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# The Religion of the Romans

by  
Georg Wissowa  
for “Culture of the Present”  
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## Introduction.

For many generations of scholars and until fairly recently, Roman religion was, and often is still, considered by those more distant to the topic, the totality of ideas, beliefs and theological speculations about the gods at the time of the Roman empire, knowledge of which was retained throughout the Middle Ages by Latin writers; included in this term were even those parts of Greek mythology and heroic saga that pertained to the Romans and were renamed by the poets of the Augustan age and their descendants in Latin terms: for the unity and identity of the Greek and the Roman panthea are taken for granted even today by the educated, so that he<sup>1</sup> will speak as a matter of course of Saturn who devoured his own children, and Juno, Minerva and Venus receiving the Judgment of Paris, without being aware of the oddness of such a statement. Of course, there are important and unmistakable connections between the Greek and Roman faith,<sup>2</sup> but by no means in the sense that both peoples worshiped the same gods under different names |<sub>2</sub> and that Roman religion was merely a faint and impoverished copy of Greek religion. A small basis of the Greek and Roman concepts of the gods dates back to prehistoric times: [[naming as father the heavenly god originally Indo-Germanic Wackernagel's syntax I 310]]<sup>3</sup> the father of heaven, Juppiter, and Vesta, goddess of the hearth, cannot deny their identity with Zeus and Hestia in name or in their spheres of power, and in other respects also do we find here and there so clearly related traits in both forms of worship that the difference of name cannot conceal the original identity in

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1 Wissowa, as was usual in his day, speaks only of the male scholar.

2 Throughout his writings, the author remains in a speech habit that is strongly framed by Christian terms, as can also be seen when considering his primary text, *Religion of the Romans*, when he speaks of ‘faith’, ‘theology’ or ‘gottesdienstliche Handlungen’ [‘divine services’]. Cf. Rüpke 2003. This is, however, far from unusual for his time.

3 [[]] mark marginal notes in the manuscript. They partly indicate changes of topics (as was usual in contemporary French academic writing), partly refer to the bibliography, partly indicate problems.

thought. But in the vast majority of cases it is not a matter of common original properties of both peoples, but of a subsequent, historical, and sometimes quite late, influencing of Roman religion by Greek thought: be it that new gods like Apollo and Aesculapius, which were clearly marked by their very names as foreigners, came to stand beside the indigenous ones; be it that they appropriated factually or supposedly related Roman deities whose essence they, preserving the old names, broke and reshaped from within, so that, e. g., Neptunus and Ceres |<sub>3</sub> became mere dummies in which the Greek gods Poseidon and Demeter were hidden. The key to understanding the religious thought of the Romans lies far beyond these adaptations and equalisations. Even if the borrowed cults of the Greeks gained the supremacy in public worship in Rome by virtue of the incomparably higher spirituality and sensuality of their ritual, and have ruled supreme in Roman poetry through the legends and myths connected to them: For the pious sense and the religious needs of the individual Roman, not Apollo and Diana, not Mars or Venus, yea not even Juppiter and Juno, but the Genius and Lares, the *di penates* and *di manes* mattered, even until the end of paganism, deities created in ancient times entirely out of Roman thought, and which have escaped equation with any Greek concepts altogether.

## I Rome and Italy.

[[Italian tribal religions.]] In Greece, we see how each tribe and every part of the mainland, as well as the forward posts in the east and west, developed their own concept of the gods and the same or similar religious sentiments in different environments, expressed in ever new |<sub>4</sub> names and forms of worship, until gradually in the close mutual contact of the tribes, shared ideas combine and connect, and poetry brings order into the colourful diversity of competing accounts, in which the plentitude of individual names and extraordinary tales came together, creating, not a Hellenic religion, but nonetheless a common Greek mythology. The image of national religion in Italy is much simpler and coherent. Here, too, different shoots grew out of a common root among the Italian tribes, and, as the few remains we have show, the religions of the Falisci and the Latins, the Umbrians and Oscians, the Marsians and Paeligni were no less different in their forms of religious expressions than were their various dialects. But when a single community of Latin origin, ever expanding from within with the elemental power of organic growth, subdued and annexed the entire peninsula over the centuries, political unification also gradually brought about a unification

of the religions of Italy: already in the 5<sup>th</sup> century of the Punic Wars, certainly, however, in the time of the Social War, did the Roman religion supersede Italian religions, which still does not exclude that in some remote cantons and lonely mountain valleys people continued to cling to the ancient names and forms of worship and the Reatine Sabines, for example, continued to worship their Vacuna and the Marsians the snake goddess Angitia, while everywhere else the gods of Rome ruled supreme. This inclusion of Italian religions within the Roman [[community of basic religious ideas in Italy]] was facilitated by the fact that certain basic religious ideas were found in all tribes and thus came together easily: thus Juppiter, father of the heavens, and Mars, god of war, were worshipped pretty much everywhere in Italy, and in many cultic forms did the same needs and sensibilities produce shared expressions in rituals, such as the exploration of divine will in lightning strikes and the flight of the birds or the regulation of duties towards the dearly departed. Nonetheless did the lack of corporeality and personality unite all Italian deities: no image showed their shape 6<sup>th</sup> or facial features, no legend knew of their deeds and sorrows, no tale brought them together with one another or with humans in hate and love, or told of the marriages and progeny of gods; they were only ever the formless exponents of human fears and desires, [[mayhap the religion of the Italian tribes was initially more personal than the Roman, Bickel, ancient Roman concept of the divine]] and if there were among the gods of the political power those who served the same needs of the pious as well or better than the ancient tribal gods, then these had not the power to resist them: the Umbrian Cerfus and the Oscian Herentas disappeared, as the Roman Genius and the Latin Venus were either attributed the same powers or else otherwise able to grant everything that was expected of them. [[Absorption of Italian religions by the Roman.]] But despite all this could Roman religion never have become Italian religion if it had not understood how to absorb and assimilate all the expressions of religious thought and need which were initially alien to Roman faith, yet to be found in Italian religions: Minerva, Fortuna, Diana, Hercules, and many other gods immigrated from the neighbouring Latin and Etrurian communities to 7<sup>th</sup> Rome, and if the Roman religion of the Gracchan period was in content as different from the religion of the four-quarter city as was the army or the nobility of the civil wars from that of the Social War, then this is less a consequence of Greek influence, as mighty as it may have been, than an assimilation which salvaged all that was viable and indestructible of the faith of the Italian peoples.

## II Primordial Roman Religion.

[[Relationship to godhead.]] The Roman religion is based neither on a joyful feeling of being one with an eternal, all-pervading power, nor on the fear that comes when faced with powers too strong or strange for any mind to understand: the basic feature in the faith of the Roman is a feeling of connection to and dependency upon the deity, which is well expressed by the name *religio*. But the Roman was not subject like a slave to any arbitrary act of that more powerful being, rather, their relationship was constituted as a fixed legal partnership, the terms of which were given by the deity itself or by it accepted, but inviolably binding as long as the mortal party meticulously and without fail fulfilled his duties towards the deity. |<sub>8</sub> Transgressions and violations on the human part might have impacted the relationship to the divine, something that could, however, always be atoned for; only where not negligence or chance, but deliberate ill intent led to contempt of the divine would recompense be impossible, the contract be dissolved: left without rights, the sinner was exposed to divine punishment. Transactions between mortal and immortal were immediate: no priestly caste mediated between the human and the divine; the Roman citizen himself [[Genius togatus?]] sacrificed and spoke the relevant prayer, himself recited the vow and himself transferred whatever was promised the deity to its possession. Families were represented towards the godhead by the pater familias, societies and colleges of any kind by their arbiters, the community by the elected magistrates; priests functioned only as expert helpers and as administrative performers, being tasked with the execution of the present sacrifice and all future sacral services. [[Immanence of the deity.]] The godhead, the image of which could not be conjured or constructed, revealed itself not in the body and to the individual, but was rather all around man. Seldom has the concept |<sub>9</sub> of the immanence of the deity been so clearly and consistently articulated as in the Roman faith: godhead was not in things, it did not exercise its power in them, but was identical with them. One of the oldest sacrificial acts known to us, called Palatuar, did not address the god of the Palatine mountain, but the mountain itself; the field and the blessing of the harvest, the door and the hearth, the fountain and the boundary stone were not subject each to their gods, but were themselves gods, the same word (Tellus, Ops, Janus, Vesta, Fons, Terminus) designated the object and the god. But even where the latter bore its own name was he not detachable from the action in which and through which he revealed himself: Saturnus and Consus were not protectors of the sowing and chafing of the field crop, Robigus and Volcanus were not demons of failed growth and fires, they existed only in and through

these processes, and even the most universal of all Roman gods, Jupiter, who seems to show a certain personal trait in the very name of the father which is inextricably linked to himself, was not the thrower of the lightning bolt, or the sender of rain and sun, but the sky itself, who lowered himself onto the earth to fertilise the fields with his sweet rain: *Iup- |<sub>10</sub> piter et laeto descendet pluirimus imbre*. [[Narrow circle of view]] But this deification of the natural environment was limited to the most obvious, every cosmogonic speculation about the origin of the world and the creation of man, every narrative explanation of the battles of nature was far from the Roman mind; not even the sun and the moon, which he saw every day and whose effects he felt, found a place in his oldest circle of gods. ~~Jupiter and Juno as heavenly gods also had to represent the male and female heavenly bodies.~~ Instead, it is the everyday life with its works and needs, birth and death, the change of the seasons, the manifold tasks and worries of the agriculturalist and the shepherd, the local environment of woods and fields, fountains and rivers that was reflected in his pantheon. The martial sense of community, for which the summer expeditions were as much part of the annual tasks as the tasks in the fields, was expressed in the prominent position of Mars among the gods: he immediately follows Jupiter in rank, in whom the highest moral and political power, the sanctity of the oath and the inviolability of lateral contracts were united, |<sub>11</sub> and with him and Quirinus, the representative of the once independent community of the Quirinal hill, who were subsequently united with the Palatine Romans, he formed a divine triad; these three we encounter whenever it was necessary to invoke and commit the state by reference to its highest gods. [[Invocation of the deity.]] There was nowhere and nothing in public or private life in which the power of the godhead did not envelop the mortals, [[protective gods (Bickel's real *Sondergötter*<sup>4</sup>)]], but to call upon them with the appropriate name in the right time and place was a difficult and involved question, much dependent on the effectiveness of prayer; when in doubt, one addressed the deity who should be concerned, but without calling upon it by name and gender (*sive deus sive dea*), or indeed by letting the needs of the moment create a new deity, as was done when the unknown god whose voice warned of the approach of the Gauls [[M Ed Meyer]] was consecrated an altar: thus it was possible to add to the circle of gods infinitely and adapt it ever to the needs of the expanding nation.

[[Domestic cult.]] In the house, the hearth on the back wall of the atrium with its living flame was where the power of the |<sub>12</sub> deity was most imme-

4 Cf. Elm 2003.

diately to be felt: here was the seat of Vesta and the *di penates*, the deities of the hearth and the pantry (*penus*), providing for the continuity and prosperity of the house, at the hearth the housewife was tasked with keeping the purity of this place of the house gods, and before them, seated along long tables, did the entire house, including the servants or slaves, eat their bread, inviting the gods to be their guests, when their share of the meal was thrown into the living flame or put in little bowls upon the hearth. And when the pater familias fulfilled his task to preserve and continue, to protect and provide for the family, they would worship his Genius, the ruling deity of the family father: for this was everywhere and manifested itself in all places, and so it did in every single person, as the Genius of the man, as the Juno of the woman, designating by their names the one who sires and the young woman (to *iuvenis*), projecting the young couple about to make their own home into the divine realm and thus showing that the Roman understood the continuous miracle of procreation and conception as an expression of a higher power. The family line was not sundered by death, the ancestral spirits (*di parentes*) were honoured by grave markers and offerings, and remembered annually especially at the All Souls' festival in February, which lasted several days and which concluded, ingeniously, with a celebration of the 'beloved relatives' of the living. There was no talk of eternal life in the underworld or <sub>13</sub> retribution after death; the souls of the departed (*di manes*) were shapeless and shadowy spirits, which at certain times, e. g., at the Lemuria in May, affected the world of the living by demanding gifts in exchange for letting them be. [[Religious clubs.]] Some modest beginnings of a kind of parish order showed themselves in the old religious associations of the mountain and district communities, in the joint celebrations of neighbouring communities of their common borders and among the curiae, most durable however in the cult of the Lares: each property had its own divinity in its Lar; where properties adjoined one another, at the *compitum*, the Lar of each property was worshipped individually and all of them together by the neighbouring community: here in winter, when all work was done, was celebrated the glad feast of the Compitalia, here the sons and daughters of the farms dedicated the tokens of their childhood upon their coming of age, here did the newly wedded wife offer coins to buy herself into the religious community of her neighbours, as she did also at the hearth to become part of the family's religious community. [[State cult.]] The state cult in its simplest forms was only a transfer of the domestic worship into a larger <sub>14</sub> context: just as every farmer in spring dedicated pig, ram and bull to Mars by walking them around the borders of his land, praying that the god will keep war and destruction away, so the greater community celebrated the same festival

(*lustratio pagi*) with a procession around their village and the state (*Ambarvalia*) by a sacrificial procession to keep the borders of the Roman lands; like every plot of land, so the *ager Romanus* had its Lares, as the individual house, so did the community commemorate their dead, and the cult at the hearth of the house found its expression in the service rendered to Vesta and the *di penates* in the innermost corner of the hearth of the central forum. This ancient, circular temple of Vesta was no more than a covered fireplace, not a place of worship, for a cult image was as alien as a house of worship to the immanent deity: Fons was sacrificed to at his source and Terminus at the boundary stone, and wherever the place of worship was not as clearly named, there was a grove, a fenced-in place, an altar, where the worshipper might feel close to the deity itself. The sacral acts of the state priests had often the mark of great antiquity, such as the war dances of the Salii in honour of Mars, or the circuits run by the leather apron-clad Luperci at the festival of Faunus, |<sub>15</sub> god of fertility; even in public cult, both offerings and gifts were mostly modest and simple, but the sequence of ceremony itself highly complex and focused on the greatest precision of even the most menial and minor of matters. This conscientiousness and meticulousness in even the smallest things is particularly evident concerning the Roman auspices, when based on the complicated regulations of its ancient priesthood one could learn the consent, or dissent, of the gods for all matters of state, in peace and in war, or recognise and expiate signs of divine displeasure that came unasked; since no magistrate of the people took up his office or appointed his successor without first having assured himself of divine approval by obtaining the necessary auspices, so did the Roman state itself rely throughout its history upon a continuous and constantly renewed guarantee of divine approval, and it is easily to be understood that pious souls saw in this the very explanation for the unprecedented success of Rome in state and in war craft. If the ancient Roman religion lacked imagination and heartfelt emotion which turn the relationship between god and man into an inner personal experience, then the predominantly legal |<sub>16</sub> understanding of the relation to the divine produced the danger of pretence and rigidity – all the same, there is without any doubt something impressive and assertive in the simplicity and stability of a religious understanding that sees life in all its facets as couched in and permeated by divinity, and which feels secure and safe as long as all duties are not neglected, by design or by accident.

### III Extension of the Roman to a Pan-Italian Religion.

[[Old and new gods.]] The Roman himself regarded the religious order and ritual prescriptions as a creation of the priest-king Numa, and the memory of its containing the actual roots of indigenous religions has insofar not been lost as the 'indigenous' gods of the oldest circle maintained a special legal position over against all other, later introduced deities, no matter their full and equal citizenship within Rome, comparable to the patriciate over against plebeian citizens. The time of the 'newly come' gods began with the government of the Tarquinian dynasty, under which Rome became the head of the Latin League and thus adapted and absorbed the worship |<sub>17</sub> of their neighbouring communities, while a strong river of Etruscan and South-Italian/Greek influences and ideas flooded Latium; it contained the centuries of strife for Italian supremacy down to the Hannibalic war, in which the dividing wall between old and new gods crumbled and fell and the Hellenising transformation of the Roman faith began from within. At the beginning of this period, the Capitoline temple stood as the most prominent landmark of a new era, in which Juppiter Optimus Maximus, Juno Regina and Minerva superseded the older triad Juppiter, Mars and Quirinus at the head of the newly formed state religion and maintained their position until the end of the Roman Empire. While Etruscan influences can clearly be seen in the design of this sanctuary, the endowment of the cult image, in the connected customs of the triumph and the games, so did the recognition of the Cumean Sibylline oracles further the acceptance of numerous Greek cults while neighbouring Latin ceremonies increasingly pushed |<sub>18</sub> into Rome, led by Diana Nemorensis of Aricia, goddess of the League of Latin Cities, who received a temple on the Aventine, on the borders of the expanding city. [[Cult image and temples.]] It was a new world of a different kind of gods that now made its way into Rome: whether of Etruscan, Greek or Latin origin, the new gods stood quite physically before their worshipper in the cult image, other than the immanent deity of the old faith used to; the cult image required an aedifice in which it would be sheltered and where worshippers approached the deity with prayers and processions, sometimes it would also demand clothing and food, and it was an impressive spectacle when pairs of gods and goddesses were publicly feasted on special occasions, within their images, richly dressed and brightly ornamented, lying on couches at table. While this latter custom in its strangeness remained limited to a small number of cults of Greek origin, the old gods soon bowed to the necessity of having their own cult image and temples, which, now rising in many places in the city, were not only places of silent worship, but intimately connected

to the political and corporate life of the community: [[Political and social significance of the new cults]] while the Capito-<sup>19</sup>lium was the sacral centre of the state and the temple of the Aventine Diana that of the Roman-Latin League, so the temple of Saturn between forum and Capitol housed the state treasure, the Greek temple of Ceres the archive and monies of the plebs, and the Roman knights gathered around the Etruscan Dioscuri. The connection between the new cults and the richer forms of economic activity and social structure become very clear: in Demeter of Henna, who was naturalised in Rome as Ceres, the import of Sicilian grain found expression and in the cult of the Cumean Apollo (as also later in that of Asklepios of Epidaurus) the Greek art of healing was embodied, Minerva, who immigrated from South Etruria, full of craft, became the patron saint of the developing guilds of artisans, and under the shield of the god of trade Hermes, reconceptualised as Mercurius, the merchants organised themselves; Hercules, despite his Greek origin no stranger to the Roman, but a friendly neighbour from nearby Tibur, was closely connected with the hustle and bustle of commercial travel [[safety of the roads.]], and the Roman's increasing acquaintance with the sea and seafaring was expressed by the fact that the ancient Roman<sup>20</sup> god of water Neptunus transformed into Greek Poseidon, ruler of the sea. [[Differentiation of religious ideas.]] As the horizon expanded the lives and thoughts of the Romans everywhere, they developed a desire to differentiate more strongly their religious beliefs; gods of more comprehensive meaning branched out according to their spheres of specific power by adding epithets to their names or developing new branches from the main stem by detaching certain of their powers, thus becoming new deities altogether: so we find, on the one hand, special forms of deities, such as Juppiter as the holder of the oath (Dius Fidius) or the bringer of victory (Juppiter Victor), while we find, on the other, also Fides and Victoria as deities in their own rights, and in these latter we find an example for a whole string of deified abstract concepts, such as Concordia and Libertas, Spes and Pietas. Other special forms of cults from neighbouring cities who settled in Rome and were only distinguished by their localised names from the related, Roman deities, added to the colourful mixture of names and conceptions: we find not only Juno as Lucina, Moneta and the like, but also Juno Regina of Veii,<sup>21</sup> Juno Curitis of Falerii and Juno Sospita of Lanuvium with their own temples in Rome. [[Correction mark; probably related to Curitis.]]

#### IV Hellenisation and Decline.

[[Triumph of Hellenism.]] While there was no restriction to creating new gods by adding epitaphs or personifications, the adoption of Italian and Greek deities into the Roman system came to a conclusion during the third century BC: the Etruscan Vortumnus of Volsinii and the Greek Aphrodite of Eryx were the last additions of this kind, by which the Roman religion incorporated all relevant religious concepts of the Italian peninsula, be they of indigenous or Greek origin; [[reflection of the Roman Empire (since the Punic Wars)]] for the addition of the Great Mother of Pessinus at the end of the Second Punic War no longer fell into this category, the incorporation of her worship was rather the first step towards the acceptance of Eastern religions that were as foreign to Rome as they were to Greece, and whose concentrated influx led a revolution of the religious order. With the victory over Hannibal, the last barrier was broken that held the Roman people back on their road to world domination [[expression!]]; |<sub>22</sub> but by choosing this way, they must needs give up something that had, in the confines of their beginnings, been very dear to them. By widening their gaze, whatever distinctions they held before they became obsolete, even the boundaries between indigenous and newly adopted, Italian and Greek, gods could not hold, and with its fall came the irreversible Hellenisation of the Roman faith and worship. Literature promoted this trend, setting Greek and Roman gods in one in the translation of Greek poems, fine arts paved the way by adopting the types of gods of Greek temple art unchanged or with only minor modifications and using these to represent Roman gods, science advanced it by taking for granted the identity of Greek and Roman gods in philosophical speculation about the nature of religion. [[Decline of the ancient faith.]] But the religious feeling of the Greeks and the Romans still differed to such a degree that it was impossible to become one, nor could the Roman simply adopt the Greek way of thinking; Hellenisation destroyed the old faith |<sub>23</sub> without having something new to offer in its stead that could thrive: the gap between the everyday faith of the masses and that which those learned in Greek philosophy held to be the true content and goal of religious thinking was wide and unbridgeable, restlessness and insecurity manifested themselves in an unholy grasping for ever new revelations, in which one expected salvation in the Orphic-Bacchic mysteries as much as from New Pythagorean theosophy or even from the flat rationalism of Euhemeros. Gone is the surety and self-assurance which marked the relationship of the individual as much as the community with their deity: in the growing tasks of the state, one watched ever more nervously and fearfully for any sign of divine wrath

in all inner and outer ventures, and endeavoured to find the appropriate means of atonement by turning to the hallowed pontifices, the interpreters of the Greek Sibylline oracles, or the Etruscan haruspices; but the acts of atonement faded quickly, confidence in their effectiveness evaporated when they had been applied a few times, and the priests had to find new ways to outdo the old ceremonies, to appease the troubled minds of the populace<sup>124</sup> and restore their feeling of being at peace with the deity (*pax et venia deum*). Among the educated, a pale utilitarian morality and pantheistic theology based on Stoic doctrine had replaced positive religion, and the state priests, who were elected from among them, exercised the duties of their office [[often]] without inner interest and with dislike for the inconveniences of ceremonies incomprehensible to them. The rulers held that for the people religion must be preserved for reasons of state welfare, but if in private life pious sense still revealed itself [[rural life!]], and domestic cults especially maintained the vitality of the old faith, there is barely an inner attachment of the masses to their state cults, the only cultic acts which were of general interest were the public festivals, which constantly increased in number and splendour, with but bare traces of their original connection to the worship from which they had sprung. All in all do the religious conditions of the last generations before the outbreak of the civil wars present a bleak picture in every respect. <sup>125</sup>

## V State Religion of the Imperial Era.

[[Reforms of Augustus.]] One of the most brilliant achievements of Augustus' wise government was his religious policy. However difficult it may have been to transform the republican order into a monarchical form of government, a development which had become inevitable and was yet contrary to the feelings of the masses, so that it did not appear to be a clear break with the past, but rather appeared as an organic continuation of what had been before – what demanded even more ingenuity was the task to restore the moral and religious conditions that were entirely corrupted in the long years of inner dissension and civil wars, and to put them on a new, firm footing; how very important this was to the emperor is shown by the repeated emphasis given to this aspect by those poets who held themselves as heralds of the imperial court and interpreters of Augustus' plans and intentions. It was comparatively easy to counter the visible decay of the state religion: for the restoration of destroyed or abandoned temples – be it by negligence or greed – for the revival and <sup>126</sup> reorganisation of the priesthoods which

had not found applicants for generations, for the reorganisation and modernisation of the quaint festivals and ceremonies, all that was needed was the material means and an intensive and persistent interest of the emperor which he communicated to his environment. When Augustus himself became a member of the priesthoods reformed by him and participated most conscientiously and engagedly in all acts of worship, when he resumed old customs, such as throwing a lance into enemy territory as done by the priesthood of the Fetiales, or closing the gate of Janus as a sign of peace throughout the lands, and carried these out in person, when he gave brilliant expression to the thought that after hard fighting a new, and happy, era had now begun under the auspices of the gods by celebrating the Secular Games of 17 BC and incorporating both old and new, Greek and Roman elements, then the earnestness and weightiness with which the first man in the state wooed his countrymen for the restoration of pious feeling within the state could not be missed by those who would otherwise have turned away. But these were only external rites that had to be filled with new content. Much depended on restoring the faith of the people who had, after the time of turmoil and disruption, even more need and desire to re-awaken and strengthen the deep-rooted faith that lay in them, |<sub>27</sub> to give it life and to have it bear fruit by introducing new ideas: Considering the close and inseparable connection in which religion and state had always stood for the Roman, these new ideas had to start first and foremost with the new form of state; the fact that now the state was concentrated on the person of one man required religious expression. The Emperor temporarily thought of placing the gods of his house at the head of the new faith and of displacing Capitoline Juppiter with Apollo, to whose aid he attributed the victories in the Sicilian sea and at Actium, with Mars Ultor, who avenged the murder of great Caesar at Philippi, and with Venus Genetrix, the ancestral mother of the Julian dynasty: but however much court poetry attempted to glorify these gods and underline their significance for emperor and empire, they were too far removed from the religious sensibilities of the masses, new religious ideas cannot just be foisted upon the people, but can only be carefully nourished from the deep, yet vital roots of religious feelings. This Augustus realised and acted upon it when, upon the death of Lepidus, he assumed the office of supreme pontiff |<sub>28</sub> and thus linked the dignity of highest office of the church to the person of the emperor once and for all: by giving up on this occasion the official residence to which the Pontifex Maximus was entitled, right by the temple of Vesta on the forum, by founding a new cult of Vesta and the *di penates* of the Roman people in his grand house on the Palatine, he moved the hearth of the state from the forum to the imperial residence,

and thus expressed to every Roman in traditional religious language that from now on this was the place where the heart of the Roman state lay. And from a related conception comes the institution in which we see perhaps the most ingenious idea among the religious innovations of Augustus. The need to divide the city of Rome into quarters and districts for administrative reasons suggested that the latter should be grouped around sacral centres, and continuing the idea of the Lares of the Compitum, that is here: the intersections, Augustus gave to each district a chapel of worship for the Lares compitales, at which the inhabitants of the quarters gathered for regular worship: between the two Lares, the image of Genius Augusti found its place and so each street corner became a place of imperial cult. As the Genius of the house-<sup>29</sup> father enjoyed continuous cult placed in between the deities of the hearth, it was both obvious and inoffensive that the new master of the state should claim divine worship through the mediation of his Genius; the basic idea of the cult of the Genius was after all one which was versatile enough for many different forms and nuances and maintained, as the sheer uncountable number of *genii* of the different corporation, troops, cities and places which we find mentioned in inscription shows, a bottomless virility; but its greatest advantage was that through it, the emperor could be clothed in divine honours without the need to apotheosise the living, something that was entirely alien to Roman sentiment. The same service was also rendered by the deification of imperial qualities and benefits, which now began to increase in both public and private worship: if the peace secured by the victories of the emperor (Pax Augusta) or the imperial clemency (Clementia Augusta) were now attributed divine rank, then the actual recipient of these divine honours is barely veiled. It is significant that all these religious ideas current in the imperial period are based on the ancient Roman view of an immanent deity that was identical with persons and things: it is this ancient Roman view, not the added layer of Hellenised teachings, which prove fruitful in a new form.

[[Imperial cult.]] In Rome and Italy, in whose cities the new custom was soon<sup>30</sup> readily accepted, the prominent veneration of the Genius Augusti inbetween the Lares in the midst of everyday traffic provided the suitable basis for a reform that connected the old with the changed circumstances. But this imaginary was after all<sup>5</sup> too specific to the Italian world to become the centre of an emerging imperial religion. As little as the Roman government intended to interfere in the various religious sentiments of the provinces, it was nevertheless an undeniable demand of state reason that a shared

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5 Unexecuted insertion, ed.

set of notions about the gods should stand above all special religions within the empire and provide the kind of spiritual bracket in religious terms as did the Roman administration in political terms when it came to unite the parts of the empire that differed so strongly in their history and populations, while also preserving local peculiarities. The cult of Juppiter Best and Greatest and his consorts Juno and Minerva the Roman proconsuls and legates brought to all provinces, where it became, as in Rome, the highest form of state religion for officers and Roman citizens. For the provincials, however, the feeling of imperial unity was expressed much more pertinently with a view to the imperial capital and the emperor who from there ruled the world, |<sub>31</sub> and for the worship of the latter did the countries of the Hellenic and Hellenised East not need a detour as provided by the Genius Augusti, as for them the deification of a living ruler, long practiced in the kingdoms of the Diadochi, was nothing unusual. Thus, with imperial permission, first the provinces of Asia and Bithynia in their capitals, then the other eastern provinces, and soon also those of the West – Gaul, Germania, Spain and others – founded the cult of Roma and Augustus: their worship, which was joined by many similar provisions in other cities, served to centralise the religious life in the provinces and its connection to the imperial government, while local cults and sacred customs remained untouched and unchanged. The emperor cult knew certain modifications in the course of time as some emperors were consecrated after death by decree of the senate, and a new group of state deities was thus created: the divi (imperatores). Within the provincial cults, the name Augustus (or Augusti) thus meant the veneration of the founder of the Roman monarchy, who first bore this title and endowed the office with a religious aura, as well as the number of divi and finally also the current wearer of the crown; the state |<sub>32</sub> religion, however, continued to adhere to the principle that only the divi themselves could be worshipped as gods, while the living emperor was to be venerated through the mediation of the Genius Augusti, and not until Aurelian did this differentiation become void by his adopting the title of ‘Lord and God’. The official oath of the imperial era shows which deities were the connecting element of the rich diversity of regional religious ideas and thus the pillars of imperial religion: one swore by Juppiter Optimus Maximus, the divi (individualised by their personal names), the Genius of the ruling emperor and the *di penates* of the Roman people.

[[Romanisation of national religions in the provinces.]] The official central and provincial religious regime was, in a way, the cover under which developed in the different parts of the empire rich and varied forms of religious life, and the provinces entered into an intensive exchange of religious ideas

among themselves and with Rome and Italy. The Roman state had almost unlimited tolerance towards the national religions of its inhabitants: where it intervened, as for example with the repeated expulsions of Egyptian cults from the capital and by suppressing the Druidic religion of Gaul that demanded human sacrifice, it happened in terms of preserving the orderliness of state, not for reasons of faith. [[Greeks also]] But the Romans also had a strange <sup>133</sup> way in which to assimilate the gods of foreign peoples to their own understanding: departing from the view that the same gods who were worshipped in Rome were essentially worshipped everywhere, even if differing in name and in cultic custom, the Romans found in any foreign land, to a greater or lesser degree of plausibility, the same gods and worshipped them under the names known to them; while the indigenous name initially remained as epithet to the Roman deity he was identified with, but was gradually phased out (thus we find, for example, a Celtic god Granus, then Apollo Grannus, then simply Apollo in the upper regions of the Danube), a Romanising of provincial gods took place, to which the Western lands especially were even more rapidly subject as they had no culture of greater antiquity which might have helped to stem the Roman tide. We often find, therefore, that, especially in the Germanic-Celtic region, indigenous names disappeared altogether, and only the learned gaze will recognise the indigenous deity in the Roman god that is addressed in a dedicatory inscription: If, for example, on votive inscriptions we meet Mercurius and Maia in the middle Rhine valley and the Moselle region, these names are given a completely different meaning by the fact <sup>134</sup> that the deities are called Mercurius and Romerta on similar stones of the same area; the indigenous name of the Celtic god that was likened to Mercurius has been entirely lost, but his consort has sometimes adopted the name of Maia, a deity closely connected to Mercurius, and sometimes retained her old name. It is not by chance that we regularly find the Roman names Mercurius and Mars in this context, and the Germanic triad of Donar, Tiu and Wodan addressed as Hercules, Mars and Mercurius in the Latin inscriptions mirrors the custom of the troops who were recruited from among the Germans: for those that were primarily active in spreading different religious ideas and concepts and the very practice of Romanisation were the members of the Roman mercantile class, travelling and trading throughout the empire, as well as the army, in which all nations were to be found, and whose practice of dislocation and constant movement throughout the empire meant that a Spanish cohort would today be sent to Egypt and a cavalry squadron from the Euphrates would tomorrow find itself on the banks of the Rhine, while their centurions advanced through the ranks and their veterans settled in numerous cases

far from home and wherever their last garrison had been posted. If one only imagines how the rich seed was spread in all directions by numerous mediators, one understands the mind-boggling confusion found in some provinces, e. g., along the Danube or |<sub>35</sub> in northern Africa: in the later province there were as many gods as there were peoples, beside Juppiter Best and Greatest and the other gods of the Roman state cult one finds also the Punic Ba'alchammân, venerated under the name of Saturn, and an indigenous pair of gods, sometimes called Frugifer and Nutrix, sometimes in Greek-Roman style Pluton and Ceres, besides ancient Roman deities such as Janus and Faunus we find barbaric Berber gods such as Bacax and Aulisva, and also the wide spread religion of the Great Mother and the Persian Mithras.

[[Oriental Cults in Rome.]] But the true pantheon of the world was the imperial capital itself. In the exchange of ideas between Italy and the lands of the Empire, the latter were naturally the recipients at first, and the provinces of the West have always remained so; from among their gods, only the Celtic Epona, goddess of the horse stable, found followers in the athletic circles of Rome and Italy, even if not entry into the state cult: nonetheless were the Celts the instructors to the Romans in all things to do with horsemanship. However, the relationship of the Egyptian religion, the Near Eastern, Syrian, Persian, yea, all the Eastern religions to Rome is quite different. A basic differences lies in the world view and the all-encompassing claim among their adherents that their, and only their, god would provide salvation, |<sub>36</sub> a claim which would not allow for Romanisation, or only in the most superficial of ways: if the divine lords of Baalbek or of Doliche in Comma-gene were addressed as Juppiter Optimus Maximus Heliopolitanus or Juppiter Optimus Maximus Dolichenus, they are equalled to the highest god of the Roman state without abandoning anything of their particular nature. These religions had certain traits which would guarantee them a strong and lasting influence on the inhabitants of the western half of the Empire: the forms of their worship, their wild exuberance and sultry sensuality exerted an exotic charm, while their dogmas offered that which Roman religion had always lacked, an inspiration to the mind and a quieting of the heart in mysterious revelations that made promises beyond the limits of mortality. Even in the streets of Augustan Rome we see the processions of the castrated priests of the Great Mother and the servants of the Cappadocian goddess Má, who was naturalised in Rome as Bellona, as well as later the mendicant priests of Atargatis of Bambyke-Hierapolis and other Semitic temple servants: |<sub>37</sub> the uplifting music of horns, of timpani and trumpets, the wild dances performed, the prophetic ecstasy and frenzy-induced, self-inflicted wounds exerted an unlimited force of attraction, in which open curiosity,

secret horror and the vague notion of something great and eternal hiding behind these bizarre displays, had an equal share. More subtle sensations were linked to the worship of Isis, a fight unsuccessfully fought by the Roman police from Caesar to Caligula, who finally recognised the cult officially: there was something strange and mysterious in its strange processions of linen-clad, clean-shaven priests, the animal-headed images of gods and exotic musical instruments, in the fasting and cleansing rituals, in its degrees and grades of initiation, which left a mark on the Roman mind. The stiff ceremonies of the ancient Roman cults as much as even the richer and more colourful Hellenised forms of worship waned before a spectacle such as the spring celebration of the Feast of the Great Mother, at which the most holy meteor stone representing the goddess was led in solemn procession to the little river Almo and bathed there, or especially the autumn celebration of Isis, where in the ritual search for Osiris, murdered and dismembered by Typhon, to the finding and resurrection of the body, |<sup>38</sup> the whole scale of emotions passionately seized the human bosom, from the most violent and encompassing pain to the most exuberant, self-forgetting elation: even where the ancient celebration of the Lupercalia or the Augustan Secular Games momentarily touched people's minds and hearts in their conspicuous, meaningful rites, they were still only cultic acts performed by magistrates and priests for the state and its citizens, without demanding an intensive inner involvement – which would also, at the same time, have granted gratification and elation of the soul. For this was more and more sought after. [[Abandoning of state religion.]] The noblest and most distinguished among the educated sought and found the elevation of the mind in a pure and serene morality, which focused on the freeing of the soul from sins and passions and in no way lacked religious piety, but its interpretation of deity lacked the differentiation inherent to polytheism in defining divinity as an all-encompassing, world-inherent power, looking down upon traditional forms of worship with disdain: Seneca's letters and dialogues, Epictetus' lectures, and |<sup>39</sup> Marcus Aurelius' self-reflections have become common property to humankind precisely because they have so completely detached themselves from their specifically pagan and national background and are just as effective in terms of moral self-knowledge and edification today as they were in the days they were written. But the vast majority of the weary sought the fulfilment of their religious desires in those religions which promised to the faithful forgiveness of sins by means of atonement and sacraments, and knowledge of the origin and destination of the soul through the teachings of the mysteries, leading them to eternal life. And thus the cults of Isis, the Great Mother and of Mithras grew in popularity since the days of

Antoninus Pius throughout Rome and the entire Empire. For all these religions had in common that their object of worship was not freely accessible to everyone, as were the gods of Greece and Rome, but that only those might approach who belonged to the covenant of initiates, in which one strove to advance step by step and grade by grade, tested and tried, to the ultimate knowledge under the careful guidance of the priests and their strange and mysterious ceremonies. Isis especially promised assistance and happiness in this life and the certainty of a blissful existence in the hereafter to those devoted to her, those who had dedicated themselves fully to her <sup>40</sup> and had faithfully followed her teachings, while the cult of the Great Mother exerted a strong pull through the peculiar rite of the Taurobolium, which transformed a bull sacrifice for the welfare of the emperor into a rite of blood baptism, by which the recipient was inwardly reborn, be it for eternity, be it for a longer period of time (20 years). But it was the cult of Mithras which most vividly aroused the imagination and the expectations of the faithful: their meetings took place in the twilight, often in underground rooms designed as caves, hymns full of miraculous symbolism told of the richly embellished legends of the deeds of God, among them his birth from the rock and the killing of the bull, from whose body came the earth with fauna and flora and whose blood was poured out for the salvation of mankind; the faithful were separated in seven grades of initiation, bearing strange names that required of its bearers to wear the pious guise of raven, soldier, lion, Persian etc., each according to his grade, while a liturgy rich in images spoke of the union of man with god in a series of mystical acts, among which a sacramental meal reminiscent of the Christian celebration of the Lord's Supper is particularly significant. [[Syncretistic and monotheistic currents.]] It is remarkable here <sup>41</sup> that in all these cults, to which was added the cult of the Punic celestial goddess of Carthage in the days of Septimius Severus, we find both a distinct monotheistic and syncretistic strain: each of these deities demanded worship as the one and only divine power; but it neither fights nor denies the other gods, it only claims that they are basically no different from itself, just another name, another refraction of the same light, another emanation of the one deity, who is Isis or Mithras, Magna Mater or Caelestis, according to special affiliation of the believer: when Isis, 'of a thousand names' unites, as Isis Panthea, all the attributes of the gods in herself or the cult of Mithras incorporates not only Mazdan theology and Chaldaean astrology, but all the great deities of the Graeco-Roman world and links them in a great legend, then this is a sort of syncretism which increasingly and successfully paved the way of faith in one god. At times it even seemed as if the content of monotheism spreading throughout the Roman Empire

were to be the Sun God revered in various forms, as if all religions of the ancient world that were still breathing would come together in the cult of a universal solar cult. The impetus for this came from the Orient. The oriental merchants that came in increasing numbers to Roman lands since the days of Hadrian |<sub>42</sub> naturally brought with them the gods of their homeland, so that we soon find cult communities of the Syrian Baalim of Damascus, Heliopolis, Berytus or elsewhere in the great trading posts and port cities of Italy, in Ostia, Puteoli, Brundisium, even in Rome herself; but these cults, which sometimes referred to themselves by the Roman name of Jupiter, sometimes of Sol, grew in importance beyond the number of their compatriots only under the rule of the emperors Septimius Severus and Caracalla, when Julia Domna, wife of the former, introduced Oriental cult to the religion of the Roman army itself and Caracalla lifted, with the extension of Roman citizenship to all inhabitants of the Empire, the bar which had so far denied foreign gods entry into the city of Rome. The result was not only an equal legal footing of the Semitic Baal cults with those of the ancient Roman and Greek world, but also the attempt to base on them a unifying, imperial religion. This task was left to ignominious Elegebalus, who wished to make the horrid cult of the fetish of Hemesa, whose priest he was and whose name he bore, the centre of that imperial religion, though the attempt did not survive its author; |<sub>43</sub> but it was an act of great importance when half a century later Aurelianus declared the 'invincible sun god' of Palmyra the supreme god of the Empire and organised his cult in the solemn terms of the ancient Roman state religion. This god, under whose image even emperor Constantine put up his statue and whose likeness was long imprinted on imperial coins, even where all other gods had already faded, shows the last attempt to unify the cults of the ancient polytheism.

## VI The Decline of Roman Religion.

[[Relation of the Roman state to Judaism and Christianity.]] The much-evident tolerance of the Romans towards foreign faiths stopped short of two religions, Judaism and Christendom; with good cause, as both advertised a monotheism that broke all boundaries of national faiths in such a way [[Geffcken]] that they not only did not recognise other divine powers beside their god but denied the very existence of the Roman gods of state. But while the Roman state allowed Jewish cult as a national religion even after the Jewish nation had been disbanded, and only forbade any proselytising while criminalising the conversion of a Roman to Judaism, but did not prosecute

Judaism itself, the mere adherence to Christianity, as long as it was properly filed with the courts |<sub>44</sub> and was not disavowed by the accused with the proper oaths and sacrifices to the gods of the state, was considered a capital offense. However, practice did not always follow principle: depending on the convictions of the various emperors, and even governors, were existing laws against the Christians enacted or not, did, in the mid-third century, prosecutions in the provinces or throughout the Empire alternate with periods in which Christians were let be, while from the Orient their movement spread over all the province and was able to build up the organisation of the 'universal' church. Against this, after the Syrian emperors Elagabalus and Alexander Severus attempted to combine the two, in gross misrecognition of the unbridgeable inner contrast between Christianity and the orientalisising Imperial religion, did first Decius, then Valerian, and after them Diocletian with his co-regents begin a struggle unto the death. But this fight came much too late: Christianity had become much too strong in itself as that it could still be overthrown by the use of force, and the defeats of Maxentius and Maximinus finally proclaimed its victory. [[Recognition of Christianity.]] For even if the first imperial decrees in favour of Christianity, beginning in 311, were mere edicts of tolerance, which freed the practicing of the Christian faith |<sub>45</sub> from restrictions and the threat of punishment, and lifted it as *religio licita* into the same rank as the recognised cults of state, this equal ranking meant that with the absolute incongruity of Christianity and polytheism, the latter would of necessity be overcome, and the personal favouring of Christianity by the emperors since Constantine may have accelerated the process, but was by no means the only decisive factor. As of yet, paganism was not dead, and the great power of resistance that still lay in the cults of the Great Mother, of Isis, Mithras and of Carthaginian Caelestis, which now combined in the light of the danger that threatened them all, shows in the excessive vehemence and boundless rage with which the adherents of victorious Christianity polemicised against just these cults, while they treated the ancient Graeco-Roman deities as conquered and now pitiable adversaries. The destruction of the ancient cults was first and most thoroughly completed in the Greek East, where Christianity had deep roots and a great number of confessors, while the pagan cults offended by the peculiarity of their rites, such as self-mutilation or temple prostitution: the ban of sacrifices |<sub>46</sub> issued by the sons of Constantine and the closure of the pagan temples were likely already fully implemented in the Orient around the middle of the century, and the short period of restoration under Julian did not find much to save. In the West, however, the roots of paganism were much deeper. The bond that united the Roman state and its ancient cults

was not torn until Emperor Gratian surrendered the title of *pontifex maximus* in the seventies, thus abolishing the personal union between emperorship and supreme priesthood of the Roman state church that had existed for almost 400 years; the same emperor also cut the lifeblood of public pagan worship by stopping the funds for pagan sacrifices on behalf of the state and by confiscating the pagan church property: From now on the old gods had ceased to exist for the state and could only live on in the pious worship of individuals, until the great destroyer Theodosius sought them out in the very nooks of private houses and levied high fines for the veneration of the old gods of the hearth, the Lares, *di penates* and Genius, in 392. [[Last conflicts.]] In the two decades that lie between Gratian and Theodosius, we see the final struggle and death of Roman paganism. Two bastions the old faith still had from which it would lead its final charge: the nobility of the imperial capital |<sub>47</sub> and the rural population of the western provinces. For the former, their resistance sprang from the greatness of the city's past which could not be understood without its gods, and the very families whose ancestors had had an active part in that glorious past now led the fight against the destruction of sacred memories: For decades, for example, did the battle wage on both sides with the greatest bitterness to eliminate or to preserve the pagan symbol of Roman victories, the altar of Victoria that stood in the curia in which the senate convened. We see an ever decreasing number of noble Romans invest all of their being and any means they had at their disposal to preserve and revive the ancient faith, to take all costs for the state cult upon themselves, and to enter any priesthood to perform the necessary rites: manifold taurobolic altars and Mithras monuments, put up in the last decades of the fourth century, bear witnesses of the revival of the old religion that was effected by these men, and the polemics of the Christians, which began at the same time with renewed vigour and anger, prove that the danger was not underestimated. But it was a final ray of light sent out by a setting sun; the defenders of the ancient gods may have died unconverted, but |<sub>48</sub> defeated, and when Stilicho after the turn of the century burned the venerable Sibylline books, no storm of indignation met his action in Rome. The peasantry, however, proved to be harder to pry away from their ancient rituals, as among them the Oriental cults had not corroded ancient custom as it had in the cities, while all of their works and their very way of life was known to be in the hands of higher powers, so that to turn away from the gods would not only have meant a break with the historical past, but a dangerous charge laid to the foundation of their very existence: in the spring, the procession along the boundaries of the fields with its prayers and petitions ensured divine protection of the ripening crop and a rich harvest, while the celebra-

tion of Vulcanus kept fires away from the houses and barns of the village, and it was thus easy to understand that these folk could not be moved to give up rituals that were so intimately connected to the livelihood and well-being of the individual, and the Christian over-zealousness, which tried to do away with these sacred customs, led to the martyrdom of no few even in later times. In the very decade in which the flame of resistance against victorious Christendom went out in Rome, |<sub>49</sub> the term *pagani*, 'villager',<sup>6</sup> first appears to denote the adherents to the old cults which still lived scattered in the countryside, and these rural circles are those who maintained remnants of pagan customs well into the sixth century, according to the witness of Christian missionary writings: [[Caesarius of Arelate]] the Spanish peasants, to whom Martin of Bracara addressed himself with his sermon *de correctione rusticorum*, not only presented offerings to trees and springs, but preserved the very names of the pagan gods, they preferred the day of Venus to be married on to any other and their womenfolk called upon Minerva while spinning; and in the countries along the Rhine and Danube, many a cast-down Mithras altar may still have found secret worshippers as 'the abandoned God' while throughout the lands Christian church bells rang.

### Outlook.

To the modern mind, the world of the ancient Roman gods is known primarily through the mediation of poetry. To let both gods and divine personifications speak for themselves or introduce them symbolically was so much part of the requirements of high poetry that even Christianity was powerless against this tradition; this set of gods remained, even if stripped of all dogmatic content, an important and indispensable component of the stock of poetic means available, and even Claudian, though a Christian himself, makes such use of |<sub>50</sub> it as to be impossible to tell from other, pagan poets. The Middle Ages may have repressed this world, but did not destroy it, so that it re-awakened in the poetry of the Renaissance to new life, and even if much of it was nothing more than mere paper embellishment of buckram armchair scholar-poets, some things endured and are used even today as expressions of our living speech and linguistic imagery. Granted that the Latin name often meant Greek things, and when we speak of Neptune's wave-riding horse or the smile of a faun, then what we think of is quite removed from the Roman bearers of those names; but we know also

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6 The German term is derogatory and belittling.

speech of double-faced Janus or the return to the penates at the hearth, both of which are more than a figure of speech for us; but it is the thought of the Genius in particular, which influenced disturbingly the superficially similar, but after all quite different conception of the Christian guardian angel and remained a vivid and evolving token of the ancient world in our day: 'Genius of humankind' and 'Genius of the twentieth century' are expressions that transcend the boundaries of the Roman imaginary connected to the Genius, and yet should by no means be taken as mere misunderstandings and distortions. In terms of content, Roman religion has left no traces in the beliefs and superstitions of the German people. |<sub>51</sub> The greater part of our lands had little or no, and no intensive, contact with the Romans so that these had hardly had any influence upon the indigenous notions of godhead and forms of worship, and in these very lands barely touched by Roman culture to the North and the East, the Reformation most thoroughly scourged what was remembered of the ancient days. The situation was different in the lands bordering the Rhine and the Danube. It is no coincidence that in those German regions in which the procession of Corpus Christi still circumambulates the fields to ward off drought and hailstorms, as was done in Roman times with the processions of Ambarvalia and Robigalia, and where the farmer lights his lamp at the hearth before the image of the Mother of God and his patron saint, just as the Roman once did to sacrifice to his *di penates*, are the very ones in which in ancient times the Celtic-Germanic peoples had been in closest contact with Roman culture. Whosoever will thus speak of the paganism of the Catholic Church may do so; but whosoever looks for historical understanding will prefer to rejoice in the quiet traces that show the perpetual and ever-renewing constants throughout time and change. |<sub>52</sub>

### Literature.

Since B. G. Niebuhr has reconceptualised the research on the older Roman history and its transmission, the problems of Roman religious history have received the most thorough discussion in the context of the consideration of the Roman state and legal history, as they have been pursued, in following Niebuhr, by A. Schwegler, J. Rubins and above all Th. Mommsen. The many new considerations and angles that were thus won are only partly taken into account in the handbooks of J. A. Hartung (1836) and L. Preller (1858, 3rd ed. 1881–83). A good summary of our knowledge of the cultic and sacral administration of the Romans is to be found in the third volume of Joach. Marquardt's *Römische Staatsverwaltung* (2nd ed., 1885), for the religious

history of the Empire, the works of the French scholars G. Boissier (*La religion romaine d'Auguste aux Antonins*, 1874), J. Réville (*La religion à Rome sous les Sévères*, 1886; German 1888) and P. Allard (*Julien l'Apostat*, 1900–1903) are of great relevance. The main task is to solve two problems. On the one hand, |<sub>53</sub> to work out the specifically Roman and Italian elements of religious feeling while they were transformed by Hellenising influences, and this is done in the most recent comprehensive account by G. Wissowa (*Religion und Kultus der Römer*, 1902, [[2nd ed. 1912]]; supplemented by the *Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur römischen Religions- und Stadtgeschichte*, 1904); on the other hand, it is important to develop an understanding for the plurifold religious life in the provinces of the empire by recognising the interacting Roman, Greek-Oriental and local elements, a task for which A. v. Domaszewski (*Religion des römischen Heeres*, 1895; *Abhandlungen zur römischen Religion*, 1909) has provided valuable contributions. For the comparative examination of the elements of the Roman faith which can also be found among other peoples, the research of E. Samter (in particular: *Familienfeste der Griechen und Römer*, 1901) and A. Dieterich (*Mutter Erde*, 1903) should be considered in addition to older studies by W. Mannhardt and H. Usener.

Among the sources the Roman festival calendar must be mentioned especially, whose understanding was furthered by Th. Mommsen (*Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum*, Vol. I |<sub>54</sub> p. 203 ff. of the 2nd ed.; cf. also W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals in the Period of the Republic*, 1899), also the numerous votive inscriptions to the many deities from all parts of the Empire, of which H. Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae selectae* II 1 (1902) pp. 1–288 Supplements III 2 has presented a rich and expert selection. The records of the Arval books, rich in information about the oldest ritual and the organisation of the priesthods, are expertly edited and introduced by W. Henzen (1874).

p. 2 Greek-Italian Vesta cult: A. Preuner, *Hestia-Vesta*, 1804 (recently wrongly challenged on linguistic grounds).

p. 11 Domestic cult: A. de Marchi, *Il cultu privato di Roma antica*, 1896. 1903.

p. 15 Auspices: Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht* I 73 ff. I. M. J. Valeton in the journal *Mnemosyne* N. S. XVII–XIX Wissowa, *Real-Enzyklopädie* II Sp. 2580 ff.

p. 20 Divine epithets: J. B. Carter, *De deorum Romanorum cognominibus*, 1898; Personifications of abstract terms: L. Deubner in Roscher's *Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* III Sp. 2069 ff. H. L. Axtall, *The Deification of Abstract Ideas in Roman Literature and Inscriptions*, 1907.

- p. 21 Hellenisation of the Roman Religion: P. Wendland, *Die hellenistisch-römische Kultur* (1907) p. 82 ff.
- p. 23 Prodigies: L. Diels, *Sibyllinische Blätter*, 1890. L. Wülker, *Die geschichtliche Entwicklung des Prodigienwesens bei den Römern*.
- p. 26 Saecular games of Augustus: Mommsen in *Ephemeris epigraphica VIII* 225 ff.; *Reden und Aufsätze* p. 351 ff.
- p. 31 Imperial cult: E. Beurlier, *Le Culte impérial*, 1891. E. Kornemann, *Beiträge zur alten Geschichte I*, 1901.
- p. 32 Roman cults in the provinces: J. Toutain, *Les Cultes païens dans l'Empire Romain*, I 1, 1907, *Assimilation of the foreign gods*: F. Richter, *De deorum barbarorum interpretatione Romana*, 1906.
- p. 35 Oriental cults: F. Cumont, *Les Religions orientales dans le Paganisme Romain*, 1907 (German 1910).
- p. 38 Moral religion without gods: T. R. Glover, *The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire*, 1909.
- p. 40 Cult of the Great Mother and Taurobolia: Grant Showerman, *The Great Mother of the Gods*, 1901 and H. Hepding, *Attis*, 1903; *Mithras religion*: F. Cumont, *Textes et Monuments, figurés relatifs aux mystères de Mithra*, 1896–1899.
- p. 43 Sol invictus: H. Usener in *Rheinisches Museum* vol. 60.
- p. 43 Legal status of Judaism and Christianity: K. J. Neumann, *Der römische Staat und die allgemeine Kirche*, I 1890. Mommsen, *Gesammelte Schriften III* 389 ff. and *Römisches Strafrecht* pp. 571 ff. |<sub>56</sub>
- p. 51 Only those who are without any historical sense at all will find it disparaging to consider the manifold traces and continuities of pagan customs and ideas within the Catholic church, as these have been identified by H. Usener, A. Dieterich, L. Deubner and others, or misuse these traces and continuities for the purpose of depreciation, as in particular Th. Trede (*Das Heidentum in der römischen Kirche*, 1890–91; *Der Wunderglaube im Heidentum und in der alten Kirche*, 1901). Unbiased appreciation of the facts in E. Lucius, *Die Anfänge des Heiligenkultes in der christlichen Kirche*, Tübingen 1904.

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