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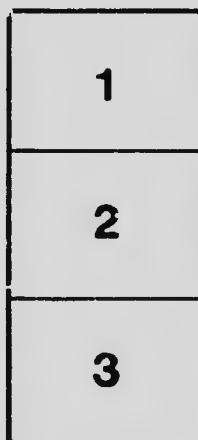
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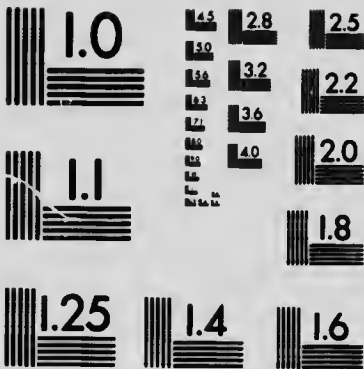
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38 **Nero and the  
Early  
Martyrs**  
OR  
**Christianity,  
the Greatest Fact  
in History**

UNITED CHURCH  
ARCHIVES

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BY  
REV. JAMES L. GORDON, D.D.  
Pastor Central Congregational Church  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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# This Evening

Jan. 18, 1914, at 7 o'clock

**DR GORDON**

Will Preach on the Subject

## “The Prisoner’s Escape--

How Did it Happen?”

# Nero and the Early Martyrs

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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 Colosseum—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-relig-



ion. There are ten great religions. Of these the three greatest is the religion of Mohammed, the religion of Buddha and the religion of Jesus. Christianity is the only religion with a world-program. Christianity asks for a map as large as the earth. In every conflict between the nations the wise statesman consults the missionary. He is everywhere to be found. He is omnipresent. The standard of the cross is the universal ensign. Jesus is the universal character. Behold the world has gone after Him!

Christianity is the religion of the most enlightened civilization known to history. George J. Romanes wandered off into the broad fields of doubt and unbelief and coming back to his first religious experience, he exclaimed: "It is Christianity or nothing."

Christianity leads the vanguard of the nations. The simple fact is that the great nations of the world are the Christian nations. Education, science, invention, discovery, sanitation and advanced legislation—these are all the instruments of a Christian civilization.

Christianity has inherited great tracts of virgin soil. Canada, United States, Mexico, South America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and a thousand islands of the sea, are big enough and vast enough to provide room and food for one thousand million people. Geographically the world belongs to Christianity. To her has been given the kingdoms of the earth for an inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. We are Canadians. We have room, here, for five hundred million souls. What a vast heritage. Mighty mountain ranges. Rushing rivers. Splendid inland seas. Vast prairies. Garden spots fit for the gods. And the encircling seas of history and prophecy.

Give us men to match our mountains.  
Give us men to match our plains;  
Men with empire in their visions;  
Men with purpose in their brains.

Christianity is the only religion which has encircled the globe. It suits itself to every country, climate and condition. The Bible of the Old and New Testament, fits, wherever it falls. The Bible was written in Palestine and Palestine, geographically, is the whole world in miniature. Summer and winter, mountain and valley, desert and plain, hill and dale, sea and river—there is no other bit of territory like Palestine. A book written there is "readable" anywhere. Therefore a gospel written in Palestine is a gospel written for the world. There is no country like Palestine, no book like the Bible, no character like Jesus and no religion like Christianity. Christianity "fits" the world.

Christianity has in its possession the best expression, in character and literature, of the accepted ideals of the

Robert G. Ingersoll, the famous agnostic, once met his friend, General Lew Wallace, and immediately opened a discussion with him on the subject of religion, with special reference to the historical authenticity of Christianity:—"Lew, you are not a professed Christian, are you? Certainly a man of your intelligence is not a believer in such doctrines as the divinity of Jesus and the inspiration of the Bible," said Ingersoll in his bold, brusque way. And, for the moment, Lew Wallace was stilled. He had no answer for the brilliant orator. But the question stirred his sluggish soul and set him thinking. Then he began to ask himself the question: "Is Christianity creditable from the standpoint of history?"

The answer to that question is revealed in that wonderful book which Lew Wallace laid on the centre table of history, "Ben Hur, or The Tale Of The Christ." The literary and historical investigations which led to the writing of that book also led the author in the real presence of the real Christ. The mental process was an evolutionary one. First he exclaimed, as the facts began to array themselves: "There certainly was a Christ!" Then, as the facts began to marshal and organize themselves, he said to himself, within himself: "This is of a surety the Christ!" And, last of all, as the thought of the rediscovery of the foundations of his religious convictions entered into the fabric of his soul, he exclaimed, triumphantly, "MY CHRIST!"—"A Christ." "The Christ." "My Christ." History leads to Christ. Any man who knows enough to read, and has read enough to know, knows this, if he knows anything, that the religion of Jesus Christ rests on the quarried blocks of history's granite.

Christianity has proved to be the greatest revolutionizing force in history. Liberty, Fraternity, Equality, Humanity, Democracy, and Socialism are all the echoes and re-echoes of the divine artillery of Christianity sounding out over the hills of Time. Mightier than nitro-glycerine, mightier than gun powder, mightier than dynamite, mightier than the earthquake and all planetary upheavals is the revolutionary force of a genuine Christianity sweeping over the earth.

The moon of Mahomet arose  
 And it shall set, while blazoned  
 On heaven's immortal noon, The  
 Cross  
 Leads generations on.

There has always been in Christianity a revolutionary force. "These men who have turned the world upside down, have come hither also." Mark the procession. The Covenanters. The Huguenots. The Waldenses. The Puritans. The Pilgrim Fathers. The Abolitionists. The men who have

race. All men and nations, today are judged by standards of morality which are Jewish and Christian in their origin. All men are measured by the Perfect Man. All books are measured by The Book of Books. All law finds its root in the Law of Moses.

Matthew Arnold was placing his finger on a great fact when he said: "If any man will show me, outside of Christianity—outside of a Christian country—ten square miles, where infancy is regarded, old age respected, womanhood revered, and where human life is held sacred—I will surrender my interest in the religion of Jesus Christ."

Christianity is built on the deepest natural instincts of the human heart. It has the best answer for the unanswered questions of the soul. It provides the doctrine of God as nature's fundamental fact. It opens the door of prayer as the way of admission into the presence of the invisible. It flashes upon the pathway of man the light of Truth. It enthrones the law of Love as the rule of life and the standard of Character as the test of experience. And it lifts up the goal of Immortality as the master motive of the soul.

No other religion has dared to combine three such ideas as the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man and the Immortality of the Soul. Immortality is the brightest gleam that ever spanned the river of death. Victor Hugo, in his old age, exclaims, "I begin to feel within me the throbbings of an immortal life."

The stars shall fade away,  
The sun himself grow dim with age,  
And nature sinks in years,  
But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth  
Unhurt amid the war of elements,  
The wreck of matter and  
The crush of worlds. ●

Christianity has shot its roots down deep into the soil of history. Christianity rests on the solid granite of historical fact. Our faith is founded on fact. The Bible is a gigantic fact. The Church of God is a stupendous fact. Christianity, as a moral force in history, is a colossal fact. A Christian civilization—the last and best civilization which the world has ever achieved—is a tremendous fact. The character of Jesus is a majestic fact. The regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, by which bad men are made good, good men made better and bettered men made even more blessed, is an all glorious fact. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, on third day, according to the Scriptures, is the one great fundamental fact of Christianity and the turning point in history. Toward that event all history converged and out from that event all history radiates: "Up from the grave He arose, Jesus my Lord!"

moved the world, have been the men whom the world could not lose.

Christianity has robbed death of its sting and the grave of its victory. What a sad world was this until Christ spoke. Listen: "And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years—and he died." Death reigned till Christ came. Then Christianity began. To the Christian this world is but the vestibule of the eternal. Off with the crape! Let the mournful dirge cease! Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh grave, where is thy victory? Samuel Rutherford turned to a weeping mother and said: "Do you think that she is lost who is siseeping on the bosom of eternal love?"

Here let me wait with patience  
Wait till the night is o'er,  
Wait till I see the morning  
Break on the golden shore.

Christianity brings "ivine comfort and consolation to the broken-hearted. Every heart breaks—sometime—somewhere. Listen to Goethe: "What I wished for came too late." A famous writer, whose name I will not mention, once said: "Failure, disgrace, sorrow, despair, suffering—these were the things of which I was afraid and yet I have been called upon to endure them all."

In that beautiful book entitled: "John Halifax, Gentleman," a mother bends over her beautiful child, Muriel, and tries to believe that her child is not blind. And you remember the sad words of Thomas Moore: "I feel like one who treads alone, some banquet hall deserted." In the old plantation days, the slaves used to sing: "Gone are the days when my heart was light and gay." Say what you will, this is a broken hearted world. Christianity comes bringing the Balm of Gilead.

"The Great Physician now is near  
The sympathizing Jesus.

Christianity lives by an actual experience in the lives of men and women. Sir Issac Newton, the Christian astronomer, said to an unbelieving member of his own calling and profession: "Sir, I am glad to hear you talk about astronomy—that's your particular line of study, but you know nothing about Christianity; that's a matter of experience." Somebody asked Coleridge: "Is Christianity true?" His answer was expressed in two words: "Try it." "Don't question me about the evidence in favor of Christianity, try it." Christianity lives as a spiritual force in an inward experience.

Christianity has taken possession of the literature of the world. Young man, Hear me! I present a five-fold argument. First, Christianity has made a persistent appeal to the human reason. When you ask a man to "believe" you ask him to reason. For we only

believe the things which are reasonable. Second, the best use of the Human Reason has produced the best civilization—our civilization in mental achievement, moral worth and spiritual power outranks all past civilizations. Third, the last and best civilization—our Christian civilization—has in its possession, the best literature of the world, past, and present. The literature of the Anglo-Saxon race, when considered from the standpoint of its original productions and incorporated material, is the most universal literature in existence in the world today. Fourth, the best specimen of literature in the possession of the best civilization, is known as "The Book." The Bible has produced the civilization which crowns it and crowns the civilization which it has produced.

This precious book I'd rather own  
 Than all the golden gems  
 Which e'er in monarch's coffers shone  
 Or on their diadems.  
 And were the seas one chrysolite  
 This earth a golden ball—  
 Gems were all the stars of night,  
 THE BOOK were worth them all.

Christianity is the hope of Humanity. The guarantee of Christianity and the hope of humanity is JESUS CHRIST. "Lord, to whom shall we go—Thou hast the words of eternal life." In the city of Paris, I found the Arch of Triumph, standing like a focal point enthroned in granite and bronze, at the exact spot where twelve great avenues converged. Every avenue of light in our Christian civilization leads up to an Imperial Christianity and to an enthroned Christ.

There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. Other religions have had their heroes, saints, sages, and teachers. No other religion presents a Christ, a redeemer, a saviour. The world has only one Saviour! "There is none other name, given, under heaven, among men whereby we must be saved."

I know of a world that is sunk in  
 shame  
 Of hearts that faint and tire.  
 I know of a name, a name, a name  
 Can set this world on fire.  
 Its sign is a Cross. Its letters, flame,  
 I know of a name, a name, a name,  
 Can set this world on fire.

Holman Hunt, the artist, said: "I am only a poor man, but I can say, in serious truth, that I would give one-third of all I possess for a real likeness of Jesus Christ." Some of us are in possession of that picture. Painted on the inner walls of the soul we possess a real likeness of the real Christ. We would give up all we possess rather than sacrifice the vision of that face. Henry Ward Beecher was an old man and his hair snowy white when, standing one day, at sunset, on a broad western prairie, he

turned to his friend, Major Pond, and exclaimed: "I would rather have the smile of Jesus than the applause of the world!"

If Jesus Christ is a man  
And only a man, I say:  
That of all mankind I will cleave to  
Him  
And to Him will cleave alway!

If Jesus Christ is a God  
And the only God, I swear  
I will follow Him through heaven  
and hell,  
The earth, the sea, the air!



UNITED CHURCH  
ARCHIVES

## Question Drawer

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Dr. J. L. Gordon Will Answer the Following Questions in the Parlors of Central Church, Winnipeg, on  
**WEDNESDAY EVENING, Jan. 21, 1914**

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1. What do you think of Sir Rodmond's answer to the Temperance Delegation?

---

2. Will Theodore Roosevelt ever "come back" politically?

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3. Is it possible for the generous acts of a wicked man of wealth to counter-balance the evil effects of his life?

---

4. Where did Jesus go at the hour of his death?

---

5. Are Foster's weather predictions reliable?

---

6. Is it wrong for a Christian to marry a person who is not a Christian?

---

7. Is there not a prejudice against a man in the business world when his hair is growing grey?

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8. Do you know of any living Socialist who has denuded himself of his property in order to be consistent?

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9. Would you approve of dancing in a private social circle?

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10. Do you agree with the Anglican Bishop who affirms that it is not a sin for a man to gamble if he can afford to?

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11. Do you believe that Krafchenko secured his escape through political influence?

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12. Is there such a thing as an honest "bluff"?

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13. Were you right when you stated that Canada had not yet produced men of outstanding personality like Lloyd-George and Theo. Roosevelt?

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14. Would Mormonism in Canada be any worse than the church described by Winston Churchill in his book, "The Inside of the Cup"?

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15. If you could work miracles, what miracles would you work?





