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## **No Higher Than The Monkeys? Religion and Education on Trial by Isidoro Panlasigui**

Joseph J. Kavanagh

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## NO HIGHER THAN THE MONKEYS?

RELIGION AND EDUCATION ON TRIAL. By Isidoro Panlasigui.  
Quezon City. 1956. Pp. v, 102.

**D**R. Panlasigui, formerly dean of the College of Education of the University of the Philippines, informs us in the preface of this little book that the thoughts and ideas it contains "have been developing and crystallizing for many years." His thoughts have revolved around two subjects, religion and education; and the author finds himself at the end of his "many years" quite dissatisfied with the results the two have produced in the modern world. Religion and education, he maintains, have failed dismally. True, through their assistance man has indeed increased his wealth and technological skill; he "has conquered the universe and gained tremendous power. But so far he has not conquered himself. His Education and his Religion have failed to make him higher than the monkeys." Religion and education therefore (as the title indicates) are on trial and are found wanting.

Leaving the evaluation of Dr. Panlasigui's views on education to critics more competent in that particular field, the present review will restrict itself to some observations on his criticism of religion.

The author's idea of what religion is and of what it is supposed to effect seems somewhat nebulous. He quotes, apparently with approval, a definition attributed to William Penn: "Religion is nothing else but the love of God and men." It would seem that in Dr. Panlasigui's opinion, religion pertains principally to the sphere of sentiment and emotion and has little to do with intellect and reason. Doctrine therefore takes a very secondary place. Dogma (so he maintains) if it proves a source of dissension and discord should be discarded. Religious groups are all endeavoring to achieve the same end fundamentally (according to the author) and so he recommends that Moslems and Buddhists and Christians prescind from their doctrinal differences, get together and form "a United Religions and Churches of the World" (sic).

A goodly proportion of Dr. Panlasigui's criticism is directed against the Roman Catholic Church which seems to him a priest-ridden organization more interested at the present time in amassing wealth and gaining political power than in saving souls. It

has departed from the teachings of Christ, preaches hatred and intolerance towards all not of its fold, etc. He seems particularly irked by Catholic ritual and ceremonies. He looks upon them as pagan contaminations of Christianity. Incidentally just why a man otherwise so liberal in his religious views—so liberal indeed as to be willing to include Moslems, Buddhists and Christians in the same religious organization—should object to a mixture of pagan ritual with Christianity is not clear. But then few things in the book are clear or consistent.

Just how confusing some of the statements are may be seen from a passage on pp. 16-18. We are told first that "The teachings of Jesus as found in the four gospels are very simple. The basis of his teachings was his intimate relation with God and his being the Son of God who came to save the world." That would seem to be straightforward enough. But two paragraphs down we are told: "But when the apostles and Paul took over, new concepts and doctrines were introduced so that by the sixteenth or seventeenth century, Christianity was filled with many different concepts and doctrines not taught by Jesus. Jesus became the Word of God and the Son of God who died as Saviour of the world, the Trinity became the dominant doctrine of the Christian churches. To these (sic) the Mithraic concepts of *redeemer* and *saviour* became the attributes of Jesus..." The good doctor gives no indication that he is aware of any contradiction between the two paragraphs.

Where there is no actual contradiction there is uncritical superficiality. For instance the pronouncements on the relationship between Christianity and Mithraism are such as no competent scholar would make. Dr. Panlasigui says:

The Mithraic holidays: Christmas, Easter and Epiphany, the rest of Sunday instead of Saturday or Sabbath were added. Even the Gospel writers adapted the supernatural birth of Horus by Virgin Orisis (sic) who became the mother of God. (sic). The daily sacrifice of the mass is of Mithraic origin. The use of halo, incense, candles, beads, relics and veneration of saints, the doctrines of penance and purgatory were adapted by Christians from other religions.

Thus we see that many doctrines, ceremonies and rituals of the Christian churches today, especially the Roman Catholic Church are the contributions of non-Christian religions. This fact seems

to suggest that Christianity as taught by Jesus, did not christianize the pagans, instead Christianity was paganized. (Pages 16-18)

Statements such as these are probably derived from hasty and uncritical reading of books like Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. That there were resemblances between the Mithraism as practiced by the Roman soldiery and certain practices of early Christianity was a fact recognized by the early Christian Fathers and apologists. But the resemblances were superficial and external. In content, as W. F. Albright of Johns Hopkins University has pointed out, the old mystery religions, of which Mithraism was one, were as different from Christianity as light from darkness. Furthermore the resemblances were between Christian practices and Mithraism as Mithraism existed in the second and third centuries after Christ, so that it is possible Mithraism was the borrower; there is no evidence however to prove borrowing on the part of either from the other.

Professor Dill (a witness not partial to Catholicism) speaks in his *Roman Society from Nero to Aurelius* of the "futile attempts... to find parallels to biblical narrative or symbolism in the faint and faded legend of Mithra recovered from the monuments... the two systems were separated by an impassable gulf." If and when the Christian Church did (in St. Augustine's phrase) "spoil the Egyptians" by borrowing and adapting rites from paganism or ideas from Greek philosophy, the Church in every case transformed what she borrowed. In all that was essential the Church would have no truce with paganism. To claim that "Christianity was paganized" is an unscholarly statement.

Incidentally the statement quoted above, that "the Gospel writers adapted the supernatural birth of Horus by Virgin Orisis (sic) who became the mother of God" is interesting. Who, one may ask, is *Orisis*? Is this a typographical error for *Osiris*? But it is not listed as such among the detected errata at the end of the book and moreover Osiris was a male deity who undoubtedly would resent (if he could) being transformed into a virgin mother. Did the professor perhaps intend to write *Isis*? In Egyptian mythology, Osiris is both brother and husband of Isis. In one form of the Osiris-Isis-Horus legend Osiris is slain by his own brother Seth and after his death Isis gives birth to a son Horus who is destined to be the avenger of his father's murder. It is apparently to this birth of Horus from Isis that the author is

referring when he speaks of the "supernatural birth of Horus from Virgin Orisis" and to which he ascribes the origin of the gospel narrative of the virginal birth of Christ. We are afraid that Dr. Panlasigui's acquaintance with Egyptian mythology is perhaps not more profound than his knowledge of Catholic doctrine.

Examples of similar inexact, erroneous, misleading or gratuitous assertions are numerous in the book under review. To list them all would be pointless but a few might be cited:

On page 14 the Zoroastrian god is called "Ahma Mazda": the correct name is "Ahura Mazda."

On page 19 we read: "At present there are many different Christian churches: the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox, the Arians, the Albigenses, the Waldensians, and others...." We are under the impression that the Albigenses were exterminated in the fourteenth century and that the Arians (who flourished in the fourth century) no longer exist as a church. It is interesting to find these listed among the Christian churches "at the present time"!

On page 20 it is stated that "During the first centuries A. D. the Christians had a very simple church organization" and that they were "weak, helpless; had no power nor influence." On the preceding page however the author informs us that "the number of followers who were converted from the Jews and from the Gentiles increased rapidly, that (sic) during the early part of 300 A. D. the Christians almost overwhelmed the whole Roman Empire."

On page 55 it is claimed that "The attitude of the Catholic hierarchy toward the Filipino clergy during the Spanish time were (sic) clearly manifest in the martyrdom of the three Filipino priests. It was this attitude that created the Aglipayan Church." The statement would seem to imply that the Catholic hierarchy was responsible for the death of the patriot priests. Concerning the same incident Gregorio F. Zaide has this to say: "The execution of Fathers Gomez, Burgos and Zamora was a blunder that stained the colonial escutcheon of Spain in the Philippines. Fortunately the Church was not a party to the mistake of the State... before the execution, Governor Izquierdo requested Archbishop Meliton Martinez to humiliate the condemned priests by depriving them of their priestly habits. The kind archbishop, believing in their innocence flatly turned down the governor's request." (*The Phil-*

*ippine Revolution*, 1954, p. 12). The substance of Zalde's statement receives confirmation from no less an authority than Rizal himself. When dedicating his novel *El Filibusterismo* to the priest-martyrs, Rizal wrote: "The Church by refusing to degrade you, has placed in doubt the crime that has been imputed to you..."

What has been said should be sufficient to indicate the limitations and unscholarly character of Dr. Panlasigui's work. A discerning reader will have little difficulty evaluating the book for himself. The style in which it is presented, the sweeping character of its assertions (not to mention the unorthodox grammar) will immediately warn him not to take the author too seriously. This review has given the book more serious consideration than it merits because there may be some who, aware of the positions the author has held in the University of the Philippines, may be inclined to lend more credence to his words than they deserve. It is not Religion and Education that are here on trial: it is the scholarship of the professor and former dean. If it be true, as the author claims, that "Education and Religion have failed to make man higher than the monkeys," this book will do very little to remedy that sad state of affairs.

JOSEPH J. KAVANAGH

## EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY. By William A. Kelly. Fourth Edition Revised. Milwaukee. The Bruce Publishing Company. Pp. vii, 574.

TO the Catholic teacher who is mindful of the need for a comprehensive text in educational psychology which presents the true facts about man's nature, the reasons underlying his actions, and the principles which should guide and direct the mental and moral development of the growing child, the fourth edition of this book will be most welcome. The purpose and function of the present edition remain unchanged essentially, namely to give to the student a proper orientation in psychological practices and procedures as these affect education, and continuous guidance in learning and