

Nero and the Early Martyrs

Text: Isaiah, 60-3, "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising."

We are thinking about "Nero and the Burning of Rome," for, Quo Vadis has just been presented in our city, with all the electrical swiftness of reel and film, and we have gazed upon the author and artist's conception of all those tragic incidents and thrilling events which cluster within the century which ushered in the most vital and revolutionizing force in history—Christianity. Why are we interested in Nero?—the burning of Rome—the Colossium—the Arena—the gladiators—the catacombs—the gardens of Caesar—the Golden House—and all the architecture of history which provides a platform for the tragedies of the first century? It is because we are concerned to know all of fact and fancy which may inform the mind and set the imagination on fire with reference to those heroic decades when the spirits of ten thousand martyrs were wafted to the skies their "torment robe of flame."

Twenty Christian centuries have intervened since then, and these splendid historic centuries may be divided into ten great epochs: First, The Life of Jesus. Second, The Days of the Apostles. Third, The period of the Early Fathers. Fourth, The Conversion of Constantine and the regeneration of the Roman Empire. Fifth, the beginning and wonderful progress of the Roman Catholic Church. Sixth, the Middle Ages. Seventh, the German Reformation under Luther. Eighth, the Revivals conducted by Wesley and Whitefield. Ninth, a renewed interest in Bible Study stimulated by D. L. Moody and a score of splendid evangelists. Tenth, the great world-wide missionary activities of the present hour.

These events mark the onward march of Christianity in the world. Christianity is the greatest fact in history. Christianity is the moral miracle of all the years. The perfume of Christianity fills the earth. Languages are losing their grip, civilizations are passing, empires are changing into republics, and kingdoms as ancient as China and Japan, are wrestling with the problems of democracy, but Christianity endures. There is in Christianity a renewing element, a secret source of hidden power, which secures for it a new lease of life and a fresh enthronement in every epoch ushered in by inspired prophet and holy seer.

Christianity is the only world-religion.