**“How the Catholic Creed Was Made. Character of the Church under Imperial Patronage” The Present Truth 13, 26, pp. 404-406.**

THE Donatist controversy, that strife for supremacy between church factions, each claiming to be the Catholic Church, touched no point of doctrine, but of discipline only, and was confined to the provinces of Africa. The result in this case, however, ought to have convinced Constantine that the best thing for the imperial authority to do was to return, and strictly adhere, to the principles announced in his Edict of Milan, namely to let religious questions and controversies entirely alone, and allow each individual “that privilege of choosing and professing his own religion.” Yet, even if this thought had occurred to him, it would have been impossible for him to do so and attain the object of his ambition. {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 404.1}

The principles of the Edict of Milan had no place in the compact entered into between Constantine and the bishops. As yet he possessed only half the empire; for Licinius still held the East, and Constantine’s position was not yet so secure that he dared risk any break with the bishops. He had bargained to them his influence in religious things for theirs in politics. The contract had been entered into, he had sold himself to the church influence, and he could not go back even if he would. The empire was before him, but without the support of the church party it could not be his. {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 404.2}

**FRUITS OF CLERICAL PRIVILEGE**

IT is necessary now to notice the material point in that edict issued in A.D. 313 (a portion of which was quoted last week), exempting from all public offices the clergy of the Catholic Church. As a benefit to society and that “the greatest good might be conferred on the State,” the clergy of the Catholic Church were to “be held totally free and exempt from all public offices.” {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 404.3}

At this time the burdens and expenses of the principal offices of the State were so great that this exemption was of the greatest material benefit. The immediate effect of the edict, therefore, was to erect the clerical order into a distinct and privileged class. For instance, in the days of the systematic governing of the empire, the decurionate was the chief office of the State. “The decurions formed the Senates of the towns; they supplied the magistrates from their body, and had the right of electing them. Under the new financial system introduced by Diocletian, the decurions were made responsible for the full amount of taxation imposed by the cataster, or assessment on the town and district.” (Milman’s “History of Christianity.”) {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 404.4}

As the splendour and magnificence of the court display was increased, and as the imperial power became more absolute, the taxation became more and more burdensome. To such an extent indeed was this carried that tenants, and indeed proprietors of moderate means, were well-nigh bankrupted. Yet the imperial power demanded of the decurions the full amount of the taxes that were levied in their town or district. “The office itself grew into disrepute, and the law was obliged to force that upon the reluctant citizen of wealth or character which had before been an object of eager emulation and competition.” (Milman.) {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 404.5}

The exemption of the clerical order from all public offices opened the way for all who would escape these burdens, to become, by whatever means possible, members of that order. The effect was, therefore, to bring into the ministry of the church a crowd of men who had no other purpose in view than to be relieved from the burdensome duties that were laid upon the public by the imperial extravagance of Constantine. So promptly did this consequence follow from this edict, and “such numbers of persons, in order to secure this exemption, rushed into the clerical order,” that “this manifest abuse demanded an immediate modification of the law.” It was therefore ordered that “none were to be admitted into the sacred order except on the vacancy of a religious charge, and then those only whose poverty exempted them from the municipal functions.” (Milman.) {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 404.6}

Nor was this all. The order of the clergy itself found that it was required to pay for this exemption a tribute which it had not at all contemplated in the original bargain. Those already belonging to the clerical order who were sufficiently wealthy to exercise the office of decurion, were commanded to “abandon their religious profession” (Milman), in order that they might fill the office which had been deserted because of the exemption which had been granted to their particular order. This of course was counted by the clergy as a great hardship. But as they had willingly consented at the first to the interference of the authority of the State when it was exercised seemingly to their profit, they had thereby forfeited their right to protest against that same interference when it was exercised actually to the denial of their natural rights. Yet the resources of dishonest intrigue were still left to them,—especially the plea that their possessions belonged not to themselves but to the church,—and this subterfuge was employed to such an extent as virtually to defeat the purpose of this later law. Thus the evil consequences of the original law still flowed on, and “numbers, without any inward call to the spiritual office, and without any fitness for it whatever, now got themselves ordained as ecclesiastics, for the sake of enjoying this exemption, whereby many of the worst class came to the administration of the most sacred calling.” (Neander’s Church History.) {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 404.7}

**THE STATE MAKES IT EASY TO BE A “CHRISTIAN.**

ANOTHER scheme adopted by Constantine was fraught with more evil in the same direction. As he had favoured the new religion only on account of its value to him as a political factor, he counted it to his advantage to have as many as possible to profess that religion. He therefore used all the means that could be employed by the State to effect this purpose. He made the principal positions about his palace and court a gift and reward to the professors of the new imperial religion; and “the hopes of wealth and honors, the example of an emperor, his exhortations, his irresistible smiles, diffused conviction among the venal and obsequious crowds which usually fill the apartments of a palace.... As the lower ranks of society are governed by imitation, the conversion of those who possessed any eminence of birth, of power, or of riches, was soon followed by dependent multitudes. The salvation of the common people was purchased at an easy rate, if it be true that in one year twelve thousand men were baptized at Rome, besides a proportionable number of women and children, and that a white garment, with twenty pieces of gold, had been promised by the emperor to every convert.” (Gibbon’s “Decline and Fall.”) {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 404.8}

It will be observed that in this statement Gibbon inserts the cautious clause, “if it be true,” but such a precaution was scarcely necessary; because the whole history of the times bears witness that such was the system followed, whether this particular instance was a fact or not. This is proved by the next instance which we shall mention of Constantine’s efforts in gaining converts to the new religion. He wrote letters offering rewards both political and financial to those cities which, as such, would forsake the heathen religion, and destroy or allow to be destroyed their heathen temples. “The cities which signalised a forward zeal by the voluntary destruction of their temples, were distinguished by municipal privileges, and rewarded with popular donatives.” (Gibbon.) {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 405.1}

In cities that would accept this offer, he would build churches at the public expense, and send there “a complete body of the clergy and a bishop” *when “there were as yet no Christians in the place*.” Also upon such churches he bestowed “large sums for the support of the poor; so that the conversion of the heathen might be promoted by doing good to their bodies.” (Neander.) And that this was simply the manifestation of his constant policy, is shown by the fact that at the Council of Nice, in giving instruction to the bishops as to how they should conduct themselves, he said:— {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 405.2}

“In all ways unbelievers must be saved. It is not every one who will be converted by learning and reasoning. Some join us from desire of maintenance, some for preferment, some for presents; nothing is so rare as a real lover of truth. We must be like physicians, and accommodate our medicines to the diseases, our teaching to the different minds of all.” {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 405.3}

He further enacted “that money should be given in every city to orphans and widows, and to those who were consecrated to the divine service; and he fixed the amount of their annual allowance [of provisions] more according to the impulse of his own generosity, than to the exigencies of their condition.” (Theodoret.) In view of these things it is evident that there is nothing at all extravagant in the statement that in a single year twelve thousand men, besides women and children, were baptized in Rome. {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 405.4}

In addition to all this, he exempted all church property from taxation, which exemption, in the course of time, the church asserted as of divine right; and the example there set is followed to this day, even among people who profess a separation of Church and State. {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 405.5}

**RESULT: THE CHURCH A MASS OF PAGANS**

THE only result which could possibly come from such proceedings as these, was, *first*, that the great mass of the people, of the pagans, in the empire, with no change either of character or convictions, were drawn into the Catholic Church. Thus the State and the church became one and the same thing; and that one thing was simply the embodiment of the *second* result; namely, a solid mass of hypocrisy. “The vast numbers who, from external considerations, without any inward call, joined themselves to the Christian communities, served to introduce into the church all the corruptions of the heathen world. Pagan vices, pagan delusions, pagan superstition, took the garb and name of Christianity, and were thus enabled to exert a more corrupting influence of the Christian life. Such were those who, without any real interest whatever in the concerns of religion, living half in paganism and half in an outward show of Christianity, composed the crowds that thronged the churches on the festivals of the Christians, and the theatres on the festivals of the pagans. Such were those who accounted themselves Christians if they but attended church once or twice in a year; while, without a thought of any higher life, they abandoned themselves to every species of worldly pursuit and pleasure.” (Neander.) {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 405.6}

It could not be otherwise. The course pursued by Constantine in conformity with the political intrigues of the bishops, drew into the Catholic Church every hypocrite in the Roman Empire. And this for the simple reason that it could draw no other kind; because no man of principle, even though he were an outright pagan, would allow himself to be won by any such means. It was only to spread throughout all the empire the ambiguous mixture of paganism and apostate Christianity which we have seen so thoroughly exemplified in the life of Constantine himself, who was further inspired and flattered by the ambitious bishops. {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 405.7}

There were some honest pagans who refused all the imperial bribes and kept aloof from the wicked system thereby established. There were some genuine Christians who not only kept aloof from the foul mass, but protested against every step that was taken in creating it. But speaking generally, the whole population of the empire was included in the system thus established. “By taking in the whole population of the Roman Empire, the church became, indeed, a church of the masses, a church of the people, but at the same time more or less a church of the world. Christianity became a matter of fashion. The number of hypocrites and formal professors rapidly increased; strict discipline, zeal, self-sacrifice, and brotherly love proportionally ebbed away; and many heathen customs and usages, under altered names, crept into the worship of God and the life of the Christian people. The Roman State had grown up under the influence of idolatry, and was not to be magically transformed at a stroke. With the secularising process, therefore, a paganising tendency went hand in hand.” (Schaff’s “History of the Christian Church.”) {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 405.8}

**ALL POWER TO WITNESS FOR CHRISTIANITY LOST**

THE effect of all this was further detrimental to true Christianity in that it argued that Christianity consists in the mere profession of the *name*, pertaining not to the essential character, nor implying any material change in the general conduct. Consequently those who had been by this means brought into the church acted worse, and really were worse, than those who remained aloof. When the bishops or clergy of the church undertook to exhort the heathen to become Christians, the pagans pointed to the hypocritical professors who were already members of the church, and to the invitation replied: “‘We lead good lives already; what need have we of Christ? We commit no murder, theft, nor robbery; we covet no man’s possessions; we are guilty of no breach of the matrimonial bond. Let something worthy of censure be found in our lives, and whoever can point it out may make us Christians.’ Comparing himself with nominal Christians: ‘Why would you persuade me to become a Christian? I have been defrauded by a Christian, I never defrauded any man; a Christian has broken his oath to me, I never broke my word to any man.’” (Neander.) {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 405.9}

Not only was the church thus rendered powerless to influence those who were without, she was likewise powerless to influence for any good those who were within. When the vast majority in the church were unconverted, and had joined the church from worldly and selfish motives, living only lives of conscious hypocrisy, it was impossible that church discipline should be enforced by church authority. {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 406.1}

The next step taken by the bishopric, therefore, was to secure edicts under which they could enforce church discipline. This, too, not only upon the members of the church, but likewise upon those who were not members. The church having, out of lust for worldly power and influence, forsaken the power of God, the civil power was the only resource that remained to her. Conscious of her loss of moral power, she seized upon the civil. The account of this further wickedness will be given in the next paper. {PTUK July 1, 1897, p. 406.2}

A. T. JONES.

**“How the Catholic Creed Was Made. The Church Uses Civil Power to Enforce Dogmas” The Present Truth 13, 27, pp. 420-422.**

THE church was fully conscious of her loss of the power of God before she sought the power of the State. Had she not been, she never would have made any overtures to the imperial authority, nor have received with favour any advances from it. There is a power that belongs with the Gospel of Christ, and is inseparable from the truth of the Gospel; that is, the power of God. In fact, the Gospel is but the manifestation of that power; for the Gospel “is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” Romans 1:16. {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 420.1}

As long, therefore, as any order or organisation of people professing the Gospel of Christ maintains in sincerity the principle of that Gospel, so long the power of God will be with them, and they will have no need of any other power to make their influence felt for good wherever known. But just as soon as any person or association professing the Gospel loses the spirit of it, so soon the power is gone also. Then and only then, does such an organisation seek for another kind of power to supply the place of that which is lost. {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 420.2}

Thus was it with the church at this time. She had fallen, deplorably fallen, from the *purity* and the *truth*, and therefore from the *power*, of the Gospel. And having lost the power of God and of godliness, she greedily grasped for the power of the State and of ungodliness. And to secure laws by which she might enforce her discipline and dogmas upon those whom she had lost the power either to convince or to persuade, was the definite purpose which the bishopric had in view when it struck that bargain with Constantine, and lent him the influence of the church in his imperial aspirations. {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 420.3}

Jesus Christ had declared, “My kingdom is not of this world,” but the bishops had conceived the idea of establishing the kingdom of the Lord on earth by alliance with the State. Thus they would have a government of God, or a theocracy. And now that they had secured the alliance of Church and State, they persuaded themselves that the kingdom of God was come. But they did not suppose for a moment that the Lord Himself would come and conduct the affairs of this kingdom in person. They themselves were to be the representatives of God upon the earth, and the theocracy thus established was to be ruled by the Lord through them. {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 420.4}

The falsity of this theory of the bishops of the fourth century has been clearly seen by but one of the church historians, that is, Neander. And this, as well as the scheme which the bishops had in mind, has been better described by him than by all the others put together. The design of the bishops with respect to the civil power is seen in the following statement:— {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 420.5}

“There had in fact arisen in the church ... a false theocratical theory, ... originating not in the essence of the Gospel, but in the confusion of the religious constitutions of the Old and New Testaments, which ... brought along with it an unchristian opposition of the spiritual to the secular power, and which might easily result in the formation of a sacerdotal State, subordinating the secular to itself in a false and outward way.” {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 420.6}

That which they had in mind when they joined their interests to Constantine’s, was to use the power which through him they would thus secure, to carry into effect in the State and by governmental authority their theocratical project. The State was not only to be subordinate to the church, but was to be *the servant* of the church to assist in bringing all the world into the new kingdom of God. The bishops were the channel through which the will of God was to be made known to the State. Therefore the views of the bishops were to be to the government the expression of the will of God, and whatever laws the bishopric might deem necessary to make the principles of their theocracy effective, it was their purpose to secure. Says Neander:— {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 420.7}

“This theocratical theory was already the prevailing one in the time of Constantine; and ... the bishops voluntarily made themselves dependent on him by their disputes, and by their determination to make use of the power of the State for the furtherance of their aims.” {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 421.1}

**MAKING PEOPLE RELIGIOUS**

AS we saw in last week’s paper, the church had become filled with a mass of people who had no respect for religious exercises, and now it became necessary to use the power of the State to assist in preserving respect for church discipline. As the church-members had not religion enough to lead them to do what they professed was their duty to do, the services of the State had to be enlisted to assist them in doing what they professed to believe it was right to do. In other words, as only worldly and selfish interests had been appealed to in bringing them to membership in the church, and as they therefore had no conscience in the matter, the services of the State were employed as aids to conscience, or rather to supply the lack of conscience. {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 421.2}

Accordingly, one of the first, if not the very first, of the laws secured by the bishops in behalf of the church, was enacted, as it is supposed, about A.D. 314, ordering that on Friday and on Sunday “there should be a suspension of business at the courts and in other civil offices, so that the day might be devoted with less interruption to the purposes of devotion.” (Neander.) {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 421.3}

To justify this, the specious plea was presented that when the courts and public offices were open and regularly conducted by the State on these church days, the members were hindered from attending to their religious exercises. It was further argued that if the State kept its offices open, and conducted the public business on those days, as the church-members could not conduct the public business and attend to church services both, they could not well hold public offices; and that, therefore, the State was in fact discriminating against the church, and was hindering rather than helping the progress of the kingdom of God. {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 421.4}

This was simply to confess that their Christianity was altogether earthly, sensual, and selfish. It was to confess that there was not enough virtue in their profession of religion to pay them for professing it; and they must needs have the State pay them for professing it. This was in fact in harmony with the whole system of which they were a part. They had been paid by the State in the first place to become professors of the new religion, and it was but consistent for them to ask the State to continue to pay them for the continued profession of it. This was consistent with the system there established; but it was totally inconsistent with every idea of true religion. Any religion that is not of sufficient value in itself to pay men for professing it, is not worth professing, much less is it worth supporting by the State. In genuine Christianity there is a virtue and a value which make it of more worth to him who professes it than all that the whole world can afford—yea, of more worth than life itself. {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 421.5}

**CONSTANTINE’S SUNDAY EDICT**

THIS, however, was but the beginning. The State had become an instrument in the hands of the church, and she was determined to use it for all it was worth. {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 421.6}

One of the first aims of the apostate church was the exaltation of Sunday as the chief sacred day. And no sooner had the Catholic Church made herself sure of the recognition and support of the State, than she secured from the emperor an edict setting apart Sunday especially to the purposes of devotion. As the sun was the chief deity of the pagans, and as the forms of sun-worship had been so fully adopted by the apostate church, it was an easy task to secure from the sun-loving and church-courting Constantine, a law establishing the observance of the day of the sun as a holy day. Accordingly, March 7, A.D. 321, Constantine issued his famous Sunday edict, which reads as follows:— {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 421.7}

“Constantine, Emperor Augustus, to Helpidius: On the venerable day of the sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations, the bounty of heaven should be lost. (Given the 7th day of March, Crispus and Constantine being consuls each of them for the second time.) {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 421.8}

The title which is given to the day by Constantine in the edict, is *venerabili die solis*—venerable day of the Sunday. This was the pagan religious title of the day, and to every heathen was suggestive of the religious character which attached to the day as the one especially devoted to the sun and its worship. {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 421.9}

It was by virtue of his office and authority as Pontifex Maximus, or supreme pontiff of the Roman religion, and not as emperor, that the day was set apart to this use; because it was the sole prerogative of the Pontifex Maximus to appoint holy days. As Duruy says in his “History of Rome:”— {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 421.10}

A law of the year 321 ordered tribunals, shops, and workshops to be closed on the day of the sun, and he [Constantine] sent to the legions to be recited upon that day, a form of prayer which could have been employed by a worshipper of Mithra, of Serapis, or of Apollo, quite as well as by a Christian believer. This was the official sanction of the old custom of addressing a prayer to the rising sun. In determining what days should be regarded as holy, and in the composition of a prayer for national use, Constantine exercised one of the rights belonging to him as Pontifex Maximus; and it caused no surprise that he should do this. {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 421.11}

The Council of Nice a few years later, in A.D. 325, gave another impetus to the Sunday movement. It decided that the Roman custom of celebrating Easter on Sunday only should he followed through-out the whole empire. The council issued a letter to the churches, in which is the following passage on this subject:— {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 421.12}

The question having been considered relative to the most holy day of Easter, it was determined by common consent that it would be proper that all should celebrate it on one and the same day everywhere.... And in the first place it seemed very unsuitable in the celebration of this sacred feast, that we should follow the custom of the Jews; a people who having imbrued their hands in a most heinous outrage, and thus polluted their souls, are deservedly blind.... Let us then have nothing in common with that most hostile people the Jews. {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 421.13}

But to sum up matters briefly, it was determined by common consent that the most holy festival of Easter should be solemnised on one and the same day; for in such a hallowed solemnity any difference is unseemly, and it is more commendable to adopt that opinion in which there will be no intermixture of strange error, or deviation from what is right. These things therefore being time. ordered, do you gladly receive this heavenly and truly Divine command: for whatever is done in the sacred assemblies of the bishops is referable to the Divine will. {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 421.14}

This throws much light upon the next move that was made, as these things were made the basis of further action by the church, as we shall see in further papers. {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 421.15}

At every step in the course of the apostasy, at every step taken in adopting the forms of sun-worship, and against the adoption and the observance of Sunday itself, there had been constant protest by all real Christians. Those who remained faithful to Christ and to the truth of the pure word of God, observed the Sabbath of the Lord according to the commandment, and according to the word of God, which sets forth the Sabbath as the sign by which the Lord, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, is distinguished from all other gods. These accordingly protested against every phase and form of sun-worship. Others compromised, especially in the East, by observing both Sabbath and Sunday. But in the West, under Roman influences and under the leadership of the church and the bishopric of Rome, Sunday alone was adopted and observed. A. T. JONES. {PTUK July 8, 1897, p. 422.1}

**“How the Catholic Creed Was Made. Laying the Foundations of the Inquisition” The Present Truth 13, 28, pp. 436-438.**

LAST week we saw how quickly the enactment of Sunday laws followed the union of the churches with the imperial power. The Sunday was made the means of asserting the power of the clergy over the lives of the people, and over the Word of God. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 436.1}

**EARLY PROTESTANTS**

AGAINST this Church and State intrigue throughout, there had been also as against every other step in the course of the apostasy, earnest protest by all real Christians. But when it came to the point where the church would enforce by the power of the State the observance of Sunday, this protest became stronger than ever. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 436.2}

And additional strength was given to the protest at this point by the fact that it was urged in the words of the very arguments which the Catholic Church had used when she was antagonised, rather than courted, by the imperial authority, the argument that God alone is sovereign of the conscience, and that religion, being a matter of the heart and conscience cannot of right be within the realm of the civil ruler. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 436.3}

This, with the strength of the argument upon the merit of the question as to the day which should be observed, greatly weakened the force of the Sunday law. But when, in addition to these considerations, the exemption was so broad, and when those who observed the Sabbath positively refused to obey the Sunday law, its effect was virtually nullified. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 436.4}

In order, therefore, to the accomplishment of her original purpose, it now became necessary for the church to secure legislation extinguishing all exemption, and prohibiting the observance of the Sabbath so as to quench that powerful protest. And now, coupled with the necessity of the situation, the “truly divine command” of Constantine and the Council of Nice that “nothing” should be held “in common with the Jews,” was made the basis and the authority for legislation utterly to crush out the observance of the Sabbath of the Lord, and to establish the observance of Sunday only in its stead. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 436.5}

**SABBATH-KEEPING ANATHEMATISED**

ACCORDINGLY, the Council of Laodicea enacted the following canon:— {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 436.6}

CANON 29. Christians shall not Judaise and be idle on Saturday, but shall work on that day; but the Lord’s day they shall especially honor, and, as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaising, they shall be shut out from Christ. 1 {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 436.7}

The report of the proceedings of the Council of Laodicea is not dated. A variety of dates has been suggested, of which A.D. 364 seems to have been the most favored. Hefele allows that it may have been as late as 380. But whatever the date, before A.D. 380, in the political condition of the empire, this could not be made effective by imperial law. In A.D. 364 Valens and Valentinian became emperors, the former of the East, and the latter of the West. For six years Valens was indifferent to all parties; but in A.D. 370 he became a zealous Arian, and so far as in him lay, established the Arian doctrine throughout his dominion. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 436.8}

Valentinian, though a Catholic, kept himself aloof from all the differences or controversies among church parties. This continued till 375, when Valentinian died, and was succeeded by his two sons, one aged sixteen, the other four, years. In 378 the reign of Valens ended, and Theodosius, a Spanish soldier, was appointed emperor of the East. In 380 he was baptized into the Catholic Church, and immediately an edict was issued in the name of the three emperors, commanding all subjects of the empire, of whatever party or name, to adopt the faith of the Catholic Church, and assume the name of “Catholic Christians.” {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.1}

As now “the State itself recognized the church as such, and endeavoured to uphold her in the prosecution of her principles and the attainment of her ends” (Neander); and as Theodosius had already ordered that all his subjects “should steadfastly adhere to the religion which was taught by St. Peter to the Romans, which faithful tradition” had preserved, and which was then “professed by the pontiff Damasus” of Rome; and that they should all “assume the title of Catholic Christians;” it was easy to bring the imperial power to the support of the decrees of the church, and make the Laodicean Canon effective. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.2}

**THE SUNDAY LAW MADE GENERAL**

NOW was given the opportunity for which the church had waited so long, and she made use of it. At the earliest possible moment she secured the desired law; for, says the historian Neander:— {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.3}

“By a law of the year 386, those older changes effected by the emperor Constantine were more rigorously enforced; and, in general, civil transactions of every kind on Sunday were strictly forbidden. Whoever transgressed was to be considered, in fact, as guilty of sacrilege.” {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.4}

As the direct result of this law, there soon appeared an evil which, under the circumstances and in the logic of the case, called for further legislation in the same direction. The law forbade all work. But as the people had not such religion as would cause them to devote the day to pious and moral exercises, the effect of the law was only to enforce idleness. Enforced idleness only multiplied opportunity for dissipation. The natural consequence was that the circuses and the theatres throughout the empire were crowded every Sunday. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.5}

But the object of the Sunday law, from the first one that was issued, was that the day might be used for the purposes of devotion, and that the people might go to church. But they had not sufficient religion to lead them to church when there was opportunity for amusement. Therefore, as given by Neander, the record is:— {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.6}

Owing to the prevailing passion at that time, especially in the large cities, to run after the various public shows, it so happened that when these spectacles fell on the same days which had been consecrated by the church to some religious festival, they proved a great hindrance to the devotion of Christians, though chiefly, it must be allowed, to those whose Christianity was the least an affair of the life and of the heart.” {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.7}

Assuredly! An open circus or theatre will always prove a great hindrance to the devotion of those Christians whose Christianity is the least an affair of the life and of the heart. In other words, an open circus or theater will always be a great hindrance to the devotion of those who have not religion enough to keep them from going to it, but who only want to use the profession of religion to maintain their popularity, and to promote their selfish interests. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.8}

On the other hand, to the devotion of those whose Christianity is really an affair of the life and of the heart, an open circus or theatre will never be a particle of hindrance, whether open at church time or all the time. With the people there, however, if the circus and theatre were open at the same time as the church, the church-members, as well as others, not being able to go to both places at once, would go to the circus or the theatres instead of to the church. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.9}

**TRYING TO LEGISLATE PEOPLE INTO CHURCH**

BUT this was not what the bishops wanted. This was not that for which all work had been forbidden. All work had been forbidden in order that the people might go to church; but instead of that, they crowded to the circus and the theatre, and *the audiences of the bishops were rather slim*. This was not at all satisfying to their pride; and they took care to let it be known. Neander says:— {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.10}

Church teachers ... were, in truth, often forced to complain that in such competitions the theater was vastly more frequented than the church.” {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.11}

And the church was now in a condition in which she could not bear competition. She must have a monopoly. Therefore, the next step to be taken, the logical one, too, was to have the circuses and theaters closed on Sundays and other special church days, so that the churches and the theatres should not be open at the same time. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.12}

There was another feature of the case which gave the bishops the opportunity to make their new demands appear plausible, by urging in another form the selfish and sophistical plea upon which they had asked for the first edict respecting church days. In the circuses and the theatres large numbers of men were employed, among whom many were church-members. But, rather than give up their places, the church-members would work on Sunday. The bishops complained that these were “compelled to work,” and were “prohibited to worship;” they pronounced it “persecution,” and demanded more Sunday laws for “protection.” {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.13}

**“PROTECTING” THE DAY**

As a consequence, therefore, and in the logic of the situation, at a council held at Carthage in June, A.D. 401, the following canon was enacted:— {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.14}

CANON 5. On Sundays and feast-days, no plays may be performed. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.15}

That this canon might be made effective, the bishops in the same council passed a resolution, and sent up a petition to the emperor Honorius, praying— {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.16}

That the public shows might be transferred from the Christian Sunday and from feast-days, to some other days of the week. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.17}

The reason given in support of the petition was not only, as above, that those who worked in government offices and employments at such times, were persecuted, but that— {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.18}

The people congregate more to the circus than to the church. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.19}

The church-members had not enough religion or love of right to do what they professed to believe was right; therefore the State was asked to take away from them all opportunity to do wrong; then they would all be Christians! The devil himself could be made that kind of Christian in that way—and he would be the devil still! {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.20}

The petition of the Council of Carthage could not be granted at once, but in 425 the desired law was secured; and to this also there was attached the reason that was given for the first Sunday law that ever was made; namely,— {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.21}

In order that the devotion of the faithful might be free from all disturbance. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.22}

It must constantly be borne in mind, however, that the only way in which “the devotion of the faithful” was “disturbed” by these things was that when the circus or theater was open at the same time that the church was open, the “faithful” would go to the circus or the theater instead of to church, and therefore their “devotion” was “disturbed.” And of course the only way in which the “devotion” of such “faithful” ones could be freed from all disturbance, was to close the circuses and the theaters at church time. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 437.23}

**THE LOGIC OF RELIGIOUS LEGISLATION**

IN the logic of this theory, there was one more step to be taken. To see how logically it came about, let us glance at the steps taken from the first one up to this point. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 438.1}

First, the church had all work on Sunday forbidden, in order that the people might attend to things divine; work was forbidden, that the people might worship. But the people would not worship; they went to the circus and the theater instead of to church. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 438.2}

Then the church had laws enacted closing the circuses and the theaters, in order that the people might attend church. But even then the people would not be devoted, nor attend church; for they had no real religion. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 438.3}

The next step to be taken, therefore, in the logic of the situation, was to compel them to be devoted—to compel them to attend to things divine. This was the next step logically to be taken, and it was taken. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 438.4}

The theocratical bishops were equal to the occasion. They were ready with a theory that exactly met the demands of the case; and one of the greatest of the Catholic Church Fathers and Catholic saints was the father of this Catholic saintly theory. Augustine wrote:— {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 438.5}

It is, indeed, better that men should be brought to serve God by instruction than by fear of punishment or by pain. But because the former means are better, the latter must not therefore be neglected.... Many must often be brought back to their Lord, like wicked servants, by the rod of temporal suffering, before they attain the highest grade of religious development. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 438.6}

Of this theory, the author who of all the church historians has best exposed the evil workings of this false theocracy, justly observes:— {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 438.7}

It was by Augustine, then, that a theory was proposed and founded, which ... contained the germ of that whole system of spiritual despotism of intolerance and persecution which ended in the tribunals of the Inquisition. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 438.8}

The history of the Inquisition is only the history of this infamous theory of Augustine’s. But this theory is only the logical sequence of the theory upon which the whole series of Sunday laws was founded. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 438.9}

In closing his history of this particular subject, the same author says:— {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 438.10}

In this way the church received help from the State for the furtherance of her ends. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 438.11}

This statement is correct. Constantine did many things to favor the bishops. He gave them money and political preference. He made their decisions in disputed cases final, as the decision of Jesus Christ. But in nothing that he did for them did he give them *power over those who did not belong to the church*, to compel them to act as though they did, except in the one thing of the Sunday law. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 438.12}

**HOW THE CHURCH SECURED CONTROL**

IN the Sunday law, power was given to the church to compel those who did not belong to the church, and who were not subject to the jurisdiction of the church, to obey the commands of the church. In the Sunday law there was given to the church control of the civil power, so that by it she could compel those who did not belong to the church to act as though they did. The history of Constantine’s time may be searched through and through, and it will be found that in nothing did he give to the church any such power, except in this one thing—the Sunday law. Neander’s statement is literally correct, that it was “in this way the church received help from the State for the furtherance of her ends.” {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 438.13}

That this may be set before the reader in as clear a light as possible, we shall here summarise the facts stated by Neander in their direct bearing. He says of the carrying into effect of the theocratical theory of the apostate bishops that they made themselves dependent upon Constantine by their disputes, and “by their determination to use the power of the State for the furtherance of their aims.” Then he mentions the first and second Sunday laws of Constantine, the Sunday law of A.D. 386, the Carthaginian council, resolution, and petition, of 401; and the law of 425 in response to this petition; and then, without a break, and with direct reference to these Sunday laws, he says: “*In this way* the church received help from the State for the furtherance of her ends.” {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 438.14}

She started out with the determination to do it; she did it; and “*in this way*” she did it. And when she had secured control of the power of the State, she used it for the furtherance of her own aims, and that in her own despotic way, as announced in the inquisitorial theory of Augustine. The first step logically led to the last. And the theocratical leaders in the movement had the cruel courage to follow the first step unto the last, as framed in the words of Augustine and illustrated in the horrors of the Inquisition during the fearful record of the dreary ages in which the bishopric of Rome was supreme over kings and nations. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 438.15}

The lesson in all this for this time is plain. Again, in Protestant lands, there is a disposition among religious leaders to secure control of the State in the interests of religion. They say they want to bring the kingdom of heaven upon earth. The Sunday is the rallying point in the crusade, and the churches are calling for stricter Sunday laws. They are going over the same path, and the logic of their false theory must lead them to the same end. {PTUK July 15, 1897, p. 438.16}

A. T. JONES.

**“How the Catholic Creed Was Made. The Great Trinitarian Controversy” The Present Truth 13, 29, pp. 453-455.**

THE Donatist dispute had developed the decision, and established the fact, that it was “the Catholic Church of the Christians” in which was embodied the “Christianity” which was to be recognized as the imperial religion. Constantine had allied himself with the church only for political advantage. The only use he had for the church was in a political way. Its value for this purpose lay entirely in its unity. If the church should be all broken up and divided into separate bodies, its value as a political factor would be gone. {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 453.1}

The Catholic Church, on her part, had long asserted the necessity of unity with the bishopric, a unity in which the bishopric should be possessed of authority to prohibit, as well as power to prevent, heresy. The church had supported and aided Constantine in the overthrown of Maxentius and the conquest of Rome. She again supported, and materially aided, him in the overthrow of Licinius and the complete conquest of the whole empire. She had received a rich reward for her assistance in the first political move; and she now, in the second and final one. {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 453.2}

The Catholic Church demanded assistance in her ambitious aim to make her power and authority absolute over all; and for Constantine’s purposes it was essential that the church should be a unit. These two considerations combined to produce results, both immediate and remote, that proved a curse to the time then present and to ages to follow. The immediate result was that Constantine had no sooner compassed the destruction of Licinius in A.D. 323, than he issued an edict against the Novatians, Valentinians, Marcionites, Paulians, Cataphrygians, and “all who devised and supported heresies by means of private assemblies,” denouncing them and their heresies, and commanding them all to enter the Catholic Church. {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 453.3}

The edict runs as follows:— {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 453.4}

Let those of you, therefore, who are desirous of embracing the true and pure religion, take far better course of entering the Catholic Church, and uniting with it in holy fellowship, whereby you will be enabled to arrive at the knowledge of the truth. In any case the delusions of your perverted understandings must entirely cease to mingle with, and mar the felicity of, our present times.... And in order that this remedy may be applied with effectual power, we have commanded (as before said) that you be positively deprived of every gathering point for your superstitious meetings; I mean all the houses of prayer (if such be worthy of the name) which belong to heretics, and that these be made over without delay to the Catholic Church; that any other places be confiscated to the public service, and no facility whatever be left for any future gathering, in order that from this day forward none of your unlawful assemblies may presume to appear in any public or private place. Let this edict be made public. {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 453.5}

Some of the penal regulations of this edict “were copied from the edicts of Diocletian; and this method of conversion was applauded by the same bishops who had felt the hand of oppression, and had pleaded for the rights of humanity.” {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 453.6}

The Donatist dispute had resulted in the establishment of the Catholic Church. Yet that dispute involved no question of doctrine, but of discipline only. Just at this time, however, there sprang into prominence the famous Trinitarian controversy, which involved, and under the circumstances demanded, an imperial decision as to what was the Catholic Church in point of *doctrine*—what was the Catholic Church in deed and in truth, and which plunged the empire into a sea of tumult and violence that continued as long as the empire itself

continued, and afflicted other nations after the empire had perished. {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 453.7}

**WARNING ABOUT HUMAN DEFINITIONS**

A CERTAIN Alexander was bishop of Alexandria. Arius was a presbyter in charge of a parish church in the same city. Alexander attempted to explain “the unity of the Holy Trinity.” Arius dissented from the views set forth by Alexander. A sort of synod of the presbyters of the city was called, and the question was discussed. Both sides claimed the victory, and the controversy spread. Then Alexander convened a council of a hundred bishops, by the majority of which the views of Alexander were endorsed. Upon this, Arius was commanded to abandon his own opinions, and adopt Alexander’s. Arius refused; and Alexander excommunicated him and all who held with him in opinion, of whom there were a considerable number of bishops and other clergy, and many of the people. {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 454.1}

The partisans of Arius wrote to many bishops a statement of their views, with a request that if those views were considered correct, they would use their influence to have Alexander receive them to communion again, but that if they thought the views to be wrong in any particular, they would signify it, and show them what were the correct opinions on the question. Arius for himself wrote a book entitled “Thalia,”—Song of Joy,—a collection of songs in which he set forth his views. This expedient took well, for in the excited state of the parties, his doctrinal songs were hummed everywhere. Alexander on his part, likewise, sent circular letters to the principal bishops round about. The controversy spread everywhere, and as it spread, it deepened. {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 454.2}

One of the chief reasons for the rapid and wide-spread interest in the controversy was that nobody could comprehend or understand the question at issue. “It was the excess of dogmatism founded on the most abstract words in the most abstract region of human thought.” (Stanley’s “Eastern Church”). There was no dispute about the fact of there being a Trinity, it was about the nature of the Trinity. Both parties believed in precisely the same Trinity; but they differed upon the precise relationship which the Son bears to the Father. {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 454.3}

With the exception of a single point, the two views were identical, only being stated in different ways. Alexander held that the Son was begotten of the *very essence* of the Father, and is therefore of the *same* substance with the Father; while Arius held that the Son was begotten by the Father, not from His own essence, but from nothing; but that when He was thus begotten, He was, and is, of precisely the *like substance* with the Father. {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 454.4}

Whether the Son of God, therefore, is of the same substance, or only of like substance, with the Father, was the question in dispute. The controversy was carried on in Greek, and as expressed in Greek the whole question turned upon a single letter. The word which expressed Alexander’s belief, is *Homoousion*. The word which expressed the belief of Arius, is *Homoiousion*. One of the words has two “I’s” in it, and the other has but one; but why the word should not have that additional “i,” neither party could ever exactly determine. Even Athanasius himself, who succeeded Alexander in the bishopric of Alexandria, and transcended him in every other quality, “has candidly confessed that whenever he forced his understanding to meditate upon the divinity of the Logos, his toilsome and unavailing efforts recoiled on themselves; that the more he thought, the less he comprehended; and the more he wrote, the less capable was he of expressing his thoughts.” (Gibbon.) {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 454.5}

**TRYING TO PUT GOD INTO A FORMULA**

IT could not possibly be otherwise, because it was an attempt of the finite to measure, to analyse, and even to dissect, the Infinite. It was an attempt to make the human superior to the Divine. God is infinite. No finite mind can comprehend Him as He actually is. Christ is the Word—the expression of the thought—of God; and none but He knows the depth of the meaning of that Word. “He had a name written, that *no man knew but He himself;* ... and His name is called the Word of God.” Revelation 19:12, 13. {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 454.6}

Neither the nature, nor the relationship, of the Father and Son can ever be measured by the mind of man. “No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.” This revelation of the Father by the Son can not be complete in this world. It will require the eternal ages for man to understand “the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:7. {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 454.7}

Therefore, no man’s conception of God can ever be fixed as the true conception of God. God will still be infinitely beyond the broadest comprehension that the mind of man can measure. The true conception of God can be attained only through “the Spirit of revelation in the knowledge of Him.” Ephesians 1:17. Therefore the only thing for men to do to find out the Almighty to perfection, is, by true faith in Jesus Christ, to receive the abiding presence of this “Spirit of revelation,” and then quietly and joyfully wait for the eternal ages to reveal “the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God.” {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 454.8}

An ecclesiastical historian who lived near the time, and was well acquainted with the whole matter, Socrates, has well remarked that the discussion {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 454.9}

seemed not unlike a contest in the dark; for neither party appeared to understand distinctly the grounds on which they calumniated one another.... In consequence of these misunderstandings, each of them wrote volumes, as if contending against adversaries; and although it was admitted on both sides that the Son of God has a distinct person and existence, and all acknowledged that there is one God in a Trinity of persons, yet, from what cause I am unable to divine, they could not agree among themselves, and therefore were never at peace. {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 454.10}

That which puzzled Socrates need not puzzle us. Although he could not divine why they should not agree when they believed the same thing, we may very readily do so, with no fear of mistake. The difficulty was that each disputant required that all the others should not only believe what he believed, but they should believe this precisely *as* he believed it, whereas just how he believed it, he himself could not define. And that which made them so determined in this respect was that the strife was not merely for a doctrinal statement, but for supremacy and for political power. {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 454.11}

**STRIFE INCREASES AND A COUNCIL IS CALLED**

The controversy spread farther and farther, and raged more fiercely as it spread. “All classes took part in it, and almost all took part with equal energy.... So violent were the discussions that they were parodied in the pagan theatres; and the emperor’s statues were broken in the public squares in the conflicts that took place.... Sailors, millers, and travellers sang the disputed doctrines at their occupations or on their journeys. Every corner, every alley of the city [this was said afterward of Constantinople, but must have been still more true of Alexandria], was full of these discussions—the streets, the market-places, the drapers, the money-changers, the victuallers. Ask a man ‘how many *oboli?*’ he answers by dogmatising on generated and ungenerated being. Inquire the price of bread, and you are told, ‘The Son is subordinate to the Father.’ Ask if the bath is ready, and you are told, ‘The Son arose out of nothing.’” (Stanley.) {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 454.12}

Constantine’s golden dream of a united Christendom was again grievously disturbed. The bow of *promise*—of the bishops—which had so brilliantly irradiated all the political prospect when his alliance was formed with the church party, was rudely dissipated by the dark cloud of ecclesiastical ambition, and the angry storm of sectarian strife. He wrote a letter to Alexander and Arius, stating to them his mission of uniting the world under one head, and his anxious desire that there should be unity among all, and exhorted them to lay aside their contentions, forgive one another, use their efforts for the restoration of peace, and so give back to him his quiet days and tranquil nights. {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 455.1}

This letter he sent by the hand of Hosius, whom he made his ambassador to reconcile the disputants. But both the letter and the mission of Hosius were in vain; and yet the more so by the very fact that the parties were now assured that the controversy had attracted the interested attention of the imperial authority. As imperial favour, imperial patronage, and imperial power were the chief objects of the contest, and as this effort of the emperor showed that the reward was almost within the grasp of whichever party might prove successful, the contention was deepened rather than abated. {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 455.2}

It had already been decided that the imperial favor and patronage were for the Catholic Church. Each of these parties claimed to be the orthodox and only Catholic Church. The case of the Donatists had been referred to a council of bishops for adjudication. It was but natural that this question should be treated in the same way. But whereas the case of the Donatists affected only a very small portion of the empire, this question directly involved the whole East, and greatly concerned much of the West. More than this, the Catholic religion was now the religion of the empire. This dispute was upon the question as to what is the truth of the Catholic religion. Therefore if the question was to be settled, it must be settled for the whole empire. These considerations demanded a general council. Therefore a general council was called, A.D. 325, which met at the city of Nice, the latter part of May or the first part of June, in that year. {PTUK July 22, 1897, p. 455.3}

A. T. JONES.

**“How the Catholic Creed Was Made. The Council of Nice” The Present Truth 13, 30, pp. 469-471.**

THE number of bishops that composed the council was three hundred and eighteen, while the number of “the presbyters and deacons in their train, and the crowd of acolytes and other attendants, was altogether beyond computation” (Eusebius), all of whom travelled, and were entertained to and from the council and while there, at the public expense. “They came as fast as they could run,” says Stanley; 1 “in almost a frenzy of excitement and enthusiasm; the actual crowd must have been enough to have metamorphosed the place.” And “shrill above all other voices, vehement above all other disputants, ‘brandishing their arguments like spears against those who sat under the same roof and ate off the same tables as themselves,’ were the combatants from Alexandria.” {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 469.1}

The emperor did not arrive at Nice for several days after the others had reached that place; but when he came, “he had no sooner taken up his quarters in the palace of Nicea, than he found showered in upon him a number of parchment rolls, or letters, containing complaints and petitions against each other from the larger part of the assembled bishops.... We are expressly told both Eusebius and Sozomen that one motive which had drawn many to the council was the hope of settling their own private concerns, and promoting their own private interests.... There, too, were the pent-up grudges and quarrels of years, which now for the first time had an opportunity of making themselves heard. Never before had these remote, often obscure, ministers of a persecuted sect come within the range of imperial power.... Still after all due allowance, it is impossible not to share in the emperor’s astonishment that this should have been the first act of the first Ecumenical Assembly of the Christian Church.” 2 {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 469.2}

**OPENING OF THE COUNCIL**

THE council met in a large hall in the palace of the emperor, which had been arranged for the purpose. In the centre of the room, on a kind of throne, was placed a copy of the gospels; at one end of the hall was placed a richly carved throne, which was to be occupied by Constantine. The day came for the formal opening of the assembly. The bishops were all assembled with their accompanying presbyters and deacons; but as it was an imperial council, it could not be opened but by the emperor himself; and they waited in silence for him to come. {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 469.3}

“He entered. His towering stature, his strong-built frame, his broad shoulders, his handsome features, were worthy of his grand position. There was a brightness in his look and mingled expression of fierceness and gentleness in his lion-like eye, which well became one who, as Augustus before him, had fancied, and perhaps still fancied, himself to be the favourite of the sun-god Apollo. The bishops were further struck by the dazzling, perhaps barbaric magnificence of his dress. Always careful of his appearance, he was so on this occasion in an eminent degree. His long hair, false or real, was crowned with the imperial diadem of pearls. His purple or scarlet robe blazed with precious stones and gold embroidery. He was shod, no doubt, in the scarlet shoes then confined to emperors, now perpetuated in the pope and cardinals.” {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 469.4}

He paraded thus up the whole length of the hall to where the seat of wrought gold had been set for him; then he turned, facing the assembly, and pretended to be so abashed by the presence of so much holiness, that he would not take his seat until the bishops had signaled to him to do so; then he sat down, and the others followed suit. Then Eusebius arose and delivered an oration in honor of the emperor, closing with a hymn of thanksgiving to God for Constantine’s final victory over Licinius. Constantine then delivered to the assembly an address exhorting them to remove all grounds of difference. {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 469.5}

Thus the council was formally opened, and then the emperor signified to the judges of the assembly to go on with the proceedings. “From this moment the flood-gates of debate were opened wide; and from side to side recriminations and accusations were bandied to and fro, without regard to the imperial presence. He remained unmoved amid the clatter of angry voices, turning from one side of the hall to the other, giving his whole attention to the questions proposed, bringing together the violent partisans.” {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 469.6}

To end their personal spites, and turn their whole attention to the question which was to come properly before the assembly, he took from the folds of his mantle the whole bundle of their complaints and recriminations against one another. Then, after stating that he had not read one of them, he ordered a brazier to be brought in, and at once burned them in the presence of the whole assembly, declaring that the bishops sat as gods, and should neglect these common matters. {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 469.7}

And as the libels vanished into ashes, he urged them, “Never to let the faults of men in their consecrated offices be publicly known to the scandal and temptation of the multitude.” “Nay,” he added, doubtless spreading out the folds of his imperial mantle as he spoke, “even though I were with mine own eyes to see a bishop in the act of gross sin, I would throw my purple robe over him, that no one might suffer from the sight of such a crime.” {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 469.8}

**THE FRAMING OF THE CREED**

THEN the great question that had caused the calling of the council was taken up. There were three parties in the council—those who sided with Alexander, those who sided with Arius, and those who were non-committal. The party of Alexander and Athanasius (Alexander’s chief advocate) soon discovered that they could depend upon the majority of the council. {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 470.1}

The draft of a creed was brought in, signed by eighteen bishops of the party of Arius; but it was not suffered to exist long enough for anybody ever to obtain a copy. Their opponents broke into a wild uproar, tore the document to pieces, and expelled Arius from the assembly. {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 470.2}

Next, Eusebius of Cesarea,—Constantine’s panegyrist—thought to bring the parties together by presenting a creed that had been largely in use before this dispute ever arose. He stated that this confession of faith was one which he had learned in his childhood, from the bishop of Cesarea, and one which he accepted at his baptism, and which he had taught through his whole career, both as a presbyter and as a bishop. As an additional argument, and one which he intended to be of great weight in the council, he declared that “it had been approved by the emperor, the beloved of heaven, who had already seen it.” {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 470.3}

As soon as this was read in the council, the party of Arius all signified their willingness to subscribe to it. But this did not suit the party of Alexander and Athanasius; it was rather the very thing that they did not want, for “they were determined to find some form of words which no Arian could receive.” They hunted about, therefore, for some point or some word, upon which they could reject it. It will be noticed that this creed says nothing about the substance of the Son of God, while that was the very question which had brought the council together. Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, was chief of the Arians who held seats in the council. At this point a letter was brought forth, which he had formerly written, in which he had stated that “to assert the Son to be uncreated, would be to say that He was ‘of one substance’—*Homoousion*—with the Father, and to say that ‘He was of one substance’ was a proposition evidently absurd.” {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 470.4}

“The letter produced a violent excitement. There was the very test of which they were in search; the letter was torn in pieces to mark their indignation, and the phrase which he had pledged himself to reject, became the phrase which they pledged themselves to adopt.” {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 470.5}

**THE EMPEROR SUPPORTS THE MOST POWERFUL**

AS Constantine had approved the creed already read by Eusebius, the question of the party of Alexander now was whether he would approve it with the addition of this word; and the hopes of both parties now hung trembling upon the emperor. Hosius and his associates, having the last consultation with him, brought him over to their side. At the next meeting of the assembly, he again presented the creed of Eusebius, approved it, and called upon all to adopt it. Seeing, however, that the majority would not accept the creed of Eusebius as it was, Constantine decided to “gain the assent of *the orthodox*, that is, *the most powerful*, part of the assembly,” by inserting the disputed word. {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 470.6}

The party of Alexander and Athanasius, now assured of the authority of the emperor, required the addition of other phrases to the same purpose, so that when the creed was finally written out in full, it read as follows:— {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 470.7}

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of all things both visible and invisible. {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 470.8}

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is to say, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, both things in heaven and things in earth; who for us man, and for our salvation, came down, and was made flesh, and was made men, suffered, and rose again on the third day went up into the heavens, and is to come again to judge the quick and dead. {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 470.9}

And in the Holy Ghost. {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 470.10}

But those that say, “There was when He was not,” and “Before He was begotten, He was not,” and that “He came into existence from what was not,” or who profess that the Son of God is of a different “person” or “substance,” or that He is created, or changeable, or variable, are anathematized by the Catholic Church. {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 470.11}

Thus came the original Nicene Creed. Constantine’s influence carried with it many in the council, but seventeen bishops refused to subscribe to the creed. The emperor then commanded all to sign it under penalty of banishment. This brought to terms all of them but five, and further imperial persuasion and explanation and threats reduced the number to two. These absolutely refused from first to last to sign the creed, and they were banished. As for Arius, he seems to have departed from Nice soon after he was expelled from the council. Sentence of banishment was pronounced against him with the others. But as he was the chief expositor of the condemned doctrines, Constantine published against him an edict commanding the destruction of all his books on pain of death. The decree banishing Arius was shortly so modified as simply to prohibit his returning to Alexandria. {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 470.12}

When the council finally closed its labours, Constantine gave, in honour of the bishops, the grand banquet before mentioned, in which it was pretended that the kingdom of God was come, and at which he loaded them with presents. He then exhorted them to unity and forbearance, and dismissed them to return to their respective places. {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 470.13}

It was intended that the decision of this council, in the creed adopted, should put an end forever to all religious differences. “It is certain that the Creed of Nicea was meant to be an end of theological controversy.” Constantine published it as the inspiration of God. {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 470.14}

“From this period,” says Milman, “we may date the introduction of rigorous articles of belief, which required the submissive assent of the mind to every word and letter of an established creed, and which raised the slightest heresy of opinion into a more fatal offence against God, and a more odious crime in the estimation of man, than the worst moral delinquency or the most flagrant deviation from the spirit of Christianity.” {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 470.15}

**MAJORITIES CANNOT DECIDE THE TRUTH**

IN the unanimity of opinion attained by the council, however, the idea of inspiration from any source other than Constantine, is a myth, and even that was a vanishing quantity; because a considerable number of those who subscribed to the creed did so against their honest convictions, and with the settled determination to secure a revision or a reversal just as soon as it could possibly be brought about; and to bring it about they would devote every waking moment of their lives. {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 470.16}

Yet more than this, this theory proceeds upon the assumption that religious truth and doctrine are subject to the decision of the majority, than which nothing could possibly be further from the truth. Even though the decision of the Council of Nicea had been absolutely, and from honest conviction spontaneously, unanimous, it never could rest with the slightest degree of obligation or authority upon any soul who had not arrived at the same conclusion from honest conviction derived from the free exercise of his own power of thought. There is no organisation nor tribunal on earth that has any right to decide for anybody what is the truth upon any religious question. “The head of every man is Christ.” 1 Corinthians 11:3. “One is your Master, even Christ.” Matthew 23:8. “Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth .... So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” Romans 14:4, 12. {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 470.17}

In the quest for truth every man is free to search, to believe, and to decide, for himself alone. And his assent to any form of belief or doctrine, to be true, must spring from his own personal conviction that such is the truth. “The truth itself,” Neander well says, “forced on man otherwise than by its own inward power, becomes falsehood.” And he who suffers anything to be so forced upon him, utters a lie against himself and against God. {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 471.1}

The realm of thought is the realm of God. Whosoever would attempt to restrict or coerce the free exercise of the thought of another, usurps the dominion of God, and exercises that of the devil. This is what Constantine did at the Council of Nice. This is what the majority of the Council of Nice itself did. In carrying out the purpose for which it was met, this is the only thing that it could do, no matter which side of the controversy should prove victorious. What Constantine and the Council of Nice did, was to open the way and set the wicked precedent for that despotism over thought which continued for more than fourteen hundred dreary years, and which was carried to such horrible lengths when the pope succeeded to the place of Constantine as head over both Church and State. {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 471.2}

To say that the Holy Spirit had any part whatever in the council, either in discussing or deciding the question, or in any other way, is but to argue that the Holy Spirit of God is but the subject and tool of the unholy passions of ambitious and wicked men. {PTUK July 29, 1897, p. 471.3}

A. T. JONES.