

### 3. 禁锢的开始

#### The Beginning of Restraint



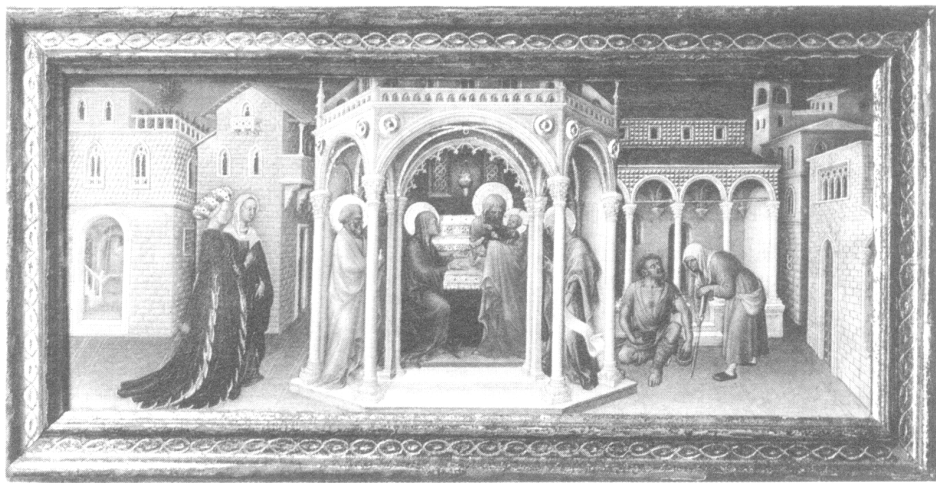
大多数罗马人都深陷于恶劣的生存环境中。在郊区拥挤不堪的贫民窟里，繁荣昌盛不见踪影。生活就是不断地品尝饥饿、汗水和痛苦的滋味。他们所听说过的神已经死了好几百年、好几千年了。告诉他们那些神的人，也已经死了好几百年、好几千年了。

然而，水果贩子、卖面包的却曾在在一个阴暗的小花园中，同彼得说过话，在耶稣被钉死的下午，彼得本人就在各各他山（耶稣被钉死之地）附近。基督教胜于其他所有宗教的，正是这种个人色彩，这种个人直接感受到的亲密、切近，以及耶稣一直对各国没有权利的下层人所表达的爱，这种爱从他说过的一切话中洋溢出来。奴隶们听懂了，耶稣将给他们一个光明的未来。他们生平第一次感受到了新希望的曙光。

他们可以自由了，这就是基督教这个新信仰的力量所在。基督教是第一个给普通人以机会的具体的宗教体系。最终建立在古罗马帝国废墟上的基督教会，是两个冲突的利益群体相妥协的混合物。一边是坚定拥护耶稣基督所宣扬的博爱、仁慈应无所不及这一理想的人。另一边则是根深蒂固、僵化褊狭的乡土观念，它使得耶稣的同胞们长久以来一直与外界相隔绝。

基督教会将罗马人的效率和犹太人的不宽容结合起来，结果它在人类的思想领域建立了恐怖统治。这种统治十分高效，但缺少理性。

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圣子进殿

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基督教起初只是犹太教内部的改革运动，是一次完全意义上的民族运动，它威胁的是犹太统治者而不是其他人。在耶稣有机会将信徒组成一个独立教派之前很久，他就被杀害了，没有留下一点文字。由于缺乏书面的教规，没有明确的条例和规则，所以信徒们就可以自主地追随先师的话语精神，而不必遵循成文教规。

我们现在认识到，基督教对罗马帝国造成了多么致命的打击，但当局竟然没有采取任何行动去压制它。警察在密切监视，却找不到下手的机会。当奴隶企图中止主仆关系，妇女要求男女平等时，保罗就会站出来告诉他们要安于现状，期待天国里的最终回报。

像历史上经常发生的一样，大众一般都不如他们的君主宽容。别以为大众贫穷，他们的头脑就必然高贵；别以为他们的良心让他们也作出妥协时——对于积累财富来说，据说这种妥协是必不可少的——他们就会感到幸福、快乐。

罗马的无产者也不例外，几百年来，他们已经被免费招待、免费看职业决斗比赛给惯坏了。但是，罗马的祭司对这种新情况却不能采取超然态度。当成千上万的人离开以前的神庙，到了另一座根本不向他们索取任何东西的教堂时，祭司们的收入就大大减少了。但是，罗马城里的托钵僧更有理由仇恨基督徒。如果基督徒建立起了与他们竞争的制度，在提供自己的那些启示时也收取高额费用，那么他们不会有什么怨言。但是，这些基督徒，他们拒绝收取任何报酬。

公元 64 年，一场大火烧掉了罗马最贫苦阶层居住的街区。就这样，对基督徒发动的第一次有组织的进攻开始了。群氓传言——犹太人和基督徒总是彼此传言——有那么快乐的一天，大火球从天而降，恶人的家会燃起火焰。故事开始了，一个老太太听到基督徒跟死人说话；一个说，基督徒偷小孩子，割断他们的喉咙，把他们的血涂在那个外来上帝的祭坛上。我们不知道这次被私刑处死的基督徒的数目，但保罗和彼得似乎也在受害者之列。

公元 68 年尼禄自杀，基督徒又回到他们以前集会的地方，一切又恢复了原样。罗马人开始发现，基督徒跟犹太人好像并不完全一样。

犹太会堂是个交换中心。基督教这个新信仰，就是从这个交换中心传播到世界其他地方的。耶稣努力想做的并不是创建一个新教，而是反对父

辈教会中的罪恶，从内部改革。但是，他逐渐被逼上了一个位置，再也不可能进行妥协了。他死后许多年，基督教都是犹太教的一个小派别。

盖乌斯·朱里乌斯·保罗，一个犹太裔的正式罗马公民，第一个意识到这个新教有可能成为一个世界性宗教。把一个纯粹的民族教派变成一个普遍宗教的想法使犹太人特别仇恨他，他最后一次到耶路撒冷时，出动了半个营的罗马士兵保护他。他死后几年，耶路撒冷——犹太基督徒的圣城，被罗马人毁掉了。7世纪后，犹太基督徒团体被伊斯兰教徒斩尽杀绝。

罗马把东西南北各个方向都结合成了一个大政治联盟，使世界对统一宗教的观念有了心理准备。基督教简单、实用，充满了直接的吸引力，注定要成功。但是基督教这个新宗教，从来没有根除掉某些令人不快之处，暴露了他的犹太教起源。

保罗和巴拿巴乘坐的那条小船，也载着希望、仁慈的福音。

但是，还有一个乘客也偷偷上了船。

他戴着圣洁、德行的面具。但在面具下面的脸，却显露出残忍和仇恨。

他的名字是：宗教不宽容。

*T*he rapid conquest of the western world by the Church is sometimes used as proof definite that the Christian ideas must have been of divine origin. It is not my business to debate this point, but I would suggest that the villainous conditions under which the majority of the Romans were forced to live had as much to do with the success of the earliest missionaries as the sound common sense of their message.

Thus far I have shown you one side of the Roman picture—the world of the soldiers and statesmen and rich manufacturers and scientists, fortunate folks who lived in delightful and enlightened ease on the slopes of the Lateran Hill or among the valleys and hills of the Campania or somewhere along the bay of Naples.

But they were only part of the story.

Amidst the teeming slums of the suburbs there was little enough evidence of that plentiful prosperity which made the poets rave about the Millennium

and inspired orators to compare Octavian to Jupiter.

There, in the endless and dreary rows of overcrowded and reeking tenement houses lived those vast multitudes to whom life was merely an uninterrupted sensation of hunger, sweat and pain. To those men and women, the wonderful tale of a simple carpenter in a little village beyond the sea, who had gained his daily bread by the labor of his own hands, who had loved the poor and downtrodden and who therefore had been killed by his cruel and rapacious enemies, meant something very real and tangible. Yes, they had all of them heard of Mithras and Isis and Astarte. But these Gods were dead, and they had died hundreds and thousands of years ago and what people knew about them they only knew by hearsay from other people who had also died hundreds and thousands of years ago.

Joshua of Nazareth, on the other hand, the Christ, the anointed, as the Greek missionaries called him, had been on this earth only a short time ago. Many a man then alive might have known him, might have listened to him, if by chance he had visited southern Syria during the reign of the Emperor Tiberius.

And there were others, the baker on the corner, the fruit peddler from the next street, who in a little dark garden on the Appian Way had spoken with a certain Peter, a fisherman from the village of Capernaum, who had actually been near the mountain of Golgotha on that terrible afternoon when the Prophet had been nailed to the cross by the soldiers of the Roman governor.

We should remember this when we try to understand the sudden popular appeal of this new faith.

It was that personal touch, that direct and personal feeling of intimacy and near-by-ness which gave Christianity such a tremendous advantage over all other creeds. That and the love which Jesus had so incessantly expressed for the submerged and disinherited among all nations and which radiated from everything he had said. Whether he had put it into the exact terms used by his followers was of very slight importance. The slaves had ears to hear and they understood. And trembling before the high promise of a glorious future, they



for the first time in their lives beheld the rays of a new hope.

At last the words had been spoken that were to set them free.

No longer were they poor and despised, an evil thing in the sight of the great of this world.

On the contrary, they were the predilected children of a loving Father.

They were to inherit the earth and the fullness thereof.

They were to partake of joys withheld from many of those proud masters who even then dwelled behind the high walls of their Samnian villas.

For that constituted the strength of the new faith. Christianity was the first concrete religious system which gave the average man a chance.

Of course I am now talking of Christianity as an experience of the soul—as mode of living and thinking—and I have tried to explain how, in a world full of the dry-rot of slavery, the good tidings must spread with the speed and fury of an emotional prairie fire. But history, except upon rare occasions, does not concern itself with the spiritual adventures of private citizens, be they free or in bondage. When these humble creatures have been neatly organized into nations, guilds, churches, armies, brotherhoods and federations; when they have begun to obey a single directing head; when they have accumulated sufficient wealth to pay taxes and can be forced into armies for the purpose of national conquest, then at last they begin to attract the attention of our chroniclers and are given serious attention. Hence we know a great deal about the early Church, but exceedingly little about the people who were the true founders of that institution. That is rather a pity, for the early development of Christianity is one of the most interesting episodes in all history.

The Church which finally was built upon the ruins of the ancient empire was really a combination of two conflicting interests. On the one side it stood forth as the champion of those all-embracing ideals of love and charity which the Master himself had taught. But on the other side it found itself ineradicably bound up with that arid spirit of provincialism which since the beginning of time had set the compatriots of Jesus apart from the rest of the world.

In plain language, it combined Roman efficiency with Judaeian intolerance

and as a result it established a reign of terror over the minds of men which was as efficient as it was illogical.

To understand how this could have happened, we must go back once more to the days of Paul and to the first fifty years after the death of Christ, and we must firmly grasp the fact that Christianity had begun as a reform movement within the bosom of the Jewish church and had been a purely nationalistic movement which in the beginning had threatened the rulers of the Jewish state and no one else.

The Pharisees who had happened to be in power when Jesus lived had understood this only too clearly. Quite naturally they had feared the ultimate consequences of an agitation which boldly threatened to question a spiritual monopoly which was based upon nothing more substantial than brute force. To save themselves from being wiped out they had been forced to act in a spirit of panic and had sent their enemy to the gallows before the Roman authorities had had time to intervene and deprive them of their victim.

What Jesus would have done had he lived it is impossible to say. He was killed long before he was able to organize his disciples into a special sect nor did he leave a single word of writing from which his followers could conclude what he wanted them to do.

In the end, however, this had proved to be a blessing in disguise.

The absence of a written set of rules, of a definite collection of ordinances and regulations, had left the disciples free to follow the spirit of their master's words rather than the letter of his law. Had they been bound by a book, they would very likely have devoted all their energies to a theological discussion upon the ever enticing subject of commas and semi-colons.

In that case, of course, no one outside of a few professional scholars could have possibly shown the slightest interest in the new faith and Christianity would have gone the way of so many other sects which begin with elaborate written programs and end when the police are called upon to throw the haggling theologians into the street.

At the distance of almost twenty centuries, when we realize what



tremendous damage Christianity did to the Roman Empire, it is a matter of surprise that the authorities took practically no steps to quell a movement which was fully as dangerous to the safety of the state as an invasion by Huns or Goths. They knew of course that the fate of this eastern prophet had caused great excitement among their house slaves, that the women were forever telling each other about the imminent reappearance of the King of Heaven, and that quite a number of old men had solemnly predicted the impending destruction of this world by a ball of fire.

But it was not the first time that the poorer classes had gone into hysterics about some new religious hero. Most likely it would not be the last time, either. Meanwhile the police would see to it that these poor, frenzied fanatics did not disturb the peace of the realm.

And that was that.

The police did watch out, but found little occasion to act. The followers of the new mystery went about their business in a most exemplary fashion. They did not try to over-throw the government. At first, several slaves had expected that the common fatherhood of God and the common brotherhood of man would imply a cessation of the old relation between master and servant. The apostle Paul, however, had hastened to explain that the Kingdom of which he spoke was an invisible and intangible kingdom of the soul and that people on this earth had better take things as they found them, in expectation of the final reward which awaited them in Heaven.

Similarly, a good many wives, chafing at the bondage of matrimony as established by the harsh laws of Rome, had rushed to the conclusion that Christianity was synonymous with emancipation and full equality of rights between men and women. But again Paul had stepped forward and in a number of tactful letters had implored his beloved sisters to refrain from all those extremes which would make their church suspect in the eyes of the more conservative pagans and had persuaded them to continue in that state of semislavery which had been woman's share ever since Adam and Eve had been driven out of Paradise. All this showed a most commendable respect for the law

and as far as the authorities were concerned, the Christian missionaries could therefore come and go at will and preach as best suited their own individual tastes and preferences.

But as has happened so often in history, the masses had shown themselves less tolerant than their rulers. Just because people are poor it does not necessarily follow that they are high-minded citizens who could be prosperous and happy if their conscience would only permit them to make those compromises which are held to be necessary for the accumulation of wealth.

And the Roman proletariat, since centuries debauched by free meals and free prize-fights, was no exception to this rule. At first it derived a great deal of rough pleasure from those sober-faced groups of men and women who with rapt attention listened to the weird stories about a God who had ignominiously died on a cross, like any other common criminal, and who made it their business to utter loud prayers for the hoodlums who pelted their gatherings with stones and dirt.

The Roman priests, however, were not able to take such a detached view of this new development.

The religion of the empire was a state religion. It consisted of certain solemn sacrifices made upon certain specified occasions and paid for in cash. This money went toward the support of the church officers. When thousands of people began to desert the old shrines and went to another church which did not charge them anything at all, the priests were faced by a very serious reduction in their salary. This of course did not please them at all, and soon they were loud in their abuse of the godless heretics who turned their backs upon the Gods of their fathers and burned incense to the memory of a foreign prophet.

But there was another class of people in the city who had even better reason to hate the Christians. Those were the fakirs, who as Indian Yogis and Pooghies and hierophants of the great and only mysteries of Isis and Ishtar and Baal and Cybele and Attis had for years made a fat and easy living at the expense of the credulous Roman middle classes. If the Christians had set up a rival establishment and had charged a handsome price for their own particular



revelations, the guild of spook-doctors and palmists and necromancers would have had no reason for complaint. Business was business and the soothsaying fraternity did not mind if a bit of their trade went elsewhere. But these Christians—a plague upon their silly notions—refused to take any reward. Yea, they even gave away what they had, fed the hungry and shared their own roof with the homeless. And all that for nothing! Surely that was going too far and they never could have done this unless they were possessed of certain hidden sources of revenue, the origin of which no one thus far had been able to discover.

Rome by this time was no longer a city of free-born burghers. It was the temporary dwelling place of hundreds of thousands of disinherited peasants from all parts of the empire. Such a mob, obeying the mysterious laws that rule the behavior of crowds, is always ready to hate those who behave differently from themselves and to suspect those who for no apparent reason prefer to live a life of decency and restraint. The hail-fellow-well-met who will take a drink and (occasionally) will pay for one is a fine neighbor and a good fellow. But the man who holds himself aloof and refuses to go to the wild-animal show in the Coliseum, who does not cheer when batches of prisoners of war are being dragged through the streets of the Capitoline Hill, is a spoil-sport and an enemy of the community at large.

When in the year 64 a great conflagration destroyed that part of Rome inhabited by the poorer classes, the scene was set for the first organized attacks upon the Christians.

At first it was rumored that the Emperor Nero, in a fit of drunken conceit, had ordered his capital to be set on fire that he might get rid of the slums and rebuild the city according to his own plans. The crowd, however, knew better. It was the fault of those Jews and Christians who were forever telling each other about the happy day when large balls of fire would descend from Heaven and the homes of the wicked would go up in flames.

Once this story had been successfully started, others followed in rapid succession. One old woman had heard the Christians talk with the dead.

Another knew that they stole little children and cut their throats and smeared their blood upon the altar of their outlandish God. Of course, no one had ever been able to detect them at any of these scandalous practices, but that was only because they were so terribly clever and had bribed the police. But now at last they had been caught red-handed and they would be made to suffer for their vile deeds.

Of the number of faithful who were lynched upon this occasion, we know nothing. Paul and Peter, so it seems, were among the victims for thereafter their names are never heard again.

That this terrible outbreak of popular folly accomplished nothing, it is needless to state. The noble dignity with which the martyrs accepted their fate was the best possible propaganda for the new ideas and for every Christian who perished, there were a dozen pagans, ready and eager to take his place. As soon as Nero had committed the only decent act of his short and useless life (he killed himself in the year 68), the Christians returned to their old haunts and everything was as it had been before.

By this time the Roman authorities were making a great discovery. They began to suspect that a Christian was not exactly the same thing as a Jew.

We can hardly blame them for having committed this error. The historical researches of the last hundred years have made it increasingly clear that the Synagogue was the clearing-house through which the new faith was passed on to the rest of the world.

Remember that Jesus himself was a Jew and that he had always been most careful in observing the ancient laws of his fathers and that he had addressed himself almost exclusively to Jewish audiences. Once, and then only for a short time, had he left his native country, but the task which he had set himself he had accomplished with and by and for his fellow-Jews. Nor was there anything in what he had ever said which could have given the average Roman the impression that there was a deliberate difference between Christianity and Judaism.

What Jesus had actually tried to do was this. He had clearly seen the



terrible abuses which had entered the church of his fathers. He had loudly and sometimes successfully protested against them. But he had fought his battles for reform from within. Never apparently had it dawned upon him that he might be the founder of a new religion. If some one had mentioned the possibility of such a thing to him, he would have rejected the idea as preposterous. But like many a reformer before his day and after, he had gradually been forced into a position where compromise was no longer possible. His untimely death alone had saved him from a fate like that of Luther and so many other advocates of reform, who were deeply perplexed when they suddenly found themselves at the head of a brand new party “outside” the organization to which they belonged, whereas they were merely trying to do some good from the “inside.”

For many years after the death of Jesus, Christianity (to use the name long before it had been coined) was the religion of a small Jewish sect which had a few adherents in Jerusalem and in the villages of Judaea and Galilee and which had never been heard of outside of the province of Syria.

It was Gaius Julius Paulus, a full-fledged Roman citizen of Jewish descent, who had first recognized the possibilities of the new doctrine as a religion for all the world. The story of his suffering tells us how bitterly the Jewish Christians had been opposed to the idea of a universal religion instead of a purely national denomination, membership to which should only be open to people of their own race. They had hated the man who dared preach salvation to Jews and Gentiles alike so bitterly that on his last visit to Jerusalem Paul would undoubtedly have suffered the fate of Jesus if his Roman passport had not saved him from the fury of his enraged compatriots.

But it had been necessary for half a battalion of Roman soldiers to protect him and conduct him safely to the coastal town from where he could be shipped to Rome for that famous trial which never took place.

A few years after his death, that which he had so often feared during his lifetime and which he had repeatedly foretold actually occurred.

Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. On the place of the temple of

Jehovah a new temple was erected in honor of Jupiter. The name of the city was changed to Aelia Capitolina and Judaea itself had become part of the Roman province of Syria Palaestina. As for the inhabitants, they were either killed or driven into exile and no one was allowed to live within several miles of the ruins on pain of death.

It was the final destruction of their holy city which had been so disastrous to the Jewish-Christians. During several centuries afterwards, in the little villages of the Judaeian hinterland colonies might have been found of strange people who called themselves “poor men” and who waited with great patience and amidst everlasting prayers for the end of the world which was at hand. They were the remnants of the old Jewish-Christian community in Jerusalem. From time to time we hear them mentioned in books written during the fifth and sixth centuries. Far away from civilization, they developed certain strange doctrines of their own in which hatred for the apostle Paul took a prominent place. After the seventh century however we no longer find any trace of these so-called Nazarenes and Ebionites. The victorious Mohammedans had killed them all. And, anyway, if they had managed to exist a few hundred years longer, they would not have been able to avert the inevitable.

Rome, by bringing east and west and north and south into one large political union, had made the world ready for the idea of a universal religion. Christianity, because it was both simple and practical and full of a direct appeal, was predestined to succeed where Judaism and Mithraism and all of the other competing creeds were predestined to fail. But, unfortunately, the new faith never quite rid itself of certain rather unpleasant characteristics which only too clearly betrayed its origin.

The little ship which had brought Paul and Barnabas from Asia to Europe had carried a message of hope and mercy.

But a third passenger had smuggled himself on board.

He wore a mask of holiness and virtue.

But the face beneath bore the stamp of cruelty and hatred.

And his name was Religious Intolerance.