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Christian paganism

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Christian Paganism

1893.

William L. Askue

Christian Paganism

Superstition is one of the most deeply rooted propensities of the human mind. No age has been exempt from his influence and no people have been free from his ravages. He is a cruel and merciless master. He forces the father to forsake wife and children and inflict upon himself the most terrible bodily torture; the mother to cast her innocent laughing babe into the gaping jaws of the crocodile; the widow to mount the funeral pile and perish in the flames; the Inquisition to consign innocent young girlhood and the strength of noble

manhood to the stake; the Puritan Magistrate to raise between Heaven and earth, as they would the foulest murderer, devoted mothers and self-sacrificing wives; and brands as fools heretics and outcasts all who do not agree with him in opinion.

We are told that such things have passed away, that not even in pagan Countries does he hold sway. Superstition, they say, went out with the advent of steam the telegraph and the printing press as darkness is dispelled by light or a ghost by the crowing of the cock.

Let us be an unseen and uninvited guest at a breakfast table in a Christian house in

Boston. The children are telling
 of their dreams and what they
 all mean and other childish
 signs which they have learned
 from the maid, when they
 are hushed by the mother because
 "it is all foolishness". The
 father laughs at the mother
 as she whispers to him her
 apprehensions concerning Chesley.
 He knocked a hand mirror off
 of the dresser and broke it
 and beside that, a bird flew
 into the room where he was
 playing, flying three times around
 the room and then out again.
 The father is uneasy all day,
 his mind is disturbed with
 imaginations of financial dis-
 aster because he forgot his
 office keys and had to go
 back after them. But of course

they are not superstitious.

It is evident, however, that our neighbors, with all of their culture and intelligence, are superstitious.

It is of a higher and more important class of superstitions of which we wish to speak. It matters but little if many people always put on the right shoe first every morning. It is of little moment if one always puts a pinch of the spitch salt into the fire to destroy the ill luck which would certainly follow. But if there is any thing that takes away our peace of mind or makes us less strong as christians less useful as citizens or less helpful as men and women let us

find it out and discard it.

The Lord Jehovah has revealed himself unto us in as plain a way as possible in nature, the Word and the Holy Spirit. But men take this plain revelation and put into it their own ideas and imaginations, or superstitions which have come down from a former generation and a pagan source and we see the truth of the statement:

"There is no truth however pure and sacred upon which falsehood can not fasten and engrave itself therein"

The Word says of God that "He is Love," "His mercy endureth forever", "Like as a Father pitieth His children so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him," "When ye pray say our Father," The

Pagan nations on the other hand, out of their imaginations gave unto their Deities human sins and weaknesses, the same passions as they themselves had, anger and revenge for any slight or neglect on their part of the subject could only be appeased a great sacrifice, and if the neglect or impiety was very great even human sacrifices had to be given, yea a favorite or an only child and thus the wrath of the offended Deity was appeased by the death and suffering of an innocent human being. Men brought this superstitious idea over into Christianity and hitched it on to the revelation which God had made of himself.

to holy men of old. He
 became no longer a loving
 Father "who is not willing
 that any should perish" and
 "so loved the world that
 he gave his only begotten
 son that whosoever believeth
 in him might not perish
 but have everlasting life," but
 an angry God thirsting for
 revenge and who can be satisfied
 only in blood and is thus
 satisfied in the death of the
 soul of man and thousands of
 thousands of human beings.

Theologians label this and
 call it the Divine Satisfaction
 Theory of the Atonement.

Now the account which
 is given us of the temptation
 and fall of the First Man
 Adam Satan is represented

as being present and being
 the agent of temptation and
 fall. In the account of the
 temptation of the second

Man Jesus Christ, Satan is
 represented as being present
 and also the agent of the
 temptation. The Persians had
 created ideas in their minds
 the ideas of evil spirits
 as sort of Genii who in a
 special manner ruled in the
 affairs of some men bringing
 upon them disasters after disasters.
 They were in fact nothing
 more or less than Evil gods.

This was brought over into
 the Biblical idea and immortalized
 by Dante and Milton giving
 us a being infinite when
 compared with men and angels.

When any one speaks of

Satan the Devil of Milton
 or Dante's Mephisto with his
 hoofs and horns arrow headed
 tail and forked tongue springs
 up before us. Having put
 themselves under the power
 of his Satanic majesty, men
 dared to question and seek
 for light. For this presumption
 they were speedily executed by
 the Church. Later they made
 a league with him signing
 the Contract with their own
 blood. When this was found
 out by the wonderful works
 which they could and did
 perform, even within a century
 and a half. The scaffold or
 the stake was their portion.

And now today seek the
 devil dodges to clear themselves
 of their responsibility forgetting

that "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed."

By giving Satan such miraculous power man's personal responsibility is weakened and he is apt to forget whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.

Men of old before they knew the laws by which God governs matter and the uniformity with which they work, saw strange phenomena and attributed it to some caprices of the deity who governed that element. It follows that their gods were capricious, continually doing strange things, and unusual things. This also has come down to us and men are looking for our God "who is the same yesterday, today and forever" to do strange and unusual

things. It is a superstition which lead men to look for miracles in the healing of disease without their complying with the laws of health. It is a superstition which lead men to expect God to literally knock them down with a club and then raise them up and force them to surrender to His will, leaving out the law of repentance and faith. Even ^{some of} the most earnest christians use such expressions as these: "The Almighty is visiting such a town", "He is coming this way", "He will remain but a few days and will probably not ^{again} visit the place for several years." They forget the 139 B. they forget that "He is not very far from any one of us" and that "He is nigh unto all".

those that call upon him in truth," and is only waiting until the faith and will of the subject of religion allows Him to reveal Himself in all His fulness.

This continual expectation of miracles now, weakens the foundation of our belief in those miracles which were wrought for the establishment of truth and revelation,

The Bible, ^{is} indeed as is recorded "a lamp unto our feet and light unto our pathway." The Book can never be superseded, other truths will grow but the germ will be found in the Book. New knowledge will be gathered but it will be an enlargement of the old. Every Christian must be a devout and faithful student of the Bible, but he should learn what it is and what it

is not; what it contains, and what it does not contain; It is a Book of sympathy and love and will ever be enshrined in the affections of the human race. It is the guide of youth, the inspiration of mature life and the solace of old age. It stands today as ever the impregnable Rock - the Book of Books - without a precedent and without a rival.

But why look upon the Bible with the superstitious awe which tradition gives to us and which was stolen from the pagans. The Bible performs the same function for revelation as the wire does to electricity or atmosphere does for light, it is the medium by which it is conducted. God is there

but it shows the works of
man - mistakes - God revealed
himself before the Book and even
now the Holy Spirit must
interpret it to our hearts.

When Geology became a science
men saw that the probabilities
were that the Universe was not
created in six literal days of
twenty four hours each, they
used their reason in connection
with scientific facts the old
tradition died but that part of
the Bible stands alive when they
read that "the sons of God (angels)
took unto themselves wives of
the daughters of men, it looked
queer. Investigation killed the
tradition but the passage stands.

Then why cry out Heretic!
Higher Critic! Rationalist! when
consecrated men try to remove

the superstitious traditions from
 our foundation and give us
 as far as possible the solid
 foundation of reason and facts.
 Can we not give to others
 the same proofs which we
 have already taken ourselves.
 Will not this foundation be
 stronger when all perishable
 material wood, hay, stubble &c.
 will be consumed and the solid
 granite Rock alone remained.
 May the Holy Spirit lead them
 and us, until this be done, to
 the glory of His name.

If we look for the origin
 of superstition we will find
 its seat in ignorance. Ignorance
 of correct reasoning; ignorance
 of inductive philosophy; ignorance
 of the influence of the imagination
 upon the nervous system; and

religious superstition is due to ignorance of the very spirit of Christianity, yet which is so clearly set forth by Jesus Christ,

The pernicious effects of superstition are evident to the earnest enquirer. The great waste of time the enormous sacrifice of human life; the vast amount of misery the injury to science and vital piety should lead every one to protest against superstition in every and in any form and magnify the ethical and practical teaching of our great Professor "who spoke as never man spoke" and who not only said "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" but also "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," a Gospel of active practical love.

That superstition which allows
 any substitute for this practical
 personal piety and righteousness
 of character is very pernicious,
 The Phoenicians considered themselves
 holy because they were the descendants
 of faithful righteous Abraham,
 They showed their loyalty to him
 and his God by outward forms
 They fasted twice every week,
 They paid tithes of all that they
 possessed, They made long prayers
 in public places, They were zealous
 for their law, observed days and
 seasons and ordinances, and at
 the same time they neglected
 the weightier matters of the
 law, justice, mercy and love.
 They devoured widows houses,
 were proud, bigoted and self-
 righteous. Today sows, with the
 same superstitious belief as other

pagans have in the efficiency of
 forms, attend punctually upon all
 religious meetings, subscribe to
 contrary articles of belief, compass
 land and sea to make our covenant
 to their denomination, observe all
 gospel ordinances and exhibit
 great sanctity of outward appearance,
 at the same time they are fateful,
 disobliging and unkind in their
 families, uncharitable in their
 judgement, grasping in their
 dealings and unhappy in their
 disposition, others pretend to believe
 that they have become those of the
 elect and are henceforth forever
 safe, others because they belong to
 the church are safe and it matters
 not if their hearts and as a result
 their activities are filled with
 avarice, lust, revenge and impurity.
 All these are gross pagan

superstition because they derive
 no support from reason
 experience or revelation. It is
 pernicious because it leads
 people to neglect the one
 thing needful a sober righteous
 and godly life. Our iniquities
 must be broken and our goodness
 acquired by our own exertions
 aided by the promised Holy
 Spirit, who will enable us
 to "Seize upon truth wherever found
 On Christian or on heathen ground
 Among your friends among your foes.
 "The plant divine wherever it grows,"
 for "when he the Spirit of Truth
 is come he will guide you
 into all truth" and paganism
 shall no longer be linked with
 Christianity.