

to which the mother of God was believed to have attached signal graces, became so famous that the Empress Pulcheria had it brought to Constantinople, where she built a magnificent church to place it in.

Edessa, the capital city of that king Abgarus who was on the point of making war on the Jews to revenge the death of our Lord, and who was only prevented from doing so through fear of the Romans, their masters, as Eusebius tells us, had also, in the first century, its church of Our Lady, adorned with a miraculous image. Egypt boasts of having had, about the same time, Our Lady of Alexandria, and Saragossa in Spain, then called Cæsar Augusta, its famous shrine of Our Lady of the Pillar. But no where was the devotion to Mary carried on with such enthusiastic fervour as in Asia Minor. Ephesus, where the memory of the Blessed Virgin was still fresh and vivid, soon built in honour of Mary the *Miriam*, a superb cathedral, wherein was held, in the fifth century, the famous council which confirmed her proud title of Mother of God.

This example was followed from one end of the immense Roman provinces to the other. Phrygia, having become Christian, consigned to oblivion those Trojan gods sung by Homer; Cappadocia suffered those sacred fires to die away which the Persians had kindled side by side with the elegant temples of the Grecian deities; and the caverns, whose gloomy vaults had so recently witnessed the bloody mysteries of Mithra,* became, during the religious persecutions—which no where broke out with greater fury than amongst those Greek colonies—a place of refuge for the Christians and their proscribed God. At length, the gods of Greece—those indigenous deities, sprung from the sparkling foam of the Ægean sea, born under the still-existing palms of the

* The worship of Mithra, before it reached Greece or Rome, had passed from Persia into Cappadocia, where Strabo, who travelled there, says that he saw a great number of the priests of Mithra. The mysteries of Mithra, which were celebrated in the depth of caverns, were something horrible, according to the holy Fathers. Human victims were there sacrificed, as appears from a fact mentioned by Socrates in his Ecclesiastical History, viz., that the Christians of Alexandria having discovered a den which had been long closed up, and in which the Mithraic mysteries were said to have been formerly celebrated, they found therein human skulls and bones which they took out to show to the people of that great city.