



The Relationship Between the Church and the Roman empire:

From Persecution to the State Religion

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I want to devote this thesis to my supervisor.

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Abstract

This study has explored the changed relationship between the church and the Roman Empire between the second and the fourth century as presented in the books *Apology* by Tertullian and *The Death of the Persecutors* by Lactantius and *Life of Constantine* by Eusebius. Tertullian presents the adverse condition of the church-state relationship at the end of the second century. He shows the vulnerable situation of the church and the church practitioners under the Pagan emperors. The *Apology* shows the persecution and its nature Christian had to face. On the other hand, *The Death of the persecutors* represents the time at the end of the third century when Christianity encountered The Great Persecution. This book features two crucial factors regarding the church-state relationship. The first one is the ever-worst relationship between the church and the empire at the time of Emperor Diocletian and his predecessors. The second is the rise of Constantine as a Christian emperor. This book the last section gives the glance of the changed scenario in the church-state relationship after Constantine declared the policy of toleration against all religions including Christianity. The *Life of Constantine* provides every detail of Constantine's effort to promote Christianity and his patronage to the church. Hence these three books represent the three different state of church-state relationship: persecution, toleration, and promotion. And this study is focused on how this relation had been changed over two hundred years. For this purpose, I have applied the historical research method. With the application of this method comparison of two different times has been done. And with the comparative study, it is concluded that there was a change in a church-state relationship beginning from the persecution to toleration and making its way to the state religion by the end of the fourth century.

Contents

Acknowledgment	2
Abstract	3
Contents	4
Chapter I.....	7
1. Introduction.....	7
1.1. General Background	7
1.1.1. Research Questions and Method of Study	7
1.1.2. Purpose of the Study	8
1.1.3. Delimitation of the Study.....	9
1.1.4. The Way Ahead	11
1.2. Historical Background	11
1.2.1. Christianity at its birth	11
1.2.2. Christianity and the Roman Empire.....	13
1.2.2.1. Legal Status.....	14
1.2.2.2. Political Status	14
1.3. Early Persecutions.....	15
1.3.1. The First Persecution	15
1.3.2. The Second Persecution.....	17
1.3.3. Lyons and Vienne	20
1.4. Pagan Criticism and Christian Apologetic.....	22
1.4.1. Early Christianity in the Eyes of Non-Christian Writers	22
1.4.2. Early Christian Apologetics	24
1.5. The Situation of the Church at the Start of the Third Century.....	28
Chapter II: Church and Empire in Tertullian's <i>Apology</i>	30
2.1.1. Tertullian and His Career.....	30
2.1.2. Carthage at the End of Second Century and Latin Christianity.....	31
2.1.3. Maintaining Christian Identity in Carthage	33

2.1.4. Child Sacrifice and Christian Martyrdom	34
2.2. Tertullian and Apology	35
2.2.1. Introduction to Apology	35
2.2.2. Hatred For the Name and Call For Justice in Apology	36
2.2.3. Criminalization of Christians and Defense of Their Faith	39
2.2.4. Christians were Subjects, not Citizens	41
2.2.5. Oedipal relation/ Thebes vs. Rome.....	45
2.2.6. No Grounds for them!.....	46
2.2.7. Distortion of the Truth and Creation of A False philosophy.....	47
2.3. Concluding Remarks	50
Chapter III: Church and Empire in Lactantius’ “Death of the Persecutors” and Eusebius’ “Life of Constantine	51
3.1.1. Lactantius and the Death of the Persecutors	51
3.1.2. Eusebius and Life of Constantine	52
3.1.3. The Situation of the Church by the Time of Lactantius.....	53
3.1.4. Announcement of the Official Persecution.....	55
3.1.5. Tetrarchy and the Churches	57
3.1.6. Persecution Under Co-Emperor and Junior Co-Emperor	60
3.1.7. Struggle for Power: A Beginning for Change.....	62
3.2. Constantine and Christianity.....	64
3.3. Physical Changes Brought by Constantine in the City of Rome	68
3.3.1. Erection of Church Buildings	68
3.3.2. Removal of Pagan Temples	71
3.3.3. Legal Changes Brought by Constantine	72
3.4. Address to Theological Dispute.....	73
Chapter IV.....	76
4.1. Mapping	76
4.2. Church-State Relation: An Analysis of Influencing Factors	76

4.2.1. Change in the Anti-Christian Attitude	76
4.2.2. From Animosity to Companionship.....	81
4.2.3. Perversion of Roman Law to the Words of God.....	83
4.2.4. Christianising the Roman Army	90
4.2.5. Conversion of Intellectuals and Development of the Theology of Roman Nationalism	93
Chapter V	100
Conclusion	100
Bibliography	103

Chapter I

1. Introduction

1.1. General Background

According to Novak, “Christianity’s rise to dominance in the Roman Empire during the first four centuries C.E. is the pivotal development in the western history and profoundly influenced the later direction of world history (Novak, 2001, p. 1).” The development that took place in that period was “pivotal” for it set Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire replacing all other religions of the time and helped to disseminate the ideas of Christianity to the different parts of Europe and Asia. Before being declared as a state religion, Christianity was undervalued by the state, and its practitioners were either driven out of the country or executed to maintain traditional pagan religions in the Roma Empire. In the journey of four hundred years, Christianity encountered various complexities and ups and downs. It was started as a form of little movement called ‘Jesus movement‘ in the first century but faced persecution from the state in the third and fourth century until Constantine declared the policy of toleration in the early fourth century. In this context, this study helps to explore the church-state relationship in ancient Rome.

1.1.1. Research Questions and Method of Study

The research question is the core part of any research. In this study with the help of following questions, I have explored the change of the church-state relationship from the first century to the fourth century as presented in the books *Apology* by Tertullian, *Death of the Persecutors* by Lactantius and *Life of Constantine* by Eusebius. Primarily, my focus will be on I. How does the relationship between church and the Roman Empire change from the time of Tertullian to the time of Constantine? And this question will be supported by two other questions: II.how

Christians thought non-Christians and the Roman imperial authorities viewed them? III. And finally, what were the changes brought by the Emperor after his conversion to Christianity?

To explore my research questions, I will be using the historical method of research. The historical research method is one of the oldest research methods originating in ancient Greece. The word “history” originally meant inquiry or investigation and the knowledge obtained from the survey. Now, though time has changed, historical methods of research denote an effort to make a systematic study of the past. The primary purpose of conducting historical research is to get a clear understanding of the time that is being studied. This method helps to recount some relevant aspects of past life and events in a new light. According to John Tosh (2015, p. 63) “comparable issues are raised” by the study of the history of religions. Similarly, for him “study of the history of the religious institution” is a subject matter of research. With the application of the method of comparative study, I have made a study of the history of the church and its relation to the Empire. Hence, the comparison of the church-state relationship between the time of Tertullian and Constantine as presented in the books mentioned above is made through the application of the historical method of study.

1.1.2. Purpose of the Study

This study has aimed to show the changed relationship between the church and the Roman Empire from the time of Tertullian to the time of Constantine. The time of Tertullian was the second half of the second century and the first half of the third century. In this period, Christians were blamed and condemned for their denial to worship the pagan gods and to offer sacrifice. Pagans charged them for their so-called criminal offense. So, they had been a victim of sporadic persecution for over a hundred years. The state was guided with the motive of the extermination of the Christians. The name “Christian” itself was enough for them to face execution. So, the state held a negative attitude towards Christians and exercised all power to make them meek,

submissive and helpless. I have called this Negative relation and will explore further through the book of Tertullian's *Apology*. After almost a hundred years of Tertullian's time, the status of Christianity changed. It was not only brought to neutrality in the eyes of the state but also established as a promoted religion under the reign of Constantine. The country became not only positive but worked and supported to create a favorable environment for the development of Christianity. I want to call this a positive and favorable relation. Eusebius's book *Life of Constantine* presents this positive attitude of the state for the further growth of the religion. So, this study will encompass the journey of Christianity from the negative perspective of the state towards neutrality and ending with a positive and favorable environment.

1.1.3. Delimitation of the Study

Another crucial factor for a thesis is the choice of study materials. Instead of recounting the entire history of four hundred years, I have chosen only three books that are significant for their historical value. The first book that I am going to discuss is Tertullian's *Apology*. The famous Christian writer and lawyer, Tertullian was born a soldier's son at Carthage, North Africa. There is no precise date of his birth and death, and different authors and translators have suggested various times. For example, Tertullian's *Apology* translated by T.R. Glover mentions A.D. 150 to 222 as his lifetime. Whereas the *Apology of Tertullian* translated and annotated by WM Reeve, A.M. says, "He was born at Carthage about A.D. 160, and died about 240" (WM. Reeve, 1889, p. 7). He studied literature, philosophy, medicine, and law and became a pleader. After he visited Rome, he became a militant Christian and worked actively for the expansion of Christianity in the region. Tertullian's conversion may be dated in 196, and he was ordained priest in the Carthaginian Church (T. Herbert Bindley, 1890, p. 1).

And what's more, is that 'he laid the foundation of Latin Christianity' and for this, he is referred to as "the father of Latin Christianity." Tertullian wrote the *Apology* in 197, soon after he visited

Rome and took the conversion. Probably about ten years later he left “the great Church” and joined the Montanist heresy. Though “the immediate purpose of the *Apology* was to protest against the wholesale condemnation of a body of men on the mere presumption of criminality which had never been proved” (T. Herbert Bindley, 1890, p. 2), he was read very carefully and was given a reserved response by the fellow churchmen. Though he was read very carefully by his contemporaries, his *Apology* is one of the vital records to show the relationship between church and the Roman Empire in the first and second century. That is why I have chosen this book and will discuss this book in the second chapter.

The next text I will talk about is ‘The Deaths of the Persecutors’ published in English translation in the book Lactantius’s *The Minor Works*. Lactantius had lived through the days when the enemy of the church was in power and furiously exerted its diabolical control (McDonald, 1965, p. 121). A Christian apologist, Lactantius was born in 250 A.D. and studied rhetoric under Arnobius. After his study, he was appointed a teacher of rhetoric at Nicomedia by the Roman Emperor Diocletian and got popularity in his profession. When the Emperor began The Great Persecution against Christians, Lactantius resigned his post about 305 and returned to the West (Britannica, 2009). After Constantine and Licinius had dual control over the Empire, Lactantius was recalled and appointed as a tutor of Constantine’s son Crispus. So, under the reign of Diocletian and Constantine, Lactantius got an opportunity to observe the national policy of Rome towards Christian. As an eye-witness of many of the events, he made a record of the details of “the epoch of the tetrarchy and the beginning of Constantine’s sole rule” (McDonald, 1965, p. 128). In this context, his text “The Death of the Persecutors” is the key to unlock the relationship between the church and the Roman Empire.

The third book I would like to study is *The Life of Constantine* by Eusebius. Eusebius, “the bishop of Caesarea, was a historian and exegete who formed the Orthodox understanding of

the relationship between church and state. He saw the Empire and the imperial church as sharing a close bond” (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 2018). The bond as he saw between the church and the state is well presented in his book *Life of Constantine*. Though the contents of the book did not remain without being questioned and provoking controversies, scholars are disposed to accept the evidence it provides. I have chosen this book because, it is the primary source book for the religious policy of Constantine, under whose reign Christianity became a favored religion of the state.

1.1.4. The Way Ahead

Before engaging myself in the main source books of this study, I will briefly present the historical background of persecution of Christian that started from Nero. Then I will proceed with how Christians were in the eyes of non-Christians and the Roman State. This all will be addressed in chapter one. Chapter two will be dedicated to the book *Apology*. Here will be the in-depth study of how Tertullian viewed the relationship between church and state. This chapter will include a discussion of the nature of persecution and the status of Christianity. The third chapter will deal with Constantine and the text of Lactantius. This chapter will show the relationship between the church and the Empire changed. The role of the state will be shown as the protector of the religion that had previously been persecuted by itself. Chapter four will be the comparison of the periods between Tertullian and Lactantius and Constantine. This chapter will sum up the relationship with the comparative study of these two different periods. And chapter five will be the conclusion of this thesis.

1.2. Historical Background

1.2.1. Christianity at its birth

Christianity at its birth was a kind of abstract idea and was unknown to the world except selected few of the Jews. It started as a new religious movement in about 30 A.D. comprising

a small group of Jews, “in which Jesus was central in its belief and practices. At some point thereafter (scholars debated exactly when), but certainly by the later parts of the first century A.D., adherents of this movement began to be referred to as “Christians” initially by the outsiders and by the second century the movement came to be known as Christianity” (Hurtado, 2016, p. 2). Similarly, Cohen (2017), writes after the death of Jesus “his followers, all of whom were Jews like Jesus himself, constituted a Jewish movement, perhaps a sect, meeting and praying regularly in the temple of Jerusalem and interacting with other Jewish worshipers. And yet before very long, the Jesus movement was no longer Jewish; it became something different, a social phenomenon of its own”.

From the very beginning, the followers of the Jesus movement deviated from the beliefs and practices of Jews and Pagans. Christianity did present a kind of polarization to its audience at various points (MacMullen, 1984, p. 19). He further writes “Christianity differed from the general context of opinion around it, the one point of difference that seems most salient was the antagonism inherent in it – antagonism of God towards all other supernatural powers.” John North, (2017, p. 15) writes Jewish Christian, those who combined the Jewish background with their belief that Jesus was the Messiah, followed Jewish tradition in their acceptance of a holy book, on which the faith was grounded; they took seriously the biblical prophecies that looked forward to the birth of Jesus, who was identified as the Messiah; they rejected all the gods of the Gentiles. On the other hand, they later rejected the practice of animal sacrifice, which was familiar to pagans and Jews,

The dogmatic Jews and pagans did not entertain adaptation of new religious practices and merging of Jewish culture and the religions of the heathen with the so-called “alien” Christianity. The reason behind this was that there was no limit on how many gods an inhabitant of the Empire could embrace. Pagans were characterized to have a multiplicity of deities; their gendered division; the regular use of domestic animals as sacrificial victims; the presence and

power of priests and diviners of various kinds; a profoundly local character in the activities of communities, cities, and tribes; and a close connection between the rituals, the rulers, and the authorities of their societies. (North, 2017, p. 8). On the contrary, ‘Christians were strict monotheist’ who refused to accept the multiplicity of gods and demanded all the believers to take the conversion. In this context, I would like to outline the development of Christianity and their distinctiveness from the Jews and Pagans, in the Roman Empire from the first century to the fourth century.

1.2.2. Christianity and the Roman Empire

Octavius, founder of the Roman Empire, better known today as the Caesar Augustus, was in the middle of his reign when Jesus of Nazareth was born in around 10 B.C.E. to 4 B.C.E. He “came to power by winning the continuous civil war” and “desired to be king over the Romans.” He was given the title of ‘Augustus’ by the Senate for his reverence after the war and was bestowed enormous power on him. As he was in control and enjoying his reign, there began a movement called “Jesus Movement” ‘in Judea and Galilee and spread into the rest of the Roman Empire.’ The movement spread with the “Jesus ministry” that was conducted entirely during the reign of Augustus’s successor Tiberius. As Jesus ministry lasted for two- or three-years period and ended with his crucifixion, many missionaries worked actively to carry out the message of Jesus and continue the messianic work.

After the death of Jesus, its followers including twelve apostles visited different places and worked to disseminate Jesus message. Since their efforts were not institutional and not organized, “very little is known about the details of Christianity’s growth during the reigns of Caligula (37-41 C.E.), Claudius (41-54C.E) and Nero (54-68C.E.) (Novak, 2001, p. 12). The only reliable resources are the letters of Apostle Paul written after the crucifixion. Out of thirteen letters attributed to Paul, one was written to Romans. He preached gospel beginning from Jerusalem and continuing all way to Rome. As a missionary, Paul visited for the preaching

of the gospel and as Lynch says ‘had a ready-made audience in the synagogue of Jewish Diaspora’ who helped them to found churches and settled down. As Novak, writes “The history of Christianity during the subsequent Flavian dynasty (69-96 C.E.) is even more obscure because there are even fewer relevant sources for that period” (Novak, 2001, p. 12). In this obscurity, I would like to analyze the status of Christianity under legal and political aspects.

1.2.2.1. Legal Status

To see the legal status of Christianity in the Roman Empire, they enjoyed religious freedom. Usually, Roman authorities practiced religious tolerance. They welcomed all spiritual practices including Christianity and provided equal opportunities to the followers of all religions until their practices meant something immoral and barbaric. Christianity, before Nero, was treated equally to other religions like Judaism and Paganism. Authorities looked down only those practices that resisted the Roman laws and customs that breached the social norms and gave shelter to vulgarity. For example, one of the reasons to become the exception of the tolerance could be the denial to worship pagan gods.

1.2.2.2. Political Status

Politically, Christianity was the religion of laymen. It was the religion of the subject. It was confined to the dregs of Roman Society. Some non-Christians had always been on the ruling class. Though magistrates were elected annually, Rome had undergone the practice of republic for about five hundred years; they later adopted the tradition of ruler-worship, which was already in practice in the area they invaded like, Asia Minor and Syria. And Christians, as a faithful and loyal subject of the Empire, had to unquestionably obey the command of the magistrates and follow the “cult of the Emperor” which was the base for their separation from the Jewish background. As Christians remain stubborn to worship God and god-kings, they

were taken as a political threat and were subject to persecution. So, by the time of Nero, Christianity was religiously and politically at risk which later exposed through his abuse.

1.3. Early Persecutions

1.3.1. The First Persecution

Nero, Emperor of the Roman Empire from 54 to 68 C.E., brought an end to the Julio-Claudian dynasty. He came to power succeeding his stepfather Claudius and as Cropp says is responsible for

the deaths of his stepbrother Britannicus, his mother Agrippina, and Octavia, his wife and step-sister, and had had senators and patricians put to death for their wealth or their potential threat to his unbridled power. In 65 C.E., possibly to divert attention from his unpopularity, he instigated the persecution of Christians in Rome. This persecution resulted in the execution of the apostles Peter and Paul (Cropp, 2007, p. 2).

As mentioned above Nero tried to exterminate his potential threat and those who defied to worship the pagan God. In terms of Roman law, failure to worship the State Gods was treason, and many Christians who refused to worship such deities were executed as a massive fire broke out at Rome and destroyed much of the city. It was believed Nero himself was responsible for the fire. After the fire, Nero made several efforts to show that he was not responsible for the destruction. He attempted to present himself as sympathetic towards the victim, but his immediate measures did not produce any effect on the people, instead of that increased further doubt against the Emperor. Finally, he took a very unfair decision and turned the blame towards Christian and announced them as responsible for the destruction and declared persecution against them. His mindless brutality was displayed in three common forms of execution: being thrown to the beasts, crucifixion, and being burnt alive. Edward Champlin in his 'Nero Reconsidered' writes, "Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished,

or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as nightly illumination, when daylight expired” (Champlin, 2010, p. 9). None of the people who fell under the category of the religion called “Christianity” could escape his execution, be it either women or children. Although Nero carried out persecution against Christian, that was neither religiously nor historically justifiable.

Nero’s persecution of Christian, instead of to repress them, set the ground for the gradual development of the Jesus movement and further influenced the relationship between Christians and the Roman government. The persecution assisted Christianity’s further development mainly in two ways. First, the early followers of Christianity became more dedicated to work for the gospel as Apostle Paul, and others readily accepted martyrdom. Second, pagans and Jews who later took conversion became interested as they come to know about the message of God. And further, early converts became the source of inspiration for conversion to the other Jews and Pagans.

After Nero committed suicide in 68 C.E.: there came three different emperors, Galba, Otho and Vitellius who ruled only for eighteen months together and could not mark significant events in the history. After them, Vespasian became Emperor of the Roman Empire and captured Jerusalem in 70 A.D. under the commandment of Titus to dominate the first Jewish war. This war is one of the causes for the obscurity of Christian history during the Flavian dynasty. Novak draws the picture of after war situation of Christianity:

The first Jewish war profoundly affected the nature and direction of Christianity’s growth. Many, if not all, of the Christian churches founded in Palestine by the twelve apostles, were destroyed during the war, as at this time these churches virtually disappear from the historical record. Many historians believe that with the destruction of these communities the written records and many of the oral traditions of the earliest Christians communities were lost or confused (Novak, 2001, p. 32).

After the first Jewish war, there was confusion among the early followers of Christianity about the future of the Jesus Movement. But, in the long run, it helped to set a boundary between Jews and Christian. The deteriorated relationship between Jews and the Roman Empire further worsened during the war as Rome used massive power against them. In this situation, Christians got an opportunity to prove themselves different from the Jews around them and unlike “disloyal” Jews they presented as loyal towards the Empire. Christians were found different than the Jews based on their nature. Jesus Movement was guided by the religious motive and accomplished spiritual life whereas the Jewish war was politically oriented. So, one was guided by political nature and marked as political movement while the next was considered as a non-political, i.e., religious movement. This consideration contributed to a fundamental policy of tolerance toward Christianity until the reign of Nero. After Nero, it seemed as if this policy of tolerance turned to intolerance and a kind of anti-Christian movement, i.e., persecution against them was executed at a large scale.

1.3.2. The Second Persecution

After the first Jewish war, historical resources to show the relationship between Christianity and Judaism are very few. It is because many of the Jews and Christian began dispersing throughout the Roman Empire with rare recordings of the later development. This period is significant for it marked the growth of Christianity being apart from Judaism. In this condition, the unique evidence show, “the leaders of the surviving Jewish communities took rigorous measures against those Christians” (Novak, 2001, s. 33-34) since they were considered as the “people who had fallen away from the proper worship of God.” Similarly, “after the catastrophe of 70 A.D., the Jews of the Diaspora made an even stronger effort to propagate Judaism as if they were striving to overcome both paganism and Christianity. (Keresztes, 1973, p. 5). This condition shows Christians were in the situation of “double Persecution,” the one from the state and the other was from the contemporary Jews. For examples, Christians were excluded from

synagogue service and “were cursed three times a day in the synagogues of Palestine.” The official persecution for the second time against Christian began during the reign of Emperor Domitian.

Domitian came to rule as a successor of Nero concerning the treatment against Christian. He came to power after Titus and ruled for fifteen years from 81 A. D. to 96 A.D. He stood in the line of Nero in the sense that he was the second one to execute persecution against Christian. Though there is a debate among the scholars whether the abuse was aimed at Christians, all agree “that Domitian enforced the imperial cult, wanting to be honored as a god not only after death but during his lifetime” (Ralph, 2012, p. 2). The practice of emperor worship began in Rome from the time of the first emperor, Augustus. After his death, he was revered as God and was worshipped. After him, Nero thought himself as divine and Domitian claimed the title “Lord and God.” Such a desire to be a “living god” lead him to take actions against those who denied the deification of Emperor. Those who refused to worship “Lord and God” were Jews and Christians. Out of them Jews had the unique privilege and was an exemption from military service and emperor worship. Fredriksen and Irshai (2004) as quoted by Paula Fredriksen write, “Whether under pagan or, later, Christian persecutors, however, Jews and the practice of Judaism, for the most part, remained free from government harassment and continued to be protected by imperial law” (Fredriksen, 2010, p. 601). So, Christians were left to be the victim of persecution from Domitian. For example, as mentioned by Ken Laffer in his thesis, Eusebius described Domitian as “the successor of Nero in enmity and hostility to God.” He resumed the official action against Christians. It is not clear how wide the persecution was carried out and how intense it was. But Paul Keresztes in his article writes “as far as the names of Christian victims of Domitian are concerned we have only one that is definitely that of Flavia Domitilla, the niece of Flavius Clemens, the consul” (Keresztes, 1973, s. 27). Though he began persecution against Christian in the beginning, he seemed to have revoked from his decision

later. Tertullian in his *Apology* makes the earliest recording of Domitian's oppression, "Domitian too, who was a good deal of a Nero in cruelty, attempted it; but being in some degree human, he soon stopped what he had begun, and restored those he had banished" (Tertullian, *Apology*, 5.4).

From the time of Domitian, Emperors drew themselves back from the position held by Nero. They tried to continue the policy of tolerance towards all sects and religions. Domitian's effort to restore the banished and exiled is the sign of the beginning of the golden age of the Roman Empire. After that, there began the reign of the "Five Good Emperors," Nerva (96-98), Trajan (98-117), Hadrian (117-135) Antonius Pius (135-161) and Marcus Aurelius (161-180). The period during the reign of the Five Good Emperor was golden for it achieved great military success, maintained general peace and prosperity and became economically stable due to its industries and trade. Relative peace and prosperity accompanied the Roman Empire as there was no bloodshed at the time of power succession of a new emperor and fewer records of localized persecutions of Christians. During the time of Trajan, though, he did not order any abuse, some irregular and local level persecutions persisted. Symeon's, the son of Cleopas, better known as the second bishop of the church in Jerusalem, persecution in around 106/107 C.E. and Ignatius's, the bishop of Antioch, arrest for mistreatment are some of the references of abuses at his time. Beside them, letters written by Pliny to Trajan are some of the evidence to show some irregular and dispersed persecution.

Though there was the occurrence of persecution at the lower level and local level, the role of the state did not remain active. The nation seemed to have taken measures against only those who resulted in religious and social disharmony. To maintain law and order in the state was its primary focus then to encourage and discourage the religion. Emperor Trajan's reply to the questions raised by Pliny about the way of treating Christian presents the official view of the Emperor against them. Indicating Christians, he writes, "these people must not be hunted out"

until the charge against them is proved. So, officially there was not a decree to work against the spirit of Christianity. Instead, as Lynch writes, “before about 250, most Roman officials took Trajan’s advice and rarely hunted for Christians or accepted an anonymous accusation against them” (Lynch, 2010, p. 84). With this, the role of the state against persecution was neutralized and adopted the policy of tolerance.

1.3.3. Lyons and Vienne

It was at the time of Marcus Aurelius (161-180), the Roman Empire had poorly suffered from plague and war. There was a call from the state to join military service or public offices to defend the Empire and help the victims of the epidemic. Christians followed the policy of disobedience against the call. They refused to participate in both services it is because “routine of both military and public service was intimately interwoven with the symbols and worship of the pagan gods” (Novak, 2001, p. 90). Their refusal to join military and social service isolated themselves from the public and social life around them. Some pagans became more hostile towards Christians and perceived them as a threat since they failed to join the military service at the time of war. This hostility and disdain exposed through the localized persecution of Christians in 177 at Lyons and Vienne. The local factors provoked persecution at Lyons and Vienne. It began with the general populace rather than the formal charge of the Empire. Despite the increasing tension between Pagan and Christians, Marcus Aurelius once again tried to reaffirm the policy laid out by Trajan. But despite his policy of tolerance, the persecution was so broad and intense that it was not limited to Gaul. Beginning from the Lyons and Vienne, it ranged up to North Africa. The nature of the persecution was harsher than any abuse ever made previously. The Letter of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne quoted by Eusebius Ecclesiastical History presents the details of the nature of the martyrdom.

As the tension and hatred increased between Pagan and the Christians, there broke a violent attack upon Christians. They were “not merely excluded from houses and baths and markets” but were forbidden to be seen around. Further, “they were whipped, beaten, and stretched on the rack, and as a last resort, red-hot bronze plates were pressed against the tenderest parts of their bodies” (Lynch, 2010, p. 85). The governor made use of them to provide public entertainment. Some were put on the hot iron chair until their bodies being roasted while others were sent to the wild beast. Four of the martyrs—Blandina, Maturus, Sanctus, and Attalus—were “exposed to wild beasts” as part of the gladiatorial spectacle arranged “expressly for [their] sake” in the amphitheater. Sanctus and Maturus, after being mutilated by the beasts, were placed in the “iron chair” and scorched to death. Blandina was fastened to a stake and suspended as food for the wild beasts (Lynchburg, 2014, p.20). As the attack against them escalated “they came together and endured every kind of abuse and punishments.” Even the process of trial for those who were arrested took longer. Before facing the Governor, physical and mental harassment was followed by “rapine, imprisonment, and stoning.”

Behind the reasons for such a criminal attack, Pagans had mainly two reasons. The first reason was that Christians were suffering from “Oedipus Complex,” i.e., they involve in a sexual relationship with their mother; Oedipodean intercourse. Further, they accused them that they participated in cannibalism. The second charge against them was that they involved in the worship of “strange and new god” rejecting old gods and adopted the belief of resurrection. As Pagans at Lyons and Vienne knew that Christians treasured the bodies of the martyrs, they prevented Christians from recovering the bodies for burial. And as they were exposed to the remains of the martyr’s bodies, they burned it and reduced to ashes and swept into the river so that they could not find the traces of their life on the earth.

Regarding the accusations made by Pagans about Christians, there are two different types of source of information that need to be studied thoroughly. First, I will look into the non-

Christian sources of data produced by the Pagan critics. Next, I will go through the texts of the Christian sources and present their views about the blame made by non-Christians.

1.4. Pagan Criticism and Christian Apologetic

1.4.1. Early Christianity in the Eyes of Non-Christian Writers

One of the non-Christian writers who has presented his clear view about early Christianity is Pliny “the younger.” As he was sent to govern Bithynia-Pontus, his writings hold the imperial view. He “regarded Christianity as comprising a problem significant enough for him to take such strong actions: torturing Christians for information, demanding that that accused apostatize, and handing over for execution or further trials those who refused to comply with his demand” (Hurtado, 2016, p. 23). Though Pliny found the problem in Christianity, he later clearly admits that he did not find the proof or confirmation of the wild accusations against them that were popular at that time. It is because he did not find the evidence to the allegations; he seemed confused about the actions to be taken. His letter to Trajan shows his wrong attitude towards Christian. So, magistrates themselves appeared in a dilemma between the duty they are obliged to do and the responsibility they ought to fulfill. Rather than running behind the wild accusations, Emperor like Trajan and governor like Pliny worked to maintain law and order and took actions only against those who were antisocial and unreasonable.

Galen, after Pliny was another Pagan writer who “does not echo the sort of wild charges about Christians” (Hurtado, 2016, p. 27). Instead, he found Christian philosophy defective. Although he found Christian philosophy problematic, he appreciated the courage to face martyrdom in the pursuit of justice. It is Galen, who supposed to set the ground for the discussion on the philosophy of Christianity and its influence upon its followers. Marcus Aurelius later showed his disdain referring to their sacrifice as “Mere obstinacy.” He blamed Christian philosophy as misleading which encouraged its followers to die for their faith and call for the disaster.

Lucian also had a robust disdainful expression for Christians. But he and the critics after him slightly changed the way they presented their scornful expression. Instead, to show their views directly, they created a character in their writings and revealed their beliefs through them. Lucian in his “The Passing of Peregrinus” denounced Peregrinus, a Christian convert, in a satirical way. He showed him eating forbidden food while he was traveling and tried to convince that Christians fail to keep their promise before their God. Sometimes he expressed his contempt directly. He characterized Christians as wretched and wrote:

The poor wretches have convinced themselves, first and foremost, that they are going to be immortal and live for all time, in consequence of which they despise death and even willingly give themselves into custody; most of them. Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brothers of one another after they have transgressed once, for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws. (Harmon, n.d.).

Similarly, “The True Word” written by Celsus in between 175-180 is full of critics of Christianity. He used ridiculing, defaming and shaming as his weapon to draw Christians back to paganism. He characterized Christians as “a bunch of intellectually inferior people” (Hurtado, P. 30). For him, there was something hilarious in the Old Testament and the Gospel. And he continued to claim that Jesus was nothing more than the illegitimate child and a mere magician. Christians, being a follower of the magician, could not develop the philosophical thought and so, they lack intellectuality. The inferiority of Christians is exposed as they refused to worship the traditional God. Celsus, showing the consequences of their refusal to worship pagan gods, posits Christianity as a threat to provoke anarchy and chaos. Unlike the orthodox pagan and Emperor of the time, Celsus had a different opinion about Christianity. He “expressed a willingness to tolerate them, if only they would honor the gods and follow the

polytheistic customs that everyone else, excepting, of course, Jews, affirmed” (Hurtado, 2016, p. 31).

1.4.2. Early Christian Apologetics

History, as quoted by Winston Churchill, is always “written by the Victors.” And every history is won, made and written by the elites, rulers, and people of the upper class. And that history is taken for granted and studied and glorified. History of Christianity is not an exception and was written primarily by the Emperor, governor or the person appointed by them. But for the fair treatment of the history and wholesome understanding, it is necessary to look at both sides of a coin. For a fuller understanding of the past, it should also be studied from the perspective of minority, subaltern, and subjects being ruled. In this chapter, I will look into the Christian intellectuals, commonly known as “apologist” and their understanding of martyrdom. Before starting, I would like to mention how this practice of writing apology began and continued after that. The trend of writing Apology started as there was a need to defend Christian philosophy at the intellectual level and justified their faith to the Roman imperial authorities so that Christianity could readily be accepted in the Roman society. While writing an apology, apologists have mainly focused on two things. First, they have shown how the system of judgment was full of prejudices. Next, they presented Christianity pure, self-disciplined and sincere towards their Empire and the Emperor.

Quadratus

The oldest Christian apologists as recorded by Eusebius in his *The ecclesiastical history* is Quadratus, who is supposed to have presented his apology to Emperor Hadrian in 125 or in 129 when he visited Athens. Nothing much is known about the text except a short quotation preserved by Eusebius. It says,

But the works of our Saviour were always present, for they were genuine:-those that were healed, and those that were raised from the dead, who were seen not only when they were healed and when they were raised, but were also always present; and not merely while the Saviour was on earth, but also after his death, they were alive for quite a while, so that some of them lived even to our day (Euseb.Hist., 4.3.2).
(http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0265-0339,_Eusebius_Caesariensis,_Church_History,_EN.pdf, n.d.)

With these lines, Quadratus seemed to have defended Christianity and their practices showing some evidence that the rumors against Christians made by the pagans and Jews were fake and were guided by the imperial motive to dismiss their practices. He presented evidence that the magical power of God still existed by their time. Instead, to make arguments against the claims made by non-Christian, Quadratus tried to establish truths and make an appeal for the recognition of their identities as a loyal citizen of the Empire.

Aristides

The next apologetics to appeal for the defense of the faith is Aristides. He presented a defense note before the king Hadrian on behalf of reverence for God in the year 125. His method of presentation is quite different than the rest of the apologist. He classified the types of people in the world into four groups: Barbarians and Greeks, Jews and Christians and characterized each of them with their special religious features. With the detail discussion of the spiritual practices of those religions, Aristides showed how Christians were different from others and explained how “they have come nearer to truth and genuine knowledge than the rest of the nations.” Describing against the false blame of Pagans he writes:

They do not commit adultery nor fornication, nor bear false witness, nor embezzle what is held in pledge, nor covet what is not theirs. They honor father and mother and show

kindness to those near to them; and whenever they are judges, they judge uprightly. They do not worship idols (made) in the image of man; and whatsoever they would not that others should do unto them (Kay, n.d.).

Aristide presents the details of the law of the Christian commandments contrasting with others. He writes it is Greeks who involve in the intercourse with males, mother, sister and a daughter. But Christians are good, just and more blessed than other people of the earth. They equally respect widows, care for orphans and support for the poor and needy with their food. Barbarian, on the other hand, did not find the traces of true God and struggled in the dark to find the truth like a drunk man and struggling with each other to fall. He concludes his apology with a remark that “let them speak the truth.” He is stressing to acknowledge Christianity and let the Emperor hears the truth for it is a gateway to light to enlighten the whole Empire.

Justin Martyr

The earliest apology ever survived was of Justin Martyr written around 155 C.E. Martyr wrote two apologies and one of them was addressed to the Romans. His apology contains many arguments which represent the response of an intellectual and educated Christians to the hostility and criticism of Pagans and the Roman officials. He argued that it was unfair to persecute Christian only for the name. The governor and the Emperor should make judgments according to the strict and exact inquiry. Being a guardian, and lover of culture and justice they should not be moved by irrational impulses and prejudices. Christians were ready to be killed if the charges against them are proved or be justified as antisocial. But the sole purpose of the apology was a plea to give them a proper hearing. Name “Christian” mere mean nothing. There is nothing right and nothing harmful in the name. It is an action that speaks something good or bad. In this context, I would like to refer a famous line spoken by Juliet from Shakespeare’s play Romeo and Juliet. The line goes: “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose By any

other name would smell as sweet (2.2.4).” As said in these lines, qualities of an object or thing lie inside it. Not the name given to it represent its natural qualities. The same applies to the name of Christians. Simply the name “Christian” is not enough to judge the quality of Christian philosophy. If they are subject to Punishment, they should be punished according to the conduct they perform. And even if they are likely to punish it should undergo the judicial process. But, martyr complained that they were punishing Christian unfairly and judicially, which was not fair and reasonable.

Justin further proceeds with the clearance to the charges made against them. He criticized the wild charges against Christians like sexual orgies and eating human flesh. Giving clean cheat to the Christians of his type, i.e., proto-orthodox Christian, Martyr marked, it was gnostic Christians who engaged in those fabulous and shameful deeds. Contrary to the rumors, he claimed that proto-orthodox Christians were sexually pure and morally honest. And what’s more, it was Greek myth that encouraged its followers to commit “infanticide by the abandonment of children, prostitution” and sort of things regarded as immoral. For him, the practice of worshipping the idols of multiple deities is far more corrupt than adopting monotheistic belief and practices. Mocking at the practice of worshipping idols made of stone, wood, silver or gold, protecting and guarding against thieves, he asked how far was that reasonable and what sort of God that could be stolen?

In the history of Christianity, it is Justin Martyr, who promoted the status of Christianity to the next level. Through the logical and sensible appeal, he showed how Christianity was superior to paganism and other non-Christian practices. One thing for sure is that he started an intellectual and philosophical debate intending the Emperor, governor and the elites of the Roman society. But “Pagans in the street” neither got the points raised by him nor developed that level of understanding for the next hundred and fifty years. As a result, persecution of Christian continued until the first quarter of the fourth century.

Tatian

A native Syrian by birth, Tatian was educated in Greek rhetoric and philosophy. In the course of his study, he visited Athens and Rome and met St. Justin Martyr upon whose influence he converted to Christianity. About 172 A.D. Tatian became the leader of the Encratites, a sect within the Gnostic Christian. He wrote "Oration against the Greeks," an apologetic work which included the passionate defense of Christianity with a violent attack on every aspect of Greco-Roman culture and religion. Mocking at the Greeks, he writes, "We do not act as fools, O Greeks, nor utter idle tales." Referring to the Greek law that punishes men according to their name he declares to defy the law, "On this account, I reject your legislation also; for there ought to be one common polity for all" (Ryland, n.d., Ch.28). It is unfair while a robber is not to be punished for the name he bears, and Christians should be punished without examination for their name. He concludes his apology with the expression that he is ready for review for the doctrine he adheres, but the universal laws must follow that.

1.5. The Situation of the Church at the Start of the Third Century

By the end of the second century, Christianity outside Rome had a strong organizational structure. Notably, in the east like Alexandria and Antioch, the Christian community had a homogeneity and had more unity in their organization. The reason behind this is that the population was easily controlled by the organization of an authoritative local tradition. And newcomers had to accommodate as per the culture of the society, which in the long term strengthened the church. Roman society, on the other hand, was continued to be filled by the immigrants from the eastern Christian center and introduced their practices and traditions. Heresies and school teachers were also among the immigrants, who came up with a new interpretation of Christian traditions, which ultimately resulted in division and disintegration in the Roman Christian community. George La Piana writes,

The various shades Christian thought and all the varieties of disciplinary, liturgical tradition which could be found in the various centers of the Christian life were represented in Rome, and all of them engaged in a deadly struggle to overcome one another and come to the official doctrine or the official practice of the community. (Piana, 1925, p. 10).

Hence, due to the conflict and struggle, proto-orthodox Christian churches in the second and third centuries were in a complex situation. There continued to be existed churches in private houses. Churches then varied in their nature according to social, economic and diverse religious practices. Lynch writes, “Between the first and fourth centuries, there must have been hundreds, perhaps thousands of such “house churches” across the Roman Empire” (Lynch, 2010, p. 110). In those house churches, some Roman Christian used to gather every morning for the celebration of the Eucharist. While J.K. Elliott, as quoted by Alikin writes “the Christian of Rome met day and night at the house of Narcissus the Presbyter” (Alikin, 2011, p. 96). Similarly, Tertullian in several of his books records that Christian met every day of the week before dawn.

Hence, until the end of the second century, though there were a division and disintegration among the Christian followers, the number of believers in Jesus increased reasonably. Seeing Christianity and its organizational structure from the eyes of the Christian, there was a struggle among them and were not in unity. They competed with each other to establish themselves as the official cult. But to look them from outside, their acts helped them to multiply their numbers and in the long run contributed to strengthening the church, and its activities increase the number of its followers. The second century helped to form a basic organizational structure of the church and set background for the first church activities which became more intense in the third and fourth century. I will further discuss the situation of the church at the time of Tertullian in chapter two.

Chapter II: Church and Empire in Tertullian's *Apology*

2.1.1. Tertullian and His Career

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus lived during the reigns of Septimus Severus and Caracalla in Roman Carthage and worked there. As he settled there and earned a reputation as a legal expert and advocate, “he dedicated all his forensic knowledge and aptitude to the defense and advancement of the Christian faith” (Allen, 2008, p. 195). He was born as a Pagan as his father was a centurion of the proconsular cohort, though the scholars like Barnes question this. Dunn writes Barnes, “questions or dismisses the ideas that Tertullian’s father was a centurion, that Tertullian was a presbyter, that he was a jurist” (Dunn, 2004, p. 4) His educational background and expertise lead him, though some scholars doubt, to be a jurist and presbyter. As an advocate, he was quite successful. When he became a Christian, Tertullian began advocating for the defense of Christianity and set a strong foundation for Latin Christianity. He contributed his effort through his apologetic writings. And his literary career is further said to have been boosted with those writings. Though he became famous and well known among his contemporaries, he remained hidden under the shadow for the next two centuries as none of the bishops and theologians paid attention to him until the end of the fourth century.

Tertullian’s literary career began in Carthage. He is best known through his treatises. Thirty-one treaties are generally accepted as being written by Tertullian. He mastered the Greek and Latin languages which are reflected in his papers in written Greek and Latin. He attended the declamation school run by Phosphorus, a well-known rhetorician of Carthage. So, his expertise comes into rhetoric too. Some of his treatises deal with Montanism, “a prophetic renewal movement informed by the Holy Spirit, which can be characterized as charismatic, ascetic enthusiastic, innovative, spiritualist, ecstatic and rigorous” (Dunn, 2004, p. 6). Tertullian inclined towards the Montanist heresy perhaps because of its “demanding and perfectionist”

qualities. For example, they forbade remarriage, demanded rigorous fasting and provided a unique position for women. Being dissatisfied with the Montanist group, as he found a difference in the demand of the Bible and the practice of the church, Tertullian later established an even more rigorous group which ultimately lead him outside the common Christian category. In other words, Tertullian at the end of his career did not “have anything in common with Christians who did not hold to his Montanist convictions” (Dunn, 2004, p. 7). So, critics pose the question of whether Tertullian was a schismatic.

2.1.2. Carthage at the End of Second Century and Latin Christianity

Carthage, according to Candida R. Moss, was the epicenter of the Christian literature and a valuable center of commerce, trade, and administration of the Roman province in North Africa. It was economically and militarily significant since it was probably the second largest city of the empire after Rome. Herodian, as quoted by David Rankin writes, “the city is the next after Rome in wealth, population and size though there was a rivalry for second place between it and Alexandria in Egypt” (Rankin, 1995, p. 9). So, Carthage had its importance and uniqueness that contributed it’s rich in religion, culture, and economy. When we talk about Carthage, the Origin of Latin Christianity and its literature come to the front. I want to discuss this topic because this is where Tertullian worked for the development of Christianity. And his work *Apology* is a masterpiece of early Latin Christianity.

Concerning the history of Christianity in North-Africa, scholars have not prescribed a precise date of the Origin of Christianity in Carthage. But as stated by Dunn the first substantial evidence for Christianity in North African comes with *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* in 180. Scholars are still trying to find the glimpse of Christianity before that period. Burns and Jensen write:

There was a well-established spread of Christianity already by 180 C.E. By what means and on what timetable Christianity had reached the African coastline and then penetrated well inland can only be conjectured. However, it would be reasonable to conjecture that some Christians had reached Africa a good half-century or more before the report of the Scillitan martyrs (Burns & Jensen, 2014, p. 4).

The question of when Christianity originated in North-Africa is related to where it came from. Since Carthage was a center for trade and people from different regions used to go there, there might not be only one source for the introduction of a new religion. The possible two sources on which historians agree are non-Jewish Christianity from Rome, or from the Jews of the east who came there and settled. Whatever the causes might be, the comments made by Telfer as quoted by Dunn suggests that “African Christianity knew no single paternity, having resulted from the joining up of Christian groups with different origins” (Dunn, 2004, p. 14). But Candida R. Moss has gone beyond the claim made by Dunn and writes, “Christianity had arrived in proconsular Africa long before the composition of the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*” (Moss, 2012, p. 122). Her argument is based on the fact that *Against the Christians* by Fronto was already written in around 162-166.

In addition to literary texts, there is some archaeological evidence that suggests the early existence of a Christian community in North-Africa. The catacomb at Hadrumetum, 150 miles south of Carthage, with the images of the good shepherd, the dove, and the fish dated 150 CE, suggests that there was a kind of established Christian community before the advent of martyrdom. Candida Moss writes, “In the absence of clear evidence, the character of early Christianity in proconsular Africa has been connected to local Phoenician religious practice” (Moss, 2012, p. 123). The sensational practice of child sacrifice characterizes the Punic culture. Parents used to sacrifice their infants to the gods for the fulfillment of their vows or to ask favor from gods. The accusation that the “Christians were cannibals” might have been initiated from

there since the practice of child sacrifice continued there long after it had ceased elsewhere. The characterization of Phoenician religion such as “flesh-eater, bloodthirsty, austere” as referred by Moss (p.124) was later attached to Christianity since Latin Christianity fostered on the foundation of Punic religion and many of the names of the martyrs were of Punic culture. Some of the scholars have argued that the concept of martyrdom that flourished later in the third and fourth century was fostered by the idea of child sacrifice which I will discuss in the next section.

Tertullian in *Apology* has not mentioned about the Christian membership and the process of the entrance to the community. But I would like to discuss it briefly here is based on chapter one of Eric Rebillard’s book *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity*. Many writers after Tertullian have recorded the various stages of Christian membership. Rebillard writes, “it seems that Christian membership was broadly understood to start before baptism with admission to the ranks of the catechumens” (Rebillard, 2012, p. 11). There existed different rules and systems for catechumens. Tertullian recommends not to give baptism just so. He writes, “that baptism ought not to be rashly granted” (Baptism. 18) and insists that it is better to delay. In *Apology* (39.4) he mentions about the divine censure. That is if any man has sinned, he would be banished from the shares of their prayers. And what’s more, is that there was no “entrance fee “for the membership.

2.1.3. Maintaining Christian Identity in Carthage

Being a Christian in Carthage was also maintaining a distinct identity. Christian tried to maintain a uniqueness regarding their speech, dresses, appearance, and involvement. The city like Carthage was the center of business and was affected by the multi-culture and multilingual practices. So, one cannot prescribe a single language of use. But still, Christians in the city like Carthage might have immigrated from oriental countries we can estimate that there was the influence of immigrated people and their language. We can say that there were multiple forms

of Christianity in practice. Tertullian in *Ad Scapulam* states that Christians are “known rather as individuals than a group” (Scap.2.10). Christians in Carthage were recognized for their collective identity than their language and appearances.

Though Tertullian presented Christianity at the individual level, Timothy Barnes states: “The ordinary Christians of Carthage were a group who could easily be defined and recognized” (1985: 90). Christians identity was constructed by recognizing the standard practices performed by its followers and associating themselves with other Christians. That is what Shaye Cohen, as quoted by Rebillard, says “identifying oneself by association” (Rebillard, 2012, p. 14). Another most important marker of Christian identity was their group performance. Tertullian mentions two types of meetings in Carthage: daily morning meeting and weekly evening meeting. Every morning meetings added them a strong sense of belongingness to the community and made them more committed to work for it. Beside that charitable visits like feeding martyrs in prison and visiting sick, were also common among Christians. Similarly, gathering at the cemeteries and praying for God also helped to make Christians distinct from their surroundings. Their abstention from the sacrifice to the Emperor, greeting people with their kisses were some other fundamental features that characterized Christian identity.

2.1.4. Child Sacrifice and Christian Martyrdom

Unlike child abandonment in the forest and human sacrifice in the ancient world, child sacrifice was relatively uncommon and was a unique practice in Carthage. The city of Carthage was a Phoenician colony followed by the typical Punic culture. According to Josephine Quinn, child sacrifice was one of the standard practices followed by the Carthaginian.

Children – both male and female, and mostly a few weeks old – were sacrificed by the Carthaginians at locations known as prophets. The practice was also carried out by their neighbors at other Phoenician colonies in Sicily, Sardinia, and Malta. Dedications from

the children's parents to the gods are inscribed on slabs of stone above their cremated remains, ending with the explanation that the God or gods concerned had 'heard my voice and blessed me' (Quinn, 2014, p. 1).

The purpose of the sacrifice for the people of Carthage was to gain the favor of the gods in their everyday activities. They expected to be blessed with a healthy life, good harvest, and prosperity. But the concept of martyrdom was something different. It was self-motivated and was guided by the motive of getting divinity. But still in his description of Christianity in the third century, John Henry tries to establish a conceptual connection between them. As quoted by Candida, he writes, "there was a priest of Punic Saturn, the child-Devourer, a sort of Moloch, to whom the martyrdom of Christian was a sacred rite" (Moss, 2012, p. 124). However, the conceptual connection assumed by Newman, between "child sacrifice" and "martyrdom" and the contribution for the former to the development of latter, should be viewed in a different context. For example, Christians were sacrificed by Romans condemning them as violators of the Roman law and for defying the pagan gods, and their execution was held publicly either in the arena or in public places by beheading them.

In contrast, child sacrifice was held at prophets followed by Punic rites. So, there is neither religious nor cultural common ground between them. The only common characteristics between them are that both are unnatural, barbaric and bloodthirsty.

2.2. Tertullian and Apology

2.2.1. Introduction to Apology

By the start of the third century, though there were sporadic persecution and mob violence against Christian, the dialogue between the non-Christians and Christians in the Roman empire was not entirely negative. Though many Pagans continued their negative attitude towards Christians and despised them, some Christian intellectuals changed their strategy and entered

into an academic and literary dialogue and started to defend Christianity from the charges that provoked such violence. Tertullian's *Apology* is one of many other apologetic notes written to make a defense of Christianity at the end of the second century. The subject matter it deals with can be divided into three parts. The first part of the book deals with the nature of the Roman Laws under which Christians were condemned. The second part engages in making a defense of Christians against the accusation that they involved in things like abusive relationships, child sacrifice, and baby eating. The third part shows that Christians were not included in treason and contempt against the state religion. Christianity is instead a sort of belief that welcomes all types of people and respects all kinds of religions. Further, Tertullian shows that Christians are equally respectful towards their nation and to the Emperor.

In this chapter, my purpose is to show the critical stage of the church-state relationship at the time of Tertullian. And I will be exploring those issues in *Apology* that are relevant to show the negative correlation between them. In this process, I am following the coherence of *Apology*. This means the structure of this chapter supports the development of the *Apology* itself. Though the primary focus of the book is to make a defense of Christians against the charges, I will pick six different issues which I believe are relevant to show the adverse situation of church-state relation.

2.2.2. Hatred For the Name and Call For Justice in Apology

The first point to show the unnatural relationship between church and the empire is the hatred of the "Christian" name and the perversion of the justice system. Tertullian starts his *Apology* with an address to the magistrates of the Roman Empire to investigate the Christian issue face to face and discover the truth about them. There is a strong need to look at the issues and address them immediately. And if they don't dare to go through and observe directly, it is necessary that they must be familiar with the truth through the hidden path of literature (Tertullian, *Apology* 1.1). Knowing the fact that the truth must be understood and

acknowledged by the rulers and people of the higher class in the society, Tertullian's first attempt is to make them aware of about the truth that is embodied and inherent in Christianity. The Emperor is responsible for the execution of laws and maintaining order in the state, but Tertullian finds shortcomings in the judicial process of the Roman Empire. As a result, disorder and injustice are prevalent throughout the empire, particularly in the case of the treatment of Christians. He proceeds by presenting the evidence of ignorance with which people of the Greco-Roman society are wondering and responding accordingly. It is unjust and unfair to hate without knowing them even though they deserve hatred. So, instead, to defend the justice of the hatred (Tertullian, *Apology* 1.5), Tertullian is calling them to be guided by the universal laws which are supreme. One thing for sure is that, once they cross the boundaries and come closer to the truth, they start hating once what they were and what they believed. Hence the gap between 'what is' and 'what is believed to be' has created a problem in the judicial procedures. The process of judgment as followed by the Roman authorities is an upside-down process. For example, if a criminal commits a crime, they are tortured into confessing their sin, but Christians are tortured to deny their faith. Christians are proud to say what they are, but the Pagans want to hear what they are not. And what's more is that every criminal can hire advocates to prove his or her innocence, but Christians are forbidden to say anything to defend their faith. They are unheard, unprotected and left to be condemned which is against the law. Referring to the letter of Pliny to Trajan, Tertullian raises the question of why they were cheating themselves with their judgment. Even Pliny had not found them guilty of more than obstinance in offering sacrifice and "nothing beyond meetings before dawn to sing to Christ and God, and to band themselves together in discipline, forbidding murder, adultery, dishonesty, treachery and the other crimes" (Tertullian, *Apology* 2.6). Despite the proven innocence of the people by the imperial legate, Tertullian is wondering why they persisted with their false judgment. And the conclusion is clear and visible to everyone. It is because of the

law that found the name 'Christian' criminal by its quality and has been guiding the Roman society for centuries. I want to discuss its Origin and the process of deification of God and its difference with Christianity in the next paragraph briefly.

The Origin of such laws is linked with an ancient decree that "no god should be consecrated by an emperor without the approval of the Senate" and "unless a god please man, he shall not be a god at all" (Tertullian, *Apology* 5.1). And the power and supremacy of the God also depended on the categorization and ranking by the Senate. In this context, Christ, once being endorsed by Tiberius, was rejected by the Senate and thus did not fall to the category of God. As a result, Christianity encountered persecution, first at the time of Nero and later, though soon stopped, by Domitian (Tertullian, *Apology* 5.2-5.4). There appears a gap among the emperors themselves regarding their exposure to Christianity. Trajan forbade Christian to be sought out, and his followers, who are known as the 'five good emperors' remained neutral or at least stopped hunting them following his decree. But the people after them recalled the same ancient order and resumed killing Christians. So, the problem lies not in Christianity; instead, it appears in the side of the rulers and Emperor since they were ignoring the social and religious tolerance maintained by their predecessor.

Tertullian finds contradictions in many spheres of Roman life. They claimed to be the protectors of their religions and maintainers of laws. But Tertullian is confused whether they have abandoned those laws or deviated from them because they "are forever praising antiquity, and every day they improvise some new way of life" (Tertullian, *Apology* 6.9). And what's more, is that they have renounced themselves from the rules of their father. Hence, distortion is brought to the society by Romans themselves and in turn, set the ground for the rise of Christianity.

Tertullian in *Apology* seems very strategic in presenting the ideas. He very skilfully presents the loopholes in the existing Roman legal system and judgment procedures in the very first

section of the book. This has brought the supreme height of the Roman Empire to the ground level and has defended Christianity in the next few chapters against the attack made by the non-Christian, which has helped to show the relevance of Christianity. So, in the next section, I will discuss his defense of the faith.

2.2.3. Criminalization of Christians and Defense of Their Faith

The second, but most important factor to show the vulnerable situation of the church-state relation is the charges against Christians. Tertullian refers to the claim made by the pagans that “Christians are the most criminal of men” since they involve in the incest, baby-killing, and baby-eating. Tertullian challenges this claim and says to bring evidence if there are any or refuse to believe the rumors without investigation. Tales do not have facts and proofs. They are uncertain and “the wise man does not believe uncertainty” (Tertullian, *Apology* 7. 11). And if you believe, come and “plunge the knife into the baby, catch the infant blood; steep your bread with it; eat and enjoy it.” If you cannot do this, how can others? After the rejection of the accusations, Tertullian turns the same weapon towards Pagans. He claims Pagans, sometimes openly and sometimes secretly, commit the crimes of child sacrifice and perhaps that is the reason they believe about others also. He presents the evidence that there was a practice of infants sacrifice to Saturn in Africa, older persons were sacrificed to Mercury in Gauls, and Jupiter used to bathe in human blood during the games held in his honor.

Similarly, Romans, not Christians, have a high chance of incest since they offer their children to passer-by expecting them to be a better parent. After a long time they loathe the memory of each other and might involve in intercourse. But Christians “are safe from random intercourse and all excess after marriage” (Tertullian, *Apology* 9.19).

In the next section, Tertullian defends against the charges of Sacrilege and treason, which for him is another case that deserves investigation. The first thing he deals with is the defying of

Pagan gods. He claims Christian ceased to worship their gods from the moment they recognized that they were not gods. They defied Pagan gods because they thought they all were once men. So, instead, to compel Christian to worship the dead men, they ought to require Christians to prove that those gods were not gods and are therefore not to be worshipped. Tertullian presents the evidence that the first ever known God of Pagan was Saturn. Pagan had no god before him. He was a man and born of a man who started writings and began to print coin with an image. Similarly, Jove, the God of the sky, too was a man and born of man. So, all the gods had human nature who was sanctified after their death and made a god. Tertullian finds a controversial practice within the Pagans. One group of Pagan worship one lot of gods and another group others. Meanwhile, they reject each other's God and despise them. But Tertullian presents how Christians were stable and unified regarding their views on the nature of God. He supports his ideas with the evidence through the revelations, first in general admission, in the material world and the witness of the soul, and then in the special revelation given in the Hebrew Bible.

Treason is one of many other charges made by Pagans against Christian. They were accused of that charge primarily being based on two points. The first one was that Christians did not give the Emperor due honor. The second, Christians endangered the security of the state. Defending against the first accusation Tertullian writes, Christians do not offer the worthless sacrifice; instead, they offer the prayer that is effective for him. Their public call for prayer goes like this: "pray for kings, and for princess and powers, that all things may be tranquil for you" (Tertullian, *Apology* 31.3). Hence, the claim that Christians did not honor the Emperor turns out to be a false accusation.

Similarly, regarding the second point, Tertullian clarifies that Christians met together "to read the books of God" and "pray for Emperors, for their ministers and those in authority for the security of the world, for peace on earth" (Tertullian, *Apology* 39.2). So, they are not traitor and conspirator against the empire and the Emperor. Instead, the Christian community is a

result of the bond of the shared hope and unity of the way of their life which is more dedicated and sincerer for the unity of the empire and wellbeing of the Emperor.

2.2.4. Christians were Subjects, not Citizens

In this section, I have tried to show Christians as subjects of the Roman empire, not as citizens, in the sense that they could not make use of their basic legal rights and the imperial legal system could not give any national recognition to identify them. I have formed this idea based on the expression of Lynch and Green. I have chosen this expression because this could best illustrate the negative church-state relation focusing on the concept of the identity crisis of Christian. I have here presented the position of Christians as subjects, who remained under the control of the empire and the imperial authorities, not as citizens. Christianity, at the time of Tertullian, was not recognized by the state and was forced to face the persecution. The opening address of Tertullian to the magistrates and his appeal for law and justice supports the arguments that they were deprived of legal rights. Now the question arises, why were the Christians persecuted? Why were they not given proper hearing? And the answer to this question is not easily discoverable. The reason is, no any documents suggest the crime they were accused of for persecution. Even Pliny's letter to Trajan does not give proper evidence and nature of crime and trial methods to follow. Pliny writes, "I do not know, therefore, what are the usual penalties passed upon them, or the limits of those penalties" (Pliny the Younger, Letters 10.96). He is further wondering whether he should punish them for the name itself or only the names associated with a crime should be punished. So, the confusion lies whether the punishment was for the title they were given or for the criminal acts like incest and cannibalism as spreading through rumors. But the answer given by Trajan specifies the case leaving many questions like nature and limits of punishment, unanswered. His response contains,

no search should be done for these people; if they are brought before you and found guilty, they must be punished; with the reservation, that if anyone denies that he is a

Christian and makes it clear that he is not, by offering prayers to our deities, then he is to be pardoned because of his recantation (Pliny the younger, *Letters* 10.97).

Though Trajan forbade to hunt Christians, it did not stop. And the way they were treated during their trial did not follow the necessary judgment procedures. This practice set the legal boundaries during the hearing of Christians, that is, if anyone accepted that he was a Christian, he would be punished, but if he recants his beliefs, he would be freed no matter what a high crime he had committed. This state of mind was the result of prejudices. People showed no interest to hear them because they prefer not to hear as they already hate them. This sense of biases and prejudices encouraged them to characterize Christians as “other” class of people. This ‘self’ and ‘other’ concept has placed the Christians to the category of subjects, not the citizen. Tertullian himself further clarifies this distinction. He writes, Christians were punished more than a criminal. A non-Christian criminal was treated superior to a Christian member of society. It comes from the facts that a non-Christian criminal was allowed to hire an advocate, but Christians were deprived of the same fundamental rights.

And what’s more, was that they were forbidden en to ask a question for what reason they were being punished or why they were deprived of giving clearance to the accusations against them. The name “Christian” itself was sufficient to categorize them as other class of people. If a wise man converted to Christianity, it would be a shock and the message used to circulate throughout the city in surprise. Tertullian presents an example of the reaction. He writes, “I am surprised that that wise man, Lucius Titius has suddenly become a Christian” (Tertullian, *Apology* 3.1). This type of response from the people has created a boundary between Christians and non-Christians and categorized Christians as people with another legal status. That is what Joseph H. Lynch writes, “Most Christians were subjected, not citizens” (Lynch, 2010, p. 79).

One of the many problems encountered by Christianity in the second century was a crisis of identity. Tertullian, in chapter thirty-eight, raises this concern, “should not this school have been classed among tolerated associations, when it commits no such actions as are commonly feared from unlawful associations? (Tertullian, *Apology* 38.1). The categorization of Christianity as ‘unlawful association’ has aroused question about the legal status of this school, the legitimacy of Christian god and their concept of monotheism. I will discuss them here thoroughly.

Tertullian presents the Pagan’s view on Christianity as unlawful and their existence as illegal. He has not mentioned the reasons why the Roman legal system did not recognize them. I want to explore some ideas regarding this issue. To begin with, I want, to refer the letter of Pliny to Trajan and Trajan’s response to the message. Pliny was confused whether they should be punished for being a Christian or for the crime they committed.

And further, the punishment was intended for the so-called crimes or designed to compel and draw them back to the traditional cult. Similarly, Trajan’s fascinating response shows, anyone who denies that he is a Christian and shows it by offering prayers to the gods must be pardoned. Now the question comes why the word “Christian” only liable for punishment. Behind the criminalization of Christian community, Pagan’s understanding of Christianity played a significant role. For Pagans, being a Christian meant, worshipping another god. That was understood as an insult to the emperor-god, hostility to the empire which consequently brought calamities to the realm. Hence the reason behind the persecution was the Pagans understanding of Christian as a source of evils.

The practice of a strange cult has brought Christianity to their identity crisis. As mentioned above the Roman Empire was a home for the people of various sects and religions. It unquestionably welcomed all religious practices that came with the immigrated foreigners. Migrants were regarded as honoring gods and worshipping in their ways. Jews too could

worship their gods for they thought that they were the gods of their people who were also recognized by their law. Now the question arises what the problem with the Christian God was?

Bernard Green answers the issue in the following quotes:

The problem with Christian monotheism was that it was not and, in the view of the authorities, had never been the religion of any city or state. It was a religion without national identity or law. As Christian did not adhere to the cult of any city, they had renounced the possibility of being a true citizen (Green, 2010, p. 124).

The practice of monotheism has subverted the Roman concept of the so-called “civilized society.” It has shaken the ground of Roman society and its religious history promoting the idea of disloyalty to the empire and the Emperor. Hence the problems with this school were that it had no clear evidence of the ground to affiliate with and its abnormal defiance to the Emperor and the imperial law.

The next aspect to discuss here is about the transitional situation of the Christian converts and its role in defining their identities. As Christian converts were appealed to abstain from idolatry, it might have been trying for some converts to bear the pressure of their friends and family to continue their previous religious activities which were the part of their social life. The problem they encountered was the problem of balancing their social life and religious life. They had to continue a new spiritual life in the century-old and traditionally structured society. In this context, they did not remain the members of the traditional Pagan community, since they were found different in their everyday life than the Pagans. And their religious practices and members of the society were not recognized by the imperial authorities. So, they were ‘in between’ the process of creating a new identity and leaving all traditional values. Hurtado also writes, “Christian converts may have found it difficult to know how to negotiate their new commitment and their continuing social life” (Hurtado, 2016, p. 87).

2.2.5. Oedipal relation/ Thebes vs. Rome

Tertullian in chapter nine refers to the charge of incest made against Christians. He refuses the cost and turns the same charge against the disciples of Jupiter. He claims that the practice of abuse lies among the Persian who consort with their mother. Further, it was in practice among the Macedonians too, because they laughed at the grief and tragedy of Oedipus with the remark “he lay with Jocasta.” Here in this section, I have referred every Pagan and their generations as Oedipus and his children. The way Oedipus slept with his mother and begot four children, there was a high chance of such co-incidence among the Romans also. Unlike Laius and Jocasta, who left their infant in the Jungle due to the fear of killing his father, Romans offered their children to the stranger to be adopted by better parents. Once they were given away, they forgot their family, friends, and relatives and might be the victim of human lust wherever they met. So, incest is the subject matter that should be searched among Pagans, not in Christianity.

Next thing to discuss here is the ignorance of ruling authority and its consequence upon their subjects. Roman authorities were ignorant of the truth about Christianity and began to punish its followers. I have here tried to establish a conceptual connection between Romans and Oedipus regarding their ignorance and its result on the relationship between the state and its citizens. Roman authorities hunted Christians for the rumors and tried to establish the truth that they believed. But they never tried to penetrate Christianity and see its entrails. Oedipus too tried to prove something that he did not think. And the consequence brought by this ignorance was terrible on both sides. Thebes suffered from plague and Rome suffered from the persecution, plagued by the idea of traditional paganism. And when both parties reached the level of confession from their ignorance, they lose their legal status. Though it took long, when the Emperor approved facts about Christianity in the fourth century, truths established by the earlier Emperor were neutralized.

2.2.6. No Grounds for them!

I have taken the title of this section from the quotes of Rebillard's book *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity*. Rebillard has quoted some lines from Tertullian's book *Ad Scapulam*. He has used them to show the distinct identities of being a Christian in Carthage. But I am using them here to look at the church-state relationship during the time of Tertullian. But I would like to start with *Apology*, and the extent of persecution Christian had to undergo not only when they were alive but also after their death.

In the course of making a defense against the attack to Christian, Tertullian presents the evidence of how cruel and barbaric they had been. In chapter thirty-seven he writes, "they spare not even the Christian dead; no! from the repose of the grave, from what I may call death's asylum, changed as the bodies may be, or mere fragments- they will have them out, rip and rend them" (Tertullian, *Apology* 37.2). This type of primitive responses of Pagans has proved that the Pagans, not Christians, were criminal. Throughout persecution Christians remained the passive receptor of assault with stones and fire by a mob. But they never tried to hit them back since they were "forbidden to retaliate."

More strong anti-Christian agitation in Carthage arose in 202 when P. Aelius Hilarianus was made acting governor in place of Minucius Opimianus. He viewed Christian as a severe problem and inflicted harsh punishment on them. It was Hilarianus who declared to send Perpetua and her companions to the beasts during the celebration of the birthday of Geta. Similar kind of anti-Christian demonstration is recorded by Tertullian in the *Ad Scapulam* also. He writes, "Under the governor Hilarianus, they shouted about our tombs: 'No grounds for them!' It was they who lost their grounds: indeed, they did not harvest their grain" (Tertullian, *Scapula* 3.1). Though this event took place after the publication of *Apology*, I have brought them here to correspond the ideas given in the *Apology*.

2.2.7. Distortion of the Truth and Creation of A False philosophy

After reviewing the responses of non-Christians to Roman Christianity, I asked myself a question, i.e., what made them so cruel, barbaric and torturous? And after a thorough understanding of the texts and through critical analysis of the context of Roman Christianity, I have come up with a possible answer to this question. My opinion is, the main factor to manipulate the non-Christian mind was the philosophy they were guiding with. Pagans distorted the truth and misrepresented God. Pagan's such practice developed a sense of hatred towards the people of God. After that, they developed a theology that favored Pagan's religion and demoralized Christianity. I have called this philosophy a false philosophy. The reason, according to Tertullian, is the philosophers who established the truth in association with the state and its authorities, brought ideas from the scriptures; Old as well as New Testament. But at the time of the presentation of the truth, they corrupted it and falsified the content. Tertullian writes:

The man who corrupts truth, who makes a false show of it, on this very score wins goodwill among the enemies of truth. Truth? The philosophers in their ill-will, mock it and corrupt it; they pretend to truth; their acting to it means its corruption; it is the glory that is their real aim (Tertullian, *Apology* 46.6-7).

The philosopher aimed to gain popularity among the people. Romans, like the people of the cave in Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, enjoyed the false myth and corrupted truth. They glorified the false philosophies and their founders. And philosophers also constructed a false reality and kept on cultivating in the mind of the people. Hence Philosophy failed to find the ground of the truth. One of such Pagan writers to challenge the Christian faith was Celsus. Though I have referred him in the first chapter very briefly, I would like to discuss him here in association with Galen regarding their effort to corrupt the truth about Christianity and bringing a charge against God. For Celsus, Christianity was an unlawful association that made gathering for what

he called “love feast.” Similarly, he charged Jesus as a magician. In Origen’s *Against Celsus* as quoted by Novak (P.77) he writes, “Celsus next proceeds to bring a charge against the Savior Himself, alleging that it was by means of sorcery that He (Jesus) was able to accomplish the miracles which he performed” (Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.6). Celsus also tried to mislead people regarding the debate of supremacy of God the Father and God the Son. In *Against Celsus* 8.15 Origen presents how Celsus attempted to deceive people and mock at the Savior regarding the nature of Christ. Celsus asks, “If the Son is mightier than God, and the Son of man is Lord over Him, who else than the Son can be Lord over that God who is the ruler over all things?. Galen, on the other hand, forwarded the concept of God as the creator of the material world and claimed that the natural law of creation bounded the divine himself. Hence both Galen and Celsus challenged the omnipotent nature of God as taught by the Christian teaching. But unlike Pagan philosophers, Christians presented the truth as it was, uncorrupted and unfeigned. They for Tertullian “are bound to seek the truth, and they offer it uncorrupted as those needs must who think of their salvation” (Tertullian, *Apology* 46.7). So, Christianity was something more than Philosophy and Christians did not match for the comparison with Philosophers. According to Tertullian:

what have philosopher and Christian in stock,- the disciple of Greece and the disciple of heaven, the business of the one with reputation, of the other with salvation, the man of words and the man of deeds,-the builder and the destroyer,-the friend and the foe of error,-the man who corrupts the truth , and the man who restores it and proclaimed it- the thief of truth and its guardian? (Tertullian, *Apology* 46.18).

Tertullian further presents the moral failure of the pagan philosophers in contrast to the great achievement of Christianity. He has referred to the events like Democritus self-blinding, so that he could not look on women without lust, killing of Speusippus for the act of adultery, Hippas, executed for plotting against his city, etc. Unlike those philosophers, Christians never

saw women with their lustful eyes. And yet they did not boast for the modesty of their behavior. Similarly, treason- a thing no Christian had ever thought of. But the philosophers who taught the stuff like “innocence, justice, patience, sobriety and chastity” have been found indulging in feigning truth and adultery. Hence Tertullian has shown the Pagan philosophers corrupted both morally and ethically and tried to defame God and the people of God. And what’s more, is that they challenged the Christian theological belief of resurrection.

In the concluding section of *Apology*, Tertullian has presented the concept of final judgment, a highly philosophical and theological issue. With this, he has shown how Pagans created a parallel story to negate the Christian idea of resurrection. He begins with the acceptance of Jews and pagans that the concept of transmigration of a soul takes place. For example, “a mule becomes a man, and a woman a snake” (Apol.48.1). But he says they were not ready to accept the idea of rebirth. This means they rejected the Christian concept “the return of souls into bodies.” The question they posed was, “how can the material of the body, once distributed, be visibly produced?” and how often it will be dying and rising again? (Tertullian, *Apology* 48.5). With such questions, they challenged the concept of the final judgment. But Tertullian defends the Christian doctrine of the resurrection. For him, once the soul prepares to return, it returns where it had been before. And it cannot become what it was not previously. The purpose of restoration of the soul is to get ready for final judgment.

For this reason, it should be the same as it was in the past and shall be the same as we are now- “the worshippers of God.” But profane, disloyal to God shall be punished with fire. So, he ironically calls the magistrates to torture them, rack them, condemn them and crush them so that people of God could be illuminated more. Hence, Tertullian makes them aware that distortion of truth and the creation of a false myth may bring the risk of their destruction. The more they act according to their false philosophy the more they fall apart, and Christians are more acquitted by God.

2.3. Concluding Remarks

Tertullian's *Apology* is a masterpiece for the defense of Christianity from the charges made by Jews and Pagans in the Roman Empire. In the course of defending Christianity, he has recorded some of the crucial issues which are vital factors to show the church-state relationship. Pagans as a ruling society treated Christians unfriendly and gave the tag of criminal. Tertullian has beautifully presented how the accusations made against them were false. He has addressed each issue raised by the non-Christians and clarifies them one by one. In doing so, he has overtly defended Christian doctrine and its practitioners and covertly he has presented the state role for the persecution of Christians and their organization. In other words, it is a good source book for the study of the relationship between the church and the Roman empire. He has presented the state as a persecutor of Christians, supporter of the traditional cult and the promoter of the concept of "Emperor-god" considering Christians as enemies of the empire, cause of the plague and disaster and the violator of the command of the emperor-god. Tertullian has presented an example of how Christians were made responsible for every failure of the state and every misfortune of the people. He writes, "If the Tiber reaches the walls," if the Nile does not rise to the fields if the sky doesn't move or the earth does if there is famine if there is the plague, the cry is at once: "The Christians to the Lion!" (Tertullian, *Apology* 40.2). Hence the Roman Empire and the imperial authorities tried to legalize the state crime defining the Christian practices as illegal, immoral and treacherous.

Chapter III: Church and Empire in Lactantius' *Death of the Persecutors* and Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*

3.1.1. Lactantius and the Death of the Persecutors

Early Christian apologist and one of the most popular Latin Church fathers of the early fourth century, Lactantius is known for his systematic and philosophical refutation of anti-Christian move elements of the early fourth century. His writings include the account of Christian attitude towards life. His work "The Death of the Persecutors" presents the view that, unlike the god of stoics and Pagans, Christian god come to intervene the world affairs to rescue human beings from injustice. Moreover, "he maintained that Roman justice could be better perfected by rooting it in the Christian doctrine of divine fatherhood uniting the human race in universal fraternity through the mediation of Christ than by basing it on the Latin concept of *aequitas* ("equity"). <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Lactantius>). As mentioned in 'the limitations of study' Lactantius had lived through the time when the enemies of the church were in power and exerted their control over it, his writings were the product of his hatred towards the persecutors and their associates. They could not be impartial since they contained "a passionate outcry, the chant of Christian victory." And the "Death of the Persecutors" is one of many other such kinds of literature addressed to the Christians and their sympathizers.

The Death of the Persecutors is pamphlet literature with the idea of Divine Vengeance exercising itself. This text is generally studied dividing into two parts. The first six chapters deal with the account of Christian persecution from the time of Nero to Aurelian. Rest of the chapters deal with the period of the tetrarchy, i.e., from the period of Diocletian to the beginning of Constantine and Licinius. The first section opens with the address to Donatus who was tortured and imprisoned for six years under Diocletian. Lactantius refers to the reward of peace and tranquillity offered by the Lord, punishing their all adversaries, for the prayers they made. He believes that, though the punishment came late, it came deservedly, to give the message

that there was only one god. Whether it was Nero, Domitian or Valerian, all of them had to undergo the same destiny that each of them had been seized from the power, punished to death and thrown unnoticed as food for the beasts and bird believing that they were not worthy of getting the proper burial. The second part deals with the period of tetrarchy and gradual fall of the persecutor, emperors, and their associates. I will discuss this in the third section of this chapter.

3.1.2. Eusebius and Life of Constantine

Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, is one of the most influential writers of the early church history. Though he was a bishop in Palestine, he did not know Constantine personally until he attended the council of Nicaea in 325, and even after that he had very few personal dealings with the emperor (Cameron & Hall, 1999, p. 3). Eusebius *Life of Constantine* is the primary sourcebook for the religious policy of Constantine. It is divided into four books by a later editor with subtitles. It is not clear when Eusebius started this work, but still H.A. Drake, as mentioned by Cameron and Hall, argues that the *Life of Constantine* was first conceived in 335 and that Eusebius was collecting material for it with the emperor's encouragement when he was in Constantinople in 336 (Cameron & Hall, 1999, p. 9). Though none of the scholars have prescribed the exact starting time of this work, scholars agree on the fact that he left it unfinished and unrevised when he died himself in 339. The nature of this work as acknowledged by most of the scholars is apologetic. But Cameron and Hall say that it may not have had a single object. Whatever his aim could be, one of his apparent objects could be an appeal to maintain and continue the religious policies of Constantine. Eusebius in his book I section eleven writes, "My purpose in the present work is to put into words and write down what relates to the life which is dear to God (Cameron & Hall, 1999, p. 72). He has omitted the historical significance of the emperor. He has ignored his involvement in the war, rooting out of enemies, personal benefits and most of his other acts as Emperor. Here Eusebius is interested

in putting only those things that he finds significant, i.e., Constantine's contribution to the legalization of Christianity. My purpose here is to use this book to see the religious policies set by Constantine and the changes brought by him after he became the emperor of the

3.1.3. The Situation of the Church by the Time of Lactantius

According to Stark (p. 6-7), Christianity had a significant growth rate during the first several centuries. He projects the growth rate of 40 percent per decade or 3.42 percent per year. This data shows there were around 10 percent Christians out of the total population by the end of the third century. But Bart D. Ehrman (P. 294) reconsiders the stark's projection and says there were only 2.5 to 3.5 million Christians who come to be only around five percent population of the total population of the empire. Whatever might be the exact population, Christianity had a recognizable position in the realm and had developed a basic organizational structure with distinct identity than the Pagans and Jews. Most of the Christian community owned church buildings and cemeteries. According to Lynch,

In many small towns, churches that been adapted from private houses continued to be used. But during the Great Peace (about 260- 303) that preceded Diocletian's persecution, some prosperous urban congregations outgrew their house churches and began to build larger structures that were publicly identifiable as churches (Lynch, 2010, s. 111).

Liturgical practices such as Baptism, Eucharist and Ordination were familiar to the followers. In addition to these, using the sign of cross in their everyday activities, keeping fasting before Easter and ordination of clergy, having food like "agape" among the poor members of the church and "refrigeria" a meal eaten in cemeteries and catacombs with dead members of their family, making tattoos of a cross on their forehead (Lynch, 120), were the typical costumes followed by the Christians. The Gathering of Christians in the mornings was widened and

became more popular among them. Valeriy A. Alikin writes, “Traditionally, the gathering on Sunday evening had been regarded as the main weekly event in the Christian community. But by the middle of the third century, the Eucharist on Sunday evening proves to lose much of its significance in favor of the Eucharist on Sunday morning” (Alikin, 2010, p. 98).

In the second and third century, Christian diversity grew much larger, and the boundaries that separated them was more sharpened. One group of Christians were excluded from other groups congregations. For example, Gnostics, who considered themselves the real Christians, were often excluded from proto-orthodox, ‘right believing’ Christians according to themselves. Lynch writes, “the groups competed with one another for converts from Paganism, Judaism and other kinds of Christianity. There was no violence among them, but heated arguments, mutual verbal abuse and the expulsion of dissenters were common” (Lynch, 2010, p. 62). In this condition of fragmentation and disintegration, a group of Christians who called themselves the “right- believers” i.e. “Orthodox” came to be organized in a loose form of structures, in which Christians from other groups also felt comfortable to join voluntarily and contributed to forming a loose organizational structure, which became the seed of all forms of modern Christianity. This group of Christianity is known as proto-orthodox Christianity. Even though proto-orthodox Christianity too separated themselves into different groups, they constituted the main line Christianity by the early fourth century.

As Rome was the city of diverse groups of people and the center of various groups of Christianity, churches grew accordingly. It became socially rich and culturally diverse. When churches grew numbers, it attracted a greater variety of people and was more flexible to welcome further. It gradually penetrated the established social and political structures of society. Earlier in the second and third century, the Christian community was predominantly made up of the poor and slaves. But, by the early fourth century wealthy and educated people who owned the slaves themselves, also joined the church. Similarly, the situation of women

was significantly changed within proto-orthodox Christianity. During the second and third century, subject matter like ‘women’s role’ in the church became the dividing line between the proto-orthodox Christian and many other Christians. Though it did not remain undisputed, they accepted Paul’s idea that women as “fellow workers.” There was a reference of deaconesses in the churches of the eastern Mediterranean, whose role was to instruct women before and after baptism and help women to be baptized. This shows that church members found women as their counterparts. In addition to this, the prestigious religious role such as martyrdom was highly appreciated and admired of women. All these changing scenarios posed a challenge to the century-old Roman religion, social structures, and politics, which were overlapped to each other in the Roman empire. And as Roman emperor and imperial authorities believed that Christianity was a threat to their chair, they began to persecute the Christians. Though there was irregular and sporadic persecution of Christians earlier, it was Diocletian who announced the official persecution against Christians. I will discuss this in section hereafter.

3.1.4. Announcement of the Official Persecution

The first official announcement of persecution against Christian was made at the time of the emperor Diocletian. He was a very conservative man with the belief that all non-Roman religions were disloyal who disrupted social unity and displeased the god. His harshness to all non-Roman religions is reflected by the event when he ordered death by burning for Manicheans. Like many of his preceding emperors, he thought that Christians were the cause of evil in the empire. In spite of his disdain, “Diocletian himself was reluctant to move against the Christian faith, but he ultimately accepted the arguments of the Caesar Galerius that the restoration and preservation of the traditional Roman order required the suppression of Christians” (Novak, 2001, p. 141). For pagans, “Christian refusal to worship the gods-“atheism,” to the right thinking pagans -threatened the hard-earned peace bestowed by those gods” (Gaddies, 2005, p. 31). Emperors believed that it was their primary duty to safeguard the

peace, security, and prosperity provided by the gods in return to the proper worship and sacrifices. It was believed that if they did not receive what was due to them, it was possible that God might cause a natural disaster like flood, earthquake, famine, and plague in addition to civil war and invasion of their enemies. Thus in 303 C.E., there began the “Great Persecution” of the Christians.

Similarly, “unity” was a central concept to the Romans. To preserve the long-longed peace and political order in the empire, unity was a precondition. The problem with Christianity came to the attention of the empire, in the military service. Some of the soldiers accepted martyrdom than sacrifice. Such acceptance of torture gave hints to the possible fraction in the military service and safeguarding the empire. This was found more shocking by Diocletian as he discovered Christians in the imperial household itself. Lactantius has made a sound recording of Diocletian’s response after he found Christian’s presence in his palace. As Diocletian had already ruled out for eighteen years in 303 and was participating in an official ceremony with the sacrifice of cattle, Pagan priest could not read the customary sign. The reason was that the Christians who were present there caused the sign to ward off. When Diocletian was informed that they could not read the sign due to the presence of some profane men, he ordered to sacrifice not only, “ministers of the sacred rites, but all who were in the palace” (Lactantius, *The Death of the Persecutors* 10). He ordered the soldiers to participate in the sacrifice. If anybody denied or seemed reluctant to that, they would be withdrawn from the service. Diocletian had observed attempts of two fire in his palace, for which he thought responsible, were Christians. A rebellion of Christian in Syria further confirmed his belief. The intensity of his persecution increased after this event. In 303, Diocletian’s soldiers destroyed the church building at Nicomedia with the following activities like seizing and burning of Christian scriptures, prohibiting church meetings and preventing Christians from the legal rights like making a will or defending themselves in court. He withdrew from his previous policy of

avoiding killing people and started to execute people. At least two hundred and sixty-eight Christians were murdered at Nicomedia. Not only that, he ordered his predecessors to continue the task that he had started.

Behind the move of Diocletian against the Christians, a kind of raw ideology seemed to have been working there. He might have thought that Christians could easily be handled like their earlier success in dealing with usurpers and foreign invaders. They had underestimated the numbers and their dedication to the religion. This can be drawn from the edict of Diocletian. His first attempt was only to divert the attention of the people from the faith by arresting the bishops, destroying the places of worship and burning the sacred text. But as the persecution widened, the tetrarch and the local officials found it difficult to enforce the direction widely as the fact was that, “by this time the Christians were a known quantity.” They “were now found at every level of society, including the imperial bureaucracy and the households of the tetrarch themselves” (Novak, 2001, p. 142). Hence an objective analysis suggests that there was a little chance of success of persecution as Christianity was well-established among the population and the numbers of the Christian was reached to 8 to 10 percent by the start of the fourth century.

3.1.5. Tetrarchy and the Churches

In this section, my purpose is to show the dynamics of church-state relation. When the state was woven into an internal crisis and facing external threats, it was using its full strength to root-out the Christians; they found the same time suitable to multiply their numbers. First, I would like to start with the background of the establishment of the tetrarchy.

The Severian Dynasty established by Septimus Severus was relatively successful in maintaining peace and defending its frontiers in the Empire. But with the end of the Severian dynasty in 235, there began “Years of the Barrack Emperors” a period in which there was “the

breakdown of the emperor's control over legions and the absence of any system of orderly succession to the emperor's position led to more or less constant internal rebellion and near collapse of the Roman Empire" (Novak, 2001, p. 101). In this period Rome underwent a severe internal turmoil with increasing external threats. Persian and barbarian armies penetrated deep into the Roman territories and captured the emperor, Valerian. Similarly, Emperor Aurelian had to abandon the province of Dacia. In this context, the Roman Empire was heading towards the complete collapse. But the lost territories and peace were recovered during the reign of Diocletian as Aurelian and Probus had already started to stabilize the frontier issues.

Diocletian's measure to maintain peace and defend the empire's territories was to provide closer supervision of its areas and the people. For this purpose, he appointed one of his friends Maximian as co-emperor and two other junior emperors called Caesar and divided the empire into four administrative bodies with the aim of each governed by one of the rulers. Diocletian's this measure provided close supervision to the empire, and by 298 C.E. the tetrarchy was mostly successful in restoring internal order and the external affairs. But the tetrarchy added extra economic burden to the government with the additional "expenditure for new fortifications, additional troops, and a much larger administrative bureaucracy" (Novak, 2001, p. 102). Novak (2001, p. 139) further writes there were only about 300 to 350 full-time individuals to administer the empire at the start of the third century. But, by the end of the third century, the number had grown to 30000 to 35000 people. This increase in administrative units was an enormous burden to the people of the empire as they added extra expenses. To settle this problem, Diocletian introduced a financial reform program. That is, he laid extra tax to the goods, which resulted in the things high-priced, tried to control price and inflation establishing wages system. Due to the expensiveness, products appeared unaffordable. This burden affected the layman and the people of the low status more since rich and people of the higher social state used their social and political influence to escape taxes. This situation corresponded

the concept of Ramsey MacMullen that “fewer have more.” Taxes fell unproportionally, as a result, marginal agriculturalist was hard hit by this resulting in the population of the rural part decreased.

Similarly, the next group of people being affected by the tax policy of Diocletian was local governing officials. Such officials were entrusted to collect tax, and if they fail to raise the assigned percent, they were personally liable for the deficits. By the end of the third and early fourth century, such decurions were unable to meet the demand of the empire; as a result, they attempted to flee from their responsibility. But they were bounded by the provision of ‘hereditary position.’ This increasing demand and continuous demoralization of the decurions weakened the effectiveness of the local governments, which were the backbone of the Roman administrative system. Though Diocletian introduced his economic policy intending to keep the government’s treasury always full, it could not get popularity. After it was found difficult to execute and after the death of many, he had to dissolve the law.

When the Roman Empire was suffering from an internal financial crisis and external threats from its enemies, the Christian church grew significantly stronger in crucial ways. First, During the troubled times of the third century, especially at the time of Diocletian, the number of Christianity grew at an extraordinary rate. Ramsey MacMullen writes the number of Christians was around five million in 312 C.E. while the total population of the entire empire was around five times of their names (MacMullen,1984, p. 85). Similarly, Rodney Stark estimates 6.3 million Christians by 300C.E (Stark, 1996, p. 7). But Ehrman (P.294) claims there were around 3.5 to 4 million Christians in 312 C.E. Whatever may be the actual number of Christianity; this shows the significant presence of Christians by the start of the fourth century. Second, there was a development of stable organizational structures inside the church. The three-level ministry, i.e., hierarchical order among Bishop, Priests, and Deacon, was strengthened and bishop centralized absolute power with them in the individual churches. Similarly, parallel to

the administrative division of the empire, churches adopted a hierarchical structure. This organizational structure was supported by its economic strength, accumulated as a result of the individual contribution of its members. With all these developments and accomplishments Christian churches seem to have been able to minister the social and economic need of the people, with both wealth and will. This situation is better expressed by the phrase of Novak “a state within a state.”

3.1.6. Persecution Under Co-Emperor and Junior Co-Emperor

From the year 284 to 305 Roman Empire was under the reign of the emperor Diocletian. The first nineteen years of his reign were known as the second half of the “Great Peace.” There were good enough signals of happy time among Christians. Gathering in the places of prayer or the growth of congregation and erection of church buildings were some of the factors to indicate the Great peace. But this peace could not last long. In 303 he announced official persecution against Christians and his co-emperors assisted him in carrying out his mission successfully. And for the next twenty years, the relationship between church and the empire reached to the worst condition ever in history and marked as the period of “the Great Persecution.” In this section, I will discuss the persecution made by other emperors and the later development of Christianity. First, I would like to start with the edicts issued by Diocletian. Bernard Green (2010, p.212) mentions four successive edicts of Diocletian according to their directions. The first proclamation issued on 23rd February 303, prohibited them from meeting for worship, Christian members of the imperial service were reduced to slavery and ordered to destroy the holy scriptures. The second proclamation ordered to arrest the clergy and the third released the prisoners who consented to offer sacrifice. The fourth edict was more extensive in its scope for it demanded all the inhabitants of the empire to offer sacrifice. I have referred this issue here because the co-emperors kept on persecuting Christians basing themselves on the fourth edict. Though the order demanded equal treatment to the

Christians throughout the empire, it varied in its intensity at the time when Augustus and the Caesars implemented it. For example, the eastern province of the empire suffered the much from the program of persecution, then the rest. The eastern part was governed by first Diocletian and Galerius and later under Galerius and Maximin Daia. This part of the empire faced full persecution due to the direct influence of the rulers. But in the west, Constantius did not share the same desire for oppression. Constantius was the Caesar of the west where he destroyed the church buildings but left the people untouched. On the other hand, Maximian ruled Italy and North Africa. He “willingly carried out the instructions throughout all of Italy for he was not a very clement man” (Lactantius, *The Death of the persecutors*, 15). But Bernard Green (p. 212) writes Maximin had encountered a problem to execute the imperial instructions in North Africa. The problem was that he found people reluctant to surrender themselves with their scriptures and church vessels. Their willingness to met execution for their scriptures raised a question about what was and was not acceptable behavior for Christians. It is because, “The African view was not necessarily shared by others who did not regard the demand to hand over the sacred books and vessels as something to be deified to the point of death” (Green, 2010, p. 212). This further posed question to those who handed over those practices and about the seriousness of their sin. So, with comparison to the east, Roman Africa passed through a unique situation raised by the question above and the division brought by it.

Christianity in Roman Africa was then divided into two groups: a hard-line majority of African Christian known as, Donatist, and the true, legitimate, and universal religion called Catholic. These two groups kept on confronting for generations. The fundamental difference between these two groups was that “The Donatist sought to separate themselves, a pure and zealous minority, from a corrupt world and especially from the corruption of imperial power. The Catholics, true to their name, wished to unify the world and transform it in their image-and were willing to compromise with power”. (Gaddies, 2005, p. 105). This condition of the

unwillingness of tetrarch and Decurions to persecute Christians, despite the imperial edict, and Catholics willingness to compromise with the power is the clear evidence that Christians and Christianity had become an accepted part of the empire.

3.1.7. Struggle for Power: A Beginning for Change

Diocletian's measure to implement tetrarchy for the effective administration brought problems not only to the general people. It had been problematic for the rulers and tetrarch also. One of the most significant weaknesses of Rome's imperial system was the lack of a proper standardized system for the succession to power. This brought unnatural competition among the tetrarchs and resulted in conflicts to grab the position. Lactantius, in *The Death of the persecutors*, presents some of the abnormal exercise made by the tetrarch to reach to the power. The first reference to such conflict is mentioned in chapter eighteen of the book. This section presents Galerius's hunger for power and the abdication of Augustus Diocletian. In 305 C.E. Galerius desired to be the Augustus and forced Diocletian to yield his power. He threatened him with possible civil war if he was not ready to appoint him as an Augustus. Galerius no longer wanted to be the second man of the empire. So, by hook or crook, he forced him to renounce from his position and accomplished what he wished. Similarly, in 306 C.E. when the western Augustus Constantius died, Severus was declared as the Augustus by the emperor. But the army of the west acclaimed Constantine as the new Augustus, ignoring Severus. As Galerius was about to reverse the case, he was threatened with the civil war and forced to accept the fact. Shortly after that, Maximian's son Maxentius declared himself a Caesar. Galerius, disturbed with the development of the situation, called Severus and commanded to attack Maxentius. In the meantime, Maximian resumed his command, as a result, soldiers of Severus deserted him and turned themselves against him. This episode saved Maxentius's throne and ensured his continuation as an Augustus.

The next level of the conflict began in 307 C.E. when Galerius decided to move against Maximian and Maxentius. Maximian, marrying his daughter to Constantine, allied with him and declared him a co-Augusti. Seeing this alliance Galerius, uncertain of his troops, summoned Diocletian to resume his throne. Unwilling to the throne, Diocletian wanted only to mediate the dispute. In between these events, Maximian agreed to go to retirement, and Licinius was made a Caesar. By that time Constantine and Maximinus Daia demanded that they are made Augustus. The political system of the empire was so disturbed that by 310 C.E. five different tetrarchs were claiming the title of the Augustus. The struggle for power continued for the next two year. As Galerius died in 311 C.E., Licinius succeeded to the position of Augustus. Constantine now allied with the Licinius and planned to go against Maxentius. But before going to the battle, Constantine was warned to mark “the celestial sign of God on his shields and thus to engage in battle” (Lactantius, *The Death of the Persecutors*, 44). Constantine ordered his soldiers to mark their shields with the Christian monogram, to call for the support of Christian god for their victory. The battle was raged with the most exceptional violence. Constantine, with the grace of God, won the battle and was declared as a senior Augustus. Licinius and Constantine in 313 C.E. met in Milan and issued a proclamation and announced for the restoration of the Church. In the same year “Maximian Daia offered belated toleration to the Christians in his territories and then launched an assault on Licinius” (Green, 2010, p. 223). But he was defeated by the troops of Licinius in 313, and he became the ruler of the whole Roma world from the Balkans to the Middle East and Egypt. Hereafter, Constantine and Licinius became the sole co-Augustus of the Roman empire, and Christianity became a legal religion.

Emperor’s struggle for power and their ruthless act of persecution proved to be a turning point in the history of Christianity. Persecution, though found gruesome, covertly encouraged people to go for conversion. From the perspective of the Roman legal system, it was believed that, if

a wrongdoer is punished publicly, that will discourage other people from committing the same mistake. Roman authorities might have thought the same, i.e., persecution of the significant few Christians would frighten the rest. But, unlike the ordinary murderer and thieves, who did not have a supporter to venerate their death, this generalization did not work in the case of Christians. Contemporary Christian apologist and the followers of the Christian tradition believed that persecution instead of to weaken the church, only made the church stronger. I have seen three significant factors to support this argument. First, the example of the martyrs strengthened the faith of the fellow believers. This helped them to be more determined in their faith and practices. Next, brave Christian's deliberate choice of death, to the reconsideration of the case through sacrifice, inspired other non-Christians to go for conversion. This helped to add the number of new converts. The third point was the distinct and unique identity of the church. The time when emperor and tetrarchs involved in a power struggle and severe persecution, the church developed the image of a welfare organization. Members of the church established the practice of donation. The donated amount or things were used to create the fund of the church or provided the poor, war victims and needy people. Those activities of the church got the favor of the people who were directly or indirectly affected by the development of the events. All these circumstances came to be the gateway for the conversion to Christianity.

3.2. Constantine and Christianity

After Constantine and Licinius got victories over Maxentius and Maximian Daia, in 313, they met in Milan when Licinius married Constantine's sister. They worked out a policy, popularly known as the "Edict of Milan" which granted toleration to all religions including Christianity. The proclamation as quoted by Lynch reads,

When I Constantine Augustus and I Licinius Augustus had come under happy auspices to Milan.... We resolved to make such decrees as should secure respect and reverence for the Deity; namely to grant both to the Christians and to all the free choice of following

whatever form of worship they pleased, to the intent that all the divine and heavenly powers.... Might be favorable to us and all those living under our authority.... We have granted to these same Christian free and unrestricted authority to observe their own form of worship” (Lynch, 2010, p. 128)

Though they proclaimed to grant toleration to Christianity, neither Constantine nor Licinius was Christian in 313. For Constantine was the son of a general and governor called Constantius and Constantine reminded at the imperial court in Nicomedia. As Constantius was promoted to the Augustus of the West, Constantine had thought to be elevated to the position of his father. But Diocletian dismissed him. As a result, he had to escape from there to join his father in Britain. Soon after his father’s death, he has proclaimed Augustus by the army of his father. After that, he began to enact his imperial authority and succeeded to be the emperor of the Empire.

After the proclamation, Constantine ruled in the west and Licinius in the east. Over the next few years, the proximity of their religious policies split into the opposite direction. There was a short but sharp war between them in 316. But Constantine proved to be stronger, securing large part of Licinius’s European territories in the peace agreed in 317. Constantine grew more favorable to Christians whereas Licinius drew himself back from the policy of toleration and tilted towards the worship of traditional gods. Constantine published some coins with the image of the cross, appointed Christian tutor for his children and began to criticize Pagans for creating favor to the Christians. Licinius, on the other hand, withdrew from the Edict of Milan and began to persecute Christians in the east believing them as the allies of Constantine. He further began to exclude Christians from public service, forbade synods of bishops, closed churches and allowed persecution. “he issued a law decreeing that the bishop should never communicate actively with each other at all, that none of them be permitted to visit his neighbor’s church, and that no synods, councils, or discussion of common interest held” (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 51.1).

Constantine, observing the development of the events, presented himself as a liberator of the people, as he had done in Italy. They marched against each other with their followers aiming to defeat the opponent. Their extensive campaign ended in 324 when Constantine defeated Licinius in a battle and drove him back to the city of Byzantium and gained control of the entire empire. Constantine's victory over Licinius once again proved the strength of mighty God and justified the belief and devotions of its followers.

To look at the affiliation of Constantine to Christianity, it does not seem accidental that he converted to Christianity the moment he saw the sign of the cross. Constantine seemed to have adopted the Christian God while he was in the war and was seeking a divine aid. He believed that without divine assistance, it was not possible to get victory over the opposing forces. Constantine regarded the number of soldiers and military as secondary since he believed in the fact that the divine assistance was irresistible and invincible. He had seen the destiny of his predecessors, who had belief in many gods, for whom they had offered sacrifice, aiming to get favor but still had poorly been deceived into meeting the unwelcomed end in the empire. He had seen the multiple of destruction by the numerous gods, so had been searching for a single god who could be savior and guardian of his empire. After going through the various level of arguments and rational analysis, Constantine decided to worship the god of his father. Constantius, throughout his life, honored the god who was the protector of his kingship, and Constantine too decided to choose his ancestral god. The god of Constantine's father, Constantius, was the god of light, i.e., sun, who could guide him forward. Eusebius in his book *Life of Constantine*, chapter twenty-eight writes, Constantine began to pray the same god and beg him to show who he was. Eusebius writes, "As he made these prayers and earnest supplications there appeared to the Emperor a most remarkable divine sign" (Cameron, & Hall, 1999, pp. 80-81). And the sign came to be non-other than the sign of the cross, resting over the sun with the message 'By this Conquer.' Confused Constantine in his dream saw the Christ of

God with the sign appeared in the sky and urged him to make a copy of the sign for himself to defend himself against the enemies. Potter writes, “In 312, Constantine’s god was both the sun and the Christian god” (Potter, 2013). By this time some Christian communities equated Christ with sun and depicted the imagery of sun in their catacombs. Some others considered the rising sun as a metaphor for resurrection. As Constantine looked at the community praying for the sun and found the root of his ancestral god, they came to be the same god: the sun god, the Christ. When Constantine observed the rites of Christians, he found the same practices already adopted by his father and now he. A scholar like Christopher Jones writes about the adoption of Christianity by Constantine’s father himself. He presents the fact that his daughter’s name Anastasia, derived from the Greek word *anastasis*, refers to resurrection. So Constantius had already adopted Christianity and had given a Christian name to his daughter at the time of her baptism. Despite all these things, some historians are unsure about the conversion of Constantine before his baptism in 337 and his religious policies in between his vision before the battle and his baptism. But Graham Keith writes, “there was a perfectly a good reason for his delaying baptism. He wished to avoid post-baptismal sin, a reasonable enough fear when the church insisted of officials and even sometimes of soldiers that they were not involved in shedding blood (Keith, 2004, p. 56).

With the development of the Christian rituals and his preferences, Constantine already found himself among the Christian family. Hence, conversion for Constantine was not a sudden change, instead as mentioned by Potter, was a journey over time and in his mind (Potter, 2013, p. 159). A scholar like R. Ross Holloway has preferred to use the term “accommodation” rather than the conversion of Constantine. He writes, “Constantine’s approach to the Christian God was no more conversion than Sulla’s dream in which the Anatolian goddess Ma-Bellona offered him a lightning bolt with which to strike his enemies. It was not conversion; it was

Accommodation” (Holloway, 2004, p. 3). Whatever might be the case, Constantine’s little step was a giant leap for the later development of Christianity. To sum up, after his conversion Constantine made significant changes for the promotion of Christianity. I discuss the changes brought by Constantine in the following section.

3.3. Physical Changes Brought by Constantine in the City of Rome

3.3.1. Erection of Church Buildings

Before talking about the impact of the revolution of Constantine I would like to quote a line from John R. Curran’s book. Curran writes, “One of the commonest assessments of the impact of Constantine in the center of the city is based not upon what he did do there but what he did not” (Curran, 2000, p. 71). Constantine, though never made Rome the center of his active political activities, set out primarily to efface the memory of Maxentius and claimed his achievements for himself claiming his superiority among the tetrarchs. He received the Senate with courtesy and in return was honored with the title *Maximus*, to mark himself as the greatest among other emperors. He transformed the massive Colossal Basilica Nova constructed by Maxentius into the Basilica Constantina, to mark the monument to himself. This is followed by the erection of other giant statues of Constantine with the image of holding the cross symbol. Eusebius, in chapter forty, writes, “He therefore immediately ordered a tall pole to be erected in the shape of a cross in the hand of the statue made to represent himself” (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* I,40.2).

Basically, there were two fundamental factors to display the changes brought by Constantine in the city of Rome. According, to Curran, those two factors are referred by the following two points: erection of architectural designs and the celebration of his victory. It is significant to bring these two points here because they both were intertwined and went together. Maxentius before being defeated by Constantine had restored the confiscated property of the church and

built a basilica near to his palace. Constantine took a significant step by offering the land to make a massive basilica for the bishop, popularly known as Lateran basilica, dissolving the previous one. Eusebius writes, “the Emperor next gave orders by the stipulations of pious laws and by generous grants for a place of worship worthy of God to be built with rich and imperial munificence around the Saviour’s cave” Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* III 29). But before building the church, the emperor instructed that the site should be excavated to a great depth. Curran writes, “In the first few years of his reign and probably during the years 312-13, Constantine decided to build a Christian church on the Caelian Hill. It is now generally agreed that the basilica on the Caelian Hill was the first of Constantine’s Christian buildings” (Curran, 2000, p. 94). The next churches Constantine built, as mentioned in the book 4. 47 to 51, were the churches at Bethlehem and the Ascension. He took those sites to adore for their mysterious caves. He related the first cave to his birth and the second one for his ascension from the mountain top. Those were further honored in memory of his mother for offering the liberator of humanity. Other churches Constantine built includes the church in Constantinople, Nicomedia and Antioch and Mamre. The city of Constantinople was embellished with new churches, many places of worship very large martyr-shrines and beautiful houses. Eusebius, as mentioned by Green, claimed it was wholly Christian and that there were no pagan images or temples or altars there (Green, 2010, p. 237). Some of the temples were built by Constantine himself During his stay of seven years between 317 to 324. Likewise, he honored the city of Bithynia with a beautiful church to mark his victory over his foes. The prominent feature of the church was its size and beauty. Its octagonal shape and the rising hall of worship to an enormous height excelled its beauty. Similarly, he circulated the command to build a place of prayer at Mamre.

According to Bernard Green (2010,p. 230), Constantine built a baptistry where baptism was performed by the bishops at Easter. That was the main church building with the image of Christ

facing congregation. It was well furnished with altars and sacred vessels of silver and gold. Some years later, another massive basilica was built. The site of the building was believed to be the site where the grave of St. Peter lied. The building was not used as a church but had been used by the people as a pilgrimage site. Constantine's passion for the building is further reflected by another building constructed at the Vatican hill. The building was more significant than the Lateran Basilica with about 360 feet long and 212 feet wide structure. It was erected as a monument of St. Peter. Another basilica was constructed at the catacombs where St Agnes, a virgin martyr was buried. The first was on the Via Praenestina and the second was on the Via Ardeatina. All these basilicas were constructed as a pilgrimage site and burial places. People venerated the tomb of the martyrs and desired to be buried near to them. They wanted to be occupied by the bricks and stone excavated from the site of the martyr's tombs.

Constantine's effort to construct basilicas in Rome was popularly successful as the churches over there were unified and were operated under the direct influence of Constantine's policy of tolerance. But his same effort to build a basilica in Roman Africa had been widely disputed and finally reached to the level of his failure to execute his policy. North African Christianity was split into two groups called Donatist and Catholic from before the time of great persecution. Constantine fell in the same pitfall. As per his policy, Constantine ordered to restore the property of the church in Carthage. But the problem arose at the time to define the authentic heir of the estate. Constantine along with the fifteen bishops of Rome decided to provide legitimacy to Caecilian bishop and condemned Donatist which was the majority church in North Africa. Due to this, there rose a riot and authorities took a firm line against the Donatist. Donatist and two bishops were killed in a riot in 317. Constantine found himself resuming the persecution but soon abandoned the policy and granted them toleration in 321.

3.3.2. Removal of Pagan Temples

After the establishment of churches in the appropriate locations and their promotions, Constantine took a turn to efface the memory of Pagan gods. Eusebius writes, “he stripped the entrance to their temples in every city so that their doors were removed at the Emperor’s command. In other cases, the roofs were ruined by the removal of cladding” (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 3.54.2). As he completely removed the heathen’s temples, he ordered to fill the cities with the objects of skillful artwork. Emperor’s measure to efface the memory of pagan gods began after he requested to seize the golden and bronze statues. He sent people city by city and country by country. They ordered people to bring out their gods made up of expensive metals like gold and bronze, melted them down and collected the most useful remains to store in a safe place. They offered to keep the rest of the useless items as a souvenir of their Emperor. One of the examples to display his removal mission was the demolition of the shrine at Aphaca. The memorial was founded for a daemon called Aphrodite in a mountainous part of Lebanon at Aphaca. This was a school to produce a man of vice who would involve unlawful intercourse and immoral activities. Emperor, having observed these practices, decided that such a shrine was not fit to exist in his empire. He ordered to demolish that shrine and taught goodness to those who indulge in an unlawful relation. Another similar site credited to Aphrodite was the shrine at Heliopolis where wives and daughters were allowed to work as prostitutes. Emperor issued law to prove such activities as crimes and warned them to be punished if anyone involved again. He even wrote letters personally and taught the law of chastity. In such city of pagans, Emperor set up a church and granted presbyter and Deacons. Another similar event was the demolition of the temple of Asclepius in Cilicia. The Emperor ordered to demolish the temple due to the dual role played by the people in the name of the Cilician spirit. Outwardly they said the spirit manifested himself as the healer and savior of the diseases. But by heart, they tempted people to conduct “godless error.” As the temple was pulled down to the ground

the spirit to protect others from the disaster could not save himself. It came to be revealed that, that was the practice of fraud conducted by the deceiver of the souls for years.

3.3.3. Legal Changes Brought by Constantine

In this section, my purpose is to show how Constantine as a Christian emperor favored Christianity and promoted the churches. For this purpose, I discuss here the religious policies of Constantine and its positive influence on churches. My focus is on how the ethical policies made the churches legally independent, financially secure and religiously dominant in the Roman Empire. First, I start with reformation in the law of property.

After the persecution and tyranny of Licinius had ended, Constantine made some significant changes in the existing legal system. The very first step taken by him was that he called home to those who were forced to banish by the governors due to their belief in God. Those who had been stripped of military and public service were summoned back either to resume their positions or to enjoy the freedom of public life in the empire. One of the most significant changes brought by Constantine was the change in the law of property. If a follower of God sacrificed his life for his belief in god and left his property back, he ordered that property to be handed to their nearer relatives. In the letter written to the provincials of Palestine, Constantine writes, “

Anywho while undergoing the highest and divine conflict of martyrdom with fearless and courageous resolution were deprived of their property, and any who stand firm in confession prepared eternal hope for themselves, and those who were compelled to go abroad because they did not despise the faith and yield to their persecutors, and thus were also deprived of their goods, and any who without even being sentenced to death suffered deprivation of their assets, we decree that their estates should attach to their next of kin. But if no relative of any of the aforesaid should remain to become the

rightful heir, let the church in every particular place be appointed to receive the inheritance (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 2. 35-36).

He further provisioned that if anybody unlawfully possessed the property of an individual, it was the greatness of them that they confess their misdeeds and make restitution instantly. The case of the property of the church was addressed explicitly by Constantine. His decree reads, if anyone unlawfully possessed the church property, it shall “lawfully withdrawn” to the churches. He not only made restitution to the property of the church. He further added the places of martyrdom, as a place to revere for their glorious decease. And the physical property it occupied was brought under the great church founded at the name of the martyrs.

3.4. Address to Theological Dispute

As the Empire was flourishing under the reign of the supreme God, Constantine believed that Christianity could work as a source of unity and strength in the Roman Empire. But his expectations went wrong as its enemies tried to cast evils upon the church and bishops. They tried to set bishops against each other regarding the doctrinal issue. The issue was that there was a dispute between orthodox Christian and Arian Christian concerning the relationship between Christ and God. Arian believed that God was superior to Christ, while orthodox considered God and Christ co-equals. Due to this, “the churches were everywhere divided. The whole of Libya was laboring under these things like a diseased body, and with it, the other parts, the provinces beyond, were catching the disease” (Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 2.62). The situation went so wrong that , “the bishop of one city was attacking the bishop of another, populations were rising against one another, and were all but coming to physical blows with each other, so that desperate men, out of their minds, were committing sacrilegious acts, even daring to insult the images of the Emperor” (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 3.4). Eusebius still mentions another reason for division among the churches. There was a disagreement over “the

feast of the Saviour.” Some of the bishops encouraged to follow the practice of Jews whereas others were not ready to make a mistake following something that is not mentioned in the Gospel.

To settle this issue, Constantine wrote a letter to bishops, Alexander and Arius. Through the message, Constantine tried to solve the problem. He tried to convince the people that they should not run behind the “truly insignificant” question and appealed them to be united to the single doctrine of faith. He writes, “My first concern was that the attitude towards the divinity of all the provinces should be united in one consistent view.” And to maintain unity Constantine suggest them to be guided by their reason as he had done.

And further he provides the secret reason for his success in uniting the empire, i.e., faith in supreme God. He tried to convince the Arians in his point with the possible use of his mighty force. But Arians were not willing to give up their belief just so. Startled Constantine saw a reasonable fraction among the Christians which ultimately might lead to the division of the vast empire. He decided to settle down the issue by calling for a high council of Christian bishops. The council was called at Nicaea in 325 C.E., and more than two hundred and fifty bishops attended the board. The bishops who participated in the assembly were mostly from the eastern province since the bishops of the western province took little interest in such theological and philosophical issue.

Before the conference began, Constantine had heard complaints and accusations hurled against each other and request to address the issue. As the assembly began, Constantine directing their attention to the matter started his address. In his speech, he insisted on the unity, harmony, and peace. His address reads,

It was the object of my prayers, my friends, to share in your company, and now that I have received this, I know I must express my sincere gratitude to the king of all, because

in addition to everything else he has allowed me to see this, which is better than any other good thing; I mean to receive you all gathered together and to observe one unanimous opinion shared by all. Let no jealous enemy ruin our prosperity, let not the malignant demon encompass the divine law with blasphemies by other means. For to me internal division in the Church of God is graver than any war or fierce battle (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* III. 12).

With this, Constantine began to persuade the bishops by praising some, shaming others and urging the rest to bring them all to the point of consensus. With the use of his majestic personality, Constantine resolved the Arian controversy and finalized the timing for the Festival of the Saviour. He marked this as his second victory over the enemies of the church.

Chapter IV

4.1. Mapping

This section includes the comparison of two different situations presented in the books *Apology* by Tertullian and *The Death of the Persecutors* by Lactantius and *Life of Constantine* by Eusebius. In this section, I will discuss how the books mentioned above have shown the changed relationship between the church and the Empire over two hundred years. The first book *Apology* represents the situation prevalent in the second century and rests two other books that describe the condition of the last decade of the third and early fourth century. In the study of these two periods, I will discuss basically on the following issues under the different headings. The first thing to talk about is the change in the policy of the empire about treatment to the church and church practitioners. This idea will be supported by the evidence of change in the Christians perspective to see the state and its role. This chapter will be concluded by showing the journey of Christianity from persecution to neutrality and a favored religion from the empire and imperial authorities. This section is based on my understanding of the texts with possible support with the secondary literature.

4.2. Church-State Relation: An Analysis of Influencing Factors

4.2.1. Change in the Anti-Christian Attitude

I want to start this section with the above title question. I have chosen this here to discuss because Pagans had believed Christians as criminals and Christianity a school to produce such criminals. Tertullian in his *Apology* well records the Pagan's concept. He writes, "We are said to be the most criminal of men" (Tertullian, *Apology* 7.1). The issues like criminal nature of Christians, how criminal were they? Were they really a criminal? These are some of the subject matters of discussion. And after a thorough study of Christianity, it is not difficult to find the hidden reality of Christianity and expose them out. Here, the important thing is not

on whether Christians were criminals. The significant factor here to focus on is the attitude of the empire to deal with the Christians. The empire, imperial authorities or let's say pagans of the time have given the tag of "criminal" to Christians. This act of criminalization shows the realm did not have a good impression or at least did not have a positive attitude towards Christians and had responded to them accordingly.

Pagans tried to authenticate their beliefs and attitudes by charging Christians for baby-killing and baby-eating. This accusation was further added with the charge of incest. Those charges were enough to spread the false rumors about Christians in that conservative pagan society. Because of those charges Pagans developed hatred against Christians and that came to be exposed at the time of Nero for the first time and later more widely at the time of Domitian in the form of persecution. The mobs sometimes harassed Christians and others they were attacked to their death. This trend of abuse, though irregular, continued for almost a century and was intensified by the end of the third century when the emperor Diocletian announced official persecution against Christians. By the time of the Great Persecution, the church-state relation reached to the worst condition ever in history, and the empire played the antagonistic role to eliminate Christianity from the realm. To come to this situation; persecution of Christians, I have seen two significant forces working actively. The first one is the anti-Christian attitude among Pagans. The second one is the feeling of a possible threat to the chair of the emperor.

For the sporadic and local level persecution, Pagan's anti-Christian attitude played a central role. There might have been several factors that lead pagans to formula late such an attitude towards Christians. But the clothes section of the above-mentioned criminalized identity of Christians played a significant role. In addition to that, Pagan society believed in the multiplicity of gods. They had the practice of praying for multiple gods for many fortunes. Their general expectations were to bring good health, safety in risky doings, good crops and

foreknowledge. But Christians practice of monotheism was found by pagans as an atheist. This idea, as pagans believed, was the bearer of evils in society and caused a natural disaster like flood, landslide, and drought. Pagan's belief is one of many other factors responsible for the persecution. Tertullian writes, "If the Tiber reaches the walls, if the Nile does not rise to the fields, if the sky doesn't move or the earth does, if there is famine, if there is plague, the cry is at once: "The Christians to the Lion" (Tertullian, *Apology* 40.2).

This practice of charging Christians for every public disaster was later slowed down as Christianity consistently managed to increase the numbers of its converts and maintained a solid organizational structure of the church and other corporate activities. Mainly, hatred of pagans against the church and their activities calmed down as church members actively involved in the welfare activities and charity services during the crisis. Stark's sociological study suggests the severe plague hit Rome in 180 and 251 C.E. And during that crisis, Christians voluntarily looked after the sick and had been able to cure them effectively. Making an analysis on Stark's work *Steven C. Muir* writes, "the conventional institutions of Greco-Roman society—medicine, civic religion, the philosophical schools were unable to deal with these plagues as effectively as the simple palliative care of Christians." (Vaage, 2006, p. 213). Stark in his book *The Rise of Christianity* further gives the evidence of Christian's effort to prove themselves not as the bearer of the disasters. In this period, they established themselves as the healer of the public wounds through their miraculous healing. He writes, "Christian values for love and charity had, from the beginning, been translated into norms of social service and community solidarity. When disaster struck, the Christians were better able to cope, and this resulted in substantially higher rates of survival (Stark, 1996, p. 74). Tertullian too has referred to those charity works of Christians. He writes that each member donated money according to his means, which is then used "to feed the poor and to bury them, for boys and girls who lack property and parents, and then for slaves grown old, for shipwrecked persons,

and for any who may be in mines, islands, or prisons, provided that it is for the sake of God's school, and they thus become pensioners of their confession" (Tertullian, *Apology* 39.6). Those works of welfare had not only won the hearts of the local people but also had influenced the Emperor and imperial authorities.

The change in the anti-Christian attitude was observed even among the emperors. Lactantius has mentioned about the liberal approach of Constantius against Christians. As Diocletian wrote his Caesars to execute the persecution as instructed by him, Maximian willingly carried out the instructions. But Constantius seemed reluctant to the policy of persecution. Lactantius writes, "Constantius, so as not to seem to disapprove of the precepts of the previous rulers, allowed the church buildings, the meeting places, that is the wall which could be restored, to be torn down; but the temple of God which is in men, he left untouched" (Lactantius, *The Death of the Persecutors*, 15). Even Constantius's act of destroying the churches does not seem to be guided by his motive. He was only performing the duty of his position. Though he was one of the tetrarchs, he was the only one to adopt an independent policy during his reign and was on friendly relation with the religion of the god. Eusebius in his *Life of Constantine* presents Constantius a liberal and free of any stain from the events of persecution. His god friendly nature is observed basically by the characteristics of two functions. The first one is Constantius's policy of taxation. While the entire empire was burdened with the system of heavy taxation, equal to people's death, Constantius alone let his people enjoy their freedom. He "provided sound and peaceable government and supplied aid from his resources no less than a father would provide" (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 1.13). Constantius's policy to free people from the extra burden of tax had a good influence on his people. He had maintained a reciprocal relationship between his throne and the people of his province. This relation of reciprocity is observed in his appeal to increase the treasury of the empire. When he summoned the people from his region and told them that he needed money, they performed their enormous

generosity and “filled the treasury with gold, silver and other financial resources vying with each other in their effort to give more, and they did this with happy smiling faces” (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 1.14). This type of voluntary support from the people and the emperor’s kindness to his people shows distinctness of the province of the Constantius and his favorable treatment to the people of God.

The change in the anti-Christian attitude hit even to one of the greatest persecutors of the history, Galerius. When secured the most significant power of the empire, he introduced the practice of enslaving his subjects and started behaving himself as a dictator of the empire. He very fiercely turned against Christians and began to torture with the fire punishment. The condemned would be called by name and brought forward to be burnt, first with the lighter flame to the feet ‘until the flesh of the soles contracted by the heat’ and then roasting them throughout the day until the fire penetrate the inner organ. Death of the sword was infrequent and was of favorable death type. Such a cruel emperor too had developed a positive attitude towards Christians at the last stage of his life. Lactantius has written about the last stage of his life and the moment of his acceptance to God. It had been eighteen years of his reign when he was caught by cancer in his lower part of his genital organs. No, any medicinal treatment proved useful to cure his disease. The veins were burst, and he lost blood from his body until he turned pale and weak. His body was rotten and was eaten by worms. When he felt helpless even by the use of all measures, he was forced to acknowledge the god. Eusebius writes:

Turning, therefore, his thoughts toward himself, he first openly confessed to the God of the universe, and then summoning his attendants, he commanded that without delay they should stop the persecution of the Christians, and should by law and royal decree, urge them forward to build their churches and to perform their customary worship, offering prayers in behalf of the emperor (Eusebius, *History of the Church* 8.17.1).

Galerius with this not only recognized God but also wanted to correct public laws that could be favorable to the Christians. He published a decree for the promotion of church and church activities. According to Lactantius (*The Death of the Persecutors*, 34), Galerius's order had allowed Christians to make laws according to their will and as they pleased. They could gather together for their prayer, built meeting places and could return to their religion to make themselves Christians once again. And further, they were free to pray their god for the wellbeing of the empire and the emperor. In this way, there was a change in the anti-Christian attitude of Pagans and their emperors which contributed to change the relationship between church and the Roman Empire.

4.2.2. From Animosity to Companionship

Christianity, in the second century, was found as an enemy of the empire by the emperor and imperial authorities. The reason to take them as an enemy of the Emperor and the Empire came from the fact that Christians defied the centuries-old practice of worshipping multiple gods and offering sacrifice to them. According to Tertullian (*Apology*, 11-12), Christians ceased to worship the pagan's gods when they recognized that they were not gods. For them, Pagan's gods were no more than the name of their dead people. And it was surprising to see one group of pagans praying for one and another group praying for others. Christianity stood sharp against such practice of worshipping the dead people. Their stand to worship the single God Father brought the situation of confrontation between them. Their hatred was further intensified as they refused to pay tribute to the practice of Emperor-God. As the Roman emperors came to know that Christians were not revering them as a god, they declared them as enemies of the empire considering them as a threat to the chair of the emperor itself. Lactantius thoroughly documents the best example of a struggle between Pagan and Christian gods and the influence of Christian god upon Pagans. According to him (*The Death of the Persecutors*, 10-12) when Diocletian was offering the sacrifice of cattle and seeking some customary signs from their

entrails to know what things were to happen in future, some noblemen were present there with the immortal sign that caused the sacred rites disturbed. When this was reported to the emperor, he took that as a threat to his throne since it had already entered into his palace and had begun to show its effect. Immediately after that, he declared Christians and their god as ‘enemies of the gods and the state religion’ and order the d to make the sacrifice of those all who were present in the palace. Pagans carried out the command of the emperor and began to persecute Christians officially as well as at the local level, believing Christians enemies of the divine religions and the emperor, Scriptures were burnt and Church buildings were torn and leveled to the ground. So, there developed parallel two different understandings among pagans and Christians. Pagans found Christians as enemies of the empire whereas Christians found infidels as enemies of God. This situation of hatred led to severe persecution of Christians in the third century.

As there began the Great Persecution of Christian in the third century, it helped Christianity to expose its dynamics. The most crucial factor it established was the supremacy of God. The sovereignty of God was established by the exercise of what Lactantius referred to as the “Divine Vengeance.” The greatest persecutors of histories met a shameful death and hate of their people. Pagan’s local levels multiple gods were gradually replaced by the supreme Christian God through the means of the conversion of a layman, intellectuals and finally of the Emperors. Romans earlier matter of pride, i.e., the multiplicity of gods now came to be a curse. Christianity, as referred by Hurtado, became the destroyer of the god,s. Instead, to be united, Pagans were divided among each other and engaged themselves in the struggle to reach to the power. Diocletian’s effort to share the empire into provinces for the effective administration proved to be problematic as the Caesars could not maintain uniformity among the regions in the case of executing laws and policies of the emperor. Diocletian’s eastern province suffered severe persecution whereas the western area of Constantius enjoyed the tolerance. On the other

hand, tetrarchs engaged in a struggle for power. Galerius threatened Diocletian to yield power with the threat of possible civil war. The unnatural conspiracy was coined upon Constantine and Severus, and Maximinus were declared as Caesars. Galerius invasion to Italy, Maximian's set out against Galerius and Maximian's violent reaction after Licinius was announced Augustus are some of the significant episodes to show the nature of power struggle among the tetrarchs. This struggle for power and division make them fall. The Christian god proved its magnificence defeating all its opposing forces. For example, the greatness of God is best observed when Constantine achieved victories over his enemies. When Constantine was in a struggle with Licinius, he was not strong enough, by physical force, to get victory over his enemies. But, since the power of supreme god was working through him, he quickly came to realize its strength and adopted Christianity. Through the means of dream and magical vision in the sky, Constantine's door to victory was opened. It was only after his conversion, Constantine got victory over his enemies and became the emperor of the Roman empire. The credit of his victory over the Roman Empire goes to his adoption of Christianity. And during, his reign, Christianity became the legal religion of the empire and flourished under him. Hence, earlier enmity between them changed into the companionship during the reign of Constantine and extended each other's hand for their success.

4.2.3. Perversion of Roman Law to the Words of God

Another most important factor to show the change in the relationship between the church and the Roman Empire is the changed perspective of the Christians. It is essential to analyze this point here because Christians were primary victims of the persecution. And only the change in the perception of the empire, that I discussed above is not enough to show the complete change in the relationship between church and the empire. The change should be realized somewhat by the victims and their changed perspective, attitude, and responses towards the realm exposed through the work of art and literature is an essential factor to consider while making a study on

this subject matter. For this purpose, I am analyzing the changed perspectives of Christian writers based on the primary books of my research. First, I would like to start with Tertullian's *Apology*, addressed to the imperial authorities, best known for its highly apologetic tone. Second, I will discuss on the celebratory nature of Lactantius in *The Death of the Persecutors*, addressed to the Christians and their sympathizers. And at last, I will discuss on Eusebius's presentation of Constantine as the presence of God on the earth.

Tertullian's highly apologetic note on *Apology* gives a vivid picture of how the relationship between Christians and the vast majority of the people, among whom they lived was. This picture indicates to the connection at the upper level between Church and the State and at the local level between an individual Christian and the local Pagan society. Showing at the unprocedural system of trial and persecution, Tertullian stated that there were no crimes in association with being a Christian. Pagans way of hating Christians for their name was nothing more than the perversion of pagan's justice system. I will here basically discuss the Christians perception on the pagan's understanding of Christianity and the three significant charges made against them. According to Tertullian, Pagans brought three substantial charges against Christianity: involvement in Oedipean intercourse, atheism and organizing Thyestean feast. For those unproven charges, Christians were persecuted, harassed and attacked by mobs. For the apologist like Tertullian and others of his time, the problem lied, first to believe in those charges and second, persecution of Christians being based on those charges. I want to discuss the first problem observed by experienced by Christians here. For them, those charges made by pagans were unproven rumors. They were only rumors because there was no evidence of incest among Christianity. Tertullian writes, "From such an event we are guarded by chastity, supremely careful and faithful; we are safe from random intercourse and from all excess after marriage, and in that degree from the risk of incest" (Tertullian, *Apology* 9.19). With these remarks, Tertullian speaks out the voice of the second century Christians that the charge of

incest was only based on rumors and there was no chance of such sin in their disciplined society. Instead, they challenged the authorities to investigate the issue thoroughly. And if they were found guilty of any charges, they were ready to be plunged with a knife. Athenagoras of Athens, an apologist active around the second half of the second century, as quoted by Novak, writes, “If indeed, anyone can convict us of wrongdoing, be it trifling, or more serious, we do not beg off punishment, but are prepared to pay the penalty however cruel and unpitiful” (Athenagoras, *Plea on Behalf of the Christians* 2). They found the problem, not in Christianity. For them, the problem lied in the rationality of the authorities. A wise man, for them, was not to believe in rumors. But here apologists have presented the authorities faithful towards the false stories which is one of the causes of the distortion of the Roman legal system.

The second problem observed by Tertullian was the act of persecution without proper judicial procedures. The upside-down approach of judgment applied by Pagans was used to make Christians confess what they were not. And if any Christian dared to admit what he was, he would be punished immediately as a criminal. And greatest of all the problems was that Christians did not fall to the category of all other criminals who, instead were allowed to hire advocates and defend their cases. But for Christians, their name weighted more than legal proof. One of the best examples of the Roman trial system as referred by Tertullian is well recorded in *The Acts of The Scillitan Martyrs* which I find relevant to mention here. Roman Governor Saturnius, according to Tertullian was the first to raise the sword against Christian in Africa, calls some Christian converts for trial and orders to give honor to Caesar. In response to, his offer, Speratus says, “I do not recognize the empire of this world, but rather I serve that God, whom no man has seen nor can see.” Hearing his response Speratus the gives him the time of thirty days to think over that. But as they responded to him that they were Christian and could not change their mind, Proconsuls reads his decision:

Whereas Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Donata, Vestia, Secunda and the rest have confessed that they live in accordance with the religious rites of the Christians, and, when the opportunity was given them of returning to the usage of Romans, preserved in their obstinacy, it is our pleasure that they should suffer by sword (*The Acts of The Scillitan Martyrs*).

After this he commanded that they should be “led forth to execution” and all were crowned with martyrdom together. This is how the apologists have recorded the distorted version of the Roman trial system.

This type of perversion was not limited in the first and the second century. It continued through the third to the early fourth century until the victory of Constantine. It was around the year 303 A.D. when Diocletian declared official persecution, published an edict to limit Christians in their every aspect of life. The proclamation had provisioned that:

men of that religion should be deprived of all honor and dignity and be subjected to torments; and no matter from what rank or grade they came every action against them would hold weight; and they themselves would not be able to plead in a court against the charge of injury or adultery or theft; in short, they would not have freedom of speech (Lactantius, *The Death of the Persecutors* 13).

Similarly, in *History of the Church* 8.2.3. Eusebius writes the decree was made to destroy the church buildings and scriptures. Those who held places of honor be degraded and the rulers of the church be thrown to the prisons.

The emperor brought the proclamation with the aim of maintaining law and order in the empire. For the imperial authorities, the declaration was kind enough to limit the activities of Christians and tried to execute as it was. But Christians had a different understanding regarding those laws. Lactantius has written about the response of a Christian member after reading the edict of Diocletian. He writes, “Although it was not right, still it was with great courage that a certain

man pulled down and tore up this edict” (Lactantius, *The Death of the Persecutors* 13). This man’s response to the edict of Diocletian and Speratus response to the governor are some of the representative events to represent the Christian perspective towards Roman laws. For them, the Roman legal system was an absurd, perverted and distorted form of practices which were in need to change according to the will of God.

Christians viewed the victory of Constantine as the victory of the god. His rule in the Roman Empire was considered as the rule of the god, and he was believed to be the liberator of humankind from the dark circle of the persecution. Eusebius’s *Life of Constantine* has presented this distinct view of the emperor Constantine which I would like to discuss here.

Constantine, emperor of the Roman Empire, is adored by Eusebius and has raised to the level of God. His rule in the empire is seen as the rule of the god under the leadership of Constantine. Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall, in their translation of *Life of Constantine*, write, “The most obvious device used by Eusebius in the *VC* to bring home his ideological message is the patterning of Constantine on Moses.” (Cameron & Hall, 1999, p. 35). Through the analogy of Moses, Eusebius has featured Constantine as the liberator of humanity from the hand of the tyrants, i.e., persecutors. In other words, Eusebius has elevated Constantine to the level of Biblical figure. Eusebius writes, “this is what our age also has proved to be true that Constantine, alone among all those who have ruled the Roman Empire, became a friend of all-sovereign God, and was established as a clear example to all mankind of the life of godliness” (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 1.2). I find it relevant here to make a comparison of two different perspectives of Christian writers on the Roman Emperors. A writer like Tertullian has referred the emperors as the enemies of the church and Lactantius has mentioned them the persecutors whereas Eusebius had seen godly nature in Constantine. In this context, I would like to discuss these two distinct perspectives in the following sections.

Eusebius has presented Constantine as a confessor, irresistible and a human creature with divine nature. His purpose in this book “is to put into words and write down what relates to life which is dear to God.”, With this, he has preferred to focus only those efforts of Constantine which were significant for the protection and promotion of Christianity. I have divided those ‘dear to god’ acts of Constantine, in three main points: Constantine as a liberator, as a promoter and a guider. After the conversion of Constantine at the Milivan Bridge, before his battle with Maxentius, he felt it was his primary duty to liberate the people of his religion. For this purpose, he took measures to liberate people in two different ways. In other words, Constantine’s work of liberation can be seen in two perspectives. First, as an immediate measure, he released people from imprisonment and every kind of liability, recalled people from the exiles and restored the confiscated property. In a letter written by Constantine to the provincials of Palestine, all these immediate provisions are enlisted. For example, *Life of Constantine* 2.31 reads:

those held against their will in islands; we order that they enjoy the benefit of this provision, so that whereas they are confined by the rigors of mountains and surrounding seas, they may be set free from the ugly and desolate wilderness and take themselves back to their loved ones, fulfilling their eager desire”.

Similarly, section 2.32 sets people free from the “labor under harsh conditions in mines,” and section 2.33 recalls the sacked military officers either to resume their military service or to choose “honorable discharge of enjoying retirement.” Section 2.35 has the provision of Property. It says, “those who without even being sentenced to death suffered deprivation of their goods, and any who without even being sentenced to death suffered deprivation of their goods, we decree that their estate should attach to their next of kin.” In this way, Constantine provided immediate remedies to make people feel free of their unwanted duties and compulsions. Second, he liberated the Roman Empire from the rule of the primitive pagans and enlightened people with the Christian philosophy. It is because of Constantine’s this second

effort Christianity flourished in the Roman Empire and has been able to write its history of two thousand years now.

As a promoter of the church, Eusebius shows Constantine using all his means and measures to defend it from its enemies. Joseph F. Shean the too finds the significant contribution of the emperor for the defense of Christianity. He writes, “the Roman emperor took on the role of chief defender of God’s people, i.e., the empire’s inhabitants, against the benighted forces of evil without, namely the barbarians” (Shean, 2010, p. 300). To fulfill his duty, Constantine used various approaches. Sometimes he addressed the issues directly whereas other times he wrote letters to the provinces and suggested to create an environment in which church could flourish. One of such letters were written by Constantine to Eusebius. In this letter, he has suggested Eusebius cooperate with other bishops for the promotion of the church. He writes:

You yourself are in charge of churches or know other bishops and presbyters or deacons to be locally in charge of them, remind them to attend to the church buildings, whether by restoring or enlarging the existing ones or where necessary building new. You yourself and the others through you shall ask for the necessary supplies from the governors and the office of the Prefect, for these have been directed to cooperate wholeheartedly with what your holiness proposes (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 2.46.3).

In this section, I have highlighted some of the changes brought by Constantine for the promotion of Christianity. My intention here is not to enlist the works of Constantine. Instead, I would like to look at the way Christians responded to those activities. Referring to the victory of Constantine Lactantius writes, “In this manner, God Conquered all the persecutors of His name overwhelmingly, so that neither their offspring nor any of their stock remained” (Lactantius, *The Death of the Persecutors* 50). Lactantius’s earlier tone to refer emperors a

tyrant and criminals has now been changed and reached to the level of God. Similarly, in the concluding section of the same chapter, he writes, “Let us celebrate with exultation, then, the triumph of God. Let us flock to the victory of the Lord with praises”. All those responses have elevated Constantine to the level of a god. His instructions either to root out the temples of pagans or his order to set up a church, all were put into effect in no time as if they were the words of the god. Eusebius writes, “Emperor gave instructions that the site should be excavated to a great depth and pavement should be carried away with the rubble a long distance outside. This also was completed straightaway”. This dramatic change in the Christian perspective to see the emperor shows the changed relationship between the church and the Empire. The expression of the possession of the empire and their excitement is observed in Christian’s this expression:

In the City which bears our name by the sustaining providence of the Saviour God a great mass of people has attached itself to the holiest Church, so that with everything there enjoying significant growth it is particularly fitting that more churches should be established. Be ready therefore to act urgently on the decision which we have reached.
(Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 4.36).

4.2.4. Christianising the Roman Army

In the process of Christianising the Roman Empire, Constantine used the policy of promotion and elimination. In the way he used all his means to promote churches, he used the same strength to eliminate the pagans from the Empire. I believe, out of many other measures Constantine’s policy to use military force for conversion played a significant role to change the church-state relationship.

Looking at the history of the Roman Empire; military power always remained a determining factor for the throne of the emperor. There are enough examples in Roman history which show

the leading role of the army. For instance, we can look at the battle between Severus and Maxentius. When Severus was leading his army to attack Maxentius, he was deserted by his soldiers and turned themselves against him. He was forced to take a flight from there.

Similarly, in the next episode when Maximian plotted against his son and blamed him for the calamities and evils in the state, he was caught by the soldiers and driven out from the city. In both, the cases mentioned above the interest of the army and interest of the Emperor did not match. As a result, soldiers were forced to decide on dismissing the position of their commander. On the other hand, Constantine was declared Augustus by the soldiers of his father. In all the cases mentioned above the contribution of the soldier played a decisive role. They possessed the authority for sanction of their commander.

Another exciting thing to observe here is the time of Diocletian. When Diocletian was in his heyday, he had the strong support of his army. With the help of his army, he had easily defeated the Persian king Narses, who was eager to seize the orient. But when Diocletian noticed the presence of Christian soldiers in his palace, he began to persecute them. He made an order to root Christianity out of his army. Evidence showed when he started his mission against the Christian soldiers; his fall began right after that. His absolute control over the Roman military gradually weakened. As a result, Galerius threatened him of the civil war and at last, he was forced to yield his power. From the development of all those events, Constantine seemed well aware that soldiers of an Emperor were the backbone of their throne. And as mentioned by Shean, “no emperor could hope to hold onto power without the active support of a considerable number of the rank and file” (Shean, 2010, p. 280). So, he did not want to make the same mistake as established by his predecessors, i.e., clash of the interest between the emperor and their soldiers. Hence his first step after his conversion was the Christianization of the Roman army. The very first step taken by Constantine for the conversion of his army was his command to make replicas of the cross sign and make use of that in their shields. Constantine used several

methods to Christianize the Roman army. One of many others, but the very strategic approach was organizing the army into two separate branches: the *comitatenses* and the *limitanei*. The *limitanei* were the border security guards stationed at the frontier to defend the empire from the attack of the barbarians. They acted as the first line of defense and were formed from the traditional pagan army. *Comitatenses* were the mobile forces to use wherever *Limitanei* could not bear the pressure of the invaders and were the recruits of the new Christian converts. Over a while, *Comitatenses* grew stronger due to the support of the empire whereas *Limitanei* withered away due to the lack of recruits and support. In this way, the units of the pagan army were dismissed, and only the Christianised army left to guard the empire. Another approach of Christianising the Roman military that appeared during the time of Constantine was the military chaplains. Eusebius's *Life of Constantine* 4.56.2 suggests that there was a possible use of the portable altars 'for divine worship' at the time of move during the war. John F. Shean writes:

Constantine did grant his Christian troops leave on Sundays to attend church while the rest were required to recite a monotheistic prayer. He is also credited with introducing military chaplains and providing portable prayer tents for himself and every unit in the army. It is likely that these practices continued throughout the fourth century. The open favoritism given to Christian soldiers by Constantine and his heirs, such as the privilege of being excused from duty at least one day a week, would have been a powerful incentive for many soldiers to proclaim their allegiance to the new religious order (Shean, 2010, p. 285).

All those efforts made by Constantine were directly or indirectly linked to the process of Christianising the Roman army. The conversion of the Roman army would have a significant consequence for the conversion of Constantine as well as of the entire empire. Shean further writes,

One of the consequences of the Christianization of Constantine would be the start of the process of Christianization of the entire military. This army, newly dedicated to the cause of the church as defined by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, would do battle not only against non-believers and willingly carry out campaigns of suppression against pagan cults, but would also act as the police of the Christian community itself, rooting out heresy and enforcing orthodoxy. What the church would gain was the use of an armed force to enforce Christian conformity (Shean, 2010, p. 285).

In this way, Christianization of the Roman army became one of the key factors to change the relationship between the church and the Roman empire. The military which previously was used to persecute Christians now played the role of its patron. The army that saw the Christians enemies of the realm soon found pagans as their adversaries. Those who once suppressed Christians now turned against infidels to root their cult out and enforced Christian orthodoxy. This is how Christianity, once a religion of minorities, made its way to become the religion of the state in the next half-century.

4.2.5. Conversion of Intellectuals and Development of the Theology of Roman

Nationalism

Conversion of intellectuals has played a significant role in the change in the church-state relationship. Scholars through their writings and preaching exposed the truth of the religion which helped to change the attitude of the people in two ways. First, their papers presented the “truth” of the faith which helped to deliver the goodness of the religion to the general people and that stimulated people to question the century-old Pagan religious beliefs and practices. Second, through their intellectual debates, they won the favor of the public which helped to create mass support for the religion which ultimately helped for the mass conversion and as referred by Eusebius conversion of the cities. Here, I would like to discuss

some Christian intellectuals of the Roman Empire from the time of Tertullian to Constantine, who contributed people to understand Christianity through their writings and became able to make them change their perspective towards the religion.

Minucius Felix was an early Christian writer of unknown date. He is best known for his treatise “Octavius,” probably written between the end of the second and the beginning of the third century. His writing was intended for the educated non-Christians of the Roman Empire. Felix, through the use of the technique of dialogue between Octavius Januarius and Caecilius Natalis, shows the distinctive qualities of Christian ethos, of their trust in God and belief in immortality. He advocates for the defense of God through Octavius. Through his writings, Felix “produced a revolt against Paganism” and helped to transfer his allegiance into Christianity.

Clement of Alexandria was another philosopher born in the middle of the second century probably in Athens. He was born in a Pagan family but became attracted to Pantaenus, founder of a Catechetical school. Succeeding his master around 190, he taught philosophy, religion, and rhetoric to his pupils. Clement’s main contribution was to establish Christianity as a real source of knowledge. Geza Vermes writes:

Clement’s overall aim was to reassure his insecure, intellectual listeners and readers that neither Greek philosophy nor heretical Gnosticism constituted a real threat to the Christian faith. Pagan philosophers possessed and conveyed only morsels of the truth, and in any case, he maintained (echoing Justin), they had dishonestly appropriated the wisdom of the Hebrews without ever acknowledging their sources (Vermes, 2013, p. 210).

To take the term of Henry Chadwick, Clement liked to address the civilized Christian society in the form of “urbane high-table conversations.” Through intellectual exercise, Clement had a good influence on the people of his time. But around 202/203 persecution of Severus

compelled him to resign from his position and make him flee from Egypt. Though he escaped from there, his writings survived to encourage people of the higher class for conversion.

Early Christian theologian and bishop of Carthage, Cyprian was born of wealthy Pagan parents and was educated in the law. Before he converted into Christianity in 246, he worked as a lawyer in Carthage. Within two years of his conversion, he became the bishop of Carthage. But soon after confronted Decian persecution. Though he led North African churches during persecution, he went into hiding for which he “was severely criticized by some members of the congregation for hiding instead of confessing the faith” (Novak, 2001, p. 126), while many of his followers apostatized. Again in 251 when “friends of Christ” reconciled Cyprian was able to regain his power. He established principals of the church discipline so that those who sacrificed their faith truly could be readmitted only at their death bed and those who worshipped god just so could be readmitted after verifying the period of penance. Cyprian conflicted with Rome regarding the nature of the church. He advocated for the unity of the churches under all circumstances whereas Rome accepted the church of mixed character. To appeal for the unity of the church, he wrote a treatise *The Unity of the Church* in which he did not accept the Roman church’s Jurisdictional power to take “a sinful priest making offerings on behalf of the people” (Frend, n.d.). His *Theology* further stressed on the unity of the church and its uniqueness. For him, unity is expressed through the consensus on bishops. And any attempt of rebellion and schism against the priesthood was viewed as ‘the worst of sin.’ As Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian was from the upper level of provincial society and had a good influence upon the people of his circle. Even Roman authorities treated him with due respect when he was arrested. In spite of his majestic personality, he endured martyrdom during the reign of Valerian and was known as the first bishop-martyr of Africa.

Similarly, Origin was one of the most influential Christian thinkers of the second and the third century. Born into a Christian family, he was educated in Greek literature and philosophy.

After, education, he worked as a teacher and later ran a catechetical school. In the meantime, he castrated himself so that he could discuss religious matters with women without suspicion of sexual immorality. He continued the proto-orthodox Christianity school, as did by Justin Martyr, that encouraged the secular culture. By nature, he was ascetic and lived through the fees of students and gifts from the admirers. During his lifetime, Christianity enjoyed relative peace under the emperors of the Severan dynasty, who had adopted the policy of tolerance.

By the time of Origen, ways to see Christianity and issues related to it had changed. The church-state relationship had entered a new era. The ideological and philosophical debate about the nature of Christianity had already started. A challenge, by that time, to Christianity was to establish its school of theology distinct from the Jews and Pagans. Origen, working on the scriptures and interpretation of biblical texts, equalized the Christian theology to the Jewish theology and was able to create a theological debate between these two religions. Being the first theologian, Origen, first attempted to find the meaning of the biblical words and texts. He believed, unless there was no agreement on the precise meaning of the words, “there could be no religious debate with Jews.” Hence, his first attempt was to give proper definitions to the words so that interpreter after him, could not mislead the followers with their false meanings and interpretations. He presumed the future of proto-orthodox Christianity was at risk if he had not started the ‘exegesis,’ i.e., the interpretation of the scriptures. The threat for them was from the Gnostic Christian who “believed that their secret knowledge enabled them to find the deep meanings beneath the simple biblical words” (Lynch, 2010, p. 99). Gnostic Christians who read the Old Testament literally and with evil motive, they depicted the god as a liar, cruel and vindictive. Even some proto-orthodox Christian,s, favored the literal reading of the text and drove off the Christian intellectuals, with whom Origen had to contest for the symbolic meaning of the scriptures.

Origen as a “theologian” and Christianity as “a branch of theology” got succeeded as there began the interpretation of the texts based on “allegory” or “typology.” With the allegorical or typological methods of interpretation, Origen revealed the hidden secret contained in the scriptures. Unlike Pagans, who took the words of the god literally, he followed the path set by Jesus and Paul. But the difference among them is that Jesus and Paul spoke in allegorical language and kept the meaning “hidden secret.” But Origen unveiled the hidden secret with the help of interpretation using allegory. He came with a claim that what is written in the book is not what it exactly means rather “one thing in a biblical account stands for another” (Lynch, 2010, p. 100). A literal understanding of the book is just the understanding of the surface. Those who read the scriptures literally understand the superficial meaning and can never reach the true sense. Origen established his distinct identity among his contemporaries because he never claimed that only his ideas were right. But he “carefully qualified his views” and left the world to judge.

Though Origen made a significant contribution to the study of the Bible and other religious scriptures, his effort did not remain out of controversy. Being a member of “mature Christians” Origen and some others separated themselves from the worldly concerns and dedicated to the script reading which “simple Christians” thought to be highly superficial. He is criticized mainly for his work *On First Principles* which showed that “a mature Christian could be a true gnostic, that is, “one who knows” as opposed to the false gnostic, whom he opposed as heretics.” Whatever might be the immediate response, Origen’s contribution had a long-term influence for the development of Christian theology and a strong defense against the attack, refutation, and ridicule of the pagans and heretics

According to Lynch (2010, p.103), though Christian intellectuals could not influence the Roman authorities to make them liberal towards the Christians, their role was important for at least three reasons. First, they helped Christian people to formulate a response to the criticism

made against them by pagans. Second, they opened a formal and intellectual dialogue through their writings with Greco-Roman society. And the third one is their contribution to the development of theology. This third point played a significant role in the development of Christianity in the second half of the third and early fourth century. One of the crucial factors to determine the foundation of Christian theology, distinct from the Jews and Pagans, was the Christological debate. Until Origen, the church fathers held the view that Jesus was not on the equal footing to the Father. Eusebius, a devout follower and champion of Origen too continued the same understanding about the relationship between God the father and God the Son. Vermes writes:

Eusebius persistently avoided before, during and after the council the keyword ('consubstantial') introduced in Nicaea that implied coequality between Father and Son. For him, the chief characteristic of the Father was that he was unbegotten and supreme. The Son, on the other hand, was the minister of the Father (Vermes, 2013, p. 224).

This understanding held by the leading philosophers of the third century was challenged and overturned by the minority bishops with the backing of the emperor Constantine at the council of Nicaea. The first ecumenical council of the church started an entirely new era in Christian thinking. Bishops like Alexandrian duo, Alexander and Athanasius came up with the idea that the Son was of the same substance as the Father. Under the influence of Constantine, this Nicaean creed was institutionalized. Out of 220 bishops, only two Libyan bishops were reluctant to sign the paper of Nicaean council. In this way, the church of the Nicaean creed made its way to the imperial household of Constantine. Constantine's victory over his enemies and the entry of the church into imperial household changed the role of the church and the perspective of the philosophers.

Philosophers, through their writings, conveyed the message that “Christianity and imperial patriotism are one and the same” (Shean, 2010, p. 302). Christian people found themselves in possession of the state surrounded by their enemies. In this context, the empire adopted the Just war principle, the war for the right cause and right intention. Use of military force for the defense of the church and the state was inevitable. Constantine’s suppression of sects and destruction of idolatry (*Life of Constantine* 3. 63-66, 4.23-25) is an example of the use of the military for the defense of the church. As a result, church father and philosophers were forced to look at the warfare from a different viewpoint. They developed a theology, theology of Roman Nationalism, that justified the uses of the Christian army for the defense of the church and the empire. John Shean writes, “the church was forced to develop a theology of Roman nationalism which justified the actions of Christians in taking up arms to defend both the church and state from its enemies (Shean, 2010, p. 302). The development of this theology established a concept ‘the church as state and the state as a church.’ Hence the conversion of the intellectuals and the development of the theology of Roman Nationalism played a significant role to change the church-state relationship.

Chapter V

Conclusion

This study is carried out to show the change in the church-state relationship in the first four century in the Roman Empire. In the course of this primary study question, I have addressed how these books have shown the changed relationship between church and the empire. And my two questions to support the main research question are related to the changes brought by Constantine and the change in Christian perspective to see the emperor and the empire. For this purpose, three books are studied as a primary source. Tertullian's *Apology* with other secondary sources has presented the negative relationship between the church and the empire during the second century. It beautifully explores the distinction between 'what they were' and 'what they were thought to be' by non-Christians. The book presumes the antagonistic role of the empire. The emperor and his officials are several times referred to as "enemies of the church." They are presented as a barbaric, criminal and bloodthirsty. Various factors to mark the negative relation are discussed in *Apology*. For example, deprivation of Christians from basic legal rights, characterization of Christians as criminals, persecute them for the charge of treason and promotion of non-Christian philosophy as opposed to the Christian theology are some of the indicators to show the critical relationship between the church and the empire. On the other hand, *The Death of the Persecutors* shows the unnatural fall of the persecutors and dramatic rise of Constantine as a Christian emperor. This book has given the glimpse of change in the church-state relationship. The first forty chapters show the dangerous situation of church-state relationship followed by the events like the destruction of church buildings, burning of Christian art and artifacts and killing the Christian followers. But the last five chapters present the rise of Constantine as a Christian emperor and his policy of toleration. This book, the last section, has shown the neutral, at least not negative, the relationship between church and empire. This neutrality is supplemented by the next book of Eusebius *Life of Constantine*. This

book has shown the church and the empire “one” and unified by the philosophy of Christianity. Unlike earlier emperors, persecutors of the church, Constantine is shown as the patron of the church, and his act of promoting church is eulogized as a divine effort to endorse Christianity and his effort to set up churches and command to abolish other sects is viewed as a godly command and is put into effect immediately. Hence these three books have presented the changed relationship between the church and the Roman Empire. In the course of this change, various factors that affected the church-state relation changed. The first factor to show the change is the change in Christian perspective to see the empire and the emperor. The conversion of the emperor and physical and legal changes brought by Constantine for the promotion of Christianity helped to change the perspective of Christian to see the empire. They received the emperor and the empire under their possession. The emperor Constantine was viewed as a liberator of the people of God. His every effort were deified and treated as a godly command to put into effect immediately. Also, the role of the empire also changed. The empire that played an active role in the persecution now took the responsibility of patronage. Next, there was a change in anti-Christian attitude among the non-Christians. The characterization of Christians as a baby eater, practitioner of incest, and a criminal organization plotting against the empire and the emperor gradually changed. The intellectual dialogue initiated by the Christian apologists through their writings helped to bring the core of Christianity to the non-Christian world. That helped to make the authorities believe that Christians were not criminal and traitor of the empire. Rather they disseminated the message that Christians were the loving people who were committed to safeguarding the nation and wished for the safety of the emperor through their prayers. Christians institutional aid to the non-Christian people during the time of crisis like; plague and intrusion of the foreigners, helped to win the heart of general non-Christians. On the other hand, conversion of the people of the higher social rank as mentioned by Tertullian (Apol.3.1) like Lucius Titius, a Roman Senator of the second century and Caius

Seius, a prefect of the Roman imperial bodyguard, shattered the Pagans religious foundation. The situation of strengthening the organizational structure of the church in spite of the severe persecution and withering of the pagan solid religious foundation due to the division among the emperors give more weight to the success of Christianity. Earlier's trend of the conversion of the layman now caught the members of the Roman upper-class society. The conversion of the intellectuals further aids this. Through their conversion intellectuals conveyed the message that Christianity was not only the religion of the uneducated layman, but it was the religion of an educated and people of the higher social rank. The most important factor among Burn Burn all is the journey from animosity to companionship. In the second and third century, Christianity and the empire treated as an enemy of each other. Churches were destroyed, and the imperial authorities burned Christian arts. The firm believers were burnt alive and fed to the wild beast inhumanely. For this cruelty churches considered the authorities their enemies. Christian apologists openly used the word "enemy" to describe the imperial people. This extent of animosity changed to friendship at the time of Constantine. Constantine adopted Christianity and prayed Christian god for his victory over his enemies. In other words, he took the help of the persecuted god for his success. After his victory, he ordered to restore churches and freed the people of the god. This is how enemies of the past came to be unified and moved ahead to mark the state-religion for the next fifty years. In this way, the relationship between the church and the empire changed throughout two hundred as shown in the primary books of my study.

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