

THE  
INFALLIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

*A COURSE OF LECTURES*

DELIVERED IN THE

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## XX.

### THE INFANCY OF ROMAN SUPREMACY.

IN a former Lecture I considered the Scripture arguments which have been adduced to prove that the Pope, by divine right, enjoys a Primacy, originally conferred by our Lord on St. Peter, and since then transmitted by succession to the bishops of Rome. It is a useful test of interpretations of Scripture to examine into their antiquity; for there is always an immense presumption against any new-fangled interpretation. I did not neglect to apply this test in the former Lecture, and we found that those passages of the New Testament which Roman Catholics now adduce as establishing the Pope's supremacy were not so understood by the most ancient interpreters of Scripture. But antiquity supplies us with a further test. The passages in question are not of a merely theoretical character, but are supposed to have fixed the constitution of the Christian Church. We may then turn from commentators on Scripture to study the history of the Church, in order to find whether that history has really been such as it must have been if the Romanist interpretation of these texts be the right one.

We know, as a historical fact, that the bishops of Rome, in the course of the Christian centuries, have exercised authority over distant cities. The question at issue is, whether or not that authority dates from the foundation of our religion. If it had been bestowed by our Lord Himself before He left this earth, we should find it exercised from the first, and its rightfulness universally acknowledged. But the contrary is the case. We can trace the history of the growth of the supremacy of the Roman bishop, exactly as in secular history we can trace the process by which the city of Rome came to exercise imperial dominion. We thus learn that in ecclesiastical matters, as well as in secular, Roman supremacy is a development, not a tradition.

If I desired a summary proof that some at least of the powers which the Popes have exercised in later times were not part of the original prerogatives of the see, I should find it in the oath which every bishop in communion with Rome is now bound to take on his appointment: 'The rights, privileges, and powers of the see of Peter I will, to the best of my ability, extend and promote.' In fact, every bishop of Rome thought he was doing a good thing if he gained for his see some powers and privileges which had not previously belonged to it; and for some centuries he has pledged all over whom he has power to aid him in this laudable endeavour. But one man's powers and privileges cannot be extended except at the expense of those of someone else. If the Popes get more power, independent bishops must have less. The Pope's avowed policy for centuries, therefore, has been one of

usurpation; and unless we believe either that all the Roman Catholic bishops have perjured themselves, or that their united efforts, continued for hundreds of years, have failed to augment and promote the rights, dignities, and privileges of the Pope, that prelate must possess some powers now which his predecessors did not enjoy.

But it is quite unnecessary for me to elaborate any proof that the doctrine of Papal Supremacy is a development; for it is fully owned by Newman how faint are the traces of it in the history of the early centuries. I have already told you that the method of his celebrated *Essay on Development* is to make frank confession that neither Scripture nor Tradition will furnish any adequate proof of Roman doctrines. But then he contends that the same confession must be made about doctrines which Roman Catholics and we hold in common, and he puts forward his theory of Development as able to supply the deficiency alike in either case. Thus, then, while he owns (p. 164) that the Pope's Supremacy is a development, so also, he contends, is Episcopacy. He tells us that St. Ignatius in his Epistles is silent on the subject of the Pope's authority; but that this is because that authority was not, and could not have been, in active operation then. While apostles were on earth they exercised the powers both of bishop and Pope. When they were taken away, 'Christianity did not at once break into portions; yet separate localities might begin to be the scenes of internal dissensions, and a local arbiter would, in consequence, be wanted.' 'When the Church was thrown on her own resources, first local disturbances gave exercise to bishops, and next Ecumenical disturbances gave exercise to Popes.' Newman quotes with assent some of Barrow's topics of proof that Roman Supremacy did not exist in the first ages of the Church: namely, that in the writings of the Fathers against the Gnostic heretics of the second century they never allege the sentence of the universal pastor and judge as the most compendious and efficacious method of silencing them; and (2) that heathen writers are quite ignorant of the doctrine, although no point of Christian teaching would be so apt to raise offence and jealousy in pagans, no novelty be more suspicious or startling than this creation of a universal empire over the consciences and religious practices of men, the doctrine also being one that could not but be very conspicuous and glaring in ordinary practice. Newman also assents to Barrow's assertion that 'the state of the most primitive Church did not well admit such a universal sovereignty. For that did consist of small bodies, incoherently situated and scattered about in very distant places, and consequently unfit to be modelled into one political society, or to be governed by one head, especially considering their condition under persecution and poverty. What convenient resort for direction or justice could a few distressed Christians in Egypt, Ethiopia, Parthia, India, Mesopotamia, Syria, Armenia, Cappadocia, and other parts have to Rome?'

Newman is quite consistent with the thesis of his Essay in abandoning Tradition as a basis for the doctrine of Papal Supremacy; but the basis of Development on which he attempts to build it is altogether insufficient to constitute any firm foundation. For the history of Development can only tell us what has been, not what ought to be. The cases of Episcopacy and Papal Supremacy are not parallel; because the former institution dates from apostolic times; and if it can be shown that it was established by apostles, then it can claim a right to permanent continuance. But what claim for permanence can be made on behalf of any form of Church government which confessedly shaped itself at least two or three centuries after the apostles were all dead? Let us liberally grant that an ecclesiastical monarchy was the form of government best adapted to the needs of the Church at the time when, in temporal matters, the whole civilized world was governed by a single ruler; and yet it might be utterly unfit for her requirements in subsequent times when Europe has been broken up into independent kingdoms; and we might be as right now in disowning Papal authority as our ancestors were in submitting to it.

The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men in temporal matters as well as spiritual; and we can trace the working of His Providence in guiding events in the one as well as in the other. We can see, for example, how the establishment of the Empire of heathen Rome tended to the furtherance of the Gospel, which never could have spread so rapidly from land to land if it had not been for the facility of intercourse resulting from the Roman peace. Yet no evidence that the Roman Empire was for a time beneficial to the world would show that it was divinely intended to have perpetual duration, or that we now commit any sin in not belonging to it; and if we recognize the guiding hand of God's Providence in the formation of that Empire, we might equally do so in its dissolution. In like manner, a citizen of the United States of America cannot help owning that his country was originally colonized from Great Britain; that the authority of the Sovereign of England was recognized in those States without question for a century or two; that English rule was of the greatest advantage in protecting the infant colonies from enemies, and conferring other benefits on them; yet he would hold that the time came when English rule was no longer beneficial, and that now the Sovereign of England neither hath nor ought to have authority in the United States. Thus, then, in like manner, the most that the theory of Development could do for the doctrine of Papal Supremacy would be to establish a proof that there have been times when the Pope's Supremacy has been beneficial to the Church (or, to speak more cautiously, to the Western Church); that there have been bishops of Rome whose aims were high, whose lives were good, and by whose rule it was at least better to have been guided than by any other likely at the time to have been substi-

tuted for it. But surely it will be granted me, without my having need to open up topics from which I have refrained in this course of lectures, that there have been bishops of Rome whose aims were not high, whose lives were not pure, and whose guidance it was not good to follow. What claim to obedience can such make out? Unless it be held that God's Providence ceased to exert itself three centuries ago, or else that it has merely a local operation, and does not extend to England, Scandinavia, or Germany, the theory of Development will afford as good a justification for the revolt from Papal authority in the sixteenth century as for its rise and growth in the third or fourth and subsequent centuries. And this theory would not prevent a history student from pronouncing Papal Supremacy to be now a useless or mischievous survival of a form of Church government which has had its day, but which is unsuited to the character of the present age. If, therefore, we are to establish any justification of Papal Supremacy we must fall back on the old sources of proof, Scripture and Tradition; for Newman's proposed substitute, the theory of Development, completely breaks down.

If we once admit Roman Supremacy to have been but a development, there were natural causes in operation which quite sufficiently account for it. The primacy of the bishop of Rome grew naturally out of the precedence accorded to the bishop of the first city of the Empire. Our own experience would tell us that the people of the greatest city can choose their bishop from among a larger number of candidates, that they are likely to be able to secure the services of an abler man, that they can put larger sums of money at his disposal for charitable and other purposes, and altogether make him a much more influential person in the Church than the bishop of a small town. Romanists who refer the supremacy of their see to divine appointment are naturally desirous to throw into the background the human causes of the greatness of the see; yet one example is enough to show how inevitably the temporal greatness of a city leads to the pre-eminence of its bishop. If there be room for controversy as to the causes which gave Rome the first place among Christian sees, there can be no doubt as to the cause which elevated Constantinople to the second place. It was the temporal greatness of the city and nothing else. Byzantium was quite an upstart capital, raised to that dignity only in the fourth century by the will of the Emperor Constantine. It had no Christian historic associations. No Apostle had evangelized the town, or had addressed letters to it, or suffered martyrdom there. It was not even a metropolitan see, but was subject to Heraclea, the very name of which may be unfamiliar to some of you. At the time when Constantinople was made a capital, the recognized order of precedence of the great sees was Rome, Alexandria, Antioch. Yet without a struggle the relations between Constantinople and Heraclea were inverted. Against the fur-

ther elevation of Constantinople there would naturally be strong objection on the part of Alexandria and Antioch, not to speak of that which might arise from sees formerly fully equal to Byzantium, which was now made the superior. And, besides, the bishop of Rome sagaciously perceiving that Constantinople, if once admitted to the second place, would be a far more formidable rival for the first place than Alexandria or Antioch could be, resisted the promotion of Constantinople with all his might. But his resistance was in vain, and the title of Constantinople to the second place came in time to be fully admitted at Rome. So if we had not countless examples in ecclesiastical history to show how inevitably a change in the civil position of a city entails a change in its ecclesiastical position, this one example would put the fact beyond controversy. It is plain that the causes which, in spite of all the disadvantages of a late start, were able when Constantinople became the second city of the Empire to raise its see to the second place, would alone have sufficed to raise to the first place Rome, which for three Christian centuries before the foundation of Constantinople had reigned without a rival as the undisputed capital of the world, the place of resort of visitors from every land, the centre both of commerce and of intellectual activity, the wealthiest of cities, the home of the conquering race who had been accustomed to see the world bow down to them.

One cause there was which might have prevented Rome from taking the first place among Christian Churches—I mean the superior claims of Jerusalem, which had been the cradle of Christianity, the place whence the missionaries had issued forth who had evangelized the world. Accordingly in one of the earliest forms of that Clementine romance, of which I had before occasion to speak to you (a form, indeed, which I believe to be earlier than the introduction of Clement into the story), James, bishop of Jerusalem, is represented as head of the Christian Church; Peter has been sent abroad on a mission by James, but is bound to render him periodical reports of his progress; and the forgery called the Clementine Homilies purports to be a report of the discourses of Peter, whether to heathen or to heretics, sent by the missionary Apostle for the information of his ecclesiastical superior. But the destruction of Jerusalem swept away all danger of rivalry with Rome from that quarter. The city might have recovered its overthrow by Titus, but the formidable rebellion in the reign of Hadrian was visited by severer penalties. Jews were utterly banished from the spot, and a Gentile city was founded there, called, after the Emperor, *Ælia*; which no circumcised person was allowed to enter. *Ælia* was not at first regarded as identical with Jerusalem, or as heir to its privileges. In the list of bishops of Jerusalem given by Eusebius (and as I believe taken by him from his predecessor as a historian, Hegesippus) two distinct series are recognized—that of the bishops of the circumcision who presided over the ancient city; and that

of the Gentile bishops, who ruled over Ælia. In the constitution of the Christian Churches, so late as the Council of Nicaea, Jerusalem had no metropolitan prerogative; and in Palestine, as elsewhere, the rule prevailed that the city highest in civil rank was also Highest in ecclesiastical. Jerusalem was therefore subordinate to Caesarea, the capital of Palestine, whose bishop, Eusebius the historian, took a leading part at Nicaea, and was honoured with much confidence by Constantine. But shortly after that Council, the fashion of pilgrimages was set by the Emperor's mother Helena, whose visit, leading to what has been happily called the Invention of the Cross, made Jerusalem a centre of resort for Christians, and gave it a place in their esteem which it had not previously enjoyed. At the third General Council, you will remember, John of Antioch was on the losing side. Juvenal of Jerusalem, an impudent and ambitious man, was on the winning one, and he actually attempted not only to elevate his see to metropolitan rank, but to place it above that of Antioch. The latter attempt had only a momentary chance of success; but Jerusalem did become relieved of subordination to Caesarea, and was placed in a position next below Antioch. However my present purpose is to point out that Rome had no rivalry from Jerusalem to encounter, and that there was no other city which could claim to have communicated to Rome her knowledge of the Gospel. Rome had received a letter from the Apostle Paul, and that Apostle had taught there for at the very least two years. It is not recorded in inspired history that Peter also visited Rome, and that both Apostles suffered martyrdom there; but I think the testimony to these things is enough to warrant belief in them, and certain it is that the early Church did believe in them without doubt; so that there was nothing to detract from the superiority which its temporal greatness gave to Rome, on the ground of its being inferior to any rival in closeness of relation to the first preachers of the Gospel.

The considerations I have brought before you only establish for Rome a precedence of honour and dignity, though it is well, in all our investigations, to bear in mind that this honourable precedence is a matter about which there has not been, and need not be, any dispute. Rome's right to govern other Churches is quite another matter, and was only gained after hard struggles and by slow degrees. Her first interference with other Churches was of the most honourable kind—of a kind that no Church is likely strongly to object to, namely, sending them money, or otherwise conferring benefits on them. There was no Church, some of whose leading members would not have occasion to visit Rome, and be able on their return to tell of hospitality and good offices received from the Christians there. By merely suspending such friendly relations, Rome had it in her power to inflict a severe penalty on any Church. But that wealthy Church not only exercised generous hospitality to strangers who visited it, but was

bountiful of gifts to poorer Churches. An interesting early example accidentally becomes known to us through a fragment of a letter written about 170 by Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, to the Church of Rome. Eusebius, who preserves it, remarks that the practice of the Roman Church which Dionysius commends had been continued down to the Diocletian persecution of his own time. Dionysius writes, in acknowledgment of a donation sent from Rome:—‘This has been your custom from the beginning to bestow benefits in various ways on all the brethren, and send supplies to many Churches in different cities, here refreshing the poverty of the needy, and in the mines ministering to the wants of the brethren there confined. In the supplies which you have been in the habit of sending from the beginning, you Romans keep up the traditional custom of the Romans, which your blessed bishop Soter has not only maintained but increased, both administering the bounty which is sent to the saints, and comforting with blessed words the brethren who go up to your city, as an affectionate father his children’ (Euseb., *H.E.* iv. 23). Dionysius adds the interesting information that Soter’s letter had come just in time to be read at their Sunday service, and promises that it should continue so to be read for their edification from time to time, in the same way as the previous letter of the Church of Rome written by the hands of Clement. There is no reason to think that there was anything special in the relations between Rome and Corinth, or that this instance, the knowledge of which chance has preserved for us, is other than a fair specimen of the munificent liberality of the wealthy Roman Christians to foreign Churches. A confirmation is given in another fragment preserved by Eusebius of a letter of the Alexandrian Dionysius. Writing to Stephen of Rome, and mentioning different provinces, he says—‘Syria and Arabia, to which you sent help on different occasions’ (Euseb., *H.E.* vii. 5); and, oddly enough, a third example is connected with the name of a third Dionysius, who was bishop of Rome. St. Basil, writing to Damasus of Rome (*Ep.* 70), gratefully calls to memory how in former days this Dionysius had sent agents to his province of Cappadocia to redeem captives. Remember now that all communications of the Church of Rome with foreign Churches were made through their bishop. We claim no divine right for the English episcopate to rule over colonial Churches; yet different colonies have acknowledged the Archbishop of Canterbury as their metropolitan. If ever we see a native episcopate in India, who can doubt that the opinion of the English episcopate would have overpowering weight with it, even though England has no divine claim to rule India in spiritual matters? But suppose that all the money subscribed in England for foreign and colonial missions was administered by the Archbishop of Canterbury; that there was no Church ‘Missionary Society, or Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, or Colonial and Continental, or such like, but that the English Primate

was the one man to be appealed to whenever any good work abroad was in need of help, do you think that in such a case the fact that that prelate exercised commanding influence would require any elaborate explanation?

The fable of Peter's Roman episcopate at once supplied the bishops of Rome with an ecclesiastical justification for a precedence which, on political grounds, it was inevitable for them to exercise. This gain of dignity by historical associations operated more strongly in favour of Rome, because this was exactly the point in which its most formidable rival, Constantinople, was deficient. This upstart capital was, by the favour of the Emperor, put over the heads of ancient sees, which were far better able than Byzantium to connect themselves with the Apostles. Now the Sovereign can give rank, but he cannot give pedigree. He may make a nobleman, but he cannot give him old blood. In the desire of Rome to keep down Constantinople, and prevent her from coming into rivalry with her, she had sympathy from Alexandria and other great eastern sees, which had been long accustomed to yield precedence to Rome, but had no mind to see a new superior placed over their heads. And, in particular, these sees sympathized with Rome when she tried to alter the ground of her priority from what it had been before, and to claim precedence not because of her political greatness, but because of her historical connexion with the Apostles. For, according to that rule, Constantinople ranked below Alexandria and Antioch as much as below Rome.

It is rather amusing how careful the bishops of Rome thenceforward became to protest against the rank of sees being made to depend on the civil rank of their cities. Thus, Innocent I writes: 'It has not seemed fitting that the Church of God should change her course according to the changes of the necessities of this world' (*Ep.* 18, Mansi, iii. 1055). But the fact is that Church history swarms with examples of changes of this kind; for the logic of facts is too strong for theories. The example that first occurs to me owes its interest to its being an incident in the life of a great man, St. Basil. In 375, when the Emperor Valens divided the province of Cappadocia into two, the bishop of Tyana, which was now raised to the rank of a capital, at once assumed that he was elevated to the rank of a metropolitan, was released from all subordination to the old capital, Caesarea, and was entitled to claim obedience from the minor sees of his half of the province. He took on him to assemble synods of bishops, and to seize the revenues which the suffragan bishops sent to the principal see. This led to some distressing disputes, in which Gregory Nazianzen was forced to take a share; but practically the victory remained with the bishop of Tyana. And at Chalcedon it was made a canon that the ecclesiastical should follow the civil divisions.

I proceed now to examine into the history of the early Church, and to inquire whether in their controversies they recognized the bishop of Rome

as their ruler, teacher, and doctor. Confessedly, the opinion of him who was the leading bishop of the Church had great weight in every dispute; but the question now is, whether his decision was final, and whether, when Rome had spoken, the cause was finished.

At the outset of the inquiry, in one of the earliest of Christian uninspired writings, the epistle of Clement of Rome, we find an example to which Romanists gladly appeal, of an interference of the Church of Rome with a distant Church. The object of the letter was to heal a schism in the Corinthian Church; and the Romans use an urgent, and to some it has seemed an imperious tone, in addressing their Corinthian brethren. They exhort the offenders to submit ‘not to them but to the will of God’ (§ 56):— ‘Receive our counsel,’ they write, ‘and ye shall have no cause of regret’ (§ 58). ‘But if certain persons should be disobedient unto the words spoken by God through us, let them understand that they will entangle themselves in no slight transgression and danger; but we shall be guiltless of this sin’ (§ 59). ‘Ye will give us great joy and gladness if ye render obedience unto the things written by us through the Holy Spirit, and root out the unrighteous anger of your jealousy, according to the entreaty we have made for peace and concord in this letter’ (§ 63).

Before we pass a judgment on these sentences, it is necessary to know the circumstances which gave occasion for them; for it is never safe to say that any language is too strong, without knowing what has occurred to justify it. Strange to say, the account of the transaction most favourable to the Roman pretensions is that given by a Scotch Presbyterian. Dr. Cunningham (*Growth of the Church*, p. 53) states that the occasion of Clement’s letter was that the Corinthians ‘had, with much bitterness and bad blood, dismissed some of their presbyters; when the Roman Church, to whom, perhaps, the paid off<sup>1</sup> presbyters had appealed, wrote to remonstrate.’ And he adds that ‘this venerable document clearly proves that, at the period when it was written—probably towards the end of the first century—the Churches of Rome and Corinth were under the rule of presbyter-bishops, with a very limited jurisdiction, and subject to dismissal from their office at the caprice of the people.’

Now, if this were really the constitution of the Church in the first century, the Corinthians acted fully within their rights in cashiering officers who had ceased to be acceptable to them; and the interference of the Roman

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<sup>1</sup> It is a pity that Dr. Cunningham did not quote in full the otherwise unknown authority whence he derived this feature; for it would be interesting to know how much these presbyters, on being dismissed, received as compensation for their annuities. Also, since the same authority, no doubt, told something as to the fees payable in the Roman ecclesiastical courts in the first century, we should be enabled to tell how far the sum they received would go in defraying the costs of an appeal to Rome, which, in later times at least, were considerable.

Church is inexplicable, unless it possessed, or at least claimed, the right of controlling the independent action of foreign Churches. But it is remarkable that there is no trace in the letter itself of any pretension of the kind. Not a hint is given that the question of deposing presbyters was one on which Rome ought to have been consulted, or one which it had any right to review. It is not stated that there had been any appeal to Rome on the part of the displaced presbyters, but only that the transactions at Corinth had become notorious, and had brought great discredit on their Church. This letter claims no superiority for the Roman Church; and if the writer declares that its remonstrances cannot be disregarded without sin, it is because of his conviction of the enormity of the evil which called them forth. For, far from thinking with Dr. Cunningham that it lies within the discretion of a Church to turn off its presbyters when so disposed, he treats the deposition of presbyters, against whom no misconduct had been alleged, as a monstrous and unheard-of thing. In the view of later times, what had taken place at Corinth might be described as feuds or dissensions; but, in the view of the writer, rebellion against the authority of the duly-appointed presbyters was 'a detestable and impious sedition, madly stirred up by a few headstrong and self-willed persons'. He argues that it is necessary to the well-being of every society that duly-constituted order should be respected; and (c. 44) that the order constituted in the Christian society owed its origin to apostolic appointment. He has no other terms of peace to counsel than that those who had rebelled should penitently submit to lawful authority, even going into voluntary exile if, for the sake of peace, that should be necessary. Such a letter as this could clearly not be regarded as an attempt by Rome to domineer over provincial Churches. On the contrary, the constituted authorities of every Church would be grateful for the moral support generously given them by the Church of the chief city; while the general acknowledgment of the principle, contended for in the letter, of the stability of the sacred office would do much to increase the reputation of the Church which had been its successful champion. Even those whose conduct was censured in this letter could take no offence at its tone, which is only that of the loving remonstrance which any Christian is justified in offering to an erring brother.

But it is necessary to remark that Clement's letter is in the name, not of the bishop of Rome, but of the Church of Rome. Clement's name is not once mentioned. It is from independent sources (the earliest, Dionysius of Corinth, has been just mentioned) we learn that Clement was the writer; but from the letter itself we should not so much as discover that Rome had any bishop. 'The later Roman theory supposes that the Church of Rome derives all its authority from the bishop of Rome, as the successor of St. Peter. History inverts the relation, and shows that, as a matter of fact, the power of

the bishop of Rome was built upon the power of the Church of Rome. It was originally a primacy, not of the episcopate, but of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

All through the second century this subordination of the bishop to the Church continues. The bishop only addresses foreign Churches as the mouthpiece of his Church. We have the letter already referred to, written by Dionysius of Corinth, (about 170) in the name of his Church, addressed to the Church of Rome, and acknowledging the benefactions sent through their bishop Soter. The letter to which he replies had been written, not in Soter's name, but in that of his Church, as appears from the use of the plural number. 'Today we kept the Lord's holy day, on which we read *your* letter; by which we shall be able to be constantly admonished, reading it from time to time, in the same manner as your former letter to us, written by the hands of Clement.'<sup>2</sup>

At the very end of the century, the proceedings with which the name of Victor is associated, taken with a view of excluding Quartodecimans from communion, were taken, not in the bishop's own name, but in that of his Church. There is so far an advance in the prominence of the bishop, that Victor does not suppress his own name as did Clement; but still the letter is not his, but that of his Church.<sup>3</sup> And the plural number is still used in the reply of Polycrates, in which also it is implied that the request that he should take the opinion of the neighbouring bishops had been made in the name of the Church, not the bishop, of Rome.<sup>4</sup>

What has been said as to the fact that in the first century the importance of the bishop of Rome was merged in that of his Church receives singular confirmation from the Ignatian Epistles. Among non-canonical writers, Ignatius is the first distinct witness to the episcopal form of Church government. His letters to the Asiatic Churches are full of exhortations to obey the bishop and to be united to him; but in his letter to the Church of Rome no hint is given that there is a bishop entitled to the obedience (not to say of foreign Christians, but even) of his own people. No salutation is sent to the bishop; and, in short, we should not discover from this letter that there was a bishop of Rome. I am not prepared to adopt the inference some have drawn, viz. that episcopacy was a form of Church Government which developed itself first in Asia Minor, and which, when Ignatius wrote, had not yet extended itself to Rome. But there seems reason to think that the bishop of Rome was then only concerned with domestic government, and that Ignatius had not even heard his name. On the other hand, the dignity of the Church of Rome is fully acknowledged in this letter. It is addressed to the

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<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot's Clement, p. 254.

<sup>2</sup> [Greek text.] (Euseb. *H. E.* iv. 23).

<sup>3</sup> [Greek text.]

<sup>4</sup> [Greek text.] (Euseb. *H. E.* v. 24).

Church ‘which presides in the place of the country of the Romans.’<sup>1</sup> The best commentary on these words is afforded by Tertullian, whose own language may possibly have been suggested by them (*De Praescr.* 36): ‘ecclesias apostolicas apud quas ipsae adhuc cathedrae apostolorum *suis locis praesident.*’ Thus each of the Apostolic Churches is regarded as presiding in its own district: so that though it would cost us nothing to admit a pre-eminence of the Church of the world’s metropolis over all other Churches, the language appears to limit the presidency to the Roman district.

While on this subject, I must not omit to discuss another early testimony to the eminence of the Roman Church. I have already (p. 358) mentioned how Church writers refuted the Gnostic pretence to the possession of secret apostolic traditions, by tracing the successions of their own bishops up to the Apostles, and thus showing that it was in their own Churches that the genuine apostolic tradition must have been handed down. Irenaeus, who uses this argument (III. 3), says, that because it would be too long in a work like his to enumerate the successions in all the Churches, he will content himself with giving the succession of bishops in the Church of Rome: ‘Ad hanc enim ecclesiam propter potentiorem principalitatem necesse est omnium convenire ecclesiam (hoc est, eos qui suet undique fideles) in qua semper, ab his qui suet undique, conservata est ea quae est ab Apostolis traditio.’ The passage has only been preserved in a Latin translation, and commentators have differed very much in their attempts to restore the Greek. Some Romanist writers have understood the first clause to mean that it is the duty of every Church to conform to that of Rome; but it has been pointed out with perfect justice that ‘necesse est’ is not the Latin equivalent for δεῖ which would be rendered ‘oportet,’ but for ἀναγκη; and expresses not moral obligation but natural necessity. When our Lord said (Matt. xviii. 7), “it must needs be that offences come,” he did not mean that it was a moral duty that offences should come. Making this correction, however, those, who understand the clause to mean that other Churches would be sure to be found agreeing with the Church of Rome, have differed among themselves as to the reason given, ‘propter potentior principalitatem’; some restoring the Greek so as to find in these words a claim founded on the civil greatness of Rome, others on the antiquity of the Church. These differences I need not discuss, because I feel no doubt that Grabe is right in considering that the words ‘convenire ad’ are not Latin for ‘agree with,’ but for ‘resort to,’ and that ‘undique’ is not to be taken as meaning no more than ‘ubique’; so that the meaning of Irenaeus is ‘Rome is, on account of its civil greatness, a place to which every Church must

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<sup>1</sup> [Greek text.]

resort: that is to say, every Church does not come thither officially, but Christians cannot help coming to the city from the Churches in every part of the world. We have no need, then, to examine the apostolic tradition of these Churches in their respective lands. We can learn it from their members to be found in Rome who, being in communion with the Roman Church, must agree with it in doctrine; and thus the apostolic tradition preserved in the capital has been preserved not by native Romans only, but by the faithful collected in the city from every part of the world.’ Understanding the passage thus, it is seen to have no relevance to modern controversies. I am surprised that Grabe’s explanation has not been more generally adopted,<sup>1</sup> because it seems to me the only one which brings out the force of the parenthesis ‘hoc est qui suet undique fideles,’ and which gives a meaning to ‘in qua,’ by which Harvey is so much puzzled that he wants to translate it ‘whereas.’

I come now to what is regarded by many as the first mild attempt at Papal aggression—the proposal of bishop Victor at the very end of the second century to excommunicate the Asiatic Quartodecimans. I have on a former occasion (*Introduction to N. T.*, pp. 45, 55) called your attention to the predominance of the Greek element in the early Roman Church; and in particular the fact should be noticed that we have in Victor a bishop with a Latin name succeeding to a line of bishops whose names (such as Anicetus, Soter, Eleutherus), in the vast majority of cases, indicate a Greek origin. Hence it has been thought that Victor’s arrogance may be accounted for by the fact that he belongs to a time when the Roman Church was no longer that of a foreign colony in the great city, but had now a predominance of native Romans, ruled by a bishop of their own conquering race. But it seems to me that there are considerations which tend to mitigate any harsh judgment we might be disposed to pass on Victor.<sup>2</sup>

I think the young student of Church history is apt to be a little scandalized on learning that there were such warm controversies in the second century on the question of the proper day for the celebration of Easter. Surely, he thinks, this is a matter of no importance. Might not any day have been selected by common consent? or if there had been any difficulty about this,

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<sup>1</sup> He is followed by Neander, who has an admirable note (*Kirchengeschichte*, i. 210), but was perversely misunderstood by Stieren, who says, *miror Neandrum, qui sequitur Grabium illud “convenire” de conventibus legatorum ex omnibus ecclesiis Romam missorum interpretari*. Of course Grabe and Neander were not thinking of embassies to the Church of Rome, but of the necessary recourse of Christians to the capital on account of civil business. Grabe quotes what Gregory Nazianzen (*Orat.* 32) says of Constantinople: [Greek text.] and the 9<sup>th</sup> Canon of the Council of Antioch: [Greek text.] Neander adds a still more apposite quotation from Athenaeus (i. 36), who describes Rome as an epitome of the world in which every city is found represented.

<sup>2</sup> Hippolytus, who, it must be owned, had an object to serve in his eulogium, describes Victor as a kind-hearted man. (*Haer. Ref.* ix. 12.)

might not different Churches without offence keep their Easter on different days? Yet we have experience enough among ourselves what warmth of feeling can be stirred by ritual peculiarities indifferent in themselves, but supposed to indicate objectionable tendencies in those who adopt them. In the great majority of Irish churches any attempt to assimilate our ritual practice to Romish usage would give the greatest offence; and the clergyman who should introduce the innovation would plead in vain that the change was an improvement, or that it only concerned matters of indifference. Now in the second century the contest with Judaism was as pressing as the contest with Romanism is among ourselves; and in the West natural suspicions were excited of the orthodoxy of a man who in place of keeping his Easter on the day observed by the Church, wished to celebrate it on the day of the Passover of the unbelieving Jews. For these reasons the Quartodeciman usage would naturally be disliked in the West; yet still as long as it was merely known to be the practice of distant Churches, it was not difficult to tolerate it. But as I have already explained (p 277), the case was altered when a presbyter at Rome denounced the usage of his own Church as un-apostolic, and as one to which a Christian could not with a good conscience conform. Then it might well seem time that diversity should be put an end to; and I have pointed out that this was not an attempt to impose a Roman peculiarity on the rest of the Christian world, but that Victor commenced by writing to the leading bishops, asking each to assemble his neighbours and report to him their practice. It was armed with this evidence that Quartodecimanism was only a local peculiarity, that he called on the Asiatic Churches to conform to the usage of the rest of the world on pain of being excommunicated. According to my view of Christian duty, the matter in dispute was one in which a local Church is not justified in resisting the rest of the Church universal; and I think the Asiatic Churches ought to have given way, rather than break unity. Yet they could plead a tradition for their practice, reaching, as they believed, up to the Apostle John; and when I bear in mind that the Christian Easter is but a commemoration of events which happened at the Jewish Passover season, I find no difficulty in believing that St. John's practice may have been to hold the Christian feast on the same day as the Jewish. But though I can also think it possible that other Apostles may have celebrated differently, and though I hold moreover, that it lies within the competence of the Church, for reason that seems to her good, to deviate from Apostolic usage in ritual matter, yet I cannot be surprised that these views were not shared by the Asiatic Christians of the second century, and that they held themselves bound, in defiance of threats, to adhere to the traditional practice of their Churches.

A few words may be necessary to explain what was meant by the threat of excommunication which was used against them: it meant a suspension of

those friendly relations which I have already described (p. 282) as existing between the different Churches which all regarded themselves as members of one great community. That one Church should break these relations with another did not necessarily imply any claim of superiority. If the Sovereign of England were to dismiss the Russian ambassador, it would be a token of hostility, but would not imply any claim of superiority over the Sovereign of Russia. Even before the Pope lost his temporal dominions, the Crown of England refused to hold diplomatic intercourse with him, yet did not thereby show that it counted him as an inferior. Nevertheless, any Church would feel it as a most severe penalty were Rome to break communion with her. She would thereby lose the good offices of the Church most powerful in influence and in money. Her members, on visiting the city which strangers had most occasion to frequent, would find themselves, no matter how high office they had held at home, treated as aliens to the Christian community. Added to the practical inconvenience would be the stigma of an exclusion which, according to the general feeling of Christians, ought not to be inflicted but for grave cause. This same general feeling, however, would make one Church slow to break communion with another; for the result of such an attempt, if unsupported, would be, instead of isolating that other, to isolate themselves. Accordingly, the threat by which it had been expected to bring the Asiatic Churches into conformity was one of separation, not from the Roman Church merely, but from the whole society of Christian Churches. But the attempt to carry out the threat was frustrated by the resistance of Irenaeus, who not only wrote a letter of sharp remonstrance to Victor himself, but wrote also to several other bishops, urging that whole Churches of God ought not to be separated from communion on account of an ancient custom, and pointing out that the matter in dispute was one on which differences had previously not been allowed to interrupt communion; citing in particular the fact that Anicetus of Rome and Polycarp, though unable to agree on this subject, had remained in close communion with each other. The result of these remonstrances seems to have been that the attempt to excommunicate the Asiatics was abandoned; for we find during the next century no trace of interruption of communion; and the suppression of Quartodecimanism was only effected by the Council of Nicea, which could speak in the name of the universal Church with an authority possessed by no single bishop.

I think that if we put the Romish controversy out of our heads, we shall have no difficulty in sympathizing with all the parties in this transaction. We cannot wonder that Victor should have been anxious to obtain uniformity of practice, and that he should have thought that object attainable through pressure put by the general body of Christians on a small number of dissentients. We can sympathize also with the unexpected tenacity with

which the Asiatics held to a usage which they believed to be Apostolic, and we can sympathize still more heartily with the counsels of peace offered by Irenaeus. But we should not have been allowed to put the Romish controversy out of our heads if the parts of Victor and Irenaeus had been interchanged. Suppose it had been Irenaeus who had rashly broken communion with the Asiatic Churches; suppose that Victor had then written a letter to Irenaeus, sharply rebuking him,<sup>1</sup> and had written also to other bishops, warning them not to separate from those who had been unwarrantably excommunicated; and suppose that in consequence of this action of Victor's the threatened schism had been averted, would not that have been paraded as a decisive proof of Papal Supremacy? and certainly it would be one far stronger than any which, as things are, early Church history can furnish.

In my opinion this was not the first time on which the Gallic Church had come forward to defend the independence of the Asiatic Churches; but the passage which I have in my mind is one which has been differently understood. In the Montanist controversy the chief subject of difference was that the Montanists regarded certain women as prophets, and revered their utterances as inspired by God's Spirit, while the local bishops considered them to be under the influence of demoniacal possession, and even attempted to exorcise the evil spirit which possessed them.<sup>2</sup> Now Eusebius (v. 3), in relating the events of the year 177, tells that the brethren in Gaul then drew up a judgment of their own on this Montanist question, a judgment pious and most orthodox, in which were also set forth letters which the martyrs in the great persecution of that year had written while yet in prison to the brethren in Asia and Phrygia, and, moreover, to Eleutherus, the then bishop of Rome, pleading on behalf of the peace of the Churches. From the last phrase it has been very commonly inferred that these letters were an unsuccessful attempt to avert the schism which actually took place, and that they had pleaded for the retention of the Montanists in the Church, by either acknowledging the inspiration of their prophets, or at least leaving that an open question. But I cannot believe that Eusebius would have characterized such advice as pious and orthodox; for a little later (c. 14) he describes these Montanist prophets as poisonous serpents sent against the Church by the devil, the hater of all good, who was determined to leave no form of injury untried. And I conceive the object of the letter to Eleutherus to have been to impress on him the propriety of not going behind the judg-

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<sup>1</sup> [Greek text.] (Euseb. H. E. v. 24.)

<sup>2</sup> I consider that it was this way of testing prophets which is forbidden in the *Didache*, xi. 7: "And every prophet who speaks in the Spirit, ye shall not try or test". To offer the indignity of exorcism to one really inspired of God's Spirit might naturally be regarded as a sin against the Holy Ghost.

ment passed on these pretenders by the bishops on the spot, since any contrary course would be a breach of the 'peace of the Churches.'

In the third century the importance of the bishop of Rome increases; yet even so late as the episcopate of Callistus (A.D. 217-222), it seems to me that it still depends on his being able to speak in the name of his Church. Hippolytus, who was an adversary of Callistus, reproaches him (*Ref. Haer.* ix. 12) for the laxity of his discipline. There is every reason to think that this was the same prelate whose decision, that persons excommunicated on account of adultery might be admitted to penance and restoration, gave rise to Tertullian's treatise, *De Pudicitia*, in which the rigorist view is strongly maintained, that such persons ought never in this life to be readmitted to the Church. It used to be thought that Zephyrinus was the bishop in question; but the only ground for that opinion was a mistaken belief that the life, or at least the literary activity, of Tertullian had not continued beyond his episcopate. The *De Pudicitia* belongs to the latest period of Tertullian's life, in which he had come to formal separation from the Church. Hippolytus gives no hint that the laxity of Callistus had received any sanction from his predecessor, Zephyrinus.

Be this, however, as it may, what we are here concerned with is that in discussing whether adulterers can be readmitted to communion, Tertullian, after considering several other texts of Scripture, comes to the texts, 'On this rock will I build my Church.' 'I have given thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven,' 'Whatsoever thou shalt bind or loose on earth shall be bound or loosed in heaven.' Now, since at the time this tract of Tertullian was written the story that Clement had been ordained by Peter had come to be received belief at Rome, it would not have surprised me if Callistus had already made the claim for the bishop of Rome to be heir to Peter's prerogatives. But it is remarkable that while Tertullian altogether denies that it lies within the competence of the bishop of Rome to give absolution to an adulterer, his whole argument shows plainly that no claim of the kind had been made for the bishop personally, but only for his Church, or rather for every Church which could claim like relationship with Peter ('ad omnem ecclesiam Petri propinquaim'). If a personal claim had been made for the bishop, Tertullian would completely play into his adversary's hands; for what he takes pains to maintain is that the powers described in the verses in St. Matthew were not conferred on the Church, but on Peter personally (see p. 340). The absence of any claim for the bishop is so striking, that two learned Roman Catholics (Morcelli and Cardinal Orsi) have refused to believe that Tertullian's controversy was with a bishop of Rome at all. It must have been a bishop of Carthage. If he was addressing a bishop of Rome, argues Orsi, Tertullian would not have said, 'Thou imaginest that to thee also, that is to every Church united with Peter, this power has been commit-

ted,' but he would have said, 'To thee who boastest that thou dost sit on the seat of Peter, and to thy Church founded by him.' But since Tertullian sarcastically calls his adversary 'Pontifex maximus,' and, 'Episcopus Episcoporum,' it cannot well be doubted that he had a bishop of Rome in view; and Orsi's argument simply proves that the bishop of Rome in the days of Tertullian had not made the claims which were afterwards advanced by his successors.

In this controversy we are disposed to sympathize with the clemency of Callistus rather than with the rigour of his critics, Tertullian and Hippolytus. But since I have spoken of the controversy between Callistus and Hippolytus, I must tell you all that is known about it, although the case is not one on which I lay stress, in a controversial point of view; for I take the side of the bishop of Rome against his assailant. The story is an interesting one; and as it has only comparatively recently come to light, so that it is not to be found in the older text-books, it is fitting that I should give you some account of it. A book known as the *Philosophumena* had been long included among the works of Origen, though learned men had given reasons for thinking that Origen could not have been really the author. It was but the introduction to a larger work, the greater part of which has been since recovered in a ms. brought from Mount Athos to Paris, and published at Oxford in 1851, still under the name of Origen's *Philosophumena*. On the publication of the whole, however, it became abundantly plain that the work was not Origen's for the author appears to claim to be a bishop, and also to have taken a leading part in the affairs of the Church of Rome. The almost unanimous opinion of the learned (whether Roman Catholic, Church of England, or Rationalistic) is that the book, whose proper title is a 'Refutation of all Heresies,' is the work of Hippolytus, who has been honoured as a saint, and who had been known as one of the most learned members of the Church of Rome between 200 and 235. There are still one or two learned men who do not think the authorship fully proved; but I have examined the question myself, and consider that it is beyond all doubt. Among the heresies refuted in this book is one which denied the distinct personality of the Father and the Son, so that these were said to be merely different names given to the same divine being, according as He existed in different relations or different ways of manifestation. Hence its promoters have been called Patripassians, the consequence having been deduced from their teaching (whether they themselves expressly asserted it or not), that it was the Father who suffered on the Cross. It was nearly the same heresy as that which afterwards became notorious under the name of Sabellianism. We learn from Hippolytus's contemporary, Tertullian, that Praxeas, who introduced this heresy at Rome had also made himself conspicuous by his opposition to Montanism, and so, probably by his admitted orthodoxy on one

point, gained a more indulgent hearing for his erroneous teaching on another. This newly-discovered writing, in refuting the Patripassian doctrine, stigmatizes as patrons of that heresy Zephyrinus and Callistus, who occupied the see of Rome between 202 and 223, who had always hitherto held an unblemished reputation in the Church, and are entered in the Roman breviary as martyrs. Zephyrinus is dealt with with comparative gentleness. He is described as an illiterate and covetous man, very much under the influence of Callistus, and partly inveigled, partly corrupted, by him to give his episcopal patronage to the Noetians. But with Callistus no terms are kept. He is said to have been originally a slave of an influential Christian in Caesar's household. Under his master's patronage he set up as a banker, and was entrusted with large deposits by the widow and brethren. These Callistus embezzled, and became bankrupt. He attempted to run away, but was overtaken and, failing in an attempt to commit suicide, was brought back, and sent by his master to the *pistrinum*. After a time he was released, on the intercession of some who thought that if he were set free he might discover the embezzled money. But this he could not do, and being watched, and unable to run away again, he devised a desperate plan to restore his credit among the Christians. He went into the Jewish synagogue, and disturbed their worship, for which he was beaten, and brought before the prefect. His master hastened to the tribunal, and begged the prefect not to believe that he was a Christian, as he was only seeking an occasion of death, having embezzled much money; but this was thought a mere subterfuge for the extrication of the accused, and Callistus was scourged, and sent to the mines in Sardinia. Some time after, Marcia, the favourite concubine of the Emperor Commodus, who had strong sympathies with the Christians, the eunuch who brought her up being a Christian priest, was able to obtain an order for the release of the Christians in these mines, and applied to Pope Victor for their names. But he, knowing the circumstances, did not include the name of Callistus in the list. However, Callistus so earnestly wept and besought the bearer of the release that the latter, being a kind-hearted man, took the responsibility of adding the name of Callistus to the list. Victor, we are told, was distressed at the return of Callistus, but contented himself with banishing him to Antium. After Victor's death, Callistus succeeded in ingratiating himself with his successor, Zephyrinus; and in the Patripassian disputes, he tried to gain the favour of both parties, with the orthodox professing orthodoxy, and with the Noetians, Noetianism. He ultimately devised a new theory, by which he endeavoured to make a compromise, and steer a middle course between the teaching of Hippolytus and that of his Patripassian opponent; on one occasion accusing Hippolytus of Ditheism. Our author further accuses Callistus of undue laxity in his moral discipline, in giving an easy absolution to sinners who had been cast out of

the Church by others—some of them by Hippolytus himself—in admitting digamists and trigamists to the ranks of the clergy; in his allowing clergy to marry, and treating their doing so as a matter between God and their own consciences; in allowing Christian ladies to take to themselves, if they so desired, consorts of a lower rank, with whom they could not contract a legal marriage.

You may guess what a sensation was produced by the discovery of a work seemingly so damaging to the credit of two Roman bishops. Bishop Wordsworth of Lincoln, who published separately this part of the newly-discovered work, believes every word that Hippolytus says to the discredit of the Popes. And he cannot be much blamed for doing so; for Hippolytus has always been honoured as a saint and a martyr, and the honour must have been given him from nearly his own time; for there is in existence a statute of him, which is proved to be nearly contemporary by its having engraved on it the cycle which Hippolytus invented in order to find the time of Easter. Now, that cycle was an erroneous one, and its error could not but be discovered after using it for a dozen years. We may conclude, therefore, that the time when it was engraved in perpetual honour of Hippolytus was before the error was discovered; that is to say before A.D. 240. If we accept the testimony of Hippolytus, it would follow that two bishops of Rome were not only men of indifferent moral character, but that they fell into heresy on a primary article of the Christian faith. Dr. Newman, on the other hand, was so shocked at this libel on Roman bishops, that he declared nothing would persuade him it could be the work of the saint and martyr Hippolytus. But a far better defence of the credit of the Roman see was made by von Dollinger, at that time in full credit as an able champion of the Roman Catholic Church. His work, *Hippolytus and Callistus*, has been translated into English (1876); and I do not know a more interesting and instructive work on early Church history.

Dollinger points out that though in this work Hippolytus claims to be a bishop, and is recognized as a bishop by early authorities, yet that the name of his see is not mentioned by them; and some of them expressly declare their ignorance of it. The statement that he was bishop of Portus (near Rome), though generally accepted, rests on comparatively late and untrustworthy authorities. A number of Greek mss., which cite passages from his writings, describe him as bishop of Rome. Further, in this work, Hippolytus never ascribes the title of bishop to Callistus; and he speaks of him as having only seemed to obtain the dignity he aimed at. Dollinger's inference is that the dissensions at Rome proceeded to such a length that they came to formal schism, Hippolytus being the bishop of the ultra-orthodox minority, and Callistus the one accepted by the majority of the Roman Church.

This theory gives an excellent explanation of all the phenomena presented by the treatise against heresies which we are discussing; but it is attended by the very grave difficulty that this, which would seem to have been one of the earliest Schisms in the Roman see, seems to have been absolutely unknown to the rest of the Christian world; and that although the leader of one of the parties was that member of the Roman Church who was best known elsewhere for his learning and his literary activity. If Dollinger's hypothesis be well founded, it follows that Christians in the third century so far from regarding the bishop of Rome as their master and teacher, regarded the question, who was bishop of Rome, as one merely of local interest, and troubled themselves little to inquire who the bishop of Rome was. Rival bishops might claim the see for years, and one of them not an obscure person, but the leading divine in the Roman Church of his day, and yet the schism did not leave a trace in Church history, and, as far as we can learn, not a single Eastern Christian have heard of its existence.

Taking this view, however, the impeachment of the orthodoxy of the Roman bishops is at once disarmed. Instead of believing on the word of Hippolytus that the Roman bishops who differed with him were heretics, we may question whether it was not he himself who was in the wrong, whether in his zeal against those who confounded the Persons of the Father and the Son, he did not use such indiscreet language as to lay himself fairly open to the charge of Ditheisin: that is to say, whether he did not so separate their substances as to seem to teach Christians to worship two distinct Gods. It is still easier to defend the disciplinary regulations of the Roman bishops, for the indulgence which characterized the practice of Callistus is more in accordance both with our own ideas, and with the practice of the Church since his time, than the unforgiving strictness of Hippolytus. And as for the charges of immorality, we are not bound to take as Gospel truth everything that is alleged by a witness so bitter and evidently prejudiced as Hippolytus. He clearly puts the worst construction on all the facts of the life of Callistus. Did he become bankrupt, it was because he had embezzled the funds entrusted to him. Did he get into trouble by his Christian zeal, it was because of his crimes, and because being unable to commit suicide, he was anxious for an occasion of death. And so on.

On the whole I consider that Dollinger has made out so good a case, that I am willing to acquit Zephyrinus and Callistus of the charge of heresy; though, as I have pointed out, the theory obliges us to set very low the influence exerted by the Roman Church on the rest of the Christian world at the beginning of the third century.