

PERSECUTION

in the FIRST CENTURIES



THE GREAT CONTROVERSY CHAPTER 2

E. G. WHITE

STEPHEN. JAMES. PHILIP. MATTHEW. JAMES.
MATTHIAS. ANDREW. MARK. PAUL. PETER. JUDE.
BARTHOLOMEW. THOMAS. LUKE. SIMON. BARNABAS.
ERASTUS. ARISTARCHUS. TROPHIMUS. BARSABAS.
ANANIAS OF DAMASCUS. | SIMEON. NICODEMUS.
PROSTASIUS. GERVASIUS. TIMOTHY. | IGNATIUS.
ALEXANDER AND HIS TWO DEACONS. QUIRINUS AND
HERNES WITH THEIR FAMILIES. ZENON AND THOUSANDS
OF CHRISTIANS. EUSTACHIUS. FAUSTINES. JOVITA. |
GERMANICUS. POLYCARP. METRODORUS. PIONIUS. CARPUS.
PAPILUS. AGATONICA. FELICITATAS. JANUARIUS. FELIX.
PHILIP. SILVANUS. ALEXANDER. VITALIS. MARTIAL.
JUSTIN AND SIX COMPANIONS. CONCORDUS.
VETIUS AGATHUS. BLANDINA. PONTICUS. SANCTUS.
BIBLIAS. ATTALUS. POTHINUS. | VICTOR. LEONIDUS.
SERENUS. PLUTARCHUS. SERENUS. HERON. HERACIDES.
RHAIS. MARCELLA. POTAINIENA. BASILIDES. IRENÆUS.
PERPETUA. FELICITAS. REVOCATUS. A SLAVE. SATURNINUS.
SECUNDULUS. SATUR. SPERATUS AND TWELVE OTHERS.
ANDOCLES. CECILIA. THE OFFICER. | PONTIANUS. ANTEROS.
PAMMACHIUS AND QUIRITUS WITH THEIR FAMILIES
AND MANY OTHERS. SIMPLICIUS. CALEPODIUS. MARTINA.
HIPPOLITUS. | FABIAN. JULIAN. PETER. DENISA. ANDREW.
PAUL. ALEXANDER. EPIMACHUS. FOUR WOMEN. LUCIAN AND
MARCIAN. TRYPHO AND RESPICIUS. AGATHA. CYRIL.
BABYLAS AND HIS THREE STUDENTS. ALEXANDER. JULIANUS.
CRONION. FORTY VIRGINS AT ANTIOCH. MAXIMIANUS. MARTIANUS.
JOANNES. MALCHUS. DIONYSIUS. SERAION. CONSTANTINUS.
THEODORA. DIDYMUS. CORNELIUS. LUCIUS. |
RUFINA AND SECUNDA. STEPHEN. SATURNINUS. SEXTUS AND
SIX DEACONS. LAWRENCE. CYPRIAN. LUCIUS. FLAVIAN. VICTORICUS.
REMUS. MONTANUS. JULIAN. PRIMELUS. DONATIAN.
THREE HUNDRED CHRISTIANS AT UTICA. FRUCTUOSUS. AUGURIUS.
EULOGIUS. ALEXANDER. MALCHUS. FRISCUS, AND A WOMAN.
MAXIMA. DONATILLA. SECUNDA. | FELIX. AGAPETUS. FELICIAN AND
PRIMUS. MARCUS AND MARCELLIANUS. ZOE. THE THEBAN LEGION.
ALBAN. THE EXECUTIONER. FAITH. LUCIAN. QUINTIN. | SEBASTIAN.
VITUS. ALEXANDER. FELICIAN. LONGINUS. VICTOR. TARACHUS.
PROBUS. ANDRONICUS. ROMANUS. SUSANNA. DOROTHEUS.
GORGONIUS. PETER. CYPRIAN AND JUSTINA. EULALIA. VINCENT.
SATURNINUS AND HIS FOUR CHILDREN. DATIVAS. THELICO.
VICTORIA. AGRAPE. CHIONIA. IRENE. AGATHO. CASSICE.
PHILIPPA. EUTYCHIA. MARCELLINUS. VICTORIUS. CARPOPHORUS.
SEVERUS. SEVERIANUS. TIMOTHY AND MAURA. SABINUS.
THE GOVERNOR AND HIS FAMILY. AMPHIANUS. JULITTA.
HERMOLAUS. PANTELEON. EUSTRATIUS. NICANDER. MARCIAN.
JANUARIES. SOSIUS. PROCULUS. EUTYCHES. ACUTIUS. FESTUS.
DESIDERIUS. QUIRINUS. PAMPHILUS. MARCELLUS. PETER. AGNES.
SERENE. VALENTINE. ERASMUS. GEORGE OF LYDDA.

PERSECUTION

in the FIRST CENTURIES

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY CHAPTER 2

E. G. WHITE

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY MAGAZINE PROJECT

SECOND EDITION. PRINTED IN THE PHILIPPINES.





At the opening of the fourth century Anno Domini (A.D.), the hand of persecution fell heavily upon the Christians. Beginning in February of A.D. 303, under the reign of Diocletian, the severe tribulation began and claimed the lives of thousands. "Racks, scourges, swords, daggers, crosses, poison, and famine, were made use of in various parts to dispatch the Christians; and invention was exhausted to devise tortures against such as had no crime..." "A city of Phrygia, consisting entirely of Christians, was burnt, and all the inhabitants perished in the flames."—Foxe's Book of Martyrs, The Tenth Persecution, Under Diocletian.

"Tired with slaughter, at length, several governors of provinces represented to the imperial court, the impropriety of such conduct. Hence many were respite from execution, but, though they were not put to death, as much as possible was done to render their lives miserable, many of them having their ears cut off, their noses slit, their right eyes put out, their limbs rendered useless by dreadful dislocations, and their flesh seared in conspicuous places with red-hot irons." Ibid.

These persecutions continued for about a decade. In A.D. 311, Galerius issued the Edict of Serdica (or Edict of Toleration), ending the Diocletianic persecution in the East. However, the slaughter was continued in other lands by Maximinus. In A.D. 313, after ten years of tribulation, the Edict of Milan was issued by Emperor Constantine I and Emperor Licinius, marking the effective end of the persecutions. In A.D. 380, the Edict of Thessalonica by Emperor Theodosius I made Nicene Christianity the official state religion of the Roman Empire.

Supplement:

Chronological Chart for Chapter 2

- Crucifixion of Jesus (AD 31)
- Stephen stoned (AD 34)
 - Philip scourged, imprisoned, crucified
 - Matthew slain with a halberd

MARTYRDOM OF THE APOSTLES. The death of the apostles have been passed down to us by tradition. Though we may not be certain how each of them actually died, all of them certainly became martyrs, save for the one apostle who was exiled to Patmos and afterward released: John. Below are the traditional stories, in no particular order, of how or where the 12 died:

PETER Crucified, head downward in Rome.
JAMES THE ELDER Beheaded by Herod.
JOHN Natural death at Ephesus.
ANDREW Crucified at Edessa.
PHILIP Died at Hierapolis, probably crucified.
BARTHOLOMEW Flayed to death in Armenia.
THOMAS Martyred near Madras, India.
MATTHEW Martyred in Ethiopia.
JAMES THE LESS Crucified in Egypt.
JUDE/THADDEUS Martyred in Persia.
SIMON Crucified in Britain.
MATTHIAS Martyred at Edessa, probably stoned then beheaded.

JOHN MARK was dragged to pieces in Alexandria; **PAUL** was beheaded in Rome; **LUKE** is said to have been hanged on an olive tree; **BARNABAS** was also martyred; **TIMOTHY** was beaten and later died.

- Pentecost (AD 31)

- Jude crucified at Edessa
- Barnabas martyred
- Simon crucified

Erastus, Aristarchus, Trophimus, Barsabas, Ananias of Damascus

Simeon of Jerusalem, Flavia, Dionysius, Protatius, Gervasius

Simeon of Jerusalem, Flavia, Dionysius, Protatius, Gervasius

- Timothy beaten
- John died in Ephesus

Ignatius, Alexander, Quirinus, Hermes, Zenon, Faustines, Jovita

Germanicus, Polycarp, Metrodorus, Pionius, Carpus, Papilus, Agathonica, Felicitatis, Justin, Concordius, Vetus Agathus, Blandina, Sanctus, Biblias, Attalus, Pothinus

Simeon of Jerusalem, Flavia, Dionysius, Protatius, Gervasius

- Great Fire of Rome (AD 64).....
- Paul beheaded
- Peter crucified

The Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus (AD 70)

PERSECUTION AFTER THE GREAT FIRE OF ROME: *The people were excited and enraged, and in order to clear himself, and also to rid the city of a class whom he feared and hated, Nero turned the accusation upon the Christians. His device succeeded, and thousands of the followers of Christ—men, women, and children—were cruelly put to death.*

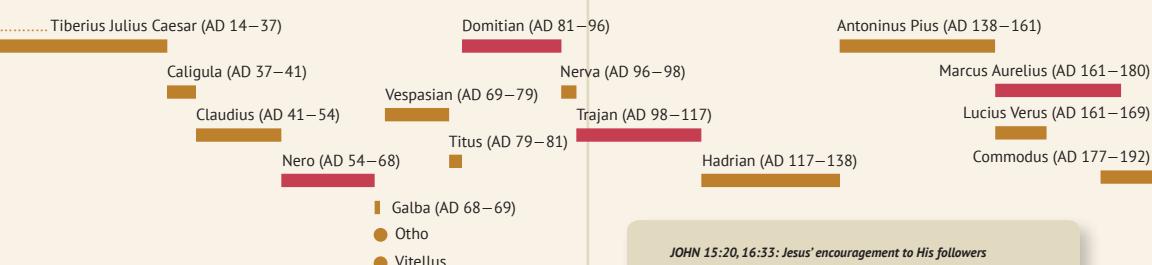
Tertullian (c. A.D. 155–240)



AD 30 AD 50 AD 70 AD 90 AD 110 AD 130 AD 150 AD 170

The Persecutions in

ROMAN EMPERORS



● A circle followed by a name indicates a very short reign.

■ A red bar indicates that this Emperor commenced a period of persecution. There were ten of these from Nero to Diocletian.

JOHN 15:20, 16:33: Jesus' encouragement to His followers
Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also.

These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

REVELATION 2:8–11: Message to the Church of Smyrna

And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the First and the Last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.



● Perpetua and Felicitas;
Revocatus and Satur;
Saturninus; Secundulus
(AD 205)

● Cecilia (AD 222)

● Calistus

● Urban

A violent persecution broke
out in Alexandria (AD 249)

● Fabian

Trypho and Respicius (AD 251)

Agatha (AD 251)

Babylas and three pupils
(AD 251)

● Irenaeus

● Victor

*At about this time, many errors have
already crept into the church as human
reason was placed above revelation.*

● Felix
Theban Legion
executed (AD 286)

● Alban
● Faith

● Quintin

Persecution began in Nicomedia;
sacred books burned, church leveled;
followed by the destruction of many
other churches and sacred books;
Christians imprisoned and martyred

● Victor
● Susanna
● Eulalia
● Victor
● Agape, Chionia, Irene
● Timothy and Maura
● Sabinus

● Rufina and Secunda
● Maxima, Donatilla, Secunda
● Cyprian

Christians of Phrygia, Sebastian,
Alexander, Felician, Longinus,
Tarachus, Probus, Saturninus,
Dativas, Thelico, Victoria, Victorius,
Carpophorus, Severus, Severianus,
Hermolaus, Eustratius, Nicander,
Marcian, George

● Julitta
● Pamphilus

Sunday edict by Constantine
required townspeople to
rest on "the venerable day
of the sun" (AD 321)

First Council of Nicaea (AD 325)

Constantine makes Constantinople
as capital (AD 330)

Edict of Serdica (AD 311)

Edict of Milan (AD 313)

AD 303–313:
Diocletianic Persecution
or the Great Persecution

AD 210

AD 230

AD 250

AD 270

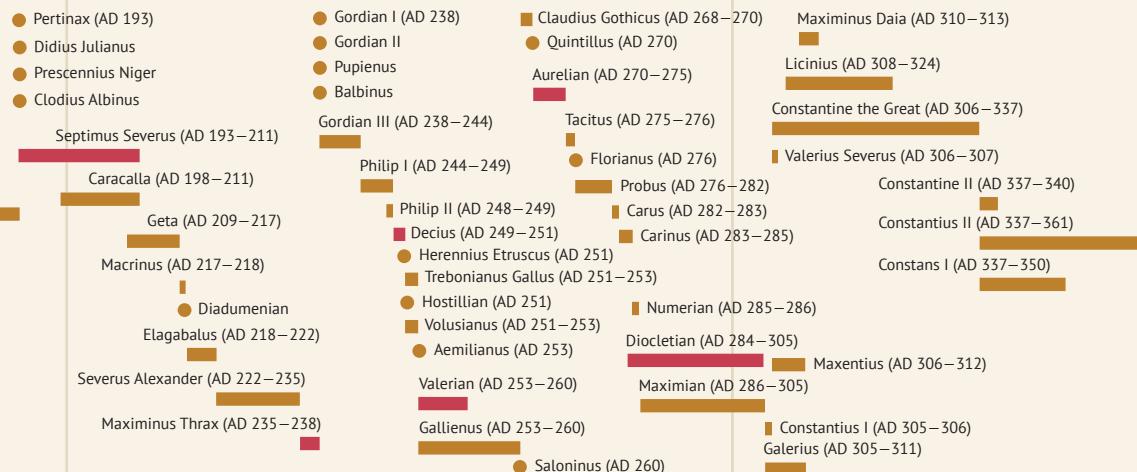
AD 290

AD 310

AD 330

AD 350

the First Centuries





Persecution *in the FIRST CENTURIES*

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY CHAPTER 2

When Jesus revealed to His disciples the fate of Jerusalem and the scenes of the second advent, He foretold also the experience of His people from the time when He should be taken from them, to His return in power and glory for their deliverance. From Olivet the Saviour beheld the storms about to fall upon the apostolic church; and penetrating deeper into the future, His eye discerned the fierce, wasting tempests that were to beat upon His followers in the coming ages of darkness and persecution. In a few brief utterances of awful significance He foretold the portion which the rulers of this world would mete out to the church of God.^a The followers of Christ must tread the same path of humiliation, reproach, and suffering which their Master trod. The enmity that burst forth

against the world's Redeemer would be manifested against all who should believe on His name.

The history of the early church testified to the fulfillment of the Saviour's words. The powers of earth and hell arrayed themselves against Christ in the person of His followers. Paganism foresaw that should the gospel triumph, her temples and altars would be swept away; therefore she summoned her forces to destroy Christianity. The fires of persecution were kindled. Christians were stripped of their possessions and driven from their homes. They "endured a great fight of afflictions."^b They "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment."^c Great numbers sealed their testimony with their blood. Noble and slave, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, were alike slain without mercy.

^aMatt. 24:9, 21, 22. ^bHeb. 10:32. ^cHeb. 11:36.

The persecutions by the pagan Roman Empire began in the time of Nero after the Great Fire of Rome in A.D. 64. These continued in varying intensities in the decades and centuries that followed, ending in A.D. 313.

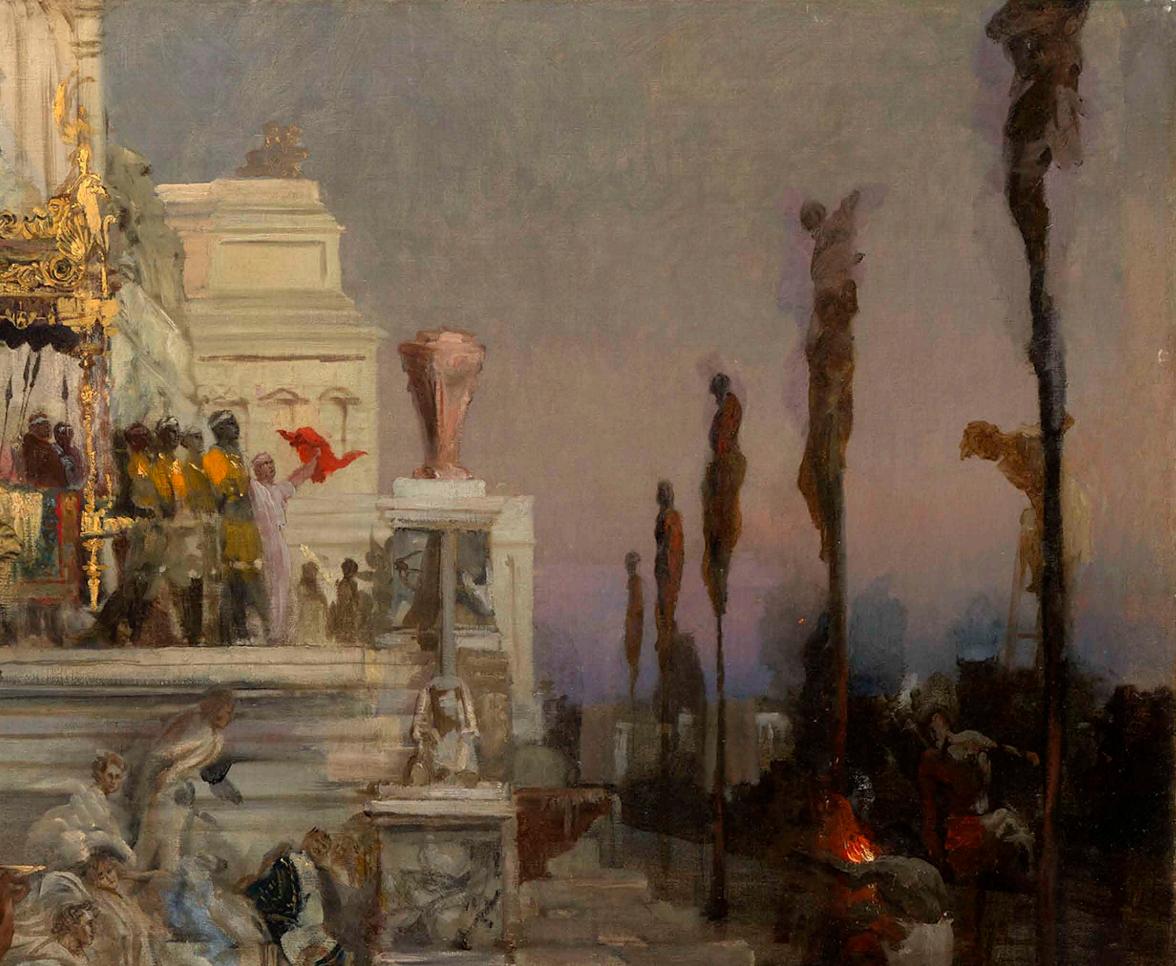


These persecutions, beginning under Nero about the time of the martyrdom of Paul, continued with greater or less fury for centuries. Christians were falsely accused of the most dreadful crimes and declared to be the cause of great calamities—famine, pestilence, and earthquake. As they became the objects of popular hatred and suspicion, informers stood ready, for the sake of gain, to betray the innocent. They were condemned as rebels against the empire, as foes of religion, and pests to society. Great numbers were thrown to wild beasts or burned alive in the amphitheaters. Some were crucified; others were covered with

the skins of wild animals and thrust into the arena to be torn by dogs. Their punishment was often made the chief entertainment at public fetes. Vast multitudes assembled to enjoy the sight and greeted their dying agonies with laughter and applause.

Wherever they sought refuge, the followers of Christ were hunted like beasts of prey. They were forced to seek concealment in desolate and solitary places. “Destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”^a The catacombs afforded shelter for thousands. Beneath the hills

^aHeb. 11:37, 38.



STUDY FOR THE 'TORCHES OF NERO.' PAINTING BY HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI. CIRCA 1876.

outside the city of Rome, long galleries had been tunneled through earth and rock; the dark and intricate network of passages extended for miles beyond the city walls. In these underground retreats the followers of Christ buried their dead; and here also, when suspected and proscribed, they found a home. When the Life-giver shall awaken those who have fought the good fight, many a martyr for Christ's sake will come forth from those gloomy caverns.

Under the fiercest persecution these witnesses for Jesus kept their faith unsullied. Though deprived of every comfort, shut away from the light of the sun, making

their home in the dark but friendly bosom of the earth, they uttered no complaint. With words of faith, patience, and hope they encouraged one another to endure privation and distress. The loss of every earthly blessing could not force them to renounce their belief in Christ. Trials and persecution were but steps bringing them nearer their rest and their reward.

Like God's servants of old, many were "tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."^a These called to mind the words of their Master, that when persecuted for Christ's sake, they were to be exceeding glad, for

^aHeb. 11:35.

The painting, above, is a study, or preparatory piece, by Henryk Siemiradzki depicting the burning of Christians (right side of the painting) by the command of Nero to light the night festivity. (From the center portion and towards the right side depicts Nero with his audience.) This work of art is also called 'Christian Lights' or 'Leading Lights of Christianity'—a fitting title to show that the martyrs' deaths were not in vain.



'THE CHRISTIAN MARTYRS' LAST PRAYER.' PAINTING BY JEAN-LÉON GÉRÔME.

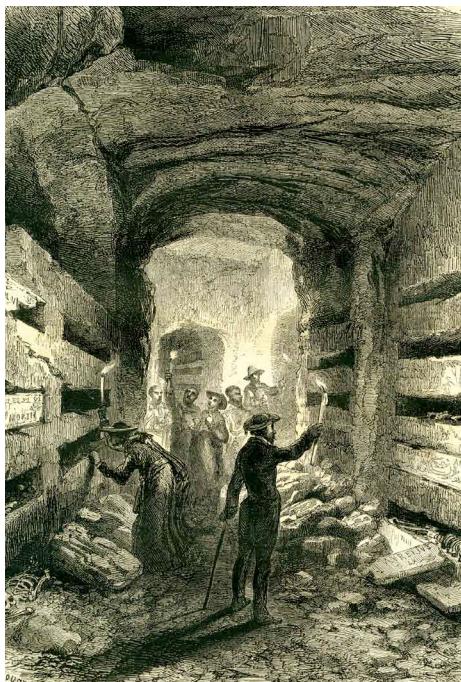
The Christians gave their lives for their Master who selflessly gave His life for them. Looking steadfastly toward heaven, they rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the truth. They held fast to the faith, knowing that their eternal reward is sure in Jesus Christ. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Revelation 2:10.)



great would be their reward in heaven; for so the prophets had been persecuted before them. They rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the truth, and songs of triumph ascended from the midst of crackling flames. Looking upward by faith, they saw Christ and angels leaning over the battlements of heaven, gazing upon them with the deepest interest and regarding their steadfastness with approval. A voice came down to them from the throne of God:

*“Be thou faithful unto death,
and I will give thee a crown of life.”^a*

In vain were Satan's efforts to destroy the church of Christ by violence. The great



CATACOMBS OF ROME. AUTHOR UNKNOWN.

controversy in which the disciples of Jesus yielded up their lives did not cease when these faithful standard-bearers fell at their post. By defeat they conquered. God's workmen were slain, but His work went steadily forward. The gospel continued to spread and the number of its adherents to increase. It penetrated into regions that were inaccessible even to the eagles of Rome. Said a Christian, expostulating with the heathen rulers who were urging forward the persecution: You may “kill us, torture us, condemn us.... Your injustice is the proof that we are innocent Nor does your cruelty ... avail you.” It was but a stronger invitation to bring others to their persuasion. “The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow; the blood of Christians is seed.”—Tertullian, *Apology*, paragraph 50.

Thousands were imprisoned and slain, but others sprang up to fill their places. And those who were martyred for their faith were secured to Christ and accounted of Him as conquerors. They had fought the good fight, and they were to receive the crown of glory when Christ should come. The sufferings which they endured brought Christians nearer to one another and to their Redeemer. Their living example and dying testimony were a constant witness for the truth; and where least expected, the subjects of Satan were leaving his service and enlisting under the banner of Christ.

Satan therefore laid his plans to war more successfully against the government of God by planting his banner in the Christian church. If the followers of Christ could be deceived and led to displease God, then their strength, fortitude, and firmness

^aRev. 2:10.



CHRISTIANS WORSHIPPING IN THE CATACOMBS. ILLUSTRATION FROM WHITE'S 'THE GREAT CONTROVERSY,' 1888. COLORIZED.

would fail, and they would fall an easy prey.

The great adversary now endeavored to gain by artifice what he had failed to secure by force. Persecution ceased, and in its stead were substituted the dangerous allurements of temporal prosperity and worldly honor. Idolaters were led to receive a part of the Christian faith, while they rejected other essential truths. They professed to accept Jesus as the Son of God and to believe in His death and resurrection, but they had no conviction of sin and felt no need of repentance or of a change of heart. With some concessions on their part they proposed that Christians should make concessions, that all might unite on the platform of belief in Christ.

Now the church was in fearful peril. Prison, torture, fire, and sword were blessings in comparison with this. Some of the Christians stood firm, declaring that they

could make no compromise. Others were in favor of yielding or modifying some features of their faith and uniting with those who had accepted a part of Christianity, urging that this might be the means of their full conversion. That was a time of deep anguish to the faithful followers of Christ. Under a cloak of pretended Christianity, Satan was insinuating himself into the church, to corrupt their faith and turn their minds from the word of truth.

Most of the Christians at last consented to lower their standard, and a union was formed between Christianity and paganism. Although the worshipers of idols professed to be converted, and united with the church, they still clung to their idolatry, only changing the objects of their worship to images of Jesus, and even of Mary and the saints. The foul leaven of idolatry, thus brought into the church, continued its baleful work. Unsound doctrines, supersti-



tious rites, and idolatrous ceremonies were incorporated into her faith and worship. As the followers of Christ united with idolaters, the Christian religion became corrupted, and the church lost her purity and power. There were some, however, who were not misled by these delusions. They still maintained their fidelity to the Author of truth and worshiped God alone.

There have ever been two classes among those who profess to be followers of Christ. While one class study the Saviour's life and earnestly seek to correct their de-

fects and conform to the Pattern, the other class shun the plain, practical truths which expose their errors. Even in her best estate the church was not composed wholly of the true, pure, and sincere. Our Saviour taught that those who willfully indulge in sin are not to be received into the church; yet He connected with Himself men who were faulty in character, and granted them the benefits of His teachings and example, that they might have an opportunity to see their errors and correct them. Among the twelve apostles was a traitor. Judas was accepted,

not because of his defects of character, but notwithstanding them. He was connected with the disciples, that, through the instruction and example of Christ, he might learn what constitutes Christian character, and thus be led to see his errors, to repent, and, by the aid of divine grace, to purify his soul "in obeying the truth." But Judas did not walk in the light so graciously permitted to shine upon him. By indulgence in sin he invited the temptations of Satan. His evil traits of character became predominant. He yielded his mind to the control of the powers of darkness, he became angry when his faults were reproved, and thus he was led to commit the fearful crime of betraying his Master. So do all who cherish evil under a profession of godliness hate those who disturb their peace by condemning their course of sin. When a favorable opportunity is presented, they will, like Judas, betray those who for their good have sought to reprove them.

The apostles encountered those in the church who professed godliness while they were secretly cherishing iniquity. Ananias and Sapphira acted the part of deceivers, pretending to make an entire sacrifice for God, when they were covetously withholding a portion for themselves. The Spirit of truth revealed to the apostles the real character of these pretenders, and the judgments of God rid the church of this foul blot upon its purity. This signal evidence of the discerning Spirit of Christ in the church was a terror to hypocrites and evildoers. They could not long remain in connection with those who were, in habit and disposition, constant representatives of Christ; and as trials and persecution came

upon His followers, those only who were willing to forsake all for the truth's sake desired to become His disciples. Thus, as long as persecution continued, the church remained comparatively pure. But as it ceased, converts were added who were less sincere and devoted, and the way was open for Satan to obtain a foothold.

But there is no union between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness, and there can be no union between their followers. When Christians consented to unite with those who were but half converted from paganism, they entered upon a

"As long as persecution continued, the church remained comparatively pure. But..."

path which led further and further from the truth. Satan exulted that he had succeeded in deceiving so large a number of the followers of Christ. He then brought his power to bear more fully upon these, and inspired them to persecute those who remained true to God. None understood so well how to oppose the true Christian faith as did those who had once been its defenders; and these apostate Christians, uniting with their half-pagan companions, directed their warfare against the most essential features of the doctrines of Christ.

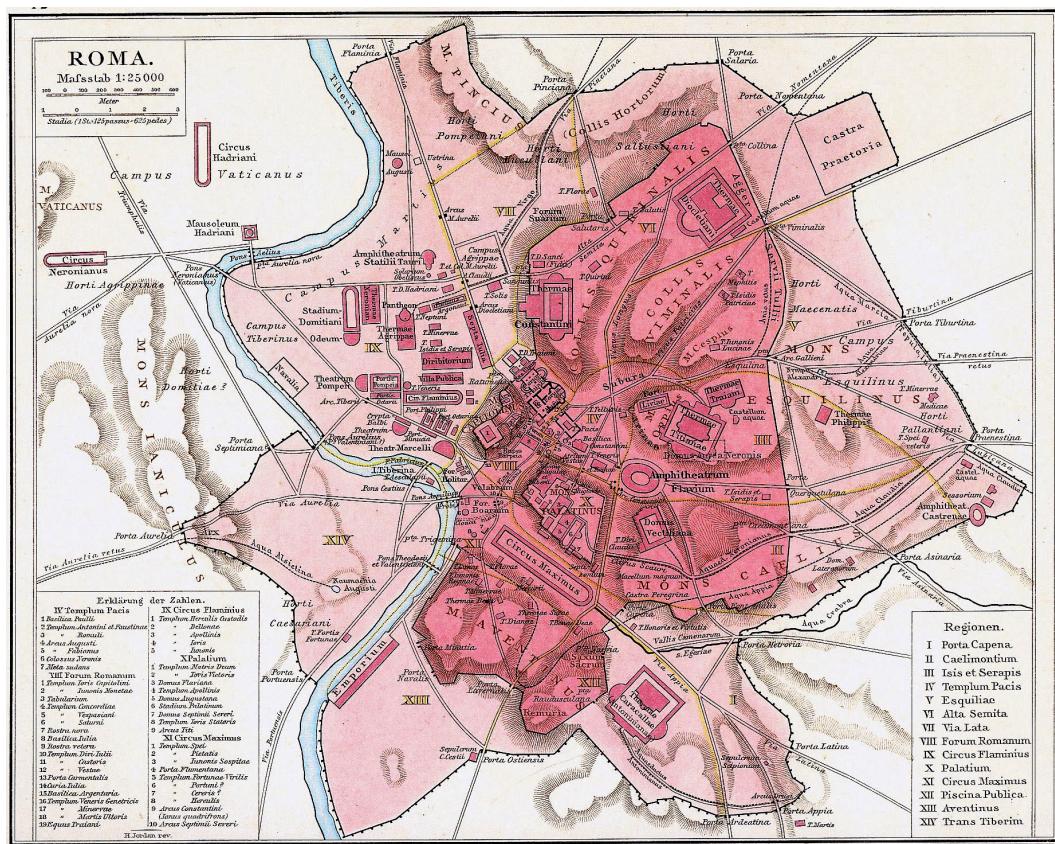
It required a desperate struggle for

those who would be faithful to stand firm against the deceptions and abominations which were disguised in sacerdotal garments and introduced into the church. The Bible was not accepted as the standard of faith. The doctrine of religious freedom was termed heresy, and its upholders were hated and proscribed.

After a long and severe conflict, the faithful few decided to dissolve all union with the apostate church if she still refused to free herself from falsehood and idolatry. They saw that separation was an absolute necessity if they would obey the word of God. They dared not tolerate errors fatal to

their own souls, and set an example which would imperil the faith of their children and children's children. To secure peace and unity they were ready to make any concession consistent with fidelity to God; but they felt that even peace would be too dearly purchased at the sacrifice of principle. If unity could be secured only by the compromise of truth and righteousness, then let there be difference, and even war.

Well would it be for the church and the world if the principles that actuated those steadfast souls were revived in the hearts of God's professed people. There is an alarming indifference in regard to the doctrines



'MAP OF ROME IN ANTIQUITY.' 1886.

which are the pillars of the Christian faith. The opinion is gaining ground, that, after all, these are not of vital importance. This degeneracy is strengthening the hands of the agents of Satan, so that false theories and fatal delusions which the faithful in ages past imperiled their lives to resist and expose, are now regarded with favor by thousands who claim to be followers of Christ.

The early Christians were indeed a peculiar people. Their blameless deportment and unswerving faith were a continual reproof that disturbed the sinner's peace. Though few in numbers, without wealth, position, or honorary titles, they were a terror to evildoers wherever their character and doctrines were known. Therefore they were hated by the wicked, even as Abel was hated by the ungodly Cain. For the same reason that Cain slew Abel, did those who sought to throw off the restraint of the Holy Spirit, put to death God's people. It was for the same reason that the Jews rejected and crucified the Saviour—because the purity and holiness of His character was a constant rebuke to their selfishness and corruption. From the days of Christ until now His faithful disciples have excited the hatred and opposition of those who love and follow the ways of sin.

How, then, can the gospel be called a message of peace? When Isaiah foretold the birth of the Messiah, he ascribed to Him the title, "Prince of Peace."^a When angels announced to the shepherds that Christ was born, they sang above the plains of Bethlehem: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."^b There is a seeming contradiction be-

tween these prophetic declarations and the words of Christ: "I came not to send peace, but a sword."^c But, rightly understood, the two are in perfect harmony. The gospel is a message of peace. Christianity is a system which, received and obeyed, would spread peace, harmony, and happiness throughout the earth. The religion of Christ will unite in close brotherhood all who accept its teachings. It was the mission of Jesus to reconcile men to God, and thus to one another. But the world at large are under the control of Satan, Christ's bitterest foe. The gospel presents to them principles of life which

"The opinion is gaining ground, that, after all these are not of vital importance."

are wholly at variance with their habits and desires, and they rise in rebellion against it. They hate the purity which reveals and condemns their sins, and they persecute and destroy those who would urge upon them its just and holy claims. It is in this sense—because the exalted truths it brings occasion hatred and strife—that the gospel is called a sword.

The mysterious providence which permits the righteous to suffer persecution at the hand of the wicked has been a cause of great perplexity to many who are weak in faith. Some are even ready to cast away

^aIsaiah 9:6. ^bLuke 2:14. ^cMatt. 10:34.



► ***In the centuries that would follow***, notwithstanding the spiritual darkness that enveloped Europe, certain men and women would come to the realization that many of the so-called truths taught to them would prove to be errors when compared to the infallible teachings of the Holy Scriptures. Though opposed and threatened with death, they fearlessly renounced the doctrines and powers that have kept the people away from seeing the light of God's Word. But until the arrival of these "reformers," the Old World was to be plunged into an era of great spiritual blindness—*The Dark Ages*.

their confidence in God because He suffers the basest of men to prosper, while the best and purest are afflicted and tormented by their cruel power. How, it is asked, can One who is just and merciful, and who is also infinite in power, tolerate such injustice and oppression? This is a question with which we have nothing to do. God has given us sufficient evidence of His love, and we are not to doubt His goodness because we cannot understand the workings of His providence. Said the Saviour to His disciples, foreseeing the doubts that would press upon their souls in days of trial and darkness: "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."^a Jesus suffered for us more than any of His followers can be made to suffer through the cruelty of wicked men. Those who are called to endure torture and martyrdom are but following in the steps of God's dear Son.

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise."^b He does not forget or neglect His children; but He permits the wicked to reveal their true character, that none who desire to do His will may be deceived concerning them. Again, the righteous are placed in the furnace of affliction, that they themselves may be purified; that their example may convince others of the reality of faith and godliness; and also that their consistent course may condemn the ungodly and unbelieving.

God permits the wicked to prosper and to reveal their enmity against Him, that when they shall have filled up the measure of their iniquity all may see His justice and mercy in their utter destruction. The day

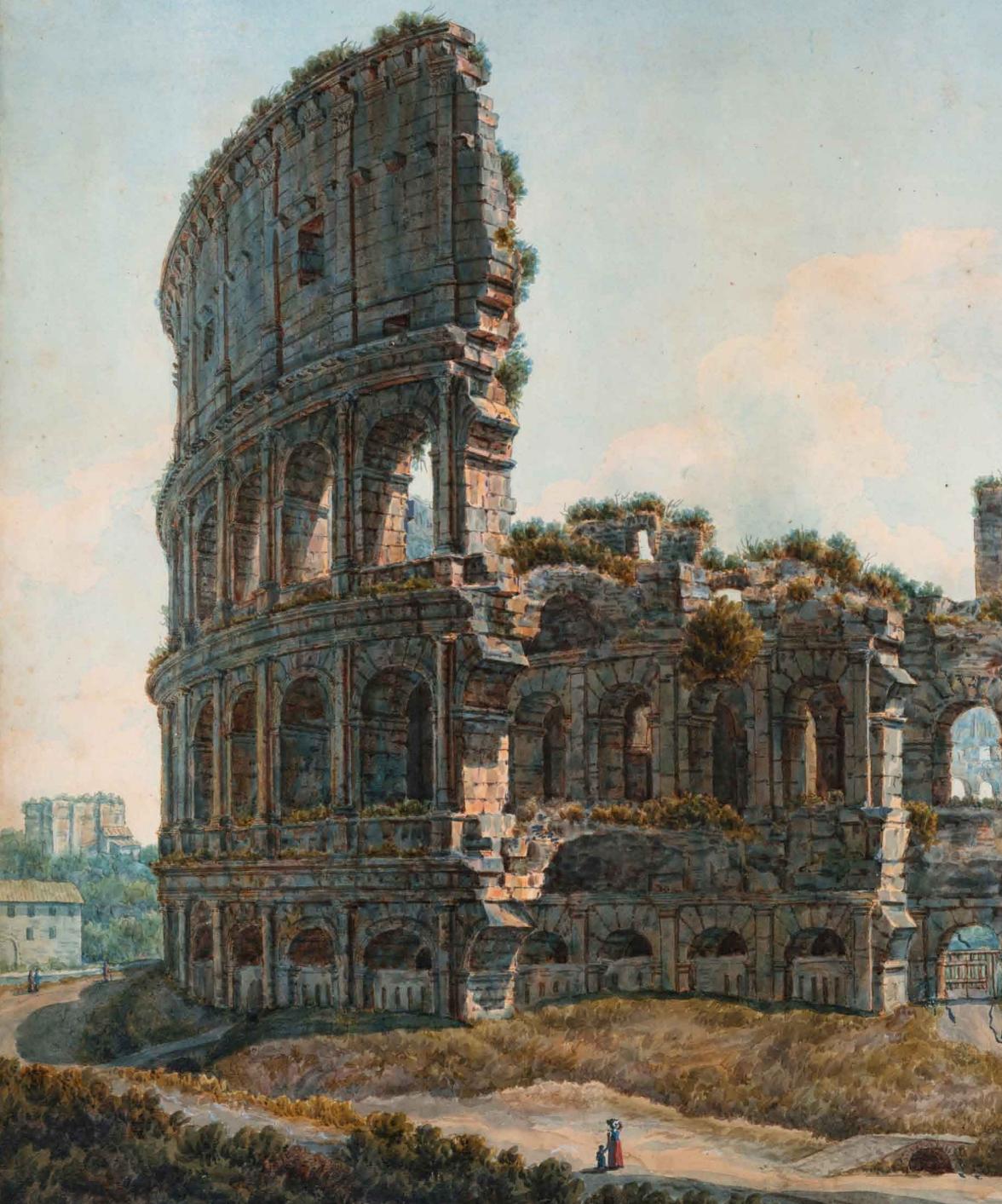
of His vengeance hastens, when all who have transgressed His law and oppressed His people will meet the just recompense of their deeds; when every act of cruelty or injustice toward God's faithful ones will be punished as though done to Christ Himself.

There is another and more important question that should engage the attention of the churches of today. The apostle Paul declares that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."^c Why is it, then, that persecution seems in a great degree to slumber? The only reason is that

"Let there be a revival of the faith of the early church."

the church has conformed to the world's standard and therefore awakens no opposition. The religion which is current in our day is not of the pure and holy character that marked the Christian faith in the days of Christ and His apostles. It is only because of the spirit of compromise with sin, because the great truths of the word of God are so indifferently regarded, because there is so little vital godliness in the church, that Christianity is apparently so popular with the world. Let there be a revival of the faith and power of the early church, and the spirit of persecution will be revived, and the fires of persecution will be rekindled. ■

^aJohn 15:20. ^b2 Peter 3:9. ^c2 Timothy 3:12.

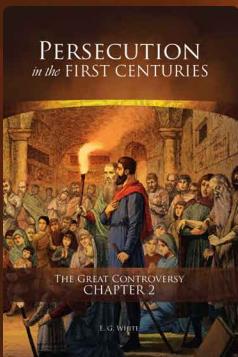


Paganism seemed to be at its end. But at the turn of the fourth century, it took on a new form. Its doctrines, ceremonies, and superstitions found their way into the Christian church. The bishop of Rome emerged from the catacombs to become a ruling power over the world. A sudden change took place: simplicity and purity were substituted by pomp, luxury and magnificence—a display that even awakened the envy of the heathen. Lavished with rich gifts, the bishop



'THE COLOSSEUM, ROME.' BY ABRAHAM LOUIS RODOLPHE DUCROS.
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART.

of Rome rode in a stately chariot through the streets of Rome. The humility shown by Christ and His apostles centuries before was now replaced with flattery and attention. But as this apostasy began to hover over the face of Europe, light began to shine in Ireland and Scotland; from Iona, missionaries were sent to England, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy. Seeds of truth were planted, while the spiritual darkness over Europe grew deeper and deeper still.



JOHN 16:33

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

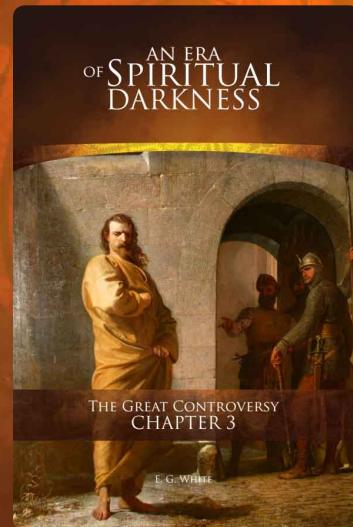
COVER IMAGE: Christians Worshipping in the Catacombs. Illustration from White's 'The Great Controversy'. Published 1888. Colored.

NEXT CHAPTER: "An Era of Spiritual Darkness"

The persecutions ceased, but another danger awaits Christianity. At the turn of the fourth century, a new kind of faith emerges—one that is so different from the centuries before. The Word of God was banished, and the stake was set up. Continue the journey into the opening of the Dark Ages and discover the results of the “falling away” that the apostle Paul prophesied about.



PREVIOUS:
Chapter 1: The Destruction of Jerusalem



The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation is a nineteenth century book which traces the story of redemption from the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 to the end of time. This magazine contains a faithful reproduction of the 1911 edition of the text.

The logo, above, is a replica of the artistic typography on the cover of the 1888 edition of *The Great Controversy*.

CONTACT INFORMATION

E-mail: thegcmag@gmail.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/thegcproject/
Instagram: [@thegcmag](https://www.instagram.com/thegcmag)

We invite you to share the dream of *The Great Controversy* being read in every home. You can send your donations to:

West Visayan Conference
of Seventh-day Adventists
Iloilo City, Philippines, 5000

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY MAGAZINE PROJECT