

## Origins of the Roman Catholic Church

GIBBON—(Continued from November)

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.*

VII. It is the undoubted right of every society to exclude from its communion and benefits such among its members as reject its laws and regulations which have been established by general consent. In the exercise of this power the censures of the Christian church were chiefly directed against scandalous sinners, and particularly those who were guilty of murder, of fraud, or of incontinence; against the authors or the followers of any heretical opinions which had been condemned by the judgment of the episcopal order; and against those unhappy persons who, whether from choice or from compulsion, had polluted themselves after their baptism by any act of idolatrous worship. The consequences of excommunication were of a temporal as well as a spiritual nature. The Christian against whom it was pronounced was deprived of any part in the oblations of the faithful. The ties both of religious and of private friendship were dissolved: he found himself a profane object of abhorrence to the persons whom he the most esteemed, or by whom he had been the most tenderly beloved; and as far as an expulsion from a respectable society could imprint on his character a mark of disgrace, he was shunned or suspected by the generality of mankind. The situation of these unfortunate exiles was in itself very painful and melancholy; but, as it usually happens, their apprehensions far exceeded their sufferings. The benefits of the Christian communion were those of eternal life; nor could they erase from their minds the awful opinion that to those ecclesiastical governors by whom they were condemned the Deity had committed the keys of Hell and of Paradise. The heretics, indeed, who might be supported by the consciousness of their intentions, and by the flattering hope that they alone had discovered the true path of salvation, endeavored to regain, in their separate assemblies, those comforts, temporal as well as spiritual, which they no longer derived from the great society of Christians. But almost all those who had reluctantly yielded to the power of the excommunicatory were sensible of their fallen condition, and anxiously desirous of being restored to the benefits of the Christian communion.

With regard to the treatment of these penitents, two opposite opinions, the one of justice, the other of mercy, divided the primitive church. The more rigid and inflexible casuists refused them forever, and without exception, the meanest place in the holy community which they had disgraced or deserted; and leaving them to the remorse of a guilty conscience, indulged them only with a faint ray of hope that the contrition of their life and death might possibly be accepted by the Supreme Being. A milder sentiment was embraced in practice as well as in theory, by the purest and most respectable of the Christian churches. The gates of reconciliation and of heaven were seldom shut against the returning penitent; but a severe and solemn form of discipline was instituted, which, if duly observed to expiate his crime, might powerfully deter the spectators from the imitation of his example. Humbled by a public confession, emancipated by fasting, and clothed in sackcloth, the penitent lay prostrate at the door of the assembly, imploring with tears the pardon of his offences, and soliciting the prayers of the faithful. If the fault was of a very heinous nature, whole years of penance were esteemed an inadequate satisfaction to the divine justice; and it was always by slow and painful gradations that the sinner, the heretic, or the apostate, was readmitted into the bosom of the church. A sentence of perpetual excommunication was, however, reserved for some crimes of an extraordinary magnitude, and particularly for the inexcusable relapses of those penitents who had already experienced and abused the clemency of their ecclesiastical superiors. According to the circumstances of the

number of the guilty, the exercise of the Christian discipline was varied by the discretion of the bishops. The councils of Ancyra and Illiberis were held about the same time, the one in Galatia, the other in Spain; but their respective canons, which are still extant, seem to breathe a very different spirit. The Galatian, who after his baptism had repeatedly sacrificed to idols, might obtain his pardon by a penance of seven years; and if he had seduced others to imitate his example, only three years more were added to the term of his exile. But the unhappy Spaniard who had committed the same offence

was deprived of the hope of reconciliation, even in the article of death; and his idolatry was placed at the head of a list of seventeen other crimes, against which a sentence no less terrible was pronounced. Among these may be distinguish the inexorable guilt of calumniating a bishop, a presbyter, or even a deacon.

The well-tempered mixture of liberality and rigor, the judicious dispensation of rewards and punishments, according to the maxims of policy as well as justice, constituted the human strength of the church. The Bishops, whose paternal care extended itself to the government of both worlds, were sensible of the importance of these prerogatives; and, covering their ambition with the fair pretence of the love of order, they were jealous of any rival in the exercise of a discipline so necessary to prevent the desertion of those troops which had enlisted themselves under the banner of the cross, and whose numbers every day became more considerable. From the impious declamations of Copernicus

(Please turn to page 31 col. 2)

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powered roadster, and turns to help his wife out of the rumble seat. Then begins the mystery. He discovers that she is dead, murdered. Suspicion is immediately cast upon Garnett. Jean was his third wife, and inquiry reveals that his first wife died suddenly from an unexplained fall from a roof. His second wife also disappeared suddenly when no one but her husband was present. Her dead body was later found in a lily pond. The finger of guilt points unmistakably at Garnett, but his brother steps forward in the role of an eager, helpful, would-be unswearer of the mystery and engages the services of the great detective, Fleming Stone, who happens to be vacationing at the club. This gentleman proceeds to apply psychology to the solution of the crime, much to the disgust of the local chief of police, and eventually uncovers the real murderer, who, of course, is the least suspected person.

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## The Lost Martina

(Continued from page 29)

what or whom they expected to find, but they were drawn to the rock now by more than the smoke spell.

They were now on the other side of the rock, and there before their eyes only a few feet in front of them was the lost Martina, seated on a low promontory of the jagged rock. They had surprised her as she was combing her long brown hair with slim fingers, abundant tresses which were her only garment. With a cry of delight, the girl's mother rushed forward, her arms outstretched and eyes streaming with tears. In her haste she stumbled and slipped on a submerged rock and fell into a deep pool, becoming entangled in seaweed from which she struggled to extricate herself. She ceased her frantic struggle moment and looked up as her daughter's voice came to her:

"Mother, do not come nearer. I was your daughter but am no more of your world. Here I live with the kindly katacos who rescued me from the cruelties and temptations of men. Seek not to disturb me. I am happy till Fate shall release me."

In vain the mother tried to reach Martina. She was caught in the pool as in a vice. Behind her stood the others, the datu's wife, the crew of the barangay, and her brothers, grouped around the old wizard, rooted to the spot with mouths agape. Then quite suddenly the first rays of dawn fell in rosy shafts across the water, and when the mother and the others looked again the girl had vanished in the morning mists, again lost to them forever.

When the barangay returned to Bago the story was taken down by old chroniclers of folk tales. Though for some generations the tale was handed down from father to son, it has now almost been forgotten—a fading legend of olden time when superstition and credulity were more prevalent than now.

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## Origins of the Roman

(Continued from page 22)

should naturally conclude that the doctrines of excommunication and penance formed the most essential part of religion; and that it was much less dangerous for the disciples of Christ to neglect the observance of the moral duties, than to despise the censures and authority of their bishops. Sometimes we might imagine that we were listening to the words of Jesus, when he commanded the earth to open, and to swallow up, in consuming flames, the rebellious race which refused obedience to the priesthood of Aaron; and we should sometimes suppose that we heard a Roman consul asserting the majesty of the republic, and declaring his inflexible resolution to enforce the rigor of the laws. "If such irregularities are suffered with impunity" (it is thus that the bishop of Carthage chided the lenity of his colleague), "if such irregularities are suffered, there is an end of EPISCOPAL VIGOR; an end of the sublime and divine power of governing the Church, an end of Christianity itself." Cyprian had renounced those temporal honors which it is probable he would never have obtained; but the acquisition of such absolute command over the consciences and understanding of a congregation, however obscurely despised by the world, is more truly grateful to the pride of the human heart than the possession of the most despotic power, imposed by arms and conquest on a reluctant people.

In the course of this important, though perhaps tedious inquiry, I have teterrum, to perhappily the secondary causes which so efficaciously assisted the truth of the Christian religion. If among these causes we have discovered any artificial ornaments, any accidental circumstances, or any mixture of error and superstition, it cannot appear surprising that mankind should be the most sensibly affected by such motives as were suited to their imperfect nature. It was by the exclusion of such causes, and by the immediate expectation of another world, the claim of miracles, the practice of rigid virtue, and the constitution of the primitive church, that Christianity spread itself with so much success in the Roman empire. To the first of these, the Christians were indebted for their invincible valor, which disdained to capitulate, with the enemy whom they were resolved to vanquish. The three succeeding causes supplied their valor with the most formidable arms. The less these causes united their courage, directed their arms, and gave their efforts that irresistible weight, which even a small band of well-trained and intrepid volunteers has so often possessed over an undisciplined multitude, ignorant of the subject and careless of the event of the war. In the various religions of Polytheism, some wandering fanatics of Egypt and Syria, who addressed themselves to the credulous superstition of the populace, were perhaps the only order of priests that derived their whole support and credit from their sacerdotal profession, and were very deeply affected by a personal concern for the safety or prosperity of their tutelar deities. The ministers of Polytheism, both in Rome and in the provinces, were, for the most part, men of a noble birth, and of an affluent fortune, who received, in an honorable distinction, the care of a celebrated temple, or of a public sacrifice, exhibited, very frequently by their own expense, the sacred games, and with cold indifference performed the ancient rites, according to the

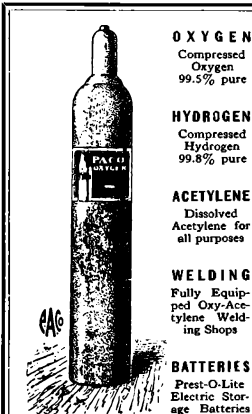
laws and fashion of their country. As they were engaged in the ordinary occupations of life, their zeal and devotion were seldom animated by a sense of interest, or by the habits of an ecclesiastical character. Confined to their respective temples and cities, they remained without any connection of discipline or government; and whilst they acknowledged the supreme jurisdiction of the senate, of the college of pontiffs, and of the emperor, those civil magistrates contented themselves with the easy task of maintaining in peace and dignity the general worship of mankind. We have already seen how various, how loose, and how uncertain were the religious sentiments of Polytheists. They were abandoned, almost without control, to the natural workings of a superstitious fancy. The accidental circumstances of their life and situation determined the object as well as the degree of their devotion; and as long as their adoration was successively prostituted to a thousand deities, it was scarcely possible that their hearts could be susceptible of a very sincere or lively passion for any of them.

(To be continued)

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