

## Years of Conflict and Progress

### A Review of The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series

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If one desires to know the history of the Christian Church between the time of the Apostles and the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.), he will not find the writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers sufficient for his purpose. During this entire period scarcely one book of church history was written. Christians wrote many Apologies, or attempts to present a reasonable argument for the truth of their religion; they composed many attacks on the false doctrines that crept into the church; they discussed the meaning of Biblical passages at great length; but they made no attempt to write a continuous history of the development and progress of the church. This was because they were constantly expecting their Lord to return and set up His promised kingdom of righteousness and peace. Their task was to witness to Him while He tarried, and to gather as large a group as possible to meet Him at His coming. Energetically applying themselves to this vital God-appointed task, there is no evidence that they ever paused to trace in detail the events that had passed since the Resurrection.

After three centuries of alternation between short periods of intense persecution and long periods of growth and witness, the church encountered the greatest persecution of all -- that of Diocletian. All the power of the mighty Roman Empire was concentrated on the task of destroying Christianity. Diocletian's own wife and daughter were forced to recant their Christian profession; high officials in his court were tortured or killed; special efforts were made to destroy the leadership of the church; the sacred Scriptures were sought out for destruction.

Nearly ten years