

the inspired command, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls."

As regards the Roman Emperors, immediately on their becoming Christians, their exaltation of the hierarchy was in porportion to its abject condition in the heathen period. Grateful converts felt that they could not do too much in its honour and service. Emperors bowed the head before the Bishops, kissed their hands and asked their blessing. When Constantine entered into the presence of the assembled Prelates at Nicæ, his eyes fell, the colour mounted up into his cheek, and his mien was that of a suppliant; he would not sit, till the Bishops bade him, and he kissed the wounds of the Confessors. He set the example for the successors of his power, nor did the Bishops decline such honours. Emperors' wives served them at table; when they did wrong, they did penance and asked forgiveness. When they quarrelled with them, and would banish them, their hand trembled when they came to sign the order, and refused to do its office, and after various attempts they gave up their purpose. Soldiers raised to sovereignty asked their recognition and were refused it. Cities under imperial displeasure sought their intervention, and the master of thirty legions found himself powerless to withstand the feeble voice of some aged travel-stained stranger.

Laws were passed in favor of the Church; Bishops could only be judged by Bishops, and the causes of their clergy were withdrawn from the secular courts. Their sentence was final, as if it were the Emperor's own, and the governors of provinces were bound to put it in execution. Litigants everywhere were allowed the liberty of referring their cause to the tribunal of the Bishops, who, besides, became arbitrators on a large scale in private quarrels; and the public, even heathens, wished it so. St. Ambrose was sometimes so taken up with business of this sort, that he had time for nothing else. St. Austin and Theodoret both complain of the weight of such secular engagements, as forced upon them by the importunity of the people. Nor was this all; the Emperors showed their belief in the divinity of the Church and of its creed by acts of what we should now call persecution. Jews were forbidden to proselytize a Christian; Christians were forbidden to become pagans; pagan rites were abolished, the works of heretics and infidels were burned wholesale; their chapels were razed to the ground, and even their private meetings were made illegal.

These characteristics of the convert Empire were the immediate, some of them the logical, consequences, of its new faith. Had not the Emperors honoured Christianity in its ministers and in its precepts, they would not properly have deserved the name of converts. Nor was it unreasonable in litigants voluntarily to frequent the episcopal tribunals, if they got justice done to them there better than in the civil courts. As to the prohibition of heretical meetings, I cannot get myself quite to believe that Pagans, Marcionites, and Manichees had much tenderness of conscience in their religious profession, or were wounded seriously by the Imperial rescript to their disadvantage. Many of these sects were of a most immoral character, whether