

## Origins of the Roman Catholic Church

GIBBON—(Continued from September)

The *Journal* is publishing a few pages of Gibbon because the authentic origins of the faith that undertook the indefatigable task of evangelizing the Orient, succeeding in the Philippines and barely failing in Japan, are no doubt of general, if casual, interest in these islands.—*Ed.*

VI. The community of goods, which had so agreeably amused the imagination of Plato, and which subsisted in some degree among the austere sect of the Essenians, was adopted for a short time in the primitive church. The fever of the first proselytes prompted them to sell those worldly possessions which they despised, to lay the price of them at the feet of the apostles, and to content themselves with receiving an equal share out of the general distribution. The progress of the Christian religion relaxed, and gradually abolished, this generous institution, which, in hands less pure than those of the apostles, would too soon have been corrupted and abused by the returning selfishness of human nature; and the converts who embraced the new religion were permitted to retain the possession of their patrimony, to receive legacies and inheritances, and to increase their separate property by all the lawful means of trade and industry. Instead of an absolute sacrifice, a moderate proportion was accepted by the ministers of the gospel; and in their weekly or monthly assemblies every believer, according to the exigency of the occasion, and the measure of his wealth and piety, presented his voluntary offering for the use of the common fund. Nothing, however inconsiderable, was refused; but it was diligently inculcated that, in the article of Tithes, the Mosaic law was still of divine obligation; and that, since the Jews, under a less perfect discipline, had been commanded to pay a tenth part of all that they possessed, it would become the disciples of Christ to distinguish themselves by a superior degree of liberality, and to acquire some merit by resigning a superfluous treasure, which must so soon be annihilated with the world itself. It is almost unnecessary to observe that the revenue of each particular church, which was of so uncertain and fluctuating a nature, must have varied with the poverty or the opulence of the faithful, as they were dispersed in obscure villages, or collected in the great cities of the empire. In the time of the emperor Decius it was the opinion of the magistrates, that the Christians of Rome were possessed of very considerable wealth; that vessels of gold and silver were used in their religious worship, and that many among their proselytes had sold their lands and houses to increase the public riches of the sect, at the expense, indeed, of their unfortunate children, who found themselves beggars because their parents had been saints. We should listen with distrust to the suspicions of strangers and enemies: on this occasion, however, they receive a very specious and probable color from the two following circumstances, the only ones that have reached our knowledge, which define any precise sums, or convey any distinct idea. Almost at the same period, the bishop of Carthage, from a society less opulent than that of Rome, collected a hundred thousand sesterces (above eight hundred and fifty pounds sterling), on a sudden call of charity to redeem the brethren of Numidia, who had been carried away captives by the barbarians of the desert. About a hundred years before the reign of Decius, the Roman church had received, in a single donation, the sum of a hundred thousand sesterces from a stranger of Pontus, who proposed to fix his residence in the capital. These donations, for the most part, were made in money; or was the society of Christians either desirous or capable of acquiring, to any considerable degree, the encumbrance of landed property. It had been provided by several laws, which were enacted with the same design as our statutes of mortmain, that no real estates should be given or bequeathed to any corporate body, without their special privilege or a particular dispensation from the emperor or from the senate; who were seldom disposed to grant them in favor of a sect, at first the object of their contempt, and at last of their fears and jealousy. A transac-

tion, however, is related under the reign of Alexander Severus, which discovers that the restraint was sometimes eluded or suspended, and that the Christians were permitted to claim and to possess lands within the limits of Rome itself. The progress of Christianity, and the civil confusion of the empire, contributed to relax the severity of the laws; and before the close of the third century many considerable estates were bestowed on the opulent churches of Rome, Milan, Carthage, Antioch, Alexandria, and the other great cities of Italy and the provinces.

The bishop was the natural steward of the church; the public stock was intrusted to his care without account or control; the presbyters were confined to their spiritual functions, and the more dependent order of deacons was solely employed in the management and distribution of the ecclesiastical revenue. If we may give credit to the vehement declamations of Cyprian, there were too many among his African brethren who, in the execution of their charge, violated every precept, not only of evangelic perfection, but even of moral virtue. By some of these unfaithful stewards the riches of the church were lavished in sensual pleasures; by others they were perverted to the purposes of private gain, of fraudulent purchases, and of rapacious usury. But as long as the contributions of the Christian people were free and unconstrained, the abuse of their confidence could not be very frequent, and the general uses to which their liberality was applied reflected honor on the religious society. A decent portion was reserved for the maintenance

## Have You Got Your Coupons Yet

### FREE COUPONS

With every purchase you get the amount of the sale in coupons.

### FREE PREMIUMS

For every coupon there is a premium. If you trade here regularly and save the coupons, you can own many things that you need not buy. Our free premium catalog tells you all about it. They are free—ask for one.

### BIGGER SAVINGS

You can buy anything you need for personal use or household here at prices generally lower than you pay elsewhere, and you get the coupons besides. Thus, your saving is double.

### HELPFULNESS

Get your friends to trade here and to give you the coupons. Since your friends plan to buy certain things anyway, and since they can probably buy them here cheaper than they can somewhere else, you not only help yourself, but help your friends also.

### FIGURE IT OUT

You would be surprised how rapidly coupons accumulate. Recall and add up what you have spent in the last week for things you could buy here at a lower price, and see how much you would have in coupons if you had bought here. Then come in and buy, and get your friends to buy, and save the coupons until you have enough to buy what you want from our premium catalog.

*Then Buy at  
Our Store*

# BECK'S : ESCOLTA

of the bishop and his clergy; a sufficient sum was allotted for the expenses of the public worship, of which the feasts of love, the *agapae*, as they were called, constituted a very pleasing part. The whole remainder was the sacred patrimony of the poor. According to the discretion of the bishop, it was distributed to support widows and orphans, the lame, the sick, and the aged of the community; to comfort strangers and pilgrims, and to alleviate the misfortunes of prisoners and captives, more especially when their sufferings had been occasioned by their firm attachment to the cause of religion. A generous intercourse of charity united the most distant provinces, and the smaller congregations were cheerfully assisted by the alms of their more opulent brethren. Such an institution, which paid less regard to the merit than to the distress of the object, very materially conduced to the progress of Christianity. The Pagans, who were actuated by a sense of humanity, while they derided the doctrines, acknowledged the benevolence, of the new sect. The prospect of immediate relief and of future protection allured into its hospitable bosom many of those unhappy persons whom the neglect of the world would have abandoned to the miseries of want, of sickness, and of old

age. There is some reason likewise to believe that great numbers of infants, who, according to the inhuman practice of the times, had been exposed by their parents, were frequently res-

cued from death, baptized, educated, and maintained by the piety of the Christians, and at the expense of the public treasure.

(To be continued)

## How Taft Bargained for the Friar Lands

(His Own Account of the Deal)

"As early as 1898, the Peace Commission, which negotiated the treaty of Paris, became convinced that one of the most important steps in tranquilizing the islands and in reconciling the Filipinos to the American Government would be the governmental purchase of the so-called friars' agricultural lands in the Philippines, and the sale of these lands to the tenants upon long, easy payments. The same policy was recommended by the first or Schurman Commission after an investigation by it, and in the first report of the present Philippine Commission much time was devoted to the political phases of the relations of the four great religious orders to the people and the wisdom of buying the agricultural lands and selling them to the tenants was much commented on and approved.

Since Taft effected the purchase of the friar lands with the first issue of public-credit bonds of the Philippines under the United States, a new generation has grown up in the islands. Members of this generation now sitting in the legislature, where there is a movement afoot to have the government purchase remaining large agricultural estates of the Church in the Philippines, may refresh their information on the friar-lands purchase by reading Taft's report of it, set forth here.

Whether the simple right of eminent domain runs in such cases or not, no doubt hinges somewhat upon the acuteness of the agrarian situation involved: Taft's method was an appeal to Rome and an accord with the pontifical authority. Some of the estates remaining in the Church are charity endowments and are of the nature of trusts. When the demands of a situation are acute (and otherwise, ordinary rights prevail) *salus populi suprema lex*, the safety of the people is the supreme law.—ED.

The Secretary of War and the President concurred in the recommendations of the Commission. Accordingly in May, 1902, the writer, as civil governor of the Philippine Islands, was directed by the Secretary of War to visit Rome and to confer with the Pope or such agents as he might designate in respect to the question of buying the friars' agricultural lands and other questions of a similar character which were pending between the Roman Catholic Church and the Government. The negotiations which were had on this subject in Rome were set forth in the correspondence published by the Secretary of War in his report to Congress for last year. In a word, the Pope approved the purchase of the agricultural lands of the three great religious orders that owned agricultural lands in the islands and appointed an apostolic delegate with as full powers as he could be invested with to bring about this result.

"The apostolic delegate, Monsignor Jean Baptiste Guidi, archbishop of Staurpoli, reached the islands in the fall of 1902, and negotiations were at once begun. In one of the letters written by Cardinal Rampolla, contained in the correspondence already referred to, he stated on behalf of the Holy See that the resources of the religious orders would be taken into charge by the supreme authorities for the benefit of the church in the Philippines, and it at first seemed that the religious orders, with little prospect of reaping much pecuniary benefit from the sale of the lands under this arrangement, were not anxious to further the proposed purchase. Probably this inference did an injustice to the religious orders in view of the event. It turned out upon examination that the agricultural lands which had originally belonged to the three religious orders of the Philippines, to wit, the Dominicans, the Augustinians, and the Recoletos, aggregated 420,000 acres. The Commission in 1901 had directed a survey to be made by a Filipino surveyor or agrimensor, skilled both in surveying agricultural land and in estimating its value, by name Juan Villegas. He surveyed between 1901 and 1903 all the agricultural holdings of the three religious orders, except an estate belonging to the Augustinians in the province of Isabela and an estate belonging to the Recoletos in the province of Mindoro. He classified the lands and placed a value upon the differing classes, giving data from which it was possible to estimate the total value of the lands, except the two estates in Isabela and Mindoro, respectively,

## When Telegraphing Use The Radiogram Route



*Handwritten note:* mention the radiogram route

**WORLD WIDE WIRELESS**

**RADIO CORPORATION OF THE PHILIPPINES**

9 PLAZA MORAGA

PHONES: { 2-26-01  
2-26-02  
2-26-03

Always Open