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The Pauline Conspiracy

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This Article Is Backed Up By Marcus Eli Ravage's Humorous Article

"A Real Case Against The Jews"

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Behold the crucifix — what does it symbolize? Pallid incompetence hanging on a tree!

Two thousands years ago Christianity was a subversive movement, hatched in Palestine, spread by Jewish agitators, financed by Jewish money, taught in Jewish pamphlets and broadsides, at a time when Jewry and Rome were in a death-struggle, and ending in the collapse of the greatest empire on earth.

It is now a century and a half since THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE was written by Gibbon. Gibbon, not being a person dabbling in history, did not try to account for the end of a great era by inventing fatuous nonsense about the vice and degradation of Rome, about the decay of morals and faith in an empire which was at that very time in the midst of its most glorious creative period. How could he? He was living in the Augustan Age in London which — in spite of nearly two thousand years since the coming of a Christian civilization — was as good a replica of Augustan Rome in the matter of refined lewdness as the foggy islanders could make it. No, Gibbon was a folk-conscious man and an admirer of the culture of the pagan West, as well as a historian with brains and eyes. Therefore, he had no difficulty in laying his finger on the malady that had rotted and wasted away the noble edifice of antique civilization. He put Christianity down — the law which went forth from Zion and the word of god from Jerusalem — as the central cause of the decline and fall of Rome and all she represented. He saw an alien creed sweeping out of the East and overwhelming the fair lands of the West. The upheaval which brought Christianity into Europe was planned and executed by Jews as an act of

revenge against Roman civilization.

This monstrous conspiracy, Christianity, began about 65 B.C. At this time, the Roman Empire was the one great military power in the world and the heir of Greece and the center of civilization. Judea was a tiny kingdom off the Eastern Mediterranean, and was hardly more than a mere geographical expression. Again and again it had been overrun and destroyed, and its population carried into exile or slavery by its powerful neighbors. Nominally independent, it was now as unstable as ever and on the edge of a civil war. These two states, Rome and Judea, had little contact with each other. Then without solicitation on her part, Rome, was suddenly asked to take a hand in Judean affairs. A dispute had arisen between two brothers over the succession to the petty throne, and the Roman general Pompey, who happened to be in Damascus winding up bigger matters, was called upon to arbitrate between the claimants. With the simple directness of a soldier, Pompey exiled one of the brothers, tossed the chief priesthood to his rival, and abolished the kingly dignity altogether. Not to put too fine a point on it, Pompey's mediation amounted in effect to making Judea a Roman dependency. The Jews, not unnaturally perhaps, objected; and Rome, to conciliate them and to conform to local prejudice, restored the royal office. Rome appointed, that is, a king of her own choosing. He was the son of an excise-man, an Idumean by folk, named Herod. But the Jews were not placated, and continued making trouble. Rome thought it very ungrateful of them.

Jewish discontent grew to disaffection and open revolt when their Roman masters began importing into Jerusalem the blessings of Western culture. Graven images, athletic games, Greek drama, and gladiatorial shows were not to the Jewish taste. The pious resented them as an offense in the nostrils of Jehovah, even though the resident officials patiently explained they were meant for the entertainment and edification of the non-Jewish garrison. The Judeans resisted with especial strenuousness the advent of the efficient Roman tax-gatherer. Above all, they wanted back a king of their own folk, and their royal line.

Among the masses the rebellion took the form of a revival of the old belief in a messiah, a 'divinely appointed savior' who was to redeem his folk from the foreign yoke and make Judea supreme among the nations. Claimants to the mission were not wanting. In Galilee, one Judas led a rather formidable insurrection, which enlisted much popular support. John, called the Baptist, operated in the Jordan country. He was followed by another north-country man,

Jesus of Nazareth. All three were masters of the technique of couching incendiary political sedition in harmless theological phrases. All three used the same signal of revolt — "The time is at hand." And all three were speedily apprehended and executed, both Galileans by crucifixion.

Personal qualities aside, Jesus of Nazareth was, like his predecessors, a political agitator engaged in liberating his country from the foreign oppressor. There is even considerable evidence that he entertained an ambition to become king of an independent Judea. He claimed, or his biographers later claimed for him, descent from the ancient royal line of David. But his paternity is somewhat confused. The same writers who traced the origin of his mother's husband back to the psalmist king also pictured Jesus as the son of Jehovah, and admitted that Joseph was not his father. It seems, however, that Jesus before long realized the hopelessness of his political mission and turned his oratorical gifts and his great popularity with the masses in quite another direction. He began preaching a primitive form of populism, socialism, and pacifism. The effect of this change in his program was to gain him the hostility of the patriots and to reduce his following to the slaves.

After his death these lowly disciples formed themselves into a communistic brotherhood. A sermon their late leader had once delivered upon a hillside summed up for them the essence of his teachings, and they made it their rule of life. It was a philosophy calculated to appeal profoundly to humble folk. It comforted those who suffered here on earth, with promised rewards beyond the grave. It made virtues of the necessities of the weak. Men without hope in the future were admonished to take no thought for the morrow. Men too helpless to resent insult or injury were taught to resist not evil. The meek were — in the hereafter — to be the elect and favored of god. The worldly, the ambitious, the powerful, were to be denied admission to 'heaven'.

The upshot, then, of Jesus' mission was a new sect in Judea. It was neither the first nor the last. The Ebionim -- the paupers, as they called themselves -- did not regard their beliefs as a new religion. Jews they had been born, and Jews they remained. The teachings of their master were rather in the nature of a social philosophy, an ethic of conduct, a way of life. To modern Christians, who never tire of asking why the Jews did not accept Jesus and his teachings, it can only be answered that for a long time none but Jews did. In ordinary times little attention would have been paid to the ragged brotherhood. Slaves for the most part, their meekness might even have been encouraged by the soldier classes. But with the country in the midst of a struggle with a foreign foe, the

unworldly philosophy took on a dangerous aspect. It was a creed of disillusion, resignation, and defeat. It threatened to undermine the morals of the nation's fighting men in time of war. This blessing of the peacemakers, this turning of the other cheek, this non-resistance, this love your enemy, looked like a deliberate attempt to paralyze the national will in a crisis and assure victory to the foe.

So it is not surprising that the Jewish authorities began persecuting the Ebionim. Their meetings were invaded and dispersed, their leaders were clapped into jail, their doctrines were proscribed. It looked for awhile as if the sect would be speedily wiped out. Perhaps the bitterest foe of the sectaries was one Saul, a native of Tarsus and thus a man of some education in Greek culture, he despised the new teachings for their unworldliness and their remoteness from life. A patriotic Jew, he dreaded their effect on the national cause. A traveled man, versed in several languages, he was ideally suited for the task of going about among the scattered Jewish communities to counteract the spread of their socialistic, pacifist doctrines. The leaders in Jerusalem appointed him chief persecutor to the Ebionim.

He was on his way to Damascus one day to arrest a group of the sectaries when a novel idea came to him. In the quaint phrase of the Book of Acts he saw a vision. He saw as a matter of fact, two. He perceived, to begin with, how utterly hopeless were the chances of little Judea winning out in armed conflict against the greatest military power in the world. Second, and more important, it came to him that the vagabond creed which he had been repressing might be forged into an irresistible weapon against the formidable foe. Pacifism, non-resistance, resignation, were dangerous teachings at home. Spread among the enemy's legions, they might break down their discipline and thus yet bring victory to Jerusalem. Saul, in a word, was probably the first man to see the possibilities of conducting war by propaganda.

He journeyed on to Damascus, and there to the amazement alike of his friends and of those he had gone to suppress, he announced his conversion to the faith and applied for admission to the brotherhood. On his return to Jerusalem he laid his new strategy before the startled Elders at Zion. After much debate and searching of souls, it was adopted. More resistance was offered by the leaders of the Ebionim of the capital. They were mistrustful of his motives and they feared that his proposal to strip the faith of its ancient Jewish observances and practices so as to make it acceptable to Gentiles would fill the fraternity with alien half-converts, and dilute its strength. But in the end

he won them over, too. And so Saul, the fiercest persecutor of Jesus' followers, became Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. And so, incidentally, began the spread into the pagan lands of the West, an entirely new Oriental religion.

Unfortunately for Paul's plan, the new strategy worked much too well. His revamped and rather alluring theology made converts faster than he dared hope, or than he even wished. His idea, it should be kept in mind, was at this stage purely defensive. He had as yet no thought of evangelizing the world; he only hoped to discourage the enemy. With that accomplished, and the Roman garrisons out of Palestine, he was prepared to call a truce. But the slaves of the empire, and the human scum of the capital itself, found as much solace in the adapted Pauline version of the creed as the poor Jews before them had found in the original teachings of their crucified master. The result of this unforeseen success was to open the enemy's eyes to what was going on. Disturbing reports of insubordination among the troops began pouring into Rome from the army chiefs in Palestine and elsewhere. Instead of giving the imperial authorities pause, the new tactics only stiffened their determination. Rome swooped down upon Jerusalem with fire and sword, and after a fierce siege which lasted four years, she destroyed the nest of agitation (70 A.D.). At least she thought she had destroyed it.

The historians of the time leave us in no doubt as to the aims of Rome. They tell us that Nero sent Vespasian and his son Titus with definite and explicit orders to annihilate Palestine and Christianity together. To the Romans, Christianity meant nothing more than Judaism militant, an interpretation which does not seem far from the facts. As to Nero's wish, he had at least half of it realized for him. Palestine was so thoroughly annihilated that it has remained a political ruin to this day. But Christianity was not so easily destroyed. Indeed, it was only after the fall of Jerusalem that Paul's program developed to the full. Hitherto, his tactic had been merely to frighten off the conqueror, in the manner of Moses plaguing the Pharaohs. He had gone along cautiously and hesitantly, taking care not to arouse the powerful foe. He was willing to dangle his novel weapon before the foe's nose and let him feel its edge, but he shrank from thrusting it in full force. Now that the worst had happened and Judea had nothing further to lose, he flung scruples to the wind and carried the war into the enemy's country. The goal now was nothing less than to humble Rome as she had humbled Jerusalem, to wipe her off the map as she had wiped out Judea.

If Paul's own writings fail to convince one of this interpretation of his

activities, attention may be directed to his more candid associate John. Where Paul, operating within the shadow of the imperial palace and half the time a prisoner in Roman jails, is obliged to deal in parable and veiled hints, John, addressing himself to disaffected Asiatics, can afford the luxury of plain speaking. At any rate, his pamphlet entitled "Revelation" is, in truth, a revelation. Rome, fancifully called Babylon, is minutely described in the language of sputtering hate, as the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth, as the woman drunken with the blood of saints (Christians and Jews), as the oppressor of "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues" and -- to remove all doubt as to her identity - as "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." An angel triumphantly cries, "Babylon the great is fallen." Then follows an orgiastic picture of ruin. Commerce and industry and maritime trade are at an end. Art and music and 'the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride', are silenced. Darkness and desolation lie like a pall upon the scene. The 'gentle' Christian conquerors wallow in blood up to the bridles of their horses. "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for god hath avenged you on her."

And what is the end and purpose of all this chaos and devastation? John is not reticent to tell us. For he closes his 'pious' prophesy with a vision of the glories of the new — that is, the restored — Jerusalem; not any allegorical fantasy, but literally Jerusalem, the capital of a great reunited kingdom of "the twelve tribes of the children of Israel." Could anyone ask for anything plainer? Of course, no civilization could forever hold out against this kind of assault. By the year 200 the efforts of Paul and John and their successors had made such headway among all classes of Roman society that Christianity had become the dominant cult throughout the empire. Meantime, as Paul had shrewdly foreseen, Roman morals and discipline had quite broken down, so that more and more the Imperial Legions, once the terror of the world and the backbone of Western culture, went down to defeat before barbarian invaders. In the year 326 the emperor Conslantine, hoping to check the insidious malady, submitted to conversion and proclaimed Christianity the official religion. It was too late. After him the emperor Julian tried to resort once more to suppression. But neither resistance nor concession were of any use. The Roman body politic had become thoroughly worm-eaten with Palestinian propaganda.

Dion Cassius says Rome became so crowded with Jews, that it was difficult to expel them without tumult. Dion also observes, as if to mark the absence of any wish on the part of the Romans to perpetuate the *Jewish* name,

although the greatness of this victory (over the Jews) induced Vespasian and Titus to take the title of Emperor, neither of them would take the cognomen of Judaicus.

Rutilius Numatianus said in A.D. 417, during the reign of Honorius, of the Jews — "that other insane practices, which he believes even some boys would not credit, go on in this lying slave-cage of Judea; and then he winds up with the wish that Judea had never been conquered in the wars of Pompey, or under the empire of Titus, for though the excrescence has been cut off, the virus creeps through the veins, and the conquered nation overcomes the conquerors."

Seneca also says: "Meanwhile the custom of that most outrageous nation has prevailed to such an extent, that it has already been received all over the world; the conquered have given laws to the conquerors."

Cicero, born B.C. 106, said that the religion of the Jews was "barbarous superstition" and that "the Jews are born to slavery."

Tacitus stated: Its (the Jews) laws were "hostile to men, and calculated to inspire the Jew with hatred and opposition to the rest of mankind." In his Annals (Book XV., 44), after speaking of "the persons commonly called Christians," Tacitus represents Judea as the source of Christianity, and tells us that "Christus, the founder of the name, was punished with death by the Procurator Pontius Pilate, in the reign of Tiberius. And the deadly superstition having been repressed, broke out again, not only through Judea, which was the source of the evil, but through Rome, where all things, from all quarters, horrible and shameful, flow together and are popular." "When the Assyrians and after them the Medes and Persians", writes Tacitus, "were masters of the Oriental world, the Jews of all nations, then held in subjection, were deemed the most contemptible."

Apion accused the Jews of having produced "no wonderful men, not any inventors of arts, or any eminent for wisdom."

Pliny, in reporting his inquiries about the Christians to Trajan calls Christianity "a system deformed and carried to excess."

Suetonius says the Christians are "a kind of men of a new and mischievous superstition."

Sulpicius says, "The Christians originated from the Jews: pull up the root, and the plant will perish."

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