

Christinas. At the end of the century, paganism, which was dominant at the beginning, had almost disappeared. Everybody, nearly, was a nominal Christian. So this is a century in which ~~Christianity~~ Christianity came from being a persecuted sect becomes a state-favored religion, and then at the end of it, the officials had accepted it. From ~~being~~ being the persecuted group, it became a group which did a certain amount of persecuting itself. By the end of the period. ~~the pagans from being the dominant powerful group are one at the end of the period which consists of only a few people out in the little villages. And hence, becomes known as paganism, the village~~ ^{group,} ~~which of course was opposite of what it had always been. The word pagas means village, and since it had gone out of the cities and lingered in the villages, it was just a village belief, at the end of the century.~~

So from that view, this century is a tremendously important one. Now there are three events during the century, which bring to particular focus this aspect of the struggle of Christianity with paganism and its complete overcoming of it. The first of these of course the great persecution. The second is the resurgence of paganism under Julian in the middle of the period, and we ~~spent~~ spent a good part of an hour seeing what Julian did and how this man, who represented the best of paganism, tried to make paganism a religion with all the good points that Christianity had, many of which the pagans had never thought of. And to make Christianity a despised group and eventually would have destroyed it altogether. But we saw how ~~utterly~~ utterly he failed in this, in the middle of the century. Of course, in the providence of God, he only reigned three years. If he had ~~reigned~~ reigned longer there would have been a great persecution, undoubtedly, from which the Christian church would have doubtless emerged as it did under ~~of~~ Diocletian. The Lord spared the church that ordeal, but nevertheless it was a very serious ordeal, a very serious threat to Christianity, and it is one of the most dramatic and interesting events in all of Christian history, this brief reign