

# Justinian I

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The battle between orthodox and Mystery-based Christianity comes to a close under the rule of Justinian I. This brief from [www.answers.com](http://www.answers.com) “(born 483, Tauresium, Dardania — died Nov. 14, 565, Constantinople) Byzantine emperor (527 – 565). Determined to regain former Roman provinces lost to barbarian invaders, Justinian conquered the Vandals in northern Africa in 534 and enjoyed an initial victory over the Ostrogoths in Italy in 540. War with the Goths, however, lasted another two decades and brought great devastation before Justinian gained control of the whole of Italy in 562 . He was unable to prevent Bulgars, Slavs, Huns, and Avars from carrying out raids along the empire's northern frontier. He also carried on an intermittent war with Persia until 561.

He reorganized the imperial government and commissioned the reform and **codification of the great body of Roman law known as the Code of Justinian**. From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justinian\\_I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justinian_I) we find the importance of The Corpus that “forms the basis of Latin jurisprudence (including ecclesiastical Canon Law) and, for historians, provides a valuable insight into the concerns and activities of the later Roman Empire. As a collection it gathers together the many sources in which the leges (laws) and the other rules were expressed or published: proper laws, senatorial consults (senatusconsulta), imperial decrees, case law, and jurists' opinions and interpretations (responsa prudentum). It formed the basis of later Byzantine law, as expressed in the Basilika of Basil I and Leo VI the Wise. It was to pass to Western Europe in the 12th century and become the basis of much European law code. It eventually passed to Eastern Europe where it appeared in Slavic editions, and it also passed on to Russia. It remains influential to this day.”

Historians point to Justinian as the Roman Emperor who facilitated the destruction of the last vestiges of the Mysteries and its Mystery centers. Excerpts from three lectures by Rudolf Steiner (see below) help to deepen the understanding of the role Justinian played. These lectures can be found at [www.rsarchive.org](http://www.rsarchive.org).

[\[from Lecture 8, Building Stones for an Understanding of the Mystery of Golgotha\]](#)

At the time of the Mystery of Golgotha the ancient pagan cults and Mysteries were widespread. And they were of such importance that a figure such as Julian the Apostate was initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries and a long succession of Roman emperors also received initiation, though of a peculiar kind. Furthermore, everything connected with the ancient pagan cults still survived. But these facts are usually dismissed today in a few words by contemporary historians. The events of that early period are portrayed in a very superficial manner; but this superficial portrayal may provide a sufficient justification in the eyes of many for speaking of a second Mystery of Golgotha. But people have not the slightest understanding of the inner meaning of those events.

From an external point of view one can say that in the early Christian centuries pagan temples, with their statues of a splendor and magnificence which are inconceivable today, were scattered over wide areas. These images (of the gods), even into their formalistic details, were a symbolic representation of

all that had lived in the ancient Mysteries. Not only was there not a town or locality without abundant representations of symbolic art forms, but in the fields where peasants cultivated their crops were to be found isolated shrines, each with its statue of a God. And they never undertook agricultural work without first putting themselves in touch with those forces which, they believed, streamed down from the universe through the agency of the magic powers which resided in these images. The Roman emperors, with the support of bishops and priests, were concerned to destroy utterly these temples and shrines together with their images. We can follow this work of iconoclasm up to the time of the emperor Justinian in the sixth century. Countless edicts were promulgated ordering the ruthless destruction of these temples and shrines. During these centuries a wave of iconoclasm swept over the world that was unprecedented in the history of mankind; unprecedented because of the extent of the systematic destruction ([note 2](#)). Up to the time when St. Benedict with his own hands and the support of his workmen leveled the temple of Apollo on Monte Cassino in order to found a monastery dedicated to the service of the Benedictine Order on this site, and up to the time of the emperor Justinian, it was one of the foremost duties of the Roman emperors (who since Constantine had been converted to Christianity) to eradicate all traces of paganism. Edicts were promulgated whose apparent purpose was to arrest this work of destruction, but in reading them one receives a strange impression. One emperor, for example, issued an edict declaring that all the pagan temples should not be destroyed immediately for fear of inflaming the populace; the work of destruction should rather be carried out gradually, for the people would then accept it without demur.

All the terrible measures associated with this work of destruction are very often glossed over like so many other things. But this is a mistake. Whenever truth is in any way obscured, the path leading to Christ Jesus is also obscured and cannot be found. Since I have already spoken of this earnest love of truth, allow me to refer to a small incident which occurred in my early childhood and which I shall never forget. Such things are most revealing. Unless we willfully blind ourselves we learn from the history of the Roman emperors that Constantine was not precisely a model of virtue, otherwise he would not have accused his own stepson, without any justification, of illicit relations with his own mother. The accusation was a pure fabrication in order to find a pretext for murder. Constantine first had his stepson murdered on this trumped-up charge and then the stepmother. These were simply routine acts with Constantine. Since however the Church was deeply indebted to him, official Church history is ashamed to portray him in his true colors. With your permission I should like to read a passage from my school text-book on the history of religion which refers to Constantine: "Constantine showed himself to be a true son of the Church even in his private life" — and I have already given you an example of this! "Though often reproached for his irascibility and ambition one must remember that faith is not a guarantee against every moral lapse and that Christianity could not manifest its redemptive power in him because, to the end of his life, he never partook of the Sacrament." Now examples of this kind of whitewash are a commonplace. They demonstrate how seldom history displays a love of truth. And much the same applies to recent history. Here we find other distortions but we fail to detect them because other interests occupy our attention.

When we read the account of these Imperial edicts (relating to the destruction of the pagan temples) we are also informed that the Roman emperors expressly rejected animal sacrifice and similar practices which are alleged to have taken place in the temples. Now I do not intend to criticize or to

gloss over anything, but simply to state the facts. But we must remember that “opposition to animal sacrifice” (from the entrails of which future events are said to have been predicted) was, in fact, a decadent form of sacrifice. It was not the trifling matter that history often suggests, but a profound science, different in character from that of today. The object of animal sacrifice — and it is difficult to speak of these practices today because we find them so revolting that we can only refer to them in general terms — was to stimulate powers which, at the time, could not be attained directly because the epoch of the old clairvoyance was past. Attempts were made within certain circles of the pagan priesthood to revive the old clairvoyant powers. This was one of the methods employed. A more satisfactory method of awakening this ancient atavistic clairvoyance in order to recapture the spirit of primeval times was to revive the particular form of sacrifice practiced in the Mithras Mysteries and in the most spiritual form known to the Mysteries at that time. In the priestly Mysteries of Egypt and in Egyptian temples far more brutal and bloodthirsty practices were carried out. When we study the Mithras Mysteries by occult means we realize that they were a means to gain insight into the secrets of the forces operating in the universe through sacrificial rites that were totally different in character from what we understand by sacrificial rites today; in fact they yielded a far deeper insight into the secrets of nature than the modern practice of autopsy which only leads to a superficial knowledge. Those who performed these sacrificial rites in the correct way were able to perceive clairvoyantly certain forces which are present in the hidden depths of nature. And for this reason the real motives for these ritual sacrifices were kept secret and only those who were adequately prepared were permitted to have knowledge of them.

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#### NOTES BY TRANSLATOR

**Note 1.** Clement of Alexandria (301–232 B.C.) was head of the Catechetical School of Alexandria, a training school for catechumens. In the conflict between *pistis* (faith) and *gnosis* (knowledge) he favored the latter and was close to the Gnostics in that he supported Platonism and the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures. He believed in the idea of the “*Disciplina Arcani*”, the withholding of higher knowledge from those unfitted to receive it, which was common to all ancient Mystery teaching. Origen (A.D. 186–253) became head of the Catechetical School. Nurtured in neo-Platonism through the influence of Ammonius Saccus. Adjudged to be a heretic by the fifth Ecumenical Council. He accepted the theory of pre-existence, free will and the necessity of grace. He also used symbol and allegory in his exegesis. He wrote commentaries on nearly every work in scripture. His crowning work was *Contra Celsum* who attacked Christianity on moral and intellectual grounds. Book VI of Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* is devoted to him. See also Appendix I in the perceptive commentary of A. P. Shepherd and Mildred Robertson Nicoll, in *The Redemption of Thinking* (Hodder & Stoughton).

**Note 2.** The systematic destruction of pagan temples began under Constantine. Out of expediency the emperors remained neutral in the conflict between Christian and pagan cults. But the Christian monks not only incited the populace to pillage, but were themselves the first to burn and pillage the temples and to ransack trophies, statues and anything of value. It was during the outburst of iconoclasm that the famous library in the temple of Serapis was destroyed in A.D. 391.

**Note 3.** Irenaeus, born in Asia, heard St. Polycarp in his youth. The date of his death is unknown. His chief work was *Adversus Haereses*, c.179, an attack upon the Gnostics and the principal heresies.

**Note 4.** Herman Grimm (1828–1901), son of Wilhelm Grimm who with his brother Jacob collected and edited the *Nursery and Household Tales*. Herman was an art historian who wrote works on Goethe, Dante, Shakespeare, Raphael and Michelangelo.

**Note 5.** Hebbel (1813–63), poet and dramatist. Tragedy, according to Hebbel arises out of conflict. Innovators, leaders of new movements, men of original mind, representatives of new principles, though they may lead to the amelioration of society, are doomed to destruction. This was the tragedy of Christ. The first and last representative of a movement, he declared, is either tragic or comic.

**Note 6.** Franz Brentano (1838–1917). An Austrian philosopher, ordained 1864, but was unable to accept the doctrine of papal infallibility and relinquished his clerical status. Professor of Philosophy in Wurzburg 1872 and taught at the University of Vienna 1874–95. *Aristoteles and seine Weltanschauung* (1911) was a re-assessment of Aristotelian philosophy. Brentano attempted to revise Aristotle's logic and psychology from the standpoint of empiricism. Brentano believed in the existence of a personal and immortal soul. (See D. Kraus, Franz Brentano, 1919, and H. O. Eaton, The Austrian Philosophy of Values, 1930.)

**Note 7.** Brooks Adams (1848–1927), also wrote *The Dream and the Reality*, 1917. Predicted that by the mid-twentieth century the two great Powers in the world would be America and Russia. American prosperity would contribute to the decay of American democracy because great wealth exercises power without responsibility.

[\[from Lecture 4, Materialism and the Task of Anthroposophy, Dornach, April 15, 1921\]](#)

“Now, a certain endeavor arose, traces of which can be observed everywhere when we look back at the first Christian centuries. The tendency arose to connect the historical fact, the Mystery of Golgotha, with the Mithras worship. Great were the numbers of people at that time, especially among the Roman Legions, who brought with them into the lands on the Danube and far into central Europe, indeed even into western Europe, what they had experienced in Asia and the Orient in general. In what they brought across as the Mithras worship there lived feelings that, without reflecting the Mystery of Golgotha, definitely contained Christian views and Christian sentiments. The worship of Mithras was considered as a concrete worship relating to the sun forces in man. The only thing this Mithras worship did not perceive was the fact that in the Mystery of Golgotha this sun force itself had descended as a spiritual entity and hand united itself with the human being Jesus of Nazareth.

Now there existed schools of wisdom in the East up until the fourth century A.D. that by and by received reports and became aware of the Mystery of Golgotha, of Christ. The further east we go in our investigations, the clearer this becomes. These schools then attempted to spread a certain teaching throughout the world, and for a time there was a tendency to let flow into the Mithras cult what agrees with the following supersensory perception: The true Mithras is the Christ; Mithras is his predecessor.

The Christ force must be poured into those forces in man that vanquish the bull. To turn the Mithras worship into a worship of Christ was something that was intensely alive in the first Christian centuries up until the fourth century. One might say that the stream intending to Christianize this Mithras worship followed after the spreading of the latter. A synthesis between Christendom and the Mithras worship was striven for. An ancient, significant image of man's being — Mithras riding on and vanquishing the bull — was to be brought into relationship with the Christ Being. One might say that a quite glorious endeavor existed in this direction, and in a certain respect it was a powerful one.

Anyone who follows the spread of Eastern Christianity and the spread of Arianism [\[Note 4\]](#) can see a Mithras element in it, even though in already quite weakened form. Any translation of the Ulfilas-Bible [\[Note 5\]](#) into modern languages remains imperfect if one is unaware that Mithras elements still play into the terminology of Ulfilas (or Wulfila). But who pays heed nowadays to these deeper relationships in the linguistic element? As late as in the fourth century, there were philosophers in Greece who worked on bringing the ancient etheric astronomy into harmony with Christianity. From this effort then arose the true Gnosis, which was thoroughly eradicated by later Christianity, so that only a few fragments of the literary samples of this Gnosis have remained.

What do people really know today about the Gnosis, of which they say in their ignorance that our anthroposophy is a warmed-over version? Even if this were true, such people would not be able to know about it, for they are familiar only with those parts of the Gnosis that are found in the critical, Occidental-Christian texts dealing with the Gnosis. They know the quotes from Gnostic texts left behind by the opponents of the Gnosis. There is hardly anything left of the Gnosis except what could be described by the following comparison. Imagine that Herr von Gleich would be successful in rooting out the whole of anthroposophical literature and nothing would remain except his quotations. Then, later on, somebody would attempt to reconstruct anthroposophy based on these quotes; then, it would be about the same procedure in the West as that which was applied to the Gnosis. Therefore, if people say that modern anthroposophy imitates the Gnosis, they would not know it even if it were the case, because they are unfamiliar with the Gnosis, knowing of it only through its opponents.

So, particularly in Athens, a school of wisdom existed well into the fourth century, and indeed even longer, that endeavored to bring the ancient etheric astronomy into harmony with Christianity. The last remnants of this view — man's entering from higher worlds through the planetary sphere into the earth sphere — still illuminate the writings of Origen; they even shine through the texts of the Greek Church Fathers. Everywhere one can see it shimmer through. It shines through particularly in the writings of the genuine Dionysius the Areopagite. [\[Note 6\]](#) This Dionysius left behind a teaching that was a pure synthesis of the etheric astronomy and the element dwelling in Christianity. He taught that the forces localized, as it were, astronomically and cosmically in the sun entered into the earth sphere in Christ through the man Jesus of Nazareth and that thereby a certain previously nonexistent relationship came into being between the earth and all the higher hierarchies, the hierarchies of the Angels, of Wisdom, the hierarchies of the Thrones and the Seraphim, and so on. It was a penetration of this teaching of the hierarchies with etheric astronomy that could be found in the original Dionysius the Areopagite.

Then, in the sixth century, the attempt was made to obliterate the traces even of the more ancient teachings by Dionysius the Areopagite. They were altered in such a way that they now represented merely an abstract teaching of the spirit. In the form in which the teaching of Dionysius the Areopagite has come down to us, it is a spiritual teaching that no longer has much to do with etheric astronomy. This is the reason he is then called the "Pseudo-Dionysius." In this manner, the decline of the teaching of wisdom was brought about. On the one hand, the teachings of Dionysius were distorted; on the other hand, the truly alive teaching in Athens that had tried to unite etheric astronomy with Christianity was eradicated. Finally, in regard to the cultic aspect, the Mithras worship was exterminated.

In addition, there were contributions by individuals such as Constantine. [\[Note 7\]](#) His actions were intensified later by the fact that Emperor Justinian [\[Note 8\]](#) ordered the School of Philosophers in Athens closed. Thus, the last remaining people who had occupied themselves with bringing the old etheric astronomy into harmony with Christianity had to emigrate; they found a place in Persia where they could at least live out their lives. Based on the same program, according to which he had closed the Athenian Academy of Philosophers, Justinian also had Origen declared a heretic. For the same reason, he abolished Roman consulship, though it led only a shadowy existence, people sought in it a kind of power of resistance against the Roman concept of the state, which was reduced to pure jurisprudence. The ancient human element people still associated with the office of consul disappeared in the political imperialism of Rome.

Thus, in the fourth century, we see the diminishing of the cultic worship that could have brought Christianity closer to man. We observe the diminishing of the ancient wisdom teaching of an etheric astronomy that tried to unite with the insight into the significance of the Mystery of Golgotha. And in the West, we see an element take its place that already carried within itself the seeds of the later materialism, which could not become a theory until the fifteenth century when the fifth post-Atlantean epoch began, but which was prepared in the main through taking the spiritual heritage from the Orient and imbuing it with materialistic substance.

We must definitely turn our minds to this course of European civilization. Otherwise, the foundations of European civilization will never become quite clear to us. It will also never become really clear to us how it was possible that, again and again, when people moved to the Orient, they could bring back with them powerful spiritual stimuli from there. Above all else, throughout the first part of the Middle Ages, there was lively commercial traffic from the Orient up the Danube River, following exactly those routes taken by the ancient Mithras worship, which, naturally, had already died away at the beginning of the Middle Ages. The merchants who traveled to the Orient and back again, always found in the East what had preceded Christianity but definitely tended already towards Christianity. We observe, moreover, that when the Crusaders journeyed to the Orient, they received stimuli from the remnants they could still discern there, and they brought treasures of ancient wisdom back to Europe."

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NOTES BY TRANSLATOR MISSING

[from Lecture 17, Materialism and the Task of Anthroposophy, Dornach, June 5, 1921]

The Greeks looked at the body, saw the soul-spiritual in the mixing and separating of the fluids and, to them, the sensory view in its clarity and vividness was the main thing. To the Romans, the essential thing was what a man felt himself to be, the feeling of self within the soul. To the Greeks, the view of how phlegm, blood, yellow, and black bile intermingle, how they are, in a manner of speaking, an expression of the earthly elements of air, fire, water, earth in the human being became something they saw as a work of art. Whereas the Egyptians contemplated the mummy, the Greeks looked upon the living work of art. The Romans had no sense for this, but they had an awareness for taking a stand in life, for developing inner consciousness, for allowing the spirit to speak, not for looking at the body but for making the spirit speak out of the soul between birth and death.

This is connected with the fact that at the height of Egyptian civilization, four branches of knowledge were especially cultivated in their ancient form: geometry, astrology, arithmetic, and music. In contemplating the heavenly element that formed the human body out of the earth, the Egyptians imagined that this body is molded in its spatial form according to the law of geometry; it is subject to the influences of the stars according to the laws of astrology. It is involved in activity from within according to the laws of arithmetic and is inwardly built up harmoniously according to the laws of music — music here conceived not merely as musical tone elements but as something that lives in harmonies in general. In the human being, as a product of the earth, in this mummified man, the Egyptians saw the result of geometry, astrology, arithmetic, and music. The Greeks lost sight of this. The Greeks replaced the lifeless, mummified element, which can be comprehended by means of geometry, astrology, arithmetic, and music, with the living soul element, the inner forming, the artistic self-development of the human body.

This is why we note in Greek culture a certain decline of geometry as it had existed among the Egyptians. It now became a mere science, no longer a revelation. The same happened with astrology and arithmetic. At most, the inner harmony that forms the basis of all living things remains in the Greek concept of music.

Then, when the Latin element came to the fore, the Romans, as I said, pictured this soul-spiritual being as it is between birth and death together with the inner spirit now expressing itself not as something that could inwardly be seen but inwardly experienced, taking its stand in the world through grammar, through dialectics, and through rhetoric. Therefore, during the time when Greek culture was passing over into Latin culture, these three disciplines flourished. In grammar, man was represented as spirit through the word; in rhetoric, the human being was represented through the beauty and forming of the word; in dialectics, the soul was represented through the forming of thought. Arithmetic, geometry, astrology, and music continued to exist, but only as ancient legacies turned science. These disciplines, which in ancient Egypt had been very much alive, became abstract sciences. By contrast, the arts attached to man — grammar, rhetoric, dialectics — took on new life.

There is a great difference between the way a person thought of a triangle in ancient Egypt prior to Euclid and the way people thought of it after Euclid's time. The abstract triangle was not experienced in

earlier times the way it was conceived later on. Euclid signified the decadence of Egyptian arithmetic and geometry. In Egypt, people felt universal forces when they envisaged a triangle. The triangle was a being. Now, all this became science, while dialectics, grammar and rhetoric became alive.

Schools were now established in accordance with the following thinking: Those people who want to be educated have to develop the spiritual potential in their already existent soul-spiritual human nature. As the first stage of instruction, they must master grammar, rhetoric, and dialectics. Then, they have to go through what remains only as a traditional legacy but forms the subjects of higher education: geometry, astrology, arithmetic, and music. These then were the seven liberal arts, even throughout the Middle Ages: grammar, rhetoric, dialectics, geometry, astrology, arithmetic, and music. The arts that came more to the fore were grammar, rhetoric, and dialectics; the arts that were more in the background, conceived by the ancient Egyptians in a living manner as they stood on a relationship to the earth, were the subjects of higher learning.

This was the essential development between the eighth century B.C. and the fourth century A.D. Look at Greece in the fourth century or in the third or fifth centuries. Look at modern Italy. You find everywhere in full bloom this knowledge of the human being as a work of art, as a product of the soul-spiritual element, of life of the spirit through dialectics, rhetoric, and grammar. Julian Apostate [\[Note 3\]](#) was educated in approximately this way in the Athenian school of philosophers. This is how he saw the human being.

Into this age burst the beginning of Christianity. But by then all this knowledge was in a certain sense already fading. In the fourth century it had been in its prime, and we have heard that by John Scotus Erigena's time only a mere tradition of it existed. What lived in the Greeks based on the view I have just characterized, then was transmitted to Plato and Aristotle who expressed it philosophically. When the fourth century B.C. drew near, however, people understood Plato and Aristotle less and less. At most people could accept the logical, abstract parts of their teachings. People were engrossed in grammar, rhetoric, dialectics. Arithmetic, geometry, astrology, and music had turned into sciences. People increasingly found their way into a sort of abstract element, into an element where something that had formerly been alive was now to exist only as tradition. As the centuries passed, it became still more a tradition. Those who were educated in the Latin tongue retained in a more or less ossified state grammar, rhetoric, and dialectics. Formerly a person would have laughed if he had been asked whether his thinking referred to something real. He would have laughed, for he would have said: I engage in dialectics; I do not cultivate the art of concepts in order to engage in anything unreal. For there, the spiritual reality lives in me. As I engage in grammar, the Logos speaks in me. As I engage in rhetoric, it is the cosmic sun that sends its influences into me.

This consciousness of being connected with the world was lost more and more. Everything became abstract soul experiences, a development that was completed by Scotus Erigena's time. The ideas that had been retained from earlier times — from Plato and Aristotle — were only comprehended more or less logically. People ceased to find any living element in them.



When the Emperor Constantine [Note 4] made Rome the ruling power under the pretext that he wished to establish the dominion of Christianity, everything became entirely abstract. It became so abstract that a person like Julian Apostate, who had been educated in the Athenian school of philosophy, was silenced. With an aching heart, he looked at what Constantine had done in the way of ossifying concepts and ancient living ideas, and Julian Apostate resolved to preserve this life that had still been evident to him in the Athenian schools of philosophers.

Later on, Justinian ruled from Byzantium, from Constantinople, which had been founded by Constantine. [Note 5] He abolished the last vestiges of these Athenian philosophers' schools that still possessed an echo of living human knowledge. Therefore, the seven wise Athenians — Athenians they were not, they were a quite international group, men from Damascus, Syrians, and others gathered from all over the world — had to flee on order of Justinian. These seven wise men fled to Asia, to the king of the Persians, [Note 6] where philosophers had had to escape to already earlier when Zeno, the Isaurian, [Note 7] had dispersed a similar academy. Thus we see how this knowledge, the best of which could no longer be comprehended in Europe, the living experience that had existed in Greece, had to seek refuge in Asia.

What was later propagated in Europe as Greek culture was really only its shadow. Goethe allowed it to influence him and as a thoroughly lively human being, he was seized with such longing that he wished he could escape from what had been offered to him as the shadow of Greek culture. He traveled to the south in order to experience at least the aftereffects.

In Asia, people who were capable of doing so received of Plato and Aristotle what had been brought across to them. This is why during the sixth century Aristotle's work was translated based on the Asian-Arabic spirit. This gave Aristotle's philosophy a different form.

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NOTES BY TRANSLATOR MISSING