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## Religious Frauds Find Profit in Americans

### Racketeers Invoke Constitution To Play Suckers Unchecked

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In other days, say about 25 years ago, the two most reliable ways to make a lot of money with the least effort and ingenuity were to get out a patent medicine or start a religion.

A truly miraculous remedy for stomach troubles could be made for a few cents a gallon out of bismuth, rhubarb and tap water and retail at 75 cents a bottle, and medicine fakers received bushels, literally, of hand-written testimonials from grateful Americans who thought some marvelous discovery had cured them of cancer, among other ills, and joyously reported that they could eat fried pork without distress.

#### The Golden Age of Medicine

That was truly the golden age of American medicine. Some of the remedies were pretty good, at that, being made according to old, standard doctors' formulas, but the Government and many of the newspapers gradually silenced the claims made for most internal medicines, and the field is now pretty well abandoned, although a few rich veins are still paying big profits.

Religion, however, is still open to the freest exploitation, and politics has taken the place of medicine, so there are still two fields of opportunity for men and women of the proper genius.

They can be worked separately, but it is being shown that they can be combined very effectively to the great profit of a professional God-man or great loving spirit under the very special protection of the United States Constitution.

There is still a temptation to carry on healing, through faith, incantations and the laying on of hands, but that is likely to be a troublesome sideline and not worth the bother. The law is peculiar about miracle-working in matters of physical illness, but the Constitution says that Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

#### Saves Racketeer From Probe

That phrase can be invoked to deter interference with the most dangerous fakery and, in conjunction with the Revenue Act, seal the accounts of a racketeer against inspection by the income tax department.

To interfere with a fraud in his preaching is to persecute him for his religious faith and martyrize him.

However idiotic, vicious and fraudulent his claims to divine credentials, the authorities, remembering the absurdity of Joseph Smith's hallucinations and the trouble that was caused by attempts to suppress him, are inclined to let him play his suckers until they run out of money or drift off, wild-eyed and slobbering after some new prophet.

There are no people more religious or, rather, more susceptible to religious nonsense than the Americans, and they have waves or spells in which, baffled by problems and excited by debate, they tend to go crazy in herds.

At such times—and this seems to be the beginning of a spell—hot-eyed demagogues, including rogues of the most wicked cynicism, come bawling out of the mists of superstition and fear and hypnotize weak souls with strong words.

The radio vastly extends their radius much as though the spitting cobra, which ordinarily can spray its venom only a few feet, by some discovery intended for the benefit of man suddenly were enabled to poison victims a thousand miles away.

#### Europeans Don't Respond

European peoples, Orientals, even savages—all of whom, God knows, have had more troubles and much more terrible ones—do not respond to such appeals as periodically drug the vaunted common sense of countless Americans and set them to praying, burning and, temporarily, believing the most infantile.

Hitlerism, with its nonsense about the Aryan race and the mysterious spiritual quality of the German soil, is a great exception, but the lunacy of those Germans who do subscribe to this madness may be attributed to a far more trying experience, lasting many years, than anything the Americans have suffered.

The Itallans were ordered to believe themselves Aryan and laughed aloud.