

**THE ARMENIAN APOLOGY AND
ACTS OF APOLLONIUS AND
OTHER MONUMENTS OF EARLY
CHRISTIANITY, SECOND EDITION**

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The Armenian Apology and Acts of Apollonius and Other Monuments of Early Christianity,
Second Edition by F. C. Conybeare

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F. C. CONYBEARE

**THE ARMENIAN APOLOGY AND
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CHRISTIANITY, SECOND EDITION**

To my friend,
GALOUST TÈR-MEKERTCHIAN,
DEACON OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH,
IN MEMORY OF MANY PLEASANT HOURS PASSED IN HIS
MONASTERY OF EDSCHMIADZIN.

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MONUMENTS OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY.

GENERAL PREFACE.

THE object of the following translations is to give the reader, in a succession of vivid pictures or glimpses, an insight into the practical working of Christianity during the first three centuries of its history. While we freely admire the heroism of the martyrs, we must not suppose that the highest temper of the new religion was displayed in these desperate struggles,¹ through which its champions bore witness to the truth, as they deemed it, of their beliefs, and in engaging in which they were, on any view, asserting the rights of individual conscience and private judgment against the overbearing weight of a government despotic in its form, and supported in its assaults by innumerable popular forces and scruples, social, religious, and political.² The best fruits of Christ-

Aim of these translations.

¹ In the following pages we shall not find any martyr who in the moment of agony prays, Father, forgive them, they know not what they do. The note struck is more frequently one of hatred, defiance, and imprecation.

² Cp. *Minucii Felicitis Octavius*, cap. 37 : quam pulchrum spectaculum

ianity were of course reaped not in these crises, not in these supreme moments of storm and stress, but in the higher religious conceptions, in the wider charity, in the purer social and family life, in the elimination of obscene or cruel religious rites and amusements, which on the whole went with the abandonment of paganism. But these blessings could not be secured for the multitude, could not be secured at all, unless a stand were made against enactments which made the very name and profession of Christian an offence punishable by any, even the most horrible, forms of death. A martyrdom resembled a battle in general history; freedom from molestation and liberty to enjoy the fruits of peace could not be secured in any other way.

The originals of these translations are to be found in a repertory of select martyrdoms, written in the ancient Armenian tongue, and published at the Armenian monastery of San Lazaro, in Venice, in the year 1874. These originals are in nearly all cases themselves versions of still more ancient Greek or Syriac texts. In some cases Latin versions also of considerable antiquity are preserved, and will be found in the *Annals of Baronius*, or in the vast

Armenian,
Syriac, Greek,
and Latin
texts of
Martyrs' Acts.

deo, cum Christianus cum dolore congregitur, cum aduersum minas et supplicia et tormenta componitur, cum strepitum mortis et honorem iridens carnifici se inculcat, cum libertatem suam aduersus reges et principes erigit, cum soli deo cuius est cedit, cum triumphator et victor ipsi qui aduersum se sententiam dixit insultat.

collection of the Lives of the Saints of all ages, at which the Society of the Jesuits has now been at work for over one hundred years, and which is known as the Bollandist Acts of the Saints. I have not chosen to translate the Armenian form of these documents rather than the Latin or Greek without reason ; and my reason is this : that as a rule the ancient Armenian version gives an earlier form of the narrative than either the Latin or Greek or Syriac manuscripts now yield us. For it is one of the first things which the student of early Christian literature has to learn, that its documents were continually being altered and recast to suit every fresh development or change in the dogmatic beliefs, moral conceptions, and discipline of believers, whether orthodox or heretical. What was believed in the first century was not believed in the same way, and was not all that was believed in the second ; and what was orthodox in the second century was in many cases heterodox, and in nearly all cases insufficiently explicit in the third and fourth centuries.¹ The value of the Armenian versions lies in this, that they often give us access to a more primitive form of a Christian writing than has survived in Greek or Latin. To take an

The Armenian form as a rule the oldest.

Christian revision of texts in each age.

¹ Thus the Armenian Acts of Athanagines retain the colophon of one, Hilarion, who states that in composing the Acts he "on paper made orthodox all that was said" (by the various actors). Athanagines no doubt, like many martyrs of Nicomedia, was an Arian.