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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Committee of General Literature and Education feel a melancholy satisfaction in offering this Volume to the public. Its able and lamented Author, among the last acts of his life, had furnished the entire manuscript for the press; and it was within a few weeks only of publication, when it pleased God to call him from his various and successful labours to his rest. These pages, with many others, will remain valued monuments of his great learning, the soundness of his faith, and his true Christian charity.

HISTORY

CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

INTRODUCTION.

THE reader of history may be compared to a traveller, who leaves his own country to visit others which are far off, and very different from that in which he has been living. The manners and customs of the nations which he is going to see, are either wholly new to him, or he is already in some measure acquainted with them by the information and researches of others. So it is with the reader of history. He is either beginning a study to which he was altogether a stranger, and meets, for the first time, with facts and circumstances of which he had never heard before, or he is partly retracing his own steps, and filling up the details of a plan which had been exhibited to him previously in outline. It is, perhaps, difficult to say in which of the two cases his gratification and amusement will be greatest; and the minds of different readers will be differently affected, according to the

degree of knowledge already possessed upon the subject which they are reading.

It must not, however, be forgotten, that gratification and amusement are not the only results which the history of past events produces on the mind. Many persons, it is true, are fond of history, and study it with avidity, without its enabling them to confer any direct practical benefit on mankind. Others, also, as is the case with children, are set to read the histories of different countries, though it is not expected that much moral improvement should be derived from such lessons. But, even in these cases, the study of history has its own peculiar benefits. The mere recollection of facts and dates is found to be of great service to the mind, as soil is improved by being frequently turned over with the spade, though it is not constantly bearing a fresh crop. History is thus an indispensable instrument in the culture of the memory; and, though few persons retain, in after-life, the minute details of history or chronology which they learned in their childhood, it might be difficult to point out any one of their mental faculties which had not been rendered more acute, and more fit for its peculiar application, by this early exercise of the memory.

Nor can history be said to be without its use, though it does not enable all its readers to confer any direct practical benefit on mankind. To measure the advantage of all knowledge by its practical utility would be as absurd as to require all persons to be of the same height, or to expect every production of the animal and vegetable kingdoms to be useful for the same purpose. The great distinction between man in a savage and in a civilized state, is, that the savage seeks for

nothing but what is useful, whereas the civilized member of society seeks for moral and intellectual enjoyment. The reader of history is therefore benefited, and is able to extend the benefit to others, if his reading supplies him with the means of making himself and others better and happier than they were. That the study of history will enable him to do this, requires no demonstration; and it would not be difficult to show, that the great end and object of this study is to improve the moral condition, and to increase the happiness, of mankind.

There is, undoubtedly, a nearer and more apparent utility, which results from an acquaintance with the events of former ages. If History has been correctly described to be "Philosophy teaching by example," it becomes at once the necessary study of all those who are concerned in the government of states. To disregard the examples of past times is imprudent in all persons, but in those who are engaged in governing others, it is positively culpable; and for a statesman to be ignorant of history, which supplies him with practical experience in the department which he has chosen to follow, must be attended with the same consequences to himself and others, as if a tradesman or a mechanic should undertake to serve his employers without a knowledge of his goods or of his tools. But, though the past history of his own or other countries may supply the statesman with many useful lessons, and he may thus be better able to carry on the government, he has gained but a small portion of experience, if he has merely treasured up a certain number of facts which may serve as a guide to his own conduct under similar circumstances. The lesson which he is

to read in the page of history, is the art of making men happy, by making them good. He must observe, in the events of past ages, how *righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people:* and he who reads history without constantly remembering, that the persons of whom he has been reading will be judged hereafter for those very actions which he has been admiring or condemning, is likely to mislead both himself and others, when he comes to apply his historical experience to practice.

If these remarks are true with respect to all history, they must be more especially so when applied to the study of the History of the Church. Every history is more or less employed in detailing the different forms which religion has assumed, and the conduct of persons acting under religious impressions; and every reader may derive instruction from the facts of this nature which are contained in the records of past ages: but the History of the Church is the history of truth; it describes to us the progress of a religion which, undoubtedly, came from heaven, and which is, undoubtedly, the only religion by which we can hope to go to heaven. This at once gives to the History of the Church an interest and importance above every other study. It represents to us human beings, actuated by human motives and passions, and indulging freely in the speculations of their own reason; but their actions are recorded as connected with the belief of certain doctrines, which God himself has commanded us to receive as true. Though mixing with the world, and taking part in the common occurrences of life, they are exhibited by the ecclesiastical historian under one aspect only—that of believers in Chris-

tianity: whatever other part they may have played in the great drama of events which have marked the last eighteen centuries, we are not concerned in noticing it, except so far as their conduct produced an effect upon the interests of religion. Whatever has advanced the cause of the Gospel, and whatever has retarded it, come naturally within the province of the ecclesiastical historian; and, being properly concerned with spiritual, rather than temporal, matters—with things relating to the soul, rather than to the body—it might be thought that he would be spared the contemplation of those painful scenes which have almost reduced the business of an historian to a record of misery and crime.

Unfortunately, the annals of the Church, like those of civil and political transactions, remind us too plainly of what was remarked above, that the actors have been human beings. If anything could deter a believer in revelation from composing a History of the Christian Church, it would be his unwillingness to disclose to the world the succession of miseries which, in one sense, may be traced to religion as their cause. He would wish to throw a veil over those dismal periods when ignorance and superstition combined to make men slaves to error, or when all the worst passions of the heart appeared to be let loose in polemical warfare. But we have no reason to think that the Almighty Disposer of events, who allowed these impurities to defile his Church, intended the record of them to be lost. That he had wise reasons for allowing them to take place, cannot be doubted; but even our limited faculties can see, that a faithful description of such misfortunes may serve as a merciful warning to those who are to-come after. It is therefore particularly

wished that the reader should be prepared beforehand for meeting with narrations of this kind. He will find that Christians have not only been hypocrites and fanatics—deceivers and deceived—supporters of false doctrines, and haters of those who differed from themselves—but that they have carried their mischievous and perverted principles into practice; have appealed to the sword, as the arbiter of religious differences; and have caused torrents of blood to be shed in supporting, as they would say, the cause of the Gospel of peace.

All this, and evils even worse than these, will be found in the pages of Ecclesiastical History. It has been thought right, even in the outset of the present work, openly to state the fact. It can only surprise those who forget that the world is still filled with nominal Christians, with men who profess to believe the Gospel, but who live in violation of almost all its precepts. These are the persons who, when they chance to act a public and conspicuous part, are brought prominently forward by the ecclesiastical historian; while the thousands are passed over in silent obscurity who have adorned the doctrine of their Saviour in their lives, and have gone to their graves, enjoying in themselves and diffusing to others the fruits of happiness and peace.

It is the misfortune of history, that it cannot find a place for characters such as these. The biographer has the more pleasing task of selecting his subjects: he may go into the retirement of private life, and bring forward the humble and peaceful virtues of those who never courted notice, and who were most remarkable for shunning the world and all its allure-

ments. But the historian has no such choice. It is his duty to describe the bad as well as the good,—to represent the Church in its darker as well as in its brighter colours;—he must draw his portraits from the life; and it may be well for him to remember, that the cause of the Gospel cannot be advanced by any attempt to suppress the truth, or to palliate crime.

That the History of the Church, notwithstanding these melancholy disclosures, is peculiarly attended with those benefits to the reader which have been claimed for history in general, is an assertion which may easily be maintained. There is, perhaps, a difficulty in steering between the opposite extremes, of attributing too much or too little value to ecclesiastical antiquity. It is easy to say, on the one hand, that a stream is purest at no great distance from its source; and, on the other, that the world is much more enlightened now than it was eighteen centuries ago. The latter statement, however, may be fully acknowledged to be true, and yet may prove nothing as to the weight which ought to be given to the authority of the earlier ages.

We do not appeal to the primitive Christians for their knowledge or their opinions of matters upon which the world is now more enlightened; but a question arises, whether the world is really more enlightened upon those points with which the primitive Christians were specially concerned. These points are the doctrines which are essential to be believed as contained in the Gospel, and the method which is most likely to be successful for spreading them through the world. Whether these two points were imperfectly understood by the early Christians, and

whether they have received more light from the discoveries of succeeding ages, are questions which it is not difficult to answer, if we rightly understand the nature of the Christian revelation.

The one word *Revelation* seems not suited to lead us to expect, that the matters which have been revealed would require, or could even admit, successive illustrations and improvements, from the powers of the human mind becoming more developed. If Christianity had been merely a system of moral precepts, which human reason had imagined and arranged, the system might undoubtedly be rendered more and more perfect as the world continued to advance. But, if the scheme of Christian redemption was not only revealed by God, but every part of it was effected by the agency of God, without man knowing anything concerning it until it was thus effected and revealed, it seems impossible that such a system could be modified or improved by later and successive discoveries.

Now, it will not be denied, that the apostles themselves had the fullest and clearest understanding of the doctrines which they preached. It might, perhaps, be said, when their inspiration is taken into the account, that no Christians have had their minds equally enlightened by a knowledge of the Gospel; so that the Revelation was, in its very commencement, full and complete; and, to say that we are more enlightened now as to the truths of the Gospel, would be the same as to say, that a ray of light is purer and brighter when it has reached the surface of the earth, than when it was first emitted from the sun. We must also recollect that the doctrine which the apostles

preached, namely, Justification by Faith in the death of Christ, could not be more or less complete, at one period than another. It was complete, when Christ died, or rather when he rose again, and when God consented that faith in his death and resurrection should justify a sinner. The first person who embraced this offer of reconciliation, at the preaching of the apostles, was as fully justified and as fully admitted into the Christian covenant, as any person from that time to the present, or from now to the end of the world. The terms of salvation are precisely the same now as they were in the infancy of the Gospel. The only written record which we have of this last Revelation was composed by the persons to whom it was made; human reason has added nothing to the letter or the spirit of it: and whoever believes the doctrines which it contains, possesses all the knowledge which can be possessed concerning the salvation of his soul.

This being the case, it would seem to follow that we have nothing else to do but to ascertain exactly what the doctrine is which was revealed, and, having ascertained it, to embrace it. This is, in fact, allowed by a vast majority of those persons who call themselves Christians. The notion that Christianity admits of being improved as the world becomes more enlightened, can hardly be said to be entertained by any persons who really understand the Gospel; and, though Christians are unhappily divided upon many fundamental points, they all agree in referring to the Scriptures, as containing the original Revelation; and each sect or party professes to believe its own interpretation of the Scriptures to be the best. It becomes,

therefore, of great importance to know which of these conflicting interpretations was adopted by the early Church; and if it can be proved that any doctrine was universally believed in the age immediately following that of the apostles, the persons who hold such a doctrine now would naturally lay great weight upon this confirmation of their opinions.

It cannot fairly be said, that in making this appeal to antiquity, we are attaching too much importance to human authority, or that we are lessening that reverence which ought to be paid exclusively to the revealed Word of God. It is because we wish to pay exclusive reverence to the Scriptures that we endeavour so anxiously to ascertain their meaning; and it is only where our own interpretation differs from that of others, that we make an appeal to some third and impartial witness. We think that we find this witness in the early Christians,—in those who lived not long after the time of the apostles; and though we fully allow, that they were fallible, like ourselves, and though, in sound critical judgment, their age may have been inferior to our own, yet there are many reasons why their testimony should be highly valued.

In the first place, they lived very near to the first promulgation of the Gospel. Even to a late period in the second century, there must have been many persons living who had conversed with the apostles, or with companions of the apostles. This would make it less likely that any doubts would arise upon points of doctrine, and, at the same time, more difficult for any corruption to be introduced, The simplicity of the Gospel was not in so much danger from the pride of learning and the love of disputation, when Christians

were daily exposed to persecution and death, and when the fiery trial purified the Church from insincere or ambitious members. The language in which the New Testament was written made the early Christians better judges of the meaning of any passage than ourselves; for Greek continued for many centuries to be the language of the learned throughout the greater part of the Roman empire, and the Fathers of the first three centuries wrote much more in Greek than in Latin. These are some of the reasons why an appeal is made to the primitive Christians in matters of faith: not that we receive any doctrine merely because this or that Father has delivered it in his writings, but because the persons who lived in those days had the best means of knowing whether any article of faith had been really delivered by the apostles or no. And this testimony of the early Church becomes so much the stronger, if we find, as the following pages will show, that, for at least three centuries, there was a perfect unanimity among all the different churches upon essential points of doctrine.

A similar appeal may be made to the primitive Christians with respect to the form of church government, and questions connected with discipline. It may be allowed, as before, that we are not bound to follow the practice of those times, as if they were invested with any authority over ourselves; but it was much more easy to ascertain, in those days, whether any custom had been introduced by the apostles; and if we find any ecclesiastical regulation universally prevalent in the second century, we may fairly assume, that it had either been sanctioned by the apostles, or was at least known to be not contrary to the spirit of

their writings and practice. It seems, indeed, hardly possible that disputes about particular forms of church government can be decided at all, unless an appeal be allowed to primitive times. It may be said, as in the case of points of doctrine, that the Scriptures alone should be our guide in these matters. But where the Scriptures are silent upon the subject, or where both parties claim the authority of the New Testament on their side, it seems natural that we should look to the customs of those churches which were planted by apostles, or which may be supposed to have copied from churches possessing this advantage. If Ecclesiastical History should show, that, in the age immediately following that of the apostles, and while some persons were still alive who had conversed with the apostles, there was a remarkable agreement upon this point between different churches, and that one and the same form of church government prevailed in all of them, it would be a very fair presumption that this was the form which had been approved by the apostles.

Enough has, perhaps, been said to show the importance of Ecclesiastical History in enabling us to settle disputes about points of doctrine or discipline. Persons may still refuse to be guided by what they call mere human authority; but if they can find no support from antiquity for their own opinions or practice, they must be prepared to be charged themselves with setting up their own authority against the voice of the Church; and if the prescription of centuries is allowed to have weight in legal and secular matters, it seems equally reasonable that it should be treated with the same respect in matters which concern religion. At all events, it must be interesting to

inquire whether history throws any light upon the subject in dispute; and if a person should meet with writers of the second and third centuries, speaking exactly his own sentiments, and with large bodies of Christians acting as he has himself been taught to act, he will hardly regret the time which he has bestowed upon the records of the early Church.

It must not be supposed from these remarks, that the reader of Ecclesiastical History must be necessarily acquainted with controversy, or that he will be led to acquire a taste for it. That controversies have existed upon questions of doctrine and church government can hardly be unknown to any person who undertakes to read the History of the Church; and, if anything would be likely to give him a distaste for religious intolerance, it would be the succession of painful and disgraceful events which were brought about by one party of Christians persecuting another, because they differed in opinion. It will, however, be impossible to avoid entering into some of the causes which led to these unhappy quarrels. When two parties are represented as dividing the Church upon points which were considered of vital importance, it will be necessary to acquaint the reader with the subjects under dispute. Even the arguments which were advanced, on either side, must sometimes be stated; but they will be introduced as a part of the history, not as a theological discussion. The reader ought to know, as a matter of fact, what were the opinions entertained by both parties; and it is from history that he must learn whether this or that opinion has been supported by the majority. It is unnecessary to add, that a partial or prejudiced statement may be of much more serious

consequence in this department of history than in any other.

I wish, however, distinctly to state, that there are some points upon which the ecclesiastical historian may be allowed to have made up his mind without being charged with partiality. Thus, he is not required to speak of Christianity as if it was merely one of the numerous forms of religion which had appeared in the world. He is to write as a Christian addressing himself to Christians; and, as he is not called upon to prove Christianity to be true, so he may assume that his readers are acquainted with its doctrines. In speaking, therefore, of the first propagation of the Gospel, I have said little concerning the nature of those new opinions which were then, for the first time, delivered to the world. A contemporary heathen historian would have thought it necessary to describe them; they would have formed an important feature in the history of the times; but a Christian historian does not feel called upon to explain *the principles of the doctrine of Christ.* He supposes his readers not only to know those principles, but to believe them; and though the differences among Christians form a necessary part of the History of the Church, it is sufficient to say of Christianity itself, as first preached by the apostles, that it is the religion contained in the Bible.

Some persons have begun the History of the Church by relating the life of its Founder; and it cannot be denied that the personal history of Jesus Christ is inseparably connected with a right understanding of the Gospel. But it has been already said, that the readers of the following pages are supposed to know

what is meant by the Gospel; and this knowledge implies an acquaintance with the facts recorded in the New Testament, concerning the life and death of Jesus Christ. The reason is given, at the opening of the following history, why the Church is said to date its beginning from the death of Christ rather than from his birth; but, independent of this consideration, it was thought better to refer the reader at once to the four Gospels, and to take up the history where the narrative of the Evangelists ends, than to attempt to express, in other language, what they have said so briefly and simply.

If the other plan had been pursued, of making the History of the Church begin from the birth of Christ, it would have been almost necessary to have made some remarks upon the chronology of that event. To fix the precise date of our Saviour's birth with certainty is perhaps hopeless; and a discussion upon this difficult question is not necessary in a work like the present. The only facts of this kind which we can state positively on the authority of the Gospels, are, that Jesus Christ was about thirty years old when he began his ministry; and that he began it about the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius. But even these expressions admit of different interpretations; and if the commencement of our Saviour's ministry could be accurately fixed, there would still be an uncertainty as to the time of his crucifixion. It seems demonstrable, from the narrative of the Evangelists, that he attended three Passovers at Jerusalem, after his baptism; and most persons have supposed that he attended no more than three: but this cannot be called a settled point: and, consequently, the age of our blessed Lord, at the

time of his completing the scheme of our redemption on the cross, cannot exactly be ascertained. Fortunately, there is no indispensable need for such accuracy in the History of the Church. We know the order and succession of events; and we are able to trace effects to their causes, from the time of our Lord's ascension into heaven, though we cannot always assign each event to its precise year. As the history advances, and as the new religion is brought more closely into contact with the affairs of the world, we are able to speak with more certainty of dates and periods; and, when we come to the history of the second century, the annals of the Church may be arranged with nearly as much precision as those of the Roman empire. It being convenient for the reader, that some system of chronology should be followed, even though it may not be correct, and that some date should be placed in the margin, though, for some few years, it may not be the true one, it has been assumed that the crucifixion took place in the year 31.

CHAPTER I.

Conduct and Preaching of the Apostles to the time of the Death of Stephen; with the Causes which operated to promote the Spreading of the Gospel.

THE Kingdom of Christ, or the Church of Christ, may be said to date its beginning from the time when the Head of that Church and Kingdom rose in triumph from the grave. The Son of God, as he himself informs us, had shared his Father's glory before the world was; and the scheme of redemption had been laid in the counsels of God, from the time of the promise being given, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head: but this gracious and merciful scheme had not been fully developed to mankind, till Jesus Christ appeared upon earth, and died upon the cross.

It had indeed pleased God, at sundry times and in divers manners, to acquaint the Jews with the coming of their Messiah; but the revelation had been made obscurely and partially; it was given to one nation only, out of the countless millions who inhabit the earth; and the Jews themselves had entirely mistaken the nature of that kingdom which their Messiah was to found. They overlooked or forgot what their prophets had told them, that he was to be despised and rejected of men; and they thought only of those glowing and glorious predictions, that kings were to bow down

before him, and all nations were to do him service. The prophecy of Daniel (though there might be doubts as to the precise application of his words) had marked with sufficient plainness the period when Christ was to appear; and when Augustus was Emperor of Rome, a general expectation was entertained, not only by the Jews, but by other nations also, that some great personage was shortly to show himself in the world. The Jews had strong reasons for cherishing such an expectation. If the sceptre had not actually departed from Judah, it had not been sufficient to preserve their independence, or to save them from the disgrace of being a conquered people. That this disgrace was shortly to be removed, and that their fetters were soon to be burst asunder, was the firm belief of a large proportion of the Jewish nation; and the name of their Messiah was coupled with ardent aspirations after liberty and conquest.

It was at this period, when the minds of men were more than usually excited, that the voice was heard of one crying in the wilderness, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord.* John the Baptist was the forerunner of the long-promised Messiah; but instead of announcing him to his countrymen as a king and a conqueror, he opposed himself at once to their strongest prejudices. They prided themselves upon being God's chosen people; and as children of Abraham, without thinking of any other qualification, they considered their salvation to be certain. John the Baptist persuaded his followers to get rid of these notions. He taught them to repent of their sins; and, instead of trusting to outward ceremonies, or to the merits of their own works, to throw themselves upon the mercy of God, and to

rest their hopes of heaven in a Saviour, who was shortly to appear. This was a great step gained in the cause of spiritual and vital religion. The disciples of the Baptist were brought to acknowledge that they had offended God, and that they had no means in themselves of obtaining reconciliation. It was thus that they were prepared for receiving the Gospel. John the Baptist made them feel the want of that atonement, which Jesus Christ not only announced, but which he actually offered in his own person to God. And not only was John the forerunner of Christ during the short time that he preceded him on earth, but even now the heart of every one who is to receive the Gospel must first be prepared by the doctrines preached by John: he must repent of his sins, and he must have faith in that One who was mightier than John, who was then announced as about to appear, and who shortly did appear, to reconcile us to his Father, by dying on the cross.

4 John the Baptist proclaimed to the Jews that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand; and though it is not probable that many of them understood the spiritual nature of the kingdom which was to be established, yet they would all know that he spoke of the Messiah; for the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven, were expressions which they had long been in the habit of using for the coming of Christ. When the Christ was actually come,—not, as the Jews expected, with the pomp and splendour of an earthly king, but in an obscure and humble station,—he began his preaching with the same words which had been used by the Baptist, that the *Kingdom of Heaven was at hand.* When he sent out his twelve disciples to preach these

glad tidings to the cities of Judæa, he told them to use the same words. From which we gather that the Kingdom of God, or of Christ, was not actually come when Jesus was born into the world, nor even when he began his ministry. It was still only at hand. Jesus Christ did not come merely to deliver a moral law, nor to teach us, by his own example, how to live and how to die. These were indeed the great objects of his appearing among us as a man; and the miracles which he worked, together with the spotless purity of his life, were intended to show that he was more than man: but Jesus Christ came into the world to atone for our sins, by dying on the cross. This was the great end and object of his coming; and Christ did not properly enter upon his kingdom till the great sacrifice was offered, and he had risen again from the dead. It was then that the Church of Christ began to be built. The foundation of it was laid in Christ crucified; and the members of it are all the believers in Christ's death, of every country and every age. It is this Church, of which, with the blessing of God, we may attempt to trace the history.

Jesus Christ had a great number of followers while he was upon earth. Many, perhaps, sincerely believed him to be the Messiah; but it is probable that very few understood the spiritual nature of the deliverance which he had purchased. The task of explaining this doctrine to the world was committed by him to twelve men, or rather to eleven; for the traitor was gone to his own place: and when Jesus Christ was ascended into heaven, we have the spectacle before us of eleven Jews, without a leader, without education, money, rank, or influence, going forth to root out the religious

opinions of all the nations of the earth, and to preach a new and strange doctrine, which was opposed to the prejudices and passions of mankind.

The doctrine itself may be explained in a few words. They were to preach faith in Christ crucified. Men were to be taught to repent of their sins, and to believe in Christ, trusting to his merits alone for pardon and salvation; and those who embraced this doctrine were admitted into the Christian covenant by baptism, as a token that they were cleansed from their sins, by faith in the death of Christ: upon which admission they received the gift of the Holy Ghost, enabling them to perform works well-pleasing to God, which they could not have done by their own strength. The commission to preach this doctrine, and to admit believers into the Christian covenant by baptism, was given by Christ, while he was upon earth, to the eleven apostles only; and one of their first acts, after his ascension, was to complete their original number of twelve, by the election of Matthias, who was known to them as having accompanied Jesus from the beginning of his ministry.

It is needless to observe, that this small band of men, if we give them credit for the utmost unanimity and zeal, was wholly unequal to the conversion of the world. There is also reason to believe that, at this time, they had very imperfect insight into the doctrines which they were to preach; but their Master had promised them assistance which would carry them through every difficulty, and fit them for their superhuman labour. Accordingly, on the day of Pentecost which followed his ascension into heaven, he kept his promise by sending the Holy Ghost upon them, in a visible form, and with an effect which was immediately connected

with their commission to preach the Gospel. The twelve apostles suddenly found themselves enabled to speak several languages which they had never learned; and the feast of Pentecost having caused the city to be filled, at this time, with foreign Jews, from every part of the world, there was an immediate opportunity for the gift of tongues to be exercised by the apostles, and observed by the strangers.

We have thus, at the very outset of the Gospel, a convincing proof of its truth, and of its having come from God; for nothing but a miracle could enable men to converse in languages which they had never learned: and if the apostles, by means of the gift of tongues, propagated a false doctrine, it must follow that God worked a miracle to assist them in propagating a falsehood.

The effect of the miracle was such as might have been expected. There must have been some hundreds of persons in Jerusalem who had not only witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus, but who were partly acquainted with his life and doctrines. The foreign Jews were probably strangers to his history; but they now heard it, for the first time, from men who proved their inspiration by evidence which could not be resisted. The apostles took advantage of the impression which this miracle had caused. They explained to the multitude the great doctrines of the Gospel; and the result was, that on this, which was the first day of their preaching, no fewer than three thousand persons were baptized, professing themselves to be believers in Jesus Christ. These persons were not yet called Christians, nor do we read of their being known at present by any particular name; but they were distinguished by a

spirit of brotherly love and charity, which might have been sufficient of itself to show that their religion came from God.

It may here be convenient to take a hasty sketch of the political state of Judæa at the time of our Saviour's crucifixion. It was, in every sense of the term, a conquered country, though the Jews were very unwilling to allow that they were subject to any foreign dominion. Their independence, however, had been little more than nominal ever since the taking of Jerusalem by Pompey in the year 63 before the birth of Christ. This was the first transaction which brought them directly in contact with the overwhelming power of Rome. Herod the Great, who was not properly a Jew, but an Idumæan, though he dazzled his subjects by the splendour and magnificence of his reign, was little else than a vassal of the Empire; and he saw the policy of paying court to his masters, who, in return, allowed him to reign over a greater extent of territory than had been held by any Jewish prince since the time of Solomon. Still there was a large party in the country which could not shut their eyes to the fact that Herod was a foreigner, and that the influence of foreigners kept him on his throne. To get rid of this influence by an open insurrection was hopeless: but Herod's connection with Rome, and his introduction of Roman manners among his subjects, kindled a flame which was smothered for some years, or only broke out partially and at intervals, but which ended in the final ruin of that devoted people.

Upon the death of Herod the Great, which happened not long after the birth of Christ, the Romans put in execution the usual policy of conquerers, and made

resistance still more difficult on the part of the conquered, by dividing their territory into parts. Judæa was given to one of the sons of Herod, and Galilee to another, but the still more decisive step had already been taken, of including Judæa in the general order which was issued by Augustus, that the whole empire should pay a tax. The money was not levied in Judæa till some years after the issuing of the edict. The opportunity chosen for this unpopular measure was on the deposition of Archelaus, who had held Judæa since the death of his father, and was removed from his government, to the great satisfaction of his subjects, about the year 8. The Romans now no longer disguised their conquest. They did not allow the Jews to retain even the shadow of national independence: but Judæa was either made an appendage to the presidentship of Syria, or was governed by an officer of its own, who bore the title of Procurator. One of these Procurators was Pontius Pilate, who was appointed in the year 26, and held the office at the time of our Saviour's crucifixion. He continued to hold it till the year 36, when he was banished to Vienne in Gaul, and there is a tradition that he died by his own hand, but we know nothing of his directing any measures against the apostles during the remaining years of his holding the government of Judæa.

It seems to have been the general policy of the Romans, not to interfere with the religious customs and prejudices of the Jews. The usual residence of the Procurator was at Cæsarea, on the sea-coast, and he only went up to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover, or on other extraordinary occasions. With the exception of a Roman garrison which occupied the

tower of Antonia, and was always ready to overawe the inhabitants in case of a tumult, Jerusalem had, perhaps, less the appearance of a conquered city, when it was the capital of a Roman province, than when it was the residence of Herod, who called himself an independent sovereign. The high-priests still exercised considerable power, though the Romans had seen the expediency of taking the appointment to this office into their own hands, and of not allowing the same individual to hold it for a long time. It might be thought that this foreign interference, in a matter of such high and sacred importance, would have been peculiarly vexatious to the Jews; but the competitors for the office, who were at this time numerous, were willing to be invested with the rank and dignity of the priesthood, even at the sacrifice of their national pride. The same feelings of ambition and jealousy inclined the high-priest, for the time being, to pay great court to the Roman authorities; and so long as this good understanding was kept up between the two parties, the influence of the procurator was as full and complete as he could desire; though, to outward appearance, the management of affairs was in the hands of the high-priest.

Such was the state of things when the apostles began their commission of preaching a new religion in Jerusalem. The narratives of the Evangelists will inform us that the procurator had no wish to interfere in such questions, except at the instigation of the priests and the Sanhedrim. Even then, he took it up more as a matter of state policy than of religion; and it was necessary to persuade him that Jesus was setting himself up as a rival to the Emperor, before he would give any orders for his execution. As soon as he returned

to Cæsarea, the field was left open for the Sanhedrim to take what steps it pleased for checking the apostles and their followers. There was always, however, need of some caution in any measures which were likely to excite a popular commotion. The turbulent character of the Jews, as well as their suppressed impatience under the yoke of conquest, were well known to the Romans, though they pretended not to be aware of it; but the troops which garrisoned the capital had special orders to be on the watch against every appearance of riot or tumult. It thus became necessary for the high-priests to avoid, as much as possible, any public disturbance in their plans against the apostles. The Romans had no objection to their practising any violence or cruelty against the followers of Jesus, so long as they did it quietly, and this will account, in some measure, for the Gospel making such rapid progress in Jerusalem, though the same persons continued in authority who had put Jesus publicly to death. The miracles worked by the apostles were evidences which could not be called in question; and the more general was the sensation which they caused among the people who witnessed them, the less easy was it for the high-priests to take any decisive steps.

It was not likely that the Gospel would be embraced at first by the rich and powerful among the Jews. These were the men who had excited the populace to demand the crucifixion of Jesus; and our Lord himself appears to have foretold that the poor would be most forward to listen to the glad tidings of salvation. Such was undoubtedly the case in the infancy of the Church; and the apostles did not forget, while they were nourishing the souls of their converts, to make provision also

for supplying their bodily wants. Those believers who possessed any property, contributed part of it to form a common fund, out of which the poorer members of the community were relieved. It is a mistake to suppose that the first believers gave up the right to their own property, and, in the literal sense of the expression, maintained a community of goods. The Gospel taught them what no other religion has taught so plainly and so powerfully, that they were to give an account to God of the use which they made of their worldly possessions, and that they were to look upon the poor as their brethren. They therefore abandoned the notion that God had given them the good things of this life for their own selfish enjoyment. They felt that they held them in trust for the benefit of others, as well as of themselves; and a part, at least, of their income was to be devoted to the relief of those who would otherwise be in want.

Charity, in the fullest sense of the term, was the characteristic mark of the early Christians; but the bond which held them together was faith in a common Saviour; and they immediately established the custom of meeting in each other's houses, to join in prayer to God, and to receive the bread and wine, in token of their belief in the death and resurrection of Christ. There is abundant evidence that the Lord's Supper was celebrated frequently, if not daily, by the early Christians. It, in fact, formed a part of their ordinary meal; and scarcely a day passed in which the converts did not give this solemn and public attestation of resting all their hopes in the death of their Redeemer.

Their numbers increased rapidly. The apostles worked stupendous miracles. Many of the converts

were themselves endued with the same power of speaking new languages, or of doing extraordinary works; and, before many weeks had elapsed, not only were some priests and Levites numbered among the converts at Jerusalem, but the new doctrines had begun to spread through the neighbouring towns.

16 The attention of the Jewish authorities was soon attracted to the apostles and their followers. Several causes combined at this time to raise among the Jews an opposition to the Gospel. The zealous patriots, whose numbers were increasing, and who were becoming more impatient of Roman domination, had indulged a hope that Jesus would have raised the standard of the Messiah, and headed an insurrection against the conquerors. Instead of seconding their wishes, he always inculcated obedience to the government, and was put to a disgraceful death. The followers, therefore, of such a man, if they were not too despicable to obtain any notice, were looked upon as enemies to the liberty of their country. All those persons who were immoral in their conduct, but, at the same time, pretenders to sanctity, could not fail to be offended at the severe reproofs which they received from Jesus and his disciples. The notion that righteousness was to be gained by an outward observance of legal ceremonies was utterly destroyed by the preaching of the Gospel. The kingdom of heaven was said, by the new teachers, to be thrown open to all persons who repented of their sins, and believed in Christ; and hence every one who was self-righteous, every one who boasted of his privileges as a descendant of Abraham, felt it to be a duty to persecute the disciples of Jesus.

It was not, however, so easy a matter to suppress

the new doctrines. The people looked on with amazement, and even with terror, while the apostles were working their miracles; and when they preached in the Temple, there was no want of multitudes who listened eagerly to their words. Every day increased their popularity; and the authorities had not courage to act openly against them. If they succeeded in arresting one or more of them privately, their prison doors were miraculously thrown open; and, instead of being brought to answer their charge or receive their sentence, they returned to disseminate their doctrines more publicly and boldly than before. If some false disciples insinuated themselves into their company, the immediate detection of their hypocrisy exhibited still more plainly the superhuman power of the apostles. Thus Ananias and Sapphira pretended to bring the whole of the sum which they had received for the sale of some land, and offered it as their contribution to the common fund. The apostles knew that the statement was false; and, while the falsehood was hanging on their lips, they both fell dead. The judgment may appear severe, but we may be sure that it was necessary. The sufferers had, in the first instance, been seeking for applause under the mask of charity, and then thought to impose upon the very persons whose miracles had been the cause of their own conversion. The times did not allow of such cases being multiplied, or escaping with impunity. Treachery from within might have made it impossible to resist the attacks which were threatening from without; and the death of Ananias and Sapphira must have had a powerful effect upon wavering and worldly minds, which were already half-convinced, but were still only half-resolved

to lay down their pleasures and their vices at the foot of the cross. Dissensions among the rulers themselves contributed in some measure to save the apostles from molestation. The Pharisees and Sadducees looked upon each other with feelings of jealousy and hatred. The Pharisees were most numerous, and reckoned among their sect the most learned expounders of the Law; but many of the rich and higher orders were Sadducees. Both parties agreed in persecuting the followers of Jesus; but the Sadducees were still more opposed to them, for maintaining so forcibly the doctrine of a Resurrection. The Pharisees were equally willing to see the apostles imprisoned, or even put to death; but they would not consent that they should suffer for preaching the resurrection of the dead: and thus the Gospel made more progress, because its enemies could not agree among themselves as to the means of suppressing it. The high-priest and his family happened at this time to be Sadducees; but Gamaliel, who was the most learned man of his day, and whose opinion had most weight in the council, was a Pharisee.

18 Jesus Christ had not himself left any directions for governing his Church: none, at least, are recorded in the books of the New Testament. During his abode on earth, he chose out twelve men from among his followers, to whom he gave a special commission to preach the Gospel, not only in Judæa, but throughout the world.

19 He also, on one occasion, sent out seventy other disciples, to declare to their countrymen that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. But they could only announce it as at hand. It is plain, that when the

kingdom was begun, and believers were to be gathered into it, he intended the keys of this kingdom to be given to the apostles. It was upon them that the Church was to be built. The commission of preaching and baptizing was given solemnly to them on the last occasion of their seeing their Master upon earth. Their first recorded act after his ascension, was to supply the deficiency which had been caused in their number by the treachery and death of Judas. All which seems to point out the twelve apostles as a distinct order from the rest of the believers, and to show that the management of the new community was intended, by their Master, to be committed to their hands.

Their first office, therefore, was to announce the offer of salvation. When any persons accepted it, it was for the apostles to admit them, by baptism, to the privileges of the new covenant; and, if they had had nothing else to do but to baptize, their time would have been fully occupied. They had also to attend the different places where prayer-meetings were held, and where the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered. When the fame of their miracles had spread, they were constantly called upon to exercise their preternatural power in healing the sick; and when we learn that the converts amounted to many thousands within a few days after the descent of the Holy Ghost, it is scarcely possible to conceive that the apostles could have met these various demands upon their time without calling in some assistance. The public fund which had been raised for the relief of the poor required much time, as well as discretion, in the distribution of it; and the apostles soon found themselves obliged to commit this part of their office to other hands. The business

was sufficiently laborious to occupy seven men, who were chosen, in the first instance, by the body of believers, and were then ordained for their special ministry, by having the hands of the apostles laid upon them. They were called Deacons, from a Greek term, which implies ministration, or service; and their first duty was to attend to the wants of the poor; but they also assisted the apostles in other ways, such as explaining the doctrines of the Gospel, and baptizing the new converts. In one point, however, there was a marked difference between them and the apostles. When they had persuaded men to believe, they could admit them into the Christian covenant by baptism, but they had not the power of imparting to them those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which it was the privilege of the apostles only to confer, by laying on their hands.

This division of labour, which was caused by the appointment of the deacons, not only gave the apostles much more time for preaching the Gospel, but their appointment is itself a proof that at this time the believers in Christ were not much molested by the Jewish authorities. The seasons most favourable for promoting a persecution were when the great festivals came round, such as the Passover, Pentecost, or the Feast of Tabernacles. On these occasions Jerusalem was filled with thousands of Jews from different parts of the world. Many of these strangers had never heard of the name of Jesus before their arrival in Judæa. So long a journey was likely to be undertaken by those who were most zealously attached to the law. Their previous notions of the Messiah would lead them to expect a triumphant conqueror, and an earthly kingdom; so that when they reached the land of their fathers, with their minds already worked upon by re-

ligious excitement, they would easily be persuaded to look with horror upon men who preached against the law, and against all the privileges which the Jews supposed to belong to their temple and nation. The apostles and their followers were represented as preaching these doctrines; and though the charge was very far from being true, yet the foreign Jews would hear them maintaining that Jesus was far greater than Moses, and that righteousness was not to be obtained by the law.

It was at one of these festivals, perhaps the Feast of Tabernacles, which followed the Ascension, that Stephen, who was one of the most active of the seven deacons, was stoned to death. He was drawn into dispute by some of the foreign Jews; and when they found him superior in argument, they raised against him the cry that he had blasphemed Moses and the law. Being dragged to trial upon this hasty charge, his sentence was as speedily passed as it was executed. He has always been called the first Christian Martyr; and, like his heavenly Master, to whom he offered a prayer as his soul was departing from his body, his last and dying words were uttered in behalf of his murderers.

23 This was the first open act of violence committed against the Christians since the crucifixion of the Founder of their religion; but even this is to be looked upon rather as an act of popular frenzy and excitement, than as a systematic attack authorised by the government. There is no evidence of the Roman authorities having been called upon, in any way, to interfere; and so long as there was no riot or public disturbance, they gave the Sanhedrim full permission to decide and to act in all cases which concerned reli-

gion. The affair of Stephen was exclusively of this nature: and though we cannot but view with abhorrence the monstrous iniquity of his sentence, it may have been strictly legal, according to the practice of the nation and of the times. The trial of the martyr took place in the Temple; his death was by stoning, as the law required in case of blasphemy; and the first stones were thrown by the witnesses. All which seems to show, that the forms of law were closely attended to, even in such a violent and hasty proceeding. The haste was perhaps necessary, that the whole might be over before the Romans could interfere, which they might be likely to have done, if a disturbance had been raised within the city: and it was probably from the same cause that the prisoner was hurried to his execution without the walls: such a spot was fitter for the scene of cruelty than the area of the Temple, or the streets, which were now crowded in consequence of the festival; and when the work of death was complete, which need not have required many minutes, there was nothing to excite the suspicion or vigilance of the Romans. No opposition seems to have been offered to the friends of the deceased carrying off his body, which was committed to the grave with the usual accompaniments of lamentation and mourning.

24 It has been doubted whether the Jews at this period possessed the power of inflicting capital punishment: but the history of Stephen appears to prove that they did. His execution, as has been observed, was precipitate, but we cannot suppose that it was altogether illegal, or that the Romans had taken away from the Jewish authorities the exercise of such a power. Offences against the procurator, or which could be construed into acts of resistance to the laws of the

empire, would, of course, be tried before Roman tribunals, or in courts where other laws than those of Moses were recognised; but it is demonstrable, that the laws of Moses were still in force, in matters not merely of a civil, but of a criminal nature; and the Romans were too politic to irritate a conquered people by depriving them at once of all their ancient usages. No attempt had hitherto been made (or, at least, by no regular act of the government) to force the Jews to adopt any religious rites of the heathen; and questions of religion were left entirely to the decision of Jewish tribunals. If Stephen had been taken before a Roman officer, he would have dismissed the case without even giving it a hearing; or, if he had listened to the complaint, he would have pronounced it to be one which had no relation to the laws of Rome, and in which he was not called upon to interfere.

25 It can hardly be denied that this was a favourable circumstance for the Gospel, at the time of its first promulgation. Its earliest enemies were the Jews, whose bitterness and malevolence could hardly have been exceeded: but their power to injure was not equal to their will. Had they shown their hatred to the Christians by a public persecution of them on an extensive scale, the Romans would probably have thought it necessary to quell the disturbance: and thus the new religion made a rapid progress in the city which was the headquarters of its deadliest enemies. But if the Romans had joined in opposing it, the contest must have appeared hopeless. Our faith may tell us, that even then the victory would have been on the side of truth, and God himself would have interposed to defeat the adversary; but, humanly speaking, the Gospel would have had much less chance of making

its way, if the power of Rome had been arrayed against it in its infancy. As we pursue the history, we shall find the whole strength of the empire put forth to crush the new religion; but the tree had then taken deep root, and though its leaves and branches were shaken and scattered by the tempest, it stood firm amidst the shock, and continued to *take root downwards, and to bear fruit upwards.* The fire and sword did their work; but they began too late to do it to their uttermost. Had the Gospel been preached while the sceptre of Judah was still grasped by a firm and independent hand, it might have crushed the rising sect before it had attracted many followers; or, had an edict from Rome prohibited the apostles from speaking in the name of Jesus, the mandate must have been obeyed; but Christ having appeared at this particular time, when the Jews, as a nation, retained but a remnant of power, and when their Roman conquerors did not care to trouble themselves with a religion which they affected to despise, the result was highly favourable to the progress of the Gospel. The Christians were for a long time considered by the heathen to be merely a Jewish sect; and the toleration, or the contempt (for either expression might be used), which protected the Jews in the exercise of their religion, afforded also the same protection to the Christians. The Jews would have exterminated Christianity, but had not the power: and the Romans were in some measure the unintentional protectors of the very religion which they afterwards tried so perseveringly, but so fruitlessly, to destroy. So true it is, that *God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty.*

CHAPTER II.

First Persecution of the Christians.—Conversion of Saul.—Introduction of the Gospel into Samaria; with an account of Simon Magus and the Gnostics.

THE death of Stephen was only the beginning of cruelties. If the popularity of the apostles had before protected them, the feeling of the people towards them had now greatly changed. It is possible that the calumny was generally believed, that the new doctrine was subversive of the Temple and the law. It was at least believed by the foreign Jews who had filled every part of the city; and the original hatred of the chief priests and scribes would burst out with more violence, from having been for a time suppressed. The persecution which ensued called forth the talents and activity of a young man, who now attracts our attention for the first time, and who, if human causes had been suffered to operate, might appear to have been born for the extirpation of Christianity. This man was Saul. He was a native of Tarsus, in Cilicia; and his father, who was a Pharisee, had given him a learned education. The schools of his native city, which were at this time in great repute, would have instructed him in heathen literature; but Saul was sent to Jerusalem, to finish his studies under Gamaliel, who has already been mentioned as the most celebrated expounder of

the Jewish law. The young Pharisee united great talents with a hasty disposition, and passions which could easily be excited; but his sense of religion had taught him to restrain them, except when he thought they could be devoted to the service of God; and, in an age which was peculiarly marked by wickedness and hypocrisy, his moral character was unimpeached and unimpeachable.

To a mind constituted and trained like that of Saul, the doctrines preached by the apostles would appear peculiarly heretical. As a Pharisee, he would approve of their asserting a future resurrection; but when they proved it by referring to a Man who had been crucified and come to life again, he would put them down for enthusiasts or impostors. When he heard that this same man was said to be the Messiah; that he and his followers denied that righteousness could come by the law; that circumcision, and the whole service of the Temple, were denounced as useless, without faith in an atonement which made all other sacrifices superfluous;—when the new doctrines were thus represented, the zeal of Saul at once pointed out to him that it was his duty to resist them with all his might. He appears to have come to Jerusalem, with some others of his countrymen, to attend the festival, and to have taken an active part in the attack upon Stephen. The dispute was at first carried on in words; and the foreign Jews (among whom we may recognise Saul and the Cilicians) undertook to refute the doctrines which had made such progress among the native inhabitants of Jerusalem. Saul was probably a man of much more learning than Stephen; but we may infer that the latter had the advantage in argument when we find

his opponents having recourse to violence and outrage. The zeal of Saul carried him still further than this, and the first Christian blood which was shed by the hands of persecutors is to be laid, in part, to the charge of Saul, who at least encouraged the death of Stephen, if he did not himself lift a stone against him, and was present when the spirit of the martyr returned to God who gave it.

The high-priest and his council were too happy to avail themselves of such an instrument for destroying the effect which had been caused by the miracles of the apostles. The death of Stephen was followed by similar outrages against many other persons who were believers in Jesus, and who were now imprisoned or killed, if they did not save themselves by flying from the city. The apostles maintained their ground: but the deacons, and most of their adherents, sought an asylum elsewhere. Saul was among the most active instruments in this first persecution of the Christian Church; and when he was about to leave Jerusalem, at the close of the festival, he made a proposal to the high-priests for carrying on the same system of attack in other places.

His journeys from Tarsus to Jerusalem were likely to make him acquainted with the large and populous city of Damascus; but whether he had lately visited it himself, or whether he had his information from the Jews who attended the festival, he had heard that the new doctrines were professed by some persons of both sexes in Damascus. The city was now in the military possession of Aretas, a petty prince of Arabia, whose daughter had been married to Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great: but when Herod took his brother Philip's wife to live with him, the daughter of

Aretas resented the insult by leaving him, and returning to her father. Aretas immediately made war upon his son-in-law, whom he defeated in a pitched battle; and the Romans neglecting at first to take up the quarrel, he held possession for some years of an extended territory, and among other places, he put a garrison into Damascus. His fear of the Romans would make him likely to court the favour of the Jews, who were very numerous in that city; and Saul could hardly have found a place where he was less likely to be checked in his attacks upon the Christians.

Damascus is at a distance of one hundred and fifty miles from Jerusalem; and Saul's journey thither is the first intimation which we have had of the Gospel having spread so far. There is, however, great reason to believe, that, even at this early period, it had been carried into several countries. Of the three thousand who were baptized on the day of Pentecost, some, if not many, had been foreign Jews; and the new doctrines would be carried by their means into distant parts of the world within a few weeks after their first promulgation. There is, therefore, nothing extraordinary in Saul being aware that Christians were to be found at Damascus; and having provided himself with letters from the high-priest at Jerusalem, addressed to the Jewish authorities, he set out with the intention of speedily returning with a train of Christian prisoners. God, however, had decided otherwise. Saul the persecutor was to become the chief preacher of the religion which he had opposed; and to him who had decreed this change it was equally easy to accomplish it.

There is no need to dwell upon the miraculous circumstances of the conversion of Saul. It is sufficient

to mention that Jesus himself appeared to him by the way, and revealed to him his future intentions concerning him. It was even added, that he was to preach the religion of Jesus to the Gentiles; which would, perhaps, have been more revolting to Saul's previous sentiments than his own adoption of the religion which he had persecuted. Nothing, however, short of a special miracle, would have been likely to persuade any Jew that salvation was to be extended to the Gentiles; and when this communication was made to Saul, we may say with truth that he was more enlightened on this point at the first moment of his conversion, than all the apostles, who had had so much longer time for understanding the Gospel. Saul was blinded by the vision, and did not recover his sight till he had been three days in Damascus. He was then admitted into the Christian covenant by baptism; and, either on account of the prejudice which still existed against him, or with a view to receiving more full revelations concerning the doctrines which he was to preach, he retired for the present into Arabia.

In the meantime the persecution had almost, if not entirely, ceased in Jerusalem. While the city was filled with foreign Jews who attended the festival, the high-priests found no want of instruments for executing their designs against the Christians. The houses in which these persons met for the purpose of prayer were easily known: and many innocent victims were thus surprised in the act of devotion, and sentenced to punishments more or less severe, on the charge of conspiring to subvert the laws of Moses. The crowded state of the city, which on such occasions often led to riots in the streets, would allow these acts of cruelty

and injustice to pass without any special notice from the Roman garrison; and while several Christians were put to death, many others found it necessary to escape a similar fate by leaving Jerusalem. The colleagues of Stephen in the office of deacon were likely to be particular objects of hatred to the persecuting party. They appear all to have sought safety in flight: and thus the very means which had been taken to extirpate the Gospel, conveyed it into a country which would have been least likely to receive it from Jewish teachers. This was Samaria, whose inhabitants still cherished their ancient hostility to the Jews; and while the persons who attended the festivals had carried Christianity into countries far more distant, Samaria, which was so near, was likely to hear nothing concerning it.

It will be remembered that Samaria had for many centuries been inhabited by a mixed race of people, whose religious worship was corrupted by Eastern superstitions, but who still professed to acknowledge the one true God, who was the God of Abraham, and who had revealed himself by Moses. It is known that when the ten tribes were carried captive to Assyria, the conquerors sent a numerous colony of strangers to occupy the country; and these men brought with them different forms of idolatry and superstition. There is, however, reason to think that a greater number of Israelites continued in the country than has been generally supposed.

The inhabitants of Samaria continued to speak the same language which had been spoken by all the twelve tribes until the time of the Babylonish captivity; which is the more remarkable, because the Jews who returned

to Jerusalem from Babylon had laid aside the original Hebrew, and had learnt from their conquerors to speak Chaldee. Very few of them could understand their Scriptures in the language in which they were written; and though copies of them were still multiplied for the use of the synagogues, the Hebrew words were written in Chaldee letters; whereas the Samaritans still continued to use the same letters which had always belonged to the Hebrew alphabet.

The Bible informs us of the quarrel which arose between the Samaritans and the Jews, when the latter began to rebuild Jerusalem upon their return from captivity; and we know that the same national antipathy continued in full force at the time of our Saviour appearing upon earth. There was, however, little or no difference between them as to the object of their worship. The God of the Jews was worshipped in Samaria, though the Samaritans denied that there was any local or peculiar sanctity in the Temple at Jerusalem. They held that he might be worshipped on Mount Gerizim as effectually as on Mount Sion; in which opinion they may be said to have come near, though without being conscious of it, to the part of that *law of liberty* which was established by the Gospel.

Another point in which they differed from the Jews was their rejection of all the books of the Scriptures, except the five which were written by Moses: but these were regarded by the Samaritans with almost the same reverence which was paid to them by the Jews. It must have been principally from these books of Moses that they learnt to entertain an expectation of the coming of the Messiah; but the fact is unquestionable that the notion which had for some time been so pre-

valent in Judæa, that the promised Deliverer was about to make his appearance, was also current in Samaria.

In some respects, therefore, we might say, that the Samaritans were less indisposed than the Jews to receive the Gospel. One of the great stumbling-blocks to the Jews, was the admission of any people beside themselves to the glories of the Messiah's kingdom; and, according to their own narrow views, it was as impossible for the Samaritans to partake of these privileges as the Gentiles. It was probably on account of this prejudice, that when our Saviour, during the period of his own ministry, sent out his disciples to preach the Gospel, he told them not to enter into any city of the Samaritans. He knew that the feelings of the two nations towards each other were as yet too hostile to admit of this friendly intercourse; but when he was about to return to heaven, and was predicting to the twelve apostles the final success of their labours, he told them plainly that they were to preach the Gospel in Samaria. He added, that they were to carry it also to the uttermost parts of the earth; and it is probable that, at that time, the apostles were as much surprised with the one prediction as with the other. The admission of Samaritans to the Messiah's kingdom must have appeared strange, even to the apostles; and this first step in the extension of the Gospel was owing to the accidental circumstance of so many Christians flying from Jerusalem after the death of Stephen.

Philip, one of the deacons, took refuge in Samaria, and announced to the inhabitants, that the Messiah was already come, in the person of Jesus. The working of miracles was by no means confined to the

apostles, but many of those upon whom they laid their hands received and exercised the same power; and we need not wonder that Philip gained many conquests in Samaria in a short time, when we remember that his preaching was confirmed by the evidence of miracles.

One of his hearers was a person who holds a conspicuous place in Ecclesiastical History. His name was Simon, and from the success with which he practised the popular art of magical delusions, he acquired the surname of *Magus*, or the Sorcerer. He is said, by many early writers, to have been the founder of the Gnostics, a new sect of philosophers, who were now rising into notice, and who had their name from laying claim to a more full and perfect *knowledge* of God. These opinions seem to have been most prevalent in Alexandria, and to have been a compound of heathen philosophy, the corrupted religion of the Jews, and the Eastern notion of two principles, one of good, the other of evil. They believed matter to have existed from all eternity; and they accounted for the origin of evil, without making God the author of it, by supposing it to reside in matter. They also imagined that several generations of beings had proceeded in regular succession from God, and that one of the latest of them created the world, without the knowledge of God. This explained why the world contained such a mass of misery and evil; and the Gnostics boasted that they were able to escape from the evil, by their superior knowledge of God. But when it is said that Simon Magus was the founder of the Gnostics, it is meant that he was the first person who introduced the name of Christ into this absurd and irrational system. For as soon as Christianity became known by the preach-

ing of the apostles, the Gnostics laid hold of as much of it as suited their purpose, by giving out that Christ was one of the beings who had proceeded from God, and who was sent into the world to free it from the tyranny of evil; thus confirming, though under a heap of errors, the two great doctrines of the Gospel, that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and that he came into the world to save us from our sins.

Simon Magus had an opportunity of hearing the doctrines of the Gospel, when Philip the Deacon was preaching in Samaria, and being conscious that his own miracles were mere tricks and delusions, he was likely to be greatly impressed by the real miracles of Philip. He, accordingly, joined the rest of his countrymen who were baptized; though we cannot tell how far he was, at that time, sincere in professing his belief in Jesus Christ. Being himself a native of Samaria, he must have shared in the general expectation that the Messiah was about to appear; and when he heard the history of Jesus, as related by Philip, he probably believed that the predictions concerning the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus; but the school of philosophy in which he had studied, taught him to mix up several strange notions concerning the person of the Messiah with those which he had collected from the scriptural prophecies.

It is certain, however, that the conversions in Samaria were extremely numerous; and when the apostles heard of it, who had continued all the time at Jerusalem, they sent down Peter and John to finish the work which had been so successfully begun by Philip. The latter had not the power of giving to his converts the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, such as speaking foreign

languages, or healing diseases; but when the apostles came down, they caused still greater astonishment, by laying their hands on those who had been baptized by Philip, and enabling them to exercise these miraculous gifts. Simon now showed how little his heart had been really touched by the doctrines of the Gospel. He was still thinking of nothing but how he could carry on his ancient imposture; and he even offered the apostles money if they would sell him the power of communicating these extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. It is needless to say that his offer was rejected. The history of Simon is, from this time, so mixed up with fable, that we scarcely know what to believe concerning him; but there is reason to think that he visited many places, and particularly Rome, dispersing, as he went, his own peculiar philosophy, and perhaps carrying the name of Christ into many countries which had not yet received the Gospel from any of the apostles. His followers were very numerous, and divided into several sects, from all of whom no small injury was caused to the Christians, by prejudicing the heathen against them, and by seducing many true believers to adopt the errors and impieties of Gnosticism.

The Gospel, however, had gained a footing in Samaria, and thus far one of the Jewish prejudices was overcome; and since Philip was sent immediately after, by a special revelation from heaven, to baptize an Ethiopian eunuch, it is not improbable that this was also done to remove another prejudice which was likely to prevail with the Jews, who knew that eunuchs were forbidden to enter into the congregation of the Lord, and who might therefore think that they were excluded from the Christian covenant. It was thus that the

minds of the Jews were gradually prepared for the final extension of the Gospel; but, for some time, it was preached only to the Jews, and it appears to have spread rapidly through the whole of Palestine, and to have met with little opposition for some years after the conversion of Saul. This apostle (for we may already call him by this name) continued a long time in Arabia: and while he was preparing himself for his future labours, the other apostles were engaged in making circuits from Jerusalem, to visit the churches which they had planted.

Being thus obliged to be frequently absent from Jerusalem, they left the Christians of that city to the permanent care of one who was in every way suited to the office of superintending them. This was James, who, in addition to his other qualifications, was a relation of our Lord. The Scriptures speak of him, as well as of Simon, Joses, and Judas, as being brothers of Jesus Christ; but few persons, either in ancient or modern times, have taken this expression in its fullest and most literal sense, and supposed these four persons to have been sons of Joseph and Mary. Some have conceived them to have been half-brothers, the sons of Joseph by a former wife; but perhaps the most probable explanation is, that they were the sons of another Mary, the sister of the Virgin, by a husband whose name was Cleopas; and thus, though James is called the brother of our Lord, he was, in fact, his cousin.

It seems most probable that he was not one of the twelve apostles, and consequently that he was a different person from the James who is described as the son of Alpheus. Such, at least, was the opinion of a majority of the early writers; all of whom are unanimous in

speaking of James as the first bishop of Jerusalem. We are, perhaps, not to infer from this that he bore the name of bishop in his own lifetime; and his diocese (if the use of such a term may be anticipated) was confined within the limits of a single town; but the writers who applied to him this title, looked rather to its primary meaning of an inspector or overseer, than to the sense which it acquired a few years later, when church government was more uniformly established; and by calling James the first bishop of Jerusalem, they meant that the Christians of that city, who undoubtedly amounted to some thousands, were confided to his care, when the apostles found themselves so frequently called away. We have seen that the Church of Jerusalem contained also subordinate officers, named deacons, who were originally appointed to assist the apostles, and would now render the same service to James. A few years later we find mention of Presbyters or Elders; and though the date of their first appointment is not recorded, it probably arose out of the same causes which had led already to the ordaining of deacons, and to the election of James; which causes were, the rapidly-increasing numbers of the Christians, and the continued absence of the apostles from Jerusalem. The title of presbyter may have been borrowed from the Jewish Church; or the persons who bore it may have been literally elders, and selected on that account from the deacons, to form a kind of council to James, in providing for the spiritual and temporal wants of his flock.

Whenever the apostles founded a church, the management of it was conducted on the same principle. At first a single presbyter, or, perhaps, a single deacon,

might be sufficient, and the number of such ministers would increase with the number of believers; but while the apostles confined themselves to making circuits through Palestine, they were themselves the superintendents of the churches which they planted.

It seems most correct to take this view of the office of the apostles, and not to consider each, or any of them as locally attached to some particular town. It is true that all of them planted several churches, and these churches continually looked upon some particular apostle as their first founder. There are cases in which the apostles are spoken of as the first bishops of these churches; but there is no evidence that they bore this title in their own lifetime, nor could the founder of several churches be called, with propriety, the bishop of all of them, or of any one in particular.

Their first care seems to have been to establish an elder or elders, who were resident in the place; but they themselves travelled about from city to city, and from village to village: first within the confines of Judæa, and at no great distance from Jerusalem; but afterwards in more extensive circuits, from one end of the empire to the other. There appear also, in addition to the presbyters and deacons, who may be called the resident ministers, to have been preachers of the Gospel who were not attached to any particular church, but who travelled about from place to place, discharging their spiritual duties. These men were called, in a special manner, Evangelists. One of them was Philip, who, as we have seen, had first been a deacon of the Church at Jerusalem; but after his flight from that city, he seems to have resided principally in

Cæsarea, and to have preached the Gospel wherever he found occasion, without discharging his former office of deacon in any particular church. Such labours must have been peculiarly useful in the infancy of the Church; and we have the authority of Scripture for saying, that a special distribution of spiritual gifts was made to the evangelists, which qualified them for their important work. Mark and Luke are, perhaps, to be considered evangelists in this sense, as well as in the more common one of having published written Gospels. Both of them were preachers of the Gospel for many years before they committed the substance of their preaching to writing: and we may suppose that such men were of great assistance to the apostles by accompanying them on their journeys, or by following up and continuing the work which had been so successfully begun.

It was during one of these circuits of the apostles, that another important step was made in the extension of the Gospel, which had hitherto been preached only to the Jews. It was natural, that people of any other country, who resided in Palestine, and became acquainted with the religion of the Jews, should be led to see the absurdity of their own superstitions, and to adopt a belief in one God, instead of worshipping many. Such appears to have been the case in all the towns which contained a Jewish synagogue; and though the persons who were thus far converted did not conform to the burdensome parts of the Mosaic law, they attended the service of the synagogue, and worshipped the one true God, who had revealed himself in the Jewish Scriptures. Some persons have called them "proselytes of the gate," to distinguish them from

"proselytes of righteousness," who adopted circumcision, and became in every respect identified with the descendants of Abraham. A Greek or Roman, who was in any degree a convert to Judaism, could hardly live long in Palestine without hearing of the new religion, which was spreading so rapidly by the preaching of the apostles: but the apostles themselves did not at first understand, that they were to preach it to any person who was not a true Israelite, or at least a circumcised proselyte. It pleased God to make a special revelation to Peter upon this subject; and the first Gentile who was baptized was Cornelius, who was a centurion of the Roman forces quartered at Cæsarea. Nothing could be more convincing to the persons who were present at his baptism, than that God approved of the admission of this Gentile into the Christian covenant; for he and his companions received the visible and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit: but though Peter, upon his return to Jerusalem, related the whole transaction, and at the time satisfied the persons who had been disposed to blame him, we shall see that the question of the admission of Gentiles to the Gospel was not yet fully and finally decided.

It is probable that Saul had from the first been more enlightened upon this subject than the rest of the apostles; for it was announced to him from Heaven, at the time of his conversion, that he was to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. We left him in Arabia, and we do not hear of his commencing his office of preacher till the third year after his conversion, when he returned to Damascus. The Jews, as might be supposed, were excessively enraged at the success which attended him; for his learning gave him great advantage in

argument; and the circumstances attending his conversion were likely to be known in Damascus. His enemies, however, prevailed upon Aretas, who still held command of the city, to assist them in their designs against Saul; and finding himself in personal danger, if he stayed there any longer, he thought it best to go elsewhere: but the gates were so carefully watched to prevent his escape, that his only chance was to be let down the wall in a basket; and, by this contrivance, he eluded the vigilance of his enemies.

He then proceeded to Jerusalem. But with what different feelings must he have entered it, from those with which he had last quitted it, when he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the Christians! He was still zealous and fervent; still seeking to do God service; but his heart had been humbled and disciplined by the Gospel. The Christians at Jerusalem were at first afraid of him; but he found a friend in Barnabas, whose family was of Cyprus, and whose conversion was the more remarkable, as he had held the office of a Levite. There is a tradition that he had been a fellow-pupil with Saul in the school of Gamaliel; but whatever cause may have made them acquainted, he was aware of the change which had been worked in the mind of Saul; and upon his recommendation, the former enemy of the Gospel was cordially received by the Church at Jerusalem. None of the apostles were now in the city, except Peter; and this was the first interview between him and Saul. If Peter could have had any doubts remaining concerning the admission of Gentile converts, they were likely to be removed by his conversations with Saul; but the latter had not yet entered upon the field which was

afterwards opened to him, in preaching to the Gentiles. His skill in disputation was exercised at present with the foreign Jews who happened to be residing in Jerusalem; for the prejudices of these men were generally less deeply rooted than those of the permanent inhabitants of Judæa. Saul, however, had made himself too notorious on his former visit, for his extraordinary change to pass unnoticed; and finding the same scene likely to be acted against him which had driven him from Damascus, he stayed in Jerusalem only fifteen days, and returned to his native city of Tarsus. He continued there for some years; but we cannot suppose that he was inactive in discharging his heavenly commission. He, perhaps, confined himself to the limits of Cilicia; and there is reason to think, that his preaching was the cause of Christian churches being established in that country.

The period of Saul's residence in Cilicia was one of tranquillity and prosperity to the Church at large. The Jews at Jerusalem were not inclined to relax their hostility; but, during the latter part of the reign of Tiberius, the presence of Roman troops in Judæa would be likely to act as a protection to the Christians. Pontius Pilate was deposed from his government in the year 36, and Judæa was then annexed to the presidentship of Syria. This brought Vitellius, the president, with his forces, more than once to Jerusalem; and the presence of a Roman army, which always operated as a restraint upon the Jews, would so far procure a respite from molestation to the Christians. Tiberius was succeeded, in 37, by Caligula, who, at the beginning of his reign, bestowed a small territory, with the title of king, upon Herod Agrippa, grandson

of Herod the Great. In the following year, he added Galilee to his dominions: but this liberality to an individual was coupled with most insulting cruelty to the Jewish nation. For the four years of his reign, he was engaged in a fruitless attempt to force the Jews to erect his statue in their Temple. The opposition to this outrage kept the whole of Judæa in a ferment; and though the President of Syria wanted either inclination or power to enforce his master's command, and the Jews succeeded in their resistance, they were so occupied in measures of self-defence, that they had little time to think of the Christians. This may account, in some measure, for the peace which the churches enjoyed for some years after the conversion of Saul: and the Gospel had now made considerable progress in distant countries. It had been carried as far as Phœnicia and the island of Cyprus; but the place where it flourished most successfully, next to Jerusalem, was Antioch.

We have no account of the first establishment of Christianity in Antioch, which was the principal city of Syria, and the residence of the Roman president, except that some of the believers who fled from Jerusalem during Saul's persecution, are said to have travelled thither, being probably Jews who resided there, and who had gone up to the festival. These persons may be considered the founders of the Church of Antioch; which, therefore, deserves to be ranked the second in order of time, as it was next in importance, to that at Jerusalem. It was too far off to be visited, at first, by any of the apostles: and the number of Christians appears to have been considerable, before the apostles heard anything concerning them. The

events which occurred at the end of the reign of Tiberius, caused a more frequent intercourse between Jerusalem and Antioch; and it was about the period of Caligula's death, in 41, that the apostles thought fit to send Barnabas to visit the Christians of Antioch. We have hitherto anticipated the use of the term *Christians;* but it was about this period that it came to be applied to the believers in Jesus. They were also called Nazarenes, because Jesus had spent so many years of his life in Nazareth, and was generally supposed to have been born there; and the Jews would have particular pleasure in applying this name, which conveyed an idea of reproach, to Jesus and his followers. The believers who resided in Antioch were the first to assume the more pleasing and more appropriate name of Christians, which came into general use, both with friends and enemies, a few years after the period of which we are now speaking.

Barnabas may have been selected for this mission on account of his connection with the island of Cyprus, which is not very distant from Antioch; but he was well suited for it, on account of his zeal. He soon saw that a favourable field was opened for propagating the Gospel; but the Church of Antioch had sprung up of itself, and there was probably a want of persons, not only to direct, but to instruct the flock, whose numbers were daily increasing.

Barnabas, therefore, took the important step of going to Tarsus and engaging the services of Saul, with whom, as we have seen, he had more than an ordinary acquaintance. Saul had probably been engaged for some years, in preaching the Gospel in his native city and its neighbourhood; and he now returned

with Barnabas to carry on the same work at Antioch. They continued there for more than a year; and there is nothing which leads us to suspect that the Christians in that city met with any molestation; but everything indicates that the Gospel spread rapidly, and not merely among people of the lowest ranks.

In the year 44, Saul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem; and the cause of their journey presents another pleasing picture of the charity of the early Christians. This year, which was the fourth of the reign of Claudius, was memorable for a severe famine, which visited several parts of the empire, and particularly Palestine, and lasted several years. The famine had been foretold, some time before, at Antioch, by a man named Agabus, who came down from Jerusalem; which fact is of importance, as furnishing an instance of those preternatural gifts of the Spirit which were so plentifully diffused among believers of every description in the first century.

We might have been prepared to find the apostles endued occasionally with the power of foretelling future events; as we also know that they were sometimes enabled to read the thoughts of men before they had been uttered by the mouth; but there is reason to think that the gift of prophecy was by no means uncommon among the early Christians. It is well known to readers of the New Testament, that this gift of prophecy is often spoken of without reference to the knowledge of future events; and that it means the power, which was possessed by many believers, of understanding and interpreting the Scriptures. This power, though it may be acquired to a considerable extent by ordinary means, was imparted in a preter-

natural way to many of the first believers, who were known by the name of prophets; and since no gift could be of more essential service to the early Church, when so many new converts were to be instructed in the faith, it is probable that the prophets, in this sense of the term, were much more numerous than those who were gifted to foretell future events. It is, however, certain, that prophecy, in this latter sense, or prediction, was exercised occasionally by the Christians of the apostolic age. Agabus, as we have seen, possessed such a power, and foretold the famine which was to happen in the reign of Claudius; and as soon as it was known that the Christians in Judæa were suffering for want of food, their brethren at Antioch raised a subscription, and sent the money to Jerusalem by Saul and Barnabas.

The Jews had now, once more, a king of their own; for Herod Agrippa, who had received but a small territory from Caligula, was presented by Claudius with the valuable addition of Judæa and Samaria; so that his kingdom was nearly as large as that of his grandfather. Though Agrippa was really a vassal of Rome, the Jews had recovered a nominal independence; and whenever they were free from foreign oppression, they were sure to think of schemes for harassing the Christians. Agrippa, also, would find it his policy to indulge them in these measures; and about the time that Saul and Barnabas arrived from Antioch, he was carrying on a persecution.

Two, if not more, of the apostles happened to be now at Jerusalem, and Agrippa was aware of the importance of securing the leaders of the rising sect. The two apostles were Peter and James, the latter being the

brother of John the Evangelist. Agrippa contrived to get both of them into his power, which was soon followed by his ordering James to be beheaded. He appears to have been the first of the apostles who was put to death, and nothing authentic is known of his history before this period; but it seems most probable that he had not yet undertaken a journey into any distant country, though he may have been actively employed in Judæa and the neighbouring districts.

Peter's execution was reserved for a more public occasion, when the feast of the Passover, which filled the city with foreign Jews, would be finished; and these feasts, as has been already stated, were generally the signal for the persecution of the Christians. In this instance, the design was frustrated. Peter was delivered from prison by a miracle, and effected his escape from Jerusalem; and the innocent blood which Agrippa had caused to be shed was speedily avenged, by the king being suddenly struck with a painful and loathsome disease, which soon carried him off. In the meanwhile, Saul and Barnabas had executed their commission, by delivering the money which had been subscribed for the suffering Christians, and then returned to Antioch.

But the famine is known to have continued some years longer; which may perhaps have operated favourably for the Christians: for not only had the Jewish rulers sufficient occupation in providing remedies for the national calamity, but some, at least, of those who had been opposed to the new religion, could hardly fail to observe and admire the effect of its principles, in teaching men to love one another, and to give such proofs of their charity in the present season of general

distress. It is certain, as we shall have occasion to see, that the liberality of the Christians towards their suffering brethren continued for some years; and there are also indications of the churches of Judæa being exposed to no particular persecution for some time after the death of Agrippa. His son, who was also called Agrippa, being only seventeen years of age at the time of his father's death, was not allowed to succeed him in the government; and Judæa was once more subject to a Roman procurator. The first, who was Cuspius Fadus, and his successor, Tiberius Alexander, were so unpopular with the Jews, and the feeling of hostility to Rome was now becoming so general throughout the country, that this may have been another cause of the attention of the Jewish authorities being drawn away from the Christians.

CHAPTER III.

Paul's first Journey.—Dissensions at Antioch about the Gentile Converts.—Council at Jerusalem.—Disagreement between Paul and Peter.

WE are now arrived at a most interesting period, not only in the personal history of Saul, but in the propagation of the Gospel. Little is known concerning the evangelical labours of many of the apostles: but it cannot be doubted that they fulfilled their Master's injunctions of carrying his doctrines into distant countries; and most, if not all, of them appear to have commenced their missionary journeys about the period at which we are now arrived. Hitherto, Samaria and Galilee had formed the limits of their ministry; but the churches of these countries were now regularly established, and Christianity was spreading so fast in other parts of the world, that it was become highly expedient for the apostles to extend their travels. Had they delayed to do so, there was a danger of the new converts receiving the Gospel with an admixture of errors and corruptions; particularly where the Gnostic doctrines had gained a footing; and the power of imparting the miraculous gifts of the Spirit was confined to the apostles only.

It was at this eventful period that Saul, who was peculiarly the apostle of the Gentiles, set out on his

first apostolic journey. The believers at Antioch were ordered, by a special revelation, to send forth Saul and Barnabas on this hazardous enterprise; and they commenced it by crossing over to the island of Cyprus. The Gospel had been preached there some years before, which facilitated the success of the two apostles: but the conversion of Sergius Paulus, the proconsul and chief governor of the island, was an event which could hardly have been anticipated, and was owing to the miraculous powers which the apostles exercised. Having traversed the whole length of the island, they crossed over to the opposite continent; and, during the course of a rapid journey, they planted several churches in Pisidia, Lycaonia, and Pamphylia. In almost every place they met with the same reception—of a ready hearing on the part of the Gentiles, and of obstinate resistance on the part of the Jews.

More than once their lives were in danger; but a timely retreat, or, if that was denied, a special miracle, preserved them from their enemies: and the opposition of the Jews was so constant and incurable, that the two apostles openly avowed their intention of devoting themselves, in future, to the conversion of the Gentiles. It was on this journey that Saul appears, for the first time, to have used the name of Paul: whether he had always borne the two names, as was customary with many of his countrymen, or whether he found it safer, when travelling in heathen countries, to adopt a Roman name, is uncertain. We shall therefore cease, from this time, to call him Saul. It was under that name that he had been known as a persecutor of the Church; but it was under the name of Paul that he preached the doctrines of the Cross, and that he wrote the Epis-

tles, which have been cherished by believers of every age as a groundwork of their faith and hope.

It was probably in the year 45, that this southern part of Asia Minor received the Gospel, by the preaching of Paul and Barnabas; and having completed their circuit, by returning to Perga, at which place they had landed from Cyprus, they again set sail, and found themselves once more at Antioch. The discussion which was raised by the report of their operations, confirms the remark made above, that the baptism of Cornelius was not considered to have decided the question concerning Gentile converts. The Church of Antioch, which was not, in any sense, dependent upon that of Jerusalem, may, from the first, have admitted Gentiles within its pale; and Paul and Barnabas, on their late journey, had established the principle, in its fullest extent, that no sort of proselytism to the Mosaic law was necessary for a heathen, before or after his conversion. This, however, was not the doctrine of a large party belonging to the Church at Jerusalem; and some of these men coming down, at this time, to Antioch, caused great distress to the Gentile converts, by saying that they not only ought to conform to the customs of the Mosaic law, with respect to food and other matters of that kind, but that, if they hoped to be saved, it was absolutely necessary for them to be circumcised. Here was a direct subversion of the Gospel covenant, which promised salvation by faith in Christ.

With a view to conciliate the Jews, or to avoid giving them offence, the Gentile converts might have agreed to observe some of the commandments and prohibitions enjoined by Moses; but when they were told

that faith alone would not justify them, unless they were circumcised, all their former hopes seemed to be destroyed. It was impossible that such a doctrine could, for a moment, be admitted by Paul, who had received a commission from Heaven to preach to the Gentiles justification by faith, and who had lately been imparting to a large number of Gentile converts the same preternatural gifts which the Jews had received. It was of the utmost importance that the question should be finally settled, and with the general consent, as far as it could be obtained, of the whole Christian Church. For this purpose, it was essential to ascertain the opinion of the apostles; and the attention of the Christians at Antioch would naturally be turned to their brethren at Jerusalem. The apostles, however, had ceased for some time to be resident in that city; but it was visited occasionally by some of them; and Paul and Barnabas, who had been the chief instruments of converting the Gentiles, were commissioned to go to Jerusalem, and to bring back a definitive sentence as to the controverted point.

The council which was held upon this subject is one of the most interesting events which happened during the lifetime of the apostles. Peter and John were at this time at Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas were therefore able to come to a full understanding with them; and all the firmness of Paul's character was necessary to carry the point which he had so deeply at heart. Among the persons who had gone up with Paul was Titus, who had himself been converted from heathenism. Some of the more bigoted Jews insisted upon his being circumcised; but Paul as resolutely opposed this being done, and Titus continued uncircumcised. The ques-

tion was then discussed in a full assembly of believers. Peter delivered his opinion, as plainly as Paul could have done, in favour of the Gentile converts; and the whole council being agreed upon the point, a decree was drawn up by James, as head of the Church at Jerusalem, and delivered to Paul and Barnabas. This decree set the question about circumcision entirely at rest. No Gentile was required to submit to it; nor was any part of the Mosaic law imposed upon the Gentiles as necessary to their salvation. But at the same time, a strong desire was expressed that no offence should be given to the Jews.

There were certain customs, which, in themselves, were indifferent, but which few Jews, even after their conversion to Christianity, could be persuaded to lay aside. Of this nature was their abhorrence of eating any animal with the blood in it, or any meat which had been offered in sacrifice to an idol. The Gentiles had no such scruples; and the Jews, who were always unwilling to sit at table with any but their own people, were likely to be seriously annoyed by seeing the Gentile converts paying no attention to a command so positively given by Moses. Accordingly, the letter written from the council recommended strongly that the Jewish prejudices should be consulted in these matters. The Gentile converts were advised to abstain from eating anything which would offend the Jews; and the laxity of morals among the heathen was so deplorable, that the council thought fit to add a special injunction against the sin of fornication.

Such appears to be a correct account of the council which was held at Jerusalem, and of the decree which was then drawn up. Many fanciful reasons have been

assigned for the apostles laying these particular injunctions upon the Gentile converts; but the simpler view here taken of the transaction may serve to show that the prohibitions were given, not as if the things prohibited were absolutely wrong in themselves, but because the Jewish and Gentile converts had no chance of living amicably together, unless the Gentiles made concessions upon certain points. It was also a great concession on the part of the Jews, when they released the Gentile Christians from the obligation of being circumcised. But here it was necessary for the apostles to stand firm. The great doctrine of Justification was in danger, if circumcision had been enforced; but no evangelical principle was affected by the Gentiles consulting the Jewish prejudices at their meals; on the contrary, the Gospel pointed out the necessity of their not giving offence, even in the smallest matters, to any of their brethren. The Jews themselves were released from the ceremonial parts of their law, as soon as they believed in Christ: but there is reason to think that very few availed themselves of this liberty. The apostles continued to live as Jews, with respect to all legal observances, except when they thought that they could advance the cause of the Gospel by showing that it was really and truly a law of liberty. Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, by no means laid aside his Jewish habits; and yet, when there was no fear of offending the Jews, or when he saw his converts inclined to give too much importance to outward ceremonies, he showed by his own practice, as well as by his precepts, that he was perfectly at liberty to live as a Gentile. The spirit of charity, and the furtherance of the Gospel, are the two principles which enable us to

understand the conduct of Paul individually, and the celebrated decree of the council.

With respect to the Gentile converts, the decree was at first received by them as a great relief, because it freed them from the necessity of circumcision; and the other part of it, which related to articles of food, could hardly be said to impose any hardship upon them. But in process of time, what was intended by the apostles as a measure of peace and brotherly concord, became a burden upon the conscience, and almost a superstition. The order against eating any animal with the blood in it, was intended merely as a precaution when Jews and Gentiles were living in habits of social intercourse: but the prohibition was considered to be in force long after the cause of it had ceased to exist: and there is evidence that Christians, for some centuries, refused to allow blood to be mixed in any manner with their food.

Paul now took leave of Peter and John, with little prospect of their meeting each other soon, if at all, in this world. They were going to engage more actively than before in their respective ministries; and it was well understood between them, that Paul had been specially chosen to convert the Gentiles. Peter considered himself to be more peculiarly the apostle of his countrymen; but he fully recognised Paul as his brother and fellow-labourer. The bodily wants of the Christians in Judæa were interesting alike to both of them. The famine, which had begun two years before, was still severely felt: and Paul undertook, as he travelled in other countries, to excite his converts to assist their brethren in Judæa by a pecuniary collection. With this charitable understanding they parted; and it need

not be added, that when Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch with the decree of the council, the contents of it were highly gratifying to the Gentile converts.

It does not appear that they were again molested on the score of circumcision; but the good sense and expediency of the late decree were very apparent, when the Jews and Gentiles came to meet together in familiar and social intercourse. Notwithstanding the advice which had been given, it would seem that the Gentiles sometimes shocked the Jews in the article of their food; or perhaps the Jews carried their scruples to an unwarrantable length. It was either now, or at a later period, that Peter came to Antioch. Whenever it was, he once more met with Paul; and, though we may hope that the two apostles again parted on friendly terms, there was, for a time, considerable altercation between them. Peter thought fit to take part with those of his countrymen who declined joining the Gentiles at their meals, though he had before associated familiarly with them, and had shown his conviction that the Jewish customs were unnecessary. He now appeared to attach a greater importance to them, and even Barnabas followed his example. But Paul still stood firm. He saw, as before, that this excessive attachment to unessential points might lead weaker brethren to suppose that they were really essential. He stated this publicly to Peter, and censured him for what he was doing; but though the Church at Antioch, which contained many Gentiles, was not in much danger of being led into error upon this point, we shall have abundant proof, that there was still a large party at Jerusalem whose views of Christian liberty were much more confined than those of Paul.

CHAPTER IV.

Paul's Second Journey through Macedonia to Athens and Corinth: he visits Jerusalem, and resides three years at Ephesus.—Disorders in the Church of Corinth.—Paul again at Corinth.—He returns through Macedonia to Jerusalem.—Sent as a prisoner to Cæsarea.—Labours of other Apostles.—Luke writes his Gospel.

IT was now time that the great apostle of the Gentiles should undertake a second missionary journey. It was his wish to have travelled, as before, in company with Barnabas: but they disagreed as to taking with them a nephew of Barnabas, and set out in different directions. We may truly say, in this instance, that God brought good out of evil. It was evil, that the two apostles should have any feelings of ill-will towards each other; but the division of their labours carried the Gospel more rapidly over a greater extent of country. It was natural that Barnabas should begin his journey by visiting Cyprus, the country with which he was connected by birth; and it was equally natural that Paul should take an interest in the Cilician churches, which were among the first that he had planted, but which he had not visited on his former journey. His present companion was Silas, or Silvanus, who had come with him on his last return from Jerusalem; and, having passed through Cilicia, they visited the countries of Pisidia and Lyconia, which

had received the Gospel from Paul and Barnabas about a year before.

They now carried with them the letter of the council, which settled the Christian liberty of the Gentile converts; and this might at first make us still more surprised, to find Paul requiring one of his own converts to be circumcised. This was Timothy, who was a Jew only on his mother's side, and had not been circumcised before. He had probably embraced the Gospel during St Paul's former visit to this country; and the apostle perceived in him so much zeal, together with such a knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures, that he decided upon engaging him as a companion and fellow-labourer. The policy of having him circumcised was very apparent: for no Jew would have listened to his preaching, if this ceremony had been known to be omitted. Nor was there anything inconsistent in Paul circumcising Timothy, though he was bearer of the decree which pronounced such an act unnecessary, and though he had himself persisted in preventing the circumcision of Titus. If he had consented in the case of Titus, he would have countenanced the notion, that faith in Christ was not sufficient for justification without circumcision; for that was then the question under discussion. But Timothy had been baptized into all the privileges of the Gospel, without being circumcised. Hundreds, if not thousands, of converts had been admitted in the same country, who were wholly independent of the law of Moses. It was only when Paul decided to take Timothy with him on his journey, and when he wished to make him serviceable in converting the Jews, that he used the precaution of having him circumcised. To Timothy

himself, it was a mere outward ceremony; but it might make him the means of persuading others to embrace the doctrines which he bore impressed upon his heart.

Paul and his companions now traversed a much larger portion of the continent of Asia than he had visited on his first journey. Churches were planted by them in Phrygia and Galatia; and when they came to the sea-coast at Troas, their company was further increased by Luke, who is supposed to have been a native of Antioch, and a proselyte to the Law of Moses. He had followed the profession of a physician: but from this time he devoted himself to preaching the Gospel, and for several years was either a fellow-traveller with Paul, or took the charge of churches which the apostle had planted. It was a bold measure for four Jews to introduce a new religion into Greece, the country which might still be said to take the lead in literature and science, though it had yielded in arms to Rome. The Greeks and Romans had long been acquainted with the Jews; but they looked upon their religion as a foolish superstition, and treated their peculiar customs with contempt. This treatment might be provoking to individual Jews, but it generally ensured for them toleration as a people; and hence they were seldom prevented from establishing a residence in any town within the Roman empire. The Jews repaid this indulgence by taking little pains to make proselytes. In their hearts they felt as much contempt for the superstitions of the heathen as the latter professed openly for the Jews; but they were content to be allowed to follow their own occupations, and to worship the God of their fathers without molestation. The Christians might have enjoyed the same

liberty, if their principles had allowed it; and for some time the heathen could not, or would not, consider them as anything else than a sect of the Jews. But a Christian could not be sincere without wishing to make proselytes. He could not see religious worship paid to a false God, without trying to convince the worshipper that he was following a delusion. The Divine Founder of Christianity did not intend it to be tolerated, but to triumph. It was to be the universal, the only religion; and though the apostles, like the rest of their countrymen, could have borne with personal insults and contempt, they had but one object in view, and that was, to plant the cross of Christ upon the ruins of every other religion.

This could not fail, sooner or later, to expose the preachers of the Gospel to persecution; for every person who was interested in keeping up the old religions, would look upon the Christians as his personal enemies. Hitherto, however, we have seen the heathen take little notice of the new doctrines. They had been first planted in Palestine, where the heathen had, necessarily, little influence; and those countries of Western Asia which were the next to receive them were some of the least civilised in the Roman empire. Whenever the Gospel had met with opposition, the Jews were the promoters of it. They considered the Gospel as destructive of the Law of Moses; and the notion of being saved by faith in a crucified Redeemer was opposed by the bigoted Jews with the most violent hostility.

The apostles were now entering upon a new field. They were approaching the countries in which learning and philosophy had made the greatest progress; and

the pride of learning, when ignorant or regardless of the knowledge which comes from heaven, has always been one of the most formidable enemies of the Gospel. The Greeks and Romans were also intolerant of any new religion. The Greeks were unwilling to listen to it unless it was connected with some system of philosophy. The Romans had passed many laws to prevent the introduction of new religions: and though these laws were not always enforced, it was in the power of any magistrate, who was so disposed, to execute them, with vexatious severity.

Paul and his companions had not been long in Macedonia, before they were exposed to a persecution of this kind. Philippi was the town in which they were first arrested; and Paul and Silas were thrown into prison, after having been publicly scourged. It is not easy to understand the precise nature of the charge which was brought against them; and the magistrates of a provincial town may not have been particular in observing the forms of justice towards two Jews. We know, however, that they were accused of violating some of the laws of Rome; and they might have been said to do this, when they denounced all the religious observances of the Romans as wicked and abominable. Heathenism was the established religion of the empire; and the apostles, by endeavouring to destroy it, might naturally be said to be setting themselves against the laws. Added to which, the unbelieving Jews took pains to publish everywhere that the Christians looked up to Jesus as their king; by which they meant to persuade the heathen authorities, that the Christians were not loyal to the emperor; and it appears to have been upon one or both of these

charges, that Paul and Silas were thrown into prison at Philippi. Their imprisonment, however, did not last long. Their chains were loosened by a miracle; and the magistrates were too happy to persuade them to leave the city when they found that both of them possessed the freedom of Rome.

It might, perhaps, excite our surprise, that Paul did not plead his Roman citizenship before he was scourged and imprisoned, and so have escaped these indignities; but we cannot tell what motives he may have had for suppressing this fact, when he was first brought before the magistrates. His miraculous release was the means of converting the jailor and his family to believe in Christ; and the salvation of even one soul was a sufficient compensation to the apostle for any sufferings which he might undergo. Had he pleaded his citizenship at first, though he would not have been scourged, he might have been imprisoned, or even put to death, on the charge of treason against the laws; so that, by taking such a course, he might have delayed or even destroyed his efficiency as a preacher of the Gospel: whereas, by submitting to the indignity of being scourged, and by frightening the magistrate, who had ordered the punishment without knowing the condition of his prisoner, he obtained immediate release, without even going through the form of a trial.

His imprisonment at Philippi did not last more than a single day; and though it was found advisable for himself and Silas to leave the city, Luke appears to have continued there; and there is reason to think that the Macedonian churches enjoyed the advantage of his presence for some years.

Paul and his two other companions visited Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, and Berœa. In almost every town they found the same scene acted over again,—of the Jews exciting the populace against them, and endeavouring to expel them by the interference of the magistrates. They could not, however, prevent the Gospel making great progress in Macedonia. The miracles which Paul worked, and the spiritual gifts which he imparted to his converts, made a much greater impression than the misrepresentations and calumnies of the Jews. The Christians of Thessalonica were held in particular esteem by the apostle, and it was with great reluctance that he paid them so short a visit, but his bigoted countrymen obliged him to retire: and, not satisfied with driving him from Thessalonica, they followed him to Berœa, and forced him once more to take his departure.

Silas and Timothy continued in Macedonia, but Paul went on to Athens; and, without any companion, ventured to preach the doctrines of the Cross in the most philosophical and most superstitious city of Greece. His success must have been quite as great as he expected, when Dionysius, a member of the Court of Areopagus, became one of his converts; and, leaving the Christians at Athens under his charge, he arrived, before winter, at Corinth.

The name of Dionysius the Areopagite became very celebrated in after-ages; but it was principally in consequence of some voluminous writings, which have been quoted as written by him, but which are undoubtedly spurious, and were perhaps composed as late as the fourth century. Little or nothing is known authentically of Dionysius, except the brief notice of

him which is found in the Acts of the Apostles; but a bishop of Corinth, who lived within a hundred years of this time, speaks of him as having been the first bishop of Athens: from which we may safely conclude that the Athenian Christians were committed to his care. The Church of Athens continued to flourish for a long time, and we know the names of some of its bishops in the second century; so that there may have been good reasons for the memory of Dionysius being held in such esteem. Paul does not seem to have resided long at Athens: but while he was at Corinth, he was at no great distance off; and the Athenian converts may have had the benefit of his counsel, if he did not occasionally visit them in person.

This was the extent of his travels in the south of Greece; and he must have thought Corinth an important station for his missionary labours, when he stayed there the long period of eighteen months. The Jews tried in vain to excite the proconsul against him; but Gallio, who filled the office, happened to be a man who had no taste for religious disputes; and the fact of Paul having succeeded in converting Crispus, the chief person in the synagogue, must have been a great triumph to the cause of the Gospel. During his residence at Corinth (from which place he wrote his two Epistles to the Thessalonians), Paul was joined by Silas and Timothy, from Macedonia; and the result of their united efforts was the founding of a flourishing church in one of the largest and most learned cities of Greece.

The learning of the Greeks was a new evil which the apostle had to contend with, and one which was more fatal to the souls of men than the sword of perse-

cution. Religious impressions are not often destroyed by opposition; but persons who would walk fearlessly to the stake, for the sake of the Gospel, may be seduced, by a show of learning, to take a false view of the religion which they profess. Paul's Corinthian converts were surrounded by dangers of this kind. His own education had made him well suited to dispute with heathen philosophers; and the church which he founded at Corinth was a proof that his arguments were successful as well as powerful. The Gnostic doctrines, which were spoken of above, in connection with the history of Simon Magus, appear, at this time, to have spread as far as Corinth; and if heathen superstition was likely to hinder men from embracing the Gospel, the errors of the Gnostics were likely to pervert and ruin those who had already embraced it: all which may enable us to understand why Paul stayed such a long time at Corinth.

Early in the year 48, he sailed from Greece, and having touched at Ephesus, proceeded to Jerusalem, where he kept the feast of Pentecost. This unhappy country had been suffering many calamities since his last visit to it, two years before. After the death of Herod Agrippa, it had again fallen under the government of Roman procurators; and, as if these officers, who were proverbially rapacious, were not sufficient to practise oppression when appointed singly, there were now two men, Cumanus and Felix, who had the districts of Judæa, Samaria, and Galilee divided between them.

The reign of Claudius was, in other respects, unfavourable to the Jews. That emperor, for some reason or other, which is not expressly told, ordered them all

to quit Rome: and we know that this edict must have caused several thousand persons to look for a home in other countries. It can hardly be doubted, that many Christians were sufferers at the same time; for the heathen had not yet learned to distinguish them from the Jews. But this can hardly be called a persecution; and their banishment may not have been owing to any cause connected with their religion. There is also reason to think that the prohibition against their returning to Rome did not last long; but it was likely to have caused many Jews to go back, for a time at least, to the land of their fathers; and their residence in Palestine would serve to increase the feelings of hatred against the Romans, which the rapacity and violence of the procurators had already fomented. Paul's visit to Jerusalem, at this season of misgovernment, was short; and going from thence to Antioch, he found the Christians of that city continuing in the flourishing condition in which he had left them. Tradition is constant in naming Euodius as the first bishop of Antioch; and we may, perhaps, conclude that he had already entered upon his office at the time of Paul coming to the city, in the year 48.

After leaving Antioch, the apostle traversed, for the second time, the whole extent of Asia Minor, and took up his residence at Ephesus, which he had visited a few months before, on his way from Corinth to Jerusalem. Ephesus was the capital of a province, and the residence of the Roman proconsul. If its fame for learning and philosophy was not equal to that of Athens or Corinth, it was probably the city of the greatest wealth and luxury which Paul had as yet visited. Whatever was splendid and costly had particular at-

tractions for the inhabitants of Ephesus. They had also been addicted, for a long time, to the arts and delusions practised by the pretenders to magic; and, at the period of Paul coming to reside among them, the Gnostic philosophy, of which magic formed a prominent ingredient, was beginning to gain ground in this part of Asia Minor. All this may account for Paul choosing to make so long a residence in Ephesus. It opened a new and wide field for his apostolical labours; and it was also a central spot from whence he could easily visit in person, or at least receive accounts from, the churches which he had planted in Greece.

There is no evidence of the Gospel having made much progress in Ephesus itself before the arrival of Paul. It had been visited by Apollos, a learned Jew of Alexandria; who, after being converted to Christianity by some of Paul's companions, passed on to Corinth, and was of great use to the Christians in that city, who were now deprived of the presence of the apostle.

Paul's residence at Ephesus continued for great part of three years, though it is not necessary to suppose that he confined himself for the whole of that time to the walls of the city, or even to its neighbourhood. He appears to have paid visits to his converts in other parts of Asia Minor; and there is scarcely any period but this to which we can ascribe those persecutions and misfortunes which befell him in preaching the Gospel. He speaks of having been imprisoned and scourged on several occasions: he had also suffered shipwreck three times; and there is good reason to think that on one, at least, of these voyages he had visited the island of Crete. It is certain from his own words that he planted

the Gospel there, and that Titus, who accompanied him, was left by him to take charge of the churches. This is the earliest notice which we find of any regular plan of church government. The island contained many distinct congregations, as might be expected from its numerous cities and towns. Each of these congregations was governed by its own presbyters; but the appointment of the presbyters was specially committed by Paul to Titus, who stayed behind in the island to arrange these matters; and while he continued there, he acted as the resident head of all the Cretan churches.

The superintendence of so many Christian communities was now becoming very burdensome to the apostles; and it gives us a melancholy idea of the inherent corruption of the human heart, when we find Paul's Corinthian converts so soon forgetting the instruction which he had given them, or, at least, listening to false and insidious teachers. He had resided among them for the long period of eighteen months, and the Church of Corinth might be considered, at the time of his leaving it, to be one of the most flourishing which he had hitherto planted. He had, accordingly, bestowed upon its members a plentiful distribution of those preternatural gifts of the Spirit which it was the privilege of the apostles alone to communicate. It was hardly possible for men to lay aside their belief in Christ, when they had such standing evidence of their religion coming from God; but the very abundance of those spiritual gifts was the cause of jealousies and irregularities among the Corinthian Christians. Forgetting that they had received these miraculous powers as an evidence to themselves and others of the truth of

hat they believed, they were fond of exercising them erely for ostentation, and to prove that they were themselves more highly favoured than the rest. The gift of tongues was particularly calculated for this idle display. The apostles, as we have seen, possessed it to a wonderful extent; and they must have found it of the greatest service when they had to preach the Gospel to men of different nations. But it was also a most convincing evidence to men who were not travelling into foreign countries, and who had merely to converse with their immediate friends and neighbours. If a native of Corinth, who had hitherto been able to speak no language but Greek, found himself, on a sudden, and without any study on his part, able to converse with a Jew, or with any other of the numerous foreigners who came to the port of Corinth, he could hardly resist the conviction that the power was given him by God; and when he knew also that he received it in consequence of Paul having laid his hands upon him, and that he did not receive it till his mind had fully assented to the doctrines which Paul had preached, it seemed necessarily to follow that his assent to these doctrines was approved by God.

Thus far the gift of tongues operated as an evidence to the believer himself, and was calculated to keep him in the faith which was so preternaturally confirmed But it would also have the effect of convincing others; for if a Corinthian, who was not yet converted, heard one of his acquaintance speaking a foreign language, and if he knew that the power of speaking it was acquired in a moment, he would be inclined to argue, as the believer himself had done, that a religion which was so powerfully confirmed, must come from God. It

was with this double view, of keeping his own converts steadfast in their faith, and of enabling them to win over the heathen to join them, that Paul appears to have distributed these gifts so abundantly in all the churches which he planted. It was not the immediate object of preaching the Gospel in foreign countries, which made the gift of tongues so valuable at Corinth; and we know that in their own religious meetings, where there were perhaps no persons present except Jews and Greeks, and consequently no occasion existed for conversing in foreign languages, yet the Christians who possessed such a gift were frequently in the habit of exercising it.

It seems obvious to remark, that such an exhibition of the gift of tongues would be of no service, not even as an evidence of preternatural power, unless the other persons present in the congregation understood the language which was thus publicly spoken. If a native of Corinth delivered a speech in Persian, or Celtic, it was necessary that some of the persons present should know the words to belong to those languages; for, without this knowledge there was no evidence of a miraculous gift, and the speakers might have been merely uttering unintelligible sounds, which differed, not only from the Greek, but from every other language. Though the Corinthians abused the power which had been given them, there is no reason to think that their abuse of it showed itself in this way. They were fond of speaking in unknown tongues; but they were merely unknown to the inhabitants of Corinth, who had learned nothing but Greek; they were real languages, which were known and spoken in other parts of the world; and if an inhabitant of one of these

countries had happened to be present at the meeting, he would have recognised and understood the sounds of his own language.

The apostle, however, had provided that these unknown tongues should become intelligible, even to the Greeks at Corinth. It was a most astonishing miracle, that a man should be suddenly able to express his ideas in a language which he had never learnt. But the power of the Holy Spirit was not confined to influencing the organs of speech: it acted also upon the organs of hearing, or rather upon the faculties of comprehension; and some persons found themselves able to understand languages which they had never learnt. It is plain that all the Christians at Corinth did not possess this power. Those who exercised the gift of tongues in the congregation, were, as has been already remarked, unintelligible to nearly all their hearers; but there were some who were gifted to understand these foreign languages; and when one person had delivered the words which the Spirit had put into his mouth, another person translated them into Greek, and so made them intelligible to all that heard them. In this manner the gift of tongues had a practical use, beyond the evidence which it furnished to the truth of the Gospel; and the Christians who attended the meetings without having themselves received either of these gifts, had the advantage of receiving instruction from persons who were manifestly under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

But though the edification of the Church was the ultimate object of all these gifts, there were many of Paul's converts at Corinth who, after he had left them, forgot the purpose for which they had received such

invaluable blessings. The gift of tongues was by no means the only instance of preternatural power which was imparted to believers. Miracles of various kinds were worked by them, of which the curing of diseases was, perhaps, the most remarkable: but the possession of such extraordinary powers gave rise, in not a few instances, to jealousy and self-conceit. This may partly be ascribed to the ordinary and natural corruption of the human heart, which was likely to show itself more openly when Paul was no longer present to repress it; but it was also fostered by false and insidious teachers, who took advantage of the apostle's absence, not only to make a party for themselves, but to disparage his personal character, and to unsettle his converts as to their religious belief. The usual fickleness of the Greeks, as well as the love of disputation which marked their philosophy, and which caused them to divide themselves into sects and schools, obtained for these false teachers a too ready hearing among the Christians at Corinth; and though a large party in the place continued attached to Paul, the attachment partook more of a sectarian spirit than became brethren professing the same faith; and others of their body openly professed themselves followers of different leaders, who had either been the means of converting them, or had put themselves at the head of a party.

There is evidence that Paul's apostolical labours were impeded by false teachers in other places than Corinth; and the mischief can, in some instances, clearly be traced to that mistaken zeal for the Law of Moses, which had led the Christians of Jerusalem to insist upon the Gentile converts being circumcised. It has been mentioned that even the decree of the

apostolical council did not satisfy the bigots of this party; and some of them appear to have followed Paul in his journeys, and to have taken a pleasure in unsettling the minds of his converts concerning the manner of justification. This was strikingly the case with the imperfectly civilised inhabitants of Galatia, who had lent themselves eagerly to some Judaising preacher, and had adopted the fatal error, that faith would not justify them, unless they conformed to the Law of Moses.

The great mixture of Jews with the Gentile converts, in every place where a church had been established, made it extremely probable that an error of this kind would meet with many persons to embrace it. The Christians of Greece, if we may judge from those of Macedonia and Achaia, do not appear to have been in so much danger from this quarter; but the religion and the philosophy of heathenism were themselves a sufficient snare to the new converts; and much of the trouble and anxiety which were caused to Paul by the misconduct of the Corinthians, may be traced to that spirit of pride and ostentation which displayed itself in the Grecian schools.

There are also some traces of Gnosticism having found its way into Corinth, though it flourished most luxuriantly in Asia Minor, and particularly in Ephesus. Wherever the Jews abounded, the extravagances of Gnosticism were also popular; which may be accounted for, not only by many Jews becoming Gnostics, but by these philosophers having borrowed so largely from the religious opinions of the Jews. It is possible that the name of Christ may have been familiar to many persons, by the discourses and writings of the Gnostics, before

they had met with an apostle, or a disciple of the apostles, to instruct them in the truths of Christianity. Doubts about the lawfulness of marriage, abstinence from certain kinds of food, and the questions connected with ascetic mortification of the body and its appetites, may be traced in whole, or in part, to the doctrines of the Gnostics. Paul was often called upon to give his opinion upon such points as these; and we always find him drawing a broad line of distinction between duties which are expressly defined in Scripture, and those matters which, being in themselves indifferent, become right or wrong according to circumstances, or to the consequences which flow from them. His leading principle was to impress upon his converts, that nothing was essential but that which concerned the salvation of their souls; and that nothing could promote their salvation which was not in some way or other connected with faith in Christ. His own practice was in illustration of this principle. If viewed at different times, or in different places, and with reference to some particular points of practice, his conduct might have been accounted inconsistent; but he was uniformly consistent in doing nothing, and omitting nothing, which might lead men to think that outward works could justify them. If a disciple abstained from any gratification from a principle of faith, he was allowed to follow his own conscience; but if the abstinence made him uncharitable, or was viewed as being in itself meritorious, he was told plainly that the Gospel is a law of liberty.

In all such questions, we can perceive the sound practical sense and kindly feeling of the apostle, as well as the instruction and illumination which he had received from above. But in opposing the inroads of

Gnosticism, he had other points to consider than those which are in themselves indifferent, and may be left to the conscience of each believer. The name of Christ held a conspicuous place in the system of the Gnostics; but there were parts of their creed which destroyed the very foundations of the doctrine of the Gospel. Thus while they believed the body of Jesus to be a phantom, and denied the reality of his crucifixion, they, in fact, denied their belief in the death of Christ, and with it they gave up altogether the doctrine of the atonement. They believed that Christ had come from heaven to reveal the knowledge of God; but that this was done by his appearing upon earth, and had no connection with his death. Christ, said they, pointed out the way by which man might be reconciled to God; but it was not by offering himself as a sacrifice; and the reconciliation was effected when a man was brought to entertain the true knowledge of God.

So also the doctrine of the resurrection was explained away, and reduced to nothing, by the figurative language of the Gnostics. The reunion of soul and body at the general resurrection had always presented great difficulties to the heathen. The notions even of their wisest philosophers had been so vague and uncertain upon this subject, that the apostles may be said to have introduced a totally new doctrine, when they taught that all who believe in Christ should rise again to an eternity of happiness. Some had believed the soul to be mortal as well as the body: others could not, or would not, understand how the body, after being reduced to dust, could be restored to life. But the Gnostics, while they professed to agree with the language held by the apostles, gave to it a figurative in-

terpretation, and said that each person rose again from the dead when he became a Gnostic. The resurrection, therefore, was with themselves a thing already past; and when they died, they believed that they were removed immediately from earth to heaven.

It is to be feared that many persons fell a prey to these false and insidious teachers: and the apostles were naturally led to appoint some one person, as was the case with Titus in Crete, to watch over the churches of a particular district. It was the same anxiety for the souls of his flock which caused the apostle of the Gentiles to write so many epistles, which, though filled with local and temporary allusions, and often containing answers to the specific questions, were intended also to furnish instruction and consolation to believers of every country and every age. It seems probable, that the Epistles to Titus and the Galatians, as well as the first Epistles to the Corinthians and to Timothy, were written during the apostle's residence at Ephesus, or shortly after. When he wrote to the Corinthians, he had planned a journey which was to take him through the continent of Greece to Corinth, from whence he meant to proceed to Jerusalem; and though his departure from Ephesus happened sooner than he expected, he was able to execute his design of visiting Greece.

It is plain that the Gospel made great progress in that part of Asia, while Paul was residing at Ephesus; nor is there any evidence of the government having as yet interfered formally to oppose the success of his preaching. The necessity for his leaving Ephesus was caused by a sudden, and apparently unpremeditated, tumult, which was excited by the workmen whose live-

lihood depended upon the national worship being kept up. These men felt the demand for images and shrines becoming daily less; and it was plain, that if Christianity continued to advance, their own gains must speedily be destroyed. It was not difficult in a city like Ephesus, where the temple of the goddess Diana was one of the wonders of the world, for these interested tradesmen to raise a cry in defence of the popular superstition. The people took up the cause, as they vainly imagined, of the goddess Diana; and if the apostle had ventured among them during the heat of their excitement, he would probably have been torn in pieces.

There are traditions which speak of his being condemned to fight with wild beasts in the Amphitheatre of Ephesus; and the notion may appear to be countenanced by an expression of his own; but there is no certain evidence of his having been exposed to such a punishment. At a later period, and perhaps in the apostle's own days, the Christians were made the victims of such barbarities; but if Paul had been treated in this manner, it must have been with the consent, and by the order, of the civil magistrates; whereas we know, that some at least of the persons who presided over the shows and games in the Amphitheatre, were disposed to favour Paul. He might also have pleaded his Roman citizenship, if his life had been endangered by such a cruel sentence: all which makes it most probable that he was not exposed to any special persecution beyond what came upon all the Christians during the continuance of the popular excitement.

But, though he thus escaped with his life, he felt it advisable to quit the city; and leaving Timothy with

the same authority over the Christians which he had committed to Titus in Crete, he set out for Macedonia. While he was traversing the latter country he was met by Titus, who was not only able to give him an account of his own flock, but also brought him a favourable report of the Corinthian converts. The Macedonian churches were found in a flourishing condition, having had the advantage, for some years, of the personal superintendence of Luke and other zealous teachers. They were now called upon to give a proof of their principles, by contributing money for the relief of the Christians in Judæa; and the call was readily obeyed. When Paul left the country, he carried with him a large sum which had been subscribed for this purpose by the Macedonian Christians; and having prepared the Corinthians for a visit, by a second epistle written to them from Macedonia, he arrived among them before winter, and stayed with them three months.

The Corinthian converts, as already stated, had caused considerable anxiety to the apostle, since the time of his first visit to their city. The spirit of party was showing itself in an attachment to different teachers of the Gospel; and the laxity of morals which had always been peculiarly prevalent in Corinth, had led to many irregularities. In his first epistle, he had been obliged to use a tone of authority and rebuke; but the effect of it was as successful as it was seasonable. Though the false teachers had tried to alienate the Corinthian Christians from their spiritual father, he found them not only penitent for what had happened, but willing to obey all his directions and commands. They followed the example of their Macedonian brethren in subscribing for the Christians in Palestine;

and though we know little beyond the mere fact of Paul having passed the three winter months at Corinth, we may safely pronounce this to have been one of the periods in his eventful life which caused him the greatest consolation and satisfaction.

His zeal in the cause of the Gospel was not confined to watching over the churches which had been planted by himself in Asia and Greece. He now extended his views to the west of Europe, which, as far as we know, had not hitherto been visited by any of the apostles. It is however plain, that the Gospel was spreading itself in that direction, as well as in the East. We have already seen it carried into distant countries by the Jews who returned from the festivals, or by those who had been driven from Jerusalem by persecution. The first of these causes was likely to make Christianity known in Rome at a very early period. When converts were made under these circumstances, they were in danger of receiving the truth with a certain admixture of error: and such may have been the case at Rome; but the favourable account which Paul received at Corinth concerning the state of the Roman Christians, was such as to make him more than ever anxious to visit them in person. He was still bent upon going to Jerusalem with the money which he had collected; but when that mission was accomplished, he intended to go to Rome; and one of the most interesting and valuable of his epistles was written to the believers in that city during his residence at Corinth.

As soon as the winter was passed, he set out for Jerusalem; but instead of going by sea, he retraced his steps through Macedonia. He was joined at Philippi by Luke; and though he was now attended by several

companions, they do not appear to have met with any molestation on their way. The journey was performed principally by sea; and wherever they landed, they appear to have found some of the inhabitants already converted to the Gospel. Five years had elapsed since Paul's last visit to Jerusalem; and during that period his unhappy country had been exposed to sufferings of various kinds. Felix had contrived to get rid of his partner in the office of procurator, and the Jews were in some respects gainers, by having only one person to insult and pillage them; but robbers and murderers infested the country in such numbers, that the government was scarcely strong enough to suppress them; and impostors were now rising up in every direction, who gave themselves out to be the Messiah, and deluded many persons to follow them. It had been the policy of the Romans to change and depose the high-priests, as best suited their own purpose, which opened a new and constant source of intrigue among the candidates for that office; and whoever was fortunate enough to obtain it, did not scruple to employ force to get rid of a rival. At the time of Paul's arrival at Jerusalem, it was difficult to say who was the legitimate high-priest. The station had been filled by Ananias; but upon his going to Rome to answer some complaint, a successor was appointed in the person of Jonathan, who had been high-priest once before. Felix found it convenient to put Jonathan to death; and before a new appointment was regularly made, Ananias returned from Rome, and resumed the office. It was just at this period that Paul arrived in Judæa; and though there were many things in the aspect of his country which could not fail to give him pain, it is probable that the

Jews had been drawn off from persecuting the Christians, by being themselves harassed with so many internal and external evils.

It is certain that the Jews who had embraced the Gospel amounted at this time to many thousands; but most, if not all of them, still adhered rigidly to the Mosaic Law. Whether there were many who so entirely misunderstood the Gospel, as to think that faith alone could not justify them without compliance with the law, we are not able to decide; but there is reason to think that there were very few Jews who did not feel bound, even after their conversion, to observe the legal ceremonies. Many of these persons could not, or would not, understand the principles which were preached and practised by Paul; and when his enemies gave out, that he taught the Jews, as well as the Gentiles, to look upon the law as of no importance, the report was readily believed, and raised a strong prejudice against him. He had contrived to reach Jerusalem by the feast of Pentecost, at which time the city was always filled by a great influx of foreign Jews. These men could not be ignorant of the progress which the new opinions had made among their countrymen. Paul would naturally be looked upon as the great leader of this defection from the faith of their fathers; and thus the believing and unbelieving Jews united in viewing him with feelings of suspicion, if not of hatred, which feelings were increased by its being known that he was not travelling in company with Gentiles.

The conduct of Paul on this occasion enables us fully to understand his views with respect to the obligation of observing the Law of Moses. He had constantly told the Gentiles, that there was no necessity

for their observing any part of it: and he had been equally explicit to the Jews, in telling them that the law was of no effect at all in procuring their justification; if they continued to observe its ceremonies, they were to look upon them merely as ceremonies: and accordingly, when he was living with Gentiles, who cared nothing for the law, he felt no scruples in disregarding its precepts; but when he was living with Jews, whose consciences would have been hurt by a neglect of the legal ceremonies, he observed all the customs in which he had been brought up. His conduct on the present occasion was exactly in conformity with this principle. Having consulted with James, who still continued at Jerusalem as the resident head of the Christian Church, and who perfectly agreed with Paul in his notions about the law, he took upon himself the vow of a Nazarite, and appeared publicly in the Temple, as a person who submitted implicitly to the Law of Moses. This conformity, though it might have satisfied the Judaising Christians, was not sufficient to remove the prejudices which the unbelieving Jews had conceived against the apostle. Seeing him upon one occasion in the Temple, they got together a crowd of people, with the avowed intention of putting him to death. Nor would they have failed in their purpose if the commander of the Roman garrison, who was always on the watch to prevent an insurrection, had not suddenly come upon them with his troops, and rescued Paul out of their hands.

This interference of the military saved his life, but was the cause of his sustaining a tedious imprisonment, first at Cæsarea, and afterwards at Rome. The Roman officer, who had rescued him from the fury of the people,

having ascertained that he was a Roman citizen, sent him to Cæsarea, where Felix, the procurator, usually resided. Paul was here kept a prisoner for two years, though his friends had free permission to visit him, and his confinement in other respects was not rigorous. Felix himself admitted him more than once into his presence, and listened to him while he explained the doctrines of the Gospel; but no practical impression was produced upon his wicked heart. He was well aware how unpopular he had made himself to the Jews by his cruelty and rapacity, and though he was not base enough to deliver up the apostle as a victim of their malice, he so far gratified them as to keep him in prison during the two years of his continuing in his government.

This was the first serious check which Paul had received in the course of his evangelical ministry. Twenty-two years had now elapsed since his conversion, eight of which had been employed in spreading the religion of Christ through different heathen countries. During this period he had met with constant opposition from the prejudices of the Jews, and had occasionally suffered from the irreligion or superstition of the heathen. But still the Gospel gained ground: the Grecian philosophers were too weak to stand against him in argument; and the Roman government had not yet learned to treat Christianity as a crime. Even Felix, while he was unjustly detaining Paul as a prisoner, was the unintentional cause of saving his life, and of reserving him for future labours in the service of his heavenly Master. For a time, however, the career of the great apostle was checked; and it is now that we feel particularly how much the history of

the early Church is confined to the personal history of Paul. We should wish to know what progress the Gospel was making in other countries during the two years that Paul was imprisoned at Cæsarea. The other apostles had now been engaged for some years in fulfilling their Master's command of spreading His religion throughout the earth; but we know little of the scenes of their respective preaching. The eastern parts of the world, rather than the western, appear to have been traversed by them. Asia Minor, and Greece, as we have already seen, received their knowledge of the Gospel from Paul; to whose name we may add those of Barnabas, Timothy, Titus, Silvanus, and Luke, as the persons who were most active in evangelising those countries.

Luke, as has been already stated, accompanied Paul to Jerusalem; but there is no evidence that any of the apostle's companions were made to share in his imprisonment. It is more probable, that they all preserved their liberty; and though Paul's personal exertions were for the present restrained, he was under no restrictions as to receiving visits from his friends; and even distant churches might still enjoy the benefit of his advice and superintendence. It has always been asserted that Luke composed his Gospel, if not at the dictation, at least under the direction, of Paul; and no more probable period can be assigned as the date of its composition, than the two years which were passed by Paul at Cæsarea. There is good reason to think that Luke was with him during the whole of this period. He had first travelled in his company in the year 46, and had only left him to take care of the Macedonian churches. Like all the other persons employed in

preaching the Gospel, he received the miraculous assistance of the Holy Spirit; and as far as human instruction or example could fit him for the work of an evangelist, he had the advantage of hearing Paul explain those doctrines which had been revealed to himself from heaven. When they arrived in Palestine, they found, as might naturally be expected in that country, that several writings were in circulation which professed to give an account of the life and actions of Jesus. Many of these histories would probably be incorrect, even when written by friends; but the open enemies of the Gospel would be likely to spread reports concerning its first Founder which would be full of misrepresentations and falsehood. It would therefore become necessary, for the sake of those who already believed, as well as of those who were to be converted, that some faithful narrative should be drawn up concerning the birth of Jesus, his miracles, his doctrine, and his death. It has been said by some writers, that this was done within a few years after the ascension of our Lord, and an early date has often been assigned to the Gospel of Matthew: but it is perhaps safer to conclude, that none of the four Gospels were written till about the period at which we are now arrived; and the Gospel of Luke may be the first of those which have come down to us as the works of inspired Evangelists.

CHAPTER V.

Paul is sent to Rome, where he stays two years.—He preaches in many countries after his release.—Death of James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, and of Mark the Evangelist.—Persecution by Nero.—Deaths of Peter and Paul.

IT was stated in the last chapter that Paul continued two years in prison at Cæsarea. He, in fact, continued there during the remainder of the government of Felix, who was succeeded by Porcius Festus, in 55, which was the second year of the reign of Nero. On the first occasion of Festus visiting Jerusalem, the Jews endeavoured to prejudice him against his prisoner, and the procurator would have gratified them by sacrificing Paul to their malice. Paul, however, was too prudent to trust himself at Jerusalem; and, instead of accepting the offer of having his cause heard in that city, he exercised his privilege of a Roman citizen, and demanded the right of having it heard by the emperor in person at Rome. Festus could not refuse this appeal; though, if he had been left to himself, he would at once have given the apostle his liberty. The latter might also have met with a friend in Agrippa, who had lately received a further accession of territory, with the title of King. Being now on a visit to Festus, he heard the story of Paul's miraculous conversion from his own mouth; and the apostle's impressive eloquence

made, for a short time, some impression upon him: but Agrippa appears to have had but one object, that of keeping on good terms with the Roman government; and he followed up this principle so successfully, that he retained his dominions during the reigns of five successive emperors, from most of whom he continued to receive favours; and he survived the destruction of Jerusalem by several years. We need not therefore be surprised if the effect produced upon him by Paul's preaching soon passed away; but, at the time, he bore the fullest testimony to his innocence, and would gladly have concurred with Festus in restoring him to liberty. The apostle, however, had himself precluded this by appealing to the emperor, which he perhaps perceived to be now his only chance of visiting Rome. Had he been released from prison, the Jews were still actively on the watch to kill him, and it would have been extremely difficult for him to have escaped from Palestine with his life. Once before they had laid a plot for destroying him upon a voyage by sea; and it was to avoid this conspiracy that he had taken the circuitous course of going back through Macedonia, when he made his last journey to Jerusalem. This may have been one of the reasons which inclined him to put in his claim of being heard in person by the emperor; and the appeal having been once made, Festus had no choice as to complying with his demand. He accordingly sent him to Rome in the autumn of 55; but the vessel in which he sailed had a most tempestuous passage, and was at length wrecked on the island of Malta. This obliged the crew to pass the winter in that island, and Paul did not reach Rome till the beginning of the following year. But his journey from

Puteoli, where he landed, enables us to conclude that the Gospel had already made considerable progress in Italy. He found some Christians among the inhabitants of Puteoli; and the believers at Rome, as soon as they heard that he was coming, sent some of their body to meet him by the way.

We are now arrived at an interesting period in the history of Paul and of the Gospel. He had for some time been meditating a journey to Rome; and though at first he had not anticipated that he should visit it in chains, he had at length reached the capital of the world, and had courted an interview with the emperor himself. We know nothing of the result of this hazardous experiment, except that he was allowed to preach his doctrines without any molestation; but if he obtained this permission by the personal indulgence of the emperor, it is difficult to account for his being detained two years more as a prisoner. It is true that his restraint was by no means severe; for he was allowed to hire his own residence, and the only inconvenience was, that of having one of his arms fastened by a chain to the arm of a soldier. This would necessarily make his case known among the soldiers who relieved each other in guarding prisoners. The prætorian guards were now under the command of Burrus, who had been tutor to Nero, and still retained some influence over him. If this officer took any interest in Paul more than in the other prisoners committed to him, he may have been the means of gaining him a hearing with the emperor; and he may also have introduced him to the philosopher Seneca, who was an intimate friend of his own, and is said by some ancient writers to have formed an acquaintance with Paul.

This, however, is extremely uncertain; and we can hardly venture to say anything more, than that the apostle and the philosopher were in Rome at the same time; and that there are expressions in some works of Seneca which might support the notion of his having seen the writings of Paul.

It would be more interesting to inquire what was the effect produced by the apostle's presence upon the Jews who resided in Rome. There is abundant evidence that they lived there in great numbers. Such, at least, was the case before the edict of Claudius, which banished them from that city; and it has been stated that the edict was revoked before the end of that emperor's reign. It is also plain from the apostle's own letter to the Roman Christians that their church was composed of Jews and Gentiles; and we might suppose the Jewish portion of it to have been numerous, from the pains taken by the apostle to guard against the notion that the Law of Moses could in any manner contribute to Justification. There are, however, no signs of the Jews having excited any prejudice or persecution against him, as they had done in other cities. His being a prisoner was, probably, his protection; and a recollection of the edict which had so lately sent them into banishment, would be likely to keep the Jews from hazarding another disturbance. It seems most probable that his principal converts at Rome were Gentiles; and it was this circumstance, so gratifying at the time to the apostle, which in a few years brought the Christians under the notice of the magistrates, who exposed them, for more than two centuries, to the cruelties of implacable enemies.

We have the evidence of the apostle himself, that he had some converts in the emperor's own household; and there can be no doubt that Christianity was now beginning to spread among people of rank and fortune. One person may be mentioned, as being partly connected with the history of our own country. This was Pomponia Græcina, the wife of Plautius, the conqueror of Britain, who was undoubtedly charged with being guilty of a foreign superstition: but when it is added that she was the first person who introduced Christianity into this island, we must be careful not to confound a vague tradition with authentic history. The same remark must be applied to the story of Claudia, the daughter of Caractacus, going back from Rome, and propagating the Gospel in her father's territories. It is perfectly possible for Paul to have assisted in the conversion of Britain, or any other distant country, by the success of his own personal preaching, while he was at Rome: but it does not become us to indulge conjecture where so little is really known. It is certain that, up to this time, no public or systematic opposition had been made, in the capital, to the profession of the Gospel; and Paul was not only allowed to deliver his doctrines openly to any of the inhabitants, but persons who came to him from other countries, and brought him accounts of the churches which he had planted, had full liberty to visit him. Luke had accompanied him from Palestine, and appears to have taken this opportunity for writing the Acts of the Apostles. Timothy also came to Rome during some part of these two years; and we are indebted to this imprisonment for the three Epistles to the Philippians, Ephesians, and Colossians, as well as

for the short Epistle to Philemon, who lived at Colossæ, and had been converted by Paul.

The apostle did not recover his liberty till the year 58; and at the time of his leaving Rome, we may consider the church in that city to have been regularly established. We have seen that there may have been Christians there very soon after the Ascension of our Lord; but if (as appears almost certain) it had not been visited by any apostle before the arrival of Paul, he must naturally be considered the founder of the Roman Church. This is, in fact, the statement of many early writers, though they generally mention the name of Peter as his associate in this important work. That the Church of Rome was founded by Peter and Paul (if we mean, by this expression, its regular organisation, and its form of ecclesiastical polity), may be received for as well-attested an historical fact as any which has come down to us; but the date of Peter's first arrival in Rome is involved in such great uncertainty, and the New Testament is so totally silent concerning it, that we can hardly hope to settle anything upon the subject. If Peter arrived in Rome before Paul quitted it, that is, in the year 57 or 58, the ancient traditions, about the Church of Rome being founded by both of them jointly, would be most satisfactorily explained. It is also probable that the two apostles would follow the same plan with respect to this church, which had been adopted in others, and would leave some one person to manage its concerns. Here, again, tradition is almost unanimous in asserting that the first Bishop of Rome was Linus: by which we are to understand that he was the first person appointed over it after the two apostles had left it; and we may, perhaps,

safely consider Linus to have entered upon his office as early as the year 58.

Very little is known of the personal history of Paul after his release from Rome. His life was prolonged for eight or ten years, and we may be sure that he devoted it, as before, to the cause of his Heavenly Master. He intended to visit Philippi, as well as the churches which he had planted in Asia Minor; and if he fulfilled his intention of travelling in those directions, he was probably going on to Jerusalem. He would be likely, indeed, to have paid more than one visit to the land of his fathers; but that unhappy country could only be viewed with feelings of the deepest affliction by every true Israelite, particularly by one who believed in the prediction which Christ had delivered concerning it. Paul would well know that the storm was gathering over it, which, in a few years, would burst upon it to its destruction. There would, perhaps, be one comfort to him, in the midst of his sorrow for his countrymen, which was, that civil disturbances drew off the attention of the Jews from the Christians, and gave to the latter more security in the propagation of their doctrines. It would be necessary, however, to warn the Christians in Judæa of the impending calamity; and this may have furnished the apostle with a motive for visiting them. If he wrote his Epistle to the Hebrews at this time (which is the opinion of most critics), we may see in it many prophetic warnings which he gave to the Christians concerning the sufferings which they would undergo. There is also some evidence that Matthew published his Gospel about the same period. He dwells with particular minuteness on the horrors of the Jewish

War; and the Christians of Judæa could not fail to notice the earnest exhortations given to them by Christ himself, that they would quit the city before the siege began. Matthew is always said to have written his Gospel for the use of the Jewish believers, and it was perhaps circulated principally in Palestine; whereas Luke intended his own composition for the Gentile believers.

Though we may feel almost certain that Paul would visit Jerusalem after his release from Rome, we are still at a loss to account for his proceedings during the remainder of his life; and yet this period was perhaps as interesting as any part of the former years which he had devoted to the service of the Gospel. We have traced his progress through the most civilised portions of the world, and even to the capital of the Roman empire; but he professed himself also under an obligation to preach the Gospel to nations that were rude and barbarous. He had ample time for fulfilling this sacred duty; and tradition has pointed out the west of Europe as the scene of these later actions of his life. Spain and Gaul, and even Britain, have claimed the great apostle as the first founder of their respective churches; but the writer of history is obliged to add, that though such journeys were perfectly possible, and even probable, the actual evidence of their having been undertaken is extremely small. We have the apostle's own testimony for his intending to visit Spain; and Clement, one of his own fellow-labourers, in an epistle which he wrote before the end of the century, speaks of Paul having gone to the extremity of the west. This may, perhaps, give some support to the notion of his visiting Spain; and if he went to that

country by land, he must have passed through the south of France. But the churches in France which claim the earliest origin, trace their foundation rather to the companions of Paul than to the apostle himself; and there is nothing unreasonable in supposing that France, as well as Spain, contained converts to Christianity before the end of the first century.

The same may perhaps be said of our own island, though we need not believe the traditions which have been already mentioned, concerning its first conversion; and it is right to add, that the earliest writer who speaks of Britain as being visited by any of the apostles is Eusebius, who wrote at the beginning of the fourth century; and the earliest writer who names St Paul is Theodoret, who lived a century later.

Traditions preserved by such writers as these, at least deserve some attention; but in later ages there was such a taste for fabulous legends, and rival churches were so anxious to trace their origin to an apostle, that we are induced to reject almost all these stories as entirely fictitious. Still, however, it must appear singular that none of the apostles should have travelled in a westerly direction, and preached to the barbarous nations which had submitted in part to the Roman arms. There might appear no more reason against their going to Germany or Britain, than to Persia or India; and when we consider what was actually done by Paul, in the space of little more than three years, we could easily conceive the whole of the world to have been traversed in the same period, if all the apostles were equally active. But the little which we know concerning their individual labours will be considered more in detail presently. It is sufficient

for the present to repeat the observation concerning Paul, that eight or ten years of his life remained after his liberation from Rome, during which we may be certain that he was constantly preaching the Gospel in different countries.

He undoubtedly visited Rome a second time, and received there his crown of martyrdom; but before we proceed to that event, the order of time requires us to notice the deaths of two other persons, who were of considerable note in the infant Church.—These were James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, and the Evangelist Mark.

We have seen the former appointed to preside over the Christians at Jerusalem, in the second or third year after the Ascension of our Lord. He held this perilous situation (for his life must often have been in imminent danger) for about thirty years; and we are perhaps, in part, to trace his own escape from persecution, as well as the constantly increasing number of his flock, to the disturbances and outrages which occupied the Jews and their governors for some years before the breaking out of the war. The Jews, however, were well aware of the important service which James had rendered to the Christians; and in the year 62, they seized a favourable opportunity for putting him to death. Festus, who had kept them in subjection with a strong hand, and who would quickly have suppressed any popular movement, though merely of a religious nature, died in the eighth year of the reign of Nero; and before his successor Albinus arrived, the high priest, whose name at this time was Ananus, put James to death. He knew so little of his victim as to think that he would assist in checking

the growth of those doctrines which were spreading so rapidly; and, with this view, he placed him on the top of the Temple, that he might harangue the people, and dissuade them from becoming Christians. He did harangue the people; but, as might be expected, he exhorted them to embrace the Gospel; upon which he was immediately thrown down, and either stoned to death or despatched by a fuller's club.

Such was the tragical end of James the Just, who, in addition to his other services, was author of the Epistle which bears his name, and which is addressed to the converted Jews; but the exact date of it cannot be ascertained. His place, as Bishop of Jerusalem, was supplied by his brother Simeon, of whose earlier history nothing certain is known; but there is reason to think that Jude, another of the brothers, was one of the twelve apostles; and Joses probably devoted himself to the same occupation of travelling about to preach the Gospel.

The same year, 62, is connected with the death of another distinguished Christian, Mark, the Evangelist; concerning whose earlier history we shall say nothing, except that he was probably not the same person with John, surnamed Mark, who accompanied Paul on his first apostolic journey. If he died in 62, as is stated by Eusebius, he could not be the same with this John, who was certainly alive at a later period, when Paul wrote his Second Epistle to Timothy. Mark, the Evangelist, is always said to have been the companion of Peter; and tradition also points him out as the first founder of the Church of Alexandria. The date of his visit to that city cannot be ascertained, but it was probably late in his life; and we might also conclude that

he did not go there in company with Peter, or the Alexandrian Church would have claimed the apostle as its founder, rather than the Evangelist. Mark, however, may have been sent into Egypt by Peter, and his name is thus connected with a church which, for some centuries, was the most distinguished for the learning of its members. His written Gospel appears to have been composed at Rome, to which place he travelled in company with Peter, and he probably continued there some time after the apostle left it; for the Roman Christians, who had heard the Gospel preached by Peter, are said to have requested Mark to commit the same to writing. If Peter visited Rome about the year 58, as was before conjectured, we may approach to the date of the publication of Mark's Gospel: and the writer of it would thus have been likely to see the earlier work, which had been written by Luke; but though the latter Gospel was already in circulation among the Roman Christians, it was not unnatural that the Jewish converts, who would listen with peculiar pleasure to the preaching of Peter, should wish to have a Gospel of their own, written by one of his companions. The stories of Mark having suffered martyrdom at Alexandria are not deserving of credit; but he appears to have died there in the eighth year of Nero, and to have been succeeded in the government of that church by Annianus.

The early history of the Alexandrian Church would be extremely interesting, if we had any authentic materials for collecting it: but the fact of its being founded by Mark, is almost the only one which is deserving of credit. It has been stated that Gnosticism, which was a compound of the Jewish and heathen

philosophy, took its rise in Alexandria; and if men were willing to exchange their former opinions for this absurd and extravagant system, we might suppose that Christianity would not have been rejected by them as altogether unworthy of their notice. It appears, in fact, to have attracted the attention of the learned at Alexandria sooner than in any other country. It was a long time before the Grecian philosophers condescended to notice the speculations of an obscure Jewish sect. But the Jews themselves who resided at Alexandria, were many of them men of learning, and were not only well acquainted with the written works of the heathen, but had frequent opportunities of conversing and disputing with philosophers of various sects who came to Alexandria. One consequence of this intercourse was, that there was a greater toleration of different opinions in that city than was generally allowed in Grecian schools, where the adherents of one class of doctrines professed to hold all others in contempt. And there is reason to think that the Christians were for a long time allowed a full liberty of discussion in Alexandria, till their numbers began to be formidable to their heathen opponents. This also led to the Alexandrian Christians being more remarkable for their learning than those of other countries; and having to explain their doctrines to Jews and Gentiles, who were well accustomed to disputation, they were obliged to take more pains in instructing their converts; and thus the Christian schools were established at an early period, which in the second and third centuries produced so many learned and voluminous writers.

There was also another circumstance which, perhaps,

contributed to the diffusion of Christianity, not only in Alexandria, but through the whole of Egypt. There was a set of men living in the country, who in later times might have been called monks or hermits, but who were known in those days by the name of Therapeutæ. Instead of frequenting the large towns, or taking part in the ordinary affairs of life, they retired into the deserts, or less inhabited districts of the country, and passed their time in a kind of mystical or religious contemplation. Their religion appears to have been free from many of the impurities and superstitions of the heathen, and a resemblance has been traced between some of their opinions and practices and those of the Jews. It has been thought, indeed, that the Egyptian Therapeutæ were Jews; and the notion has derived support from the fact, that at the same period there was a Jewish sect, living in Palestine, known by the name of Essenes. The habits of these men bore a close resemblance to those of the Therapeutæ; and there may, perhaps, have been some connection between them, which would account for both of them adopting such a singular mode of life. But there are strong reasons for concluding that the Therapeutæ were not Jews, though some persons of that nation may have joined them from Alexandria; and their religious opinions, as was before observed, contained some traces of a Jewish origin.

It can hardly be denied that the morality of these sects came nearer to the standard of the Gospel than that of any other men who were unenlightened by revelation. In some respects they ran into the extreme of making themselves entirely useless to their fellow-beings; and society could not be carried on if their

habits were generally adopted. But if we compare them with what was known of the heathen, or even of the Jews, at the time when the Gospel was first preached, it must be allowed, that there was no place where the soil was better prepared for receiving the heavenly seed, than among these contemplative and ascetic recluses of Egypt. There are traditions which speak of many of them having been converted to the Gospel; and such a result was certainly not improbable. We shall also see, in the course of this history, that the first Christians who adopted monastic habits were resident in Egypt, which might be accounted for by some of the Therapeutæ retaining their ancient mode of life after their conversion. It is to be regretted that so little is known of the effect produced upon these men by the first preaching of Christianity; but it was thought right to give this short account of them, though we can only say from conjecture, that some of them received the word of life from the Evangelist Mark.

Though we know so little of the two great apostles, Peter and Paul, during the later years of their lives, we may assert with confidence that they both suffered martyrdom at Rome, which brings us to the first systematic persecution of the Christians by the heathen. In the year 64, a great fire happened at Rome, which burnt down ten out of the fourteen regions into which the city was divided. The emperor Nero was strongly suspected of having caused the conflagration; but he tried to silence the report, by turning the fury of the citizens against the Christians. The rapid growth of Christianity was sure by this time to have raised against it many enemies who were interested in suppressing it.

When Paul preached it for the first time at Rome, as a prisoner, he met with no opposition; but during the six years which followed his departure, the grain of mustard-seed had been growing into a tree, which threatened to overtop the stateliest and most luxuriant plantations of heathenism. This is the real cause of the different reception which the apostle met with on his first and second visits. If the emperor had wished to raise a cry against the Christians on the former occasion, he would not have found many, in proportion to the population of the city, who had even heard of their name. But before his second visit, the new religion had gained so many followers, that the persons interested in supporting the ancient superstitions began to be seriously alarmed. The emperor himself would be likely to care little about religion; but he would care still less for the sufferings of the Christians, if he could make his people believe that they had set fire to Rome. It is certain that many calumnies were now beginning to be spread which were likely to raise prejudices against the Christians. The heathen could not, or would not, understand their abhorrence of a plurality of gods, and set them down as atheists. They were even represented as grossly immoral in their conduct, and as practising horrid and inhuman rites at their religious meetings. Such notions may have arisen, in part, from the love-feasts and sacraments of the Christians; but they are also to be traced to the Gnostics, all of whom were addicted to magic, and some of them did not scruple to defend and to practise the most licentious and disgusting immoralities. The Gnostics were for a long time confounded with the Christians, by those who pretended to despise all

foreign superstitions; and thus when the Christians were accused of having set fire to Rome, the populace was easily excited to demand their blood.

The emperor's gardens were used as a circus for the occasion; and the remorseless tyrant disgraced himself and human nature by taking part in the games, while the Christians were tortured by new and barbarous inventions, to furnish amusement for the spectators. Humanity shudders to hear of these innocent victims being enclosed in the skins of beasts, that they might be torn in pieces by dogs; or covered with pitch and other inflammable materials, that they might serve as torches to dispel the darkness of the night. The number of persons who suffered in this way is not stated; but the Romans appear from this time to have acquired a taste for persecuting the Christians, which continued, more or less, to the end of Nero's reign. It was during this period, that the two apostles, Peter and Paul, came to Rome; and it seems probable that Paul arrived first; he approached the capital from the east, and there is no reason to think that he entered it as a prisoner, but he appears to have lost his liberty soon after his arrival; and his imprisonment was now much more close and severe than it had been on the former occasion.

Under other circumstances, the apostle would have rejoiced in having the company of Peter; but they were now fellow-sufferers, or rather fellow-victims; and it is not certain whether they were even allowed to visit each other as prisoners, though the place is still shown in Rome in which they are said to have been confined. It seems most probable that Peter wrote his two Epistles before his last journey to Rome;

and if he had visited the people to whom the first of them is addressed, we are able to say that he had traversed nearly the whole of Asia Minor. He had also gone much farther to the east, if the Babylon from which he wrote the Epistle was the celebrated city on the Euphrates. But it has been supposed by some writers to be a figurative name, by which he chose to speak of Rome; and if this was the case, it is most probable that he wrote the Epistle during some former visit which he paid to the capital. The second Epistle was certainly written not long before his death; but there is no evidence of his having written it during his imprisonment. We may speak with more certainty with respect to Paul, whose second Epistle to Timothy was undoubtedly sent from Rome during the period of which we are now speaking. Timothy was still taking charge of the apostle's converts at Ephesus; and the Epistle pressed him to come to Rome before winter; but whether the two friends met again in this world cannot be ascertained.

The eventful lives of the two great apostles were now drawing to a close. Paul appears to have been called upon to make a public defence; but the sequel shows, as might have been expected, that all defence was useless. He was ordered to be beheaded, that mode of punishment having probably been selected out of regard for his being a citizen of Rome; and as early as in the third century, a spot was shown, on the road leading to Ostia, in which his body was said to have been buried. We are equally in the dark as to the personal history of Peter during his last visit to Rome. There are traditions which speak of his once more encountering Simon, the Samaritan impostor, and cele-

brated founder of the Gnostics, during one of his visits at Rome; but whether such a meeting ever actually took place, and whether it was at this last or a previous visit, is entirely uncertain. We can only venture to assert, that Peter was imprisoned for some time before his death at Rome; and it is generally stated that both apostles suffered martyrdom on the same day. Peter, not being a citizen of Rome, was ordered to be crucified, which was a common punishment for criminals of the lower orders. But the apostle showed his humility by requesting to be fastened to the cross with his head downwards, as if he felt himself unworthy to die in the same manner with his heavenly Master. If the story may be received which was current at the end of the second century, that Peter saw his wife led out to martyrdom, and encouraged her to bear the trial, it is probably to be referred to the period of his own suffering. The place of his interment was also shown, like that of Paul's, as early as in the third century, but not on the same spot; for Peter is said to have been buried on the hill of the Vatican, where the magnificent church now stands which bears his name.

This persecution began, as was stated, in the year 64, and the reign of Nero ended in the June of 68; but it is uncertain whether the Christians were exposed to suffering during the whole of that period. The deaths of the two apostles must be placed some time before the death of the emperor, perhaps in the year 67, which thus becomes a memorable and melancholy era in the history of the Church. Some persons have supposed that the persecution was felt by the Christians not only in the capital, but throughout various provinces of the empire. This point, however, has never

been clearly proved. The rapid progress of Christianity may have led to the same results in different countries, and provincial magistrates may have been encouraged in any acts of cruelty, by knowing that the emperor allowed the Christians to be tortured; but there is no evidence that Nero published any general edict which made Christianity a crime, or which ordered the magistrates to suppress it. We may hope that, even in the capital, the thirst for blood was satisfied when that of the two apostles had been shed. The Roman Christians, as we have seen, had been committed some years before to the care of Linus; and there is reason to think that Linus also suffered martyrdom during Nero's persecution. The Church was then committed to the charge of Anencletus, whose name has thus been preserved as that of the second Bishop of Rome.

CHAPTER VI.

Lives of the Apostles.—Destruction of Jerusalem.—Flight of the Christians to Pella.—Rise of the Nazarenes and Ebionites.—Effect of the Dispersion of the Jews.—Gnostic notions concerning Christ.

BEFORE we pursue the history of the Church in its chronological order, we will pause to consider the progress which had already been made by the Gospel. When Paul wrote to the Colossians, during his first imprisonment at Rome, he spoke of the Gospel having been then *preached to every creature which is under heaven.* We are not to press the literal interpretation of these words, any more than those of our Saviour, who said, when speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, *The Gospel must first be published among all nations.* Nevertheless, it was literally true, at the time when the Epistle to the Colossians was written, that the Gospel had been preached in every country of the then civilised world, as well as in many countries which were still barbarous. Paul himself had visited the whole of Palestine, with part of Syria, including the capital; the sea-coast of Asia Minor, on the south and west, with great part of the interior, and the Islands of Cyprus and Crete; Macedonia, in its widest signification; Attica, the Peloponnesus, and Rome. All this was done by one man in the space of twelve years; after which time the same apostle continued his missionary

labours for eight years more; and during the whole of both periods, there is every reason to believe that the other apostles were performing similar journeys with similar success.

It has already been observed, that we know very little of the personal history of the twelve apostles; but the remark may be repeated here, that they probably did not begin their distant travels till the time of Paul's first journey in 45; and there is reason to think that very few of them survived the destruction of Jerusalem. We have already mentioned the little that is known concerning Peter. James, the brother of John, was beheaded in the year 44, before his apostolical labours could have begun, though the fact of his death may serve to show that he had been a zealous preacher to his countrymen at Jerusalem. John himself outlived all the other apostles, and did not die till the end of the century, so that we shall have occasion to notice him hereafter.

Of the nine other apostles we have very little authentic information, though there are abundant traditions concerning their preaching in distant countries, and suffering martyrdom. These accounts are not supported by the earlier writers, except with relation to Andrew and Thomas; the former of whom is said by a writer of the third century, to have preached in Scythia, and the latter in Parthia. The term Scythia might be applied to many countries; but Andrew is said more precisely to have visited the country about the Black Sea, and ultimately to have died in the south of Greece. If it be true that the apostle Thomas preached in Parthia, we are to understand this expression of the Persian territories; and he is also said

to have travelled as far as India. Some persons have thought to find traces of his apostolical labours in a settlement of Christians lately discovered on the coast of Malabar, and we are told that these persons lay claim to the apostle Thomas as their founder. But though this interesting church may be of great antiquity, there is good reason to doubt the truth of such a tradition; and part of the country, which is now called Arabia, was often spoken of in ancient times as India. It is, therefore, highly probable that Thomas preached the Gospel in the central parts of Asia; and the church of Edessa, a city on the east bank of the Euphrates, may have been planted by this apostle. But the story of Abgarus, the king of that people, having written a letter to our Saviour, and being cured of a disorder by a person sent to him from the apostle Thomas, is worthy of little credit, except as it confirms the tradition of Thomas having preached at Edessa. His remains were shown in that city as early as in the fourth century; and there is reason to think that he did not suffer martyrdom.

There is the same doubt concerning the proper meaning of the term India, in another tradition, concerning the apostles Matthew and Bartholomew. It was reported, at the end of the second century, that a Hebrew copy of the Gospel, composed by Matthew, had been found in India, which had been brought to that country by Bartholomew. It is plain that a Hebrew translation of this Gospel could only have been of use to Jews, who are known to have been settled in great numbers in Arabia; so that, if there is any truth in this story, it probably applies to Arabia, and we may conclude that one or both of these apostles visited

that country. Matthew is reported upon other, but later, authority, to have preached in Ethiopia, which was another name occasionally used for Arabia. He is also said to have led a life of rigid abstemiousness, and not to have met his end by martyrdom.

Concerning three of the apostles, Simon, surnamed the Zealot, Matthias, and James the son of Alphæus, we know absolutely nothing: at least, if we follow the opinion expressed in this history, that the James now mentioned was a different person from the Bishop of Jerusalem. There was, however, a brother of the bishop, named Jude, who was probably the same with the apostle of that name; and since Paul, in a letter which he wrote in the year 52, speaks of *the brethren of our Lord* travelling about with their wives, and preaching the Gospel, we can hardly help referring the expression to Jude, who at that time was pursuing his apostolical labours; but the particular countries in which he travelled are not known. We learn, from other authorities, that he was married and left descendants. He was also the writer of the Epistle which is still extant; and there is reason to think that he survived most of the other apostles. It has been stated that none of them lived to the end of the century, except John; but it is probable that Philip died at an advanced age; and his residence, in the latter part of his life, was at Hierapolis in Phrygia. He also was married, and had daughters, which was perhaps the cause of his being sometimes confounded with the other Philip, who was one of the seven deacons, and lived at Cæsarea, whose unmarried daughters are mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles.

This brief sketch of the personal history of the

apostles will be unsatisfactory to those who would wish to be furnished with anecdotes concerning the founders of our faith. Such a wish is perfectly reasonable, if materials could be found for gratifying it; and the historian of the Church could not better discharge his duty, when engaged upon the affairs of the first century, than in relating circumstances connected with the lives and deaths of the apostles. Their history would be that of the first propagation of the Gospel. But it has been already stated more than once, that we know very little concerning them; and upon this interesting subject, the Christians of the third and fourth centuries appear to have been almost as much in the dark as ourselves. Traditions must have been extant in the second century, connected with the history of the apostles, and collections of them are stated to have been made by writers of that period, but they have not come down to our day, except, perhaps, amidst a heap of extravagant fictions, which make it impossible for us to ascertain whether any of the stories are genuine. The lives of all the apostles may be read in most minute detail, not only in the compilations of modern writers, but in works, or fragments of works, which are probably as old as the second century; and we shall see, when we come to that period, that literary forgeries began then to be common, which pretended to relate the personal adventures of the companions of our Lord. The only inspired work upon the subject, which is entitled the Acts of the Apostles, might, with more propriety, be termed the Acts of Paul, and they do not bring down his history beyond the termination of his first imprisonment at Rome. The account of his second imprison-

ment, and of his death, might have been related much more minutely, if credit could be given to the statements of later writers; but it is impossible to do so, in the great majority of instances, without laying aside every principle of sound and rational criticism; and the same remark will apply to the voluminous legends which are still extant concerning the rest of the apostles.

We may now pursue the history of the Church during the period which followed the Martyrdom of Peter and Paul. There still remain more than thirty years before we come to the end of the first century; but of these thirty years very little is known. We have been able to trace the history of Paul with some minuteness; but the short and scanty account which has been given of the other apostles, will show that very little is known of their individual labours.

The three successors of Nero in the empire held their disputed titles for only eighteen months; and in the year 69, Vespasian was declared emperor. The event which makes his reign so peculiarly interesting, is the destruction of Jerusalem by his son Titus, who, without knowing the counsels which he was called to fulfil, was employed by God to execute his vengeance upon his infatuated and rebellious people. The ecclesiastical historian may be thankful that he is not called upon to describe the horrors of the Jewish war. It is sufficient for our present purpose to state, that the discontent, which had been showing itself at intervals for several years, broke out into open hostilities in the year 66, when the Jews were successful in defeating a Roman army commanded by Cestius Gallus. This was the signal for open war. Vespasian himself took the field against them; and the Jews soon found that their only

hope was in the power of Jerusalem to stand a siege. The command of the besieging army was then committed to Titus; and though, according to the notions of those days, he was not a bloodthirsty conqueror, it is calculated that more than a million of Jews perished in the siege. The city was taken in the year 72, and from that time to the present, Jerusalem has been trodden down by the Gentiles.

There can be no doubt that the Jews were partly excited to this obstinate resistance by the expectation that a mighty and victorious prince was soon to appear among them. One impostor after another declared himself to be the Messiah; and the notion was so generally spread of an universal empire being about to begin from Judæa, that Vespasian thought it expedient to proclaim the fulfilment of the expectation in his own person. The fact of his first assuming the imperial title in Judæa supported such a notion; but Vespasian, like other usurpers, was mistrustful of his own right, and could not altogether dismiss his fears of a rival. We are told that when Jerusalem was taken, he ordered an inquiry to be made after all the descendants of David, that the Jews might not have any person of the royal race remaining. If they had not been too much occupied by their own misfortunes, they would perhaps have gratified their hatred of the Christians by denouncing them to the emperor, as persons who owned for their king a descendant of the house of David. In one sense this was true of the Christians; but though Vespasian might have been inclined to view the Christians with jealousy, there is good reason to think that, on the present occasion at least, they escaped his inquiries.

His only object would have been to ascertain whether any person of the royal line was likely to oppose him as a competitor for the empire. The notion of a kingdom *which was not of this world* would have given him no uneasiness; and there is no reason to suppose that Vespasian paid any attention to the religion of the Christians, unless we conclude that the miraculous cures which he pretended to perform in Egypt, were set up in rivalry to that preternatural power which so many of the first converts had received from the hands of the apostles.

Our Saviour had predicted the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, in the plainest terms, to his disciples. With equal plainness he had warned the Christians to quit the city before the siege began. History informs us that they profited by these merciful predictions; and if the dates have been rightly assigned to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, the publication of them at that period would forcibly remind the Christians of the necessity which there was of flying from the devoted spot.

It has even been said that new and supernatural warnings were given to them to retire from Jerusalem; but it is certain that, as early as the year 66, before the city was at all surrounded by armies, many of the inhabitants left it; and a place named Pella, on the eastern side of the river Jordan, is mentioned as providing a refuge for the Christians. We may conclude that they were accompanied by Symeon, who, since the year 62, had presided over the church at Jerusalem; and the number of fugitives must have been extremely great, if he was attended by all his flock. But it is not improbable that several of the Jewish believers quitted Palestine altogether, and settled in different

parts of the empire. This would be the case particularly with those who had already laid aside their attachment to the law of Moses. The destruction of the city, and the dispersion of its inhabitants, would confirm them in their belief that God no longer intended the Jews to be a peculiar people. They would thenceforth cease to think of Judæa as their home; and, so far as they could lay aside their national character, they would join themselves to the great body of Gentile Christians, who were now beginning to be numerous in every part of the world.

The effect of so many converted Jews being suddenly dispersed throughout the empire must have been felt in various ways. In the first place the mere accession of numbers to the Christians must have brought them more under the notice of the heathen; and though this was likely to be followed by persecution, it would also operate in making the new religion more widely known and therefore more widely propagated. In the next place it would tend to confirm the notion already entertained by the heathen, that the Christians were merely a Jewish sect; and though the contempt which was felt for the Jews might hitherto have served as a protection to the Christians, this feeling was likely to be changed when the war was brought to a conclusion. The Jews, who had before been only distinguished for a peculiar religion, were now known throughout the empire as an obstinate and turbulent people, whose desperate courage had for a time defied the whole strength of Rome, and who could only cease to be formidable by being utterly wiped away from the catalogue of nations. So long as the Christians were confounded with the Jews, they would be likely to

share in these feelings of suspicion and ill-will; and persons who might not have cared for the increasing propagation of the Christian doctrines, would view with dislike, if not with actual alarm, the general diffusion of opinions which were supposed to be peculiar to the Jews.

These were some of the effects which might have been produced upon the minds of the heathen, by the dispersion of so many converted Jews at the close of the war. But it is probable that consequences of a different kind were felt by the Christians themselves. It has been already observed, that those countries which received the Gospel before the arrival of any apostle, received it most probably by the hands of Jews; and hence there are traces of even the Gentile converts becoming attached, in a greater or less degree, to the Law of Moses, in every place where a Christian community was formed. If this had been so from the beginning, it was likely that the adoption of Jewish customs would become still more general when so many churches received an accession of Jewish members. We, perhaps, see traces of this in the practice, which was continued for some centuries, of the Christians observing the Jewish Sabbath, on the seventh day of the week, as well as the Sunday, or first day. That the Sunday was called the Lord's day, and was kept holy in memory of the Lord, having risen from the dead on that day, can be proved from the practice of the apostles, as recorded in the New Testament. But there is also evidence that many Christians continued for a long time to attach a religious sanctity to the Saturday, as being the Sabbath of the Jews; and such a custom may have derived support from the cause

above mentioned, when so many Hebrew Christians were dispersed throughout the empire. The same remark may be applied to what has been already mentioned in a former chapter, that the prohibition of eating things strangled, or any animal which was killed with the blood in it, was considered a perpetual obligation by all, or nearly all, Christians, for some centuries.

The country in which Pella is situated formed part of the territories given by the Romans to Agrippa, who had prudence and policy enough to keep on good terms with the conquerors, without actually taking up arms against his countrymen. The Christians, therefore, remained unmolested in Pella and the neighbourhood; and as soon as it was possible for them to return to Jerusalem, many of them did so, accompanied by their bishop, and set up again a Christian church amidst the ruins of their city. Without attributing to the Jewish Christians any want of patriotism, or any feeling of attachment to the Roman government, it was natural for them to view the destruction of Jerusalem with very different emotions from those of their unbelieving countrymen. They knew that this event, disastrous and fatal as it was to their nation, had been positively foretold by the Founder of their religion: many of them had long acknowledged that the distinction between Jew and Gentile was to exist no longer; and the total subversion of the Jewish polity would be likely to make still more of them embrace this once unwelcome truth: to which it may be added, that the expectation of a temporal prince, descended from the family of David, could hardly be entertained by the Christians, who already acknowledged a spiritual completion of the prophecies in Jesus, the Son of

David. All this would incline them to acquiesce much more patiently than the rest of their nation in the awful judgments of God; and if their Roman masters allowed them to return to the land of their fathers, they would accept the indulgence with gratitude; and though their walls were not to be rebuilt, and one stone of the Temple was not left upon another; they were too happy to return to their homes as a quiet, inoffensive people, and to continue to worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

It might, perhaps, be too much to assert, that from this period the only inhabitants of Jerusalem were Christians, though it is not improbable that such was the case when the settlers from Pella first took possession of the ruins. That these men were sincere believers in Christ cannot be doubted; but there is reason to think that they still continued to observe some of the peculiarities of the Law of Moses; not that they considered any of these ceremonies as essential to salvation, but they had scruples as to leaving them off altogether, and added them, as external ordinances, to the more pure and vital doctrines of the Gospel.

This, however, was not the case with all the Jewish Christians who had fled beyond the Jordan. Many of them remained in that district; and from them we are to date the origin of two sects, whose religious opinions have led to much discussion. These were the Nazarenes and Ebionites, whose doctrines have been confounded by later writers, and both of them have received the name of heretics; but there is good reason to think that, at first, there was an essential difference between them, and that the Nazarenes had no peculiar tenets,

except their continued and rigorous attachment to all the ceremonies of the Mosaic Law.

We have seen that this attachment prevailed very generally among the Jewish believers; and it is probable that it had been held by many of the persons who fled to Pella. The destruction of Jerusalem, as has been already remarked, would be likely to diminish the numbers of these adherents of the law; and from this time the Judaising Christians formed a distinct sect or party in the Church, though from the nature of the case they would be principally confined to Judea; and, accordingly, when we find mention of them as existing in the fourth century, they were still living in the neighbourhood of Pella. They then bore the name of Nazarenes, and were considered to differ in some important points from the orthodox Church; but there is no evidence that this name was exclusively applied to them in the first century, or for a long time after. At first it was a term of reproach given by the Jews to all the believers in Christ; and though the term Christian, which was of Greek or Latin origin, was more suited for general adoption than a name which was taken from a Jewish town, it was not unnatural that the Judaising Christians should still continue to be called Nazarenes. Even their believing brethren might give them this appellation; and if the sect afterwards came to adopt erroneous opinions, we can easily account for a distinct heresy being mentioned as that of the Nazarenes.

The Ebionites were, from the first, much more decidedly heretical, though they also took their origin, at the same period, from the neighbourhood of Pella. It must be remembered that this part of the country had

lost its former connection with Judæa, though Herod the Great had held it with his other possessions, and it now formed part of the small dominions of Agrippa. Ever since the captivity of the ten tribes, it had been inhabited, like Samaria, by a mixed race of people, who blended some parts of the religion of the Jews with superstitions imported principally from the East. When the Christian fugitives came among them from Jerusalem, their doctrines would naturally excite the attention of the natives, particularly of such as had already in part adopted Judaism. Another set of opinions had also been gaining ground for some time in this part of the world, which has already been mentioned under the name of Gnosticism. Simon Magus had preached it with great success in his native country, Samaria, from whence it could easily be carried across the Jordan to the country where Pella was situated. The leader of the Gnostics made great use of the name of Christian in his new system of philosophy. He considered Christ as one among many emanations from God, who was sent into the world to free it from the tyranny of evil. He received whatever he had heard of the personal history of Jesus, and fully believed him to be the divine emanation called Christ. But he would not believe that Jesus had a real, substantial body: he thought that a divine and heavenly being would never unite himself with what was earthly and material: and having heard of Christ soon after his ascension, before any written accounts of his birth and death were circulated, he formed the absurd and fanciful notion that the body of Jesus was a mere spirit or phantom, which only appeared to perform the functions of a man, and that it was not really nailed to the cross.

It has been already observed, that this impiety entirely destroyed the doctrine of the atonement. Such was the notion entertained by Simon Magus concerning Jesus Christ; and his followers, the Gnostics, were for some time called Docetæ, from a Greek word implying their belief that the body of Jesus was a phantom. The notion, in fact, continued for some centuries, and was perpetuated, after the declension of Gnosticism, by the Manichees. But before the end of the first century, another division of Gnostics invented a new doctrine, which was, perhaps, owing to the general circulation of the written Gospels. It was plainly stated in these books, and persons living in Judæa could not be ignorant of the fact, that Jesus had, in every sense of the term, a human body. The names of his mother, Mary, and her husband, Joseph, were generally known; and his growth from childhood to manhood, as well as other circumstances in his life, proved him to be subject to the usual laws of human nature. All this could not be denied by the Gnostics; but still they would not bring themselves to believe that a being of heaven could so intimately unite itself with a being of earth as to be born of a human parent; and, to get rid of this difficulty, a new doctrine was devised, for which they seemed to find some support in the written Gospels.

They had read the account of the baptism of Jesus, on which occasion the Holy Spirit descended visibly from heaven, and lighted upon him. The Gnostics interpreted this to mean, that Jesus, up to the time of his baptism, had been a mere human being, born in the ordinary way, of two human parents; but that after that time, the man Jesus was united to Christ, who was an emanation from God; and that the two beings

continued so united till the crucifixion of Jesus, when Christ left him and returned to heaven. It was their belief in the divinity of Christ which hindered them from believing that he was born of a human mother; and hence they divided Jesus and Christ into two distinct beings—Jesus was a mere man, but Christ was an emanation from God.

The name of the person who invented this doctrine has not been ascertained; but, before the end of the first century, it was held by two persons who became eminent as the heads of parties—the one a Greek, named Carpocrates, and the other named Cerinthus, who, if he was not a Jew, admitted much of the Jewish religion into his scheme of Gnosticism. Both these persons were openly and scandalously profligate in their moral conduct, which enables us to point out another division among the Gnostics; for, while some maintained, that all actions were lawful to one who possessed the true knowledge of God, and accordingly indulged in every species of vice, others considered it the duty of a Gnostic to mortify the body, and to abstain even from the most innocent enjoyments. Carpocrates and Cerinthus belonged to the former of these divisions; and Cerinthus, not content with encouraging his followers in the grossest dissipation, held out to them a millennium of enjoyment at the end of the world, when Christ was again to appear upon earth, and his faithful followers were to revel in a thousand years of sensual indulgence!

It is possible that Cerinthus did not rise into notice till towards the end of the century; but Gnosticism had undoubtedly made great progress in the world before the period at which we are now arrived; and

though its early history is involved in some obscurity, it is plain that it borrowed largely from the religion of the Jews, as might be expected in a system which was begun by a native of Samaria. The Ebionites, whose origin led us into this discussion, were a branch of the Gnostics, and they are said to have appeared at first, like the Nazarenes, in the neighbourhood of Pella. Their name signifies, in Hebrew, *poor;* but it has been doubted whether they were not called from an individual whose name was Ebion. They were represented by the ancients as Jews, and some moderns have considered them to be Christians. But though their tenets partook both of Christianity and Judaism, they cannot properly be classed with either party. The first Ebionites may by birth have been Jews, and they may have fancied that they were embracing the doctrines of the Gospel; but they chose to disfigure both forms of religion, and they should properly be described as a branch of Jewish Gnostics. If they were originally Jews, they made a strong departure from the faith of their fathers, for they did not acknowledge the whole of the Pentateuch, and utterly rejected the writings of the prophets. Notwithstanding this heterodoxy, they sided with the most bigoted of the Jews in adhering to all the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, although they professed to be believers in Jesus Christ. It was on this principle that they paid no respect to Paul as an apostle; and when his epistles came into general circulation, they were rejected by the Ebionites.

Their connection with the Gnostics is proved by their adopting the notion that Christ descended upon Jesus at his baptism; and their belief in Christ's divinity led them to maintain that Jesus was born, in the

ordinary way, of two human parents. They would not admit any account which spoke of Christ, the Son of God, being conceived in the womb of the Virgin, or of his being united from the moment of his birth with a human being. They had a Gospel of their own, written in Hebrew, and made up in part from that of Matthew, from which they had expunged everything relating to the miraculous conception, and to the birth of Christ. It is stated, however, that the later Ebionites became divided upon this point; and though all of them believed that Christ came down from heaven, and united himself to Jesus, some of them maintained that Jesus was conceived miraculously by the Virgin, while others, as stated above, believed him in every sense to be an ordinary human being. It should be added in favour of the Ebionites, that though their religious tenets were erroneous and extravagant, their moral practice was particularly strict, which perhaps forms the most prominent contrast between themselves and the Cerinthians.

This account of the Ebionites has been introduced in this place, because they are said to have arisen in the neighbourhood of Pella, about the time of the Christians resorting thither from Jerusalem. It will be remembered that all these Christians were converted Jews, and all of them had once conformed to the Law of Moses. Those who continued to do so were known by the name of Nazarenes: but though they adhered to the ceremonies of the law, they were firm believers in Jesus Christ, and looked for salvation only through him. Others of their body, while they kept the same strict observance of the law, adopted the Gnostic notions concerning Jesus Christ, and were known by the

name of Ebionites. They were probably of the poorer sort, as was implied in their name; and it does not appear that they were numerous. But there was always a danger among the Jewish converts, lest their attachment to the law should incline them to adopt the errors of the Ebionites and other Gnostics. There is, however, reason to believe that the church at Jerusalem continued pure. It had witnessed the most awful calamity which had ever befallen the Jewish nation; and its members could not forget, on returning once more to Jerusalem, that a remnant only had been saved, even they who believed in Jesus.

CHAPTER VII.

Sees of Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, and Alexandria.—Epistle of Clement. — Spurious Writings. — Domitian persecutes. — Causes of Persecution.—Banishment and Death of John.—Exiles recalled by Nerva.—Canon of Scripture.

THE destruction of Jerusalem, though the details of it cannot be read even now without horror, was not likely at the time to produce any effect upon the external circumstances of the Gentile Church, which was now so widely spread throughout the world. The reigns of Vespasian and Titus present no instance of the Christians being molested on account of their religion: and we cannot doubt that the Gospel made great progress during that period. Very little is known of the history of any particular church; but the four cities which afterwards became most celebrated in the Christian world, and which took precedence over all other sees, have preserved the names of their bishops from the beginning. These cities were Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, and Alexandria, which are here mentioned in the order of their foundation; or if Mark went to Alexandria before any apostle visited Rome, the authority of Peter and Paul gave a priority to the latter city over one which was founded merely by an evangelist. The apostolical sees, as they were called, soon came to be looked upon with particular respect: not as having any power or jurisdiction over the rest, but as

being most likely to have preserved apostolical traditions, and to have kept their faith uncorrupted.

There were many other churches besides the four lately mentioned which were founded by apostles, some of which might claim precedence in order of time: but Jerusalem was, without dispute, the mother of all churches; and Rome, as the metropolis of the world, and Antioch and Alexandria, as capitals of provinces, naturally acquired an importance over inferior places. If we may judge from the length of time during which the bishops of these four cities held their sees in the first century, we have perhaps another proof that Christianity was not then exposed to much opposition from the heathen. The appointment of Symeon to the bishopric of Jerusalem has been already mentioned; and he held that station to the beginning of the following century. It has also been stated, that Euodius is named as the first bishop of Antioch, though the date of his appointment is not ascertained. He was succeeded, and probably about the year 70, by Ignatius, whose interesting history will occupy us hereafter; but his continuing bishop of that see for upwards of thirty years, may be taken as a proof that the period which we are now considering was one of tranquillity to the Christians of Antioch. The same may be said of Alexandria, where the first three successors of Mark held the bishopric for almost half a century.

The church which, on many accounts, would be most interesting to us, if its early history had been preserved, is that of Rome; but the reader will have seen that we know little concerning it, except the fact of its being founded conjointly by Peter and Paul. The names of

time of these apostles, but with confusion in the first century, both as to the order of their succession and the time of their holding the bishopric. It seems, however, most probable that the first three bishops of the imperial city were Linus, Anencletus, and Clement. The name of the latter deserves a conspicuous place after that of the apostles, whose companion and successor he was: and it is to be regretted that we cannot tell whether he lived to the end of the century, or whether he died long before.

This difference of opinion would be of little importance if Clement had not left a writing behind him, which is still extant: and so few events have been preserved in the history of the Church, during the time that Clement was bishop of Rome, that every incident in his life becomes of value. The writing alluded to was a letter written by Clement, in the name of the Christians at Rome, to their brethren at Corinth; and this interesting document has been preserved almost entire to our own day. We may gather from it that the Roman Christians had lately been suffering some persecution, though the storm had then passed away; which has led some persons to suppose the letter to have been written soon after the end of the reign of Nero, while others refer these expressions to a later persecution, which will be mentioned presently, and which happened in the reign of Domitian. The letter was caused by some dissensions in the Church of Corinth, the exact nature of which is not explained; but the Corinthians had shown a fondness for dividing into parties very soon after their first conversion; and notwithstanding the expostulations and reproof addressed to them by Paul, the same unhappy spirit pre-

vailed among them after his death. It appears to have burst out still more violently on the occasion which called forth the letter from Clement: and it is pleasing to see one church taking this kind and charitable interest in the affairs of another.

The letter is full of earnest exhortations to peace, which, we may hope, were not thrown away upon the Christians of Corinth, when we find that the letter was carefully preserved in that city, and, to a late period, was read publicly in the congregation. Nor was Corinth the only place in which it was treated with this respect. Other churches had also the custom of having it read in public; and, whether we regard the apostolical character of its author, or the early period at which it was composed, it was well deserving of holding a place in the estimation of all Christians next to the writings of the apostles themselves.

The Epistle of Clement may be safely said to be the only genuine work which has come down to us from the first century, besides the canonical books of the New Testament; and there is reason to think that it is older than some, if not all, the writings of the last surviving apostle, John. It is probable that Christianity, at this early period, had produced many authors. The name of Barnabas, the companion of Paul, and that of Hermas, who is mentioned in his Epistle to the Romans, are both of them prefixed to works which are ascribed respectively to these two persons. The writings which bear their names are still extant, and they demand some notice, as being as old as the second century: but if the names of Barnabas and Hermas were given to them that they might be received as works of the first century, there must have been an

intention to deceive. It is known that several books were composed at an early period, which were filled with stories concerning our Lord and his apostles. Many of them professed to have been written by apostles; but they were evidently spurious, and some of them appear to have been written by the Gnostics. If they had come down to our day, we should, perhaps, have found in them a few authentic traditions concerning the first preachers of the Gospel: but, on the whole, their loss is not to be lamented; and we cannot but acknowledge the merciful superintendence of God, who has allowed the genuine works of the apostles and evangelists to be preserved, while he has protected his Church from being imposed upon by others which were once widely circulated.

The peace which the Christians enjoyed during the reigns of Vespasian and Titus does not appear to have been disturbed during the earlier part of the reign of Domitian. That tyrant exercised too much cruelty towards his heathen subjects to allow them much time for harassing the Christians; and when, at length, he began to persecute the latter, it was, perhaps, rather to draw off the public attention from his other barbarities, than from any regard for the national religion. His persecution probably began in the latter years of his reign; and it was felt, not only in the capital, but in various parts of the empire. One cause of suffering to the Christians, which has been mentioned already, arose from their being confounded with the Jews; a mistake which had been made from the first by the heathen, who pretended to despise all foreign religions; and would not take the pains to distinguish the Christians from the Jews.

When Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus, it was ordered that every Jew should henceforward pay to the Capitol at Rome the same piece of money which had before been levied upon them for the maintenance of the Temple. Domitian, who probably wanted the money for his own purposes, exacted the payment with great severity; and it is mentioned by a heathen historian, that some persons who professed the Jewish religion, but endeavoured to conceal it, were compelled to pay the tax. There can be little doubt that these persons were Christians, who asserted with truth that they were not Jews, but were not believed by the officers of the government.

This measure of the emperor, though flagrantly unjust, may have been attended with little personal suffering to the Christians. But another heathen historian informs us that several persons, about this period, had adopted Jewish manners; one of whom, Acilius Glabrio, was put to death, in the fifteenth year of Domitian, on the charge of atheism. Here we have positive proof of capital punishment being inflicted on account of religion, and atheism was one of the charges frequently brought against the Christians. It was well known that they refused to offer worship to the numerous deities of Paganism; and the votaries of idolatry could not, or would not, understand that their religious adoration was confined to one God. It was also remarked that the Christians had no temples nor images: there was nothing in their forms of worship which met the public eye; and this contributed to give strength to the report, that they were, in religion, atheists. It might, however, excite some surprise that this charge, even if it was generally believed, should

have given rise to persecution: for though the Romans, as has been already observed, were by no means tolerant of other religions, and several laws had been passed against the introduction of foreign superstitions, yet it cannot be denied that persons had been known to maintain atheistical principles without having been brought into any trouble on account of their opinions. Philosophers had only argued against the existence of any First Cause, or any superintending Providence; and though there were some who did not like to say, in plain terms, that there were no gods, yet it was universally allowed and acknowledged that their principles led, necessarily, to atheism.

The question now presents itself, why these philosophers were suffered to maintain their sentiments, and to oppose the popular mythology, without having any notice taken of them by the laws; and yet the Christians, who were falsely accused of doing the same thing, were persecuted and put to death? It might perhaps be said that the philosophers confined their reasoning to the schools, and to a few of their scholars, who chose to employ themselves upon such speculations; whereas the Christians preached their doctrines openly, and forced them upon the notice of the public, if not of the government itself. The remark is just, and may lead the way to an explanation of the question proposed; but we must not forget to add, that what was true with respect to the philosophers, was a mere idle calumny when urged against the Christians.

Atheism was really taught in some schools of philosophy; and the wretched and irrational system made no progress among the great bulk of mankind. The teachers of it were therefore suffered to pursue their

speculations without encountering any public opposition. But the Christians, who were accused of being atheists, were the preachers of a doctrine which not merely amused the ear or exercised the head, but forced an entrance to the heart. Wherever it made its way, the national religion, which recognised a plurality of gods, fled before it. The heathen priests, and all who made their livelihood by the maintenance of idolatry, began to feel that the struggle was for their very existence; hence arose the many calumnies which were circulated against the Christians; and when Acilius Glabrio was put to death on the charge of atheism, his real crime was that of refusing to worship more gods than one.

Many persons were condemned on the same grounds; some of whom suffered death, and some had their property confiscated. Among the former was a man of distinguished rank, Flavius Clemens, who had not only been consul in the preceding year, but was uncle to the emperor, and his sons had been destined to succeed to the empire. None of these distinctions could save him: he and his wife Domitilla were convicted of atheism, that is, of being Christians, for which crime Clemens himself was put to death, and his wife banished.

These anecdotes lead us to some of the causes which exposed the Christians to persecution; and we find another in what is said of the same Clemens, by a writer who meant it as a reproach, that he was a man whose indolence made him contemptible. This inattention to public affairs was often objected to the Christians as a fault; and they could hardly help being open to it, when their religion required them to abstain

from many acts which were connected with heathen superstitions. It was not that the Gospel commanded them to withdraw from public life, or that they felt less interest in the welfare of their country: but it was impossible for them to hold any office, or to be present at any public ceremony, without countenancing, in some degree, the worship of the gods, or the still more irrational error of paying divine honours to the emperor.

A Christian was therefore obliged to abstain from these exhibitions, or to do violence to his conscience; and it was soon observed that such persons seemed to take no interest in the public festivities and rejoicings, which occurred so frequently for the amusement of the Roman populace. To accuse them on this account of indolence and apathy, was, perhaps, merely an expression of contempt; but a tyrant like Domitian might easily be persuaded that a refusal to worship him as a god implied disaffection to his person and his government. The Christians would thus become suspected of a want of loyalty; and though they prayed daily for the emperor and for the state, yet, because their prayers were offered in secret to the one true God they were accused of having no regard for the welfare of their country. Domitian probably listened to insinuations of this kind, when he consented to the execution of his uncle Clemens; and persons who were interested in suppressing Christianity may easily have persuaded him to look upon the Christians as enemies to the state. In one instance he was certainly actuated by jealousy and fear of a rival. He had heard of the report which had been so prevalent at the beginning of the reign of his father, that a great prince was ex-

pected to appear in Judæa, and that he was to come from the house of David. He accordingly ordered inquiry to be made on the spot; and some professors of Gnosticism gave information that the children or grandchildren of the apostle Jude were descended from David. These men appear to have resided in Judæa, and were in a very humble station; they even worked with their own hands to obtain a livelihood; and when they were brought into the emperor's presence, he was so struck with their simplicity, and so convinced that they had no thoughts of any temporal kingdom, that he immediately ordered them to be released.

We may hope that the Christians of Palestine were thus protected from persecution; but the same period which was fatal to so many Christians in Rome, was felt with equal severity by their brethren in Asia Minor. The chief city in those parts, which was also the most distinguished for its Christian church, was Ephesus; and, before the end of the century, it had the advantage of becoming the residence of the last surviving apostle.

We have scarcely had occasion to mention the name of John since the year 46, when he was present at the council held in that year at Jerusalem; and we, in fact, know nothing of his personal history, or of the countries in which he preached the Gospel, till the latter years of his life, which appear to have been spent in Ephesus, or the neighbourhood. His presence there was very necessary to check the inroads which were then making upon the true faith by the Gnostics. There is some evidence that Cerinthus himself was living at Ephesus; and there was no country in which Gnosticism had made more alarming progress. John

has himself mentioned a Gnostic sect, which bore the name of Nicolaitans. These men laid claim to Nicolas, who had been one of the seven deacons, as their founder; but it can never be believed that he countenanced the gross impurities of which the Nicolaitans are known to have been guilty. They also showed the laxity of their principles by consenting, in times of persecution, to eat meats which had been offered to idols. This was now become the test of a genuine Christian. If he was brought before a magistrate on the ground of his religion, and refused to pollute his mouth by tasting a heathen sacrifice, he was immediately ordered to punishment. Many of the Gnostics were equally firm in expressing their abhorrence of heathenism; but some of them found it convenient to comply, among whom were the Nicolaitans; and it has been said that the example had already been set them by Simon Magus, the original father of Gnosticism.

The Nicolaitans had an opportunity of acting upon this disgraceful principle at the end of the reign of Domitian. John's own writings are sufficient evidence that the Christians among whom he was then living had been suffering from persecution. One of them, Antipas, who belonged to Pergamos, has had the distinction of being specially named by the apostle, though we know nothing of the circumstances which attended his martyrdom. It was not long before the apostle was himself called upon to be an actor in the scenes which he describes. If we could believe a writer of the second century, John was sent to Rome, and plunged into a vessel of boiling oil, from which he came out unhurt. The story is not now generally received as true; but we have his own evidence that he was

banished to the island of Patmos; and it was during his residence there that he saw the Revelation which he afterwards committed to writing.

Banishment to distant islands was at this time a common punishment; and it is probable that many Christians were thus transported from their homes for no other crime than that of worshipping Jesus, and that they continued in exile till the end of Domitian's reign. The tyrant died in the September of 96, and was succeeded by Nerva, whose first act was to recall all persons from banishment, including those who were suffering on account of religion. This would allow John to return once more to Ephesus; and we may hope that the few remaining years of his life were passed in a peaceful superintendence of the Asiatic churches. His chief cause of anxiety was from the errors of the Gnostics, which were now beginning to draw away many Christians from their faith in Christ as it had been taught by the apostles. It has been said that his Gospel was specially directed against these erroneous doctrines: and there are passages in his Epistles which plainly allude to them. But the date of all his writings is attended with uncertainty, except perhaps that of his Apocalypse, which must have been written either in the island of Patmos, or soon after his return to Ephesus. The most probable opinion seems to be, that his Gospel and Epistles were also written in the latter part of his life.

It has been said by some writers, that what is called the canon of Scripture was settled by the apostle John shortly before his death. But there seems little foundation for such a statement, if it mean that all the books which are now contained in the New Testament

were then collected into a volume, and received the authoritative sanction of the last of the apostles. That John had read all the writings of the other apostles and evangelists can hardly be doubted; for they were composed and published many years before his own death. We may also be certain that he could not be deceived or mistaken as to the real author of any of these writings; so that in this sense he may be said to have settled the canon of Scripture: but there is no evidence of his having left any decision or command upon the subject. There are traditions which speak of his having seen and approved of the three other Gospels, and of his publishing his own as a kind of supplement to them; and if we adopt the opinion, which seems much the most probable, that the Gospel of John was written at the close of his life, he would hardly have failed to have had the works of his predecessors in view when he was composing his own. That his Gospel is very different from the other three, must have been observed by every reader of the New Testament: and the close agreement, even as to words and sentences, between Matthew, Mark, and Luke, has given rise to many conjectures as to the probable cause of it. The agreement is most striking in our Saviour's discourses on parables; and if the writers intended to report his actual words, there would be nothing extraordinary in this; but we may also remember that the evangelists had been engaged in preaching the Gospel for many years before they committed it to writing: and having to repeat the same parable, or the story of the same miracle, over and over again, to different hearers, they would naturally adopt a set form of words. The apostles had heard each other preach in this way for

perhaps twelve years before they left Jerusalem; and Mark, who accompanied Peter, and Luke, who accompanied Paul, would be likely to agree with each other, and with Matthew, in style, and even in words, when they came to commit to writing what they had been so long in the habit of speaking.

It is also not improbable that the earliest of these three Gospels may have been seen by the two other evangelists; and whichever of them wrote the last may have seen both the former; which may account still more plainly for there being so close an agreement between all the three. But though they thus support each other in all material points, and no contradictions have ever been discovered in their narratives, so as to throw any suspicion upon their honesty or veracity, it has often been remarked that there is sufficient variety between them to remove any suspicion of their having conspired together to impose a falsehood upon the world.

If we could be certain that John intended his Gospel as a supplement to the other three, we should want no further proof of their credibility. They then come to us under the sanction of an inspired apostle, who had not only seen the same miracles, and heard the same discourses which the three evangelists had recorded, but who had the assistance of a divine and infallible guide to preserve him from error and imposture. The Gospel, however, of John, does not appear to be strictly and literally a supplement to the other three. Nor need we suppose that its author intended to make it so. It appears to have been composed at Ephesus; and parts of it were specially directed against the errors of the Gnostics. At the

same time, it is very probable that John purposely omitted some circumstances in the history of Jesus, because they were already well known from the works of the other evangelists. Wherever he goes over the same ground, he confirms their narrative; but it was obviously his intention to devote a large portion of his work to the discourses of our Saviour; and in this respect he has supplied a great deal which the others have omitted.

Though we may not admit the tradition that John settled the canon of the New Testament by any formal and authoritative act, yet he may be said to have finally closed it by his own writings; for it is certain that no work has been admitted into the canon or list of the New Testament, whose date is subsequent to the death of John. There is no evidence that the canonical books were ever more numerous than they are at present. None have been lost or put out of the canon; and when we think of the vast number of Gospels and Acts which were circulated in the second and third centuries, and which bore the names of apostles and their companions, we may well ascribe it to more than human carefulness, that none of these spurious compositions ever found a place among the canonical Scriptures.

On the other hand, there is reason to think that a few of the writings which now form part of the New Testament, were not universally received in the first century, and for some time later. The Epistle to the Hebrews, that of Jude, the second Epistle of Peter, and the second and third of John, were among this number; and there were some churches which do not appear to have received them so early as the rest.

This, however, only shows the extreme caution which was used in settling questions of this kind. It was very possible for a letter to be preserved and read in Asia Minor or Palestine, and yet for many years to have elapsed before it became known in other parts of the empire. As Christianity spread, and the intercourse between distant churches became more frequent, the doubts which had been entertained as to the genuineness of any writing were gradually removed: and though some churches were later than others in admitting the whole of the New Testament, there is no evidence that any part of it was composed later than the end of the first century; so that, though we may reject the tradition of the canon of Scripture having been settled by John, we can hardly doubt, as was before observed, that he had seen and read the writings of all the other apostles before his death.

Anecdotes have been preserved which show the warm and zealous affection felt by the aged apostle for the souls of his flock. He knew that they were beset with enemies from within and without. The heathen were impatient for license to renew their attacks, and the Gnostics were spreading their poison with the subtlety of serpents. The presence of an apostle among them, as well as the circulation of his Gospel, could hardly fail to check the evil; and a story has been recorded, which we might wish to believe, from its natural and affecting simplicity, that the venerable apostle was at length so weakened by age, that his disciples were obliged to carry him to the religious meetings of the Christians; and when even his voice failed him, he continued to address them with what might be called his dying words,—"My dear children, love one

another." There is reason to think that his life was prolonged till the beginning of the reign of Trajan, who succeeded Nerva in the January of 98; and thus the death of the last surviving apostle coincides very nearly with the close of the first century.

He has himself told us in his Gospel, that a notion had been entertained that he was not to die; and we know from history that reports were circulated in later times which confirm such an expectation. There is no need to expose the erroneousness of such a belief. A writer of the second century mentions his tomb as being then to be seen at Ephesus; and there is every reason to think that he died in that city. It has been said that the Virgin Mary accompanied him when he went to settle in that part of Asia; and it is very probable that such was the fact, if she had not died at an earlier period; but unless her life was protracted to an unusual length, she was released from her earthly pilgrimage before the time when John is supposed to have gone to Asia. It is, perhaps, singular, that no authentic account has been preserved of the latter days of one who had received the high privilege of being called the Mother of our Lord; but nothing whatever is known of her from the New Testament, after the time that her Son had ascended into heaven, and she was left with his apostles and other followers in Jerusalem. The same spirit of invention which gave rise to so many stories concerning the apostles, has also supplied many marvellous occurrences which befel the Virgin Mary; but they can only be read to be rejected, and claim no place in the authentic annals of the Church.

The reader will now have observed the truth of the

remark which was made above, that we know very little concerning the last thirty years of the first century; and yet it would be difficult to name any period which was of greater interest to the Church. It was during those thirty years that all the apostles, except John, who were not already dead, were gradually removed from the world, and committed their flocks to their successors. Many churches, whose early history is unknown, but which were flourishing at the beginning of the second century, must have been planted at this period. There is every reason to think that the progress of conversion was rapid; and what was only a rivulet at the time of the death of Paul, and which is then almost lost sight of, suddenly meets us again at the end of the century, as a wide and majestic stream. But its waters were already mixed with blood; and the heathen, who had learnt under Nero to find amusement in persecution, had leisure during these thirty years to reduce their cruel pastime to a system. The Gnostics also were unceasingly active during the same period; and one reason why their history is involved in such obscurity, may be traced to the fact of their rising into notice in that part of the first century of which so little is known. The apostles, before their deaths had predicted the success of these insidious teachers; and when we come to the beginning of the second century, we find their predictions abundantly fulfilled; so that this dark period was memorable, not only for the commencement of persecution, but for the spreading of an evil which was perhaps more fatal to the Church, by seducing the souls of men, and turning them from the truth of the Gospel to the ravings of the Gnostics.

One fact is, however, strikingly conspicuous in the midst of the obscurity of this eventful period. Christianity was beset on all sides by obstacles and impediments, and scarcely a single circumstance, humanly speaking, could be said to favour its propagation; and yet we find it, at the beginning of the second century, so widely diffused, and so deeply rooted, that from this time it was able to sustain a warfare against the whole force of the Roman Empire, and finally to win the victory. We know, therefore, that for the last thirty years it must have been constantly gaining ground, though we have not the materials for marking the details of its progress, and we can only say, when we see so prodigious an effect arising from so small a beginning, *This is the Lord's doing: it is marvellous in our eyes.*

CHAPTER VIII.

Church Government.—Successors of the Apostles.—Continuance of Miraculous Powers.—Death of Symeon, Bishop of Jerusalem.—Death of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch.—Letter of Pliny to Trajan.—Persecution in Bithynia.—Revolt of the Jews.—Death of Trajan.

IT was a melancholy moment for the Church when she was left to herself, without any of that "glorious company of the apostles," who had seen their Redeemer while he was in the flesh, and had received from his own lips the charge to feed his flock. He had committed the trust to faithful hands. They were few in number, and weak in worldly resources; but, guided and strengthened from above, they went forth into all lands, and planted the banner of the Cross upon the ruins of heathenism. One by one they were withdrawn from their earthly labours; and it was mercifully provided by God, that the Church did not feel at once the severity of her loss. The apostles had also zealous companions, who assisted them in their ministry, and who were placed by them over the churches in different countries. We have seen the Ephesian converts committed by Paul to Timothy, and those in Crete to Titus. Luke appears to have resided for some time at Philippi; and Mark was sent by Peter to watch over the flock at Alexandria. These may serve as examples of what was done in other churches. So long as the

apostles who founded the churches were alive, and able to visit them in person, it was not necessary to have one fixed superintendent in each city or town. The apostles themselves continued to watch over their converts; and Paul, though residing at Ephesus, was consulted, and gave directions as head of the Church of Corinth. Even in his lifetime he seems to have found the care of all his churches too great for him; and we can well understand the earnest charge which he gave to Timothy not long before his death, that he would commit the things which he had heard to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also.

The state of the Asiatic churches when John was residing at Ephesus may explain the system which had now been generally established for governing Christian communities. The apostle, in his Apocalypse, mentions seven churches in that part of the world, with which he seems to have been intimately acquainted. Two of them, those of Ephesus and Laodicea, are known to have been planted some years before the death of Paul; and the five others were in countries which he frequently visited. Nearly half a century may therefore have elapsed between their first foundation and the notice they received from John. At the latter period they were all of them under the same form of church government. One person was put over each of them, who is called by John, the Angel of his respective church; but within a very few years the heads of the same churches were spoken of as bishops, the meaning of which term, in Greek, is simply *an overseer;* and this name, which had been applied by the apostles to Presbyters, as being persons appointed by themselves to overlook their flocks, came at length to be applied

to the successors of the apostles, who did not follow them in travelling from country to country, but resided permanently in some one city or town. In one sense, therefore, there were several bishops or overseers in each church, for every presbyter might have borne that name, but as soon as the system became general which was established in the seven Asiatic churches, and which we have seen to have been adopted also at Antioch, and Rome, and Alexandria, of selecting one man to superintend the church, the term bishop was limited to this one superintendent of the whole body. In most cases a bishop had only the charge of the Christians in one single town.

The term *diocese* was not then known; though there may have been instances where the care of more than one congregation was committed to a single bishop, of which we have a very early example in all the Cretan churches being entrusted by Paul to Titus. The name which was generally applied to the flock of a single pastor, was one from which our present word *parish* is derived, which signifies his superintendence over the *inhabitants* of a particular place; and if we add to the two orders of bishops and presbyters the one which was more ancient than either of them, that of deacons, we shall have the form of church government which appears to have been generally established at the beginning of the second century.

It is interesting to think that many of the persons who were now presiding over churches had been appointed to their important stations by apostles, or, at least, had seen the men who had been personally acquainted with our Lord. They form the connection between the first, or apostolic age, and that which im-

mediately succeeded it. There is also one circumstance connected with their history which must not be forgotten,—that the apostles were able, by laying on their hands, to convey those preternatural gifts of the Spirit which enabled persons to work miracles. There must have been many persons living at the beginning of the second century, upon whom some apostle had thus laid his hands. The Angels or Bishops of the seven Asiatic churches may all have had this advantage, and may all have been appointed to their bishoprics by John. One of them, the bishop of Smyrna, was probably Polycarp; who certainly held this station a few years later, and is always said to have received his appointment from an apostle, as well as to have been personally acquainted with John. His interesting life will occupy our attention later in the century; and he is mentioned now, as showing that there must have been many persons still alive, though the apostles were withdrawn, who possessed some portion of miraculous power; and that miracles did not cease suddenly and abruptly with the last of the apostles, but were still exerted occasionally for the benefit of the Church, till God thought fit to withdraw them altogether.

This seems the most rational conclusion to which we can come, concerning the duration of miraculous powers in the Church; and by adopting it, we steer between two opposite opinions, both of which must be considered erroneous; one, which would strictly limit miracles to the age of the apostles, and assert that there was no instance of their being worked afterwards; and another, which maintains that the power of working them has never ceased; but is exercised to the present day, in the true Church. This is not the place for

refuting the latter opinion; and it is sufficient to say that the Protestant churches do not profess to exercise any such power. But the former opinion must also be pronounced untenable, unless we say that all the persons who had worked miracles in the lifetime of the apostles were dead before the end of the century, or that they suddenly lost the power at the moment when John, the last of the apostles, died.

The reader has already been reminded that spiritual gifts were distributed in great abundance by Paul; and there is no reason to think that the other apostles were more sparing in communicating them. The gift of healing was undoubtedly exercised by many persons besides the apostles; and it is scarcely possible to suppose they were all dead before the time which has been fixed for the death of John. We must, however, conclude that they were becoming, almost daily, less numerous; and although the Christian writers of the second century say expressly that preternatural gifts of the Spirit were occasionally witnessed in their own day, they fully confirm the view which has been here taken of this subject, and show that instances of this kind were much more uncommon than they had been formerly. As the numbers of believers increased, and the churches became more settled, there was less need of these miraculous interferences to confirm the faith of believers, or to attract fresh converts; and we may now proceed to consider the state of some of the principal churches at the beginning of the second century.

The Christians of Jerusalem, as we have already seen, had been committed, since the year 62, to the care of Symeon, who had not only known our Lord

while on earth, but was one of his relations, being the brother of James, who had preceded him in that office. The descendants of Jude were placed over other churches in Judæa, on the same ground of their being connected with the family of Jesus. Such a relationship could hardly fail to make them zealous pastors of Christ's flock, which was now beginning to be a prey to the *grievous wolves*, who, according to the predictions of Paul, had broken in upon the fold after the death of the apostles. These were the teachers of Gnosticism, whose doctrines were peculiarly dangerous to the Jewish Christians, from their having borrowed so much from the Law of Moses. It may be hoped that the Christians who returned to Jerusalem with Symeon after the siege were safe from these delusive errors; or if they listened to their Ebionite brethren, they would be kept in the true faith by the vigilance of their bishop. The enemies of the Gospel were, therefore, the enemies of Symeon, and he at length fell a sacrifice to the same fears and jealousies which, on two former occasions, had caused inquiry to be made after the descendants of David.

There is nothing which personally connects the Emperor Trajan with this act of cruelty. After the year 101 he was engaged, for several campaigns, in conquering Dacia, and probably heard or cared little about the Christians. In the year 104, Atticus was governor of Syria, and Symeon was brought before him as being one of the descendants of David. If the Jews had shown any inclination to revolt, we could understand the jealousy which led a Roman officer to hinder them from rallying round a popular leader of the family of David. But we might have thought that

a harmless old man, who was living amidst the ruins of Jerusalem, might have been suffered to go down to his grave in peace. It was not the president of Syria who thirsted for his blood, though, like Pilate, he had not firmness enough to protect a man whom he believed to be innocent. The Gnostic heretics, who justly regarded Symeon as their greatest enemy, denounced him to Atticus as a dangerous person on account of his descent from David; and perhaps a Roman officer might find it difficult to understand how several thousand Jews could look up to a descendant of David as their head, and yet not be objects of political suspicion. Symeon was now a hundred and twenty years old, and the firmness with which he endured an examination by torture, though it lasted several days, filled the spectators with astonishment. His fate was, however, determined, and his sufferings were at length closed by crucifixion. His successor in the see of Jerusalem was Justus; but a person named Thebuthis, who had wished to gain the appointment for himself, excited a schism in the church, and joined one of the numerous sects into which the Gnostic philosophy was now divided.

It is stated upon good authority, that at this time the people were excited in many different places to persecute the Christians: and one distinguished sufferer was Ignatius, who may be truly called the apostolical bishop of Antioch. He had been appointed to that see about the year 70; and the spirit of persecution which had shown itself in the reign of Domitian did not entirely pass him over: but he escaped for that time; and the beginning of the second century saw the bishopric of Antioch still possessed by one who, if

tradition may be believed, had been personally acquainted with at least three apostles, Peter, Paul, and John. It seems to have been about the year 107 that Trajan came to Antioch on his way to make war with Parthia. The emperor himself may still have had no feeling of hostility against the Christians: but he found the people of Antioch already in a state of religious excitement, and he consented that Ignatius should be sent to Rome to be exposed to wild beasts in the amphitheatre.

During his voyage to Italy, he landed at different places on the coast of Asia and Greece, and was met by several bishops, who came from their respective cities to see the venerable martyr. At Smyrna he had the gratification of meeting with Polycarp, who, like himself, had been known to the last surviving apostle; and it is not improbable that some of the other persons who now visited him had conversed with some of the apostles. Though he was on his way to death, he found time to write letters to different churches, seven of which are still extant; and we may judge of the respect which was deservedly paid to his memory, when we find that Polycarp himself collected copies of these letters, and sent them to the Christians at Philippi. It is to be regretted that Polycarp's own letters, which appear to have been numerous, have not been preserved. A portion of that which he wrote to the Philippians has come down to us, and forms, together with the letters of his friend Ignatius, and the single letter of Clement to the Church of Corinth, that most interesting and valuable collection which is known by the name of the Works of the Apostolical Fathers.

The genuineness of Clement's Epistle, and of the

fragment of the Epistle of Polycarp, has scarcely ever been called in question; but the Epistles of Ignatius have led to much controversy. There can be no doubt that they were corrupted and interpolated at an early period; and copies of these counterfeit epistles, as well as others which bear the name of Ignatius, have come down to us. Fortunately, however, the seven epistles have also been preserved in a much shorter form; and it is now generally agreed among the learned that these are genuine, and free from the interpolations which disfigure the larger edition.

Ignatius arrived at Rome in time to form part of the spectacle in the public games which were exhibited at the end of the year. On the 19th of December, he was exposed to wild beasts in the amphitheatre, and his death appears to have been the work of a moment. The larger and harder bones, which resisted the teeth of the animals, were taken up by his friends, and, with an indulgence which could hardly have been expected, were allowed to be carried back to Antioch, where they were buried near one of the gates, in the suburbs. The persecution of the Christians had already ceased with the removal of the bishop; so that it was perhaps a temporary storm, which spent itself and subsided. The successor of Ignatius in the bishopric was Heros.

With respect to the people of Rome, we need not conclude that a persecution was also being carried on there at the same time; for so long as the spectators in the amphitheatre were gratified with the sight of human victims, they did not care who it was that afforded them this amusement; and many persons, perhaps, did not even know that Ignatius came from Antioch, much less that he was a Christian bishop. Trajan may have

sent him to Rome for execution, as he would have sent any common criminal; and the fact of his bones being carried away by his friends, would rather seem to show, that at this time there was no particular excitement in the capital on account of religion.

We are unable to connect the emperor personally with the original instigation of any of these acts of cruelty. His Parthian wars kept him in the East for some years, and he did not return to Rome till 110 or 111. It was in the latter year that he was called upon to give a positive decision upon the legality of punishing Christianity as a crime. The younger Pliny was sent as proprætor into Bithynia in 110, and in the following year he presided at a public festival held in honour of the emperor. On these occasions the Christians were often called upon to take part in the sacrifices, and to perform some act in honour of the gods or the emperor, which they felt to be forbidden by their religion. Their refusal to comply was looked upon as impiety, or disaffection to the government; and Pliny found himself obliged, as chief magistrate of the province, to investigate the cases of this kind which were brought before him. The progress of Christianity in that part of the empire must have astonished and alarmed him; for Pliny was really religious, according to the notions in which he had been brought up. The heathen temples were almost deserted; the sellers of victims for the sacrifices complained that they had no purchasers; persons of either sex, and of all ages and ranks, even Roman citizens, had embraced the new opinions; and Pliny himself met with persons who had once been converted, but had abjured Christianity twenty years before.

This state of things might cause less surprise when we remember that the Gospel had found its way into Bithynia as early as the date of Peter's first Epistle, so that it may have been making progress in that country for nearly half a century. It is satisfactory that our accounts are, in this instance, so authentic and unquestionable; and the scene which Pliny witnessed in Bithynia was probably exhibited at this period in various portions of the empire. Heathenism appeared to be already hastening to its decay; but there were too many persons interested in preserving it, to allow the triumph of Christianity to be so soon completed. There is no reason to think that Pliny was naturally cruel or inclined to injustice. He acknowledged that the Christians who were brought before him had committed no crime, and he even bore testimony to the purity of their principles and practice; but he suffered himself to be persuaded that their obstinate adherence to their religion was itself criminal; and if, upon a third examination, they did not consent to renounce it, he even ordered them to execution.

There was at this time no precise and definite law which sanctioned such cruelty; but foreign superstitions, as they were termed, had at various times been suppressed, and the present emperor, as well as his predecessors, had prohibited private meetings and associations. It was not difficult to represent the Christians as guilty of both these charges: but Pliny, though he allowed them to be punished, did not feel satisfied without consulting the emperor, who at this time was at Rome. His letter to Trajan, as well as the answer which he received, are both extant; and though the emperor, perhaps, did not intend to be

severe, the opinion delivered by him on this occasion became a precedent, which enabled provincial magistrates to exercise as much cruelty as they pleased against the Christians. He wrote to Pliny that he fully approved of what he had done, and directed him not to make any search after the Christians, and in no case to listen to anonymous accusations. If the suspected party cleared himself by worshipping the gods, he was to be acquitted; but there was added to this apparent lenity, that if any such persons were brought before the proprætor and convicted, or, in other words, if they adhered to the religion which they believed to be true, they were to be put to death.

There is too great reason to think that this iniquitous counsel was the cause of many Christians losing their lives. When Pliny wrote to the emperor, he told him that no compulsion could make a Christian abjure his faith. He had himself frequently tried to induce them to join in a sacrifice, or in imprecations against Christ; but they preferred death to either of these impieties; and when Trajan's answer arrived, the work of persecution was likely to proceed more actively than before. It is painful to think, that the first emperor who sanctioned such cruelties by law was Trajan, and that the first magistrate who put the law in force was Pliny; both of these persons, according to heathen notions of morality, being considered amiable, and lovers of justice. But though they had power to uphold for a season their unrighteous cause, and to pour Christian blood upon the earth like water, their attempt to suppress Christianity totally failed. We have the evidence of a heathen writer, who lived in the middle of this same century, that there were then many Christians in part

of the country which was subject to the government of the proprætor of Bithynia. They were, in fact, very numerous through the whole of Asia Minor; and if a person had at this time gone over the same ground which had been traversed by Paul, from the eastern confines of Cilicia to the shores of the Ægean, he would have found churches regularly established, not only in the most flourishing and most civilised Grecian colonies, but in parts of the country which had scarcely yet been subdued by the arms of Rome.

The reign of Trajan continued for six years after the date of his celebrated letter to Pliny; but history has preserved no further particulars which connect him personally with the Christians. In the year 115 he suppressed a formidable revolt of the Jews in Africa and Cyprus, and the restless character of that people led him to treat them with great severity in the country about the Euphrates. Palestine does not appear to have been included in these acts of vengeance. The Jews had begun to return to it in considerable numbers; and we shall see presently that they had lost neither their patriotism, nor their impatience of subjection to foreigners; but they were not yet prepared to revolt; and Judæa was at this time under the government of an experienced and determined officer. We should be most interested to know whether the punishment inflicted upon the rebellious Jews was felt in any measure by the Christians; but history is still silent upon the subject. If we might judge by the rapid succession of the bishops of Jerusalem after the death of Symeon, we might perhaps conclude that the deaths of some of them were hastened by martyrdom. The names of seven bishops have been preserved who held that see

from the year 107 to 125. But if the Christians of Jerusalem were suffering during that period from the unbelieving Jews, or from the heathen, we can only say that we know nothing of the cause or manner of the persecution. The emperor himself was not likely to interfere with them in any part of his dominions, during the latter part of his reign. His brilliant career of victories was now exchanged for a succession of defeats. One conquered province after another revolted; he was repulsed in a personal attack upon the fortress of Atra; and before his death, which happened at Selinus, in Cilicia, in 117, nearly all his conquests in the East were lost.

We are perhaps justified in concluding, from a general review of the reign of Trajan, that the progress of Christianity was not impeded during that period by any systematic opposition of the government. The emperor's attention was directed to the new religion by Pliny, but, like many other subjects which were mentioned in letters from the provinces, this perhaps did not dwell long upon his mind; and we may infer from the correspondence itself, that neither Trajan nor Pliny had troubled themselves about the Christians before. It has been mentioned, that the emperor's answer formed a precedent, which was often acted upon with great cruelty in the course of the present century; but we do not meet with any other instance in the course of the late reign. We shall see reason to think, that a season of peace was more injurious to the Christians than one of war, as giving the heathen more leisure and opportunity to notice their proceedings; and the late emperor was so constantly engaged in military expeditions, that if such a circumstance was

favourable to the Christians, it may account in some measure for their religion making such a rapid advance. That this was the case in the former part of the second century, cannot be doubted. The martyrdoms of Symeon and Ignatius arrest our attention on account of the rank and fortitude of the sufferers, and the iniquity of their sentence. But we are not told in either case that they had many companions in death; and the perpetrators of such cruelties are apt to forget that a party does not become less attached to its opinions, or less zealous in support of them, by seeing its leaders suffer martyrdom with firmness. The death of Ignatius caused the loss of one individual to the Christians; but their enemies were not aware that by leading him in a kind of triumph from Antioch to Rome, and allowing him to touch at several intermediate places, they were doing the greatest service to the cause which they were wishing to destroy.

CHAPTER IX.

Travels of Hadrian: visits Alexandria.—Basilides, Saturninus, and the Gnostics.—Writings of Christians.—Church of Athens.—Letter of Hadrian, protecting the Christians.—Second Jewish War.—Gentile Church at Jerusalem.—Death of Hadrian.—Causes of Persecution.

HADRIAN, who had been adopted by Trajan a short time before his death, succeeded him in the empire. Though accustomed hitherto to military command, he was not inattentive to literature and the arts. Being fond of observing the peculiarities of different countries, he passed several years of his reign in foreign travel. In addition to this inquisitive and antiquarian spirit, he is said to have paid particular attention to the religious customs of the people whom he visited; but his own prejudices were strongly in favour of the religion in which he had been educated. While he was upon his travels, he could not fail to be struck with the progress which Christianity was making among his subjects; and he appears to have looked with equal contempt upon the superstitions of the Egyptians, the Jews, and the Christians. In more than one country which he visited, he would witness the effects of the late insurrection of the Jews; and his dislike to that people was shown by his building a temple to Jupiter on the spot where Solomon's temple had formerly stood. This was on a visit which he paid to Jerusalem soon after his accession; and he

seems to have taken a pleasure in insulting the Jews, by giving to the city, which lately had been rising out of the ruins of Jerusalem, the appearance and character of a Roman town. The inhabitants were unable at present to resist the insult; but their discontent was only smothered for a time, till it broke out into open rebellion.

Alexandria, which he also visited on the same journey, had been nearly destroyed by the quarrels between the Jews and the other inhabitants. The emperor ordered it to be rebuilt; and his curiosity in prying into different forms of religion would find a rich treat while he resided in the capital of Egypt. We have a letter written by him a few years later, in which he chose to confound the worshippers of Serapis, a popular idol of the Egyptians, with the Christians. He also mentioned by name the Jews and Samaritans, and treated them all as impostors and mountebanks; but there is no evidence of his having at this time shown any ill-will towards the Christians. His opinion of their religious tenets was very likely to be erroneous, by his confounding them with the Gnostics, who had learnt many of their absurdities and impieties in the schools of Alexandria. Simon Magus, the first founder of Gnosticism, had studied in that city. His successor was Menander, who lived at the end of the first century, and the beginning of the second; and the place in which he attracted most followers was Antioch. Menander was followed by Saturninus and Basilides, who became the heads of two different sects or parties of Gnostics; and Basilides, who spread his opinions in Alexandria, had already obtained his celebrity when that city was visited by Hadrian.

It is not improbable that Basilides quitted Alexandria when the riots caused by the Jews had made it so unsafe a place of residence; and this may account for his peculiar opinions becoming so notorious in the world at large. His notion concerning Jesus Christ was the same with that of the other Gnostics, who believed his body to be a phantom: but Basilides is charged with having invented the new and extravagant doctrine, that Simon of Cyrene was crucified instead of Jesus. He could not persuade himself that a divine emanation, such as he believed Christ to have been, could unite itself to a material and corruptible body, but at the same time he could not resist the evidence, which was now universally diffused by the four Gospels, that a real and substantial body had been nailed to the cross. He therefore had recourse to the extraordinary notion, that Simon of Cyrene was substituted for Jesus: which may remind the reader of what has been already observed, that Gnosticism entirely destroyed the doctrine of the atonement: that Jesus Christ suffered death for the sins of the world, did not, and could not, form any part of the religious tenets of Basilides. We are not, therefore, to be surprised that the heads of the Church took such pains to expose the errors of a system which, though it appears at first unworthy of serious attention, was fatally subversive of the very foundations of our faith.

The followers of Basilides were also addicted to magic, which was the case in a greater or less degree with all the Gnostics: but the Basilidians carried the practice of this impiety to a greater length than their predecessors; and several amulets or charms have been preserved to the present day, which show that they be-

longed to the votaries of this unholy superstition. The same sect has also been reproached for the grossest licentiousness of conduct; and though the Christian writers may be suspected of some exaggeration in drawing the character of the Gnostics, it cannot be doubted, as has been already observed, that one division of them maintained, upon principle, that all actions were indifferent; and that the heathen, who chose to confound Christianity with Gnosticism, were induced to consider it as inculcating maxims of the most shameless depravity. It should, however, be added, that there is no sufficient evidence that Basilides himself had countenanced such impurities. Saturninus is known to have gone into the opposite extreme, and his followers practised the most rigid austerities; so that if Hadrian, like many other of the heathen, confounded the Christians with the Gnostics, it cannot be thought strange that he spoke of their religion with contempt. There was, perhaps, no city in which he was so likely to find out his mistake, and to have formed correct notions of the Christians, as Alexandria, where Christianity had been taught, from a very early period, in regularly-established schools. Had he visited the city a few years earlier or later, he might have gratified his curiosity by attending the lectures of the professors of this new religion: but he came there when many Christians were likely to have left the city on account of the late disturbances; and Alexandria was always the receptacle of so many different religions, that it is not very surprising if he looked upon them all as equally erroneous.

The history of Basilides is interesting in another point of view, as making us acquainted with works

expressly written by Christians in defence of their religion. The epistles of Clement and Ignatius have been already mentioned, which were circulated and read with great avidity; but they were interesting only to Christians, and were not likely, as indeed they were not intended, to give the heathen a knowledge of Christianity. The precise period is not marked when the Christians first began to explain or defend their doctrines in writing, nor have their earliest works come down to us; but it is not probable that anything of this kind appeared till after the beginning of the second century. Basilides, the Gnostic, is known to have been an author, and the name of at least one Christian writer has been preserved who published against him. This was Agrippa Castor, who appears to have lived in the reign of Hadrian; and it is much to be regretted that his writings have perished: for, though an exposure of Gnosticism might now be considered easy, it was no light task in those days for a Christian to enter the lists against one who had attracted a numerous party in the schools of Alexandria.

The travels of Hadrian led him to pay more than one visit to Athens, where we know that he would find a considerable body of Christians. The Gospel, as we have seen, had been planted in that celebrated city by Paul himself, in the year 46; and there is respectable evidence, that Dionysius the Areopagite, who was certainly converted by the apostle, was entrusted by him with the care of the Athenian church. However this may have been, Christianity continued to flourish in Athens; and Publius, the bishop of this see, is known to have suffered martyrdom in the course of the present century. His successor in the bishopric

was Quadratus; and the same, or another person of that name, presented a written defence of Christianity to the emperor Hadrian, on the occasion of his visiting Athens. Many of these defences, or Apologies, as they are sometimes called, were written in the second and third centuries, with the view of explaining Christianity to the heathen, and refuting the calumnies which were spread against it. Some few of them are still extant, though that of Quadratus is lost, which is also the case with another Apology, presented to the same emperor by Aristides, who, before his conversion, had been an Athenian philosopher. We only know that Quadratus spoke of persons being alive in his own day who had been miraculously cured by our Saviour; and he is himself mentioned as possessing some portion of those preternatural gifts which were common in the apostolic age.

We have thus had abundant proof that the emperor's attention was turned to the religion of the Christians; but he was called upon to interfere still more decidedly, when Serenus Granius, the proconsul of Asia, who seems to have been a humane and equitable magistrate, wrote to him for instructions as to the mode of treating the Christians. The emperor's reply was addressed to Minucius Fundanus, the successor of Granius; and he expressly ordered that both parties, the accuser and the accused, should be heard openly before the tribunal; to which he added, that some positive violation of the laws must be proved, before a Christian could be condemned to punishment. The letter also contained some strong expressions against wanton and malicious informers; so that, if provincial magistrates attended to the imperial edict, the condition of the Christians was

likely to be much improved. But though similar orders were sent into the provinces, there is too good reason to fear that they were generally disregarded.

The present decree was certainly more favourable to the Christians than that which Trajan had sent in answer to the application of Pliny. Such, at least, appears to have been its intention: but although the emperor prohibited punishment, except in cases where some positive crime was alleged, it would not be difficult to construe Christianity itself into a violation of the laws; and there is no doubt that many magistrates acted upon this principle.

The emperor's own conduct in the different countries which he visited was calculated to support the national religion, and consequently to excite the people against the Christians. It at least showed that he was himself attached to the superstitions of heathenism: for wherever he went, he allowed temples to be built in honour of himself. At the same time, he furnished the Christians with powerful arguments against the religion which he professed. On one occasion of his visiting Egypt, he had the misfortune to lose his favourite, Antinous, who was drowned in the Nile; and, not content with building a city which bore his name, and perpetuating his memory in a variety of ways, he ordered divine honours to be paid to him, and placed him among the number of the gods. The Christians who wrote to defend their own religion, or to attack that of their opponents, could not fail to notice this irrational and disgusting impiety; and the cause of Christianity was advanced by the follies and absurdities of those who attempted to suppress it.

We must now once more turn our attention to the

melancholy history of the Jews. Indignant at the insults which they had received from Hadrian, they took advantage of his being no longer in their neighbourhood, and, about the year 132, broke out into open insurrection. Their leader was Bar-Cochab, which name implies *the son of a star.* He was a man in every way suited to command the energies of a desperate and fanatical people. The expectation of the Messiah, which had never subsided in Judæa, conspired with the hatred of the Romans to give to this impostor an extraordinary influence with his countrymen. The contest, however, was hopeless from the beginning, though it was protracted for nearly four years. Jerusalem was no longer the important fortress, and was soon occupied by the Romans: but Bitthera, which lay between Jerusalem and the sea, held out for three years and a half against the forces of Severus, who was sent to quell the insurrection. When the city was taken, the war was in fact ended. It was calculated that 580,000 Jews perished during the continuance of it; and we should naturally wish to inquire, in what degree this awful visitation was felt by that part of the nation which had embraced Christianity.

There is reason to think that the blow fell much more severely upon the unbelieving portion of the people. Not that the Christians were less attached to the land of their fathers, or more disposed to submit to the yoke of Rome; but Bar-Cochab raised the standard of religion as well as of liberty; his followers were required to acknowledge him as the expected deliverer, who was sent from heaven to redeem them; and it was impossible that any Christian could countenance such pretensions as these. The impostor was impolitic

enough to persecute all those who opposed themselves to his wishes. We have it on the authority of a man who was himself obliged to fly the country, that the Christians were sentenced to horrid punishments if they would not deny that Jesus was the Christ, and utter blasphemy. There was therefore no want of patriotism, if the Christian inhabitants of Judæa looked upon the Romans as less objects of aversion and dread than their unbelieving countrymen. Many of them sought refuge elsewhere, and those who remained probably continued neuter during the war. It is to be hoped that the Romans learned from henceforth to distinguish more accurately between Jews and Christians; and this second taking of Jerusalem produced an important effect upon the church in that city.

The war was finished by the taking of Bitthera, in 135, and from that time no Jew was allowed to pay even a passing visit to Jerusalem. On one day only in the year was it lawful for them to approach their unhappy city. This was the day of its being taken by Titus. On the anniversary of that event the Jews might take a view of the walls for the space of an hour, but they might do no more, unless they purchased the indulgence for a settled sum. Though we know that this edict continued in force for a long period, it is also certain that there was a Christian Church at Jerusalem after the reign of Hadrian, as well as before; and it is impossible to suppose that some members of it were not Jews by descent, though they had cast off their adherence to the law of Moses; so that we might almost conclude that the prohibition of entering Jerusalem applied only to those Jews who had not embraced Christianity. It is said, indeed, by Eusebius, that the

Church of Jerusalem (or rather of Ælia, which was the new name given to the city by Hadrian), consisted from this time entirely of Gentiles, and that a Gentile bishop named Marcus was now appointed over them, the former fifteen bishops having been all of Jewish extraction. We may perhaps receive this statement concerning Marcus as correct, and it may have been a measure of prudence to elect a bishop who was not a Jew: but it is difficult to conceive that an entirely new body of Christians settled in the city after the war. What we know for certain is, that the church of Ælia continued to hold a conspicuous place among the Eastern churches, and its bishop was equal in rank with the bishops of the greatest sees, Antioch, Rome, and Alexandria.

The emperor Hadrian survived the Jewish war by three years, and died in 138. His reign, as we have seen, was not unfavourable to the Christians; and if his written instructions were generally acted upon in the provinces, it became less easy for their enemies to annoy them. It is certain, however, that the heathen were now beginning to persecute the Christians more systematically and more cruelly than they had done in the first century. The rapid progress of Christianity was the cause of its being opposed thus violently; and its bitterest opponents were the persons whose livelihood depended upon the maintenance of heathen worship. The populace in every town were attached to the pomp and splendour of the sacrifices and public games, which seemed in danger of being stopped, if the simple religion of the Christians was adopted. The Romans had also introduced into every country a taste for the barbarous and bloody spectacles which were exhibited in the

amphitheatre. Men were trained to fight with wild beasts, or criminals were condemned to be exposed to them as a punishment. It was easy to decide that Christianity was itself a crime, and thus to ensure a constant supply of criminals, whose shrieks and sufferings might amuse the spectators of the games. The unpopular or rapacious governor of a province had only to condemn a constant succession of Christians to the lions, and he ensured the attachment of the priests, as well as the applause of the multitude. This may sufficiently account for Christians being persecuted in various parts of the empire, without our looking for general edicts issued by the emperor, or for the emperor's personal interference on the subject. The name of Hadrian has been added, improperly, to the list of persecutors. The religion of the Christians was viewed by him with contempt, and the superstitions of paganism received his protection and encouragement: but it probably never struck him that his own creed was in danger of being supplanted by Christianity, and he saw the gross injustice of punishing men for their opinions, when they were guilty of no crime.

The philosophers, as they were called, were greater enemies to the Gospel than any emperor or magistrate who had hitherto noticed it. They directed against it all the arguments which sophistry and sarcasm, combining with misrepresentation and ignorance, could invent. They took little trouble to learn what Christianity really was, and it suited their purpose to confound it with the absurdities and impieties of Gnosticism. The result was, that men whose lives were innocent and irreproachable, were tortured and put to death as guilty of the most atrocious crimes. One of

the most distinguished persons who wrote against Christianity was Celsus, a Platonic philosopher, who lived in the days of Hadrian, and published a work entitled, "The Word of Truth." The work itself has long since perished, except a few fragments which have been preserved by Origen, who wrote a reply to it. Christianity has never shrunk from the attacks of its opponents. The more its doctrines have been investigated, the more plainly has their heavenly origin been demonstrated. The books which were written against it in the earlier ages may have hastened the deaths of many individual Christians, and heathenism, for a time, enjoyed its triumph; but as soon as Christianity was attacked in writing, it not only defended itself, but turned upon its assailants. The Apologies which were written in the second century contain most powerful and open exposures of the follies of paganism. The rich and the learned treated them with contempt, and the emperors appear to have paid little attention to them; but none ventured to answer them. Many of them have been preserved to our own day, and are well deserving of being read, as containing the sentiments of men who proved their belief in the Gospel by laying down their lives in its defence.

CHAPTER X.

Accession of Antoninus Pius.—Valentinus, Cerdon, and Marcion, go to Rome.—Shepherd of Hermas, and other spurious works. —Justin Martyr.—Causes of Persecution.—Paschal Controversy.—Polycarp visits Rome.—Hegesippus.

WE are now arrived at that period of history which has been described as the age of the Antonines; a period which, in many respects, was memorable in the fortunes of the Roman empire. Antoninus Pius, who had been adopted by Hadrian not long before his death, succeeded him as emperor in 138. His predecessor had passed so many years in foreign travel, that whatever opinions he had formed concerning Christianity must have been taken from his observations in distant countries. It is now time that we should look to the state of religion in the capital, the history of the Roman Church, during the second century, having occupied little of our attention. Our information on this point is extremely scanty. The names of the bishops of Rome have been preserved from the beginning; but the dates of their election and of their death have led to much discussion. It has also been asserted that many of them suffered martyrdom; and this could hardly have been the case, unless the Christians of Rome had been exposed to frequent and violent persecutions. There is, however, no authentic evidence of this; and there are strong

grounds for concluding that none of the early Roman bishops met a violent death before the time of Telesphorus, who was martyred in the first year of Antoninus Pius. Even with respect to this event, we have no authentic details; but it is not improbable that the games and other solemnities which ushered in a new reign, gave a licence to those persons who cherished hostility to the Gospel.

One fact seems certain with respect to the Church of Rome, and the remark may be extended to all the Western churches, that Gnosticism had produced much less effect in this part of the world than it had done in the East. Unfortunately, this freedom from the contagion of error was enjoyed no longer. It was during the first four years of the present reign, while Hyginus was Bishop of Rome, that two of the most celebrated leaders of Gnosticism visited the capital. It may be stated generally, that this extraordinary delusion reached its height about the middle of the second century; and it was natural that persons who had met with such success in Asia and Egypt should seek to extend their fame, and to make proselytes in the capital of the world. Accordingly, we are told that Valentinus and Cerdon arrived at Rome during the period mentioned above, or between the years 138 and 142. Valentinus had studied at Alexandria, and must have been at one time, really or professedly, a Christian, if it be true that he aspired to a bishopric. His chief celebrity arose from the new and fanciful arrangement which he made of those spiritual beings or emanations which were supposed to have proceeded from God. He also adopted, in its most irrational form, that early notion of the Gnostics, that the body

of Jesus was an illusive phantom; and though some of the Gnostics may have been calumniated, as to the impurity of their moral practice, there is no room for doubt that the Valentinians laid themselves open to this charge.

Cerdon, who came to Rome about the same period, had previously been teaching in Syria, and was principally distinguished for introducing the doctrine of two principles, the one of good, and the other of evil, which had been held for many ages in Persia. He was not, however, the first Gnostic who accounted for the origin of evil by some notion of this kind. It had already been adopted by Basilides; and the fame of Cerdon was so eclipsed by that of Marcion, who came to Rome a few years later, that it is not necessary to say anything more concerning him.

When Marcion came to Rome the bishopric was held by Pius, whose brother Hermas is supposed to have been the author of a work entitled "The Shephed," which some have ascribed to the Hermas mentioned by St Paul. It is, however, much more probable that it was composed in the middle of the second century, which makes it an interesting work, on account of its antiquity, and it also contains many sentiments of piety and devotion; but it should be added, that these are mixed up with so much of puerility and mysticism, as to detract considerably from its value. It cannot now be ascertained whether it was intended at the time to pass for a work which was written by a companion of Paul; but it is certain that many spurious publications were circulated at this period, and later in the century, which professed to have been written by apostles, or companions of the apostles. These

Gospels, or Acts, or Travels, or Revelations (for such were the titles which they commonly bore), may sometimes have preserved authentic traditions concerning our Lord and his disciples; but they were for the most part filled with improbable fictions: many of them were composed by Gnostics, and the contrast is very striking between the religious fidelity with which all the books of the New Testament have been preserved, and the total oblivion which has covered nearly all the spurious productions of the second and third centuries.

Though Marcion came to Rome while Pius was bishop, he rose to most celebrity there under his successor, Anicetus, who was appointed in 156. Marcion was a native of Pontus, and the son of a Christian bishop: but having been guilty of an act of gross immorality, he was expelled from the Church by his own father, and eventually obliged to leave Asia. He then went to Rome, still calling himself a Christian, though it seems almost certain that he had already been suspected of heresy; and finding the Roman Christians unwilling to admit him, he threw himself at once into the party of Cerdon. From this time the name of Marcion became most distinguished among the Gnostics; and he adopted that form of their creed which considered matter to be the cause of evil, and to form a second principle independent of God. He agreed entirely with Valentinus in not believing the body of Jesus to have been real and substantial; and both of them retained to the last an attachment to the Gospel. Marcion admitted some of the books of the New Testament, but with alterations and mutilations; and though he is said to have received the Gospel of Luke,

it was more properly a composition of his own formed upon the basis of that evangelist.

The most painful part of Marcion's history is his success in drawing away many of the Roman Christians to embrace his opinions. It is possible that some of his converts may have been led to abandon their faith by the terrors of persecution: for there is evidence that attacks of this kind were now becoming general in various parts of the world. A Defence or Apology is still extant, which was presented about the year 148 to the emperor, his two adopted sons, the senate and people of Rome, by Justin Martyr, in which the writer speaks of the Christians as being everywhere the objects of contempt and outrage. Justin was one of the most learned men who had hitherto taken up his pen in defence of the Gospel. He was a native of Samaria, and had made himself acquainted with all the different schools of philosophy, but that which gave him most satisfaction was the Platonic. His conversion to Christianity was principally owing to the constancy which he saw the Christians evince in the time of persecution: and he was himself obliged to leave his country on account of the revolt of the Jews under Bar-Cochab. He wrote several works beside the Apology mentioned above, some of which have come down to us, the most interesting being a second Apology, presented nearly twenty years later, and a Dialogue or Disputation with Trypho, a Jew.

It would be interesting to know whether Justin's present appeal to the emperor produced any effect in obtaining justice for the Christians. We have already seen that their sufferings were not caused by direct orders from the government; and it is certain that

Antoninus issued no edict against them. At some period of his reign he openly interfered in their favour, and wrote letters to different cities of Greece, commanding the persons in office to abstain from molesting the Christians. There is also a letter addressed to the cities of Asia Minor, in which the same instructions are given as to the treatment of the Christians; but it is uncertain whether this letter was written by the present emperor or by his successor. We may at least assume that Antoninus was not a persecutor in the common acceptation of that term, though he did not trouble himself, as much as he was bound, to see that common justice, as well as his own special edicts, were executed by provincial magistrates. But if he went so far as to take measures for protecting the Christians in Greece and Asia, we might hope that he would not allow any open cruelties to be practised against them in the capital.

One remark may be made in this place concerning the altered state of public feeling towards the Christians at the present period, if compared with what it was at the first promulgation of the Gospel. It is certain that the new religion made more progress, at first, among the lower orders and the illiterate, than among the learned and the powerful. Except during times of excitement, such as was caused by a recurrence of the festivals, and by a numerous arrival of foreign Jews, the apostles and first preachers of Christianity were not unpopular with the poorer classes at Jerusalem. On more than one occasion the Jewish authorities were prevented from gratifying their malice against the rising sect, because they knew that the leaders of it were favourites with the people. This was natural,

when miracles were worked every day, and almost every hour, in the public streets, and when the result of this miraculous power was especially beneficial to the poor. Miracles were the credentials offered by the apostles for the recommendation of their doctrines; and the effect of them was greater upon the uneducated, who were not accustomed to deep and laboured arguments, than upon men of learning, who complained that the Christians had no arguments to offer. The falsehood of this complaint became apparent as Christianity began to spread, and when God was gradually withdrawing from it that miraculous support which it had needed at its first promulgation. The history of the second century is a proof that Christianity had no occasion, as indeed it had no intention, to shrink from argument. Though it could make no resistance with the sword, it became the assailant in the war of the pen; and it could no longer be said, as was the case a century before, that *not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, were called.* It was now raising its head from the obscurity which had marked its earlier progress: and the age of the Antonines called forth much more learning in defence of Christianity than against it.

There were, however, as we have seen, many persons interested in the suppression of the new religion, who employed, as they imagined, more effectual weapons than those of learning and argument. The prison, the sword, and the wild beasts of the amphitheatre, supplied them with means of silencing the Christians. It was essential for such persons that they should have the populace on their side; and this was easily effected by raising the cry, that the national religion was in

danger of being destroyed. It is true that the rabble, in a Roman or Grecian town, cared little for religion; but they cared for the pleasure and amusement, as well as the more substantial enjoyment, which followed upon the exhibition of public sacrifices and games. There was, in this respect, a difference between the lower orders in heathen countries and in Judæa. The Jews were highly sensitive upon the point of the Law of Moses; but the unity of God was held by themselves as firmly as by the Christians, and their own prophets had taught them to look forward to the coming of Christ. The heathen, on the other hand, knew nothing of this argument from prophecy; and the unity of God was the very point which threatened their favourite superstitions with extinction. This will perhaps account for Christianity being less popular with the lower orders in heathen countries than it had been in Jerusalem. The heathen priests made the people their instruments in raising a cry against the Christians; and the philosophers, who were unable to defend their own impieties by argument, were glad to see their opponents silenced by any means, and none was so effectual as a general persecution. The miseries which the Christians suffered in the second century are to be attributed to these causes, rather than to any special acts of the government. The latter would have taken effect in every part of the empire at the same time; whereas, there are many instances of the Christians of one province, or city, being made the victims of popular fury, while their brethren in other countries were enjoying comparative tranquillity.

We have, perhaps, some proof of the Christians having a temporary respite from their enemies in both

quarters of the world, when we find an Asiatic bishop undertaking so long a journey as to come to Rome upon a question purely of religion. This was the case with Polycarp, whose name is already familiar to the reader as Bishop of Smyrna, and as having been personally acquainted with the apostle John. He came to Rome about the year 158, when Anicetus was bishop of that see. The cause of his coming was a dispute between the Eastern and Western Churches, concerning the Paschal festival, which was kept by some of the Asiatic Churches on the fourteenth day of the first month; and on the third day from this they kept the festival of the Resurrection, whether it fell upon a Sunday or no. This was, in fact, a compliance with the Jewish method of keeping the passover. The Western Christians, on the other hand, always kept the anniversary of the Resurrection on a Sunday; and on the day preceding they observed the Paschal festival. Both parties laid claim to apostolical authority. The Eastern Christians asserted that John and Philip had sanctioned the custom which was still preserved in Asia, while their brethren at Rome defended themselves by the authority of Peter and Paul; and the disputes which arose upon this question, which now appears of little importance, were carried on for a long time with much animosity.

It was in the hope of putting an end to these divisions, that Polycarp undertook, at his advanced age, to visit the capital of the empire, and to have a conference with Anicetus upon the subject. Though neither of the two bishops was able to convince the other, it is pleasing to read that they maintained their separate opinions with the most perfect amity and good-will. It also

acquaints us with the religious customs of the time, when we find them receiving the sacrament of bread and wine together, and the Bishop of Rome, though it was in his own city, and his own church, allowing the Bishop of Smyrna to consecrate the elements. We may well conceive that he paid this respect to Polycarp in deference to his venerable age, and to his character of an apostolical bishop. From the nature of the case, it is not likely that many persons were then living, certainly not many bishops, who had seen and conversed with an apostle; and the presence of Polycarp must have been considered as a blessing to any church which he chanced to visit. The Roman Christians were at this time in greater want of assistance and direction in matters of faith than at any former period. Gnosticism, as we have seen, had seduced many from the truth; and though there is no reason to think that Anicetus was deficient in activity and zeal, it was not perhaps to be expected that he could singly protect his flock from such insidious and skilful assailants as Valentinus and Marcion. The arrival of Polycarp was therefore very seasonable. His own city, Smyrna, had been exposed to danger from the Gnostics, before the end of the first century; and the whole of his long life had been passed in endeavouring to protect his fold from these grievous wolves. When he came to Rome, he found that the enemy had preceded him; and we have the best authority for saying, that he succeeded in bringing back many of the Roman Christians from their unfortunate delusion.

Another person who came to Rome while Anicetus was bishop, was Hegesippus; and if his writings had come down to us, we might have been led to say more

concerning him, as the earliest ecclesiastical historian. But the work which he wrote in five books is lost, and we only know that he spoke with great satisfaction of the uniformity of faith which he found in all the churches which he visited on his way to Rome. He may perhaps have arrived in the capital during the reign of M. Aurelius, for Anicetus held the bishopric for twelve years, from 156 to 168; and Antoninus Pius died in 161. Hegesippus appears to have continued in Rome for twenty years longer, and made out a list of the bishops of that see, which shows the interest already begun to be taken in all matters relating to the History of the Church.

CHAPTER XI.

Accession of M. Aurelius. — Persecution. — Death of Justin Martyr.—Tatian the Assyrian.—Sect of the Encratites.—Church of Athens.—Apology of Athenagoras.—Charity of the Christians.—Martyrdom of Papias.—Belief in a Millennium.—Martyrdom of Polycarp.—Learning of the Christians. —Montanism.—Miraculous Shower of Rain.—Persecution at Lyons.—Irenæus.—Death of M. Aurelius.

THE second of the Antonines, who is better known by his other name of Marcus Aurelius, began his reign in 161. Uniting the character of a Stoic philosopher to that of a statesman and a soldier, he was more likely to notice Christianity, and perhaps we should add, that he was more likely to view it with contempt, if not with stronger feelings. It is undoubtedly true that the condition of the Christians became much worse in all parts of the empire during the present reign than it had been before : and it is difficult to acquit the emperor of being in some measure the cause of it. It has been stated that a letter was written, either by his predecessor or himself, to the cities of Asia Minor, which was decidedly favourable to the Christians ; and if it is to be ascribed to M. Aurelius, it was probably written at the very beginning of his reign, before he had imbibed any feelings of prejudice against them. The cities of Asia Minor had applied to the emperor for leave to punish the Christians ; and one of their pleas was the alarming succes-

sion of earthquakes, by which the gods were showing their dislike to the new religion. It was argued that the extinction of Christianity would appease the wrath of Heaven; but the emperor saw through the cruelty and injustice of the petition; he referred in his answer to the edicts of his predecessors, which required a Christian to be convicted of a criminal offence before he could be punished; and he concluded his letter by saying, that if any one proceeded against another merely for being a Christian, the Christian should be acquitted even if he avowed his belief, and the accusing party should be punished.

Notwithstanding this favourable edict, it is certain that the Christians were exposed to severe persecution, even in Rome, at the beginning of the present reign. A second Apology was presented to the emperor by Justin Martyr, between the years 161 and 165, from which we learn that Urbicus, who commanded the prætorian guards, put several persons to death, merely because they were Christians; and others were victims to the malice of Crescens, a Cynic philosopher. Justin himself did not long survive this second Defence. There was a law which made it a capital crime for any one to refuse to take part in a sacrifice to the gods, or to swear by the name of the emperor. It was, of course, impossible for a Christian to comply with the former, and the latter was considered a religious ceremony, to which he had equal objections. This was henceforth found the most convenient mode of harassing the Christians; and Justin, with many other companions, was first scourged, and afterwards beheaded, about the year 165.

The name of Martyr has always been peculiarly ap-

plied to this excellent and distinguished man; and it was about this time that it came to be restricted to those who had actually suffered death for sake of the Gospel. Hitherto it had been applied to all persons who suffered for their religion, though they were not called upon to lay down their lives; but as the work of persecution increased, a distinction was made between those who bore testimony unto death, and those who only suffered imprisonment or tortures. The latter were called confessors, and those only who died for the truth were spoken of as martyrs; and it was probably the high character which Justin bore as a man of learning, as well as his firmness and intrepidity in suffering, which gained for him the permanent distinction of bearing the surname of Martyr.

His long residence in Rome could not fail to be of great service to the Christians in that city; and he left behind him a pupil who, like his master, was well able to defend his opinions against the philosophers of the day. This was Tatian, who was an Assyrian by birth, and was converted to Christianity by reading the books of the Old Testament. Only one of his works has come down to us, entitled, "An Oration against the Greeks," in which he openly and unsparingly attacks the religion of the heathen. He probably left Rome upon the death of Justin, having been a sufferer in the same persecution; and it is painful to find him falling into heresy, when he lost the example and guidance of his master. He adopted the Gnostic errors of Valentinus and Marcion; and, some years later, he became the head of a party which, from following rigid rules of continence and privation, obtained the name of Encratites. It has been stated that one branch of the Gnostics had been

distinguished for practising these austerities; but Tatian, who took up his residence in Antioch, appears to have carried them still further, and to have reduced them more to a system.

The Encratites continued as a sect for a long period, but it would be incorrect to suppose that all persons who practised self-privations and austerities were included in the sect, or considered heretical. There appear to have been always Christians, and particularly in Egypt, who thought it right to mortify the body by abstinence from certain kinds of food, and who discouraged, if they did not actually prohibit, marriage. The Church had not as yet given any decision upon these points, and persons were allowed to follow their own inclinations without interfering with each other; but it was perhaps natural that each party should proceed to censure the other, as if it were in error, not upon a matter of indifference, but upon a question of vital importance to religion. There can be no doubt that the progress of Gnosticism had an influence, in this respect, upon many persons who still considered themselves members of the orthodox church. A Christian might have agreed with a Gnostic in his rules of rigid mortification, though he may have kept himself entirely free from errors of belief; and when Tatian and his followers came to be classed among heretics, it was perhaps owing to their adoption of the Gnostic doctrines, rather than to the peculiar mode of life which they chose to follow.

A person named Severus succeeded Tatian as head of the Encratites, who became so decidedly heretical as to reject the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of Paul. Tatian was also the author of a "Harmony of

the Four Gospels," but, having adopted the Gnostic notion of Christ not having really assumed a human body, he omitted those parts which opposed this extravagant theory. Notwithstanding this omission, it is much to be regretted that Tatian's "Harmony" has not come down to us, which would have set the question at rest, whether the Four Gospels were at this time generally received by the Church. The mere fact of such a work having been composed, is sufficient to decide this question in the affirmative; nor can there be any doubt upon the subject, to persons who will study impartially the writings of the second century. Justin Martyr expressly refers to the Four Gospels, and quotes passages from them; and they must have been in general circulation at that period, or Tatian would not have undertaken to arrange the different narratives in one connected history. The chronology of the various events recorded by the four evangelists would, perhaps, have been less uncertain, if we could have seen the opinion of a writer whose date is so little removed from the age of the apostles.

The same scenes of cruelty which had caused the death of Justin, and had driven Tatian from Rome, were acted at this period at various parts of the empire. The churches of Greece did not escape, and Publius, bishop of Athens, suffered martyrdom. The persecution was so hot in that city, that many Christians abandoned their faith; and we have a pleasing picture of the friendly intercourse which took place between different churches, when we find Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, writing to the Athenians to encourage them in standing firm. His exhortation was not thrown away; and when the vacancy caused by the death

of Publius was filled up by Quadratus (who was perhaps the same person who presented his apology to Hadrian), the faith and constancy of the Athenian Christians revived. Athens was not the only city which received proofs of the paternal solicitude of Dionysius. This excellent and learned bishop wrote letters to several other churches, either exhorting them to unity, or guarding them against Gnostic errors; but, unhappily, none of them have been preserved, and we only know from the titles of them, that there were churches in Sparta, Nicomedia, Pontus, and in more than one city of Crete.

It was either now, or about ten years later, that an Athenian philosopher, named Athenagoras, addressed a work to the emperor, which he called an Embassy in behalf of the Christians; and at the time of his writing it, not only were the most horrid calumnies circulated against them, but they were brought before the governors of provinces in such numbers, that these officers were unequal to the task of hearing the cases. In the midst of all this suffering, the charity of the Christians shone conspicuous, as in those early days when the believers were of one heart and one soul. Even heathen writers were struck with the remarkable fact of the Christians in one country sending relief to their brethren in others. For this purpose it was usual, as in the time of the apostles, for a public fund to be raised, the distribution of which was at the disposal of the bishop; and if Christians had been shipwrecked, banished to the islands, condemned to work in the mines, or thrown into prison, relief was afforded to them from this common fund. The Roman church is particularly mentioned, as having kept up this charitable

custom from very early times; and when Soter was bishop of that see, which he held from 168 to 173, the liberality of himself and his flock was acknowledged in a letter from Dionysius, who still occupied the see of Corinth. We also learn that a letter of Soter, to which this was a reply, was read publicly in the Corinthian churches on Sundays, which was still the case with the letter written so many years before by Clement.

When we are considering the causes which led to the rapid spread of Christianity in the second century, the charity of the Christians is perhaps not to be omitted: nor can it be fairly urged that the increase in the number of believers becomes less wonderful, even if some of them were attracted to the Gospel by interested motives. The new religion must have brought forth the fruits of charity to a considerable extent, before it would have engaged the attention of the heathen merely on that account; and though there may be nothing wonderful in men professing to embrace a religion which held out to them worldly advantages, yet the persons who gave up their property for the relief of others could only have been influenced by motives of religion; and if we study the human heart, or the history of all former religions (except that of the Jews, which also came from God), we must allow that a system of charity, like that which was established by the Christians, was in the highest degree wonderful and unprecedented. It will at least be conceded that the heathen, who embraced Christianity in the hope of pecuniary profit, had observed greater instances of liberality on the part of the Christians than of the heathen; and a comparison between the two religions could not fail to lead to such a conclusion; but there

is no occasion to suppose that many of those who were converted by observing the charity of the Christians were influenced by interested motives: this at least could only have been the case with the poor; those who were not in want, and who had superfluous wealth of their own, could have had no selfish motive in embracing a religion which required them to part with this superfluity.

The charity of the Christians may have been the first attraction which led these persons to become believers, but it was because they could not help admiring and loving a religion which produced such heavenly fruits. Such motives for conversion were perfectly natural, and wholly unconnected with selfishness. Heathenism had failed to make men charitable, but Christianity, on its very first appearance, produced this effect. We cannot therefore wonder, if the system, which was the most amiable, was also the most attractive; and this, as was observed above, may have been one of the causes which led to the wide and rapid propagation of the new religion.

But it was not merely by making a provision for their poorer members, that the Christians obtained commendation even from their enemies. In times of public suffering, such as a contagious sickness or plague, it was observed that Christians attended upon the sick and the dying with the most affectionate and heroical constancy. The fear of death appeared to be no restraint to them in these acts of mutual kindness; whereas every writer who has described the ravages of any pestilential disease among the ancients, has noticed among the melancholy effects of such visitations, that they seemed to steel the heart against the tenderest and

most natural affections; and that men became more hard-hearted, and more regardless of the future, by seeing death on every side, and by expecting it to come shortly to themselves. The persons thus described were heathens; and when a Christian was seen to devote himself to a friend who was infected with pestilence, and perhaps to fall a victim to his own disinterested kindness, the spectacle was one which the world had not hitherto witnessed.

The present reign afforded an opportunity for such instances to be frequently repeated; for the soldiers who returned from the Parthian campaign of the Emperor Verus, brought back with them a pestilential disease of great malignity, which continued for several years. The celebrated physician, Galen, was living at this period; and he has left some remarks upon the firmness or the obstinacy with which the Christians submitted to any suffering rather than abandon their religion. It was thus that the heathen chose to speak of the fortitude of the Christians, which they could not help admiring, though they professed to treat it with contempt; and we have seen that pestilence was only one among many trials which at this period exercised the patient endurance of the Christians.

If we now turn our eyes to the eastern part of the empire, we shall find still stronger indications of sufferings, particularly in Asia Minor; and the blow appears to have been generally struck at the heads of the Church. We shall see the venerable Polycarp receiving at length his crown of martyrdom; but his death was preceded by that of another bishop, who had either been personally acquainted with John, or had seen persons who had conversed with several of the apostles.

This was Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, in Phrygia. He was a man of extensive reading, but apparently not of strong judgment. Notwithstanding this defect, a work which he wrote, containing a collection of anecdotes and sayings connected with our Lord and his apostles, would have been extremely interesting if it had come down to us. He is generally mentioned as the first Christian writer who maintained the doctrine of a Millennium, or who held that, previous to the final judgment, there would be a resurrection of the just, who would reign with Christ upon earth for a thousand years. Such a belief was certainly entertained by several writers of the second century, though Justinian, who himself adopted it, acknowledges that there were many Christians of sound and religious minds who differed from him on this point. It was, in fact, never made an article of belief, and each person was at liberty to follow his own opinion; beside which, we must carefully distinguish between the notion of a Millennium entertained by Papias and the earlier writers, and that which has been ascribed to Cerinthus and other Gnostics. The Cerinthians have always been charged with having very gross and sensual views concerning the happiness of the saints during this reign of Christ upon earth; but Papias and his followers admitted no such impurities into their creed: and we shall see that, during the third century, this belief in a Millennium gradually died away.

Papias suffered martyrdom in 163, having been taken from his own city to Pergamos for that purpose. It is to be feared that the sufferings of his flock did not cease with his death, for his successor, Abercius, presented an Apology to the emperor, as did also Apolli-

narius, who held the same bishopric in 168, if not earlier. Both these compositions are lost, which is unfortunately the case with all the other works of Apollinarius, who was an author of much celebrity, and entered into all the religious controversies of his day.

Severe as were the sufferings of all these confessors and martyrs, they sink comparatively into the shade while we read of the aged and apostolical Polycarp being burnt to death in the amphitheatre of Smyrna. This event probably happened in the year 167. The proconsul Quadratus, affecting to have compassion upon his age, held out the hopes of pardon if he would utter imprecations against Christ; to which the old man made no other reply than, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he has done me no injury; how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?" It was intended that he should be exposed to wild beasts; but it being too late in the day for such a spectacle when he was dragged into the amphitheatre, it was decided that he should be burnt. A fire was soon kindled, and the Jews were observed to assist the heathen in this work of cruelty; but when, from some cause or other, the flames delayed to consume the body, an executioner pierced it through with a sword, and put an end to the martyr's sufferings. We have another proof of the intercourse kept up between the different churches, when we find a detailed account of Polycarp's death drawn up by the Christians of Smyrna, and copies of it sent to the neighbouring places. The letter is still extant; and it adds a remarkable instance of the persevering hostility of the Jews, that, not satisfied with having assisted in burning Polycarp, they

advised the proconsul not to let the Christians take the body, lest they should proceed to give up Jesus, and worship Polycarp. The Jews were therefore well aware that Jesus was an object of religious worship to the Christians; but the writers of the letter add the remark, that the case anticipated by the Jews was perfectly impossible: Jesus, they observe, and Jesus only, could be the object of their worship; to him, as the Son of God, they offered adoration; but the martyrs, as disciples and imitators of the Lord, were merely objects of gratitude and love.

The proconsul allowed the bones of Polycarp to be carried away by his friends; and we learn from this letter that the custom already existed of meetings being held at the graves of the martyrs; and, on the anniversary of their death, which was called their birth-day, the Christians assembled to commemorate their history. The service resembled that of the Sunday. The Lord's supper was eaten; collections were made for the poor; and the acts of the martyr, whose death was being commemorated, were publicly read.

The death of Polycarp had the effect for a short time of checking the persecution in Smyrna; but it must have revived shortly after, since Papirius, who succeeded to the bishopric, suffered martyrdom; and Thraceus, bishop of Eumenia, met the same fate at Smyrna in this or the following reign. The neighbouring city of Laodicea saw its bishop, Sagaris, publicly put to death; and we may close this melancholy account by noticing another Apology, addressed to M. Aurelius, by Melito, bishop of Sardis. He was a man of considerable learning, and author of several works, all of which have perished; but we learn from a fragment of

his Apology that he did not charge the emperor himself with sanctioning such cruel proceedings; and it is also inferred from his expressions, that persons were induced to accuse the Christians, by having their property adjudged to them in case of conviction.

The reader will long since have ceased to feel surprise at finding Christians spoken of as men of learning. The works which have come down to us from Christian writers of the second and third centuries, are far more numerous than those of the heathen. The names of several apologists have already been mentioned, who did not fear to address their petitions to emperors and magistrates, though they exposed the superstitions of these very persons as fabulous and absurd. Others defended their brethren from the errors of Gnosticism; and Theophilus, who became Bishop of Antioch in 168, would have been eminent as a philosopher if he had not been converted to the Gospel. One of his works, which he addressed to a heathen friend, named Autolycus, has come down to us; and in another, which he published against Hermogenes, he entered into the question which had so long employed the heathen philosophers, concerning the eternity of matter.

The Gnostics, as we have seen, contributed to keep up the agitation of this perplexing subject; and, whatever other differences they may have had, they all agreed in believing that the elements of matter had not been created by God, but had existed, like God himself, from all eternity. It is a remarkable fact, that no philosopher or writer of any school, before the appearance of Christianity, ever conceived the idea of God having made the world out of nothing; but wherever the Gospel was received, this fundamental

truth was also recognised, and the eternity of matter became, as it deserved to be, an exploded doctrine, which cannot consist with a sound and rational belief in the omnipotence of God. We need not, however, be surprised if some persons professing themselves Christians, endeavoured to unite the ancient notion with this new creed; and Hermogenes, who called himself a Stoic, appears to have been one of this class, though the name of Christian can hardly be applied to him, except as the leading points of Christianity entered, under some form or other, into every scheme of Gnosticism. He did not deny that matter could have been created out of nothing; but he held that God would not have created it, because it is the source of all evil. He also believed that the evil spirits, and even the human soul, had their origin from matter; and his speculations probably made a considerable sensation, and were considered dangerous to the Christians, since a bishop of Antioch undertook to refute them; and Tertullian, later in the century, also exercised his pen in exposing their mischievous tendency. The work of the latter writer is still extant, but that of Theophilus has not come down to us.

Though the Christians were suffering so severely from persecution at this period, the bishops and men of learning among them were forced to direct their attention to another subject, which was now becoming of some importance. The heresy which bore the name of Montanism, began about the middle of the second century, and had its name from Montanus, who first made himself known in the village of Mysia, not far from the borders of Phrygia, from whence the sect which he founded was frequently called the Phrygian,

or Cataphrygian. Montanus had been recently converted to Christianity, and perhaps was not so much an impostor as led away by a fanciful and heated imagination. He appeared subject to trances or ecstasies; and two ladies of rank, Priscilla and Maximilia, were persuaded by him to leave their husbands, and to follow him about as prophetesses. It was this pretence to inspiration which formed the peculiar character of the sect; for the Montanists were not accused of being heretical upon any vital point of religion; and though Montanus has been charged with the blasphemy of calling himself the Paraclete, it seems certain that he only meant to say, that the Holy Ghost, or Paraclete, had given to him and his followers an extraordinary measure of spiritual illumination.

There can be no doubt that the Montanists laid claim to this distinction, and boasted, in virtue of their inspiration, not only to have a clearer insight into the mysteries of Revelation, but to be specially gifted with the power of looking into futurity. This may account, in some degree, for the strong measures which were taken by the heads of the Church to repress these enthusiasts, and to expel them from their communion; for the Montanists were not satisfied with assuming to themselves, in a peculiar and exclusive sense, the title of *spiritual*, but they spoke of all persons who denied their pretensions, as if they were devoid of the Spirit, and were living in a natural or unregenerate state. Offensive epithets of this kind are always causes of irritation; and they were likely to be particularly so when used by the Montanists, whose tenets were confessedly of a recent date, and who were in a decided

minority. Calumnies were spread against them in later times, as if they practised some horrid and mysterious cruelties in their religious meetings; but there is no reason to think that such stories had any foundation in truth. The objections were much more just which were brought against the Montanists for their extreme severity in punishing the heavier offences. A rigid system of self-mortification seemed to harden them against all notions of forgiveness; to obtain safety by flight, in the time of persecution, was pronounced by them unlawful; and though we may acquit them of heresy in point of doctrine, it is scarcely possible not to convict them of enthusiasm.

A belief in the extravagant pretensions of Montanus spread rapidly in Asia Minor, particularly among the lower orders; and the bishops tried in vain to preserve their flocks from the contagion. Several writers, in various parts of the world, published treatises against it; but whatever advantage they may have had in argument, they could not hinder the severe principles of Montanus from being very generally adopted. The sect of the Encratites, which has been already mentioned, agreed with the Montanists in this particular; and it was perhaps natural that persons who had witnessed, and even joined in, the gross immoralities of the heathen, should go to the extreme of abstinence and self-denial when they became converted to the Gospel. There is no doubt that many persons who were not called Montanists, and who held high stations in the Church, imposed upon themselves a more rigid discipline than was thought necessary by the generality of Christians. The notion now began to be entertained that second marriages were not lawful. It was strongly

urged that Christians ought not to be present at the games of the circus and amphitheatre; not that such amusements were considered in themselves to be sinful, but a spectator of them could not fail to witness many acts of pagan superstition, and in some measure to take a part in them. The same feeling began now to operate in making Christians have scruples as to serving in the army; not that they looked upon war as unlawful, but almost every act of a soldier's life was closely interwoven with the national religion: and we know from the Apologists of Christianity, that the legions had for some time been filled with Christians. Their numbers had now increased so prodigiously, that it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to carry on a campaign, if the army had been manned exclusively by heathens; and if many Christians had acted upon the principles of the Montanists, and been led by scruples of religion to quit the service, their loss would have been very seriously felt by the empire at large. Notwithstanding the arguments which were urged by the more rigid party, it seems, however, certain that Christians still continued to serve in the army; and though we cannot condemn the feeling which looked upon all the religious rites of paganism with horror, there is evidence that this new scruple was only a source of fresh sufferings to the Christians. If they left the service, or refused to take part in any public ceremony, it was easy to represent them as disaffected to the emperor, or the empire; and every recurrence of a military spectacle, which happened frequently both in the capital and the provincial towns, was sure to be attended with insults, if not more serious injuries, being offered to the Christians.

If we ask for any one cause which led the heathen in every part of the world to persecute the Christians, we need not look beyond the rapid increase of Christianity; but there were circumstances of a local or temporary nature, which frequently exposed them to insults and outrages. If any national calamity befell the country, it was attributed to the anger of the gods, who were indignant at the toleration of a new religion. An earthquake, a famine, or a pestilence, could only be removed by the shedding of Christian blood. If the Tiber happened to overflow its banks, or if the Nile did not rise to its usual height, in either case the Christians were considered the guilty cause; and the rabble of Rome or Alexandria were accordingly amused with an exhibition of Christians and wild beasts in the amphitheatre. The present reign furnished instances of this kind. Lucius Verus, who was associated with M. Aurelius in the empire, returned from his Parthian campaigns in 165; and the soldiers, as has been already observed, brought back a pestilential disorder of great malignity, which continued several years. Notwithstanding this visitation, the two emperors celebrated their triumphs for the victories of Verus in the following year; and such occasions always gave a license for insults to the Christians. In 169, the two emperors left Rome to make war with some German tribes, which were becoming formidable by their invasions. The terror which these barbarians excited, had caused the priest to recommend some extraordinary means for obtaining the favour of Heaven; and since this same year was marked by an inundation of the Tiber, we may be sure that it was a season of severe trial to the Christians of Rome.

All these religious precautions were ineffectual in behalf of one of the emperors. Verus died before the campaign had begun; and his colleague, who returned to Rome in consequence, was again very active in restoring the worship of the gods. At length, in 170, he resumed the expedition, and did not revisit his capital for several years; so that if the Roman Christians were persecuted during the interval, it can hardly be laid to the charge of the emperor. It was during this German war, that he is said to have issued an edict, that any person who was brought to trial merely for being a Christian should be acquitted, and his accuser should be burnt to death; but there are strong grounds for supposing that the letter containing this order is a forgery. If we might believe contemporary writers, he was moved to extend his protection to the Christians, by having received the benefit of their prayers, when the army was suffering from thirst, and the Christian soldiers, kneeling down, obtained a shower of rain. That the army was unexpectedly relieved in this manner during a war with the Quadi, in 174, can hardly be doubted, for it is mentioned by heathen authors, who ascribe the shower of rain either to a magician, or to the prayers of the emperor: but if there were any Christians in the army, it seems not only probable, but certain, that they would pray to God in their distress; and when the rain came down, they could hardly fail to feel grateful that their prayers had been heard.

This is, perhaps, the simple account of an event which, in ancient and modern times, has been considered miraculous: nor is there any superstition or credulity in supposing that the prayer of faith prevailed

for the preservation of the army; but that these Christian soldiers belonged to a legion which was henceforward called the "thundering legion," or that the emperor acknowledged their services in the letter mentioned above, are stories which do not rest on any sufficient evidence.

If the emperor had issued such an edict, the Christians would have met with very different treatment during the remainder of his reign; but it is plain that his mind continued unchanged with respect to their religion. Had it been otherwise, he would have found an additional reason for favouring them, in the following year, when Avidius Cassius headed an insurrection in Syria. The emperor set out immediately to quell it, and though his opponent was defeated and killed before the imperial forces had sailed from Italy, he still continued his design of going in person to the scene of the late rebellion. It was remarked that no Christian had joined the party of Cassius, which ought, perhaps, to have inclined the emperor to treat them more kindly; but we must not infer from this fact, that the Christians, as a body, felt any personal attachment to M. Aurelius. They had, from the first, been censured by the heathen for indolence and indifference as to public affairs; and there were many reasons why they should not interfere in political commotions. As far as their lives and liberties were concerned, they had no more reason to expect protection from one competitor for the throne than from another; but being already accused of disaffection to the government, they had at least an inducement to remain quiet. This will, perhaps, explain why no Christian had joined the party of Cassius.

It has been already observed that some of them may

have objected, on religious grounds, to conform to the duties of a soldier; but this was certainly not the case universally; the armies were at this time filled with Christians; and religious scruples were not much felt on this head, till the rigid doctrines of Montanus had spread more widely at the end of the century. It may, however, be received as a fact, whatever was the cause of it, that no Christian was punished by order of the emperor, for having taken part in the rebellion. The Christians themselves would be aware of this circumstance; but it does not follow that any public notice was taken of it. Had the fact been otherwise, their condition might have been still worse; but, as it was, their loyalty or their neutrality gained for them no advantage.

It was observed above, that the rapid growth of Christianity was a principal cause of its being persecuted; and there never was a more signal instance of failure, than when the heathen sought to impede its progress by measures of violence. There is abundant evidence that during the whole of the second century it was advancing rapidly. Justin Martyr spoke of the religion of Christ having reached the remotest regions; and Bardesanes, who wrote a few years later, and was himself a native of Mesopotamia, mentioned by name the Persians, the Medes, the Parthians, and the Bactrians, as having already received the Gospel.

Mesopotamia contained the ancient and flourishing church at Edessa, which has been supposed to have been founded in the first century; and more than one of its sovereigns (all of whom appear to have borne the name of Abgarus) are mentioned as being converted to the Gospel. But its most distinguished member (at

least in the present century) was Bardesanes, who has been lately quoted, as asserting the extensive progress of Christianity in the East. His writings in defence of it became very celebrated, and he attracted the notice of Apollonius, a stoic philosopher, whose reputation stood so high, that M. Aurelius attended his school even after he was emperor. Apollonius is known to have accompanied L. Verus, when he went into the East, in 161, and he may have met with Bardesanes while he was in that country. The philosopher used every argument to make him give up Christianity, but to no purpose. Bardesanes showed great firmness as well as courage in defending his religious belief; and for some time he was equally zealous in refuting the heresies which were then infecting his countrymen. One of his many publications was directed against Marcion; but unfortunately he did not always continue sound in his religious opinions. He is generally classed among those persons who held the oriental doctrine of two principles; and he so far agreed with the Valentinian Gnostics as to deny the resurrection of the body, and to believe Jesus to have been an incorporeal phantom. In some points, however, he differed materially from Valentinus; and perhaps there was no time when he did not call himself a Christian; but the speculations upon the origin of matter, and of evil, led him into some peculiar notions, which have caused him to be classed with the precursors of Manicheeism. Some of his errors were abjured by him before he died, though not the whole of them; and he does not appear to have been looked upon as so decidedly heretical as many others of the Gnostic school.

The history of this man, as well as the passage

quoted from his writings, is a proof that Christianity had penetrated into the interior of Asia.

It had been conveyed to Egypt at a still earlier period; and though we cannot fix the date of the foundation of the Church of Carthage, it certainly existed before the end of the second century. If we turn to the west of Europe, though it is uncertain whether Gaul and Spain were visited by any of the apostles, there are traces of churches being planted there in very early times. Even the remote island of Britain contained many Christians in the time of M. Aurelius. Germany is expressly mentioned as being similarly circumstanced; and the period at which we are now arrived will present a melancholy proof that Christianity was flourishing in the south of France.

There are many traces of a connection having existed between the Christians in that part of the world and those of Asia Minor. It has been supposed that Polycarp sent missionaries into Gaul; but at whatever time this intercourse began, it is certain that churches were regularly established there before 177. It was in this year that the two cities of Lyons and Vienne witnessed a severe and bloody persecution of the Christians, a detailed account of which is still extant, in a letter addressed to their brethren of Asia Minor. The storm had been gathering for some time, and at first the Christians were forbidden to frequent the public baths, or even to show themselves. This was soon followed by imprisonments and deaths. As many as confessed themselves to be Christians were ordered for execution; and the amphitheatre was soon surfeited with victims. The venerable Pothinus, bishop of Lyons, who was now upwards of ninety years of age, fell a sacrifice to

these barbarities. The number of prisoners became so great, that the governor wrote to the emperor to know how they were to be treated; and if the answer was dictated by the emperor himself, we have too plain a proof that his heart was steeled against the Christians. It was ordered that all who confessed themselves to be of that religion should be put to the torture; and the work of cruelty was resumed with more activity than before. As many as were citizens of Rome had the distinction of being beheaded; the rest were exposed to wild beasts in the amphitheatre, and their mangled remains were thrown into the river, that they might not receive interment from their friends!

While the governor was sending to Rome for his instructions, the unhappy people whom he was tormenting had the calmness to take the same opportunity of sending some of their own body to the capital. But it was not to supplicate the emperor for mercy. They had heard of the dissensions which the opinions of Montanus had raised, and they were anxious, if they could, to bring the parties to agreement. A letter was also written to Eleutherus, who at that time was Bishop of Rome; and it is said to have contained an exhortation to peace, though the particular subject of it is not mentioned. It may have alluded to the doctrines of Montanus, or to the controversy which was still carried on concerning the feast of Easter; but what a beautiful picture does this give us of the Gospel, when men whose lives were hourly in danger could thus forget their own sufferings, and exhort their brethren to maintain the bond of peace.

The letter to Eleutherus was carried by Irenæus, who was at this time a presbyter in the Church of

Lyons, and had enjoyed the advantage, when very young, of receiving instruction from Polycarp. His absence from Lyons at this critical time perhaps saved his life: and his visit to Rome enabled him to become better acquainted with the doctrines of the Gnostics. It is uncertain whether he found Valentinus and Marcion still residing at Rome. But Marcion, if not Valentinus also, lived till the time of Eleutherus; and after what we have heard of their doctrines, it will seem strange that both of them not only solicited but obtained re-admission into the Church. Even after a second expulsion, they were again received to communion; and Marcion, upon one of these occasions, contributed a large sum to the fund which was raised from charity. It was as honourable to Eleutherus as to the body over whom he presided, that when it was again found necessary to expel Marcion from the Church, his money was returned to him; and if he was sincere in making still another overture for re-admission, he was hindered by death from proving his sincerity.

If these leaders of the Gnostics were dead when Irenæus arrived at Rome, there were still many persons residing there who had imbibed their tenets. One of them, Florinus, had been known before to Irenæus, when both of them were hearers of Polycarp in Asia; since which time he had been ordained a presbyter in the Roman church, and had been ejected for heresy. On some points his opinions were peculiar, and he differed from the Gnostics in believing God to be the author of evil, but in others he resembled them; and Irenæus published a work against him. It is even said that the still greater work which he composed a few

years later, and in which the whole system of Gnosticism was exposed and confuted, was undertaken in consequence of the sorrow which he felt at seeing his former friend betrayed into such a fatal error. Irenæus also wrote to another person whom he had met at Rome, named Blastus, on the subject of schism; but these letters were probably written after he had quitted Rome, and when he was advanced to a higher station in the Church. When he returned to Lyons, he found the church in that city deprived of its head by the martyrdom of Pothinus; and we may now understand why Irenæus had been fixed upon to carry the letter which had been addressed to the Bishop of Rome. It is plain that he was considered a leading member of his church; and he had no sooner returned from his mission than he was himself elected to fill the vacant bishopric. His future conduct amply justified the choice. On a future occasion we shall see him once more in communication with the Bishop of Rome, recommending measures of peace; and he left behind him a monument of theological learning which has given him an eminent station among the fathers of the Church. This was the work alluded to above, in which he exposed the errors and impieties of that fanciful school which had seduced his former friend, Florinus. It was entitled, "A Refutation of Knowledge, falsely so called;" and we may judge of the necessity which there was for men of learning to publish works of this kind, when we find Irenæus complaining that the Gnostic doctrines were embraced by some females even in the distant country which was watered by the Rhone. It is to be regretted that so valuable a work exists only in an old Latin translation, the original having been

composed in Greek, which was the native language of Irenæus before he passed from Asia into Gaul.

We may hope that the fury of persecution was exhausted before the Christians of Lyons were committed to the care of Irenæus, though there is evidence that it had by no means subsided in other parts of the world. It is hardly possible to acquit the emperor of permitting, or even encouraging it, in the latter part of his reign; but the edict which he sent to Lyons must have been nearly the last which he published on the subject. In the year 178, he set out with his son Commodus for a second war with the Marcomanni, and in 180, he died in Pannoni. It is probable that the religion of the Christians had attracted the attention of this emperor more than of his predecessors. This may have been partly owing to the rapid increase of it during his long reign of nineteen years; but there were also reasons of a peculiar and personal nature, which were likely to prejudice M. Aurelius against the Christians. His mother, who was a religious woman according to the notions of the day, had given early impressions to her son in favour of heathenism. He was brought up in the principles of the Stoic philosophy, and professed himself attached to that school, of which he has given a proof in his own writings. The celebrated orator, Fronto, from whom he took lessons in eloquence, published a work against the Christians, which shows that their opinions had already attracted the notice of the learned. The emperor mentions another person, named Diognetus, who had taught him to have no faith in incantations, the exorcising of evil spirits, or any pretended wonders of that kind: and we can hardly doubt that this caution was directed

against the miracles which were appealed to by the Christians.

But the person who had the principal charge of instructing the young emperor was Apollonius, who has been already mentioned as trying to turn Bardesanes from his belief in Christianity. Bardesanes is said to have written a work on the subject of *fate*, which was dedicated to Antonius; but it has been doubted whether this meant the emperor, or a private friend of that name.

The arguments of Apollonius were likely to have much more weight with the emperor than with Bardesanes; and we have seen, that the longer he continued to reign, the more he showed his hostility to the Christians. He could not help observing the patient fortitude with which they endured tortures and death, and he mentions it in one of his own writings; but he attributed it to nothing but obstinacy, which was also the opinion of other heathen writers, who pretended to despise the Christians for the very quality which proved the sincerity of their professions. So little did the heathen understand the principles of that religion which they endeavoured to destroy!

CHAPTER XII.

Commodus.—Flourishing state of the Church.—Christianity in Britain.—In Alexandria.—Pantænus.—Clement of Alexandria.—Successors of Commodus.—Theodotus and his Heresy.—Payment of the Clergy.—Dispute about Easter.—Councils.—Praxeas.—Tertullian.—Progress of Christianity.

HAVING witnessed the cruel treatment of the Christians under emperors who were called philosophical and humane, we might be surprised to find them enjoying a temporary respite while the throne was filled by a man whose character was a mixture of barbarity and profligacy. Commodus was nineteen years of age when he succeeded his father, in the year 180; and it is certain that, during a great part of his reign, the Christians were not exposed to their former sufferings. The storm, as might be expected, did not pass away immediately; and we have proofs that the enemies of Christianity were still active during the beginning of the reign of Commodus. Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, complained of them, in a work which he published about this period; and a Defence of Christianity was published by a rhetorician named Miltiades, who also wrote against Montanus.

Even in Rome itself, we find that Apollonius, a member of the senate, was put to death on the charge of being a Christian; which shews that the new religion was embraced by men of rank, and that laws were still in force which allowed them to be treated as

criminals. Appollonius defended himself in a speech delivered in the senate, which was afterwards published; but his arguments were not regarded, though there is no reason to accuse Commodus of being himself a party to his execution. The emperor treated all his subjects with equal cruelty, without regard to their religion; and it was this personal danger which hindered the heathen from molesting the Christians. They had to look to themselves, and to guard against the assaults of the common tyrant. Commodus was also different from the emperors who had preceded him, in having no regard for the religion of his country. The temples of the gods were converted by him into scenes of debauchery and bloodshed; and even his heathen subjects must have been disgusted with their own forms of worship, when this monster of impiety required divine honours to be paid to himself, under the character of Hercules.

The Christians also found protection from another quarter, which was much less likely to be expected. Crispina, the wife of Commodus, was convicted of adultery, and banished, in 183; after which time his favourite mistress was Marcia, who, though she had previously been leading a most abandoned life, had been once a Christian. She exercised an extraordinary influence over the emperor, and was so far mindful of her former professions, that, whenever it was in her power, she showed kindness to the Christians.

There is no evidence that this licentious and degraded woman was considered to belong to the new religion, while she was the mistress of Commodus. She may have returned to the errors of heathenism, or she may have cast off religion altogether: but even if she still

professed herself a Christian, this would furnish no ground of attack against Christianity in general; nor should we be warranted in entertaining suspicions of the moral conduct of the Christians in the second century. The distinction between real and nominal believers has existed from the beginning. There were hypocrites, whose practice was at variance with their principles, in the time of the apostles; and our own experience may tell us, that such characters are still sadly common. If we argue that Christians were immoral in the age of Commodus, because the name of Marcia has obtained a disgraceful celebrity, we must draw a more painful, because a far more general conclusion with respect to our own times, when cases of depravity among persons professing themselves Christians are of such frequent occurrence.

We are not, however, left to inference with respect to the morality of the second century. It has been mentioned that the most atrocious calumnies were cast against the Christians, charging them with the commission of every enormity; and the Christian Apologists triumphantly refuted such absurd and inconsistent falsehoods. The heathen, on the other hand, could make no defence against the charges of vice and immorality retorted upon themselves. Their own writers, instead of refuting or denying such statements, acknowledged them to be correct, by drawing the most frightful pictures of the wickedness of the age. Even those persons who passed for virtuous and humane were marked, as we have seen, by intolerance and cruelty in matters which concerned religion. The Christians had perhaps little merit in avoiding such odious examples, and placing their own conduct in con-

trast with that of their persecutors. But we are not attempting to prove that Christianity was a meritorious religion. It was a signal blessing, vouchsafed to the early Church by its Divine Founder, that outward circumstances hindered it from becoming corrupt. The same heavenly aid which rescued the new religion from destruction, also enabled its professors to conquer the natural depravity of their own hearts; and the Gospel effected what no human system had hitherto been able to effect, by teaching men not to trust to their own strength, but to seek assistance from above.

It is probable that this practical triumph of Christianity was more generally apparent in the second century than at any subsequent period. The following century was marked by severe persecutions, and these trials had the effect of purifying the Church from her corruptions and defilements: but this period also presented intervals of tranquillity and repose, which were often productive of fatal results to the moral and religious character of the Christians. Other causes, as we shall see, also conspired to introduce a secular spirit into the Church, especially among those who ought to have set an example of practical holiness. The heads of the Church appeared to have had little temptation, as well as little means, to indulge their selfish or worldly feelings throughout the second century. It was not a time when hypocrites were likely to creep into the Church for the sake of any honours which it might bestow; and though some such were found within it, and there were others, like Marcia, the mistress of Commodus, whose lives were a disgrace to any religion, there is reason to think that such cases were extremely rare, and that even the heathen

were beginning to wonder at the principles displayed by Christians, and sometimes, though perhaps unconsciously, to copy them.

From the several causes which have been mentioned, the reign of Commodus may be considered, on the whole, as favourable to the Gospel; and we have some evidence of this being the case, when we find persons travelling into distant countries, and carrying the religion of Christ into places which as yet had scarcely submitted to the Roman arms. There is a tradition of Lucius, a British king, having written to Eleutherus, who held the bishopric of Rome from 173 to 189, with a request that he would send some persons to instruct his people in the Gospel. There are, however, no sufficient grounds for believing the story to be true; and it is certain, as already stated, that Christianity had been carried into remote parts of the island before this period.

The story of Lucius has been reported by so many writers, all of whom so nearly agree in placing him in the latter part of the second century, and in connecting him with Eleutherus, bishop of Rome, that it would not be unreasonable to suppose that some intercourse of a religious kind may have taken place between the two countries about that period. It is also not improbable, that some of the native or Romanised princes of Britain were already converts to Christianity. That many of their subjects had embraced the new religion is certain; and there is every reason to think that the country was at this period divided into bishoprics. It is, however, in accordance with what we have observed in other countries, and with the progress of the Gospel from its first beginning, that the persons in authority

should follow, rather than take the lead in embracing the religion of Jesus. Lucius may therefore have been the first British chieftain who professed himself a Christian ; and it may have been this circumstance which has given to his name so prominent a place in ecclesiastical tradition. We know little concerning the kingdoms or principalities into which our island was divided in the second and third centuries ; but the Romans appear to have pursued their usual policy of allowing the natives to preserve the semblance of power while the substance of it was retained by themselves, and while, by dividing the conquered country into many minute territories, they effectually secured themselves against any combined attempt at opposition or resistance. If there really was such a person as Lucius, he was probably one of those petty sovereigns or chiefs who held their limited authority at the will of the Romans. If he was sincere and zealous in professing Christianity, he would naturally seek to extend it among his subjects ; and this would be likely to bring him into communication with foreign countries, which were more civilised than his own. We know that learning had already been cultivated with some success in Britain ; but the professors of it were generally Romans, and the Latin language was the vehicle of instruction and civilisation to the semi-barbarous natives. This would cause a constant intercourse to be kept up with the Continent, and especially with Italy, for the purposes of literature and education, as well as of policy ; and if Lucius was in want of a fresh accession of instructors for his subjects, he would be not unlikely to apply to the Bishop of Rome. At this time there was but one language spoken, among all

persons of education, through the western portion of the empire; we know that there was also the same uniformity as to doctrine and church government; so that if a British Christian went to Rome, or a Roman Christian came to Britain, they would find a ready reception among their brethren; and communications of this kind could not fail to be of service in promoting the spread of Christianity in distant provinces.

The mission of Pantænus into India rests upon much better evidence than the correspondence of Lucius with Eleutherus. He united the character of a philosopher with that of a Christian teacher, and for some years presided over the school which was established in Alexandria for giving instructions in Christianity. The date of the first establishment of this school is not ascertained; but the Christians of Alexandria had an advantage over those of other places, in being able to attend lectures on their own religion, as well as on various branches of science. The mode of instruction appears to have borne some resemblance to that pursued in modern universities, where public lectures are delivered by professors. Their schools were numerously attended, not only by those who were already converted to Christianity, but by those who had still to choose their religion, or who were professedly heathens. We shall see presently, that though this led to a greater toleration of Christianity in Alexandria than in most other countries, it also had the result of causing some persons, incautiously, to engraft erroneous opinions upon the simplicity of the Gospel. The Jews were also very numerous in Alexandria, and whatever was the religious creed of an inhabitant of that city, he could

hardly fail, if he was in any degree addicted to study, to have some acquaintance with Jewish and Christian writings, as well as with those of the heathen.

This may account for the superior learning of the Alexandrian Christians; and at the time which we are now considering, the principal teacher in the school was Pantænus, who, in addition to the powers of his own mind, had the advantage of having been taught by persons who had seen the apostles. While Demetrius was Bishop of Alexandria (which station he held from 188 to 232), Pantænus undertook a journey to India, the inhabitants of that country having sent to ask for some person to instruct them. It is uncertain whether he went to the country properly called India, or to part of Arabia, which sometimes bore that name; but he is reported to have found a copy of Matthew's Gospel written in Hebrew, which had been left there by the apostle Bartholomew.

It cannot be denied that the history of Pantænus contains some obscurity, and much room for discussion, though the evidence on which it rests is extremely respectable, and such as to require us to attach to it some degree of credit. The doubt respecting the country called India, to which he is stated to have been sent, is most probably to be solved by our concluding that he went to Arabia, and not to that country in the east of Asia, which is properly known by the name of India. There is no reason to suppose that Pantænus travelled in that direction; but the southern part of Arabia, which is washed by the waters of the Persian gulf, had certainly churches established in it at the beginning of the second century: and the conversion of the inhabitants may have been principally

caused by Pantænus. It will, however, have been observed, that his visit to that country is connected with the name of Bartholomew; and if the tradition is to be received, we may suppose that apostle to have planted Christianity in Arabia. This is not at all improbable; and whether we suppose the new religion to have made much progress, or to have received some sudden check, in either case it was not unnatural that the Arabian Christians should apply for assistance to Alexandria, as we have supposed our countryman, Lucius, to have applied to Rome. These two cities were the headquarters of literature and civilisation to the eastern and western portions of the empire. Their bishops were consequently looked up to with great respect, and exercised authority over larger dioceses than was generally the case in those early times. It was also likely that the Arabian Christians should hear much of Alexandria, by reason of the commercial intercourse which was kept up between that city and the East. The fame of the Alexandrian schools would reach them through the same channel; and it must give us a high idea of the importance attached to this mission, when we find the Bishop of Alexandria selecting the first teacher in the catechetical school to undertake it.

The tradition about Pantænus finding in the country a Hebrew translation of Matthew's Gospel, which had been left there by the apostle Bartholomew, might lead to more discussion. It has already been stated, that there is no good evidence of Matthew having himself composed his Gospel in Hebrew, though the fact is asserted by several writers. It may, however, be considered certain that the Jewish converts to Christianity,

who were not able to read the Scriptures in Greek, would procure a translation of them into their own language. The notion of any of these books being translated into Hebrew, implies the presence of the Jews in the country where they were to be read; and it is known that the Jews existed in great numbers in Arabia. It seems, therefore, most probable that Bartholomew, like the rest of the apostles, addressed himself in the first instance to the conversion of the Jews; and for this purpose he might have carried with him a copy of one of the Gospels translated into Hebrew or Syriac: but it may also be conjectured, and perhaps with more probability, that the name of Bartholomew was connected with this Hebrew copy, not because he had brought it into the country, but because he was known to have been the first person who preached Christianity there. The book which Pantænus met with was, perhaps, not a genuine translation of the Gospel composed by Matthew, but a work which has often been confounded with it, and which has been called the Gospel according to the Hebrews. It seems to have had the work of the evangelist for its basis, but to have been intended rather to inculcate the doctrines of the Ebionites than those of genuine Christianity.

The age of Pantænus makes it probable that he undertook this journey in the reign of Commodus; and Clement, the most learned of his pupils, supplied his place in the catechetical school. He was in every way worthy of succeeding to such a master. Many of his writings have come down to us, which prove him to have been a man of most extensive reading, and equally versed in profane literature as in the Scriptures. He

was by far the most learned man who had hitherto employed his pen in defending or explaining the Gospel. Some of his works were perhaps published as early as 190; and it was impossible that such a man could be giving public lectures in a school, without producing a great impression upon the heathen, as well as upon his Christian hearers. There is, in fact, great reason to conclude that the Gospel made a rapid progress in Alexandria during the latter part of the second century, and the writings of Clement would still be interesting as remnants of ancient literature, even if we read them without any reference to religion and the Gospel. They are, however, of great value, as showing the opinions which were publicly avowed and taught in the most learned city in the empire. They prove that Clement was a man of extensive reading, and that he was anxious to conciliate the heathen philosophers, by persuading them that Christianity had many points of resemblance to Platonism. The Platonic philosophy was singled out from all the other heathen systems, because its theology was more sublime, and less disfigured with the gross and disgusting conceptions of the Pagan mythology. The absurdities of the latter system were exposed by Clement with the most unsparing and triumphant arguments; and it is plain that, in this respect, he was not in danger of giving much offence to the men of learning in Alexandria. It required more delicacy and discretion to exhibit the unsoundness and insufficiency of Plato's reasoning in matters of religion. It was necessary for a Christian teacher to detach his hearers from the errors of the Platonists; but he knew, at the same time, that they were the most plausible and the most

fashionable doctrines of the day. If he had openly asserted their falsehood, and their contradiction to Christianity, the result would have been, that the teacher of the new religion would have been silenced, if not persecuted and killed.

The attempt was therefore made to induce the Platonists, insensibly and unknowingly, to abandon their own opinions, by persuading them that the writings of Plato contained statements and assertions which it is certain that Plato himself had never even imagined.

With this view, the leading doctrines of the Gospel were said to be contained, obscurely and enigmatically, in the writings of Plato; which was accounted for by the belief, which was currently received in Alexandria, that Plato himself had borrowed largely from the writings of Moses. This notion, though it would meet at present with very few supporters, appears to have been entertained by the learned Jews of those days, as well as by the Platonic philosophers and the Christian fathers. It was asserted by Clement in several passages of his writings; and it is probable that, for some time, he was able to diffuse the doctrines of Christianity more openly and successfully, by thus persuading his hearers that the doctrines were not altogether new. If the Christians had consented to alter their own tenets, and to corrupt the Gospel, with a view to making this resemblance appear more striking, it is difficult to say what might have been the effect of such a compromise. The enemies of Christianity would perhaps have remained quiet, and the bloody persecutions of the following century might not have taken place. But *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-*

day, and for ever; and so his doctrines have continued unchanged.

The heathen philosophers, who felt the superiority of the Gospel, both as a code of morals, and as a system of theology, were not unwilling to alter the language of Plato, so as to accommodate it to Christianity; but here the attempt at conciliation stopped: the Christians could not, and would not, alter their own doctrines to satisfy the heathen; and Clement himself, after having taught them for several years with very little interruption or molestation, was forced, as we shall see presently, to seek safety in flight from the violence of his heathen adversaries.

The empire was freed from the monstrous impieties of Commodus on the last day of the year 192, when he was first poisoned and afterwards strangled by two of his officers, assisted by the wretched Marcia. The throne was then filled for a few months successively by Pertinax and Julianus; but three other competitors appeared in different parts of the world, namely, Pescennius Niger in Syria, Clodius Albinus in Britain, and L. Septimus Severus in Pannonia. All of them maintained their pretensions by arms; but the activity of Severus finally prevailed. Having immediately secured the capital, he set out for Syria; and Niger was killed after more than one defeat, in 194. His cause being still supported by the inhabitants of Byzantium, Severus laid siege to that city, which did not surrender till two years after; and in 197, or 198, the indefatigable emperor defeated and killed his remaining rival, Albinus, in a pitched battle near Lyons. Upon his return to Rome he acted with great severity towards the supporters of his two opponents; and we

are again informed, as in the case of the insurrection of Cassius, that no Christian fell under the displeasure of the emperor for having joined Albinus or Niger. If Severus was aware of this fact, we may hope that it would incline him to protect the Christians; though, as was observed before, their abstaining from taking arms in the support of either of these emperors was perhaps more owing to their peculiar scruples as to military service, than to any systematic attachment to Severus. The same scruples would have hindered them from supporting any competitor for the empire; and Severus would not be likely to feel much obliged to them for an assistance which was merely negative. Added to which, we may be sure that the Christians would not take part in the military rejoicings which accompanied the triumph of the conqueror; so that, though it may be true that he had no cause to punish any Christian for joining the party of his opponents, he may at the same time have taken a dislike to them for their apparent indifference to his cause; and we may be sure that there would be no want of persons in his army and in his court who would use their utmost endeavours to increase these feelings, and to prejudice him still more strongly against the Christians.

The siege of Byzantium, which continued two years, was productive of much annoyance to the Christians within the city, as well as of serious and lasting effects to the Church at large. The garrison was commanded by Cæcilius Capella, who, finding the Christians unwilling to take part against the besieging army, encouraged the inhabitants in torturing or killing them. One of them, named Theodotus, who, though engaged in trade, was a man of considerable learning, had the

cowardice, when taken before the authorities, to deny his faith in Christ, and thus escaped punishment. When the siege was over, the apostate was taunted by his brethren for the baseness of his conduct; and, finding it convenient to leave Byzantium, he went to Rome. The report of his having denied his faith soon followed him; and his defence, as is often the case, plunged him still deeper in guilt. Without pretending to have abjured Christianity, he justified what he had done by the urgency of the case, and extenuated the greatness of the offence by saying that he had not denied God, but man; evidently implying that he believed Christ to be a mere man. The impiety was brought to the ears of Victor, who had succeeded Eleutherus as Bishop of Rome in 189, and he immediately excluded Theodotus from communion with his church.

Every bishop had the right to exercise this power, both towards members of his own church and towards strangers. If a Christian had occasion to pass from one city to another, he generally carried with him a letter from his own bishop to the bishop of the church which he was visiting, in which an assurance was made that the bearer was orthodox in his belief. Letters of this kind ensured an admission to church fellowship, and especially to a participation in the holy eucharist: but if a person appeared with no such credentials, he was liable to be examined as to the soundness of his faith; and if his answers did not appear satisfactory, he was not admitted to communion. This was the case with Theodotus, who, though he did not originally belong to the Roman church, would naturally have wished to join its communion when he happened to be living in Rome. He would have enjoyed this privilege

in common with any other stranger, if he could have given proofs of his faith being sound: but this was not the case; he professed a belief which was utterly at variance with that which had always been held by the Roman church, and the bishop would not allow his flock to be contaminated by such an example.

If Theodotus had meant to say that he was no longer a Christian, he would merely have used the expression of any heathen or Jew, who believed Jesus Christ to be an ordinary mortal. But this was not his meaning. He still called himself a Christian, but his views concerning Christ were peculiar to himself; and several of the early writers have spoken of him as the father and founder of the heresy which denied the divinity of Christ. This statement is perfectly correct; no Christian had as yet entertained such a notion. One branch of the Gnostics had maintained that Jesus was a mere human being, born in the ordinary way, who had a divine being called Christ united to him at his baptism: but even the Gnostics had never conceived the idea of Jesus Christ being a mere man, without any portion of Divinity. This impiety was reserved for Theodotus, at the end of the second century; and the opinion of the Church upon this subject is very clearly shown, when we find the Bishop of Rome excluding him from communion with his flock. It would appear that even Theodotus could not resist the evidence of Jesus being more than a common man; for, though he denied his pre-existence and inherent divinity, he believed in his miraculous conception, and taught that he was born of a virgin by the Holy Ghost.

This heresy attracted many followers; and the name of Artemon or Artemas, who lived not long after

Theodotus, became as celebrated as that of his master. It must have been a great triumph to the party, when Natalius, who had been a sufferer in some persecution, was persuaded to adopt their tenets, and to take the office of a bishop among them: and we learn something of the manners of the times, when we read of his receiving a monthly salary of 120 denarii. This man lived to abjure his errors, and was re-admitted to the communion of the Church by the succeeding bishop, Zephyrinus; nor do the Theodosian heretics appear at any time to have formed a large or influential body.

The fact of Natalius receiving a monthly payment for his services, may throw some light upon the method which was then established for the maintenance of the clergy: for though Natalius, in consequence of his heresy, was not at this time in communion with the Church, we may suppose that his followers adopted the custom which was then prevalent with the orthodox clergy. The principle had been expressly asserted by St Paul, as well as supported by the analogy of the Jewish priesthood, and by the reason of the case itself, that the ministers of Christ should be maintained by their flocks. The apostles availed themselves of this privilege; and all those who were ordained to the ministry by the apostles received their maintenance from the congregation in which they ministered. The common fund which was collected by subscriptions from the believers, supplied this maintenance; and the poorer members, such as widows, and those who were destitute or afflicted, received relief from the same charitable source. We have no means of ascertaining the proportions in which this common fund was divided between the ministers of the Word and the poor: and

it appears certain that the distribution must have varied in different churches, according to the amount of sums contributed, and the number of applications for relief.

One fact has been preserved, that the management of the common fund was at the discretion of the bishop, who appointed the presbyters and deacons to their offices, as well as paid to them their stipends. The primitive and apostolic custom was preserved of the money being actually distributed to the poor by the hands of the deacons: but the sums allotted to the respective claimants were settled by the bishop, who was probably assisted in his work by the presbyters of his church. The bishop himself received his maintenance from the common fund; and we know that in later times a fourth part of the whole was considered to belong to him. But when this fourfold division existed, one of the parts was appropriated to the repairs of the church; an expense which was not required, or in a very small degree, for at least the two first centuries, when the Christians had not been permitted to erect churches, but were in the habit of meeting in private houses. A small sum must always have been necessary for the purposes of congregational worship, even when thus simply and privately conducted: but we may conclude that the remainder of the common stock, after this moderate deduction, was divided between the bishop, his clergy, and the poor: although it does not follow that the proportions were equal, or always invariable. Natalius, as we have seen, a sectarian bishop, residing in Rome, received 120 denarii for a month's salary; and though we cannot suppose that the fund which was raised by a single sect, and that apparently

not a large one, was equal to that which belonged to the Church, yet it is not improbable that the supporters of Natalius would be anxious to secure to him as good an income as that which was enjoyed by the bishops of the Church. If this was the case, it follows that the bishops, at the end of the second century, received a payment which equalled £70 a year: or if it be thought that this cannot be taken as an average of the incomes of all bishops, which were certain to vary in different churches, we may at least assume that the income of the Bishop of Rome was not less than the amount which has now been mentioned.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain the sum allotted for the maintenance of a presbyter at the same period. We have an account of there being forty-six presbyters in the Roman church, about fifty years after the time which we are now considering; and it has been assumed, as in later times, that a third part of the whole common stock was allotted to the clergy. But the presbyters were not the only persons to share this third portion. There were at the same period, seven deacons, as many sub-deacons, and forty-two assistants; which seems to show that the number *seven* had been retained out of respect to apostolic precedent, though the persons who actually officiated as deacons were as many as fifty-six. There were other persons connected with the church, who bore the name of Exorcists, readers, and door-keepers, amounting in all to fifty-two; so that if the forty-six presbyters, as being superior in rank, received half of the third portion set apart for the clergy, each of them would have had an income of not so much as twenty shillings a year, which seems impossible to be true; and we

must conclude that the threefold division did not exist at this early period; or, which was perhaps the case, that though the persons maintained out of the common fund might be divided into three classes, the bishop, his clergy, and the poor, the portions allotted to the maintenance of each were by no means equal.

It must have been about the year 196, or 197, that Theodotus was excommunicated by Victor; and in the following year the bishop gave a still greater proof of decision in a case which was much more doubtful. The dispute about Easter had never been settled since the time that Polycarp and Anicetus met at Rome in 158. The controversy was now becoming still more serious. As before, the bishops of Asia Minor adhered to the Jewish method of computing the Paschal festival, and Victor was as tenacious in following the customs of his predecessors. It cannot be denied that a large majority of the Christian world agreed with the Bishop of Rome. It was now becoming usual for the bishops and clergy of neighbouring churches to meet together in councils; which shows at once that Christianity was more firmly settled, and that at this period it was receiving less molestation from the heathen. Councils had been convened, a few years before, in some parts of Asia, to discuss the pretensions of Montanus and his followers; but the question about Easter was the cause of their being held much more generally while Victor was Bishop of Rome.

The person who took the lead on the opposite side was Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, who was now sixty years old, and might therefore have been acquainted with Polycarp, and other persons who had

seen the apostles. Having corresponded with Victor and other bishops upon the subject, he followed the suggestion of the Bishop of Rome, and called a meeting of the heads of those churches which agreed with himself. The result of their deliberations was sent in a letter to Rome; and at the same time councils were held in several other parts of the empire. We learn from the history of these proceedings, that the apostolic churches, as they were called, that is, those which had been founded by the apostles, were looked up to by the rest with particular respect. It is also plain that a kind of metropolitan character was given to some of the sees, either from this distinction of their foundation, or from the size and political importance of the city. Thus the Bishops of Tyre and Ptolemais, as well as several others, attended the council, which was held at Cæsarea, in Palestine. The churches of Pontus met in the city of which Palmas was bishop; this precedence being given him on account of his age. Corinth took the lead in the Peloponnesus; and the churches of Gaul were assembled in a council under Irenæus, bishop of Lyons.

The decision of all these councils was perfectly unanimous. The three great sees of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria, also agreed with Rome; and Victor wished to persuade all the churches to join in excluding those of Asia Minor from their communion. The uncharitable proposal met with no support, and the Bishop of Rome stood alone in putting his advice into practice. He prohibited the churches which agreed in opinion with Polycrates from holding communion with his own; so that any Christian who came from those parts to Rome, would find himself excluded

from partaking of the Lord's Supper with the Roman Christians. Several bishops remonstrated with Victor upon the violence of his conduct; and among the rest, Irenæus wrote a letter, in which he rebuked him with some sharpness. There is reason to believe that this exhortation to peace produced a good effect; and though the question still continued to be agitated, the unity of the Catholic Church was not broken. Each particular church acted as it pleased in matters which were not essential; and though the custom of observing a fast before Easter was universal, there were great differences as to the number of days which it lasted, and the food which was not to be eaten. A bishop had power to enjoin a general fast to be kept by his own church, on any particular occasion; and as early as the second century, Wednesdays and Fridays were considered days of abstinence. Sunday was never kept as a fast—this rule being observed even by the Montanists; and the same was the case with the days between Easter and Pentecost. But with a few such exceptions, every church was at liberty to regulate these matters for itself; and individual members of the same communion often fasted on different days.

It has been thought (though the suspicion is perhaps uncharitable) that the quarrel between Victor and the Asiatic churches led him to show an inclination towards favouring the Montanists. It is certain that he was once on the point of doing so; and the Montanists, it will be remembered, were most numerous in Asia Minor. Their opinions had, however, been gaining ground in other parts of the world, though the bishops and men of learning were almost always opposed to them. Several works were published

against them, and councils were held from time to time which condemned their tenets. Serapion, bishop of Antioch, not only presided at one of these councils, but he wrote against the Montanists; and we may form some idea of the progress of Christianity, when we find bishops assembling in the remote country of Thrace, and passing a similar sentence.

There is no evidence of Montanism having made much progress in Rome. Soter, who preceded Eleutherus as bishop, is said to have written against it; and, a few years later, it was attacked in a special treatise by Caius, who was a presbyter in that church, and who also published against the heresy of Artemon. It is therefore difficult to account for Victor having been once on the point of admitting the Montanists to communion with his church; though we may remember, as was observed above, that the Montanists were not considered heretical in any articles of faith; and it was rather a severe act of discipline that they were excluded by the orthodox party from communion. This may, perhaps, have been owing to their setting up congregations and ministers of their own, which brought them under the character of schismatics, though not of heretics; and it might be thought an instance of charitable lenity in Victor, if he had chosen to pass over this irregularity, and to admit the Montanists to hold communion with members of his own church.

This, however, is at variance with what we have seen of his conduct in two other instances, when he passed a sentence of exclusion against Theodotus and the Christians in the neighbourhood of Ephesus. We might argue from these cases that he was inclined to visit with severity any variation from his own opinions;

and hence it has been concluded that he relaxed in favour of the Montanists, not from any predilection for their peculiar opinions, but that he might mortify the bishops who adhered to Polycrates, and who had tried in vain to put a stop to the progress of Montanism.

He had written letters, announcing his intention, but a man named Praxeas, who came to Rome from Asia, and had himself been formerly a Montanist, persuaded him to take a contrary course. Praxeas became, shortly after, the leader of a much worse heresy than that of Montanus. He denied that the Son and the Holy Ghost were distinct Persons, and taught that they were merely modes or operations of the one Being called God. Thus, if God was spoken of as having redeemed the world from sin, he was said to be revealed in the Scriptures as Christ the Son of God; or if he was spoken of as sanctifying our hearts, he was said to be revealed under the character of the Holy Ghost.

This doctrine was not altogether new when it was promulgated by Praxeas. Justin Martyr was aware that some persons had thus confounded the three Persons of the Trinity together; and the Jews, who took any notice of Christianity, were inclined to give this interpretation to the expressions of Scripture, but Praxeas is the first Christian whose name has been preserved as having held such a notion. Not many years later he found a powerful opponent in Tertullian, who was a presbyter in the Church of Carthage, and one of the most learned men, as well as one of the most voluminous writers, at the end of the second, and beginning of the third, century.

The most interesting event in his history is his

embracing the opinions of Montanus, which he carried to their utmost length of rigid and uncompromising severity. This, however, is not considered to lessen the value of his authority on the great points of doctrine which were debated in his day. His works, together with that of Irenæus, afford the fullest information concerning the absurdities of the Gnostics; and his treatise against Praxeas is a proof of the opinion which was then held by the Church at large concerning the three Persons of the Trinity. He exposes the unfairness of Praxeas in claiming for himself and his party the exclusive merit of worshipping one God; and he shows that his doctrine, if pushed to its consequences, must lead us to believe that the Father himself was born of the Virgin Mary, that he suffered on the cross, and was himself Jesus Christ. Praxeas could easily have removed this objection to his doctrine, if he had said that he believed Jesus Christ to be a mere human being; but he maintained no such notion; it was his full conviction of Jesus Christ being divine which led him to confound the Son of God with the Father; and the controversy appears at this time to have been confined principally to the second Person of the Trinity. Praxeas, perhaps, did not admit in express terms, that he believed God the Father to have suffered on the cross; but his party never refuted the arguments of Tertullian on this point, and the name of *Patripassians* has, consequently, been always applied to those who take the same view of the Trinity with Praxeas.

The interesting events which we have been lately considering, can hardly fail to be taken as indications that the Church was now enjoying a season of repose.

Such appears to have been in some measure the case from the accession of Commodus, in 180, to the end of the century. It was this which allowed the Christians to meet so frequently, and openly to discuss their domestic concerns; and though the temporary calm was in some places interrupted partially by storms, there is no proof of Severus having hitherto interfered to cause them any molestation. It has been said by some persons, that he was the governor of the province who conducted the persecution at Lyons, in 177; but the fact is very uncertain. He undoubtedly held that station a few years later, and his son, Caracalla, was born at Lyons, in 188; but since he allowed the child to have a Christian for a nurse, and a person of that religion, named Proculus, who had performed a cure upon himself, was retained in his household till he died, we can hardly think that he could have any strong prejudices against the sect. Tertullian says expressly, that in the former part of his reign, he had been favourable to the Christians, and had saved many of them from persecution; and it was not till the year 202 that he adopted a contrary conduct.

We are thus arrived at the end of the second century; and we might pause for awhile to consider the progress which Christianity had made, if the events which have been already related had not acquainted us incidentally with the countries into which it had penetrated. From Persia, and even India, on the east,—to Spain and Britain on the west,—the Gospel had been steadily making its way. The Church of Carthage, though founded later than that of Alexandria, was now rising into importance on the northern coast of Africa; and even in the interior of that continent, there were

already communities of Christians. Without repeating what has been said concerning Gaul and Germany, we may add to our list the less civilised and unexplored countries of Dacia, Sarmatia, and Scythia; so that the remark of Tertullian was strictly and literally true, that the Gospel had penetrated into islands and distant regions which had not as yet submitted to the Romans.

The unity of the Church had not as yet been broken by any open secession from the whole body of Christians. This body, though consisting of many members, and dispersed throughout the world, was yet one and undivided, if we view it with reference to doctrines, or to the form of ecclesiastical government. Every church had its own spiritual head or bishop, and was independent of every other church with respect to its own internal regulations and laws. There was, however, a connection, more or less intimate, between neighbouring churches, which was a consequence, in some degree, of the geographical or civil divisions of the empire. Thus the churches of one province, such as Achaia, Egypt, Cappadocia, &c., formed a kind of union; and the bishop of the capital, particularly if his see happened to be of apostolic foundation, acquired a precedence in rank and dignity over the rest. This superiority was often increased by the bishop of the capital (who was called in later times the metropolitan) having actually planted the Church in smaller and more distant places, so that the mother-church, as it might literally be termed, continued to feel a natural and parental regard for the churches planted by itself. These churches, however, were wholly independent in matters of internal jurisdiction; though it was likely that there would be a resemblance, in points even of

slight importance, between churches of the same province.

This resemblance became more constant when the custom arose, of which we have already seen instances in the second century, of the churches of the same province meeting together in council. The election of a bishop, when any of the sees became vacant, gave occasion to one of these meetings. The election was made by the clergy of that particular church, who submitted the name of one of their own body to the approbation of the lay members; and if their selection was approved by these persons, as well as by the other bishops who were convened for the purpose, the bishop elected was appointed to his office by the assembled bishops laying their hands upon him; but in most provinces, the bishop of the capital (who afterwards bore the name of primate) exercised the privilege of consecrating (as we shall now term it) the new bishop: the election was therefore generally made in his presence; or, if he was absent, it received subsequently his approval and confirmation. The primates or metropolitans were themselves, in most cases, consecrated by the bishop of some particular see, who claimed this privilege; as in the instance of the Bishop of Rome, who was consecrated from very early times by the Bishop of Ostia; but when the bishopric of Ostia became vacant, and a successor was appointed in the manner mentioned above, the Bishop of Rome, as metropolitan of the Roman diocese, confirmed the election, and the same custom prevailed in every other province.

The term *diocese*, as has been observed in a former chapter, was of later introduction, and was borrowed

by the Church from the civil constitution of the empire. At the period which we are now considering, a bishop's diocese was more analogous to a modern parish, and such was the name which it bore. Each parish had therefore its own bishop, with a varying number of presbyters, or priests, and deacons; and the system already described as prevailing in each province, was likely to ensure uniformity between the churches within that district. But early in the second century we find proofs of churches, not only in neighbouring provinces, but in distant parts of the world, taking pains to preserve the bond of unity, and to show themselves members of one common head.

The term *Catholic*, or *Universal*, as applied to the Church of Christ, may be traced almost to the time of the apostles; and every person who believed in Christ was a member of the Catholic Church, because he was a member of some particular or national Church, which was in communion with the whole body. We have already seen instances of this communion being preserved or interrupted between the members of different churches: and the anxiety of the early Christians upon this point is shown by the custom of bishops, as soon as they were elected, sending a notification of their appointment to distant churches. When this official announcement had been made, any person who was the bearer of a letter from his bishop was admitted to communion with the Church in any country which he visited: but these *communicatory letters*, as they were called, were certain to be denied him if any suspicion was entertained as to the soundness of his faith.

It may be supposed that these precautions were very effectual in preserving the unity of the Church, and

in preventing diversity of doctrine. The result was, as has been already observed, that up to the end of the second century no schism had taken place among the great body of believers. There was no church in any country which was not in communion with the Catholic, or Universal, Church, and there was no church in any particular town or province which was divided into sects and parties. The followers of Montanus were frequent in many of the Asiatic churches; but they do not appear, for the present at least, to have withdrawn from the communion of their brethren. One exception should perhaps be made, which was furnished by the Church of Rome, where the followers of Theodotus and Artemon appear to have continued for some years in a state of schismatic separation from the rest of their brethren. But even these schismatics adopted the same form of church government which had existed in the Roman church from the beginning. There was no community of Christians in any country which presented a variation in this respect; the agreement in fundamental and essential doctrines was equally uniform. The only difference was in ecclesiastical customs, which related chiefly to the times and modes of certain religious observances. Every church was at liberty to regulate these matters according to its own discretion; and the dispute about the Paschal festival would not have been carried to such a height but from the inconvenience which was felt when Christians of one country visited those of another, and found themselves celebrating this great festival according to a different calculation of time; so that the inhabitants of the place would be feasting and rejoicing, while they themselves were fasting. This led, as we have seen, to occasional

interruptions of good-will between different churches; but it enables us to establish the fact, that each church exercised the right of making laws for its own members, without admitting the interference of other churches.

It is stated, on the authority of Tertullian, that the army was filled with Christians; that they held offices in provincial towns, transacted business in the forum, had seats in the senate, and lived even in the palace of the emperor. Their numbers were become so great, that the public business could not have been carried on, if they had not been admitted to such stations. Their writers were not only equal, but, as far as we know, snperior, in number and talent, to the heathen. There were, in fact, very few of the philosophers who defended their religion by argument: or if they ventured to attack Christianity, it was by confounding it with Gnosticism. The persons most interested in checking its progress were the priests, and all those persons who gained a livelihood by the service of the heathen temples: but they would have failed in raising a popular cry against the Christians, if they had merely had to depend upon the attachment of the people to the national religion. There is good reason to think that the sincere believers in the follies and fables of paganism were extremely few. Many of the philosophers openly laughed at the superstitions of Greece and Rome; and their hatred of the Christians was much more owing to the exposure which was made of their own vicious and profligate lives, than to any fear which they entertained of one religion being supplanted by another.

It was a favourite scheme with some of the opponents of Christianity, to set up certain fictitious and imaginary characters as rivals to our Saviour and his

apostles, and to invest their history with the same marvellous circumstances which are recorded in the New Testament of the first preachers of the Gospel. One of these fabulous personages was Apollonius of Tyana, who was represented as a contemporary of the apostles. It may be doubted whether he had ever any real existence; but if a philosopher of that name was living in the first century, it is unquestionable that a multiplicity of the most incredible falsehoods was circulated concerning him. A life of him is still extant, which was written by Philostratus, at the request of Julia Severa, the wife of the present emperor. It is scarcely possible to read this work without perceiving that the miracles of Jesus Christ were intended to be imitated and surpassed. The writer of it had evidently read the Gospel history, or was familiar with the fact of miracles having been worked by the Founder of Christianity. We have thus a strong confirmation of one of the great evidences of our religion. The rapidity of its progress admits of an easy explanation, if we believe it to have been attended with the working of miracles: and it is plain that the reality of them was not denied at the end of the second century. It was not asserted that Jesus had worked no miracles; but it was attempted to be proved that Apollonius had worked greater. The name of this impostor was often employed, in the two following centuries, with a view to weaken the effect which was produced by the evidence of miracles. On the same principle, the lives of their philosophers were filled with circumstances of a preternatural character. Pythagoras was reported to have worked the most stupendous miracles, and to have imparted the same power to his disciples and successors;

all which may be taken as a proof that the philosophers found it hopeless to deny the truth of what was recorded in the New Testament. The fact of the reigning empress encouraging Philostratus to write the life of Apollonius, may perhaps lead us to think that the great success of Christianity had occupied her attention; and if we might draw the same inference as to the emperor, we might account in some measure for his subsequent conduct towards the Christians.

The priests and the philosophers combined in representing them as traitors to the emperor and the state, and the cause of every national calamity. A degraded and demoralised people eagerly seconded the cry which was raised for the blood of the Christians; and magistrates were too happy to gain credit to themselves for avenging the honour of the gods, asserting the majesty of the emperor, and gratifying the passions of the people. Such was the warfare which the great enemy of mankind had planned to carry on against the Gospel. He was allowed for a time to exert his power. The history of the last century has exhibited the Church under suffering: in the latter part of it her enemies were less active, and persecution for a time abated; but the flames were only smothered, and not extinguished. The same causes of hatred still existed, and nothing but an opportunity was wanted to renew in all their horrors those scenes of cruelty and bloodshed which had already given to thousands of Christ's faithful servants their crown of martyrdom.

CHAPTER XIII.

Septimius Severus.—Persecution in the Provinces and the Capital.—Caracalla.—Tranquillity of the Church.—Origen.—Elagabalus.

THE first nine years of the reign of Septimius Severus passed away without the Christians being exposed to any general or systematic persecution. During the greater part of that period, the emperor was absent from Rome. He had not freed himself from his last rival, Albinus, till 197 or 198, and in the following year he set out, with his two sons, to make war with the Parthians. In the year 202 he returned into Syria, and visited Alexandria, in which city he is said to have been particularly curious in prying into the Egyptian mysteries. The latter fact is mentioned as showing that Severus, though accustomed so long to the active duties of a military life, paid some attention to matters of religion: but still we are at a loss to account for the motives which led him, in the present year, to issue a decree more definite in its terms, and more intolerant, than any which had hitherto appeared.

It is not improbable that this was owing, in some measure, to the increasing unwillingness of the Christians to serve in the army. Some of them, as we have seen, had objections, on religious grounds, to all military service: and as they grew bolder by their numbers and the temporary cessation of persecution, they would

more openly show their dislike to the religious ceremonies which soldiers were required to attend. A warlike emperor, like Severus, who owed his throne to military activity, and who was constantly engaged in wars, was likely to have this conduct of the Christians pointed out to him, if he did not feel the effects of it in the diminution of his forces. The very weakness of the empire, which was beginning to show its inability to resist barbarian incursions, was likely to increase the prejudices against the Christians. Not only were they represented as indifferent to the glory, and even the safety, of their country, but if the ravages of the barbarians on the borders were taken as a sign of the anger and displeasure of the gods, it was easy to propagate the notion that these deities were displeased at seeing their worship supplanted by a new religion. Thus the national pride, as well as the national superstition, were interested in suppressing Christianity; and if such motives did not weigh with Septimius personally, we may be sure that they were felt by many of those about him, who excited him to issue the present edict. He strictly prohibited all persons from embracing the religion of the Jews or of the Christians; and though the actual letter of the edict has not been preserved, it is plain that death was the penalty of its being violated; and we shall also meet with evidence that the property of the sufferers became confiscated to the state.

From one end of the empire to the other, there was an immediate readiness to execute this iniquitous law; but nowhere was more cruelty displayed than in Alexandria, which had so lately been visited in person by the emperor.

It is now that we first become acquainted with Origen, who was by far the most learned man in the former half of the third century. His father, Leonides, was one of the first victims in the present persecution; and while he was in prison, his son wrote him a letter in these few expressive words: "Beware that you do not change your mind on our account." Origen was only in his seventeenth year when he was thus left fatherless, with a mother and six brothers; and to add to their misfortunes, the whole of their property was seized, as forfeited to the emperor. Leonides had given his son the best possible education. The whole range of literature and science had been exhausted by him at this early age, and, what was of far higher importance, he had from the first been deeply impressed with the doctrines of the Gospel, and had the advantage of attending the school when Clement was lecturing there. His ardour led him into great personal danger when the persecution broke out; and if it had not been for his mother, he would probably have died.

The following year saw a new governor of Egypt, in the person of Aquila, who equalled his predecessor, Lætus, in tormenting the Christians. Clement was forced to save his life by flight, at which time he appears to have taken refuge in Cappadocia; and the bishop, Demetrius, committed the care of the Alexandrian School to Origen. In the midst of the great personal dangers to which he was exposed, he was still able to continue giving instruction: and that he might maintain himself and his family without asking for assistance, he sold all his books connected with heathen literature, and lived upon the money which they produced, at the rate of four oboli a day.

In the meantime, persecution was raging with equal fury through the whole of Christian Africa. The history of it acquaints us with the interesting fact, that the Gospel had reached even the remote country to the south of Egypt, called the Thebaid. But the principal Church of Africa, next to that of Alexandria, was at Carthage. The Roman governors of that part of the country had for some years been indulgent to the Christians, and even assisted them in evading the laws which were intended for their annoyance; but Saturninus, who now held the office, began the custom of putting Christians to death; and it was, perhaps, not unnatural, that a loss of sight, which came upon him shortly after, should be considered as a visitation from Heaven. His successors in the province followed the iniquitous example; and one of them, named Scapula, was addressed in a special treatise by Tertullian, which is still extant. We have also an Apology from the same author, that was perhaps published in 205, which proves the sufferings of the Christians, at that period, to have been exceedingly severe.

If the advice of Tertullian, who was at this time a Montanist, had been extensively followed, the Christians would have materially contributed to the aggravation of their own sufferings. It was laid down as a principle by these rigid enthusiasts, that it was not lawful to seek safety by flight. Though our Saviour had expressly told his disciples, if they were persecuted in one city to flee to another, the Montanists denounced such conduct as cowardly, and unworthy of a Christian. Tertullian even wrote a special treatise upon the subject; and we may conclude that he did not shrink from personal danger during this trying time, though he

escaped with his life, and employed his pen in attempting to check the cruelty of the heathen. It is plain that these severe notions of Christian duty did not generally prevail. Clement, as we have seen, set the example of seeking safety by flight; and though Origen continued in Alexandria, and often courted martyrdom, yet he has left his opinion in his writings, that a Christian was not bound to expose himself to the certainty of death. There is evidence that some persons did not scruple to purchase their safety by payment of a sum of money; and even whole churches or communities of Christians appear to have submitted to a kind of annual tribute, which obtained for them this exemption from persecution. The increasing numbers of the Christians would make this a source of considerable wealth to rapacious governors; and it becomes a true remark, that the lives of Christians were spared, and that, consequently, their religion was continued, because it was found more profitable to tax them than to destroy them.

The Christians of Antioch were still under the bishopric of Serapion, who held it from 189 to 211. He addressed a work to Domninus, who, through fear of personal danger, went over to the Jewish religion, which seems to show, though Severus had forbidden both Jews and Christians to make proselytes, that the Christians were in the worse condition of the two. Asclepiades, who ultimately succeeded Serapion, had himself been a sufferer in those scenes of cruelty.

The remote province of Cappadocia also contained many Christians. Alexander, bishop of Flavias, whose name will occur frequently hereafter, was thrown into prison; and Claudius Herminianus, the governor, was

excited to still greater violence, by finding his own wife a convert to the religion which he was persecuting. His exertions were checked by his being seized with a loathsome disorder, which he concealed for some time, that the Christians might not look upon it as a demonstration from Heaven in their favour: but before he died he had almost himself adopted their religion.

Little is known of the events which took place, during this period, at Rome. When the emperor issued his decree, he sent an order to the capital, that persons attending illegal meetings were to be brought before the prefect of the city. It was easy to apply this order to the meetings of the Christians for religious worship; and the emperor returned to Rome, in 203, to see it put in execution. The bishopric was at this time held by Zephyrinus, who had succeeded Victor in 201. He had, therefore, but a short time for the peaceful government of his flock: and we cannot tell whether it was at this or a later period, that he exerted himself to save the members of his church from the contagion of heresy. He appears to have been well aware of the importance of the unity of faith. Praxeas, who had been in personal communication with Victor on the subject of the Montanists, was put out of communion with the church of Zephyrinus, for his own erroneous tenets. He then recanted his errors, and wrote a book expressive of his penitence: but subsequently he returned to his former opinions; and we shall see that he obtained many followers. The heresy of Theodotus was also warmly opposed by Zephyrinus, and he succeeded in bringing back Natalius to the Church, who, as we have seen, had accepted the office of bishop among the followers of Theodotus.

We know nothing of the personal history of Zephyrinus during the persecution: but the emperor's residence in Rome gave rise to many public opportunities for the Christians to be treated with severity. Upon his return, in 203, he celebrated a triumph for his victory in the East, and the unwillingness of the Christians to join in such solemnities always exposed them to insults and indignities. At the same time, he married his eldest son, Caracalla, to the daughter of Plautianus; and the latter person has been charged with taking an active part in harassing the Christians. In 204, the secular games were exhibited, which ought to have come round only once in a century; but the emperor chose to celebrate them before the proper time; and we may be sure that Christian blood flowed freely in the amphitheatre on this occasion.

So terrible was the cruelty exercised at this time by the heathen, that Christian writers began confidently to predict that the end of the world was at hand. The notion had been lately gaining ground, that this event was to be preceded by the coming of Antichrist: though the term Antichrist seems rather to have been applied to all heretics and opposers of the truth, than to any particular individual. The Roman Government was naturally looked upon as Antichrist: and the Montanists, who had from the first assumed the spirit of prophecy, indulged in many predictions that the empire of Rome would shortly be dissolved. The notion appears to have been entertained by persons who did not otherwise agree with Montanus; and we are perhaps to add this to the other causes which prejudiced the Roman Government against the Christians.

The weak condition of the empire, with respect to

its defence against the barbarians, has already been mentioned; and predictions concerning its downfall were likely to increase the alarm which was beginning to be generally felt. It would be easy to represent the Christians as wishing the completion of the event which they predicted; and when the laws of the empire, as well as the whole power of the state, were directed against Christianity, it was not surprising if some Christians ventured to express a hope that the power of their oppressors was shortly coming to an end. It was not, however, to be expected that they would be allowed to circulate such opinions with impunity; and while the Christians brought upon themselves, by such predictions, the indignation of the heathen, we may conclude that the fullest measure of their violence would fall upon the Montanists.

The coming of Antichrist was expressly asserted by a writer named Jude, who published a commentary upon Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks. Other writers also came forward, at this period, in defence of Christianity, though the mere profession of it was attended with danger. A dialogue, entitled "Octavius," is still extant, which was written by Minucius Felix, a lawyer of eminence at Rome, which throws considerable light upon the treatment of the Christians, and is, at the same time, a powerful exposure of the absurdities of paganism.

If the emperor took an active part in exciting his subjects to injustice and cruelty, he probably ceased to do so after the year 208, when he set out with his two sons, to complete the conquest of Britain; and the war detained him in that island till the beginning of 211, when he died at York.

We should wish to have some materials for tracing the effect of the persecution in our own island, where Christianity, as has been already stated, had made considerable progress, and even in remote parts of it; but we know nothing beyond the fact of the emperor being here in person, when he would be able to see that the terms of his edict were complied with. We may hope, however, that he was satisfied with having watched the execution of it for the last six years: and, in addition to the usual anxiety of a military expedition in an imperfectly civilised country, we know that these last years of his life were filled with continued uneasiness, occasioned by the unnatural quarrels of his sons. There is no authentic tradition of the Christians in Britain being exposed to any peculiar trials during the reign of Severus. On the contrary, all evidence points to the earliest martyrdom having taken place at the end of the third century: and if the British Church escaped at the present period, we may hope that the storm was beginning to subside in other parts of the world.

The painful and perplexing part in the history of this emperor is, that he once protected the Christians, and afterwards exposed them to the most savage barbarities: and so long as his edict continued in force, it was in the power of any magistrate to torture and destroy them.

It was perhaps fortunate for the Christians that Caracalla and Geta, the two sons of Severus, were jealous of each other, and that Caracalla, after murdering his brother, that he might have the empire to himself, was a tyrant to all his subjects. Such conduct, as was the case in the reign of Commodus, drew off the attention of the heathen from harassing the Christians: and Ca-

racalla was much too insensible to any feelings of religion, to give them annoyance on that account. It has been mentioned, that he had a Christian nurse in his childhood, so that he may have known something of the manners and opinions of the Christians: but all such impressions were effaced long before he mounted the throne; and it must have been some motive of policy, rather than any principle of justice or kindness, which caused him to begin his reign by allowing all exiles to return to their homes, whatever may have been the nature of the accusation against them. We may even suppose, when we consider his conduct to his father during his latter years, that the mere pleasure of counteracting his orders might have led him to show favour to the Christians, or at least to those persons who had been sent into banishment by his father.

An edict like this, though not specially intended to relieve the Christians, could hardly fail to benefit some of their body; and there are several indications that other evils, beside those of exile, were beginning now to press less heavily upon them. Alexander, the Cappadocian bishop, who had been in prison since the year 204, recovered his liberty; and Clement of Alexandria, who had taken refuge in that country, was able to pay a visit to the Christians of Antioch. The state of things must have been still more peaceful in 214, when Alexander undertook a journey to Jerusalem. from no other motives than those of devotion, and to survey the scenes of our Saviour's sufferings. The visit turned out of much more importance to himself than he had expected. The Bishop of Jerusalem, whose name was Narcissus, was now 116 years old, having been elected to the see in 196. His life was one of

particular strictness and severity; but this did not hinder him from being attacked by such atrocious calumnies, the truth of which was most solemnly attested, that he thought it best to withdraw, and was not heard of for some years. The falsehood of these charges was afterwards fully established; and when the vacant see had been filled successively by three bishops, Narcissus suddenly reappeared. He was again elected to discharge his episcopal duties; but his great age rendering him almost incapable, it was decided that a coadjutor should be appointed.

It was just at this juncture that Alexander arrived from Cappadocia: and though the translation of a bishop from one see to another was as unprecedented as the case of a bishop having an assistant, both these objections were disregarded in the person of Alexander. He was persuaded not to leave Jerusalem: and Narcissus dying shortly after, he continued the sole bishop of that see, which he filled to the middle of the century. In many respects, he was one of the leading characters of his time: and the library which he founded at Jerusalem was of great service to Eusebius, when he was writing his history.

The continuation of Origen's history also shows that persecution had subsided at Alexandria. He is known to have visited Rome while Zephyrinus was bishop, that is, before the year 218: and he took the journey merely for the love of seeing a church of such great antiquity. He probably went thither in 213; and upon his return home, he found the number of his hearers so greatly increased, that he was obliged to commit the younger part of them to Heraclas, who had now attended him for ten years; his own time being

devoted to the instruction of those who were further advanced, and to studying the Scriptures. Many of the heathen attended his lectures, and were often drawn on insensibly to embrace the Gospel, while they thought that they were only acquiring human wisdom. But the fame of Origen was not confined to Alexandria. An Arabian prince sent letters to the bishop, and to the Roman governor of Egypt, requesting that Origen might come and instruct him in Christianity. The request was granted; which seems to prove demonstrably, that the government no longer molested the Christians: and we cannot doubt that a teacher like Origen produced a great impression in the country which he visited; but it is plain that Christianity was not then introduced into Arabia for the first time. It is possible that this may have been the same country which had been visited by Pantænus more than twenty years before: and in the course of the present century we meet with several Arabian churches, with bishops at their head. One of them, named Hippolytus, who lived about this period, was a man of great learning, and the author of various works, a few only of which have come down to our day.

There appear, however, to have been more than one writer of this name, and their works may have been confounded, or ascribed to the wrong person. One of them is thought to have been bishop of the city named Portus, at the mouth of the Tiber; and it has been conjectured that the Arabian Hippolytus quitted his own country, and settled in Italy. It is, however, more probable that the occupiers of the two sees were different persons, each of them bearing the name of Hippolytus; and the works which are extant have

generally been ascribed to the one who was bishop in Arabia, and who had the advantage of conversing with Origen during his visit to that country.

If Origen returned to Alexandria before 215, he was driven from it in that year by the cruelty of Caracalla. The Christians, however, were not at this time the special objects of his vengeance. The inhabitants in general had provoked him by reflecting upon his conduct, and particularly by allusions to the murder of his brother. The emperor went in person to Alexandria, and presided at an extensive massacre of the citizens. If he singled out all who had been most loud in denouncing him for his crimes, the Christians could hardly have escaped; but religion had nothing to do with his atrocities: and we are informed that so little did he care about religious distinctions, that the temples of the gods were openly pillaged; so that the Christians, who at this time had probably no public places of worship, but met in each other's houses, were perhaps more likely to escape than their heathen neighbours. The pillage of the temples may have been merely a measure of rapacity on the part of the emperor, who wished to get possession of their treasures: and we may be sure that the Christians, who had had but a short respite from the recent confiscations, would not be in danger of attracting much notice from the emperor, if his object was plunder. We know, however, that the Christians did not altogether escape: or at least they thought it prudent to retire before the storm.

Origen, and perhaps many of his Christian hearers, sought refuge in flight. He took the opportunity of visiting Palestine; and Theoctistus, bishop of Cæsarea, was so struck with his learning and his knowledge of

the Scriptures, that he allowed him to expound them publicly in the church, though at present he was only a layman. We may form some idea of the strictness of ecclesiastical discipline in those days, when we find the Bishop of Alexandria remonstrating with his brother of Cæsarea for his irregularity in giving this permission. The Alexandrian church did not allow a layman to expound the Scriptures to the congregation; but such restrictions were not universal; and in the present instance, Theoctistus quoted several precedents which authorised him in engaging the services of Origen. Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, took the same view upon this question; and we may conclude that such was the custom in the churches of Palestine; but Demetrius was not satisfied, and Origen having been recalled by him to continue his lectures in the school, returned to Alexandria about the year 217, or perhaps later.

It was either shortly after his return, or while he was still residing at Cæsarea, that he was sent for to Antioch, upon rather an extraordinary occasion. The disgraceful reign of Caracalla came to a close in 217; and Macrinus, his successor, who had caused him to be put to death, met with a similar fate in the following year. The empire was then given to Elagabalus, who, before his elevation, had been priest of the Sun, at Emessa, in Phœnicia. Notwithstanding this sacred office, he is represented as a monster of vice and sensuality; but his mother's sister, Mammæa, bore a very different character. Though she is described as being fond of money, both heathen and Christian writers have joined in giving her credit for being impressed with feelings of religion. Some have even

supposed her to have been a Christian; but the supposition does not rest on sufficient grounds. She may perhaps have seen the absurdity of many of the heathen superstitions, and her long residence in Syria was likely to make her acquainted with some of the tenets of the Christians. She had even heard of the fame of Origen; and on one occasion, while she was at Antioch, she sent an escort of soldiers, requesting him to come and discourse with her on matters of religion. It seems most probable that this took place in the first year of her nephew's succession to the empire, when he is known to have passed through Antioch, in company with his mother and her sister.

Origen complied with the invitation, and met Mammæa at Antioch, but we know nothing of the result of the interview. It certainly produced no effect upon the emperor, who, upon his arrival at Rome, in 219, attempted to establish the worship of the Sun, to the exclusion of every other deity. All the most sacred symbols of superstition which the city possessed were ordered to be removed to the temple of the Sun: and the heathen writer who gives us this account states expressly that the Jewish, Samaritan, and Christian religions were among the number of those which were thus to be suppressed. Christianity, however, was not treated worse than the numerous forms of heathenism. In some respects it was, perhaps, benefited by this mad attempts of Elagabalus. It was no new thing for Christians to perform their acts of worship in secret; and one of the charges brought against them was, that they had no temples or altars. It was, therefore, easy for them to evade the emperor's command without being observed; but if the heathen

wished to worship any other deity beside the Sun, they could hardly do so without some public act which exposed them to detection. If Elagabalus had continued longer on the throne, he might, without intending it, materially have aided the triumph of Christianity. Many objects of pagan devotion would have been forgotten, while Christianity was still making its way in secret. But even the degenerate Romans could not long endure the absurdities and crimes of such an emperor; and after a reign of not quite four years, he was murdered in 222, being then not more than eighteen years old.

CHAPTER XIV.

Alexander Severus.—Erection of Churches.—The later Platonists, at Alexandria.—Origen; his Ordination, and Residence at Cæsarea; his Works.—Montanists.—Council of Iconium.—Persecution under Maximinus.—Councils.—Opinions concerning the soul.—Reign of Philip.

NO prince had as yet been called to the empire under fairer promises of happiness to himself and to his subjects than Alexander Severus, who succeeded his cousin, Elagabalus. His mother, Mammæa, whose regard for religion has been already mentioned, had taken great pains with his education. It has been said of both of them, that they were Christians; but the remark made above, concerning the mother, must be extended also to the son. He certainly was not a Christian, though his early impressions had led him to think favourably of those who professed that religion. When he mounted the throne, he was only sixteen years of age; so that we must not think much of his having an image of Christ in his own chamber, and praying to it every morning. The fact is stated by a heathen historian; but it is added, that he offered the same worship, not only to Abraham, but to Orpheus, and the impostor Apollonius of Tyana. With a mind apparently so open to feelings of religion, it is impossible that he would have listened to any proposals for harassing the Christians.

In some points he even took their customs as a model for himself. He had observed that they never filled up any ecclesiastical appointment without publishing the names of the candidates, and consulting the people as to their fitness; and accordingly, he ordered the same to be done in appointing the governors of provinces, or any public officer. He was also much pleased with the sentiment, which was so common in the mouths of Christians, "*Do not to another what you wish him not to do to you;*" and he ordered it to be inscribed upon several public buildings. But his approbation of the Christians was carried further than this. He may be said to have expressly tolerated their public worship; for when the keepers of a tavern claimed a piece of ground that had been occupied by the Christians, the emperor adjudged it to the latter, adding the remark, that it was better for God to be worshipped there in any manner, than for the ground to be used for a pot-house.

The last anecdote might lead to an interesting inquiry into the period when the Christians first began to meet in churches, or at least to have buildings set apart for public worship. They probably acquired this liberty earlier in some countries than in others; but we can hardly doubt that some such buildings were possessed by them in Rome, during the reign of the present emperor. We know that, for many years, they met in each other's houses. Concealment on such occasions was absolutely necessary; and we may judge of the perils with which they were beset, as well as of the firmness of their faith, when we know that the excavations in the neighbourhood of Rome, which were formed by the digging of stone, were used for a

long time by the Christians as places of religious meetings. In these dark and dismal catacombs, which may still be seen, and which still bear traces of their former occupants, the early martyrs and confessors poured forth their prayers to God, and thanked their Redeemer that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. Here also the remains of their dead were interred; and it was long before the intolerance of their enemies allowed the Christians to breathe a healthy air, or enjoy the light of heaven while they were engaged in their sacred duties. This indulgence appears to have been gained at Rome during the period of comparative peace, which began with the death of Septimius Severus; but since Elagabalus prohibited every kind of public worship, except that of the Sun, we may perhaps conclude, that few, if any, religious buildings had been possessed by the Christians, till the time when Alexander decided the case in their favour.

At that time they had a piece of ground belonging to them, and it appears to have been the property, not of some individual who was a Christian, but of the whole community. It was probably bought out of the common fund, which has already been mentioned as belonging to the Christians; and the emperor's decision makes it plain that it had been used for the purposes of public worship. It is not probable that the Christians met in the open air. The spot must, therefore, have been occupied by some building, which was either a private dwelling converted to this sacred purpose after its purchase by the Christians, or one which had been specially erected for the occasion. The latter conclusion would be the most interesting, as containing

the earliest evidence of the building of churches; though it might be thought that the present edifice was rather of an inferior kind, since the opposite party intended to turn it into a tavern. This is not improbable; or rather we may be certain that the first churches erected by the Christians were of a poor and humble character, that they might not provoke the jealousy of the heathen. It was, perhaps, owing to the general toleration which was allowed by the present emperor, that the Christians were able to appropriate any building for their own religious ceremonies; and it might be thought that some law was still in force, which gave to informers the power of seizing any property which they could prove to belong to a Christian.

We have seen, at the beginning of the century, that confiscations of this kind were made by the Government, and other instances will occur a few years later, when persecution was revived; it was perhaps argued in the present instance, that the piece of ground belonged of right to the emperor, because it had been purchased by Christians; and application was made to him, that he would exercise his power of seizing it, and grant the use of it to the keepers of a tavern. If this were so, we might also say that the first Christian church was the gift of a heathen emperor; and there is reason to think that from this time the right of possessing places of worship was generally exercised by the Christians.

It is a sure indication of a period of peace to the Church, when the ecclesiastical historian meets with few incidents to relate. While persecution was raging, every church had its own interesting, though painful, stories: but the mere progress of Christianity among

the heathen, when unchecked by open and legalised violence, is traced rather in its lasting effects than in the history of each successive step. The Alexandrian church alone, or the single life of Origen, if circumstantially detailed, would be sufficient to prove the inroads that Christianity was making upon heathenism. The philosophers in that city were obliged to abandon their principles, and to form a new system, which has been called the Eclectic, or the school of the later Platonists. They could not shut their eyes to the fact, that Christianity was gaining rapidly upon them, and that, as a scheme of religion, it was far purer and sublimer than their own. They therefore endeavoured to prove that the doctrines held by the Christians concerning the nature of God, his Word or Son, and the Spirit emanating from Him, were all to be found in the philosophical system of Plato. In order to establish this resemblance, they gave an entirely new interpretation to the language of Plato, and ascribed to him opinions which he had never held. By this artifice they thought to check the progress of Christianity, and to show that, after all, it was merely a corruption of Platonism.

It is greatly to be regretted that Christians incautiously lent their aid in tracing this fanciful resemblance. They thought to do away the objection to the Gospel in the eyes of the heathen, if they showed it to be like to the philosophy of Plato. They therefore asserted, that Plato had borrowed many of his ideas from the writings of Moses: and the most mysterious doctrines of Christianity, even that of a Trinity, were said to be found in the works of the heathen philosopher. This compromise between the two parties appears to

have taken place at Alexandria, about the beginning of the third century. Ammonius Saccas, who had once been a Christian, was considered at the head of these later Platonists; and Origen, in his younger days, had attended his lectures.

Origen, as well as the other Christian writers of Alexandria, has often been charged with borrowing largely from Plato. But it was his language only which they borrowed, not his philosophy. Plato never conceived the ideas which were ascribed to him by the philosophers of Alexandria; and the latter pretended to find them in his writings, merely that they might be able to check the progress of Christianity. Origen, however, was extremely incautious, in some of the opinions which he expressed. He was too fond of fanciful speculations into subjects which human reason cannot fathom: and he carried to an unwarrantable length the system of allegorising the Scriptures. This fanciful method of interpretation, was not an invention of Origen, nor of the Christian fathers. They found it already carried to a great length by the Alexandrian Jews, who seemed to have adopted it in order to establish a resemblance between the writings of Moses and those of the Greek philosophers. There was not a passage in the Scriptures, even in the books which are purely historical, which was not supposed to contain a hidden or allegorical meaning. If we read the works of Philo Judæus, we might almost suppose that he did not receive the words of Moses and the other sacred writers in their literal sense at all; he might be supposed to have understood them, as if the events recorded had not really taken place, but as if some moral and religious truth was intended to be conveyed to the reader by the

narrative. It would probably be very unjust to Philo and his countrymen to charge them with such extravagance, though their own words, and their fanciful method of interpretation, have exposed them to it; but it was laid down as a principle with expositors of that school, that every passage of Scripture contained at least three meanings; one, which was the literal or historical; another, which conveyed some moral lesson; and a third, which was still more sublime and mystical, and which, under the semblance of something visible and earthly, was intended to reveal the truths of the invisible and spiritual world.

It was not unnatural that the Alexandrian Christians should adopt this method in their interpretation of Scripture. They knew that it would be acceptable to the Jews: and even the heathen had learnt to extract meanings from the works of their own writers, which were very different from the plain and obvious sense. Clement of Alexandria belonged to this allegorical school, and his pupil, Origen, carried its principles to still more unwarrantable lengths. We know, from his own words, that he was accused of taking dangerous liberties with the Scriptures: and from the causes already assigned, or from others which have not been explained, a disagreement arose between him and his bishop, Demetrius. It is most probable that this had something to do with his leaving Alexandria in 229, when he paid a second visit to Cæsarea, in Palestine. He took this opportunity of receiving ordination from Theoctistus, the bishop of that see, who was assisted by Alexander of Jerusalem, and other bishops. He was now forty-five years of age; and we might wonder that he had put off his ordination so long, and that he did

not receive it in his own city, and from his own bishop. Demetrius complained of the irregularity; but it is plain that Origen was extremely popular in Palestine, and the Bishop of Alexandria found few persons who took his own view of the matter.

It is to be regretted that we have not more materials for explaining the cause of the quarrel between Demetrius and Origen. It might be thought that the Bishop of Alexandria complained of the Bishops of Palestine conferring ordination upon a person not belonging to any of their dioceses; and it would have been held irregular in those days, as well as imprudent at any period, to ordain a stranger without a certificate of approbation from the church to which he had belonged. It appears, however, that Origen had been furnished with a letter from Demetrius, which was probably the usual document by which a Christian obtained admission to communion with the members of a foreign church. Demetrius must, therefore, have considered Origen's opinions to be sound upon fundamental articles of faith: but it does not follow that he looked upon him as a fit person to receive ordination. It also appears that the teacher of the school received his appointment from the bishop, and was under his authority while he held that office: so that Demetrius may have had reason to complain on this ground, of Origen going into a foreign country to receive ordination. It has been thought, that the bishop had begun to be jealous of the great fame of Origen; and it is most probable that many causes combined to widen the breach between them: but it seems almost certain that Origen's own opinions were partly instrumental in exciting the ill-will of the party which opposed him.

Origen, after visiting Greece, returned once more to his native city, but he was unable to continue there. Demetrius now found the Egyptian bishops and his own clergy prepared to join in condemning him. Two synods were held in Alexandria, the first of which prohibited him from teaching, and ordered him to leave the city; the second went still further, and degraded him from his rank of priest. Origen had perhaps already quitted the city; but he left it finally in 231, and never again returned to it. His place in the school was supplied by Heraclas, who had been a long time his pupil, and latterly his assistant; but he did not hold this station long; for the bishopric becoming vacant in the following year by the death of Demetrius, Heraclas was elected to fill it. Another pupil of Origen, named Dionysius, was appointed to the school.

Origen now took up his abode permanently at Cæsarea, and continued without interruption his laborious commentaries on the Scriptures. The churches of Phœnicia, Arabia, and Achaia, as well as those of Palestine, had declared decidedly in his favour: and though the Bishop of Alexandria had taken pains to write to other churches, giving them an unfavourable account of Origen's tenets, it does not appear that he produced much impression. The Bishop of Rome is said to have convened a synod upon the occasion; but we are not acquainted with the result of its deliberations. Each church being at this time entirely independent of any other, and exercising authority only over its own members, Demetrius could only have written these letters to caution other bishops against receiving Origen to their communion, or any persons professing the opinions of Origen: but it is probable that these

opinions had been little heard of except in Alexandria, and related to subjects which did not excite much attention, nor seem of that importance which Demetrius attached to them. There is no evidence that any sentence of exclusion was at this time passed against Origen by any church or synod, except in his own city of Alexandria. Some, as has been already stated, openly supported him; and such was now the peaceable state of the church, that persons came from different parts of the world to Cæsarea, merely for the sake of listening to Origen. The names of some of these visitors enable us to judge of the progress which the Gospel had been making in countries which were little known to the Greeks or Romans. Firmilianus came from Cappadocia, being now, or at a later period, a bishop in that province. There were, at this time, several churches in Cappadocia; and so well regulated were their affairs, that the bishops held annual meetings among themselves, to insure uniformity in their proceedings. Councils were occasionally held upon a more extensive scale, attended by deputies from different provinces. One of them was convened about this period at Iconium, at which Firmilianus was present, and fifty bishops from Phrygia, Galatia, Cilicia, and Cappadocia. The heresy of Montanus was the cause of it being assembled, which, as we have seen, was constantly gaining followers, and as constantly opposed by the heads of the Church. It was now debated, whether baptism administered by Montanists was valid; and the council of Iconium decided that it was not.

This was the strongest step which had as yet been taken against those persons who professed themselves Montanists. At first they scarcely deserved the name

of schismatics; and the profession of Montanism did not exclude a man from communion with the Church. It seems to have been a want of charity on both sides, which made the breach gradually wider: but it cannot be denied that the Church decided with an overwhelming majority of voices against the Montanists. The question, as we have seen, was discussed in several councils; and the result was uniformly unfavourable to the new opinions. This unanimity among the spiritual rulers of the Church seems to have produced little effect; and the Montanists cannot be acquitted of openly and knowingly opposing themselves to the authority of the Church. We learn from Tertullian, who was himself a Montanist, that they used the most contemptuous and provoking language, when speaking of those who denied their pretensions. There is reason to think that they refused, of their own accord, to join in communion with the other members of the Church. They, in fact, excommunicated their opponents rather than were excommunicated by them; and though it does not appear that any general sentence was pronounced against them, they at length formed themselves into separate communities, and regulated their own affairs without holding any intercourse with the great body of the Church. They did not, however, make any alteration in the outward form of ecclesiastical government, which had now been established for two centuries. They had bishops and clergy of their own; they held synods for discussing their common affairs; and the Sacrament of baptism was used by them upon the admission of members into the Church. It was this latter circumstance which led to the most decisive step which had hitherto been taken against them. The

council of Iconium pronounced their baptism invalid; and if a person who had been bred up a Montanist went over to the true Church, it was decided that he ought to be baptized. This was, in fact, to declare that he had not been baptized before, though the ceremony had been performed by the Montanists: from which it followed that the clergy of this sect were not acknowledged to be properly and regularly ordained; for there is no reason to think that the Montanists did not administer baptism according to the form of words prescribed by our Saviour; and the objection was therefore confined to the persons who undertook to administer it.

It had always been held that the power of admitting members into the Church by baptism was confined to those persons who were ordained by the successors of the apostles; and the Montanists had interrupted this succession by electing bishops of their own, without the concurrence of those who could trace their commission through the successors of the apostles. The Montanists were therefore considered to have founded a new Church, and not to be a part of the one Catholic Church, which had existed from the beginning. This was the cause of their baptism being disallowed: such, at least, was the custom among the Asiatic churches where the opinions of Montanus had made most progress; and there is reason to think that the Church of Carthage adopted the same principle. But in places where the Montanists were not sufficiently numerous to form a separate church, the question concerning their baptisms did not come under discussion; and this will perhaps account for the difference of opinion which prevailed upon this subject a few years later, and

which caused so much disagreement between the Church of Rome and the Asiatic and African churches.

Two other persons who visited Origen at Cæsarea, were Athenodorus and Theodorus, brothers, and natives of Pontus. The latter became better known by the name of Gregory; and they continued five years with Origen, receiving instruction from him, not only in the Gospel, but in the whole range of philosophy and literature.

The name of Gregory became still more conspicuous in later times, by its receiving the addition of Thaumaturgus, or Wonder-worker; and a life of him, which was written in the fourth century, is filled with an account of the most astonishing miracles which he is said to have worked. Earlier writers mention nothing of his extraordinary powers in this way; and it is scarcely possible not to come to the conclusion that the stories were invented at some later period. It has already been stated as the most probable conclusion, that the power of working miracles died away gradually and imperceptibly; and instances of them may therefore have occurred in the second, and even in the third centuries; but the miracles ascribed to Gregory of Pontus are more stupendous than those of our Lord and his apostles: his whole life is represented as one continued exertion of miraculous power: and there seems no alternative between admitting the whole of his miraculous history as true, or rejecting the whole of it as false; it is at least hopeless, at this distance of time, and with so few materials for guiding us, to decide whether there was any foundation of truth under the heap of fictitious exaggerations. That Gregory was a bishop of great celebrity cannot be doubted; and we

may also conclude that the Gospel made extraordinary progress among the heathen in his day, and in his own province; but whether it pleased God to make him more than an ordinary instrument of spreading the kingdom of Christ upon earth, we have no means of ascertaining.

The longer residence of the two brothers with Origen, at Cæsarea, was prevented by the death of the emperor, who was murdered, in 235, at Mentz, when on his way to make war with the Germans. His death was brought about by a Thracian named Maximinus, who was popular with the army on account of his gigantic strength, but most unsuited in his mental qualities to succeed to the empire. In every sense of the term he was a barbarian; and one of his first acts, upon coming to the throne, was to kill all the persons who were attached to his predecessor. Four thousand lives were sacrificed in this way; and among the number were several Christians, who had held places in the imperial household.

This is a convincing proof, if any were wanting, that the Christians were tolerated, and even favoured by Alexander. On the other hand, it has been asserted that his reign had been marked by several martyrdoms in the capital. This may have been the case, particularly when the emperor was absent in the East, but there is certainly no evidence of any systematic persecution. The celebrated lawyer, Ulpian, who was one of the emperor's advisers, is said to have been instrumental in putting many Christians to death; and if we may judge from some fragments of his writings, he was certainly inclined to be intolerant of any strange religion.

These local and temporary attacks upon the Christians were of slight importance when compared with the atrocities inflicted upon them by Maximinus. It is impossible to suppose that such a savage cared about religion; but he, or the persons about him, may have seen that the Christians were attached to the late emperor, and that they were not unlikely to attempt to avenge his death. A persecution of them was, therefore, immediately decreed, which would be felt more severely after the long interval of security and repose. The blow was specially aimed at the heads of churches; and where the magistrates were inclined to second the cruelty of the emperor, the work of slaughter was revived in all its former activity. This is known to have been the case in Cappadocia, where the people were still more excited against the Christians, in consequence of some tremendous earthquakes, which had swallowed up whole cities; and the calamity, as usual, was viewed as a visitation from heaven, on account of the progress of Christianity.

Great as was the suffering in Cappadocia, Origen found it more safe to take refuge in that country than to remain at Cæsarea. His two friends, Athenodorus and Gregory, also fled, and went to Alexandria; from whence we may perhaps infer, that the Christians in Egypt were not much molested. Origen took the opportunity of visiting his friend, Firmilianus, whose city in Cappadocia was also called Cæsarea; and finding shelter in the house of a lady, named Juliana, where he stayed two years, he was able to carry on the greatest literary work which he had ever undertaken.

This was a new and corrected edition of the Greek translation of the Old Testament, known by the name of

the Septuagint, which had been made about two centuries before the birth of Christ, and was now full of variations and mistakes. Other Greek translations of the Scriptures had also been made, the most celebrated of which were, that of Aquila, who lived in the reign of Hadrian; that of Theodotion, which was published in the reign of Commodus; and that of Symmachus, the date of which is fixed at the year 202. A copy of this latter translation, or rather what was said to be the original itself, was given to him by Juliana. Two other anonymous versions were also in Origen's possession; and he published all of them in six parallel columns, with the text of the original Hebrew. It has been said that twenty-eight years were employed upon this prodigious undertaking, which may give us some notion of the indefatigable exertions of this extraordinary man. He was at the same time carrying on his Commentary upon the Scriptures, which already amounted to several volumes; and though he did not permit his homilies to be taken down and published till late in his life, they are said to have amounted to a thousand.

If his edition of the Greek translation had come down to us, it might be of some use in assisting us to settle the text of the original Hebrew. The variations in the present copies of the Septuagint are extremely numerous; and Origen took great pains to ascertain the true readings. If he succeeded in this point, and if we could have the Greek text as it came from the pen of the original translators, we should be better able to judge of the Hebrew text in those places where the modern copies differ from each other. These translators lived more than two thousand years ago;

since which time many mistakes and alterations may have been introduced into copies of the Hebrew Bible, from which the older copies used by the Greek translators were free. The same remark will apply to the other translations used by Origen, which were later by three or four centuries than the Septuagint, but which were made from much older copies of the Hebrew Bible than any which we now possess. The great work of Origen is unfortunately lost. The Septuagint is the only one of the Greek versions which has come down to us entire; and the text of it, as has been stated above, is rendered very uncertain by numerous variations. Of the other Greek translations we have only a few fragments remaining, which serve to show that the translators differed exceedingly from each other in many of their interpretations. Origen himself did not learn the Hebrew language till a late period of his life; but his love of knowledge urged him to undertake this study, when his literary occupations already seemed too overwhelming for the mind of one man.

The death of Maximinus, which took place in 238, allowed Origen and the other fugitives to return to their homes. The reign of Gordian was one of tranquillity to the Christians; and we have proof of this in their being able to meet together in large bodies to settle their own affairs. In all these cases we cannot fail to be struck with the unity which prevailed upon all essential points between the members of different churches. A man named Privatus was condemned by a council of ninety bishops, which met at Carthage, while Donatus was bishop of that see. The particular heresy of Privatus is not recorded; but Fabianus, who was at this time Bishop of Rome, addressed a letter to

Carthage, expressing his entire concurrence in the sentence which was passed. There seems to have been a close connection between the two churches of Rome and Carthage. Their situation made the communication between them easy; and among the Western, or Latin churches, there was none which could claim precedence over them.

The number of African bishops which met at this council cannot fail to strike us with the great progress which Christianity must have made in that country; and must also convince us that though Tertullian is the earliest African writer whose works have come down to us, yet the Gospel must have been planted in his country at a much earlier period. It has already been stated that Carthage probably received its instruction in Christianity from Rome; and we shall see many instances of the bishops of the two cities being anxious to agree with each other, when they had to consult their clergy or the neighbouring bishops.

A question of still greater importance led to a meeting of Arabian bishops, about the year 240. Beryllus, bishop of Bostra in that country, maintained that our Saviour had no distinct personal existence before his appearance upon earth; and that he had only the divinity, or a portion of the divinity, of the Father residing in himself. This, as will be seen, nearly resembled the opinion of Praxeas, which had been condemned at the end of the last century. It had reappeared from time to time under different forms; and Noëtus, who was a native of Asia Minor, had been confuted in a special treatise written by Hippolytus, which is still extant. This seems to show, that the heresy had for some time been attracting

notice in Arabia; but Bostra was the metropolis of the country, and the bishop of such a see becoming heretical was a sufficient reason for a general meeting being held. Many bishops had engaged him in disputation, but apparently without success; and there cannot be a greater proof of Origen's celebrity, than that he was invited to take part in this intricate discussion. It will be remembered that this was not the first time of his visiting Arabia; and his presence, as on the former occasion, produced the best effect. Beryllus was convinced by his reasoning, and abjured his errors. But it is plain that the Christians of Arabia were too fond of abstruse speculations; and a few years later, Origen was once more called into that country, to check some erroneous opinions concerning the soul. It was contended by a party there, that the soul perishes with the body, and that both will be restored to life at the general resurrection; and it is satisfactory to find that Origen was again successful in exposing the error of such a notion.

It has, however, been generally supposed, that Origen himself entertained some erroneous notions concerning the soul, and there are passages in his own writings which seem to show that he was too fond of indulging his fancy upon subjects of this kind. The Scripture has told us very little concerning the state of the soul after its separation from the body by death; and the Church had not as yet been called upon to give any decision upon the point. It is therefore probable that many Christians entertained different notions on this subject, which did not lead to any inconvenience until persons began to publish their speculations to the world. We are, however, able to

collect, both from the transaction in which Origen was engaged in Arabia, and from the writings of Tertullian and others, that Christians were at this time generally agreed in supposing that the soul in its separate or disembodied state enjoyed a kind of consciousness, and was not insensible or asleep. They seem also to have considered that the souls of good and bad men were in a different state, or rather in a different place; for we have little means of judging of the opinion of the early Christians as to the actual condition of the souls of bad men; but with respect to the souls of the righteous, they conceived them to be in a place by themselves, where they enjoyed a kind of foretaste of the happiness which awaited them hereafter.

It was also believed by a large portion of Christians, that the resurrection of the righteous would take place before the final resurrection of all mankind at the day of judgment. This was the doctrine of the millennium, which has been already mentioned as entertained by several Christian writers of the second century. When they spoke of the first resurrection, they meant that the righteous would rise and reign with Christ upon earth for a thousand years, at the end of which period the general resurrection would take place. It was natural for them to add to this belief, that the souls of the righteous, while they were in their separate abode, were anxiously looking forward to the time of the first resurrection, when they would be released from their confinement; and their surviving friends did not think it improper to make it a subject of their own prayers to God, that he would be pleased to hasten the period when those who had departed in his faith and fear might enter into their heavenly kingdom.

This was the only sense in which prayers were offered for the dead by the early Christians. They did not think that their prayers could affect the present or future condition of those who were departed. They believed them to be in a state of happiness immediately after death, and to be certain of enjoying still greater happiness hereafter. It was only the period of their entering upon this final state which was supposed to be affected by the prayers of the living, and it afforded a melancholy satisfaction to the latter to meet at the graves of their friends, or on the anniversary of their death, and to remember them in their prayers to God.

The notion had not as yet been entertained that their prayers were heard by the departed, or that these could in turn address themselves to God, and benefit the living by their prayers. The first person who seems to have introduced any new speculation upon this subject was Origen; and it is difficult to form any correct notion of the opinions which he intended to support. Perhaps he had not come to any definite conclusion: and it is to be regretted that he entered at all upon a question which the Scriptures have left in obscurity. His mind, however, was peculiarly inquisitive upon these matters. He seems to have imagined that the soul of every person had contracted a certain stain of guilt, which was necessary to be effaced before it could be fit for the happiness of heaven. This cleansing was to be performed by fire; and every soul, even of the best of men, was to pass through this fiery purification. This, however, was not to take place immediately after death, but at the time of the resurrection; so that Origen's notion was totally different from that which was introduced in

later times concerning a purgatorial fire, though it may in some measure have led the way to it: but it is probable that the generality of Christians, at the period which we are now considering, had heard nothing of the soul having to pass through fire after its separation from the body.

The reign of Philip who succeeded to the throne by contriving the death of Gordian, in 244, would be more interesting than any which preceded it, if it could be proved, as some persons have asserted, that he was a Christian: but it seems certain that he was not. It was scarcely possible for any person of education at this period to have been ignorant of Christianity; and there may have been traditions that Philip, at some time of his life, was inclined to adopt it; but whatever may have been his own opinions, his public conduct, after he mounted the throne, can only be explained on the principle of his being attached to heathenism. The fact of Origen having addressed a letter to him, and another to his wife or mother, Severa, can hardly be taken as a proof that the writer had brought him over to his own faith, nor do we even know the subject of these letters. That Philip showed no inclination to persecute the Christians, and that on the whole their condition was prosperous during his reign, may be taken as an undoubted fact; but this had been the case ever since the death of Maximinus, and proves very little as to the personal conduct of the emperor.

The only exception to this tranquillity during the present reign was at Alexandria, where Dionysius was now bishop, having succeeded Heraclas in 246, or 247. He was a man of profound learning, and in every way suited to his station, as will be seen by the religious

controversies in which he was engaged, and by his conduct during times of severe trial to the Church. His flock was exposed to some danger in 248, when the heathen inhabitants, from some cause which is not explained, began to break out into violent attacks upon the Christians. This appears to have been a mere ebullition of popular feeling, without any order from the Government; and the formidable progress which Christianity was making, may fully account for the heathen having recourse to such measures: but the cruelties which they practised upon the Christians were excessive. Fortunately they did not last long; they continued till the Easter of 249, when the heathen began to quarrel among themselves for some political differences, and thus a short respite was given to the Christians.

CHAPTER XV.

Tranquillity of the Church and Corruption of Morals.—Persecution under Decius.—Origin of the Monastic System.—Case of the Lapsed.—Schisms at Carthage and Rome.—Unanimity of different Churches.—Valerian favours the Christians.—Mutual relation and intercourse of Churches.—Questions concerning the validity of Heretical Baptisms.

IT was stated at the end of the last chapter that the Alexandrian Christians enjoyed but a short respite. A season of suffering was now coming on, which had not been experienced since the issuing of the edict by Septimius Severus, in 202. Nearly forty years had elapsed since the death of that emperor; and, with the exception of the short reign of Maximinus, the whole of the period had been one of comparative tranquillity to the Christians. Heathenism appeared to be hastening rapidly to decay. Philosophers and men of learning did not attempt to defend its inconsistencies and absurdities; and the only method they could devise for checking the progress of the Gospel was, to invent a resemblance between its doctrines and those of Plato; a resemblance which could only be maintained by an entire alteration and perversion of Plato's own writings. Christianity, on the other hand, numbered among its defenders and teachers the profoundest scholars of the day. It had long ceased to be professed by the lower or middling classes only; and since the middle of

the second century, it had been finding its way into the camp, the courts of justice, the senate, and even the palace of the emperor. It might, perhaps, be doubted whether seasons of persecution or of peace were most instrumental in producing converts to the Gospel. The constancy of the Christians under suffering had a powerful effect in convincing the heathen that they were neither enthusiasts nor impostors: and some of the best and sincerest converts were perhaps brought into the Church in this way. But forty years of peace must also have had their effect in allowing the Christians to spread their doctrines openly and without fear. The erection of churches, which seems to have begun during this period, was a public refutation of the ancient prejudices, that the Christians were atheists. Though we need not ascribe anything miraculous to the preservation of a church at Neocæsarea, in Pontus, while all the neighbouring buildings were destroyed by an earthquake, such an incident was sure to be noticed at the time; and it could hardly be contended, as before, that earthquakes were visitations from Heaven, and a proof of the gods being angry with the Christians. It may be added, that the charitable fund which every church possessed for the support of its poorer members might incline the heathen to admire a system of religion which produced such unequivocal fruits; and if some persons became proselytes in the hope of partaking of this fund, we must remember that those who distributed it were fully able to detect hypocrisy; and even where the convert had little evangelical piety, he had given up a religion which had cost him no effort to abandon, because it had never established any real hold upon his heart.

Such was the state of things when Philip was put to death by the contrivance of Decius, in the July of 249. But though Christianity had been gaining ground for so long a period, it had not, in every respect, the same pure and heavenly aspect as in its earlier days, when the believers were of one heart and one soul. It now numbered in its ranks many wavering and timid disciples, who were little prepared to stand the fiery trial, and to come out unhurt. Prosperity and security were beginning to show their usual effects. The difference between heathens and Christians, as to the performance of their moral and social duties, was no longer so strongly marked. Religious speculations had more than disturbed the unity of faith; and a contemporary writer, himself a bishop and martyr in the cause, informs us that the manners of the Christians, and even of the clergy, had been becoming gradually corrupt. He speaks of a secular ostentatious spirit being very apparent. Marriages were formed with heathens; and even bishops were seen to neglect their flocks, and employ themselves in the most ordinary occupations, with a view to getting money.

This honest recorder of his brethren's shame looked upon the conduct of the new emperor, Decius, as a chastisement from Heaven, intended mercifully to correct the increasing corruption. The motives which urged the emperor himself have not been clearly ascertained; but at the end of 249, or early in 250, he issued an edict, by which the Christians were to be compelled to sacrifice to the gods. As was the case in 202, there seemed to be nothing wanting but this licence from the head of the Government, to let loose all the most cruel and malignant passions of the heart against

the Christians. Every quarter of the empire presents us with its anecdotes of suffering and slaughter. Alexander, the venerable Bishop of Jerusalem, who had held the bishopric nearly forty years, was thrown into prison, where he soon after died. Origen was also imprisoned, and continued in that state till the death of Decius. The same indignity befell Babylas, bishop of Antioch; but, like his brother of Jerusalem, he died before he was released. Origen's friend, Gregory, who was become Bishop of Neocæsarea, in Pontus, was obliged to conceal himself, ; but many of his flock were imprisoned and put to death. The storm raged severely in Asia Minor; and one bishop is mentioned, Eudæmon of Smyrna, who was frightened into a denial of his faith; but several other persons had the courage to receive their crown of martyrdom.

Alexandria, and the whole of Egypt, became once more the scene of cruelty and outrage. Sabinus, the Roman governor, contrived to get Dionysius into his power, and sent him prisoner to a place called Taposiris; but the bishop effected his escape, and, by continuing some time in retirement, preserved his life for future trials. Egypt, and the country adjoining it, afforded great facility for concealment. Large tracts of mountain and desert furnished protection to the unhappy Christians; and several persons who fled from persecution never returned again to their former habits of life. Monks and hermits owed their earliest origin to this cause. One of the fugitives, named Paul, has acquired the celebrity of being the first hermit. He had received a learned education, and was left by his parents at an early age with a considerable fortune; but, having retired into the desert during the Decian

persecution, when he was twenty-two years of age, he concealed himself in a cave, and continued to inhabit it till the following century.

Other causes, however, had been in operation for a considerable time, which made persons not disinclined to a life of monastic retirement. One division of the Gnostics, and after them the Montanists, had recommended and practised many severe rules of mortification and abstemiousness. The human mind is always too much inclined to make religion consist in a scrupulous observance of outward ceremonies; and many customs which had their origin in real and humble piety would come to be adopted from principles of ostentation, or at best from habit and prescription. It was thus that many of the early Christians, either from observing the Gnostics and Montanists, or from their own inclinations and views of religious duty, persuaded themselves that many of the usual enjoyments and occupations of life were displeasing to God. The Church had never been required to give a decision upon the subject; and such matters were wisely and charitably left to the religious feeling and the discretion of each individual. A time of persecution was perhaps most suited to encourage principles of this kind; and if the former part of the third century was likely to make the professors of Christianity too much attached to the pleasures of this world, the Decian persecution was calculated to bring them back to stricter ideas of religion, and to revive the notion, which had lately been becoming fainter, that it was the duty of a Christian to abstract himself from the world.

There is also evidence that persons who were called *Ascetics*, that is, who imposed upon themselves severe

rules of discipline and abstemiousness, had existed in Egypt from very early times. There were certainly large numbers of persons in the neighbourhood of Alexandria in the beginning of the first century, and for some time after, whose habits were so peculiar, and who withdrew themselves so entirely from intercourse with the world, that some writers have pronounced them to have been converts to Christianity. It has been already stated, that such a notion is undoubtedly incorrect; but there is nothing unreasonable in supposing that their mode of life produced an effect upon the Christians, and induced some of them to follow the example. Personal safety supplied a still stronger argument for retirement in the time of persecution; and this, as has been observed, was the case in Egypt at the period which we are now considering. Many countries which were thickly peopled with Christians, such as Italy and Western Asia, would furnish no facilities for solitary concealment, but the deserts of Egypt were very extensive; and here we may trace the origin of that monastic system which spread gradually over Christendom, and still exercises its influence over a large portion of mankind.

It will have been observed, at the renewal of the persecution, that the blow was generally aimed at the heads of the Church, and a Christian bishop was now a much more conspicuous object for attack than in the earlier persecutions. This was strikingly the case in the two leading churches of Rome and Carthage. Decius had been heard to say, that he would rather endure a competitor in the empire, than a bishop of Rome; which shows his personal hatred to Christianity, and his determination to destroy it. The cause of such

vindictive feelings might seem difficult to ascertain, when we consider the extreme disparity between a Christian bishop of those days, and the sovereign of the Roman empire. It might be thought that the emperor could not possibly have looked upon the bishop with any feelings of jealousy or fear; and if he treated him with contempt, it need not have seemed surprising. We must, however, remember that the Christians were at this period very numerous in Rome. They have been estimated to have amounted to fifty thousand; all of whom were submissively obedient to one head, with a regularly-organised system of government, and a large pecuniary fund, collected among themselves. Associations of this kind have always been objects of suspicion to kings and rulers: and the fact of all these people being bound together by a religion which had repeatedly been pronounced unlawful, was likely to increase the feeling of hostility which had been raised against them. If any member of the Roman church was examined before a magistrate, he would be found to profess himself subject to the bishop. The personal influence of this one man was probably much greater than that of the emperor; and if the latter was aware that his authority was maintained by fear, he might naturally be jealous of a man who was beloved as well as obeyed. These considerations may furnish some explanation of the saying which is ascribed to Decius; and the history of this persecution shows that his inveterate hatred was not confined to words.

Fabianus, who had filled the see of Rome since 238, was put to death; several of the clergy were thrown into prison: and the storm raged with such fury, that a

successor to the bishopric was not appointed for more than a year.

This confirms what was said above of the emperor's rage being specially directed against the spiritual heads of the Christians. There would, however, have been a difficulty in electing a bishop of Rome at this period, because the neighbouring bishops could hardly have attended; and we have seen that their presence was necessary to make the election valid. We may also be sure, that if a bishop had been appointed, he would not long have survived. The fact of his being appointed would have increased the violence of the persecution; and though no case had as yet occurred of a church being left without a head, the existing circumstances of the Roman church justified the exception. The presbyters appear to have taken upon themselves the management of affairs; and we know that at this time the number of Presbyters in Rome was forty-six: each of whom may have found abundant employment in rendering assistance to the members of his own congregation. But when anything extraordinary occurred, or a communication was received from a foreign city, the whole body of presbyters appear to have assembled in council,—so admirably organised were the affairs of the Christians at this early period, and so little did the heathen know of the real strength of the party which they were seeking to destroy.

The see of Carthage was now filled by Cyprian, who had succeeded Donatus in 248 or 249. His election had been opposed by Novatus and four other presbyters, whose factious conduct was productive of much evil, not only to the bishop, but to the Church at large. As soon as the imperial edict arrived at Carthage, Cyprian was

obliged to fly for his life, and was separated from his flock for about sixteen months; but we may form some notion of his pastoral zeal, when we find him writing several letters during that period to his clergy, giving them directions upon many important subjects.

He might have returned sooner to Carthage, if Novatus and his followers had not continued to set themselves against him. The persecution had caused several Christians to pay an outward obedience to the edict of Decius, by assisting at a sacrifice. Others, who had not actually sacrificed, had allowed their names to be added to the list of those who had done so, and received a certificate from a magistrate, which saved them from further molestation. The number of persons who had lapsed, as it was termed, or who had received this certificate, was far greater than on any former occasion; and considerable difficulty was felt as to re-admitting them into the Church. It had been the custom for such persons to go through a prescribed form of penitence, after which the bishop and the clergy laid their hands upon them, and they were restored to communion. It was also the privilege of confessors, that is, of persons who had suffered torture, or received sentence of death, to give to any of the lapsed a written paper, termed a letter of peace, and the bearer was entitled to a remission of some part of the ecclesiastical discipline.

The absence of the bishop caused a difficulty in the admission of these penitents, and many of them were in great distress, lest they should die under the sentence of excommunication. Novatus and his party were for acting without the bishop. They admitted several of the lapsed to communion; and even some confessors

so far seconded them, as to make a very indiscriminate use of their letters of peace. News of all this irregularity was conveyed to Cyprian, which added much to his troubles and anxiety; but the letters which he wrote to his clergy conveyed the charitable direction, that if any person had received a paper from a confessor, and was in danger of dying, he might be admitted to communion without delay. Dionysius, whose personal circumstances were similar to those of Cyprian, had given the same instructions, during his absence, to the clergy of Alexandria.

These bishops did not mean to countenance or encourage what has been called a death-bed repentance. Whether the dying penitent would have his pardon sealed in heaven or no, was not for man to decide; but it was not for man to prohibit him from testifying his faith by receiving the symbols of Christ's body and blood. It was charitably supposed that if he confessed his Saviour with his last and dying words, he could not be unfit at the same moment to partake of the Eucharist. While there was a prospect of his life being preserved, and while the Church had the means of putting his sincerity to the test, she prudently decreed that his participation in the sacrament should be postponed. This solemn rite was considered the privilege, as it was the blessing and comfort, of sincere believers only. The lapsed had shown, in the time of trial, that their belief was not sincere; and though the Church did not for ever shut the door against the re-admission of such persons, she would not receive them among the faithful soldiers of Christ till she had exacted from them some effectual tokens of repentance.

The unanimity of different churches upon this point was very remarkable, as well as the pains which they took to communicate with each other at this trying time. The Christians of Rome and Carthage kept up a frequent intercourse, and acted in perfect concert. Though the Romans were still without a bishop, the decision of Cyprian met with the approbation of the Roman clergy, who held a meeting among themselves and agreed to admit the lapsed to communion, if they were on the point of death. The majority of Cyprian's clergy acted according to his instructions; and it is observable, that among other directions he told them to note the days on which any confessors had died in prison, that they might be kept as festivals, when the persecution was over.

We have already seen instances of this custom being observed. The Acts of the Martyr, that is, the circumstances preceding and attending his death, were generally committed to writing, and it was usual to read them on the anniversary of his martyrdom, either at the spot where his remains were deposited, or at some other religious meeting. Many of these Acts of the Martyrs have come down to us, and some of them are undoubtedly as old as the second century; but it is to be regretted that as the number increased, so many marvellous circumstances have been introduced into these accounts, that it is often difficult to separate truth from fiction. Volumes of legends have been written, which are manifestly filled with fables; but this ought not to make us reject the whole collection, any more than the superstitions of later times should lead us to condemn the affectionate piety which dictated the directions given by Cyprian to his clergy.

There can be no doubt that, in those times of trial, the zeal of the Christians was animated by a recollection of those who had continued faithful unto death; and when personal danger had subsided, it might still be found useful to hold up the example of suffering to those who were exposed to the still more fatal temptations of security and ease.

In the beginning of 251, Cyprian might have returned to Carthage, the violence of the heathen having somewhat abated. But Novatus still continued his irregular proceedings with the lapsed; and a little before Easter an open schism was formed against the bishop's authority. It was impossible to prevent such schisms, so long as the government was in the hands of the heathen. Cyprian and a whole council of bishops might have decided that certain persons were not to be admitted to communion; but if any body of persons, however small, thought proper to act in opposition to this decision, the majority had no means of punishing them. The only expedient was to include these refractory members in the same sentence of excommunication; but nothing could hinder them from communicating among themselves, and admitting other persons, who were so disposed, to join them. Thus the very attempt to preserve uniformity led the way to schism; and Novatus took the most effectual means to secure popularity for himself and his party, when he recommended and practised greater indulgence to the lapsed than what they were likely to obtain from the bishop.

As soon as Easter was passed, Cyprian was able to return; and his first act was to publish a treatise concerning the case of the lapsed, and then to convene a

council of several bishops and clergy. They decided that those who had actually sacrificed should submit for a time to a prescribed course of discipline; but that those who had only accepted the certificate, if they were truly penitent, should at once be restored to communion. The authors of the late schism were excommunicated.

While this council was sitting at Carthage, news was brought of Cornelius being elected to the bishopric of Rome. The absence of Decius, who had marched to check an invasion of the Goths, enabled the clergy to take this step; but the spirit of insubordination unfortunately spread from Carthage to Rome. Novatus had gone to the latter city, and found there a man who was in every way ready to copy his schismatical proceedings. This was a presbyter, named Novatian, who was charged with having denied his faith, and had been put out of communion by the clergy while the see was vacant.

The similarity of name in the two leaders of schisms at Rome and Carthage has been the cause of some confusion; and it has been asserted that there was only one individual, who was called indifferently Novatus, or Novatian, and who opposed himself to the constituted authorities of the Church in both cities. This, however, seems undoubtedly a mistake; and it is demonstrable from the letters of Cyprian, which are still extant, that there was a presbyter of Rome named Novatian, who was equally factious with Novatus, and who acquired still greater celebrity. He began by opposing the election of Cornelius, and setting himself up as a rival bishop, having persuaded three other bishops, who were simple, uneducated men, to come

from a remote part of Italy, and assist in his consecration. That there should at one time be two bishops of the same see was a thing perfectly unprecedented; the only exception having occurred at the beginning of the century, when Alexander was appointed as a coadjutor to Narcissus, in the bishopric of Jerusalem. In this case, however, the great age of Narcissus made him incapable of discharging his duties; and there is every reason to suppose that he perfectly agreed with the other members of his church, in wishing to have an assistant appointed. The decision was novel, but it was made unanimously, and to the great benefit of the church; whereas, in the case of Cornelius and Novatian, there was no doubt whatever, that the former was properly elected, and that the latter set himself up as a rival, with the support of a small minority. It was, however, very desirable that the schism should not spread; and Cornelius, as well as his clergy, were anxious that his election should be made known at Carthage. Cyprian also took pains to inquire into the case, and soon convinced himself that Cornelius was the lawful bishop. The next step of the Bishop of Rome was to assemble a council, which was attended by sixty bishops and a great number of presbyters. The proceedings of Novatian were condemned, and the decision of the council of Carthage concerning the lapsed was adopted, with the additional provision, that bishops or clergymen, if they had lapsed, should only be re-admitted to communion as laymen, and should no longer exercise their spiritual functions. Copies of this decision were sent to distant churches; and Cyprian showed the same wish to produce uniformity by announcing the election of Cornelius to all the African

churches, and by publishing a treatise on the unity of the Church.

It was necessary that the heads of the Church should act in concert with respect to the lapsed, since a spirit was displaying itself in several places of treating these unfortunate persons with the utmost severity. The Montanists, it will be remembered, had held the most unforgiving doctrines with respect to the heavier offences; and there were many who maintained that the Church had no power to forgive its members who had lapsed. Novatian embraced this principle in all its rigour, in which he seems to have been actuated merely by the love of opposing Cornelius: for Novatus, whose example he had followed in beginning his schism, went into the opposite extreme of over-indulgence, merely because Cyprian recommended caution in re-admitting the lapsed. From this time Novatianism became the name of a distinct and numerous party in the Church. All the more flagrant sins, as well as that of lapsing in the time of persecution, were held by this party to admit of no forgiveness: no repentance on the part of the offender, nor any course of discipline imposed by the Church, could entitle him to be re-admitted to communion. The Novatians, however, though at variance with the great majority of the Church upon this point, and often spoken of as heretics, were not heretical in any leading article of faith. Novatian himself, who was a man of learning, published a treatise upon the Trinity, which is still extant, and refutes the several errors which had then been entertained upon that mysterious subject. His followers also adopted the same form of church-government which they found already established. The members

of their community were schismatical, and the unanimity which had hitherto prevailed was broken; but they made no innovation in the outward form of their establishments; and we meet with Novatian bishops at several later periods of history, who were occasionally summoned to councils with the other heads of the Church, when measures of particular importance were to be discussed.

Cornelius and Cyprian were not the only bishops who took an active part in the question of the lapsed. Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, entirely concurred with them, and wrote letters, not only to the churches nearer home, but to Laodicea, and even to Armenia. The only bishop of any note who is mentioned as being inclined to agree with Novatian, was Fabius, bishop of Antioch. Cornelius had written to him soon after his own election, and Dionysius had done the same; and early in 252 a council was held at Antioch to consider the question. Fabius did not live to take part in it, but the decision was probably unfavourable to Novatian, since Demetrianus, who succeeded to the see, is known to have agreed in sentiment with Dionysius. The unanimity of all the principal churches was extraordinary. The names of Firmilianus, bishop of Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, and of Theoctistus of Cæsarea, in Palestine, are already familiar to us. Mazabanes of Jerusalem, Marinus of Tyre, Heliodorus of Laodicea, and Helenus of Tarsus, were also bishops of great note: and we are told generally, that all the churches in Syria, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Pontus, and Bithynia, adopted the same course.

This frequent intercourse between such distant churches took place in 251, when the persecution had

considerably abated. In the December of that year Decius was killed, and the imperial title was given to Gallus and Hostilianus. The latter soon fell a victim to a dreadful pestilence, which continued for fifteen years, and was perhaps a great cause of the Christians once more becoming the objects of popular fury. Cyprian had called a council in the May of 252, which prescribed the course of discipline necessary for the lapsed; but when the penitents were again exposed to trial by a revival of the persecution, it was agreed, at a second council in the same year, that those who had shown from the first a sincere contrition should immediately be admitted to communion. Gallus renewed the edict of Decius, which had ordered the Christians to sacrifice, and Cornelius was put to death in September. Lucius, who succeeded him, was obliged to leave Rome; and though he returned at the end of the year, it was only to encounter fresh sufferings; and in the March of the following year he was also added to the list of martyrs.

Cyprian, in the meantime, had the affliction of seeing many of his clergy dragged to prison or to death, but contrived to preserve his own life without leaving the city. The charity of the Christians at this season of trial was very remarkable. An incursion of barbarians had carried off a great number of prisoners from some part of Numidia, and Cyprian immediately raised a subscription for their ransom, which amounted to about £3000. Fortunately for the bishop and his flock, this second attack upon them was not of long duration. Gallus, after a short reign of seventeen months, was put to death; and Valerian was successful in defeating another rival, and securing the empire for himself. He

was now seventy years of age, and had always shown himself favourable to the Christians; so that his accession was a signal for their being once more freed from molestation. Their only suffering was what they shared in common with the heathen, from the continuance of the pestilence. Cyprian published a work upon the subject; and the kindness of the Christians to each other under this heavy visitation, could not fail to be contrasted with the reckless indifference or unnatural cruelty of the heathen. There is reason to think that Origen's eventful life was brought to a close at this period. He had continued in prison till the death of Decius, after which he appears to have resided at Tyre; amd since he died in his seventieth year, the event must have happened about 253.

We have already seen symptoms of his opinions being called in question, and of his meeting with some inconvenience in consequence of these suspicions; but it does not appear that the prejudice against him existed to much extent in his lifetime, nor for several years after his death. He was looked upon as a man of profound learning, and held the foremost rank among the champions of Christianity. This caused his name to be long held in great respect: and persons were not satisfied with studying and transcribing his works, but he was placed at the head of a school which honoured him with almost a religious veneration. Towards the end of the present century we read of an attack being made upon him by Methodius, bishop of Tyre. He was afterwards considered decidedly heretical upon several points, and his works have been condemned by bishops and councils: but persons who were able to read many more of his works than what have come

down to our own day, have taken a more favourable view of his opinions; and, like other questions which have been treated with a spirit of party, it seems most probable that this has given rise to much misrepresentation on both sides; and that without attempting to justify Origen for his bold and fanciful speculations, we may still stop short of condemning him as heretical on fundamental articles of faith.

The churches in the west of Europe were now sufficiently numerous to take an interest in the questions which were agitated, and to communicate with those of other countries. There is reason to think that several foreign missionaries, from Rome, or elsewhere, visited Gaul about the reign of Decius, some of whom travelled as far northward as Paris; and thus Christianity received a new impulse in that country.

The names of these missionaries have been preserved, and some of them being the same which were borne by companions of the Apostles, or by persons mentioned in the New Testament, great confusion has arisen in the early accounts of the plantation of Christianity in Gaul. Some churches in that country have claimed to have been founded in the first century; but it seems most probable that they received the Gospel at the time, and in the manner, above-mentioned; though it may also be true, as was stated in a former part of this history, that the south of Gaul was visited by some of the Apostles, or their immediate followers.

We have seen that Christianity had been established in that part of the country before the middle of the second century: and the Dacian persecution had given rise to the same questions about the lapsed which had been settled so amicably at Rome and Carthage. Mar-

cianus, bishop of Arles, was rather inclined to adopt the severity of the Novatians, which caused Faustinus, bishop of Lyons, and other neighbouring prelates, to write to Stephen, who now filled the see of Rome, and to Cyprian. It was natural for them to consult the two principal western churches; and Cyprian strongly urged Stephen to join the Gallic bishops in excluding Marcianus from communion, and to recognise the new bishop who should be appointed in his room.

The churches of Rome and Carthage could have nothing to do with appointing a bishop in Gaul; but it was optional with them to recognise his appointment or no; and if they did not recognise it, any member of his flock would be excluded from communion, if he visited Rome or Carthage. This made it important that the Gallic bishops should know whether they were likely to be supported in taking so strong a step as the deposition of one of their colleagues. If the churches of Rome and Carthage had continued to recognise the deposed bishop, a schism must unavoidably have ensued: but if the two most important cities in the west of Europe agreed to hold no intercourse with Marcianus, there was little chance of his being able to establish a party. We do not know what was the opinion or conduct of Stephen upon this occasion; but it is most probable that he followed the advice given him by Cyprian, and that their respective churches complied with the request of the Gallic bishops.

An application of rather a different kind was made about the same period to Cyprian from Spain. Two bishops of that country, Barsilides and Martialis, had been deposed for lapsing, and for other offences; but though they had confessed themselves guilty, they went

afterwards to Rome, and by making out a false statement to Stephen, they persuaded him to give them a favourable reception; upon which the two bishops, who had been elected in their room, went in person to Carthage, and laid their case before Cyprian. He immediately summoned a council of thirty-seven bishops, and the case appeared so plain, that a letter was written to the Spanish bishops in the name of the African council, advising them to adhere to what they had done. Cyprian apologised for the imprudence of the Bishop of Rome, by observing that he was a long way off, and had been deceived by a false account; but he added very plainly, that if any person held communion with the lapsed and degraded bishops, he became a partner in their guilt.

These two cases serve to show in what sense the bishop of one church could excommunicate the members of another. Such a power was exercised by every church, not in virtue of any authority which it had over other churches, but as a measure of safety and protection to its own members. The power appears to have been lodged with the bishop; but he generally acted with the advice of his clergy; and where there was an opportunity of consulting other bishops, the matter was frequently discussed in a council, as was the case at Carthage on the present occasion.

Stephen appears to have been of a hasty disposition, and to have entertained high notions of the dignity of his see. Cyprian, though equally firm, and conscious of the independence of his own church, was more conciliating, and did not dispute precedence in point of rank with the Bishop of Rome. If both had been

equally warm, their churches would have come to an open rupture upon another question which was now rising into importance. It had been the custom in the Eastern and African churches to baptize those persons who came over to the orthodox faith from heresy, although they had already gone through some form of baptism. It has been mentioned that a council held at Iconium, in 231, had decided against the validity of baptisms administered by heretics. But there were older decisions on the same side, and one of a council which had been held at Carthage in 215, while Agrippinus was bishop. If a person had been baptized in the Catholic Church, and afterwards fell into heresy, he might be re-admitted into the Church by the simple imposition of hands from the bishop; but in the other case he was not considered to be rebaptized, his former baptism being looked upon as null and void. The practice in the Church of Rome had been different; and if any person came over to it from heresy, he was admitted to communion without being baptized.

The reason of this difference between Rome and the other churches is perhaps to be traced to the fact which has been already noticed, that the Roman church (and the remark may be extended to all the Italian churches) had been less infected by heresies than any other. The Gnostics and Montanists had spread their opinions in Rome, but not till after they had taken deep root in the East; and the reception which they met with in Europe had never been so favourable as that which had attended them from the first in Asia. Every heresy had as yet taken its origin in the East; and the Roman church would comparatively have seen much fewer cases of persons coming over to the true faith

after having been baptized by heretics. It had not, therefore, been necessary at Rome to make any regulation upon the subject. Almost every religious party administered baptism with the same form of words which had been prescribed by our Saviour, and which was used in the Catholic Church. The Bishop and clergy of Rome had been satisfied with this; but Montanism had made such successful progress in Asia and Africa, that the bishops found it necessary to check the evil by pronouncing all baptisms to be invalid, except when administered within the Catholic Church. This decision could not fail to have the effect of throwing a discredit upon Montanism and the other sects; and we are, perhaps, doing injustice to the Asiatic and African churches, if we suppose them to have felt so warmly upon the mere question of baptism; whereas their real object was to preserve the unity of faith, and to guard their flocks from the contagion of heresy.

From some cause which has not been explained, the Bishop of Rome, about the year 254, had a controversy with some Asiatic bishops upon this point. It is not improbable that some member of the Roman church, who had been originally baptized in an heretical communion, had happened to travel into Asia, and been refused admission into the Church on the ground of the invalidity of his baptism. When he returned to Rome, he would mention the transaction to his bishop; and Stephen was not unlikely to remonstrate strongly with the parties who had offered what appeared such an insult to a member of his own church.

Firmilianus of Cæsarea, and Helenus of Tarsus, were two of the parties engaged in this dispute. Some others, from the same part of the world, went in person

to Rome; but Stephen would not even give them an audience, and threatened to hold no communion with the churches of Asia Minor. Matters had gone thus far when the same question was referred to Cyprian by eighteen African bishops. Cyprian never acted without consulting some members of his church; and a council of thirty-one bishops happened at this time to be assembled at Carthage. Early in the following year (256) another council of seventy bishops was held in the same city; and the decision of both councils was against the validity of heretical baptisms. Cyprian communicated these decisions to Stephen, in a letter which was mild and conciliatory, though he asserted strongly the right of every church to make rules for itself. Stephen replied in a very different tone. His opponents were termed perverters of the truth, and traitors to ecclesiastical unity; and the threat was renewed of excluding them from communion with the Church of Rome. This intemperate conduct did not deter Cyprian from adhering to his own opinion, though he made no direct reply to the letter of Stephen. Writing upon the subject shortly after, he said of his threat of excommunication, that the person who uttered it was a friend of heretics, and an enemy to Christians. He also sent copies of his letters to Firmilianus; and so anxious was he for the preservation of unity, that he convened another council in the autumn, of eighty-seven bishops, and a large number of clergy and laity. The decision was again the same as before; and the bishop had the satisfaction, shortly after, of receiving a reply from Firmilianus, fully approving of the conduct of the African churches. The Cappadocian bishop had much less respect for the dignity of the Roman see

than Cyprian was willing to pay to it; and it is to be regretted, that while he differed so totally from Stephen in his view of the question, he copied him so closely in the intemperance of his language. He spoke of him as a schismatic, and worse than all heretics. He even went so far as to say that his just indignation was excited by the plain and palpable folly of Stephen, who boasted of his episcopal rank, and of his being the successor of Peter; and as to the latter pretension, there were many things done at Rome, which were contrary to apostolical authority! Circumstances soon occurred, which hindered one of these parties from continuing this unhappy controversy.

CHAPTER XVI.

Persecution under Valerian.—Sabellius.—Gallienus restores tranquillity to the Church.—Dionysius of Alexandria.—Controversy concerning the Millennium.—Affairs in the East.—Paul of Samosata; his Depositions.—Reign of Aurelian.—Progress of Christianity.—Manicheism.—Probus and his immediate Successors.

IF the conduct of Stephen has hitherto caused us to view him in no amiable light, his violence may be forgotten in the firmness and intrepidity of his faith. Though the emperor Valerian had shown more indulgence to the Christians than any of his predecessors, and his own household had been filled with them, he was persuaded, in 257, to adopt a very different conduct. The author of the advice was Macrianus, who paid great attention to magicians and astrologers; and these men, who had promised him the empire, were particularly indignant against the Christians for exposing their magical delusions. The result was, that the aged emperor allowed an edict to be issued, that all persons should adopt the religious ceremonies of Rome. Bishops and presbyters were specially mentioned in this edict: and the punishment of exile was appointed for those who disobeyed. It was also added, that private meetings should not be held, and that no person should enter the cemeteries; these being the excavations already alluded to, which were used by the Christians for their religious meetings, and as hiding-places. The

punishment of death was not expressly contained in this decree; but while Macrianus was at Rome, there would be no difficulty in giving that interpretation to it, and one of the first victims was Stephen, who suffered martyrdom in August. His successor in the bishopric was Xystus.

By the end of the same month, a copy of this edict was delivered to Paternus, proconsul of Africa, who immediately prepared to execute it. Not only bishops and presbyters, but multitudes of the common people, even women and children, were brought to trial for their religion. Some of them were beaten, others were imprisoned, or sent to the mines in distant parts of Africa, this being now a common punishment to which the Christians were condemned. Cyprian himself was brought before the proconsul, and banished to Cumbis, about fifty miles from Carthage; but his confinement was not severe, and he was not only allowed to send letters and money to the Christians who were working in the mines, but even to address large congregations of persons who flocked to hear him.

The persecution does not appear to have begun so early in the diocese of Alexandria. Dionysius had time to write letters to Xystus, and others of the Roman clergy, upon the question of heretical baptisms, his own opinion having been already expressed in agreement with the African councils; and there is reason to think that Xystus was much more disposed than his predecessor to let the controversy drop. Dionysius also mentioned to the Bishop of Rome that he had been lately called upon to suppress a new heresy, which had been propagated in the diocese by Sabellius.

The opinions of this heretic resembled those already described as being held by Praxeas and Beryllus, or if there was any difference, it consisted in this, that the former heretics supposed the whole divinity of the Father to dwell in Jesus Christ; whereas Sabellius supposed it to be only a part which was put forth for a time, like an emanation, and was again absorbed in the Deity. All of them, however, agreed in denying the Son and the Holy Ghost to be distinct persons; and Dionysius, after writing some letters upon the subject, and having it discussed in his presence, delivered his own opinion more fully in writing. So anxious was he for unity upon a point of such vital importance, that in his letter to the Bishop of Rome he mentioned what he had done, and subjoined copies of his own letters.

This probably took place at the end of 257, or early in 258; for in the course of the latter year, Dionysius was himself brought before Æmilianus, the prefect of Egypt, and banished to Cephron, on the edge of the desert. The form of proceeding against him was exactly the same as in the case of Cyprian; and, like that bishop, Dionysius was able to make many converts in the place of his exile. He was then removed to Colluthion, nearer to Alexandria, where he appears to have stayed a considerable time.

Valerian had left Rome early in 258, to make war with Persia. He had previously given the title of Augustus to his son, Gallienus, and the names of both of them appeared at the head of public edicts; but Macrianus, who attended the emperor to the East, had the real management of all public affairs, and the persecution of the Christians may be ascribed entirely to himself. In the course of the present year he per-

suaded the emperor to send to the senate a much more sanguinary order than had yet been issued. It enacted that bishops, presbyters, and deacons should be punished immediately with death; but that senators, and men of rank, and knights, who were Christians, should be degraded and lose their property, and if they still persisted in their religion, they were to suffer capitally: women were to lose their property, and be sent into banishment. If any persons connected with the imperial household had confessed before, or should confess now, that they were Christians, they were to have their property confiscated, and to be sent abroad as prisoners. This iniquitous edict (copies of which were sent to all the governors of provinces) arrived at Rome about the middle of summer; and on the 6th of August, Xystus, the bishop, was put to death in one of the cemeteries, thus making the fifth bishop of Rome, in succession, who had suffered martyrdom in the space of eight years.

The venerable Cyprian was soon called to follow him. He had continued in confinement at Cumbis since the August of the preceding year, and soon after he had received the account of the death of Xystus, he was taken before Galerius, the proconsul, who ordered him to be beheaded; and the sentence was executed on the 14th of September. His works, which have come down to us, are perhaps the most interesting of any which had been written up to that period. His letters, which are numerous, throw great light, not only on his personal history, but on that of the times in which he lived, particularly on the controversies in which he was engaged; and the system of church-government, as pursued at that period, as well as the habits of inter-

course between different churches, are all remarkably illustrated by the writings of Cyprian.

Dionysius still continued separated from his flock, many of whom suffered death in various ways. The same cruelties were also practised in other countries; but they were suddenly checked, in 259, by the emperor Valerian being taken prisoner by the Persians, in which state he continued for ten years,—till his death. His son, Gallienus, who succeeded to the empire, immediately issued an edict for releasing the Christians from persecution; the first effect of which was, that the see of Rome, which had continued vacant for nearly a year, was filled up by the election of Dionysius, who, like his namesake of Alexandria, was a man of considerable learning. Gallienus, however, was not recognised through the whole of the empire. The army in the East gave the imperial title to Macrianus, whose authority was likewise acknowledged in Egypt: the consequence of which was, that in that country, and in Africa, the Christians were still exposed to severe trials. Fortunately, however, Macrianus and his two sons were put to death in 261, and Gallienus wrote himself to the Alexandrian Dionysius, giving him full permission to return to his diocese, and restoring any places which had been used for religious worship.

From the accession of Gallienus we may date the commencement of another period of peace to the Church, but it was marked, as before, by the growth of religious dissensions among the Christians themselves. The late persecution had by no means had the effect of checking the opinions of Sabellius; and the Bishop of Alexandria, even during his banishment, had employed himself

in repressing them. Soon after his return, a charge was brought against him, that, in some of the letters which he had published against Sabellius, he had spoken of the Son of God as a created being, and had not considered him to be of one substance with the Father. The expressions which he had used soon reached the ears of the Bishop of Rome, who felt so keenly upon the subject, that without waiting to see an exculpatory letter of the Bishop of Alexandria, he convened a synod of his own clergy, and wrote in their names to Dionysius.

Alexandria, in the meantime, had again become the theatre of tumult and bloodshed; but it was no longer a quarrel between the Christians and the heathen. Æmilianus, the governor of Egypt, finding the whole of the country inclined to support him, assumed the imperial title, towards the end of 261. Alexandria alone was divided; and the two parties of Gallienus and Æmilianus filled the city with slaughter, and reduced great part of it to a desert. Dionysius was in the habit of delivering a charge to his clergy at Easter; but at that season in 262, he could only address them by letter. He also wrote an answer to his namesake of Rome, and asked to be furnished with a copy of the charges brought against himself; but before the end of the year, Æmilianus was taken prisoner; and peace being now restored at Alexandria, the bishop was able to enter more fully into the question, and published a work in four books, entitled *Refutation and Defence.* Though the work itself has not come down to us, we learn, from a few fragments of it, that the writer had been entirely misrepresented as to his opinions about the Son of God. In his zeal to refute Sabellius, he

had, perhaps, used some incautious expressions as to the human nature of Christ, and had appeared to speak of him as a creature: but nothing can be more explicit than his denial of holding such a notion; and the fact of his being charged with it is so far satisfactory, that it shows the opinion of the Catholic Church in the middle of the third century to be equally opposed to Sabellianism, and to the notion of the Son being a creature. Dionysius of Rome also wrote against Sabellius, but the work has shared the fate of that of his namesake.

The controversy which employed the pen of these two bishops is of great importance in enabling us to understand the sentiments of the Church at large upon the doctrine of the Trinity. It has been the fashion, in ancient and modern times, to put forward the name of the Alexandrian Dionysius as a man who held a low opinion concerning the divinity of Christ. We have seen that the truth of this statement was expressly denied by Dionysius himself: but even if it had been proved, it would only show more strongly that the sentiments which are ascribed to Dionysius were not entertained at that time by the Church at large. If Dionysius lowered the doctrine of Christ's divinity, and was called to account by the Church for so doing, it follows necessarily that the Church did not itself maintain the belief which is censured in Dionysius: so that if the opposers of Christ's divinity imagine that they gain an advantage by claiming this distinguished bishop on their side, they must at the same time admit that they would have been considered heretical by the great body of Christians. If Dionysius believed the Son to be of one substance with the Father, he agreed with

the Catholic Church upon that point; but if he did not hold this doctrine, he differed from the Church.

The Bishop of Alexandria had no sooner contended against one error than he had to encounter another. The belief in a millennium, which had been held by several writers of distinction in the second century, had been rather on the decline since the beginning of the third. This was perhaps owing in some measure to its having been embraced by the Montanists, whose tenets had always been opposed by the heads of the Church; and the allegorical interpretation of Scripture, which had been carried so far by Origen and his school, may also have contributed to remove the notion of a millennium. Afterwards an Egyptian bishop, named Nepos, published a work entitled, *A Confutation of the Allegorists*, in which he defended the literal interpretation of Scripture, and deduced from it the doctrine of a millennium. Nepos was himself dead, but his work produced a great sensation, and gained him so many followers in Egypt, that Dionysius called together several of the clergy who took an interest in the question, and the discussion lasted three days. At length Coracion, who was the leader of the millenarians, acknowledged himself convinced, and pledged himself never to preach such doctrines again. Dionysius delivered his opinion more publicly, in a work, in two books, *Upon the Promises;* and from this time forward we find few writers of any note who defended the doctrine.

While the Alexandrian diocese was thus giving birth to religious speculations, the eastern part of the empire was suffering from an evil of a different kind. The Goths and other barbarous tribes overran

a large part of Asia Minor, and not only destroyed many of the inhabitants, but carried off great numbers as prisoners. Christians and heathens suffered alike from these savage invaders; but wherever they settled in the country, it was observed that a bad effect was produced upon the Christian part of the population. Conversion had been going on so rapidly in Asia, that there would necessarily be many imperfect and insincere believers in the Gospel; and some of these persons rather copied the licentious manners of their invaders, than endeavoured to bring them over to a purer creed. The evil was in some measure compensated by the prisoners who were carried away. Several of the clergy had been thus forced from their homes, and found themselves strangers in a foreign land. The Gospel was thus carried into countries which it had not hitherto reached. There is evidence that these Christian prisoners had great success in converting the natives; and it seems to have been about this period that the nations on the banks of the Danube, and the Gallic or German tribes which lived at the mouths of the Rhine, received for the first time a knowledge of Christianity. The charity of the Christians was also very strikingly displayed at the time of these invasions. One motive of these barbarians, in carrying off their prisoners, was to extort a sum of money for their ransom; and Dionysius, bishop of Rome, raised a subscription among his flock, to assist in procuring the liberty of some Cappadocian Christians. The letter which he wrote upon the subject to the Church of Cæsarea was read publicly in the congregations as late as the fourth century.

We have hitherto observed that cessation of perse-

cution was generally followed by the introduction of heresy, or some strange speculations in religion; but the reign of Gallienus presents us with the phenomenon of a bishop of one of the oldest and most important churches becoming heretical in a fundamental article of faith. In the year 265, a council was held at Antioch, to consider the opinions of Paul, a native of Samosata, who had been elected to the bishopric of Antioch, in 260. The Christian world had never yet seen so numerous a meeting of its spiritual rulers. The bishops of all the principal Asiatic sees, from Pontus to Arabia, were assembled on this occasion. The Western or European churches were too far off to send deputies to the council; but Dionysius of Alexandria was invited, and was hindered only by his great age from attending. He, in fact, died while the council was sitting, having first delivered his opinion in writing, which contained the strongest condemnation of the tenets of Paul.

The Bishop of Antioch is represented as arrogant and ostentatious in his conduct, and even corrupt in his morals; but the council was engaged in examining his religious sentiments. He appears to have blended the mystical philosophy of Plato with the doctrines of the Gospel; and we know that Longinus, one of the most celebrated philosophers of his day, was at this time residing at Antioch. It may be mentioned, that the new Platonic school, with respect to the celebrity of its teachers, was now at its height. Porphyry, who had studied under Longinus, went to Rome in 262, where he found Plotinus already established, and attended by many pupils. The books of the New Testament, and all the writings of the Christians, were

read by these philosophers, who laboured, as has been already stated, to prove that their doctrines were borrowed from Plato. Porphyry was one of the bitterest enemies that the Gospel encountered, and wrote a work against it, in twenty-one books; but it was a great gain to the Christians, when their opponents attacked them with the pen instead of the sword. The work of Porphyry was answered by Methodius, bishop of Tyre; but neither the attack nor the defence have come down to us.

The Bishop of Antioch had no intention of injuring Christianity when he allowed himself to borrow the notions of the Platonic philosophers. He still intended to continue a sincere believer, but his heretical tenets brought upon him the condemnation of all the Eastern churches. His opinion of Jesus Christ agreed in some respects with those of Theodotus and Artemas. Like those heretics, he denied the pre-existence of Christ, though he believed in his miraculous conception. He taught that Jesus was by nature, and at the time of his birth, a mere man; but that after his birth some portion of the divinity resided in him, so that he might truly be called God. He taught that it was the Mind or Reason of God which was said by Paul to have united itself to the man Jesus; and thus his doctrines have been said, not without foundation, to resemble those of the Ebionites and of the Sabellians. They were sufficiently subtle and heretical to alarm the heads of all the Eastern churches, who now flocked in crowds to Antioch, and the question was discussed with the deepest attention. Paul was accused afterwards of having managed his defence with an intention to deceive his opponents. He even promised to alter his

opinions; and Firmilianus of Cæsarea, whose age and character gave him a prominent place in the council, advised his colleagues to preserve, if possible, the unity of the Church, and not to make any formal decision. His advice was followed, and Paul was allowed to continue bishop of Antioch; but we shall see presently that lenient measures were of no avail.

Antioch was at this time subject to the government of Odenatus, who, from a private citizen of Palmyra, had raised himself by his victories over the Persians to receive from Gallienus the title of emperor, and the actual sovereignty of the eastern portion of the empire. He held his honours only for three years, being put to death in 267; upon which his wife, Zenobia, a woman of masculine and enterprising spirit, assumed the imperial title, and for some years maintained her independence against all the power of Rome. When the empire was divided, Antioch had naturally fallen to the share of her husband, and the bishop appears to have seen the policy of paying his court to Zenobia. Her preceptor in Grecian literature had been Longinus, which may have inclined her, if she took any part in religious controversy, to favour the opinions of Paul. It is certain that the bishop continued to propagate his heretical doctrines; and in 269 it became necessary for the heads of the church to interfere a second time, by holding a council at Antioch.

Some accounts represent the persons assembled to have been as many as one hundred and eighty. One of their first acts was to address a letter to Paul, which is still extant, and in which they laid down what was the belief of the Catholic Church concerning the point in question. They maintained the essential divinity

of Christ; his eternal pre-existence; his creation of the world; his relation to God as a Son—not as a creature; and his miraculous incarnation: and having supported these doctrines by copious references to Scripture, they asserted that this belief had been preserved in the Catholic Church from the time of the apostles. The discussion in the council was conducted principally by a presbyter, named Malchion, who was the chief teacher in a school of philosophy at Antioch. The questions put by him to Paul were taken down by shorthand writers, and afterwards published: and the council finally decided that Paul was to be deposed from his bishopric, and to be excluded from the communion of the whole Catholic Church. His place was filled up by Domnus, the son of his immediate predecessor, Demetrianus; and since the Eastern churches had alone taken part in the discussion, a circular letter was addressed to the bishop and clergy of every church, particularly of those in the West, acquainting them with the deposition of Paul, and the election of Domnus. The letter sent to Rome was addressed to Dionysius; but he probably did not live to receive it, having died at the end of the same year, when he was succeeded by Felix. Another copy had been addressed to Maximus, who was now bishop of Alexandria; and it is satisfactory to find, from the fragment of a letter addressed to the latter by Felix, that the Western churches were entirely in accordance with the Eastern in their belief in the divinity of Christ.

Though the council of Antioch had deposed Paul, and a successor had been elected in his room, the ejected bishop still kept possession of the building in which he had been accustomed to perform divine ser-

vice. It is probable that Zenobia supported him in this opposition to the council; and neither his own clergy nor the assembled bishops having power to enforce their own unanimous sentence, he continued to set them at defiance so long as Zenobia retained possession of Antioch. Her empire was, however, drawing to a close. The feeble Gallienus was put to death in 268, when Claudius succeeded, who has been said, but upon no sufficient authority, to have persecuted the Christians at Rome. If he did so, their sufferings did not last long; for Claudius himself died in 270, and the empire was shortly after given to Aurelian. The five years of his reign were almost incessantly employed in repelling invasions of barbarians, or in recovering the empire of the East from the intrepid Zenobia. By withdrawing the Roman troops from Dacia, he tacitly allowed the Goths and Vandals to occupy that great province; and since the country on both banks of the Danube thus became more settled and less liable to hostile invasion, we may perhaps date from this period the introduction of Christianity into Wallachia. In 272, Aurelian marched against Zenobia. Antioch surrendered to him; and the unhappy queen, after being defeated in a pitched battle, and losing her capital, Palmyra, was taken prisoner to grace the emperor's triumph at Rome. While the emperor was at Antioch, he was appealed to by the Christians to put them in possession of the building which was unlawfully retained by Paul. It was not likely that Aurelian would know anything of the rights and pretensions of the two rival bishops; but his decision was a very impartial one: instead of consulting the clergy of the place, who might be supposed to be interested, he

decided that he should be the lawful bishop with whom the Italian bishops, and particularly the Bishop of Rome, held communion. The council had already written to Rome, as also to other churches, announcing the fact of Domnus being Bishop of Antioch, so that the emperor's decision was immediately followed by Domnus being put in possession of all his rights; and thus the singular spectacle was exhibited of the Church being unable to enforce its own decrees, and calling in the aid of the civil power, though at this time it was exercised by a heathen.

It is almost needless to remark, that the Christians of Antioch were no longer afraid of avowing their religion. The late decision of the emperor was, in fact, a legal recognition of them. Their proceedings were now carried on openly; and neither in the capital nor in the provinces was there any occasion for concealment. Still, however, their personal safety depended, in a great degree, upon the will or caprice of the reigning emperor; and though no measures of the Government could have hindered Christianity from finally supplanting heathenism, it was in the power of the sovereign at any moment to let loose against it the passions of its implacable enemies. It is certain that Aurelian, at the time of his death, was meditating some measure of this kind, though we do not know the exact motives by which he was actuated. He is represented as not only cruel, but superstitious; and like Elagabalus, he singled out the sun as a particular object of worship. His mother had been priestess of that deity, and Aurelian had shown himself extravagantly profuse in ornamenting his temples; all which may incline us to conclude that it was merely the

superstition of an old man, acted upon by the persuasions of interested advisers, which led Aurelian to alter his opinion and his conduct with respect to the Christians. The persecution had perhaps begun in Rome, and in the places where he was personally present; but his orders had not reached the distant provinces when he died, apparently by treachery, in the March of 275, in the neighbourhood of Byzantium.

Tacitus, who succeeded him, revoked the edicts which had been issued against the Christians, but he lived only a few months after his accession; and his brother, Florianus, who assumed the imperial title at Rome, did not long survive him. Probus then established himself on the throne, and his reign of six years appears to have been one of tranquillity to the Christians; but it was during this period that the doctrines which are known by the name of Manichean began to spread themselves in Europe. They were first disseminated in Persia by Manes, a native of that country, who called himself a Christian, but took great liberties with the Gospel, by mixing with it some of his national superstitions. The Persians had from a very remote period believed in the existence of two principles—one of good, and the other of evil; and Manes taught that Jesus Christ was sent into the world to free it from the effects of the evil principle. He also adopted the same notion which had been held by the Gnostics, that the body of Jesus was a mere phantom. Manicheism found many followers. It seemed to account for the origin of evil without ascribing it to God as its cause; but it also led men away from considering the natural corruption of their own hearts, and entirely destroyed the doctrine of the atonement.

The fundamental absurdity of Manicheism was its believing in the existence of two eternal beings. This, however, was an error which it shared in common with every system of heathenism. There was no heathen philosopher who did not believe the elements of matter to have existed from all eternity; that they were not originally called into being by God, and that he had no power to annihilate them: it was sometimes conceived that the universe itself was an animated being. But the philosophy of Manicheism was different from any system which had been taught in Grecian or Roman schools: though some professors of Gnosticism appear to have held notions which bore a resemblance to those of Manes. The second principle or god of the Manichees was not matter, nor the material universe, but a being equally spiritual, intelligent, and incorporeal with the other. Everything that was good proceeded from one of these principles; everything that was evil proceeded from the other. It seems, however, to have been forgotten, that though this system represented God as exclusively the author of good, it subjected him to evil, though he was not the cause of it; for he was perpetually exposed to see his own works suffering from evils which he could not prevent: which must itself have been the greatest of evils to a being of perfect benevolence. And to this we must add, that such a notion entirely destroys the omnipotence of God: inasmuch as it supposes that there is something in existence, which he wishes not to exist, and yet which he cannot destroy.

It has been said that the evil principle of the Manichees bears a resemblance to the spirit of evil, or the devil, whose existence is so expressly asserted in the

Jewish and Christian Scriptures. But there is this essential difference between them. The devil was a fallen angel, and all the angels were created by God; whereas the evil principle of the Manichees was co-eternal with God. The agency of wicked spirits is allowed for wise reasons by God, who could at any moment take from them their power of inflicting evil or even of existing; but the good principle does not possess this power over the evil principle, according to the creed of the Manichees.

Manes is supposed to have been put to death in 277, which has caused the origin of Manicheism to be placed in the reign of Probus; but the personal history of that emperor has no connection with the progress of Christianity, which went on rapidly at this period, without any interference on the part of the Government to hasten or retard it. The emperor was generally engaged in distant wars, and was put to death in 282. Carus, who succeeded him, gave the title of Cæsar to his two sons, Carinus and Numerianus, the latter of whom has acquired the character of a persecutor. If Eutychianus, bishop of Rome, who died in 283, suffered martyrdom, there was probably some attack upon the Christians in the capital; but Numerianus could hardly have been the author of it. He accompanied his father into Persia, who died at Ctesiphon in the summer of 284; and he was himself put to death in Thrace, in the September of the same year. The title of his brother Carinus to the empire was acknowledged in the west of Europe; but as soon as the death of Numerianus was known, another emperor was put forward by the army, the memory of whose reign is one of the most painful in the annals of the Church.

CHAPTER XVII.

Accession of Diocletian.—Gradual Cessation of Miracles.—Herculeus Joint Emperor; Galerius and Constantius Cæsars.—Persecution of Christians begun.—Continued Severities.—Galerius and Constantius Emperors.—Tranquillity partially restored.—Death of Constantius.—Accession of Constantine, who favours and protects Christianity.—Ecclesiastical Endowments.—The Catholic Church.

THE reign of Diocletian, who was raised from an humble station to the empire in 284, was longer than that of any of his predecessors since the time of Hadrian. It carries us into the beginning of the fourth century; it presents us with the longest and bloodiest persecution which the Church had yet encountered; but it is also the introduction to that brighter and happier period when the religion of Christ achieved its final triumph, and mounted the throne of the Cæsars amidst the wreck and ruins of heathenism.

The reader has already been asked to pause more than once, that he might survey the state of Christianity, and trace its progress through successive periods of its history. At the beginning of the third century he found it exposed to persecution; but from the year 211 to the middle of the century it enjoyed comparative tranquillity, and obtained respectful notice even from emperors on the throne. The Decian persecution was then a fiery trial, which purified the Church from some of those corruptions which peace

and security are too apt to bring forth; after which another quarter of a century passed away, with little of external violence to stop the progress of the Gospel. It had now become evident that to stop it by any means was impossible. We have few materials for estimating the numerical proportion of Christians to heathens at the beginning of the reign of Diocletian. The question could only be raised with respect to those parts of the world which might be called civilised, and which were immediately subject to the dominion of Rome. It can hardly be doubted that the heathen still counted a large majority. The lower orders of people, particularly in the large towns, were still easily excited against the Christians; and the slow progress of their conversion may be accounted for by their total want of education, and their habitual depravity. It is with such men that miracles are almost necessary to produce any sudden and extensive impression; and at the beginning of the Gospel, when the foolish things of the world were to confound the wise, it pleased God to furnish abundantly the evidence of miracles. The consequence was, that the Gospel was then embraced eagerly by the poor; while the rich were restrained by their love of pleasure, and the wise by the pride of reason, from listening to a religion which required the moral and intellectual faculties to be submitted to its control.

The mere fact of the existence of miracles, as well as our knowledge of the depravity of the human heart and will, might lead us to conclude that Christianity would not have made its way at the beginning without miraculous agency. But if we may argue at all from probabilities, when speaking of the councils of the Almighty, we might expect that he would not have

continued this support to the Gospel, when it had provided itself with the ordinary human means for persuading men to embrace it. Such appears to have been the fact. There is reason to believe that miracles were by no means so common at the end of the first century, as they had been when all the apostles were alive; and though the persons who had received the gifts of the Spirit by the laying-on of the apostles' hands, continued to exercise these gifts as long as they lived, and miracles would thus be witnessed occasionally in the second century, they undoubtedly became much less frequent, as the writers of that period expressly testify. Whether they existed at all in the third century, has long been a matter of dispute; but God had now raised up other agents, and supplied them with other evidence for spreading the religion of his Son. If we cast our eyes from the time of the first preaching of the apostles to the end of the third century, the difference is not so much in the number of converts (for the day of Pentecost, which produced 3000 at once, is perhaps still the greatest phenomenon in the history of conversions), as in the rank and learning of the persons who professed the religion of Christ. It was this which made it no longer possible for the powers of this world to extinguish Christianity and re-establish heathenism: and when Diocletian was raised to the empire, the question merely was, whether the time was to be long or short, before the mass of the people adopted the religion of their superiors.

We shall have reason to see that Christianity had made no impression upon the heart of Diocletian himself; though, like most persons of his day, he did not view it with those feelings of prejudice and contempt

which it excited a century before. It had, in fact, obtained for itself toleration and respect, by the mere course of events, and by its coming so frequently into notice in all the circumstances of public and private life. The emperor's own household was filled with Christians, and it was no uncommon thing for not only the servants, but the wives and children of men of rank, to profess Christianity, though the head of the family still continued in heathenism. What is still more remarkable, Christians were appointed to the government of provinces, with an express exception in their favour, that they should not be required to join in sacrifices. It was well known that they assembled in large numbers, for the purpose of prayer; and the buildings in which they met began to assume an appearance of architectural splendour. This picture of Christianity, as it was at the accession of Diocletian, would be much more pleasing, if the manners of the clergy and of their flocks had corresponded with the purity of their doctrines. The unity of the Church in matters of faith was still preserved entire; and it might boast of members who, for piety and learning, have never been surpassed: but five-and-twenty years of peace had produced the same effect which was seen before the Decian persecution. Pride, indolence, jealousies, and dissensions, are named among the poisonous fruits of this long season of repose; and if Christianity had forced its way into all the transactions of civil and social life, it furnished a fatal warning to those who think that they may mix with the world, and yet that their souls are in no danger.

Few of the Christians were perhaps aware of the storm which was gathering over their heads; and

Diocletian might still have continued to give them toleration and protection, if he had found himself equal, by his own unassisted strength, to direct the vast machine of which he was the mover. There were, however, so many enemies to contend with, either rivals for the throne, or barbarous nations on the frontiers, that in 286, he admitted a partner in the empire, by giving the title of Augustus to Maximianus Herculeus; and in 292 the two emperors strengthened themselves still more, by giving the title of Cæsar to Galerius and Constantius. In the original partition, the government of Europe and Africa was committed to Herculeus, while the eastern part of the empire, including Egypt, was retained by Diocletian, who fixed his residence almost entirely at Nicomedia, in Bithynia. When the two Cæsars were created, Galerius took the command of Illyria, and Constantius in Spain and Britain; Italy and Africa still remaining subject to Herculeus. The Christian inhabitants of these countries soon found the difference of their respective governors.

Diocletian, who had retained the largest portion of the empire, was now advancing in age, and becoming less fond of active enterprise. His last military exploit of any moment was the reduction of Egypt, where a rival emperor had maintained himself for some years. While he was at Alexandria, he wrote an answer to a letter which he had received from Julianus, the proconsul of Africa; and it enables us to form some idea of his views upon matters of religion. The proconsul had been alarmed by the rapid spread of the Manichean doctrines in Africa, and consulted the emperor upon the subject. It was

perhaps the Persian origin of these doctrines which led Diocletian to take such a prejudice against them; and his letter is conceived in the bitterest spirit of religious intolerance. After speaking very strongly of the old religion being supplanted by a new one, and of the criminality of suffering established usages to go into decay, he ordered that persons professing Manicheism should suffer capitally, that their books should be burnt, and their property confiscated; but if any of them happened to be high in rank or station their property should be seized, and themselves sent to work in the mines. The terms of this letter have been mentioned more in detail, because it seems to show that the mind which could dictate such an order was not far removed from conceiving hostility to the Christians. It is by no means impossible, that the proconsul of Africa, either from ignorance or from design, may have confounded the Christians with the Manichees.

It must have been about the same time that a new heresy appeared in Egypt, which was founded by a man named Hieracas or Hierax. He professed himself a Christian; but his Egyptian education had led him to study astrology and magic, to which he added an acquaintance with the literature and philosophy of Greece. The Manichean doctrines, which were now becoming popular, soon attracted his notice. He prohibited marriage and the use of animal food; in which he followed the more rigorous of the Manichees: though there is reason to think that Manes did not impose this abstinence upon all his followers. Hierax appears to have borrowed largely from the Gnostics; and with respect to the nature of the Son of God, he had a notion peculiarly his own, which tended to a denial of

the eternal existence of the Son. His followers were called after him, Hieracitæ; and they were likely to be numerous, when we find Manicheism so widely spread as to attract the notice of the Government; and when we remember that many persons in Egypt had, from a long period, been following an ascetic or monastic life. It does not, however, follow that Hierax adopted the doctrinal as well as the practical principles of the Manichees. They seem to have been considered as a Christian sect, and may have had their share in bringing Christianity into disrepute, when persecution was beginning to revive at the end of the century.

The emperor had an adviser at hand, who was not likely to let his religious bigotry cool. Galerius, who was also his son-in-law, was of a savage, unfeeling disposition; and his ambition was gratified, in 297, by being sent on an expedition against Persia, from which he returned victorious. He did not conceal from Diocletian that he hated the Christians; but for some time he was not able to move him to any act of violence against them. Superstition at length came to his aid; and by urging that the Christians impeded the effect of their sacrifices to the gods, he persuaded the emperor to issue an order, in 298, that all persons holding office about court, or in the army, should be obliged to be present at sacrifices. Galerius could not at least prevail so far as to make the punishment capital; but a Christian was now obliged to choose between giving up his situation or denying his faith.

The countries which were immediately under the command of Diocletian and Galerius were likely to feel the effect of this edict. Herculeus, whose name was also fixed to it, was still more anxious than his colleague

to promote its execution; and there is some evidence that, both in Africa and at Rome, the Christians were treated with more severity than the letter of the edict warranted. Constantius alone refused to enforce it. He probably did not make any open resistance to what the emperors had ordered, but he took no pains to gratify them in their injustice; and the Christians of Gaul and Britain, who were committed to his authority, were exposed to much less inconvenience than those in any other part of the empire.

Galerius was as yet by no means satisfied with the success of his measures for harassing the Christians; but having met Diocletian, at Nicomedia, in the winter of 302, he persuaded him in the following spring to issue a more decisive edict. The terms of it were, that the churches of the Christians should be pulled down, and their books burnt; and if any persons refused to give up their books, they were liable to be punished capitally. The order was executed at Nicomedia on the day of its being first published; and the church, which stood on a high spot of ground, was demolished in a few hours by the soldiers. On the following day another edict was issued, that all Christians who held any public station should be removed; that inferior persons should be subjected to torture and imprisonment; and that no Christian should be allowed to be plaintiff in any cause. Their meetings were also strictly prohibited; and the houses in which they were held were liable to be seized for the use of the state. Copies of these orders were immediately sent to all the provinces, and in some places they arrived in time for the heathen to have the special gratification of destroying the churches on Good Friday.

The former order was also still in force, that Christians in office should attend the sacrifices; and the example was set in Nicomedia of punishing capitally those who refused to comply. Diocletian himself was now roused to more vigour by being persuaded that the palace at Nicomedia was twice set on fire by Christians. The first objects of his tyranny were his own wife, Prisca, and (which is still more extraordinary) her daughter Valeria, the wife of Galerius, both of whom had embraced Christianity; and both of them were compelled to join in a sacrifice.

It might have been thought that the two emperors were now satisfied with the orders which they had issued; and if the zeal of the people was deficient in molesting the Christians, it was excited by the publication of violent attacks upon their religion and its authors. Diocletian, however, had by this time fully adopted the views of his son-in-law; and symptoms of rebellion having shown themselves in Armenia and at Antioch, he chose to vent his indignation by still greater severities against the Christians. A new order was issued, that the heads of the churches in every place should first be put into prison, and then that every means should be used to compel them to sacrifice. Christian blood had already been made to flow, but from this time all doubt was removed as to the real meaning of the late decrees. Anthinius, bishop of Nicomedia, was beheaded, and great numbers of his clergy shared the same fate. Some were burnt to death; others were drowned; and the prisons were so full of these unhappy victims, that there was no room for ordinary criminals.

The same scenes were acted in various parts of the

empire; and we may judge of the extent to which the cruelty was carried, when we read of persons who had their lives spared, because, when they were senseless from pain, or their hands powerless from the rack, they were made to go through some act of sacrificing which satisfied the magistrates. Constantius alone refused to countenance such iniquitous proceedings; and if any churches were pulled down in the countries under his authority, it was not by his direction, and he gave the Christians all the protection in his power.

Before the end of the year, Diocletian and his son-in-law left Nicomedia, having first put forth another general order, that all persons whatever, not merely the clergy, should be compelled to sacrifice. The twentieth anniversary of Diocletian's accession to the empire furnished a good opportunity for putting this cruelty into practice, and the solemnity was kept by Galerius at Antioch, and by the emperor himself at Rome. In both places the Christians were exposed to much suffering; but, from some cause or other, Diocletian was so much displeased with his Roman subjects, that though it was the depth of winter, and his health was very unfit for travelling, he suddenly left the city, and in the summer of 304 found himself once more in Nicomedia. Notwithstanding his departure, the Christians of Rome were likely to have little respite, while that division of the empire was under Herculeus; and Marcellinus, the bishop, who died in the month of October, is said by some writers to have suffered martyrdom. The see continued vacant for three years, which might also seem to indicate more than an ordinary persecution. This was certainly the case in Africa and Egypt, which were likewise under the government

of Herculeus. Several of the bishops and clergy were put to death by Anulinus, proconsul of Africa; and particular pains seem to have been taken, in that country, to force the Christians to give up their books. It was thought that many persons showed too great a willingness to surrender them; and the name of *traditores*, which they continued to bear ever after, carried with it no small disgrace.

In the meantime, Diocletian's health was becoming rapidly worse; and in 305 Galerius was able to accomplish his favourite design, of persuading him to abdicate the empire. He even succeeded in prevailing upon Herculeus to do the same: upon which the title of emperor was assumed by himself and Constantius, and that of Cæsar was given to Severus and Maximinus. This was followed by a new partition of the empire. Galerius retained Illyria, Greece, Egypt, and all the East, while Africa and the west of Europe fell to the share of Constantius.

This was a fortunate change for the Christians of Africa and Europe, who had before been suffering under Herculeus. Persecution was now almost at an end in those countries; and the case of the lapsed occupied the attention of the bishops, as it had done after the reign of Decius. Though Egypt was still under Galerius, Peter, who was now Bishop of Alexandria, and who was old enough to have experienced the sufferings of the former period, published a set of rules for all the different cases of the lapsed, in which he followed generally the mild and indulgent measures of his predecessor, Dionysius, and of Cyprian. A council was held about the same period at Illiberis, or Elvira, in Spain; the decisions of which, with regard

to the lapsed, partook much more of the severity of the Novatians; and we may perhaps trace the same principles in another canon of this council, which ordered that bishops and clergymen, if they happened to be married, should live separate from their wives. Paintings in churches were likewise forbidden, as was the use of wax candles in the cemeteries, because they were used at heathen festivals.

We must remember that this was not a general council, and that its decisions were binding only upon those churches which sent bishops to attend it. It had long been the custom for such councils to be assembled; and the division of the empire into provinces suggested an arrangement which was found convenient for the Church. Provincial councils appear to have been held every year, or sometimes oftener; and it happened, as might have been expected, that the decisions of one council were, in some instances, opposed to those of another. This, however, was not the case in matters which were considered essential. Upon these great points the whole Catholic Church had hitherto been unanimous; but where the question was of less importance, affecting merely a point of discipline or of ceremony, not only every provincial council, but every separate church, was at liberty to make its own regulations.

Mensurius, bishop of Carthage, was consulted upon another occasion, which arose out of the late persecution. It has been mentioned that it was the custom to keep up the memory of martyrs by an annual celebration; but their names had now become so numerous, that it was necessary to have some selection of them, which was generally left to the bishop; and Mensurius

was consulted as being the chief bishop of the province. He wrote in reply, that those ought not to be placed on the lists of martyrs who had courted death voluntarily, or who had surrendered their books before any inquiry was made. It even appears that some persons had been anxious to be put into prison, either for the sake of the support which they received there from the charity of the Christians, or that the credit which they gained as confessors might cause their former irregularities to be forgotten.

While the Christians in the West had leisure to pay this attention to their spiritual concerns, their brethren in the East had occasion bitterly to lament the elevation of Maximinus, who was in every way suited to second the cruelty of Galerius. Syria and Egypt were committed specially to his government: but we read of great barbarities being occasionally practised in Mesopotamia, Arabia, Cilicia, Cappadocia, and Pontus. Orders were sent into all the provinces that the heathen temples should be restored. Men, women, and children were to be compelled to attend the sacrifices, and to taste the meat which had been offered to some idol. By a refinement of cruelty, it was also ordered that whatever was offered for sale in the market should first have been made to touch a portion of the sacrifice; and the managers of the public baths were to let no persons wash themselves clean from these pollutions. It was a common sight to see crowds of Christians, even aged bishops and clergymen, transported from their homes to work at hard labour in the mines. Others had one of their eyes put out, or the joints of their feet dislocated. Peter, bishop of Alexandria, was obliged to save his life by flight: and, as if the

Church had not suffered sufficiently from the violence of its enemies, internal dissension was now added to its misfortunes. Meletius, bishop of Lycopolis, taking advantage of the absence of Peter from Alexandria, undertook to make regulations which none but Peter himself had power to make. It was in vain that other Egyptian bishops remonstrated with him upon his conduct, he found a party willing to support him: and the Meletian schism continued for some years to distract the Alexandrian Church.

It might be thought that the Bishop of Lycopolis was guilty of no irregularity in making rules for his own flock, but that he was only exercising a right which was possessed by the independent head of every church. This, however, was not the nature of the transaction in which he was engaged. The early history of the jurisdiction of bishops is involved in some obscurity: and it is probable that different customs prevailed in different countries: but we have sufficient authority for saying that the Bishop of Alexandria exercised a kind of supremacy over several other churches. His diocese, in the modern sense of the expression, was very extensive, though it resembled rather what is now called the province of an archbishop. The churches, not only of Egypt and the Thebaid, but of Pentapolis, and other districts of Africa, acknowledged him as their primate. Alexandria was the ecclesiastical, as well as the civil, metropolis of that portion of the empire; and the Bishop of Alexandria, as a metropolitan bishop, had rights and privileges which were not enjoyed by the other bishops of his province. It would be difficult to define exactly the nature of these privileges. Some of them were rather

matters of dignity and precedence, than of any actual authority; but there were several affairs to be transacted in a province which required the sanction, if not the presence, of the metropolitan. The Bishops of Rome and Carthage were primates, or metropolitans, in the same manner with the Bishop of Alexandria: and in course of time the same system prevailed in every province: but we know that it was introduced into these churches, and some others, as early as the third century, if not before.

We may now understand why the conduct of Meletius was so irregular, and brought upon him such universal condemnation. Instead of respecting the rights of Peter, as his metropolitan bishop, he acted in defiance of them, and even exercised them himself. The time which he chose for this flagrant breach of discipline was an aggravation of the offence. When his primate was in concealment, and the whole Egyptian Church in the greatest distress, he tried to introduce the additional evils of insubordination and discord; and the sequel of his history will show that he was much too successful in accomplishing this object.

Maximinus continued his cruelties for several years, particularly in Egypt and Palestine; but political changes took place, which materially affected the condition of the Christians in other parts of the world. In 306, Constantius died at York: and his son Constantine, who was now in his thirty-second year, and had been residing with Galerius at Nicomedia, contrived to elude the emperor's vigilance, and to arrive in Britain just before his father expired. The soldiers would immediately have given him the title of emperor, but he was satisfied with that of Cæsar, which was

conferred upon him by Galerius; and he continued to show to the Christians the same indulgence and protection which they had received from his father. There is no evidence that Constantius was converted to the Gospel, but he seems to have discarded the errors of polytheism, and to have brought up his son Constantine in the same notions with respect to religion. Neither of them, perhaps, had any fixed creed: but they could not be ignorant that the principles of Christianity were purer than those of any heathen system; and that Christians, though they might be mistaken in the object of their worship, were at least sincere in offering it. The effects of this conviction upon the mind of Constantine were immediately visible, in suppressing all attempts at persecution in Gaul and Britain.

It has been asserted that the mother of Constantine was the daughter of a British prince; but it has been proved that the story rests upon no good foundation; and our island has no claim to any peculiar connection with Constantine, except that the title of Cæsar was given to him in Britain, and that it was for some time subject to his government, as it had been to that of his father. It is pleasing to think, that during the whole of this long and violent persecution, the British Christians were exposed to very little suffering. Their first martyr is always said to have been Albanus; but he probably died about the year 286, before the great persecution began, and while Herculeus was commanding in the west of Europe.

Italy, which had been under the government of Constantius, was, for some time after his death, the theatre of contending parties. In October of the same

year the Romans gave the imperial title to Maxentius, who was son of Herculeus, and son-in-law of Galerius. His first act was to prevail upon his father to resume the rank which he had abdicated; and finding it politic to ingratiate himself with all his subjects, he issued an order that no person should molest the Christians. He probably meant nothing by this pretended kindness. He promised at the same time to restore to the Christians the places of worship which had been taken from them: but when Melchiades was elected bishop, in 310, he found the fulfilment of the promise no nearer than it had been four years before. He sent some of his deacons to claim possession of the buildings, and we are not informed whether the application succeeded: but the transaction seems to show that the Christians of Rome were at least not exposed to any personal suffering at this period. It is plain that their numbers were now sufficiently great to make their support an object of importance to competitors for power. In the case of Maxentius, it gained them a temporary cessation from annoyance; but such favours were not likely, on the whole, to be beneficial to the cause. In the first place, if one party paid court to the Christians, the other would look upon them with dislike; but the worst consequence was, that the Christians would be induced to take part in political dissensions, from which, as we have seen on former occasions, they had contrived to keep themselves free.

It was not likely that Galerius would allow Maxentius thus to set his authority at defiance. Upon the death of Constantius, he had given the title of emperor to Severus; and, in the spring of 307, he sent him at the head of an army to march to Rome. The expedition

ended in the flight and death of Severus; and Galerius, who followed in person at the head of another army, was obliged to retreat with equal disgrace into Illyria. Maxentius being now at liberty to act as he pleased, proceeded to extend his authority into Africa; but Alexander, who commanded in that country, assumed the imperial title himself, and maintained it for three years. He was perhaps aware that Maxentius had favoured the Christians, which may account for his pursuing an opposite conduct; and the persecution, which for two years had nearly subsided in that country, was now revived. Mensurius, bishop of Carthage, was a personal sufferer, and died during the usurpation of Alexander, or shortly after; for though Maxentius succeeded in putting his rival to death in 311, the African Christians did not return to a state of security till the end of the following year, when Maxentius sent an order into Africa that they should not be molested.

Maximinus, in the meantime, had been carrying on his cruelties still more actively than before. He had expected Galerius to have given him the title of emperor upon the death of Constantius; and when he found it conferred first upon Severus, and afterwards upon Licinius, he assumed it himself, without waiting for permission from Galerius, at the end of the year 307. Palestine and Egypt were again the scenes of his wanton and inhuman barbarity. The martyrdom of Pamphilus at Cæsarea, in 309, attracted particular commiseration. He was a man of great learning, and had written out nearly all the works of Origen with his own hand. Being thrown into prison, in 307, he employed himself in writing a defence of Origen,

whose opinions were now beginning to be called in question. He was assisted in the work by Eusebius, who was now about forty years of age, and who was such a devoted admirer of Pamphilus, having been his pupil for many years at Cæsarea, that he is frequently called Eusebius Pamphili. After lying in prison two years, Pamphilus was beheaded, with twelve of his companions; and their bodies were exposed for four days, by order of the governor, that the birds and beasts might eat them.

In the midst of these dismal scenes, a gleam of light burst upon the Christians from a quarter in which it was least expected. At the end of 309, Galerius had been taken extremely ill. He continued in a wretched state of suffering through the whole of the following year; and, in the spring of 311, when his death was evidently approaching, his conscience began to smite him for his treatment of the Christians. A few days before he breathed his last, he issued an edict, which bore the names of Licinius and Constantine, as well as his own, in which the Christians were allowed to have buildings for the exercise of their worship. It was, in fact, an order for the cessation of persecution, and was immediately followed by hundreds of unhappy victims returning to their homes from prison or the mines. Among the rest, Peter was able to re-visit Alexandria, after having been in concealment five years; and one of his first acts was to convene a synod of bishops, which pronounced a sentence of deposition against Meletius: but unfortunately his schism continued for some years to disturb the Alexandrian Church.

Maximinus was a very unwilling spectator of the returning happiness of the Christians. Immediately

upon the death of Galerius, he marched against Licinius, and the two emperors were on the point of coming to an engagement: but they made a fresh arrangement of their territories without a battle; and Maximinus, thinking it not safe at present to oppose his colleagues in the empire, gave verbal orders to his ministers, that the persecution of the Christians should cease. He never intended this temporary calm to continue. Before the end of the year, he was again at Nicomedia, and measures were taken for renewing the attack upon the Christians, in all the countries subject to his authority. Petitions were got up in several cities, which requested him not to allow the Christians to live there; and under pretence of complying with the wishes of his subjects, he began to practise the same system of torture and mutilation which had been used before. He also made the fruitless attempt to re-establish heathenism, by having priests appointed in every town, and a high priest, selected from persons of the highest rank, for every province, which confirms the statement made above that the custom of having metropolitan bishops was now becoming general in every province. Egypt was now under the government of Hierocles, who not only seconded his master by the cruelty of his punishments, but also published a work against Christianity, which called forth an answer from Eusebius.

The heathen appear at this time to have made a more vigorous effort than usual to injure Christianity with the pen. They had found that force was useless, and their only hope lay in the effect which might be produced by the publication of written attacks. For this purpose, the calumnies were revived which had been circulated in the first and second centuries against

the Christians. A work was forged, under the name of the "Acts of Pilate," which gave a false and disgraceful account of the life of Jesus; and pains were taken that children at school should learn their lessons from such books as this. The Christians were well prepared to meet their opponents in the field of literary discussion. They had now been explaining and defending their religion for nearly two centuries, and few writers of note had ventured to appear against them. The Church was well supplied with men of learning and genius at this critical period. The names of Lactantius and Arnobius are particularly recorded, because their works have come down to our own day. Both of them were natives of Africa, and both of them teachers of rhetoric. Their defence of Christianity will therefore be read with interest, as showing what was thought by laymen, who were mixing with the world, and who had no interested motives in the maintenance of Christian worship. Their works, as might be expected, bear marks of superficial information, and of inaccuracy upon doctrinal points. They are not to be consulted as standards of Christian faith, like many of those venerable productions which came from the earlier fathers; but they show, to a certain extent, the popular notions concerning Christianity, and their powerful exposure of the follies and impieties of paganism has never been surpassed. Perhaps the most learned man who was now in existence was Eusebius, but his history rather belongs to that part of the fourth century which followed the persecution; and we must return to a consideration of the cruelties perpetrated by order of Maximinus.

Peter, bishop of Alexandria, who had returned so

lately to the city, was martyred in November; and his clergy suffered so severely from these renewed hostilities, that they were unable for a twelvemonth to fill up the bishopric. A whole village in Phrygia is stated to have been burnt, all the inhabitants having declared themselves to be Christians. Maximinus marched in person into Armenia, where the Gospel had made great progress, and two kings in succession are reported to have been Christians. The invasion, which took place early in 312, ended in the repulse of Maximinus; and he soon had to act upon the defensive against much more formidable opponents.

He had for some time been corresponding with Maxentius, in the hopes that they might both join their forces against Constantine; but in the October of 312, Maxentius had to contend with Constantine for his empire and his life, under the walls of Rome. Historians have related, that shortly before the battle, the appearance of a cross was seen in the heavens by Constantine and his army; and there has been much discussion, whether the whole story was a fiction, or whether the figure of a cross was actually seen in the sky, either as the effect of a miracle, or as an optical illusion, which has sometimes been witnessed. However the case may have been, the army of Constantine gained a signal victory. Maxentius was drowned in the river; and when the conqueror entered the city, he caused the emblem of the cross to be treated with particular respect.

We must certainly infer from this part of Constantine's history, that the number of Christians had been exceedingly on the increase of late in Rome. It is true that much may be attributed to the effects of a recent

victory, and to the example set by the conqueror, who was himself at the head of the empire. But the change is too great and too sudden to be accounted for merely on these grounds. We might almost say, that the capital of the world was on one day in the darkness of heathenism, and on the day following it was enlightened by the Gospel. There is at least no trace of any opposition being made to the orders of the emperor, when the cross of Christ was seen for the first time to be raised in public triumph, and to command respectful adoration from those who had so lately treated it with contumely and scorn. It can hardly be said that the rapid conversion was owing to that principle of obsequious flattery, which causes subjects to follow the caprice of their rulers; for Constantine's own opinions appear to have been very unsettled up to the time of his entering Rome; and doubts have been entertained as to the sincerity of his conversion even after this period. But these observations were made with special reference to the inhabitants of Rome; and if the populace of that city had felt towards the Christians as they had done at the beginning of the last century, no example or authority of the emperor would have inclined them to acquiesce in the honours paid to Christianity. It was little more than half a century since five bishops of Rome had been murdered in succession; but now there was no officer in the empire who was higher in favour with the emperor, or treated with more deference and respect, than the Bishop of Rome. The victory over Maxentius was merely a sequel to another victory, which had been won silently and insensibly by the Christians over their heathen enemies: and Con-

stantine rather followed than led the way in raising Christianity upon the ruins of heathenism.

From this victory we may date the cessation of the persecution, which had now lasted, with occasional intermissions, for ten years. Constantine stayed in Rome three months; and being joined by Licinius at Milan early in the following year, he issued an edict in both their names, which allowed to every person and sect the free exercise of their own religion. No peculiar preference was shown to the Christians, except that they were allowed to hold meetings and erect churches; but the edict was, in every sense of the term, one of entire toleration. Copies of it were sent to Maximinus, who immediately began the same system of dissimulation which he had practised two years before. He gave orders for releasing the Christians from any molestation on account of their religion; but before he had time to show again the insincerity of his intentions, he was obliged to give battle to Licinius in the neighbourhood of Adrianople, and was totally defeated. He was closely pursued by Licinius, and, halting for a while at Nicomedia, he published a still more favourable edict for the Christians than that which had been issued at Milan. The latter had contained some conditions which were now removed: and instead of merely allowing the Christians to hold meetings and erect churches, it expressly provided, that if any person had bought, or received as a gift, any land or building which had belonged to the Christians, he should restore it to them, and receive an indemnification from the Government.

It is plain, from the terms of this edict, that the Christians had for some time been in possession of

property. It speaks of houses and lands which did not belong to individuals, but to the whole body. Their possession of such property could hardly have escaped the notice of the Government; but it seems to have been held in direct violation of a law of Diocletian, which prohibited corporate bodies, or associations which were not legally recognised, from acquiring property. The Christians were certainly not a body recognised by law at the beginning of the reign of Diocletian; and it might almost be thought that this enactment was specially directed against them. But, like other laws which are founded upon tyranny, and are at variance with the first principles of justice, it is probable that this law about corporate property was evaded. We must suppose that the Christians had purchased lands and houses before the law was passed: and their disregard of the prohibition may be taken as another proof that their religion had now gained so firm a footing, that the executors of the laws were obliged to connive at their being broken by so numerous a body.

It would, perhaps, be idle to speculate upon the nature of the property which was in the possession of Christian communities at the end of the third century. Some of the buildings may be presumed to have been those which were used for the purpose of their congregational worship. But the edicts of restitution, which were now published by the emperors, spoke of lands as well as buildings; and these could only have been purchased for the sake of the income which they produced.

Here, then, we have indications of Christian communities having a common fund or stock, part of which they invested in land, and received the rent. That

they had such a common fund at a very early period has already been observed: when it was stated to have arisen entirely from voluntary contributions among the faithful, and to have been expended in maintaining the clergy and the poorer brethren. The purposes of religious worship also required a certain expenditure, even when it was a service of personal danger to the Christians to meet together, and their devotions were offered in the cemeteries or other places of concealment. In the course of the third century, when their religious edifices began to be accommodated to the wants of their increasing numbers, it would be necessary to devote a larger share of the public property to this purpose. It might also be found expedient for the bishops and their clergy to have a more settled income than that which accrued from the voluntary contributions of their flocks. Some portion of the public money was therefore devoted to what may be called the permanent endowments of the Church. The custom of voluntary offerings still continued, and part of this sum was distributed in charity to the poorer members. But part of it was occasionally applied to the purchase of houses and lands; and it was this public property of the Church which had been confiscated during the persecution, and was now restored to the Christians by the recent edicts.

Maximinus, in the meantime, continued his flight; and having discovered, when it was too late, his fatal error, he published an edict which gave to the Christians complete toleration. It was, in fact, a copy, in all its provisions, of that which the two emperors had lately put forth; but he gained nothing by this tardy recantation. Having retreated as far as Tarsus, he met his death in that city by poison. His ministers and

confidential friends were put to the sword, and even his wife and children were not permitted to live.

Constantine had published in Europe the same favourable edicts which had been circulated by Licinius in Asia. From this period we can hardly avoid considering him a convert to Christianity, though he was not baptized till several years later. In the midst of his civil and military occupations, he paid the most minute attention to the affairs of the Christians, and entered even into their private disputes with all the zeal of one who had been long converted. He seemed to step at once, and without an effort, into his new station of protector of religion. He wrote to the proconsul of Africa, pressing upon him the execution of the recent edicts, and ordering also that the clergy of that country should be paid a sum of money from the public treasury; and sent another letter to Cæcilianus, bishop of Carthage, authorising him to receive and distribute the money. At the same time, he relieved all persons engaged in the sacred ministry from the burden of holding any public office; but the emperor was not aware that this measure of intended kindness involved him in a dispute upon a question of great importance to the African Church.

The election of Cæcilianus to the bishopric of Carthage had been opposed by a party of which Donatus was the leader, and which was called from this circumstance the party of the Donatists. When Constantine sent the order concerning the immunities of the clergy, the Donatists applied to the proconsul for their own clergy to be admitted to the benefit of it; and, at the same time, they made some serious charges against Cæcilianus. The whole matter was referred to Con-

stantine, who happened at that time to be in Gaul; and he ordered Cæcilianus, with ten bishops of his own party and ten of the opposite party, to go to Rome, where a council was to meet and decide upon the question. The emperor wrote himself to Melchiades, who now filled the see of Rome, and also to three bishops in Gaul, as well as to some in Italy, requesting them to attend the council: and the decision to which they came entirely acquitted Cæcilianus from the charges brought against him, and pronounced a sentence of excommunication against Donatus.

The reader will have observed, that these acts of Constantine were not considered as an undue interference on his part in the affairs of the Church. As soon as he was converted, he became himself a member of the Church. It was his duty to feel an interest in its concerns, and when any question was referred to him as the head of the empire, it was his duty to provide for its being amicably settled. In matters of a temporal nature, when the Christians were viewed merely as one portion of his subjects, he made what regulations he pleased concerning them, according to the power which was vested in him as head of the state; but when he saw them disputing among themselves upon points of doctrine or discipline, in which the rest of his subjects had no concern, he took the best measures which he could for leading them to settle their differences. For this purpose he always directed a meeting of bishops and clergy; which, as we have seen, had been the custom among the Christians themselves before the Government took any interest in their proceedings; and the unanimity which prevailed in these meetings upon all subjects of importance, is one of

the most striking features in the history of the early Church.

We may also form a favourable idea of the good sense and right feeling of Constantine, when we find him so anxious to keep up this ecclesiastical unity. In his letter to Cæcilianus, which was written not many months after his victory over Maxentius, he shows an interest in Church questions, and an acquaintance with existing parties, which could hardly have been expected in one so recently converted. He speaks of the Catholic Church, as if it was an expression with which he had been long familiar; and whenever the unity of the Church was disturbed, though he did not himself pretend to decide which party was right, he had the sense to perceive that truth could rest with one party only, and that it was his duty to side with those whose opinions were in agreement with the universal Church.

The term *Catholic* was applied to the Church, as comprising the whole body of believers throughout the world, as early as the middle of the second century, and perhaps much earlier; and the preceding history has shown us how anxious the heads of the churches felt, in every country, that their members should hold communion with each other, and that this communion should not be extended to any who held sentiments at variance with those of the whole body. During the three first centuries, if a Christian went from any one part of the world to another, from Persia to Spain, or from Pontus to Carthage, he was certain to find his brethren holding exactly the same opinions with himself upon all points which they both considered essential to salvation; and wherever he travelled he was sure of being

admitted to communion: but, on the other hand, if the Christians of his own country had put him out of communion for any errors of belief or conduct, he found himself exposed to the same exclusion wherever he went; and so careful were the churches upon this point, that they gave letters or certificates to any of their members, which ensured them an admission to communion with their brethren in other countries.

The first dispute of any moment was that concerning the Paschal festival; but churches which differed upon this point continued to hold communion with each other; and the Bishop of Rome was thought decidedly wrong when he made this difference a cause of refusing communion. So strong a measure was only considered necessary when the difference involved an essential point of doctrine. The Montanists were not erroneous in doctrine; and there is no evidence that every Montanist was put out of communion by his own church. In countries like Asia Minor, where the party was so numerous, it would have been hardly possible to do this; but churches which were not yet infected sometimes thought fit to exclude the Montanists; and at the end of the second century, the breach was rather formed by the Montanists separating from the Church than by the Church issuing any decree against them. This, however, appears to have been done at the beginning of the third century; and when Montanism began to decline, which it did shortly after, the bishops proceeded as far as to treat its supporters as heretics.

When a matter of faith was at issue, there was no room for doubt or difficulty. If a man did not hold the articles of faith which were taught by the Church,

and which he had himself recited at his baptism, he could not receive the bread and wine which were taken as a proof of his holding this faith. Thus Theodotus, who did not believe the Divinity of Christ, was excluded from communion when he went to Rome. The same church excluded Praxeas for denying the personality of the Son and Holy Ghost; and when a doctrine somewhat similar began to spread in the Alexandrian diocese, the bishop, who opposed it, was so desirous to know that he was acting in agreement with other churches, that he sent copies of his own letters to Rome. The reader will recollect that the Bishop of Rome was not satisfied with his brother of Alexandria, on account of some expressions in these letters which seemed to imply that he believed the Son to be a created being: such a notion was known to be at variance with the doctrine of the universal Church; and the Bishop of Alexandria proved, to the satisfaction of the Church, that his opinions were perfectly sound. The case of Paul, bishop of Antioch, was still more remarkable. The council which deposed him might be called a general council of the Eastern Church; and steps were taken by the parties assembled there to inform the Western churches of their reasons for deposing the heretical bishop.

It is in this way that we are able to ascertain, at different periods of history, the sentiments entertained by the Church on various points of doctrine. We have also the works of the early Christian writers, which show that the Church maintained the same doctrines during the whole of the period which we have been considering. If we take any particular opinion, Sabellianism for instance, we know for certain that it

was not the doctrine of the Catholic Church. Whenever it was brought forward by Praxeas, Noëtus, Beryllus, or Sabellius himself, it was uniformly condemned, and that not merely by one writer, or by one church, but by the consentient voice of all the Eastern and Western churches. If we wish to know whether the divinity of Christ was an article of belief at the period which we have been considering, we find no instance of its being denied till the end of the second century, when Theodotus was put out of communion by the Roman Church for denying his belief in it. A few years later, Dionysius of Alexandria was obliged to defend himself from the charge of not believing it; and all the Eastern churches put forth their declaration from Antioch, that not only did they all maintain this article of belief themselves, but that it had been maintained by the Catholic Church from the beginning.

Creeds and confessions of faith were, during this period, and especially the former part of it, short and simple. While there were no heretics, there was no need to guard against heresy. Antidotes are only given to persons who have taken poison, or who are likely to take it; neither do we use precautions against contagion, when no disease is to be caught. The case, however, is altered, when the air has become infected, and thousands are dying all around us. It is then necessary to call in the physician, and guard against danger. The case was the same with the Church, when she saw her children in peril from new and erroneous doctrines. When a member wished to be admitted, it was her duty to examine whether he was infected or no. The former tests were no longer suffi-

cient. Words and phrases, which had hitherto borne but one meaning, were now found to admit of several; and the bishops and clergy were too honest to allow a man to say one thing with his tongue, while in his heart he meant another. It was thus that creeds became lengthened, and clauses were added to meet the presumptuous speculations of human reason. But the fault (if fault it can be called) was with the heretics, not with the Church. Her great object from the beginning had been unity. Even when the bond of peace was broken by schisms in different churches, there was still an unity of faith. The churches of Rome, Alexandria, and Carthage, did not expel the Novatians, the Meletians, and the Donatists, from their respective communions, till the schismatics had themselves dissolved the bond of unity, and had formed, as they termed it, a separate Church. But, schismatical as they were, they still looked upon themselves as members of Christ's holy Catholic Church. The Church which admitted Constantine into its pale was one and undivided as to articles of faith: but the seeds were already sown which were to bring forth, ere long, an abundant crop of heresy, division, and corruption.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

PRINCIPAL EVENTS OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES.

A.D.

31 Crucifixion and Ascension of Jesus Christ.
Appointment of the Seven Deacons. Death of Stephen; and Conversion of Saul.
32 Saul in Arabia. James appointed Bishop of Jerusalem. Conversion of Cornelius.
33 Saul returns to Damascus, goes to Jerusalem, and thence to Tarsus.
42 Barnabus brings Saul from Tarsus to Antioch.
44 Saul and Barnabas go to Jerusalem. Death of James, the brother of John.
45 Paul and Barnabas take their first journey, and return to Antioch.
46 Council at Jerusalem.
Paul sets out on his second journey with Silas.
47 Paul at Corinth.
48 Paul goes to Ephesus.
52 Paul leaves Ephesus, and goes through Macedonia to Corinth.
53 Paul goes to Jerusalem, and is imprisoned at Cæsarea.
54 Luke writes his Gospel.
55 Paul sails for Rome, and winters at Malta.
56 Paul arrives at Rome.
58 Luke writes the Acts of the Apostles. Paul leaves Rome.
62 Death of James, bishop of Jerusalem, and of Mark, bishop of Alexandria.
64 Burning of Rome. Christians persecuted by Nero.
66 Jewish war breaks out. Christians retire to Pella.
68 Peter and Paul martyred at Rome.
72 Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus.
Rise of the Ebionites and Nazarenes.
93 Christians persecuted by Domitian. John, banished to Patmos, writes his Revelation.
Clement writes his Epistle to the Corinthians.
97 Nerva recalls the Exiles. John returns to Ephesus, and writes his Gospel and Epistles.
104 Death of Symeon, bishop of Jerusalem.
107 Martyrdom of Ignatius at Rome.
111 Pliny writes to the Emperor Trajan, and persecutes the Christians.
114 Insurrection of the Jews in Egypt and Cyrene.
Basilides, a leader of the Gnostics at Alexandria, and Saturninus at Antioch.
119 Ælia Capitolina built on the site of Jerusalem.
122 Hadrian visits Athens. Apologies presented to him by Quadratus and Aristides.
125 Hadrian writes to Minucius Fundanus, proconsul of Asia, concerning the Christians.
132 Revolt of the Jews under Bar-Cochab.
Justin Martyr leaves Palestine.
135 End of the Jewish war.
138 Martyrdom of Telesphorus, bishop of Rome. Shortly after, Valentidus and Cerdon, leaders of the Gnostics, come to Rome.
142 Marcion comes to Rome.
148 Justin Martyr presents his first Apology to Antoninus.
158 Polycarp visits Anicetus, bishop of Rome.
Hegesippus flourishes.

A.D.
163 Death of Papias.
165 Death of Justin Martyr.
166 Tatian founds the sect of the Encratites.
Bardesanes flourished.
167 Martyrdom of Polycarp.
168 Montanus begins his heresy.
174 Reported miracle of rain, in the campaign of M. Aurelius.
177 Persecution at Lyons. Irenæus succeeds Pothinus, as bishop.
183 Marcia, the mistress of Commodus, favours the Christians.
184 Apollonius, Senator of Rome, martyred.
188 Pantænus goes to India: succeeded in the school by Clement.
193 L. Septimius Severus emperor.
197 Theodotus flourished. Artemon.
198 Paschal Controversy between Victor and Asiatic Churches.
200 Praxeas flourished. Tertullian.
202 Severus begins a persecution of the Christians.
204 Origen, head of the Alexandrian School.
211 Severus dies at York. His successor, Caracalla, favours the Christians.
217 Macrinus, emperor.
218 Elagabalus, emperor. Interview of Origen with Mammæ.
222 Alexander Severus, emperor, tolerates Christianity.
228 Ordination of Origen.
235 Progress of Montanism. Council of Iconium.
Maximinus, emperor, persecutes the Christians.
238 Gordian, emperor. Tranquillity of the Church.
240 Beryllus flourished. Noëtus.
244 Philip, emperor. Tranquillity continues. Corruption of morals among Christians.
248 Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage.
249 Decius, emperor. Severe persecution of Christians. Origin of Monastic systems.
251 Schism of Novatus, at Carthage; and of Novatian, at Rome; arising out of controversy concerning the case of the lapsed. Gallus, emperor, continues the persecution.
253 Valerian, emperor. Favours the Christians. Death of Origen.
254 Questions concerning validity of baptism by heretics.
257 Valerian begins a persecution. Martyrdom of Stephen, bishop of Rome. Sabellius flourished.
258 Martyrdom of Cyprian.
260 Gallienus, emperor. Tranquillity of the Church.
265, 269 Councils at Antioch, in which the heresy of Paul of Samosata was condemned.
268 Claudius, emperor.
270 Aurelian, emperor. Christianity introduced into Wallachia.
275 Tacitus, emperor.
276 Probus, emperor. Tranquillity of the Church continues.
277 Death of Manes. Origin of Manicheism.
282 Carus, emperor.
284 Diocletian begins his reign.
286 Maximianus Herculeus joint emperor with Diocletian. Galerius and Constantius Chlorus, Cæsars.
292 Hieracitæ in Egypt.
298 A new persecution of the Christians begun.
302 Continued and increasing severities against Christians.
305 Diocletian and Herculeus abdicate the empire. Galerius and Constantius, emperors: Severus and Maximinus, Cæsars.
Constantius favours the Christians in the West. Council of Illiberis. Meletian Schism.
306 Death of Constantius at York. His son, Constantine, proclaimed Cæsar. Competition for the empire.
312 Victory of Constantine near Rome. Cessation of persecution. Edict of toleration and restitution in favour of the Christians.

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