

*Trajan* and *Aurelius* harassed the Christians was that the religion of Rome was a part of the state system, and the denial of the Roman gods by the Christians was regarded as political hostility and disloyalty. The Christians were a *sect*, and not a *nation*; and the Roman government, which tolerated all national faiths, looked with suspicion on the votaries of a creed which had a new and unknown God, and taught that all other deities were non-existent or else powers of evil.

13. Severe persecutions also occurred during the reigns of *Diocletian* and *Valerian*, and the struggle between the *Diocletian persecution*. old faiths and the new culminated in the decree of *Diocletian* (A.D. 303), ordering the destruction of all Christian places of worship and of all the holy books, and the removal of all Christians from official posts of dignity and power. For eight years a cruel persecution raged throughout the empire, except in Britain, Gaul, and Spain, but it ended in permission being given (A.D. 311) for the Christians to worship God as they pleased. Henceforward Christianity was safe from external foes. The rise and progress of heresies (or novelties of doctrine) within the Christian church, and the councils at which these matters were disputed and settled, do not belong to a work of this kind. The different forms assumed by the new religion were moulded by the peculiarities of the Western, Greek, and Oriental modes of thought, states of feeling, and types of character, and displayed a corresponding fervent simplicity, or subtlety, or mysticism, which were the basis of endless divergencies and discussions.

14. Apart from its effects upon the morals, the new religion greatly and beneficially stirred the mind of the age. *The Christian Fathers*. Political speculation and discussion were impossible under a despotism, and active minds turned to theology, and soon showed that the intellectual power of the time was to be found within the ranks of Christianity. Amongst these early writers and rulers of the church known as the "*Christian Fathers*" the following are the chief—*Tertullian*, *Ambrose*, *Cyprian*, *Lactantius*, *Jerome* and *Augustine*, being *Latin Fathers*, *Origen*, *Gregory*, *Basil*, *Chrysostom*, *Athanasius*, being *Greek Fathers*:—

15. *Tertullian*, who lived between about A.D. 160 and 240. He was a *Tertullian*, native of Roman Africa, and acquired much learning. He *Origen*, wrote an "*Apologia*" or "*Defence*" of Christianity, and a *Ambrose*. number of treatises on points of faith and conduct, distinguished by imagination, energy, and wit, and by an obscure and extravagant