

der of that name was Christ! who suffered death in the reign of Tiberius, under his procurator Pontius. This pernicious superstition, thus checked for a while, broke out again, and spread, not only over Judea, where the evil originated, but through Rome also, where every thing bad upon earth finds its way, and is practised. Some who confessed their sect were first seized, and afterwards, by their own confession, a vast multitude were apprehended, who were convicted, not so much of the crime of burning Rome, as of hatred to mankind. Their sufferings at their execution were aggravated by insult and mockery; for some were disguised in the skins of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs; some were crucified; and others were wrapped in pitched shirts and set on fire when the day closed, that they might serve to illuminate the night. Nero lent his gardens for these executions, and exhibited at the same time a mock Circensian entertainment, being a spectator of the whole, in the dress of a charioteer; sometimes mingling with the crowd on foot, and sometimes viewing the spectacle from his car. This conduct made the sufferers pitied, and though they were criminals, and deserving the severest punishment, yet they were considered as sacrificed, not so much out of a regard to the public good, as to gratify the cruelty of one man." This passage gives us, on the authority of a celebrated historian, writing to the Roman empire, on a transaction of only thirty years before, and of which a multitude of witnesses were alive, the following facts:—That there was a religion called Christianity, in the days of the Emperor Nero—that its founder, Christ, was executed—that his religion, sustaining a check in consequence of his execution, rapidly appeared again and was extended—and that within 34 years from the death of Christ the Roman Christians were a very considerable number. Suetonius, the contemporary of Tacitus,

describing the principal features of Nero's reign, says: "The Christians, a set of men of a new and magical superstition, were punished." The younger Pliny, the contemporary of both these writers, in his letter to the Emperor Trajan, speaks of the state of the Christians in his own district; and at the moment of his writing, seventy years after the death of our Lord: "There are many of every age, and of both sexes, nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only, but smaller towns, and the open country." He details that accusations, trials, and examinations, had been going on against them, in the provinces over which he presided; that schedules were delivered by anonymous informers, containing the names of persons suspected of holding or of favouring that religion; that in consequence of those informations many had been apprehended, some of whom had boldly avowed their profession, and died in the cause; others denied that they were Christians; others acknowledging that they had once been Christians declared that they had long ceased to be such." The pre-script of the Emperor Adrian to Minucius Fundanus, the proconsul of Asia, shews that it was the custom of the Asiatic populace to exhibit outrage against the Christians; for the Emperor enjoins, that for the time to come the Christians should be legally brought to their trial, and not be hunted by insolence and clamour.—Martial, a contemporary of Pliny, speaks of the sufferings of the Christians in an epigram, and finds food for his habitual ridicule in their voluntary deaths. It is to be remembered, that though those men, as being Pagans, and in their philosophic contempt of the idolatry of their day, disdaining to enquire into the tenets of a religion coming from the loathed and captive land of the Jews, were yet alluding to events either fresh in the general memory, or living before their eyes.

(To be continued.)