



ASTRAL WORSHIP

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BY
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charter of the Grand Lodge of the order in this country. In reference to the Druidism on the continent, history records the fact that when one of the reigning kings became a convert to Christianity the whole of his subjects were baptized into the Church of Rome by Imperial decree.

THE SABBATH

In determining the origin of the seventh day Sabbath, we must of necessity refer to that source of all religious ordinances, the ancient astrolatry, the founders of which, having taught that God Sol was engaged in the reorganization of Chaos during the first six periods of the twelve thousand year cycle, corresponding to the months of Spring and Summer, they conceived the idea that he ceased to exert his energies, or rested from his labors on the seventh period, corresponding to the first of the Autumn months. Hence, deriving the suggestion from the apparent septenary rest in nature, they taught that God ordained the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath or rest day for man.

In conformity to this ordinance the founders of ancient Judaism enforced the observance of the seventh day Sabbath in the fourth commandment of the Decalogue, which, found in Gen. xx. 8-11, reads as follows, viz: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." Thus was the seventh day of the week made the Sabbath of the Old Testament; but the authors of the Jewish or ancient Christianity, looking for the immediate fulfillment of the prophecies relative to the second judgment, ignored its observance, as may be seen by reference to Mark ii. 23, 27; John v. 2-18; Romans xiv. 5; and Col. ii. 16; and the founders of modern Christianity, perpetuating the belief in the speedy fulfillment of those prophecies, made no change relative to the Sabbath in their version of the New Testament.

After Constantine's pretended conversion to Christianity, and the time for the fulfillment of the prophecies had been put off to the year 10000, as previously stated, the hierarchy of the church appealed to the Emperor to give them a Sabbath, and although they knew that the seventh day of the week was the Sabbath of the Old Testament, and that

Sunday was the first of the six working days, according to the fourth commandment, their hatred to the Jews for refusing to accept their Christ as the Saviour induced them to have it placed on the first day of the week. Hence that obliging potentate, in the year 321, promulgated the memorable edict, which, found in that Digest of Roman law known as the Justinian Code, Book III., Title 12, Sec. 2 and 3, reads as follows, viz.: "Let all judges and all people of the towns rest and all the various trades be suspended on the venerable day of the Sun. Those who live in the country, however, may freely and without fault attend to the cultivation of their fields lest, with the loss of favorable opportunity, the commodities offered by Divine Providence shall be destroyed."

Thus we see that the primary movement towards enforcing the observance of Sunday, or Lord's Day, as the Sabbath, did not originate in a Divine command, but in the edict of an earthly potentate.

This edict was ratified at the third council of Orleans, in the year 538; and in order, "that the people might not be prevented from attending church, and saying their prayers," a resolution was adopted at the same time recommending the observance of the day by all classes. From merely "recommending," the Church of Rome soon began to enforce the observance of the day; but, in spite of all her efforts, it was not until the 12th century that its observance had become so universal as to receive the designation of "The Christian Sabbath."

Cognizant of the manner in which Sunday was made the Sabbath, Luther issued for the government of the Protestant communion the following mandate: "As for the Sabbath, or Sunday, there is no necessity for keeping it;" see Michelet's Life of Luther, Book IV., chapter 2. Luther also said, as recorded in Table Talk, "If anywhere the day (Sunday) is made holy for the mere day's sake; if anywhere anyone sets up its observance upon a Jewish foundation, then I order you to work on it, to dance on it, to ride on it, to feast on it, and to do anything that shall reprove this encroachment on the Christian spirit of liberty."

Melancthon, Luther's chief coadjutor in the work of Reformation, denied, in the most emphatic language, that Sunday was made the Sabbath by Divine ordainment; and in reference thereto John Milton, in reply to the Sunday Sabbatarians, makes the pertinent inquiry: "If, on a plea of Divine command, you impose upon us the observance of a

particular day, how do you presume, without the authority of a Divine command, to substitute another in its place?"

During the reign of Elizabeth, Queen of England, a sect of fanatics, known as Dissenters or Nonconformists, basing their action upon the fallacious arguments derived from the fourth commandment, and upon the plea that the Saviour was raised from the dead on the first day of the week, inaugurated what is known as the Puritan Sabbath, which having been transferred to our shores by the voyagers in the Mayflower, and enforced by those statutory enactments known as Blue Laws, caused the people of New England to have a blue time of it while the delusion lasted; and now a large body of Protestant clergy perverting the teachings of scripture, and, ignoring the authority of the Reformers, are disturbing the peace of society by their efforts to enforce the code of sundry laws, which were enacted through their connivance.

Thus have we shown that, originating with the Catholics and adopted by the Protestants, the Sunday Sabbath is purely and entirely a human institution, and, being such, we must recognize all Sunday laws as grave encroachments upon constitutional liberty; and it behooves the advocates of individual rights to demand their immediate repeal; for unless a vigilant watch is kept upon the conspirators who secured their enactment, our fair land will soon be cursed by a union of church and State, the tendency in that direction having been indicated by the unprecedented opinion recently handed down by one of the Justices of the United States Supreme Court that this is a Christian Government.

PIOUS FRAUDS

By claiming to be divinely appointed for the propagation of a divinely authenticated religion, the priesthood of all forms of worship have ever labored to deceive and enslave the ignorant multitude; and in support of these fallacious assumptions have resorted to all manner of pious frauds, in reference to which we quote from both Pagan and Christian sources with the view to showing that the moderns have faithfully followed the ancient example. Euripedes, an Athenian writer, who flourished about 450 years before the beginning of our era, maintained that, "in the early state of society, some wise men insisted on the necessity of darkening truth with falsehood and of persuading men that there is an immortal deity who hears and sees and understands our actions, whatever we may think of that matter ourselves." Strabo, the famous geographer and historian of Greek extraction, who flourished about the beginning of the Christian era, wrote that "It is not possible for a philosopher to conduct by reasoning a multitude of women and the low vulgar, and thus to invite them to piety, holiness and faith; but the philosopher must make use of superstition and not omit the invention of fables and the performance of wonders. For the lightning and the ægis and the trident are but fables, and so all ancient theology. But the founders of states adopted them as bugbears to frighten the weak-minded." Varro, a learned Roman scholar, who also flourished about the beginning of our era, wrote that "There are many truths which it is useless for the vulgar to know, and many falsehoods which it is fit that the people should not know are falsehoods."

So much from Pagan authorities relative to the necessity of deceiving the ignorant masses. We will now present some Christian authorities upon the same subject; and first from Christ himself, who in addressing his disciples is made to say, in Mark iv, 11, 12, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables, that seeing they may see and not perceive; and hearing they may hear and not understand." Paul, in his fourteen Epistles, inculcates and avows the principle of deceiving the common people. He speaks of having been upbraided by his own

converts with being crafty and catching them with guile and of his known and wilful lies abounding to the glory of God. See Romans iii. 7, and II. Cor. xii. 16. If Christ and Paul were guilty of deception, their followers had good excuse for the same course of conduct. Upon this subject Beausobre, a very learned ecclesiastical writer, who flourished about the beginning of the 18th century, says: "We see in the history which I have related a sort of hypocrisy that has been, perhaps, but too common at all times; that churchmen not only do not say what they think, but they do say the direct contrary of what they think. Philosophers in their cabinets; out of them they are content with fables, though they well know that they are fables." *Historie de Manichee*, vol. 2, page 568. Bishop Synesius, the distinguished author of religious literature and Christian father of the 5th century, said: "I shall be a philosopher only to myself, and I shall always be a bishop to the people." Mosheim, the distinguished author of *Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. I., page 120, says: "The authors who have treated of the innocence and sanctity of the primitive Christians have fallen into the error of supposing them to have been unspotted models of piety and virtue, and a gross error indeed it is, as the strongest testimonies too evidently prove." The same author, in Vol. I., page. 198, says in the fourth century "it was an almost universally adopted maxim that it was an act of virtue to deceive and lie, when by such means the interest of the church might be promoted." In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. II., page 11, he says that "as regards the fifth century, the simplicity and ignorance of the generality in those times furnished the most favorable occasion for the exercise of fraud; and the impudence of impostors in contriving false miracles was artfully proportioned to the credulity of the vulgar; while the sagacious and the wise, who perceived these cheats, were overawed into silence by the dangers that threatened their lives and fortunes if they should expose the artifice." Thomas Burnet, D.D., who flourished about the beginning of the 18th century, in his treatise entitled *De Statu Mortuorum*, purposely written in Latin that it might serve for the instruction of the clergy only, and not come to the knowledge of the laity, because, as he says, "too much light is hurtful for weak eyes," not only justifies, but recommends the practice of the most consummate hypocrisy, and that, too, on the most awful of all subjects; and would have his, clergy seriously preach and maintain the reality and eternity of hell torments, even though they should believe nothing of the sort themselves. See page 304. Hugo Grotius, the eminent writer of

Holland in the 17th century, says in his 22d Epistle: "He that reads ecclesiastical history, reads nothing but the roguery and folly of bishops, and churchmen." In the language of Robert Taylor, from whom we have taken most of the quotations under this heading, we assert that "no man could quote higher authorities," to prove "the roguery and folly of bishops and churchmen."

CONCLUSION

Having presented the evidences in support of the apparently untenable assertion that, notwithstanding the numerous modes in which man has manifested his devotional proclivities, the world has virtually had but the one religion founded in the worship of personified nature, we are necessitated to recognize the facts that the Christian Scriptures like the sacred records of other forms of nature worship are, but a collection of astronomical allegories; that the gospel story is truly "the old, old story" which had been told of a thousand other Saviours before it was applied to the Christian Messiah; that Jesus is but one of the many names given to imaginary incarnations of the mythical genius of the sun; and that the Disciples and Evangelists are but the genii of the months and the seasons. Such being the facts, which cannot be successfully refuted, we must believe that the Christian religion, instead of being of Divine authenticity, as popularly claimed, is purely and entirely of human origin, and that all its teachings relative to a future state are but priestly inventions, concocted for the purpose of enslaving the ignorant masses.

When we think of the thousand millions of dollars invested in church properties, and estimate the cost of maintaining more than a hundred thousand priests and ministers, in supporting foreign and domestic missions and in publishing religious literature; besides the taxes applied to the care of the religious insane, and realize the fact that all of this vast sum of money is abstracted from the resources of the people, we would not have to go outside of our own country to appreciate the fact that religion is the burden of all burdens to society; and when we contemplate the great disturbance to the social relation, resulting from sectarian strife, and the almost universal disposition of Christians to persecute and ostracize those who differ with them in opinion, we can readily subscribe to the sentiment accredited to one of our revolutionary sires, that "this would be a good world to live in if there was no religion in it." If the clergy had been laboring as faithfully to impress the observance of ethical principles as they have to indoctrinate the people with the superstitions of religion, we would not now be deploring the great demoralization of society. It is a grave arraignment of the clericals to

charge them with being, indirectly, the cause of this lamentable state of things; but it is a condition that might have been expected, for, when entering the ministry, they engaged themselves, not so much to teach ethics as to propagate faith in the doctrines of their respective sects. Thus hampered they cannot do the good to society their better natures might desire. Hence the only hope for improvement is for the people to wholly ignore the dogmatic element of religion, and refusing to longer support it, demand that moral training shall be the grand essential of education. If this course were adopted and persistently followed, it would be but a question of time when mankind would come into being with such a benign heredity that crime would be almost impossible.

Then, since religion inculcates a salvation that does not save, let us rise superior to its false teachings and, accepting science as the true saviour of mankind, find our whole duty in the code of natural morality, the spirit of which is embodied in that comprehensive precept known as the golden rule, which, being the outgrowth of the discovered necessities of association, without which society could not exist, it necessarily constituted man's sole rule and guide long before priest or temple; and founded in the eternal principles of right, truth and justice must remain as man's sole rule and guide when priest and church are numbered among the things that were. Spirit of progress! speed the day when all mankind, redeemed from the bondage of superstition, will recognize the great truth that nature, governed by her own inherent forces, is all that has been, all that is and all that shall be; and that, ceasing to indulge in the vain hope of a blissful immortality in a paradise beyond the stars, will make a real paradise of this old earth of ours.
