Hymn: 638 "My Soul, Be on Thy Guard"
Scripture: Jude 17-23
Prayer Jude 24, 25

By A.D. 189 the Latin element in the Roman church had become strong enough to choose a Latin bishop, Victor. He had been born of Latin parents in North Africa. In Rome he became the leader of the Latin part of the church and was chosen Bishop—the first bishop with a Latin name. The 190's were very troubled years, especially in the church at Rome. To Victor it must have seemed that the Roman church was about to burst into many factions and fly off in every direction. He felt the situation called for strong action. He was the first bishop to make extensive use of the weapon of excommunication. He was the first bishop to write in Latin—he made extensive use of letters or encyclicals addressed to his clergy and churches. Just about all the heresies and problems were alive and active in Rome: Gnostics of different kinds, Marcionites, Encratites, Montanists, Alogoi, Quartodecimans. To Victor it must have seemed that the problems of the Roman church really boiled down to one thing—"The Asia-Minor Problem"—for most of these problems had come to Rome from Asia Minor. There was a revival of the Eastern Controversy—Blastus came from Asia Minor reviving Quartodecimanism. Two new heresies came from Asia Minor—they were two of the most disturbing heresies the church had faced and they would bother the church for many years. Both of these heresies were called "Monarchian"—one group was the Dynamic or Adoptionist Monarchians. The other group was the Modalistic Monarchians—later called Patripassianists and Sabellians. Victor decided to settle the Asia Minor problem once and for all. Victor is remembered as the first great monarchical bishop of Rome. Victor determined to use the power of the bishop to enforce unity and conformity.

VICTOR AND THE EASTERN CONTROVERSY:
Blastus had come from Asia Minor urging that the Church must celebrate the resurrection of the Lord in the Quartodeciman tradition (reckoning from the Jewish Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month of the Jewish year). Blastus also insisted that the church should install altars and offer animal sacrifices.

Victor called a council in Rome and threatened all who did not keep the Roman date of Easter (Easter Sunday) with excommunication. He would use the power of the keys of Peter.

The reply of Polycrates of Ephesus: Great lights had fallen asleep in Asia—they had the tombs of John and Philip.

Irenaeus of Gaul wrote Victor begging that he follow the example of Anicetus and Polycarp. Others plead for moderation.

It seems that Victor did excommunicate the churches of Asia Minor that held to Quartodecimanism, but he must have backed down since it seems that fellowship between Rome and Asia Minor continued.

VICTOR EXCOMMUNICATED A ROMAN PRESBYTER, FLORINUS: Florinus had become a Valentinian Gnostic. Irenaeus plead with Florinus in a letter, reminding him of their old teacher, Polycarp.
THE DYNAMIC OR ADOPTIONIST MONARCHIANS: Monarchianism was a reaction against Gnosticism with its doctrine of emanations and to the charges made by both Jews and Greeks that Christians were polytheists. Monarchianism was a reaffirmation of monotheism: "We believe in the monarchy." Involved in the Monarchian controversy were three things: the unity of God, the personality of the Son, and the divinity of the Son. The Dynamic or Adoptionist Monarchians put the emphasis on the personality of the Son, and maintained the unity of God by denying the divinity of the Son. They insisted that Jesus was just a man; his divinity was a power (dynamis) that descended upon him as a reward for goodness—hence the name Dynamic Monarchians. Jesus was a man who was adopted by God to be his son—hence they were called Adoptionist Monarchians. The divinity of Jesus was a secondary or lower divinity, thus preserving the oneness of God. A new manifestation of old Ebionism. Theodotus the Tanner brought Adoptionist Monarchianism from Asia Minor to Rome in the early 190's.

Theodotus a wealthy tanner, leather merchant, and harness maker.

Theodotus was a learned man—he knew of the Alogoi's rejection of the Gospel of John and possibly also of Heracleon's commentary. He had his own interpretation.

Theodotus had denied the faith during persecution. After the persecution died down out of shame he fled to Rome. When Theodotus in Rome was confronted with the reports he had denied the faith his defense was that he did not deny God, he had only denied a man.

The doctrine and proof-texts of Theodotus: Jesus was born of a virgin according to the council of the Father, but he was a mere man. He became so pre-eminently religious that at his baptism the Christ descended upon him in the form of a dove. This signalled his adoption as the Son of God. After this he could work miracles.

He drew up a list of proof-texts drawing attention to the manhood of Jesus:
- John 8:40 A man has told you the truth
- Matthew 12:31 Blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven but blasphemy against the Son of Man can be forgiven.
- Deuteronomy 18:15 A prophet from the midst of your brethren like me
- Luke 1:35 the child will be called holy, the Son of God
- Acts 2:22 Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved by God
- I Timothy 2:5 One Mediator—himselves man, Christ Jesus

Gaius a presbyter of Rome wrote against the Adoptionists, calling them "psilanthropists" (those who say Jesus was a mere man).

Victor excommunicated Theodotus the Tanner.

Theodotus the Banker, a wealthy, well educated Aristotelian from Asia Minor, took over the leadership of the Adoptionists, organizing them into a sect.

Early in the third century the Adoptionists chose Natalius as bishop and paid him a set stipend, a practice highly offensive to the church.

Later Adoptionists disagreed whether the adoption came at the baptism or the resurrection. Some denied the Virgin birth. Between 235 and 275 Artemon preached Adoptionism in Rome with some success.
Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch, under Queen Zenobia of Palmyra, was the last a greatest exponent of Adoptionism. He dominated the church in Antioch in the 260's and into the 270's.

THE MODALIST MONARCHIANS: They preserved the Unity of God and the divinity of the Son by denying the personality of the Son. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were one God—they were just different and temporary modes or manifestations of the One God. A new manifestation of Docetism.

Praxeas had been a Confessor in Asia Minor (he had suffered in the persecutions of Marcus Aurelius). In Rome he used his influence as a Confessor to arouse Bishop Victor against the Montanists and Adoptionists.

Praxeas emphasized the divine unity. Father, Son and Holy Spirit were manifestations of the One God. The Father himself suffered for us on the cross.

Praxeas carried his doctrine to Carthage where Tertullian called him a "Patripassianist". He wrote a great work against Praxeas early in the third century charging him with doing two works of the devil in Rome: he drove out the Holy Spirit and crucified the Father—he put to flight the prophets and brought in heresy. Praxeas was forced to sign a recantation which was kept by the church in Carthage.

Noetus of Smyrna took over the leadership of the Modalists in Rome. He had been questioned about his faith in Smurna and had denied that he taught the Father suffered and died. When he was brought before the church a second time he confessed that God had died on the cross and the church excommunicated him.

In Rome Noetus set up a school, claiming to glorify the one God. He claimed to glorify Christ. He rendered the Modalism of Praxeas less offensive by saying that God in his essential nature cannot suffer, but he willed to make himself into a condition of passibility and visibility and appeared as Jesus and as Jesus died on the cross.

Epigonus and Cleomenes carried on the Modalist school in Rome early in the third century.

Sabellius of Libya became the greatest of the Modalists in the third century. He polished the doctrine using the figure of one actor on the Greek stage using three masks to play three roles. His influence was so great in Alexandria and Rome that Modalism came to be called Sabellianism.

THE DEFENSE MECHANISMS OF THE CHURCH:

Development of the hierarchy—tightening the organization of the church

The Monarchical Bishop
Apostolic Succession—Holy Spirit handed down through ordination.

The Tradition—kept by the Bishop
Development of penitential discipline: excommunication.

Councils of bishops
Uniformity of worship—growth of liturgical forms
Canon of the New Testament: the Muratorian Canon (180-200 A.D.)
The Creed: The baptismal formula and the Apostles' Creed (180-200).
Christian commentaries and the allegorical interpretation
The Christian Gnosis and the Christian Mysteries.
THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL IN ALEXANDRIA
Pantaenus, a converted Stoic from Sicily, established a school in Alexandria c. 180 to battle Gnosticism and to prepare candidates for baptism and to strengthen them for Christian living. "The Sicilian bee"--all truth belongs to the Logos. Pantaenus turned his school over to his most celebrated pupil, Clement, and went to India as a missionary c. 190 A.D.