



The Profits of Religion

Upton Sinclair

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The Profits of Religion Upton Sinclair

The Profits of Religion: An Essay in Economic Interpretation is a snapshot of the religious movements in the U.S. before its entry into World War I. The book is the first of the "Dead Hand" series: six books Upton Sinclair wrote on American institutions. The series also includes The Brass Check (journalism), The Goose-step (higher education), The Goslings (elementary and high school education), Mammonart (art) and Money Writes! (literature). The term "Dead Hand" ironically refers to Adam Smith's concept that allowing an "invisible hand" of individual self interest to shape economic relations provides the best result for society as a whole. In this book, Sinclair attacks institutionalized religion as a "source of income to parasites, and the natural ally of every form of oppression and exploitation." Most clergymen are hypocrites, but they are not entirely to blame. Like other men, they are victimized by "the competitive wage-system, which presents them with the alternative to swindle or to starve." Sinclair savages the Episcopal establishment for transforming the proletarian Jesus into a defender of wealth and privilege, and for a long history of alliance with political power in England and the United states. Turning to the "nonconforming" Protestant sects, adherents of "The Church of the Merchants" are focused on achieving prosperity within the existing economic system. So are the devotees of the mostly California-based 'new religions' or 'cults', including New Thought.

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