

Man and his Gods

[1952] by Homer Smith (Am. physiologist, 1895-1962) Excerpts

1. In the canonical and apocryphan (false, obscure in origin and unapproved) literature of the sect not on line was written by anyone who could credibly claim to have seen Jesus in the flesh. The oldest documents are ostensibly the Epistles of Paul, the earliest of which date from about 51 A.D. Paul himself never saw Jesus except as an apparition who appeared to him in a seizure... In the matter of interpolation the Pauline epistles are not above suspicion... but these letters tell only of a cult in which the crucified Jesus figures as the supreme purificatory sacrifice. Though information on the matter may have been current, they contain no reference to Jesus' birth, to his miracles or to his ethical teachings, even though the teachings are subsequently made to appear as the *raison d'être* of the movement, while the miracles are advanced as proof of Jesus's divinity.

All that can be recovered from Paul, the source closest to the namesake of Christianity in time, is that Jesus has quit the right hand of God and come to earth in order to serve as a supreme sacrifice for all men, that he had been crucified and had ascended again unto heaven, and that redemption from sin could be gained by Jew and Greek regardless of circumcision, through the rite of baptism. If Paul knew more than this, he was not interested in the information, and his accounts offer no confirmation of the elaborate details which are recorded in the latter gospel narratives. (p.180).

2. Almost from the moment of its inception, the Christian movement began to break up into sects over circumcision, marriage, taboos and contentious items in the creed, and with each schism it tended to lose its Jewish character by taking to itself pagan practices and beliefs. its final pattern was determined not so much by the mystical doctrines which Paul bequeathed it as by the legends, dogma and organization which it acquired in the first three or four centuries of its

development. It grew by absorbing competing theological ideas. (p181)

3. New testament discrepancies are too frequently intentional and were obviously made by persons who had new matter to insert and felt themselves free to take any liberties they chose... most of these interpolations were made in the second and third centuries. (p.181)

4. Between its inception and its final establishment, the syncretic growth of Christianity was so much in evidence that its sponsors were frequently hard pressed to explain the parallels between its doctrines and rituals and those of the pagans, especially the Mithraists. The Mithraic priests baptized that god's devotees with holy water, signed them on their foreheads, transferred the holy spirit to them by the 'laying on of hands' and exorcised devils by holding two or more fingers directed towards the suppliant. (p.199)

5. The cross, the pine tree of Adonis and the crux ansata of the Egyptians were carved upon the grave to ward off evil demons and the manual sign was freely used to protect the living against misfortune and disease.

Tertullian reports that, ‘At every step, at every movement, at every coming in and going out, in putting on our clothes and our shoes, in the bath, at table in the evening, lying down or sitting, whatever attitude we assume, we mark our foreheads with a little sign of the cross.’ ... (p.199)

6. The initial success of Christianity was in great measure attributable to its capacity to borrow pagan customs and beliefs; its greatest difficulty in its first four centuries lay in integrating these customs and beliefs with Judiac theology into an organized, coherent body of doctrine. (p.212)

7. For more than six centuries Judaism had condemned the worship of idols, but images of Jesus and Mary, and even of

the more illustrious saints, easily passed this traditional veto and rapidly came to play a role in Christian worship equivalent to the sacred statues of the pagans... By the sixth century all Christian temples had statues which spoke, wept, perspired or bled, these prodigies being officially approved... The chief difference between the Christian and pagan idols was that in place of the great stone sculptures of the past the Christians, lacking any artistic tradition or training, used painted wooden images or pictures of the crudest sort. (p.217)

8. The transfer from pagan to Christian worship represented but little change. The statues of Jupiter and Apollo were readily christened St. Peter and St. Paul, and by the middle of the fifth century Christianity had acquired numerous pagan deities as saints. Osiris was sanctified as St. Onuphris, Mithra (Peter) as St. Peter, Cheron as St. Ceraunos, Castor and Pollux as St. Cosmo and St. Darnieu, Diana Illythra as St. Yllis, Artemis as St. Artemidos, Dionysus as St. Dionysus and also as St. Bacchus;

Demetrius, Rusticus, Denis and Eleutherius, some of these deities having been appropriated on the pretense that they were martyrs were sanctified, while Buddha, quite by accident, was canonized as St. Josaphat. ... The principle of sacrifice and propitiation were preserved, there was nothing unfamiliar in penance and atonement, and, with the adoration of shrines, sacred relics and images, the resort to emotionally titillating mysteries and the absorption and renaming of pagan festivals and holy places, the conversion of the Mediterranean world did not prove difficult. (p.227)

9. Many reasons have been given for the 'fall' of the Roman empire, most of them but partial answers or mere guesses. Be the true causes what they may, it was not in the nature of the faith to oppose the process of disintegration. At the opening of the Christian era, there had been schools in every considerable town, and many advanced academies in the great cities; these the Christians gradually allowed to die out, maintaining only a

few theological seminaries... The temple schools of Asklepios had been shut and public lecturing by nonofficial teachers had been practically prohibited in Rome and Constantinople in the fourth century. Under the edict of Theodosius, Bishop Theophilus in 389 destroyed the Serapeum in Alexandria, and with it nearly all the works in the only remaining pagan library of importance in the world. In 529, Justinian closed the schools at Athens, the last to teach Greek philosophy, and the intensity of this emperor's persecutions brought about within a short space of time the baptism of 70,000 in Asia Minor alone, and so alienated the population of Egypt and Syria that the way was paved for the spread of Mohammedanism. The Christians preferred prayer and exorcism to pagan magic, religious to geometric theorems, the gospels to any other literature. So fallible was reason held that Pope Gregory the great (540-604) condemned all literature and intellectual effort, and in the East the laity were forbidden to read even the sacred book. (p.228)

10. The Sermon on the Mount, the accepted repository of Christian teaching and piety, was a compilation from [biblical] and other sources. That it was compiled late is indicated by references to persecutions and false prophets, and by the mention of gentiles as opposed to Christians, usages which would have been meaningless in Jesus's time when no organized Christian bodies as yet existed. (p.186)

11. MIRACLES

In respect of the nature of the miracles there was scant originality, for they imitated either the prophets or the pagan gods: Jesus turned water into wine, as did Dionysus on January sixth of every year; and multiplied loaves of bread, as did Elisha. He walked on water like Orion, Poseidon's son. He raised men from the dead, as did Elijah and Elishah this feat had once been so common that Aristophanes in *The Frogs* (405 BC) made Dionysus say of Hermes and of Hermes's father, that performing resurrections was a family profession. He

gave sight to the blind by application of his spittle, the remedy which Thoth had used to restore the eyes of Horus, and one which was used all around the Mediterranean by medicine men... He healed the leper, the lunatic, the deaf and dumb as did Asklepios. The Pauline Epistles make no mention of Jesus's miraculous power, and had these miracles been known to Paul it is inconceivable that all mention of them would have been omitted. The miraculous element was interpolated partly to convince the pagans, partly to convince the jews that Jesus was the true Messiah, and patly by the sheer credulity of the Christian mind. (p.202)

12. Early Christianity undermined the family, the unit of the social system, by teaching that celibacy is an exalted virtue; and by its emphasis on continence it directed the sexual impulse into physical and psychological perversions. It dogmatically relegated women to an inferior position, socially, politically and intellectually, and by making a sacrament of marriage it permitted wives to become

chattels and husbands boors. It supplanted courage and initiative by resignation: Providence had arranged things in their order, the rich and the poor, the well and the sick, the wise and the ignorant; and to question Providence was to question the wisdom of God. Misery was to be tolerated patiently in anticipation of everlasting glory. It did not highly esteem personal or political freedom, and in no case was it prepared to fight for them. By the fallacious philosophy of free will and the countersense of predestination, it obliterated education and experience from ethics and obstructed objective inquiry into the human mind. It rent philosophy by its dualisms of secular and holy, reason and faith, natural and supernatural, good and evil; and by its insistence that uniformed faith is a higher form of knowledge, that no earthly betterment could outweigh the overwhelming issue of salvation or damnation which awaited men after death, it paralyzed all curiosity and intelligent examination of the natural world. For the love of life it substituted

the fear of death. For the sense of dignity of man, fundamental to the precepts of the Stoics and of Cicero, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius and other Roman moralists, it substituted the doctrine of personal inadequacy, the sense of guilt, and the habits of self doubt and self abnegation. In its cardinal doctrines of sin, for which it crucified the Christ, it promulgated a belief which was to crucify the whole of the western world for centuries to come. (p.228)

13. In later centuries, the Christians accused the Saracens of cruelty and bloodiness, but in their own missionary work they set a ruthless example... Charlemagne decreed that any who rejected baptism should be put to death... It required two centuries of warfare to Christianize Scandinavia, and almost as long to spread the light across Middle Europe. The cost of Christianizing the whole of Europe is estimated at from eight to ten million lives, while the necessarily late introduction of Christianity into the New World was to cost twelve million native

lives and utterly destroy the civilization of the Aztecs and the Incas.

(p.251)

Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven

[1990] ix (tr. P. Heinegg, 1990)

Uta Ranke-Heinemann (Ger. Catholic theologian, b. 1927)

1. {REL & WOMEN}

The history of Christianity is a history of how women were silenced and deprived of their rights... At the root of the defamation of women in the Church lies the notion that women are unclean and, as such, stand in opposition to the holy. In the assessment of clerics, women were second class human beings. (ix)

2. {REL & WOMEN}

All in all, considering the repression, defamation, and demonization of women, the whole of church history adds up to one long arbitrary, narrow minded masculine despotism over the female sex... The subordination of woman to man has remained a postulate of the theologians throughout the history of the

Church; and even in today's male Church it goes on being treated as divinely willed dogma. (ix)

3. {REL_CHR}

It [the Catholic Church] merely strives to impose its own moral dictatorship without regard to the welfare of married people, a dictatorship based on pleasure hating, celibate contempt for marriage, and a maniacal cult of virginity. (xxiv)

4. {REL_CHR}

By separating Mary so radically from other women who have borne children, one may have given her something crucially important. But from the human standpoint one has taken something just as crucial away... her motherhood. With the doctrine of the Virgin Birth theologians have stolen Mary's motherhood. The intention was to make her an exception to the curse that, as the Church's celibates saw it, weighed down on the normal motherhood of normal mothers. But this curse is merely a monstrous product of neurotic sexual fantasy. (xxx)

5. {REL_CHR}

It is a grim fate for a woman to have to live in a dogmatic corset made by men. Mary encountered this in an unparalleled way. She was not allowed a share in anything having to do with female sexuality, in anything connected with the natural process of conceiving and bearing a child. She was not allowed to get her only son through the love of a man, it had to be the Holy Spirit, and there could be no pleasure. She was not allowed to bear her son in the natural way, because she had to remain intact in childbirth. Finally she was not allowed to have other children later on, for that meant violation and shame. Thus she was turned into a sort of sexless creature, to a shadow of a wife and mother. (xxx)

6. {REL_CLER}

The Church's celibates have no notion of why a husband loves his wife not just physically, but spiritually. Fortunately, the love and respect married people have

for one another are not affected by whether or not contraception is practiced in a way the Pope approves. (xxv)

7. {REL_CLER}

It is finally time for the Church to stop usurping the conjugal act as a kind of celibate act..., and to extricate married love from the voyeuristic sphere of a clerical bedroom police force. (xxv)

8. {REL_CLER}

For this exclusively male world, this womanless terrarium in which popes and their educators move and which, by placing them in a totally separate society, is supposed to preserve them from what they would see as the beginning of their gravest error, namely the perception of the other half of the human race; for this ghetto of the male church, women are still objects to be ignored in the process whereby the celibates take protective measures for maintaining their chaste little world apart. They strive to behave as if there were no women, س and in this

surrealistic effort to dive back again into that paradisiacal time before God created Eve, in their infantile flight into a sort of male uterus of a womanless world, they can have no vision for the real world. (xxviii)

9. {REL_CLER}

Mary... the one intact mother while to other are all more or less violated, the one pure mother, while the other are impure. The theologians have dumped their theological rubbish on mothers, believing in their pious zeal that this would paint the mother of Jesus as all the more spotless. But in unloading a perpetual curse on all others, in contrast to the perpetual virgin, they lost sight of women as a group. (xxx)

10. {SIN}

As theology increasingly became the business of bachelors, sin was more and more placed in the realm of sex. (iv)