

laws of their forefathers. With an even-handed injustice, which would almost make it appear that the offence of the Christians was their pure morality, Domitianus banished from Rome at the same time all who professed philosophy, and put to death all who were enough distinguished by virtue, riches, or talent, to excite his envy, his cupidity, or his fears. According to Eusebius, he dreaded all of the house of David so much, that he ordered as many as could be found of the family of Christ to be sent to Rome for examination. He found them hard-working, humble men, whom he had no cause to fear, and he dismissed them.

Among those who suffered death, or were banished for the profession of Christianity, were several relations of the sovereign himself; and probably nothing contributed more to the spread of these purer doctrines, than the detestable vices of the emperors and their creatures; hateful to the pure-minded of whatever religious creed. The contrast between the two could hardly fail to be seen and appreciated; and such had been the almost silent progress of the Christian faith, that a little later we find Plinius embarrassed by the numbers of its professors in the province of Bithynia, and applying to the emperor Trajanus for directions respecting them: all proceedings against them having been discontinued under the mild reign of Nerva.

The mockery of adoring as gods the licentious tyrants who had occupied the imperial throne, seems to have put an end to everything like religious feeling among the nations under the sway of Rome. The free satire of Lucianus shows how completely it had faded away; for it introduces the gods of Olympus, complaining that they