

THE SPREAD OF  
CHRISTIANITY  

---

PAUL HUTCHINSON



The Abingdon Religious Education Texts<sup>7</sup>

David G. Downey, General Editor

WEEK-DAY SCHOOL SERIES

GEORGE HERBERT BETTS, Editor

---

# THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY

BY

PAUL HUTCHINSON



THE ABINGDON PRESS

NEW YORK

CINCINNATI

Copyright, 1922, by  
PAUL HUTCHINSON  
All Rights Reserved

Printed in the United States of America

To  
LYNN HAROLD HOUGH

AT WHOSE TOUCH

THE PAST SPRINGS TO LIFE  
THE PRESENT TAKES MEANING  
AND THE FUTURE BECKONS

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE .....	5
I. THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD .....	7
II. CHRISTIANITY FACES THE DANGER OF SUCCESS .....	16
III. THE BREAK-UP OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE .....	24
IV. THE WINNING OF NORTHERN EUROPE .....	33
V. THE POPES COME TO POWER .....	42
VI. THE LATER CHURCH IN THE EAST .....	51
VII. CHRISTIANITY'S GREATEST RIVAL .....	60
VIII. THE CHURCH GOES TO WAR .....	69
IX. LIFE AND WORSHIP IN THE MEDIÆVAL CHURCH .....	77
X. CHURCH AND STATE .....	85
XI. THE DAWN OF A NEW AGE .....	94
XII. NEW CHANNELS FOR CHRISTIANITY'S SPREAD .....	102
XIII. THE ROMAN THEORY OF THE CHURCH CHALLENGED .....	110
XIV. CATHOLICISM ENTERS NEW WORLDS .....	120
XV. WHO WAS TO SPREAD CHRISTIANITY? .....	129
XVI. GENEVA—A CITY FOR GOD .....	137
XVII. THE REFORMATION IN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND .....	146
XVIII. EARLY MISSIONARIES IN THE AMERICAS .....	156
XIX. PROTESTANTISM FACES THE WIDER WORLD .....	164
XX. METHODISM BRINGS NEW ENERGY .....	172
XXI. SPREADING RELIGION IN AMERICA .....	180
XXII. CHRISTIANITY IN MODERN INDIA .....	188
XXIII. CHINA AND CHRISTIANITY .....	197
XXIV. THE APPROACH TO ISLAM .....	205
XXV. THE CROSS IN THE JAPANESE EMPIRE .....	213
XXVI. IN THE DARK CONTINENT .....	221
XXVII. RELIGION IN LATIN-AMERICA .....	229
XXVIII. OTHER FIELDS FOR CHRISTIANITY'S ADVANCE .....	237
XXIX. THE AMERICAN CHURCHES .....	244
XXX. MODERN CATHOLICISM .....	252
XXXI. HOW CHRISTIANITY IS SPREAD .....	260
XXXII. CHRISTIANITY TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW .....	267
AIDS IN THE STUDY OF THIS BOOK .....	275

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

THE EXTENT OF CHRISTIANITY ABOUT 600 A. D. ....	Frontispiece
	FACING PAGE
THE CHURCH IN THE LIFE OF MEDIÆVAL EUROPE.....	82
JERUSALEM, THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE.....	104
LUTHER BEFORE THE DIET AT WORMS.....	117
WESLEY PREACHING IN WALES.....	176
INDIA'S RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL.....	193
THE CHALLENGE OF MOHAMMEDANISM TO CHRISTIANITY.....	209
THE EXTENT OF CHRISTIANITY, 1920 A. D.....	269

## PREFACE

OF the making of church histories there seems to be no end, nor of the discovery of new facts that have a bearing on the story. The only reason for a new text, in view of the adequate volumes that already exist, is the hope of winning the interest of a new group—in this case, pupils in the eleventh grade of the American school.

In writing for this group (which is generally found in the sophomore or junior years of the high school) no effort has been made to mention all the facts, or even all the names, that must be included in any complete record of the Christian enterprise. It is conceivable that some church historians, chancing on this book, might be overwhelmed by its omissions. To any such it can only be said that the omissions have been deliberate.

The attempt has been to throw into bold relief the significant developments in Christian history since the days of Constantine. Christianity as a *growing* power is the theme, with the hope that young Christians may find some pride in belonging to a body that, with all its long traditions, lives ever on the move. Likewise, the spread of Christianity has been presented, not as some unique phenomenon in a water-tight compartment of its own, but as an integral part of the movement of all history. The repetition of much that is included in the usual school course seems justified if this branch of history is to be seen in its proper frame.

In every case the publishers named in the footnotes

have generously granted permission to quote from the books mentioned.

The cooperation of the editors and publishers of the Abingdon Series of Week-Day Religious Education Texts is gratefully acknowledged.

Teachers of this course will find added material and suggested methods of approach and treatment in the *Teacher's Manual* soon to follow this text.

So the book goes forth, with all its shortcomings. May these not mar for any the challenge of the Christian adventure, hard-bound toward the establishment of a universal kingdom. For there is ever a place for any youth that would share in that high endeavor.

THE AUTHOR.



## CHAPTER I

### THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

FROM its birth Christianity has prospered as it has traveled. The days of its missionary vigor have been the days of its greatest power. Almost the last authentic echo from the life of its Founder centers about the imperative "Go!" and it has seemed as though the destiny of the gospel were bound up with the degree of fidelity that the church has shown that command.

It is our purpose to trace the process by which Christianity developed from a small sect within the Jewish faith to a religion spread throughout the continents. We will not find a story of unimpeded advance. We will encounter defeats, retreats, and—what is perhaps worse—periods of self-centered stupor. But we will find, after twenty centuries, a vast body of believers and multiplying agencies, inspired by common ideals, owning allegiance to a common Lord, and moving ever toward distant horizons.

#### THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE ENTERS THE WORLD

**What is the Christian message?**—Christianity has spread because it has brought men such a message as they have heard nowhere else. For that reason it is well for us to ask, as a foundation for our study, what the Christian message is.

It was first given form by Jesus, a member of the Hebrew tribe of Judah, who came from the town

of Nazareth, preaching throughout Judæa during the early years of the Roman Empire. Jesus followed in the line of the Hebrew prophets, proclaiming the necessity for inner righteousness that should express itself in a life able to stand the most searching ethical tests. He found the impulse for such a life in the realization of the character of God, whom he spoke of as always actuated by motives of love and good will, and directly interested in the spiritual welfare of every human being. His conception of God was epitomized in the term by which he habitually spoke of the Deity, a term that has become characteristic of Christian devotion: "the heavenly Father."

Jesus taught that the heavenly Father is seeking a regenerated human society, to which he gives the name of "the kingdom of God," or "the kingdom of heaven," and conceived it as distinctively his mission to lead men into the understanding of God that he himself possessed, and so into membership in this kingdom. Such relationship with God, Jesus promised, would result in transformation of life, both inwardly and outwardly, and ultimately in transformation of all human society.

After a brief career as a teacher Jesus came into conflict with the conservative religious forces of his own nation. To some extent the universality of his outlook brought this to pass; to some extent his claim to possession of unique spiritual truth outside the bounds of the established church. The Roman administration of Palestine was induced to regard the teacher from Nazareth as a disturber of the public order, and he was crucified.

**The message of Jesus begins to spread.**—The execution of Jesus was one more instance of the answer

that authority is generally moved to make to agitation. In this case, however, the application of force failed to put an end to the new ideas that had come out of Galilee. Declaring that they had knowledge that Jesus had risen from the dead, as an evidence of the truth of his teaching and the validity of his claim to be the Messiah (or, in Greek, the Christ), the group of followers who had formed about Jesus by the time of his death formed a band within the Jewish church marked by evangelistic fervor and philanthropic effort.

There must have been about a hundred in this group of original disciples, among whom the eleven who had been most intimately in association with Jesus naturally took the leadership. Among these apostles, as they are known to history, Peter stood out at the beginning by reason of the boldness of his preaching, which led to great additions to the community of believers at Pentecost and after.

Within a few months or years (it is difficult to determine the precise chronology of this portion of the story), this group had grown to such size, and had so disturbed the conservative elements within the Jewish Church by the radicalism of its teaching, that it was practically forced to separate places and forms of worship, and was subjected to persecution. This persecution drove out of Jerusalem many of the professed believers in Christ, and these, in the language of the New Testament, "went everywhere (through Palestine) preaching the word." Thus began the diffusion of the Christian message.

**The first approach to the Gentile world.**—Some of the more adventurous of these refugees from Jerusalem, or those who had relatives in the Jewish quarters of Gentile cities, pushed beyond the borders of Palestine.

The first contact with this vast Gentile life came within Palestine itself, when a Roman centurion, already in some touch with the Jewish faith, received baptism at the hand of Peter. This apostle thus became the champion of the element that opposed the policy of restricting the Christian message to the Hebrews. Others followed his lead, and soon there were followers of Jesus banded together in many of the great cities of Asia Minor. Of these the most important was Antioch, the great trade center of the eastern part of the Roman Empire. Here a remarkable group was gathered in the infant church, and here the necessity for some distinguishing name first resulted in the application of the term "Christian."

These Christians in Antioch were largely Jews who possessed the cultural advantages of that Greek civilization that had been so determinedly repulsed from Palestine. They felt the urge of all the lands bordering the Mediterranean, and it was not long before two of their leaders had been sent to bear the Christian message to their brethren in the other cities of the Dispersion.

**Paul takes the gospel to Rome.**—The larger part of the book of Acts deals with the labors of the greater of these two Antiochan missionaries. This was Saul, a native of Tarsus, who soon, in his wanderings about the Roman world, became known as Paul.

Paul combined with a thorough grounding in Jewish theology the outlook of a Roman citizen and the culture of a home in a Greek city. As a result, when he turned to Christianity he was fitted to give the new faith its first formulated doctrine, and to respond to the inherent internationalism of the teaching of Jesus.

So it was that, from the day when he left Antioch

upon the first of his three great missionary journeys, Paul felt the call of his world so compellingly that before he suffered martyrdom he had seen the Christian message carried to the Roman provinces of Asia Minor, to the leading cities of Greece, to islands such as Cyprus and Crete, to imperial Rome and minor cities of Italy, and perhaps even to Spain.

At the beginning of his ministry Paul confined his labors to the Jews found in the cities he visited. These provided a natural constituency in which to preach of one who claimed to be the Jewish Messiah. But when the Jews refused to accept his gospel, Paul did not hesitate to extend his invitation to the Gentiles.

After a brief but intense struggle he won the church to support of his position. When he died he left Christianity planted in the capital of the world of that day, and committed to a policy of universalism. So influential, in fact, had he been in rescuing the new faith from the parochialism threatened by its Jewish antecedents, that some have claimed that Paul, rather than Jesus, should be regarded as the founder.

### THE STRUGGLE FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

In the early Christian writings that form the New Testament, frequent references will be found to the proposed extension of the gospel throughout "the world." It is doubtful if the first-century writers employed that term in the same sense in which it would be used to-day. Geography was a very restricted science in those days. In fact, compared with our present geographical knowledge, it remained restricted for fifteen hundred years after the days of Saint Paul.

**The world of the early Christians.**—The world that the New Testament writers knew, and of which they

thought when they employed the term, was practically coextensive with the Roman Empire. The first phase of Christian history, therefore, consisted of the effort to evangelize this world. As will be seen by a glance at any map, the Roman Empire was composed largely of the lands that bordered the Mediterranean Sea. To be sure, the imperial eagles were carried to Gaul, Germany, and Britain. But control in these provinces was always disputed. Roman civilization really gripped only the lands about the Mediterranean.

The story of the first three hundred years of Christianity concerned the penetration of these lands by the gospel. It has been told in detail in another volume in this series.<sup>1</sup> Here it is sufficient to say that the campaign Saint Paul launched continued with increasing power, despite severe repressive measures, until Constantine, the greatest of the emperors to make his capital in the city named after him, Constantinople, placed the sign of the cross upon his imperial banners and gave Christianity legal standing as a permitted, and even favored, religion.

On his death-bed, Constantine was baptized. The year 313 is generally remembered as the year in which Christianity won its struggle for dominance in the Roman Empire, for it was in that year that the Edict of Milan, granting toleration, was signed.

**Early Christian worship.**—When Justin Martyr wrote his *Apology*, in the middle of the second century, Christian worship as he described it was a very simple thing: "On Sunday a meeting is held of all who live in the cities and villages, and a section is read from the memoirs of the Apostles and the writings of the Prophets, as long as the time per-

<sup>1</sup>See *The Early Days of Christianity*, The Abingdon Press, by Frederick C. Grant.

mits. When the reading has finished, the president, in a discourse (or homily) gives the admonition and exhortation to imitate these noble things. After this we all arise and offer a common prayer. At the close of the prayer, as we have before described, bread and wine and water are brought. The president offers prayer and thanks for them according to his ability, and the congregation answers, 'Amen.' Then the consecrated elements are distributed to each one and partaken of, and are carried by the deacons to the houses of the absent. The wealthy and the willing then give contributions according to their free will; and this collection is deposited with the president, who therewith supplies orphans and widows, the poor and needy, prisoners and strangers, and takes care of all who are in want."

**The development of a church organization.**—While the Christian message was thus sweeping around the Mediterranean, and even penetrating into Mesopotamia, Persia, Media, Parthia, Bactria, and Britain, the church itself was developing from the group of single-minded enthusiasts, with a simple, direct form of worship, to a complex organization, with symbolic and sometimes even secret rites. In part this came from a desire to protect the precious elements in the Christian faith from unworthy outside influences; in part it was the effect of those influences, particularly of the elaborate rituals of worship that marked the many mystery religions then competing for prominence in the Roman world.

Various views have been advanced as to the precise manner in which this development from the simplicity of apostolic days to the intricacies of the established church of Constantine's empire took place. It is

sufficient for our purpose to remember that "very early in their existence the churches required for their spiritual life certain officers. Thus overseers and teachers were needed at once and they appeared as bishops, or presbyters, or pastors. The care of the poor and the proper distribution of alms led to the appointment of deacons. Very soon, therefore, the two great offices of the early church—the pastorate and the diaconate—were fixed. . . . The very ablest became the leader among his equals, and gradually combined several functions in himself, and if his ability sustained him, he became the chief source of power and influence in the community. . . .

"Towns became centers varying in their influence according to their size, the degree of their culture, their historical position, and their geographical situation. Questions too difficult or of too general interest to be settled by local communities were carried up to synods composed of representatives of all the communities, and usually the ablest man presided at the sessions of the synod. In the course of this process gradually and naturally each member seemed to fall into his proper place. The clergy and laity are separated, and ecclesiastical orders arise."<sup>1</sup>

By the reign of Constantine this development had reached the point where the chief pastors of the churches in important cities were regarded as bishops, where the bishops in such cities as Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome had won recognition as archbishops, or metropolitans, and where an extended and standardized form of worship and church life had won acceptance.

**A lofty claim.**—What, then, was the condition of the Christian Church at the beginning of our period of

---

<sup>1</sup> Moncrief: *A Short History of the Christian Church*, F. H. Revell Co., pp. 49, 70.



study? Justin could claim that "There is not a single race of human beings, barbarians, Greeks, or whatever name you please to call them, nomads or vagrants, or herdsmen living in tents, where prayers in the name of Jesus the crucified are not offered up." We know within what narrow geographical limits the early Christian writers were thinking when they made such statements, but it is clear that by the opening of the fourth century, Christianity had spread from an inconsiderable group of enthusiasts within the Jewish religion to a highly organized system of worship and doctrine that had penetrated throughout the Roman Empire, and could even require the approval of Constantine on the throne.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. From what other religion did Christianity emerge, and what were its points of likeness to the parent faith?
2. What, in the minds of his fellow countrymen, was regarded as new in the teaching of Jesus?
3. What evidences can be shown of the statesmanship of Saint Paul?
4. Was the spread of Christianity hastened or delayed by the presence of Jewish communities in the cities of the Roman Empire? by the strong government of Rome? by the widespread use of Greek?
5. To what extent had Christianity conquered the world by the opening of the fourth century?
6. What was the worship and organization of the Christian Church like in the days of Constantine?