

the time of Trajan (98-117). It is universally admitted that the Gospel of John was written in the years 90-100. And when he died, the Christians could not believe that he was really dead, but the legend prevailed that he was only sleeping, resting from his labors, while he waited for Jesus to return. The pious people believed they could see how the earth where he was buried rose and fell with his breathing.

The western part of Asia Minor was the most Christianized part of the world in the first and second centuries, but heretical teachings weakened the churches in the second century and caused their decline. Gnosticism and Montanism were two very different theories, but they assisted each other in the decline of Christianity. Gnosticism was an attempt to state the Christian faith in Greek philosophic terms. It was really paganism in the clothes of Christianity. Montanism was sincere but extreme. It emphasized the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit in much the same fashion as the "Holiness Church" in our days.

#### THE EPISTLES TO PHILEMON, COLOSSIANS AND EPHESIANS.

These letters were written by Paul, from Rome during his first imprisonment in the years 58 and 59.

The Epistle to Philemon was written by Paul to a Christian of Colossae. The occasion of the letter is the conversion of Onesimus, a runaway slave of Philemon, whom Paul had met in Rome. When the slave had been converted, Paul sent him back to his owner but suggested in guarded phrases that he be released by his master.

In Col. 4:9, 17 and Philemon 2, it appears that Archippus is minister of the church that meets in Philemon's house, which was one of the two or more in Colossae. (Col. 4:15.)

The Epistle to the Colossians appears to have been written in reply to a letter Paul had received from the church at Colossae, probably including messages from the adjoining churches, for Colossians was accompanied by another letter which would reach Colossae from Laodicea, and the two were to be exchanged (Col. 4:16). Professor B. W. Bacon thinks that the letter "from Laodicea" is our letter to the Ephesians, which seems to have been written as a circular letter to a group of churches.

A certain type of false teaching about angels had been brought into the church at Colossae in such a way that it was harmful to the exclusive position of

Christ. In reply Paul sets forth the pre-eminence of the Son, who existed from all eternity and was the instrument of God the Father in the creation of the world.

The Epistle to the Ephesians is undoubtedly a circular letter addressed to a group of churches of which Ephesus was the center. "The epistle is an exposition of the ideal church and lessons from this truth." The church is pictured as the bride of Christ, and the Christian as joint heirs with Christ. Paul thinks of the universal church in his letter to the Ephesians.

Professor Bacon argues that these three epistles are evidence that Paul's first imprisonment at Rome occurred before the year 60. (We have followed Professor Bacon's chronology in these outlines.) "The absence," he says, "of any mention in this group, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, of the earthquake which, according to Tacitus, reduced Laodicea, in 60 A. D., to ruins (Eusebius, however, dating the overthrow of all three cities of Col. 4:13 in 64), confirms our early dating of Paul's imprisonment in Rome (58-60 A. D.), for his arrival cannot have been recent, his correspondents being informed in general as to his circumstances."



## How Christmas Came to the Thlinkets

By E. M. Axelson, Yakutat, Alaska.

The low mid-winter sun crept slowly over the mountain top. Its gentle rays caused thousands of diamonds to sparkle in the snow-covered valley below. Under a cluster of spruce trees were a few lean-tos, a temporary camp of an Indian hunting party.

Usually the chase was well under way when the tinted sky heralded the approach of a new day. But this morning the rising sun found the brave hunters still in camp, and Kowkosha, the leader, not even stirring about.

"Wassa Kowkosha?" (What is the matter with Kowkosha), was the topic passing about the camp.

"Kowkosha was never slow; always first to take the trail, and always first to bring his kill to camp. Wassa Kowkosha?"

Finally, Kowkosha rolled his blanket. "Brothers," he spoke to his fellow hunters, "I dreamt last night that Deki Ankow (The Great Good Spirit) sent Dletka Wookned (the White Missionary) to our village. It was the time of potlatch. I had just made my speech recounting the names and deeds of our great ancestors and was starting to hand out my furs

"Kowkosha," said Dletka Wookned, "come with me to the potlatch of Deki Ankow."

"I went with him and together we entered a large valley studded with lights and diamonds—the most beautiful I have ever seen. Here I found many of my

people. They were in the potlatch of the Great Good Spirit; and all were very happy. I prayed the Great Good Spirit to let me join them. This was granted, and I, too, became very happy. At this point I awoke, but I could sleep no more, nor can I hunt to-day. Let us pack for home. Perhaps Dletka Wookned has come



Christmas at Yakutat, Alaska, 1925.

as predicted by White Crow at our feast last summer."

Kowkosha's speech was not pleasing to some of the party. But the leader's word was law; camp was broken, and the hunters started for home with their game and furs.

A couple of days later the party landed on the beach in front of the village.

"Dletka Wookned anagut, Dletka Wookned anagut," (the White Missionary has come) was the news that greeted the returning hunters. And Mrs. Kowkosha continued:

"He has a little black and white object he talks to and says the Great Deki Ankow has given a big present. It is the Son. He will come to us. It will be a big potlatch, and we will be very happy."

"I know," replied Kowkosha, as he went with wife into the primitive hut, their home. "I saw it all in a dream the other night. Has Dletka Wookned asked for me?"

"No," spoke wife Kowkosha, "but in a few days he wants us to come to his place. It will be Christmas he says. He will tell us something that will make us very happy."

"But Ertseh (Witch-Doctor) says that we must not run after Dletka Wookned, or great trouble will come; that the spirits of our ancestors must be looked after; and that he must have a free hand to punish witches and help bewitched people."

"Last moon Kasko died, and now his wife is sick. Ertseh pointed out the old slave Tenuk as the one that bewitched the kaskos. The Thlinkets hung him up. But Tenuk said he would rather die than bear the shame of a witch. The Thlinkets quarreled about where to put his body. Tenuk's son was full of fire-water and bit the nose off of Nekeen. The doctor woman Durchtla put nose in hot water and tried to put it back, but it would not stick. I fear trouble, and don't know what to do."

"But I have faith in Dletka Wookned," interrupted Kowkosha. "Let us go to his Christmas potlatch."

Some days later the recently arrived missionary had his first Christmas among the Thlinket Indians. It was a perfect evening, and many of the Indians had come to the meeting to see what Dletka Wookned would potlatch to them. And it was to be a supreme test of the missionary's faith in his religion. And to him it seemed like his heart was thumping like the drum that called the Indians together to a dance the second week after his coming. But he earnestly prayed for strength as he lit the candles that were to guide his eyes over the dear old story from Bethlehem. And strength and assurance came.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And, "For

unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Thus the Christmas story was unfolded little by little to the listening Redmen. And hardly had the interpreter finished the last phrase when Kowkosha arose:

"This beats even our big chief's potlatch last year. Let us have more of it and perhaps we shall be a happier people."

As a token of good-will the missionary distributed small gifts in the form of refreshments to those present. But Nekeen rushed for the door and home to tell Ertseh what Kowkosha said.

"Kowkosha is a witch," said Ertseh, as he loosened his long black hair to let it fall on the ground. "He must be punished or some great trouble will come upon the people."

"Let us hear again about Deki Ankow's potlatch," spoke Kowkosha as he left the meeting.

"God willing," replied the missionary, his eyes beaming with joy.

\* \* \*

The seasons have made their round. Christmas has come again. And Kowkosha with his family is baptized.

"I knew it would come; I saw it in my dream. Deki Ankow has sent his Son to us. Christmas is his big potlatch. Come brothers and sisters and let us accept this present. It will save us and we will be happy."

Thus spoke Kowkosha as the missionary presented him with a pocket edition of the New Testament. Real Christmas had come into the heart of Kowkosha. And from this time he became an interpreter and faithful assistant to the missionary. And ridicule and persecution from the very Ertseh himself could not undo him.

\* \* \*

Many a Christmas has come and gone. Kowkosha himself has entered the valley of his dream where the people were so happy. And again the wonderful yuletide is approaching. Jessie, a little grandchild to Kowkosha, is very sick. Her brother Donald rushes home from Sunday School. He fumbles with a little white paper and tries:

"For be-h-o-l-d I b-r-i-n-g you go-od ti-d-i-n-gs of g-r-e-at joy whi-ch sh-a-ll be to a-ll the pe-o-ple."

"I would like to have a Christmas piece too," speaks the sister in a hardly audible voice, as she lets her feverish eyes fall on the little white paper.

But the angels are already beckoning little Jessie to the valley of happiness where grandfather Kowkosha has gone.

"Let me again see the Christmas lights," whispers little Jessie as she reaches out her tiny hand to bid goodbye to her brother.

A few days later the church is beautifully decorated, and glittering candles stud the Christmas tree. It is the Children's day. The theme is the Christ-child

—God's great potlatch to mankind. The church is crowded with young and old, and the children vie with one another to praise the name of Dletka Wookned's God.

Even Ertseh, the Witch-Doctor, is here; but he is now old and feeble and shorn of his hair and his power—the Christmas story conquered him little by little.

"— gr-e-at joy whi-ch sha-ll be to a-ll the pe-o-ple," spoke Donald, wishing that his sister could have seen the beautiful Christmas tree with the brilliant candles.

Ertseh remains to the last. Slowly he finds his way out.

"Joy which shall be to all the people," moves his lips into almost indistinct words as he disappears into the peaceful Christmas night.

And Dletka Wookned rejoices over God's great potlatch to mankind.



(Continued from page 11.)

Christmas night the two went together to the manger in Bethlehem. There the stranger found Him who was their common Saviour, the Good Shepherd, who seeks for the lost sheep until He finds it. And when He was found it, He lays it on His shoulders, rejoicing.

## Christmas Eve

Yonder, I see in the pale moonlight,  
A city, asleep, and still.  
While the plaintive bleat of a little lamb  
Is heard from the distant hill.

The Shepherds sat around a fire,  
For the night was damp and chill.  
And sheep were grazing round about,  
Half drowsy, on the hill.

Methinks in yonder city,  
They saw not the shining light  
Nor heard the angels chorus,  
On that first Christmas night.

But to the shepherds, waiting there,  
Heavenly hosts came near, in the air.  
Singing of Christ, the Baby King,  
Their messages of joy they bring.

"Oh," that we all, this Christmas eve,  
Would read, the sweet story o'er,  
And the blessed Christ, we would receive,  
For His second coming is near.  
Myrtle V. Baker.

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