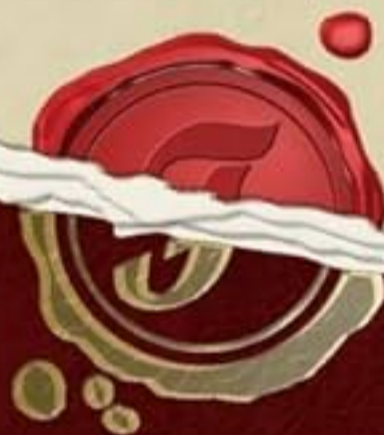


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HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity,
From Constantine the Great to
Gregory the Great, A. D. 311-600

Vol. 3



by
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Forgotten Books

civil government, and should permit no trespass on the conscience of its subjects. "No one," says he, "shall be forced to believe against his will." Yet, toward the close of his reign, on mere political suspicion, he ordered the execution of the celebrated philosopher Boethius, with whom the old Roman literature far more worthily closes, than the Roman empire with Augustulus; and on the same ground he caused the death of the senator Symmachus and the incarceration of Pope John I. (523-526).

Almost the last act of his reign was the nomination of the worthy FELIX III. (IV.) to the papal chair, after a protracted struggle of contending parties. With the appointment he issued the order that hereafter, as heretofore, the pope should be elected by clergy and people, but should be confirmed by the temporal prince before assuming his office; and with this understanding the clergy and the city gave their consent to the nomination.

Yet, in spite of this arrangement, in the election of *Boniface II.* (530-532) and *John II.* (532-535) the same disgraceful quarrelling and briberies occurred;—a sort of chronic disease in the history of the papacy.

Soon after the death of Theodoric (526) the Gothic empire fell to pieces through internal distraction and imperial weakness. Italy was conquered by Belisarius (535), and, with Africa, again incorporated with the East Roman empire, which renewed under Justinian its ancient splendor, and enjoyed a transient after-summer. And yet this powerful, orthodox emperor was a slave to the intriguing, heretical Theodora, whom he had raised from the theatre to the throne; and Belisarius likewise, his victorious general, was completely under the power of his wife Antonina.

With the conquest of Italy the popes fell into a perilous and unworthy dependence on the emperor at Constantinople, who revered, indeed, the Roman chair, but not less that of Constantinople, and in reality sought to use both as tools of his own state-church despotism. AGAPETUS (535-536) offered fearless resistance to the arbitrary course of Justinian, and

successfully protested against the elevation of the Eutychian Anthimus to the patriarchal see of Constantinople. But, by the intrigues of the Monophysite empress, his successor, Pope SILVERIUS (a son of Hormisdas, 536-538), was deposed on the charge of treasonable correspondence with the Goths, and banished to the island of Pandataria, whither the worst heathen emperors used to send the victims of their tyranny, and where in 540 he died—whether a natural or a violent death, we do not know.

VIGILIUS, a pliant creature of Theodora, ascended the papal chair under the military protection of Belisarius (538-554). The empress had promised him this office and a sum of money, on condition that he nullify the decrees of the council of Chalcedon, and pronounce Anthimus and his friends orthodox. The ambitious and doubled-tongued prelate accepted the condition, and accomplished the deposition, and perhaps the death, of Silverius. In his pontificate occurred the violent controversy of the three chapters and the second general council of Constantinople (553). His administration was an unprincipled vacillation between the dignity and duties of his office and subservience to an alien theological and political influence; between repeated condemnation of the three chapters in behalf of a Eutychianizing spirit, and repeated retraction of that condemnation. In Constantinople, where he resided several years at the instance of the emperor, he suffered much personal persecution, but without the spirit of martyrdom, and without its glory. For example, at least according to Western accounts, he was violently torn from the altar, upon which he was holding with both hands so firmly that the posts of the canopy fell in above him; he was dragged through the streets with a rope around his neck, and cast into a common prison; because he would not submit to the will of Justinian and his council. Yet he yielded at last, through fear of deposition. He obtained permission to return to Rome, but died in Sicily, of the stone, on his way thither (554).

PELAGIUS I. (554-560), by order of Justinian, whose favor he had previously gained as papal legate at Constantinople, was made successor of Vigilius, but found only two bishops