The History of the Church

No. 1. Introduction

[Contributed]

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son*." - John 3:16.*

The Herald of Christ's Kingdom - December, 1936

IN FIELDS not far outside the sleeping town, shepherds are guarding their flocks. The chill of the October night is in the air and the watchers draw their garments closer about them. The sheep lie huddled together with little movement save the occasional stretching to ease cramped limbs. From their vaulted dome the stars shine down and in their cool light the houses, clustered solidly together on the hillside, gleam whitely through the softened shadows. Stilled is the beating pulse of Bethlehem after the bustling crowds of the day; all is dark save where some fitful gleam behind closed doors proclaims a lonely vigil.

In the low-stretched field the shepherds, tired now of the eagerly exchanged thoughts of the hour, sit silent, gazing into the jeweled expanse above them, voicing again within their own hearts the immortal paean of David as he guarded his father's flock in pastures not far distant, perhaps in this selfsame place. Shine on, stars, and let your fingers of light touch with an added gentleness the long fleece of the sleeping flocks. Shine as you have never shone before, bathing with a holier light the quiet roofs of the darkened town. Show tonight, ye heavens, all the wealth of your profound knowledge, for He who hung you faultlessly in the sky, bidding you swing eternally through space to the rhythm of a perfect law, soon shall utter a babe's first cry on earth. Greater are you tonight, oh Bethlehem, than all of earth's proud cities! Amid your humblest surroundings, your poorest travelers, the tired beasts of the day's journey, He who was once so rich, for man's sake becomes poor, and the loving glance and the tender smile to bend over Him adorns but the face of Mary, wife of the peasant Joseph, yet blessed above all women! Sing now, oh angel chorus, your, "Glory to God in the Highest," and chant o'er the hills of Judea that promise of peace to earth's weary.

The World that God so Loved

At the time that Christianity was born, the human race, old and numerous and separated by religion, language, color, and culture, occupied in its civilized aspect a strip of land some twenty degrees in width, lying on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean and extending east to the Pacific Ocean. Outside this strip the rest of the world was barbarous or savage with no settled life, written language, art, architecture, or culture, and so it is impossible to estimate at this time the earth's population. In the eastern half of this civilized strip lay China, India, and Japan; in the western half were the Semites, Greeks and Romans. These two parts influenced each other but little and it was in the middle of the western half that Christianity had its beginning and where its activities were confined for five long centuries. Let us turn then from the Jewish cradle of this new gospel, from the lowly babe in swaddling clothes, and gaze at mighty Rome.

Gross Darkness Covers the People

No denser darkness, no heavier fog of moral corruption, can be found in all history than that of the land of the Caesars at the time the new religion-new, yet with its roots planted deeply in the past, began to dawn. We find Rome a land of white slaves whose new recruits came constantly, brought in chains from her many wars, with bored ears and prices chalked on their bare feet; and to these were added also, from time to time, those men who could not pay their debts. It was not at all uncommon for a household to have as many as a thousand of these slaves, indeed, some senators owned as many as 20,000, most of them idle, uneducated and corrupt. Some of higher mentality, however, were trained to serve as schoolmasters, secretaries, actors, musicians, physicians, in short, in those branches which we today are pleased to term the "professions," and often some refined and cultivated Greek was made to obey the most offensive orders of a vulgar and illiterate Roman. Treated often with great cruelty by masters who possessed over them the power of life and death, looked upon as little better than brute beasts, it was inevitable that such should lose much of the dignity of men. With slaves so much more numerous than owners and hatred from harsh treatment so deeply instilled into their hearts, many were the masters who lived in constant fear, and, indeed, all Rome lived in constant dread of servile insurrections. Even female slaves were lashed and roughly handled for the most trifling offense-a brooch missing, a lock of hair not neatly arranged, and the offender might face death itself.

History relates that one evening the Emperor Augustus was dining at the house of a friend when one of the slaves, carrying a crystal goblet, stumbled and fell, breaking it into many fragments. Angered, the host ordered that the slave be taken at once to the fish-pond and thrown in alive as food for the lampreys, a repulsive fish that rasps away flesh with its sucker-like mouth and its tongue. The terrified boy, escaping from the hands of his fellow-slaves, ran and threw himself at Caesar's feet, imploring that he might die a less horrible death than that of being eaten 'by the fishes. Customary as it was to torture slaves and put them to death, Augustus, horrified it seems, by such cruelty, ordered that the boy be set free, that every crystal goblet in the house of Vedius Pollio be 'broken in his presence and that the fish-pond be at once filled up.

Great Luxury - Great Mystery

In Rome's empire the two great extremes, enormous wealth and the most abject poverty, walked side by side. Around her fine palaces wandered hundreds of beggars, often horribly mutilated, and with small children maimed; the better to ply their sordid profession and move the fortunate, if possible, to greater interest and compassion; beggars, whose numbers were constantly increased by the Roman custom of exposing infants. In a Greek or Roman household the birth of a child was not always a time for rejoicing. If, when the child was first shown to the father, he stooped down and took it up in his arms, it was received by that act as a member of the family and was then taken to the apartments of the women where it rarely, if ever, saw its father's face. If, however, he turned away with no sign of interest, the helpless being was doomed, probably to death, left exposed in some lonely or barren place to the mercy of the wild beasts or first passerby.

Hand in hand with great luxury usually goes great gluttony, and the philosophy of the Epicureans, "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die," had much force. Sometimes a single banquet cost the price of an entire estate. Far lands and seas were searched for food whose value depended

on its cost and rarity rather than on its real good. The 'brains of peacocks, the tongues of nightingales, shell-fish from almost unknown shores, rare wines, all served in dishes of crystal and gold and silver, "embossed," says the poet, "with gems and studs of pearls." "They eat," says the great philosopher, Seneca, "they eat and then they vomit; they vomit, and then they eat." The women supped at silver tables; precious stones ornamented their sandals; their necks gleamed with priceless pearls, diamonds, and rubies; a certain Paulina wore a single pearl said to have cost in our money some $250,000, and her second-best dress, fashioned of emeralds and pearls, cost the equivalent of $160,000. Apicus dissolved pearls in the wine which he drank-a supposed cure for epilepsy-and outside it all were the poor and the aged, the sick and miserable, dying unheeded and unrelieved. Benevolence and charity were all but dead in effete Rome; a man was thought a fool if he gave to the poor: "Give only to him who is rich and can return favors"-and so they lolled in the baths, often open from sunrise to sunset, and even all night. An army of slaves attended them there, rogues and thieves amongst them, and the health and cleanliness of the body were but of secondary consideration, the main object was but idle, voluptuous pleasure.

Cruel was that Roman world as the Gospel morning dawned; gladiators fought to the death in the magnificent amphitheatres, that one of Titus alone seated 80,000 spectators on cushioned and canopied benches of marble. According to rank they were seated from the Emperor down to the lowest populace. Back of the Emperor sat the senators, back of these the generals, then the patricians, then the ordinary citizens, and, last of all, the people fed at the public expense and to whom free entertainment also was given-all this to keep them quiet and submissive-the modern "dole" of today having so historical a precedent. Supported by contributions exacted from conquered provinces, the idle rich and the idle poor, alike, could give themselves up to pleasure, and so the Roman people sat around the arenas where wild beasts tore at each other, where men and wild beasts engaged in conflict, where capital punishments were often meted out, where martyrs burned in shirts of pitchy fire, and where gladiators fought to the death as the populace, wildly cheering, waved handkerchiefs if they desired clemency for a fallen combatant, turned thumbs downward if the popular whim of the crowd called for his death, and showered money into the arena upon the victors. The games of Tragan in celebration of a victory lasted 120 days when 10,000 gladiators fought and 10,000 beasts were slain.

And so money became prized above all things and the only test of social position; the nobility gladly wedding with the most vulgar plebians if to their monetary advantage. Women, regarded with no reverence and little esteem, asked only for diamonds and chariots. All worshiped at the shrine of Mammon, and the pursuit of wealth became a national obsession, for prosperity and success, no matter how obtained, secured position and influence. By this time about 2,000 persons alone owned the, world.

The Religion of Rome

Man is innately religious, there is in him a hunger that has ever caused him to look out and beyond himself to some greater Power, the created calling for his Creator in whose image he was made; that image marred, weakened, and, in some cases, almost obliterated, it is true, but still bearing within him a longing that, alienated from God, finds no satisfaction. And the masses of Rome **were** religious, but with a religion that was national rather than personal or universal, and dwelt only with the affairs of present life. What belief they had in a future life was shadowy and uncertain and today was of vaster importance. And so they prayed the gods to turn away their anger and keep them in good health and to grant good crops and to give them victory and safety in their constant wars. The Emperor, standing far. removed from even his noblest senators,

sometimes cruel and corrupt if not half-mad, was actually deified while living, and took to himself the high title of Pontifex Maximus - Chief Priest-he was, at once, as the historian Gibbon so aptly puts it, "a priest, an atheist, and a god." Though the people in general sneered now at the legends of the gods and goddesses whom their father's worshiped, the rulers thought it expedient to hold the most elaborate rituals that a firmer grasp might be kept on the crowd, for a people devoted to religious rites either then or today, is bound securely to those in charge of those rites. And so a hollow, public display was made of a creed in which its defenders themselves no more believed, for in its stead they were entirely atheistic and superstitious, 'giving credence to sorcerers and astrologers, and to all kinds of imposters. "I perceive," says Paul later at Athens, "that in all things ye are too superstitious."

Such was imperial Rome. What a sad and repellent picture! The wickedly wealthy, the rest of her citizens fed on a miserable pittance, wasted in the games and crime of the day, dying of pestilence and starvation. The loftiest emotions of life all missing, and in their place depraved tastes and enjoyments, wrecking what might have been left in man of the original divine image. Suicide became so common that it was scarcely noticed, and those whose minds were better and more meditative fled to caves and solitude to escape it all. Despotism! debased and illiterate people! cruel slavery! lowered womankind!-is this then the glory of Rome to which Gibbon refers? There were, indeed, its miles of broad paved roads, its 17,000 palaces, its 9,000 'baths, its theatres sand its amphitheatres, the gilded roof of its capitol, costing $15,000,000 of our money. There was that great empire, so vast that the Mediterranean Sea which it enclosed, became a small inland lake, edged with banks, adorned with temples and palaces of superb beauty. There were the white ships flecking this sea, and on land the glory of fruit and harvest. But what of the heart and soul of it all? The Apostle Paul touches that soul with a brief pen-picture in Romans, a glimpse into a dark abyss from which we shrink appalled.

Herein then lies the Christian's deep interest in far-off Pagan Rome -- these were the conditions that Christianity found on that world stage as she entered and, having found, attempting no public reforms, began her impassioned appeal on individual hearts alone. And the action and reaction of Christianity upon the world and the world upon Christianity forms the subject matter of that which we are pleased to term Church History-that History a steady and unbroken chain of events from then until now.

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides 'upon the storm.

"Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work-in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

Next of this series
"SEEKERS AFTER GOD"
" . . . *meaning them (men) to seek for God on the chance of finding Him in their groping for Him." - Moffatt's Translation.*

The History of the Church

No. 2. Seekers After God

"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us." - Acts 17:27.

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IN the darkness of the long, long centuries man has ever sought for God. Heavy have the mists been above him; weary the endless procession of years; but, through the chill, forbidding clouds of his alienation and wistful ignorance, have pierced from time to time stray beams of a heavenly light, fragments as it were from the great and eternal Source of all light, in whom alone there is no darkness. Whether, as some of earth's Christian thinkers have seemed inclined to believe, these came as inspiration, or whether they were but bred in noble hearts and minds bearing still much of the original impress of the Maker, it matters not; true wisdom is, and must ever be, in the very nature of itself, divine wisdom; and truths which man may have arrived at from glimpsing the Invisible from all that is visible, the Creator from the created, and all he has found revealed to him in the law of nature and in the testimony of his highest conscience, are not set aside but are confirmed and strengthened, magnified and made yet more glorious, by the Word of God. "Not having the law," says St. Paul, "they were a law unto themselves and show the work of the law written in their hearts." "The divine image in man," says St. Bernard, "may be burned, but it is never burned out." Truth is ever of God, and is no less truth when found on blotted pages than when inscribed on priceless vellum; no less true when found on heathen lips, than when thundered forth from carved and costly pulpit.

What Christian heart could fail to feel, in that gratitude which is his for an infinitely fuller and more blessed revelation, aught but a compassionate interest in what truth or measure of truth God in His tender mercy vouchsafed even some Pagan philosopher in his dire need? "God is close to each one of us," said Paul to the Athenians, "for it is in Him that we live and move and exist, as some of *your own poets* have said." If the God-inspired Apostle thought it not amiss to quote to the crowd a fragment of truth from the Pagan poets, Aratus and Cleanthes (see margin Acts 17:28), surely we may deem it not displeasing to that Heavenly Father if we pause for a few moments to see what light, or aspect of light, a Seneca, an Epictetus, a Marcus Aurelius -- great philosopher, humble slave, and lofty Emperor, "groping blindly in the darkness," apprehended. Touched they God's hand in that darkness? Were they lifted up and strengthened?

The World Knew God not by Wisdom

The melancholy picture already presented of the state of Roman society at the time Christianity made its appearance corroborates the Scriptural declaration that *"the world by wisdom* knew not God." For philosophy was a religion of the intellectual and noble few-a mere handful history discloses -- soaring over the heads and leaving untouched the hearts of the travailing multitude. Christianity, on the contrary, called to not many wise, not many noble, who, hearing that sweetest of all messages, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden," embraced with joy all that it had to offer of peace and happiness in the present, and found hope and comfort in the anticipation of that resurrection and life brought to light by the Gospel, and made certain by the death on Calvary.

The Wrath of God-the Guilty World

" ... when they knew God they glorified Him not as God," declares the Apostle Paul, "for whatever is to be known of God is plain to them; God Himself has made it plain-for ever since the world was created, His invisible nature, His everlasting power and divine being have been quite perceptible in what He has made,, So they have no excuse." - MOFFATT.

Yea, they were without excuse, for the heavens above them had spoken to them by day, given knowledge by night. They beheld the bright sun, the gathering cloud, the falling rain, coaxing the dark mold until it burst forth into profusion of upward reaching life: ". . .. as the bountiful Giver," declared Paul at Lystra, "He did not leave Himself without a witness, giving you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, giving you food and joy to your heart's content." They thrilled to the lofty peaks of mountains clothed in blue shadows and capped with white clouds; they gazed at verdure crowned hills and calm valleys and saw the rivers running their clearcut paths to the heaving breast of the great ocean waiting to infold them. Their wondering eyes watched the steady procession of the seasons, unalterable in their seedtime and harvest-the visible testifying to the Invisible, the things that are made telling ever of their beneficent Maker. "When r founded the earth where were you then?" asked the Eternal's voice from the storm cloud; "Who laid the corner stone, when the morning stars were singing and all the angels chanted in their joy? Who helped to shut in the sea, when it burst from the womb of chaos -when I fixed its boundaries, barred and bolted it, saying, 'Thus far and no further! Here your proud waves shall not pass'? ... Have showers a human sire? ... who has the skill to mass the clouds, or tilt the pitchers of the sky, when the soil runs into cakes of earth, and the clods stick fast together?" Then Job replied to the Eternal: "I have heard of Thee by hearsay, but now *mine eyes* have *seen* Thee."

The Work of the Law Written in Their Hearts

Out of the quagmire of the Roman world, like some high mountains rising from the common plain, there were those few men of lofty mind and soul who pushed their altars to the great Unknown. The exact date of birth of one of these, the philosopher, Seneca, tutor of the young Nero, is uncertain, but thought to be about B.C. 7. No (higher or grander truths have ever been - reached by man who had not the aid of Christianity, than were reached by this high-minded Roman, and many prominent in the Gospel's spread have paused at times to pay him tribute. "Seneca, our own," says Jerome of the Latin Vulgate. It has been interestingly pointed out that Seneca's early days were contemporary with those of the Savior and that before he had reached the great power and success of his mature years, the Son of God had been mocked and scourged and crucified in far Judea. As Seneca walked sedately along the streets of Rome, an attendant slave by his side, two fisher lads, Peter and John, played by the blue waters of the Sea of Galilee, and when, later, St. Paul was sitting at the feet of Gamaliel, the renowned teacher of the Law at Jerusalem, Seneca, a young man, haunted in his own great city the school of the Stoic, absorbing with eager attention the moral philosophy of the instructor Attalus.

The Stoic philosophy was the purest and highest in Rome and shone as light against darkness in the cruelty, the intemperate feasting, and the grosser appetites of the times. But a true Stoic must feel no pity, for pity is to him but a weakness and might disturb his inner calm; he must destroy rather than master the' human passions; indulge in no anger even against the moral evil about him, repelling to his very soul; he must feel no fear in danger; be given not to much affection-in

short, he must suppress all emotion and scorn the sadness of his fellow-creatures. So stern a doctrine might rule the mind, but never the gentle soul of Seneca, for he taught kindness to slaves at a time when kindness was despised; he wrote of the duty that the master should ever feel towards his slave, placing the human above all the prejudice of birth or position. Better far it seems could the philosopher have fitted his steps to follow the way of the Man of Sorrows who drove in indignation the greedy money-changers from the Temple, who wept at the tomb of the friend He loved, and bowed His meek head in grief in the loneliness of the olive grove. But Seneca knew the Christians only in the shocking calumnies uttered about them and they appeared to him but as a repellent sect of a repellent race, the Jews. It was an older 'brother of his before whom St. Paul stood as recorded in Acts 18, the careless Gallio, who with the true Roman scorn for the constant religious bickering of the Jews, said to them just as Paul was about to open his mouth: "If it had been a misdemeanor or wicked crime, there would be some reason in me listening to you -- but as these are merely questions of words and persons and your own Law, you can attend, to them for yourselves." And Gallio took no notice when the Greeks beat the president of the synagogue outside.

But to Seneca's shame, it must be confessed that his -life in one outstanding circumstance did not conform to his highest and best thoughts, for he became, his critics never fail to point out, rich and powerful under the patronage of the detestable Nero. Let us express sorrow rather than blame, however, at this blot on a good man's memory, for Christians too have shamed at times their higher and more glorious heritage.

How nearly Senecaa approximated the revealed truth of the Scriptures at times may be seen from the following comparisons, but in his writings much is also alien to that Word, for, from the loftiest thoughts of God, he wanders at times into expressions of vague Pantheism, and great moral truths are intermingled with great error; paradoxes occur, but beauty of sentiment and a desire for holiness pervades even his mistakes. As we proceed further along the traveled road of Christian history and view the constant evidence that with all the help of the inspired pages of the Old Scriptures and with all the glorious revealment of the New, man has ever brought forth his brightest gems of truth encased still in much that is earthy, much that is human; that his best and most earnest efforts have ever been, in the very nature of man himself, imperfect and not free from fault, it is then, and only then, that we can duly appreciate and at the same time view with a clear and impartial charity the earnest work of these noblest philosophers of antiquity.

Scripture: "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

Seneca: "It is no advantage that conscience is shut within us; we lie open to God."

Scripture: "Let not -thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."

Seneca: "Let him who hath conferred a favor hold his tongue-In confessing a favor nothing should be more avoided than pride."

Scripture: "Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love."

Seneca: "Man is born for mutual assistance."

Scripture: "But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold."

Seneca: "Words must be sown like seeds; which, although It be small, when it hath found a suitable ground, unfolds its strength, and from a very small size is expanded into the large increase."

Scripture: "'The love of money is the root of all evil." Seneca: "Riches-the greatest source of human trouble."

Scripture: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

Seneca: "If we wish to be just judges of all things, let us first persuade ourselves of this: :that there is not one of us without fault-no man is found who can acquit himself; and he who calls himself innocent does so without reference to a witness, and not to his conscience."

Epictetus

In the household of Epalphroditus, -- secretary and librarian of Nero, there lived a lame slave boy from Phrygia, called Epictetus, meaning "bought" or "acquired." The great Seneca may have noticed him there when he called on matters of business with his master, for awkwardness of movement often compels the eye more than grace of bearing, but what Seneca could not know, as Epictetus limped across the marble floors before him, was that in that mean and undersized body dwelt so lofty a mind and soul that later years would find him so high in philosophy as to reach the flight of the master philosopher himself. Epictetus had been educated under the best of tutors, for just as scores of slaves were needed for the lowest menial tasks, ignorant, and debased in fear, so were those also needed who could minister to the highest needs of the master, and it seems to have pleased Epaphroditus to own a philosopher-slave. Faith in God, resignation to His will, and gratitude to Divine providence breathes forth in all his lines.

Speaking of the multitude of our natural gifts, he .says: "Are these the only gifts of Providence towards us? Nay, what power of speech suffices adequately to praise, or to set them forth? For had we but true intelligence, what duty would be more perpetually incumbent on us than both in public and in private to hymn the Divine and 'bless His name and praise His benefits?

Ought we not, when we dig and when we plow, and when we eat, to sing this hymn to God? -- What else can I do, who am a lame, old man, except sing praise to God? Now had I been a nightingale, or had I been a swan, I should have sung the songs of a nightingale or the songs of a swan; but being a reasonable being, it is my duty to hymn God-and you also do I exhort to this same song."

". . . He is a slave," says Epictetus, "whose body is free -but whose soul is bound, and, on the contrary, he is free whose body is bound but whose soul is free."

"Think of God," says the poor slave-philosopher, "oftener than you breathe. Let discourse of God be renewed daily more surely than your food."

We quote from his famous Manual these words of a resigned heart: "Remember that you are an actor of just such a part as is assigned you by the Poet of the play, of a short part, if the part be short; of a long part, if it be long. Should He wish you to act the part of a beggar, take care to act it naturally and nobly; and the same if it be the part of a lame man, or a ruler, or a private man;

for *this* is in your power, to act well the part assigned you: but to *choose* that part is the function of another."

"If you wish to be good, first believe that you are bad," he counsels. "They that be whole need not a physician," says the Bible.

"Slave, will you not bear with your own brother who has God for 'his father no less than you? Are you yourself so very wise?"

Epictetus never mentions a life to come, although the inherent immortality of man was a prominent thought in the teaching of Plato, whose philosophy the Roman schools decadently followed. Either he did not believe or he felt he had too little evidence to stress it. It seems not to have been given to these philosophers to know Christianity as it really was, for it was everywhere viewed with suspicion and pictured with the grossest misrepresentations. Prejudice has often worked sad havoc in the best of Christian lives, therefore let us not condemn it too harshly in those of such an age. As we view a lame slave, knowing nothing of the hope brought to light in the Gospel, seeing in the present, on the one hand, all the dissolute and selfish folly of the rich, on the other, looking into the sad, the depraved, the ignorant faces of his brethren slaves about him -- slaves, chained even to kennels beside the great doors of the palace for human watch dogs: as we see him dragging his hindering limb beside him and hear again his song of praise and gratitude to his Maker, "What else can I do, who am a lame, old man, except sing praise to God?" -- What else can we do, who have the assurance of sins forgiven, who behold a new day when the tears shall be wiped off all faces; when the lame shall leap, the blind eyes see, the deaf ears hear; who see with the clear eye of faith the child at play beside the viper's nest, the tender lamb besides the jungle beast; nothing to hurt, naught to offend in the glorious land where none shall say, "I am sick" -- we repeat, what else can we do than to sing our constant praise to God in that love and gratitude which no "language can express" and "no ministry can show"? No time we find for idle disputations, no time to judge the feast days of another-time only for the praise of God, the Father; time only for the Bride to be made ready.

Marcus Aurelius

"O framed for nobler times and calmer hearts 0 studious thinker, eloquent for truth! Philosopher, despising wealth and death But patient, childlike, full of life and love."

The great historian, Niebuhr, says this of the noble emperor: "It is more delightful to speak of Marcus Aurelius than of any man in history, for if there is any sublime human virtue it is his. He was certainly the noblest character of his time and I know no other man who combined such unaffected kindness and humility, with such conscientiousness and severity towards himself." Another remarks, "It seems that in him the philosophy of heathendom grows less proud, draws nearer and nearer to a Christianity which it ignored or which it despised and is ready to fling itself into the arms of the 'Unknown God.'" And the gentle historian, John Lord, writes, "Marcus Aurelius is immortal, not so much for what he *did* as for what he was. His greatness was in his character; his influence for good was in his noble example." Absolute monarch over 120,000;000 of people, occupant of the throne of the civilized world, he was, "modest, virtuous, affable, accessible, considerate, gentle, studious, contemplative, stained by no vices, a model of human virtue." As the fame of David rests upon his Psalms, so the fame of Aurelius rests upon his Meditations. It has been said that Christian grace alone has surpassed the sweetness and resignation to the will of God that is expressed in this private diary where this mighty though humble Emperor

holds soliloquy with his own heart and solemnly examines his own conscience. His thanks extends to Providence at all times, not for his great personal beauty, his wealth or his throne, not for those things that men seek, but for the careful guidance of his youth which kept him from the gross sins of his day, trained him in philosophy, and for the grace that kept him in the way. The lofty discourses of Epictetus had a part in his education and thus the lowly slave, chattel of an unkind master who was himself but a vulgar freedman, became the teacher of the gentle aristocrat, his seat the throne of mighty Rome. There is sadness in these Meditations, the sadness of the pure and great in contact with a wicked, sinful world: "Soon, very soon, thou wilt be but ashes, or a skeleton, and either a name or not even a name; but a name is sound and echo. All the things which are much valued in life are empty, and rotten, and trifling, and little dogs biting one another-but fidelity and modesty, and justice and truth are fled." And again, "It would be man's happiest lot to depart from mankind without having had a taste of lying, and hypocrisy, and luxury, and pride. However, to breathe out one's life when a man has had enough of these things is the next best voyage, as the saying is."

But such notes of sorrow at life's disillusionment give way to nobler utterances: "For what will the most violent .man do to thee if thou continuest benevolent to him? gently and calmly correcting him when he is trying to do thee harm, saying, 'Not so, my child; we are constituted by nature for something else: I shall certainly not be injured, but thou art injuring thyself, my child!' " And, "Begin the morning by saying to thyself, I shall meet with the busybody, the ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, envious, unsocial. All these things happen to them by their ignorance of what is good and evil. But I who, have seen the nature of the good that it is beautiful, and of the bad that it is ugly, and the nature of him that does wrong that it is akin to me,--I can neither be injured by any of them, for no one can fix on me what is ugly, nor can I be angry with my kinsman, nor hate him." How closely here Aurelius approximates the Christian teaching-"Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." (2 Thess. 4:15.) "Forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any." - Col. 3:13.

"We ought to do good to others as simply and naturally as a horse runs, or a bee makes honey, or a vine bears grapes after season without thinking of the grapes which it has borne."

"Making life as honest as possible, and calmly doing our duty in the present, as the hour and the act require, and not too curiously considering the future beyond us; standing ever erect, believing that God is just, we make our passage through this life no dishonor to the power that placed us there."

"How hast thou comported thyself unto this day? Consider how complete is the history of thy life, how thou hast fulfilled thine office. Call to mind all the noble actions which have been done by thee, the many pleasures and pains thou hast despised, the honors thou hast neglected, the ingrates thou hast treated with benignity."

Do we find in these quotations something of self-complacency? If so, it is the inevitable outcome of man seeking salvation within himself. "Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men," cried the Pharisee in faraway Judea, and Stoicism was after all, the Pharisaism of the Roman but free from hypocrisy. Austere in its pride, it was the natural enemy of a religion based on humility, and in this as well as in his devotion to what he considered the good of the State may lie that answer of the seeming paradox of a good and kind and lofty character standing before the eyes of the world as a severe persecutor of the Christians.

Retiring into his small tent after the day's battle with the enemy, the barbarian along the Danube, he held ' nightly meditation with his own 'heart and conscience. Writing in his diary by the feeble

brightness of his small lamp, he made permanent his thoughts in words that down throughout succeeding years would echo and re-echo in other noble hearts. "It is in thy power," he writes, "whenever thou shalt choose, to retire into thyself, for *nowhere* with more *quiet* and *freedom* does a man retire than into his own soul." And again, "Since it is possible that thou mayest depart from this life this very moment, regulate every act and thought accordingly, while it is in thy power to be good."

But, we would ask, is not this the Emperor under whose reign the followers of Christ were greatly persecuted? Did not the venerable Polycarp, good Bishop of Smyrna, meet at this time the martyrdom he so courted rather than shunned? Can he be called *good* whose rulership stands forth before the world stained red, by innocent blood? It has often been said that the best of Rome's Emperors persecuted the Christians, the depraved and dissolute let them alone. Why this was so, we may see later on. Suffice it now to say that the early Christians regarded him charitably and without great blame, and the ablest and best of religious historians of more recent times rise to his defense, insisting that the charge of cold-blooded persecution alongside so gentle and loving and charitable a character creates but a paradox. In his time the Bishop of Sardis expresses doubt that he is really aware of the manner in which his Christian subjects are treated, *while* Justin Martyr, also to lose his life in that reign, addresses him *in his Apology* (the appeals of the Apologists are believed never to have reached the eyes of the Emperors) in words of great confidence and respect. It is true that Aurelius seemed to regard the Christians with the prevailing dislike of his kind. The philosophers surrounding his throne treated this new, "imitation of philosophy" with jealousy and aversion and the pure and lofty nature of the Emperor himself would shrink from a sect whose *supposed* midnight *orgies* included even the deed of cannibalism. Christian slaves had admitted this, and much more, under torture, and this was believed to be a sure criterion of truth to the superstitious populace, who sent rumor after rumor abroad. The mind of Aurelius could not have been heavily concerned with the Christians, fox he mentions them but once in his Meditations and then only their seeming indifference to death, which he ascribes to perverse obstinacy rather than devotion to principle. There were many Christians in Rome but the persecution did not occur there; it seemed, rather, spontaneous and accidental, happening as it did in Gaul and Asia Minor. He cared so little for the State religion that he built but one temple and that to Beneficence and he looked with kindly tolerance on all sorts of beliefs and ideas within his capitol. Writing of the rigors of asceticism, which he viewed with disfavor, he remarks, "It is not fit that I should give myself pain, for I have never intentionally given pain to others." Do brackish fountains then send forth sweet waters? Nay, and figs grow not on thorns and thistles!

The morality of these philosophers is high and beautiful and we would reflect that if a Seneca could live a life of simplicity and self-denial in the midst of Roman wealth and extravagance; if an Epictetus, granted his late freedom, found contentment and high thoughts within his barren hut; if an Aurelius, absolute of throne, could live pure, simple, self-denying days-what shall *we* render to the Lord for all His benefits to us? They arrived at the sweet faith of divine guidance but with God and nature often confused; and with all the attainment of that which was good they were still left unsatisfied and sad. "The morality and philosophy of Paganism" says one, "as contrasted with the splendor of revealed truth and the holiness of Christian life, are as moonlight to sunlight. The Stoical philosophy may be compared to a torch which flings a faint gleam here and there in the dusky recesses of a mighty cavern; Christianity is the sun pouring into the inmost depths of the same cavern its sevenfold *illumination." - Contributed.*

Next of this series

THE CHURCH ESTABLISHED--PERSECUTION

The History of the Church

No. 3 - THE CHURCH ESTABLISHED--PERSECUTION

"Then what is the Jew's superiority? Much in every way."

The Herald of Christ's Kingdom - February, 1937

THE PHILOSOPHY of the Pagan world has been compared to a torch casting its flickering light into the darkness of a mighty cavern; Judaism then was as the radiance of moonlight, clear and steady, touching the deeper shadows of the darkness, and reflecting, with the promise of a coming day, the light of a Sun already shining upon it. Much advantage then had the Jew in every way for to him was entrusted the Scripture of God, speaking not in the sermons of brook and of stones, eloquent though they may be of creative power and intelligence, but in the loving tones of a personal Creator whose Father's heart must still remember though an earthly parent forget her child and through all those inspired pages, whether by historian, law-giver, or prophet, there lay the transcendent promise, the undying hope of a coming Messiah -- a coming but dimly at first revealed to undone man outside the eastern gate as One who yet would bruise the serpent's head. Prophet, greater than Moses; Priest, after the order of Melchisedec; the Rod from Jesse's stem, the Branch from out his root; wise Counselor; strong Deliverer -- all shadowed forth in manifold distinction the greatness of the coming, needed Christ.

"For He decreed of old that those whom He predestined should share the likeness of His Son -- - that He might be the firstborn of a great brotherhood."

Prefigured in the Old Testament, revealed in the New, came Jesus of Nazareth in due time to the shore of Galilee where weary crowds pressed close and pleading hands touched hopefully His robe. Calling to lowly fishermen, He bade them leave their boats and, trusting, follow on, to witness of that Life to all the world.

The faith of Christ, at first confined to Jerusalem, spread on to Samaria-a town regarded by the Jew as half-heathen though situated in the very heart of Palestine. The Samaritans, returned Jews from Assyria, were touched by those elements of Pagan worship absorbed during the period of captivity. On to Antioch in north Syria, third city in importance in the Roman Empire, the message was carried, and to Damascus the other side of Jordan.

The Apostle John seemed to confine his efforts for the first twenty years after Pentecost to Palestine, and we find him one of those present at the council in Jerusalem in A. D. 50. Then we lose sight of him entirely until he is found in Ephesus and, later on, an exile to Patmos, dying in Ephesus about the year A. D. 98, around a hundred years of age. Three great events occurred in the late active years of his life -- the Neronian persecution of the Church, the fall of Jerusalem, and the growth of heresy. Peter, an intensely Jewish character, labored also in Palestine and as far north as Antioch, making a missionary tour through parts of Asia Minor and to Babylon. He, too, was present at the Jerusalem council and, hard as it had been for him to learn that Christianity was for all men, took his stand with Paul, breaking the bonds of Judaism for all time and nullifying its ceremonials as a necessary entrance to the Church. This placed on a common footing all Christian converts, whether tutored under the Jewish schoolmaster of the Law, or

taught in the Academy of Plato; whether reaped from the field of unlettered slave, or drawn from freedman's home. Peter seems to have confined his labors to the East, leaving the West to Paul, and there is no historical proof that he founded the Church in Rome, that he was bishop of that Church, or that he was ever in Rome at all, although there is the possibility that he reached there for a brief period and that he perished there under the persecutions of Nero about A. D. 67.

A Chosen Vessel to the Gentiles

At the tender age of fifteen years there came to Jerusalem an earnest student of the Law to be a pupil of the great Gamaliel.. He was born in Tarsus about the year A. D. 4. His father, a Jew, and probably a man of means, had attained to Roman citizenship there. The boy had been reared in the strictest piety, schooled in Scripture and all Rabbinic lore. The city was a seat of Hellenist culture, its university second only to that of Alexandria. The teachers of this school were also zealous preachers, lecturing in the streets and bringing to the motley crowd the morals of the Stoic philosophy. Saul, an ardent worshiper of the one great God of the. Hebrews, could not have been ignorant of the many gods worshiped by the people about him, and his writings show a familiarity with the Greek classical literature, though pure from any shade of thereby colored thought. He spoke Greek, the language of that part of Asia Minor where he lived, but loved best the holy tongue of his fathers, or next its Hebrew cognate, the Aramaic, language of our Lord. "It was a day," says one, "when people groped for salvation as a man gropes for a tinder box fallen in the dark. They craved a light to show them a way out of the horror which was existence, and no ritual was too strange, no religion too old, for them to inquire into it." And so not only to the Stoic teacher in the street came the Gentiles, but also to the synagogue of the Jew, peering half-persuadedly through the door, with but the few entering, for the threshold of the Law proved too high, and to step inside was at too great a cost. "God-fearers" they were called, and beholding such as these the devout and zealous soul of the young Jew must have been stirred with deep pity and with a compelling desire that all the world might be won to his God and to Israel's law.

In Jerusalem Saul came in contact with the followers of Jesus. To him they seemed a menace to all that he had loved and hoped and sought for, and the doctrine of a Stephen, who was no ignorant Galilean but a learned Hellenist like himself, a subtle, poison thing. And at the age of thirty as he witnessed Stephen's death, the pure life and the angelic countenance arousing no pity, no regret, in his intolerant, Pharisaical heart, he determined to root out this devastating faith and drive it far from the precincts of his loved Jerusalem. Accordingly we read, in the Book of Acts, "Saul made havoc of the Church." Not content with this, he armed himself with special authority and hurried on to Damascus to arrest all of the hated ones there. A few miles from his destination, still breathing forth his murderous threatenings, the strange thing happened, which resulted in the blinded Saul, being led humbly by the hand, entering Damascus gate, with those kind, reproving tones, "Why persecutest thou Me?" to ring forever in his contrite mem*ory*. And so the hateful name of Saul, a name that still filled Christian souls with dread in spite of his conversion, was - changed to Roman Paul, a name to be enshrined throughout the Age on every pious heart, and carved for all eternity upon the twelfth stone of the New Jerusalem.

"I have fought a good fight . . . I have kept the faith."

Poor in personal appearance, afflicted by some unnamed "weakness, encountering treachery in various places, his very life in danger on sea and land, slandered by false brethren, hated by the Jews, treated coldly by some of the Jewish Christians for his utter disregard of Jewish ceremonials in the new life, that which he had tried to destroy he sought now to carry to all the world. How he traveled we do not know, probably on foot, choosing water routes whenever possible as more comfortable and less hazardous in spite of the uncertainty of the elements. Some twelve years, if not longer, he labored, toiling over rocky places and through the briers of the way, crust in pocket, staff in hand. On he went through Cyprus, Asia Minor, and Greece, the Book of Acts closing abruptly with Paul a prisoner in Rome, his end shrouded in mystery except as reasonable tradition tells of his martyrdom in Nero's reign. And in such a way, perhaps, closed the 'career of the most outstanding of all, the Apostles in character, zeal in learning, in selflessness without equal-his earthly life ended, his work continuing on. He had endured slander as the best of the saints must ofttimes endure, the distress of his heart showing forth on some occasions in the force and irony of his defense, but in the main ignoring it all with that forgiveness born of Christlike love

"Assailed by slander and the tongue of strife,
His only answer was a blameless life,
And he that forged and he that flung the dart
Had each a brother's interest in his heart."

But his hard and weary pilgrimage had known its joy and comfort in the fellowship along the way: There was Timothy, his spiritual son, his beloved companion; Tychicus, faithful to the last; Gaits of Derby, one of his first converts; Jason, his fellow-countryman from Thessalonica. There were those three happy months, in Corinth where he found fellowship with Titus, Luke, and many of the Christians of that city, among them Gaius whose house was always open for the hospitality so necessary at that time to the Church. We can share in imagination those happy evenings, the high, pure intercourse of Christian minds and hearts, the consolation given one to another, the joyous dwelling upon that greatest of all topics -- that One had lived and died and lived again, triumphant o'er the grave. What heartfelt praise, what fervent prayers, what nameless acts of brotherly devotion, and then the last God-speed as Paul, departing, bade farewell.

". . . a holy nation . . . honest among the Gentiles."

And so by the labor of the Apostles and many nameless evangelists the churches were established here and there. Against the larkness all around they shone as beacons, heaven-lit, along a wave-washed shore. The daily lives of the Christians, testifying to the beauty of holiness within them, contrasted greatly with those, of their Pagan neighbors The Pagan amusements were cruel and degrading; the Christians asked nothing more than their happy little meetings together. Paintings on the uncovered walls of Pompeii bear shameful witness to the traveler of today of a people morally sick unto death; on the walls of the Catacombs the Christian pictured forth his faith and hope and joy. The Roman practiced infanticide; the followers of Jesus had as their example One who, taking little children into His arms, tenderly blessed them. The Pagan detested the institution of marriage, looking upon it as a hindrance to desired freedom; the Christian regarded it as holy, ordained of God, and inviolate. Pagan society was composed of unhappy slaves and cruel masters; amongst God's children there was neither bond nor free, all were brethren with *no* lines of distinction in Christ. In the Pagan heart dwelt hopeless dissatisfaction; in the Christian heart was shed an inward joy, and hope of a blessed future, earthly sorrow they had, to be sure, but to them it endured for but a moment. The heathen was coldly callous; his Christian neighbor, often with little of this world's goods himself, shared with the needy.

Can Christian idealism then present that early and visible Church without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing? Not so, for from the darkness of the Pagan world they came, many of those converts, poor, ignorant, and despised, and in that coming brought with them its marks upon the flesh. But with all their faults and weaknesses they were as the arresting salt in an earth whose general corruption was bringing surely and swiftly its course to a close. They tended the sick, relieved the poor, and regarded every soul for whom Christ died as precious, no matter how degraded. The same failings however were theirs that have beset the Lord's people all down the Gospel Age. They triumphed as we triumph; they failed where we fail; they were inconsistent and not free from party-spirit, trying to force upon others their own prejudices and thereby falling short in love. They were intolerant, and magnified the importance of the flesh, which at its best can never glory in God's presence, some holding forth a banner with the name of Paul and others crying out the name Apollos, forgetting that the basis for all Christian unity is Christ -- the All-embracing and the Indivisible.

The Testimony of the Catacombs

A deep glimpse into the lives and aspirations of the very early Church may be had in the paintings and drawings of the Catacombs. These excavations, perhaps some 400 miles in all, are hewn in the under-soil of Rome, known to geology as "granular tufa" which lends itself readily to such tunnelings, there being sometimes from three to five galleries one above another. Although they were at times used as places of refuge and worship, they were not formed for such a purpose, but were places of Christian' burial, the Pagans burning their dead while the Christians, following the practice of the Jew, buried them. The earliest inscription that has been found in the Catacombs is A. D. 72, and the latest bears the date of A. D. 410. The comforting hope of the Christians, as shown in symbol, inscription, and fresco, gives evidence that they had already received by faith the oil of joy for mourning and that the ashes of their loved ones by the same power blossomed forth in beauty.

They pictured not the sadness of human bereavement, but that abiding peace which the sorrows of their earthly life could never take away. They touched the earthy, gloomy walls with life, not death; in vine and blooming flower, not in broken wheel and column: the rose peeped out from thorny stem, the purple cluster of the grape hung heavy from its twisting vine-symbols these of life and hope and 'beauty, never of despair. And o'er their dead they carved such gentle thoughts as these: "Eternal peace be with thee, Timothea, in Christ"; "The sleeping place of Elpis" "Agape, thou shalt live forever while all along the words, "In peace", are touching, in the sweet monotony of their repetition. The very word of death was studiously avoided on the graves of the martyrs - there was but one Death and that had swallowed up all other deaths in victory. Quite marked in contrast are the thoughts carved on memorials of the Pagans: "Farewell, farewell, oh most sweet, forever and eternally, farewell"; "Our hope was in our boy; all is ashes and lamentation "Once I was not; now I am not; I know nothing about it; it does not concern me."

On the frescoes a scene depicts the raising of Lazarus and another the healing of the paralytic, but most of them are from the Old Testament. There is one of the three Hebrew lads in the fiery furnace; Daniel safe amongst the hungry lions; and Jonah spewed upon the shore by a creature long and uncouth, probably to show victory through Christ over death. One of the most favored pictures is that of the Good Shepherd; there is nothing of the merciless judge and the Infant in Mother arms which later on in the Church's history the brush of an Angelo and the canvas of a Raphael so earnestly exulted in. In the Catacombs the symbol of the Cross is also impressively absent, its earliest appearance being on the tomb of an empress of the date A. D. 451. There is no

real picture of the crucifixion, such conceptions dating rather from. the ninth century. The Christ of the primitive Church was a glorious, living person, a brief glimpse of whose resurrected glory was all but fatal to the eyes of Saul, and it would have been but sacrilege for them to dwell upon and blazon forth the dead body of One arisen. Better far to enshrine the living image of that glorified Lord in their hearts and refrain as from an impiety to set it forth by chalk and *brush.*

- Contributed.

Next of this series
THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH

The History of the Church

The Herald of Christ's Kingdom - May, 1937

No. 4

The Persecution of the Church

UP TO the tenth year of Nero's reign, A. D. 64, the power of the Roman Empire had meant something of protection to the "Galileans"; especially had the Apostle Paul reason to thank that ruling arm which reached out to protect him in several instances when his safety was threatened in provincial trouble. The boy, Nero, as has been noted previously, had been brought up under the care and tutelage of the philosopher Seneca, called from exile for the purpose. For some five years after his succession to the throne the careful rearing of the philosopher made itself felt, and Nero ruled humbly and well, gaining esteem and popularity. Then the wealth and power of his position began to have its effect and the evil of the suppressed nature (began to assert itself, until in 62, when Seneca retired from his post, Nero was already reaping the resultant distrust of his people. Now came disaster after disaster; in 63 an earthquake destroyed Pompeii, an earthquake whose destruction was still in evidence in spite of earnest rebuilding, when the erupting volcano, Vesuvius, took its horror-marked place upon the pages of devastating history. "Surely," said the worshipful Pagans, "our gods are most angry."

On the night of July 18, 64, fire broke out in Rome. For nine days the flames licked the frantic city. Nero was not free from suspicion. All the authorities since Tacitus, who declares the origin uncertain, claim it was started by Nero, 'but his guilt has never been proved. At enormous cost the city was beautifully and safely rebuilt and the magnificent palace of Nero, "the golden house, was erected. But the dissatisfaction of the people was increasing and the selfish, cruel, depraved Emperor looked about for a scape-goat to direct attention from his own unpopularity-ah, yes, the Christians! Who better than they to place before the Romans as the offenders of the gods! Already they were despised. *They* were said to hate mankind, and had been heard to speak of a devastating conflagration, earth-wide. Yes, upon the Christians should fall the blame for the catastrophe.

Persecution under Nero

And so Nero made a great holiday, for nothing pleased the Romans more. He gay e elaborate chariot races and, more exciting still, killed in great numbers the helpless Christians, thinking up many ingenious ways of making their dying agonies more interesting. Some were clothed with the skins of wild beasts and placed where the dogs could tear them to pieces. Others were attired in pitchy shirts, then hung upon crosses and set on fire to illuminate the garden walks at twilight. The Bible is strangely silent on the Neronian persecution; neither can we find there any answer to the question of just what death came to Paul and to Peter. It has been suggested as a reasonable answer to this that it was perhaps deemed wiser that no compromising matter be found in the Christian manuscripts, no direct accusation of this persecuting government.

The life of Nero ends in a way that rivals the close of some fiction. History reveals him crouched in a room of the freedman's villa some four miles from Rome, to which he has fled. He hears the beat -of the horses' hoofs as the soldiers near his hiding place. He points a dagger to his own throat with a trembling hand, the will behind it lacking the courage to strike. Then Epaphroditus, secretary of Nero and former master of the philosopher slave, Epictetus, who has. loyally accompanied his Emperor to exile, reaches forth his hand and drives the dagger home. Thus perished Nero, last of the Caesars, looked upon with horror by the early Christians as the fulfillment of that Antichrist whose seat would be the seven hills of Rome, whose coming was to fill the saints with dread.

By the end of the first century the Christians were very numerous and the Romans no longer confounded them with Judaism, a tolerated religion, as they had done. At first, regarded as just another sect of detestable Jews, they were reasonably safe from any interference, for Rome, although her twelve tables of law forbade foreign beliefs within her own borders, practised as expedient a toleration of the many religious beliefs and customs which worshiped side by side in the famed city. But after the reign of Hadrian and the savage massacre by the false Messiah, Barcochba, they were viewed in the light of a new and very detestable cult and became a forbidden religion in a city that tolerated practically all others.

Testified on Racks of Torture

A Jewish school established at Tiberius used its pen to send abroad misrepresentations of the Christian faith and helped on the general persecution of the Church. Terribly misunderstood, this best and holiest of all religions, teaching respect for and obedience to those in authority and sending up its very prayers in their behalf, aroused the bitterest of animosity. Christian slaves and apostates had testified on racks of torture and at execution that horrid crimes were committed in their secret gatherings. Even some of the fairer-minded provincial officers, such as Pliny, considered this a sure way of finding out 'the truth, and it can be seen how the necessary customs of the Christians might seem to lend support to such falsehood: forced to meet in lonely places under the cover of darkness and in excavations under Rome, using secret signs and passwords in the fear of being molested, this "illegal" religion was easily open to the suspicion of jealousy and hatred.

Fellow Romans were already incensed at the Christian refusal to take part in any public amusements or even to be present at the joyous celebrations in Pagan homes, and they were quite willing to believe that their austere and superior bearing was, after all, but a cloak to hide grosser,

darker deeds. The very language of the Lord's Supper, misconstrued by Pagan ears, seemed to give support to the dreadful calumny that human blood was drunk and human flesh consumed in their darkened gatherings. But under all the ignorance and prejudice of the people lay that hatred, evil must ever feel beside the beauty of holiness, and at each public calamity the cry would arise, "the Christians, the Christians to the lions"; thus would they appease their gods, and the most benevolent, the most inoffensive of Rome's citizens were torn to shreds to the shouts of the exultation of the populace; power had they to kill the body, but of these the Master had said, "Fear not." (Matt. 10:28.) They could not crush the dauntless spirit of the martyrs who met the furious hate of their persecutors undismayed, and who by their dying agonies handed the lighted torch of the Gospel down to the next and the succeeding generations, an unquenchable flame brighter and more compelling by the very witness of their devotion" I know thy works and tribulation and poverty (but thou art rich) . . . Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer . . . be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." -- So speaks the voice of one like unto the Son of Man from the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

"Through Ignorance Ye did It, as did also Your Rulers"

The Emperors themselves had little chance to know the truth about the religion of the Christian and his daily life. They depended upon under-officials for all such information, and this was in general colored with the untruths of the time. Pliny, governor of Bithynia, had declared in his letter to Emperor Trajan concerning them that they were blameless as to their lives, and when they met before dawn, it was not, as had been said, to steal, to rob, to be immoral, but to sing hymns. However, with Christianity spreading everywhere as it was, he feared the temples would soon be deserted. How was he to treat this forbidden religion, he queried. Was any difference to be made between the young and the old, the weak and the strong? If they forswore their Christianity, should he be lenient? He has hitherto ordered all to execution, letting only some who had been accused anonymously go if they offered incense to the image of the Emperor and anathema to Christ. Trajan replied to this letter approvingly, and during this reign Ignatius was thrown to the lions.

The Apologists

During this time of persecution and controversy there were those writers of letters in defense of the Christian faith known as the Apologists, the Greek word apologia, meaning a work written for resistance. The Greek Apologists were mostly defensive in spirit and showed a deep knowledge of Greek philosophy, while the Latin writers were aggressive in tone and through their defense ran the thought of universal conquest and world-without-end dominion. Brilliant examples of these letters were Tertullian's Apologeticus, written about 200 A. D., and Cyprian's Apology written in the middle of the third century. These attacked Pagan idolatry and vowed that Christians were loyal to their Emperors, that they obeyed all laws that did not conflict with their religion, and that Christianity had produced no thieves, assassins, or traitors. The fruit of a pure doctrine, they pointed out, must needs be that of a pure life. "We live," declared Tertullian, "a life 'free from reproach among you. You can see us every day."

The letters of the Apologists were, according to the custom of those times, addressed to an individual -- in these instances to the Emperor. Although the rulers probably never saw them, yet they served the intended purpose of informing all who had ears to hear of the reasonableness, beauty, and truth of the Christian teaching and the corresponding purity and excellence of the

lives of its followers; and they served the added purpose of stimulating a more earnest searching of the Scriptures by Christians in all walks of life, as the verbal controversy raged through those first three centuries, and indeed was not entirely over until the fifth.

For nearly a hundred years after the persecution under Trajan the trouble was only sporadic, though it never entirely ceased. Justyn Martyr died in Rome A. D. 168, and in the persecutions at Lyons and Vienne the bishop Pothinus, the lad Ponticus, the slave girl Blandina and others met death. After this there was rest for the Christians from A. D. 211-235, when it broke out again under Maximin and, after another pause, under Decius and Valeran; then came the Edict of Toleration lasting 40 years, broken by the furious persecution under Diocletian and 'his colleagues. Galerius issued an edict of toleration A. D. 311, and two years later the victorious Constantine put forth his decree which was but a forerunner of Christianity being made the religion of the State (in A. D. 323) when the civil observance of Sunday was ordered, the Pagan temples of the East were confiscated for churches, slaves were emancipated, and the clergy exempted from all military and official duties.

The Church now entered an epoch far more dangerous to her spiritual welfare than the period of persecution had been. Constantine still claimed the right to direct religion as he had in Paganism-he was still the Pontifex Maximus. Christianity had not conquered the Roman Empire, the Roman Empire had conquered Christianity! And thus was brought in the great evils of the following twelve centuries, namely, the moral corruption of the clergy, the growth of superstition, and the ignorance of the masses; the buying of office followed, and the angry disputes about various theological questions were rampant.

Three sons of Constantine continued their father's policy, and then Julian, nephew of Constantine, came to the throne. Raised as a Christian, he secretly favored Paganism, with a mixture of philosophy, and took many measures to weaken the recognized religion of the State. He believed that Christianity was to die out and that he had been placed as an instrument for the purpose. He was the author of a treatise in the defense of Paganism, now a lost document. He supported Pagan temples at public expense; he punished Christians for the slightest offense and overlooked any violence of Pagan against Christian; he encouraged strife and schism in the Church, and prohibited the Christian schools, making the classics the prevailing textbooks. But "Julian the Apostate," as he is known, reigned but twenty months, and the Christians, although the tradition was without foundation, believed his dying words to have been, "Thou, O Galilean, hast conquered." The passing of Julian marked the end of the last hostile ruler to the Church; surely and steadily now as we turn the revealing pages of history we shall witness the sad and astounding usurpation of authority by a powerful, visible Church; the persecuted becomes the persecutor; the oppressed, in the arrogance of all her worldly power, the *oppressor.*

- *Contributed.*

Next of this series
THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS

The History of the Church

(The Herald of Christ's Kingdom - June, 1937)

No. 5
The Early Church Fathers

THE WRITING of letters, addressed to an individual but ofttimes written with the intent of expressing publicly certain views and opinions, had long been a popular practice in Rome. St. Paul, following the manner of the times, had set this example to the early Christians and it was therefore but natural that those who followed the Apostles in point of time, and held aloft the burning torch of Christian truth left them by those Apostles, should make use also of this custom-established writing of letters.

We may compare with gratitude the opportunity and blessings of our own day with the slender means of communication available to primitive Christianity -- letters placed in the hands of slow moving travelers to be carried to this point or that; letters to individuals or to assemblies of Christians that might take months in reaching their destination but whose difficult and sometimes uncertain delivery but increased their value and the joy of their possession. But may we riot, less favorably to our own day, compare also the burning zeal of those times, the brotherly love so full and overflowing as to lead to the experiment of a voluntary and enthusiastic communism? We may compare too, the meeting and fellowshipping together even under the dark wings of a possible violent death with the cool religiousness of the later Gospel Age when the visible congregation, called the Church, merits so evidently the prophetic implication in the query of St. Luke, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"

It is then from these few accidental, and no doubt providentially preserved letters that we learn something of that period of the Church, the Church of the second century, which would otherwise be quite dark and unknown. We see in these few tattered, faded fragments the Christians of that far day as they were in ordinary life free from the artificiality and unreality which carefully inscribed records of historians so often impart to those who once lived.' Through the field-glass of these few warm, individual missives those distant days come close, and as we see their lives lived .over again for us in these word pictures, instinctively we clasp their hands in the unity of Christian faith and hope and love-that unity of spirit whose blessed and mighty Center is neither book nor dogma but the ever-living,. ever-loving Christ. Verily, we have passed from death to life, and this is the proof, that we love the brethren. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

How mighty is the pen directed' by the earnest mind, the yearning heart, bringing to us, notwithstanding the lapse of so many centuries, fresh incentive to holy, living and holy dying! Let us meet then a few of these who stand high in the annals of Christianity for the effect of their lives and teachings upon it-men of pure lives and earnest desires, each with his own particular faults and virtues, each with his own measure of truth and error-that inevitable mixture that permeates man's work in every instance and which even while we absorb the good of their efforts and profit from their noble examples, causes us to turn our dissatisfied eyes upward to the One altogether lovely, and away from too much dependence on man's fallible reasoning to the Fountain of all truth as revealed in God's pure Word.

Ignatius - Foremost of Christian Martyrs

In the letters of Ignatius we view something of the churches of Asia Minor at the beginning of the second century. He is, even as he writes these letters, a man doomed to death, already on his last journey to the fate that awaits him. Since he is not a Roman citizen,, he knows that the more humane method of execution by beheading will not be granted him; he will be thrown to the wild beasts in the arena, or, crueler still, burned alive. However, he does not shun but greatly desires martyrdom, and he begs that the Church at Rome use no argument or influence to save his life. He is being guarded on the way by a company of ten soldiers whose treatment of him seems to have been -most cruel, for he declares that in spite of kindness on his own part toward them "they only wax worse." He refers to them as "ten leopards" with whom he must fight "as with wild beasts." Yet he counts all his difficulties as gain, in that through them he is taught to be more completely a disciple. Rough and unkind these soldiers must have been, but strange as it seems, he was allowed to fellowship with the Christians of every city in which the soldiers paused, and small groups of delegates from churches along the way met Ignatius and continued on the journey with him. The stay in Smyrna was long enough to permit him to write those four brief letters which throw some light on Christian years otherwise dark. Through these letters we enter into the loving sympathy he found in those who came from the churches of Asia to cheer him on his way- Onesimus, whom he loved, and Euplus and Fronto; and there was Crocus, "a name very dear to me" and Burrhus.

In his letter to the Ephesian Church, Ignatius voices praise for the sympathy shown him in sending its delegates, dwelling especially on the love manifested to him by their Bishop, Onesimus. He compares the unity existing in that Church to the unbroken harmony and yet individual melody of a choir. They are helping him along the way, he declares, which he is treading in the footsteps of Paul.

The letters to the Churches at Magnesia and Tralles commend also their unity, and rejoices that churches and bishops act in harmony; but in the one to Rome, which bears no more definite a date than August 24 although his year of martyrdom is believed to have been about A. D. 107-109, he speaks in another strain, making mention of his coming death and doubting if he is really worthy to suffer thus for Christ. Do not intervene, he urges, but rather, "let me be poured out -a libation to God." Surely, the dear ones of the Roman Church, he pleads, will not rob him of such an opportunity. "Of what value is all the world? . . . better to die for Christ than to rule its farthest Kingdom."

But, honest and true as we believe this outstanding martyr to have been, and honor and reverence him as we do today even as Christians of the centuries past have done, still, we would contrast the quieter attitude of a St. Paul who paused to consider those on earth who so badly needed him and accepted gladly that which he knew to be the Lord's will, that he abide and continue with them for the furtherance of their faith. Indeed,' it became necessary later an for the Church to reprove and restrain a very epidemic of that desire for martyrdom, too suicidal in spirit, and though sincere, in some, a banner of egoism in others and even believed to be efficacious in wiping out all the past sins of the martyred. Sad is ever the picture where Satan, master hand at deception, has convinced the Christian that something of his own must yet be added to the atoning blood shed for all on Calvary -- that anything that can be said to be of man's effort or accomplishment is needed to purge the guilt stained heart of sin.

"Could my tears forever flow,
Could my zeal no languor know,
These for sin could not atone,
Thou hast saved, and *Thou alone."*

Polycarp

One of the most interesting of all the martyrs was Polycarp, Bishop of S-myrna. Of his early life little is known except that he was born about the year of the fall of Jerusalem A. D. 70 and was, it is believed, a celibate by choice. It is almost certain that he had heard St. John and had been acquainted in his youth with Andrew at Ephesus and Philip at Hierapolis. History possesses but one letter by Polycarp, one of the outstanding events of whose life was the visit of Ignatius on the way to martyrdom. In a famous letter from Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, to a pupil of Polycarp, many things are related that show the famous teacher and martyr as lacking at times much of Christian gentleness and good temper that in a more refined and enlightened day would be classed as ignorant dogmatism and crude intolerance. Speaking of one, Marcion, whom he considered guilty of gross heresy, Polycarp exclaimed, "He who wrests the words of the Lord according to his own pleasure, and sayeth there is no resurrection and judgment, is the first-born of Satan. St. Paul, speaking of this same grave heresy utters no scathing denunciation but reasons the matter calmly in Christian forbearance and forceful utterance.

Polycarp and the churches of Asia kept the fourteenth day of Nisan as the day of the crucifixion no matter on what day of week it fell, claiming for this date the authority, of St. John. The western churches always observed Friday. Anicetus, Bishop of Rome, however, did not let this difference interfere with his warm friendship with Polycarp, but some forty years later Victor excommunicated the Eastern churches for this practice, although some of the bishops around Rome though agreeing in doctrine, refused to enter the dismissal. It is with astonishment we view the spirit of Papacy so soon in the saddle.

Polycarp came back to Smyrna from Rome. The Pagan festival was on, a time of easily aroused anger, and eleven Christians had already been thrown to the lions. The enraged masses now cried out for the aged bishop. He had retired to a small cottage in the country, where those officers sent to fetch him found' him at his evening meal. After giving them food, Polycarp asked for an hour to devote to prayer. For two hours the venerable saint prayed fervently, then mounting a donkey, he rode to the city. Here the police captain met him and transferred him to his chariot, offering him then clemency if he would but say Caesar was Lord. His refusal angered them greatly. Seeming to them -but stubborn and defiant, they pushed him from the chariot, and he walked on with a bruised limb. Led to the stadium, he was offered freedom by the proconsul if he would revile his Christ. The aged form stood erect and fearless, "Eighty and six years have I served Him and He hath done me no wrong. How then can I speak evil of my King, who saved me?" Then the people cried, "Away with this father of the Christians, the puller down of our gods," and they burned him with fire, since the games were over and the lions were now confined. The half burned bones of the ardent Christian teacher were then carried away by his friends, the time being February 23, A.D. 155.

Irenaeus

Little is known of this early Christian, probably born during the first twenty years of -the second century. His youth was spent in Smyrna, and his teacher was Polycarp. He is pictured as having much of the grace of Christian character, and being forced by the times into three great religious controversies, he formulated the first complete outline of Christian theology. He probably lived some three-score and ten years or more and died a natural death.

St. Justyn Martyr

St. Justyn, who wrote the first Apology in defense of Christianity, was 'born A. D. 148, a heathen by birth and education, his home in Palestine. Longing and thirsting for truth, he had earnestly searched through all philosophy and listened to the greatest teachers still with his soul unsatisfied, for in spite of all his effort he had not found God.

As a Platonist he had believed the Christians guilty of all the dark deeds accredited to them by an actually guilty heathendom and his attention was first directed to them favorably by the fearlessness with which they braved death. Not in itself is such fearlessness a sure criterion of faith and virtue, for even criminals have been known to face the great enemy with stoic calm, but much of the beauty of faith and holiness must have made itself felt in many of those martyrs to the casual, even cynical onlooker. In any case such bravery served to attract the attention of Justyn, the philosopher, and gazing their way he began to note what manner of people the "Galileans" really were.

His real conversion he seems to date from a chance visit with a strange and unidentified old man whom he met one day on a walk in the field along the shore. Whether Justyn is relating an actual meeting or is merely drawing a, picture of a dialogue in his own mind and soul it does not matter, for that dialogue effected his change from the role of heathen philosopher to that of an ambassador of Christ. The venerable man, with Justyn arguing from the Platonic teachings, made clear to him that philosophy knew nothing about the soul and had no right to call it immortal since the world was created and therefore souls are also created. He declared to Justyn that the opinions of the philosopher or that of any other man meant nothing to him since reason proves that the soul partakes of life because God so wills it-"But pray above all things that the gates of light may be opened to you; for these things cannot be perceived or understood 'by all, but only by the man to whom God and His Christ have imparted wisdom." The old Christian went away and Justyn now goes on to say:

"But straightway a flame was kindled in my soul; and a love of the prophets and of those men who are friends of Christ possessed' me; and whilst revolving these words in'-my mind, I found this philosophy alone to bee safe 'and profitable. Thus and for this reason am I a philosopher. Moreover, I would wish' that all, making a resolution similar to my own, would not keep themselves away from the words of the Savior. For they possess a terrible power in themselves, and are sufficient to inspire those who turn aside from the path of rectitude with awe; while the sweetest rest is afforded them who make a practice of them."

Thus quaintly and fervently did Justyn express the new Christian philosophy that filled his heart, he who, at the half century mark of years, was destined to die for his conviction so impressively and nobly that adown the Gospel Age the Christian Church would speak of him with an added

name, the thrilling name of Martyr. Justyn continued to regard himself to the end of life as a philosopher, wearing still the threadbare coat which marked all such, this giving him a better chance to talk to those with whom he came in contact of the Christ he now so served and loved and followed. His well-trained intellect grasped truth amid much error. As a heathen he deemed the soul immortal, as a convert he could hold this view no more. His theology is touched upon but lightly, or in an apologetic tone by a post-Nicean Church, for his expressions infer too strongly that he believed the Son subordinate to the Father; and conservative modern Churchianity feels that the demons played too large a part in his teachings -- that teaching being that the devil was once a leading angel, was cast out of heaven for betraying God, and is identified with the Serpent; that the other evil angels are those who fell by illicit union with the daughters of men and their children are the demons. With these he identified the gods of the heathen and thought the lewd tales of heathen mythology were derived from the actual misdeeds of the demons. Intent on the deception of mankind, these demons, he believed, imitated the prophecies and the rites and the facts of Christ and lent their aid to such as Simon Magus. He regarded them as the authors of war, murder, magic, uncleanness, in fact of all wickedness, and represents them as living in constant antagonism to God and Christ, inspiring the lies against the Christians and the hatred and persecution of the good.

While there are Christians who may agree with Justyn Martyr even today in much of his view of Satan and his legions, still, to much of modern Protestant ecclesiasticism the devils which Christ cast out and which testified to their knowledge of Him, were not demons at all, but the vagaries and hallucinations of the disordered mind of the victim. When truth covers the earth, when the wisdom of the wise of this world shall have perished, then shall the clear statements of God's glorious Word stand as it has ever stood, unchanged and unchangeable.

Justyn says scarcely anything of the Church, recognizing no church officers except president and deacons and holding forth the universal priesthood of all Christians under the great High Priest, Christ. He favored a very simple order of service and pointed out that the Lord's Supper was a memorial to bring the sufferings of Christ to mind, that there was no efficacy in the mere elements themselves. He believed, as did many others in those first two centuries, in a literal Millennium. He prefers to speak of punishment as a "boundless age," always shunning the word "endless," and in certain passages seems to feel not at all certain that God may not will that evil souls cease to exist. Gently tolerant of the heathen whom he understood well, where many of the Fathers spoke of them in terms of scorn and hatred, he regarded those of them who had lived up to the light vouchsafed them with all the hopefulness of a St. Paul.

- *Contributed.*

Next of this series

TERTULLIAN OF CARTHAGE AND OTHERS -- THE GRASPING CHURCH

The History of the Church

(The Herald of Christ's Kingdom - July, 1937)

No. 6

Tertullian of Carthage

ABOUT THE year 160, some historians making it ten years earlier, there was born in the city of Carthage one who was destined to become a most learned and eloquent expositor of Christian thought. Tertullian, of heathen parentage, was perhaps more than thirty years of age when converted to Christianity.

The churches of northern Africa exercised in the first and second centuries a greater influence on Christian doctrine than any others, and second only to the Church at Alexandria was that of Carthage. Here Tertullian was trained, and here in this voluptuous city his youth was stained with sin, even as were the early years of St. Augustine, who, two hundred years after him, turned also from dissipation in this same place to a better way of living.

Tertullian, considered the most forceful writer to follow the Apostles, was the creator of Latin Christian literature. Christianity, it has been pointed out, does not destroy individuality but directs its way and sets the limits of its control; and so the excitable heathen became the excitable Christian, a great lack of natural patience and humility marking this notable Church Father from the first. Fear seemed to linger in his Christian experience and a spirit of bondage remained in his heart. Those who have lived depraved years, as did Tertullian, seem to bear at times the horror of a soul once so stained upon repentant memory. "All that was pure and noblest in his religious life," says Farrar, "flowed from the fountain of penitence, which swept him on its troubled waves to the foot of the throne of God."

Justyn Martyr who had reached the very door of truth by way of Plato, and, leaving him outside, had entered through the only and Living way, gently refuted the error of philosophy through his very knowledge of its teachings, while Tertullian, the passionate teacher, showed for it but profound contempt, calling the greatest of all the philosophers, "the patriarch of heretics," and fiercely denouncing Socrates and Aristotle, saying, "We despise the learning of secular literature, which is reckoned as folly with God." With himself and with others he constantly battled, seldom using his pen in the interest of the higher Christian development, being at all times embroiled in matters of dispute and strife with all the ardor of a born debator. Believing that the rite of baptism had in itself a saving power, he termed one who thought differently, "a viper of the Cainite heresy," adding by way of explanation that vipers always inhabit arid, that is, waterless, places. He painted a savage picture of the exultation Christians would feel some day when, instead of the cruel arena of the Pagan, they should behold not only heaven but hell also. Scathingly he contrasted the guilt of Paganism with the evil attributed to Christian innocence. It was not Tertullian's way to reason calmly, to speak the truth in love, and thus win the sinner, rather would he tread them beneath the heel of his bitter eloquence, and the saddest part of it all was that, later on, the same fellow Christians whom he had so indignantly defended against their heathen slanderers, he now attacked most bitterly in his zeal to advance his personal views which they were unable to embrace.

Montanists

This sect arose in the middle of the second century in Phrygea. Though the Church viewed it as a heresy, it started with an earnest desire to right the wrong thinking of Gnosticism* and loose practices of the Church, already becoming an organization of fixed rules even to the smallest and nonessential details of discipline, showing the tendency to grant to the bishops the binding decision on all questions of belief and conduct. The outstanding fact of Tertullian's Christian life was his adoption of the views of Montanus, and when he argued that a church which establishes itself as an unchanging, and therefore an unprogressive body, must of necessity be a dead church, for it is the continuous work of the Holy Spirit to unfold the meaning of God's Word and to eradicate errors of the understanding, he was but voicing the belief of many in the Church of that day. The Montanists held that at first man was left to the religion of nature's teachings, then the Law was given to Israel, but now had come the dispensation of the Spirit into individual hearts and lives -that rock-truth of the universal priesthood of all believers which would shake the Christian world at its revival in the coming days of Reformation. But, regrettable as it seems, the Church while denouncing the Montanists as heretics and crushing the cult's very existence, kept nothing of its principles of truth and wisdom, but came to adopt many of its most flagrant errors. For there were errors and mistakes, to be sure, mixed with this teaching. The truth they advocated as to the necessity of holy living led in a short time to spiritual pride, a "holier than thou" attitude. The favor of heaven it seemed was a thing to be purchased by fasts and torturing the body, rather than by a growth in Christian grace, and the spirituality of a child of God came to be measured by the length and frequency of his feasts. The Church out-did Montanus and Tertullian in the exaltation of celibacy above the Scriptures and the placing of it on a much holier footing than wedlock. When Tertullian discarded the regular Roman toga and wore the cloak, or pallium, of the Greek philosophers whom he scorned, and congratulated the cloak on covering the limbs of the best kind of a philosopher, a Christian, he seemed to wear it as a sort of sign that he had not only left the world but had also withdrawn from the large company of his fellow-Christians, having by now severed his connection with the catholic communion; His motives for the distinctive dress were not all foreign to those that led the clergy more than a century later to adopt an official regalia that not only served as a badge to the world but set them apart from and above the mere "laity."

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* "A philosophical and religious system (1st to 6th century) teaching that knowledge rather than faith was the key to salvation."

But Tertullian's short tract, "De Pallio," was the end of his Montanistic writings. From then on he turned the bitter weapons of his learning and eloquence away from his brother Christians to those he believed heretics and enemies of the Apostolic teachings. He hated any heresy but his own, adopting the arrogant tone of infallibility which, no matter where heard, seems always to say, "Would you know what is the truth? Listen then to my opinions for, being **mine** they must of necessity be the truth and all else are but Satan's lies." Fiercely he had contended for liberty of conscience, but dogmatically brushed it aside except for himself and those who viewed matters as he did. And the Church has ever had its Tertullians, not so much willfully claiming justice for themselves and refusing it to others, as afflicted with the strange blind spots that seem so much a part of fallen human nature.

Cyprian

Born in Carthage about the year 200, of heathen parentage, Cyprian, first martyr bishop of Africa, was himself a heathen until about middle age. He was not original in his teachings but followed that of Tertullian. Being of an honest and inquiring turn of mind he attempted to support his ideas with Scripture, but was not always successful, as by this time many ideas quite foreign to the Scriptures had been added to Christianity. Indeed, for centuries little of that Bible itself but rather the words of Tertullian, Origen, Basil, and the eloquent Chrysostom were echoed and re-echoed in the Church. If Cyprian lacked something in his understanding of the philosophy of salvation, his heart was pure, his life was blameless, and his presence compelling and kind. This with his eloquence and the added maturity of years caused the people of Carthage to loudly cry forth his name as a candidate for bishop-the people, whose voices were being less and less heard as the bishops assumed more and more power. After his election, this bishop of the congregation was addressed by the title of "Papa," an honor already given to the Bishop of Alexandria, later to be extended also to the Bishop of Rome. Gradually, as we review. the lives of these teachers of the early Church, that history not so much their own as it is the history of the visible congregations themselves, we trace the errors creeping in-an Enemy is sowing tares. The picture drawn by Cyprian of the Church at this period shows that evil had developed during the years of freedom from worldly persecution. Many Christians were worldly, practicing fraud because they loved wealth and, having gained that wealth, in many cases becoming apostate. There was slander and deceit and superstition, tales of miracles being rife. But quiet, holy lives of faith, known or unknown to history's pages, were there as they have ever been present all down the Age, for the earth must not entirely lose its salt lest Christianity perish from the face of it.

We need not spend much time with the theology of the martyred saint, being so much a mouthpiece of Tertullian. Though he spoke of Rome as the chief Church and termed it "the root and womb of the Catholic Church," he seemed not to have recognized any infallibility in Rome's bishop, for he disagreed with him, even offering rebuke. He declared the bishop of a church "absolute vice-regent of Christ in things spiritual" and his only idea of Church unity was agreement amongst the various bishops for they, he believed, had inherited the promise to Peter, :applicable first to all the Apostles and now to these, their successors in authority. A supporter of Cyprian in his controversy with Stephen, Bishop of Rome, wrote him at this time, "I am justly indignant at this so open and manifest folly of Stephen who thus glories about the place of his episcopate, and maintains that he holds the succession of Peter."

The words of Cyprian, "Whoever he is, and whatever he is, he is not a Christian who is not in the Church of Christ," and, "Outside the Church there is no salvation, differ much in essence with those of Irenaeus: "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is the Church." For Cyprian sensed little of that Church, bound not by rigid forms of discipline and an exacted unity with bishops, 'but by a glorious, an invisible Head. He overlooked entirely the words of the Master, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Had he considered that small text more carefully, he might have noticed all human names brushed aside in those few words so sweet in portent, so pregnant in meaning. He might even have come to see that whether within or without the visible Church they are truly Christ's who hold Him as their Head and who as under-priests offer up living sacrifices-presenting their bodies as such; holy and acceptable unto God through their Lord. He might have seen, not a unity of bishops only, but a unity embracing every member of the mystical Body of Christ-that beautiful harmony of sentiment often co-existing with **diversity** of opinion, that oneness of spirit in which all true followers of Jesus participate.

Cyprian, after serving thirteen years, was beheaded under the persecution of Valeran, the Christians burning his body at night to protect it from the curious and scoffing gaze of the heathen.

Origen

Origen, the most powerful theologian of the early Church, except perhaps Augustine, was born about the year 186 of uncertain nationality, although it is accounted a possibility that his mother was Hebrew. He had intimate acquaintance with Greek literature, but better still he knew and loved the pages of Holy Writ, for he was the son of a Christian and a martyr, and had been required all through childhood to learn a passage of the Scriptures every day. So deep was his youthful interest and so thoughtful his inquiries that his father, Leonides, was known to stoop and reverently kiss the breast of the sleeping child, saying that it seemed, "the Holy Spirit of God had made it His temple. When Origen was sixteen his father was beheaded and the lad was left with a mother and six brothers to support, which he did by teaching and with the aid of a wealthy friend. Raised in piety his young manhood was clouded by no such sowing to the wind as Augustine, Cyprian, and Jerome. "He was," says one, "from his youth upward a saint and the beloved teacher of many saints." But he has been much criticized throughout the centuries, even his salvation having been doubted by some so much his inferior in learning and saintliness as to seem beside him but ignorant and prejudiced. Mosheim declares him as the possessor of "every excellence that can adorn Christian character," and we find his life story a testimony to this praise. But Origen was condemned by the patriarch of Alexandria for political reasons, and Jerome in the fourth century, fearful for his own reputation, turned against his teacher he had so enthusiastically honored, while at the fifth ecumenical council at Constantinople in the sixth century his teaching was anathematized.

Origen taught the school at Alexandria when. Clement fled from persecution, receiving no salary or price for his lectures--the free, voluntary gifts of his pupils sufficing for his simple needs. Then he sold his collection of the Greek classics and with the money subsisted for many years, allowing himself but six pence a day, refusing now any help from the students for, "God gives to His priests no earthly portion because God Himself is their portion." Taking Christ's words to His disciples literally, he wore no shoes for many years, nor permitted himself more than one coat; he drank no wine, slept on the bare floor, spent his day in work, his night in study. He fasted to such an extent that his health suffered, but he labored on for some thirteen years as a Christian teacher. He has received much censure for attending lectures on Platonism, but during that time, many heathen came to him as an eminent expounder of the new religion and he thought it most necessary to have a knowledge of that which was offered as truth by heathen or heretic that he might be better able to meet them informed. There has ever been in the Church exponents of the theory that God can be served best by ignorance, forgetting that no Philip or Andrew had been chosen to go to the intellectual heathen, the scoffing Athenians, but a Paul, versed in the classics of the world and with so much learning it was deemed by the unbeliever a contributing cause to a to them, seeming madness.

When Origen, fleeing from the massacre at Alexandria to Palestine, was invited by the bishops of Caesarea and Jerusalem to give lectures there in the Church, he was angrily recalled by his Bishop Demetrius, for the Alexandrian Church permitted no "layman" to so publicly lecture. There was jealousy in the act, no doubt; however, he returned, but relations between him and his bishop were so strained that he turned to writing. With the assistance of more than a half-dozen

shorthand writers and many copyists furnished by Ambrosins, his commentary on St. John grew to thirty two volumes and there were commentaries on Genesis, Psalms, and Lamentations; indeed, so many were his books that St. Jerome remarked, "Which of us can read all his books?" And it was recorded, although with apparent exaggeration, that there were 6000 of these. But few of the original works of Origen have come down to us. There are some translations in Latin much doctored up by the translator, who believed that heretics had tampered with them. How ominously that word "heretic" has sounded down the long corridors of the visible Church! "Every great reformer in turn, every discoverer of new forms or expressions of religious truth, every slayer of old and monstrous errors, has been called a heretic." Another has ironically said that to be termed a heretic requires only a being in the minority or standing alone. An eminent scholar and theologian of the English Church, who near the middle of the nineteenth century had dared to utter under the stately roof of the historic Westminster Abbey a most powerful and touching plea against the prevailing doctrine of eternal torture and thereby had brought down upon his gracious and respected head a cry of indignant protest from many of his brother-clergy but, happily, also the grateful endorsement of many a less courageous soul who had secretly thought as he did -- Dean Farrar -- whose beautiful Life of Christ has never been allowed to go out of print, whose classic learning, coupled with the deepest of religious feeling and spirituality, has been so great a blessing to his contemporaries and those after them, has this to say "'Heresy' in the New Testament means not erroneous opinions, but the factiousness of party spirit. He who prides himself on great orthodoxy **may be** heretical."

- *Contributed.*

Next of this series
ST. AUGUSTINE

The History of the Church

(The Herald of Christ's Kingdom - September, 1937)

No. 7
St. Augustine

AUGUSTINE WAS born near Carthage in A. D. 354 and of all the Fathers of the Western Church exerted the greatest influence by his teachings. Up to his seventeenth year his father was a heathen who, of moderate means, educated his son. But Monica, his mother, was a sincere Christian, herself born of Christian parents, and the love and reverence of the illustrious son for the saintly mother and the testimony of her influence upon him, have carved her name in deepest characters on the pages of the history of the Church. "I joyed indeed in her testimony," writes Augustine, "when, in her last sickness, mingling her endearments with my acts of duty, she called me 'dutiful,' and mentioned with great affection of love that she never heard any harsh or reproachful sound uttered by my mouth against her. But yet, O my Lord, who madest us, what comparison is there 'betwixt that honor that I paid her and her slavery for me?"

Earnestly indeed had Monica prayed for years for the wayward boy who, in answer to an awakening intellect, after a careless, sinful youth, made a step in a better direction by joining a sect called the Manicheans. Though claiming Christianity, this belief was Oriental in origin, and it was the claim it made to superior knowledge and the solution of mystery that led the young Augustine, seeking hungrily for truth, its way. The Manicheans, holding that all matter is essentially **evil** and that the soul is divine and therefore holy, sought to free that soul from its unfavorable association by abstinence and asceticism. Boldly advocating these doctrines, so contrary to the Gospel his mother loved, Augustine abandoned sin, at least in its grosser forms, and for nine years was a flattered and admired member of this sect. But his faith that truth was in these teachings was already gone when at thirty years of age he moved to Rome, where, at the same time though unknown to Augustine, St. Jerome was teaching high-born ladies who gathered around him, such as Paula, Fabiola, and Marcella, the meaning of the Scripture of God. But in Rome Augustine heard the Christian 'bishop, the great Ambrose, speak. According to his own statement he was drawn at first only 'by the great beauty of the words of the speaker, oblivious to their meaning, but, "While I opened my heart to admire how eloquently he spoke," says Augustine, "I also felt how truly he spoke" and, abandoning forever the error of the Manicheans, "whose falsehood I detested," this hungry hearted seeker for truth sought again and again the help of the bishop whose great kindness to the inquiring Augustine testifies convincingly of his Christian gentleness and love. But, with all the assistance of Ambrose, Augustine felt he had but reached the vestibule of truth, when suddenly it dawned within his longing heart in blessed light, that light shed forth from that which he had heretofore ignored as but a simple thing -- the writings of St. Paul. He had searched the teachings of Plato but there had found no revelation of the lost state of man; within his soul was bred no conscious need for a Redeemer; now in this illuminating fountain he had found what all the wisdom of the proudest lore came short of -- the blessed, ever living, ever loving, ever needed Christ! The insufficiency of human righteousness so clearly demonstrated in the history of Israel, the insufficiency of human wisdom as exemplified in the Greek, was met and set to naught and yet satisfied in the glorious assurance of a risen Lord!

At the age of 33 the great grief of his life came to this proud philosopher who had become the humble Christian-his beloved mother died at Ostia, 'but with her ardent prayers now answered, her dearest wish fulfilled. Asked on her death-bed by a friend, "Would you not dread to leave

your body so far from your country?", she answered, "Nothing is afar from God; nor need I fear lest He, at the end of the world, should forget whence He should wake me from the dead."

Selling his paternal estate, reserving nothing for himself that he might serve his God without any added hindrance, Augustine gave what he had to the poor. His dress was simple for he did not deem rich apparel as becoming to the lowly office of a Christian bishop. He 'believed also the Scriptures taught that he should wear no shoes, but this proved detrimental to his health and so he comforted himself with the thought that Christ wore sandals and therefore it was excusable that he provide his feet with a protecting covering. At his table, meat was ordered only for guests, or for the weak, and no slanderous gossip was ever permitted to besmirch his hospitality. Money left to the Church at the expense of bereaved relatives was not accepted, and this in a day when the greed of the clergy had become so great as to force passage of laws to protect heirs. A box for the poor in the church received any voluntary offerings used to relieve distress and save debtors from imprisonment, and when this proved inadequate he, even as had the good Ambrose, melted the church plate. His sermons were simple and evangelical, no mitred brows, and impressive robes adorned Augustine, although we see the bishops so attired in the art of the Middle Ages. Even when presented with a new cloak, he continued to wear his own shabby one and gave the price of the new one to the poor. Although the bishops had begun to usurp many rights, and costly vestments were already being given to the churches, such spiritual men as Ambrose, Augustine, and Basil coveted none of these.

But doctrinal questions were raging at this time, and the bishops of the western churches were forced to give many opinions in these controversies, these opinions often wavering and uncertain, but becoming for centuries after the infallible orthodoxy of the Church. And it is most regrettable that this continual disputation brought about in time a dogmatism in Augustine far removed from the charity that marked his former days. Much less gentle with his fellow Christians than with the Pagans, his expressions and arguments became such that they were flaunted later on by the worst Inquisitors, for in his controversy with the Donatists-that sect that had begun as rigid Evangelicals and ended in a fury of party fanaticism-he had reasoned at first as a tolerant Christian, a kindly churchman, but ended as bitter, dogmatic, persecuting, while his opponents in their turn tried to ambush those who opposed them, beating and wounding them, filling their eyes with vinegar to blind them (these Donatists who were members of the same Catholic Church, not heretics but bigots, magnifying the rite of baptism to a saving ordinance in itself until the importance of the doctrine or dogma depreciated that of well-doing, an evil from which Christianity, true Christianity has suffered through the Gospel Age) --in short we see here the stark tragedy of the resultant effect of controversy amongst the followers of Him whose fruit of every doctrine must be but that of love, that all-embracing love, within whose cradling arms all other virtues lie.

In his arguments against the Donatists, Augustine uses Scriptures that speak of the Church as referring to his own visible congregation exclusively -- rare are other Christian souls who have not at times so limited it -- and he is credited as the first to use the words, **"Compel** them to come in," that sad principle that led to the slaughter in the Netherlands and the massacre of St. Bartholomew, yea, that even in the horrors of the Inquisition were quoted as authority for atrocities that caused men to regard the religion of Christ, which that Church claimed to represent, with aversion and horror.

In its attempt to suppress the Donatists the Church appealed to the civil authority and obtained such persecuting measures that many of that sect found it expedient to be converted. Elated at this success Augustine seemed to find the end quite justifying the means, but how far removed was this later decision from that which he had held forth in his earlier career: "If we are dragged to Christ, we believe against our will. . . . Hear the Apostle: 'With the heart man believeth unto

justification'. . . . Since he who is dragged seems to be compelled against his will, how do we solve the question, 'No man cometh unto Me except the Father draw him'?"

The Forge of Error's Chains

In our brief perusal of the lives and teachings of some of those men who, following the Apostles in point of time, left so marked an influence upon the Christian Church that they are termed the Early Fathers of that Church, we have seen that the primitive period was marked by simple government, its few offices and orders derived only from the Scripture. In the end of the first century when the Roman bishop, Clement, wrote his Epistle to the Corinthians, there was no difference between the bishop of a congregation and the presbyter, the pastor. Originally the church group itself elected its bishop and invited the neighboring bishops in for the consecration ceremony, but by the middle of the third century, the election of a bishop was confirmed by the votes of the other bishops of the province, 'but in the presence of the "laity" and by their consent. When, however, the Council of Nicea gave this right to the bishops alone, with no voice of the congregation, this mode of election became popular only in the West, the Eastern churches still continuing their right to veto and to directly elect (as in the case of Cyprian who was chosen by a popular demand of the people, and the clergy were obliged to submit). But the bishop was still only a spiritual guide, of limited powers, for the decision of doctrinal questions was not left to him, but to the vote of the clergy summoned together, and the government of the church was in the hands of the 'congregation itself. When from a parent church there radiated other lesser congregations, its presbyter was esteemed as over all the bishops, but with no greater powers than the humblest one of them.

In time, the word "Metropolitan" (the word does not appear to have been used prior to the Council of Nicea) was applied to six of these important centers, or parent churches, namely: Rome, Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Ephesus, and Corinth, for in these cities had the Gospel been planted and from these had it spread.

Pre-eminence of Rome

Cyprian had declared each bishop to be equal and each church a unit at the time when Stephen of the Roman Church vaunted the place of his episcopate and maintained that he held the position of successor to Peter. "Be it so," cried Origen, when he heard the new claim made by Rome that the church there was founded by this Apostle, "but if Peter is the only one on whom the Church is built, what becomes of John and the other Apostles? Is Peter forsooth the only one against whom the gates of hell shall not prevail?" Irenaeus also spoke in this same vein. But still the trend continued towards the sure and steady centralization at Rome, each new Roman bishop going beyond the claims of his predecessor. Had not its faith been "spoken of throughout the world"? Had not Paul resided there, and was not Peter supposed to have preached in Rome, and did not this greatly sanctify it? Had it not been firm in its stand against heresies and was its equal to be found in alms-giving and missionary zeal? Thus did many reason as the office of a humble bishop reached higher and higher, until with "a mouth speaking great things," the Roman Church declared its head Vicar of Christ on earth.

Martyrology

We have noted the great reverence for martyrdom that had developed in the early period of the Church, a reverence that continued to grow until it became customary to speak of the day of a martyr's death as his "birthday." Processions to the scene of the martyrdom were held and churches erected over the remains, while a special day was set aside to preach memorial sermons for such dead. Dangerous indeed seem the smallest observances that give to human ashes anything of that reverence and glory that belong but to the Lord in spirit. Superstition had grown rapidly after the first four centuries of comparative naturalness and simplicity among Christians, and it flowered into such practices as the holding of the. Lord's Supper on the Memorial day of Martyrs that the living Christians might have fellowship also with those who had died for' the testimony of Christ. But it was not until some centuries had passed that Martyrology became a part of the order of the Church.

The Mass

From more or less faint beginnings we find in the ninth century the bold declaration in open treatise that the bread and wine, mere emblems to the early Church of the body and blood of the slain anti-typical Lamb, mysteriously and actually became that blood and that body to be offered in fresh sacrifice for the sins of the people, yea, even in benefit for the dead.

Graven Images

The erection of special buildings for worship is not mentioned until the close of the second century. Then they were simple, with a few pictures of Scripture events on their walls, but nothing of portrayal of Christ, for, as Clement of Alexandria expressed it, "The custom of a daily looking upon the divine Being desecrates his dignity." When early art began to picture our Lord, it did not do so in beauty and sweetness as later artists have done, for Tertullian had fancied that Christ could not in His person have manifested on earth the beauty that was rightfully His else He would not have been despised and rejected by men, and Origen thought His whole body to have been repulsive. This latter view the Eastern Church still holds.

We remember that one of the causes that led to the separation of East and West was the use of images in the Roman Church. This setting up of images had been gradually attained, first by raising a hand or a limb in relief on an otherwise smooth painting. In time the object itself was reached, an image stood forth in cool marble, before which the penitent might bow, even as the heathen might prostrate himself before the representations of the many false deities. Thus from small and subtle beginnings did Satan lead away the Church from that primitive purity which had at first distinguished it, from the faith once delivered to the saints.

Monasticism

The unscriptural vaunting of celibacy, the exaltation of penance and fasting for sin, grew into the vast system of Monasticism that held sway until the Reformation and is still maintained by the Church of Rome. Beginning at first, innocently enough, with individuals seeking relief from the political corruption, the poverty, the persecution of the times, it developed, into such a multiplicity of rigid orders that it is declared there were at one time as many monks in the desert as people in the cities. Of these the Pillar Saints, a separate class of hermits, reached the pinnacle of astounding fanaticism. Their founder, St. Simeon, after living ten years in a monastery then removing to a hut for a shorter period, mounted a pillar 72 feet high and 4-feet in diameter. Here he is believed to have remained for thirty years, dying at Antioch, and being buried with all religious pomp and ecclesiastical ceremony. The poet, Alfred Tennyson, gives a pitiful pen-portrait of this mistaken one after years of such penance-this sadly mistaken one who thought by torturing his body, temple of the Holy Spirit, he could atone for his sins and do his God a service. Beautiful, transcendent, beside such error, afflicting Christians in varying degrees through the centuries, is the watchword of a then coming awakening, the banner of a Reformation-"The just shall live by faith"! Let us thank God for so clear an understanding of this glorious cardinal truth as He has been pleased to grant us in these Gospel closing days!

"O Lord, Lord, Thou knowest I bore this better at the first;
For I was strong and hale of body then;
And though my teeth, which now are dropt away,
Would chatter with the cold, and all my beard
Was tagged with icy fringes in the moon,
I drown'd the whoopings of the owl with sound
Of pious hymns and psalms
Now am I feeble grown; my end draws nigh.
I hope my end draws nigh; half deaf I am,
So that I scarce can hear the people hum
About the column's base, and almost blind,
And scarce can recognize the fields I know;
And both my thighs are rotted with the dew;
Yet cease I not to clamor and to cry,
While my stiff spine can hold my weary head
Till all my limbs drop piecemeal from the stone,
Have mercy, mercy! take away my sin!
O Jesus, if thou wilt not save my soul,
Who may be saved? who is it may be saved?
Who may be made a saint if I fail here?"

- *Contributed.*

Next of this series
WICKEDNESS TO THE FULL - THE REFORMATION

The History of the Church

(The Herald of Christ's Kingdom - February, 1938)

No. 8
The Reformation

JOHN LORD, that most gentle historian, ever ready to pay tribute to the good that may exist even in the manifestation of much that is evil, divides Roman Catholicism into its two parts, that of a religion and that of a ruling government. In this dual role, he declares, it imprisoned the European nations while at the same time it sheltered them; and it did defend the foundation principles of faith and morality, namely the personal sovereignty of God, salvation through the death of Christ, and the necessity of a holy life as taught in the Sermon on the Mount and voiced by the inspired Apostles.

On the other hand we quote the earnest declaration of another regarding this same Papal power: "Its reign has been long, its sphere has been wide, its power has been vast. It has usurped the headship of the Christian Church, and the titles and prerogatives of the Deity. It has corrupted the Gospel, suppressed the Bible, and turned Christianity into a baptized heathenism. Idolatries and false doctrines have been inculcated and promulgated throughout Christendom by its instrumentality. For centuries it made war with the saints and overcame them. Millions of evangelical martyrs have been slain by its authority. It has injuriously affected countless myriads of human beings. During its course of more than 1200 years, thirty or forty generations have suffered under it, cither in the way of corruption or persecution. In a word, it has vindicated its title to, be considered that system of supernatural and soul destroying error, that dire and dreadful apostasy revealed by prophecy as the principle power of evil to arise between the first and second advents of Christ.

The corner-stone of all Papal encroachment is the boastful assertion upon which all the prestige and power of the Roman pontiffs rest -- the doctrine of Apostolic succession. To Leo the Great, born of noble parentage in the latter part of the fourth century and numbered even amongst the Fathers of the early Church, may be traced some of the important developments that transformed that body into a ruling institution. The haughty and astounding declaration that the Church at Rome was presided over by a man who was, by virtue of his very office, the successor of St. Peter was the foundation dogma upon which the long train of errors that followed its promulgation were constantly conceived and placed upon their unholy platform. The superstition to which the professing Christian world had sunk furthered the acceptance of such doctrine, so contrary to the Gospel -- that Gospel which so- clearly declared Christ to be the foundation Rock and never man; that Gospel which is the source of all Christian truth and spiritual law to the child of God, and which, neglected even for the best good works o men must ever mean a loss, for bit by hit the Enemy begins his encroachment. This we find to be true as we scan the pages of history.

But, leaving the Church of the fifth century when some virtues still supported it, when Leo (whose exalted, character even Gibbon praises) believing that a new central power, a theocracy, would restore civilization, settle disputes, depose tyrants, and establish a common standard of faith and worship, had urged that visible unity so remote from that real unity built on faith alone, we turn to the Roman Church of the fifteenth century whose encroachments and corruptions had so reached the full that in all directions earnest voices were raised in indignation at the perverted institution.

Arrogant was the ruling church. One of the strangest facts of history is that picture of Henry IV, German Emperor, standing three days and nights in tile cruel snows of winter, barefoot and clad in a scanty woolen garment, begging in tears, as lie kneeled, the favor of Hildebrand. But all efforts to bring about a reformation in the Church had so far failed, for the attempt had always been to remove the branch of error rather than to strike at the root itself. We find in nearly every age the Mystics laboring to turn men from the empty forms of outward worship to the soul's inner peace with God. In silence, holiness, and communion they sought that peace for themselves, but with no clear view of the necessary and important doctrine that must rally the faithful to the battle that was to be inevitable-"The just shall live by faith." The Waldenses, from the summit of the Piedmont Alps, joined them and purified their doctrines, calling to their minds Scriptures damaging to Rome; but the primary truth of justification was not made prominent. In England, Wyclif lifted up his voice. John Huss, called by historians the John the Baptist of the Reformation, appeared in Bohemia. He stressed the wrong in the clergy rather than the error of doctrine, and, summoned before the council at Constance under a deceitful promise of safety, he was imprisoned, burned, and his ashes were cast into the Rhine. In Italy, Savonarola paid with his life at the stake for his attack on the vices of Rome.

Breaking Down of Strongholds

The great drama was destined to begin in the very heart of the Empire, its cradle the University of Wittemberg, founded by Frederick the Wise of Saxony, close friend of the Emperor. Providence chose this firm, tolerant prince to play an important part in the Reformation, the historian, D'Au'bigne, comparing him to a tree under whose nurturing shade the sprouting seed might be sheltered and grow. To Staupitz, the Vicar-general, Frederick remarked one day. "All sermons made up of mere subtleties and human tradition are marvelously cold. . . . Holy Scripture alone is clothed with such power and majesty that, shaming us out of our rules of reasoning, it compels us to cry out, 'Never man spake as this.'" Many others, men of learning and piety, had added their share in preparing the field for the breaking up of the hard, unfertile soil of established precedent and sectarianism., as seen in the oft-repeated words of the Bishop of Meissen: "As often as I read the Bible, I find there a different religion from that which is taught us." Word of God! As precious and necessary today as in the time of the Reformation to the breaking clown of strongholds and exposing every error substituted for its life-giving truth. May we hold ever open its priceless pages, jealous lest even the best of mail's interpretations might occupy our minds and tongues to the neglect of the message fresh from the lips of holy men moved by the Spirit of God, the unspeakably precious tidings of great joy which, please God, shall yet he to all people.

It was necessary that the interest and love for the Holy Scriptures in the original Hebrew and Greek be revived, that the truth fresh from the lips of inspired men might refute and clear away the rubbish of misinterpretation and additions which had long obscured its healing light. And so God prepared His servants.

Reuchlin

Foremost amongst these was John Reuchliu, he had been chosen as the proper instrument for a certain work and it came to pass after the ways of Providence that the sweet voice of this boy singing in the choir so attracted a prominent official of the town of Baden that lie chose the lad to accompany his own son to the most celebrated school of the West, the University of Paris. Here under the best of teachers he studied Greek and Latin, which he was destined to carry to

Germany, becoming there the first professor of these languages. The two-edged sword which is the Old and the New Testaments might now be brought out of the (lust. and sackcloth where it had lain for years and be restored to the hands of Christian soldiers, who would not lay it down. Some six years after Christopher Columbus had first sighted land in the New Hemisphere, Reuchlin studied Hebrew in Rome under the learned Jew, Abdias Sphorna. He now translated and expounded the Psalms, revised the Vulgate, and published the first Hebrew-German grammar and dictionary. Adopting a young cousin, he changed his harsh German name of Schwarzerd to the soft and musical Greek one of Melartcthon -- that Melancthon who lives in every account of the Reformation as the illustrious friend of Martin Luther.

One of the strange little twists seen in history is the welding of the Christian faith with classical knowledge in the Reformation day and the opposite condition in the day of early Christianity, when" a world of letters stood arrayed against the humble message of the Christian. Thus in strange, mysterious ways God has ever moved, bringing to pass His high designs, His sovereign will. We, as Christians, can not despise ignorance allied to a true heart of faith, for of such were the humble fishermen of Galilee, nor can we any less despise the union of the cultured intellect and the consecrated heart, for this latter shines forth so glorious in the recorded annals of the progress of God's true Church, as it emerges from the clouds, the mildew, and the frost of its enforced wilderness.

Erasmus

When John Reuchlin was but twelve years of age t sere was born in Rotterdam, out of wedlock, the greatest genius of the Reformation age. His name I was Gerhard, after his Dutch father who later *be*came a spriest, but it was later translated into the latin, Desiderius,, and still later into the Greek, Erasmus, by which name he is known to historians. Sent to school by his father at the age of four, then orphaned and left poor, he grew up to tear the veil from the vices of the Church by his brilliant satires, thus paving the wail for one destined to be the real reformer rather than himself. Powerful were some of the princes and prelates Who protected him in his combating of the vices of the Church, but the monks whom he attacked in his "Praise of Folly" vowed vengeance. Erasmus, offered ease and wealth, even to the hat of a cardinal, chose instead to earn his living correcting the proofs of a printer. "I any firmly resolved," said he, "to die in the study of the Scripture. In that is *my joy* and peace." And again. "The sum of all Christian philosophy is reduced to this: -- to place all our hope in God, who, without our deserts, by **grace,** gives us all things by Jesus Christ."

Lessons from the Past

Today the principle embodied in the words of Erasmus must ever be instilled into every earnest Christian consciousness, clearing with one majestic sweep the shadows of all subtle doctrines of works instead of faith, placing in its stead that doctrine of heart-holiness without which we may not please the Lord. Let the Christian not be deceived, nor point with pride to aught of his own good and desirable effort, nor boast of invincible standing in his previously accepted minutia of interpretation and creed, pointing the finger of scorn with more or less refined anathema at some. humble, trusting saint of God who does not see quite eye to eye with him in each dogmatic conclusion of parable and prophecy and type. All such stand out in unmistakable prototype on the pages of the Reformation day. And no less do we see beside them on those same pages those who, count not their lives dear, if they must, in such preservation, cease that clarion cry of the

awakened lovers of truth divine, "The just shall live by faith." Nay, not by any works of our own, not by any superior minutia of orthodoxy of belief, but by the washing of the blood that seals the New Covenant, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which indwelling in the natural order of things must purify the earthen vessel in which God has been pleased to let it dwell. By the grace of God and not by anything of our own-thus are we saved, dwelling here in the secret place of the Most High and under the shadow of the wings of the Almighty.

A year previous to the usual given date of the Reformation a New Testament was completed by Erasmus, and accompanying it was a Latin translation which corrected the Vulgate fearlessly, and defended those corrections with notes. In this, learned men, holding positions in the Church, might read the Word in its original language. Erasmus had done for the New Testament what Reuchlin had accomplished for the Old, and now the means of exposing error having been put, into the hands of the learned, another phase of the divinely-controlled work of cleansing the sanctuary of Truth was already on its way, its instrument prepared and ready for the giving of that uncovered truth, not to the learned alone but to the people.

-- *Contributed.*

Next of this series
MARTIN LUTHER

The History of the Church

(The Herald of Christ's Kingdom - August, 1938)

No. 9

Martin Luther

STANDING UPON the pinnacle of God-given light and understanding, the earnest Christian is stirred as 'he turns to view those time-recorded events which men call History. To the alien mind it may seem but a jumbled mass of chance happenings, confused and with no pattern; but to the heaven-enlightened it is a majestic edifice, planned by the greatest of all architects, steadily and symmetrically moving onward to completion-not by the skilled laborers of a Hiram or a Solomon, but by the activities of the wise, the stupid, the blindly ignorant, actuated at times by noble purpose, but oftener by selfish aims and desires; God using their very wrath to His ultimate praise and the bringing about of His invincible purpose.

When the current of human history is changed by some great and turbulent movement to another and quite diverse channel, the practiced eye may trace back of it a long series of events preparatory to that momentous happening. We follow onward through the pages of the Holy Word four thousand years of God-prepared happenings and circumstances that brought to pass surely and steadily its intended culmination-the birth of a Redeemer. And no less surely did the same omnipotent Hand set into motion and control those forces which would lead His people forth from the cold and barren pastures of an apostate Church.

Faithful Witnesses of the Reformation

Back of those stars which shone so brightly in the darkened firmament,-Luther, Calvin, Zwingle, and Knox -- were the less brilliant but contributing lights of other earnest men holding aloft their individual torches, that other, eyes, straining to pierce the obscuring mist of Papal bull and boasting error, might also behold the Gospel Sun still shining in the blue vault of heaven.

In the year 1170 Peter Waldo, rich merchant of Lyons, desiring the poverty of his Lord, sold his possessions, gave all to the poor, and attempted to restore to its original purity the Church which he believed to be utterly corrupt. He continued to preach and after repeated warnings, he was ex-communicated, as were his followers.

In England appeared John Wycliffe, "Morning Star of the Reformation," emaciated and weakened by study and asceticism. At first he confined his protests to those against the corrupt clergy and the tyranny -of Rome, then brought his great intellect and knowledge of the New Testament to bear in an examination of the doctrine of Transubstantiation, held by the Church which had substituted the Sacrament of the Mass for the holy simplicity of the Supper of the Lord. In the tongue of the common people his co-workers gave forth the plainer truths of the Gospel, while Wycliffe's English version of the Bible removed the sackcloth with which it had been bound and gave it, open and unchained, to a grateful people. Against his influence Papal decrees were useless, and nearly a half century after his death, his bones were removed and burned, and the ashes scattered upon the surface of the river. But the flowing water could not carry *away* from men the sound of his voice, nor the breezes remove the ever-ascending incense of the truth he uttered.

In Bohemia John Huss pointed with a steady finger at the appalling vices of the clergy and was consigned alive to the blazing fagots, whose roaring flames but lighted with a greater intensity the surrounding darkness.

Men Destined and Chosen by God

Through Huss the truth taught by Wycliffe reached the eyes of an awakening monk in Saxony, bold of speech and impetuous in action-Martin Luther. Violating at times in his earnest vehemence the very law of love, but standing in heroic disregard of all personal safety, Luther was a man destined and chosen by God to fling wide open the. door which the delicate, scholarly hand of an Erasmus had already set ajar. But a mightier Hand than theirs had reached down from the great white throne of heaven and turned that stubborn door upon its time-bound hinges; for without divine help the timid fingers of a scholar and the virile hand of the Augustinian could have availed nothing. "Lo, I have set a door open before you which no one is able to shut; for though your strength is small, you have kept My Word, you have not renounced My name." . Praise God there is One who opens and none shall shut, who shuts and none shall open, who sets up and puts down, whose mighty Word shall not return to Him empty, but shall work out His glorious will in all the affairs of men.

Beside the great reformer there must ever stand the frail body -of Erasmus-he of the weak and gentle voice, who shrank from every form of violence in speech and deed, accomplishing by the strength of his intellect alone so telling an attack upon the haughty Church that the world listened and, charmed with the delicacy of his satire and the brilliance of the mind that guided his pen, fell admiringly and trustingly at his feet. Though they were never to meet in person, the pictures of Erasmus and Luther appeared side by side, hailed as the first honest German reformers. Yet great is the contrast they present; for though both were deep in their natures and their view the same, in temperament their fundamental difference clashed all along the way.

The sway that Erasmus held over his own time and generation seems to lie in the fact that he became a symbol of all that men longed for in the depths of their consciousness. He held up before them a blessed vision of men dwelling in brotherhood, of peace instead of war; and they were sick at heart of constant strife and bloodshed. The humanist dream of Erasmus was that of a world united in speech, religion, and culture, with all bickerings and controversies laid aside for all time. Viewing the constant quarrels of the nations, the hatred that existed between French, English, and German, he exclaimed, "Why do such foolish names still exist to keep us sundered, since we are united in the name of Christ?" In his idealistic vision the pen and not the sword would bring about a new spiritual form of a universal unity, would bring men into the fold of an all-embracing Christliness where love of fellow and an absorbing desire to serve others should prevail. But, beautiful as was the idea, men in general were inadequate to receive it. It was beyond man's power then as now to write upon the fleshy tablets of men's hearts so high a law-hardened more or less to stone as their hearts are through their continued alienation.

And so Erasmus and his followers instituted a new kind of nobility, of culture and high aspiration. They buried their tell-tale names of humble origin under the Latin or Greek equivalents of those names, even as Gerhard was called Erasmus, and Schwarzerd became Melancthon. But, alas, such intellectual atmosphere was but for the happy few, and the threshold of the door too high for the masses-"the barbarians," which a weary earth under varied forms of tyranny has held in such numbers.

Various Methods of Reformation

The brilliant criticisms of the ruling domineering Church penned by the scholarly hand of Erasmus became in Luther's brawny grasp a heavy weapon in an active personal battle with the arrogant foe. Still say the Catholic theologians, even as it was remarked in his own time, "Erasmus laid the egg and Luther hatched it." While reason and mockery were the best of tools in the delicate fingers of the scholar, sitting within the four walls of his study, swathed in furs to keep within his frail, anemic body what was there of heat, Luther wielded the scapel blade, cutting with bold and certain strokes at the malignant sores which he loathed But Erasmus hated force, and the harsh, dictatorial tones of the monk fell upon his ear with much unpleasantness. However, he said, "If God, as may be surmised by the magnificent swing with which Luther's cause has gone forward, wishes that matters should run this course, and needs a rough handed surgeon like Luther to heal the sores of a degenerate epoch, it is not for me to question His wisdom." Calmly seated behind his books, again he remarked, "How should I be able to help Luther by merely turning myself into a companion in danger? By so doing I should lead two men to their deaths instead of one."

But in just the same measure that Erasmus shrank in disapproval from Luther's noisy assault upon that which he himself had held up to the world in ridicule in his "Praise of Folly," so Luther despised the lukewarmness and indecision in matters of faith that Erasmus displayed. He scorned his evasion when a pointed question was put to him, his refusal to say Yes, or No, his seeming lack of conviction. The public attack Erasmus had made upon him he could not overlook, and for a year waged a fierce war of words against him whom he called, "the greatest enemy of God." Later Erasmus refused Luther's overtures to peace. He would not be the friend of him who had brought war where the teacher had believed himself about to establish good will amongst men. But Luther had said, "This war is our Lord God's war. He has unchained it, and never will it cease raging until all the enemies of His Word have been wiped from the face of the earth."

Melancthon and Luther, however, walked hand in hand, a loving John and an, energetic Paul; but the gentle fellow-laborer was often hurt by the excitable outbursts of Luther, and Erasmus ever remained in his eyes as the great teacher, the revered master.

On the outside, the Roman Church presented itself as a fair edifice indeed, but the supporting pillars were weakened by the dry-rot of formalism and the boring termites of Papal error. Already in the deep grooves made upon its outer walls by a scholar's pen, the pick of a miner's son was at work, each forceful blow shaking its very foundations. But small attention was given this at first by those complacently seated within. They were too busy with the decorating of St. Peter's, too engrossed in master paintings for the Vatican to direct much attention to the noisy Saxon monk. They had handed Savonarola over to the flames, and had escorted the dissenting ones out of the Spanish peninsula, now they hoped for quiet that they might give their full attention to art. But the sound of storm grew into the threatening roll of thunder.

Divine Protection Afforded the Reformer

Brother Streeter, in his "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" remarks: "In the Lord's providence the Reformers were protected in their witnessing by some of the world's princes." Otherwise the reformers of this particular period would have met with violence as did some we have mentioned of an earlier time. The most outstanding of these powerful protectors was Frederick, Elector of Saxony, of whom we have already spoken as the founder of the new University of Wittenberg. He

had invited the young priest, Luther, there as a professor, protecting him in both his pulpit and in his university chair. Strange as it may seem, no more ardent son of the Roman Church was to be found in all Germany than Frederick, in the collecting of relics and the bones of saints, the superstitious tokens which Luther despised. Then fate seemed to lay the whole outcome of the Reformation into the hands of Erasmus. When Frederick was passing through Cologne, he asked for an interview with this indisputable; leader of religious thought that he might determine his opinion of Martin Luther. Was he the head of a new and better evangelism, he queried, or was he merely a fanatical sectarian. The whole issue of the Reformation trembled in the balance. Would the answer be that the fiery monk was justified in what he was doing or would it imply that he was wrong? Luther's rebellious methods were distasteful to Erasmus. "If Luther remains within the fold of the Church, I shall be happy to rally to his side," he had said. Even with the same horizon they were in a sense, rivals. One word of disapproval from Erasmus, the master, and Frederick would withdraw his supporting arm; as nearly as Erasmus would take sides on any question he now stood on the side of the Reformer, and the Elector straightway requested the Papal delegate not to excommunicate Luther and burn his books as threatened until a careful and public inquiry had been made into his cause.

And so to the town of Worms, already filled with people who had come to witness the entry of its recently crowned young emperor, Charles V, came Luther now under the ban of the Pope and with an official letter of safe-conduct in his purse lest he be waylaid and burned at the stake as had his noble predecessor, John Huss, one hundred years earlier. The next day he stood before the assembly; demanded to recant portions of the books he had already acknowledged as his own work and to be the first to consign one to the flames, he asked for time to consider. The next day he gave them his reply-noble, brave, and worthy of his Christly 'ambassadorship: "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture . . . my conscience is taken captive by God's Word, and I neither can nor will revoke anything, seeing it is not safe or right to act against conscience. God help me. Amen." Ordered ten days later by the Emperor to leave Worms, he was waylaid in the Thuringian forest by a party of five horsemen and carried captive to the castle of Wartburg where, known only as Knight George, he remained a year-a captive only that he might be safe from those who would have taken his life. Thus did Frederick, Elector of Saxony, come to the rescue of the Reformation. Thus did he press his name deeply and dramatically on the pages of the history of the Church, a ready instrument, noble and willing, in the hands of his God.

Luther in his quiet forest-surrounded sanctuary continued his letters and controversial papers which, fluttering through the bars of his prison, went their way to gladden all the world. At the age of sixty-three he passed quietly away, as a mighty wind, its force all spent against resisting oaks gently moves the sleeping flowers with a final sigh. His last word on earth was a decided, "Yes," when asked if he still stood by the doctrines he had taught. "The just shall live by faith," the young monk had declared as he arose from his knees when ascending the Scala Scanta -- and so shall the just die; and so died Martin Luther.

A Prophet Sent by God

In the funeral discourse given before his interment at Wittenberg he was likened to that angel of the Apocalypse who flew in mid-heaven with the everlasting Gospel. He was declared to be a prophet sent by God to deliver His Church from thee power and corruption of Rome. Surely, the listeners were reminded, it was his prerogative as such a messenger to speak so forcibly that to some it would seem to be bitter and lacking in gentleness, but the result of 'his labor and fortitude might well be summed up in the words of the second angel, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great."

Brother Streeter, who so ably wrote an exposition of Revelation in our own day, 'has an embracing but more complete explanation of these angel messages by virtue of the later and clearer epoch in which he lived.*

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*See "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, in two volumes, published by our Institute.

Melancthon, faithful friend and fellow-laborer, who' had himself often suffered under the vehemence and strong words of Luther, gave also on the solemn occasion his eulogy. He declared him to have been a Jeremiah into whose mouth God had placed His Word, mighty to the tearing down of strongholds of sin, a word sufficient also to plant and to build. There might be truth, he admitted, in the complaint of some good people that in controversy Luther was too rough and outspoken, but even Erasmus had reputedly said, "God in these last times, in which great and terrible diseases have prevailed, has given the world also a sharp physician." And he, Melancthon, associate and friend of thirty years, in his own deep loss bore testimony to the deep spirituality of the Reformer, of his constant dependence upon prayer in all the trials and difficulties of life, of his freedom from personal vice, and his eye of single devotedness to God's will and purposes, relying on Him for help in all his times of need. Thus spoke Melancthon, the gentle scholar and loving John, of whom Luther had lovingly said, "Our master of arts, Philip, goes forward quietly and gently, cultivating and planting, sowing and watering joyfully, according as God has dealt to him so liberally of his gifts."

And what of Erasmus? Had he escaped the noisy battle which he so detested and to which he had paved the way? His wish had been to reform the Church from within. He had sat calmly in his study as Luther stood before the hostile assembly at Worms, when one word from the scholar would have had weight with the decision. He hoped instead that the Pope's ban would curb Luther. Could he, now in his fifties, hide himself in student quiet and be thought of kindly by both parties? Not so, for in times of great crises the people insist on a decisive stand -- for or against, yes or no -- and Erasmus found himself named by the Catholics as the promoter of this, "Luther plague." Priests spoke against him from the pulpit, while radical students threw down his chair at the university. He could not live happily in any decidedly Catholic town, nor did he find a suitable haven in one gone over to the Reformation. It has been said, "A free and independent mind which refuses to be bound by any dogma and declines to join any party, never finds a home upon this earth," but Switzerland, loved refuge for all who have sought freedom of thought and conscience, became his dwelling-place. Here he lived for eight years, linking his name inseparably with Basle as he carried on his great literary work, sought by the learned.

Outside, the battle waged fiercely, for Luther had found upon his own hands a storm that he had never wished nor bargained for, as an oppressed peasantry, now taking matters into their own excited hands, staged a social insurrection where the Reformer had intended one of spirit and of truth. His spiritual sword, keen and two-edged, became a carnal weapon in their hands; words of the spirit resolved themselves into fleshly commands. One sea-like surge succeeded another as they stormed cloisters and destroyed graven images, and at Luther's reproof they taunted him with the term, "Friend of Antichrist." "I was born for struggling on the field of battle,'-" Luther had said, "with parties and devils. Thus it is that my writings breathe war and tempest. . . . I am like the sturdy wood-cutter, who must clear and level the road." But this insurrection he had not reckoned for, and deciding that "the brute populace must be governed by brute force," he took his stand on the side of authority against these who had followed him so devotedly but mistakenly. Surely with sorrow as well as with characteristic courage and honesty he exclaimed at the end, "I, Martin Luther, have slain all the peasants who died during this rebellion, for I goaded authority to the slaughter. Their blood be on my head." Erasmus, old and sickly, pricked to the heart at tidings

of the violent deaths of friends, uttered his sorrowful prayer, "May God gather me soon unto Himself so that I quit this mad world." The wrath of man, the overruling of God! To those standing upon a sea of glass, how beautifully the sun is shining, though storm-clouds gather and men's hearts fail them for very fear.

"No storm can shake my inmost calm
While to that Refuge clinging,
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth
How can I keep from singing?"

-*Contributed.*

Next of this series JOHN WESLEY

The History of the Church

(The Herald of Christ's Kingdom - December, 1938)

No. 10
John Wesley

IN THE beginning of the eighteenth century the religious situation in England presented a sad picture of an established Church frozen into a soul-chilling formality -- a Church which had substituted for the life-giving truths of the Bible a smug moralism -- a Church whose very ministers in private were cynical of much of the teachings of the Word of God, laughing it away as more or less fiction. Reason, with its attendant culture, had arrived, they believed, and so boastful an outlook could find little in common with a humble faith in the Scriptures. As a result the poor stayed away from church and only the class-conscious, gentle-folk attended who believed religion a necessary something to keep the lower classes in order, and so they devoted themselves to the cold formalism of a needed bulwark.

They were brutal in that early eighteenth century. Their games were coarse and unbelievably cruel. Half of all the wheat went into soul destroying gin instead of into their children's bread, for one house in every six was a grog-shop. Drunkenness, swearing and cursing, even amongst the small children, were seen and heard everywhere, and some idea of the heartlessness of the populace may be had from an advertisement which appeared in London in the year 1727. In sum and substance it promised that a mad bull would be dressed up with fireworks and turned loose in the place where games were to be held; a dog also would be decked out-in the same manner; a bear would be let loose at the same time, and a cat would be tied to the bull's tail. Such was the shocking idea of sport held by the people of a nation robbed of its God given right to hear something of His truth by a smug, self-satisfied churchianity.

A Reformer is Born

Into a modest rectory in the town of Epworth in England there was born one day in the year 1703 one more child' to tax to its capacity a nursery already overflowing. This newcomer was the fifteenth child of Samuel and Susannah Wesley, nine of whose children died pat an early age. Infant mortality was high at that time, and all over the land of the Wesleys, as over many other lands there went constantly up the wail of countless Rachels weeping for their children.

Susannah, "Mother of Methodism"

Susannah Wesley, herself the daughter of a clergyman, was one of a family of twenty-five children. Her father seems to have been a man of determined faith, for when confronted with the enforced giving of his unqualified consent to everything in the Book of Common Prayer he, along with many others, gave up his position in the established Church. From him the daughter inherited her strong will to pursue that course which to her seemed right, and such character must have impressed itself in turn upon her own children. "Mother of Methodism" she has been termed, and mother she was of the great preacher and reformer, John, and of Charles, that sweet hymn-writer whose many songs have thrilled Christian hearts from their day to ours.

How insignificant then becomes that long coveted, now realized, privilege of woman's rights embraced in the term "suffrage," beside this greater God given one, of leading the young awakening intellect in holy thought; of teaching small lips to form the lisping prayer -- that blessed privilege of all earth's pious mothers. When the name of Samuel is spoken, there comes to mind the no less reverenced name of Hannah; when on the pages of Christian history we read the name of Augustine, we may see on that same page the lovely name of Monica; in Holy Writ we behold the Babe of Bethlehem, mother wrapped in swaddling garments, and Mary bending over the Life transferred from heaven to earth, whose baby steps she had been chosen from above to guide. Blessed amongst all women the heavenly messenger had declared her to be, and in a lesser sense have been blessed all women who have handed to a needful world a son or daughter whose teaching and example should leave behind a hallowing effect on frail humanity.

"As self-will," said Susannah, "is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children insures their after-wretchedness and irreligion; whatever checks and mortifies it, promotes their future happiness and piety. This is still more evident if we farther consider that religion is nothing less than the doing of the will of God, and not our own: that the one grand impediment to our temporal and eternal happiness being this self-will, no indulgences of it can be trivial, no denial unprofitable."

If we, then, living in an age when self-will and self-expression have been the key-note in the raising of the child, seem to doubt the wisdom of so hard a saying, let the lives of John and Charles Wesley, 'those sons who later in life rose up and called her blessed, give testimony. "Train up a child in the way he should go," runs a proverb in Israel, "and he will not depart from it and "provoke not your children to wrath," declares Paul in Ephesians, "but bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord." All this the mother of the Wesleys did, and the Christian world is the richer and better because of it. And so the small children of the Epworth parsonage were in the words of the mother, "When turned a year old (and some before), . . . taught to cry softly; by which means they escaped abundance of correction they might otherwise have had; and that most odious sound of the crying of children was rarely heard in the house; but the family usually lived in as much quietness as if there had not been a child among them." So wrote Susannah to John who had requested her in a letter to set down those rules by which she had raised her family and to send them to him, he being at this time, though illustrious in presence and voice throughout England, still but the admiring and grateful son.

She also tells him how at the age of five they were all taught to read, only one day being allowed them wherein to learn their letters. Samuel, the eldest, learned his "in a few hours," and then began to read the first chapter of Genesis; "He read continually," says the mother, "and had such prodigious memory, that I cannot remember ever to have told him the same word twice." Continuing, she says "I take such a proportion of time as I can spare every night to discourse with each child apart. On Monday, I talk with Molly; on Tuesday with Hetty; Wednesday with Nancy; Thursday with Jacky; Friday with Patty; Saturday with Charles; and with Emily and Suky together on Sunday." For she reasons, "Though I am not a man nor a minister, yet if my heart were sincerely devoted to God, and I was inspired with a true zeal for His glory, I might do somewhat more than I do. I thought I might pray more for them (that is, for others), and might speak to those with whom I converse with more warmth of affection. I resolved to begin with my own children."

The Burning of Epworth Parsonage

The first and by no means the least impressive happening of John Wesley's life came when he was but **six** years of age. The home at Epworth burned and the young boy nearly burned with it. He had been left asleep on, the second floor and the stairs were aflame when, as they counted the children assembled on the lawn, he was not found among them. But the lad had awakened and mounting a chest appeared at the window, from which he was rescued by the means of one neighbor standing on the shoulders of another to reach him. So profound an impression was made by the incident on the heart of the- mother that- that very day she made this entry in her diary

"Son John. What shall I render to the Lord for all His mercies? I would offer myself and all that Thou hast given me; and I would resolve -- O, give me grace to do it! -- that the residue of my life shall all be devoted to Thy service. And I do intend to be more particularly careful with the soul of this child, that Thou hast so mercifully provided for, than I have ever been; that .1 may instill in his mind the principles of true religion and virtue. Lord, give me grace to do it sincerely and prudently."

Surely reward for such heart-consecration to God, -and for "the work" of her hands, Susannah Wesley must have found as she viewed the life and labors of her son John; for Augustine Birrell has said: "No single figure influenced so many minds, no single voice touched so many hearts. No other man did such a life's work for England."

Sails for America

In the fall of 1735 John and Charles Wesley sailed for America, not, as John remarks in his diary, for "dross of riches or honor, but to save our souls and live wholly to the glory of God." For John Wesley with all his singleness of purpose, gathering around himself as he had at Oxford a group of students committed to holy living with set rules for daily walk and conduct, had as yet not reached that peace of mind, that rest in God, that becomes the blessed portion of all those who deeply sense all that lies in the words: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves." What better course could he pursue, he questioned, to save his own soul than to save the souls of many others, and what better place than the new land? What more virgin soil for the sowing of the good seed than the simple, primitive hearts of the Indian?

Storms came on that ocean voyage and Wesley found himself panic-stricken with fear. Much ashamed of his unwillingness to die, he exclaims in his diary, "O, how pure in heart must he be who would rejoice to appear before God at a minute's warning." He had noticed however the reaction of a group of Germans on board, some, twenty-six in number, Moravians, who were in the midst of a religious service when the third storm broke violently over the boat, splitting the mainsail in pieces and threatening at any moment to swallow them up. Amongst the screaming of the others their singing of the German psalm went calmly on. "Were you not afraid?" asked Wesley afterwards of one of them. "I thank God, No," was the answer. "But were your women and children not afraid?" still questioned Wesley. "No; our women and children are not afraid to die," replied the Moravian. The English preacher had before this noticed their daily behavior, their quiet seriousness, their humility in performing the most servile tasks for the other passengers while refusing any pay, tasks which none of the English on board would undertake. It was good for their proud hearts they insisted-their loving Savior had done more for them. Wesley makes

note in his diary that they showed neither "pride, anger, nor revenge," evidencing at all times a meekness that no injury could move.

Later on, after he had left America for England, disappointed and hindered as he had been in his desired work among the Indians, frightened again by rough seas on the return voyage until he exclaims in self-depreciation: "I went to America to convert the Indians; but O! who shall convert me? Who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of mischief? . . . Let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, 'To die is gain.'" He, through a great Moravian, Peter Bohler, "in the hands of the great God," was convinced of unbelief, "of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved." Peter Bohler had said, "Acknowledge as vile every deed of yours, every trait you have held virtuous, and pray God to pardon you in view solely of Christ's atonement."

Wesley began to preach with all zeal now along the line of "free salvation by faith in the blood of Christ." He mentions preaching in five different churches, and in each one he was told he could preach no more. "I felt," he writes, "I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and staved me from the law of sin and death." He now contrasts the difference between his former state and this: "I was striving, yea, fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace. But then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered; now, I was always conqueror."

At this time he met George Whitefield, famous for his Christian eloquence, who had the strange way of preaching in the fields. Wesley, loyal churchman that he really was, would have heretofore considered it almost a sin for souls to be saved except in a church, but he began to remind himself that the Lord's Sermon on the Mount was a remarkable precedent of field-preaching, and there were churches, or their equivalent, in the days of the Master also.

And so to a crowd of a thousand souls in a green meadow John Wesley preached his stirring message of salvation. To the remonstrance of some of his friends, he replied, "You ask how is it I assemble Christians who are none of my charge, to sing psalms, and pray, and hear the Scriptures expounded? . . . Permit me to speak plainly. . . . On Scriptural principles, I do not think it hard to justify whatever I do. God in Scriptures commands me, according to my power, to instruct the ignorant, reform the wicked, confirm the virtuous. Man forbids me to do this in another's parish; that is, in effect, to do it at all; seeing I have no parish of my own, nor probably ever shall. Whom then shall I hear, God or man? I look upon the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all who are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation."

"I look upon the whole world as my parish." Standing before the stone tablet that marks the resting place of John and Charles Wesley in impressive and historical Westminster Abbey in London, England, one reads again the ringing words, cut into enduring stone. And the thoughts of some of us may go onward a century of years to another who courageously and firmly, with -all the power of a strong conviction, started forth also to make the world his parish, Charles T. Russell, beloved pastor and enlightening teacher of our own time. Blessed are those servants who give light and truth in due season to the hungry ones who clamor for bread and find no satisfaction in the stones of formalism and established tradition. But a glance through the real work and victories of John Wesley as gleaned from his own journal must be left for our next article.

- *Contributed.*

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The History of the Church

(The Herald of Christ's Kingdom - February, 1939)

No. 11
John Wesley

BECAUSE HE had turned from ritualism as a means of. salvation to the simple, primitive, Pauline doctrine of faith, John Wesley, "spoken against under the new name of Methodism" (to use his own words), found church doors closed against him. Turning to the greensward of the open field he received there the insults and stones of rough mobs secretly instigated at times by the clergymen, sometimes by the town officials, whose very duty should have been to preserve order. For the privileged classes of England were shocked at this new religion, which in a moment's time could place even the town drunkard on a spiritual par with the most respected church-goes, and the ignorant, roughly clad miner on the level, it might be, of even the archbishop. If any of the members of the Established Church did surreptitiously glance back to the Apostle Paul and see there the old, old doctrine of faith in the blood of Christ alone, it was still too democratic, too much of a class-leveler to smack well on the theological lips: of staid, smugly satisfied and class-conscious religionists.

My Times are in Thy Hand

"Clods and stones flew about me on every side," Wesley remarks in his journal, "but they neither touched nor disturbed me." The simple faith he placed in God's watch-care over the most minute affairs of his life rendered him utterly fearless in all danger. His personal health and safety seemed to concern him only that on them depended his service to others. Could he not then trust the One whose loving eye numbered even the hairs of his head, or more amazing still, marked the feathery fall of the tiny sparrow? So- when the sun shone too hotly on his head, threatening by the faintness stealing over him to cut his sermon short, he lifted up his heart to God and the clouds drifted over the face of it and remained. "Let any one who please call this chance," says Wesley, "I call it an answer to prayer." On another occasion, "The rain began almost as soon as I began to speak. I prayed that if God saw best, it might be stayed till I had delivered His Word. It was so, and then began again."

While Wesley believed that God could and did heal instantly at times in answer to prayer, he ,looked upon the observation of reasonable rules of health .and the use of simple remedies as secondary means to bring to pass God's will. In a book of primitive remedies which he compiled and published, he wrote, "The love of God as it is the sovereign remedy for all miseries, so, in. particular, it effectually prevents all bodily disorders the passions introduce, by keeping the passions themselves within due bounds. And by the unspeakable joy and perfect calm it gives the mind it becomes the most powerful of all means of health and long life."

If a physician were needed, he advised one who feared God, and along with the remedies one must exercise faith. His own life, spanning as it did nearly the eighteenth century, seems to verify his wisdom in this, for in history it is hard to find a parallel of such physical activity -- his writing alone would constitute a life work for the average man. A week's enforced rest because of a sprained ankle was spent "in prayer, reading, and conversation," also in writing a "Hebrew Grammar" and "Lessons for Children." On the following Sunday and twice during the week he

preached at the Foundry, kneeling because he could not stand, "my heart being enlarged, and my mouth opened to declare the wonders of God's love" as he tells us in his daily journal. Every moment of time seemed to be redeemed and used to the glory of Him he served. "What reason have I to praise God," he exclaims after a hindering illness, "that He does not take the word of his truth utterly out of my mouth!"

"How is this," he writes on his seventy-second birthday, "that I find just the same strength as I did thirty years ago? That my sight is considerably better now, and my nerves firmer, than they were then? That I have none of the infirmities of old age, and have lost several I had in my youth? The grand cause is the good pleasure of God, who doeth whatsoever pleaseth Him. The chief means are, first, my constantly arising at four, for about fifty years; second, my generally preaching at five in the morning-one of the most healthful exercises in the world; third, my never traveling less, by sea or land, than 4,500 miles in a year."

Let not Your Heart be Troubled or Afraid

In the pages of his journal lies not alone the consecrated life work of the Reformer, but his loving heart, his holy thoughts as well. We follow him on through wind and rain and hail and deep drifts of snow in which at times he is forced to dismount and lead his horse on through. He must at any cost keep every appointment with the waiting souls ahead.. Not through any fear for health, or love of ease, on his part must they be hindered in their hearing of the blessed Word of God. Speaking of the rain on one such occasion, he writes: "It drove through our coats, great and small, boots and everything, and yet froze as it fell, even upon our eyebrows; so that we had scarce either strength or motion left-when we came to our inn at Stilton. Threatened on every hand with physical violence even to being drowned in the river, by violent mobs, he walked daily through the valley of death's shadow, fearing no evil. At one time an ox was driven in amongst his outdoor congregation; at another, wild-fire was thrown into the room, but he preached on, and his audience remained in spite of the smoke. During one of the worst disturbances raised against him he walked into the very thickest of the rabble and kindly took the hand of its captain. "He immediately said," Wesley relates, "'Sir, I will see you safe home. Sir, no man shall touch you. Gentlemen, stand off; give back, I will knock the first man down that touches him' . . . We then parted (at Mr. Hide's door) in much love." Again, when a mob filled the street in front of the house where he was staying, forcing its way in till the lower rooms were filled, Wesley, in spite of the fears of those with him for his safety, went down amongst them, asked for a chair, and from so weak a rostrum spoke to the angry gathering. "My heart was filled with love, my eyes with tears, and my mouth with arguments. They were amazed, they were ashamed, they were melted down, they devoured every word. What a turn was this. O how did God change the counsel of the old Ahitophel into foolishness; and bring all drunkards swearers, Sabbath-breakers, and mere sinners in the place to hear of his plenteous redemption." In a few hours, he declared the scene as changed, "We could walk now through every street of the town, and none molested or opened his mouth, unless to thank and bless us."

Though he, relied upon God for all necessary protection there were times when he came out of such encounters not unscathed, ". . a little before ten, God brought me safe to Wednesbury; having lost only a flap of my waistcoat, and a little skin from one of my hands." Farther on we read, "By how gentle degrees does God prepare us for his will! Two years ago a piece of brick grazed my shoulders. It was a year after that that the stone struck me between the eyes. Last month I received one blow, and this evening two; one before we came into the town, and one after we were gone out; but both were as nothing: for though one man struck me on the breast

with all his might, and the other on the mouth with such a force that the blood gushed out immediately, I felt no pain from either of the blows, than if they had touched me with a straw." He felt the power of Christ resting on his life and, like Paul, it made him satisfied, for Christ's sake, with weakness, insults, trouble, persecution, and calamity.

He spoke of the people in Wales as being, "the most insensible, ill-behaved people I have ever seen . . . one ancient man cursed and swore almost incessantly and tried to throw a great stone, but was not allowed to do so." The ignorant and vicious colliers of Kingswood he declared "but one remove from the beasts that perish." Then the great evangelist, George Whitefield, Wesley's friend and contemporary, went there -- he of the Demosthenes -- like eloquence, whose voice Benjamin Franklin once measured in its carrying power and found that, standing on the edge of a crowd estimated by the area covered as about 30,000, he could yet' hear distinctly. No more did the town resound with cursing and blasphemy, nor was it filled with drunkenness,- uncleanness, bitterness, and wrath. "Peace and love are there," writes Wesley. Whitefield was, in the words of a biographer, "all thunder emotion. and tears." Wesley may have lacked much of the dramatic tones, the impressive gestures of Whitefield, but his voice, distinct and clear, carried to the outer fringes of the crowd and held his audience by its very power of conviction. "I never scream," he once said in a letter. "I never strain myself. I dare not."

Speaking the Truth in Love

"My preaching," says Paul, "was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power." Such might be said of -John Wesley. His was the first voice to reach the lower classes since the days of the Franciscan friars, and "plain people needing but plain truth," he purposely set aside John Wesley the scholar, and became only the Christian; avoiding all philosophical speculations, all the labyrinths of intricate reasoning, all the non-essential theological disputations, he bared his own heart to the multitude and in doing so opened the flood-gates of other hearts.

"The effect of salvation upon John Wesley," it has been said, "set him on fire to preach the Gospel to all mankind," As we read in Jeremiah: "His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, . . . and I could not stay." Extracts from his own journal give unquestionable testimony that this was so. "I had had for some time a great desire to go and publish the love of God . if it were but for one day, in the Isles of Scilly," he writes, and go he did on the day set, in a fisher boat, fifteen leagues upon the main ocean, where the waves were rolling dangerously high. "The waves an awful distance keep, They cannot harm for God is there. This and other hymns Wesley and his companions sang comfortingly. The pilot thought it would be but good luck if they ever reached the land, "but he knew not of Him whom the wind and seas obey, Wesley later inscribed happily in his diary. Placey, ten miles north of Newcastle, was inhabited only by colliers, cruel, ignorant and wicked. "I felt great compassion for these poor creatures from the time I heard of them first, and the more because all men seemed to despair of them."

Tolerance

One of the outstanding characteristics of the leader of Methodism as we examine his mind and heart through the medium of his own pen was his gentle tolerance of the personal views of his fellow Christians. "I will not quarrel with you about your opinion, only see that your heart is right towards God, that you know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, that you love your neighbor, and walk as your Master walked, and I desire no more. I am sick of opinions; am weary to bear them; my soul loathes this frothy food. Give me solid and substantial religion; give me a humble, gentle lover of God and man; a man full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy; a man laying himself out in the work of faith, the patience of hope, the labor of love. Let my soul, be with these Christians wheresoever they are, and whatsoever opinion they are of."

As he was riding through a village called Sticklepath he was stopped by one who asked, "Is not thy name John Wesley?" Two or three more then came up and they asked him to pause there. "Before we had spoken many words, our souls took acquaintance with each other. I find they were called Quakers: but that hurt me not; seeing the love of God was in their hearts."

"I've no more right to object to a man for holding a different opinion from mine than I have to differ with a man because he wears a wig and I wear my own hair; but if he takes his wig off and shakes the powder in my eyes I shall consider it my duty- to get quit of him as soon as possible.

Methodism as It Was

The weavers and miners of England hungered for a religion that would govern their daily lives and hallow every thought. Wesley offered them such a religion-a religion that made them one in Christ. When criticized for drawing them away from the fellowship of the Church, he answered, "Look east, west, north or south." Name what parish you please, is Christian fellowship there? . . . . What Christian connection is there between them? What watching over each other's souls? What a mere jest is it, then, to talk of destroying what never was." Now the humblest one of them was watched over and advised. He was lonely no longer. There was sympathy and love and fellowship with the members of his society, his class leader, and his pastor. Where before rough colliers had gathered evenings in the ale-houses in ribald song they now assembled in the schoolhouse and sang hymns and prayed. There- were watch nights and love-feasts and breaking of bread. The societies were subdivided into small groups or classes of twelve each for Scripture study. Those able to do so brought a contribution of a "penny a week" to the stewards, and from this the poor were fed when the need was great, as they had been in the days of Paul. These Methodist societies were the only religious bodies requiring no confession of belief. This opinion or that interpretation was not insisted upon. Each individual was permitted to think for himself but he must in turn extend the same courtesy to others. Wesley, however, expelled members for loose living; Christians under his firm but loving rule might not swear or beat their wives or seek company with the drunken. "True," says Wesley, "we are saved by faith. But those who are 'justified' must inevitably show their state of mind in their acts. Acts issue from an inner state. To suppose that a man can be all holiness within and do nothing to show it is nonsense the inner state becomes inevitably visible in 'works.'

Wesley had made song a great influence in his work, for he was deeply moved by holy thoughts set to music. He criticized and published the hymns written by his brother, Charles, which num-

bered some 6,500; some of minor importance. As a prolific writer of sacred songs his nearest equal was Dr. Watt, who fell quite behind. Some of the less important of Charles' hymns were merely rhymed tracts, many of them against Calvinism, which had fairly split the Methodists into two wings. Whitefield was a Calvinist and an ardent debater of the doctrine, but John Wesley refrained from argument,' much as he was opposed to the teaching. To do so he knew would cause only dissension among Christians and help not at all. His refusal to argue only incensed the Calvinists more, but the Reformer went gently on his way, calling not the righteous but sinners to repentance.

The mining districts of England are still strongly Methodist, and on the walls of many humble homes may still be seen the picture of a burning house with a small boy at an upper window. The transcendent doctrine of justification by faith, adding nothing of their own, struck deep into the souls of the roughly ignorant masses, "rough enough in outward appearance," declared John Wesley, "but their hearts were as melting wax. So eagerly did they come, these counterparts of the common people who heard Jesus gladly, that Wesley was awakened one morning by a company of tinners who, fearing they might be late, had gathered early outside his house, "and were singing and praising God."

"God Buries His Workman, but Carries on His Work

At Epworth at the age of eighty-one Wesley writes, "Today I entered on my eighty-second year, and found myself just as strong to labor, and as fit for any exercise of body and mind as I was forty years ago. I do not impute this to second causes, but to the Sovereign Lord of all."

At eighty-three and at eighty-five years we still find Wesley never tired either with writing, preaching, or traveling. "Such is the goodness of God." All his faculties remained, his hearing, smell, taste were not impaired. But on his eighty-sixth year he had suddenly grown old, strength, memory, senses had decayed. He speaks of it as a sudden change. "For above eighty-six years I found none of the infirmities of old age; my eyes did not wax dim, neither was my natural strength abated but last August I felt almost a sudden change.. My eyes were so dim that no glasses would help me. My strength likewise quite forsook me and probably will not return in this world. But I feel no pain from head to foot; only it seems nature is exhausted; and, humanly speaking, will sink more and more, till, 'the weary springs of life stand still at last.'"

A week before he died he preached to a congregation of miners on the text, "One thing is needful." And then death came-came in the way he had hoped it would come, expressing as he had a wish early in life that his end as well as his days might be to God's glory. He was conscious to the last, as he spoke words of comfort and encouragement to weeping friends around his bed. He uttered words of trust and asked for prayers and hymns from time to time. Many years before he had stood at Susannah's bedside and watched his saintly mother die -- "Children, as soon as I am released, sing a psalm of praise to God."

The marriage of John Wesley at the late age of forty-eight was a grave disappointment and source of much sorrow. His wife soon tired of the rough roads. She and her daughter did not take kindly to setting forth in violent storms from one of his appointments to another. "I took horse with my wife and daughter.. The tiles were rattling from the houses on both sides; but they hurt us not." On a page of his journal we find this opinion: "I cannot understand how a Methodist preacher can answer it to God, to preach one sermon less, in a married state than in a single state. In this respect surely, 'it remaineth, that they *who* have wives be as though they had none.'" At his death

there were three hundred itinerant ministers and local preachers, humble and unlettered, but often with much ability, on whom the Anglican clergy looked down. At first these lay preachers, though lodged and fed by members, were ragged because of no pay. Then they received fifteen dollars a quarter for books and clothes. Pelted by mobs and thrown into ponds, they wore high collars to protect their throats from stones, and carried in a bag their books and clothes. In addition to this they carried a spade in winter to dig themselves out, of the snow. Four years after Wesley's death the Methodists, numbering over one hundred thousand, took the step he had never wished to take, and became a separate church. He had always looked upon his classes as being supplementary to, or a holy movement within, the English Church. At no time had he thought to *secede.*

- Contributed.

Next and final article
"BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM"

The History of the Church

(The Herald of Christ's Kingdom - August, 1939)

No. 12
"Behold the Bridegroom"

WHILE John Wesley was riding horseback through the narrow lanes and rutted roads of old England, his head nodding with the movement of his horse over the book he was ever wont to slip from his saddle-bag, the church in the New England across the Atlantic was all but asleep, little remaining of that fervency of spirit which the Pilgrims had brought with them. Te congregations were drowsy indeed, and literally so, under dry and uninspiring sermons, and could scarcely keep awake. Equally uninspiring to the minister was the sight of such an audience, and it was the custom to carry up and down the aisles a long stick with a bunch of soft feathers tied to the farther end, to be whisked gently under the noses of the nodding women and tapped, not so gently, on the unattentive head of some sleeping deacon.

The churches for the most part were assemblies of small farmers, their faith a curious blend of the admonitions and promises of earthly Israel and the Calvinist doctrines of the time. They were not so much concerned with an eternal future as with the present, and so, if they were as good as men ought to be and attended church regularly on Sunday, they expected as a natural return to be rewarded with abundant harvests, to be sheltered from all the fierce manifestations of nature - from earthquake and drouth, from storm and flood-and from the constant danger of attack by the Indians. And then the message of George Whitefield swept, an, awakening storm, across the country.

George Whitefield had little training in theology. He believed however that the doctrine of eternal torment for sinners was in the Bible, but it gave him no pleasure. So often we find this has been true, the heart of imperfect man in his human sympathy shaming the very conception he has set up in his mind of the God the Scriptures have so firmly declared to be . Love itself, the pure fountain-head of all sympathy, all affection, all yearning. It is generally acknowledged that no more eloquent preacher has appeared in many centuries than Whitefield. The effect of his evangelism is still known as "The Great Awakening," although in spite of his power to draw great crowds after him and to awaken intense human emotion, some have complained that the lasting spiritual effect of his preaching was shallow. He set the people to thinking gravely along the lines of the apparent imminence of Christ's Kingdom-a kingdom to be ushered in, he believed, with awful and majestic events, with the return of Christ and the burning up of the world and all the unsaved therein. Even the young had been turned by his eloquent pleading from their careless, if not sinful, ways to thoughts of the future and its glorious reward. or, frightening thought, its dire punishment. Their brooding, excited minds were now fertile for the revival that was to sweep across the stony soil of New England.

The work of this most notable "hell-fire preacher" of the time stands out in the earlier history of our country as remarkable in its effect upon the people. The many conversions and the fervency of the repentance of the converted seemed to all but the skeptic to indicate that the Millennium was indeed at hand. The underlying doubt embraced in the Scripture, "Shall He find the faith in the earth," seems to have escaped their notice, and after the excitement of the revival, came the whirlwind of reaction which always follows periods of outstanding leadership and great enthusiasm in religion evidenced in heresies, factions, and schisms. Groups here and there denounced the clergy, some known gas Separatists claiming to be "the persecuted remnant" and God's special

servants. It was at this time also that Unitarianism dawned-that teaching so removed from the Pauline Gospel, "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh"; and Edwards, though deeply disappointed at all the adverse conditions, still believed that the work had been of the Lord and that the Millennium was not far distant.

William Miller

About forty years after this time a boy was born on a small farm, the first of a family of sixteen children. The only one of these to care for books, young William Miller read everything that came to hand. In early youth he declared himself a Deist, a prevalent belief amongst thinkers of the day, a belief that admits in an offhand way the existence of a Creator but rejects as superstition the Scriptural revelation of a Savior. Leaving his family and farm to serve a while in the army, some severe mental and spiritual conflict ended in his becoming a Christian and embracing the Bible gas his chief study. "I lost all my taste for other reading," he informs us, "and applied my heart to get wisdom from God." For fourteen years he continued to work his farm, spending what leisure hours he had in the study of prophecy, drawing the while strange charts covered with mathematical deductions. Through this application he became convinced that the year 1843 was to usher in the Millennial reign of Christ. After some time he presented this teaching to others and was invited to speak in a little Baptist Church. Picturing, as he did, earnestly and quietly enough but in dramatic terms, an earth in flames, the cries of the wicked for mercy and by contrast the victorious shouts of the redeemed as they were caught safely up to meet the Lord in the air, he had the absorbed attention of his listeners. He so solemnly and fully believed what he preached, he felt so deeply himself what he wished others to feel-to this William Miller ascribed his hold over his congregations.

In a letter to Baptist Elder Hendryx in the spring of 1832 he writes: "I am satisfied that the end of the world is at hand. The evidence flows in from every quarter -- 'The earth is reeling to and fro like a drunkard' . . . . See, see! The angel with the sharp sickle is about to take the field! . . . High and low, rich and poor, trembling and falling before the appalling grave, the dreadful cholera. Hark! Hear those dreadful bellowings of the angry nations! It is the presage of horrid and terrific war. Look! Look again! See crowns, and kings, and kingdoms trembling to the dust! . . . Behold the heavens grow black with clouds; the sun has veiled himself; the moon, pale and forsaken, hangs in middle air; the hail descends; . . . At this dread moment, look! The clouds have burst asunder; the heavens appear; the great white throne is in sight. Amazement fills the universe with awe! He comes! He comes Behold the Savior comes! Lift up your heads, ye saints-He comes! He comes! He comes!"

About this time strange !and frequent signs appeared in the heavens which even men of science watched with great interest. In an old Shaker journal one of these occurrences is described as sheets of light coming', up one behind the other in the sky; then a star would shoot to the west; then many would shoot upwards; then the light would gather again and the strange happening would be repeated many times. Two years after this, sometime before the dawn of November 13, 1833, there occurred something which intensified the interest in the Miller prophecy, already gaining much ground, and filled the papers of the next morning with startling headlines. The stars of heaven had appeared to be falling earthward. To the north and to the south they fell, thousands upon thousands of them. Against the clear sky brilliant light shot upward and balls of fire exploded in air, recalling to people's minds the dark day scientists had recorded some fifty years before, a day so dark that the sun to all appearances had neither risen nor set. Henry Dana Ward sent his description of these falling stars to the New York Chamber of Commerce. He related that

he had called his wife to hurry to the window to see the stars fall-"and we felt in our hearts that it was the sign of the last days. For truly 'the stars of heaven fall to the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken by a mighty wind.'" Professor Olmstead of Yale was quoted in one paper with the following: "Those who were so fortunate as to witness the exhibition of shooting stars of November 13, 1833, probably saw the greatest display of celestial fireworks that has ever been since the creation of the world, or at least within the annals covered by the pages of history."

In the spring of 1834 Miller was given by the Baptist Church a license to preach, and after serving for some time in the rural churches and small villages, he was invited to speak in the cities, colder and more sophisticated. At this time the Wesleyan Journal gave this word picture of him: "Mr. Miller is about sixty years of age; a plain farmer from Hampton, in the State of New York . . . . In his public discourse he is self-possessed and ready; distinct in his utterance, and frequently in expressions . . . . Mr. Miller is a great stickler for literal interpretation; never admitting the figurative unless absolutely required to make correct sense, or meet the events pointed out. He doubtless believes most unwaveringly all he teaches to others. His lectures are interspersed with powerful admonitions to the wicked, and he handles Universalism with gloves of steel."

Tired, worn, and elderly, William Miller saw the beginning of the crucial year he had pointed out. The newspapers had been full of his predictions. The people had discussed it all in lecture halls and talked of it on the street corners. A nervous dread of the momentous day was abroad, great fear gripping the hearts of those less assured of salvation. To counteract this the Bishop of Vermont widely circulated a pamphlet containing the following: "Full of presumption and peril do we consider the attempt to fix the day or the year of our Lord's coming. Full of presumption because Christ Himself declared, 'Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of God, but, My Father only.'" Another learned minister whose opinion had much weight attempted to confute the idea: "The phrase, 'the end of the world,' " said he, "occurs seven times in the New Testament. The Greek term rendered world is not **kosmos** (which signifies the material world), but aion, which signifies **era** or **age.** Its meaning is well expressed when we speak of the Christian era, the Jewish era, the Elizabethian era -- or Golden Age -- the Dark Ages, and the like . . . . There is not a place in Scripture where the end of the kosmos is mentioned, but the end of the **aion** is seventeen times spoken of in the New Testament."

But the followers of William Miller happily pointed to Daniel's vision, to the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, the ram, the he-goat, the exceeding great horn-to the historical fulfillment of it all, and they continued to sing joyously from their song book, the Millennial Harp, their hymn called "The Alarm":

"We are living, we are dwelling,
In a grand and awful time;
In an age on ages telling,
To be living is sublime."

Full of great expectation, intensified and in no wise dampened by the appearance of a great comet in the western sky, so bright as to be seen even at noonday and of magnificence after sunset-the comet of 1843 famous in history as the largest ever seen to approach the earth, the Miller camp meetings began, a steady procession of wagon wheels on the dusty, winding roads to the chosen spots. The gentle Quaker poet, John Greenleaf Whittier, attended one of these, he whose loving heart so lamented the sternness of the creed to which he had been born:

"But still my human hands are weak

To hold your iron creeds!
Against the words ye bid me speak
My heart within me pleads. . .

"I walk with bare, hushed feet the ground
Ye tread with boldness shod;
I dare not fix with mete and bound
The love and power of God....

"The wrong that pains my soul below
I dare not throne above.
I know not of His hate -- I know
His goodness and His love."

And so we do not wonder at the account he gave of his impressions at the camp meeting, as he listened to the literal interpretations of the symbols which speak of the day of judgment-the destruction of an accursed earth, that earth whose beauty haunts !all of his poetic work, the shriveling in flames of the despairing wicked. "I do not, I confess," wrote Whittier, "sympathize with my Second Advent friends in the lamentable depreciation of Mother Earth even in her present state. I find it extremely difficult to comprehend how it is that this goodly, green, sunlit home of ours is resting under a curse. . . . September sunsets, changing forests, moonrise and cloud, sun and rain-I for one am contented with them."

Disappointed in his expectation, William Miller had seen the year pass as the many others that had preceded it, but he felt he was not all mistaken, and died with faith in God and His Word unshake*n. - Contributed.*

(To be continued)

The History of the Church

No. 12 - "Behold the Bridegroom" - Conclusion
(Continued from August issue)

(THE HERALD OF CHRIST's KINGDOM - December, 1939)

Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899)

I LOOK UPON him as one of God's choicest I gifts to the church and the world, during this century now drawing to a close. His value will never be rightly appreciated here, where the view is partial and transient. Yonder in the perfect light we shall know." So spoke Campbell Morgan when Dwight L. Moody, the great American evangelist, had ended his earthly pilgrimage. One of nine children, he had known in childhood all the privations that widowhood often brings to the mother of a family of little ones. But that home, poor in material things, was rich in faith, the faith of a parent whose brief creed seems to have been summed up in the three words, "Trust in God." Strict in discipline, as had been the mother of Wesley, she too gave to the world another beacon light to show to men the way to God.

A pious upbringing may bring forth a religious man, but such a life, regulated by the external authority of "thou shalt and "thou shalt not," is a thing apart from that of a sincere Christian, who no longer needs the outward law, for the fountain within has become sweet, love for God and for man has there found a throne, and the Holy Spirit shed abroad in the heart reaches forth and subdues all things unto itself. Formality and the outward adornment of the Pharisee may mark the religious man, but the true Christian ever radiates love and joy from an illumined center and gives himself unselfishly and without reservation to the service of men. Dwight Moody and John Wesley both had found this to be true in their own life experience. "Before my conversion," Moody often said, "I worked toward the Cross, but since then I have worked from the Cross; then I worked to be saved, now I work because I am saved." He had found when the Holy Spirit had entered his heart that the sun shone more brightly and the birds sang more sweetly-"Do you know, I fell in love with the birds. I had never cared for them before. It seemed to me that I was in love with all creation. I had not a bitter feeling against any man, and I was ready to take all men to my heart. If a man has not the love of God shed abroad in. his heart, he has never been regenerated. . . . The impulse of a converted soul is to love, and not to be . . . complaining of every one else and finding fault."

And so Dwight Moody in manhood gave himself without reservation to the service of God and mankind at a time when a religious awakening was already sweeping over the land. Successful in business, all that was in him that made that success was to be used now in a long labor of love for his Lord. "The greatest struggle I ever had in my life was when I gave up business," he often said. His first start in the long act he was to play as a "fisher of men" began with iris gathering up of some eighteen little "hoodlums" from the streets to form a class of his own in a mission where he had asked to be a teacher but had been told there were already sixteen instructors and but twelve pupils. His future wife, then a girl of fifteen, was one of these teachers. In the fall, of 1858 he began another mission in another part of the city which by degrees increased to 1500 -- pupils and teachers having but one text-book, the Bible, denominational lines not being recognized.

The Civil War came, but he could not conscientiously enlist. His explanation was, "There never has been a time in my life when I felt I could take a gun and shoot down a fellow-being. In this respect I am a Quaker." So he worked instead as a Christian minister amongst the soldiers,, appealing to the living and pointing the eyes of the dying to One bleeding on Calvary.

In 1871 came the great fire in Chicago, after which he started east to raise money for the homeless and for a new church. But his heart was not in "the work of begging," as he termed it, "I was crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit. Well, one day, in the city of New York -- oh, what a day! -- I cannot describe it. I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name. Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for fourteen years. I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to .ask Him to stay His hand. I went to preaching again. The sermons were not different: I did not present any new truths, and yet hundreds were converted. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world -- it would be as the small dust of the balance."

A deep impression on his religious life and work came about through a young preacher, "the Boy Preacher," as he was known, whom he had casually met in Dublin, and who had arrived in Chicago on a visit. Not being acquainted with his way and method, Moody was uncertain as to the wisdom of inviting him to speak to his congregation but decided to try him out for a couple of nights, letting him continue for a space if he found all was well. The first night the young man ascended into the pulpit, he took for his text that sweetest of all declarations of love -- "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Night after night he preached to the people always from the same text. The seventh day came, and again he ascended the platform. "Beloved friends," he began, "I have been hunting all day for a new text, but I cannot find anything so good as the old one," and again he preached the old, old story of redeeming love. "And he just beat that truth down into my heart," Mr. Moody often related, "and I've never doubted it since. I used to preach that God was behind the sinner with a double-edged sword ready to hew him down. I have got done with that. I preach now that God is behind him with love, and he is running away from the God of love." Our hearts rejoice when we find that the most enduring evangelism of the age was brought about by such ministry as this; the sinner being drawn to the foot of the Cross by the soft cadences of a voice of love, not frightened there by the breath of the threat of vengeance. Gladly, not fearfully, they could sing

"Oh what love, what wondrous love,
The love of God to me:
It brought my Savior from above
To die on Calvary."

In the year of 1873 Mr. Moody carried his campaign to the British Isles -- Edinburgh, Dublin, and then the city of London. "What is the magic power," asked one writer at this time, "which draws together these mighty multitudes and holds them spellbound? Is it the worldly rank or wealth of learning or oratory of the preacher? No, for he is possessed of little of these. It is the simple lifting up of the Cross of Christ-the holding forth the Lord Jesus before the eyes of the people." Even some not entirely in sympathy with his evangelism admitted that it seemed to be entirely the work of God. "He could never speak of a lost soul," remarked such an one, "without tears in his eyes."

Associated with him at this time was Sankey, the sweet gospel singer, and the Moody-Sankey hymn book was issued. More than two years he had labored in London. Before he came there,

one fearful questioner had suggested that he print his creed before coming. "My creed is in print," Moody replied, "It is found in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah." At the closing service he said, "I have sought to bring Christ before you and to tell you of His beauty. It is true I have done it with stammering tongue. . . I do not want to close this meeting until I see you in the ark of refuge. . You that are willing to take Christ now, will you rise?"

One of his dearest friends was Henry Drummond, who had helped him in his campaign in Scotland, he who was the author of that beautiful exposition entitled, "The Greatest Thing in the World." Moody found he could not follow him in all his theories but loved him devotedly and stood by when criticism assailed, speaking of him as a Christian "who lived continually in the 13th chapter of lst Corinthians." Each had declared of the other, "He is the sweetest-tempered Christian I ever knew," within the same hour to a mutual friend.

We can sense something of the tender appeal, the touching pathos, in the preaching of Moody in the following quotation from a public discourse "I can imagine that when Christ said to the little band around Him, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel,' Peter said, 'Lord, do You really mean that we are to go back to Jerusalem and preach the Gospel to those men that murdered You?' 'Yes,' said Christ, 'go hunt up that man that spat in My face; tell him that he may have a seat in My Kingdom yet. Yes, Peter, go find that man that made that cruel crown of thorns and placed it on My brow, and tell him I will have a crown ready for him when he comes into My Kingdom, and there will be no thorns in it. Hunt up that man that took a reed and brought it down over the cruel thorns, driving them into My brow, and tell him I will put a scepter in his hand, and he shall rule over the nations of the earth, if he will accept salvation. Search for the man that drove the spear into My side, and tell him there is a nearer way into My heart: than that. Tell him I forgive him freely, and that he can be saved if he will accept salvation as a gift.'"

His success in London, due, he believed, entirely to God's power and nothing of himself, may be seen in the following figures -- 285 meetings with a total attendance of two and a half millions of people. But this was only the sowing -- God Himself added the increase, and how great only eternity can declare.

At the death of Moody, whose labor for the Church had been so great, and whose home life surrounded by a devoted, helpful wife, children, and grandchildren had been so sweet, there was, at his request, little outward mourning. After a simple service he was lowered to rest on the top of a quiet hill, his grave quietly marked. The beautiful word-tributes given at the time by his friends manifested the tenderness and compassion of his own heart, which, touching others, had left so deep an impress. "That Word," said one, "he hid in his heart: as the seed there ready for use on every occasion and in every emergency. It was sweeter to him than honey and the honeycomb. His mind and heart were given to the Word of God. But his life, like Christ's, was for others. He did not search the Bible to add to his knowledge but to save men from sin. His first and dominate purpose was to have every man receive that life of which he had been made a partaker. To this his sermons were devoted; he counted everything but loss unless this were attained."

In the death of Dwight Moody again the Lord had buried His workman but carried on His work, "in this case literally so in the school which the evangelist had established to send forth into the world trained and devoted Christians to turn men to Christ, to carry the Bible to the far corners of the earth, to preach the acceptable day of the Lord. Men live and preach; men die and sometimes are forgotten, but the great center truth of the Gospel that Jesus Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man, goes on and on until, having accomplished its purpose, it will still shine forth, the greatest truth of all eternity."

C. T. Russell

It was in the year 1879 that a small publication appeared in Pennsylvania, its outer page bearing the name, "Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence." Its Editor, Charles Taze Russell, who had been disappointed in orthodoxy to the point, of infidelity, had turned to the Bible to find it a pure fountain, and, untouched with the streams that had flowed from it to be so muddied by man's false reasoning and traditions, a mine of unsullied truth, deeper than any human heart and mind could go, inexhaustible and never ending in its fresh supplies of comfort and cleansing. Every failure of the visible Church adown the Gospel Age, every failure in the individual spiritual lives of God's children, every God-dishonoring doctrine that had polluted the Sanctuary, had come it seemed in the turning away from the Book of books to the interpretations and handed-down traditions of well-meaning but imperfect men. Then followed a season of great activity after a prosperous business had been sold that he might give all his time to the service of his Lord and His Word. "Come," and the cry went out to all who would hear, "Come, let us reason together."

Over a large part of the world went six volumes entitled, "Studies in the Scriptures." Weekly sermons found their way into many newspapers. Millions of tracts were published and scattered abroad. Ministers known as "Pilgrims" traveled about continuously, visiting the groups gathered in every city several times a week for the study of the Word, much the same as they did in Wesley's day, or, as the noble Bereans once met in the early morning of the Church's history. Their hearing ears had caught something of the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of God -- a love which even the poet in his own inspiration often saw dimly, shaming the very theologian who stood for the expositor of that divine compassion

"O, yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood; . . .
Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last -- far off -- at last to all,
And every winter change to spring."

So sang Tennyson in the anguish of bereavement, and in contrast we hear the words of Jonathan Edwards as he leaned earnestly over his congregation, trying to impress upon their minds some comprehension of the awful state of the unsaved "Imagine yourself," said he, "cast into a fiery oven, all of a glowing heat, or into the midst of a glowing brick-kiln, or of a great furnace . . . what horror would you feel at the entrance of such a furnace . . . what would be the effect on your soul, if you knew you must lie there enduring that torment to the full of twenty-four hours! And how much greater would be the effect, if you knew you must endure it for a whole year . . . O then, how would your heart sink, if you thought, if you knew, that you must bear it forever and ever! That there would be no end! That after millions of millions of ages, your torment would be no nearer an end than it ever was; and that you never, never should be delivered!"

Frederick Farrar, Dean of Westminster Abbey in London, scholarly and consecrated ambassador for Christ as he was, had given a series of sermons against the God-dishonoring doctrine, pleading the love of the Father, the unreasonableness of such a teaching, and presenting the real meaning of misunderstood words in the original languages. A storm of denunciation fell upon

him from many of his colleagues, but there were also many who secretly wrote him that such had been their views personally but they had feared to voice them. Charles T. Russell occupied no pulpit of honor and dignity on earth, 'but he knew himself to be by all the sanction of Holy Writ, an ambassador for his Lord. He was, in the phraseology of the theologians, but a layman and therefore unqualified and unordained of man. But he felt it his mission to publish from the very housetops, as it were, the love and not the hatred of God for the human race. Back and forth he went, demonstrating by the Word itself that the Creator's gracious Plan for His creatures was restoration to all that had been lost in Adam, with the tears wiped from off all faces throughout the glorious and unending stretch of an eternity-through the all-embracing merit of an offering for sin upon the brow of Calvary. Other earnest, consecrated students of the Word had seen a David's throne restored, a happy race on earth at one with God; others had pictured from prophetic lines a kingdom filling all the earth, a tabernacle of God with men, the long-prayed-for reign of Christ as Lord. But of the races asleep in the dust of the earth, the majority of whom had never heard the one Name given whereby they might be saved -- there was no part in this for them. Their fate, already sealed, lay in some vague condition in the spirit world-good, as a reward for good; evil, unbounded evil, as a fit recompense for sin or indifference. Such was the view of the large part of so-called Christendom. Such was the conception of the tidings of great joy to all people in the birth of a Savior for a lost world.

In the message of Pastor Russell the vision of a saved Church pausing at times in their glorified eternal bliss, as preached by Edwards, to gaze over the parapet of heaven to complacently view their former fellow mortals in all the agony of unsatisfied thirst and spiritualized human pain and misery, became instead a class predestined before the foundation of the world to suffer with their Lord on earth that they might be with Him in glory and assist in blessing all the families of earth. Now they could understand why the Savior saw the travail of His soul and was satisfied. The transaction of the Cross was to benefit not alone the mere handful of saved of the Gospel Age, but all who had died in Adam. Strange indeed did it seem to listening ears that the doctrine of the restoration of all things had lain a golden thread entwined from Genesis to Revelation beside the scarlet cord of shed blood for the remission of earth's sins. Strange it seemed that their eyes as well as the eyes of other believers down throughout the Age had been holden to the glory of the vision as were the eyes of the discouraged disciples on the road to Emmaus to their Lord.

The year 1914, which Pastor Russell had believed to be the time pointed out by prophecy as the fulfillment of the Church's hope of completed glorification and the setting up of the earthly Kingdom, came and went with such expectations unfulfilled, but in the fall of that year a great war broke out over a surprised world. Bruised were the heads over many countries and in its wake there followed a train of avarice, violence and crime, with social in security increasing from day to day. But like a message of hope the sprouting leaves of the blasted fig-tree of prophecy grew firmer and greener as powers arose, predestined it seemed to drive the chosen nation of Israel nearer home with weeping and supplication.

On October 31, 1916, Pastor Russell died on a moving train, attended only by a devoted friend and follower. Up to the last hours of his life he had not wavered in his purpose, speaking under the severe strain of human pain and weakness to a large audience from a lecture platform. "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith," he might have declared as did Paul. Humanly speaking, the carving of his name on the world's pages of history has been all but obliterated by the feverish events, the gathering clouds of trouble, the fear gripping all hearts, the blackness settling on all faces. But those who still live and might in the phraseology of the world be termed his followers, though differing somewhat here and there in minor point and minute interpretation, as human minds must always differ where there is granted the liberty of thought and conscience compatible with the indwelling of Christ, have basically the same thought, the same hope of their

calling, the same hope of the Kingdom-one faith, one Lord, one baptism. What manner of persons ought we therefore to be, perfected in love, without which none shall be associated with the Lord in the work of the Kingdom, grateful to our God for His unspeakable kindness in the granting of such a message to us in an otherwise puzzling world.

"When all Thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love and praise."

Surely the lot of those who have heard the message of the Kingdom in its clearly revealed beauty has fallen in pleasant places. In faith they have beheld the tabernacle of God with men, they His people and He their God. The tears are wiped from off all faces, and there is no more curse, for the former things have passed away. Behold, He has made all things new! So saw John on the Isle of Patmos; and clearly was the vision made known to us by the faithful witnessing of one of the Lord's most zealous *servants.* - *Contributed.*