

3RD CENTURY - BATTLES OF THE BISHOPS

Zephyrinus, Bishop of Rome (201-217) was strongly criticized by Hippolytus & Tertullian.

Callistus, Bishop of Rome (217-222) was openly opposed by Hippolytus & others.

Urban, Bishop of Rome (222-230) was also openly opposed by Hippolytus.

[Origen was very productive at Alexandria during 202-230.]

Pontian, Bishop of Rome (230-235) was exiled to Sardinia, along with Hippolytus.

Anterus, Bishop of Rome (235-236) didn't remain in power long.

Fabian, Bishop of Rome (236-250) he further organized the Roman Church.

[Origen continued his work in Caesarea during 231-254, after being banished by the Bishop of Alexandria simply because the Bishops of Caesarea had ordained Origen a priest.]

[Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine was born around 248.]

1 January 250, Emperor Decius decreed that everyone in the empire had to sacrifice to the ancient gods in order to receive a document called a libellus.

“To the officers in charge of the sacrifices of the village of Alexander’s Isle, from Aurelius Diogenes, the son of Satabus, of the village of Alexander’s Isle, aged about 72, with a scar on his right eyebrow. I have always sacrificed to the gods; and now in your presence, according to the commands, I have sacrificed and made a libation and tasted of the victims; and I desire you to subscribe.

Fare ye well.

I, Aurelius Diogenes, have delivered this...

I, Mys[... the son of ...]non, [saw him] sacrificing, and have subscribed

In the first year of Imperator Caesar Caius Messius Quintus Trajanus Decius Pius Felix Augustus, on Epiphi 2 (= June 26, 250).”

Many Christians died rather than perform the sacrifices. Other Christians complied but later, after the persecution ebbed, regretted their action & wanted to resume their relationship with the Church. These were called *lapsi* and how to deal with them caused great trouble.

Cornelius, Bishop of Rome (251-253) &
Lucius, Bishop of Rome (253-254) &
Stephen, Bishop of Rome (254-257) &
Sixtus II, Bishop of Rome (257-258)

...were all opposed by Novatian, a rival Bishop of Rome (251-258) & his followers, who believed that such lapses in commitment required rebaptism and not just penance.

Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage (249-258) was a very strong critique of the Novatians. Many of his writing seem to uphold the idea that the Bishop of Rome was Peter's successor & therefore not to be opposed; although he did himself critique Stephen for accepting the baptism done by "heretics" (Novatians), provided it was done in accordance with Church formula.

Sixtus II, Novatian & Cyprian all died in the persecutions (258-260) of Emperor Valerian.

During the next couple of decades, the Empire began unraveling. Christianity was alternately tolerated & persecuted.

[Constantine was born in 272.]

Emperor Diocletian (284-305) appointed Maximian as his co-emperor in 285. Then, in 293, he officially split the Empire into two parts, each to be administered by himself & his co-emperor (both termed *Augustus*) with the aide of two junior co-emperors (termed *Caesar*). The Western Empire went to Augustus Maximian, whose Caesar was Constantius, the father of Constantine.

[From about 299 until 313, Christians were heavily persecuted.]

In 305 Diocletian retired himself Maximian as *Augustus*, promoting Galerius and Constantius into those roles.

When Constantius died in Britain in 306, Constantine, who was assisting his father in military action within the region, was hailed as *Augustus* of the West by the troops stationed there, but Galerius objected, appointing someone else to that spot and making Constantine Augustus over Britain, Gaul & Spain.

There was a lot of wrangling over who would rule the Empire from 307-312. In October of 312, Constantine won a decisive battle at the Milvian Bridge. Eusebius & others connect this with a vision of some sort.