

How Christianity Destroyed the Environment (and other ancient mysteries)

By David Jamison

There is no denying the amount of good Christianity has done for the world. A man turned the other cheek and decried hypocrisy in earnest. No one ever outright countered the Pharisees' wisdom back then – but Jesus called them frauds. And when he was in turn attacked, his willingness to give his life for his ideals was unparalleled at that time in history. None of that is under dispute. The real evil in Christianity came after, when lesser humans got a hold of it.

Western Europe didn't know what to do with Christianity. Most bishops knew it was the most "real" religion they had encountered yet, but they gave up on Jesus' ideals in a minute. Within a few centuries of his death, bishops were using manipulation, intolerance, and persecution to safeguard the sanctity of the Christian church. Doubtless Jesus would have been appalled, but all the major players from the New Testament were dead and buried, and the only people Christians had to look to for guidance were bishops – not much

better than the Pharisees by now. But along the way a little side effect occurred that I don't think anyone planned on. Christianity eventually wiped paganism off the map of accepted worship, and with it Western civilization's relationship with nature.

The defining aspect of paganism – and to that point the defining aspect of RELIGION – was its connection to nature. Indeed, the most ancient religions began as attempts to try and rationalize nature. “Our crops must be growing because the corn god is happy.” “Fire is so destructive because it's alive.” Stuff like that. Eventually, man went on to give a god to virtually every natural phenomenon. As a result, the Western world maintained a very close relationship with nature. Though modern science had not yet taught them the effects of bacteria, or animal or flora endangerment, there was still a bond that every citizen of the world had with nature because, well, that's what was mostly around. If Jesus had been there, I have no doubt he would have found room for the pagan gods of Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Greek and British societies had great and colorful traditions, with lightning-sluing gods and woodland creatures with magical powers. But Norse gods, Asian phantoms, and Egyptian icons were all massacred by the fury and fervor of the “Jewish cult.”

This pattern unfolded naturally right up until the Middle Ages, also known as the Dark Ages. While in other polytheistic nations, people would live off of nature and, when it didn't work out, pray to their

nature gods; in Western Europe, people went to towns and started to rely on technology and the accomplishments of MAN. Nature wasn't so hot anymore; 'cuz now man could be born divine.

The stage was set for modern society to emerge. Now, our inventions and innovations were not so much to complement nature, but rather to improve upon and even replace her. "Zeus is no impediment now, so I can make fire in a forge." "I'm no longer afraid of Aton, I can make a clock to tell me when He rises in the East." The Renaissance wasn't a time of just pretty pictures, it was a philosophical flowering through the prism of Christianity, so that all shackles of superstitious pagan beliefs were gone, and mankind really got a chance to stretch the wings of our genius. Without these shackles, Western Europe burned a map on the world. It was at that time that Western European nations took over control of the world stage from the Islamic world, where it has remained ever since.

I think what happened is this: Once Western Europe started blossoming, the inventions came fast and furious, and technology built upon itself, until things just exploded in the 18th Century's Industrial Revolution. But there was just one problem: modern man had long since lost our connection with nature, so we depleted and drained and destroyed her without impunity. The Western Christian churches taught that God would never let us run out of natural resources – what would've been the point of Him giving them to us

in the first place? And the Bible makes no bones about ecological conservation – it is decidedly silent on the matter. There is nowhere any mention of ways to replenish herds or keep our daily crap out of the water – though the Bible’s tributes to God’s majesty in the creation of said nature are legion.

So here’s where we find ourselves today. Totally Christianized and totally Westernized, but displaced as to what exactly our relationship with nature SHOULD be. God has made it clear through our conquests that man was to have dominion over the earth . . . but was every creature, then, supposed to be subservient to us? Or, grimmer still, was Earth simply to be looked at as a resource for our continued growth? That’s a tough one. And as a product of this society I can honestly say I don’t know. And even many religions that retained some link to the land withered in the face of the untold bounty that was flowing out of rich Christian churches. But I do know that modern science is now saying that we need to take some measures to conserve this ecological gift God has given us. These days, more scientists are ecological activists, continually advising their government against wasteful endeavors. And while a vast number of other scientists have decided that throwing more technology at the problem will solve the problem, most science fiction writers have given us the likely outcome of that plan of action – waves of spaceships leaping from the earth’s surface in search of new colonies to replace our soon-dead planet.

So, Christianity didn't really DESTROY the environment. Christianity is, in essence, a perfectly peaceful religion, full of moral fiber and goodwill. It is, as always, human arrogance, our lust for our own ingenuity that did us in. When man started to worship his own creations more than God's, we were sunk, so to speak. Of course there IS room for mankind to have a relationship with technology AND nature, but the person who could probably have shown us the best way to make that transition was executed in Jerusalem 2000 years ago. So now we have the most dominant culture in the world, which has created the most industrial damage the world has ever known. We are richer and smarter than ever, but most people in the West are lost in the wilderness without a 7-11 or a cell phone. So do we have nothing to look forward to but gloom-and-doom? Probably not. But we'll have to have a new revolution that pulls us back from the brink of disaster. As it is today, Western Civilization is a mighty movement, trampling and devouring everything in its path. And reparations must be paid to the planet Earth.