

Conclusion

A Comparison

Without the leading of the Spirit, we humans will always choose ritual, that is, the appearance of righteousness, over the righteousness of God, which requires genuine humility and repentance. Paul's gospel proclaimed that Christ's sacrifice was intended to set believers free from bondage to ceremonial works, and when believers rejected his gospel, they fell headlong into ceremonial forms of worship and, eventually, social and political entanglements. Justin #1 stated that the only way believers would feel obligated to observe the rituals of Moses' law was if they did not understand it (Dial. XVIII), that is, if they did not understand that Jesus fulfilled God's purpose for Moses' law, and brought it to an end. Paul taught the same, that a right understanding of the law relieves believers from the obligation to observe it.

A comparison of fundamental differences between first-century believers and believers of the following centuries illustrates the great change that took place after the apostasy from Paul's gospel:

- First-century believers saw themselves as a non-political community who worshipped “in spirit and in truth” (cf. Jn 4:23–24), but believers of the following centuries came to see themselves as an political community whose values were expressed in a sacramental faith.
- In the first-century, doctrine was determined by the Spirit of God. It revealed the doctrine of Christ (cf. Gal. 1:11–12). Paul's hope for the saints was that revelation would be a part of their lives (Eph. 1:15–17). But believers in the following centuries devised creeds to be used as standards for judging orthodoxy.
- In the first-century, authority among believers was determined by the Spirit of God. It distributed gifts for ministry, according to the will of God (cf. 1Cor. 12:4–11). In the centuries following the rise of Christianity, ministers were appointed to office by Church officials.
- In the first-century, men preached the gospel “by the holy Spirit sent from heaven”, but Christian ministers of the following centuries developed a sermon style akin to the Pagan's style of oratory.
- First-century believers had no rituals, holy places, or holy times, but believers of the following centuries were devoted to such things.¹

In sum, human nature took the reins of government among believers after they rejected Paul. God's divine nature, granted to men by the Spirit at Pentecost, was at first neglected, and then forgotten.

He Fooled Us

¹ For more, see tract #59, “Christ or Christianity”, at GoingtoJesus.com.

Considering the enormous success of Rome's Third Transformation into Christianity, with the mysterious, powerful grip it has on hearts around the world—and has had for almost two millennia—, one must conclude that the inspiration for it came from a source beyond man's capacity. As Hightet said, and I agree, "Rome's power sprang from some spiritual source."² It is how one sees Christianity, as either a holy or unholy institution, which determines what one will think that source is, either Christ or Satan.

I have conclude that, at the bottom of it, the instigator of the Third Transformation of the Roman Empire into Christendom was the beautiful and wise cherub, Satan, the father of lies (Jn. 8:44), whom God has forever cast out of heaven (Rev. 12:9). The wicked wisdom involved in that amazing Transformation seems to me to be beyond human.

We know that Satan was filled with great wisdom when he was created (Ezek. 28:12), and when he was cast down to earth, he brought that supernatural cunning to earth with him. With it, he patiently brought together apostate believers and Pagan leaders of Rome to devise history's most convincing lie: an empire of the mind and heart, using the name of the true Lord to proclaim a false gospel. Without the holy Spirit's strength and guidance, which the world never had and believers forsook when they abandoned Paul, they were all helpless even to perceive, much less to resist, such wisdom.

The mysterious, cruel, and powerful fourth kingdom of Daniel's visions entered onto the world stage in the fourth-century Synthesis of apostate believers and Rome, and it is Satan's crowning achievement to date. It sports itself as the Bride of Christ, and the children of God on earth who have joined that religion, Christianity, thinking to please God, have no idea what they have made themselves part of.

Satan has deceived the whole world into believing that Christianity represents Christ. He fooled me; he fooled you; he fooled our parents, and their parents, and the generations that preceded them, persuading us all to think that Christianity represents Christ, and by joining ourselves to that religion, we became partakers of its sins and were in danger of receiving its coming judgment (cf. Rev. 18:4). But obedience to the Spirit of Christ is the way of escape, and that door is open for "whosoever will".

Absolute Dominion

The most enduring dominion is achieved by controlling people's hearts and minds, not just their bodies. From its beginning, Rome's genius seemed to understand that absolute dominion can be achieved if people view serving the State as serving God. Participation in State affairs, in that case, is something that people will *want* to do because it makes them feel that they are good people. They will devote themselves to it because, to them, patriotism is part of righteousness. Moreover, being thus persuaded, people will stand by and go along with harsh punishments for those who are deemed by the State to be unpatriotic.

For its Third Transformation into Christianity, what Rome's genius needed was a way to convince believers that the Roman Empire was God's chosen defender of the Faith, which Rome claimed was taught by its "Universal Church". That need was supplied by the Apostates, endorsing Constantine's agenda with a false gospel in the name of the true Lord. And once the

² Gilbert Hightet, Forward to *Ancient Rome* by Robert Payne, viii. **Format correct?**

Synthesis was realized, being supported by both sermons and imperial decrees, the hope of eternal life was monopolized by the Christianized Empire. The yearning of believers for eternal life then excited enthusiasm for the Roman Church and the Empire, for they were one. Believers lacking in that enthusiasm because of their love for Jesus were marginalized in society, strapped with civil penalties, and in some cases, crushed by the iron fist of Rome.

Using Old Things

What God abandons, Satan uses. When God abandoned the high places where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worshipped, false prophets in Israel used the fact that Abraham worshipped there to persuade Israel to continue that practice (Amos 8:14). In a similar manner, when the law's form of worship had been fulfilled by Christ and ritual worship was consequently abandoned by God, false teachers in the body of Christ used the fact that Jesus and his apostles worshipped that way to persuade believers to do the same. How many times have we heard the practice of water baptism justified by pointing to Jesus' example of being baptized in water by John! But Jesus did not observe such rites so that we would do them; he observed them so that we would not have to! Justin said that he and other believers "continually beseech God by Jesus Christ to preserve us from the demons which are hostile to the worship of God" (*Dial. XXX*), but in worshipping God in ceremonies, believers fell right into their hands.

Some have held that although Christianity put an end to Paganism, there was a resurgence of it, a revival of its spirit, resisting conquest by Christians. Writing in opposition to that position, Alan Cameron captured the essence of the event I call the Synthesis. He wrote, "There was no Pagan revival in the West, no Pagan party, no Pagan literary circles, no Pagan patronage of the classics, no Pagan propaganda in art or literature, no Pagans editing classical texts, above all, no Pagan last stand."³ That is true. How can there be a revival of something that never died, or a "last stand" of something that was winning the war? In Christianity, Paganism attained to its most successful form. Cameron explained:

All these apparent negatives actually add up to a resounding positive. So many of the activities, artifacts, and enthusiasms that have been identified as hallmarks of an elaborate, concerted campaign to combat Christianity turn out to have been central elements in the life of cultivated Christians. This is the one area in which Paganism (defined as the Roman tradition, Rome's glorious past) continued to exercise real power and influence on men's minds.⁴

There was conservative resistance among Pagans to Rome's Transformation into Christianity, of course, just as there had been conservative resistance among them to the previous Transformation of Rome, but Rome's genius cared nothing for that and proceeded to do as it would. In every Transformation, Rome was always in charge, and Rome was always Pagan. Just as with the conflicts between Catholics and Protestants, the conflicts between apostate believers and Pagans of the ancient world were conflicts only over which *form* of Paganism

³ Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 801.

⁴ Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 801.

would prevail; they were never conflicts over which spirit would prevail. All the forms were “of the flesh”, Pagan at heart, and they still are.

Robert Payne expressed the historical reality when he wrote, “After the physical empire [Rome] came the ghostly empire [Christianity],” but then, unfortunately, he repeats the tired old Christian line, that “the Roman gods fell before the single god incarnate in Jesus.”⁵ The Roman gods did not fall any more than Rome itself fell. Thinly disguised, they were rechristened for the new Pagan religion as “patron saints” by decree of the Roman Universal Church. The ancient expressions of Paganism, such as animal sacrifice, which went out of style were roundly condemned by early Christian clergy and emperors, but the spirit of Paganism, with its ceremonies and political entanglements, has never gone out of style.

Rituals Are the Law

The need for rituals in human society is tantamount to the need for laws. Humans without God’s Spirit cannot long dwell together peaceably without law. In every culture, laws exist as expressions of authority, and those who are under the laws acknowledge by their obedience to them the authority of those who write the laws and see to their enforcement. In the realm of human religion, rituals are the law, for they are a source for unity and of peace among worshippers, and those ordained to perform the rituals are the recognized authority.

When someone with the Spirit of God participates in a ritual led by a Christian minister, he is surrendering his freedom from rituals and acquiescing to that minister’s claim of authority from God to rule over believers. It is confusion, for participation in rituals is tacit submission to a governmental order that is not of God; it is the Spirit, not rituals, which is now the source—the only source—of unity and of peace in the household of God.

Focusing on the need for rituals in human society, Bernard Cooke wrote:

“Rituals not only celebrate the deepest values of a culture, they also create, maintain, and legitimize that culture. Part of the process of legitimization necessarily entails the negotiation of power within a society, so that important rituals and symbols in every society are essential for maintaining the power structures of that society.... Leaders of the rituals certainly lead because they have power, and the rituals constantly remind others of their power. On the other hand, participants in rituals by their continued participation grant that power to the leaders. If and when participants no longer participate in the ritual or acquiesce to the leadership in the ritual, then the leadership simply ceases being leaders.... Christian rituals are no exception to this dynamic.”⁶

Because that is true, God is calling for His people to trust Him, to refuse Christian rituals and, so, reject the claim of Christian ministers to have authority from God to rule over His precious people.

“Come out of her, my people!”

⁵ Robert Payne, *Rome Triumphant*, 211.

⁶ Bernard Cooke, *Christian Symbol and Ritual*, 21–22.

Christ alone can liberate the human heart and mind from bondage to the spirit of Paganism, which survives through its rituals. The mind of Christ is not in the least influenced by Rome, not even in its modern dress as Christianity. Christ still has nothing in common with Belial, and God's temple, His people, still has nothing to do with idols—when they follow His Son. Those who walk in the Spirit are “holy, innocent, undefiled, and separate from sinners” just as the real Jesus is (Heb. 7:26b). Those who are baptized into Christ by the Spirit (Rom. 6:3) are buried and raised again with him by the same (Col. 2:12), and they are as dead to earthly rituals as he is now, sitting at the right hand of God.

Vast numbers of God's children on earth have joined themselves to the religion of Christianity, thinking that is what God wanted them to do, but they have no idea what they have joined. Had they known what Christianity really is, they would not have joined it. But their heavenly Father knows what it is, and that is why He is calling to His children, “Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues!” This book was written to help children of God to recognize that voice, for I believe that if they do, they will obey it. And when God's children obey His voice, He will make us all one in His Son, Christ Jesus, who prayed earnestly for that to happen:

John 17

20. I am not asking for these [the disciples] alone, but also for those who believe in me through their word,
21. that they all might be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they may also be one in us, so that the world might believe that you sent me.
22. And the glory that you have given me, I have given to them, that they might be one, just as we are one:
23. I in them, and you in me, so that they might be perfected in unity, and so that the world might know that you sent me and have loved them just as you loved me.

Paul loved the body of Christ just as Jesus did, and it was not so much in spite of that as it was because of that, that he was rejected by most first-century believers. They did not understand Paul's gospel because they did not know God, even if they had the Spirit (cf. Gal. 4:9). Paul's earnest desire was that all God's children would be one in Christ, as Christ is one with God, and Paul knew that the gospel Jesus had given him was the only way that precious hope of his, and of Jesus, would become a reality. His plea to the saints was from the heart of God:

1 Corinthians 1

10. I urge you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there not be divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Philippians 2

1. If there be any comfort in Christ, if any solace of love, if any fellowship in spirit, if any tender affections and mercies,

2. make my joy complete, that you think the same thing, having the same love, as united souls, thinking one thing,
3. doing nothing through strife or vanity, but with humility, regarding one another as more important than yourselves.
4. Let each of you look not to his own interests, but each one also to the interests of others.
5. Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus.

May God make it so.