

**THE VALERIAN PERSECUTION. A
STUDY OF THE RELATIONS
BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE IN
THE THIRD CENTURY A. D.
[BOSTON]**

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The Valerian Persecution. A Study of the Relations Between Church and State in the Third Century A. D. [Boston] by Patrick J. Healy

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THE
VALERIAN PERSECUTION

A Study of the Relations between
Church and State in the
Third Century A. D.

BY

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OF THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA



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TO
THE REVEREND MICHAEL C. O'FARRELL
RECTOR
HOLY INNOCENTS' CHURCH
NEW YORK CITY



PREFACE

RECENT investigation into the relations between the Christian Church and the Roman State during the first three centuries of our era has thrown much new light on the history of this long period of persecution, and has served to show that the opposition to Christianity on the part of the Roman authorities arose from a deep-seated adherence to time-honored state policy rather than from blind hatred for the followers of the new religion. This view of the subject does not tend to diminish belief in the intensity and bitterness of the struggle, while it brings into clearer light the herculean task which confronted the first Apostles of Christianity in promulgating doctrines which were to revolutionize all old ideas regarding the political, social, moral, and religious relations of mankind. Bearing in mind the peculiar character of pagan society in antiquity, its cohesiveness and absolutism, and its claims to complete domination over all human affairs, it will be manifest how easily a propaganda which aimed at disintegrating this autocratic exercise of power could be construed into treason to the state.

The persecution which took place during the reign of the Emperor Valerian was, in a sense, the most critical period in the history of the Church during the first three centuries. The policy of complete extermination formulated by the Emperor Decius, which was the first systematic attempt to destroy Christianity, was never adequately tested, as the premature death of that Emperor prevented the full carrying out of his plans. In the case of Valerian the same policy prevailed; it was in force for a longer period; and it was put into operation at a time when the Church was still staggering under the blows inflicted by Decius. The meagre list of martyrs whose names are known to us as victims of this persecution affords no indication as to the actual number of those who suffered death, banishment, or confiscation at the hands of the Roman authorities. There is no complete history in English of these three centuries of Christian trial. In fact, outside the pages of M. Paul Allard's monumental work on the Persecutions there is no systematic presentation of the subject in any language. The author takes this opportunity to acknowledge his indebtedness to M. Allard for the help and guidance afforded by his works in treating a subject which would otherwise have offered insuperable difficulties. Realizing very thoroughly the many imperfections of the work, the author is loath

to mention the names of those from whom he received aid and advice; but justice no less than thankfulness compels him to acknowledge the many obligations which he is under to Doctor Shahan, Professor of Church History at the Catholic University, without whose aid, never failing kindness, and ever ready advice and encouragement the achievement, slight as it is, would not have been possible.

The work was in typewritten manuscript before the author had an opportunity to examine some of the more recent publications dealing with this portion of history, such as Harnack's "Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten," and especially Lécirivain's "Études sur l'Histoire Auguste;" but a close examination of these and some other works on the same subject has convinced him that they contain nothing which would call for modification or change in any of the conclusions at which he has arrived.

PATRICK J. HEALY.

WASHINGTON, D. C., April 11, 1905.