of Rome. Paul, we know, was in the Eternal City when he wrote this Second Epistle to Timothy, and, consequently, Crescens must have been sent to Gaul from Rome, whose real head was Peter. But as to the direct mission of Trophimus of Arles, and many others by Peter himself, no doubt can be raised at this late day, since the positive demonstration of it has been admitted by such men as Augustin Thierry and Paulin Pâris. A few words on this question are of extreme importance, since this fact alone is sufficient to establish the very early spread of religion in the Western part of the Roman Empire, and at the same time the real zeal and authority of Peter as Head of the Church from the very beginning, and in particular as Patriarch of the West, after he had established his see at Rome. This extensive subject would require infinite details ; and in the impossibility of giving here clear proofs of every particular which enters into the controversy, the whole might not be altogether satisfactory and convincing. It is preferable, therefore, to select some special topic which may serve as a test, and carry the question

---

\* Book iii., c. iv.

with it. The best seems to us this mission of seven bishops sent to Gaul from Rome, and on whose account a long discussion arose among French critics, until at last, a few years ago, such proofs were given that previous opponents finally gave way, and it seems that at this day the controversy is at an end. These are the facts in a few words :

Until the seventeenth century, it was admitted by everybody in France that seven missionary bishops had been sent by Peter to Gaul, who were the real apostles of the country. These were Trophimus of Arles, Martial of Limoges, Austremonius of Clermont in Auvergne, Paul of Narbonne, Saturninus of Toulouse, Gatian of Tours, and Valerius of Treves. St. Clement, the second successor of Peter at Rome, had, according to the same tradition, sent later on to Lutetia Dionysius the Areopagite, with several companions, who became the first bishops of several cities in Gaul. This second part of the story is, for the moment, discarded. The only thing to be considered here, is the mission of the first seven bishops sent by Peter. It was at first admitted in France as a fact by all the churches they had founded, and denied by none, until Launoy attacked all these venerable traditions, as well as the universal belief in the apostleship of St. Denys in Paris, St. Lazarus and Maximinus in Provence, etc. Launoy was also the first to base his criticism on some texts of Gregory of Tours and of Sulpitius Severus, who seemed to assign the third century as the precise time of these events. The celebrated De Marca, then Archbishop of Toulouse, wrote at that epoch to the learned Henry Valois a long letter, published afterward by the Bollandists on the 30th day of June, in which he vindicated these precious traditions by many proofs and arguments. But the very beginning of his letter might be said to be sufficient, and perfectly satisfactory for any man of good faith. "These critics," he says, "deny for Gaul the zeal displayed by the apostles for such countries as Ethiopia and India. They pretend that Peter and Paul, after they had come to reside in Rome, which later on they purified by their blood, forgot entirely the neighboring nations to think only of those which were out of the Roman Empire. Very different indeed was the disposition of the apostles who, as soon as they arrived in Italy, thought of having the faith preached in Gaul. Luke, at the intimation of Paul, his master, went there and began his individual apostleship," etc. And De Marca quoted Epiphanius for this fact, which the other Fathers seemed to have forgotten.



But this sharp remonstrance of the learned author of *Concordia Sacerdotii et Imperii* could not affect public opinion, which was already setting strongly in France against what began to be called the mediæval want of criticism. From that day forth, not only men of doubtful faith, and open Jansenists, but even writers otherwise known as sound Catholics, ultramontanes, as they would be called at this day, rejected every old tradition which was not strictly historical. The conclusion was a complete obscurity of the whole subject, so that in France men, learned or not, did not know any more when Gaul had been first evangelized. De Marca had seen it from the very beginning of the controversy, and he said pointedly in the first phrase of his letter : "The love of my country and of truth excites, nay, compels me, dear Henry Valois, to complain to thee in a few words of the injury done to France, not by strangers, but by some of our own countrymen. These men, enticed by an excessive ardor for literary attainments, which they possess indeed, but by which they think they can distinguish themselves from, and claim deeper thoughts than the vulgar, have imagined that truth, which is in fact patent and evident, was nevertheless at the bottom of a well, out of which their duty was to hoist her up."

Not satisfied with these general observations, the illustrious De Marca, although a Gallican and a leader of Gallicans, brought out solid and serious proofs of the evangelization of Gaul in the apostolic age, which can be read in the seventh volume of June (art. St. Martial) of the Bollandist collection. It is very much to be doubted if Launoy could bring on better arguments on his side ; but as he was, according to De Marca, engaged in the interesting operation of "drawing out of a well Truth, which before was in the open air," the French critics, who too often have since taken a great delight in such a performance as this, sided in far greater number with Launoy than with his early adversary. There is no need of adding that during the whole of the eighteenth century there was no more any controversy on the subject. Nearly all writers stood up against the old traditions.

This, however, could not last forever ; good sense was sure to return ; and it did return with a rush. Bossuet already, at the end of the seventeenth century, in 1681, when this controversy was at its height, had said a few words in his sermon on the Unity of the Church, which were little attended to, yet showed sufficiently his mind on the subject.

But quite lately the various questions of the mission of the first seven bishops who were said by tradition to have been sent by St. Peter; and of the others whom St. Clement of Rome was thought to have dispatched to Gaul; as well as the apostleship of St. Lazarus and St. Maximinus to Provence, etc., were taken up, one by one, by as many able French writers. The result of their most impartial researches has been a complete re-vindication of the old traditions. To speak only of one of those most interesting works, that of Abbé Arbellot, *On the Date of the Apostleship of St. Martial of Limoges*, was so convincing that Augustin Thierry, then living, and perhaps the most competent man in France to pronounce a decision, said, in a letter to the author, published afterward: "I have read with a deep interest your Memoir on the date of the apostleship of St. Martial. I think that you are perfectly right, and that on this point a local tradition prevails against history such as they had made it. The method which you employ in this demonstration seems to me irreproachable; and I have no doubt that all men of true erudition will fully appreciate it." More yet: Mr. Paulin Paris, who has been called, we think, the last of the lay-Benedictines in France—although he had previously, in a Report to the *Academy of Inscriptions*, expressed his regret as to the literary movement in favor of the apostolic origin of the evangelization of Gaul, and called it "a return to the ideas of the eleventh century," did not later on scruple to say, in his edition of the *Histoire littéraire de France*:\* "We confess that for a long time we have professed to believe with Tillemont that Christianity came to Gaul from Asia. But the recent arguments offered by the upholders of the contrary opinion, have completely brought us on to a different conviction. Rome, where the new belief made such an advance directly after Nero; Rome, where the persecution against Christians was already rife; Rome had too many intimate relations with Gaul, for us to suppose that priests and confessors of the faith did not frequently travel thither in company with the numerous rhetoricians, philosophers, and grammarians who were constantly going and coming from Rome to Lyons, Arles, Marseilles, Toulouse, Nimes, Narbonne, etc. This seems to us now absolutely impossible; for all our Gallic cities partook then of the life, feelings, and manners of Imperial Rome. To suppose that Christianity, which had already entered into

---

\* T. i., p. 441.

Germany and Spain, could be carried on so silently as not to produce a single sound in Gaul, is evidently to go counter to Seneca, Pliny, and Tacitus ; it is to close one's eyes to the light of history."

Peter, therefore, had actually sent Trophimus to Arles, Martial to Limoges, Austremonius to Clermont, Paul to Narbonne, Saturninus to Toulouse, Gatian to Tours, and Valerius to Treves. Lazarus and Maximinus, coming directly from Palestine, at about the same time, evangelized Marseilles and Aix ; and a few years later Clement of Rome, the second successor of Peter as Pope, sent other bishops to various Gallic cities ; so that at the beginning of the second century, the great country of the former Celts was rapidly becoming Christian.

But in Western Europe this was not peculiar to Gaul. Bossuet has said in the sermon mentioned above that Peter, having first evangelized the East, devoted his ministry particularly to Rome, where he was brought by his first Gentile convert, the Roman officer Cornelius ; and "with Rome," he added, "came the whole West." Rome, in fact, being the capital of the world, in daily communication with all the Western provinces, that which Mr. Paulin Pâris just told us must necessarily have happened for Gaul, of necessity also the same must have happened for the other Western provinces, which were as closely connected with the center as Gaul itself. Of these, Spain must briefly be examined before all others, with the remark that Spain was a much older possession of Rome than Gaul. Its first occupancy, in fact, dated from the Punic wars ; and when Julius Cæsar began the first real conquest of the Gallic nations, Spain had been already for a long time subdued, although occasionally some partial insurrections took place. But the Roman manners and culture penetrated it so completely that, after Italy, it was the one country, of the whole world, most imbued with what was called Roman civilization. From the time of the first civil wars, before, consequently, J. Cæsar went to Gaul, many patrician families resided in Spain, and several men illustrious in the State and in the literary world, were born in it. Thus the series of reflections which made such an impression on the mind of Mr. Paulin Pâris with respect to Gaul, that he rejected absolutely his former belief on the time of its evangelization, and admitted unreservedly that it had taken place in the apostolic age ; the same reasons must convince every judicious man that Spain also received the first news of the Gospel as early as the time of Peter and Paul. But we are far from being

reduced to these inferences, whatever may be their power ; and positive testimonies of great value make it impossible not to admit that St. Paul was, in fact, the first apostle of the Iberian peninsula.

In his Epistle to the Romans he had said, in express terms : "When I shall begin to take my journey into Spain, I hope that as I pass, I shall see you." Thus he did not intend first to go to Rome purposely, but his direct intention was to go to Spain ; he would see the Romans on the way. Consequently a few lines farther he added : "I will come by you into Spain." He was, however, obliged to protract his sojourn in Rome, on account of his subsequent appeal to Cæsar ; being then, in fact, a prisoner. But that after a two years' captivity, his trial terminated favorably for him, and he was set free ; so that his subsequent martyrdom took place in a second voyage to Rome, is the only supposition which squares entirely with the whole biography of St. Paul. Aberlé, in the art. *Paul* of the *Dict. de Théologie Catholique*, shows it conclusively ; and the Second Epistle to Timothy can hardly be understood in any other supposition. Thus Eusebius concluded from this letter of the apostle that he had been twice to Rome. Many other Fathers of the Church were also of this opinion, and thought that St. Paul had gone to Spain in the interval between his first and second residence in the great city. De Marca, in the letter to H. Valois previously quoted, attributes this sentiment to Athanasius, Epiphanius, Theodoretus, and Chrysostom among the Greeks, and to Jerome among the Latins. These are undoubtedly respectable writers. But there is the testimony of an author contemporary of St. Paul, which by itself would settle the question. It is that of St. Clement of Rome, in his letter to the Corinthians, of which some very striking passages have been previously quoted. In the fifth chapter or paragraph he says : "Paul . . . having preached the word in the East and the West,"—Clement wrote from Rome—"acquired a fame as illustrious as his faith was, instructed the whole world in the way of righteousness, reached even the confines of the setting sun, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects of the city," etc.\* We have quoted St. Clement from the Oxford edition of 1847, by William Jacobson, and

---

\* The words *reached the confines of the setting sun* are in Greek ἐπὶ τὸ τέρμα τῆς δύσεως ἑλθών. They must mean that he went to Spain, which was certainly, as it is now, *west* of Rome, and was believed at the time to be the end of the world toward the setting sun.

the text must be admitted even by Protestant critics. It would be difficult, therefore, to find any historical fact of that age as strongly supported as is the traveling of St. Paul to Spain in order to establish the faith in that distant country. Of the preaching of St. James, the brother of John, in the same province of the Roman Empire, there is no time to speak, because this is merely supported by tradition, and would require longer proofs than we can afford to give here. Nevertheless, whoever will take the trouble to go through the details and arguments contained in the discussion of this fact by the Bollandists, in the sixth volume of July in their collection, will have to admit that wit and ridicule can scarcely hope to shake the deliberate opinion of many Spaniards on the subject. But this is not needed to establish solidly the diffusion of Christianity in Spain during the first century.

Beside the passage of the life of St. Paul, discussed a moment ago, there is that inscription discovered during the life of Baronius in the ruins of Marcussia, not far from Burgos, which praises Nero for having cleared the province of robbers, and of those "who infected mankind with a new superstition." This is the very style used by Tacitus and Suetonius to designate the Christian religion at about the same epoch. This epigraph, rejected, it is true, by some antiquaries, among them Muratori, is nevertheless generally admitted at this time; and Ernest Walch, professor in the Jena University, has demonstrated its genuineness in two convincing dissertations.

In a second place, a general reflection on the subsequent persecutions in Spain cannot but make a deep impression on every thoughtful mind. Prudentius, a Spaniard, born in the province of Tarragona, describes vividly the triumphs of martyrs, chiefly in Spain, under the Roman emperors. A great part of his work *Peristephanon* is devoted to the glory of his countrymen who died for Christ. From these poems, and from other sources of information, it is certain that Spain furnished as great a number of martyrs as any other part of the Roman Empire, except Rome. But, as it has been remarked, persecutions of such an atrocious character suppose, wherever they took place, not only a strong vitality in the Christian Church, but likewise a large diffusion of the faith. Where Christians were few it could not be expected that the Roman proconsuls would pay a great deal of attention to the new superstition, as they called it. It was when the number of the faithful had increased to such an extent that they filled every spot, every public institution, except the temples, as

Tertullian said, that fear was excited in the heart of pagan governors for the safety of the commonwealth. This reflection can be verified, by an examination of the various outbursts of cruelty which disgraced the Roman government during more than two centuries. There must, consequently, have been a very considerable number of Christians in Spain, when the scenes described by Prudentius in his *Peristephanon* occurred. But who had first established the faith together with St. Paul? He did not remain long enough in the country to make it altogether Christian. There must have been some cause for that diffusion of Christian life. There must have been, as everywhere else, bishops and priests to found churches and fill them with ardent devotees. Who were those that labored first among them? When the peace of Constantine left finally the Church free in Spain, we see suddenly the whole country full of Christians; we find bishops and a numerous clergy in all great Spanish cities. It is sufficient to throw a glance on the lists of Gams, to be astonished at the sudden spectacle. There was certainly a starting-point of all this. Where can we find it?

An answer must be given to these questions, and it will not do to say, We don't know, when the Spaniards themselves have at all times maintained that they knew. The only fair answer, the only solution of the question satisfactory to reason, is that given by the unanimous voice of the people—namely, this: Peter and Paul sent from Rome seven bishops, who settled down after various wanderings into seven places. The bishops' names and those of their new sees were: Torquatus in Acci or Gades; Secundus in Abula or Abula; Indaletius in Urci or Almeria; Ctesiphon in Bergii or Verja; Cæcilius in Eliberi or Granata; Esitius or Epsychius in Carcesæ or Cazorlæ; Euphrasius in Illiturgi, on the Betis River. Thus it seems that the first Pope and his coadjutor Paul chose seven men to establish the faith in Spain, as seven other men were selected likewise to establish it in Gaul. Since history consists in relating events happening in the civil, political, and religious orders, we call this an historical fact founded on tradition only, a tradition which nothing else contradicts, and which thus explains sufficiently the first diffusion of Christianity in so great a country as Spain. Should anybody not be satisfied with these reasons, let him find better ones, and above all let them be more consistent with probability, and we are ready to admit them on the spot.

But those Spanish traditions with regard to the first bishops of the

country state generally that they were sent by the *apostles* in Rome ; some, however, attributing it, it seems, particularly to St. Peter. From this it is evident that if it took place, it was when St. Paul was in Rome as well as St. Peter ; consequently, toward the end of the pontificate of the Prince of the Apostles. There is not even a great stretch of fancy in imagining that it happened during the second sojourn of St. Paul in Rome, that is, just before the martyrdom of both. The reason of this last supposition is that it seems probable they were not sent before the voyage of Paul to Spain, by which he ascertained the needs of the country, and could select the particular spots where their ministry would be more profitable. This was found to be the *Provincia Bætica*, in which the seven sees founded by them are located by ancient geographers. But we know that St. Paul went to Spain after the first two years of his residence in the city, when he was left free, and the accusations of the Jews were set aside. He must, therefore, have been principally instrumental in the choice made by *the apostles* of that part of Spain to which the first seven missionary bishops were directed to go. But it can be maintained that they received their mission chiefly from St. Peter, and the reasons of this opinion must be stated at this particular moment. A Catholic will certainly and readily admit it, because he knows that Peter was Pope and not Paul ; that to Peter alone Christ gave the mission to feed the whole flock, the ewes as well as the lambs ; that if Paul received indeed from Christ a real apostolic power, he was not declared to be the rock on which the Church was to stand forever ; and he did not receive the keys which were emblematic of all spiritual power. On the 29th of June, the Church celebrates the festival of both apostles ; and in the lessons of the day, St. Leo, addressing the city of Rome, uses these remarkable words : “ These are thy fathers and thy true pastors.” So that St. Paul is as truly a father and a pastor for Rome as Peter was ; and in the remainder of the office of the day he is celebrated as *the teacher of the world*, when Peter is called *the janitor of heaven*, and both are called *the parents of Rome*. It is, however, remarkable that in this office of the Roman breviary all the texts taken from Scripture refer to Peter ; absolutely none of them to Paul ; and if on the following day there is a large compensation made for the *teacher of the world*, there is not in this office of June 30 a single word referring to Rome, and to the power of St. Paul there ; but every text of Scripture describes his qualifications as an apostle in general, and his great deeds in the

early spread of Christianity; none absolutely as a spiritual ruler at Rome.

All this, we repeat, is perfectly natural to a Catholic who knows how much depends, in the great question of the unity of the Church, on having one head to rest upon, and not two, much less twelve. But for those who unfortunately have lost this confiding reliance on a single source of supreme authority, and who fondly imagine that truth can still subsist when it is distributed in a thousand channels, having no common source, and scarcely any point of interlocking with each other, it is proper to enter into a short discussion appropriate to their state of mind. To these men we ask, Who founded the See of Rome? and the answer must be from their own lips: Peter, alone. Paul had never seen the Romans when he praised them with the solemn assertion that their "faith was announced in the whole world." When Paul wrote this to them, who at the time had preached them the Gospel? Peter, certainly, if there is any truth in the forcible proofs given previously of the pontificate of the Prince of the Apostles in Rome. The Catholic belief in this long apostleship of Peter among the Romans, is the only thing which can render probable, nay, possible, the *immense multitude* of Christians who suffered persecution under Nero. It may be said, without fear of error or even of exaggeration, that the great number of those who were burned alive in the gardens of Nero, when this monster drove his chariot at night through the long rows of their flaming bodies, had been baptized by Peter himself, or at least by those he had ordained as bishops and deacons to assist him in the ministry. Linus, and Clement, and Cletus, who followed him in regular succession, as shall be seen, had been the disciples of Peter, and not of Paul. Details will shortly be given in confirmation of this assertion. Rome was therefore the See of Peter, and of nobody else.

It must be known, moreover, that it was an invariable principle with St. Paul not to interfere in the labors of the other apostles. He states it in so many words in some passages of one of his epistles. It must have been, in fact, a general rule among the twelve when they divided the world between themselves; and several facts of the life of St. Paul are a proof of it. Still, he was authorized to visit the countries evangelized by Peter, because he had been appointed chiefly for the Gentiles as Peter was chiefly for the Jews; and both lived together all over the empire. The reader has not forgotten the reflections formerly indulged in on the subject. But whatever



could have been the mixing up of their labor, on account of the ubiquitous presence of Jews and Gentiles in the Roman world, it is certainly true that when a particular church was founded by any apostle, no other interfered with it from henceforth. Thus we see that St. John neither did go to Asia Minor, nor placed himself at the head of the bishops of that country ordained by St. Paul, until St. Paul had died. The same was certainly true of the Apostle of the Gentiles toward his brethren in the apostleship, but particularly toward the head of the twelve. It may be conjectured even that St. Paul would not have gone to reside for any length of time in Rome, had it not been for the capital accusations which obliged him to appeal to Cæsar. He had said himself previously that as he wished to see the Romans, he would take advantage, for that purpose, of his intended voyage to Spain, and that he would merely pass through Rome, *præteriens*. Providence overruled his designs, compelled him to make a longer stay in the capital of the world; and by demanding of him the shedding of his blood there by martyrdom, gave him thus a share in the establishment of Christianity in the Eternal City. It is, therefore, the martyrdom of Paul which made him an apostle of Rome. He founded the Church there, together with Peter, by pouring his life-blood to cement the groundwork of the edifice. This is all; but it was having a magnificent share in so glorious a work.

The reader must not, therefore, be surprised that some of the traditions which attribute the mission of the first bishops in Spain to Peter himself, speak so positively as apparently to exclude St. Paul. The only thing calculated to cause some surprise is the assertion in other MSS. that these seven holy missionaries were sent by the *apostles* in Rome. The surprise ceases when it is remarked that every time the general terms *the apostles* is not used, but a proper name is employed, it is that of Peter which is read, not that of St. Paul.

Is anything known of the early progress of Christianity in Spain beside the foundation of the first seven sees by Peter? From the well-ascertained position of those sees it appears at a mere glance that the country was first evangelized in the south. Their geographical direction from Urçi and Verja on the sea-coast, to Acci and Illiberis in the interior, and finally to Illiturgi, on the Betis River, shows that the missionaries coming from Rome through the Mediterranean, had landed most probably at Cartagena. The Christian faith had

therefore, from the start, taken possession of the finest part of Spain, which the pen of Fénelon has so charmingly described in his *Telemachus*, and which formed later on the brilliant Arab kingdom of Granada. But unfortunately we are left perfectly in the dark with regard to the subsequent history of those primitive bishoprics. In all other countries of the old world where the Gospel was early preached, there are frequently gaps in the succession of bishops before the third or fourth century, when suddenly we see in nearly all ancient cities prelates ruling the flock of Christ, and numerous congregations of fervent Christians. But those gaps in Palestine, Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece, Gaul, or Italy are often supplemented by most precious indications, contained in the works of ancient writers we still possess. In Spain it may be said to be an almost complete and universal blank. The student of ecclesiastical history is absolutely unable to follow the life of the Church and its development during the first two hundred and fifty years. That it was, however, active, and taking a gradual but firm hold of the country, is abundantly proved by the sudden burst of a universal sway developed at once to the view, when Constantine, gave peace to the Church. All cities in Spain appear at once Christianized, governed by bishops, and meeting with but few obstacles from the previous polytheism. What may be the cause of the total want of knowledge under which the modern student labors? It can scarcely be accounted for. The only explanation possible at this time, is the complete dearth of authors, civil or ecclesiastical, belonging to Spain during that period. It is known that of all the provinces of the Roman Empire, under the first Cæsars, Spain was the country where Roman culture prevailed most prominently. The schools of Southern Gaul, so celebrated in that age, were less brilliant than those of the Iberian peninsula. We may be allowed to conclude that this was particularly the case in the south, from the fact that both Seneca and Lucan, the greatest Latin writers born in Spain, came from the *Provincia Bætica*; and two or three centuries later, the noblest Christian bishop of the country in point of science and virtue, the great Osius, so celebrated in the history of Arianism, was also born in the same part of Spain, and is known particularly as bishop of Cordova. It would be curious indeed to examine if the seven primitive sees established east and south of Cordova, had not something to do with this development of intellect in this part of the peninsula. The schools where Lucan and Seneca studied in their youth could not

have been influenced by any Christian development, since at the time the first missionaries were sent by Peter, both the philosopher Seneca and the poet Lucan were already in Rome, and had distinguished themselves in the world of letters. They both were even put to death by Nero, probably before the Christian missionaries could have made a great number of proselytes in the *Provincia Bœtica*. Still, it is known that everywhere in Greece, Africa, and Gaul, directly after the first establishment of Christianity, Greek and Latin literature declined rapidly in the hands of profane and pagan authors, whilst Christian literature, both Greek and Latin, took directly their place, and threw a halo of glory around the cradle of the Christian Church. Why could not this have been the case likewise in Spain? When Osius of Cordova appears at the time of the peace of Constantine, after having confessed the faith in his native country during the persecution of Maximian, we see in him a man taking his position directly among the greatest Christian doctors of the East or the West. The representative of the Pope at Nice, the great defender of Athanasius, he is accused, it is true, by some writers of having showed a moment's weakness, but justified by others, as if this had been a calumny or at least a mistake; it is impossible not to look with respect on this great figure, one of the noblest among a galaxy of intellectual stars. Then reflecting on all these circumstances, we ask ourselves, Where had he been educated, so as to be able to appear suddenly as a great leader in so brilliant an age? The only answer is, that he had studied at Cordova. But of his writings only a single letter remains, beside the text of his opinions on ecclesiastical discipline preserved in the Acts of the Council of Sardica. The letter was written to Constantius, the unworthy son of Constantine, and remains to this day a model of episcopal dignity and firmness. It is altogether in defense of Athanasius, and scarcely contains any details on the life of the writer, except when he states, at the beginning of it, that "he had been persecuted by Maximian, the predecessor of Constantius, as he was at the time persecuted also by Constantius himself." This is all he says of himself, and we are perfectly ignorant of the youth of Osius and of his surroundings. The contemporary Greek or Latin Fathers who have spoken of him, are unanimous in praising him for his science, his virtue, nay, his holiness; but do not give us any more details of his biography. And it must be confessed that except this glimpse afforded suddenly of the life of the Church in Spain, by the individuality of Osius, we

are in total ignorance of any other fact furnished by history or literature.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude, that Spanish Christianity remained during the three first centuries altogether disconnected from the whole world. There was at all times an active correspondence between the bishops of the Iberian peninsula and those of Africa and Italy. But all the monuments of it have unfortunately perished, except one, which has been preserved to us in the writings of St. Cyprian. This must be examined somewhat leisurely, as it is calculated to throw a flood of light on that period—the third century—in Spain, and on the previous epoch, which must have been connected with it by the necessity of the case. It was in 254, about the time of the birth of Osius, who lived just a hundred years, that a council of thirty-seven bishops met at Carthage under the presidency of Cyprian. It was convened at the request of several Spanish prelates, who sent two of their number—Sabinus and Felix—to St. Cyprian, that he might, with his co-bishops of the province of Carthage, give to Pope Stephen correct information on a subject which was at that time causing some disturbance in that distant part of Spain, the *Provincia Tarraconensis*.

Leon and Astorga, sees of the bishops Sabinus and Felix, were two cities situated in the northwestern part of the peninsula, not far from the frontier of Lusitania, now the kingdom of Portugal. They were, consequently, far indeed from the *Provincia Bætica*, and it must be inferred that from the south, from the banks of the Betis River, and the coast of Spain, just in view of Africa, Christianity had spread to the very limits of the country in the north, very near the coast of the ocean. The cause which brought the two Spanish prelates to Carthage, had likewise given rise in Africa to numerous difficulties which a previous council, held in 251, had settled. It was the well-known case of the *libellatici*. In Spain as well as in Africa, during the persecution of Decius, many Christians, and among them some bishops, escaped from the persecution by obtaining, through the intervention of friends, papers certifying that they had complied with the law and sacrificed to the gods, although they had not really done so. These men were called *libellatici*; their conduct was condemned in subsequent councils, and the guilty priests and bishops were deprived of their office and reduced, with regard to ecclesiastical functions, to the rank of laymen. Basilides, the former bishop of Leon, and Martialis of Astorga, had thus lost their sees, and Sabi-

nus and Felix had been substituted in their places. But the persecution being over, the deposed prelates pretended, like Felicissimus in Carthage, to be restored forthwith, as if the council which had deposed them had overstepped its power. For this object, Basilides went directly to Rome with the intention of deceiving Pope Stephen, before the Spanish bishops had had time to concert their action and lay the case in its proper light before the Holy See. From circumstances which are now unknown, the cause of the two guilty prelates was likely to succeed, temporarily at least, at Rome. The prelates who had appointed Sabinus and Felix thought, consequently, that their best course was to apply to Cyprian, who, having already deposed Felicissimus in Africa for the same reason, could more likely understand the case in its proper bearing, and present it more forcibly before the Pope. And so in fact it turned out. The Acts of this council, such as we have them, mention only, it is true, that Basilides had gone to Rome and had deceived Stephen, whom Cyprian calls his "colleague," by false representations, with the view of obtaining his reinstatement in the episcopal dignity. No positive allusion is made to the superior authority of the bishop of Rome, and it looks at first sight as if Cyprian considered his power and that of the other African bishops as on a par with that of Stephen. But it would be a mistake to think so; since at a recent epoch in the well-known affair of the Carthaginian deacon Felicissimus, who had been likewise deposed as a *libellaticus*, the bishop of Carthage had sent the Acts of the council, where this had taken place, to Cornelius, in 251—not to Stephen, as Alzog pretends. And this measure of referring it to the Pope was not then a mere affair of courtesy, since in the council of 254, now under consideration, Cyprian, stating that former case as the motive of his action in the actual one, uses the following remarkable expressions: "Already on a former occasion, Cornelius, acting with our concurrence and that of all the bishops of the whole world, *has decreed* that such men could be admitted to public penance, but those of them who belong to the clergy, or to the sacerdotal order, must be deprived of their dignity."

Thus, in the mind of Cyprian, the condemnation of such men as these was grounded on a former *decree* of a Pope in 251; and he justifies his action in 254 because of that former papal decision. As to the consideration of the great number of bishops who had coincided with Pope Cornelius, he gives it certainly as a confirmation of the correctness of the decision; not, however—in the Gallican sense—

as a necessary adjunct, since, in many texts, some of which are quoted by Alzog, Cyprian acknowledges that "The Church is built upon Peter for the sake of unity;" and that "sacerdotal unity takes its rise from the chair of Peter;" also that "The Roman faith is free from all taint of infidelity," and finally that "To be united with the See of Rome is to be united with the Catholic Church," etc. The consequence of all these broad assertions is certainly the paramount authority of the Pope—what we call his infallibility; and the sense in which he uses the words *collega noster* in speaking of the pontiff is thus sufficiently qualified. It means merely that the Pope was a bishop in Rome as Cyprian was a bishop in Carthage; the episcopal character was the same in both. Nothing more.

It is proper to state that this Council of Carthage, in 254, is regarded as apocryphal by some critics, but forcibly vindicated by the great majority of them. Baluzius has certainly demonstrated its genuineness, and labored assiduously and successfully in restoring the text, which was undoubtedly very corrupt in many manuscripts. Migne, in giving it a place in his great collection, has published with the text notes which must carry the conviction of all impartial men on these points.

But in regard to our actual considerations the facts conveyed by this precious document appear to be of extreme importance. Just in the middle of the third century, though no positive information of any kind has otherwise reached us of the two previous ages which intervened since the first evangelization of Spain, we find that in the distant province of Tarragona there are numerous dioceses governed by Christian bishops. When difficulties arise the custom among them is to refer the case to the bishops of Italy or of Africa. In Italy they look particularly to Rome; in Africa to Carthage. To reach either of these points they have often to travel across the whole peninsula, and then to venture on the sea, and pass it over. The questions which agitate the Church all over the world, agitate it likewise in Spain. Whenever we can obtain a glimpse of it, the features are absolutely the same as in the most flourishing parts of it. And it is a most fortunate circumstance that this document, found among the writings of St. Cyprian, does not refer to the coast just in view of Carthage, or in daily communication with Italy, but to the wild portion of the country, where, later on, the Spaniards were to bid defiance to the Moslem, because of its being almost inaccessible, and as it were out of the world. It can, consequently, be

safely concluded that the same must have been the case for all other parts of Spain, although the documents which could furnish the historical proof of it have totally disappeared. And this state of the country in 250 supposes a universal spread of Christianity through it in the two previous ages. The pagan civilization which existed everywhere at the time of the arrival of the first seven missionaries sent by Peter, was giving way on every side, and was replaced by new ideas, new customs, a new language, at least with respect to religious thought. How long a time would this have required if it had been a purely natural process? Much more, undoubtedly, than two hundred years. But as it was not a purely natural process, but in reality a providential design brought out by the power of God and contained within the order of grace, this length of time amply sufficed, however wonderful was the change, and rationally unexpected and unexplained the result.

That this is true and without any exaggeration, will be plain to every one who reflects that this process of conversion from heathenism to Christianity was going on not only in large cities and among a small number of educated men, but in villages and in the wildest rural districts, among the common people, as well as among the upper classes of society. All this is obvious, although no one can now point his finger at facts recorded by contemporary writers, or by monuments known to modern archæologists. The simple truth of it is as sure as if we still possessed the books which were certainly written in Spain during those first three centuries, and which have now perished.

But the abundance of matter urges us on. It is time to consider the early growth of the Church in Western Africa, where the reader is naturally brought by the great name of Cyprian. This is the last country comprised in the vast European district called the Western Patriarchate of the Roman Pontiff.

The precise epoch of its first evangelization cannot be determined. In none of the extant writings of the great Latin Fathers who have illustrated the country—Tertullian, Cyprian, Optatus, Augustine, etc.—can there be found the least hint on the subject. A phrase of Augustine has puzzled some modern writers, and at first sight it is perplexing, indeed. It says bluntly, “that Cyprian had had seventy predecessors.” But this cannot be admitted, since in the two centuries which elapsed from the apostolic time till the episcopacy of Cyprian, there could not have been seventy bishops in succession on

the same see. Yet some Catholic authors have pretended that as it is a positive statement of Augustine it must be true, and the only conclusion to be drawn from it is that the average of each Carthaginian bishop's occupancy was about two years and a half; and in this case the first would certainly have been sent by St. Peter. There is, however, a much more probable meaning of this strange phrase. We learn from this work of the great African doctor,\* that the same Agrippinus of whom he speaks in the present passage, had held a synod of seventy or eighty bishops at Carthage, in which they had unanimously resolved that all heretics coming back to the Church were to be rebaptized. These are the seventy predecessors of Cyprian, not on the see of Carthage, but *predecessors* as to his opinion about the rebaptization of heretics.

In fact, there are only four prelates known to us, entitled to that honor; namely, Optatus, who was bishop of Carthage toward 202; Agrippinus, between 215 and 220; Cyrus, whose period of office is not known; and Donatus, a short time previous to 238, ten years before Cyprian. Nothing absolutely is known of the first in this list, although he governed the Church of Carthage precisely at the time Tertullian wrote his *Apologeticus*. But he was not certainly the first bishop of that city. Tertullian informs us † that in his time the number of Christians was so great that "they constituted all but the majority in every city." ‡ If this were true of all cities known to Tertullian, it must have been so particularly in Carthage, where he lived. It is certain, therefore, that Optatus had many predecessors on the see of Carthage. Whence had the first of them come? This is the question to be examined presently.

It is not probable he had come from Eastern Africa, that is, from Egypt or Cyrenaika. St. Mark had founded the Church in this part of the African continent. From Alexandria it spread chiefly south to Nubia and Ethiopia, east to Arabia and Persia; thence to Hindostan and Central Asia; in all directions except the west. Although there must have been frequent communications from Alexandria to Carthage for the purposes of trade, still, we never read that Christian missionaries followed that road. Were they afraid of interfering with the mission of Peter all over the Western world? Had Christianity come to Western Africa from the East, it would

---

\* De baptismo contra Donatistas, lib. i., cap. xviii., et lib. ii., cap. ix.

† Ad Scapulam, cap. ii.

‡ Ante-Nicene Christian Library.



have brought with it the Greek idiom. But it is very remarkable, on the contrary, that Greek was almost altogether unknown to what is called now the African Church, namely, to the bishops of Proconsular Africa, of Numidia, Mauritania, Getulia, etc. The Latin idiom was so exclusively the language of this part of the empire that Dean Milman pretends that the Latin Church—he has written on *Latin Christianity*—was properly at first the African. Papal Rome, he imagines, scarcely used originally the Latin idiom, but only the Greek. He is so much convinced of this that he positively derives “Latin Christianity” from Africa. This strange preoccupation of the “Dean of St. Paul’s” will be discussed briefly in course of time. But it is sufficient for the moment to conclude from this remarkable fact that Christianity was not introduced in Western Africa from Cyrenaika or Egypt. The same reasoning would apply to Palestine, Syria, or Greece. It must, therefore, necessarily have come from Rome, either directly through *Ostia Tiberina*, or indirectly through Spain. Had it come from this last country, it would have to be referred to Rome, from which undoubtedly Spain has received the religion of Christ. But it seems a great deal more probable that it came directly from Rome. This great city, then at the height of its prosperity, was particularly the center of the Western world. It cannot be doubted that under the first Roman Cæsars, a great many more ships entered the harbor of Carthage from Rome than from Carthagenæ in Spain, although this last emporium was certainly much nearer than the capital of the empire.

To be still more convinced of this, the precise character of Roman Carthage as a city must be briefly considered. It had absolutely nothing to do with the old Phœnician capital. This had been altogether destroyed by the Romans under Scipio Æmilianus, one hundred and forty-six years before Christ. The very site on which it was built had been cursed by the gods.\* Rome ordered Carthage never to be reinhabited, denouncing dreadful imprecations against any one who should attempt it. C. Gracchus, however, undertook it, and to that end conducted thither a colony of six hundred Roman citizens. It was the first Roman colony ever sent out of Italy. The workmen, according to Plutarch, were terrified by many unlucky omens, at the time they were tracing the limits, and laying the foundations of the new city. So that ultimately another site in the neighbor-

---

\* Macrobius, Sat. iii. 9.

hood was chosen, and thus the Roman Carthage was born. Julius Cæsar, and after him Augustus, increased and embellished it; and at the time of Strabo it was equal, if not superior, to any other city in Africa. But it was an Italian city in every respect; the language was Latin, the manners were Roman. The reader of the *Confessions* of St. Augustine can never forget the details of the death of Monica. It was at Ostia Tiberina it took place, just when both mother and son were returning to Carthage. It looks exactly as if in our modern times an Englishman was starting from London to go and live in Dublin, on the other side of the Irish Channel. The population of Carthage, a Roman colony, was thus altogether Roman, and had been so from the time of Caius Gracchus.

The consequence of all these facts is the firm conviction in every mind which examines them well, that the missionaries who first evangelized Carthage, and through her Western Africa, came from Rome and from no other place; although there is a bare possibility that some of them may have arrived from Carthagenæ in Spain, or from the shores of the Betis River.\*

It has just been ascertained that Optatus was bishop of Carthage in 202 of our era, that is, a hundred years after the death of St. John, and less than a hundred and fifty after the pontificate of St. Peter himself. A few years after Optatus, that is, about 215, Agrippinus, bishop of Carthage, could assemble in that city a council of seventy or eighty bishops, to discuss the question of the baptism of heretics. Tertullian, at the same epoch, said that the Christians constituted then all but the majority in every city.† Let any candid man calculate what a time was absolutely required to obtain such a remarkable result. This consideration alone might justify the assertion that Peter was in truth the one who had sent the first missionaries to Western Africa, as he had confessedly intrusted his disciple, Mark, with the evangelization of Egypt, at the eastern end of the same continent. Some objections are raised, it is true, against this testimony of Tertullian, which will be presently answered. But before attempting it,

---

\* An interesting volume was published at the end of last century by Frederick Christian Munter, the Lutheran Bishop of Seeland in Denmark, under the title of *Primordia Ecclesiæ Africanæ*; the best edition being from Copenhagen, 1829. According to Dr. Héfélé (*Dict. de Théol. Catholique*), the conclusion of the book is that the Christianization of this part of Africa came from Rome.

† Pars pæne major civitatis cujusque.

the immense number of bishops in that part of the world must be briefly insisted upon, as a strong proof that the origin of the Church in Africa must go to the very beginnings of Christianity. With regard to many countries where, undoubtedly, the apostles themselves preached, the small number of bishops *historically* ascertained until the third and fourth centuries, formed a real difficulty which had to be dealt with in a former chapter. But in Africa, owing chiefly to the numerous works of St. Augustine against the Donatists, which contain very remarkable details on the subject, there can be no doubt that early in the third century there was not a small town, nay, an indifferent village in the wilds of Numidia and Mauritania, which had not its bishop, and which, almost directly after the martyrdom of Cyprian in 258, had not, unfortunately, two bishops, one Catholic and the other Donatist. This phenomenon is peculiar to this part of Africa, and must be briefly commented upon. For there is scarcely any other fact of ancient Christian history so powerful to prove the rapid spread of religion in the most early times, and the real interposition of divine Providence in the general result.

What has just been said of the population of Carthage—that it was altogether Roman, and thus opened the door for the early evangelization of the country—must not be applied to all those wild provinces. Their population was then, and has been ever since, mainly composed of Numids, Moors, and Getulians. Modern ethnologists refer them to a Syro-Arabian stock, which is supposed to have, at a very early epoch, taken possession of the whole northern coast of Africa, from Egypt to the Straits of Gibraltar, and even to the Canary Islands. But, whatever may be the speculations of the men of science in our day, with respect to their noble physical characteristics, it must be said that in the Berbers and the Moors of our time, as well as in the Numids and Mauritaniens of two thousand years ago, the student of history finds only wild tribes, full of bravery, no doubt, and worthy of a better fate than they ever experienced from their conquerors, the Romans, the Vandals, and the Arabs; still, a stubborn race, invariably resisting foreign nations even should they bring them the boon of civilization and true religion. Is it not wonderful that as soon as Christianity was offered them, many embraced it. They were certainly on the way of becoming all Christians, when the Vandals first, and the Arab Moslems afterward, checked, unfortunately, a process nearly completed. The proof of this directly results from a single glance given at the precious works

of Augustine and of Optatus on the Donatist schism, which have been condensed in the list of bishops compiled by Gams, after the previous labors of Munter,\* Pitra,† Blampignon,‡ and others. It must be sufficient to state that according to the lists of Gams, the various provinces of this part of Africa contained at the end of the fifth century fifty-four bishops' sees in *Africa Proconsularis*; one hundred and twenty-five in *Numidia*; one hundred and twenty-two in *Bysacene*; one hundred and twenty-three in *Mauritania Cæsariensis*; forty-four in *Mauritania Sitifensis*; eight in the adjacent islands; in all four hundred and seventy-six Catholic bishoprics, the Donatists not being counted. Should the reader consent to go through the names of cities, towns, and villages enumerated in twenty columns of the large quarto volume of Father Gams, he will see that the greatest number of them were real African towns, not Roman colonies or cities. It was, therefore, the real old Numid and Moorish population which had been converted, in so short a period of time. It is true the lists are compiled for the end of the fifth century. Should the same process be followed for the end of the second age a great deal more than a hundred sees could easily be ascertained for the same countries, since at that epoch Agrippinus of Carthage succeeded in holding a council of seventy or eighty bishops from Proconsular Africa and Numidia alone. It is unnecessary to expatiate on such an historical fact as this; and there is no doubt in our mind that if we possessed authentic documents of the same kind for all the countries where the Gospel had been preached during the three first centuries, very nearly similar results would be reached, for all of them. Tertullian asserts that the Christians were already in his time—the end of the second century and the beginning of the third—"all but the majority in every city;" and he said this of all the cities he knew in the Roman world and out of it, not of those of Africa alone. This assertion must be examined leisurely, as being of extreme importance to prove that the early spread of Christianity was a divine work, and a real fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament, which is all along the object of these pages.

And we are first obliged to confess that this is not the opinion of the majority of Catholic writers, who, firmly believing in this fulfillment, think, however, that the progress of the conversion of mankind was far less rapid. You will read in many excellent works on the

---

\* *Primordia Eccl. Afr.* † *Spicilegium Solesmense.* ‡ *De Sto. Cypriano.*

subject, that at the peace of Constantine the far greater number of people in the Roman world were yet pagans ; that after five hundred years and more of papal sway Rome was still a pagan city ; that there are expressions of Origen going to prove that in his time the Christians were still by far in the minority, etc. Yet, an immense number of facts have been so far offered to the reader, going strongly to show the contrary, from the remarkable testimony of Pliny the younger in his first letter to Trajan from Bithynia, to the phrase of Tertullian, just quoted. It is certainly proper, on this account, to discuss the question more thoroughly. The expressions of Tertullian are openly controverted ; and some of his statements may be acknowledged to have been somewhat exaggerated. The impulsive character of this great writer led him undoubtedly to overestimate whatever was favorable to his cause. Must we concede that he never was exact ? In the celebrated passage of the *Apologeticus*, where he boldly affirms that the Christians already filled the senate, the army, the cities and country towns, etc., leaving only the temples empty, people in our day see there a figure of rhetoric. He is even accused of having increased the fury of the persecutors by his blunt boldness, as if the Roman emperors had ever needed the precise statements of Tertullian to be aware of the rapidly increasing number of the Christians. People do not reflect, in speaking thus, that if there were not indeed a great deal of truth in what Tertullian said on the subject, if it were not, in fact, mainly the truth, it would have amounted to a positive falsehood on his part, since he speaks here of what he saw, and expresses it in well-weighed terms. Now, did Tertullian lie in speaking as he did ? Was he not truly convinced of what he said ? Is not his very style a proof of his intimate conviction ? In this case, supposing his statements to have been grossly exaggerated, then he must have been grossly deceived. Can this be said of such a man, particularly when he speaks of facts falling daily under his observation ? He affirms that, in all cities, in his time, the majority of inhabitants were Christian ; it must have been true, certainly, of Carthage, where he lived ; of the other African cities with which he was personally acquainted ; of all great and important cities likewise from which he could obtain reliable information. If such an affirmation as this from such a man must be rejected, we maintain that the history of ancient times cannot be written ; nay, that scarcely any one can write the history of his own time, and convey to posterity a real idea of it.

Beside this single phrase of Tertullian there is a remarkable passage of the same author on the extension of Christianity in his day, not referring to Africa alone, but to the whole world. It is, in fact, a strict enumeration, intimately connected with our whole subject. It is, also, the very passage calculated to test the truthfulness of Tertullian, as to his understanding the meaning of the old Hebrew prophecies, and their positive fulfillment in his day; the extent likewise of his geographical knowledge, and the honesty of his assertions, when he speaks with such dogmatism and eloquence. It is taken from his work, *Adversus Judæos*.\* We give the translation of it from the Edinburgh edition of the Ante-Nicene Fathers :

“That Christ was to come we know that even the Jews do not attempt to disprove, inasmuch as it is to his advent that they are directing their hope. Nor need we inquire at more length concerning that matter, since in days bygone all the prophets have prophesied of it; as Isaias: ‘Thus saith the Lord God to my Christ the Lord, whose right hand I have holden, that the nations may hear Him; the powers of kings will I burst asunder; I will open before Him the gates, and the cities shall not be closed to Him.’ Which very thing we see fulfilled. For whose right hand does God the Father hold but Christ’s, His Son?—whom all nations have heard, that is, whom all nations have believed—whose preachers, withal, the apostles, are pointed to in the Psalms of David: ‘into the universal earth,’ says he, ‘is gone out their sound, and unto the ends of the earth their words.’ For upon whom else have the universal nations believed, but upon the Christ who is already come? For whom have the nations believed—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and they who inhabit Mesopotamia, Armenia, Phrygia, Cappadocia, and they who dwell in Pontus, and Asia, and Pamphylia, tarriers in Egypt, and inhabitants in the region of Africa which is beyond Cyrene, Romans and sojourners, yes, and in Jerusalem Jews, and all other nations; as, for instance, by this time, the varied races of the Gætulians, and manifold confines of the Moors, all the limits of the Spains, and the diverse nations of the Gauls, and the haunts of the Britons (haunts) inaccessible to the Romans, but subjugated to Christ, and of the Sarmatians, and Dacians, and Germans, and Scythians, and of many remote nations, and of provinces and islands many, to us unknown, and we can scarce enumerate? In all which places the name of

---

\* Cap. vii.

Christ, who is already come, reigns, as of Him before whom the gates of all cities have been opened, and to whom none are closed, before whom iron bars have been crumbled, and brazen valves opened. Although there be withal a spiritual sense to be affixed to these expressions—that the hearts of individuals, blockaded in various ways by the devil, are unbarred by the faith of Christ—still, they have been evidently fulfilled, inasmuch as in all these places dwells the ‘people’ of the Name of Christ. For who *could* have reigned *over all nations* but Christ, God’s Son, who was ever announced as destined to reign over all to eternity? For, if Solomon ‘reigned,’ why, it was within the confines of Judea merely: ‘from Beersheba unto Dan’ the boundaries of his kingdom are marked. If, moreover, Darius ‘reigned’ over the Babylonians and Parthians, he had not power *over all nations*; if Pharaoh, or whoever succeeded him in his hereditary kingdom over the Egyptians, in that country merely did he possess his kingdom’s dominion; if Nebuchadnezzar, with his petty kings from ‘India unto Ethiopia,’ he had his kingdom’s boundaries; if Alexander, the Macedonian, he did not hold more than universal Asia, and the other regions, after he had quite conquered them; if the Germans, to this day they are not suffered to cross their own limits; the Britons are shut within the circuit of their own ocean; the nations of the Moors, and the barbarism of the Gætulians are blockaded by the Romans, lest they exceed the confines of their own regions. What shall I say of the Romans themselves, who fortify their own empire with garrisons of their own legions, nor can extend the might of their kingdom beyond these nations? But Christ’s Name is being extended everywhere, believed everywhere, worshiped by all the above enumerated nations, reigning everywhere, being adored everywhere, being conferred equally everywhere upon all; no king, with Him, finds greater favor, no barbarian lesser joy; no dignities or pedigrees enjoy distinctions of merit; to all He is equal, to all King, to all Judge, to all ‘God and Lord.’ Nor would you hesitate to believe what we asseverate, since you see it taking place.”

This admirable passage proves exactly what this book is endeavoring to establish. At the time of Tertullian—one hundred years only after the death of St. John—the exact fulfillment of the ancient prophecies was already a solemn fact. The only thing to be ascertained is the reliability of this testimony on the part of the great African writer. And first his clear statement is to be taken

into consideration : " Although there be withal a spiritual sense to be affixed to these expressions, namely, that the hearts of individuals, blockaded in various ways by the devil, are unbarred by the faith of Christ ; still, they have been evidently fulfilled, inasmuch as in all these places dwells the 'people' of the Name of Christ." Thus, Tertullian is not a mere declamatory writer. His expressions here are guarded, and thoughtfully penned. He admits two meanings in the old prophecies ; a *spiritual* one, which might have sufficed for their fulfillment, and consists in the various impressions of the divine grace over the hearts of individuals ; and a *literal* one, by which the fact is proved that numerous nations had been, as formerly promised, visibly and actually conquered to Christ as a King, as a Lord, as a God. To make any impression on his readers, to be able to say at the end : " You see it taking place," it must have been a patent fact, of which all men acquainted with the world as it then was, socially and geographically, could judge. Hence his whole enumeration is extremely cautious, and shows learning, accuracy, and judgment. How can any one pretend after this, that where in another work (*Ad Scapulam*) he says that " in cities the Christians were in the majority," he must be considered as a sensational and unreliable writer, speaking at random, without having first ascertained the fact ? And when to this we add that at the very time he was writing, Agrippinus, the bishop of Carthage, had assembled a council of seventy or eighty bishops from all parts of Africa Proconsularis, and Numidia, had he not in this simple circumstance a strong proof of his assertion, at least as far as regarded Western Africa ? All this argues certainly a most rapid spread of the Christian religion in those now benighted regions ; and it was so extraordinary and unexpected that the grace of God alone is sufficient to explain it.

But this became particularly evident a little later on, when the schism of Novatus was renewed on a larger scale by Donatus of *Casæ Nigræ* and his party, opposed to Cæcilian's consecration in 311. Then the whole of Christian Africa was stirred up to its very center ; in all cities bishop was arrayed against bishop, congregation against congregation, and numerous councils of both parties changed the epoch of peace just proclaimed by Constantine into one of universal strife. It seems strange at first sight that war and discord should be given as a proof of Christian activity and success. But in the meaning attached here to this fact, the reader must not consider the element of contention, except as exemplifying the universality of



Christian discipline, which was the cause of strife. If the new religion had not taken a firm hold of the whole country, there could not have been such a general uproar on the subject of the consecration of the bishop of Carthage. No better proof can be given of the universal sway of Christian ideas after so short a time of expansion, than the strange spectacle then offered by Northwestern Africa. An anti-Christian writer may find in it a fit subject of declamation against the bitter struggles so early originated among the disciples of a meek Saviour; yet he cannot but concede that the object of contention among men in Africa was then very different from what it had been a couple of centuries before. Human passions were undoubtedly concerned in both cases; but it was at least very remarkable that in the latter those passions were surging and soaring for the possession of ecclesiastical dignities completely unknown or at best despised at the first period of time. The world had been meanwhile taken possession of by new teachers, new rulers, new shepherds of souls. Those of legitimate character, that is, those having true connection with the real center of unity, and animated by the true spirit of the doctrine itself, began to experience a new kind of opposition from "hirelings and wolves in sheep's clothing," as Christ had previously announced. Still, this last circumstance did not preclude the existence all over the globe of a new race of teachers, of rulers, of shepherds of souls, totally unknown anteriorly, and in possession of an authority as strange and new, as it was universal and now respected by all.

And what is particularly remarkable in this rapid formation and spread of Christianity, is the development of the center of its unity, as it has just been called, to which few parts of the Church have contributed more than Northwestern Africa. This opens the way for considerations of extreme importance; and the great names of Cyprian, Optatus, Augustine are fortunately intimately connected with the question, as well as those of Irenæus, and other bishops of Gaul. In fact, the popes being not only bishops of Rome but likewise patriarchs of the West, it was in Western Europe that the development of the center of unity was to appear at first more prominently. St. Peter, no doubt, had from the start established it firmly in the East, and his early successors were to continue to claim their paramount rights all over the Church. Still, their more immediate contact with Gaul, Great Britain, Spain, and Northwestern Africa, gave them more opportunity of proving their authority over that extensive part of the world. On this account there was a deep reason

for the discussion of the origin of Christianity in those various countries. It has just been seen that from Rome were sent the missionaries who first evangelized them, and that the action of St. Peter in the case was even superior to that of St. Paul.

Henceforth, however, the West and the East must be considered together with regard to the center of unity : and the actual purpose must be to examine the question in its general aspect, and not for the West alone.

### *3. The early Popes exercised a universal supervision and a paramount authority in the Churches East and West.*

Was the spread of Christianity only the diffusion of a vague system of belief and conduct without almost any unity except in name? Were the various nations that embraced it to remain disconnected in fact, unless the general appellation of Christian is considered a sufficient bond for a universal worship? This is very nearly the idea many people entertain of the Church, and it is proper to say at first a word on the opinions of these very loose thinkers and believers. They pretend that God is pleased with the prodigious variety of belief and practice that this incoherent system entails; and they imagine that such was the Church in the early centuries of our era, until the popes were crafty enough to hoodwink mankind.

At first, they think, the popes were merely the spiritual overseers of Rome; these were called bishops, yet they were absolutely identified with the presbyters, who in their turn had scarcely more authority than the inferior members of the clergy, nay, than the laymen themselves. Each congregation, they suppose, formed a small republic, wherever Christianity extended. Thus the hierarchy was only a name, and the papacy itself was merely a unit in this unsubstantial organization. The same was true, they say, of Christian dogmas, which had not yet received any definite shape; so that every individual Christian was allowed to believe as he pleased. And many other points of the exterior or even interior characteristics of the Church, are supposed to have been of the same shadowy nature. The strictness and compactness of the whole system, as it is known in our day, is imagined by many to have been the result of human labor, skill, ingenuity—nay, cunning, craftiness, intrigue. No doubt, those who entertain such an idea of the bride of Christ—and they are many—cannot be called any more Christians; since they regard the whole

scheme as a mere delusion, if not an imposture. To this, however, must ultimately come a second class of men, formerly very numerous, but gradually becoming less so, although, and perhaps precisely because, they have so far kept a shred of faith.

These claim a real title to the name of orthodox Christians. Some of them do not scruple to assume that of Catholics. They believe, nevertheless, that in the primitive ages each diocese was nearly independent. The bishop, in their opinion, had a real authority over his flock; no one had any real authority over him except Christ and the Holy Ghost, when it was not the State. The authority of the Roman Pontiffs grew gradually, they think, merely on account of their being bishops of Rome, the capital of the empire, and the first subjects of Cæsar, the head of the State. Thus, the Roman Church happened to become the most brilliant adjunct of the empire. From the State she received her glory; and Cæsar, at least after Constantine, gave a part of his purple to cover the Pope. Was this in reality the Church we have been considering with admiration until this moment? Was this brilliant achievement of so many apostolic men, endowed with miraculous power, and professing to be the executors of God's will in the fulfillment of the old prophecies, a mere agglomeration of discordant elements in the first case, and a slave of Cæsar in the second?

For in the first system, of which a word has just been said, the Church is merely a jumble of functionaries without distinct and subordinate powers; a huge body without a head; a spiritual edifice much more feeble and far less able to resist attack than Mahometanism, which has at least a caliph or padishah, at its head. In the second, it is in fact rather a political than a spiritual power. In the end Cæsar governs it, not Christ. The Pope has found a master; and Christianity is much more an earthly than a heavenly institution. At first sight some of those who have adopted this last view of the papacy may not think so. But were they to reflect seriously on the very first principle they adopt on the subject—namely, that the authority of the Pope came simply from having his see at Rome, the capital of the empire, they would feel compelled to admit the conclusion as stated above. As to the pretended proofs relied upon by the upholders of the same view, and the supposition which they firmly believe, that the Church was in fact organized at first as they pretend, it is now time to undeceive them, and to reveal with proofs and comments the real organization of the Church at its very origin.

This embraces the nature of the central authority—the papacy—and the limits within which was included the power of the other functionaries—the bishops, presbyters, and deacons. Texts from ancient authors must certainly be produced for such an object, but a great deal of reliance also must be laid on some facts of ecclesiastical history which of themselves can carry conviction to any unbiassed mind, particularly on the question of the papal power.

What regards, personally, St. Peter, need not be repeated, since many texts of the New Testament, and many facts of early Church history, have already been passed in review in previous chapters; and if some proofs of Peter's primacy have been apparently neglected, they are to be found in all theological treatises of the most elementary character. It is sufficient here to allude to the texts in a note below.\* As to the fact of St. Peter being at the head of the apostolic college, it has been previously sufficiently insisted upon.

But it looks as if directly after the death of St. John, and perhaps before, all this had been forgotten; and some people are ready to believe that there was no more question of it. St. Peter had died, and his power with him. His successors on the See of Rome do not appear to have inherited any of his prerogatives, if he had any. Yes, if he had any; for his most early successors seem not to have insisted on those proofs so evident in the New Testament. In fact, was there any New Testament at the time? This is denied by many critics of our age. Our demonstration must be historical, very little theological; but on that very account it may be more striking for many minds. The order to be adopted must be this: Christians at the time possessed the New Testament, and knew from it the prerogatives of St. Peter. Secondly, many early texts and facts prove that, historically, the same prerogatives had passed to his successors. Thus the Church never was without a head; and there was always in her a strong principle of unity. First, therefore, about the New Testament.

The two or three first centuries were remarkable for the formation of the canon of the Scriptures of the New Testament. There can be no doubt about this, in spite of the frivolous objections of those German and English critics, who pretend that during the latter half of the second century there was no Scripture at all, but that all the circumstances of the life of our Lord were merely preserved in the

---

\* Matt. xvi. 18, 19; Luke, xxii. 29-32; John, xxi. 15-17.

memory of the faithful. The question has been discussed in a previous chapter. It has been there demonstrated that there must have been at that time an immense number of copies of all the books of the New Testament, as every church possessed them, and the persecution of Decius proved it beyond contradiction. But if those divine books were in existence, they were certainly read, more than any other book, particularly by the pastors and rulers of the Church. There all could see what was really the authority of Peter. How can any one pretend that with the firm belief that they were reading the words of Christ, uttered scarcely a hundred and fifty years before, they ignored completely the privileges granted by those words to the Prince of the Apostles? We will see presently that there are, moreover, texts contained mostly in the writings of Western authors, chiefly of Irenæus, Tertullian, and Cyprian, strong enough on the subject for all intents and purposes; and beside these texts, there are also facts proving that the authority of the popes extended at that time over the whole East, as well as over the West. But before they are discussed, a word must be said on the immediate successors of St. Peter, since some modern writers, believing that the precise order of their succession cannot now be ascertained, conclude that the succession itself must be almost given up. Are both alternatives really to be admitted? The historical discussion of their primacy will follow directly after.

It cannot be our intention to enter at length into the discussion relative to the immediate successors of Peter on the See of Rome. This has been attempted on many occasions by a number of serious authors, particularly by the Bollandists in their first volume of May. Unfortunately, several important documents of early times were then wanting which were almost necessary for obtaining a strict decision of the case. On this account many long and arduous labors of previous writers have been altogether useless; and some of them even injurious, by rendering the discussion more complex and intricate. But in our day there are more elements for reaching at last the truth, and the question has again begun to be discussed with a greater prospect of being finally decided. Lately an important dissertation on the subject was published in the *Revue des questions historiques*, for April, 1876. It looks indeed like a final determination of the question; and we think it can be taken for granted, by merely referring the reader to the paper itself for the reasons of this opinion, which space does not allow us to give. The series

of the first successors of St. Peter, according to this new scheme is : Linus, Cletus, Clement, and Evaristus. There can be no difficulty after this last pontiff ; all respectable writers are agreed after Evaristus.

But let us suppose that this opinion of Father H. Colombier, S. J., is not yet received as final—we do not see what objection can be raised against it—suppose that the question remains undecided ; the only real difficulty regards the order of succession, and does not touch in the least the fact that these four holy men have all been Roman pontiffs after Peter. This is too well established to give rise to the least doubt. In this case certainly the uncertainty is a mere trifle, since it refers only to the time when each of them has ruled the Church. Reduced to these proportions, the question can well be dismissed as of no importance whatever. There remains to be considered, therefore, only the fact of the early recognition of the supreme authority of the popes, which, indeed, is of the greatest importance, and which, if resolved in the affirmative, testifies to the existence of a center of unity in the Church, from the first moment of her existence. Indeed, did not such a center exist at all times, it would have to be confessed that Christ had left his Church in the most precarious state, unable altogether to stand, ready to fall at any moment in the most inextricable confusion, much more feeble, in fact, as was said before, than Mussulmanism, to which Mahomet at least gave a single caliph or padishah. Was it so ? In such a case as this, what becomes of the analogy between the Old and the New Testaments, so firmly established in our preliminary chapter ? How was the office of Aaron in the Synagogue represented in the Christian Church ? Yet such a feature as the High Priesthood among the Jews has always been admitted by Christians as being still more prominent in the new law than in the old. If the successors of Aaron in a direct line enjoyed the privilege of a spiritual headship among the Jews, the successors of Peter, by right of lawful election, must enjoy the same among the disciples of Christ. Had it not been so from the beginning, the Church would have fallen into decomposition directly after the death of St. John, the last of the apostles ; because every social or spiritual body must have a head to live, in as strict a sense as the body of a man requires its head in order to perform any vital functions. Consequently, even had we not direct proofs of it in ancient texts, we must admit that it was so. Particularly, since from the fourth century down to our own, the fact is so well established

that the most hypercritic of all critics among men is bound to admit that the authority of the successors of St. Peter was acknowledged in the East as well as in the West, without a dissentient voice, except in the various groups of excommunicated heretics. Let any one examine the authentic Acts of all Ecumenical Councils, he will find it expressed in such strong terms that no Provincial Council of our own age can do more. The only exception, to a certain extent, is the first Council of Nice. We say, to a certain extent, because even in it the first rank given to the See of Rome indicates clearly what the Fathers meant. Still, no expression is used in what we possess of the decisions of this council comparable to the words: "Peter has spoken by the mouth of Leo," of a subsequent one. The privilege of presiding, beside, as belonging to Rome, although sufficiently established by the presence of Osius and of the two Roman priests sent by the Pope, is not so clearly expressed as we see it in other Ecumenical Councils. The reason of this slight difference between the gathering at Nice and the following universal synods has been pointed out previously. It is now well ascertained that we have not the genuine Acts of this council. All we possess of it are a few fragments, contained in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius. Had this volume of the Bishop of Cæsarea perished, we would really know nothing authentic of it, except, in general, the condemnation of Arius.

But it is time to come to the often-promised texts, confining our researches to the first three centuries. Should we include in our inquiry the following ages, we might fill easily a hundred pages of texts, were we allowed to add to them a few comments.

All the early Fathers who speak distinctly of the apostleship of Peter at Rome, so that the establishment of his see in that city is the natural consequence, can be reckoned among those who admit the superior authority of the Bishops of Rome as being the successors of Peter. For this is the natural and strict consequence of the supreme position given him by the New Testament, in the apostolic college. Peter is certainly everywhere in the sacred record the first of the apostles and the head of the Church. Thus we have St. Clement of Rome in the text quoted previously from his letter to the Corinthians. We have St. Ignatius of Antioch in his epistle to the Romans where he says to them: "I do not command you as Peter and Paul did. They were apostles, I am a condemned man." We have Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia, a disciple of St. John, who states positively that

“Peter wrote his first epistle from Rome, calling it Babylon.” This fragment was preserved by Eusebius.\* We have Irenæus, of whom a special mention shall be made presently. We have finally Dionysius of Corinth, and Caius of Rome, who testify to the same fact.

But in all those texts the authority of the bishops of Rome as successors of Peter is only implied, not mentioned directly. Many early texts, which speak of the pre-eminence of the Roman Church over the other churches, go, therefore, a step farther, and must be referred to briefly. There is St. Ignatius in his letter to the Romans, whose very title and heading is certainly remarkable. He says that he writes to “the *Church which presides in the country of the Romans.*” And at the end of the same title he repeats again that it *presides* in charity. It must be confessed that Protestant editors and commentators have given a different meaning to the words *presides* and *presiding*, which is here *προκάθηνται* and *προκαθήμενη*. They generally think that Ignatius meant only the pre-eminence of honor and virtue enjoyed by the Roman Church. The Greek word taken alone may mean this; but it means also a real *presiding* with authority, and texts of other Fathers authorize it. The celebrated one of Irenæus † is so positive and so clear that no Protestant controversialist can elude its cogency. It has already been quoted and shall be presently commented upon. But the remarks of Tertullian in his work on *Prescriptions* is still more to the point as to the prerogatives of the Roman see; they deserve more extended comments, and will soon receive them. Finally, to end these reflections on the authority of the Roman see, St. Cyprian does not hesitate to say: ‡ “Cornelius was chosen bishop at Rome, when the place of Fabian, that is, the place of Peter, was vacant.” It is impossible to express more tersely and cogently that the authority of the Roman see is derived entirely from the fact that it is the See of Peter, who first occupied it and communicated to it his own personal prerogatives. St. Cyprian, therefore, did not believe that the authority of the Roman see came from the mere circumstance that Rome was the capital of the empire, and the head of the Roman State.

Another step in advance must be made again. Texts must be found which not only determine the place of the See of Peter, and attribute to the *see* permanent privileges; but which positively at-

---

\* Lib. ii. cap. xv. Hist. Eccles.

† Lib. iii. hæres. c. iii.

‡ Epist. 55<sup>a</sup>, Antoniano.



tribute those eminent prerogatives to the Roman bishops themselves personally, so as to dissipate entirely the mist of those former Gallican prejudices which made it a point to enhance the greatness of the see *in abstracto*, in order to lower down as much as possible the power of those who occupied it *in concreto*. Many of them, in fact, and Fleury in particular, spoke often magnificently of the Roman Church, but very poorly—to say nothing worse—of the Roman bishops. Thank God, this delusion is now over. The first ecclesiastical writers and early Fathers of the Church were never guilty of such an outrage against common sense. They not only spoke well of the pre-eminent see on which Peter sat, but they spoke better still, if possible, of the men who followed Peter in the occupancy of it. And to those texts we must pay yet a greater attention than to the previous ones, because they are more to the point, and leave the Protestant, Jansenist, and Gallican opinions and objections without a single little spot to stand upon. And these more distinct and unequivocal enunciations of this great truth relative to the personal authority of the bishops of Rome are found mostly in the works of the earliest Fathers of the West, namely, Irenæus, Tertullian, and Cyprian of Carthage. It was proper it should be so, because the popes have always had a more direct and strict authority over the West, namely, over Italy, Gaul, Spain, and Western Africa. Their strict patriarchate extended over these regions, as over the East extended the patriarchates of Antioch and Alexandria. It is therefore in the West that their strict prerogative must have been felt more particularly. Irenæus, our first author in this new inquiry, came, they say, from the East. This is true, since he was the disciple of Polycarp, and certainly he heard nothing from his great and holy master derogatory to the authority of the popes; but by his residence in Rome, his long episcopate in Gaul, and his martyrdom finally in the same country, he acquired the right to be considered not as an Eastern but rather as a Western Father of the Church. He says, and the passage is taken from his work, *Adversus hæreses* : \*  
“All who wish to know the truth, may hear in the entire Church the tradition of the apostles, manifested throughout the whole world; and we can enumerate the bishops who have been ordained by the apostles, and their successors, down to our own time, who taught or knew no such doctrine as they (the heretics) madly dream of. But

---

\* Lib. iii., c. 3., n. 2.

since it would be very tedious to enumerate in this work the succession of all the churches ; by pointing to the tradition of the greatest and most ancient church, known to all, founded and established at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul ; yea by pointing to her faith announced to all men, which comes down to us by the succession of her bishops, we put to confusion those who meet together unlawfully or improperly." . . . "For with this church, on account of her more powerful principality, it is necessary that every church, that is, the faithful encircled around her as a center, should agree ; in which the apostolic tradition has always been preserved for the faithful of all countries." And directly after Irenæus gives the list of the bishops of Rome from Peter to his own time, in the following words : To Peter succeeded "Linus, whom Paul mentions in his Epistles to Timothy ; Anacletus was his successor, and Clement followed. Clement had known the apostles and conversed with them ; his eyes had seen, his ears had heard their preaching and tradition. To Clement succeeded Evaristus, to Evaristus Alexander. The sixth after the apostles was Xistus. After him, Telesphorus, who ended his life by a glorious martyrdom. Then came one after another Hyginus, Pius, Anicetus, to whom Soter succeeded ; and at the present time Eleutherus occupies the see ; the twelfth after the apostles."

This last passage of the Bishop of Lyons is of extreme importance, as we can rely on this list of the first successors of St. Peter, more than on any other document of antiquity. Irenæus had lived some time in Rome. From this very passage it is clear that the exact succession of the Roman pontiffs was of great consequence in his eyes ; and the distance between the episcopate of Eleutherus and that of St. Peter—a little more than a century—was, in fact, insignificant in so enlightened an age as was that of the first Roman emperors. If some of the faithful in Rome may be supposed not to have known exactly the order of the bishops who had succeeded each other in the space of one hundred and twenty-five years ; at least this order must have been perfectly well ascertained for a great number, for all those, in fact, who attached importance enough to their religion to keep some private records of the succession of events in the infant Church. At any rate, the Pope himself and those who surrounded him, to whom Irenæus had been sent from Lyons after the martyrdom of Pothinus, could not be ignorant of so important a peculiarity in the history of the Apostolic See. It is now a matter of

wonder that this document had not been considered sufficient to settle the vexed question of the order of the succession of the first popes. The subsequent legend of an Anacletus different from the one mentioned by Irenæus as the immediate successor of Linus, has thrown confusion in all the catalogues ; so that the Bollandists themselves appeared bewildered, and had to write a big folio volume—their *propylæum* for May—to explain many difficulties originating in this single blunder ; and in the end they were altogether wrong. It is a subject of wonder, indeed, that they scarcely mention this list of Irenæus. In looking over their huge folio, not, however, in a thorough manner, we could find but one passage where the list of Irenæus is alluded to, and the reader is coolly referred to the work of Father Halloix on Irenæus. To increase the perplexity, we suppose, the very exact and learned *Bibliothèque des écrivains de la C. d. J.* of Father A. de Backer, does not mention any such work among the numerous productions of Halloix. Irenæus, in fact, seems to be ignored on this subject by the Bollandists ; and his name is not even mentioned in any index that we could consult in their compilation on the subject of the succession of the popes. His history and martyrdom, given out on the 28th June, is certainly, as usual, full of interest and erudition, but much too short for so great a man ; and in alluding to his embassy to Rome from the Church of Lyons, after the martyrdom of Pothinus, no occasion is taken from this fact to enlighten us on what they thought of his list of the twelve first popes.

The late dissertation of Father Colombier, in the *Revue des questions historiques*, has solved the question for us ; and we attach a paramount importance to this list contained in the great work of the holy Bishop of Lyons. But the passage which immediately precedes it is of far greater weight, still, to prove the position given to the Pope in the Church, in the latter half of the second century. According to Irenæus, and consequently to the general belief of Christians in his time, ‘with the Roman Church it was necessary, on account of her more powerful principality, that every Church, that is, the faithful encircled around her as around a center, should agree.’ This translation is somewhat different from the one usually given, in order to conform more strictly to the Greek text, whose expressions, *κύκλῳ πανταχῆ*, have never been rendered that we know. Yet they are graphic and must not be omitted : they represent the Roman Church as a center, and all other churches encircling her,

and bound by a necessary tie to "agree with her" on account of her "more powerful principality." Nothing stronger could be said to establish her claim to the primacy. Moreover, that "Roman Church" was not a metaphysical or logical entity, unrecognizable except by the adherence of the other churches to her, as the Gallican system had it; so that it was almost problematical if the "necessity" was laid on the part of the other churches to obey her, or, on her part, to see that she agreed with the others. The "Roman Church," in the opinion of Irenæus was a succession of men, beginning with Peter and ending with Eleutherus, in his day. That is, the real authority resided in the popes and in nobody else; since he gives, directly after, the list, on which a sufficient commentary has been given.

But we must hasten on, and from the Church of Gaul pass over to that of Africa, where it was said that more than anywhere else proofs can be found of the pontifical authority in early ages. Tertullian in his powerful work *On Prescriptions* shows that the *ancient doctrine* alone must be true, and the teaching of heretics is always *new*. In speaking of Rome he says: "If you are near Italy, you have Rome, whence we also (Africans) derive our origin"—a remarkable testimony overlooked in the previous pages—"How happy is this Church, to which the apostles poured forth their whole doctrine with their blood! . . . Let us see what she learned, what she taught, what she communicated to the African churches in her union with them."—See Forcellini on the word *Contesseratio*.—The *communication* was not therefore radically *mutual*, as is generally supposed to be the meaning of Tertullian: it had come from Rome, which was the *teacher*; *quid docuerit*. The inquiry to be made was merely what Rome (not Africa) had taught and was yet teaching. The thing is clear for any one who understands the Latin of Tertullian.

Yet it might be said that Rome was only one Apostolic Church, and the author of the book *On Prescriptions* recognized others: Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, Ephesus, etc., in fine, all the churches which had been founded by any apostle. There is no need of clearing up this difficult matter, which would require a long discussion. For Tertullian recognized in the bishops of Rome a title which was already given them universally in his time, and which is sufficient for our present purpose of proving her universal supremacy. This title was that of *bishop of bishops*. It is precisely the pure and simple translation of the words of Christ to Peter, "Feed my sheep." It was not enough to have made him the pastor of the lambs—*agnos*—that is, of the

faithful. He was also to feed the “ewes”—*oves*—that is, the pastors themselves; and this meaning of the words of Christ was already admitted universally at the time of Tertullian. The words of the great African doctor are so remarkable that they must be exactly reproduced. In his book *de Pudicitia* \* he says: “I hear that an edict has come out; indeed, an absolute decree. The *Pontifex Maximus*, that is, the bishop of bishops, orders,” etc. This is, of course, said ironically. Tertullian was then a Montanist, and had renounced the authority of Rome when he wrote this book. But this circumstance precisely gives a greater strength to the words of the writer. He admits here, with a sneer, that the Bishop of Rome was then called *Pontifex Maximus*, and bishop of bishops. He recognizes that he sometimes issued edicts which were called *peremptoria*; and in the present case they were addressed to the whole Church, inasmuch as they declared the principles of morality which were to be universally followed. This single text of Tertullian, therefore, represents the authority of the popes as great and absolute in the second century as it is in this nineteenth age. We cannot perceive any difference in the position of the Bishop of Rome in the time of Tertullian and in our own. As to the assertion that the ironical meaning intended by the writer strengthens rather the principle involved in the text, instead of weakening it, there is the actual case of the Old Catholics of Germany to show how far it is true. Will not every one admit that in a few hundred years the numerous pamphlets of these gentlemen against the infallibility of the Pope will be an absolutely convincing proof—if any were needed—that the universal Church in the nineteenth century believed in that infallibility which had just been declared by a General Council? Supposing that all the other documents establishing this fact should perish, the very rage of the Old Catholics of this century would be a sufficient warrant for it. The case involved in the text of Tertullian is exactly parallel. Proceeding half a century further down, we come to the age of Cyprian, which gives us indeed a superabundant number of texts, among which we are necessitated to choose a few. In general, it is taken for granted by Cyprian that “the Church of Rome is the *principal* Church”—the word underlined here is derived from *princeps*—“that the Bishop of Rome is the first bishop, being the Head of the principal Church; the episcopal throne of this Church is the throne

---

\* Cap. i.

of Peter (*cathedra, locus Petri*), the source and center of ecclesiastical unity; and, therefore, all the bishops of the world must, either directly or indirectly, be in communication with Rome." This comprehensive phrase is taken from Alzog, and many texts of Cyprian, in his letters to Pope Cornelius, to Antonianus, and to others, are sufficient vouchers of it. They are chiefly contained in the 27th, 52d, 70th, and 71st letters of the correspondence of the holy bishop of Carthage. But as the editions of his works do not agree in the paging of these letters, and as a good number of them are printed in our Migne's edition, with papal letters published in different volumes, it would be a work of great patience and long time to find at last some of those genuine texts. They are, however, acknowledged equally by friends and foes, and Archbishop Kenrick, in his *Primacy*, quotes from Dr. Hopkins, Protestant bishop in Vermont, the following avowal: "We have, certainly, here (in one of those texts) a beginning of the doctrine of the Church of Rome, showing to us what we anticipated, when examining the evidence of Irenæus, namely, how early the bishops of Rome endeavored to secure dominion and supremacy. . . . Let it be granted, then, that in the year 220, about a century and a half later than Polycarp, a century later than Irenæus, and fifty years later than Tertullian, the doctrine was partially admitted that Peter had been Bishop of Rome, and that the unity of the Church took its rise in the See or diocese of Peter." Those texts prove, undoubtedly, a great deal more than Dr. Hopkins is thus willing to concede. It is not, as the Vermont doctor pretends, on the part of the bishops of Rome that there was an "early endeavor to secure dominion and supremacy;" but the texts in question prove that this "dominion and supremacy" was acknowledged by other bishops, even when they were in conflict with the "Bishops of Rome." Again, the doctrine was not admitted only "partially," but universally, as far at least as texts are met with belonging to that age; and the opponents can be challenged to bring other texts in proof that the contrary doctrine was upheld by any orthodox bishop. The simple phrase, "the unity of the Church," mentioned, as it were, incidentally by Dr. Hopkins, is much more important than a careless reader would be disposed to imagine. It means, in fact, that at the time of Cyprian, the principle was generally admitted in the Church, that "the See of Peter was the center of unity;" that is, any one not in communion with that See, had broken the bond of unity, and was out of the Church;

that, consequently, all Christians, all the faithful, all the heads of particular churches, were bound to remain united to the See of Peter, and to receive the doctrine emanating from that See. This admission embraces the whole case, as looked upon by the Catholics even of this century.

To be sure, the authoritative voice of the supreme Pastor, the successor of Peter, had to speak in commanding tones in order to bind the flock, and enforce obedience. The way of expressing on his part that he spoke *ex cathedra*, was merely for him to issue a decree of excommunication. Everything short of it was not considered, it seems, as an absolute decree, and the reader will soon perceive that this was undoubtedly the reason why Cyprian did not submit to the decision of Pope Stephen with regard to the baptism of heretics. But of this directly.

This controversy, however, between Cyprian of Carthage and Firmilian of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, on the one side, and Pope Stephen on the other, furnishes us with a new and strong proof of the matter now under discussion. It is known that Cyprian and Firmilian took the same wrong view of the obligation of rebaptizing heretics who returned to the bosom of the Church, even should the baptism administered to them in any sect have been correct with regard to the *matter* and the *form* of the sacrament. They pretended that in the Catholic Church alone was baptism valid; any non-Catholic priest or bishop could not administer it, and should any of them do it, it must be repeated. Pope Stephen opposed strongly this opinion, and proved that Catholic tradition was against it. It is well known with what extreme warmth Cyprian, and Firmilian particularly, replied to the Pope. It looks to a modern reader as if they both were opposed to papal authority and engaged in as bold an act of rebellion nearly as was that of Luther. But when all the circumstances are examined coolly, the whole affair takes quite another shape, and an impartial reader sees that there was never any rebellion on the part of those two great men, although certainly their conduct was not blameless, nor their language sufficiently temperate and respectful. That they never thought of discarding the strong principles advocated by them before, with regard to the doctrinal authority of the Pope, will appear manifest to any one who reads attentively the documents of that celebrated controversy; that is, the correspondence between the Pope on the one side and the two great bishops on the other. This must be briefly examined.

St. Cyprian in his seventy-first Epistle takes to task Pope Stephen without naming him, and maintains against him his opinion that heretics must be rebaptized when they come back to the Church. Yet he repeats in this letter what he had always maintained : " that Peter was the head of the apostolic college, that on him the Church had been built," etc. He only pretends that as St. Peter had received mildly the remonstrance of St. Paul on the subject of circumcision, and had not " obtruded insolently *his supremacy*," so Stephen is bound to do in the present controversy, and allow Cyprian to hold his private opinion. The text is remarkable in its clearness and cogency. Cyprian, therefore, considered the question agitated between him and the Pope as not belonging to the domain of faith, but of opinion. The Pope had not spoken *ex cathedra*, as we would say. Other texts intimate that at that time a decree of excommunication was considered as almost a necessary proof that the Pope spoke authoritatively. Firmilian likewise, warmer still than Cyprian in the advocacy of the rebaptization of heretics, never denied the real authority of the Pope, and always acknowledged that " the Church had been built on Peter." This he repeats in several passages of his Epistle to Cyprian : \* " To Peter alone Christ said, ' Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth,' " etc. ;—† " On Peter the foundations of the Church have been laid." In some other passage of the same epistle Firmilian seems, however, to suppose that the very identical authority was given to all the apostles and to all bishops as *successors of the apostles*. †

The fact is that neither Cyprian nor Firmilian ever thought of opposing the doctrinal authority of the Holy See ; but they both thought that their opinion could be maintained without separating themselves from the center of unity. They had been called to order by the Pope, not excommunicated by his high authority. As St. Augustine said repeatedly later on in his books against the Donatists, Cyprian believed that the bond of charity by which he was united to the successor of St. Peter was too strong to be thus broken asunder in a war of opinions. He was mistaken, and not altogether guiltless ;

---

\* Cap. xvi.

† Ch. xviii.

‡ A very interesting dissertation by the Franciscan Marcellinus Molkenbuhr, published in 1790, has for its object to prove that this Epistle of Firmilian is not genuine, but was written much later by a Donatist. If this is not strictly proved by the good father, at least it can well be believed that we have not the correct text of Firmilian.



but the shedding of his blood in the same prolonged persecution that had already put to death Cornelius, the predecessor of Stephen on the See of Rome, showed that they must have been really united during their lives, since they were thus linked together in the chains of martyrdom ; this is the deliberate opinion of Augustine.

That in spite of his discussions with Stephen Cyprian was always a firm believer in the paramount authority of the Pope is not only manifest from his writings, but has always been the consistent opinion of all orthodox Christians, until the Jansenists and Gallicans of the last age joined in a remarkable chorus with the Protestants and Deists of the sixteenth century. There is on the subject a very remarkable historico-dogmatic dissertation published at Avenam in 1740, and republished by Migne.\* It is there *proved* and placed beyond question, that St. Cyprian believed all his life in the unerrancy—*inerrantiam*—of the See of Rome, and continued in this belief even at the time of his hottest controversy with Pope Stephen. This was the universal opinion before the sixteenth century. When, in the previous age—the fifteenth—some French Doctors of Theology, among them Gerson, Richer, Almain, and Major, advocated the Pope's fallibility in point of doctrine, they endeavored to support their opinion by every stray theologian or historian that appeared to agree with their views. They were men of profound learning and erudition, and they had oftener gone through all the works of the ancient Fathers than modern students spend time generally in reading dramatists, or novelists. Yet not one of them dared speak of Cyprian as having ever entertained their opinion *de fallibilitate Papæ*. They were certainly acquainted with the dispute between Cyprian and Stephen ; not a single doctor in theology at that time but knew all the particulars of it. Still, instead of thinking that there was any basis of argument against the infallibility of the Pope in that ancient controversy, they were evidently of opinion that any scholastic disputant who might think of even alluding to it in that sense, would only stultify himself, and get in return merely laughter and ridicule.

The real authors and the true source of that opinion, so common in our day, and more universal yet during last century, namely, that Cyprian had at last ceased believing in the supremacy of the Pope, are Luther, Calvin, the Centuriators of Magdeburgh, Marc

---

\* Tomus tertius Patrum Latinorum.

Anthony de Dominis, followed later on by Thorndike, Basnage, Blondell, John Forbes, Fred. Spanheim, etc., that is, the founders and propagators of Protestantism. The proofs given of this by the author of the historico-dogmatic dissertation are simply overwhelming. The authors and abettors of the great Reformation were only too happy to register down among their predecessors such a man as Cyprian was; they consequently embellished his text, gave to his phrases a becoming twist; and putting in the shade his often-repeated affirmations, that the Church was built on Peter; that the authority of his successors was the only bond of unity which could save it; that all were bound to believe as Rome believed, etc., they insisted on bringing forward some unguarded expressions of that holy and great man, and, finally, they made of him some fit subject of the same anti-papal rage by which they were devoured. When, a little later on, Launoy came in France to give to biblical and patristic criticism a free and easy gait, and offered himself as the worthy harbinger of fierce anti-papal Catholics—we beg pardon for daring to associate such discordant words as these—then Cyprian became, in spite of his life and of his writings, the great model of an anti-Roman Father and Theologian, and writers then mightily applauded and read, such as Fleury, Tillemont, Dom Gervaise, Ellies Dupin, etc., began to confront together not Cyprian and Stephen—mind it well—but a pretended bishop of Carthage whom they called by the first name, with a supposed bishop of Rome whom they dubbed with the name of the second. The Carthaginian man of straw was a pattern of learning, sound theology, virtue, modesty, moderation, charity, etc., the Roman scarecrow was the model of superciliousness, ignorance, tyranny, etc. And this they called writing ecclesiastical history. This way of speaking of men who were certainly learned, may appear rash and perhaps unwarranted. But if the reader is not afraid of opening the third volume of the *Bibliotheca Patrum Latinorum* of Migne, and of looking at the notes and references contained in the dissertation already mentioned, from the column 1279 to the end of the chapter, he will be satisfied by the passages of those same writers, quoted by the author of the dissertation referred to, that our language is perfectly justified.

Our limits prevent us from extending these remarks any farther. And we must pass on to another line of argument of great force, with regard to the authority of the Roman pontiffs during the first ages of Christianity. We mean the actual interference of the popes in

the affairs of the whole Church ; an interference often direct, always admitted, at least by implication. Read a great number of the ablest modern histories purporting to give an account of the transactions between popes and bishops, bishops and metropolitans, patriarchs and other prelates ruling over distant and important parts of the great commonwealth established by Christ himself, it looks as if in the first ages of Christianity everything was disconnected, fragmentary, or rather, crumbling into dust. There seems to be among many of those writers (although some of them are men of talent and apparently endowed with a conscience) a tacit understanding for excluding altogether a whole class of facts, which go to show that it was not so in reality ; but that there was a strict connection among all the parts of the great edifice built by the Saviour, and particularly a key-stone, without which the vault itself would have almost immediately come down with a crash.

Many of those facts have lately been brought forward by men of erudition, good sense, and faith, who have perceived finally that in the previous narratives either a great blunder or a great crime had been perpetrated. Archbishop Kenrick in his *Primacy* has chosen five cases of this kind, which he discusses in his tenth chapter. He might have made the list of them much longer ; but he justly thought that these few were amply sufficient for his purpose. They are the cases, first, of the disturbances at Corinth during the first century, when St. Clement, the fourth Pope and the third successor of Peter, interposed his authority to re-establish peace and order at such distance from his see, as soon as the abatement of persecution allowed him to attend to the Church in other countries than his own. Secondly, the Paschal controversy in the second age, when Pope Victor threatened to excommunicate many bishops of Asia for celebrating Easter at the exact time of the Jewish Pasch, contrary to the universal tradition, and particularly to that of Rome. This was not a question of faith, but merely of discipline. Yet the Pope would have gone as far as excommunication, had not Irenæus begged of him to be tolerant of an ancient usage which was said to go back in time as far as St. John. Thirdly, the rise of the Montanist heresy both in the East and in Africa, when the Pope put an end to it by a decree of excommunication. The wrath of Tertullian, who had unfortunately embraced the error, proves conclusively by the very expressions he uses, that already at the end of the second century or the beginning of the third, the popes could excommunicate refrac-

tory Christians in any part of the world, and could decide on questions of doctrine by decrees which settled them and from which there was no appeal. This right rested undoubtedly on the prerogative of infallibility. Fourthly, the controversy concerning baptism in the third century ; of which a sufficient account has just been given. Fifthly and lastly, the history of Donatism.

These five well-ascertained cases, whose chief circumstances are perfectly well defined, and based on texts which cannot be disputed, prove conclusively that the theory of the papal power in the first three centuries, including the infallible authority of the popes to enforce the Christian dogmas, and their paramount right to require obedience in matters of discipline, is not reduced to a few phrases of ancient authors, but is vouched for by numerous facts of ecclesiastical history. Some reflections, however, are required, to explain several difficulties which yet remain after the discussion of the case of St. Cyprian.

It was then plainly seen that the Bishop of Carthage never ceased to believe in the supreme authority of the "one who sat in the chair of Peter." This expression is common with him, and speaks at once to the understanding of the Christian. But he supposed, as we do ourselves, that the voice of the Pope had not always the same tone of command, and did not always require of the hearer the same kind of submission. In our day we portray to ourselves the Pope as speaking out, sometimes merely as the bishop of a particular diocese, called that of Rome ; sometimes as the Patriarch of the West ; occasionally as a simple private doctor, giving his individual opinion, etc. We think that it is only when his utterances are accompanied with certain well-defined circumstances that he speaks, as we say, *ex cathedra*. Then, indeed, every Catholic has to submit his judgment to that of the successor of Peter, the infallible teacher, the Vicar of Christ. The same precisely was the case in the time of Cyprian. Only the theological questions connected with this theory had not been so thoroughly discussed, as they have been since that primitive epoch. When the Pope threatened excommunication, or rather, issued the decree of it, he was thought to exert all his authority, and consequently to be the mouth-piece of Christ. But the history of those first ages develops a new and startling character in the holy and great men who then occupied the Holy See. It is that of a great prudence, an unalterable mildness, and a patience carried as far as the rights of holy faith allowed. By attributing these peculiar features to the first ages of the Church, the intention is not

to intimate that the reverse was ever the case in after times, and that in the course of events popes became imprudent, harsh, and easily offended, as they have been accused. This only can be inferred from all the facts contemporaneous of and subsequent to those under actual consideration : that at first the popes confided more to human nature, and appeared more inclined to believe in good faith, right intention, and love of God in those who called for animadversion. But the time came when a long experience of treachery, deceit, and mischievous opposition constrained them to be sooner severe, and not to wait too long before cutting off from the Church unworthy members and rebellious children.

At the beginning we see almost invariably in the popes a spirit of forbearance, simplicity, and hope almost against hope. And if in some acts of its administration the Holy See refused to hold communion with some prelate unjustly accused, it never failed to recognize the mistake when all the facts were finally cleared up. A quotation from the *Primacy* of Archbishop Kenrick will render this remark most striking, and worthy of being kept in view. It is taken from the ninth chapter : *on the center of unity*.

“It is worthy of the truly liberal spirit of the Holy See to render homage after death to a bishop whom, for a considerable period, it treated with distrust, under false impressions, which time removed. The integrity of the faith of Meletius”—the well-known Patriarch of Antioch—“the legitimacy of his ordination, and the eminence of his virtues, were generally recognized after his death, when rival pretensions and interests could no longer cast a cloud over them. The successors of Damasus have united with the East in the celebration of his virtues, and his name was inscribed on the records of illustrious prelates of the Church, who, in difficult times, preserved the faith, and cultivated piety. His example may serve to show that a man can attain to sanctity and salvation, although, from misconception and misrepresentation, he be not favored with the special marks of communion with the chief bishop. But it offers no security to such as persevere in sects separated from the Church, contrary to the divine law, which enjoins submission to our lawful pastors, and contrary to the divine constitution of the Church, of which unity is the distinctive principle. Meletius was neither the leader nor member of a sect. . . . It was his misfortune, not his fault, that he could not for a time succeed in dissipating the suspicions that deprived him of official intercourse.”

It is still more remarkable that the Holy See at that time, when occasionally there was not the least doubt that the opposers of its decisions were clearly in the wrong, displayed a most commendable spirit of condescension, and carried forbearance almost to a fault. This can be seen conspicuously in the celebrated difference between Pope Victor and the Asiatic bishops, chiefly Polycrates of Ephesus. Details of the same nature are still better known in the affair of Cyprian on the subject of the rebaptization of heretics. St. Augustine speaks often of it in his works against the Donatists. These deluded men, of course, regarded St. Cyprian as their great champion and model. They endeavored to justify their rebellion against the Holy See by the supposed example of the bishop of Carthage; and the great Doctor of Hippo proves profusely that the conduct of Cyprian, although not always correct, was nevertheless very different from that of the sectators of Donatus. But Augustine does not fail to bring the attention of the African schismatics to the consideration of the meekness of Pope Stephen on that occasion. The opinion of the bishop of Carthage was opposed to the universal tradition of the Catholic Church, as St. Augustine himself remarks in his *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*. \*It was to be feared that after having obtained a hold in Africa, such as they had already from the time of Agrippinus and his synod, it should also spread in Asia, where Firmilian of Cæsarea advocated it. It was the duty of the Pope to oppose this innovation. But with what moderation he proceeds! St. Augustine tells us that at first he merely “forbade any innovation.” † This first decree is not obeyed; the same Augustine says: “He endures it for the sake of peace and unity.” ‡ He had already called him: “A thoroughly great man, but remarkable for his charity.” § He adds later on, “He endeavored to keep unity in the bond of peace.” ¶ It would be easy to go on indefinitely and quote many other passages of Augustine in proof of the Pope’s condescension. But these must suffice.

The authority of the popes in the early ages as derived from well-ascertained facts of church history, is so well calculated to strike the modern mind, and has been so seldom brought forward by previous writers, that it is proper not to be satisfied with the few cases mentioned in Archbishop Kenrick’s *Primacy*. The first, even, concern-

---

\* Lib. ii., cap. 8.

† Lib. v., cap. 23.

‡ Ib., lib. vi., cap. 22.

§ Ib., lib. i., c. 7.

¶ Ib., lib. vi., c. 22.

ing the disturbances in the Corinthian Church, and the interference of St. Clement of Rome, which is discussed briefly in the tenth chapter of that book, does not give any passage of the Pope's letter. Yet every one must be struck by the forcible tone of the writer, and on this account we cannot omit to quote the end of this remarkable document, whose genuineness cannot be controverted.

“It is disgraceful, beloved, yea, highly disgraceful, and unworthy of your Christian profession, that such a thing should be heard of as that the most steadfast and ancient Church of the Corinthians should be, on account of one or two persons, engaged in sedition against its presbyters. And this rumor has reached not only us, but those who are unconnected with us; so that, through your infatuation, the Name of the Lord is blasphemed, whilst danger is also brought upon yourselves. . . . Ye, therefore, who laid the foundation of this sedition, submit yourselves to the presbyters, and receive correction, so as to repent, bending the knees of your heart. Learn to be subject, laying aside the proud and arrogant self-confidence of your tongue. . . . May God, who chose our Lord Jesus Christ, and us through Him, to be a peculiar people, grant to every soul that calleth upon His glorious and holy Name, faith, fear, peace, patience, long-suffering, self-control, purity, and sobriety, to the well-pleasing of His Name, through our High Priest and Protector Jesus Christ. . . . Send back speedily to us, in peace and with joy, these our messengers to you—Claudius Ephebus and Valerius Bito, with Fortunatus; that they may the sooner announce to us the peace and harmony we so earnestly desire and long for among you, and that we may the more quickly rejoice over the good order re-established among you.”

When in our day the Pope, hearing of some disorder in a far-distant Church, writes to its bishop to reprove, admonish, and correct, does he not use the same language, expressed in equivalent expressions? In the system of those who see in him only the Bishop of Rome, and refuse him the title of Vicar of Christ, could St. Clement have written such a letter as this, and sent it by *legates*—though no such a word is used—to see that his orders were obeyed? What right could he have to dictate in such a peremptory manner the terms of reconciliation? There is not in this case, it is true, question of his infallibility; but of his supervision over all the churches of the world. This is very remarkable so early as this; and it proves that the successor of Peter has always been the center of unity. It

is proper to state that according to the best authorities Clement was Pope from A.D. 91 to 107.

Fifty years later St. Polycarp went to Rome from Smyrna, for no other object that is known, but to confer with Anicetus on the subject of the time proper for the celebration of Easter. It was just the beginning of the Paschal controversy, which, forty years later, under Pope Victor, threatened a schism between Rome and Asia Minor. It is known that the holy Bishop of Smyrna and Pope Anicetus, after some discussion, separated without coming to an agreement; and the Protestant controversialists suppose it is a case in their favor, as furnishing a proof that the Bishop of Smyrna was on a par with the Bishop of Rome. But had it been so, why should Polycarp have gone to Rome? It is clear that he felt the need of more light on the subject. Could he not as well have obtained that light by going to consult the Bishop of Alexandria, or of Antioch? Why go so far as Rome, unless he knew that the See of Rome was superior to the two others? We see already, toward the middle of the second century, the East turning its eyes toward the Western Patriarch, to obtain the solution of arduous questions. Is there not in this fact something inexplicable in the system of disconnected churches, particularly when it is known that this was the beginning of a custom which soon became prevalent, and strikes the eyes of every one in the subsequent Arian controversy?

Still the difficulty seems to remain, since Polycarp did not change his opinion, and apparently refused to submit to the authority of the Pope. But the *difficulty* in fact amounts to nothing, since the Pope did not use his authority in the matter; and on account of the respectable tradition of the East, which was claimed to have originated in St. John himself, forbore to insist, at that time, on the universal adoption of the tradition of St. Peter. Thus the point of discussion remained in abeyance till a later epoch, when, as usual, the opinion of Rome was at last enforced. It has been a very common occurrence in the history of the Church; and no one can be surprised to perceive it so early as the middle of the second century. Meanwhile the whole transaction can be counted as another proof of early papal action in building up the Church's unity.

Another remarkable fact pointing in the same direction is taken from the life of St. Cyprian, but is not alluded to by Archbishop Kenrick in his *Primacy*. It is contained in a letter of the Roman clergy to that of Carthage, during a two years' vacancy of the Papal See on account of the persecutions. St. Cyprian was then living in



concealment to escape the pursuit of the State authorities. Both in Carthage and Rome, therefore, the spiritual power over the flock was intrusted to the body of the clergy, or, more probably, to the more prominent ones, who formed what we would call in our age a committee of administration and government. Now, it is very curious to see how the Roman clergy addresses that of Carthage; and if after this example somebody pretends yet that there was no superiority on the part of Rome, the conclusion must be that ecclesiastical history is a puzzle and must be left altogether aside. The letter was written between 250 and 252 of our era: "We have been informed by Crementius, the sub-deacon, who came to us from you, that the blessed Father Cyprian has for a certain reason withdrawn; in doing which he acted quite rightly, because he is a person of eminence and because a conflict is impending. . . . Since, moreover, it devolves upon us, who appear to be placed on high in the place of the shepherd, to keep watch over the flock; if we be found neglectful, it will be said of us, as it was said of our predecessors also, who in such wise negligent had been placed in charge, that we have not sought for that which was lost; and had not corrected the wanderer, and had not bound up that which was broken, but have taken of their milk and been clothed with their wool. Then also the Lord himself, fulfilling what had been written in the law and the prophets, teaches, saying, 'I am the good Shepherd who lay down My life for the sheep.' . . . To Simon too He speaks thus: 'Lovest thou Me?' He answered, 'I do love Thee.' He saith to him, 'Feed My sheep.' . . ."

"We know that this saying arose out of the very circumstance of his withdrawal, and the rest of the disciples did likewise. We are unwilling, therefore, beloved brethren, that you should be found hirelings, but we desire you to be good shepherds, since you are aware that no slight danger threatens you if you do not exhort our brethren to stand steadfast in the faith. . . ."

It seems, therefore, that in the middle of the second century not only the popes exercised their authority over the whole Church; but during the vacancy of the See, the presbyters appointed to administer in his place at Rome embraced the whole world in their supervision. The case becomes still more interesting when it is known that St. Cyprian himself admitted such a claim as this, and that from his place of concealment he wrote to the "Roman clergy": "Having ascertained, beloved brethren, that what I have done and

am doing has been told you in a somewhat garbled and untruthful manner, I have thought it *necessary* to write this letter to you, wherein I might give an account to you of my doings, my discipline, and my diligence." And, in fact, he enters into minute details of the whole administration of his diocese.

In a subsequent letter of the Roman clergy to St. Cyprian, they say with still more distinctness than in the previous one to the clergy of Carthage: "It is no wonder, brother Cyprian, that you should do this"—namely, desire that your doings should be approved by your brethren—"who, with your usual modesty and inborn industry, have wished that we should be found not so much judges of, as sharers in, your counsels," etc. There is no doubt that the "Roman clergy," during the vacancy of the Papal See, could not be precisely established as judges over distant bishops, and that they were only "sharers in their counsels," on which, however, they gave proper decisions. And in order to fulfill this duty, the bishops had to submit their whole conduct to them, as the representatives of the Pope, having in his absence the governing power of the "Roman See." To this St. Cyprian entirely agreed, and were it possible to give here the whole text of his letters to them, the extent of the papal prerogative would appear to have been at that time as comprehensive as it is at this day.

So far the proofs of it have been derived from Ante-Nicene documents, to which more could be added were it not entirely superfluous. As to the well-ascertained facts belonging to the fourth and fifth centuries, they are so numerous that the real difficulty consists in making a complete enumeration of them. Many of them can be found in the excellent work of Hon. Colin Lindsay, entitled *Evidence for the Papacy*, published a few years ago. We must be satisfied with this reference. A short passage, however, of the admirable paper of Dr. Jas. A. Corcoran, in the *American Catholic Quarterly Review* for last July, cannot but be acceptable to the reader, as it contains allusions to the most important of these remarkable facts, and is tersely and forcibly expressed:

"It is, no doubt, a noble and cheering sight to behold the Henrys, Fredericks, and other mediæval monsters crushed, for the welfare of religion and society, by judicial sentence of the Gregories and Innocents. But the real power of the Holy See shines out, perhaps, more brilliantly when seen in a Victor (A.D. 198), who, from his hiding-place in the catacombs, threatens the disobedient churches of

Asia with excommunication ; in a Celestine (A.D. 431), who sends his legates to the General Council with instructions that they are to abide no discussion, but sit there as judges of the assembled fathers ; in a Leo (A.D. 451), who, with a stroke of his pen, annuls the canons of a General Council ; in an Hormisdas (A.D. 519), who demands and obtains from the Eastern churches full unreserved submission to the decrees of his predecessors against Acacius, as the only condition on which they could be freed from the ban which had lain heavily upon them for more than thirty years. Yet these pontiffs, when speaking out with such royal energy, and exacting obedience from high and low, enjoyed no temporal rule. In our own day, Pius IX. has been robbed of his States by sacrilegious violence ; but the whole world can bear witness that he has thereby lost no portion of his spiritual empire." The notes which accompany this short but comprehensive text, are a sufficient explanation of their startling character. A word only added to it will render the whole of it more irresistible. Of the proceedings of Celestine, of Leo, of Hormisdas, the Eastern churches could not complain ; as they admitted fully the doctrine on which these proceedings themselves were grounded. The reader may remember what has been said of the obscurity attending the decrees of Nice and of the first Council of Constantinople ; but from that of Ephesus down to the final schism of Cerularius, the Greek world agreed perfectly with the West in regard to the supreme authority of the Roman Pontiff in point of faith and morals. A very cursory review of the Acts of all Ecumenical Councils, after the first of Constantinople, suffices for ascertaining it.

There remains only to draw an inevitable conclusion from the texts and facts which have just been passed in review ; and this can be done very briefly. We behold already in the third century of our era, if not before, the papacy enjoying the same rights and prerogatives which many simple men of our day think were first granted to it by the Council of the Vatican, to the great scandal of all but ultramontanes. The Pope at the epoch of St. Cyprian is already endowed with a jurisdiction co-extensive with the globe, and with an absolute infallibility when speaking as the successor of Peter. But the Pope is likewise, in our age, the same meek, condescending, and prudent man that he was before the peace of Constantine. We know that he forebore during the centuries which have just preceded us, to cut off openly from the Church those who denied his privilege of inerrancy. Yet, although Cyprian himself never uttered a word

against it in his time ; although all orthodox writers ever admitted it ; when the fifteenth century came, Dailly, Gerson, and their compeers thought fit to write books *de fallibilitate Papæ*, and as a proper consequence to that first step, wrote also *de auferibilitate Papæ*. The theory that a Pope can be deposed is, in fact, sure to follow the principle that he is fallible. But the consequences which have resulted from both of those Gallican axioms constrain all sincere Catholics of our day to come back to the early doctrine of Cyprian and Augustine, that "the rock on which the Church is built cannot be shaken by the impotent efforts of puny theologians, no more than by all the fury of hell." Thus the Church remains in our age exactly what she was already at the beginning of the third century.

The primacy of the Pope appears, therefore, from the very origin of the Church, as the keystone of the whole edifice ; but as he was the bishop of bishops, the inquiry offers itself to our consideration, What is a bishop ? This question has been delayed so far because of the necessity of showing its relation to the papacy. For no adequate idea of the episcopacy could be conveyed to the reader, before its foundation was proved to rest on the rock itself on which the Church is built. Together with the episcopacy the question of the priesthood comes naturally before us, as the first is the necessary complement of the second. And, finally, the order of deaconship has to be examined briefly, as being an eventual offshoot of the priesthood whose necessity was felt by the apostles themselves. These considerations will enable us to perceive at once in what essentially consists the constitution of the Church ; and thus history will prove that what the Catholic Church is to-day, she already was at the very beginning of her existence.

#### 4. *A few words on the constitution of the Church.*

The previous pages have often recounted the travels of the first apostles, and the care they took of consecrating bishops and placing them over the various congregations composed of the new converts to the faith. Nothing results so clearly from this primitive history as the fact just alluded to. The apostles, by preaching in any city or country town, convinced a certain number of Jews or pagans of the mission of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Eternal Father ; they announced his incarnation, his miraculous birth

from Mary, his obscure life at Nazareth, the prodigies he performed during the three years of his public career, his passion, death, resurrection, and ascension. They added to this detailed instructions on individual redemption by the remission of sins, a new birth, a new life, the belief in one God, Creator of heaven and earth, the abjuration of idolatry, and the profession of a pure worship. Those who believed were baptized and prepared for the reception of other sacraments, principally of the Holy Eucharist. A particular church was thus founded, and a bishop was ordained and placed at its head.

This is the process universally gone through, either in Palestine or in Egypt, Persia, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, and the West. In this all apostles coincided; and St. Paul and St. James did not act differently from St. Peter. Must we conclude that each of them acted all together independently, after having agreed on a general plan? By no means; and to understand the powers the new bishops obtained, we must come back for a moment to the subordination that Christ himself had established among his apostles. Peter had certainly been placed at their head. The proofs of it, derived from the New Testament, have been amply discussed in former chapters. The proofs of it, derived from the subsequent history of the Church and the teachings of the earliest Fathers, have been briefly enumerated a few pages back. Only too few of the texts on which this depends could be given, and we had to refer to books of theology, which treat of the matter *in extenso*. But, after all, the great proof of it, which must strike every intelligent inquirer, is the absolute necessity of the case; the condition *sine qua non* required for the maintenance of any institution, of such a nature as was the Church of Christ: a Church destined to unite all nations in the bonds of one faith and one code of morality. As George Phillips, the friend of Gœrres, justly says: \* “There must be only one shepherd, since there is only one flock; and this shepherd has to lead not only the lambs, but likewise the sheep. The power conferred on Peter does not extend only to this or that people, to this or that state; but to all in general, and in each to every individual without distinction, let them be laymen or priests, civil rulers or bishops. Christ certainly intrusted the same sacerdotal mission to the whole apostolate; but only after having conferred it on Peter in its fullness, and in its

---

\*Dict. de Théol. Cath., art. Pape.

highest meaning. All the apostles received these powers ; nevertheless, Peter obtained the supreme power among them and above them all. The object aimed at in the reunion of all sovereign prerogatives in the same person, is the unity of the Church, and its conservation, which absolutely requires that unity.

“The various nations of the earth could not be united in the Church unless the Church had a center of unity, a single and visible Head. Without it the Church would have been merely an incoherent body made of incongruous members. Christ, who was a God of peace and order, must have looked chiefly to that unity ; and ‘it is on this account,’ as St. Jerome says : \* ‘that one of the twelve was chosen, in order that by the institution of a supreme chief, the division and dissolution of the whole body might be prevented.’”

No thoughtful man can refuse his assent to such words as these ; so that, even had we not the New Testament and the writings of the Fathers, this reason alone would suffice to lead all intelligent Christians to the same conclusion. Whoever tries to form a Church in his imagination without this necessary center of union, must give birth to the production of a useless and shapeless monster. To be convinced of this we have but to look on the Protestant sects, whose first principle, admitted by one and by all, is to reject the supreme Head, and denounce its authority. By so doing they preclude in the end the possibility of one single faith, and Christianity finally disappears in the midst of discordant opinions and gradually increasing negations, until nothing remains but *magni nominis umbra*. The primitive constitution of the Church was, consequently, composed of a supreme ruler in the person of Peter, and of eleven other men who had been called with him by Christ, and formed a body called afterward the Apostolate. They were equally enjoined “to teach all nations,” and to confer baptism and the other sacraments. They founded churches, and placed at the head of each a particular spiritual ruler, called at first by various names, but afterward designated by an expression translated in our language by the word *bishop*. To this man they gave all their powers, except that these were restricted to one particular district or city. The bishops, consequently, were not to be apostles any more ; that is, their jurisdiction was not to spread to all places equally where their zeal might carry them. In other respects they had all the apostolic preroga-

---

\* Adv. Jov. i. 14.

tives of bestowing the priesthood on others, of teaching and governing the Church. Consequently, the body of bishops, or the Episcopate, succeeded to what has just been called the Apostolate. In this sense they are justly designated as successors of the apostles; but each of them does not succeed to the particular apostleship of any of the primitive eleven. This is so strictly true that even in those sees founded personally by one of the apostles, no one in the line of legitimate succession can lay any claim to the apostleship itself. The only exception to this general rule refers to the successors of Peter at Rome, who, being destined to govern the whole Church, must have received, and according to the testimony of the Fathers, did actually receive, all the prerogatives of Peter: so that Peter continues to live in the Bishop of Rome, and speaks by his mouth to the Church. On this account has the Pope been called *Apostolicus*; in him alone as an individual the apostleship continues.

Nevertheless the bishops share with the Pope the supreme government of the Church; because they have really received the mission of teaching and governing; they are the mouth-piece of the tradition of the Church in their particular district. Not only matters of discipline are left to their discretion in their own diocese, subject to the higher tribunal of Peter, but even in matters of faith they are constituted judges, not alone over the secondary pastors of the flock in their district, but likewise over a larger territory, and even over the whole earth, in councils either particular or general, when legitimately convened. But the gift of infallibility in point of faith or morals does not belong to them, either individually or collectively, except in the case of their agreement with the successor of him who was appointed by Christ to "confirm his brethren."

All these points are absolutely required for the preservation of the Church in peace and good order. Thus is it seen at once how great and exalted is the dignity of a bishop, and what an admirable institution it was in the midst of the corrupt pagan world which first saw its birth. The great question, however, so long debated in the Council of Trent, namely, Does a bishop hold his power immediately from God, or mediately through the Pope? does not require a solution at our hands, because this is not precisely a theological work. Sufficient for us is the truth that the Episcopate is a divine institution. St. Paul supposes it in his epistles everywhere, but he stated it in so many words to the bishops he had called together at Ephesus: "Take heed to yourselves and to the whole flock,

wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops, to rule the Church of God."\*

But what of presbyters, of simple priests, of the second order of the clergy? Not a word has been said, could be said, in fact, in the previous pages, of this most important feature of the Church as primitively constituted. Why is it that nothing could be said of it? Because the apostles, whose mission was the main object to be described, seldom ordained priests, if they ever did. The spiritual ruler they invariably appointed over the churches they founded, was a bishop endowed with all the power which the maintenance of his particular church required. The bishop, having received the faculty of communicating to others spiritual functions, that is, of conferring orders, could, evidently, not only consecrate other bishops, but likewise ordain inferior ministers of every degree; among them, and at the head of them, priests, who should help the bishop in his spiritual functions. On this account a confusion arose in the language of the early ecclesiastical writers, who indifferently used the words bishops or presbyters, without making apparently any distinction between them. St. Jerome, later on, went so far as to say: † "Among the ancients bishops and presbyters were the same; only the first designation was that of the dignity, the second that of age." The Presbyterians of our day are delighted to find such texts as this. But it is seldom they meet with any so plainly expressed. There is no doubt that St. Paul often called bishops by the name of presbyters. The origin of this confusion came probably from the fact just mentioned, that the apostles consecrated bishops to place them at the head of churches just organized, and perhaps never ordained priests. Hence St. Paul called them indifferently bishops or presbyters, in the sense explained by St. Jerome in his epistle *ad Oceanum*. But certainly the noble friend of Paula fell into a great mistake when he generalized the equality between both, not only in this passage but in several others of his writings, notably in his epistle *ad Evangelum*. It seems that, being a presbyter himself, he had not been treated with sufficient consideration by certain deacons; and he wished to vindicate his dignity by raising it on a par with that of bishops. That in the main his notions on so important a subject were not always wrong, is proved by several other passages of his works, in which he shows conclusively the superiority of the episcopal character over

---

\* Acts, xx. 28.

† Epist. 69 ad Oceanum, edit. Migne.



that of a simple priest. His mistake arose probably from this, that both bishops and presbyters are endowed with the high dignity of the priesthood; both can offer the great sacrifice of the new law, and apply, by sacramental absolution, the merits of Christ to repentant sinners. But, after all, the peculiarity of the teaching of St. Jerome is not of paramount importance in the present question. What must decide it is the practice of the Church from the very beginning. Before the end of the first century, and certainly all along the second, the bishops appear on many occasions surrounded with what was called very anciently "the presbytery." As the number of Christians increased in the city or country where the bishop had been first placed, he was inadequate to the spiritual needs of the faithful, and had to call to his aid other men with sufficient powers to attend to all the wants of the Christian people. Then we see everywhere the three distinct orders of bishops, priests, and deacons. The genuine epistles of Ignatius of Antioch speak clearly on the subject. We will quote only one passage of that *ad Smyrnæos*, translated from the text of the Oxford edition of 1847: "Avoid divisions as the source of all evils. All of you follow the bishop as Jesus Christ follows the Father; and the Presbytery as the Apostles; respect the deacons, because it is the commandment of God." The language is not classic, but it is the most literal translation from the Greek.

Many passages of the same Father—disciple of St. John, acquainted consequently with the true organization of the Church by the apostles themselves—prove conclusively the superior authority of bishops in their dioceses, and their distinction from presbyters, whom he always requires to be ruled by the will of their bishop. It is impossible to imagine a stronger proof historically. No one can suppose that so holy a man could claim from his inferior clergy more than the Church herself prescribed; and the importance he gives to the subject is a sure warrant that it was a divine institution he wished to protect against future dangers. There must have been, so early as this, the manifestation of some personal ambitions opposed to the established order; and it was consequently a gradation of hierarchy, previously established, that he desired to preserve. The dangers he foresaw could not come but from innovations. Everything the apostles, assisted by the Holy Spirit, had devised, could not be but holy. The reader sees at a glance the high value of those texts of Ignatius. It is so particularly on account of the universality of the institution in

the following age, when the same organization of bishops, presbyters, and deacons is found established everywhere in the Church, without the possibility of assigning an origin to it, except by going up to the apostles themselves. In spite of what Jerome, in his ardent temper, may have written subsequently, it is sure that long before him the presbyters were not the same as the bishops. He himself, in his time, would not have dared to ordain other priests, although he was a priest; he would not have dared, although naturally daring enough, to define the faith; but he was satisfied with condemning errors evidently forbidden by previous definitions of bishops and popes. No more need be said at present. The development of the constitution of the Church, the establishment of several inferior orders, and the increase of solemnity in the numerous festivals and customs introduced in the following centuries, cannot enter into the plan of this work, and are consequently dismissed. It is time to return to Rome, where we left Peter, and saw the first days of the Roman Church. A word, however, in conclusion, must be said on the higher rank primitively occupied by the clergy of this Church, to whom was left the election of a successor to St. Peter, who often became associated with the Pope himself in his decisions and injunctions, and to whom all other churches looked up with the greatest respect, as the central one, in which heresy could never obtain a foothold. This task is easy and short; we have but to copy a couple of paragraphs from the article already quoted of George Phillips; we merely translate from the French: "Peter had founded the Christian community of Rome; he had been its first bishop, and at the end of twenty-five years, he had suffered martyrdom at Rome as bishop of that city (A. D. 69). The Church of Rome had thus obtained an immense pre-eminence over all other churches. It was in the Church of Rome that the Prince of the Apostles had placed his see; it was from that see that he had governed the whole Church, and that the faith of that Church 'had been announced in the whole world.' The man, consequently, who happened to be the successor of Peter in the bishopric of Rome was previously in virtue of this subsequent fact the nearest to the See of the Prince of the Apostles. He ascended it, and placed himself in the seat which the sacred person of Peter had occupied. He thus became the successor and the *locum tenens* of Peter. Peter continued to live in the Bishop of Rome, and spoke by his mouth to the Church.

"But this precise situation of the Roman Church and the great

prerogatives attached to it, with respect to their special origin and source, must be appreciated with exactness. There might be danger of attributing to the Roman Church, as such, rights which it possesses only on account of the Pope.

“In the same way that it is through Peter that Christ generally grants his favors to the Church ; through Peter that the Church has received the supreme power of the keys ; through Peter that the infallibility of her teaching is warranted ; through Peter as a chief that the whole Church has become the kingdom of Christ on earth ; in the same way also, it is through Peter that Christ has communicated to the Church of Rome the extraordinary privilege of investing its bishops with the primacy over the whole Church. ‘The See of Peter, the Roman Church,’ said the General of the Dominicans, in the Council of Florence, ‘possesses the primacy on account of Peter—*ratione Petri*—because the words : Thou art Peter, etc., have communicated all power to the Apostolic See, by the very succession of those who occupy that See.’ Thus, that privilege the Roman Church does not hold as Roman Church, but only through Peter. This apostle has been invested with the primacy personally, directly, immediately, not for himself, but for the Church ; and the Church of Rome has obtained it by the episcopacy of Peter at Rome, not for her, but for the good of the whole Church. She does not hold it of herself ; but she owes it, after God, only to the Prince of the Apostles, whom God brought there, as it were, by the hand. Thus the episcopacy of Peter at Rome has prefigured for all future ages, until the fullness of time, the order of the succession to the Primacy.” This well-guarded and deeply thought page of the friend of Görres, shows that this sublime prerogative, as it has not been given by princely power or popular favor, cannot depend on either for its continuance, and that even if expelled from Rome by brute force, the popes shall continue forever to be the bishops of Rome, and as such hold the spiritual primacy over the world. But to Rome itself we must return after these necessary wanderings over the Western patriarchate of the Roman See.

##### 5. *What must have been the labors of Peter in the conversion of Rome.*

Peter had so firmly established Christianity in Rome that at the end of his life “an immense multitude” of Christians died mar-

tyrs with him and with Paul. This supposes on his part immense labors, of which, unfortunately, we ignore absolutely the details. It is, however, ascertained that this spiritual community was not composed only of persons of low birth and menial occupations—although undoubtedly this was true of the great number—but already members of patrician families, of senatorial rank, and high officials of the “household of Cæsar,” as St. Paul says, had professed their faith in Christ and acknowledged for their high-priest a fisherman of Galilee transformed into an apostle. Several modern Catholic writers, and among others Dom Guéranger in his *Sainte Cécile*, have demonstrated that the Roman traditions about the Senator Pudens, and the Cornelii, and the *Cæcilia gens*, are no dreams, but facts, which the discoveries of De Rossi in the catacombs may be said to have proved historically. There is, besides, the story of Pomponia Græcina, alluded to by Tacitus, and somewhat later on there are several members of the Flavian family who were exiled or died under Domitian, thus proving that numerous converts had been made by Peter, or Linus, his immediate successor, among the most highly educated and the wealthiest families of Rome. Let the reader picture to himself what it must have cost of care, of anxiety, of personal exertions to a single man, lost in that immense city, to secure to himself in so short a time such a numerous and in many instances precious following, in the midst of the most corrupt population that ever existed on earth. For this was precisely the epoch of the greatest profligacy among the Romans: the reigns, namely, of Claudius and of Nero. The almost totality of those swarms of people, either belonging to the plebs or to the patrician class, had no other object in life but to enjoy pleasure, that is, to wallow in the mire of lust. No doubt this predisposed a certain number to reflection, self-examination, and an instinctive abhorrence of vice, when carried to such monstrous excesses as we know was then the case. But was it necessary in order to avoid contamination, to run into the very opposite, and embrace the doctrines of the Crucified, when Stoicism appeared sufficient to reason and was then flourishing? Whatever modern historians may say, some of them animated with the best intentions, and sincere Christians undoubtedly, it is impossible for a sensible man to see in that putrid mass, seething then and filling the moral atmosphere with the most deadly vapors, any fitness for such a religion as that of Christ must have appeared to all, or nearly all of them. Purity of the kind proclaimed by the new doctrine is instinctively

repulsive to men used to such unbounded license as was then general. How could Peter look without disdain on the world in the midst of which he was thrust? and how could this world look on Peter? The conversion of Rome is far more incomprehensible to a reflective mind than that of the barbarians when they came to destroy it. The superabundant grace of God was as necessary for it, as was his power to create the heavens and the earth.

To understand well what this conversion meant, it is necessary to know not only the term *a quo*, namely, the moral degradation from which the republic was to be rescued, but likewise the term *ad quem*, that is, the moral excellence to which Christianity invited humanity to ascend. We will suppose the first of those terms as almost sufficiently well known to the reader: a full description of it would only stain his imagination, and a few words on the subject must suffice.\* The second will have to be explained to a greater degree, because few, perhaps, at this time understand it thoroughly. Something of the first is said in one of the finest pages of that pretentious book, *The History of Latin Christianity*, by Dean Milman; and this alone shows that it would have required more than natural means to bring on the conversion of the Roman world. But a great deal more, in fact, was effected than the Dean of St. Paul's could have an idea of; and we will have to supply the deficiency, in order to prove thoroughly the impossibility of reducing the work of Peter at Rome to a mere appliance of natural means to a natural end. This is all that Mr. Milman sees in the conversion of the Romans:

“Amid the affairs of the universal empire, the perpetual revolutions which were constantly calling up new dynasties or new masters over the world, the pomp and state of the imperial palace, the commerce, the business flowing in from all parts of the world . . . Christianity was gradually withdrawing from the heterogeneous mass some of all orders, even slaves, out of the vices, the ignorance, the misery of that corrupted social system. It was ever instilling feelings of humanity yet unknown, or coldly commanded by an impotent philosophy, among men and women whose infant ears had been habituated to the shrieks of dying gladiators; it was giving dignity to minds prostrated by years, almost centuries, of degrading despotism; it was nurturing purity and dignity of manners in an unspeak-

---

\* See “The Beginnings of Christianity,” of Dr. Fisher of Yale—the chapter on Heathen Morals.

able state of depravation ; it was enshrining the marriage bed in a sanctity long almost entirely lost, and rekindling to a steady warmth the domestic affections ; it was substituting a simple, calm, and rational faith and worship for the worn-out superstitions of heathenism ; gently establishing in the soul of man the sense of immortality, till it became a natural and inextinguishable part of his moral being."

This is, it seems, the whole result of the religion the apostles preached and established among the Romans. Everything is *natural, rational, simple*, etc. The writer could not perceive anything more, because it seems his own religious feelings could not go any farther. Still, even reduced to this, the establishment of Christianity at Rome was naturally impossible. Let, for instance, a mere philosopher try to "instill feelings of Christian humanity among men and women habituated from infancy" not only "to hear the shrieks of dying gladiators," but to see them daily fighting, striking, expiring ; men and women whose conscience had long been deadened by participating daily in feelings of homicide, and the most cruel, bloody, disgusting homicide, to which they had given their consent, nay, for which they had called vociferously. Let him try to "give dignity to minds prostrated by years of degrading despotism," as the Stoics had been for some time laboring to do without having met with the most distant prospect of success. Let him try to "nurture purity and dignity of manners, in an unspeakable state of depravation," such as those who have read the details know it was ; etc., to the end of the paragraph. We are confident this philosopher would never have "substituted a simple, calm, and rational faith for the worn-out superstitions of heathenism." Consequently, the form of Christianity which alone the Dean of St. Paul's is capable of appreciating, would have required more than all philosophers could accomplish for its establishment in the well-known circumstances of that epoch.

But the Christianity founded at Rome by St. Peter and St. Paul, preached afterward by all their successors in the good work, declared openly in writings which we still possess, those, for instance, of Cyprian and Tertullian, and, moreover, supported all along by the text of the Gospels themselves, is an Institution which it was much more difficult to found in Rome than the one which it seems ministers of the Anglican establishment can appreciate. We must see this a little more in detail ; since it is a necessary part of our duty as narrators of the real ministry of Peter and Paul.

Christianity, as it was announced by its Founder, and exemplified

in His own divine Person ; as it was preached by the apostles, who gave a scheme of it plain enough in their epistles ; as it has, at all times, been explained and taught by the Catholic Church, is a system of religion totally different from the view that such men as the author of *Latin Christianity* entertain of it. If it does not proclaim the absolute depravity of human nature, and the necessity of discarding entirely natural feelings, or rather extirpating them from the human system as radically evil ; if this gloomy excess invented by Calvin and placed by him at the base and foundation of his horrible and blasphemous theology, has never formed a part of the true heaven-born religion revealed to us ; has, on the contrary, been anathematized by the Church, and declared by her as being in direct opposition to the true doctrine ; still it steadily opposes and tries to subdue the evil tendencies of our *natural* aspirations, and declares war against our *natural* appetites and passions. Nothing is more plain than its steady antagonism to “the world, the flesh, and the devil.” The Christian has to renounce them in baptism ; and if he receives it at an adult age, he has to personally promise a constant warfare against them, lasting until the hour of death. This may be called the essence of the moral system in the religion of Christ, whose simple but striking emblem is the Cross, and nothing else. Could a Roman of the epoch of Claudius and Nero, not alone understand this, but chiefly relish it naturally, and find in all his aims and aspirations anything akin to it ? Let us examine the whole matter at some leisure.

The *world* which a Roman had to renounce as a first step to his becoming a Christian, was the society in which he was born, nurtured, molded in all refined accomplishments, and launched on the sea of high life as it was then understood. A modern reader must not imagine that the words refinement, polished intercourse, and such like, had the same meaning for a Roman of that epoch which they have for a common Christian of our own. Our very religion has taught us to distinguish between true elegance and taste on the one side, and a brilliant dissoluteness on the other. The man of pleasure in our day, if he has received at all a Christian education of any sort, has yet a conscience, and knows perfectly well the Ten Commandments. The Roman pagan of the first century of our era, did not possess such an inappreciable advantage. For him refinement was vice, polished manners were a gilded licentiousness ; because he could not reflect, in his own person, but the features of the society

in which he had been born and educated, and St. John said of his time, "The whole world is seated in wickedness."\* St. Paul tells us, indeed, that the pagans themselves, although deprived of the law of Moses, still "show the work of the law written in their hearts."† But here the apostle speaks of the human conscience independently of its surroundings, and thus it was perfectly true that the Romans had an interior light which might have been for them a sure guide. Unfortunately, its brilliancy was dimmed by the noxious vapors of the atmosphere in which they lived, and of which the apostle of love had much reason to say the words quoted above. Christianity had not yet introduced in the world those maxims of right, decency, and good order, which are still in our day the salvation of society. To know what the world of his time taught to the Roman, we have only to look at the state of the commonwealth in politics, in social manners, in the life of the great, in the unbridled licentiousness of the plebs, in the wretched misery of the slaves. It is not possible to go through all the details contained, in germ, in this simple enumeration. But it would be easy to prove, peremptorily, that in all these respects there was no more in Rome any sense of justice, of virtue, of religion, nay, of the most common decency, of the most ordinary feeling of moral obligation whatsoever. Tacitus, a little later on, wrote big words concerning liberty, the oppression of virtuous men in his time, the glory of the ancient republic which could yet revive, the abominable deeds of monstrous tyrants, and the noble daring of his friends, the Stoics who found courage enough to escape the oppressor by putting an end to their own existence. We doubt much if even *he* knew what true virtue is. His powerful writings convey seldom, if ever, the idea we all possess of conscience; and without this idea how can virtue be known? The fact is, the Romans were precisely such as St. Paul describes them in his epistle to the true Romans of his time, namely, to those few men who had chosen, against all the irresistible allurements of vice, a life of humility, chastity, disinterestedness, and strict attachment to duty. The reader may look again in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, from the 21st verse to the end, particularly the 29th, 30th, and 31st. It is impossible to draw of any people a more gloomy and hideous picture. How could they *naturally*, and without the powerful impulse of divine grace, turn from paganism to Christianity?

---

\* 1 Joan. v. 19.

† Ad Rom. ii. 15.



But these few words relate only to *the world* they had to renounce. We must, secondly, briefly speak of *the flesh*, under whose tyranny they were at the time groaning, without the least will or power to shake off the yoke.

The works of the flesh can be understood in two senses : a general one, comprising whatever is opposed to the law of God ; and a more restricted one, having reference only to the sixth commandment. In both senses, but particularly in the last, were the Romans of that epoch engaged morally in a deadly contest with whatever is right and just. They were indeed slaves of the flesh, as opposed in general to all the commandments of God. There is none of these which they showed the least inclination to obey. It had not been so for many of their ancestors. There was a time when disinterestedness, a strict attention to duty of every kind, sobriety, carried almost to a Spartan sternness, chastity, in marriage at least, and invariably limited to an indissoluble monogamy, religion even, understood as a general worship of the deity, and apart from the errors of their polytheism, were most striking features of their character. These St. Augustine called their virtues, and he said emphatically that as a reward for them God had given them command over the world. But all these virtues had disappeared long before Christ came ; and they had been replaced by the very opposite vices. Instead of a noble disinterestedness the lust of ill-gotten wealth had superseded in the greater number of them every other feeling. How had those great patrician families acquired the enormous opulence which enabled them to live with the luxurious indulgence of princes and kings ? Cicero, Seneca, Lucan, and the other philosophers and poets of the epoch, who shared themselves in the general dissoluteness, will tell you that those proud Romans, poor at first, and abstemious, had become the epicurean monsters that we know, by plundering and impoverishing, each of them, some large and wealthy provinces. Cicero, in particular, has acquainted us in detail with the tyrannical abuses of a Verres in Sicily. Rome was rich with the plunder of the whole world ; but in becoming rich she had been degraded by the most shameless venality ; and already in the time of Jugurtha, a man wealthy enough to purchase her senate would have ruled the counsels of the nation.

There was a time certainly when the Romans had a conscience and knew what duty was. But that time had long before passed away. Duty had been replaced for them by the most brazen-faced selfishness ; the most base self-gratification had more power to move them

to exertion than the loudest call of conscience, which, in fact, had ceased to speak to them. Duty, therefore, was a vain word; and we very much doubt if they ever used at the time the term of their vocabulary corresponding to the idea. Cicero uses often the word *officium*, which is generally translated by *duty*. But he said already in his time that for the numerous class of philosophers who advocated a kind of *summum bonum* completely disconnected from virtue, and measured by the rule of utilitarianism, not by that of the true *honestum*, there was in fact no duty—*officium*. A hundred years after Cicero that class of *philosophers* had become universal in Rome. Egotism was absolutely prevalent. Every one looked to his own personal advantage, not to what the *honestum*, that is, the sense of virtue, dictated. Duty had disappeared with conscience, and selfishness ruled supreme.

What could be said at the time of sobriety, which had formerly been carried in Rome almost to a sort of Spartan severity? Let those writers speak, who have lately published such interesting works on the daily life of the Romans at the beginning of the empire. It is in particular in those monstrous suppers, lasting from sunset nearly to the following sunrise, that another of our previous assertions is demonstrated to the letter. When this new fashion arose of taking a nightly meal, it was considered, no doubt, a new degree of refinement. And it is very probable indeed that at first it was not accompanied with any vulgar excess, but resembled rather those elegant *symposia* of the Greeks, who, reclining softly on silken cushions, crowned with sweet-smelling flowers, a golden or glass cup in their right hand filled with the most delicious juice of the grape, appeared like their Olympian gods, feeding on nectar and ambrosia. They might have been, all the time the meal lasted, under the gentle influence of their inspiring beverage, and light as well as delicious food. But in all the songs of Anacreon, where this epicurean life is represented with such bright colors, do you ever find a gross suggestion with regard to eating and drinking? Is it ever supposed that the reclining gastronome will, at the end of his enjoyment, be turned into a beastly drunkard or disgusting glutton? Certainly not, that we know; so that if the Greek votary of pleasure was not distinguished for his sobriety, and was not naturally disposed to become a Christian, at least, he never assumed the form of a piggish sot. This might have been at first the *refinement* of Roman suppers, if refinement it can be called by a Christian. But who can look at

the picture which was finally offered to the spectator, when the revelry ended by all the details known now in perfection to the archæologists of our day, but which cannot be even mentioned in these pages in a general and veiled manner. It was, therefore, literally true with regard to the Romans, that refinement had turned into licentiousness, and they could not distinguish between what is pleasurable and what must be called beastly.

We might go on through all the commandments of God, and the list of deadly sins opposed to them. There is no need of exhausting the loathsome subject. The reader sees at a glance what is understood when it is said that nothing in the Romans of that epoch could dispose them for the reception of Christianity; and everything, on the contrary, set them in a complete antagonism to it. But as it was said that the *works of the flesh* mean particularly the sins opposed to the sixth commandment of God—and in great many Christian authors it has no other meaning—it is proper not to dismiss this subject without a word, at least, bearing in that direction. Every one, however, understands that it must be short, and more remarkable for its comprehensiveness than for its unveiled fidelity.

Unchastity can have a great many meanings; and positive degradation, both moral and physical, is sure to follow this vice, whatever form it may assume. But the Christian ideal of the contrary virtue is so exalted that many kinds of sensual indulgence customary to Oriental nations in general, appear to us, and were, in fact, abuses which became in course of time one of the main causes of the final corruption of those races. Whatever may be said of the polygamy of the ancient patriarchs, it is abhorrent to the Christian ideal, which was also the primitive perfection, as it was said expressly by our Saviour. The excesses of the latter Hebrew kings, and of the monarchs of many races in Asia, cannot be excused, and led to destructive consequences for those peoples. The loose notions concerning marriage in Greece, the influence given to courtesans there, and, worse yet, the unnatural vice advocated by many Hellenic philosophers, are known to have been fatal in many ways to the prosperity and endurance of the Greek power over the East. But who does not see at a glance that all these varieties of sensual disorders, including those of Phrygia, Syria, Egypt, etc., are as nothing compared to the monstrosities publicly exposed to the sight of all mankind in that worse than modern Babylon, the pagan Rome of the two first centuries of our era? If, for some good men living at a great distance, who perceived only

the beneficial influence of the empire, by which universal peace was procured, and which brought on an undoubted material well-being all over the world ; if, for such writers as Philo the Jew, the men instrumental in bringing on those blessings, namely, the rulers of the Roman autocracy, were worthy to be called the benefactors of mankind, it was, nevertheless, true that as St. John expressed it in his *Apocalypse*, Babylon was offering her intoxicating and deadly beverage of unnatural lust to all the nations of the earth, and corrupting them all by her more than monstrous example. As to those living in Rome, no man possessing the least feeling—we will not say of purity, but—of common decency, could not but abhor this *universal sink* of the whole world, as it has been justly called by several writers. And this is not declamation. If the numerous facts proving it could be mentioned in detail, no one would refuse to admit that since man began the career of beastly vices which have degraded so many individuals of the race, no nation has ever appeared so totally depraved as the Roman was. And this must suffice on such a repulsive subject as this.

To become a Christian any citizen of the corrupt capital of the universe had to renounce these *works of the flesh*, after having renounced *the world*. But he had also to turn his back on *the devil*. Holy King David had long before Christ expressly said : “all the gods of the nations are demons.”\* But at the time of the preaching of the Gospel, this was received as true, not only by the Church, but by the pagans themselves. The Neo-Platonist philosophers of Alexandria concluded that the statues of the gods were to be adored, for this reason, that in the act of consecrating them by prayers, ceremonies, and sacrifices, as the pagan ritual prescribed, the gods came to dwell in them, so that they were no more simple representations in stone, wood, or metal, but animated beings, whose soul was the god inside, a spirit endowed with powers far above those of man. And they gave to those spirits the actual name of demons—*dæmonia*—no polytheist at the time denied this. They boasted of it, on the contrary ; and they brought out many facts to prove it. They thought also that the various manifestations of rabid enthusiasm, devilish madness, and cruel fury, which often appeared in the highest ministers of their religion—undoubtedly the main cause of the immolation of human victims, which continued as late as the

---

\* Ps. xcvi. 5.

time of the apostles and later—were the solemn proofs of a divine inspiration, which widely separated their rites from the scenic actions of the dramatist, or the useful occupation of the slaughterer of animals. In their view, therefore, the minister of their religion was possessed by a god-like spirit—we say, by the devil. The narrative of the Gospel instructs us to believe that this satanic possession did not embrace only a class of pretended ministers of worship, but extended also to numerous individuals among the common people. Hence our Saviour was accused of magic by his enemies, because, as they said: “By the prince of devils he casteth out devils.”\* People in our age deride all this, and yet they believe in spiritism, which amounts to the same. And this foolish act of derision cannot explain away the universal fact, extending to all places and to all ages, including our own: that wherever the Gospel is preached for the first time in any country, it invariably meets with evident cases of devilish possession; and numerous Catholic missionaries still living can testify to having been witnesses of such, even in civilized countries.

We cannot, therefore, be surprised at the belief entertained by all the Fathers of the Church, chiefly in the first centuries of our era, that all the gods of the nations were devils. To become a Christian every convert from paganism had thus to *renounce the devil*. And let not the reader imagine that this renouncement required no effort, nay, was a pleasant affair for either the soul or the senses. It was one of the greatest sacrifices that a man could make to his reason and his sense of duty. For if every pagan was not actually possessed by the devil, as we express it; if there was, in fact, only a minority given over to that terrible state of slavish subjection, all more or less had in paganism surrendered their soul to a hard master, from whose obedience they felt powerless to free themselves. Now, if every one of us knows by his own sad experience that an evil act, often repeated, becomes the father of a bad habit, and this in its turn enchains the will so as to take away a part at least of its freedom of action, we may imagine what can be the state of the soul, when, besides these psychological phenomena with which we are all perfectly well acquainted, there is, over and above, the far stronger action of a distinct being, superior to us in power, but all bent on evil. Then indeed, as our Saviour himself said of a case analogous to this: “The

---

\* Matt. ix. 34.

last state of that man becomes worse than the first.”\* And the more rigorous is the slavery imposed on us by sin and by the influence of the evil spirit, the more difficult it is to come back to reason and to break off the yoke of this despotism. All know it of intemperance ; but it is equally true of every other vice ; so that the more odious to a right-minded man is the excess to which sin carries its victim, the more impossible the victim finds it to rescue himself from its folds. God alone, undoubtedly, can act directly on our soul ; and theology teaches that man is so exalted a being that if the Head-Devil itself can oppress the body, it cannot touch with its burning finger any spirit created to the image of God. Still, in the act of *possession* there is a surrendering of rights, which includes the most personal among them to the human soul ; and thus, if the soul itself remains untouched, it is in reality benumbed, paralyzed, deprived almost of its native activity. All its cravings and aspirations are reduced to what the spirit of evil suggests ; and there cannot be a more difficult process than that of averting the doom by which it is carried toward the abyss, and of giving it a taste again for the sweet light and pure pleasures of the holy region left far behind. It was, therefore, a hopeless task, considering nature alone, to bid a pagan Roman renounce his master and become free again with the freedom of the children of God.

But these considerations have placed before our eyes only the term *a quo*, as was said previously ; still, we can already appreciate how impossible it was, naturally, to an idolater of those times to turn his back on what had been so far his delight ; to despise what he had esteemed ; to abhor what he had loved. The term *ad quem*, according to our previous expression, has, in addition, to be briefly examined ; and it is here particularly that the hopelessness of the case will become more evident.

To convince the reader of this nothing more is required than refer to the words of St. Paul himself when he states fearlessly the object of his mission : “The Jews require signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom ; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness. But unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” † All is compressed in these few words, and no Christian can close his eyes to it. But if there was any doubt about

---

\* Luke, xi. 26.

† 1 Cor. i. 22, 23, 24.

it, the event, that is, the conversion of Rome, has proved its correctness. The passage is so clear and limpid that there can be no difficulty whatever with respect to its exegesis. "The Jews require signs (or miracles) and the Hellenes seek for wisdom ; but we preach Christ crucified," etc. Substitute for *Hellenes* or Greeks and *Gentiles*, the word *Roman*, to which it must also apply, as they were Gentiles, and the statement becomes so plain that it is equivalent to a truism. The term *ad quem*, that is, the conversion of Rome to Christ by the apostles, had for its object to make them worship a crucified man. There were in Rome at the time Jews and pagans ; and it is known that the Church from the beginning embraced converts of either kind. But for the Jews already, to invite them to worship a crucified Messiah was a stumbling-block. Peter and Paul found it to be so from Jerusalem to Rome. If a small number among them acknowledged the concordance of the old prophecies with the facts lately enacted in Judea, and embraced the new religion ; with regard to the great mass of the nation, to acknowledge for their Messiah a man whom the chiefs of their race had condemned as an impostor and had crucified, was indeed a stumbling-block ; and a thick veil spread itself over their sight, to prevent them from seeing how perfectly Isaias agreed with the plain story of the Nazarene. A few of them, therefore, *were called*, and by their conversion they became a proof that Christ was God's power and God's wisdom ; that is, their conversion was altogether supernatural, and could not be explained by human means and agency. As to the Romans themselves, being Gentiles, they, like the Greeks, were *seeking for wisdom*. Many of them, undoubtedly, were not satisfied with the national polytheism, and consequently they looked to Egypt, to Phrygia, to Syria, etc., for a better worship. Their reason, however, must be satisfied before they embraced any new doctrine. Among the others, Christianity is offered to them by Peter and Paul ; but what is the object they will have to worship ? Simply a crucified man ! But indeed will they exclaim : "This is sheer folly !"—*stultitiam*. See, however, how immediately the apostles find an immense following in that city, so refined, so artistic at the time, so eager for the Greek philosophy ! Is not their conversion the work only of "God's power and God's wisdom ?" For, mind it well, the new God they are requested to worship is to be their model, their absolute pattern. Many texts of St. Paul could be brought out to prove it. They must, consequently, be *mortified* like him in their lives, and



often die like him on the cross, or among tortures far more dreadful to our senses, such as they are related by contemporary historians, than the sufferings of Christ on the way to Calvary and on the cross itself. We say *to our senses*, because the torments to which the martyrs were subjected have been made known to us by ordinary men, their contemporaries, who had been witnesses of the terrible conflicts of the amphitheater, or of the atrocious details of Roman criminal procedure. The sufferings of Christ, on the other side, have been narrated by inspired historians, who seem to have divested themselves of their human nature by becoming the instrument of the Holy Ghost. The facts are plainly given, without comment, and without attempting to excite any feeling of horror. But the only thing to be considered at this moment, is the invitation extended to the Romans of the time of Nero not only to worship Christ crucified, but to aim at copying his austerity of life, with the prospect of ending like him, loaded with ignominy, and torn in pieces by the claws of wild beasts, or the iron hooks of the executioner!

And this is not an exaggerated picture. We have the testimony of Tacitus, an eye-witness, for believing that "an immense multitude of Christians" perished under Nero in the frightful manner described by the historians of the day. They must all have been the disciples of Peter and Paul. Can their conversion be ascribed to human motives, to natural means, to a simple process of argumentation or syllogism? Can it be said with the Dean of St. Paul's, that any of those future martyrs, in becoming a Christian under the instruction of Peter, was merely "substituting a simple, calm, and rational faith and worship, for the worn-out superstitions of heathenism"? No indeed, a thousand times, no! He only fell prostrate before the power and wisdom of God, surrendered himself to the impulse of divine grace, and, closing his eyes to all earthly things, he was guilty of the greatest *folly—stultitiam*—a man, as man, could commit.

But it is true that in this act of madness he experienced directly an immense moral change, and became a new man, a unit among many destined to form a heavenly community, such as the world had never seen before. Who could be able to describe it with the scanty materials we have at hand? The gloomy corridors of the catacombs spreading for miles and miles in all directions, under the most thickly built parts of Rome, and beyond under the extensive *Campagna*, begin to unfold under our eyes the spectacle of that city of God so different from the city of the world which at the time glo-



ried in its name—Rome, strength—and of its eternal destiny. De Rossi has already extended his discoveries far enough, to embalm forever the sweet memory of primitive Christianity in the City of the Seven Hills ; and when his task shall be accomplished, then we will know to perfection the new and holy generation to which Peter and Paul gave birth. Petronilla, Pudens, and Pudentiana, and many other converts and friends of Peter or of his immediate successors, will then be familiar names to every Christian of our day ; and the martyrs that followed them, Nereus and Achilles, Titus Flavius Clemens, Domitilla, and the other victims of the rage of Domitian, will tell us the change brought on in Roman patricians and Roman ladies of the apostolic age by the preaching of the two apostles. A little later on the lives of Lawrence and Sebastian, of Cecilia and Agnes, so well known, owing to the labors of modern archæologists, will convince every candid man, even if not Christian, that the production of such characters as these out of the corrupt stock which disgraced Rome under the first Cæsars, required absolutely a divine power. This could not be but because Christ crucified, who was a stumbling-block for the Jews, and folly in the eyes of the Gentiles, was nevertheless, in reality, God's power and wisdom.

The researches of De Rossi have thus far given reality to the sublime virtues of the first Christians in Rome ; and have proved that even many members of the highest families of that great city submitted to the yoke of Christ. The proofs he gives of the actual conversion of a good part of the *Flavia gens*, that is, of Vespasian's family, are simply conclusive, and do not leave the least possible doubt. Rev. J. S. Northcote in his *Roma Sotterranea* shows that the testimonies of Dio Cassius, a pagan, and of Eusebius, a Christian, on the subject, are so positive as not to leave the least loophole to the usual denials of hypercritical writers ; and the discoveries of De Rossi in the cemetery of Domitilla confirm every statement of those two authors ; so that he can say in conclusion : "Had it been handed down in any Acts of martyrs that, immediately after the death of the apostles, Christianity was within an ace of mounting the imperial throne, that a cousin and niece of the emperor not only professed the new religion, but also suffered exile, and even death itself, on its account, we can imagine with what vehemence the pious legend would have been laughed to scorn by many modern critics ; but the testimony of Dio Cassius, to which we may add perhaps that of Suetonius also, is received with greater respect."

It is not on the occasion only of the *Flavia gens* that the labors of De Rossi prove the reliability of the old records, such as the *Liber Pontificalis*, the *Almanac* of Filocalus, the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, and in general what is called the Roman tradition in archæology; but many points referring to the primitive history of the Church in Rome have been, we may say, demonstrated as true by the researches of the learned Italian. And there is no need of insisting on the fact which all these labors establish, namely, the extraordinary and most successful ministry of Peter in the capital of the Roman Empire. How he could have in the space of twenty-five years brought to the feet of Christ such a number of Romans of every condition, from that of the slave to that of the prince seated on the degrees of the throne of Cæsar, must remain a mystery, although it is a fact. Just after his death, nearly one-half of the family of the emperor were Christian; and several of them actually died martyrs or in exile! and Rome was already full of the worshipers of a crucified God, although many deluded pagans thought they were Jews, and called them so. This is the most comprehensive, although the most abridged, statement possible regarding the labors of Peter in Rome. We must hasten on to speak briefly of his immediate successors, and to examine if the Roman Church, thus founded, belonged to Latin Christianity, or was altogether a Greek organization, as Mr. Milman firmly believes.

6. *The successors of St. Peter in Rome ascertained by the labors of De Rossi. Cemetery of Callistus.*

The order of succession of the popes who first followed St. Peter on the See of Rome—a subject of ardent contention among critics until the present age—is now sufficiently well ascertained; and the reader remembers what was said previously of the remarkable dissertation of Father Colombier on this much disputed topic. Father P. B. Gams, at the very head of his *Pontifices Romani*, in his book on the *Series Episcoporum*, admits it; and by making a single person of Cletus, Anencletus, and Anacletus, he shows at once the system he adopts. We consider that this order is historically proved, and it runs thus: *Petrus, Linus, Cletus, Clemens, Evaristus*. Dean Milman, followed, no doubt, by all the other Protestant writers on ecclesiastical history, pretends that it is mere conjecture. But it can be confidently asserted that none of those authors has read the ancient

and authentic documents on which this list of succession of the first popes rests. Independently, however, of many texts of old writers, quoted by Father Colombier, the discoveries made lately in the catacombs by De Rossi have a great weight for deciding in favor of this opinion. Unfortunately, it is true, the places of sepulture of those first pontiffs, who were all interred on the Vatican (down to St. Victor I., in 203), were disturbed, and entirely thrown into confusion when the foundations were dug for building St. Peter's. No one at that time thought of the treasures of Christian archæology contained in this spot. Still, modern researches have confirmed the statement derived from various sources, and particularly mentioned in the *Liber Pontificalis*, that the earliest successors of St. Peter lay buried, each in his own sepulcher, "near the body of blessed Peter in the Vatican." To this positive assertion is added by the same ancient writers, that Clement, who "adorned the sepulchral monument"—*construxit memoriam*—of blessed Peter, was also buried there, with Linus, Cletus, Evaristus, Sixtus, and all the others down to Victor. The only names omitted in this list are those of Alexander, Anicetus, and Soter; and solid reasons are given by De Rossi for this omission. It seems that in the seventeenth century a sepulcher was discovered near this spot, bearing simply the name of *Linus*. That the tomb of St. Peter was there is sufficiently proved by the well-known text of Caius, a contemporary of Irenæus, who points it out to the traveler anxious to know and see the chief monuments of the Christian faith in Rome.

If this is true, it is useless to look for the tombs of these first popes in any other catacomb in Rome; and it is very remarkable that in the subsequent discoveries of De Rossi, particularly in bringing to light the *Cæmeterium Callisti*, he found the places of sepulture of most of the popes who followed St. Victor, beginning from Zephyrinus, his immediate successor; but none of the predecessors of Zephyrinus. He, however, ascertained that there are yet in Rome catacombs which must be referred to the apostolic age; and although neither St. Peter nor any of his immediate successors were buried in them, yet it is of great consequence to endeavor to distinguish them from those of the following centuries. They are the very places to make us acquainted with the social state of the Christians at the very origin of our religion; and to give the proof of the complete success attending not only Peter and Paul, but likewise Linus, Cletus, Clement, Evaristus, and their next successors. It is not an exaggeration to say that the great Roman archæologist has thrown a

flood of light on this most interesting subject. A word has been already said about the conversion of a part of Vespasian's family; but this would not suffice to give any adequate idea of the subject. Dean Milman, who seems to grieve, in his *Latin Christianity*, that there is no means of knowing what kind of life the first popes led in Rome, might do well to read the details suggested by the precious monuments lately discovered there.

De Rossi begins by remarking that the opinion entertained before him with regard to the way of pronouncing on the relative antiquity of those subterranean galleries called catacombs, was diametrically opposed to the right one. "Former writers," says Rev. J. S. Northcote, "have always taken it for granted that the first beginnings of *Roma Sotterranea* must have been poor and mean and insignificant, and that any appearance of subterranean works on a large scale, or richly decorated, must necessarily belong to a later and more peaceful age; it is now certain that this statement cannot be reconciled with the monuments and facts that modern discovery has brought to light. All who have any knowledge of the history of the fine arts are agreed that the decorations of the many remarkable crypts lately discovered are much more ancient than those which form the great bulk of the paintings in the catacombs with which we were familiar before, and which have been always justly regarded as the work of the third century. Nor can any thoughtful and impartial judge fail to recognize in the social and political condition of the first Roman Christians, and in the laws and usages of Roman burial, an adequate cause for all that is thus thrown back on the first and second centuries."

It is, in fact, natural that the Christian monuments should share in the artistic manner of the pagan painters and sculptors of that epoch; particularly before an independent Christian art was born, and had received traditional laws of its own. Now it is well known that classical art remained pure in Rome until the Antonines, and no further; there was then a rapid decline, which can scarcely be accounted for. Any one looking on the Arch of Titus and on that of Constantine, which are yet standing in view of each other in Rome, cannot but be struck with wonder at the sight of both monuments: the first so perfect and so redolent of classical taste; the second stamped with the unmistakable character of degeneracy and incipient barbarism. It is not consequently surprising that Rev. Mr. Northcote speaks in the following manner of the sure signs by

which the most ancient catacombs may be distinguished from the more recent ones.

“From a diligent comparison of various (ancient) authorities”—these are, local traditions, the Books of Indulgences, the book of the Wonders of Rome, etc.—“it is gathered that some five or six of the subterranean cemeteries of Rome were believed to have had their origin in apostolic times; and in every one of these instances, so far as we have had an opportunity of examining them, something peculiar has been either noted by our predecessors, or seen by ourselves, which gives countenance to the tradition. When these peculiarities are brought together, they are found to be in perfect harmony, not only with one another, but also with what we should have been led to expect from a careful consideration of the period to which they are supposed to belong. The peculiarities are such as these:—paintings in the most classical style, and scarcely inferior in execution to the best specimens of contemporary pagan art; a system of ornamentation in fine stucco such as has not yet been found in any Christian subterranean work later than the second century; crypts of considerable dimensions, not hewn out of the bare rock, but carefully, and even elegantly, built with pilasters and cornices of bricks or terra-cotta; no narrow galleries with shelf-like graves thickly pierced in their walls, but spacious *ambulacra*, with painted walls, and recesses provided only for the reception of sarcophagi; whole families of inscriptions, with classical names, and without any distinctly Christian forms of speech; and lastly, actual dates of the first or second century.”

These characters of the catacombs which go back to the apostolic age, were first pointed out by De Rossi, and they form one of his most important discoveries. They enable us to judge of the stupendous work of conversion carried on by Peter and his immediate successors, much better than many texts of ancient authors could do. For, is it not generally admitted that the excavations executed at Pompeii by the Neapolitan government have brought more vividly before our eyes the actual life of the ancient Romans than all the works of the classical authors we possessed? Thus, also, in subterranean Rome the most ancient works of art, which archæologists must acknowledge to be contemporaneous with the Flavian or Antonine dynasties, represent to us, better than long treatises would do, the belief, the feelings, the pure life, as well as the real refinement of the Christians living at that epoch. It is, therefore, important

to reproduce some of the details with which De Rossi has made us acquainted.

It is not proclaimed by the great Italian archæologist alone, but likewise by many French and German writers of note, that the first century, and the earliest part of the second, is the true date of some paintings in the crypt of St. Lucina, in the cemeteries of St. Domitilla, St. Prætextatus, and others. Raoul Rochette, as early as 1845, setting aside the testimony of Tertullian—which had been misunderstood as declaring that the primitive Church positively proscribed art—concluded a long passage on the subject in his *Tableau des Catacombes Romaines* by saying that “the question whether it entered into the views and the principles of the primitive Church to authorize the execution of such paintings, has been long since decided—for the Christian by the authority of the Church, and for the antiquary by the study of monuments.” According to Rev. J. S. Northcote, “Le Normant considered some of the paintings in St. Domitilla’s cemetery to be of the same style with those in the well-known pyramidal tomb of Caius Sextius, B.C. 32. Welcker attributed the paintings in the crypt of St. Lucina to the first century.” On this opinion of Le Normant, quoted in the *Roma Sotterranea* of Northcote, it is proper to say that the French savant did not mean to maintain that the works of art in St. Domitilla’s cemetery were as *old* as those in the tomb of Caius Sextius, which existed before Christ was born; but that they belong to the same school of art, and must be attributed to the very origin of Christianity in Rome. With respect to the words of Welcker about the crypt of St. Lucina, a very important remark cannot be omitted here. The great German archæologist, by referring “the paintings in the crypt of St. Lucina to the first century,” brings thus forward, unconsciously, perhaps, a strong confirmation of the startling, but plausible, at least, opinion of De Rossi, that the St. Lucina, so celebrated in the old Roman traditions, was no other than the Pomponia Græcina of Tacitus. His grounds for thinking so are briefly given by Northcote; our limits compel us to further condense them in a very few words.

The crypt of St. Lucina, near the lately discovered cemetery of Callistus, is certainly, together with the crypt of St. Peter in the Vatican, and of St. Paul on the Via Ostiensis, the most ancient place of Christian burial in Rome. The name—Lucina—is so often recorded by ancient ecclesiastical writers of the three first centuries as being that of a Christian lady living in their time, that the only con-

jecture which can explain the phenomenon is that it was a sobriquet—alluding to the illumination (*Lux*) of baptism—rather than a real name. The question is, Who was the first woman that bore it? The crypt of *Lucina* is under the ground adjoining to the well-known monument of *Cecilia Metella*. In the crypt itself many inscriptions have been found of persons buried there, and belonging to the first families of pagan Rome; the *Cecilii*, the *Pomponii*, the *Bassi*, etc. *Pomponia Græcina* belonged to one of those families. From the narrative of *Tacitus* it is conjectured that the “superstition” of which she was accused, and which was referred to the family tribunal, that is, to the judicial decision of her husband, was, in fact, Christianity; the conjecture is a very strong one. Of the numerous places of burial contained in the crypt, it is known that later on some must have been occupied by Christians. *St. Cecilia* belonged to that family. But were there Christians buried in this place from the most primitive times? *De Rossi*, after protracted investigations, became at last convinced—he brought inscriptions and fragments of inscriptions in proof—that at the end of the second century there were Christian *Pomponii Bassi* and *Pomponii Græcini* buried there. The whole, given in the words of *De Rossi* himself, does not amount to a demonstration, but at least furnishes strong grounds for believing that the first *Lucina* was the true *Pomponia Græcina*. The land belonged originally to the gens *Cæcilia*; this family, one of the first to embrace Christianity in Rome, was intimately connected with the *Pomponii*, *Attici*, and *Bassi*; *Pomponia Græcina* had her first name from her own ancestors the *Pomponii*; the *Bassi* and the *Cæcilii* were connected with her by marriage. That from her relatives, the *Cæcilii*, she obtained a part of their property for her crypt must be certain, since all ancient writers state that this very property in which the catacomb was excavated, belonged to her whom they call *Lucina*.

In conclusion, if it cannot be positively maintained that the identity of *Lucina* with *Pomponia Græcina* is demonstrated; it is at least certain that at the end of the first century and the beginning of the second, there were among the Christians of Rome men and women belonging to the most ancient and illustrious families of the commonwealth. *Northcote* gives several cuts of frescoes found in the most ancient part of the crypts of *Lucina*; among them we see already the good Shepherd carrying a sheep on his shoulders, but of a far superior artistic merit to those of the following ages; the milk-

pail, the lamb, the fish carrying loaves of bread and chalices of blood on its back ; everything betokens the simplicity, purity, and taste of the age of the Flavians and Antonines ; at the same time that in the immediate vicinity of those holy symbols, sepulchral inscriptions in the very style of that refined age bear the names of the most illustrious Romans of that period. The reader must remember that Lucina's crypt formed primitively a part of the property of the Cæciliæ, and is contiguous to the tomb of Cecilia Metella.

It is true that a contrary opinion has prevailed until our day, and that even at this moment Catholic writers of repute believe that Christianity made at first a very slow progress among the great in Rome. The Senate, particularly, remained pagan—they say—almost entirely as far down as the fifth century and later. They quote the celebrated “petition” of senators, headed by Symmachus, asking the preservation of the privileges granted of old to the vestal virgins, and the allowing of the statue of Victory to stand in the hall of their deliberations. People believe that all the senators, or most of them, had signed this “petition.” But St. Ambrose, who was at that very time archbishop of Milan, and had received positive information on the subject from Damasus, who was then Pope, tells us a very different story. This is a passage of the letter the holy archbishop wrote to Valentinian on this occasion—it is the seventeenth in the edition of Migne : “It cannot be said that the Senate has signed such a ‘petition.’ A few Gentiles (or pagans) among them have used the name of the whole body. It is less than two years ago, when the project of this ‘petition’ was set on foot, that holy Damasus, the High Priest of the Roman Church, sent me a copy of a memorial published on the occasion by the Christian senators—that is, the immense majority of them—(*innumeri*). They protested that they had not given such an order to any one ; that they could not agree with such ‘petitions’ of those that were *Gentiles* among them, and they did not give their consent to such a step as this ; and if the project was carried out, they would neither individually nor collectively go any more to the senate chamber.”

These few words dispose of a great deal of the extravagant rhetoric of such a writer as Aristides, who describes Rome in his day as a totally pagan city. The “immense majority” of the senators in the time of Valentinian were Christian, because the process of the conversion of patrician families had commenced under Nero, through the instrumentality of Peter and Paul, continued under the Flavian



dynasty through that of Linus and Cletus and Clement, and increased powerfully under the Antonines through the zeal of Evaristus and the following popes. All this the discoveries of De Rossi in the crypts of Lucina, in the cemeteries of Prætextatus, of St. Alexander, and others, which can be referred to the apostolic age, prove abundantly. Several inscriptions have been ascertained to go back to the most primitive times of the Christian Church ; to the year 72, the third of Vespasian ; to the years 107, 110, and to intermediate epochs down to 175 and 200.

In the cemetery of St. Prætextatus, subterranean buildings, sculptures, and paintings with inscriptions, acknowledged to be of the second century, toward the middle of it, have been discovered and secured against future damage. Under a beautifully built and decorated arcosolium, the names of Januarius, the oldest of the seven sons of St. Felicitas, of Felicissimus and Agapetus, the deacons of St. Sixtus, and many others, have been read enshrined in the sweet piety of the first Christian age. Thus : "Januarius, Agapetus, Felicissimus, martyrs, refresh the soul of . . ." The reader feels immediately that the stream of a new life is running in the veins of these regenerated Romans. For the names inscribed on those monuments are mostly Roman ; very few Greek names comparatively are met with. It is not, therefore, a foreign and Hellenic Church which had invaded Rome, and did not allow "Latin Christianity" to appear before Africa brought it in the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian—a wild theory, invented by Dean Milman, of which more will be said presently. It was a really Roman Church, composed mainly of Roman men and women, but regenerated and purified, not sharing any more in the corruption of the unworthy descendants of the old Latin race, but shining with the halo of holiness and martyrdom. Innumerable passages of those primitive inscriptions and *graffiti* could be quoted to prove this. We say *graffiti*, besides inscriptions, because the interior walls of the chapels and recesses in the catacombs are often covered with what we would call the private records of visitors. These Christian men and women, carried away by their devotional feelings, did not scruple to use any sharp instrument they happened to have on their person, in order to inscribe on the mortar, often fresh, of the walls, any thought or affection which was at the moment uppermost in their soul. Nothing, in our opinion can give a fairer idea of the Christian population then existing than these glowing outbursts of fervor and prayer in behalf of

themselves or of their friends. And as Rev. Mr. Northcote remarks : “Instances of it may be found even among the heathen themselves” —of course on some very rare occasions, when the writer was animated with true religious feeling—“Thus one Serapion, son of Aristomachus, having visited the island of Phylè in Egypt, writes there, that ‘having come to the great Isis, goddess of Phylè, he makes a remembrance there of his parents, for their good.’” Such expressions as these, on the part of pagans, are very seldom discovered on the walls of ancient Gentile monuments, because idolatry had dried up in the hearts of men the gushing stream of affection engendered by primitive piety. When they are met with, however, they are still very different from, and a great deal colder than the expression used in the graffiti of Christian catacombs.

It is time we should give some instances of these, taken from the *Roma Sotterranea*. They are mostly found in that branch of the cemetery of Callistus, nearest to the crypts of Lucina ; and thus the under-ground galleries on which they are inscribed go back nearly to the apostolic age. “Prayers or acclamations for absent or departed friends are mixed amongst the most ancient names”—these names are those mentioned before of the great Roman families of the time of the Flavians or the Antonines—“Generally they run in the same form as the earliest and most simple Christian epitaphs, *e. g.*, *Vivas, Vivas in Deo Christo, Vivas in eterno, Ζης εν Θεω, Te in pace*, etc. . . . But besides mere names and short acclamations, there are also in the same places, and manifestly belonging to the same age, prayers and invocations of the martyrs who lay buried in these chapels. Sometimes the holy souls of all the martyrs are addressed collectively, and petitioned to hold such and such an one in remembrance, and sometimes this prayer is addressed to one individually . . . *e. g.*, ‘Holy souls, have in remembrance Marcianus Successus Severus, and all our brethren. Holy souls, ask that Verecundus and his friends may have a prosperous voyage. Ask for rest both for my parent and his brothers. May they live with good holy Sixtus ; have in remembrance in your prayers Aurelius Repentinus. Have ye in remembrance Dionysius.’”

“There is,” says Rev. Mr. Northcote, “a simplicity and a warmth of affection which savors of the earliest ages. They are very different from the dry and verbose epitaphs of the fourth or fifth centuries. Indeed, there is something almost classical about the third one (of those previously quoted), reminding us, says De Rossi, of

Horace's *Otium Divos rogat in patenti prensus Ægæo*; and the phrase, which is so frequently repeated in them, *in mente habere*, points to the same antiquity. It is found on an inscription in Pompeii, on two Christian epitaphs of the third and fourth centuries, and is used by St. Cyprian in one of his letters."

A much longer array of similar inscriptions or graffiti could be easily put together to strengthen the impression these few examples naturally produce. But our limits prevent us from indulging the inclination to do so. Enough of them, we hope, have been quoted to give an idea of the new community of brethren formed at Rome first by St. Peter, and rapidly increased by his immediate successors. We must hasten on to describe briefly the following age, which was nothing, however, but the development of the previous one. Monuments of it have been found by De Rossi in the cemetery of Callistus, sufficient to render this epoch—the most disastrous with regard to the fury of persecution—one of the holiest known in ecclesiastical history. We are now acquainted with the strange way the celebrated Roman archæologist fell upon this catacomb almost unexpectedly.

In 1849 he found in the cellar of a vineyard on the Via Appia, but much nearer to Rome than St. Sebastian, a large fragment of a marble slab, having on it the upper part of the letter R, followed by the complete letters, NELIUS MARTYR. He immediately conjectured that this fragment was part of the tombstone of St. Cornelius, in the middle of the third century. He had thus discovered the cemetery first opened by St. Zephyrinus, confided by him to the care of Callistus, whose name it bore henceforth. He had discovered the place of sepulture of most of the popes from St. Victor down to Sylvester, when at last the peace of Constantine allowed them to be buried above ground. There, in these subterranean galleries, lay the treasure which kept the secret of the history of the Church during the most fierce persecutions she had to encounter. Henceforth Christians would become much better acquainted with the lives of the men who were called Zephyrinus, Callistus, Urbanus, Pontianus, Anterus, Fabianus, Cornelius, Lucius, Stephanus, Sixtus, and all the others, down to Melchiades, who was the last to be interred in that queen-city of the most illustrious dead. And as it was befitting for those who inhabited it, nothing in all the other catacombs could be compared to it in point of regularity, splendor, size of rooms, and beauty of artistic remains.

How the memory of it had been completely lost; how the small

under-ground gallery at St. Sebastian's had been generally supposed to be the place where all those popes had been buried, how the best-disposed antiquarians and classicists were thus thrown into doubt and hesitation with regard to believing in what the Roman traditions justly reported, there is no possibility to tell. But it is to be supposed that most of our readers know sufficiently well the answers to these questions. At any rate they can find them in the master-work of De Rossi himself, or in its abridgment by Rev. Mr. Northcote.

It is only, therefore, from the year 1850, that the perfect agreement of the historical account kept by the Roman traditions with the facts themselves have been proven. But it is a complete vindication, of which Protestant writers must now begin to show that they are aware. The number of martyrs, for instance, and the holiness of those early popes, together with their real authority over the whole Church, must henceforth be acknowledged by heterodox historians, if they have any care for their reputation as scholars. More will be said presently on the subject. But we cannot delay any longer treating of a question already alluded to several times, and which at this moment is in order for us. Was the Church of the early popes, was the Church of the Catacombs in Rome, a Greek institution, or did it already belong to "Latin Christianity"? The shape given to this question by Dean Milman must be first presented in all its strength and apparent consistency, to render more striking the proof of its real want of support. Some passages of his great work must be first given, taking care not to weaken in the least the efficiency of what he evidently supposes to be a demonstration. We will come later on to what he says of the Roman martyrologies and of the persecutions. When we do not give the text of the Dean of St. Paul's, we abridge his generalizations, endeavoring, however, not to deprive his logic of any of its power.

When did Latin Christianity begin? According to Dr. Milman, "For some considerable (it cannot but be an undefinable) part of the first three centuries, the Church of Rome, and most if not all the churches of the West, were, if we may so speak, Greek religious colonies." This is the starting-point of the Dean, which he endeavors afterward to bolster up by numerous facts to be enumerated later on. But this *starting-point* must be met at first with a strong denial. It is not true that "the Church of Rome and most of the churches of the West were Greek religious colonies." To the Church of Rome

itself it would be ridiculous indeed to apply such a qualification. Neither Peter nor Paul were Greeks, and they were not sent from a Greek metropolis to found a Greek colony at Rome. This first assertion of Milman is, therefore, untrue. But we know that some churches in Gaul might be called, to a certain extent, Greek colonies, because their first apostles came directly from Greece, as for instance, Vienne and Lyons. To pretend, however, that most of the churches of the West were of the same character, is to entirely ignore what is proved now beyond all controversy, namely, that St. Peter and his immediate successors sent Roman, and consequently Latin missionaries to Gaul—some of them undoubtedly in the first, and the greater number very early in the second century. This has been examined at the beginning of this chapter, and the reader besides is referred to the important note added to the text of Alzog by his American editors, on the subject. It is sure, likewise, that the origin of the Christian Church in African Mauritania was Roman and apostolic, as previously maintained; and thus “Latin Christianity” did not go first from Africa to Rome, as Dean Milman thinks, but truly from Rome to Africa, which completely subverts his theory. The reader remembers particularly the testimony of Tertullian.

Many facts, however, enumerated by him are true, tending to show the great influence of the Greek language in the early Roman Church. “The language was Greek, the organization Greek, the writers, the Scriptures Greek; and many vestiges show that the ritual, the liturgy was Greek.”

We are not prepared to admit entirely this last part of the enumeration; but let it pass. What precedes is in great part true; it is true likewise that, as he remarks, through the Greek language communication was kept between the West and the East; and likewise that the Oriental heresiarchs found through the Hellenic idiom the means of propagating their doctrines in Rome and the West. But the same absolutely was true of the pagan empire of Rome, and yet it was a “Latin” not a “Greek” empire. The Attic dialect was used in the capital, at least among the educated classes, nearly as much as the Latin. The letters of Augustus, which have been preserved, are often interlarded with Greek phrases, so as almost to cease to be Latin letters. The various professors who taught philosophy or rhetoric to the Roman youth, were mostly Greeks, and often, at least, gave their lectures in Greek. We know it for certain of Plutarch, who was a public teacher in Rome for several years dur-

ing the reign of Domitian, and yet never knew Latin, and could not speak it fluently. Nearly all the foreign trade of the Romans was carried on in Greek vessels, and with the Greek idiom, which was the only means of intercourse all over the Orient. Sufficient details of it have been furnished in a previous chapter. In fact, it has been proved that the Attic idiom was then spoken all over the world; and it must have been the usual mode of communication of the Romans with all foreign countries.

But Dean Milman insists on his theory; and with a plausible array of erudition says: "All the Christian extant writings which appeared in Rome and in the West at the beginning of Christianity are Greek, or were originally written in Greek; the epistles of Clement, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Clementine Recognitions, and Homilies, the works of Justin the Martyr, down to Caius and the author of the Refutation of Heresies (Hippolytus)." . . . "The Octavius of Minutius Felix, and the treatise of Novatian on the Trinity, are the earliest known works of Latin Christian literature which came from Rome." The same in Gaul; Irenæus, the letters on the Lyons and Viennese martyrs, vestiges of rituals, etc., are proofs of it. According to Sozomen, there was no preaching in Latin in Rome during the first centuries. "Pope Leo I. (440-461) was the first celebrated Latin preacher; and his brief and emphatic sermons read like the first essays of a rude and untried eloquence, rather than the finished compositions which would imply a long study, and cultivation of pulpit oratory. Compare them with Chrysostom.

"Africa, not Rome, gave birth to Latin Christianity. Tertullian was the first Latin Christian writer; at least the first who commanded the public ear; and there is strong ground for supposing that, since Tertullian quotes the sacred writings perpetually and copiously, the earliest of those many Latin versions quoted by Augustine, and on which Jerome grounded his Vulgate, were African."

This long passage of Milman requires at least a short review at our hand, and we must follow him step by step. What he says first of the Greek as the almost universal idiom of the first Christian writers, is equally true of the profane authors of that epoch even when speaking of the affairs of the West: Plutarch, Appian, Arrian, Herodian, Lucian, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Diodorus Siculus, Polybius, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius the emperor, and Julian, later on, besides many others, wrote only in Greek. Quintilian, the Plinys, and Tacitus, besides Suetonius and the contemptible *Scriptores His-*

*torix Augustæ*, are the last Latin authors. From Juvenal to Claudian, there is scarcely a poet.

Yet no one will pretend that the Roman Empire after Augustus was a Greek empire. The Greek language had been adopted by the educated classes both on account of its universality, and for the abundance of its literature. But what the Dean of St. Paul's says of the Scriptures having been first probably translated into Latin in Africa requires more serious strictures from us, because the consequences he pretends to draw from it are insidious, and tend to bring on a quasi-demonstration of the Protestant theory of independent churches *ab initio*. His precise words must be repeated: "There is strong ground for supposing that, since Tertullian quotes the sacred writings perpetually and copiously, the earliest of those many Latin versions noticed by Augustine, and on which Jerome grounded his Vulgate, were African." The reader will soon be convinced that the only "ground" for this supposition was the "strong" desire of Dean Milman that it should be so. First, it is perfectly true that Tertullian "quotes the sacred writings perpetually and copiously" in Latin; but the only inference for a strict logician is that they existed in Africa in his time. Mr. Milman must bring stronger proofs than this simple fact to convince us that the "earliest Latin version was African." There were certainly many Latin versions noticed by Augustine, but what were they, and which was the earliest? The words of the holy Bishop of Hippo must be quoted, and they may prove something very distasteful to the Dean of St. Paul's. These are the words of Augustine: \* "The translations of Scripture from the Hebrew into Greek can be counted; but the Latin translations cannot. For, in the first Christian age, whoever happened to meet with a Greek *codex*, if he had the least knowledge of both languages (Greek and Latin), he dared attempt to translate." Mr. Milman may see from this passage of Augustine that there was a "Latin Christianity" in the West from the very beginning, since every bishop, every priest, every man intrusted with the religious teaching of the people in the West, as soon as he could get a Greek copy of Holy Scripture he directly made a version of it for his own use as a Christian teacher. This is evidently the meaning of Augustine; and it proves that Christianity was taught in the West in Latin, since every teacher thought fit to make his own Latin version of the Bible.

---

\* De Doctr. Christ., lib. ii., cap. 11.



But the holy Bishop of Hippo does not say that these were authorized versions ; and very probably “ Jerome did *not* ground his Vulgate ” on these, as Mr. Milman pretends. Jerome and Augustine speak of only one authorized version, called *Vetus* by all the first Fathers of the Church. Consequently, this one was the “ earliest,” that is, the one Mr. Milman is so anxious to find out. He does not give himself the name of this “ earliest ” version, though he knew it perfectly well. He knew that all the Fathers called it *Itala* ; so that it was, in fact, an Italian version ; and since all acknowledged it likewise as the “ earliest,” and called it *Vetus* on this account, it must have passed to Africa from Italy. It would be interesting to know—after these short explanations have been given—what remains of the theory of Dean Milman. Yet he insists on this extraordinary conclusion of his learned labors : “ Thus the Roman Church was but one of the confederation of Greek religious republics founded by Christianity.”

After this feat of a most wonderful logic, the author of *Latin Christianity* finds little difficulty in proving to his own satisfaction that the popes were then very small personages indeed. According to him, they left all heresiarchs perfectly free in Rome, allowed them to spread their errors, nay, occasionally adopted those errors ; but soon after turned about, and became orthodox again without any apparent consciousness of having fallen into the errors of “ Noetus,” of the “ Patripassianists,” etc. They were evidently novices in theology. Dr. Milman states in so many words that their utterances were rather uncertain on dogmas until “ the East had spoken,” until the great doctors of Greece, Syria, Egypt, had established the orthodox truths. Then only the popes felt the ground firm under their feet, and assumed a bold attitude against Noetianism, Patripassianism, Arianism, and other heresies. To establish this remarkable theory, the Dean of St. Paul’s relies much on the celebrated book of *Philosophumena*, attributed first to Origen, but now generally supposed to have been written by Hippolytus of Porto. The author of *Philosophumena* cannot be admitted as a witness against the popes of his day, on account of the violent passion which evidently inspired him, and blindly led him on to slander them. But there is no need of entering into the discussion of this point. It is sufficient to allude to the great fact resulting from the whole history of the primitive Church, that the greatest doctors of the East applied at all times to Rome for its decision in controverted matters ; that the principles set forth by Irenæus, Cyprian, and Tertullian, before his



fall, became in course of time the principles of Athanasius, of Cyril, of Chrysostom. They have been sufficiently developed and proved in the previous pages. But a last reflection, somewhat different from those considerations, yet having a visible reference to the present subject, deserves a moment's attention before concluding.

If the first popes spoke often Greek, if in Christian Rome many details had a Greek look, and supposed a deep connection with the East, still everything was, after all, Roman. It was Roman theology which in all controversies prevailed in the end, showing that the Roman pontiff was in fact omnipotent when he had to oppose even the doctrines of men high in sanctity and learning, as, for instance, Polycrates of Ephesus, Cyprian of Carthage, Firmilian of Cappadocia. It was the Roman administration which gradually extended its principles all over the world; it was Roman authority which commanded and was in the end obeyed; it was finally the seat of Peter, the rock on which Christ had built his Church, etc. Theologians and historians of the strength of Dr. Milman cannot do away with the solidity of the structure of the Catholic Church, and replace it by a "confederation of Greek religious republics." And not only was everything Roman with respect to the authority that governed, but the subjects likewise who obeyed in Italy, the converts to the new faith, the simple members of the new Church, were emphatically Roman. This feature has been distinctly recognized in everything the catacombs have revealed to us. And yet we could say but a word on so interesting a subject. It is proper to revert to it, and to consider the city of the dead as affording the strongest proof of the great number of Roman martyrs, of men and women mostly of Latin birth, forming, indeed, a "Latin Christianity."

#### *7. The Catacombs afford the proof of the great number of Martyrs.*

The promise made anteriorly with regard to the violence of the persecutions, and the large number of the martyrs, must be redeemed. On several occasions this question has been already touched upon, but never thoroughly; a few remarks only were made, suggested by the subject treated of at the time. But the natural place of this inquiry is the present one, when the course of events at Rome has brought us to the detailed examination of the catacombs, that is, of the place of burial of the Roman martyrs. The Protestant writers who, following Dodwell, have endeavored to diminish their number,

or rather to reduce it nearly to nothing, have taken good care not to speak of the catacombs when treating of the subject, and to mention only the scattered fragments of ancient authors, omitting of course as unworthy of credit those who have represented the persecutions as most cruel and universal. Dean Milman in his *Latin Christianity* is not an exception to these authors. He never, or very seldom, speaks of the wonderful under-ground city of Rome, although its attentive exploration is undoubtedly the best means of knowing Roman Christianity in the primitive ages. But we cannot afford to neglect such a precious line of researches; and we intend to ask again of these hoary ruins what they testify with regard to the number of Christians who died rather than renounce their religion, and what was the true character of the persecutions in which they gloriously perished.

Faithful to the usual Protestant manner of considering the subject, Dean Milman brings on this most interesting topic by a simple note on the Roman martyrologies; and there he evidently beams with delight, because he finds in it an occasion both of showing some erudition, and of depreciating the Catholic martyrologies in general, and those of Rome in particular. This is the significant note of the Dean of St. Paul's, on which we will take the liberty of making afterward some comments:

“Two remarkable passages greatly weaken, or rather utterly destroy, the authority of all the older Roman martyrologies. In the book *De Libris Recipiendis*, ascribed to the pontificate of Damasus, of Hormisdas, more probably to that of Gelasius, the caution of the Roman Church, in not publicly reading the martyrologies, is highly praised, their writers being unknown and without authority. *Singulari cautela a S. Romana Ecclesia non leguntur, etc.* The authors ‘*Deo magis quam hominibus noti sunt.*’ (*Apud Mansi, etc.*)

“Gregory I. makes even a more ingenuous confession, that excepting one small volume (a calendar, it should seem, of the names and days on which they were honored) there were no Acts of martyrs in the archives of the Roman See, or in the libraries of Rome. *Præter illa quæ in Eusebii libris* (doubtless the *De Martyr. Palest.* of the historian), *de gestis sanctorum martyrum continentur, nulla in archivis,*” etc.\*

Did Mr. Milman wish merely to indite some critical remarks on

---

\* Greg. Magn., epist. viii. 29.

the old Roman martyrologies, and throw some doubt on the authenticity of those we have, we would not think it worth while to examine scrupulously his observations on the subject. Some Catholic critics have gone, perhaps, farther than he does. Henry Valesius is one of them; and the Dean would not probably know anything of it himself, had it not been for the Catholic Mansi. But as this note precedes precisely what he says of the persecutions, of which he speaks exactly in the style of Dodwell, it is evident that his object is to make his readers believe that as the text of the martyrologies is not a scriptural text, as there must be something very inaccurate in them, we cannot believe anything of what they contain, and consequently we must throw all their recitals of martyrdoms and persecutions among the rubbish of old legends and Arabian tales. Moreover, as he seems to think that the martyrologies alone contain the pretended proofs of the deaths of our Christian ancestors, their credibility being altogether discarded, we are perfectly in the dark about both persecutions and martyrdoms. And what particularly promoted the glee experienced by the simple Dean was that all this was found in the authentic remains of Damasus, Hormisdas, Gelasius, or better still, Gregory the Great. It is, consequently, very proper and even important to call this note of the Dean of St. Paul's to a strict account.

What he calls *the book de libris recipiendis*, which he had certainly not seen, is a decree—*decretum*—of a Council of Rome, generally supposed to have been held in 494, under the consuls Asterius and Præsidius, Gelasius I. being Pope. The first decree of this council enumerates the books of the Old and New Testament received by the Church. The second proclaims the authority given by Christ himself to St. Peter and the Roman Church, an authority superior to that of the patriarchal sees of Alexandria and Antioch. The third enumerates the ecumenical councils from the first, at Nice, to that of Chalcedon, inclusively. The fourth approves the works of the Fathers, beginning from those of St. Cyprian down to those of St. Leo I. It is in this fourth decree, after the enumeration of the writings of the Fathers, that is found the passage, quoted badly, because at second hand, by Dean Milman. There is no question there of martyrologies, neither Roman nor foreign, but of *Gesta Sanctorum martyrum*, what we call Acts of martyrs in general—a very different thing. We translate the whole paragraph, of which Mr. Milman has given only a phrase. “Item (that is, we approve) the

*Acts* of the holy martyrs who have been made illustrious both by the multiplicity of the torments they endured, and the wonderful triumphs due to their open profession of the faith (*confessionum*). Is there a Catholic who can doubt all they have suffered in fighting to the end, and that they were enabled to do so not by their own strength but by the grace and help of God? But according to an ancient custom, a great care is taken in the holy Roman Church not to read them" (in public, of course), "because the names of those who wrote them" (the Acts of martyrs)\* "are not known; and there are in them things superfluous and not in perfect agreement with the remainder, which are supposed to have been written by infidels (that is, non-Catholics), or illiterate and not authorized persons (*idiotis*); as for instance, the Acts of a certain Quiricus and of Julita, those of George" (and the Dragon, we suppose), "and other martyrdoms of this kind, which seem to have been composed by heretics. For this reason, in order not to give any one the least occasion of finding fault, they are not read publicly in the holy Roman Church. Nevertheless, with the same Church, we venerate with all possible devotion all martyrs, and their arduous combats, *known more to God than to men.*" We underline these last words, which Dean Milman understood of the *authors* of what he calls the martyrologies. It is evident that there is nothing in this passage which could authorize the author of *Latin Christianity* to speak as he does of Roman *martyrologies*.

The text from St. Gregory has now to be examined; and it is, indeed, difficult to understand how Mr. Milman could see in the part on which he wrote, anything in which the Roman martyrologies are concerned. It may be called, in our opinion, a mare's nest, found by the Dean of St. Paul's. He is not, however, the only one that has been caught at it. Men of a much higher capacity have stumbled on it too; they evidently did not read the whole passage at once. Had they done so, and never inquired farther than the text allowed them to do, they would not have jumped at conclusions altogether baseless and unwarranted by St. Gregory. This passage is taken from a letter (the 29th of the Eighth Book of Epistles) addressed to Eulogius, then Patriarch of Alexandria.

---

\* This *decretum de libris recipiendis* speaks all along of particular "Acts" of martyrs, that is, of legends on the death of any martyr in particular; never of what is called "martyrologies," that is, lists or enumerations more or less complete of names of martyrs. Dean Milman has confounded the one with the other.

Gregory to Eulogius, bishop of Alexandria: "The words of a learned man are always useful, because the person who hears them, either learns from them what he was aware he did not know, or what is better still, he acquires some knowledge, when he was not even aware of his own ignorance. I have just been made such a hearer when your Beatitude wrote to ask me the collection of all the Acts of martyrs published by Eusebius of Cæsarea in the time of Constantine. Before receiving your letter I never knew if such collection had been made" (by Eusebius of Cæsarea, of course) "or not. I thank you sincerely for having taught me what I did not know. Besides what is contained in the well-known books of Eusebius *de gestis sanctorum martyrum*, I do not know anything else" (of the same author, of course), "either in the archives of our own church, or in the libraries of Rome, except a few Acts contained in a small codex." Until this point of his epistle St. Gregory speaks evidently only of what Eusebius had written on the subject, this being the purport of Eulogius' letter; and yet it is the only passage which awakened in Mr. Milman the idea of Roman martyrologies. It is directly after this that the saint speaks of general collections of the names of martyrs, either of Italy or foreign countries, existing in Rome, and thus it is proper to continue the letter farther than Mr. Milman has done. "We possess, indeed, in a single codex the distinct names of all the martyrs that have suffered, arranged in the form of a diary, in order that masses should be said in their honor every day. But the detail of their sufferings"—namely, their Acts—"are not contained in this codex; only their names, with the place and day of their *passion*. So that each day, as I have said, the memory is made of a *great number* from all lands and provinces, who have received the crown of martyrdom on that day. But I suppose that you possess some copy of the same. As to the collection you asked from me"—that of Eusebius—"after looking for it, we could not find it; but had we found it we would have certainly sent it."

We leave it to the reader to judge from these quotations, how far it is true that according to "the confession of St. Gregory, excepting one small volume (a calendar, it should seem, of the names and days on which they were honored) there were no Acts of martyrs in the archives of the Roman See, or in the libraries of Rome." His quotation of the Latin, *præter illa*, etc., shows that he had not even read the whole letter of St. Gregory. The *small volume* of which the saint speaks here, must have been one of Eusebius different from

his *De Martyribus Palestinæ*, and now lost. But it is to be presumed that had Mr. Milman read the whole letter he would have seen how distinctly Gregory speaks of another volume, which must not have been a small one, but which contained, in the form of a diary, the names of all martyrs (acknowledged by the Church as such), and the place and day of their martyrdom. This was a martyrology indeed, which the books of Eusebius were not. But it could not be a small volume, since the saint adds: "each day the memory is made of a great number from all lands and provinces, who have received the crown of martyrdom on that day."

To elucidate the question fully, a strict distinction must be made between a *martyrology* and a book of *Acts of martyrs*. The first contains only a list of their names, with the place and day of their death. The second gives in detail the history of their capture, their interrogatory before the pagan magistrate, and finally their sufferings and deaths. The *decretum* of the Roman Council under Gelasius says merely that such Acts of martyrs were not read publicly in the Roman Church, because in such compilations as were edited at the time several fragments written by non-Catholic or non-authorized persons had been introduced, which might excite a reasonable doubt. This is all that is contained in the first text commented on so unfairly by Dr. Milman. In the second text, of which he quotes but a phrase, the very next words, of which he does not say anything, prove conclusively that there was then a copious martyrology in Rome altogether different from the small codex of Eusebius, which Milman imagines furnishes the proof that the number of martyrs acknowledged by the Roman Church had been small indeed.

The question of martyrologies in general, and of Roman martyrologies in particular, cannot be a subject of discussion in these pages. No more than the Acts of martyrs, were they ever supposed to contain the names of all those who had died for Christ; and critics differ considerably as to their value, authenticity, and completeness. Respectable Catholic writers seem to believe that the origin of our Roman martyrology is very obscure, and that scarcely any reliance can be put on any of those published before that of Usuard in France. The words of Gregory, however, just quoted, go far to prove that there was in the sixth century in Rome a very copious one. And it could not be otherwise, since the popes had from the very beginning of the Church been so careful to keep in their archives the Acts of Roman martyrs; and to obtain from foreign churches relations of

similar transactions. The Bollandists, in the preface to their first volume for January, refer with justice to that solicitude of the Roman pontiffs, first with respect to Rome.

“This custom,” they say\* (of having the names of the martyrs, with their Acts, transcribed by notaries), “prevailed in the Roman Church almost from the beginning of our religion. Thus, in the book *de Romanis Pontificibus*, which is generally ascribed to St. Damasus, this is said of St. Clement : ‘He divided the city into seven regions, and gave to as many notaries of the Church the care of inquiring diligently, each in his own region, concerning the Acts of martyrs (*gesta martyrum*) belonging thereunto.’ In the civil order there were fourteen regions of the city, so that each Christian notary had two of them in his department. . . .

“Pope Fabian, nearly one hundred and fifty years after Clement, either made a new ordinance on the subject, or re-established the former one with some modifications . . . since it is said of him in the same book *de Pontificibus*, that ‘he divided the regions among the deacons, and ordained seven subdeacons, to co-operate together with the notaries in the collection of the Acts of Martyrs *ex integro*.’

“Henceforth, therefore, the deacons and sub-deacons presented to the pontiff those Acts which they had faithfully recorded, whilst previously this office belonged to the notaries. The pontiff received them and acknowledged their correctness, as it is recorded of St. Anterus, the predecessor of Fabian : ‘He requested diligently that the Acts of the martyrs should be given him by the notaries, and he deposited them in the church ; and for this was he crowned with martyrdom by the Præfect Maximus.’”

A voice is heard, it is true, from modern critics, asking what is this book *de Romanis Pontificibus*, and what authority it can have in such a question ? It is ascribed to Damasus ! What does this mean ? It was probably concocted by some mediæval monk, etc. The reasons for ascribing it to Damasus must be known ; and then it is possible that the reader, if he can judge of true antiquity by a kind of intuitive perception, will share in the opinion of old Pearson, a Protestant at that, but a learned man of the right stamp. When this catalogue—for it is, in fact, a catalogue, not a book—was first published, Pearson wrote in his work *de successione primorum Romæ*

---

\* Page xiv.

*Episcoporum*, "If Latin chronologists can finally give the character of certitude to those times, it will be by the means of the oldest copies of this catalogue."\* But since the time of the great Anglican controversialist, the question has progressed, and we may say that it is settled at this day.

It is certain that Anastasius, when he wrote his *Liber Pontificalis* or *De vitis Romanorum Pontificum*, had this book under his eyes, and copied it with the *variantes lectiones* of distinct MSS. The comparison of both suffices for the proof of this assertion. It could not, of course, be copied by Anastasius except as far as it went, namely, to the pontificate of Liberius, the predecessor of Damasus. On this account it is generally called *Catalogus Liberii*. But Mr. De Rossi has told his readers repeatedly that one of the best guides he had to direct him in his investigations of the catacombs was the *Liber Pontificalis*. He must have meant that part of it which goes as far as Liberius, since the history of the development of the catacombs cannot extend farther down in time. This is mainly the book *De Romanis Pontificibus*, ascribed to Damasus. Mr. De Rossi, therefore, vouches for the truthfulness of that book or catalogue in point of antiquity. There may be in it some doubtful points, as for instance, the order of the succession of the first five or six popes, which is not correct. But F. Colombier, in the *Revue des questions historiques*, for April, 1876, has pointed out the reason of this incorrectness, which does not affect in the least the narrative of the various facts attributed to each pope.

Secondly, independently of the *Liber Pontificalis*, which was in the hands of everybody, original manuscripts were found in Rome by the first Bollandists, of the very book ascribed to Damasus. Henschenius relates the very interesting history of it in his *Diatriba . . . in Catalogos veteres Romanorum Pontificum*, printed at the head of the first volume for April of the *Acta SS.* He applied first to the Pope himself, Alexander VII., who referred him to Lucas Holstenius, the then custodian of the Vatican library. No man in the world, probably, could be a better guide in such a research as this, than this learned German convert. He placed in the hands of the Bollandist *Catalogum Summ. Pontif. ex antiquissimis membranis Palatinis Vaticanæ bibliotecæ descriptum*. This work Henschenius calls in his *Diatriba* his *Catalogus Primus*. But as good luck

---

\* Cap. xii., p. 133.



would have it, it happened that Christina of Sweden was then living in Rome, where Pope Alexander VII. had received her with such honors that in her enthusiasm she took the name of *Alessandra*. She had, of course, brought with her the most precious books of her library, and the Bollandist was allowed to look at them, and there he found another copy of the same original codex, but containing besides, references to consulships, and other chronological indications of the greatest importance for the work itself. This was published in the *Acta Sanctorum* under the title of *Catalogus Secundus*.

Thirdly, this might suffice to convince a man of a not very credulous propensity. But lately the authors of the *Origines de l'Eglise Romaine* have called the public attention to a book altogether forgotten, yet of a very great value in the present question. It was published at Antwerp, in 1634, consequently long before the voyage of Henschenius to Rome, by F. Gilles Boucher, a learned Jesuit of the time. His chief object was to write a commentary on the Paschal cycle of Victorius; and to render his views clear to the reader, he published in his work five old chronological documents of the highest interest. He had found them all in the same manuscript, and by the juxtaposition of these five records it was proved that they had all been written originally in the same decade, namely, from 354 to 364. It is impossible to determine now the antiquity of the manuscript itself in which F. Boucher had found those documents bound together. But as subsequently several other MSS. of the same compilation were ascertained to have been anteriorly in the hands of Cuspinian, of Peiresc, of Schestrade; and as those MSS. differed from each other and from the two codices used by F. Henschenius, in several non-important points, it was clear that they had all been derived from an older and single manuscript which has never been found, but which must have been older even than the one placed in the hands of Henschenius by Lucas Holstenius. This carries us certainly to an epoch far anterior to the ninth century, when Anastasius, the author of the *Liber Pontificalis*, lived. And this book was one of the best guides De Rossi had in his investigations.

No critic will refuse to admit that those details, furnished by the new French Benedictines, prove the genuineness of the *Catalogus Liberii*. In the hurry of composition, we had forgotten to say that the fourth among the five documents published at Antwerp by Boucher in 1634, was nothing else than the same *Catalogus Liberii*,

whose chronology is thus supported by that of the four other parts of the compilation. Does not this amount to a real demonstration?

It can be, therefore, taken for granted that the mention made in the book on which we comment, of the care taken by the first popes for the collection of the Acts of martyrs, is not a fabrication of some mediæval monk, but expresses a fact well known in the first ages of Christianity. The subsequent martyrologies, either Roman or others, were only abstracts from these primitive documents, and were at no time supposed to give a full list of martyrs and saints. The formula which usually brings to a close our modern martyrology for each day, expresses this fact most accurately: "And in other places mention is made (on this day) of many other martyrs," etc. The argument, therefore, of Dodwell and his followers, among whom Dean Milman can be justly numbered, must be altogether reversed. They say: "The number of martyrs was small, and the pretended lists given in all martyrologies have no more foundation than the martyrologies themselves, which do not deserve any consideration." We reply, "The number of martyrs was far greater than that of those who are recorded in all the martyrologies; because these records professed to enumerate only a small part of them; and this enumeration is worthy of all respect, because it results from the great care taken by the Roman Church through her notaries and deacons appointed for that purpose. And the same must have taken place in all the principal churches of Gaul, Spain, Greece, etc. in Europe, as well as all over Asia and Africa, as it could be verified if many of those records had not perished."

But even setting aside all this dissertation, the most cursory examination of the catacombs would demonstrate the violence of the persecutions and the immense number of martyrs, at Rome, at least. And thus the success of the labors of Peter and Paul and their immediate successors is proven beyond peradventure. To this we come at last. Many passages of the great work of De Rossi have already been alluded to; but scarcely any of them bearing on this question. It is time to speak of it somewhat more leisurely.

A preparatory remark of great importance is contained in the chapter "On the origin of the Christian catacombs," toward the end of the first volume of De Rossi,\* and runs counter to the general opinion of archæologists. It is a conclusion drawn by the author

---

\* Page 39.

from a previous discussion on the subject: "The under-ground cemeteries of Rome have been dug by Christian *fossores*, with the exception of a few portions, which may be interesting for the sake of history, but which disappear in the vast extent of the excavations; so that they might be called by a mathematician an infinitesimal part of them, of which there is no need of taking any account." It is not true, therefore, as it was formerly believed, that the Christians mainly used the old sand-pits from which materials had been taken out for the building of the city. The immense labor required for the formation of the vast city of the dead, of which a short description will presently be given, was altogether Christian labor; and to understand thoroughly the power of the Church in the capital of the world, the number of her children, and the deadly war waged against her by pagan Rome, it is proper to hear De Rossi on that subject—the real extent of the catacombs.

It is treated of directly after the passage just quoted, and begins by stating that they were nearly altogether out of the city proper. The Roman law forbade the burial of the dead inside of the *pomærium*. Still, a number of Christians were actually interred in violation of the law. The author thinks that this frequently happened in time of great danger, when it was scarcely possible to convey a corpse to the consecrated ground. It is well ascertained that although for a long time the Christians could openly use the catacombs for the sepulture of martyrs even, there were occasions when the emperors positively forbade it, and tried, in fact, to exclude them by force from their place of refuge. Then no other means was left them but to bury the remains of their friends and relatives under their own houses. This explains why some Christian crypts are occasionally found in the heart of Rome. But the real cemeteries were always outside the walls.

There were, according to De Rossi, in the third century, twenty-six greater ones—*majores*—and eleven lesser ones—*minores*. Without establishing any such distinction between them, Panvinus had counted forty-three of them; and Arringhi as many as sixty. But they were both mistaken. The first twenty-six of De Rossi were, many of them, of a large size. Yet in the aggregate they would not cover so much space under ground as one would think. None of them, in fact, went farther than the third mile-stone beyond the walls. But as Rev. J. Spencer Northcote, abridging the narrative of De Rossi, remarks: "Their extent is enormous, not as to the amount

of the superficial soil which they underlie, . . . but in the actual length of their galleries. For these are often excavated on various levels or *piani*, three, four, or even five, one above the other; and they cross and recross one another, sometimes at short intervals, on each of these levels; so that, on the whole, there are certainly not less than three hundred and fifty miles of them; that is to say, if stretched out in one continuous line, they would extend the whole length of Italy itself. . . . The walls on both sides are pierced with horizontal niches, like shelves in a book-case or berths in a steamer, and every niche once contained one or more dead bodies."

We must pause and ponder over this short but forcible description. Who can calculate the number of Christians that had already been buried in Rome in the third century? Peter arrived in the city toward the middle of the first. It is, therefore, a little more than two hundred years after he began to evangelize the Romans, that this stupendous spectacle is offered to our gaze. All these corpses were the bodies of former Christians; there was not a single pagan among them. This vast *necropolis*—to use a Greek word—had been dug by Christian *fossores* for Christian uses. Yet all the Roman Christians of those two hundred years were not buried in the part of the catacombs which has just been placed under our eyes. The greater portion of the original cemetery on the Vatican has totally disappeared. Many people, perhaps, were interred within the limits of the city, as was mentioned a moment ago. Several well-ascertained measures taken by the popes to prevent a certain number of Christian families from burying their dead in the grounds of pagan associations organized for that purpose, prove that all were not brought to the place where alone they should have rested.

But setting aside these extraordinary cases, which, however, might come together to a respectable amount; setting aside, likewise, the eleven lesser cemeteries—*minores*—mentioned by De Rossi; the twenty-six greater ones—*majores*—corresponding to the twenty-six *tittes* or Christian parishes of the city, furnish a sufficient matter of serious reflection. Look at those galleries, three, four, five, one above the other, crossing and recrossing each other, forming a vast network of streets above streets under the ground; so that if you place them in a single line, they would form a road of three hundred and fifty miles, just the length of the peninsula of Italy or thereabout. On both sides of it look at those shelves containing one or more bodies! Rev. Mr. Northcote has forgotten to state that these galleries did not

contain a single row of graves, but several, describing horizontal lines on the walls, so as to form three, four, five rows, one above the other—we have often counted them—consequently, to reduce the whole to a single line, you would have to cross over or under the sea to Africa, and stretch in space a road three, four, five times the length of Italy! Can any other thing of the kind ever be found in any spot on the globe? And good people will tell us that at the peace of Constantine there was only a small minority of the Romans that were converted! If such were the case, how will we find the other Roman cemeteries where the innumerable non-Christian dead were buried, during those momentous two hundred years or a little more? This deserves some consideration. Lately, several burial-places of Jews have been discovered; but how few and how inconsiderable! The pagans under the first Cæsars had universally adopted cremation, which, in appearance, considerably reduced the space required for sepulture. The patricians, however, built for their resting-places those huge monuments whose ruins are still visible on both sides of the roads around Rome; and for a few urns, each containing a handful of ashes, large edifices were constructed, often with ample grounds around. For the common people, however, *columbaria* were used, which cannot be better described than as being large vaults where, in place of coffins, the urns were placed in small niches distributed all over the circuit.

Should any one ask competent men, able to form a judgment in the matter, from inspection, measurements, etc., if all the tombs and the *columbaria* which are known or can be known could furnish a number of pagan burials in Rome, equivalent, or nearly so, to those of the Christians, it is more than probable that the answer would be negative. It is true that perhaps the investigations have not been so exact for pagan as for Christian sepultures. Yet how many men, since the revival in the fifteenth century, have devoted their lives to antiquarian researches, in order to illustrate and explain the Latin and Greek classics! Many more, certainly, than those who have done the same for ecclesiastical history and antiquity. Here, of course, there can be no question of exact accuracy; but it is impossible not to be struck with amazement when the question is put under the form we have just given it; and not to become convinced at once of the immense multitude of people who had renounced paganism to embrace Christianity.

This becomes a fixed conviction for every one who has himself

seriously examined the catacombs and walked through a considerable part of them day after day, for some length of time. When, after a few steps, your eyes have become used to the feeble light of the lamp, and can discern every object, although at first somewhat indistinctly, each grave open to the view, after the slabs in front have been removed, offers to you a skeleton, in most cases well preserved. They are all in close proximity, the feet of the first separated from the head of the second by a few inches of hard soil or of tufa. You remark the parallel rows one above the other, from three to five or six, according to the height of the gallery. A single look with a short calculation shows you in what limited space twenty-five of them can be counted; and it is easy to understand how soon you will have passed a thousand in review, particularly if you take account of both sides at the same moment. Go on in your walk, and continue to go for hours and hours together, and the same sight will be before you. It is, of course, supposed that care is taken that you should not lose your way. You have friends with you, holding a number of pieces of reeds two feet long; and they place two of them crosswise at the opening of every side branch which presents itself, and in which you do not purpose to enter. With this simple contrivance everything, it seems, is safe; but if you have with you a guide well acquainted with this holy place you may feel more confident.

After having reached the end of the gallery you explore, a narrow passage, with rough steps sinking down deeper in the ground, will lead you to another and to another, etc., where the same process may be gone through. And this is the case in twenty-six large cemeteries. Compare with it what the best antiquaries of Rome will show you, or tell you, of the pagan burial-places in use at the same time; and the conclusion will be clear in your mind that Rome was then fast becoming a Christian city.

But in the great city of the dead, how can we know the number of those who died for Christ? The object was from the start to convince ourselves of the extreme violence of the persecutions, and the catacombs were to furnish us with a simple way of solving the problem. They have so far proved the spread of Christianity in Rome during the third century; and this is a great point. In fact, it is the principal object of this work. The other question, namely, that of the persecutions, is but accessory to the first, and of a secondary interest; nevertheless, it is an important one, and this is the place to look for its solution.

It is impossible to read what De Rossi has written on the cemetery of Callistus—and it is the main object of his *Roma Sotterranea*—without being deeply impressed with the thought that the number of martyrs buried in that holy place alone, is above calculation. The great Roman archæologist does not attempt anything like a computation of their number. But go through his various chapters in the second volume particularly, and he scarcely speaks of anything but of martyrs and martyrdoms. The fact is that it must be so ; because it is certain that, during the third century in Rome, to be a Christian was to be naturally devoted to destruction. Everybody knows it and says it : a pagan could not at that time become a Christian without rendering his life insecure, and preparing for himself the frightful end of those whom Rome had proscribed. We say every day of men who break the laws of the State against murder, that sooner or later they will receive their deserts, and go to the gallows. Now, during the third century in Rome the most rigidly prosecuted and barbarously enforced of all *capital* laws were those against the Christians. Consequently, that a large percentage of those who died in Rome and were buried in the catacombs, at that epoch, were martyrs, there cannot be the least possible doubt.

There are some persons who imagine that penal laws against state offenses of the highest degree were habitually in Rome left inoperative, as are in England the penal laws against Catholics and Jesuits, which have not been yet repealed. But it is a great mistake. To be convinced of it one has only to remember that the profession of Christianity was considered in Rome at that time as the greatest crime against the State ; because all statesmen were then fully persuaded that the new religion would surely destroy the empire if it were allowed to exist. Every genuine Act of martyrs proves it ; since it is only in that supposition that the more than barbarous procedure was possible against a mere name, that of Christians. In those same Acts it is occasionally stated in express terms that the religion the Christians professed was inimical to the empire, and that the enemy of the gods was the enemy of Cæsar. The Pope and the emperor, in fact, were two *rivals* ; both wore the title of *Pontifex Maximus* ; one could not exist in the presence of the other. From all those circumstances we can judge of the importance all magistrates attached to the prosecution and the destruction of the Christians, according to the edicts of the emperors. And as they were confessedly very numerous, they must have been known to a great



number of people, at least, and consequently many of them must have been denounced by the pagans, subjected to the usual interrogatory, and on their confession that they were Christians, handed over to the executioners, and dispatched.

These conjectures are thus based on considerations of so serious a nature, that they would by themselves carry conviction in all minds sufficiently well acquainted with the genius of Rome. But the catacombs, even in their present ruinous state, corroborate them to a high degree. All of them speak of persecution and martyrdom. It is not possible to walk in those vast repositories of the dead without being confirmed in the usual belief that a very great number of those graves contain the relics of former martyrs. There are not, it seems, sure indications to distinguish them from those of ordinary Christians. But it would be preposterous to imagine that those epitaphs only which bear the word *Martyr* or its initial can give the positive certitude of it. It was very seldom inscribed on the tombs which still exist. It was such an honor to be called the witness of Christ that probably only illustrious personages in the Church, or people of the highest sanctity during their lives, received that supreme distinction on their tombs after their death.

If this were the case in all cemeteries, it was particularly so in that of Callistus. The description given of it by De Rossi, impresses at once the mind that in it martyrs are met with in an immense number. And although we could not find any particular passage of *Roma Sotterranea* showing anything like an attempt at a calculation, in many places the gifted author does not conceal his opinion, which is altogether in accord with the common one among Catholics. He mentions particularly the fact of an inscription—“*in un ipogeo della Appia senza nome speciale,*” that is, in an *hypogeum* along the Appian Way, without any special name—recording the number of martyrs buried in that place in three different groups, as being forty-eight, eighty, and eight hundred; and in juxtaposition with this statement, he refers to the *Martyrologio Romano piccolo*, which speaks of forty-eight and eight hundred martyrs buried “*in cœmeterio Callisti ubi martyr Christi erat Sta. Cœcilia;*” that is, “in the cemetery of Callistus near the place of burial of the martyr of Christ, St. Cecilia;” which is precisely the position of the *hypogeum* mentioned above.

Mr. De Rossi explains very satisfactorily this wholesale murder, which must have happened as early as the reign of Marcus Aure-



lius, but during his absence from Rome. He attributes it to the fury of the rabble, excited against the Christians for some reason or other, and he proves by other facts of the history of the time that there is nothing in it calculated to surprise, much less to justify a denial. It seems that the remains of the Christians who were thus slaughtered, were buried one half in the cemetery of Prætextatus, and the other half in the *hypogeum* of St. Cecilia, which stood near the Appian Way long before Callistus built his cemetery around. The Roman martyrology written a long time after used the name which was best known to the Christians of a later epoch.

But in a subsequent chapter, the twenty-seventh of the second volume, the author of *Roma Sotterranea* goes still much farther. He discusses the legend of the saints Marcellus and Decoratus, who are said to have perished in Rome under Hadrian, with four thousand companions of their martyrdom. The expressions he uses on this occasion are remarkable. "Marcellus and Decoratus," he says, "with four thousand other martyrs, are not imaginary personages. . . . There is a Marcellus in the crypt of St. Cecilia," etc. The whole of it can be read at page 176 of the second volume and following.

It is he again who makes the remark that in the Acts of St. Cecilia the Roman judge says to Urban, who has been brought to his tribunal: "Already five thousand men have been deceived by you, and perished; so that you are guilty of their wretched end." Mr. De Rossi has assiduously labored to correct those Acts of St. Cecilia which he considers genuine but corrupt. But he does not think proper to expunge from their restored text these words of a pagan judge to Pope, or at least Bishop, Urban.

But these are very remarkable statements, which require at least a few comments. Around the grave of St. Cecilia, in the cemetery of Callistus, in this single spot of the catacombs, we find first three numbers, 48, 80, 800, giving the totality of three groups of martyrs whose death is ascertained both by an old Roman martyrology and an inscription. Secondly, we find an army of four thousand men headed by Marcellus, also in the crypt of St. Cecilia, who are pronounced by Mr. De Rossi not to be "imaginary beings." Finally, the Acts of that holy virgin, pronounced genuine, and restored with the greatest care by Mr. De Rossi, contain after their correction has been effected the words of a judge asserting that five thousand persons had perished just before St. Cecilia, induced into error by Urban.

When an observer of the acuteness of perception for which the author of *Roma Sotterranea* is distinguished, goes so far as to group those facts together and offer them to our acceptance as having happened just around a single spot of the cemetery of Callistus, it is not just to reject contemptuously statements made by other painstaking writers, because they do not happen to enjoy such a universal reputation as Mr. De Rossi. There is, for instance, the respectable author of the *General History of the Church*—the Abbé Darras—who states in a note to page 204 of his second volume, that the number of martyrs buried in the cemetery of Callistus alone “is estimated at one hundred and seventy-four thousand.” There is nothing in this last assertion which disagrees with the partial numbers given by the great Roman archæologist. Mr. Darras, it is true, does not quote its authorities. But it is plain that if an accurate investigator did for the whole cemetery what De Rossi has done for a single spot of it, there would not be anything surprising if the totality reached the amount stated by the *General History of the Church*.

And it is not only from the late discoveries that this testimony of the catacombs is known. It was sufficiently well ascertained long ago, though not to the same extent. Arringhi, in his *Roma Subterranea*,\* gives the text of an inscription found in his time in the cemetery of Callistus, which can be thus translated in English: “Alexander is not dead; he lives in heaven and his body rests in this grave. He died under the Emperor Antoninus, who repaid by hatred the services he had received from him. When he was on his knees, sacrificing to the true God, he was dragged to execution. O! unhappy times, when in the midst of our prayers and sacred rites we cannot be safe even in caves under the ground.” This inscription, besides others, proves that Antoninus was not always favorable to the Church. It seems to be certain that after publishing the edict of toleration of which a word was said, he turned against the Christians, and persecuted them. Lucian furnishes another proof of it in his book *De Morte Peregrini*, where he relates their sufferings under that prince.

It was known likewise in the time of Bosio and Arringhi that many graves in the catacombs contained a number of dead bodies of martyrs. One of them had been discovered with this inscription: “Marcella and five hundred and fifty martyrs of Christ.” On ano-

---

\* Tom. ii., p. 685.

ther: "One hundred and fifty martyrs of Christ." Others had been found without names, but with Roman numerals on both sides of the monogram of Christ, or of the words *in pace*. This became at the time so frequent that those who believed that there had been on the whole a small number of martyrs, endeavored to explain these occurrences by pretending that the numerals were merely the designations of some progressive series unconnected with the fact of martyrdom. But it was found impossible to give the least proof of it, owing to the complete irregularity of the successive numbers; and the only satisfactory explanation was the obvious one referring to martyrs and nothing else. A passage of Prudentius gives the full demonstration of it, and it is proper to speak of it in this place. The Rev. Mr. Northcote having briefly commented upon it, it will be sufficient to quote a passage of his *Roma Sotterranea*.

He speaks first of a Damatine inscription discovered in the Papal Crypt in the cemetery of Callistus, and gives an English version of it: "Here, if you would know, lie heaped together a whole crowd of holy ones. These honored sepulchers inclose the bodies of the saints, etc." Prudentius had evidently this inscription in his mind when he wrote the eleventh ode of his *Peristephanon*. But he had seen himself the catacombs, and thus he could give a faithful description of them with reference to the inscription of Damasus. The numbers 48, 80, 800, ascertained by De Rossi as expressing that of martyrs buried in large pits, must be fresh in the mind of the reader; and this being presupposed, we quote from Rev. Mr. Northcote:

"It is common, indeed, with a certain class of writers, to set these statements on one side as manifest and absurd exaggerations; and yet the language of Prudentius is precise, and an accurate knowledge of the laws and customs of pagan Rome predisposes us to accept it as a literal statement of the truth. Prudentius supposes his friend to have asked him the names of those who had shed their blood for the faith in Rome, and the epitaphs (*tituli*) inscribed on their tombs. He replies that it would be very difficult to do this, for that the relics of the saints in Rome are innumerable; that so long as the city continued to worship their pagan gods, their wicked rage slew vast multitudes of the just. On many tombs, indeed, he says, you may read the name of the martyr, and some short inscription, but there are also many others which are silent as to the name, and only express the number. You can ascertain the number which lie heaped up together (*congestis corpora acervis*), but nothing more;

and he specifies in particular one grave, in which he learnt that the remains of sixty men had been laid, whose names were known only to Christ as being his special friends. Let us put side by side with this a narrative from the *Annals* of Tacitus,\* and we shall be satisfied that such wholesale butchery of those whom the law condemned was by no means improbable. It appears that it had been provided by an ancient law of Rome that if a master was ever murdered by his slave, all his fellow-slaves were to suffer death, together with the culprit. Such a murder happened in the year A.D. 62, of one Pedanius Secundus, who had lately been the prefect of the city, and who was the master of four hundred slaves. The innocence of the great majority of these slaves was notorious, and this, coupled with the unusual number of the victims, created a considerable excitement among the people. The matter was discussed in the senate, and some of its members ventured to express compassion, and to deprecate the rigorous execution of the law. It was decided, however, apparently by a very large majority, that the law should take its course (*nihil mutandum*), and when the people threatened violence, the troops were called out, the whole line of road was guarded by them, and the unhappy four hundred were put to death at once. Tacitus has recorded the speech of one of those who took the chief part in the debate, and his language and arguments are precisely those which we can imagine to have been used again and again in the second and third centuries by orators persuading a general persecution of the Christians. 'Now that we have nations amongst us,' said Cassius, 'who have different rites and ceremonies, a foreign religion, or perhaps no religion at all, it is impossible to keep such a rabble (*conluviem istam*) under restraint in any other way than by fear. True, indeed, some innocent persons will perish with the guilty. But wherever it is necessary to make some striking example of severity for the public good, there will be always incidental injustice to certain individuals.' Nor is this the only testimony that could be alleged upon this point. We will only add, however, that of Lactantius, or the author of *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, who was at least a contemporary witness of what he describes, and who tells us that when the number of Christians condemned was very great, they were not executed singly, but surrounded by fire on all sides, and thus burnt together (*gregatim amburebantur*).† This explains

---

\* XIV. 43-45.

† Cap. xv.

how it was possible for the relics of so many to have been buried in one grave. On the whole, therefore, we conclude that there seems to be no solid reason for calling in question the truth of what ancient authorities generally have told us on this subject, however difficult it may be, in this or that particular instance, to verify the number recorded."

Taking altogether the testimony of the catacombs, either with regard to single graves, so numerous in those long under-ground corridors, and bearing frequently undoubted signs of the violent death by martyrdom of those buried in them; or the well-ascertained pits which must have contained scores and hundreds of victims, the idea that the persecutions of the Church by the Roman emperors were mild affairs, scarcely worth a minute examination, is, indeed, unaccountable and preposterous. This, however, is not peculiar to Rome. The burning words of Clement of Alexandria, of Eusebius, of Lactantius, which we have briefly recorded, many more testimonies of eye-witnesses we still possess, or which have perished, are sure warrants, both of the atrocious cruelty of those persecutions and of the immense number of their victims. But Rome alone has preserved under its pavement undeniable proofs of both. Even had we not a single phrase of ancient writers on the subject, no one has a right, with such evidence as this against his opinion, to speak slightly of the terrible scenes which must have been enacted in "gore-dyed Babylon," as St. John already in his time called Rome.

Yet Dr. Milman, faithful to old Anglican prejudices, speaks of those times which indeed "tried men's souls" as if they had been epochs of material prosperity for the Church. After having briefly acknowledged that the Neronian persecution was cruel (because of a word of Tacitus), he pretends that it was an *exception*. The one of Domitian was only "a *pretext* (the accusation of Christianity) which he took against some members of the imperial family." Before penning this phrase why did not the writer go first to visit the cemetery of Domitilla at Rome, where he could see yet the place where repose the remains of some of the victims of this *pretext*, with the proof that they were Christians? In the persecution of Trajan "some Christians suffered because they were thought to be Jews." The emperor was only incensed against the Jews, for some good reason, we suppose. Has Mr. Milman read the letters of Pliny the Younger, and what he says of the state of affairs in Bithynia when he arrived? Has he pondered over the answers of Trajan, approving the

policy of his friend Pliny, who did not look for Christians, but yet killed those who were brought to him, and who did not recant? Against all these clear testimonies Mr. Milman brings on as a counterproof "the great influence of the Roman Church, which could have rescued Ignatius of Antioch from death; the wealth of the Christian congregations in Rome, since they sent at that very time alms to the whole Christian world—to Corinth, under Dionysius, bishop of that city; to Syria and Arabia, and other countries, as testified to by Eusebius," and other facts of the kind. He does not seem to understand that the Roman Christians could very well give of their wealth to their poor brethren at a distance, and that very day or the day after give their blood for Christ. All his arguments are based on surmises, conjectures, and weak probabilities. Against his feeble thesis there are undeniable facts in great number, of which some few have been stated in these pages. The subject can thus rest without further discussion, until some better objection is raised than is found in the pretended *History of Latin Christianity*.

8. *The lives of the early Popes, either in the catacombs or out of them.*

There was, nevertheless, a time of respite for the Christians in Rome, almost uninterrupted from the persecution of Decius, A.D. 249–251, to that of Diocletian, A.D. 303. During that long period of fifty years, two short interruptions, however, are recorded, and counted among the general persecutions. The first is that of Valerian, who published his edict against the Christians in 257, and was made prisoner by the Persians in 260; and the second, that of Aurelian, in 275, the last year of his life. Thus the Church enjoyed—with the exception of these two short periods of time—a peace of more than forty years; and it is now difficult to ascertain the rate of her increase in the capital of the world, during so long a term. One thing is certain, and suffices for the belief that the majority of the Roman world became then Christian. This is the fact, as well ascertained for the East—Greece, Egypt, Asia Minor—as for the West—Italy, Gaul, Africa—that Christian churches were built and used openly in cities and towns for public worship. One of the first steps taken by the emperors at Nicomedia in 303, was to order everywhere the destruction of those edifices previously tolerated by the authorities of the State. This must have been the case in Rome as

well as at Nicomedia. Rome had, for a long time already, almost ceased to be the place of residence of the Cæsars. Diocletian himself had scarcely visited it during his reign. After his victories over the Parthians, it is true, he entered it to celebrate his triumph, in 303; but directly after he left it in December, without even waiting for the inauguration of his consulship in January. He did not like, it seems, the free thinking and talking of the Romans, who expressed openly their antipathy against his sordid parsimony. Constantine, in fact, was far from being the first emperor who preferred to live out of Rome. The Christians, therefore, must have enjoyed as much security in the capital of the empire as anywhere else. Thus their worship was open and tolerated most of the time after Valerian. This must have given an immense impulse to the work of conversion; and if already in the time of Tertullian they formed, according to his clear testimony, more than one-half of the population of cities, what must have been the case a full century after the great African writer? It may be maintained that the Church had long before the beginning of the fourth century come out of the catacombs, although the popes, when dead, continued to be buried there until after Melchiades, who was the last.

In general, from the year 100 to about the year 260, the Roman Church had lived under the ground; but from this last epoch until the persecution of Diocletian, she showed herself openly in the streets of the capital. In both periods, the life she led, the virtues her pontiffs and people practiced, her wonderful perseverance, labors, and unity of purpose, brought to her bosom all the Romans who felt yet a real respect for virtue, and a desire of embracing a life that conscience could approve.

The whole series of her pontiffs, particularly, is a most admirable dynasty of saintly kings worthy of leading mankind. It is proper to speak of them *in globo* at least; forming of them, however, two groups: the first from 100 to 260; the second from this date to 303. There can be scarcely any doubt that almost from the beginning of the second century to the middle of the third, the catacombs were the only place where Christ could be worshiped in Rome; but that from the middle of the third age to the beginning of the fourth, there was a long breathing-time, when public buildings devoted to Christian worship began to appear, and the popes lived again as Peter had done, probably in houses given to the Church by rich



patricians. But, in both cases, nothing could be brighter than their virtue, more venerable than their whole life, and already stronger than their power. Let us look, in the first place, at the group which begins, say with Evaristus, and ends with Lucius. The lull of forty years or more, ending in the general outburst of the last persecution, shall come afterward under consideration.

In this first period, the catacombs did not become at once places of an almost absolute concealment, as was after a while the case. De Rossi conjectures, with much probability, that if they were, as he thinks, Christian property, where Christians alone were buried, they were, nevertheless, primitively opened and excavated under ground, without the intention of hiding the fact. The Christians, he believes, merely profited by the liberty granted to all Roman citizens of opening places of burial in their own property, wherever they chose, provided it were out of the *pomærium*. Consequently their operations were made in open day, and to the knowledge of all. They did not use the former arenarias which had been worked under ground to obtain puzzolana for the building of the city—this was for a long time the common opinion. They made their subterranean galleries at their own expense, and in property belonging to them, for the purpose of burying their dead; as did also the other classes of citizens, the members of religious bodies who did not adhere to the common form of worship, the Jews, for instance. Consequently, if the galleries of their cemeteries ran under ground, the doors leading to them were not concealed, and everybody knew that a dark world existed beyond. But as no one could at first imagine that any other use was made of it except interring the dead, no place could be found more secure for the persecuted Christians, when their places of worship began to be looked after by spies, and denounced to the city authorities. When this happened first, we do not know. But it must have taken place very early, since late discoveries have proved that in the earliest cemeteries, some of which, as we know, go back to the apostolic age, there are already indications that the sacred mysteries were offered there. Either *arcosolia* are found in them, which were evidently recesses prepared for altars, or *sarcophagi*, altogether apart from the walls, and very different from the *loculi* dug into them, could in many instances have no other object than the offering of the Christian sacrifice over the marble table which covered them. In both cases, namely, of *arcosolia*, and of *sarcophagi*, there is invariably a larger space kept around for the



worshiping Christians to assist at the divine mysteries, and thus the topography itself shows the intended object.

It is not, therefore, a groundless supposition to say that from the time of Evaristus or some of his immediate successors—about 100 A.D.—the Christian mysteries were already celebrated in the catacombs; but this became evidently a more strict feature; and the outside doors were henceforth carefully concealed or covered, when Zephyrinus gave to Callistus the care of the cemetery known afterward under this last name. The large corridors, halls, recesses of every kind, as well as the profuse ornamentation of all the surroundings in this part of the sacred precincts of Christian Rome, prove beyond any doubt that this cemetery became in fact the Christian Rome of that epoch. There the popes must have often dwelt for a long space of time, surrounded every day by crowds of the faithful. It was, in fact, the holy womb in which the new generation of a redeemed people, of a kingly and godlike race, was in the act of formation, being slowly developed not in nine months, but in twice nine decades of years. Who can say at this day what kind of men were the popes of that age?

Some of them, it is true, have been assailed by the tongue of calumny in their very time, and by men who had belonged formerly to their flock. There was a Montanist Tertullian, an Hippolytus, or whoever may be the author of *Philosophumena*, a Novatian, somewhat later, whose slanders against Pope Cornelius are well known, and many others, probably, whom it is useless to inquire after. But is not the testimony of the whole Church, during that heroic age, of more weight than those few discordant voices? Is not the positive knowledge we possess of their daily life, principally from the mere inspection of the catacombs, a sure voucher for the austerity of their personal habits, for their zeal and devotedness in the fulfillment of their high mission, for their unflagging activity in the spread of true religion, their supreme disinterestedness in the midst of a most selfish world, their holiness, in fine, attested by the practice of the highest virtues, ending often in the supreme tortures of martyrdom? It has already been said that they merely continued the work of Peter and Paul. Like them, they gave all their time to the conversion of the Romans, but did not forget that their charge embraced the whole universe, and we will soon have striking proofs of it. But the immediate object of their days' labor and often of their nights' vigilance was to increase their Roman flock. In this they showed

themselves true missionary bishops, and they attended the call for spiritual aid on the part of the poor and the lowly as well as of the great and the influential. Details may be soon furnished. To form a more exact idea of it, it is proper to recur to the chronological division referred to a moment ago. Until the pontificate of Zephyrinus, it was said, toward 202, that is, at the moment the edict of persecution issued by Sept. Severus began to take effect, the catacombs were not properly a totally hidden and secret place. They had been openly dug out; the doors leading to them were visible and well known; they probably served the Christians for places of worship, only in time of danger; and being devoted almost exclusively to the burial of the dead, they were not so profusely ornamented as they became afterward. During that period the Christian churches were either edifices above ground purchased or received in gift, devoted only to the service of God, although without any pretension to real architecture; or they were merely some of the largest halls found in the houses of rich patricians who had been early converted to Christ, as had been, according to tradition, the house of Pudens during the life of St. Peter. We may conjecture from this what was the life of the pontiffs during that first period of a little more than a century.

Their names are well known; there are nine of them after St. Evaristus, namely, Alexander, Sixtus I., Telesphorus, Hyginus, Pius, Anicetus, Soter, Eleutherus, and the great Victor I. The majority of them were evidently of Greek origin. The reader knows already why; more will be said on the subject. The whole burden of the administration of the sacraments did not fall on them, since the *Catalogus Liberii* and the *Liber Pontificalis* mention that St. Cletus, at the command of St. Peter, had already in his time ordained priests for the city of Rome. We read likewise in the same opuscles that St. Clement, the successor of Cletus, had divided the city into seven ecclesiastical *regions*, appointing to them notaries, to take notice of the death of martyrs. As those *regions* became afterward the chief parishes of the city, each having a church with a *title* (*titulus*), it is sure that very early priests, besides notaries, were appointed to reside in those parishes and administer the sacraments to the faithful. The popes, therefore, were free from a great part of this burden. But it must not be supposed that they stood on their dignity, and sent with superciliousness to inferior ministers those who applied to them for baptism, or confession, or the Holy Eucha-

rist. They were but too happy to fulfill those functions when called upon for such purposes, provided they had then the leisure to do it. They were, in fact, what we often call in this country *missionary bishops*. Should you wish to know more in detail in what precise particulars these consist, go to Colorado, or to Arizona, and you will soon learn that it is not exactly what may be called a most pleasant life, according to sense. How many details are contained in a great number of Acts of martyrs admitted now to be genuine, illustrative of this simple but striking statement? It must be said, however, that no missionary bishop in modern times can compare in activity and incessant occupation with any of the early popes. Where can be found on the frontier of civilization such a city as Rome then was, with its immense population, its incredible bustle, its manifold aspirations—all the classes of this capital of mankind, looking with suspicion or confidence, alarm or admiration, on this Jew, or Greek, or Roman, claiming to possess the secret of satisfying and quieting the most restless and ambitious aims of the human soul? With these few words we must be content. But every one will find it easy to fill up the picture, and thus have a portraiture faithful enough of the representative of Christ in the midst of Babylon. Every street, alley, square, almost building, except the temples, in this immense city, must have been familiar to him in this first period of the papacy. For he was already the *Apostolicus*—a title so well known in the middle ages—he was emphatically the successor of the Prince of the Apostles, and had thus received the fullness of the apostleship. All the characteristics, therefore, of this supreme dignity belonged to him; and one of the most prominent, everybody knows, is an incessant activity unable to rest in one place, but embracing them all. By the necessity of his position, he was bound to Rome and seldom left it. But at least, as long as he remained free to move, and was not constrained to remain habitually under the ground, he was mainly occupied in framing and shaping with his own hands the heart and brain of Christendom, and thus changing gradually the capital of heathenism into the central Temple of the One Living God. He had, therefore, to cherish individually, if possible, all the members of the flock, destined to be the principal stones of the future edifice. The poor inhabitants of the Suburra, of the Velabrum, of the low grounds along the Tiber, as well as the rich people living in palaces around the golden house of Nero, were equally the objects of his paternal care; and he knew as exactly the immense tenement-

houses where the *proletarii* lived and died in wretchedness, as the wealthiest mansions of those who lived and died in luxury. That this is not a mere conjecture, is proved by the fact of the seven deacons constantly engaged in helping the helpless, who had to report faithfully also to the Pope himself; and with respect to the great, the Pope must have been acquainted with a multitude of patrician converts, some of them belonging to the various imperial families of the Flavia gens, of the Antonines, and, later on, of Diocletian. There can be no doubt that as long as the popes could go and see by their own eyes, and attend personally to the most distressing or interesting cases, they considered it one of the most prominent parts of their apostolic care to do so.

But with Zephyrinus the scene changes. The great and most important discovery by De Rossi of the cemetery of Callistus and chiefly of the papal crypt, can leave no doubt on the subject. The new aspect of these catacombs shows that they were made not merely for burial, but mostly for worship, and the administration of the sacraments, which go to compose the various phases of Christian life. When the care of those beautiful chapels, large churches, spacious halls, was confided by Zephyrinus to Callistus, from whom they surely passed to the supervision of another, the evident intention was to confine the Christian ministry to these holy recesses of *Roma Sotterranea*. The previous places of worship above ground in the city itself must have been closed, at least gradually. And there can be no better proof of it than the very epoch at which this took place. It was just at the outbreak of the general persecution by Severus. The reader has not forgotten what has been stated and proved of the character of the persecutions before him. They were most of the time the result of popular rage against the Christians. Often the governors of provinces or cities—as was the case for Polycarp—did their best to save them from the pagan rabble. The statements of many modern historians, of Mr. Alzog himself, with regard to general edicts of persecution having already been issued, according to the public law of Rome, has been shown—we think so at least—as not perfectly proved. Many respectable authors state openly that the edict of Severus was the first *general edict* of persecution, and this appears to be the most probable opinion. Henceforth the scourge was to rage at once all over the world. But in Rome it must have been at this time, as well as during the persecution of Decius, more formidable than anywhere else, because Rome was yet in full possession of being the real center

of the empire. Later on, under Diocletian, for instance, it was no more so. Consequently all ecclesiastical authors state that in 303 and the following years, the persecution was much more fierce at Nicomedia and in Greece than at Rome and in Italy. This circumstance of the case, it is true, is generally attributed to the good disposition of Constantius Chlorus for the Christians. But this fact even proves precisely that Rome was no more the center, since the chief Cæsar, Diocletian, had almost abandoned Italy.

All these circumstances being taken into account, the great fact recorded in the *Catalogus Liberii* and the *Liber Pontificalis*, and admirably illustrated by the modern discoveries of the great Italian archæologist, becomes the natural consequence of the stormy period which was just beginning, and which was to continue until the great lull of forty years, beginning from Gallienus. This is, consequently, the beginning of the period of gloom, when everything appeared to be lost; and yet it became, in fact, a period of a surprising increase, to replace in greater number the Christian heroes who then died martyrs, and whose bodies are now found by hundreds of thousands in the silent streets and squares and churches of Rome the holy, the true Bride of Christ, crucified and buried like the bridegroom, but destined, like him, to rise from the dead.

We must look now with more care on those holy pontiffs, whose reign was mainly spent under the ground, and most of whom undoubtedly died for Christ. Before Zephyrinus all the popes had been buried around St. Peter, on the Vatican; and it is very likely that for many of them, at least, no care was taken to conceal their place of burial. It is so stated positively of Peter himself, by Caius, a priest of the second century. The only fragment of his writings that we possess declares that in order to be assured of the presence of Peter and Paul at Rome, and of their martyrdom, any one had only, in his time, to go to the Vatican, where he could see the *trophæum*, that is, the sepulchral monument of Peter; and to the *Via Ostiensis*, where he could as easily look at that of Paul. It is clear from this text, which we quote from memory, that the Christians buried openly in Rome their bishops, even when they had died martyrs. And it is known from Roman customs generally, in that age, that the bodies of criminals executed according to law were left to their relatives and friends, to be buried as they wished.

But this seems to have been changed from the time of Septimius Severus. It is very probable, and several texts of contemporary

authors go a great way to prove it, that the veneration bestowed by the Christians on the relics of their martyrs finally drove to madness their persecutors ; and not satisfied with having put their victims to death, they did their best to prevent any of their remains from falling into the hands of their friends. They either burned them and threw the ashes into the sea, or appointed guards over them until they had been devoured by dogs or birds of prey. To prevent such a desecration as this, the Christians secretly bought at great price what could be saved of the holy relics, and henceforth buried them invariably under ground. It was known by tradition that a great number of popes had been thus interred in one crypt ; and from a random description of a pious pilgrim during the middle ages, it was supposed that this holy spot was nothing else than the main catacomb underlying the Church of St. Sebastian, *extra muros*. Thirty or forty years ago, to our personal knowledge, and later still, probably, it was still the custom of the good Franciscan lay brother who conducted you to that sacred abode of martyrs, to show you with assurance the pretended sarcophagus where had been deposited the holy body of St. Urban I. and other popes of the same age. But every one knew then that the statement was unsubstantiated by proofs, and there were good reasons to believe that it could not be true. It was, however, a sad puzzle.

It is De Rossi who finally stumbled over the long-buried entrance to the cemetery of Callistus ; led to it by a fragment of the marble slab which had been, centuries before, laid over the remains of St. Cornelius. Soon the places of burial of many other pontiffs were ascertained, and among the first, those of Anterus, Fabianus, and Lucius. The list itself of the popes included in this category, namely, of those who spent most of their pontificate in the catacombs when all the former public places of worship could not be any more used in Rome, runs thus : Zephyrinus, Callistus, Urbanus, Pontianus, Anterus, Fabianus, Cornelius, and Lucius. From this last pontiff's death, the Christians began again assuredly to worship God in the city above, until the time of Diocletian, when many churches well known to pagans must have existed and were certainly destroyed as in Greece. The reader, however, must not imagine that the Church enjoyed an undisturbed peace during this last period of over forty years. Several of the subsequent pontiffs, until Sylvester, died certainly martyrs. All the details, in particular, of the death of St. Sixtus II. and of his deacon Lawrence are well known. For the

ostensible head of the Christian religion could be slaughtered by the order of the emperor as a *rival*, without disturbing entirely the order of exterior worship. More will be said on the subject, when examining briefly how many popes died in reality martyrs, and how far the Protestant writers are right in admitting only two or three of them. This will occupy us presently.

The question to be examined at this moment is merely this, Can we judge correctly of the life of the popes from Zephyrinus to Stephen, the successor of Lucius? The answer cannot be doubtful. Their private life as men, persecuted as they were by the strongest power on earth, and obliged to hide themselves from the sight of a hostile world, is perfectly well ascertained by the late discoveries made in the catacomb of Callistus, and also by many details contained in the Acts of martyrs who ennobled the Church at that epoch. Their life, also, as heads of Christendom, is known historically by many facts attesting already their supreme power as the vicars of Christ, nay, their infallibility in controverted matters of faith, and it is remarkable that the very epoch in which they were less free, was precisely the one when their universal supervision of the Christian flock became better known and acknowledged.

To proceed with order, the narrative must go back to the dark period which, in our opinion, began with the edict of Severus. It was just at that moment that Zephyrinus gave to his deacon Callistus the charge of the cemetery called ever since after this name. It is not pretended that the passage from public worship above to secret meetings under the ground was a sudden and complete one at once. The closing of the former houses of worship must have been gradual, and followed the necessities of the times. The catacomb itself, which now occupies us, was not excavated, built up, and ornamented directly in the state in which the late discoveries have offered it to the gaze of Mr. De Rossi. Callistus began the work, which was continued afterward, during more than a century. But from henceforth the holy sacrifice was offered and the sacraments were administered either exclusively or to a great extent, in these subterranean recesses. It is sufficient to read the description of this holy place, even in the abridgment of Mr. Northcote, and to look at the various plans and cuts representing its whole interior arrangement, to conclude that henceforth this catacomb was not intended only, as formerly, for burial, but was used also, no doubt, principally for celebrating the mysteries of religion. On several occasions it is historically ascer-



tained, that the faithful in great number, men, women, and children, were surprised at their devotions by the pagan soldiery and police, and actually buried alive in front of their holy altars. St. Damasus discovered long after one of these hecatombs of human beings, and thought proper, in restoring the altar, and giving back the place to the sacred uses of religion, to inclose it with a glass partition, leaving the interior as it was found, so that no one except the priests could enter and disarrange the religious and solemn disorder of the scene, and yet every one could see the interior of the chapel, and assist at the divine mysteries. This wholesale slaughter is recorded by Gregory of Tours, who refers the fact to the reign of Numerianus.

It was long previous to that gloomy epoch that the Christians were already called by the pagans a "*lucifugax et latebrosa natio*."\* Tertullian, as early as the end of the second century, or the first year of the third, wrote in his *Apologeticus*: "We are daily besieged, and betrayed, and caught unawares in our very assemblies and congregations." And in his book *Ad Nationes*, "You know the days of our meetings; hence we are besieged, entrapped, and often detained in our most secret congregations." Finally, numerous respectable traditions of nearly the same epoch have preserved the remembrance of those times, when the Roman Christians and the popes had often to take refuge in the crypts and the dim avenues and corridors of the catacombs. The *Liber Pontificalis* mentions several of them; we quote only the following: "Caius, in the very act of fleeing from the persecution of Diocletian, by hiding in the crypts, is crowned with martyrdom." A qualifying word in conclusion, referring to a general expression used previously on the subject, is appropriate, and will prevent the reader from falling under any kind of misapprehension. When it is maintained that for more than a century the popes lived mainly in the catacombs, the intention is not precisely to convey the idea that they seldom spent even a few hours out of them. They may have occasionally resided for some time in unpretending houses, where they could be as surely hidden almost as under the ground itself. But for the purposes of worship, instruction, and administration of the sacraments, they were mainly to be found in the catacomb of Callistus, or in the neighborhood of it, belonging to the Cæcilia family.

This brings us naturally to a fact related in the Acts of the saintly

---

\* *Minut. Felix.*



young woman of that name, as illustrative of the matter which has been just discussed. These Acts are admitted to be corrupt; but Dom Guéranger and De Rossi have both proved that they are true in the main, and that the mistakes they certainly contain can easily be explained by several circumstances of the time itself and by the topography of this part of the catacombs, now well known in all its main points. Pity that we cannot enlarge on the beautiful history of that holy virgin. But the chief thing of importance in the actual inquiry, namely, the conversion of young Valerian by the sight of an angel, and his instruction by Urban, cannot now be rejected by any impartial critic. It is true, the Urban mentioned in those Acts may not have been the well-known Pope of that name, but a Bishop Urban whom Eleutherus had made, as it were, his vicar, as was occasionally the case in those troublous times. It is of little importance to admit either the one or the other as being the personage mentioned in the holy legend. But it must be true that Valerian went to the Urban who was then lying hid in a cemetery on the Appian Way, by whom he was instructed and baptized.

These few details must suffice to illustrate the private life of those holy pontiffs from Zephyrinus to Stephen. Before, however, we pass on to the consideration of their authority over the whole Church, this is the place to speak briefly of the number of them who died martyrs. Read the Protestant writers on ecclesiastical history from first to last, and you will hear from them that only two or at most three can be proved to have shed their blood for Christ. Read on the contrary the Roman traditions, contained particularly in the *Liber Pontificalis*, and you will find in the biography of each of them, with the exception of two or three, the ominous short phrase, "he was crowned with martyrdom." To which side must we look for the truth?

That there are many more than three whose death by martyrdom is verified historically independently of the *Liber Pontificalis*, must be conceded by any one who cares for his reputation as a commonly well-read man. That it is true of St. Peter is attested by St. Clement, an eye-witness, in his letter to the Corinthians, a genuine work. The martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul, in Rome, under Nero, is most positively mentioned in this precious document, although the horrible details of the persecution, described by the profane authors of the period, are not alluded to by Clement, except as to the number of the sufferers, in which point the words of the pontiff answer well to

the *immensa multitudo* of Tacitus. Thus Peter, the first pope, was certainly a martyr. Nothing of this kind can be said, one way or the other, of Linus and Cletus. But is not the general opinion of Catholics, that Clement, the fourth pope, died by martyrdom, historically proved? Without mentioning the *Liber Pontificalis*, it is plainly stated by Rufinus, by Pope Zozimus, and by the Council of Bazas; all authorities of the fifth century. Zozimus particularly, the fourth successor of Damasus, must have known perfectly if it were so or not, since in his time the origin of the Christian Church in Rome could not but be known in all its details. Less than three hundred years separated Zozimus from Clement, and not only the traditions of the Roman Christians at that epoch, but likewise many positive records still existing, must have then sufficed for a real historical basis. In the ancient canon of the Roman mass, St. Clement is ranked among the martyrs, not a mean authority in the eyes of those who can appreciate such a document as this. Finally, the Church of St. Clement in Rome was from the most ancient times one of the *titles* or parishes of the city; and it is well known to archæologists that primitively only martyrs gave titles to churches. Assuredly this can suffice for calling Clement a martyr, according to history, and not to legend. The particulars of his martyrdom, as related in the Greek acts still existing,—are generally repudiated even by Catholic critics, such as Tillemont and Orsi. Yet the main points of this remarkable document present no features unacceptable to a critic. They assert merely that under Trajan, Clement was exiled by his order to the Crimea; and because in his place of banishment he continued to preach Christ and make converts, he was finally thrown into the sea. This is perfectly in accord with what is known of the Roman customs of that time. Was not Ovid, so early as the reign of Augustus, banished to the same dreary peninsula for having written some bad verses? and was not the act of throwing people into the sea one of the *refined* modes of execution among the Romans? The other smaller details of those Acts are merely ornaments of composition and flowers of rhetoric.

As to the other popes who died martyrs we must abridge the evidence and speak concisely. Irenæus writes it positively of Telesphorus,\* who lived less than fifty years before him. In his voyage to Rome under Eleutherus he could certainly converse with people

---

\* Hær. iii. 3.

who had known Telesphorus personally and been present at his death. Is not this a sufficient historical basis? Again, Callistus, of celebrated memory, must at this time be admitted by critics to have been undoubtedly a martyr, whatever some Protestant writers may continue to say. The proofs of it are detailed in the *Acta Sanctorum* (14th day of October). The fact of the martyrdom of the pontiff is there vindicated, particularly against the objections of Basnage. These objections are, first, the silence of Eusebius; as if the Bishop of Cæsarea ever pretended to enumerate in his *History* and other works all the Christians who had perished and died for Christ; and second, the well-known mild disposition of Alexander, emperor at that time, and his well-ascertained inclination for Christianity, attested by Lampridius. The Bollandists explain admirably all the difficulties connected with the character of Alexander; and their remarks answer equally well to all the objections of Protestant writers, whenever in Catholic history the same apparent anomaly takes place, and Christians are reported to have been subjected to the torture and to death, under the most mild and humane Roman emperors. Finally, the fact of the martyrdom of Callistus is so well proved that Tillemont himself, not very credulous in those matters, is obliged to admit it. But the authors of the *Acta Sanctorum* go still farther, and demonstrate by the rules of the most strict criticism, and by the light of a solid erudition, that the "Acts of St. Callistus," rejected by Tillemont, must be admitted as genuine, and scarcely give rise to some slight difficulty owing to unavoidable faults, or oversights on the part of copyists.

The same must be said of Urban, the successor of Callistus; and the *Acta Sanctorum* again, on the 25th of May, contain ample vouchers for it. From the Acts of St. Cecilia, now sufficiently vindicated by Dom Guéranger, it is manifest that the popes had entered into that gloomy period described a moment ago. They say that before the last consummation of his martyrdom, Urban had seven times *confessed* the faith, and been subjected each time to ill-treatment and stripes. This argues the state of a man, pursued and tracked by his enemies, caught, but escaping, caught again, and finally put to death.\*

There can be no doubt of the exile into Sardinia of Pontian, successor to Urban. It is known historically that he was sent to that

---

\* See *Acta Sanctorum*, vol. xix., Maii sexto, p. 6, 2<sup>a</sup> col., sub finem.

island by Alexander Severus, where, according to some authors, he died *œrumnis confectus*, and according to others he was beheaded by the orders of the barbarian Maximinus, successor to Alexander on the imperial throne. In either case he is entitled to the title of martyr.

Anterus, who was pope after Pontian, did not occupy the See more than a month and a half. Until recently nothing precise could be said of his death. The discoveries of De Rossi, and the researches of Dom Guéranger preparatory to writing the second edition of his *Histoire de Ste. Cécile*, prove that the title of martyr cannot be refused him, although there would have been nothing strange, had he died naturally, after so short a pontificate.

Of the immediate successors of Anterus, namely Fabian, Cornelius, Lucius, Stephanus, Sixtus II., one only—Lucius—died naturally in the possession of his see; and as he was pope but five months, this cannot create surprise. All the others were either put to death or sent to exile, where a cruel ill-treatment, which always accompanied such a punishment at Rome, soon put an end to their existence. It would be tedious to proceed any farther. What has just been said is sufficient to prove the unreliability of those Protestant historians who pretend to reduce to a few the number of the first thirty-two successors of St. Peter who died martyrs.

But cannot the *Liber Pontificalis* be accused of exaggeration on the opposite side, by repeating constantly of all the popes until Melchisedes, with the exception of two or three, the celebrated phrase, "he was crowned with martyrdom"? Criticism has demonstrated lately that this book must always be treated with great respect; and the best proof of it is the statement of De Rossi, that he has found it one of his best guides in his exploration of the catacombs. It is not, however, pretended that all those pontiffs whose biography contains the usual formula, "crowned with martyrdom," shed really their blood for Christ, even in the meaning of the writer. It is very probable (as the Bollandists believe it) that at the time the book was published, and long previous, any Christian who had openly confessed the faith, and been subjected to some kind of torture on that account, received the title of martyr. In this sense the *Liber Pontificalis* is right in its statements. For the reader must be satisfied, after going through all the details—and many more might be added—that few popes indeed, before the peace of Constantine, could hope to escape persecution of some sort.

9. *Authority of the popes over the whole Church from a very early time.*

In spite of persecutions, and of the extraordinary restraints imposed on the freedom of action of the popes, they nevertheless attended to the government of the whole Church ; and it was precisely at the time when they had to live in an almost absolute concealment, that they were called upon to exert their influence in the remotest parts of the World, and to prove their right to the name of successors of St. Peter by acting in truth as the heads of the Church, the interpreters of God's Word, and the supreme judges in deciding controverted points of dogma or morality.

This question has been touched upon a moment ago, but only in a rather cursory and disconnected manner. It is proper to examine it in connection with the general history of the first popes. It will thus be seen that it was from the beginning considered as an attribution of the Supreme Pontificate, and that the *pretensions* of the papacy, as they have been called, were in fact rights as ancient as the Church herself. The intention is not to fall into redundancy, and repeat what cannot have been so soon forgotten. But many details could not but be passed over, and some important facts may have been overlooked : and the argument will be more pointed and produce a very lasting impression when presented in a strictly historical series of the early popes. Meanwhile the former numerous incidents previously recorded must be kept in view, and the reader must not lose sight of them, but consider the new facts offered to his consideration, as being merely supplementary to the first.

Consequently, there is no need of speaking again of the interference of the third pope—St. Clement of Rome—in the affairs of the Corinthian Church. The solemn tone of his letter, and what he required of a pretended independent body of Christians, is yet fresh in the mind of all.

As to the words of St. Ignatius of Antioch in his letter to the Romans, and with regard to the voyage of St. Polycarp to Rome, some very serious considerations must be added to the previous narrative.

It is remarkable how, in the most primitive ages of Christianity, when the dearth of positive documents often renders the task of writing an intelligent history of it almost hopeless, we meet suddenly with facts, disconnected in appearance, which nevertheless shed a flood of light on the universal feeling of reverence, veneration, and even submission to Rome in the most early ages. Non-Catholic writers take

often a good care not to mention them, or if they do, they give them a turn which takes from them all their point and interest.

The great fact, for instance, of the almost exclusive use of the Greek language by the early Roman Church has been alluded to; and the reader has not forgotten how the author of the *History of Latin Christianity*, has tried to find in it a proof that the Roman Church, after all, was nothing but a "religious colony," of some Greek metropolitan center, Corinth, for instance, or more likely Antioch. It is perfectly evident to any one ever so slightly acquainted with the first spread of Christianity over the world, that this strange theory of Dean Milman is a pure dream. But if some providential object is sought for, which may have been involved in this most remarkable feature of primitive Christianity in Rome, many people may be surprised at the long vista of considerations which the subject suddenly presents to the view.

Christianity, starting from Palestine, had certainly spread extensively in Greece before it reached the West; although it must have existed in Rome very early, if we pay the least attention to the well-known phrase of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans.\* There is no doubt that at the time, the Greek language was spoken much more extensively than the Latin. The proofs of it, which have been given at some length, are now sufficiently remembered, we hope. It is evident that if Rome was to be the center of the Christian world she must have first spoken Greek a great deal more than Latin. The Catholic says—and brings solid reasons for it—that Peter had been made by Christ the supreme ruler, and consequently the center of the Church, to establish unity in the whole frame, as St. Cyprian expressed it. The Catholic adds also that Peter went to Rome and established his See there to be the material center of Christianity, as he was himself its moral center. The Roman Church, therefore, had to speak Greek at first. We defy any one to find a better reason for the great and surprising fact under consideration, and on this account it can be considered as providential.

Let any one now reflect on the facility which was thus given to the whole East for an easy communication with Rome, such as all the points of the circumference must necessarily keep with the center. Suppose that "Latin Christianity," in the low sense of Mr. Milman, had begun in Rome from the very time of St. Peter; and that all his

---

\* C. i. 8.

successors, all the Roman clergy, all those intrusted with the spiritual administration of affairs, had spoken Latin, and nothing but Latin. It could then be maintained without fear of contradiction that there would have been from the first a complete separation of the West from the East ; and that Rome could not have possibly fulfilled her function of center. For it is well known that the Greeks did not like Latin, and almost never spoke it. They were used to travel everywhere, and find their language everywhere understood. Every foreign language seemed to them barbarous. Mr. Milman himself has told us how they were once surprised somewhere in Greece to receive a Latin letter from St. Cyprian, we believe, which the great African had not thought fit to write in Greek. We know also that Plutarch taught philosophy in Rome, where he resided several years under Domitian, yet he could never speak or write Latin. We hope that he could at least understand it ; but the contrary might even have been the case.

All these things being well considered, no one can be surprised that there was union between the East and West, owing to this condescension of the Roman Church in adopting the Greek idiom under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. How many Greek bishops or leading men were induced by this favorable state of circumstances to travel to Rome and see the Pope, we have no means of ascertaining. We know some of them, however, and very early too. The voyage of Ignatius of Antioch, it is true, was compulsory, as he was sent there by Trajan to perish under the teeth of the wild beasts in the amphitheater. Yet it seems to have been a consolation for him to be enabled thus to see the Roman Christians, and no doubt particularly the successor of Peter, who then ruled over the Church. "Long since have I prayed," he says at the very beginning of his letter, "that I might be worthy that I should see your faces." From these very words it is manifest that Ignatius had wished to go to Rome long before he had been condemned by Trajan to be transported there and die. The heading of his letter has been already commented upon.

But Polycarp of Smyrna half a century later was not satisfied with a wish. He went to Rome as early as 158, and the object he had in view is most striking, and directly falls in with the matter under consideration. It was to confer with Pope Anicetus on the subject of the time of celebrating Easter. This question, a mere affair of discipline after all, had introduced germs of division between some



of the Oriental churches and Rome ; and it was necessary—*necesse*—that a perfect union of all churches with Rome should subsist, as St. Cyprian said a little later on.

The celebration of the festival of Easter differed for Rome and the West, on the one side, and the Judaizing Christians of Palestine, who became at last Ebionite heretics, on the other. Many orthodox churches of the East celebrated also Easter as the Jews celebrated their Pasch, on the fourteenth of the moon of March, on whatever day of the week it might fall ; whilst the other Eastern churches, with the whole West, celebrated it only on a Sunday ; and the appointment of that Sunday required great astronomical observations, which always created some difficulty until the whole process was subsequently fixed by the Council of Nice. The Eastern churches which differed from Rome in that regard were mostly situated in the *Asia proconsularis*, where primitively St. John had exercised the holy ministry ; and thus they relied on the tradition of St. John. This was the side of the question which St. Polycarp went to advocate before Anicetus. The whole West, and the Oriental churches in accord with it, relied on the tradition of St. Peter and St. Paul. Every Christian understood this at the time.

Why did Polycarp go to Rome to have the matter settled ? Evidently because he thought that Rome could settle it. It must be remarked that Anicetus was the tenth successor of St. Peter, and lived just three generations only after this Prince of the Apostles. He governed the Church about forty years before Zephyrinus, that is, before the epoch of gloom when the popes had to withdraw to the catacombs. At that early age, on the subject of the first question which came to be debated without a solution, among the orthodox Christians, that is, the Catholics—it was not considered as a question of faith—Rome already was the spot to which the eyes of all turned instinctively. No other conclusion—but it is an important one—need so far be drawn from this fact. It is true, there seems to have been no practical solution of the case between the Pope and Polycarp. After the holy bishop of Smyrna returned home, the difference between the Eastern and Western churches remained the same. The party opposed to the prerogatives of the Holy See conclude from this that its authority was not recognized. But such a conclusion is too hasty, for this reason, that we do not know what passed at Rome between the two holy men. No one can say what Polycarp thought at the end of his intercourse with the pontiff. It is very likely that



the authority of Anicetus was not obeyed, because he did not wish, in fact, to exert his whole authority. After his conversations with Polycarp he may have seen that a decision at the time might have brought on a schism. After all, faith was not engaged in the matter. How often have not the popes, since that early epoch, used the same condescension with wayward children, particularly with Gallican bishops, and much earlier with the African bishops, at the time of Cyprian ?

But a phenomenon which has been general ever since in the Church, begins already to appear, and must, so early as this, be pointed out. Whenever a question arises between the popes and the bishops of some particular churches, the popes may be sure that their side of the question will finally prevail. Thus, in the matter under consideration, although a conference of Polycarp with the Supreme Pontiff did not bring the Eastern churches to a proper submission, and to the acknowledgment of the rightful authority ; although, more than thirty years later, the same question having again come forward between Victor I. and Polycrates of Ephesus, Victor I., inclined to excommunicate Polycrates, refrained from doing so at the request of Irenæus, so that the same division in discipline continued still between the East and the West ; yet when at last an ecumenical council pronounced at Nice on this question, the side advocated by the popes was adopted by the Nicene Fathers ; and henceforth those who persevered in the former error were called Quartodecimans, and formed a sect. A detailed review of ecclesiastical history would demonstrate that this has been invariably the case in matters connected with faith and morality, and that it has been likewise generally so in things of discipline and mere opinion. And this is very remarkable.

But the threat of excommunication uttered by Victor I. against Polycrates of Ephesus gives rise naturally to some important considerations. This threat was not put into execution, at the request of Irenæus. Still, the Bishop of Lyons never pretended that Victor could not do it. Had Victor done it, there is no doubt that all the churches in communion with Rome would have felt obliged to consider Polycrates as being under censure. This is at least tantamount to acknowledging that the Bishop of Rome was in truth the superior of the bishop of Ephesus. Yet Ephesus was certainly an apostolic church, having been founded by St. Paul, and having been for a long time the see of St. John. It is impossible to explain this fact,

unless the Bishop of Rome is supposed to be the superior of all other bishops whatsoever. This is undoubtedly admitted by all Catholics ; but it is good to remark that this was already conceded early in the second century by all Christians.

That Irenæus could not be mistaken on this subject—as to the general power of excommunication possessed by the Pope—results from the fact that having himself come originally from Asia Minor, where he had been a disciple of Polycarp, he had, nevertheless, under Eleutherus, the predecessor of Victor, gone to Rome, whose claims to authority he could thus very well appreciate. He was not yet a bishop when he was sent from Gaul to carry to the Pope the letters of the clergy of Vienne and Lyons, relating the glorious triumph of Pothinus and other Lyonesse martyrs. Eusebius says that the object of his mission had reference to ecclesiastical affairs. This is another strange fact, throwing a quite unexpected light on the character of the Roman See as the center of the Church. Not only Rome was to be consulted on matters of faith or discipline, but she was likewise to be informed of all important events connected with religion in far-distant countries. Other proofs of it have been brought out before. All these details cannot very well agree with the system of independent or quasi-independent churches in the first ages of Christianity.

But it is particularly at the end of the second century and the beginning of the third, precisely when the scourge of persecution was going to fall on the Christians with greater power, that the need of visiting Rome was felt by the great men who at that time were attracting the eyes not only of the whole Church but even of the pagan world. The reader understands that Origen and Tertullian are particularly meant in these general expressions. If it were not for a few words which fortunately have been preserved in the remaining works of Adamantius, he might have been considered as one of the most *precious* supports of the theory of independence from Rome. Origen's nature was altogether Greek, although his ancestors might have been originally Egyptian. 'His speculative mind, as shown in his great work *περὶ Ἀρχῶν*, was certainly Hellenic, if not Oriental, in its tendency. All his life was spent in Egypt, Palestine, or Asia Minor. He agreed, or disagreed, with great prelates of the East, particularly with several patriarchs of his own native Alexandria, without any apparent reference to Rome. In all his troubles he applied for relief to the Syrian bishops of

Jerusalem or Cæsarea of Palestine, nay, with more trust still, to his intimate friend Firmilianus of Cappadocia. He does not seem to have ever thought of throwing himself under the protection of the Roman pontiff, who, nevertheless, had already begun to be the "refuge of the oppressed." Does it not look as if the Church in the East was an entity apart, having a life of her own, independent from what we know to be the center? But suddenly a short phrase occurs, which opens a new view in the well-settled opinions of Origen. In 212, under the pontificate of Zephyrinus, just a little after the barbarous persecution of Severus, he goes suddenly to Rome to visit *τὴν ἀρχαιοτάτην Ῥωμαίων Ἐκκλησίαν*, to wit, "the most ancient Church, that of Rome." Origen was certainly well acquainted with ecclesiastical history. He knew perfectly well that the Church of Jerusalem had been founded before that of Rome. He must have felt a deep devotion for the cradle of Christianity; the spot from which the apostles started for their several missions, leaving one of them, James, to take care both of the first converts of Peter, after the day of Pentecost, and also of those whom he had himself gained over to Christ. How could he call the Roman Church the most ancient? It is impossible, and it would be presumptuous, to declare dogmatically what Origen thought on the subject. We have only a brief phrase, apparently contradictory to real facts, and we must endeavor to find for it a meaning sufficiently rational to account for these ominous words. It can perhaps be said that in the eyes of the writer the Church of Jerusalem in his time was no more the church over which James had presided as its first bishop. It is known historically, that the series of Jewish bishops was suddenly cut short after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus; that henceforth no Jews were allowed to reside within the city; and that when Christians returned to it, it was only Hellenist Christians who came back, over whom were placed Greek bishops, the first of whom was Mark, in 156. This Origen might consider as a very different church organization from the first; and thus it can very well be said that the Church of Rome is more ancient than that of Jerusalem. Origen knew likewise that St. Mark, who had founded his own Church of Alexandria, had come from Rome, and received his mission from Peter, then at Rome. The origin of that of Antioch is at best obscure, and there might have been Christians in Rome as early, if not earlier, than at Antioch itself. It is certain that what St. Paul said of the Romans in his epistle to them—that their faith was

proclaimed in the whole world—could not have been said of that of Antioch, although it is in this last city that the disciples of Christ took the name of Christians. If this meaning of Origen's phrase is admitted, the consequence is that Rome, in his eyes, was the Christian center, since, on account of its being the oldest, the whole body out of it must have come from it. This line of argument would not have been a bad one after all, and it might have occurred to the mind of Origen.

But it is very possible that by "the most ancient," Adamantius meant the most venerable, powerful, commanding, and consequently the first in authority and power. There is nothing forced and unnatural in this meaning; it is, on the contrary, in keeping with the usual way of speech adopted by Origen, who, every one knows, was fonder of a good and substantial allegorical and metaphorical expression than of a realistic and literal one. The reader may choose which of the two explanations seems to him most true. The phrase must have had certainly for Origen a rational meaning, and we cannot see any other besides these two. A theologian, however, will most surely adopt the last, as being supported by a great number of other texts of Adamantius in favor of the primacy of Peter. The list may be seen in all orthodox writers on dogmatic theology, and is really surprising. It is a pity that no detail of the voyage of Origen to Rome has been preserved. What he ever wrote on the subject must have perished. This single phrase, however, may be said to contain a great deal of information, as these few observations intimate. The voyage of Tertullian to the center of Catholicity will be as instructive; but the result of it is much more painful, however it may be confirmatory of the early influence of Rome.

Tertullian knew much more of Rome than Origen. Several expressions of Eusebius make of him a Roman jurisconsult, and a most illustrious Roman writer. He had certainly lived in the great city before his conversion; for he turned out to be a convert. But before becoming a Christian, he must have studied deeply the Roman faith. Cyprian, a few years younger, called him often his master. One circumstance only, however, is of importance at this moment. It is his voyage to Rome after he had already written several of his best works in favor of Christianity. When this happened is not exactly known. For his biography is most obscure; and it is strange that a man who wrote so much, and said so many remarkable things, has

remained so little noticed, as to his life, by his contemporaries, and has recorded so few incidents of his own biography. It is generally admitted that he went to Rome when Zephyrinus was pope, the same as Origen. Several authors have made him a Roman presbyter; but the majority of writers call him a Carthaginian presbyter. He seems, in fact, to have resided much more in Carthage than in Rome. It is supposed that he married after becoming a Christian, and took to himself a Christian wife, which is the almost necessary conclusion of the tract he wrote, *Ad Uxorem*.

According to Weiss\*—a commendable authority—the great African writer was in Rome in 204, during the secular games given by Severus, and composed his treatise *De Spectaculis*, on this occasion. The clergy of Rome did not approve of his rigorism, and he went back discontented to Africa, where he soon became a partisan of Montanus. This agrees with St. Jerome, who attributes his leaning toward this heresy to the “envy and abuse” of the Roman clergy. Many authors, however, think that St. Jerome imputed, almost gratuitously, to Tertullian, feelings which had affected himself much later on against some of the Roman clergymen. It is certain that the gloomy and stern opinions of Tertullian had disposed him from the start in favor of Montanism; and this must have acted upon him much more powerfully than a slight exhibition of dislike from any one in the Church. Tertullian, however, may have found at the time in Rome men well able to embitter his feelings toward those who did not sympathize with him. The author of *Philosophumena* must have been living at the same time in the city; and it is easy to see at a glance what disastrous effects the conversation of such a man as Hippolytus must have produced on a fiery soul like that of the African.

It is certain that from this time out Tertullian became an enemy to the Roman pontiffs, and spoke of them as if they had been ambitious men, and desirous of extending their authority beyond its just limits. But this merely proves that the moderation of the Roman bishops could not be shaken off, and made to yield to his exaggerated opinions. *Inde iræ*. O blessed Church of Rome! How many zealots, in the course of ages, have been intent on dragging you down into their schemes, which they thought came directly from heaven! Through the long series of centuries we could describe the

---

\* Art. Tertullien, Biographie Universelle.

innumerable attempts that have been made to obtain from the Vicars of Christ the consecration of their unholy Utopias. Knowing well that a word from the successor of Peter would be sufficient to bring down the submissive flock of faithful souls to a confiding and, as it were, unreflecting assent, they have labored with the stubborn zeal of perhaps a well-meaning dictation, and often with a burning Christian eloquence, to win the adhesion of the Universal Pastor of souls; but in vain! This alone could assure mankind of the infallibility of the Head of the Church. No man, unless evidently assisted from heaven, could have resisted the pressure of exalted doctrine or apparent holiness. What happened to Tertullian, has likewise happened to hundreds of others, and this so late as our own days. We have only to refer to the unfortunate Lamennais in France, and still later on to Doellinger in Germany.

But the taunting expressions of Tertullian, after he broke loose from the center of unity, are the best condemnation of his own rashness. He thought that he could not better insult the Roman pontiffs than by giving them in derision the titles which the Christian world already granted them. He called them, with an assumed contempt, *bishops of bishops*, and he applied to Zephyrinus as a matter of reproach the name which the world already acknowledged as the right one, namely, that of *Pontifex Maximus!*

The eyes of mankind were, in fact, already directed toward the man who sat in the chair of Peter. The whole subsequent history of the Church bears testimony to this. The whole account of the Arian movement comes finally to the same result, although some writers do their best to describe it independently of the Pope. The best answer to them is included in the simple questions, Where did Athanasius find his only support? From what quarter did this heresy of Arius fear its greatest danger? But many other facts occurred before Arianism arose, to show the growing importance of the papal power in all the questions which were started after Tertullian and Origen.

The first is the controversy about the rebaptization of heretics, between Cyprian and Firmilian on the one side, and Pope Stephen on the other. If it looked at first sight as an affair of discipline, it touched, however, very nearly, on the dogma; since it went finally to make the validity of the sacrament depend on the holiness of the minister. The main arguments used by the bishops of Carthage and of Cæsarea in Cappadocia against Stephen, became in course of time

those of the Lutherans and other heretics of the sixteenth century. St. Cyprian, nevertheless, thought all along that the question did not touch the faith, and was merely an affair of opinion. He wished the Pope to allow all bishops who chose to differ from each other on the subject. The Pope saw more clearly the danger of such an opinion as this, and he would have condemned it openly, had not the persecution been rekindled in the meanwhile, and by giving the crown of martyrdom to both Stephen and Cyprian, ended momentarily a dispute which, as usual, was finally determined at Nice, as the Pope had decided at the very outset of the controversy; so that from henceforth it has not been allowed in the Church to rebaptize heretics when they come back to the fold, provided their baptism had been administered with proper matter and form. But the matter has been already sufficiently discussed.

In this celebrated controversy the papal authority extended substantially to the remotest parts of the Church, namely, to Africa and the farthest end of Asia Minor. It is a great mistake of Gallican authors to pretend that the contrary seems to be proved by it, since, as they say, both Cyprian and Firmilian rejected the power of the Pope in the premises. They rejected it merely because they thought erroneously that the question being only of opinion, not of faith, the Pope had no authority to exert on the subject. But Cyprian could not have forgotten the texts of his own writings, which strongly uphold the rights of the successors of Peter to decide dogmatic questions, in order, as he said, that "unity should be preserved." There cannot be, consequently, any doubt as to the admission by Cyprian of the papal power at the time, both in the South and in the East, in places far removed from the center itself in dogmatic matters. And the reader must not lose sight of the fact that this remarkable exercise of authority took place at the very time that the popes were reduced by the fury of the persecution to hide themselves in the dark recesses of the catacombs.

What is more strange still is the ambition enkindled in the hearts of some envious Christian prelates of the time for an office which was in the eyes of all only a stepping-stone to martyrdom. For it was a few years before the pontificate of Stephen, at the very moment of the election of Cornelius to the papacy, that the first anti-pope appeared in the person of Novatian. The schism created by this incident affected at once the Church in her whole extent; and councils met at Carthage and at Antioch, and elsewhere, as well as



at Rome, to condemn the rash enterprise of Novatus and Novatian. To judge of the importance of the See of Rome, at the very moment of the deepest gloom and uncertainty as to the future, one has only to read the details contained on the subject in all the reliable annals of the Church. The question, Who was the real Pope? convulsed already the whole Christian world.

When from the time of Gallienus (A.D. 260) the Church began to breathe freely amidst the apparent dissolution of the whole empire, this universal influence of the popes over the entire Church, and their intercourse with the bishops of the East and the South, not only continued, but became still a great deal more remarkable than ever before. This period includes the pontificates of Dionysius, Felix, Eutychianus, and Gaius, namely, from 259 to 296. It is at this time that churches began again to be built openly all over the world, and at Rome as well as anywhere else. The number of conversions must have increased rapidly; and this became the cause of the frightful persecution in which Diocletian, Galerius, Maxentius, and at last Maximinus and Licinius, endeavored to overwhelm and, as it were, drown Christianity in the blood of its adherents. The description of these forty-three years of comparative peace, nay, of exterior prosperity and outward splendor, before Diocletian, is rendered easy by the industry of Abbé Migne, who, in the fifth volume of his *Patrologia Latina*, has collected every literary fragment belonging to that otherwise most obscure epoch. The genuineness of many of these documents must command the assent of all sensible critics. If some of them may be considered as *dubia* or *adulterata*, these, nevertheless, contain particularities neither to be despised nor altogether thrown aside. A moment of attention is required on the subject.

Dionysius—the successor of Sixtus II., whose martyrdom, followed by that of his deacon, Lawrence, forms so conspicuous an episode in the early Christian history of Rome—governed the Church founded by Peter, when another Dionysius, better known still to history and literature, ruled over that of Alexandria. The most captious critic cannot find fault here, since the intimate relations between the two bishops are attested by Eusebius himself in his *Ecclesiastical History*.\* It is known from the letters of the Alexandrian Dionysius that his namesake of Rome, whom he calls *eruditissimum plane que admirandum virum*, had been, when a simple Roman priest, strongly

---

\* B. vii., c. 7.



in favor of the vigorous measures of Stephen against the *rebaptizantes*. When he became himself Pope, however, he preferred to use indulgence toward them, and not to publish any decree of excommunication against Firmilian of Cappadocia—Cyprian's martyrdom had already taken place. It seems from these circumstances that the universal power of the Pope to cut off from the Church those who refused to obey him, was not an affair of mere contingency, and that the thought of it had not been prompted by the excitement of the moment. It was a settled principle, whose origin must have been far anterior to the dispute between Stephen and Cyprian. But the sovereign authority of the Pope found, directly after this, an occasion of displaying itself far more conspicuously than it ever had before. This is a statement we read in the invaluable collection of Migne : \* “The bishops of the Pentapolis accused Denys of Alexandria before him (Denys of Rome)—the phrase between inverted single commas belongs to St. Athanasius—‘as if his opinion of the nature of the Son of God was the same as that which Arius entertained afterward.’ As soon as he heard it, Denys of Rome wrote both against the sectators of Sabellius, and against whomsoever might share in the opinion for which Arius was later on cut off from the Church.” This is a most remarkable passage. The bishops of the Pentapolis in East Africa write a joint letter to Pope Dionysius, accusing the Alexandrian Denys of heretical opinions. These opinions, St. Athanasius declares, were exactly those which Arius professed shortly after. Why did these Eastern bishops forward their accusation to Rome and not to Antioch, if Rome had no power in the premises superior to that of Antioch? And Dionysius of Rome, fully persuaded that he possessed such an authority as this, answers directly, condemning both this doctrine attributed to Denys of Alexandria, and the errors of Sabellius, which had just begun to create noise. And the Pope is so truly acknowledged the judge in this matter, that a synod being convened in Rome on the subject, Dionysius of Alexandria sends his justification, which the synod accepts; and the whole ends by the condemnation of Sabellius alone. Athanasius, a contemporary, is the authority for all these most remarkable facts. † Thus the Pope had condemned Arianism before Arius had openly broached his doctrine; and all the measures taken afterward in the East against this baneful heresy, were merely the acknowledgment of the solemn agreement of the Church

---

\* Vol. v., p. 103.

† See Migne, vol. v., p. 104, 105.

with the voice of the Supreme Pastor. This is the spectacle offered us by the first Pope who emerged from the catacombs after the immolation of his meek predecessor, Sixtus II. Neither he nor any of his immediate successors—unless perhaps Felix, under Aurelian—received the crown of martyrdom. Claudius II. was at the time Emperor of Rome, and from his reign to that of Diocletian, the peace generally prevailing enabled the Church of Christ to prosper and multiply. The edict of Aurelian, which alone interfered during that epoch, was published only in the last year of his short reign, and, as Alzog says: “his murder prevented him from fully carrying it out.” Before he had promulgated that decree of proscription the same emperor rendered a judicial decision in favor of the property of Christian churches, which deserves certainly more than a passing allusion.

This happened under Felix, the successor of Dionysius on the See of Rome; and was but the consequence of a measure inaugurated by the latter. Paul of Samosata, having been raised to the dignity of Patriarch of Antioch, scandalized the Church both by professing openly the heresy of Sabellius, and by leading a luxurious life in the midst of women and courtiers. The protection of Zenobia, and a profound hypocrisy, saved him from condemnation in two councils held at Antioch in 264 and 267. But in 270 he could not succeed in deceiving or browbeating the bishops who met for the third time. He was excommunicated and deposed, but he would not surrender to the new prelate the palace where he lived. Zenobia, still powerful over the whole East, kept him in possession. At her downfall, however, the Eastern bishops applied to Aurelian, her conqueror, to obtain the enjoyment of their right in this property of the Church. The extraordinary proceedings which followed deserve a particular attention. Eusebius says merely that Aurelian “ordered that the possession of this house should be given over to those Christians of Antioch, who should be in communication by letters—*Litteræ formatæ* undoubtedly—with the Italian prelates of the Christian religion, and with the Roman Bishop.” This decision must have been given soon after Aurelian, by his victory over Zenobia, became again master of Antioch and the East. This happened at the end of 272, consequently, more than two years and a half before he issued his general edict of persecution. The Church enjoyed then a universal peace; but the unfortunate divisions which heresy had created among the Christians, made it difficult for a pagan to discriminate

among them. The emperor, in deciding as a judge, could not be guided by any letter of the law, and had to follow equity. The terms of his decision, as given by Eusebius, show that "equity" required then that those among Christians who wished to remain members of the universal Church, *ἐκκλησία καθ' ὅλην*, should be united in communion with the prelates of Italy and the Bishop of Rome. Some theologians and historians seem to make very little of this decision of Aurelian. Saint Martin, in Michaux' *Biographie Universelle*, says that probably the emperor paid very little attention to the whole affair, and merely wished to play a trick on a favorite of Zenobia who had given him much trouble. The very guarded terms of the decision prove that the emperor had paid some serious attention to the question. The Roman juriconsults were always very careful when rendering judgment on property, and the emperors, when they acted as judges, either followed the lead of juriconsults, or prided themselves on their own personal knowledge of the law.

The importance of the decision was so well acknowledged at the time that the Eastern bishops communicated it directly to the Pope. They had already before sent him the notice of the condemnation of Paul of Samosata, for his approval; and this first letter directed to Dionysius reached Rome only after his death, and was received by Felix. But the very terms of the imperial decree required that Rome should be written to a second time, since it was to those in communion with her that the property had been adjudged. This letter of Pope Felix has perished. But as it has always been the custom of his predecessors, whenever anything of importance was reported to them, to assemble their synod, take its advice, and give afterward their decision, or at least write on the subject, there can be no doubt that Felix did not neglect to do the same, on so remarkable an occasion. There remains of him only an indubitable fragment of a letter which he wrote to the Alexandrian patriarch Maximus, and which was later on quoted by the Fathers of the Council of Ephesus. Constant has proved its authenticity; and the few lines it contains anticipate again the decision of Ephesus against Nestorius—another example of the remarkable feature already adverted to.

A word more, in conclusion, on the subject of the celebrated decision of Aurelian cannot possibly be omitted. The very subject-matter referred to the emperor, and the liberal manner in which he disposed of it, prove that the laws of the empire were not then adverse to the possession of ecclesiastical property by the Christians as a

corporate body ; and that the Pope was considered as the legal head of this corporation. Two most remarkable consequences follow from this. The first, that the expression *Catholic Church* had then the same meaning it has with us ; namely, the society of the faithful, *καθ' ὅλην*, that is, in any country whatever, acknowledging the authority of the Roman Pontiff. The Protestant way of understanding this same expression, which does not admit the bond of unity recognized by the decree of Aurelian, is, therefore, a modern invention, and must be rejected by all men acquainted with Christian antiquity. The second consequence is merely the fact, already mentioned on several occasions, that after the period of concealment in the catacombs, the Christians from the time of Dionysius possessed openly common property, and consequently could have churches open to all, and built anywhere in cities and villages. This feature of the age under consideration, the second half of the third century, must, therefore, be considered as decidedly proved. The universal state of persecution under Diocletian and his fellow-Cæsars, dating from 303, was atemporary interruption of this happy state of things, so favorable to the spread of Christianity at that epoch.

This is further proved by the pontificates of Eutychianus and Gaius, the immediate successors of Felix. Of the first Eusebius testifies that "in his time the Church enjoyed a profound peace."\* This renders very probable the great number of decrees attributed to this holy pontiff. They are not, undoubtedly, all equally genuine. Several letters and decretals have been published under his name, which are now repudiated by eminent critics. But it must be admitted that the time had arrived for the popes to establish strict rules of discipline, particularly for the clergy. There is not perhaps in the long-continued action of the sovereign pontiffs anything more remarkable than their zeal for the enactment and enforcement of disciplinary laws ; and who can wonder that the popes of the second and third centuries did what everybody knows was done by those of the fourth, fifth, and sixth ages ? If many decrees attributed to the first popes individually are for some good reason rejected, it does not follow that other decrees of a different and even a like import were not issued by them. It is easy enough to speak against the false decretals ; but everybody must admit that there were at that time decretals of some sort. No one in our age will insist on the admission

---

\* Book iii., c. 1.

of those which are proved to be false ; but if all are placed in the same category without sufficient warrant, true history will be the loser by it. It is still better to admit those which are not proved to be false, have at least some look of antiquity about them, and after all possess the merit of filling to a certain extent the pages of history, which otherwise would remain blank. Many thanks, therefore, are due to the Abbé Migne, who has published many of them with the discriminating marks of *falsa, dubia, adulterata, certa, or probabilia*. And the reader must understand that even those decretals which are recognized as false or interpolated may very well contain many grains of truth, and be, in fact, precious *débris* of more ancient and genuine decrees.

This being presupposed, we come to some of the decrees attributed to Eutychianus, or coming really from him. It is good and proper to see how the Church was already strongly organized, and came from the catacombs full of life, energy, and vigor. In the impossibility of going through them all, a precious MS., preserved in the Vatican library and published by Migne, is amply sufficient for our purpose. It is pronounced "ancient" by the editor, and many of its prescriptions justify the epithet. It is a pity that it has not yet appeared with comments and notes, so that some interpolations it may very well contain could be critically pointed out, and leave the text comparatively pure and reliable. At any rate, when the whole of it is read uninterruptedly, it looks exactly as if it came really from the universal Pastor in a time of peace, in order to correct abuses of detail introduced perforce during the previous times of persecution. Most of the decrees issued in after times by popes and councils for preserving good order among the clergy, are contained, in germ, in this precious document, which is thus one of the most striking instances of the zeal of the early pontiffs for the honor of the "House of God."\*

"The clergy is admonished (*admonemus*) that the house (*cella*) of the priest be near the church, and no woman should be allowed to live in it. . . . The nocturnal prayers should not be omitted, and at stated hours, during the day, the proper chant intoned. . . . No one should sing mass without being fasting, and no one should celebrate it without communicating himself. . . . No one should

---

\* The title is : "Eutychiani Papæ Exhortatio ad presbyteros, ex antico codice Vaticano."

celebrate with the *alba* which he wears habitually ; nor use a chalice of wood or of glass. No woman should come near the altar, nor touch the chalice of the Lord. . . . Nothing should be placed on the altar except relics of the saints and the four gospels ; or the *pix* containing the body of the Lord to carry to the infirm. . . .

“No one can say mass out of the church, in private houses, nor in places not consecrated. . . . The sick you shall visit, reconcile them by confession, anoint them with holy oil according to the apostle, and communicate them with your own hand. Let no one presume to use a layman or a woman to carry communion to the sick ; nor to sell the holy chrism, nor to require a fee for baptizing infants, reconciling sinners, burying the dead, or consecrating churches ; and let no one deprive any other priest of his church by paying money for it, or using any other improper means. See that no child dies without baptism through your negligence. . . .

“Let any one of you explain to his people, to the best of his ability, some passage from the gospels or the epistles, or some other part of Holy Scripture, on Sundays or festival days. Take proper care of the poor, of travelers, of orphans, giving them hospitality and refec-tion. Reconcile together those who are at variance ; protect the widows, and give thus to others every kind of good example. . . . Do not pawn the sacred vessels, nor the sacerdotal vestments to any secular. . . . The property that you acquire from the day of your ordination, let every one know that it belongs to the church which is your *title*, and to which you give your care.”

A great number of other prescriptions of the kind are contained in the same *exhortatio* ; and there are several of them which point strongly to a very early age, following almost immediately after a time of persecution, very appropriate, consequently, to the time of Euty-chianus.

We possess nothing altogether reliable from Gaius ; although the remarks made a moment ago on the decretals attributed to the first popes can be applied to him as well as to Euty-chianus, his predecessor. He was a near relative to Diocletian, and saw the beginning of the ferocious persecution which followed. Several other members of this imperial family were also Christians, and Diocletian himself favored at first the new religion, and would not have declared himself openly against it, as he did, had it not been for Galerius. We will not attempt to describe it. The short sketch of it, given previously from the general narrative contained in the *Ecclesiastical History*

of Eusebius, must suffice. The triumph of the Church which followed the conversion of Constantine, has been described for Eastern Europe. The same grateful spectacle in the West would unfold itself if time allowed. There is place only for a few reflections naturally suggested by the subject.

#### 10. *Conclusions from this chapter.*

Of all the countries conquered by Christianity, Western Europe was destined to be the most important. It was to form in after times a vast commonwealth, under the name of Christendom. The southern part of it was, under the first Roman emperors, perishing from the excess of a material civilization, such as the world has never seen, either before or after. The North was still occupied by rough and warlike nations; some of them already bowed down under the yoke of Rome; the others remained independent, and were destined to utterly destroy the most brilliant empire which had yet appeared on earth. Christianity would in course of time give a new shape to both those parts of the Western continent, and infuse into the veins of the various nations living on it a pure blood, rich enough to sustain an ardent and generous life. Thus, under the mild and refining sway of the new religion, the whole country would in the course of ages be raised to the highest pitch of power and glory. The time would come when it should in reality rule the world, and carry the religion of Christ to the utmost confines of Asia in the East, and to a large continent yet undiscovered in the West.

But when the apostles came there to preach the Gospel nothing of the kind could be foreseen. Pagan Rome was more powerful than ever; still, her sway over the world, which she thought would be eternal, was a harsh domination, that could endure only so long as the patience of the conquered nations was not exhausted. Her motley heathenism, however, composed of the superstitions of the whole world, was as firmly rooted as ever. No one could expect that a few Jews, lately arrived from Palestine, could give it a fatal blow, and that their successors would be able in a couple of centuries to ruin it forever. How her great citizens of the time of Claudius and Nero would have laughed at the conceit!

The Celtic and German nations of the North thought more of war than of religion; and as they stubbornly refused to replace their own superstitions by the more refined Roman paganism, there was



little prospect that they would ever listen to obscure men coming from a distant country to relate to them the strange story of a crucified Redeemer. As to the remote tribes of the South, in wild Mauritanian Africa, on the other side of the Mediterranean Sea, who could suppose that they would ever be amenable to a doctrine which preached the mortification of the senses, the contempt of the world, and the forgiveness of injuries ?

Yet in a very short time, on the whole surface of this vast territory, idolatry was as good as ruined, the Cross was everywhere an object of adoration, and the virtues of chastity, of self-sacrifice, of the most ardent charity, became resplendent in the lives of former votaries of pleasure or degraded adorers of foul idols. Many of them literally died for Christ, for refusing to burn incense to their former deities. Many of the others embraced an ascetic life, and withdrew from the world to live to God alone in the wilderness. Women and young maidens vied with the most generous of the stronger sex in practicing the austere precepts of Christian virtues ; and in a world lately devoted entirely to debauchery and sin, many spots soon became known as consecrated to purity and holiness.

But it was particularly the city of Rome itself which exhibited the most tangible proof that has ever been offered to the admiration of mankind of a complete change in manners and aspirations, such as required evidently the finger of God for its accomplishment—*Vere digitus Dei est hic*—truly the finger of God is here ! When we read in the historians and poets of the epoch, in Sallust, Tacitus, Suetonius, Persius, and Juvenal, the details of the abominable corruption of all classes of citizens, the thought comes directly to the mind that the evil was irreparable. Nothing but a complete sweep of the whole putrid matter could prepare the soil for a better state of society. Yet all those writers were themselves pagans, and could not have the keen sense of virtue which only true religion can give. On this account, to have a more exact idea of the universal depravity which then prevailed, it is better to go at once to the ruins of Pompeii, where vice appears in all its nakedness and ugliness. And as there has been a complete collection of those specimens of lubricity made by the order of the Neapolitan government, and preserved with the best of care in its museums, no better means can be imagined of diving at once into this abyss of lewdness, than by trying to give a glance at those infamous pictures, and, if possible, more infamous intaglios. Pompeii in that regard was not worse than Rome, than



any other city of Italy at the time. Nay, in Rome the horrible spectacle must have been more repulsive because it was more gigantic and monstrous.

This must suffice for so offensive a subject. But the conclusion is irresistible: God alone could remedy the evil, and a divine religion alone could miraculously change such a completely corrupt state of society. There are, it is true, Christian writers who think that in point of fact Rome was not radically transformed by Christianity. They seem to believe that whatever God could do, and whatever he did, for healing the wounds of the bruised and expiring city, remained in the end of no avail; and in their opinion the devastations of barbarians were required for purging the soil of Italy of all its moral filth. But they are evidently mistaken. There is an immense difference in point of morality between the age of Nero and that of Constantine. It is, in fact, impossible to imagine that the Church of the Catacombs coming at once in the open air to sanctify the city, and the entrance to that sacred abode of the most exalted virtues being henceforth open and free, and allowing every one to enter and look, there should not have been an immense moral reaction taking place at once among all classes of citizens, even among those who remained pagans.

At that epoch particularly, so far distant from us, when every memory of the past was fresh, the history of every spot under the ground perfectly well known, the details of the martyrdom of a great number of Romans as well ascertained as anything that has happened among us yesterday, the effect of all this on the reformation of morality in Rome must have been stupendous. To be persuaded that this is not a mere conjecture, one has only to read what Constantine wrote in several of his letters, exhortations to his people, and legal decrees. He is everywhere profoundly impressed with the sanctity of the Christians; he concludes from it that they must be dear to God, and that the Deity they adore is the only true one; and he ends invariably by inviting all the subjects of the empire to imitate the Christians and embrace their religion. His reflections must have been shared by a great number of pagans; and this alone would prove that Rome became very different from what it was two hundred years previous.

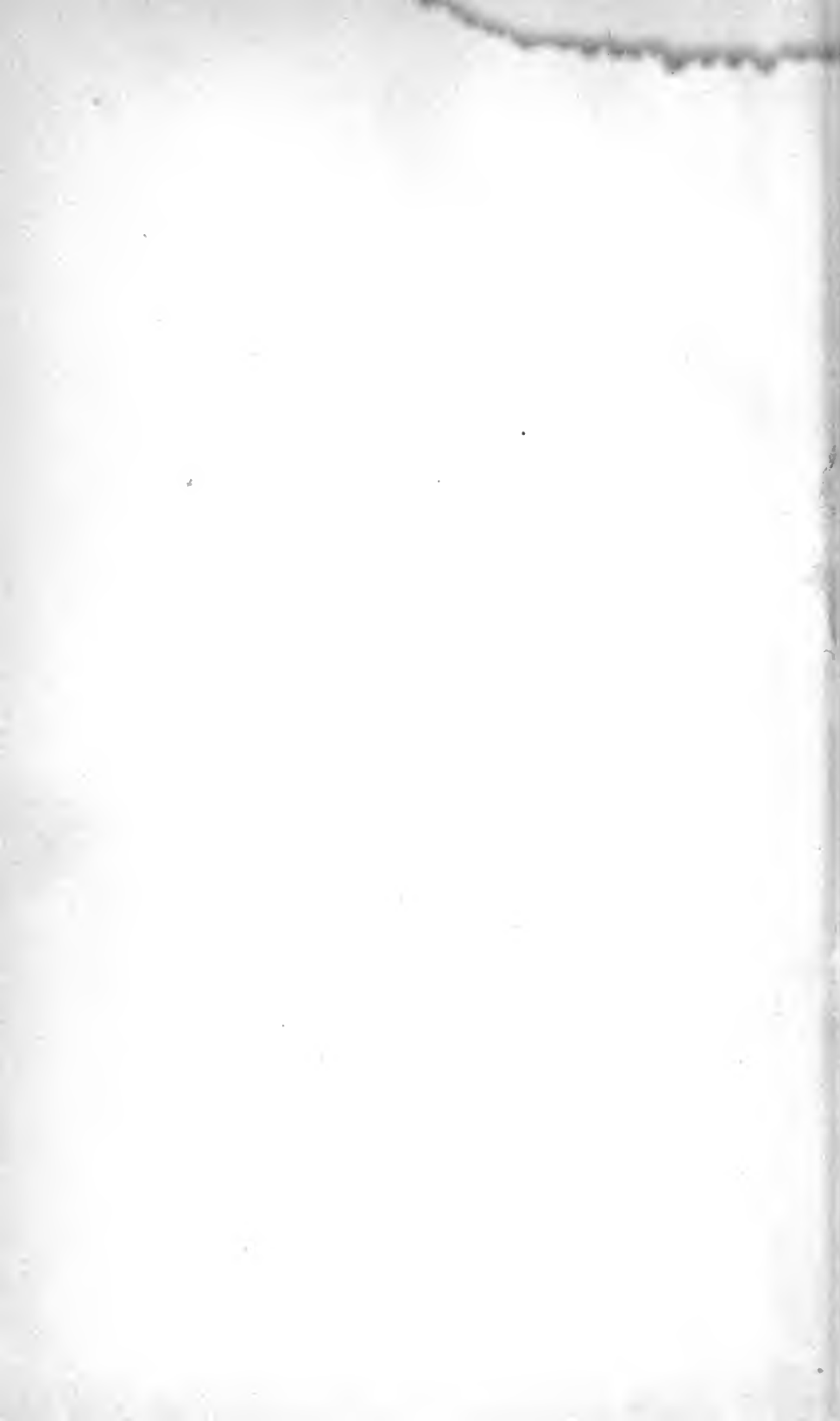
All these reasons are further confirmed by the consideration that the whole of it must have been the result of a providential design to convert the world through Christian Rome as it had been corrupted

by pagan Rome. Look for a moment at that City of God, emerging from the dark recesses of the Papal Crypt in the cemetery of Callistus, to take possession at once of the Palace of Lateran, given to Sylvester by Constantine, in order to establish in that spot the center of a new spiritual dominion as extensive as the globe, and as durable as time itself. See it already in possession of the universe, since the Church was already Catholic. The remains of Peter had reposed on the Vatican less than two centuries and a half; and so early as this the Cross is exalted on high in all the great cities of the whole world; and the successor of the fisherman counts among his children millions and millions of human beings spread over the surface of three large continents and the islands of the sea. The same faith, the same morality, the same form of a pure worship prevail already everywhere. It is a new creation which has sprung into existence. To give it birth the hand of God was as absolutely required as for the creation of the material universe. But it was not enough to have done this, namely, to have through the apostles and their first successors converted the world. To keep this new spiritual society together a center and a head were necessarily needed. Rome and the Pope furnished both, and that eternity was thus assured to the Church which had been refused to the former proud city.

These last pages have presented some few details of the simple but effective process of this organization. Many facts have proved that from the earliest ages the successors of St. Peter have exerted their authority over the East as well as over the West, and that this authority was recognized by all, except by the few who proudly separated themselves from the body because they refused their allegiance to the head. Would to God that the manifest intention of Christ in establishing His Church would be recognized at this day by all Christians, and that there should be at last one fold and one Pastor—*Unum Ovile et Unus Pastor.*

THE END.









THEBAUD, A.J.  
The Church and the  
gentile world.

BQX  
246  
.T5-  
v.2

