

## Did Christians Destroy Classical Culture and Create the Dark Ages?



S. Dominic, Burner of Books by P. Berruguete, Prado Museum, Madrid. Pedro Berruguete was the court artist of Ferdinand and Isabella. He painted panels for the Dominican convent at Avila, ten of which are now in the Prado. The Dominicans were obviously proud that they burnt books!

The invasions of the barbarians who conquered the Roman Empire destroyed infinitely less than did the Christian hatred and persecution of the heathen.

T K Oesterreich, *Possession: Demonical and Other*

## The Origin of God's Word

Christians try to deny that, when they achieved total power at the end of the fourth century, they ravaged the Pagan learning accumulated over the whole of previous history. Since this vandalism started the Dark Ages, it is quite difficult to prove, simply because the destruction of learning meant there was little recorded evidence about it that was not written down by Christians—the few left who could write.

Christians have come up with almost any other explanation because they cannot admit that their own saintly predecessors were in fact uncivilised bigots. They claim the destruction of classical works and libraries was caused by accidental or deliberate fires, neglect and barbarian invasions or the collapse of society caused by barbarian invasions. Christians, on the other hand tried to preserve classical and Pagan works, and it is because they succeeded so well that we have them today. That claim is belied even in the *New Testament* itself where in *Acts* 19:19, Christian converts burn magical books worth sixty thousand pieces of silver! If the vicar to the gentiles could condone that, then who were ignorant bishops to dissent from it?

Let us return to that later. First consider what the Christian bishops did as soon as they had any power at all. They had no power over anyone other than their own flocks until Constantine merged the solar cults of the Empire under the direction of the Christian bishops in the fourth century. But Jesus had scarcely settled on the right hand of God before the gentile bishops were telling their flocks what they could and could not read.

The original followers of Jesus thought his resurrection was the first of the general resurrection of *Hosea* 6:2. They believed that up to forty years would follow in which there would be many trials and tribulations because a cosmic battle was being fought between good and evil. That is the meaning of the mini-apocalypse of *Mark* 13. The battle would end with the angel Michael appearing with a heavenly host to cleanse the world of sin and corruption and instate the kingdom of God.

The archangel Michael was the heavenly messiah while the followers of Jesus believed he was the earthly messiah. The point though was that the righteous people, the saints, would be resurrected into incorruptible bodies. That meant they were angels. So it seems likely that the simple converts of Jesus believed that when he returned—his Parousia—he would *be* the archangel Michael. So

the earliest Christians were content to wait for the kingdom of God. It is plain from much of the *New Testament* that the earliest Christians lived with the knowledge that, having repented and been baptised, they would enter God's kingdom.

The point of this little explanatory digression is that nothing was written down about Jesus for about forty years after his death. The gospel was that the kingdom of God was nigh, and the resurrection of Jesus as the first fruit of the dead was sufficient proof. However forty years is a long time—time enough for two generations of Christians to have arrived. It seems likely that Mark composed his gospel toward the end of Peter's life, to record the stories of Jesus to convince the latest generation of Christians of the good news. But the message it contains is still that the kingdom is nigh.

Jesus was crucified in 31 AD. It follows that by 61 AD he should have returned. It is incredible that the first Christians did not mark off the years in anticipation of the event and indeed they might have done just that. But the first Christians were Jews and we cannot be sure that precise details followed Paul into the gentile religion he was preaching in Greece and Asia Minor. Indeed Paul seems to know nothing precise about the events of Jesus's life. Furthermore, the bishops might not have been willing to tell their flocks any precise dates, just in case. If so, they were obviously very wise because nothing had happened by 61 AD!

In the new circumstances, the written record of *Mark* assumed new importance, but shortly thereafter the Jews began their revolt against the Romans, and there is little doubt that *Mark* was edited to make it anti-Jewish and pro-Roman in the war situation. Evidence that there was an earlier version of *Mark* actually exists in *Mark* as it stands. The repetition of the mass feeding is probably because two versions of the event were bound together making it seem as if there were two feedings. In truth there were probably many mass feedings but it is doubtful that Jesus, in an 18 month career presided over more than two, and only one need have been described.

By now the original gentile converts who believed the Parousia was due in their lifetimes were dying off, but the new generations were like every Christian since—happy to live and die believing it would happen soon! Anyway it started a publishing industry which in the second century really blossomed. Pious works were written by the barrow load. That was too much for the bishops who saw the situation getting out of hand. The campaign to restrict the reading of Christians to certain prescribed books was led by Marcion, a Christian bishop who—like many later Christians—was particularly incensed that the son of God was a Jew.

This was quite understandable at the time because the Jews had just been rebelling yet again and twelve legions were needed to suppress the unrest. This was the rebellion of Bar Kosiba in 132 AD. Marcion felt the Jews were giving

everyone a hard time and particularly Christians whose god was Jewish. He concluded that it was all a lie and recommended that only ten letters of Paul, who Marcion considered sufficiently un-Jewish, and the gospel of Luke, suitably freed of its Jewish content, should be accepted.

Fortunately for Christianity as it is, Marcion was an unpopular man and his absurd views were rejected—but not the principle of controlling what the faithful could read. The Catholic bishops came up with their own list of approved works—all four gospels and thirteen of Paul's letters! Marcion wanted to limit the reading of Christians to eleven books, but the church leaders were so liberal, they admitted another six!

## **Pagan Libraries**

With that sort of background, it is hardly surprising that once the church leaders got control of the publication of books, they launched an all out destruction of any literature they did not like. To counter this, modern Christians like to claim that the church fathers cited classical works widely and favourably in their writings, maintained them in their personal libraries, and made attempts to preserve them. More to the point is that the earliest Christian intellectuals were converts brought up in the Pagan schools. Naturally Pagan books would have been the original stock of their libraries, but that is hardly an argument that Christians in general aimed to preserve Pagan books. Arguments like this are intended to fool the gullible and the simple minded.

Furthermore, these early church intellectuals, having taken the step of joining the new religion themselves, were keen to explain its benefits to their Pagan friends. In fact, their friends were not too friendly in the main. Mostly they regarded Christianity as a superstition for the ignorant. It lacked depth, had no philosophical background and seemed like a new version of the mystery religions. Nevertheless, the converts felt obliged to justify their new position and wrote apologetic works in defence of their newly adopted stance. To do this, they used the forms and styles of classical oratory and rhetoric and took instances from the Pagan books their opponents knew. Christian polemicists had to rely on the rhetoric and literature of the Paganism which had taught them. Christianity had little of its own, just a few gospels and a few more letters, and these were quite unfamiliar to most people.

Even if any of these early converts had tried to shrug off their old habits, it plainly would have been impossible. They had been brought up in Pagan culture, they had imbibed classical habits with their mother's milk. In short, society itself was Pagan and there was no way they could avoid its influence. Christians might argue that these early saints were able to do it because they were guided by the Holy Ghost. It does not need saying, that, as an argument, this is fatuous, but even if we were to accept it, we could get no further because

the Holy Ghost is quite inept to judge by its efforts to make the gospels coherent.

A few church leaders founded libraries and in the earliest days these libraries included Pagan works for the reason explained. The church never burned all Pagan books anyway. There were always some Pagan books, mainly now called “the classics,” the Christians book-burners allowed to survive, so they are the only ancient works that can be called “classics”. Books like Homer’s *Odyssey* were thought to be allegorical accounts of the struggle for faith. The books of Plato were thought quite compatible with Christian thought and particularly useful since Christianity had no philosophy of its own. It is therefore not surprising that these books were placed by Christians in their own libraries and have therefore survived to this day. Many other books were not so favoured and have been lost. One source has put it:

The study of classical literature was continued and the intellectual discipline involved valued so long as these could serve the Christian purpose, without endangering the new Christian Society.

Many Church fathers quoted from Pagan books not with approval but with scorn. They quoted them to mock them.

Where were the Pagan libraries in Greece and Rome that eventually were destroyed? Roman emperors liked to commission public libraries. Temples usually had libraries attached to them, and schools, colleges and even public baths had libraries. In addition there were public libraries funded by government or local government, official archives which were not public, and private libraries. The first private library in Rome was composed of the captured library of Aristotle, and they were common by 50 BC. According to Seneca, by 65 AD, almost all the upper-class homes in Rome had private libraries.

It is plain that as the Christians closed Pagan temples and the Pagan academies so too they destroyed or at least dispersed their libraries. Public libraries, once the Empire was administered by Christians, had their Pagan books progressively replaced by Christian books. Even as early as 235 AD Christians, like Sextus Julius Africanus, were in powerful and influential positions in Rome. Africanus, a Christian scholar, was put in charge of the public library founded by the Emperor Severus on a site near the Pantheon. Knowing the subsequent history of the Christians’ bigotry with their missionary zeal for foisting their One True God on to everyone else in the world, it is interesting to wonder what influential people like Julius Africanus got up to even before Christianity triumphed.

Official archives contained state reports and these too were purged of any sources which were not favourable to Christianity, once the Christians took control. This is why the official reports of Pontius Pilate to the Emperor

Tiberius, the *Acta Pilati*, disappeared. It showed that Jesus was a Jewish rebel, a member of the gang of Galilaeans founded by Judas of Galilee when Jesus was a youth. Pagan private libraries were dispersed when the Pagan aristocracy were impoverished by the Christians.

## Tit for Tat

Christians like to justify their own vandalism by citing the earlier persecution of Christians by the Pagan Romans. They claim persecutions under Nero (54-68), Domitian (81-96), Marcus Aurelius (161-180), Septimius Severus (193-211), Maximinius the Tracian (235-8), Decius (249-251), Valerian (253-260) and The “Great Persecution” under Diocletian (284 -305). The dates given are to suggest that these persecutions went on for decades. They are actually the reigns of the respective emperors and even the “Great Persecution” of Diocletian only lasted from 303 until his abdication in 305 AD.

Christians pretend that the persecution of Christians under Diocletian was far more terrible than anything the Christians did afterwards though, even if true, quite how it justifies Christian barbarity defeats me. The old adage is that two wrongs do not make a right, and Christians claim to turn the other cheek in the interest of their immortal souls. They did not here. A tit-for-tat ensued in the fourth century between pro-Pagan emperors and pro-Christian ones vying for the *victor ludorum* of persecution. Christians, of course, were too sporting to try to win!

The circumstances at the time of Diocletian’s persecution were strange. Christians were already dominating the administration of the Empire. Though Diocletian preferred the old Pagan gods, Diocletian’s court was dominated by Christians. His wife and daughter were influenced by Christianity, his principal attendants had embraced the Christian faith, many of the senior officers of the palace were Christian as were their wives, children and slaves. The situation at the court of Constantius was even more weighted the Christian way.

Nevertheless, Diocletian, realising that Christianity was weakening the Empire, instituted the persecution, apparently persuaded by Galerius who, like several subsequent Emperors, hated Christians. Old soldiers like Diocletian and Galerius saw them refusing to serve in the army, at a time when the threat from the barbarians was already serious. The Christian doctrine of personal salvation seemed to them to be an evasion of public duty contrary to the old sense of noble self-sacrifice that had built the Republic and then the Empire. Furthermore, the parallel state organisation of the Church, they saw as a threat to Imperial control. Rightly or wrongly Diocletian decided he had to cut Christianity down to size but his intention was to limit its power and wealth not particularly to murder its practitioners, many of whom, we have seen were close to him. He aimed to destroy Christian literature and churches to *avoid* targeting people.



Diocletian issued an edict at Nicomedia on February 23, 303 AD ordering Christian books to be confiscated and burned by imperial agents and the demolition of churches. Punishments of persons only occurred for those who refused to comply with the edict or persisted in secret worship. We depend for accounts of what happened on later Christians and naturally they multiply martyrs, but they also speak particularly harshly about the “Traditors”, bishops and deacons willing to hand over the *New Testament* as demanded, so it is plain that Christians generally did not volunteer for death.

The Christian chroniclers do not tell us precisely what happened next but the situation escalated. A Christian illegally tore down the edict and was martyred. Christians twice tried to burn down the palace at Nicomedia, Diocletian’s capital city, in attempts to murder the Emperor. Galerius was so scared, even though he was a hardy old soldier that he decided to seek refuge with his legions. Diocletian responded with harsher measures.

Reading between the lines, there was at least a riot and probably an uprising. The old soldiers had precipitated what they feared—a Christian takeover. When he considered the immediate situation was under control Diocletian abdicated. Most authorities praise him as one of the few good Emperors, generally tolerant of religion too, except for one blot—the persecution of the Christians. Common sense dictates that such a shrewd operator would not have introduced his persecution just out of malice. In two years, Constantine, who favoured the Christians, was a joint Emperor and not many years after the sole Emperor. So the Great Persecution cannot have been as bad as the Christian chroniclers make out. And Diocletian died naturally in 311 AD. Even the Christians did not want to kill him in the end.

## **Constantine**

Even Constantine, who all Christians revere, began by suppressing Christians. Constantine was not a Christian although he was brought up surrounded by them. He converted to Christianity, which he had already made the Imperial Religion, on his deathbed. He wanted to be rid of the potential divisions caused by Christianity by putting the widespread and effective Christian administration in charge of all the main solar religions of the empire. To be effective however, the Christians themselves had to be united and, of course, they were not. Have they ever been? The Council of Nicæa was convened to resolve problems:

Learned men, so called “Correctors” were, following the church meeting at Nicæa 325 AD, selected by the church authorities to scrutinize the sacred texts and rewrite them in order to correct their meaning in accordance with the views which the church had just sanctioned.

Prof Eberhard Nestle

Constantine passed severe penalties against the Donatists, and ordered anyone owning Arian books should burn them on the pain of death. The Eastern Roman emperor Arcadius made the reading of books written by the Eunomians a capital crime. Valentinian and Theodosius proscribed Nestorian books, and Valentinian and Marcian the books of Eutyches and Nestorius. The condemnation of any heresy by the church was followed by the proscription of the writings of members of the sect.

Constantine's sons were more positively pro-Christian than their father. Pagan sacrifices were forbidden and Pagan temples of the mystery religions destroyed. Christians who go to admire the glory that was Greece, do not seem to realise that many of the broken Corinthian columns were tipped by Christian bigots not by invading Turks.

This, the fourth century was when the Roman branch of Christianity gained dominance over most rival branches, including the remnants of Nazarene "Christianity". They began to persecute these rival churches and destroy their manuscripts. In 382 AD, to establish an orthodox position, Pope Damasus I instructed Jerome to revise and unify the Latin bible, and in 384 AD Jerome duly presented the same Pope with the Vulgate Latin Bible. The new definitive bible was the basis for the Church to claim orthodoxy and it began to eradicate divergent texts, declaring those who used them as heretics. Many manuscripts that sometimes come to light having been concealed for centuries, such as the Nag Hammadi library, most likely were buried by persecuted sects to avoid the book burning campaigns of the fourth century. This is why little now remains other than fragments of first, second and third century source material, and is the reason so little is known about the early church and its transformation from Essenism.

Julian the Apostate (360-363 AD) favoured Paganism and tried to revive it, though his edict of religious freedom was not issued until 4 February 362 AD, only the year before he was killed. His essential fairness is illustrated by his calling heretical Christian bishops back from exile, but Christian priests who had been exempted from paying taxes and municipal duties were again required to do so.

Christian zealots were incensed especially in Asia Minor where, of course, gentile Christianity was longest established. The Pagan temples which Julian had put up were immediately pulled down by Christians. Christians paid a priest of Apollo to burn down the temple of Daphne in Antioch, then claiming the Pagan had burnt it down accidentally by leaving candles burning. Candles had been left burning there for seven centuries, just as they are in Christian churches, and no one hears of *them* burning down as a consequence. It was an act of Christian vandalism. Julian closed the Cathedral at Antioch in reprisal and the riots between Christians and Pagans "added a few names to the church calendar of martyrs" according to Henry Chadwick in *The Early Church*. There



must have been martyrs on the other side too, but losers are not counted, Christians ultimately prevailed and Chadwick is a Christian.

As noted above, Christians had taken to some of the classical authors as exemplars of style and oratory while scorning the content of their works. This had the double effect then of allowing Christians to be taught good style and rhetoric while deprecating the ancient Pagan knowledge. It has gone to further extremes today when Greek mythology is regarded as simple fairy tales for children. Julian thought it outrageous that Christians should treat Pagan classics merely as exercises. He banned Christians from teaching the classics, a decision which was widely criticised even by some of Julian's supporters.

## **Theodosius and Ambrose**

Theodosius, Emperor from 379-395 AD, took it on himself to suppress Paganism for good by persecuting the few remaining Pagan leaders of Rome and making Pagan worship punishable by death. He banned the Olympic games and stopped all Pagan worship. Mobs of Christians looted Pagan temples and destroyed temple libraries. Many fine Pagan buildings were also destroyed.

The Pagan countryside was dotted over with shrines to the gods, some large but mainly small. The murals on the walls of the villas of wealthy Greeks and Romans were scenes of the "divine landscape", where the shrines of rustic peoples and noble country families hid in groves and glades, by springs and wells. Mostly these groves and shrines were looked after by slaves and eunuchs who tended the trees, replaced dead ones and kept the surrounding gardens neat. Tame animals wandered in the grounds as they do in India, unmolested because they were sacred. The fashionable landscapes of large eighteenth century country house parks in England like Stourhead House and Gardens are Renaissance imitations of this sacred landscape. Classic temples surrounded by deer and peacocks by the carefully sculpted lakes were modelled on the Pagan shrines of the Greeks and Romans.

Where did the originals go? Barbarians destroyed them, Christian say, and they are right! Ignorant and bigoted Christians took their axes to assault the sacred trees, groves and gardens. Graceful arboreta that were centuries old were chopped up for firewood. Christian monks set about destroying the rural shrines impelled by a manic fervour, but it still took them a century to complete. The orator, Libanius, impotently complained to the emperor Theodosius that "shrines are the very soul of the countryside".

Theodosius was in the grip of the Christian bishop Ambrose who had excommunicated him for a massacre of Thessalonians, among the first gentile nations converted by Paul, who had attacked and murdered an army commander. Christians consider this a remarkably principled act by bishop Ambrose but they like to forget that Ambrose had already refused the eucharist

to Theodosius for ordering the bishop of Callicinium in Syria to make restitution to local Jews when a gang of Christian thugs had burnt down a synagogue. Jews were Roman citizens and entitled to the protection of the state. Not for long! Ambrose, upholding the anti-Semitism which is inseparable from Christianity, told the Emperor that it was sinful for a Christian to help Jews against Christ's church. Scared for the welfare of his immortal soul Theodosius withdrew his order for reparations and Christian thugs took it that synagogues could be destroyed willy-nilly. In Judaea, entire villages of Jews were set ablaze. Jews living in the empire were excluded from state office and forbidden from marrying Christians. Ordinary Christians were delighted at this move.

This Ambrose had been the provincial governor of Milan, a talented legal and administrative expert who the principled Christian authorities spotted and offered the bishopric of Milan. The only trouble was Ambrose was not a Christian! No trouble. Here was a man who would be useful. They arranged for a quick baptism and a lightening fast track through the lower orders of the church to deliver him the bishopric. They were shrewd. Ambrose soon had Theodosius eating out of his hand. The worst act of many vandal acts under Theodosius was in 391 AD when Christians pulled down the temple of Serapis at Alexandria which housed one of the world's greatest libraries—said, at one time, to have had over half a million rolls—and scattered and burned the books.

## **The Library of Alexandria**

The library was founded by Alexander's general Ptolemy Soter (Ptolemy I, 367-282 BC). Under his son, Ptolemy Philadelphus, the library became the centre of Hellenistic culture. Manuscripts were collected from all over the world and the library's fame drew scholars from far and wide. The main library was in the Bruchium, the privileged quarter, with an overflow in the Serapeum. The number of rolls is uncertain but around half a million. Aulus Gelleus claims there were 700,000, Seneca says 400,000 and John Tzetzes makes it 490,000 in the Bruchium and 42,800 in the Serapeum.

Christians like to make out that Ptolemy VIII burned the city before the birth of Christ thus destroying the library long before Christianity was founded. Needless to say it is nonsense. Whatever burning Ptolemy VIII did cannot have been extensive because Alexandria remained a great, famous and wealthy city, and the library remained a huge attraction to scholars for hundreds more years. The library of Alexandria might well have been less grand than it was in its first century but to pretend it had been destroyed in 88 BC is God's Truth *par excellence*. One irresponsible Christian apologist quotes a source saying that, though it never reached its former greatness, the library was reconstituted and survived for several hundred years longer, and then illogically concludes "most of the damage to the library occurred before the birth of Christ!"

Between the birth of Christ and the vandalism of the Christian bishop Theophilus in 391 AD, the library of Alexandria had its tribulations mainly at the hands of Roman Emperors, but the damage was not huge, was made good and the library restored in each case. The mathematician Diophantus made efforts to restore the library in about 270 AD only to find Aurelian invading to put down the inept pretender, Firmius, and doubtless causing substantial damage because the Palace quarter was partly incinerated.

Christians say that the Serapeum library which they admit they *did* destroy was a small temple library, not the original massive library of Alexandria. It is sophistry. After Aurelian had damaged the Bruchesium library, the Serapeum became the main library. That does not imply that only temple books remained, though it does suggest the library was much smaller than it was in its heyday. Evidently the main library building in the Bruchesium must have been too badly damaged to serve as a library any more, whence the transfer, but many rolls must have been salvaged and restored. There might still have been hundreds of thousands of rolls, many of them transferred from the Bruchesium library, in the Serapeum when it was destroyed by the Christians. But, however many rolls there were, the Serapeum was a valuable Pagan resource. The Christians knew what they were doing and why.

The claim that the library continued to flourish even under Christianity until the Moslem conquest, according to F L Kent, Librarian of the American University of Beirut, and Arundell Esdaile, of the School of Librarianship at the University of London, editing the article on 'Libraries' in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "*can hardly be supported*". Christians have been keen to blame the destruction of the Serapeum on to the Moslem invaders in 642 AD, when Omar, Caliph of Baghdad, is said to have ordered the books, except for the works of Aristotle, to be used as fuel to heat water for the city's public baths. This story was not recorded until 300 years later. Its author is Bishop Gregory Bar Hebraeus, a Christian, who typically wrote about the Moslem invasions without the distraction of historical documentation, but simply with the benefit of his lurid imagination (*The Burning of the Library of Alexandria*, Preston Chesser, eHistory)!

The suspicious reader will notice that the Moslem invasion was 300 years after the Roman empire came under the influence of Christianity, and 150 years after Theodosius I had already ordered Pagan temples to be destroyed. The *New Columbia Encyclopedia*, making no mention of the Moslems feeding the bath house fires, notes simply that the libraries "suffered especially in 391 AD when Theodosius I had Pagan temples and other structures razed". A report online by San Jose State University coyly remarks:

In AD 391, riots instigated by fanatical Christians damaged the collection heavily.

The temple of Serapis was made into a Christian Church in 391 AD, doubtless marking the end of the library. Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria from 385 to 412 AD, oversaw the end of it. His nephew, Cyril, succeeded him as Patriarch.

## Justinian the Great

Christians consider it proof of the virtue of the fifth and sixth century bishops regarding the preservation of classical knowledge that Greek culture could still be an issue in the sixth century. In truth, by then large numbers of classic books had already disappeared forever. The ones spoken of by Christians are those which they declared compatible with Christianity for one reason or another. The intolerance of Christians is illustrated by the plot by Cyril of Alexandria to murder the fashionable and virtuous Neoplatonist philosopher and daughter of the ‘last member of the Library of Alexandria’, Hypatia. It is the Cyril who succeeded Theophilus. He ordered a gang of monks to murder her by hijacking her carriage, mercilessly killing her then stripping her naked body of its flesh using broken tiles or oyster shells—a monstrous deed even Christians cannot deny.

The final death blows to Pagan culture however came from Justinian the Great, Emperor from 527-565 AD. He is considered *great* because:

- he had two great commanders, Belisarius and the eunuch, Narses, who re-conquered large parts of the Western Empire from the Germans for him,
- he codified Roman law (but himself ignored the rule of law—blatantly robbing friend and foe alike and encouraging his officials to extortion),
- he spent fortunes on building churches to the glory of God, and
- he persecuted Pagans and heretical Christians alike.

While doing all these wonderful things he forgot the proper management of the economy and did far more damage to civilisation than barbarians ever did. The empire was left ruined, its administration corrupt, the countryside abandoned and the cities full of beggars who waited in vast numbers for alms from the state coffers.

When Justinian closed the Neoplatonic Academy in Athens (529 AD), he closed the last of the Pagan schools, the large Neoplatonic school in Alexandria having already gone Christian in 517 AD. It was closed because it was anti-Christian! This school was the *last* Pagan school in the whole of the Christian Empire—but the “great” Christian Emperor thought it too dangerous to tolerate and closed it.

Christians were happy to retain some classic writers—Homer because Christians saw allegories in his work, Plato and Aristotle for their philosophic

value and some poetic and rhetorical works were kept for teaching style. Otherwise Paganism had gone. Chadwick says there was no prohibition on the expression of Pagan thought and no restriction imposed on the diffusion of Pagan literature. Since neither Pagan thought nor Pagan literature could be taught, neither was likely to be a problem. It is like saying people can watch whatever they like on TV, but there will be only one channel—the Christian channel.

## **The Barbarian Excuse**

Christians pretended the destruction of the classical works and libraries of the ancient world was the result of the barbarian invasions, as though the barbarians were ignorant savages. Well, perhaps they were, but they were Christians. The invasions of the Western Empire were by the German nations, the Visigoths and the Vandals.

- The Visigoths, who sacked Rome in 410 AD, founded the first German kingdom in the Empire. They were Christians having been converted by Wulfila to the Arian faith half a century earlier.
- The Vandals migrated through Western Europe to North Africa in 429 AD. There they founded a powerful maritime nation which harassed the shipping in the Mediterranean and in 476 AD they sacked Rome leading to the end of the Empire in the West. Like the Visigoths they were Arian Christians.

Though these tribes had put paid to the Western Empire, invasions continued for several centuries, east and west, but after Justinian the damage had been done—not by the barbarians but by the Christian bishops and their thugs. Nevertheless Christians insist that the barbarian invasions created several conditions which led to the end of culture.

1. The German invasions and the declining economy destroyed the educational system largely through the decline of the cities. With the loss of the educational system, culture automatically declined too. Christians also claim that the invaders destroyed public records and urban libraries.

Naturally there is truth in this. The barbarian invasions effectively finished off the Western Empire, but the German invaders were themselves Christians, and the Roman decline had been started long before by the Christian onslaught on the culture prevailing when they took over administration of religion. The economy declined because the effectiveness of the army declined and the economy of the Empire depended in part on conquest. Christians refused to serve and urbane Romans followed suit, leaving the army to uneducated provincials and barbarian *federati*, who were often good soldiers but obviously lacking the commitment to Rome that had built the Empire. The economy also

was damaged by maladministration by Christian administrators when Christianity dominated the Empire. The followers of the poor Galilæan were interested in riches and glorifying God—as they remain to this day.

2. Papyrus used for the rolls favoured by Romans was fragile and so Latin manuscripts were easily damaged.

Of course this is true, but for hundreds of years before the Christians took power it had never been a problem—manuscripts were always being re-copied in a major industry. Under the Christians it became a problem, not because the manuscripts were fragile but because the Christian bishops would not allow them to be copied and as manuscripts cracked and flaked in use they had to be discarded without being replaced. Yet Christians claim that their monks preserved ancient culture by copying old texts. Why then was the fragile nature of papyri a problem? Surely the worthy Christian monks would have copied the papyri on to vellum or parchment. They did not, precisely because they were trying to expunge Pagan traces except the few which were acceptable.

3. Literacy in Greek then Latin declined.

This has nothing to do with the barbarian invasions. The disappearance of Greek began exactly when the Christians took over and began to close the Pagan temples and Pagan schools. The link is blatant yet Christian apologists try to blame barbarian invasions. To say that some Christians themselves taught Greek is rather like saying it is fine to kill off wild animals because we have some preserved in zoos! Not surprisingly, the loss of Greek culture was followed by a decline in Latin until only the clergy used it in a bastardised form, the rest of the population being illiterate.

4. Writing itself was almost lost, being preserved only by the Christian clergy and monks.

Having destroyed all means of learning it is hardly surprising that writing almost disappeared. The Christians were not interested in general learning and practical knowledge but only religious understanding. Having destroyed the Pagan schools they generally did not replace them with anything comparable. Clergymen were taught but the knowledge was sterile—it only enabled them to read the Vulgate and other devotional works. That a little learning survived in a few monasteries is true but, in fact, most scholarship was lost and had to be rediscovered at the Renaissance or relearnt afterwards.

It is pious lying—God's Truth—forced on to Christians by historical truth that gives us this nonsense. If the real story of Christianity were taught in schools, the Christians would be thought of like Hitler—destroyers of culture to force their own interpretation on the world. The only difference is that Hitler failed. No one denies that barbarian invasions disrupted society, but the barbarians



were Christians and they were able to invade because Christianity had already undermined the Empire from within.

## **Preserving Classical Culture**

Their fathers having destroyed ancient culture, Christians today have the gall to claim that it was the Christians who preserved it! These modern Christians are so unprincipled as to quote the Nestorians as an example of how Christians treasured classical learning. Truthfully they banished Nestorius to Egypt as a dangerous heretic. He declared the Virgin Mary was not the mother of God because, although God was the father, she had borne Jesus as a human.

Christians, liberal as they never were had the Nestorian Christians driven from Syria by the Emperor Zeno, the Isaurian, around 485 AD. They fled to Persia and Nestorianism was effectively destroyed in the West. At Nisibis, however, Nestorians built a centre of Greek culture including a library of the classics. They attracted scholars from Greece, including some of the Pagan school of Athens closed by Justinian in 529 AD.

Fortunately, the despised Nestorians were able to preserve some Pagan culture and pass it on to the Moslem Arabs when they conquered the area in building up the mighty Moslem Empire. Many Pagan classics were translated into Arabic whence they eventually were recovered in the West at the Renaissance.

So, yes, Nestorian Christians did help to preserve classical culture but it was through no good intent on the part of orthodox Christians who hated the Nestorians as much as Pagans and sought to destroy them both. To claim credit because their plans did not work out as they expected is typical Christian trickery.

Christians also pretend their own scholars linked the wisdom of Antiquity and the Middle Ages. They cite Boethius (d 524 AD) who wrote commentaries on Greek and Latin philosophers. He translated two of Aristotle's treatises on logic into Latin, and was the resident scholar in the Ostrogoth kingdom.

Note the contradiction. Christians blame the destruction of classic culture on the barbarian invasions not on Christianity, but here they quote the resident scholar of a barbarian kingdom as a protector of classic works. They blame the barbarians for book burning then seek kudos because Christian scholars in the barbarians' court preserve Pagan texts. Curious that, like the Nestorians, the Arians had been declared as heretical and were persecuted as much as the Pagans.

Another servant of the king of the Ostrogoths was Cassiodorus (d 583 AD). In about 537 AD he founded a monastic order to study and copy Pagan literature which he brought from Africa when necessary. Christians want us to believe

that barbarians destroyed books then employed Christians to replace them. The truth is that the Catholic church was barbaric but the Arian barbarians were relatively civilised. The Church destroyed Pagan books but some Arian barbarians tried to preserve them.

## **The Role of Monks**

Individuals such as S Benedict of Nursia (d 543 AD), who founded the Benedictine order, and the Venerable Bede (d 735 AD), had some marginal effects in preserving ancient scholarship but mainly Benedictines were copyists and perpetrated many pious forgeries. Inasmuch as these people preserved anything, it was already just a question of saving from total extinction what the Christians had already practically destroyed. The reason was that the sixth century had already seen the completion of the virtual destruction of classical knowledge. For the next six hundred years Christian scholars like Bede were picking over the ruins, trying to find nuggets of learning. When they did they tried to preserve them and find reasons for using them in teaching. They pleaded that they were necessary for the monks to learn Latin grammar or to learn how to declaim effectively. Thus some books of the Latin poets, Juvenal, Ovid and Horace, orators like Cicero and playwrights like Terence were preserved before the last copies were binned.

All of this puts Christians in an ambiguous position but the demands of faith always seem to overwhelm the demands of honest scholarship, and the crimes of the Christians are always played down and their few heroes and heroines, played up. Sometimes they admit Christian bigots opposed the classics and intellectualism but salve their consciences with the pretence the church actually preserved classical scholarship.

It is not even true that monasteries in general preserved scholarship. Some did—usually remote ones difficult for the church of Rome to control—in the wild north of England and in Ireland. The stage arose when even much of the clergy were illiterate and orders like the Benedictines preserved literacy largely for devotional reasons not through dedication to scholarship. The first Benedictine monastery was at Monte Cassino in Southern Italy, where the works of Tacitus, Seneca and Varro were copied. Christians like to take praise that they preserved Tacitus, the historian who was not flattering to the them, but this is nonsense. Most of the books of Tacitus were not preserved, particularly the ones that would have referred to Jesus! Isn't that just strange?

Much of the scholarship re-found at the renaissance came from the east, and from the Arabs who had marvellous universities in, for example, Cordova, when Christian Europe was savage. Some monks of the Dark Ages, culture having gone, began to wonder about things and came to be scholastic. But many authors have romanticized the extent to which they preserved anything. Some knowledge was preserved but it was nothing to what the Christians had

destroyed, and some inquisitive monks were among the first to rediscover wonderful things in the dusty works left unread in their libraries. But to claim credit for this when centuries earlier Pagan scholars had been made into beggars and their books burnt in the interest of the One True God, is brazen.

## **Charlemagne**

In France and northern Europe, it was Charlemagne not the church who tried to revive learning. He found many of the Frankish clergy illiterate. The monks who copied manuscripts did it purely mechanically, with little understanding of the texts they were copying. Errors in the texts, poor handwriting and a failure to divide the words properly make Merovingian manuscripts hard to understand. So much for the church preserving scholarship. Ignoring all this, Christians demand praise because a few wealthy monasteries had libraries.

Charlemagne—not the church—made every monastery and cathedral in the Carolingian Empire, besides observing the practices of religious life, run a school for anyone able to learn. To teach the teachers, he brought in scholars from England and Italy. This exactly illustrates the sterility spoken of above. Observance of religious practice to save their immortal souls was what was important to Christians—nothing else! That is why the Roman Empire collapsed so spectacularly, splintering into warring principalities in the west and, in the east, consolidating into a corrupt autocracy run by a potentate treated as a God. It took the secular head of one of the largest principalities in the west to force the clergy to start to do something useful. Charlemagne's reforms made education once again a public matter. Only from this point on can Christians begin to claim with any general truth that the church kept alive learning.

We are in the ninth century, almost 500 years after Constantine. The spark of knowledge had almost been extinguished in Europe as a consequence of Christian bigotry. The stirrings of a renaissance were beginning at the instigation of an eight foot high sword wielding prince—not the ignorant loafers in the Vatican. Yet the Christians want to take credit for keeping alive the scholarship of the ancients which they had destroyed in the first place.

In fact the paucity of this tradition of preservation is proved by the Christian tendency to list individual cases of Christians preserving classical texts. They are able to give these individual instances precisely because they are so rare. If there were massive exchanges of learning and literature—and that was what was needed after the bishops had destroyed classical schools—then these pitiful exchanges of individual books would have been unnecessary.

The enormity of the loss of knowledge in the west is shown by the facts that most of the surviving texts of Latin authors were preserved by the Carolingians because of Charlemagne's edict, and three quarters of the surviving Greek

classics were preserved in the east. Note we can only speak of surviving classics. Many more never survived. The retrieval of Greek classics from the Arabs and Byzantium began only in this millennium and reached its zenith just as the Byzantine Empire collapsed to the Turks.

When they could not destroy the books, the Christians suppressed the information by declaring it heretical or blasphemous. A few examples will show it, and hint at what has been lost by Christian bigotry. Thales and Anaximander thought stars were suns with planets at immense distances from us. Lucretius implied the uniform acceleration of falling bodies—not rediscovered until Galileo did it—and that space was infinite and with an infinite number of worlds in it. In 1600, Giordano Bruno was burnt at the stake as a heretic for saying the same sort of thing. Sextus Empiricus says Democritus had his atomic theory from Moscus the Phœnician. But in Moscus's idea, the atoms were not utterly indivisible, and so was closer to modern atomic theory—under some conditions they could divide. Pythagoras is thought to have known the inverse square law of attraction. Copernicus, Galileo and Newton all acknowledged the debt they owed to the discoveries and conjectures of the pre-Christian philosophers and scientists. They were able to express this debt because the Dark Ages shutters were being prized open after a thousand years of darkness.

## **Into Modern Times**

Even into the late Middle Ages, the Christians did not cease to destroy anything that they considered alien. They lit pyres of Jewish books after the pope had anathematized the Talmud because it portrayed Jesus as a common criminal. Around 1500 the Spanish Inquisition burned huge numbers of Jewish and Arabic books. Because these events are documented with some pride by the Christian chroniclers of the time, there is no way the Christian apologists can deny them. Nevertheless, it does not suggest to them that perhaps it was simply the continuation of Christian tradition. Christians in Roman times felt just the same way about Pagans as they felt about the Jews and Muslims in the Middle Ages. They taught false doctrine—doctrine not approved by the church as the representative of the One True God—and so their works should be destroyed as the work of the Devil.



Nor did this attitude cease with the Renaissance and the gradual rediscovery of learning, and the discovery of the New World. The Church found itself new targets to abuse. Bishop Diego de Landa (*Relacion de la cosas de Yucatan*) wrote in 1565 AD:

We found, in the possession of the Mayas, a large number of books written in these letters of theirs and, as they contained nothing in which there was not some superstition and devil's lies, we burnt them all, at which they felt wondrous sorrow and were aggrieved.

The sweet enlightened Christian bishop could not understand why a conquered people should be aggrieved when their cultural heritage was consigned to the flames. It is symbolic of the sheer barbarity of the Church even into modern times. Shakespeare wrote his great works shortly after this. Would we be aggrieved if some monster of a bully had obliged us to burn Shakespeare and the King James bible, written soon after that. All that remains of these Mayan treasures is the Troana and the Cortesian codices in the National Museum of Spain in Madrid, another codex in Dresden and a fourth in Paris. No other Mayan books survived the Christian holocaust.

As a footnote to the rest—the first Christian missionaries to arrive on Easter Island in the Pacific ocean, just like their predecessors in Africa and South America, set about destroying the old culture they found there. About 600 large stone heads, up to 40 feet high, looked out over the sea. At their bases were wooden boards covered in hieroglyphics. A few were sent to the Vatican, and most of the rest were incinerated *in situ*. The heads they could not destroy or they would have done. The population was exterminated, carried into slavery or blasted by western diseases. 4000 lived there when it was discovered in 1722—100 in 1887.

To any objective person, it is Christianity which is the work of the Devil.

- Reference: Edward Parsons: *The Alexandrian Library*, London, 1952.

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## **Bookburning? And the Rest: Chronology**

To help counter Christians in denial, a Greek correspondent, Achaïos, has submitted the following chronology of Christian persecution especially of the Greeks...

- **314** Immediately after its full legalisation, the Christian Church attacks the gentiles (non-Christians). The Council of Ancyra denounces the worship of Goddess Artemis.
- **324** The emperor Constantine declares Christianity as the only official religion of the Roman empire. In Dydim, Minor Asia, he sacks the Oracle of the god Apollo and tortures the Pagan priests to death. He also evicts all non-Christian peoples from Mount Athos and destroys all the local Hellenic temples.
- **326** Constantine, following the instructions of his mother Helen, destroys the temple of the god Asclepius in Aigeai of Cilicia and many temples of the goddess Aphrodite in Jerusalem, Aphaca, Mambre, Phœnicia, Baalbek, etc.
- **330** Constantine steals the treasures and statues of the Pagan temples of Greece to decorate Nova Roma (Constantinople), the new capital of his Empire.
- **335** Constantine sacks many Pagan temples of Minor Asia and Palestine and orders the execution by crucifixion of "all magicians and soothsayers". Martyrdom of the neoplatonist philosopher Sopatrus.
- **341** Flavius Julius Constantius persecutes "all the soothsayers and the Hellenists". Many gentile Hellenes are either imprisoned or executed.
- **346** New large scale persecutions against non-Christian peoples in Constantinople. Banishment of the famous orator Libanius accused as a "magician".
- **353** An edict of Constantius orders the death penalty for all kind of worship through sacrifices and "idols".
- **354** A new edict orders the closing of all the Pagan temples. Some of them are profaned and turned into brothels or gambling rooms. Executions of Pagan priests.
- **354** A new edict of Constantius orders the destruction of the Pagan temples and the execution of all "idolaters". First burning of libraries in various cities of the empire. The first lime factories are



being organised next to the closed Pagan temples. A major part of the holy architecture of the Pagans turns to lime.

- **357** Constantius outlaws all methods of divination (astrology not excluded).
- **359** In Skythopolis, Syria, the Christians organise the first death camps for the torture and executions of the arrested non-Christians from all around the empire.
- **361 to 363** Religious tolerance and restoration of the Pagan cults declared in Constantinople (11th December 361) by the Pagan emperor Flavius Claudius Julianus.
- **363** Assassination of Julianus (26th June).
- **364** Emperor Flavius Jovianus orders the burning of the Library of Antioch.
- **364** An Imperial edict (11th September) orders the death penalty for all those that worship their ancestral gods or practice divination (“sileat omnibus perpetuo divinandi curiositas”). Three different edicts (4th February, 9th September, 23rd December) order the confiscation of all properties of the Pagan temples and the death penalty for participation in Pagan rituals, even private ones.
- **365** An Imperial edict (17th November) forbids the gentile (Pagan) officers of the army to command Christian soldiers.
- **370** Valens orders a tremendous persecution of non-Christian peoples in all the Eastern Empire. In Antioch, among many other non-Christians, the ex-governor Fidustius and the priests Hilarius and Patricius are executed. Tons of books are burnt in the squares of the cities of the Eastern Empire. All the friends of Julianus are persecuted (Orebasius, Sallustius, Pegasus etc.), the philosopher Simonides is burned alive and the philosopher Maximus is decapitated.
- **372** Valens orders the governor of Minor Asia to exterminate all the Hellenes and all documents of their wisdom.
- **373** New prohibition of all divination methods. The term ‘Pagan’ (pagani, villagers, equivalent to the modern insult, ‘peasants’) is introduced by the Christians to demean non-believers.
- **375** The temple of god Asclepius in Epidaurus, Greece, is closed down by the Christians.
- **380** On 27th February, Christianity becomes the exclusive religion of the Roman empire by an edict of the emperor Flavius Theodosius, requiring that:

All the various nations which are subject to our clemency and moderation should continue in the profession of that religion which was delivered to the Romans by the divine Apostle Peter.

- The non-Christians are called “loathsome, heretics, stupid and blind”. In another edict, Theodosius calls “insane” those that do not believe to the Christian God and outlaws all disagreements with the Church dogmas. Ambrosius, bishop of Milan, starts destroying all the Pagan temples of his area. The Christian priests lead the hungry mob against the temple of goddess Demeter in Eleusis and try to lynch the hierophants Nestorius and Priskus. The 95 years old hierophant Nestorius ends the Eleusinian Mysteries and announces the predominance of mental darkness over the human race.
- **381** On 2nd May, Theodosius deprives of all their rights the Christians that return back to the Pagan religion. In all the Eastern Empire the Pagan temples and Libraries are looted or burned down. On 21st December, Theodosius outlaws even simple visits to the temples of the Hellenes. In Constantinople, the temple of goddess Aphrodite is turned to a brothel and the temples of Sun and Artemis to stables.
- **382** “Hellelujah” (“Glory to Yahweh”) is imposed in the Christian mass.
- **384** Theodosius orders the Praetorian Prefect Maternus Cynegius, a dedicated Christian, to cooperate with the local bishops and destroy the temples of the Pagans in Northern Greece and Minor Asia.
- **385 to 388** Maternus Cynegius, encouraged by his fanatic wife, and bishop “Saint” Marcellus with his gangs scour the countryside and sack and destroy hundreds of Hellenic temples, shrines and altars. Among others they destroy the temple of Edessa, the Cabeireion of Imbros, the temple of Zeus in Apamea, the temple of Apollo in Dydimia and all the temples of Palmyra. Thousands of innocent Pagans from all sides of the empire suffer martyrdom in the notorious death camps of Skythopolis.
- **386** Theodosius outlaws (16th June) the care of the sacked Pagan temples.
- **388** Public talks on religious subjects are outlawed by Theodosius. The old orator Libanius sends his famous epistle “Pro Templis” to Theodosius with the hope that the few remaining Hellenic temples will be respected and spared.
- **389 to 390** All non-Christian date-methods are outlawed. Hordes of fanatic hermits from the desert flood the cities of the Middle East and Egypt and destroy statues, altars, libraries and Pagan temples, and lynch the Pagans. Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria, starts heavy persecutions against non-Christian peoples, turns the temple of Dionysos into a Christian church, burns down the Mithraeum of the city, destroys the temple of Zeus and burlesques the Pagan priests before they are killed by stoning. The Christian mob profanes the cult images.

- **391** On 24th February, a new edict of Theodosius prohibits not only visits to Pagan temples but also looking at the vandalised statues. New heavy persecutions all around the empire. In Alexandria, Egypt, Pagans, led by the philosopher Olympius, revolt and after some street fights they lock themselves inside the fortified temple of god Serapis (the Serapeion). After a violent siege, the Christians take over the building, demolish it, burn its famous library and profane the cult images.
- **392** On 8th November, Theodosius outlaws all the non-Christian rituals and names them “superstitions of the gentiles” (gentilicia superstitio). New full scale persecutions against Pagans. The Mysteries of Samothrace are ended and the priests slaughtered. In Cyprus the local bishop ‘Saint’ Epiphanius and ‘Saint’ Tychon destroy almost all the temples of the island and exterminate thousands of non-Christians. The local Mysteries of goddess Aphrodite are ended. Theodosius’s edict declares: ‘the ones that won’t obey pater Epiphanius have no right to keep living in that island’. The Pagans revolt against the emperor and the Church in Petra, Aeropolis, Rafia, Gaza, Baalbek and other cities of the Middle East.
- **393** The Pythian Games, the Aktia Games and the Olympic Games are outlawed as part of the Hellenic ‘idolatry’. The Christians sack the temples of Olympia.
- **395** Two new edicts (22nd July and 7th August) cause new persecutions against Pagans. Rufinus, the eunuch Prime Minister of emperor Flavius Arcadius directs the hordes of the baptised Goths (led by Alaric) to the country of the Hellenes. Encouraged by Christian monks the barbarians sack and burn many cities (Dion, Delphi, Megara, Corinth, Pheneos, Argos, Nemea, Lycosoura, Sparta, Messene, Phigaleia, Olympia, etc.), slaughter or enslave innumerable gentile Hellenes and burn down all the temples. Among others, they burn down the Eleusinian Sanctuary and burn alive all its priests (including the hierophant of Mithras Hilarius).
- **396** On 7th December, a new edict by Arcadius orders that Paganism be treated as high treason. Imprisonment of the few remaining Pagan priests and hierophants.
- **397** ‘Demolish them!’. Flavius Arcadius orders all the still standing Pagan temples to be demolished.
- **398** The Fourth Church Council of Carthage prohibits to everybody, including to the Christian bishops, the study of the books of the Pagans. Porphyrius, bishop of Gaza, demolishes almost all the Pagan temples of his city (except 9 of them that remain active).
- **399** With a new edict (13th July) Flavius Arcadius orders all the still standing Pagan temples, mainly in the countryside, to be immediately demolished.

- **400** Bishop Nicetas destroys the Oracle of the god Dionysus in Vesai and baptises all the non-Christians of this area.
- **401** The Christian mob of Carthage lynches non-Christians and destroys temples and ‘idols’. In Gaza too, the local bishop ‘Saint’ Porphyrius sends his followers to lynch Pagans and to demolish the remaining 9 still active temples of the city. The 15th Council of Chalkedon orders all the Christians that still keep good relations with their gentile relatives to be excommunicated (even after their death).
- **405** John Chrysostom sends hordes of gray dressed monks armed with clubs and iron bars to destroy the ‘idols’ in all the cities of Palestine.
- **406** John Chrysostom collects funds from rich Christian women to financially support the demolition of the Hellenic temples. In Ephessus he orders the destruction of the famous temple of goddess Artemis. In Salamis, Cyprus, ‘Saints’ Epiphanius and Eutychius continue the persecutions of the Pagans and the total destruction of their temples and sanctuaries.
- **407** A new edict outlaws once more all the non-Christian acts of worship
- **408** The emperor of the Western Empire, Honorius, and the emperor of the Eastern Empire, Arcadius, order together all the sculptures of the Pagan temples to be either destroyed or to be taken away. Private ownership of Pagan sculpture is also outlawed. The local bishops lead new heavy persecutions against the Pagans and new book burning. The judges that have pity for the Pagans are also persecuted. ‘Saint’ Augustine massacres hundreds of protesting Pagans in Calama, Algeria.
- **409** Another edict orders all methods of divination including astrology to be punished by death.
- **415** In Alexandria, Egypt, the Christian mob, urged by the bishop Cyrillus, attacks a few days before the Judaeo-Christian Pascha (Easter) and cuts to pieces the famous and beautiful philosopher Hypatia. The pieces of her body, carried around by the Christian mob through the streets of Alexandria, are finally burned together with her books in a place called Cynaron. On 30th August, new persecutions start against all the Pagan priests of North Africa who end their lives either crucified or burned alive.
- **416** The inquisitor Hypatius, alias “The Sword of God”, exterminates the last Pagans of Bithynia. In Constantinople (7th December) all non-Christian army officers, public employees and judges are dismissed.
- **423** Emperor Theodosius II declares (8th June) that the religion of the Pagans is nothing more than “demon worship” and orders all those who persist in practicing it to be punished by imprisonment and torture.

- **429** The temple of goddess Athena (Parthenon) on the Acropolis of Athens is sacked. The Athenian Pagans are persecuted.
- **435** On 14th November, a new edict by Theodosius II orders the death penalty for all ‘heretics’ and Pagans of the empire. Only Judaism is considered a legal non-Christian religion.
- **438** Theodosius II issues a new edict (31st January) against the Pagans, incriminating their ‘idolatry’ as the reason of a recent plague!
- **440 to 450** The Christians demolish all the monuments, altars and temples of Athens, Olympia, and other Greek cities.
- **448** Theodosius II orders all non-Christian books to be burned.
- **450** All the temples of Aphrodisias (the City of the Goddess Aphrodite) are demolished and all its libraries burned down. The city is renamed Stavroupolis (City of the Cross).
- **451** New edict by Theodosius II (4th November) emphasises that ‘idolatry’ is punished by death.
- **457 to 491** Sporadic persecutions against the Pagans of the Eastern Empire. Among others, the physician Jacobus and the philosopher Gessius are executed. Severianus, Herestios, Zosimus, Isidorus and others are tortured and imprisoned. The proselytiser Conon and his followers exterminate the last non-Christians of Imbros Island, Northeast Aegean Sea. The last worshippers of Lavranus Zeus are exterminated in Cyprus.
- **482 to 488** The majority of the Pagans of Minor Asia are exterminated after a desperate revolt against the emperor and the Church.
- **486** More ‘underground’ Pagan priests are discovered, arrested, burlesqued, tortured and executed in Alexandria, Egypt.
- **515** Baptism becomes obligatory even for those that already say they are Christians. The emperor of Constantinople, Anastasius, orders the massacre of the Pagans in the Arabian city Zoara and the demolition of the temple of local god Theandrites.
- **528** Emperor Jutprada (Justinianus) outlaws the ‘alternative’ Olympian Games of Antioch. He also orders the execution—by fire, crucifixion, tearing to pieces by wild beasts or cutting to pieces by iron nails—of all who practice ‘sorcery, divination, magic or idolatry’ and prohibits all teachings by the Pagans (‘the ones suffering from the blasphemous insanity of the Hellenes’).
- **529** Justinianus outlaws the Athenian Philosophical Academy and has its property confiscated.
- **532** The inquisitor Ioannis Asiacus, a fanatic monk, leads a crusade against the Pagans of Minor Asia.
- **542** Justinianus allows the inquisitor Ioannis Asiacus to convert the Pagans of Phrygia, Caria and Lydia, Minor Asia. Within 35 years of this crusade, 99 churches and 12 monasteries are built on the sites of demolished Pagan temples.

- **546** Hundreds of Pagans are put to death in Constantinople by the inquisitor Ioannis Asiacus.
- **556** Justinianus orders the notorious inquisitor Amantius to go to Antioch, to find, arrest, torture and exterminate the last non-Christians of the city and burn all the private libraries down.
- **562** Mass arrests, burlesquing, tortures, imprisonments and executions of gentile Hellenes in Athens, Antioch, Palmyra and Constantinople.
- **578 to 582** The Christians torture and crucify gentile Hellenes all around the Eastern Empire, and exterminate the last non-Christians of Heliopolis (Baalbek).
- **580** The Christian inquisitors attack a secret temple of Zeus in Antioch. The priest commits suicide, but the rest of the Pagans are arrested. All the prisoners, the Vice Governor Anatolius included, are tortured and sent to Constantinople to face trial. Sentenced to death they are thrown to the lions. The wild animals being unwilling to tear them to pieces, they end up crucified. Their dead bodies are dragged in the streets by the Christian mob and afterwards thrown unburied in the dump.
- **583** New persecutions against the gentile Hellenes by the Mauricius.
- **590** In all the Eastern Empire the Christian accusers “discover” Pagan conspiracies. New storm of torture and executions.
- **692** The ‘Penthekto” Council of Constantinople prohibits the remains of Calends, Brumalia, Anthesteria, and other Pagan/Dionysian celebrations.
- **804** The gentile Hellenes of Mesa Mani (Cape Tainaron, Lakonia, Greece) resist successfully the attempt of Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople, to convert them to Christianity.
- **850 to 860** Violent conversion of the last gentile Hellenes of Laconia by the Armenian ‘Saint”Nikon.

Source: Vlasias Rassias, *Demolish Them!...* published in Greek, Athens 1994, Diipetes Editions, ISBN 960-85311-3-6. Any similar material will be received gratefully.

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## Discussion

### From James H

I was interested in your article on askwhy.co.uk about the destruction of Pagan manuscripts by Christians and was wondering if I could ask a couple of questions. I have been examining this subject for a while and have found some evidence that “orthodox” Christians deliberately destroyed the work of



“heretics” and some magical texts. However, I can find nothing at all that supports the claim that Pagan literature went the same way. In particular you mentioned the demolition (it was not burnt down) of the Serapeum in Alexandria. That this happened cannot be doubted but it would appear the library was long gone at the time. Have a look at this essay that covers all the primary sources for the Great Library of Alexandria and shows that the Christian destruction was a myth relating to Gibbon reading too much into his sources (not a surprise!). May I ask what you make of this essay and also what sources you been able to find. Given that we should not expect the early Christians to be ashamed of burning the work of the devil their silence about the matter is even more surprising.

Thanks for showing me Bede’s site. I do not agree with your final remark. Early Christians might have been proud of it, but later Christians, after the rediscovery of learning, were not. Christians are always defensive about this and part of the reason it is problematic is because they are dab hands at destroying evidence, then pleading innocence. They had 1500 years in which to do it.

There is an expression to damn with faint praise but it works just as well expressed as to praise with faint damnation. General Pinochet, doubtless a faithful mass-taking Catholic, was extremely kind as a destroyer of the aspirations of the Chilean people because normally far more than 3000 people die when fascist Generals overturn the will of the people—as in Spain. This I heard on TV this very afternoon and illustrates my point. Praising with faint damnation is accepting responsibility for a small crime to exculpate oneself from a large one.

I say on the page, the Christians claim that the Serapeum library which they admit they destroyed was a small temple library, not the original massive library of Alexandria. It is sophistry, but even if the library was a fraction of what it was, it was still a massive source of ancient scholarship.

I took a look at Mr Bede’s pages, and I think they are well presented and well researched, but Christians are unrepentantly tendentious in everything they argue and Mr Bede is no less so than any other Christian. Put bluntly he is trying to kid us, as Christians do.

OK, the Serapeum was not itself torched, but it seems more likely that the truth in the story that the Moslems destroyed the library was that the Christians had fed the rolls to the holocausts of the bath houses. I do not deny in the piece I wrote that the library had been attacked before Theophilus ordered the destruction of the temple, but why should it be assumed that the books were not replaced, even if only in part? Why is Plutarch not to be relied on when he says that Mark Antony replaced 200,000 books from the library at Pergamum, yet should be taken seriously when he says that Caesar destroyed the library. This is what you would call tendentious!

Hirtius says Alexandria would not burn because it was made of stone, and this must be a lie because all cities burn, yet Caesar admitted freely that he burnt the Egyptian fleet in its harbour and the quays caught fire too. He made no such admission regarding the library. Like modern politicians, he did not want obvious blots on his CV, but it is not proof of dissimulation. I cannot see that Hirtius should be dismissed as he is except because it suits Bede's argument. Stone built temples and palaces would not easily catch fire simply because a nearby quayside is ablaze. The owners or priests would be taking measures to make sure the fire would not spread. Assuredly, if Caesar had wanted to incinerate the city, he could have done so. Preston Chesser, in eHistory, online, notes that Caesar had his public opponents and enemies, and indeed they eventually murdered him, so he could hardly have kept the scandal of burning a national treasure like the library from public debate:

“If he was solely to blame for the disappearance of the Library it is very likely significant documentation on the affair would exist today.”

The evidence is that he did not burn the Bruchesium. It would have been a crime that could not have been hidden.

Mr Bede has to accept that Cicero does not mention the crime when he should have done—had it happened!—Bede's assumption throughout. He simply dismisses the omission with a few half-hearted excuses. An argument from silence he tells us is to be doubted—unless it is a Christian argument from silence. Next he tries the technique of suggesting an answer—his answer—with a leading question. “Can we conclude that the library was no longer there?” It is a conclusion to do so, no doubt about that, but the conclusion that he dismisses is more likely—he could not describe it because the library was inside and quite possibly in the vaults, since it was not designed to take a large collection. The palace was built on an artificial mound fully one hundred steps above the level of the city. The mound had an interior cavity supported by arches, split into vaults and apartments. This is possibly where the bulk of the library was kept.

When Mr Bede talks about there being less information than earlier librarians had, according to someone called Mostafa El-Abbadi, there is no dispute—the library was not as big as it had been.

Bede blandly concedes that the relevant book of Livy's history has been “lost”. Considering they tried to have the credit of being the preservers of culture and knowledge, the Christians were most careless about “losing” books. This makes my point, they were doing the opposite—they were destroying books. Seneca quotes Livy on this but Bede discounts it! Tendentious? Seneca says 40,000 books were destroyed, only ten percent of the smallest estimate of the original collection. That is why it does not suit the Christian argument.

The evidence of Dio Cassius is similarly dismissed. Tendentious! No one seems to dispute that the quay was destroyed and Dio Cassius says the books that were destroyed were on the quays, one imagines having just been unloaded or waiting to be loaded. The librarians collected books from everywhere they could, promising to copy and return them. That is how the library was built up and presumably repaired when books were damaged or destroyed. Furthermore, obviously an industry of copying books for other libraries existed to help finance and maintain the collection. No one disputes this. So there were quite likely to have been cargoes of books at the docks. Why should Bede cavalierly dismiss this possibility? It does not suit the Christian defence!

On the other hand, a passage in Gellius accepted by many as an obvious interpolation, is admitted as evidence because it says the entire library of 700,000 books went up in smoke. Ask yourself too, if this was an interpolation, who would be interpolating it? Christians controlled book production for well over a millennium.

He quotes Marcellinus and Orosius and, like the American attorney in court, implants the evidence that he knows will be overruled. It is both late and dependent on Gellius, or is it Gellius that is dependent on Marcellinus, being an interpolation? These historians are 500 years, almost, from the event. In any case, Orosius admits that the books were scattered by “our own men”—Christians—but please don’t notice that.

Mr Bede comes to his summing up, and calls one of the witnesses a “crony”. Tendentious? It is a “cover up”. Their “silence” about the crime is not “surprising”. In case you did not notice, Bede has decided that they had done it. Yet Caesar and other witnesses he has quoted, the most reliable ones closest to the events, do not confirm that the whole library was destroyed. It is the later ones who do that.

He tells us that the library did not exist at the time of Strabo “as a separate building”? He tells us that Plutarch, Seneca and Aulus Gellius all say the library was destroyed. Tendentious? Plutarch did, but also said that Cleopatra got 200,000 more books from Mark Antony to restore the collection (and this according to Gibbon, horrid man daring to criticise Christian saintliness). Gellius is quite probably an interpolation. Seneca says 40,000 books only were destroyed. Bede repeats that Seneca said “the books perished”, despite giving the figure. He also, paradoxically admits that scholarship continued! What were the scholars studying? What was the mathematician Diophantus trying to restore in 270 AD only to have his efforts frustrated at the hands of Aurelian? The Serapeum had become the main library, so it is hardly surprising that the original library should be described as a memory. But a library is its books not the building that houses it.

“Theodosius was emperor and energetically converting all his subjects to Christianity”. Bede makes it sound like a virtue. When communists allegedly

ban Christianity, it is a dastardly crime, but when Christians ban Paganism, it is God's own work. From where I stand they look to be exactly the same crime—people are being obliged to think in somebody else's prescribed way.

“Alexandria remained a centre of scholarship and other libraries existed”. Well, well! “The Emperor Claudius set up the eponymous named Claudian to be a centre for the study of history and Hadrian founded a library at the Caesarean temple during his visit”. “The fourth century Bishop Epiphanius of Cyprus (died 402 AD) in his *Weights and Measures* (actually a biblical commentary!) says that there were over 50,000 volumes in the “daughter” library that he places in the Serapeum”.

Is Bede now trying to tell us that these libraries were not destroyed at all? Caesar did not destroy them because some were endowed by Caesars in the next century or two after him. The Christians never destroyed anything because they are so kind. The Moslems did not destroy any libraries because the sources are late and the stories are fantastic. My article points out that the destruction of books was not merely one act in 391 BC. It is merely that that one seems to have captured the popular imagination and is remembered. Justinian closed and dispersed any remaining schools or made them Christian and scattered their libraries in the sixth century to finish off the job.

That Marcellinus speaks of the libraries in the perfect tense is hardly convincing. If he is writing his history after the destruction and putting it in an historic present, he only needs to lose his concentration briefly to get this error. Equally it could be scribal. Marcellinus is also always called a Pagan, yet is sympathetic to Christianity. He supported Julian but was perhaps sensible enough to accept the signs of the times when Theodosius ruled, for the sake of his career. This is Mr Bede's best point but hardly enough to build on.

Rufinus Tyrannius did not mention any libraries at all, yet Bede has just mentioned three that Caesar did not destroy. What then is the point of this? Is he trying to show that Rufinus is a bad reporter? He ‘puts the blame squarely on the local Pagans for inciting the Christian mob’. You mean there were Christian mobs? The same applies to Eunapius and Socrates. The Christian predilection for censorship now has to be considered too. The offending passages, if present originally, could easily have been excised at a later date when Christian publishers were more cautious about being depicted as barbarians.

Orosius is quoted to show there were no other libraries in Alexandria when Caesar burnt the books, but he says "today there exist in the temples book chests which we ourselves have seen and which we are told were emptied by our own men in our own time when these temples were plundered (and this is indeed the truth)." Mr Bede tells us Orosius is a “useless” historian. Wonder why!

Mr Bede tries to wheedle his way out: "Christians did empty some temples of books but we cannot go much further." Hope you are still alert. Why do we have to go any further? A Christian eyewitness (they normally believe anyone who claims to be an eyewitness) tells us just what we wanted to know! The chests of books were emptied by Christians when they plundered the temples. QED.

What was the rest of all this about other than blather and flannel aimed at apologising for the barbarism of Christian history? Christians know the tree is known by its fruit, and the fruit of Christian history is death, torture and destruction. They have to deny it and cover it up, but it is God's Truth—deceit!

Thanks for your long and detailed reply but I must admit that I found it a bit of a disappointment. I asked if you had any sources for the Christian book destruction and you have only been able to tell me that Christians must have destroyed the evidence.

I do not get your point about evidence. I have a page for bibliography where I list all my sources for the whole site. If you want formal scholarship, why don't you go to a university? I am a reporter, and my reportage has higher standards than many pseudo-scholarly books (in that they give endless footnotes to give an aura of scholarship). Unlike Christians, I am not an habitual liar, secure in the thought that lying for god gets them a place in heaven. And Bede quotes the relevant evidence on this topic, so what more do you want? You sound like a Christian. They will not accept any evidence however good it is because their faith is their evidence. I said the evidence has mostly been destroyed—by Christians! I showed that Bede's interpretation of what remains is tendentious, but if you disagree, at least I cannot burn you at the stake.

Regardless of whether this happened it does not help from a historical point of view.

It helps the Christians. That is why they did it.

If we have no evidence then that is that. The lack of ancient texts today is adequately explained by 2000 years of war, neglect, accidental fires and decay. I certainly cannot take on an apologist with silence.

It shows how gullible you are. Do you seriously believe that all of those books, widely dispersed over an empire half as big as the US could have been destroyed accidentally by the means you mention? Was there only one copy of each book? My page points out that there were many libraries including private ones. I try to point out in my reply and on the page that large libraries ran an industry for producing books. To think that so many books could have been utterly destroyed not deliberately is puerile. Even if your apology for the Christians is true and the books went the way you say, it proves that Christians

had stopped the manufacture of books, content in the knowledge that they would decay.

Bede is certainly an apologist but I found his essay was a fair piece of work.

I showed he was not fair, but your drift is plain to me. You will believe what you want.

On the Serapeum library he is right—it was almost certainly gone before Theophilus got his claws on it. The silence of Eunapius and the words of Marcellinus seem proof positive that Gibbon was mistaken.

Why was Gibbon mistaken? He agrees with Bede, stating very clearly that the *old* Library of the Ptolemies was destroyed. But Cleopatra started a *new* one with the help of Antony. I think it is unlikely that it was totally destroyed, but it does not matter either way, since many books were replaced and a large library remained. Antony's gift was to *start* the new library, so plainly the procedure of collecting books from everywhere would have continued. It is, if you like, evidence that the Christians *must* have deliberately destroyed books that they all disappeared except for the selection Christians tolerated. The end of one library does not destroy all knowledge because much of it is repeated elsewhere and can be reassesmbled.

It was finding this out that made me keen to find any other evidence for ancient Christian book burning and I'm sorry you haven't been able to give me any. I do not mean to lessen such crimes as the Inquisition and Crusades (for which we have warehouses of evidence—the new book on the Cathars may interest you) but we must stick to the highest standards of scholarship when cataloguing these matters. I fear that you are perhaps an anti-Christian apologist. This is all well and good but does not take scholarship very far. For that we need references and objective facts. Given the abuse of these concepts by fundamentalist Christians over the years it doesn't help to find others doing the same thing.

You speak of references and objective facts, sounding just like any Christian apologist. They have destroyed the evidence and then claim there is no objective evidence against them. You read the travesty of an interpretation of evidence that they have presented, and believe it even when its utter bias is exposed. Though Christians bleat over and over again to their critics, like me, who say, where is Solomon? where is David? where is Moses? etc, etc, the mantra: "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence", denying that the absence of a whole culture can be explained away, will still use the failure of Eunapius et al to mention a library explicitly as evidence—conclusive evidence to you. The last word is that the Christians admitted the crime. If that impresses you less than someone not mentioning the library, you must examine your own thinking.



If you have read my pages and not noticed that I am utterly anti-Christian, your perception is faulty. Christianity has destroyed everything it could, including thousands if not millions of people, and created misery throughout the world for over a millennium of history. Anyone who can read that and, as you point out, it is not arguable, can hardly maintain that the highest standards of scholarship must necessarily remain neutral. Even scholars can come to a conclusion—that is the point of evidence. Only Christians pretend that this should be a polite debate. Christianity is respected in our society because its true history is unknown to most people. Bede's article, and your own position, shows that they present what little evidence remains in a wholly tendentious way, to make themselves look saintly. Those who believe they were saints present them as saints. It is Christians who argue about being fair or scholarly, because they want to win arguments by tying down their opponents then jumping on them. Righting a wrong cannot be done by being neutral. This has to be fought the way you would fight any bully, using his own tactics. Only the bully's friends would defend him. Regards, Mike.

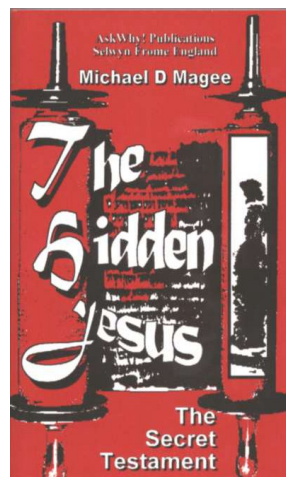
Note Added: I am informed that my correspondent was none other than Mr Bede himself!

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## **The Hidden Jesus**

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- Why do demons get driven out of opponents of Jesus when he and his henchmen arrive on the scene? Why are these people torn and left for dead? Was it because the disciples were doing the tearing and beating to silence the opposition?
- Why are Jesus's main apostles given such thuggish nicknames? Could it be that they really were thugs, or zealots as they came to be known? Christians pretend they were pacifists but is that because the early church had to paint such a picture to disguise the opposite, and has done so ever since?
- What did Jesus consider to be God's when he, according to Christians, agreed to pay the tribute money, saying, "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto god what is God's? Aren't the only characteristic possessions claimed by God, His Children and the land he promised them? Jesus was *refusing* to pay tribute when he uttered this famous sentence.
- What was the unbindable, savage demon that Jesus rendered impotent when it revealed itself to be really 2000 Gadarene swine and to have the name Legion? Is Gadarene, an inland town the correct name for these swine? What was the Field of Akeldama where guts were spilled, gentiles were supposed to have lain asleep and had the nickname the field of blood? Who were the Galilaeans whose blood was spilt in the temple?
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two thousand years of conditioning and the invention of spurious translations of Greek words to suit Christian belief in the so-called New Testament Greek have succeeded in blinding even the most critical of scholars.

The gentile bishops of the embryonic religion were faced with travelers' tales from Palestine that Jesus was not what he seemed. This oral tradition was strong because Jews were already widespread in the Empire and after the defeat of their rebellion in the Jewish War and their dispersion in 70 AD many more arrived from Palestine. Pericopes, individual stories about Jesus, kept coming to the bishops and when they did not match their preferred image of a saintly Son of God, had to be "corrected". The bishops had to say to their flocks, "Ho, Ho, Theophilus, how silly you are. It was not quite like that. No, this is what really happened." Then they would change a few subjects and objects and retell the tale such that a core remained but the sense favoured the view they were propagating rather than the truth.

It still happens today. There never was a gate in Jerusalem called The Eye of a Needle but it was invented by clerics to allow the rich to be saved when the plain sense of Jesus's aside was that it was impossible for the rich to be saved. Dr Magee explains parables and the healing miracles, and such difficulties as the cursing of the fig tree, the meaning of Nazarene, the cleansing of the temple, the release of Barabbas, Peter's triple denial, the tribute money and the Gadarene swine.

This book is a tour de force. For honest reasoning people, though not those who are irrational or emotionally dependent on the traditional image of Jesus, gospel stories will never be the same again-they now make sense. Oddly, the message of many modern Christians is upheld-that God is not an external supernatural entity ready to interfere with the world at a whim or a prayer. Jesus believed an external God was ready to intervene-he was forsaken or rather mistaken-but Christians have made the same mistake ever since, teaching people to blame devils instead of facing up to their own responsibility for their actions. Our gods and devils are within us and there we must seek and come to terms with them.

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