

**SECTION I**

**FROM THE APOSTLES TO CAREY**

## LESSON 1

# CONQUEST OF THE GRAECO-ROMAN WORLD

## A.D. 30-500

### The World to Which Christianity Came

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son . . ." (Gal. 4:4). With the birth of Jesus Christ Christianity put down roots on earth. The world to which Christianity came was not without religion. Animism is almost as old as human history. Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, and Hinduism antedated Christianity from 500 to 1500 years. Most races had some knowledge or belief in one supreme being. In most cases their vision of this god was dim and they felt he was not much concerned with the affairs of man. Jesus came to reveal the living God to all men and to teach them that He cares for them individually.

The timing of Jesus' advent to the world was providential and perfect. Judaism, through tribulation and captivity, had committed itself to the worship of the one true God, and adhered to His moral laws. The synagogue, an innovation of the captivity, accompanied the Jews in their dispersion to many parts of the Graeco-Roman empire and became a medium by which the revelation of God was shared with the gentiles.

In the fourth century before Christ, Alexander the Great conquered the Mediterranean world, including Palestine. The Greeks imposed their culture and their language upon the countries they conquered. Beginning in the third century before Christ, Rome wrested from Greece her extensive territories. In 63 B.C. Roman soldiers took charge of Palestine. When Christ was born the Roman Empire was bounded by Armenia, Middle Mesopotamia, the Arabian Desert, the Red Sea, Nubia, the Sahara, the Moroccan mountain mass, the Atlantic Ocean, the Irish Sea, Scotland, the North Sea, the Rhine, the Danube, the Black Sea, and the Caucasus. This was the world to which Christianity would initially address itself.

Conditions were favourable for the spread of Christianity in the Graeco-Roman world. Even when the Romans conquered formerly Greek territories the people continued to speak Greek. Greek, perhaps the world's most articulate language, would be the vehicle through which the gospel would be announced in the Roman world. The Romans unified their empire, building an extensive network of permanent highways and establishing military garrisons in principal cities. These highways would be used by missionaries with comparative safety.

Principal religions in the world to which Christianity came were: B \_\_\_\_\_, Z \_\_\_\_\_, C \_\_\_\_\_ and H \_\_\_\_\_.

*(Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, Hinduism)*

Is the following statement true or false?

The synagogue was used by early missionaries to introduce Christianity in many lands. \_\_\_\_\_

*(True)*

The G \_\_\_\_\_ language, in which the New Testament was written, was spoken throughout the Roman Empire. The network of h \_\_\_\_\_ and m \_\_\_\_\_ g \_\_\_\_\_ established by the Romans aided missionary travel and provided protection.

*(Greek, highways, military garrisons)*

The Jews had permeated the Graeco-Roman empire. Through their synagogues they had shared their faith with interested gentiles. The teaching of moral ethics by Greek philosophers had created a desire on the part of many for a better life; but neither the Jewish faith, nor Greek philosophy, nor the Greek mystery religions satisfied the spiritual hunger of the people. A spiritual vacuum awaited the introduction of Christianity.

### Foundation Stones of Christian Missions

Jesus began His public ministry at the age of thirty. He did not repudiate the Mosaic Law which was the heart of Judaism. He said that He came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it. He made it crystal clear that He had not come to amend Judaism, but to offer the world a new and vital religion (Matt. 9:14-16). Both John the Baptist and Jesus preached: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, sent to atone for sin, and to reconcile men to the Father. He invited men to believe on Him: to submit to His Lordship. Thus they would become citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus first appeared to restrict His message to His own people, the Jews (Matt. 15:24); but He later balanced this with the announcement that His gospel was for all the world (Matt. 10:5,6; 28:19,20).

Jesus without delay laid foundations to perpetuate the universal nature of His ministry. He selected a dozen men to be with Him. These were called *apóstolos*, a word which means messenger, or one sent with orders. Missionary is the closest synonym. These were also called disciples or learners, for Jesus taught them constantly. Jesus' itinerant school may well be considered the first missionary training school. The disciples learned by precept, observation, and practise. Jesus sent the twelve forth to preach, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 10:5, 7). The number of disciples increased and on one occasion Jesus sent out seventy, two by two, to announce: "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (Luke 10:11).

Jesus began His Church as the foundation stone of mission support. This body of born again believers was authorized and empowered to project His message and His programme in a victorious manner (Matt. 16:18,19). To this body of dedicated Christians Jesus repeatedly gave a world-wide commission (Matt. 28:19,20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8). In His final commission (Acts 1:8), Jesus laid down guide-lines for missionary endeavour: (1) Mission work is dependent on a receiving power from on high. (2) Every believer should be a witness: some where they reside and others going abroad: "unto the uttermost part of the earth." (3) The message of missions is Jesus Christ: "Ye shall be witnesses *unto me*." The apostle Paul summarized the gospel message in these words: "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3,4).

Place a tick mark by the correct statement.

Jesus came to amend the Jewish religion \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Jesus came to offer the world a new and vital religion \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The message of Jesus was not for the J \_\_\_\_\_ only, but for \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_.

(Jews, all, world)

Which of these acts of Jesus laid foundations for mission work?

- He called workers. \_\_\_\_\_
- He taught workers. \_\_\_\_\_
- He trained workers. \_\_\_\_\_
- He established His Church. \_\_\_\_\_
- He gave a world commission to His Church. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer(s) with the text.)

List three guide-lines laid down in Acts 1:8 for missionary endeavour.

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(Compare your answers with the text.)

## The March of Missions in the First Century

Robert A. Baker has divided the period from the death of Jesus to the death of the last apostle as follows:

- Local witnessing (A.D. 30-45)
- Missionary expansion (A.D. 45-68)
- Westward growth (A.D. 68-100)<sup>1</sup>

### Local witnessing (A.D. 30-45)

Jesus left His disciples with a world-wide commission and a promise of power from on high. When the day of Pentecost came, the fire of the Holy Spirit fell upon each of the 120 who had expectantly prayed for the promise of their Lord. Immediately they witnessed to multitudes in Jerusalem. People from many nations were present and heard in their own tongue. Some of these no doubt returned to their own countries and shared their new found faith. Three thousand believers in Jerusalem were baptized in one day (Acts 2:41). Soon there were about five thousand men (Acts 4:4). Then "the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

Stephen's energetic preaching in the synagogues resulted in his martyrdom. As persecution of Christians intensified, many disciples "that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Philip preached in Samaria, and a revival of such proportions broke out that the church in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to assess the work (Acts 8:5-14). An Ethiopian official who was converted by Philip (Acts 8:27-39) probably planted the gospel in Ethiopia upon his return. Peter, divinely drawn to the house of the gentile centurion Cornelius in Caesarea, baptized him with all his household (Acts 10). Jewish Christians, fleeing Jerusalem, at first preached "the word to none but the Jews only;" but arriving in Antioch of Syria they "spoke unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus" (Acts 11:19,20). Saul of Tarsus, the chief persecutor of Christians, was marvellously converted as he approached Damascus. Christians were already established in that Syrian city. Saul was baptized and the Lord appointed him a missionary to the gentiles (Acts 9:1-20). This was a turning point in the course of Christian missions.

### Missionary expansion (A.D. 45-68)

Barnabas, a native of Cyprus (Acts 4:36), was sent from Jerusalem to Antioch to help the Jewish-gentile church. He enlisted the aid of Saul of Tarsus, who joined him in teaching the believers (Acts 11:22-26). The Holy Spirit called upon the church at Antioch to separate Barnabas and Saul as missionaries and the church sent them forth (Acts 13:1-4). From this time (c. A.D. 50)

The period from A.D. 30 to 100 can be divided as follows:

- Local witnessing \_\_\_\_\_
- Missionary expansion \_\_\_\_\_
- Westward growth \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Pentecost caused the church in J\_\_\_\_\_ to witness to the m\_\_\_\_\_.

(Jerusalem, multitudes)

Fill in the blanks to complete the following statements.

S\_\_\_\_\_ was martyred for preaching Christ in Jerusalem.

P\_\_\_\_\_ led a revival in Samaria.

P\_\_\_\_\_ preached to gentiles in Caesarea.

P\_\_\_\_\_ scattered witnesses as far as

A\_\_\_\_\_.

S\_\_\_\_\_ of T\_\_\_\_\_ was converted and became a missionary to the g\_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

A\_\_\_\_\_ of Syria became a new mission centre, sending forth B\_\_\_\_\_ and S\_\_\_\_\_ as missionaries.

(Antioch, Barnabas, Saul)

<sup>1</sup> Robert A. Baker, *A Summary of Christian History* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959), pp. 8ff.

Antioch was the new missionary centre of gentile Christianity.

The *first missionary journey* took Barnabas and Saul to Cyprus, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. They established and organized congregations in these places. Opposition on this journey came primarily from unbelieving Jews. Upon returning to Antioch of Syria they found that professing Christians from Jerusalem had disrupted the church by demanding that gentile Christians conform to Jewish customs. A council called in Jerusalem concluded that a man is saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone, not by human merit. Furthermore, the Jerusalem Council certified Paul as a missionary to the gentiles (Acts 15).

On the *second missionary journey* (Acts 15:36–18:22) Paul was accompanied by Silas. They were joined by Timothy in Lystra. Apparently Luke joined them in Troas. The vision in Troas of the man of Macedonia led the group to Philippi where a church was established. In the course of the journey churches were established in Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth. At Ephesus Paul promised to return when God should permit it.

Paul's *third missionary journey* (Acts 18:23–21:15) led him to visit the churches in Galatia and Phrygia and to establish a mission school in Ephesus, where he remained two years and three months. Leaving Ephesus, he revisited Troas, Philippi, and Corinth. At Corinth he wrote a letter to Rome expressing his hope to extend work as far west as Spain (Rom. 15:24-28). Following this journey, a visit to the temple in Jerusalem resulted in Paul's imprisonment for two years at Caesarea, after which he was taken to Rome in bonds. Paul reinforced the new churches by sending them letters. The last three of these letters (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus) suggest that the Apostle was released from prison in Rome, perhaps in the fall of A.D. 62. It appears he spent the winter in Nicopolis, visited Titus in Crete, and Timothy in Ephesus. Some have maintained that Paul visited Spain during this time of freedom. Clement of Rome wrote (c. A.D. 96) that Paul "came to the extreme limit of the West." According to the usage of his day, Clement almost certainly meant to include Spain. After Nero burned Rome in A.D. 64, and blamed it on the Christians, it appears that Paul was returned to Rome, and was executed about A.D. 66 or 67.

**Westward growth (A.D. 68-100)** About A.D. 66 the Jewish War broke out in Palestine. This led to the complete destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Roman Titus in A.D. 70. This event not only put an end to temple sacrifices by the Jews, but also forced the removal of many Christians from Jerusalem. It was at that time that the apostle John probably established himself in Ephesus. During the persecution of Christians by the Roman Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96) John was banished to the Isle of Patmos. The Revelation which he

The missionary journey of Barnabas and Saul took them to C \_\_\_\_\_, A \_\_\_\_\_ of P \_\_\_\_\_, I \_\_\_\_\_, L \_\_\_\_\_ and D \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answers with the text)

The missionary journey of Paul, Silas, and Timothy left churches in P \_\_\_\_\_, T \_\_\_\_\_, B \_\_\_\_\_ and C \_\_\_\_\_.

(Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth)

Paul's third missionary journey took him to G \_\_\_\_\_, P \_\_\_\_\_, E \_\_\_\_\_, T \_\_\_\_\_, P \_\_\_\_\_ and C \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Paul was a witness while imprisoned in J \_\_\_\_\_, C \_\_\_\_\_, and R \_\_\_\_\_.

(Jerusalem, Caesarea, Rome)

penned indicates that in addition to Ephesus and other Christian centres in Asia Minor mentioned by Paul and Luke, churches had been long established in Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

Peter wrote his first epistle from Babylon, and Mark was with him (1 Pet. 5:13). He addressed the letter to the believers who were in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

No doubt other apostles and missionaries worked as contemporaries of Paul and some after his death. There is evidence that Christianity was known all about the Mediterranean Sea. Tradition speculates freely about the activities of other apostles and evangelists. Bartholomew and Thomas are both said to have visited India. The Russian Church has honoured Andrew as an apostle since he is supposed to have worked in Scythia. Philip is supposed to have spent his final years in Phrygia. The name of Thaddaeus is related to Persia. Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot are reported to have visited Egypt; the latter has been located as far away as Britain, Persia, and Babylonia. John Mark, who was with Peter in Babylon, is said to have founded the church in Alexandria. While tradition is not trustworthy as history, it is unthinkable that those men whom Jesus trained did not carry the gospel to other regions.

### The Spread of Christianity, A.D. 100-313

#### Factors which affected the spread of Christianity

The spread of Christianity during the first century had been phenomenal. Warneck estimated that at the end of the century Christians numbered about 200,000.<sup>2</sup> John at the close of the apostolic period was a target of persecution. Persecution of Christians continued intermittently throughout the second and third centuries. Refusal of Christians to make the customary sacrifices to the Roman emperor resulted in the death of thousands. Tertullian (c. A.D. 155-222) coined the phrase: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

Opposition to Christianity came not only from the emperors, but also from the pagan masses. The high moral conduct and spiritual principles of Christians stood as a condemnation of the pagan way of life. Christians were also misunderstood. Because they rejected the worship of gods represented by idols they were called atheists. Some, believing that Christians actually ate the body and drank the blood of their Lord in a secret ceremony, labelled them cannibals. When earthquakes, fires, floods, drought, and other calamities came, the pagans commonly blamed them on the Christians.

Christian doctrine was diluted due to the paucity of Scriptures and the influence of Greek philosophy upon

<sup>2</sup> Gustav Warneck, *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions* (New York: Revell, 1901), p. 3.

In addition to churches Paul established in Asia Minor, list others mentioned in Revelation, chapters two and three:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Place a tick by the countries in which tradition says apostles (other than Paul) preached the gospel:

Islands of the Mediterranean \_\_\_\_\_, North Africa \_\_\_\_\_, Egypt \_\_\_\_\_, Ethiopia \_\_\_\_\_, India \_\_\_\_\_, Persia \_\_\_\_\_, Arabia \_\_\_\_\_, Babylonia \_\_\_\_\_, Britain \_\_\_\_\_, Italy \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Draw a circle around the correct answer.

The approximate number of Christians at the end of the first century was: 20,000, 200,000, or 2,000,000.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Draw a line under the correct answer(s).

Christians were opposed by pagans (including some emperors) because:

Christians didn't live like the pagans.

Christians were considered to be atheists.

Some thought they were cannibals.

Pagans blamed natural disasters on Christians.

(Compare your answer(s) with the text.)

Christian doctrine and practice was diluted because there were few \_\_\_\_\_ and G \_\_\_\_\_ p \_\_\_\_\_ influenced Christian leaders.

(Scriptures, Greek, philosophy)

Christianity. Church polity was also twisted by church leaders who acted through political expediency or for personal gain.

### **Sources of information**

Much of what we know about the Church during this era comes from the writings of its enemies and friends. Pliny the Younger, imperial legate in Bithynia, in north-west Asia Minor, wrote to Emperor Trajan about A.D. 112 concerning the growing threat of Christians to the government. It appears that Christianity was proscribed; that if Christians recanted they were to be spared, but if they persisted in their faith they were to be put to death. He said that Christians were "on every level of society, of both sexes...in towns and villages and scattered throughout the countryside." The growth of Christianity was so rapid that Pliny feared desertion of the Roman shrines.<sup>3</sup>

The Greek philosopher Celsus published an attack against Christianity towards the end of the second century. Origen's answer, *Contra Celsum*, reveals what Celsus' allegations were. He alleged that Christians formed secret societies, defying the law; that Christian teachings were not new, but had long been anticipated by Greek philosophy; that Christians taught: "Do not examine, but believe" etc. Celsus' treatise, intended to disparage Christians, reveals that the spread of Christianity was in the main a lay movement: "Weavers, cobblers, and fullers, the most illiterate persons, preached the irrational faith and knew how to commend it especially to women and children."<sup>4</sup>

Christian apologists and polemicists defended their faith. The apologists, those who addressed themselves to the emperor and other government officials, were Quadratus, Aristides, Justin Martyr (c. A.D. 100), Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Hermias and Melito. Chief among the polemicists, those who combatted doctrinal error, were Irenaeus (130-202, renowned for his treatise "Against Heresies"), Tertullian (155-222), and Origen (185-254). The writings of these men were a medium for the spread of Christianity. The Apostolic Fathers, whose writings circulated largely in church circles, are also a source of information concerning the march of Christianity.

### **Geographical expansion**

Principal mission centres during the first century were Jerusalem, Antioch of Syria, and Ephesus. Persecution of the church at Jerusalem scattered believers to many parts and these shared their Christian faith. The Jewish-gentile church at Antioch thrust Paul, Barnabas, and Silas westward into new fields. Ephesus, where Paul and John laboured with distinction, permeated Asia

**Apologists defended Christianity before government officials. Polemicists combatted doctrinal error. NAME THREE OF EACH.**

Apologists: \_\_\_\_\_

Polemicists: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

**During the first century, missionary centres were first J \_\_\_\_\_, then A \_\_\_\_\_, and then E \_\_\_\_\_.**

*(Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus)*

<sup>3</sup> Pliny, *Epistles X*, 96,97.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (New York: Scribner, 1888-1910), Vol. II, Sec. 4. Quoted from *Contra Celsus* III, 55.

Minor with the gospel. During the second and third centuries Alexandria, Carthage, Rome, and Lyons became important mission centres.

**Rome.**-This great city became the centre from which Paul directed churches and associates during his imprisonment. Clement of Rome sent a letter of counsel to the church in Corinth about A.D. 96 on behalf of the church in Rome. Most Roman Christians were from the poorer classes, but the inclusion of Titus Flavius Clemens and his wife Domitilla among the victims of the Domitian persecution (c. A.D. 96) indicates that some noblemen were among the believers. The church in Rome grew through evangelistic outreach and the convergence of Christians upon the capital of the empire. Bishop Soter remarked (about A.D. 166) that the number of Christians in Rome exceeded the number of Jews. By the end of the third century there were forty congregations in Rome, each with its presbyter. The ecclesiastical administrator of these churches was called bishop. Communications between the bishop of Rome and church officials in other cities reveal that Rome increasingly sought to make its prestige felt among the churches.

**Egypt.**-The origin of Christian work in Egypt is not clear. Alexandria, founded in the time of Alexander the Great (c. 332 B.C.) had a large Jewish population. The Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament, was made there about two and a half centuries before Christ. It is believed that Jewish Christians early joined the Jewish colony in Alexandria. We know that there were Christians in Alexandria during the reign of Hadrian (c. A.D. 125). We also know that a Christian school was founded at Alexandria by Pantaenus about 180. Outstanding writers of this school were Clement (c. 150-215) and Origen (c. 185-254). Translation of the scriptures into the Coptic dialects of the desert-dwellers came not later than the middle of the third century.

**North Africa.**-Cyrene, located west of Egypt, is mentioned in Mark 15:21; Acts 2:10; 6:9; and 11:20. It would have been natural for Cyrenians who heard Peter preach at Jerusalem on Pentecost to carry the gospel back to their own land. Cyrenians helped establish the gospel among the Greeks at Antioch (Acts 11:20). From Bishop Synesius we learn there were half a dozen bishoprics in Cyrene by the beginning of the fifth century. Farther west, almost due south of Rome, Carthage became a centre of Christianity. Greek was spoken in Alexandria, but Latin, language of the Roman elite, was used by the churches of Carthage. The first Latin translation of the New Testament was made at Carthage. Renowned Christian writers of North Africa were Tertullian (c. 160-220), Cyprian (died c. 250), and Augustine of Hippo (354-440). Tertullian challenged Roman magistrates who were persecuting Christians with these words: "We are but of yesterday, and yet we have filled your cities, islands, camps, your palace, senate, and

During the second and third centuries A \_\_\_\_\_, C \_\_\_\_\_, R \_\_\_\_\_ and L \_\_\_\_\_ became mission centres.

(Alexandria, Carthage, Rome, Lyons)

Qualify these statements as true or false.

Most Christians in Rome were from the upper class.

By the end of the third century there were about forty Christian congregations in Rome.

The Bishop of Rome increasingly tried to exercise authority over churches in other parts.

(false, true, true)

Jewish scholars in A \_\_\_\_\_ translated the Old Testament to Greek about 250 B.C. This translation was called the S \_\_\_\_\_.

(Alexandria, Septuagint)

P \_\_\_\_\_ founded a Christian school in Alexandria about \_\_\_\_\_. Famous writers of this school were C \_\_\_\_\_ and O \_\_\_\_\_.

(Pantaenus, 180, Clement, Origen)

Cyrene was located west of Egypt. Cyrenians heard Peter preach the day of Pentecost. Do you think some of these planted the gospel in Cyrene when they returned? Read Mark 15:21; Acts 2:10; 6:9; 11:20.

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(Your response)

Famous Christian writers of North Africa were: T \_\_\_\_\_, C \_\_\_\_\_, and A \_\_\_\_\_ of H \_\_\_\_\_.

(Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Hippo)

forum. We have left you only your temples."

*Gaul, Germany, and Spain.*-In Lyons, Gaul (southern France), Bishop Pothinus was martyred in 177. He was succeeded by Irenaeus who was Bishop of Lyons during the final quarter of the second century. Since cities of this region were originally Greek colonies of Ionia on the west coast of Asia Minor, and since Irenaeus was a native of Smyrna in Asia Minor, and because the churches of Gaul followed the dates for Easter used by Ephesus rather than those used by Rome, it is most probable that Christianity reached Gaul from Asia Minor. Irenaeus preached in the Celtic vernacular as well as in Latin. It is inferred, therefore, that Christianity reached beyond the cities of Gaul to the non-hellenistic population. Irenaeus made reference to churches west of the Rhine, which would be present-day Germany. Light on the history of Christianity in Spain during the first three centuries is very dim. In 305 a synod in Elvira, Spain demanded celibacy for the clergy. It would appear from the records of this synod that the moral and spiritual state of Christianity in Spain at that time was deplorable.

*Britain.*-Little is known about the beginnings of Christianity in Britain. Tertullian of North Africa wrote about 208 that Christ had followers on the far side of the Roman Wall in Britain. Constantius Clorus, father of Constantine, while governor of Britain, Gaul, and Spain, took only token measures to apply the anti-Christian decrees of emperor Diocletian. Constantius' wife was a Christian. We know that in 314 Britain was represented at the Council of Arles in Gaul by the bishops of York and London.

*Armenia.*-Gregory the Enlightener or Illuminator (c. 240-332), a native of Caesarea in Cappadocia, planted the gospel in Armenia. Through the influence of Gregory, King Tiridates was baptized and thereafter worked with the missionary for the conversion of all the country. After some years Gregory was consecrated Bishop of the Armenian Church by Bishop Leontius of Caesarea in Cappadocia. Gregory preached in Armenian and enlisted the aid of the scholar Mesrob to invent an alphabet for the language. The New Testament in Armenian was completed in 410 with the aid of missionaries from Syria. The Armenian Church continues until the present and has congregations in various parts of the world.

*India.*-When did the gospel reach India? The Mar Thoma Christians believe the apostle Thomas founded their church in the first century. Pantaenus is reported to have left his school in Alexandria not long after 180 to take the gospel to India. Eusebius of Caesarea, writing during the first quarter of the fourth century, says of Pantaenus: "He is said to have displayed such ardor, and so zealous a disposition respecting the divine word, that he was constituted a herald of the gospel of Christ to the nations of the east, and advanced even as far as

Complete the following statements.

The Bishop of Lyons during the last twenty-five years of the second century was \_\_\_\_\_  
Christianity probably reached beyond the cities of \_\_\_\_\_

There is not much information on Christianity in \_\_\_\_\_ for the first \_\_\_\_\_ centuries.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

List at least three facts that are known about the beginnings of Christianity in Britain.

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(Compare your answers with the text.)

The gospel was planted in Armenia by \_\_\_\_\_  
the \_\_\_\_\_.

(Gregory, Enlightener)

The Mar Thoma Christians claim their church was founded in the \_\_\_\_\_ century by the apostle \_\_\_\_\_.

(first, Thomas)

Indicate that Christianity was in these places before A.D. 313 by completing the following exercise.

Place	Person or source	Dates
Gaul (France)	_____	_____
Germany	_____	_____

India.<sup>5</sup> Eusebius also reported that Pantaeus found that the Indians possessed a Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew, which the apostle Bartholomew had left them. The gospel was also brought to India from Syria, as inscriptions which exist today indicate, but there is nothing to date this work as early as the third century.

### Results of Mission Work, 100-313

Adolph Harnack estimated that one-fifth of the population of the Roman Empire was Christian by the end of this period.<sup>6</sup> According to Harnack, at the close of this period at least half of the population was Christian in Asia Minor, Thrace, Cyprus, and Edessa, including Armenia. There was a sizeable Christian population in northern Syria, Egypt, southern Italy, southern Gaul and North Africa. Christians were thinly scattered in northern Italy, Spain, northern Gaul, Germany, Britain, Mesopotamia, Arabia and the countries north and north-east of the Black Sea. It is estimated that by 313 the Christian population was between five and ten million. Dr. T.R. Glover said that this growth was due to the fact that Christians out-thought, out-lived and out-died the followers of all other faiths.

Dr. Stephen Neill<sup>7</sup> summarizes the reasons for Christianity's phenomenal growth as follows: (1) The burning conviction of Christians that they should share the good news of redemption with the whole world. (2) Philosophers had given uncertain answers to men's questions; mystery religions did not deal with established fact; Christians came with the confidence of eye-witnesses, speaking of one who lived in recent times, had died, risen from the dead, a living reality who would give himself to those who trusted in him. (3) The purity of life and mutual love of Christians recommended Christianity to mankind. (4) The behaviour of the majority of Christians who suffered persecution focused attention on Christianity and influenced many to embrace Christianity.

### Expansion from 313 to 500

The dates for this period are approximate. They are bounded by the conversion of two men who changed the course of Christian missions. The conversion of Constantine (A.D. 312) brought Christianity under the protection of the Roman government. After the conversion of Clovis, King of the Franks (A.D. 496), the base of missionary operations began to shift from southern to middle and northern Europe.

<sup>5</sup> *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962), p. 190.

<sup>6</sup> Adolph Harnack, *Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (New York: Putnam, 2nd ed. 1908), Vol. II, pp. 324-37.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1964), pp. 38-44.

Spain \_\_\_\_\_  
 Britain \_\_\_\_\_  
 Armenia \_\_\_\_\_  
 India \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Compare your answer with the text.)

Historian Adolph Harnack estimated that \_\_\_\_\_ of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire were Christian by A.D. 313.  
 (one-fifth)

T.R. Glover said this growth was because Christians \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ the followers of other faiths.  
 (out-thought, out-lived, out-died)

The conversion of Constantine in 312 gave Christianity the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ government.  
 The conversion of \_\_\_\_\_ in 496 promoted Christianity in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ Europe.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

### **Conversion of Constantine**

The most severe and general persecution against Christians came with the edict of Diocletian in 303. His joint emperor, Maximius, issued a similar edict the following year. This persecution left martyrs from Arabia to Britain. When Diocletian retired in 305 a power struggle began. With the death in 306 of Constantius Clorus, governor over Gaul, Spain, and Britain, his son Constantine who was stationed in York was proclaimed emperor by his army. In 312 Constantine, marching on Rome, faced his formidable opponent Maxentius. Years later Constantine told the historian Eusebius of a vision he had before the battle with Maxentius. He saw a cross of light in the sky bearing the inscription: "In this sign conquer!" Constantine crushed Maxentius and entered Rome as undisputed ruler of the West. He considered that the God of the Christians had given him the victory. In 313 Constantine met with Licinius, ruler of the East, and jointly they issued an edict of toleration of Christians at Milan. Ten years later Constantine defeated Licinius and became sole emperor of the Roman Empire.

Did Constantine truly become a Christian? He favoured Christianity, but he never completely abandoned the paganism which was ingrained in the Roman government. His conduct was not Christian. He was a power hungry ruler, susceptible to flattery, and put to death those who were a threat or inconvenience, including his wife, a son, and a nephew. Constantine did, shortly before his death, submit to baptism at the hands of Eusebius of Nicomedia in 337. The delay of his baptism was probably due to his belief that sin was washed away in baptism.

Constantine favoured Christianity in several ways. Sunday was given the same legal status as that given to pagan feast days. The clergy was exempt from paying taxes. When Constantine moved the capital to Byzantium and named that city Constantinople he built many churches there. When controversy between Athanasius and Arius over the nature of Christ threatened to divide Christianity, Constantine called the Council of Nicea (A.D. 323) in an attempt to unite his subject. The Council declared that Jesus Christ was "begotten, not made, being of one essence with the Father." Constantine had his sons brought up in the Christian faith and these not only promoted Christianity, but also suppressed paganism following the decease of their father.

### **Ethiopia**

It is reasonable to believe that the Ethiopian eunuch, baptized by Philip (Acts 8:26-39) planted Christianity in Ethiopia, although we have no historical evidence of this. The *Ecclesiastical History* of Rufinus, written about A.D. 400 tells of missionary endeavour in Ethiopia in the early part of the fourth century. Frumentius and Aedesius, young men from Tyre, were aboard a ship which wrecked on the shores of Ethiopia. They were taken as slaves to the King of Axum. They gained the favour of the

The most severe persecution of Christians was decreed by D\_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_.

(Diocletian, 303)

State how Constantine favoured Christianity.

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(Compare your answers with the text.)

king and were permitted to preach the gospel. They ministered to the spiritual needs of Christian merchants from the Roman Empire and led in erecting a house of worship. Aedesius, after some years, was permitted to return to Tyre. Frumentius went to Alexandria and appealed to the patriarch Athanasius (c. 296-373) for a missionary to promote the Christian work in Axum. Athanasius is reported to have said: "Who could be found more suitable than yourself?" Athanasius consecrated Frumentius Bishop of Axum about A.D. 341. Frumentius served as head of the Ethiopian church until his death. He was affectionately called *Abba Salama*, father of peace. The church in Ethiopia still exists after sixteen centuries.

### **Ireland**

*Patricius Magonus Sucatas* (c. 389-461), commonly known as Patrick, was the man responsible for establishing the gospel in Ireland. He was not Irish, but was born near Glasgow in Britain, a son of Christian parents. His father was a deacon and his grandfather a presbyter. The life of Patrick is shrouded in tradition. The most reliable source of information is his biographical notes, but these are difficult to decipher.

At a date unknown, Irish pirates raided the coast where Patrick lived and carried the able-bodied boys to their country where they were sold as slaves. For some six years Patrick herded sheep for a chieftain in the north. He escaped and obtained passage to Gaul where he appears to have served in the monastery in Lerins. After some years he returned to Britain and was welcomed by his family. He had no thought of leaving home again until he had a vision in a dream, similar to the vision that Paul had at Troas. Patrick relates that a man named Victoricus, coming from Ireland, handed him some letters. The one he read began with these words: "The voice of the Irish," and he thought he heard the Irish crying out in unison: "We ask thee, boy, come and walk among us once more."<sup>8</sup>

Patrick returned to Ireland where he laboured for some thirty-five years. In spite of opposition from the Druid chieftains he preached to crowds in the open air, baptized thousands of converts, organized hundreds of churches, and established schools. Patrick is claimed by both Protestants and Catholics. His message was evangelical. When Palladius was sent to Ireland by the Pope near the end of Patrick's life the ancient missionary rejected his overtures. Patrick's doctrine was purely biblical. His writings reveal him to be a deeply consecrated and zealous missionary. When Patrick went to Ireland there were few Christians. When he died, practically the whole nation had embraced the Christian faith. Ireland became a base of missionary activity. In subse-

<sup>8</sup> Ludwig Bieler (trans)., *The Works of St. Patrick* (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1953), p. 28.

Qualify these statements about Patrick as true or false.

1. Patrick was Irish. \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Enslaved to herd sheep, Patrick escaped from Ireland. \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. After receiving a vision he returned to Ireland as a missionary. \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. He preached in Ireland fifty years. \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. He baptized thousands and organized hundreds of churches. \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. The Pope got him to promote Roman Catholicism. \_\_\_\_\_

*Continued on the next page.*

quent years men from Ireland and the Continent went forth to convert Scotland, England, Germany and other countries.

### **The Goths**

The Goths, who lived north of the Danube River, made frequent incursions into the Byzantine Empire. Christianity was probably introduced to the Goths by Christian prisoners of war. The Christianity which prevailed among the Goths was Arianism. The Arians considered that the Son of God was not of the same essence as the Father, but was the highest creation of the Father.

The establishment of Christianity among the Goths was largely the work of *Ulfilas* (c. 311-c. 383). His father was a Cappadocian, possibly a prisoner of war, and his mother a Goth. Ulfilas adopted the Arian form of Christianity and became a reader in the church. During a visit to Constantinople he met Bishop Eusebius who made him a bishop (c. 341) for the Gothic race and sent him back to evangelize that people. Ulfilas laboured among the Goths more than forty years. His greatest contribution was the reduction of the Gothic language to writing and the translation of the Bible into that language. He omitted the Book of Kings lest it inflame the warlike passions of the Goths. The work of Ulfilas had a marked effect upon the religion, language, literature, and culture of the Teutonic peoples of Europe.

### **The Franks**

In the fifth century the Franks became dominant in northern Gaul and the lower portions of the Rhine Valley. As the old Roman Empire was waning the barbarians streamed southward. France received its name from the Franks. There were some Christians among the Franks, but the vast majority were pagan barbarians. Latourette considers the conversion of the Franks one of the truly important events in Christian history.<sup>9</sup> Stephen Neill sees the conversion of Clovis, King of the Franks, "as one of the turning points of Christian history."<sup>10</sup> Clovis conquered much of Gaul and laid the foundations for one of the important states in Western Europe. Clovis' wife was a Christian and tried to convert him. The time of crisis came when he was threatened with overthrow in a battle with the powerful Alemanni. Clovis swore that if victory were his he would become a Christian. He kept his vow. On Christmas day, 496, Clovis and three thousand of his soldiers were baptized. Most of his subjects followed Clovis' example. He embraced the traditional view concerning the person of Christ rather than the Arian view. Thus, the Christianity of the Franks was related to that of Rome and of the West, whereas the Goths for two centuries had their ties with Constantinople. Neither people was deeply rooted in Christian conduct, for their warlike spirit prevailed for many decades.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity, Vol. I, to A.D. 1500* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 101.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, p. 58.

7. From monasteries started by Patrick, missionaries went to Scotland, England and Germany. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

U \_\_\_\_\_, (c. 311-c. 383), missionary to the Goths, gave the people the Bible in their own language. Gothic Christians were related to the church in C \_\_\_\_\_.

(Ulfilas, Constantinople)

On C \_\_\_\_\_ d \_\_\_\_\_, 496, C \_\_\_\_\_, King of the Franks and three thousand of his soldiers were baptized. He induced most Franks to become Christians. He tied Christianity in middle and western Europe to the church in R \_\_\_\_\_.

(Christmas, day, Clovis, Rome)

## Home Study Exercise

**Basic activity** (*Levels 1,2 and 3*). After reading the study guide, answer the following questions.

1. Mention two developments among the Jewish people which favoured the introduction of Christianity.

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2. How did the spread of Greek philosophy and culture prepare the way for the introduction of Christianity?

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3. What conditions in the Roman Empire in the first century were favourable to the spread of Christianity?

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4. Name five things Jesus did to assure the propagation of the gospel to all the world.

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5. How did Pentecost stimulate witnessing in Jerusalem?

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6. What effect did Saul's persecution of the church have on the spread of the gospel?

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7. Read Acts 9:1-20. How did Saul's conversion and commission affect the course of missions?

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8. Where did Barnabas and Saul take the gospel on their first missionary journey?

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9. List the places where Paul planted the gospel on his second and third missionary journeys.

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10. How many churches can you name which existed at the close of the first century? Name them.

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11. According to historian Warneck, how many Christians existed at the end of the first century?

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12. Why were Christians persecuted by Roman emperors and what effect did it have on the growth of Christianity?

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13. Name five cities on or near the Mediterranean which were centres of Christian work before A.D. 313.

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14. According to Adolph Harnack, in what countries or regions were *half or more* of the inhabitants Christians by 313?

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In what regions was there *sizeable* Christian population?

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In what parts were Christians *thinly scattered*?

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15. What was the immediate effect of Constantine's conversion upon Christianity?

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16. Tell of Patrick's work as a missionary in Ireland.

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17. To what countries did Irish missionaries go in subsequent years?

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18. What was Ulfilas' greatest contribution to the Goths?

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19. How did Clovis' conversion lay the foundations for Christian work in middle and western Europe?

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**Supplementary activity** (*Levels 2 and 3*). Read pages 3-35 in *A Global View of Christian Missions* by J. Herbert Kane and answer the following questions.

1. How was the dispersion of the Jews a great factor in preparing the way for Christianity?
2. List geographical areas penetrated by the gospel by the end of the fifth century.
3. In what ways did the persecution under Diocletian differ from previous persecutions by Roman emperors?
4. Why did Christianity become popular after the conversion of Constantine?
5. List four probable reasons why Constantine chose to favour Christianity.

**Advanced activity** (*Level 3*). Make a study of the relationship of the Holy Spirit to missions in the *Acts of the Apostles*.

1. As you read Acts, underscore *Holy Spirit* or take note of every time it occurs.
2. List passages in Acts that have to do with:
  - (1) The Holy Spirit empowering for witnessing.
  - (2) The Holy Spirit calling workers.
  - (3) The Holy Spirit directing churches in mission work.
  - (4) The Holy Spirit directing missionaries.
  - (5) The Holy Spirit overcoming barriers to the spread of the gospel.

### **Seminar Discussion**

1. What preparation did Jesus make for the continuing spread of the gospel?
2. How did God use the Greeks, the Romans, and the Jews in preparation for the spread of the gospel?
3. What types of opposition did Christianity meet?
4. How far had Christianity expanded by the end of the first century? the third century? the fifth century?
5. What were the probable reasons Constantine favoured Christianity and what were the long range effects of favour by the state?
6. Discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in the administration of missionary outreach.