

Ancient Ethical Worship



Ancient Ethical Worships

THE TERM PAGANISM is properly used by many modern writers with hesitation. Professor Alexander Wilder, in his edition of R Payne Knight's *The Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Mythology*, says: "It ('Paganism') has degenerated into slang, and is generally employed with more or less of an opprobrious meaning. The more correct expression would have been 'the ancient ethnical worships,' but it would be hardly understood in its true sense, and we accordingly have adopted the term in popular use, but not disrespectfully. A religion which can develop a Plato, an Epictetus, and an Anaxagoras, is not gross, superficial, or totally unworthy of candid attention. Besides, many of the rites and doctrines included in the Christian as well as in the Jewish Institute, appeared first in the other systems. Zoroastrianism anticipated far more than has been imagined. The Cross, the priestly robes and symbols, the sacraments, the Sabbath, the festivals and anniversaries, are all anterior to the Christian era by thousands of years. The ancient worship, after it had been excluded from its former shrines, and from the metropolitan towns, was maintained for a long time by the inhabitants of humble localities. To this fact it owes its later designation. From being kept up in the *pagi*, or rural districts, its votaries were denominated *pagans*, or provincials."¹

Being neither Christian, Jew nor Mussulman, I must necessarily be *pagan*, if the scientific etymology of the term means anything. . . . What is the origin of the word *pagan*? *Paganus* meant, in the first centuries, an inhabitant of the village, a peasant if you like, one who by living too far from the centres of the new proselytism had remained (very fortunately for him, perhaps) in the faith of his fathers. According to the Latin Church, all that is not *perverted* to the sacerdotal theology is *pagan*, idolatrous, and comes from the devil. And what does Roman etymology, whose adoption was imposed upon other peoples by circumstances, matter to us? *I am democratic*, in the true sense of the word. I respect the country folk, the people of the fields and of nature, the honest labourer scorned by the wealthy. And I say loudly that I prefer to be a *pagan* with the peasants than a Roman Catholic with the Princes of the Church, of whom I take very little notice so long as I do not find them in my way.²

¹ *Isis Unveiled*, (NIHILISTIC DOCTRINES OF THE SADDUCEES) II p. 179 *fn.*

² *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (REPLY OF ABBÉ ROCA) IX pp. 377-78

Frontispiece: Indoctrination, by Judson Huss.

