

point of that particular movement, this fourth century is perhaps as important and as interesting as any century in the whole course of Ch. hist. ~~It~~ It is important because while it had been growing steadily during the previous three centuries, ~~xxxxxx~~ much of the growth has been difficult to trace. It has always been, that is until the last part of the third century, it has been contrary to the law of the Roman Empire. And so we find ~~an~~ evidence here and an evidence there, all of a sudden, at the latter part of the second century we find ~~xxxxxx~~ Irenaeus, the great writer, having a great influence, and we find that he is bishop of the church in France, and we learn that there are strong important churches in France. And before that we had heard ~~a~~ a little about persecutions in France, ~~xxxx~~ so there were Christians there, but we didn't know much about them. And then at the end of the century we find very active and powerful churches, even though they were probably not more than twenty of the whole ~~xxxx~~ population.

And so we have seen a view here and a view there of the church which probably had a history of fifty years before, of which no thread has been left. But in this century we find the Christian church strong enough at the beginning that it is able to resist the greatest persecution that the church has ever had. The effort of one of the greatest Roman emperors, to ~~xxxx~~ entirely destroy it, and effort which was to continue to about ten years, and ~~xxxx~~ which resulted in the killing of most of the prominent, or many of the prominent leaders which were specifically singled out. The church was large enough and strong enough to resist this, and to reach the point where the emperors decided they had to give it up. They could not tear out the Christian church without tearing into their people, and so they had to give up the persecution.

However, the century begins with the Christian church a sect somewhat despised, a sect which had large buildings, most of them destroyed by Diocletian's persecution, but at the beginning of the persecutuion; they had large and impressive churches, and ~~had~~ had quite a province, but certainly not more than a third of the votes of the people of the Empire, ~~who~~ were professing