

A Reddit Exchange With Comments

Post by “Cassius” of September 30, 2019 at 8:29 AM

The intersection of (1) Nietzsche's analysis in ANTICHRIST of Epicurus as combating Christianity before it even existed, with (2) DeWitt's analysis in "St Paul and Epicurus" of several of the "antichrist" references as essentially referring to Epicurus, is something I find extremely interesting and important. As important as I find many other issues in life, I doubt there is any more important than properly diagnosing and combating Judeo-Christian theology.

AntiChrist 58.

In point of fact, the end for which one lies makes a great difference: whether one preserves thereby or destroys. There is a perfect likeness between Christian and anarchist: their object, their instinct, points only toward destruction. One need only turn to history for a proof of this: there it appears with appalling distinctness. We have just studied a code of religious legislation whose object it was to convert the conditions which cause life to flourish into an "eternal" social organization,—Christianity found its mission in putting an end to such an organization, *because life flourished under it*. There the benefits that reason had produced during long ages of experiment and insecurity were applied to the most remote uses, and an effort was made to bring in a harvest that should be as large, as rich and as complete as possible; here, on the contrary, the harvest is blighted overnight... That which stood there *aere perennis*, the *imperium Romanum*, the most magnificent form of organization under difficult conditions that has ever been achieved, and compared to which everything before it and after it appears as patchwork, bungling, dilletantism—those holy anarchists made it a matter of "piety" to destroy "the world", *which is to say*, the *imperium Romanum*, so that in the end not a stone stood upon another—and even Germans and other such louts were able to become its masters... The Christian and the anarchist: both are decadents; both are incapable of any act that is not disintegrating, poisonous, degenerating, *blood-sucking*; both have an instinct of *mortal hatred* of everything that stands up, and is great, and has durability, and promises life a future... Christianity was the vampire of the *imperium Romanum*,—overnight it destroyed the vast achievement of the Romans: the conquest of the soil for a great culture *that could await its time*. Can it be that this fact is not yet understood? The *imperium Romanum* that we know, and that the history of the Roman provinces teaches us to know better and better,—this most admirable of all works of art in the grand manner was merely the beginning, and the structure to follow was not to prove its worth for thousands of years. To this day, nothing on a like scale *sub specie aeterni* has been brought into being, or even dreamed of!—This organization was strong enough to withstand bad emperors: the accident of personality has nothing to do with such things—the first principle of all genuinely great architecture. But it was not strong enough to stand up against the corruptest of all forms of corruption—against Christians... These stealthy worms, which under the cover of night, mist and duplicity, crept upon every individual,

sucking him dry of all earnest interest in real things, of all instinct for reality—this cowardly, effeminate and sugar-coated gang gradually alienated all "souls", step by step, from that colossal edifice, turning against it all the meritorious, manly and noble natures that had found in the cause of Rome their own cause, their own serious purpose, their own pride. The sneakishness of hypocrisy, the secrecy of the conventicle, concepts as black as hell, such as the sacrifice of the innocent, the unio mystica in the drinking of blood, above all, the slowly rekindled fire of revenge, of Chandala revenge—all that sort of thing became master of Rome: the same kind of religion which, in a pre-existent form, Epicurus had combatted. One has but to read Lucretius to know what Epicurus made war upon—not paganism, but "Christianity", which is to say, the corruption of souls by means of the concepts of guilt, punishment and immortality.—He combatted the subterranean cults, the whole of latent Christianity—to deny immortality was already a form of genuine salvation.—Epicurus had triumphed, and every respectable intellect in Rome was Epicurean—*when Paul appeared...* Paul, the Chandala hatred of Rome, of "the world", in the flesh and inspired by genius—the Jew, the eternal Jew *par excellence*... What he saw was how, with the aid of the small sectarian Christian movement that stood apart from Judaism, a "world conflagration" might be kindled; how, with the symbol of "God on the cross", all secret seditions, all the fruits of anarchistic intrigues in the empire, might be amalgamated into one immense power. "Salvation is of the Jews."—Christianity is the formula for exceeding and summing up the subterranean cults of all varieties, that of Osiris, that of the GreatMother, that of Mithras, for instance: in his discernment of this fact the genius of Paul showed itself. His instinct was here so sure that, with reckless violence to the truth, he put the ideas which lent fascination to every sort of Chandala religion into the mouth of the "Saviour" as his own inventions, and not only into the mouth—he made out of him something that even a priest of Mithras could understand... This was his revelation at Damascus: he grasped the fact that he needed the belief in immortality in order to rob "the world" of its value, that the concept of "hell" would master Rome—that the notion of a "beyond" is the *death of life*. Nihilist and Christian: they rhyme in German, and they do more than rhyme.

St Paul and Epicurus

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All the armament of Epicurean logic which had been developed to combat Greek paganism and Platonic idealism was available from the outset for the crusade against the nascent Christianity. This conflict fell chiefly upon Paul, because it was his lot to carry the new gospel to the Greeks. For him the specific task was to build up a new structure of spirituality in the face of an entrenched and confident structure of materialism. It was the logic of the cross against the logic of the atom, an early phase of the long strife between science and religion. Epicurus himself became a sort of Antichrist.

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The very first of his Authorized Doctrines declared the gods to be incapable of anger. Anger was a disturbing emotion and a symptom of weakness; to ascribe such an emotion to the gods was to detract from their sanctity and to diminish their claim to the worship of mankind. Upon this worship as embodied in the public festivals, especially the music, he placed supreme importance and among his sayings is one to the effect that "the wise man will derive more enjoyment than other men from the state festivals."

If this elimination of anger from celestial minds was offensive to orthodox pagan Greeks, it was still more so when it became known to orthodox Jews, whose Jehovah bore a unique reputation as a God of wrath. Equally offensive was the removal of the gods from all participation in human affairs, which involved the rejection of belief in divine prophecy, in miracles, and divine providence.

These teachings were judged to cancel all the merit that resided in the demand of Epicurus for more reverence for godhead; they relegated him to the evil eminence of being the archenemy of religion and a sort of Antichrist.

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In seeking help from Epicurus to explain Paul it deserves also to be brought to knowledge that this procedure involves a shocking rivalry of loyalties. In the Greek language the name Epicurus signifies "helper" or "succorer" and this may account in part for Paul's detestation of it and unwillingness to mention it. To concede to the adversary the title of helper, which by implication belonged to Jesus, was only one degree less repellent than to know that his disciples knew him as a savior, which they did. Epicurus became virtually a sort of Antichrist.

The Prince of the Power of the Air

There was one talent the exercise of which was denied to both Epicurus and Paul. Both were ardent moralists, a noble breed of men but as such forbidden the use of humor. The one form of wit that befitted them was satire, which belittles the competitor and lingers in the memory. Epicurus was a master of it. He dubbed the Platonists as "hangers-on of Dionysus," the god of the theater; he referred to them as "the men who pitch their voices low," as if unemployed actors, would-be Hamlets, as it were, itching for kingly roles. Paul belittled the Epicureans as a Peace-at-any-Price Party or Safety-First Party, designating them by their catchwords Peace and Safety; but his masterpiece of satire is to be found in this Epistle: he satirizes Epicurus as "prince of the power of the air."

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Peace and Safety

Among the numerous clues that serve to identify references to the Epicureans none is more specific and certain than the mention of their watchwords Peace and Safety. These occur in

First Thessalonians 5:3, where the King James Version runs: "For when they shall say, Peace and Safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them." This falls far short of exactitude but it is superior to the Revised Standard: "When people say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them."

The unlucky change from "when they shall say" to "when people say" is based upon the gratuitous assumption that no particular group or sect is being singled out for censure but merely some section of the populace that refuses to be alarmed by the prediction of the second coming and the destruction of unbelievers. The perplexity of translators is due to the fact that catchwords of unmistakable reference in Paul's time have lost their significance through the lapse of the centuries.

No person of ordinary intelligence at the date when the letter was written would have been ignorant that peace and safety were objectives of the Epicurean way of life. Recognition of this fact will enable us to correct the translation. To this end it must be remembered that the second coming and the destruction of unbelievers are events in the future but the threat is present and perpetual. With this knowledge kept well in mind we shall be able to set the tenses to rights: "At the very moment that they are saying 'peace and safety' sudden destruction is hanging over them."

When once this identification of the Epicureans has been made, confirmation will be the more certain in the seemingly innocent words (4:3), "the others who have no hope." This signifies no hope of benefiting by the grace of God and the Epicureans were so characterized even outside of the New Testament by their rivals the Stoics, because they denied divine providence.

Additional confirmation of a new and oblique sort will be found in the Second Epistle, 2:1-12, where the coming of Antichrist is predicted. It has long since been observed that the description admirably fits the character of the notorious Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria and persecutor of the Jews. What has not been so well known is the fact that this king became a convert to the creed of Epicurus and adopted it as the court philosophy. **Thus the ominous inference is forced upon us that Epicureanism is to be associated with Antichrist.**