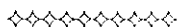


Catholic World

IN LONELY RAVENNA.

Ravenna is the resting-place of that supreme singer of the Middle Ages, Dante, and a fitting place of pilgrimage in this centenary year (writes Joseph Francis Wickham, in the August *Catholic World*). His mausoleum stands near the Church of San Francesco, in the vestibule of which the Florentine exile was first buried. Dante's tomb was originally the work of Pietro Lombardi, who built it in 1482 at the instance of Bernardo Bembo, the representative of Venice in the city; but now, through reconstruction, it is more modern than the sentimental heart would wish. The old palace of the Polenta looks down upon the tomb from across the way, a fitting guard for the poet's grave. For it was Guido da Polenta who gave him the welcome of Ravenna, after Florence had forbidden him her shelter and had doomed him to follow the wandering roads.



THE FOUR GREAT FATHERS OF THE EAST.

The four great Fathers and Doctors of the East are St. Athanasius, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzen, and St. John Chrysostom. They belonged to the 4th century; the century in which the great truths of faith—the Divinity of Our Lord and the Blessed Trinity—were solemnly defined by the Church. I need not say that though these doctrines were not defined till the fourth century they were always part of the Christian faith. The Christians who lived and died in the 1st century believed them as firmly as those who lived in the 4th, or as we ourselves who live in the 20th. But it is only when circumstances require it that the Church solemnly defines a doctrine—when, for instance, heretics attack it and it is necessary to safeguard the truth.

From the very beginning Christianity came into conflict with ideas and practices which had a widespread hold until Jesus came. When Our Lord was presented in the Temple holy Simeon said of Him that He was set "for a sign which shall be contradicted," and there were two things about Christianity which were bound to encounter contradiction.

In the first place, while the great pagan teachers of the past—Plato and Aristotle, for example—had only professed to point out to men the better way of life, Jesus Christ was Himself "the way, and the truth, and the life"; the followers of the pagan philosophers revered them as men, but the followers of Christ adored Him as God. When the first Christians taught that Christ was God, and that all men are bound to follow His teaching, they came at once into conflict with the philosophers of the Roman Empire.

In the second place, Christianity was for all. It was no respecter of persons. It bound the emperor just as much as the meanest of his subjects. "There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians iii. 28). Christianity insisted on the rights of all men, and as at this time four-fifths of the human race were slaves, and slaves had no legal rights of any kind but were the absolute property of their master like the horse or his cow; women and children had practically no rights; while the emperor was an absolute monarch whose whims were law, it is not surprising to find that Christianity had many and powerful enemies from the start. Since the Christians claimed that Christ was God, the obvious retort of the unbelievers was that He was only a man. Some of the early heretics taught the opposite of this, and said that Christ was indeed true God, but was not true man.

These controversies came to a head with what is known as the Arian heresy, the founder of which was a priest of Alexandria named Arius. He lived in the 4th century, and he maintained that Christ was the most perfect creature, but was not God. His great opponent was St. Athanasius, who was born at Alexandria about 295. Arius

was a man of "soft and smooth address, calculated to persuade and attract," and he had no scruples as to how those who opposed him ought to be treated. The Council of Nicaea—the first General Council of the Church—condemned Arius, but the Arians won over the Emperor Constantine to their side—who wanted to be supreme in the Church as in the State, like Henry VIII.—and St. Athanasius, who had become Bishop of Alexandria in 328, was banished from his see. Arianism, aided by the powerful patronage of the Emperors, maintained a bitter struggle till the end of the 4th century, the chief object of its hate being St. Athanasius. After spending 20 years in exile and enduring extreme hardships, St. Athanasius died peacefully at Alexandria in 373.

St. Basil was born at Caesarea in Cappadocia (now Asia Minor) about 329. He studied at Athens, where he became intimate with St. Gregory Nazianzen, who was also born about the same year. While there he began to think seriously of religion, and he founded a religious Order known as the Basilian Monks, still in existence. In 370 he became Bishop of Caesarea, and he devoted his great talents to combating Arianism, which had the support of the Emperor Valens, who was an Arian. He was famous both as a theologian and a preacher, and is usually styled St. Basil the Great. He died in 379.

St. Gregory of Nyssa, another great name in the history of the Church, was a younger brother of St. Basil. St. Gregory of Nazianzen was born about 329, near Nazianzen, in Cappadocia. He was consecrated from birth to God by his saintly mother Nonna, and after a brilliant course of study at Athens resolved to give his life to the service of religion. He was the great champion of the Church against the Arians in Constantinople, of which city he became bishop in 380. He vigorously opposed Macedonius, a heretic bishop, who denied that the Holy Ghost was God. His work on the Trinity, directed especially against the Arians and the Macedonians, was so excellent that it obtained for him the title of "The Theologian." He died about 390.

St. John Chrysostom was born at Antioch, in Syria, about 345. He was perhaps the greatest orator the world has ever seen. He was appointed Bishop of Constantinople in 398, and his fearless denunciations of the vices of the imperial court roused the fury of the Empress Eudoxia, who had him arrested and banished. Recalled shortly after, he was again banished, and he died in exile at Comana, in Pontus (now Asia Minor), in 407. Besides the four great Fathers and Doctors there are other famous doctors too.—*Irish Catholic*.



To have that love for our neighbor which is commanded by the Lord, we must entertain good and amiable feelings towards him, especially when he is disagreeable and annoying to us on account of any defect, natural or moral; for then we find in him nothing to love, except in God. The maxim of the saints was that in performing works of charity and kindness, we ought to consider, not the person who receives them, but Him for whose sake they are done. Nor let us be discouraged if we sometimes feel repugnance; for an ounce of this solid and reasonable love is of much greater value than any amount of that tender and sensitive love which we share with animals and which often deceives and betrays our reason.—St. Francis de Sales.

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