the retirement of Dion Cassius from his command (see Dion). On the whole, however, the reign of Alexander Severus was prosperous till he was summoned to the East to face the new power of the Sásánians (see Persia, vol. xviii. p. G07). Of the war that followed we have very various accounts ; Mommsen (vol. v. p. 420 *sqj)* leans to that which is least favourable to the Romans. At all events, though the Persians were checked for the time, the conduct of the Roman army showed an extraordinary lack of discipline. The emperor returned to Rome and celebrated a triumph (233), but next year he was called to face German invaders in Gaul, and there was slain with his mother in a mutiny which was probably led by Maximinus, and at any rate purchased him the throne. Whatever the personal virtues of Alexander were, and they have not lost by contrast with his successor’s brutal tyranny, he was not of the stuff to rule a military empire.

SEVERUS, Sulpicius (c. 365-c. 425), early Christian writer. A native of Aquitania, he was thoroughly imbued with the culture of his country and time. The seven southern provinces of Gaul, between the Alps and the Loire, had long been completely Romanized. The very name “ Gaul ” was repudiated by the inhabitants and confined to the natives of the ruder northern districts. The lifetime of Severus exactly coincided with the period of greatest literary development in Aquitania, then the truest or only true home of Latin letters and learning— their last place of refuge, from which Severus saw them driven before he closed his eyes on the world. Almost all that we know of his life comes from a few allusions in his own writings, and some passages in the letters of his friend Paulinus, bishop of Nola. In his early days he was famous as a pleader in the courts, and his knowledge of Roman law is reflected in parts of his writings. He married a wealthy lady belonging to a consular family, who died young, leaving him no children. At this time Severus came under the powerful influence of St Martin, bishop of Tours, by whom he was led to devote his wealth to the Christian poor, and his own powers to a life of good works and meditation. To use the words of his friend Paulinus, he broke with his father, followed Christ, and set the teachings of the “ fishermen” far above all his “ Tullian learning.” He rose to no higher rank in the church than that of presbyter. His time was passed chiefly in the neighbourhood of Toulouse, and such literary efforts as he permitted to himself were made in the interests of Christianity. In many respects no two men could be more unlike than Severus, the scholar and orator, well versed in the ways of the world, and Martin, the rough Pannonian bishop of Tours, ignorant of learning, sus­picious of culture, the champion of the monastic life, the seer of visions, and the worker of miracles. Yet the spirit of the rugged saint subdued that of the polished scholar, and the works of Severus would have little importance now did they not reflect the ideas, influence, and aspira­tions of Martin, the foremost ecclesiastic of Gaul, and one of the most striking figures in the church of his day.

The chief work of Severus is the *Chronica,* a summary of sacred history from the beginning of the world to his own times, with the omission of the events recorded in the Gospels and the Acts, “ lest the form of his brief work should detract from the honour due to those events. ” The book was in fact a text-book, and was actually used as such in the schools of Europe for about a century and a half after the *editio princeps* was published by Flacius Illyricus in 1556. Severus nowhere clearly points to the class of readers for whom his book is designed. He disclaims the inten­tion of making his work a substitute for the actual narrative contained in the Bible. “Worldly historians” had been used by him, he says, to make clear the dates and the connexion of events and for supplementing the sacred sources, and with the intent at one and the same time to instruct the unlearned and to “ convince ” the learned. Probably the “ unlearned ” are the mass of Christians and the learned are the cultivated Christians and

pagans alike, to whom the rude language of the sacred texts, whether in their Greek or their Latin form, would be distasteful. The literary structure of the narrative itself shows that Severus had in his mind principally readers on the same level of culture with himself. He was anxious to show that sacred history might be presented in a form which lovers of Sallust and Tacitus could appreciate and enjoy. The style is lucid and almost classical. Though phrases and even sentences from many classical authors are inwoven here and there, the narrative flows on easily, with no trace of the jolts and jerks which offend us in almost every line of a patchwork imitator of the classics like Sidonius. In order that his work might fairly stand beside that of the old Latin writers, Severus boldly ignored the allegorical methods of interpreting sacred history to which the heretics and the orthodox of the age were alike wedded. Possibly he was not unshaken in his adherence to the peculiar reading which nearly all men then gave to the maxim that “ the letter killeth but the spirit maketh alive.”

As an authority for times antecedent to his own, Severus is of little moment. At only a few points does he enable us to correct or supplement other records. Bernays has shown that he based his narrative of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus on the account given by Tacitus in his “Histories,” a portion of which has been lost. We are enabled thus to contrast Tacitus with Josephus, who warped his narrative to do honour to Titus. In his allusions to the Gentile rulers with whom the Jews came into contact from the time of the Maccabees onwards, Severus dis­closes some points which are not without importance. But the real interest of his work lies, first, in the incidental glimpses it affords all through of the history of his own time, next and more particularly, in the information he has preserved concerning the struggle over the Priscillianist heresy, which disorganized and degraded the churches of Spain and Gaul, and particularly affected Aquitaine. The sympathies here betrayed by Severus are wholly those of St Martin. The stout bishop had withstood to his face Maximus, who ruled for some years a large part of the western portion of the empire, though he never conquered Italy. He had reproached him with attacking and overthrowing his predecessors on the throne, and for his dealings with the church. Severus loses no opportunity presented by his narrative for laying stress on the crimes and follies of rulers, and on their cruelty, though he once declares that, cruel as rulers could be, priests could be crueller still. This last statement has reference to the bishops who had left Maximus no peace till he had stained his hands with the blood of Priscillian and his followers. Martin, too, had denounced the worldliness and greed of the Gaulish bishops and clergy. Accord­ingly we find that Severus, in narrating the division of Canaan among the tribes, calls the special attention of ecclesiastics to the fact that no portion of the land was assigned to the tribe of Levi, lest they should be hindered in their service of God. “ Our clergy seem,” he says, “not merely forgetful of the lesson but ignorant of it, such a passion for possessions has in our days fastened like a pesti­lence on their souls. They are greedy of property, and tend their estates and hoard their gold, and buy and sell and give their minds to gain. Those of them who are reputed to be of better principles, who neither hold property nor barter, sit and wait for gifts, and pollute all the grace of their lives by taking fees, while they almost make market of their holiness ; but I have digressed farther than I intended, through vexation and weariness of the present age.” We here catch an interesting glimpse of the circumstances which were winning over good men to monasticism in the West, though the evi­dence of an enthusiastic votary of the solitary life, such as Severus was, is probably not free from exaggeration. Severus also fully sympathized with the action of St Martin touching Priscillianism. This mysterious Western offshoot of Gnosticism had no single feature about it which could soften the hostility of a character such as Martin’s was, but he staunchly resisted the introduction of secular punishment for evil doctrine, and withdrew from communion with those bishops in Gaul, a large majority, who invoked the aid of Maximus against their erring brethren. In this connexion it is interesting to note the account given by Severus of the synod held at Rimini in 359, where the question arose whether the bishops attending the assembly might lawfully receive money from the imperial treasury to recoup their travelling and other expenses. Severus evidently approves the action of the British and Gaulish bishops, who deemed it unbecoming that they should lie under pecuniary obligation to the emperor. His ideal of the church required that it should stand clear of and above the state.

After the *Chronica* the chief work of Severus is his *Life of Marlin,* a contribution to popular Christian literature which did much to establish the great reputation which that wonder­working saint maintained throughout the Middle Ages. The book is not properly a biography, but a catalogue of miracles, told in all the simplicity of absolute belief. The power to work miraculous signs is assumed to be in direct proportion to holiness, and is by Severus valued merely as an evidence of holiness, which he is persuaded can only be attained through a life of isolation from the