

Neglected Aspects of Western History

by Chuck Waibel

[Author's Note: This is neither a complete nor inclusive examination of the history of Western Civilization,

just a short description of an alternative viewpoint. (From Morgana: This is a work in progress, and the author has given kind permission for it to be published in installments.)]

History is usually thought of in terms of dates and kings and battles, but a Promethean, memetic point of view yields different results; History is the evolutionary struggle toward the encompassing Destiny of Humankind, as developed in the battle between sets of ideas.

The Mediterranean world of 2000 years ago had most of the seeds for creating a mature human civilization; practical knowledge of basic physical laws and methods for discovering them, a philosophy of tolerance, and highly developed Metaphysics and Philosophy. Lively trade in goods and ideas went on with India, China and the rest of Asia, as well as Africa and the rest of Europe. While the assassination of Gaius Julius Caesar dealt this a blow, it was not an irredeemable one. Within a few decades the Roman empire was headed toward being more of a centralized confederacy than an empire in fact. Rome's legions were then less conquerors than policemen, peaceful trade rather than war was the norm, and people of most faiths acknowledged and respected one another, working together for the common good of the known world.

The trouble came from the province of Judea, the extremist rulers of which could not abide the unification of the world unless it was on their own terms, as prophesied in their holy writings. Their god must be supreme, with no respect or acknowledgment of any others allowed. Their Temple must be the sole Temple, and their Capital that of the World. Many of these Jews were actually quite tolerant, and numerous versions of that faith had spread and were happily coexistent with others throughout the Empire. This could have been lived with, if there had not arisen a new sect which packed a more universal appeal, with a nasty kicker, in its message.

This new sect originally appeared in several tolerant, universalist, progressive versions. However, one version included in its meme-set the perverse concepts of exclusivity and martyrdom, closely coupled with concepts of charity and piety. Over time, using subterfuge, slander, and outright physical coercion, this sect supplanted all others, giving its adherents wonderful feelings of belonging and sanctity, while spreading discord and hysterical paranoia in society around them. This insured the death of the egalitarian Mediterranean confederacy before it could even be born. With the final adoption of this virulent strain of Messianic Judaism by Emperor Constantine, the Roman Empire was converted into a great machine for the destruction of Civilization.

Since the servants of gods have usually been the intellectuals and wisdom-keepers of their cultures, when the unholy alliance of Christianity and Empire set out to destroy all rival gods, it likewise consigned to blood and flames millennia of oral and written wisdom. As today, the great mass of people were simply trying to live decent lives, so when a new

priest appeared at the shrine, or a new set of monks at the monastery, it wasn't a matter of great concern so long as life went on. Statues to gods became statues to angels and saints. Holidays changed from seasonal events, charged with immediate significance from planting and harvest and solstices, to commemorations of events in the life of an obscure god-man far away in time and space, even though they retained some of the trappings of the earlier holy days. After only a few generations the people forgot that there had ever been a different way of looking at things. They came to associate their own better natures, which had been there all along, with the new dogmas and forms, not realizing that their heritage had been stolen. The new meme-set had successfully conquered the territory of their minds, destroying whatever part of their folkways and customs it had not co-opted.

By linking the concepts of goodness and piety into itself exclusively, this meme-set made the next step, that "different = evil = to-be-destroyed" simple to follow. Heretics and those who tried to preserve the supposed "old ways" were of course servants of the Supreme Evil, and must be painfully purged and executed for their own good. When the call went out for missionaries to evangelize the heathens, or for troops to conquer the lands of the Infidel, the folk responded joyfully; after all, anyone who isn't willing to fight and risk for what is good is less than a full person. In this way each folk who were absorbed by the Christian meme-set became the shock troops for conquering yet more unsuspecting peoples. Notice that there was no practical difference between the Church and Civil Government, for both served the same basic values, the rivalry between them actually strengthening the meme-set's hold.

When Europe had finally been secured as the bastion of Christendom, the drive to share this wonderful enlightenment with others, whether they wanted it or not, drove explorers and conquerors outward. Certainly, the drive for riches and territory helped to fuel this expansion, but the main drive was evangelism. To spread the faith wars of conquest were fought, countless libraries burned, peoples enslaved, addictive drugs smuggled into unsuspecting populaces, and fortified missions established to dispense physical succor, always with the most-holy meme-set, to decimated populations. Ironically, people whose ancestors only a few generations before had been free, independent and proud, labored heroically to perpetrate on other races what had been done to their own.

Christianity was successfully challenged in its expansion, if only to a draw, by only two other meme-set faiths: its fellow in Monotheism, Islam, by being just as ruthless and exclusive; and Buddhism, by the sheer weight of its numbers and its stolidly pacifist stance.

In the Twentieth Century, by virtue of the rise of advanced communications technology, the Christian meme-set is finally facing the challenge which will topple it. As with any virulent meme-set, the antidote is knowledge. In the small world created by telecommunications it is impossible for Christianity to hold itself up in its territories as the sole source of goodness, charity, family values, artistic inspiration or peaceful government. It struggles in vain to deny the evidence of sounds, pictures and writings from around the globe, that there are other good ways of being and doing, and that some of these may actually be more peaceful and "moral." It can no longer deny that the many ancient faiths it opposes, from North America to Australia, from the steppes of Asia to the Pacific Islands, differ only in form, not in substance. It cannot prevent some brave souls from recalling that the original teachings of its purported "founder" had far more in common with these other Paths than with what it has become. It can only shout the same old time worn epithets at its adversaries, drowning free thought under torrents of noise, springing reflexive reactions from its slaves by using long-established catch phrases.

The end of the Monotheist meme-sets is in sight, heralding an era of enlightened Earth Spirituality. This is the time when these things **MUST** happen, for this long-dominant philosophy, coupled with the powers of modern technology, can lead only to perpetual, dreary slavery at best, or planetary extinction at worst.

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