

all, and the conflicts of the ages reveal the germination of that seed. When the Master proclaimed his Magna Charta to an enslaved world from the hill top of Galilee, slavery was one of the most strongly entrenched customs of the Roman Empire. In his legal position the slave was the property of his master, to be let, sold, exchanged, or killed at the sweet will of his owner. He had no civil rights, no legal parentage, and could hold no property. All who could afford to do so held slaves and they were used the same as the lower animals. Tacitus tells of a slave who killed his master, and in order that proper revenge might be taken, all his fellow slaves to the number of 600 were put to death. Plutarch tells of a guest of Flaminius who happened to remark that he had never seen a man die. To prove his hospitality, his host immediately called in one of his slaves, and killed him by slow torture in order to satisfy the curiosity of his guest. Thousands were sent into the amphitheatre to fight one another, or to be devoured by the lions. When Alaric attacked Rome he was assisted in the siege by 40,000 escaped Roman slaves. Such was the institution which Christianity was destined to abolish. An institution which appealed directly to avarice, an institution enshrined in the customs of the world, an institution hoary with antiquity. The early church went forth to the battle with slavery, strong in the conviction that this evil must fall before the onward march of the Gospel, and her first demand was that no Christian should hold slaves. In the early days St. Theodore gave this command to Christians: "Thou shalt hold no slaves either for domestic use, or for the labor of the field, because man was made in the image of God." In 119 A.D., Hermes, a Roman Prefect, became a Christian and immediately liberated 1250 slaves. Time would fail me to tell of the thirty-seven church Councils, in which men of faith fought out this battle, and of the humane legislation passed by Constantine, Justinian and Lee as the result of pressure brought to bear by Christianity. Whenever Christian faith in a living Christ grew dim, slavery advanced. During that period of Egyptian night which preceded the Reformation, it began to show its hydra-head even in the Church. When