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The Olympics — The Greeks and a Hebrew Bible

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DURING the closing months of 1956 the Olympic Games will be held on Australian soil for the first time. Doubtless the Australian Press will devote a considerable amount of space in the preliminary build-up to showing how and where these Games originated. Not with any desire to anticipate the Press but simply to show how a piece of ancient Greek mentality has been transposed unconsciously into the modern Australian mind I shall here recount the facts.

In ancient Greek mythology there were two major sets of deities. The more important of these — the ones which concern us here — were the Olympians. Of the 12 Olympian gods, Zeus, "father of gods and men," was the chief. It was to him that the Games were dedicated, and indeed, their very foundation is attributed to him.

The Olympic Games was one of the four sacred festivals of ancient Greece. The Games were held every four years in a valley in the middle of ancient Elis, which was bounded by the rivers Cladeus and Alphieus. This valley, known as Olympia, was the sanctuary of the Greek gods. It was neither a town nor a village, but simply a vast shrine covered with sacred edifices and buildings connected with the gods and the games. There was a theatre, gymnasium and a senate, and a great temple dedicated to Zeus, and a temple (or Metroon) dedicated to his mother Rhea, the Mother of the Gods.

It is estimated that the first games took place in 776 B.C. when Coroebus gained a victory in the first foot race. The exercises in the games were of five sorts: Running, leaping, wrestling, throwing the quoit, and hurling the javelin or boxing. There were also contests in music, poetry and eloquence.

The timing of the Games gave rise to the custom of reckoning time and dating events by Olympiads. The original Olympic Games were abandoned in 394 A.D., the second year of the 293rd Olympiad. They were revived in Athens in 1896 since when they have become a feature of the modern scene.

A TRANSPOSITION

The gods of Olympia were very artful deities; so much so, that they endowed themselves with every attribute that the ingenuity of man could devise. The ancient Greeks were an intellectual race and their gods also were very intellectual. Had it been otherwise they could not have commanded the people's respect. The time came, however, when the Greek gods saw the number of their devotees dwindling. For a time the Latin race came to their aid (though they changed the name of Zeus to Jupiter, and renamed the lesser deities also), but it seemed that even the Latins eventually might desert them.

So these deities who embodied Greek intellectuality left their ancient abode and sought new fields. About this time some Hebrews were preaching the gospel of

regeneration. One of the preachers known as Paul expressed his message in the language of Greek intellectuals, and because of his peculiar style, his message had an appeal all its own, mainly for those who had least hope of understanding it.

These gods of the ancient Greeks saw their opportunity and seized it with delight. As time passed, while keeping their own particular natures, their devotees gave them Biblical names; the thought being all the time insinuated that they were invited into the Christian circle by the intellectual Paul, and that they were really Christian gods. As I said before, these gods had every attribute that man could devise, for they were very, very intellectual, and very, very artful.

Ecclesiastics say to-day that their gospel (meaning their doctrines) is not supposed to be an answer to the intellect, and they accuse any who point out their absurdities on a factual basis of being non-spiritual. Surely these ecclesiastics know that the exact purpose of the Greek Fathers when they originated the doctrines about Jesus of Nazareth was to "answer all the subtle questions of the intellect" (in much the same manner as the ancient gods had answered all the subtle questions of the ancient intellects).

It is proposed now to examine the doctrines of churchianity and to demonstrate the affinity between them and the ancient Greek gods. From a maze of doctrine we can choose but two — the doctrine of Trinity and the doctrine of Virgin Birth.

MYTHOLOGY

Greek mythology supplies the reason for the doctrine of Virgin Birth. To point out that no early Hebrew Christian had heard of this doctrine would simply be to "slay the slain," and I do not propose to discuss that aspect here, beyond saying that it is derived from a Greek mistranslation of a Hebrew word of which the earliest Greek ecclesiastics were well aware.

The city of Athens derived its name from Athene, the daughter of Zeus. Athene (who is also called Minerva) was the goddess of Wisdom. She won Athens as her own city in a contest with Neptune.

The principal eminence within the city boundary was the Acropolis, and on it, amongst the most splendid works of art which Athens could boast, the people built a temple in her honour. This temple was the chief adornment of the Acropolis. Inside it stood a statue of the goddess 42½ feet high. The name of this building is significant, for it is called the Parthenon, the temple of Athena Parthenos, THE TEMPLE OF THE VIRGIN: It is upon the very word "parthenos" by which the Greeks mistranslated Isaiah 7:14 that the doctrine of Virgin birth has been built.

Long before the Old Testament was translated into Greek or the New Testament written, there was a temple of the Virgin in Athens, and the city itself was named after her. Is it any wonder that the Greeks read the doctrine into the Hebrew scripture, presumptuously declaring that their version of the scriptures was divinely inspired?

PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy had its origins in Greece about the 6th Century, B.C. The purpose of philosophy was to discover the “soul” or animating principle of the universe. From it the sciences developed. We may mention geometry, trigonometry and logic as sufficient for our purpose. Because of their study and development of the sciences the Greeks became mathematically minded. All would have been well if the Greeks had not mixed their science with their religion, for it was from their love of mathematics that the doctrine of Trinity arose.

According to the Bible the animating principles of the world are love and truth. These are very simple things. They are also very hard things. They were much too simple for the mathematically minded Greeks. Accustomed as they were to worshipping their mythical trinitarian gods and goddesses, and proving their geometrical problems by the use of triangles, they approached the Biblical problem with a mentality pre-inclined towards a triangular proof.

Reading a Hebrew problem through Greek eyes they arrived at an incorrect Greek solution to which the name of Trinity has been given. This doctrine is a mathematical proposition expressed in Biblical terms and nothing more. The Greek mentality is in evidence in this quotation from a work on the philosopher Aristotle, who lived a few centuries B.C.: “A magnitude if divisible one way is a line, if two ways a surface, and if three a body. Beyond this there is no other magnitude because the three dimensions are all that there are, and that which is divisible in three directions is divisible in all. For, as the Pythagoreans say, the world and all that is in it is determined by the number 3, single beginning and middle and end give the number of an “all” and the number they give is the triad... We make further use of the number 3 in the worship of the Gods.”

It is not my purpose to pursue the development of the doctrine, except to say that it is the corner stone of Roman Catholic theology. The word “trinity” does not occur in scripture, and in fact it was not until the time of Theophilus of Antioch (180 A.D.) that the word even came into existence. (The same Theophilus accused the ancient Greek philosophers of stealing from the Hebrew prophets!)

The philosophers exercised a profound influence and philosophy soon became a recognised pursuit. However, just as in the case of Athena Parthenos, the term itself has deep significance in connection with the doctrine. “Philosopher” means “lover of wisdom,” and one of the earliest attempts by the Greeks to find a Biblical Trinity centred on the personification of Wisdom in the Proverbs (8:2). The meaning of the word emphasises Paul’s statement: “Seeing that Jews ask for signs AND GREEKS SEEK AFTER WISDOM, but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling block and unto Gentiles foolishness.” Hardly a laudatory statement!

It is the testimony of history that the doctrine of Trinity is one of those things which “settled or changed, or modified, in the cabinet of an earthly monarch the prerogatives of the King of Heaven.”

LOGIC AND LITERATURE

When the ecclesiastics say that their doctrines are meant for the spiritual — not for the intellectual — they mean in effect that their doctrines cannot stand the test of logic. Yet the catholic religion and the system of logic stemmed from the same source — the Greek philosophers!

The character of Jesus is portrayed in the Bible by Hebrew writers. The world relies upon the Greeks for its character interpretation. In what field other than religion would such a course be advocated, much less adopted?

For the Clarion reader who likes his religion to be on the basis of a toe-the-line reality, I suggest that your answer to any who claim the doctrine of Trinity to be scriptural should be: "No, thanks, I'd sooner see a good 3-D film."

Perhaps they'll get the point.