

they were permitted to return to their native land and enter upon their inheritance. The rulers allied with Rome were eager to send their children to the imperial city for the same purpose. Herod the Great spoke in all probability Latin. Else he would hardly have been a friend of Augustus. Of his sons we know for sure that they all studied at Rome. One of them, Antipater the son of Salome, had become so proficient in Latin that he afterward pleaded his own cause before the emperor while Archelaos employed Nicolaos as his attorney (Jos., *Ant.*, XVII, 9, 5f).

In view of these facts, we cannot escape the conclusion that Joseph of Arimathæa, because he went to Pilate and asked him a favor, must have spoken Latin. This conclusion compels us to look more closely at the possible meaning of Arimathæa. For Ramah in Palestine, whichever of the five places going by that name it might have been, is out of the question as the seat of a school for Latin.

There is no room for doubt as to the meaning ascribed to the word by the original translator from Aramaic into Greek. He was sure it denoted a town in Palestine. For, otherwise, he would have given us the Greek name of the city. But if Ramah and Roma were both written with Hebrew letters, the two words would spell alike RMH. For at the age of Christ, vowels were not indicated in Hebrew words by special signs; and the final H simply indicates the feminine gender. In the Aramaic period, Rama had become Rima. Still, if the *scriptio defectiva* was used, the two names Rama, or Rima, and Roma would be spelled alike. But even if, according to the *scriptio plena*, the I in Rima was expressed by the Hebrew letter Yodh and the O in Roma by Waw, there was a fair chance of mistaking the one word for the other, for the head of both letters is the same. They differ only in the length of their necks. Both are slender and straight. If the manuscript had suffered much or if the neck of the Waw had been only a faint line from the beginning, the word intended to signify Roma could easily be read to denote Rima. The very word Romah is, by the way, a Hebrew word, used in Mic. ii. 3 as an adverb. It means "pride," or "haughtiness." That such a meaning would appeal to the Jews as a proper expression of the character of Rome is superfluous to state.

Consequently, in spite of Mr. Kampmeier's kind information, I have to repeat here what I suggested in my paper of last October. Arimathæa, for general reasons, must be and, on lexicological considerations, may be accepted as the Aramaic form of the name of the ancient mistress of the world.

WM. WEBER.

ST. CATHARINE OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.¹

[OUR FRONTISPIECE.]

St. Catharine of Alexandria, Virgin and Martyr, was the daughter of a rich and noble chieftain who lived toward the end of the third century and was believed by some to have been the son of the Emperor Constantine. He was King of Armenia and by his marriage with a princess of Cyprus became king of that island, and founded the city of Fama Costa, now called Famagosta.

After the marriage a baby girl was born to them, who as she grew became

¹ Transcribed for *The Open Court* almost word for word from an ancient manuscript in the British Museum, by Katharine M. Langford. With some additions from the Abbotsford edition of the *Life of St. Katharine*.

exceeding fair and of a wondrous intellect. Her form and face were equally beautiful, and her intelligence was so far above the average in things natural as well as spiritual, that the learned men to whom her father intrusted her education were astounded and oftentimes puzzled by her wisdom and understanding.

Left an orphan at an early age, she managed her household and heritage with marvelous skill, and the chief men of the kingdom begged to be allowed to call a parliament at which she was to preside. Gaining her consent they proceeded to do so, and when they were assembled they implored their beloved queen to select a spouse that she might be married, and so hand down to posterity her beauty and her talents.

Catharine, whose character was pure and whose abilities as high as her fate was tragic and melancholy, had constantly dreamt of finding a kindred soul with high spiritual instincts, with whom her own might be linked, and she dreaded soiling her purity by allowing others to choose for her or being forced into an uncongenial union.

At some distance from the city there lived in the wilderness an aged anchorite, Adrian by name, to whom Our Lady appeared in a vision, and she told him to go to the palace, and search for the Queen Catharine and bring her back with him, for she desired that she should be married to her Son, the Christ Himself, for love of whom she had so often refused the love of many earthly kings. Adrian, to whom the way was entirely unknown, was miraculously guided to the palace, and when there he followed from one apartment to another, until he found the Queen alone in her room.

Catharine who was greatly surprised when he told his mission, consented to return with him. As they journeyed and drew near the place where his cell should have been, Adrian could see it nowhere, but suddenly as in a vision there rose before him a wondrous mystical temple, and standing in the midst was the Queen of Heaven, Our Lady herself surrounded by a glorious company of angels.

She commanded Adrian to come forth and bring with him his beautiful companion, upon whom she gazed with love and admiration, and told her that she should be married to the Blessed Christ Himself, but that first she must be baptized. Removing Catharine's garment she bade Adrian come forward, who for the time seemed stricken with blindness, and perform the sacred rite, but to retain the name of Catharine. The baptism over, Adrian regained his sight and then Our Lady conducted the young Queen into the choir, and presented her to her Blessed Son.

This beautiful King embraced her saying: "I take thee Catharine to my Spouse, promising truly never to forsake thee while thy life lasts, and after this life I shall bring thee to an endless life where thou shalt dwell with me in bliss forever." With this He put a ring on her finger and bade Adrian don his vestments and celebrate the mass, as belongeth to the custom of weddings. After the ceremony Catharine fell into a swoon and woke to find herself in the hermit's cell, and would have thought it all a dream if she had not found the ring on her finger.

Soon after this event arose the persecution of St. Catharine which ended in her martyrdom.

Constantine and Maxence were, upon a time, as in the Emperor's place highest in Rome, and a war broke out between them. Maxence fled to Alexan-

dria—Constantine pursued but remained in Illyria. The former made himself King of Alexandria, which was subject to Rome as was almost all the rest of the world, and began to persecute the Holy Church and all Christians like a mad wolf and drew many to heathenism, some by large gifts and diverse rewards, some through terror of his awful threats, and lastly some with severe torments and bodily pain.

Catharine, hearing of the horrors of the idolatry that were being carried on, was so indignant that she almost went mad, and felt it her bounden duty to protest openly before the cruel tyrant. She therefore went boldly into his presence and addressed him thus :

“Greeting O Emperor, would well become thee for thy high station, if thou gavest this, which thou dost to devils that destroy thee, both in body and soul, and all that pursue the same course—if thou payedst and gavest this, I say, to His honor, who made thee and all the world, and didst rule by His wisdom all that is made—I would greet thee O King, if thou understoodst that He alone is to be praised through whom and under whom all kings rule. Nor may anything withstand His will, though He has much forbearance.

“This Heavenly Lord loveth true faith and neither blood nor bone of innocent cattle, but that man keep and reverence His sanctifying behest. Nor is there anything by which the great folly of man more displeases Him than that the creature, man, whom He made and to whom He gave the faculty of distinguishing both good and evil by reason of wisdom, should become so irrational through the accursed peril, that he pays worship which He owes to God, to senseless things that the Fiend dwells in, and that he honors and reveres a visible creature, bloodless, boneless, and limbs without life, as he should honor the Creator Himself of himself and all things, who is the Invisible God.

“The Fiend that inventeth every evil among all crooked crafts, with none catcheth he more crafty, froward men, nor leadeth them to unbelief than in that he maketh men who ought to know well that they are begotten, born, and brought forth through the Heavenly Father, to make such idols of wood or of stone, or through greater folly of gold or silver, and give them diverse names of sun or moon, or wind, or of wood, or of water and revere and worship them as if they were God.”

When she had finished, the Emperor was greatly indignant, and caused her to be thrown into prison and severely punished, and he then issued a command that fifty of the wisest men, gathered from all parts of the country, who had never yet been defeated in argument, should assemble and confute the young queen, which if they failed to do they were at once to be put to death.

Catharine on hearing that she was to be brought up before kings and rulers for the sake of her Lord and Saviour, offered up the following beautiful prayer :

“Christ, God, Thou Son of God—sweet, compassionate Jesus, of all odors sweetest. Thou Almighty God, Thy Father’s Wisdom, Thou that didst teach Thy disciples, that they should neither be confounded nor afraid of torment nor any worldly tribulation—but warnedst them well how men would afflict and drag them unlawfully, and didst comfort them so that it was easy for them to endure all that men did to them and all that they suffered, for Thy dear love, precious Lord, and Thyself didst say: ‘When they deliver you up, take

no thought how or what ye shall say, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak, for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you'—Lord abide with me and keep that which thou didst promise us, and put O Jesu such sayings in my mouth to-morrow and give such power and strength to my words, that they who are come against thy dear name to oppose me to my face with their worldly prudence may be overruled by Thy wisdom, and by Thy great prophecy master them, so that they may be totally checked and silenced or be converted to Thee, and worship Thy name, who with God the Father, and with the Holy Ghost ever livest in the world of all worlds eternally."

When she had finished praying, an angel, by some said to have been the Archangel Michael, appeared to her, strengthening her.

The next day, when called before the assembled court, she went saying: "I am determined to know none save Jesus Christ, my Lord and my Beloved, and I will destroy the wisdom of these worldly men, and reject the understanding of the worldly wise."

When she entered, all refused to speak until she had spoken, and she set forth the great Doctrine of the Incarnation in His twofold nature of the God-Man with great clearness, and when her opponents argued that it was impossible for God to die or for man to triumph over death she proved so conclusively that it was God in His humanity that died and God in His divinity who triumphed over death, that they were one and all converted and declared that they were willing to suffer martyrdom for the faith which she had expounded with such skill, and begged that they might be baptized.

The Emperor ordered them all to be burned, and their hands and feet being dislocated and bound together they were consigned to the flames, Catharine meanwhile assuring them that baptism by water was not needed since they were to be baptized with fire and the Spirit, and cheering them with the hope of the glorious eternity where she hoped soon to join them. Christians came by night and buried them, on November 13, A. D. 307.

The Emperor then sent for Catharine and used every inducement to win her for himself, promising her power, wealth, position, even the half of his throne, if she would renounce her faith. Nothing, however, would move her, and he commanded that she should be stripped and scourged. The fair form and face were horribly disfigured and she was cast into the torture-house for twelve days without food, the Emperor meanwhile commanding Cursates, known as "the Devil's herald," to invent a fresh torture for her at the end of that time; and to him is attributed the invention of the diabolical wheel known as "catharine-wheel."

It consisted of four wheels, the spokes and felloes of which were to be driven through with iron goads, so that the spikes and iron prongs so sharp and so strong might pierce through and project far on the other side. Two wheels turned either contrary to each other, and yet both one way, and the other two turned one way also but contrary to the former, so that when the first two would cast upward whatever thing they caught, the other two would draw it and dash it downward. So frightful was the contrivance that horror seized every one when he looked upon it.

While the wheel was in the making Catharine was made to sit by and watch, that the dismal sounds might cause her to cease her follies or else be torn to pieces by it. She in spite of all remained firm: and amid crowds

the fair maiden was plac'd to be torn and piteously rent if she would not listen or obey. But she lifted up her eyes and cried to Heaven full loudly with her heart, but with still voice:

“Almighty God, manifest now Thy power, and do honor to Thy high name, Heavenly Lord, and in order to confirm those in the true faith who are converted unto Thee and that Maxene and all his party may be confounded, smite sharply upon it that all the four wheels may be shattered to pieces.”

This was hardly said when an angel came with wonderful flight, flying downward and drove straight down toward it like a thunderclap and struck it such a blow that it began to rattle and to cleave asunder, to burst and to break as if it had been brittle glass, both the wood and the iron, and to dart forth whizzing the fragments among the crowd with such force that full 4999 of that accursed folk were slain. There one might have heard the heathen hounds yell and cry on every side. The Christians laughed for gladness and praised the Saviour who helpeth His people everywhere.

The Emperor was completely baffled, and his wife who watched from afar adressed him saying:

“Wretched man that thou art, wherefore wilt thou wrestle with the World’s Ruler? What madness maketh thee, thou bitter baleful beast, war against Him who created thee and all earthly things? Be now convinced, and acknowledge from what thou hast seen, how mighty and how powerful, how high and how holy is the God of this Christian whom she worships. How vengefully will He, all-incensed, avenge Himself on thee. O wretch! who hast scattered with a stroke, and destroyed on thy account to-day so many thousands.”

Many, moreover, of the heathen people who had rushed to see the sight, when they saw the wonder and heard the Empress’s words, all at once turned and cried out:

“Truly, very worthy and deserving of all worship is the maiden’s God and the Christ the Son of God, and Him we know and acknowledge as Lord, and great Saviour from henceforth, and thy vile idols are all accursed for they can neither help themselves nor those who serve them.”

Maxence, hearing his wife’s words and seeing the effect they had on the people, ordered her to be put to death with the most cruel torture, both breasts being torn away to the bone, and he commanded that Catharine should be beheaded.

She, when brought forth, begged of the executioner a few moments for prayer, and lifting up her eyes to Heaven, said:

“Lord, Light and Life of all true believers, mild Jesu who art Thyself the reward of maidens, praised and exalted be Thou, great Saviour, and I thank Thee Lord, that Thou hast permitted me and wouldest that I should be in the number of Thy women. Lord, be gracious to me now, and grant me what I desire.

“I request by Thee this boon, that all those who mention my pain and my suffering unto Thee, dear Lord, and invoke me when they are about to endure the struggle of death, or whensoever they do this in need or in trouble, Thou listen to them speedily O Heavenly Saviour!

“Make flee from them all war and want, and unseasonable storms, hunger, and every heat that depresses and harms them. Lo! I abide here the bite of the sword’s edge, let him who puts me to death do all that he may, let him

take what he can take—the life of my body, I send my soul to the Saviour in Heaven. Command that it be placed by Thy holy angels in the Heavenly Company among Thy maidens.”

She had no sooner spoken than there came a voice descending from Heaven:

“Come my dearly beloved, come, my spouse, most beloved of women. Behold the Gate of Eternal Life awaits thee fully opened. The abode of every joy expecteth and longeth for thy coming—Lo! all the Assembly of Virgins and the Company of Heaven are coming to meet thee with the crown of victory.

“Come now and doubt nothing in regard to all that thou hast prayed for. All those who think of thee and of thy passion inwardly in their heart, how thou enduredst death, at every time when they shall invoke thee with love and true faith, I promise them help speedily from Heaven.”

She at these words, stretched forth her snow-white neck and said to the executioner: “Jesus Christ, my Life, my Beloved and my Lord hath called me to Him. Now then quickly perform that which is commanded thee,” and as she bade him he lifted up the baleful sword and struck off her head.

In the same place, instantly two miracles were performed. One of them was, that there sprang out with the stroke, milk mingled with blood, to bear witness of her pure virginity; the other—that angels descended from Heaven and carried her up on high and bore away her body and buried it on Mt. Sinai, a twenty-nine days’ journey from where Moses received the Law. Pilgrims say that the Lord worketh there many miracles past recount, the greatest that a stream of oil ever flows from her small bones which have a healing power wherever they go.

She died Friday, November 25, A. D. 307.

St. Catharine was excellent and miraculous in five things:

- I. Wisdom—having a full knowledge of all that was excellent and miraculous.
- II. Knowledge of herself, and power of self-government as well as of the people and realms she had under her.
- III. The wisdom which learns of God by contemplation and by knowledge of the mysteries of the faith.
- IV. She had a knowledge of the world, knowing its wretchedness and sinfulness, despising its wealth and pleasures, preferring the love of everlasting life and God Himself.
- V. She was long-suffering and patient, and she maintained her chastity under the most trying and difficult circumstances; she had a keen sense of justice.