

ORIGINS OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Gibbon: Continued from February

as been remarked with more ingenuity than that the virgin purity of the church ever violated by schism or heresy before the reign of Trajan or Hadrian, about one hundred years after the death of Christ. We may view with much more propriety, that, during the period, the disciples of the Messiah were gathered in a freer latitude, both of faith and doctrine, than has ever been allowed in succeeding ages. As the terms of communion were gradually narrowed, and the spiritual authority of the prevailing party was exercised with increasing severity, many of its most respectable members, who were called upon to renounce, provoked to assert their private opinions, to the consequences of their mistaken principles, and openly to erect the standard of rebellion against the unity of the church. The Gnostics distinguished as the most polite, the learned, and the most wealthy of the Christians; and that general appellation, which implied a superiority of knowledge, was either assumed by their own pride, or ironically bestowed by the envy of their adversaries. They were distinguished without exception of the race of the Greeks, and their principal founders seem to have been natives of Syria or Egypt, where the softness of the climate disposes both the mind and the body to indolent and contemplative habits. The Gnostics blended with the faith of Christ many sublime but obscure tenets, which were derived from oriental philosophy, and even from the religion of Zoroaster, concerning the eternity of matter, the existence of two principles, and the mysterious hierarchy of the infernal world. As soon as they launched out into the vast abyss, they delivered themselves to the influence of a disordered imagination; and as the sources of error are various and infinite, the Gnostics were imperceptibly divided into more than a hundred particular sects, of whom the most celebrated appear to have been the Basilidians, the Marcionites, and, in a still later period, the Manichæans. Each of these could boast of its bishops and congregations, its doctors and martyrs; and, instead of the Gospels adopted by the church, the heretics composed a multitude of histories, in which the sayings and discourses of Christ and of his apostles were adapted to their respective tenets. The success of the Gnostics was rapid and extensive. They covered Asia and Egypt, established themselves in Rome, and sometimes penetrated into the provinces of the West. For the first time they arose in the second century, and were suppressed during the third, and were suppressed

in the fourth or fifth, by the prevalence of more fashionable controversies, and by the superior ascendancy of the reigning power. Though they constantly disturbed the peace, and frequently disgraced the name, of religion, they contributed to assist rather than to retard the progress of Christianity. The Gentile converts, whose



Paulist Fathers' Church, Manila

strongest objections and prejudices were directed against the law of Moses, could find admission into many Christian societies, which required not from their untutored mind any belief of an antecedent revelation. Their faith was insensibly fortified and enlarged, and the church was ultimately benefited by the conquests of its inveterate enemies.

But whatever difference of opinion might subsist between the Orthodox, the Ebionites, and the Gnostics, concerning the divinity or the obligation of the Mosaic law, they were all equally animated by the same exclusive zeal, and by the

same abhorrence for idolatry, which had distinguished the Jews from the other nations of the ancient world. The philosopher, who considered the system of polytheism as a composition of human fraud and error, could disguise a smile of contempt under the mask of devotion, without apprehending that either the mockery, or the compliance, would expose him to the resentment of any invisible, or, as he conceived them, imaginary powers. But the established religions of Paganism were seen by the primitive Christians in a much more odious and formidable light. It was the universal sentiment both of the church and of heretics, that the demons were the authors, the patrons, and the objects of idolatry. Those rebellious spirits who had been degraded from the rank of angels, and cast down into the infernal pit, were still permitted to roam upon earth, to torment the bodies, and to seduce the minds, of sinful men. The demons soon discovered and abused the natural propensity of the human heart towards devotion, and, artfully withdrawing the adoration of mankind from their Creator, they usurped the place and honors of the Supreme Deity. By the success of their malicious contrivances, they at once gratified their own vanity and revenge, and obtained the only comfort of which they were yet susceptible, the hope of involving the human species in the participation of their guilt and misery. It was confessed, or at least it was imagined, that they had distributed among themselves the most important characters of polytheism, one demon assuming the name and attributes of Jupiter, another of Æsculapius, a third of Venus, and a fourth perhaps of Apollo; and that, by the advantage of their long experience and aerial nature, they were enabled to execute, with sufficient skill and dignity, the parts which they had undertaken. They lurked in the temples, instituted festivals and sacrifices, invented fables, pronounced oracles, and were frequently allowed to perform miracles. The Christians, who, by the interposition of evil spirits, could so readily explain every preternatural appearance, were disposed and even desirous to admit the most extravagant fictions of the Pagan mythology. But the belief of the Christian was accompanied with horror. The most trifling mark of respect to the national worship he considered as a direct homage yielded to the demon, and as an act of rebellion against the majesty of God.

In consequence of this opinion, it was the first but arduous duty of a Christian to preserve himself pure and undefiled by the practice of idolatry. The religion of the nations was not merely a speculative doctrine professed in the schools or preached in the temples. The innumerable deities and rites of polytheism were closely interwoven with every circumstance of business or pleasure, of public or of private life, and it seemed impossible to escape the observance of them, without, at the same time, renouncing the commerce of mankind, and all the offices and amusements of society. The important transactions of peace and war were prepared or concluded by solemn sacrifices, in which the magistrate, the senator, and the soldier, were obliged to preside or to participate. The public spectacles were an essential part of the cheerful devotion of the Pagans, and the gods were supposed to accept, as the most grateful offering, the games that the prince and people celebrated in honor of their peculiar festivals. The Christian, who with pious horror avoided the abomination of the circus or the theatre, found himself encompassed with infernal snares in every convivial entertainment, as often as his friends, invoking the hospitable deities, poured out libations to each other's happiness. When the bride, struggling with well-affected reluctance, was forced in hymeneal pomp over the threshold of her new habitation, or when the sad procession of the dead slowly moved towards the funeral pile, the Christian, on these interesting occasions, was compelled to desert the persons who were the dearest to him, rather than contract the guilt inherent to those impious ceremonies. Every art and every trade that was in the least concerned in the framing or adorning of idols was polluted by the stain of idolatry; a severe sentence, since it devoted to eternal misery the far greater part of the community which is employed in the exercise of liberal or mechanic professions. If

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we cast our eyes over the numerous remains of antiquity, we shall perceive that, besides the immediate representations of the gods, and the holy instruments of their worship, the elegant forms and agreeable fictions consecrated by the imagination of the Greeks, were introduced as the richest ornaments of the houses, the dress, and the furniture of the Pagans. Even the arts of music and painting, of eloquence and poetry, flowed from the same impure origin. In the style of the fathers, Apollo and the Muses were the organs of the infernal spirit; Homer and Virgil were the most eminent of his servants; and the beautiful mythology which pervades and animates the compositions of their genius is destined to celebrate the glory of the demons. Even the common language of Greece and Rome abounded with familiar but impious expressions, which the imprudent Christian might too carelessly utter, or too patiently hear.

The dangerous temptations which on every side lurked in ambush to surprise the unguarded believer assailed him with redoubled violence on the days of solemn festivals. So artfully were they framed and disposed throughout the year, that superstition always wore the appear-

ance of pleasure, and often of virtue. Some of the most sacred festivals in the Roman ritual were destined to salute the new calends of January with vows of public and private felicity to indulge the pious remembrance of the dead and living; to ascertain the inviolable bounds of property; to hail, on the return of spring, the genial powers of fecundity; to perpetuate the two memorable æras of Rome, the foundation of the city and that of the republic; and to restore, during the humane license of the Saturnalia, the primitive equality of mankind. Some idea may be conceived of the abhorrence of the Christians for such impious ceremonies, by the scrupulous delicacy which they displayed on a much less alarming occasion. On days of general festivity it was the custom of the ancients to adorn their doors with lamps and with branches of laurel, and to crown their heads with a garland of flowers. This innocent and elegant practice might perhaps have been tolerated as a merciful institution. But it most unluckily happened that the doors were under the protection of the household gods, that the laurel was sacred to the lover of Daphne, and that garlands of flowers, though frequently worn as a symbol either of joy

or mourning, had been dedicated in their origin to the service of superstition. The trembling Christians, who were persuaded in instance to comply with the fashion of the country and the commands of the magistrates labored under the most gloomy apprehensions from the reproaches of their own conscience, censures of the church, and the denunciation of divine vengeance.

Such was the anxious diligence which was required to guard the chastity of the gospel from the infectious breath of idolatry. The superstitious observances of public or private rites were carelessly practised, from education and habit by the followers of the established religion. But as often as they occurred, they afforded the Christians an opportunity of declaring and confirming their zealous opposition. By these frequent protestations their attachment to the faith was continually fortified; and in proportion to the increase of zeal, they combated with the more ardor and success in the holy war which they had undertaken against the empire of the demons.

(Continued in April)

THE RICE INDUSTRY

By PERCY A. HILL

of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija,
Director, Rice Producers' Association



Prices for both rice and palay remain practically the same as those of last month with but little fluctuation. Brisk demand from the southern islands as well as other points is keeping the market steady. Supply from the granary

province, Nueva Ecija, is also steady and by the end of March it is expected that the major portion of the crop produced will have been stored, the volume of deposits awaiting market rises being much greater than that of last year.

Indo-Asian prices for the cereal are reported to be firm with a tendency to advance. Rice imported into the Philippines during the last month of the year was almost a million pesos, an advance of P850,000 over that of the previous month. It is expected that the scale of imports in rice will be materially increased each month to assure supply.

As usual, transportation for the milled product from the terminal points is inadequate to the seasonal demands. In connection with this, should be taken into consideration direct shipments required for southern island points rather than the filling of the Manila bodegas for more storage purposes. Due to a larger volume being shipped direct by trucks, this problem is somewhat lightened, but there still remains room for improvement. It is for study in rapid and efficient transportation in the service of interprovincial commerce.

Author:—Thanks ever so much for your criticism of my manuscript.

Critic:—Oh, quite all right—don't mencken it!

For 12 months Philippine cotton imports have averaged in value \$2,334,000.

Pupils enrolled in Philippine public schools now number nearly 1,125,000.

The Manila Stock Market During February

By W. P. G. ELLIOTT

The month has seen an abnormal shortage in the money market, and local banks have been hard pressed to maintain their legal reserves. The shortage in the money market is due principally to the large amount of funds withdrawn to finance sugar, hemp and copra commitments, but with the low prices now ruling for the Islands commodities, sales of these products are negligible, resulting in funds remaining in the provinces, thereby causing a shortage in the Manila money market. While the money shortage is more or less seasonal at this time of the year, the present shortage is abnormal and it is very apparent that in addition to the funds withdrawn for usual financing, large sums have also been withdrawn by individuals, who have accumulated "panicky" feelings, as the result of the reports from Washington regarding the various proposed restrictions on Philippine products, and the political

situation in general.

The Bank of England advanced its discount rate from 4-1/2 to 5-1/2% early in the month, and while this had been expected, and with it a tightening of interest rates, the effects were also felt in the local market. Apparently a number of local business men have been placing their surplus funds on call loans, in foreign markets, attracted by the high rates of interest, and this also helped to cripple the local market, these factors uniting in making the widest fluctuations in gold dollar against sterling exchange, since the stabilization accomplished under the wood régime.

However, as the month closed, much better feeling prevailed and funds withdrawn on "panicky" tendencies began to find their way back to banks again, thereby improving the cash position considerably. But there is a great scarcity of export bills offered, and if these come into the market

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