

THE RELIGION OF ANCIENT ROME

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THE RELIGION OF ANCIENT ROME

CHAPTER I [ToC](#)

INTRODUCTION—SOURCES AND SCOPE

The conditions of our knowledge of the native religion of early Rome may perhaps be best illustrated by a parallel from Roman archæology. The visitor to the Roman Forum at the present day, if he wishes to reconstruct in imagination the Forum of the early Republic, must not merely 'think away' many strata of later buildings, but, we are told, must picture to himself a totally different orientation of the whole: the upper layer of remains, which he sees before him, is for his purpose in most cases not merely useless, but positively misleading. In the same way, if we wish to form a picture of the genuine Roman religion, we cannot find it immediately in classical literature; we must banish from our minds all that is due to the contact with the East and Egypt, and even with the other races of Italy, [2]and we must imagine, so to speak, a totally different mental orientation before the great influx of Greek literature and Greek thought, which gave an entirely new turn to Roman ideas in general, and in particular revolutionised religion by the introduction of anthropomorphic notions and sensuous representations. But in this difficult search we are not left without indications to guide us. In the writings of the savants of the late Republic and of the Empire, and in the Augustan poets, biassed though they are in their interpretations by Greek tendencies, there is embodied a great wealth of ancient custom and ritual, which becomes

significant when we have once got the clue to its meaning. More direct evidence is afforded by a large body of inscriptions and monuments, and above all by the surviving Calendars of the Roman festival year, which give us the true outline of the ceremonial observances of the early religion.

It is not within the scope of this sketch to enter, except by way of occasional illustration, into the process of interpretation by which the patient work of scholars has disentangled the form and spirit of the native religion from the mass of foreign accretions. I intend rather to assume the process, and deal, as far as it is [3]possible in so controversial a subject, with results upon which authorities are generally agreed. Neither will any attempt be made to follow the development which the early religion underwent in later periods, when foreign elements were added and foreign ideas altered and remoulded the old tradition. We must confine ourselves to a single epoch, in which the native Roman spirit worked out unaided the ideas inherited from half-civilised ancestors, and formed that body of belief and ritual, which was always, at least officially, the kernel of Roman religion, and constituted what the Romans themselves—staunch believers in their own traditional history—loved to describe as the 'Religion of Numa.' We must discover, as far as we can, how far its inherited notions ran parallel with those of other primitive religions, but more especially we must try to note what is characteristically Roman alike in custom and ritual and in the motives and spirit which prompted them.

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CHAPTER II [ToC](#)

THE 'ANTECEDENTS' OF ROMAN RELIGION

In every early religion there will of course be found, apart from external influence, traces of its own internal development, of stages by which it must have advanced from a mass of vague and primitive belief and custom to the organised worship of a civilised community. The religion of Rome is no exception to this rule; we can detect in its later practice evidences of primitive notions and habits which it had in common with other semi-barbarous peoples, and we shall see that the leading idea in its theology is but a characteristically Roman development of a marked feature in most early religions.

1. Magic.—Anthropology has taught us that in many primitive societies religion—a sense of man's dependence on a power higher than himself—is preceded by a stage of magic—a belief in man's own power to influence by occult means the action of the world around him. That the [5]ancestors of the Roman community passed through this stage seems clear, and in surviving religious practice we may discover evidence of such magic in various forms. There is, for instance, what anthropology describes as 'sympathetic magic'—the attempt to influence the powers of nature by an imitation of the process which it is desired that they should perform. Of this we have a characteristic example in the ceremony of the *aquaelicum*, designed to produce rain after a long drought. In classical times the ceremony consisted in a procession headed by the pontifices, which bore the sacred rain-stone from its resting-place by the Porta Capena to the Capitol, where offerings were made to the sky-deity, Iuppiter, but [1] from the analogy of other primitive cults and the sacred title of the stone (*lapis manalis*), it is practically certain that the original ritual was the purely imitative process of pouring water over the stone. A similar rain-

charm may possibly be seen in the curious ritual of the *argeorum sacra*, when puppets of straw were thrown into the Tiber—a symbolic wetting of the crops to which many parallels may be found among other primitive peoples. A sympathetic charm of a rather [6]different character seems to survive in the ceremony of the *augurium canarium*, at which a red dog was sacrificed for the prosperity of the crop—a symbolic killing of the red mildew (*robigo*); and again the slaughter of pregnant cows at the *Fordicidia* in the middle of April, before the sprouting of the corn, has a clearly sympathetic connection with the fertility of the earth. Another prominent survival—equally characteristic of primitive peoples—is the sacredness which attaches to the person of the priest-king, so that his every act or word may have a magic significance or effect. This is reflected generally in the Roman priesthood, but especially in the ceremonial surrounding the *flamen Dialis*, the priest of Iuppiter. He must appear always in festival garb, fire may never be taken from his hearth but for sacred purposes, no other person may ever sleep in his bed, the cuttings of his hair and nails must be preserved and buried beneath an *arbor felix*—no doubt a magic charm for fertility—he must not eat or even mention a goat or a bean, or other objects of an unlucky character.

2. Worship of Natural Objects.—A very common feature in the early development of religious consciousness is the worship of natural objects—in the first place of the objects [7]themselves and no more, but later of a spirit indwelling in them. The distinction is no doubt in individual cases a difficult one to make, and we find that among the Romans the earlier worship of the object tends to give way to the cult of the inhabiting spirit, but examples may be found which seem to belong to the earlier stage. We have, for instance, the sacred stone (*silex*) which was preserved in the temple of Iuppiter on the Capitol, and was brought out to play a prominent part in the ceremony of treaty-making. The fetial, who on that occasion represented the Roman people, at the solemn moment of the oath-taking, struck the sacrificial pig with the *silex*, saying as he did so, 'Do thou, Diespiter, strike the Roman people as I strike this pig here to-day, and strike them the more, as thou art greater and stronger.' Here no doubt the underlying notion is not merely symbolical, but in origin the stone is itself the god, an idea which later religion expressed in the cult-title specially used in this connection, *Iuppiter Lapis*. So again, in all probability, the *termini* or boundary-stones between properties are in origin the objects—though later only the site—of a yearly ritual at the festival of the Terminalia on February the 23rd, and they are, as it were, summed up in 'the [8]god Terminus,' the great sacred boundary-stone, which had its own shrine within the Capitoline temple, because, according to the legend, 'the god' refused to budge even to make room for Iuppiter. The same notion is most likely at the root of the two great domestic cults of Vesta, 'the hearth,' and Ianus, 'the door,' though a more spiritual idea was soon associated with them; we may notice too in this connection the worship of springs, summed up in the subsequent deity Fons, and of rivers, such as Volturnus, the cult-name of the Tiber.

3. Worship of Trees.—But most conspicuous among the cults of natural objects, as in so many primitive religions, is the worship of trees. Here, though doubtless at first the tree was itself the object of veneration, surviving instances seem rather to belong to the later period when it was regarded as the abode of the spirit. We may recognise a case of this sort in the *ficus Ruminalis*, once the recipient of worship, though later legend, which preferred to find an historical or mythical explanation of cults, looked upon it as sacred because it was the scene of the suckling of Romulus and Remus by the wolf. Another fig-tree with a similar history is the *caprificus* of the Campus Martius, subsequently the site of the worship of Iuno [9]Caprotina. A more significant case is the sacred oak of Iuppiter Feretrius on the Capitol, on which the *spolia opima* were hung after the triumph—probably in early times a dedication of the booty to the spirit inhabiting the tree. Outside Rome, showing the same ideas at work among neighbouring peoples, was the 'golden bough' in the grove of Diana at Aricia. Nor was it only special trees which were thus regarded as the home of a deity; the tree in general is sacred, and any one may chance to be inhabited by a spirit. The feeling of the country population on this point comes out clearly in the prayer which Cato recommends his farmer to use before making a clearing in a wood: 'Be thou god or goddess, to whom this grove is sacred, be it granted to us to make propitiatory sacrifice to thee

with a pig for the clearing of this sacred spot'; here we have a clear instance of the tree regarded as the dwelling of the sacred power, and it is interesting to compare the many similar examples which^[2] Dr. Frazer has collected from different parts of the world.

4. Worship of Animals.—Of the worship of animals we have comparatively little evidence in Roman religion, though we may perhaps detect it in a portion of the mysterious ritual of the ^[10]Lupercalia, where the Luperci dressed themselves in the skins of the sacrificed goats and smeared their faces with the blood, thus symbolically trying to bring themselves into communion with the sacred animal. We may recognise it too in the association of particular animals with divinities, such as the sacred wolf and woodpecker of Mars, but on the whole we may doubt whether the worship of animals ever played so prominent a part in Roman religion as the cult of other natural objects.

5. Animism.—Such are some of the survivals of very early stages of religious custom which still kept their place in the developed religion of Rome, but by far the most important element in it, which might indeed be described as its 'immediate antecedent,' is the state of religious feeling to which anthropologists have given the name of 'Animism.' As far as we can follow the development of early religions, this attitude of mind seems to be the direct outcome of the failure of magic. Primitive man begins to see that neither he nor his magicians really possess that occult control over the forces of nature which was the supposed basis of magic: the charm fails, the spell does not produce the rain and when he looks for the cause, he can only argue that these things must ^[11]be in the hands of some power higher than his own. The world then and its various familiar objects become for him peopled with spirits, like in character to men, but more powerful, and his success in life and its various operations depends on the degree in which he is able to propitiate these spirits and secure their co-operation. If he desires rain, he must win the favour of the spirit who controls it, if he would fell a tree and suffer no harm, he must by suitable offerings entice the indwelling spirit to leave it. His 'theology' in this stage is the knowledge of the various spirits and their dwellings, his ritual the due performance of sacrifice for purposes of propitiation and expiation. It was in this state of religious feeling that the ancestors of Rome must have lived before they founded their agricultural settlement on the Palatine: we must try now to see how far it had retained this character and what developments it had undergone when it had crystallised into the 'Religion of Numa.'

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Frazer, *Golden Bough*, vol. i. pp. 81 ff.

[2] *Golden Bough*, vol. i. pp. 181-185.

MAIN FEATURES OF THE RELIGION OF NUMA

1. Theology.—The characteristic appellation of a divine spirit in the oldest stratum of the Roman religion is not *deus*, a god, but rather *numen*, a power: he becomes *deus* when he obtains a name, and so is on the way to acquiring a definite personality, but in origin he is simply the 'spirit' of the 'animistic' period, and retains something of the spirit's characteristics. Thus among the divinities of the household we shall see later that the Genius and even the Lar Familiaris, though they attained great dignity of conception, and were the centre of the family life, and to some extent of the family morality, never quite rose to the position of full-grown gods; while among the spirits of the field the wildness and impishness of character associated with Faunus and his companion Inuus—almost the cobolds or hobgoblins of the flocks—reflects clearly the old 'animistic' belief in the natural evilness of [13]the spirits and their hostility to men. The notion of the *numen* is always vague and indefinite: even its sex may be uncertain. 'Be thou god or goddess' is the form of address in the farmer's prayer already quoted from Cato: 'be it male or female' is the constant formula in liturgies and even dedicatory inscriptions of a much later period.

These spirits are, as we have seen, indwellers in the objects of nature and controllers of the phenomena of nature: but to the Roman they were more. Not merely did they inhabit places and things, but they presided over each phase of natural development, each state or action in the life of man. Varro, for instance, gives us a list of the deities concerned in the early life of the child, which, though it bears the marks of priestly elaboration, may yet be taken as typical of the feeling of the normal Roman family. There is Vaticanus, who opens the child's mouth to cry, Cunina, who guards his cradle, Edulia and Potina, who teach him to eat and drink, Statilinus, who helps him to stand up, Adeona and Abeona, who watch over his first footstep, and many others each with his special province of protection or assistance. The farmer similarly is in the hands of a whole host of divinities who [14]assist him at each stage of ploughing, hoeing, sowing, reaping, and so forth. If the *numen* then lacks personal individuality, he has a very distinct specialisation of function, and if man's appeal to the divinity is to be successful, he must be very careful to make it in the right quarter: it was a stock joke in Roman comedy to make a character 'ask for water from Liber, or wine from the nymphs.' Hence we find in the prayer formulæ in Cato and elsewhere the most careful precautions to prevent the accidental omission of the deity concerned: usually the worshipper will go through the whole list of the gods who may be thought to have power in the special circumstances; sometimes he will conclude his prayer with the formula 'whosoever thou art,' or 'and any other name by which thou mayest desire to be called.' The *numen* is thus vague in his conception but specialised in his function, and so later on, when certain deities have acquired definite names and become prominent above the rest, the worshipper in appealing to them will add a cult-title, to indicate the special character in which he wishes the deity to hear: the woman in childbirth will appeal to Iuno Lucina, the general praying for victory to Iuppiter Victor, the man who is taking an oath to Iuppiter [15]as the *deus Fidius*. As a still later development the cult-title will, as it were, break off and set up for itself, usually in the form of an abstract personification: Iuppiter, in the two special capacities just noted, gives birth to Victoria and Fides.

The conception of the *numen* being so formless and indefinite, it is not surprising that in the genuine Roman religion there should have been no anthropomorphic representations of the divinity at all. 'For 170 years,' Varro tells us, taking his date from the traditional foundation of the city in 754 B.C., 'the Romans worshipped their gods without images,' and he adds the characteristic comment, 'those who introduced representations among the nations, took away fear and brought in falsehood.' Symbols of a few deities were no doubt recognised: we have noticed already the *silex* of Iuppiter and the boundary-stone of Terminus, which were probably at an earlier period themselves objects of worship, and to these we may add the sacred spears of Mars, and the *sigilla* of the State-Penates. But for the most part the *numina* were without even such symbolic representation, nor till about the end of the regal period was any form of temple built for them to dwell in. The sacred fire of Vesta near the [16]Forum was, it is true,

from the earliest times enclosed in a building; this, however, was no temple, but merely an erection with the essentially practical purpose of preventing the extinction of the fire by rain. The first temple in the full sense of the word was according to tradition built by Servius Tullius to Diana on the Aventine: the tradition is significant, for Diana was not one of the *di indigetes*, the old deities of the 'Religion of Numa,' but was introduced from the neighbouring town of Aricia, and the attribution to Servius Tullius nearly always denotes an Etruscan^[3] or at any rate a non-Roman origin. There were, however, altars in special places to particular deities, built sometimes of stone, sometimes in a more homely manner of earth or sods. We hear for instance of the altar of Mars in the Campus Martius, of Quirinus on the Quirinal, of Saturnus at the foot of the Capitol, and notably of the curious underground altar of Consus on what was later the site of the Circus Maximus. But more characteristic than the erection of altars is the connection of deities with special localities. Naturally enough in the worship of the household Vesta had her seat at the hearth, Janus ^[17]at the door, and the 'gods of the storehouse' (*Penates*) at the cupboard by the hearth, but the same idea appears too in the state-cult. Hilltops, groves, and especially clearings in groves (*luci*) are the most usual sacred localities. Thus Quirinus has his own sacred hill, Iuppiter is worshipped on the Capitol, Vesta and Iuno Lucina have their sacred groves within the boundaries of the city, and Dea Dia, Robigus, and Furrina similar groves at the limits of Roman territory. The record of almost every Roman cult reveals the importance of locality in connection with the *di indigetes*, and the localities are usually such as would be naturally chosen by a pastoral and agricultural people.

Such were roughly the main outlines of the genuine Roman 'theology.' It has no gods of human form with human relations to one another, interested in the life of men and capable of the deepest passions of hatred and affection towards them, such as we meet, for instance, in the mythology of Greece, but only these impersonal individualities, if we may so call them, capable of no relation to one another, but able to bring good or ill to men, localised usually in their habitations, but requiring no artificial dwelling or elaborate adornment of their abode; becoming ^[18]gradually more and more specialised in function, yet gaining thereby no more real protective care for their worshippers—a cold and heartless hierarchy, ready to exact their due, but incapable of inspiring devotion or enthusiasm. Let us ask next how the Romans conceived of their own relations towards them.

2. The Relation of Gods and Men.—The character of the Roman was essentially practical and his natural mental attitude that of the lawyer. And so in his relation towards the divine beings whom he worshipped there was little of sentiment or affection: all must be regulated by clearly understood principles and carried out with formal exactness. Hence the *ius sacrum*, the body of rights and duties in the matter of religion, is regarded as a department of the *ius publicum*, the fundamental constitution of the state, and it is significant, as Marquardt has observed, that it was Numa, a king and lawgiver, and not a prophet or a poet, who was looked upon as the founder of the Roman religion. Starting from the simple general feeling of a dependence on a higher power (*religio*), which is common to all religions, the Roman gives it his own characteristic colour when he conceives of that dependence as ^[19]analogous to a civil contract between man and god. Both sides are under obligation to fulfil their part: if a god answers a man's prayer, he must be repaid by a thank-offering: if the man has fulfilled 'his bounden duty and service,' the god must make his return: if he does not, either the cause lies in an unconscious failure on the human side to carry out the exact letter of the law, or else, if the god has really broken his contract, he has, as it were, put himself out of court and the man may seek aid elsewhere. In this notion we have the secret of Rome's readiness under stress of circumstances, when all appeals to the old gods have failed, to adopt foreign deities and cults in the hope of a greater measure of success.

The contract-notion may perhaps appear more clearly if we consider one or two of the normal religious acts of the Roman individual or state. Take first of all the performance of the regular sacrifices or acts of worship ordained by the state-calendar or the celebration of the household *sacra*. The *pietas* of man consists in their due fulfilment, but he may through negligence omit them or make a mistake in the ritual to be employed. In that case the gods, as it were, have the upper hand in the contract and are not obliged to fulfil ^[20]their share, but the man can set himself right again by the offering of a *piaculum*, which may

take the form either of an additional sacrifice or a repetition of the original rite. So, for instance, when Cato is giving his farmer directions for the lustration of his fields, he supplies him at the end with two significant formulæ: 'if,' he says, 'you have failed in any respect with regard to all your offerings, use this formula: "Father Mars, if thou hast not found satisfaction in my former offering of pig, sheep, and ox (the most solemn combination in rustic sacrifices), then let this offering of pig and sheep and ox appease thee": but if you have made a mistake in one or two only of your offerings, then say, "Father Mars, because thou hast not found satisfaction in that pig (or whatever it may be), let this pig appease thee."' On the other hand, for intentional neglect, there was no remedy: the man was *impius* and it rested with the gods to punish him as they liked (*deorum iniuriæ dis curæ*).

But apart from the regularly constituted ceremonies of religion, there might be special occasions on which new relations would be entered into between god and man. Sometimes the initiative would come from man: desiring to obtain from [21]the gods some blessings on which he had set his heart, he would enter into a *votum*, a special contract by which he undertook to perform certain acts or make certain sacrifices, in case of the fulfilment of his desire. The whole proceeding is strictly legal: from the moment when he makes his vow the man is *voti reus*, in the same position, that is, as the defendant in a case whose decision is still pending; as soon as the gods have accomplished their side of the contract he is *voti damnatus*, condemned, as it were, to damages, having lost his suit; nor does he recover his independence until he has paid what he undertook: *votum reddidi lubens merito* ('I have paid my vow gladly as it was due') is the characteristic wording of votive inscriptions. If the gods did not accomplish the wish, the man was of course free, and sometimes the contract would be carried so far that a time-limit for their action would be fixed by the maker of the vow: legal exactness can hardly go further.

Or again, the initiative might come from the gods. Some marked misfortune, an earthquake, lightning, a great famine, a portentous birth, or some such occurrence would be recognised as a *prodigium*, or sign of the god's displeasure. Somehow or other the contract must have been [22]broken on the human side and it was the duty of the state to see to the restoration of the *pax deum*, the equilibrium of the normal relation of god and man. The right proceeding in such a case was a *lustratio*, a solemn cleansing of the people—or the portion of the people involved in the god's displeasure—with the double object of removing the original reason of misfortune and averting future causes of the divine anger. The commercial notion is not perhaps quite so distinct here, but the underlying legal relationship is sufficiently marked.

If then the question be asked whether the relation between the Roman and his gods was friendly or unfriendly, the correct answer would probably be that it was neither. It was rather what Aristotle in speaking of human relations describes as 'a friendship for profit': it is entered into because both sides hope for some advantage—it is maintained as long as both sides fulfil their obligations.

3. Ceremonial.—It has been said sometimes that the old Roman religion was one of cult and ritual without dogma or belief. As we have seen this is not in origin strictly true, and it would be fairer to say that belief was latent rather than non-existent: this we may see, for instance, from [23]Cicero's dialogues on the subject of religion, where in discussion the fundamental sense of the dependence of man on the help of the gods comes clearly into view: in the domestic worship of the family too cult was always to some extent 'tinged with emotion,' and sanctified by a belief which made it a more living and in the end a more permanent reality than the religion of the state. But it is no doubt true that as the community advanced, belief tended to sink into the background: development took place in cult and not in theology, so that by the end of the Republic, to take an example, though the festival of the Furrinalia was duly observed every year on the 25th of July, the nature or function of the goddess Furrina was, as we learn from Cicero, a pure matter of conjecture, and Varro tells us that her name was known only to a few persons. Nor was it mere lapse of time which tended to obscure theology and exalt ceremonial: their relative position was the immediate and natural outcome of the underlying idea of the relation of god and man. Devotion, piety—in our sense of the term—and a feeling of the divine presence could not be

enjoined or even encouraged by the strictly legal conception on which religion was based: the 'contract-notion' required not a 'right spirit' but [24]right performance. And so it comes about that in all the records we have left of the old religion the salient feature which catches and retains our attention is exactness of ritual. All must be performed not merely 'decently and in order,' but with the most scrupulous care alike for every detail of the ceremonial itself, and for the surrounding circumstances. The omission or misplacement of a single word in the formulæ, the slightest sign of resistance on the part of the victim, any disorder among the bystanders, even the accidental squeak of a mouse, are sufficient to vitiate the whole ritual and necessitate its repetition from the very beginning. One of the main functions of the Roman priesthood was to preserve intact the tradition of formulæ and ritual, and, when the magistrate offered sacrifice for the state, the *pontifex* stood at his side and dictated (*præire*) the formulæ which he must use. Almost the oldest specimen of Latin which we now possess is the song of the *Salii*, the priests of Mars, handed on from generation to generation and repeated with scrupulous care, even though the priests themselves, as Quintilian assures us, had not the least notion what it meant. Nor was it merely the words of ceremonial which were of vital importance: other details must be attended [25]to with equal exactness. Place, as we have seen, was an essential feature even in the conception of deity, and it must have required all the personal influence of Augustus and his entourage to reconcile the people of Rome, with the ancient home of the goddess still before their eyes, to the second shrine of Vesta within the limits of his palace on the Palatine. The choice of the appropriate offering again was a matter of the greatest moment and was dictated by a large number of considerations. The sex of the victim must correspond to the sex of the deity to whom it is offered, white beasts must be given to the gods of the upper world, black victims to the deities below. Mars at his October festival must have his horse, Iuno Caprotina her goat, and Robigus his dog, while in the more rustic festivals such as the *Parilia*, the offering would be the simpler gift of millet-cakes and bowls of milk: in the case of the *Bona Dea* we have the curious provision that if wine were used in the ceremonial, it must, as she was in origin a pastoral deity, always be spoken of as 'milk.' The persons who might be present in the various festivals were also rigidly determined: men were excluded from the *Matronalia* on March 1, from the *Vestalia* on the 9th of June, and from the night festival of the *Bona Dea*: the [26]notorious escapade of Clodius in 62 B.C. shows the scandal raised by a breach of this rule even at the period when religious enthusiasm was at its lowest ebb. Slaves were specifically admitted to a share in certain festivals such as the *Saturnalia* and the *Compitalia* (the festival of the *Lares*), whereas at the *Matralia* (the festival of the matrons) a female slave was brought in with the express purpose of being significantly driven away.

The general notion of the exactness of ritual will perhaps become clearer when we come to examine some of the festivals in detail, but it is of extreme importance for the understanding of the Roman religious attitude, to think of it from the first as an essential part in the expression of the relation of man to god.

4. Directness of Relation—Functions of Priests.—In contrast to all this precision of ritual, which tends almost to alienate humanity from deity, we may turn to another hardly less prominent feature of the Roman religion—the immediateness of relation between the god and his worshippers. Not only may the individual at any time approach the altar of the god with his prayer or thank-offering, but in every community of persons its religious representative is its natural head. In [27]the family the head of the household (*pater familias*) is also the priest and he is responsible for conducting the religious worship of the whole house, free and slave alike: to his wife and daughters he leaves the ceremonial connected with the hearth (*Vesta*) and the deities of the store-cupboard (*Penates*), and to his bailiff the sacrifice to the powers who protect his fields (*Lares*), but the other acts of worship at home and in the fields he conducts himself, and his sons act as his acolytes. Once a year he meets with his neighbours at the boundaries of their properties and celebrates the common worship over the boundary-stones. So in [4] the larger outgrowth of the family, the *gens*, which consisted of all persons with the same surname (*nomen*, not *cognomen*), the gentile *sacra* are in the hands of the more wealthy members who are regarded as its heads; we have the curious instance of Clodius even after his adoption into another family, providing for

the worship of the *gens Clodia* in his own house, and we may remember Virgil's picture of the founders of the *gentes* of the Potitii and the Pinarii performing the sacrifice to Hercules at the *ara maxima*, which was the traditional privilege of [28]their houses. When societies (*sodalitates*) are formed for religious purposes they elect their own *magistri* to be their religious representatives, as we see in the case of the Salii and the Luperci. Finally, in the great community of the state the king is priest, and with that exactness of parallelism of which the Roman was so fond, he—like the *pater familias*—leaves the worship of Vesta in the hands of his 'daughters,' the Vestal virgins. And so, when the Republic is instituted, a special official, the *rex sacrorum*, inherits the king's ritual duties, while the superintendence of the Vestals passes to his representative in the matter of religious law, the *pontifex maximus*, whose official residence is always the *regia*, Numa's palace. The state is but the enlarged household and the head of the state is its religious representative.

If then the approach to the gods is so direct, where, it may be asked, in the organisation of Roman religion is there room for the priest? Two points about the Roman priesthood are of paramount importance. In the first place, they are not a caste apart: though there were restrictions as to the holding of secular magistracies in combination with the priesthood—always observed strictly in the case of the *rex sacrorum* and with few exceptions in the case of the greater [29]*flamines*—yet the *pontifices* might always take their part in public life, and no kind of barrier existed between them and the rest of the community: Iulius Cæsar himself was *pontifex maximus*. In the second place they are not regarded as representatives of the gods or as mediators between god and man, but simply as administrative officials appointed for the performance of the acts of state-worship, just as the magistrates were for its civil and military government. In origin they were chosen to assist the king in the multifarious duties of the state-cult—the *flamines* were to act as special priests of particular deities, the most prominent among them being the three great priests of Iuppiter (*flamen Dialis*), Mars, and Quirinus; the *pontifices* were sometimes delegates of the king on special occasions, but more particularly formed his religious *consilium*, a consulting body, to give him advice as to ritual and act as the repositories of tradition. In later times the *flamines* still retain their original character, the *pontifices* and especially the *pontifex maximus* are responsible for the whole organisation of the state-religion and are the guardians and interpreters of religious lore. In the state-cult then the priests play a very important part, but their relation to the worship of the individual was very small indeed. They had [30]a general superintendence over private worship and their leave would be required for the introduction of any new domestic cult; in cases too where the private person was in doubt as to ritual or the legitimacy of any religious practice, he could appeal to the *pontifices* for decision. Otherwise the priest could never intervene in the worship of the family, except in the case of the most solemn form of marriage (*confarreatio*), which, as it conferred on the children the right to hold certain of the priesthoods, was regarded itself as a ceremony of the state-religion.

In his private worship then the individual had immediate access to the deity, and it was no doubt this absence of priestly mediation and the consequent sense of personal responsibility, no less than its emotional significance, which caused the greater reality and permanence of the domestic worship as compared with the organised and official cults of the state.

FOOTNOTES:

[3] Etruscan builders were according to tradition employed on the earliest Roman temples.

[4] This is all open to doubt, but see De Marchi, *Il Culto Privato*, vol. ii.

CHAPTER IV ToC

EARLY HISTORY OF ROME—THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY

After this sketch of the main features which we must expect to find in Roman religion, we may attempt to look a little more in detail at its various departments, but before doing so it is necessary to form some notion of the situation and character of the Roman community: religion is not a little determined by men's natural surroundings and occupations. The subject is naturally one of considerable controversy, but certain facts of great significance for our purpose may fairly be taken as established. The earliest settlement which can be called 'Rome' was the community of the Palatine hill, which rises out of the valleys more abruptly than any of the other hills and was the natural place to be selected for fortification: the outline of the walls and sacred enclosure running outside them (*pomoerium*) may still be traced, marking the limits [32]of 'square Rome' (*Roma quadrata*), as the historians called it. The Palatine community no doubt pursued their agricultural labours over the neighbouring valleys and hills, and gradually began to extend their settlement till it included the Esquiline and Caelian and other lesser heights which made up the Septimontium—the next stage of Rome's development. Meanwhile a kindred settlement had been established on the opposite hills of the Quirinal and Viminal, and ultimately the two communities united, enclosing within their boundaries the Capitol and their meeting-place in the valley which separated them—the Forum. In this way was formed the Rome of the Four Regions, which represents the utmost extent of its development during the period which gave rise to the genuine Roman religion. All these stages have left their mark on the customs of religion. *Roma quadrata* comes to the fore in the Lupercalia: not merely is the site of the ceremony a grotto on the Palatine (*Lupercal*), but when the *Luperci* run their purificatory course around the boundaries, it is the circuit of the Palatine hill which marks its limits. Annually on the 11th of December the festival of the Septimontium was celebrated, not by the whole people, but by the *montani*, presumably the inhabitants of those [33]parts of Rome which were included in the second settlement. Finally, the addition of the Quirinal settlement is marked by the inclusion among the great state-gods of Quirinus, who must have been previously the local deity of the Quirinal community.

But more important for us than the history of the early settlement is its character. We have spoken of early Rome as an agricultural community: it would be more exact and more helpful to describe it as a community of agricultural households. The institutions of Rome, legal as well as religious, all point to the household (*familia*) as the original unit of organisation: the individual, as such, counted for nothing, the community was but the aggregate of families. Domestic worship then was not merely independent of the religion of the community: it was prior to it, and is both its historical and logical origin. Yet the life of the early Roman agriculturalist could not be confined to the household: in the tilling of the fields and the care of his cattle he meets his neighbour, and common interests suggest common prayer and thanksgiving. Thus there sprung up the great series of agricultural festivals which form the basis of the state-calendar, but were in origin—as some of them [34]still continued to be—the independent acts of worship of groups of agricultural households. Gradually, as the community grew on the lines we have

just seen, there grew with it a sense of an organised state, as something more than the casual aggregation of households or clans (*gentes*). As the feeling of union became stronger, so did the necessity for common worship of the gods, and the state-cult came into being primarily as the repetition on behalf of the community as a whole of the worship which its members performed separately in their households or as joint-worshippers in the fields. But the conception of a state must carry with it at least two ideas over and beyond the common needs of its members: there must be internal organisation to secure domestic tranquillity, and—since there will be collision with other states—external organisation for purposes of offence and defence. Religion follows the new ideas, and in two of the older deities of the fields develops the notions of justice and war. Organisation ensues, and the general conceptions of state-deities and state-ritual are made more definite and precise.

It will be at once natural and convenient that we should consider these three departments of religion in the order that has just been [35]suggested—the worship of the household, the worship of the fields, the worship of the state. But it must not be forgotten that both the departments themselves and the evidence for them frequently overlap. The domestic worship is not wholly distinguishable from that of the fields, the state-cult is, as we have seen, very largely a replica of the other two. The evidence for the domestic and agricultural cults is in itself very scanty, and we shall frequently have to draw inferences from their counterparts in the state. Above all, it is not to be supposed that any hard and fast line between the three existed in the Roman's mind; but for the purposes of analysis the distinction is valuable and represents a historical reality.

[36]

CHAPTER V ToC

WORSHIP OF THE HOUSEHOLD

1. The Deities.—The worship of the household seems to have originated, as has been suggested, in the sense of the sacredness of certain objects closely bound up with the family life—the door, the protection against the external world, by which the household went out to work in the morning and returned at evening, the hearth, the giver of warmth and nourishment, and the store-cupboard, where was preserved the food for future use. At first, in all probability, the worship was actually of the objects themselves, but by the time that Rome can be said to have existed at all, 'animism' had undoubtedly transformed it into a veneration of the indwelling spirits, Ianus, Vesta, and the Penates.

Of the domestic worship of Ianus no information has come down to us, but we may well suppose that as the defence of the door and its main use lay with the men of the household, so they, under [37]the control of the *pater familias*, were responsible for the cult of its spirit. Vesta was, of course, worshipped at the hearth by the women, who most often used it in the preparation of the domestic meals. In the original round hut, such as the primitive Roman dwelt in—witness the models which he buried with his dead and which recent excavations in the Forum have brought to light—the 'blazing hearth' (such seems to be the meaning of Vesta) would be the most conspicuously sacred thing; it is therefore not surprising to find that her simple cult was the most persistent of all throughout the history of Rome, and did not vary from

its original notion. Even Ovid can tell the inquirer 'think not Vesta to be ought else than living flame,' and again, 'Vesta and fire require no effigy'—notions in which he has come curiously near to the conceptions of the earliest religion. The Penates in the same way were at first 'the spirits'—whoever they might be—who preserved and increased the store in the cupboard. Then as the conception of individual deities became clearer, they were identified with some one or other of the gods of the country or the state, among whom the individual householder would select those who should be the particular Penates of his family: Ceres, Iuno, [38]Jupiter, Pales would be some of those chosen in the earlier period. Nor are we to suppose that selection was merely arbitrary: the tradition of family and clan, even possibly of locality, would determine the choice, much as the patron-saints of a church are now determined in a Roman Catholic country.

Two other deities are very prominent in the worship of the early household, and each is a characteristic product of Roman religious feeling, the Lar Familiaris and the Genius. The Lares[5] seem to have been in origin the spirits of the family fields: they were worshipped, as Cicero tells us, 'on the farm in sight of the house,' and they had their annual festival in the Compitalia, celebrated at the *compita*—places where two or more properties marched. But one of these spirits, the *Lar Familiaris*, had special charge of the house and household, and as such was worshipped with the other domestic gods at the hearth. As his protection extended over all the household, including the slaves, his cult is placed specially in the charge of the bailiff's wife (*vilica*). He is [39]regularly worshipped at the great divisions of the month on Calends, Nones, and Ides, but he has also an intimate and beautiful connection with the domestic history of the family. An offering is made to the Lar on the occasion of a birth, a wedding, a departure, or a return, and even—a characteristically Roman addition—on the occasion of the first utterance of a word by a son of the house: finally, a particularly solemn sacrifice is made to him after a death in the family.

The Genius is perhaps the most difficult conception in the Roman religion for the modern mind to grasp. It has been spoken of as the 'patron-saint' or 'guardian-angel,' both of them conceptions akin to that of the Genius, but both far too definite and anthropomorphic: we shall understand it best by keeping the '*numen*' notion clearly in mind and looking to the root-meaning of the word (*genius* connected with the root of *gignere*, to beget). It was after all only a natural development of the notions of 'animism' to imagine that man too, like other objects, had his indwelling spirit—not his 'soul' either in our sense of moral and intellectual powers, or in the ancient sense of the vital principle—but rather as the derivation suggests, in origin simply the spirit which gave him the power of generation. [40]Hence in the house, the sphere of the Genius is no longer the hearth but the marriage-bed (*lectus genialis*). This notion growing somewhat wider, the Genius comes to denote all the full powers, almost the personality, of developed manhood, and especially those powers which make for pleasure and happiness: this is the origin of such common phrases as *genium curare*, *genio indulgere*, meaning practically to 'look after oneself,' 'to indulge oneself.' Every man, then, has this 'spirit of his manhood' in his Genius, and correspondingly every woman her Iuno, or spirit of womanhood, which are worshipped on the birthdays of their owners. No doubt later the Genius was accredited with powers over the fortune and misfortune of his possessor, but he never really developed anything like the independence of a god, and remained always rather a *numen*. The individual revered his own Genius, but the household cult was concerned, as one would expect, with the Genius of the master of the house, the pre-eminent Genius of the family. Its special locality was, for the reason just noticed, the marriage-bed and its symbol, the house-snake, kept as a revered inmate and cherished in the feeling that evil happening to it meant misfortune to the master. The festival of the Genius was [41]naturally the master's birthday, and on that day slaves and freedmen kept holiday with the family and brought offerings to the *Genius domus*. It is a significant fact, and may serve to bring out the underlying notion, that in later paintings, when anthropomorphism and sensuous representation held sway over all Roman religion, though the other gods of the household were depicted after the manner of Greek deities, the Genius is either represented by his symbolic snake or appears with the human features and characteristics of the head of the house, his owner.

The spirit-gods then of the door and the hearth, the specially chosen deities of the store-cupboard, the

particular field-power presiding over the household, and the spirit of the master's personality were the gods of the early home, and round their worship centred the domestic religion. We must attempt to see what was its relation to family life.

2. Religion and the Family Life.—We have already noticed the main occasions of regular sacrifice to the deities of the household, the offerings to the Lar on Calends, Nones, and Ides, to the Genius on the master's birthday, and so on, and we are enabled to form a fair picture of the rites from [42]paintings which, although of later date, undoubtedly represent the continuous tradition of domestic custom. In a wall-painting at Herculaneum, for instance, we have a picture of the *pater familias*, represented with veiled head (according to regular Roman custom) and the cornucopia of the Genius, making sacrifice at a round altar or hearth. Opposite him stands the flute-player (*tibicen*) playing to drown any unpropitious sound, while on either side are two smaller figures, presumably the sons, acting as attendants (*camilli*), and both clad (*succincti*) in the short sacrificial tunic (*limus*); one carries in his left hand the sacred dish (*patera*), and in his right garlands or, more probably, ribbons for the decoration of the victim: the other is acting as *victimarius* and bringing the pig for sacrifice, but the animal is hurrying with almost excessive eagerness towards the altar, no doubt to show that there is none of the reluctance which would have been sufficient to vitiate the sacrifice.

But from our point of view such formal acts of worship are of less importance than the part played by religion in the daily life of the household. There is evidence both for earlier and later periods that the really 'pious' would begin their day with prayer and sacrifice to the [43]household gods, and like Virgil's Aeneas, typically *pious* in all the meanings of the word, would 'rouse the slumbering flame upon the altar and gladly approach again the Lar and little Penates whom he worshipped yesterday.' But this was perhaps exceptional devotion, and the daily worship in the normal household centred rather round the family meal. In the old and simple house the table would be placed at the side of the hearth, and, as the household sat round it, master and man together, a part of the meal, set aside on a special sacred dish (*patella*), would be thrown into the flames as the gods' portion. Sometimes incense might be added, and later a libation of wine: when images had become common, the little statuettes of Lares and Penates would be fetched from the shrine (*lararium*) and placed upon the table in token of their presence at the meal. Even in the luxurious, many-roomed house of the imperial epoch, when the dining-table was far from the kitchen-hearth, a pause was made in the meal and an offering sent out to the household-gods, nor would the banquet proceed until the slave had returned and announced that the gods were favourable (*deos propitios*): so persistent was this tradition of domestic piety. Prayer might be made at this point on special [44]occasions to special deities, as, for instance, before the beginning of the sowing of the crops, appeal was made to Iuppiter, and a special portion of the meal (*daps*) was set aside for him. The sanctification of the one occasion when the whole household met in the day cannot fail to have had its effect on the domestic life, and, even if it was no direct incentive to morality, it yet bound the family together in a sense of dependence on a higher power for the supply of their daily needs.

We observed incidentally how the small events of domestic life were given their religious significance, particularly in connection with the worship of Lar and Genius, but to complete the sketch of domestic religion, we must examine a little more closely its relation to the process of life, and especially to the two important occasions of birth and marriage. In no department of life is the specialisation of function among the *numina* more conspicuous than in connection with birth and childhood. Apart from the general protection of Iuno Lucina, the prominent divinity of childbirth, we can count in the records that have come down to us some twenty subordinate spirits, who from the moment of conception to the moment of birth watched, each in its own [45]particular sphere, over the mother and the unborn child. As soon as the birth had taken place began a series of ceremonies, which are of particular interest, as they seem to belong to a very early stage of religious thought, and have a markedly rustic character. Immediately a sacred meal was offered to the two field-deities, Picumnus and Pilumnus, and then the Roman turned his attention to the practical danger of fever for the mother and child. At night three men gathered round the threshold, one armed with an axe, another with a stake, and a third with a broom: the

two first struck the threshold with their implements, the third swept out the floor. Over this ceremony were said to preside three *numina*, Intercidona (connected with the axe), Pilumnus (connected with the stake, *pilum*), and Deverra (connected with the act of sweeping). Its object was, as Varro explains it, to avert the entrance of the half-wild Silvanus by giving three unmistakable signs of human civilisation; we shall probably not be wrong in seeing in it rather an actual hacking, beating, and sweeping away of evil spirits. On the ninth day after birth, in the case of a boy, on the eighth in the case of a girl, occurred the festival of the naming (*solemnitas nominalium*). The ceremony was [46]one of purification (*dies lustricus* is its alternative title), and a piacular offering was made to preserve the child from evil influences in the future. Friends brought presents, especially neck-bands in the form of a half-moon (*lunulae*), and the golden balls (*bullae*) which were worn as a charm round the neck until the attainment of manhood.

Of the numerous petty divinities which watched over the child's early years we have already given some account. In their protection he remained until he arrived at puberty, about the age of seventeen, when with due religious ceremony he entered on his manhood. At home, on the morning of the festival, he solemnly laid aside the *bullae* and the purple-striped garb of childhood (*toga praetexta*) before the shrine of the household gods, and made them a thank-offering for their protection in the past. Afterwards, accompanied by his father and friends and clad now in the *toga virilis*, he went solemnly to the Capitol, and, after placing a contribution in the coffers of Iuventas—or probably in earlier times of Iuppiter Iuventus—made an offering to the supreme deity Iuppiter Capitolinus. The sacred character of the early years of a young Roman's life could hardly be more closely marked.

[47]Though *confarreatio* was the only essentially religious form of marriage, and was sanctified by the presence of the *pontifex maximus* and the *flamen Dialis*, yet marriage even in the less religious ceremony of *coemptio* was always a *sacrum*. It must not take place on the days of state-festivals (*feriae*), nor on certain other *dies religiosi*, such as those of the Vestalia or the feast of the dead (*Parentalia*). Both the marriage itself and the preliminary betrothal (*sponsalia*) had to receive the divine sanction by means of auspices, and in the ceremonies of both rites the religious element, though bound up with superstition and folk-customs, emerges clearly enough. The central ceremony of the *confarreatio* was an act partly of sacrifice, partly, one might almost say, of communion. The bride and bridegroom sat on two chairs united to one another and covered with a lambskin, they offered to Iuppiter bloodless offerings of a rustic character (*fruges et molam salsam*), they employed in the sacrifice the fundamental household necessities, water, fire, and salt, and themselves ate of the sacred spelt-cake (*libus farreus*), from which the ceremony derived its name. The crucial point in the more civil ceremony of *coemptio* was the purely human and legal act of the [48]joining of hands (*dextrarum iunctio*), but it was immediately followed by the sacrifice of a victim, which gave the ceremony a markedly religious significance. The customs connected with the bringing of the bride to the bridegroom's house—so beautifully depicted in Catullus' *Epithalamium*—her forcible abduction from her parents, the ribaldry of the bridegroom's companions, the throwing of nuts as a symbol of fecundity, the carrying of the bride over the threshold, a relic probably of primitive marriage by capture, the untying of the bridal knot on the bridal couch—are perhaps more akin to superstition than religion, but we may notice two points in the proceedings. Firstly, the three coins (*asses*) which the bride brought with her, one to give to her husband as a token of dowry, one to be offered at the hearth to her new Lar Familiaris, one to be offered subsequently at the nearest *compitum* (a clear sign of connection between the household Lar and those of the fields); and secondly, an echo of the feature so marked all through domestic life, the crowd of little *numina*, who took their part in assisting the ceremony. There was Domiduca, who brought the bride to the bridegroom's house, Iterduca, who looked after her on the transit, Unxia, who [49]anointed her, Cinxia, who bound and unbound her girdle, and many others.

This sketch of the household worship of the Romans will, I hope, have justified my contention that there was in it an element more truly 'religious' than anything we should gather from the ceremonies of the state. The ideas are simpler, the *numina* seem less cold and more protective, the worshippers more

sensible of divine aid. When we have looked at the companion picture of the farmer in the fields, we shall go on to see how the worship of the agricultural household is the prototype and basis of the state-cult, but first we must consider briefly the very difficult question of the relation of the living to the dead.

3. Relation of the Living and the Dead.—The worship of the spirits of dead ancestors is so common a feature in most primitive religions that it may seem strange even to doubt whether it existed among the Romans, but, although the question is one of extreme difficulty, and the evidence very insufficient, I am inclined to believe that, though the living were always conscious of their continued relation to the dead, and sensitive of the influence of the powers of the underworld, yet there was not, strictly speaking, any cult of the dead. Let us attempt briefly to collect the [50]salient features in ritual, and see to what conclusion they point as to the underlying belief.

One of the most remarkable facts in domestic worship is that, whereas the moment of birth and the other great occasions of life are surrounded with religious ceremony and belief, the moment of death passes without any trace of religious accompaniment: it is as though the dying man went out into another world where the ceremonials of this life can no more avail him, nor its gods protect him. As to his state after death, opinion varied at different times under different influences, but the simple early notion, connected especially with the practice of burial as opposed to cremation,[6] was that his spirit just sank into the earth, where it rested and returned from time to time to the upper world through certain openings in the ground (*mundi*), whose solemn uncovering was one of the regular observances of the festal calendar: later, no doubt, a more spiritual notion prevailed, though it never reached definiteness or universality. One idea, however, seems always to be prominent, that the happiness of the dead could be much affected by the due performance [51]of the funeral rites; hence it was the most solemn duty of the heir to perform the *iusta* for the dead, and if he failed in any respect to carry them out, he could only atone for his omission by the annual sacrifice of a sow (*porca praecidanea*) to Ceres and Tellus—to the divinities of the earth, be it noticed, and not to the dead themselves. The actual funeral was not a religious ceremony; a procession was formed (originally at night) of the family and friends, in which the body of the dead was carried—accompanied by the busts (*imagines*) of his ancestors—to a tomb outside the town, and was there laid in the grave. The family on their return proceeded at once to rites of purification from the contamination which had overtaken them owing to the presence of a dead body. Two ceremonies were performed, one for the purification of the house by the sacrifice of a sow (*porca praesentanea*) to Ceres accompanied by a solemn sweeping out of refuse (*exverrae*), the other the lustration of their own persons by fire and water. This done, they sat down with their friends to a funeral feast (*silicernium*), which, Cicero tells us, was regarded as an honour rather to the surviving members of the family than to the dead, so that mourning was not worn. Two other ceremonies within the following week, the [52]*feriae denicales* and the *novendiale sacrum*, brought the religious mourning to a close. Not that the dead were forgotten after the funeral: year by year, on the anniversaries of death and burial, and on certain fixed occasions known by such suggestive titles as 'the day of roses' and 'the day of violets,' the family would revisit the tomb and make simple offerings of salt cake (*mola salsa*), of bread soaked in wine, or garlands of flowers: there is some trace, on such occasions, of prayer, but it would seem to be rather the repetition of general religious formulæ than a petition to the dead for definite blessings.

Such are the principal features of the family ritual in relation to their dead; but if we are to form any just notion of belief, we must supplement them by reference to the ceremonies of the state, which here, as elsewhere, are very clearly the household-cult 'writ large.' In the Calendars we find two obvious celebrations in connection with the dead, taking place at different seasons of the year, and consisting of ceremonies markedly different in character. In the gloomy month of February—associated with solemn lustrations—occurs the festival known popularly (though not in the Calendars) as the Parentalia or dies Parentales, that is, the days of sacrifice in connection [53]with the dead members of the family (*parentes*, *parentare*). It begins with the note on February 13, *Virgo Vestalis parentat*, and continues till the climax, *Feralia*, on February 21. During these days the magistrates laid aside the insignia of their offices, the temples were shut, marriages were forbidden, and every family carried out at the tombs of its relatives

ceremonies resembling those of the *sacra privata*. The whole season closed on February 22 with the festival of the Caristia or *cara cognatio*, a family reunion of the survivors in a kind of 'love-feast,' which centred in the worship of the Lar Familiaris. Here we seem to have simply, as in the family rites, a peaceful and solemn acknowledgment by the community as a whole of the still subsisting relation of the living and the dead. On the 9th, 11th, and 13th of May occurs the Lemuria, a ceremony of a strikingly different order. Once again temples are shut and marriages forbidden, but the ritual is of a very different nature. The *Lemures* or *Larvae*—for there seems to be little distinction between the two names—are regarded no longer as members of the family to be welcomed back to their place, but as hostile spirits to be exorcised.[7] [54]The head of the house rises from bed at midnight, washes, and walks barefoot through the house, making signs for the aversion of evil spirits. In his mouth he carries black beans—always a chthonic symbol—which he spits out nine times without looking round, saying, as he does so, 'With these I redeem me and mine': he washes again, and clanks brass vessels together; nine times he repeats the formula, 'depart, Manes of our fathers' (no doubt using the dignified title Manes euphemistically), and then finally turns round. Here we have in a quite unmistakable manner the feeling of the hostility of the spirits of the dead: they must be given their appropriate food and got out of the place as quickly as possible. Some scholars have attempted to explain the difference between these two festivals on the assumption that the Parentalia represents the commemoration of the duly buried dead, the Lemuria the apotropaic rite for the aversion of the unburied, and therefore hostile spirits; but Ovid has given a far more significant hint, when he tells us that the Lemuria was the more ancient festival of the two.

So far we have had no indication of anything approaching divinity in connection with the dead or the underworld as distinct from the [55]earth-goddesses, but the evidence for it, though vague and shadowy, is not wanting. Certain mysterious female deities, Tarpeia, Acca Larentia, Carna, and Laverna, of whom late ætiological myth had its own explanation, have, in all probability, been rightly interpreted by Mommsen as divinities of the lower world: the commemorative 'sacrifice at the tomb,' which we hear of in connection with the first two, was in reality, we may suppose, an offering to a chthonic deity at a *mundus*. A rather more tangible personality is Vediovis, who three times a year has his celebration (*Agonia* not *feriae*) in the Calendar: he, as his name denotes, must be the 'opposite of Iove,' that is, probably, his chthonic counterpart, a notion sufficiently borne out by his subsequent identification with the Greek Pluto. Finally, of course, there is that vague body, the Di Manes, 'the good gods,' the principal deities of the world of the dead; to them invocations are addressed, and they have their place in the formulæ of the *parentalia* and the opening of the *mundi*. [8] In connection with them, acting as a link with the female deities, we have the strange goddess Genita Mana, the 'spirit of birth and death.'

[56]Controversy is acute as to the interpretation of these facts, especially in regard to the question whether or no the spirits of the dead were actually worshipped. I would hazard the following reconstruction of history as consistent with what we otherwise know of Roman religion, and with the evidence before us. From the earliest times the Roman looked upon his dead relations as in some sense living, lying beneath the earth, but capable alike of returning to the world above and of influencing in some vague way the fortunes of the living, especially in relation to the crops which sprung from the ground in which they lay. At first, when his religion was one of fear, he regarded the dead as normally hostile, and their presence as something to be averted; this is the stage which gave birth to the Lemuria. As civilisation increased, and the sense of the unity of household and community developed, fear, proving ungrounded, gave place to a kindlier feeling of the continued existence of the dead as members of household and state, and even in some sense as an additional bond between the living: this is the period which produced the *sacra privata* and the Parentalia. When the *numen*-feeling began to pass into that of *deus*, in the first place a connection was felt between the spirits of the dead and the [57]deities of the earth associated with the growth of the crops, in the second the notion that the underworld must have its gods as well as the world above, produced the shadowy female deities and Vediovis. Lastly, the same kind of feeling which added Parentalia to Lemuria developed the vague general notion of the Di Manes,

not the deified spirits of the dead, but peaceful and on the whole kindly divinities holding sway in the world of dead spirits, yet accessible to the prayers of the living. The dead, then, were not themselves worshipped, but they needed commemoration and kindly gifts, and they had in their lower world deities to whom prayer might be made and worship given.

FOOTNOTES:

[5] It is right to state that there is a totally different theory, according to which the Lares were the spirits of the dead ancestors and the Lar Familiaris an embodiment, as it were, of all the family dead.

[6] It is significant that even when the dead were cremated, one bone was carefully preserved in order to be symbolically buried.

[7] We may note that, though it is a state festival, our information is solely of rites in individual households.

[8] Their mention in sepulchral inscriptions dates from the time of the Empire, when a new conception of their nature had sprung up.

[58]

CHAPTER VI [ToC](#)

WORSHIP OF THE FIELDS

The life of the early Roman in the fields, his activities, his hopes and fears, are reflected in the long list of agricultural festivals which constitute the greater part of the celebrations in the Calendar, and follow closely the seasons and occupations of the agricultural year. We are, of course, in the Calendar dealing, to speak strictly, with the worship of the state, and not with the semi-private festivals of groups of farmers, but in many instances, such as the Robigalia, the state seems only to have taken over the cult of the farmers, preserving carefully the site on which the celebration took place; in others, such as the Terminalia and the Parilia, it seems to have established, as it were, a state-counterpart of a rite performed independently at many rustic centres: in both cases we are justified in inferring the practice of the early Roman agriculturalist. We shall see that in most cases these festivals are associated—though

[59]often loosely enough—with the worship of a particular divinity. Sometimes, however,—as in the case of the Lupercalia—it is very difficult to discover who this divinity was; in other festivals, such as the Robigalia, it looks as if the eponymous deity was a comparatively late development. We may, therefore, suppose, on the analogy of what we have already seen to be the general lines of development in Roman religion, that the festivals in origin centred round a purpose rather than a personality, and were

addressed 'to all spirits whom it might concern'; and that later, when the *deus* notion was on the increase, they either attached themselves to some god whose personality was already distinct, as the Vinalia were attached to Iuppiter, or 'developed' a deity of their own. Among these deities, strictly functional as a rule and existing only in connection with their special festival, we shall notice the frequent recurrence of a divinity pair, not, of course, mythologically related as husband and wife, but representing, perhaps, the male and female aspects of the same process of development.

The festivals divide themselves naturally into three groups: those of Spring, expressive of the hopes and fears for the growing crops and herds; [60]those of Summer, the festivals of fulfilment, including the celebration of harvest; and those of Winter, the festivals of sowing, of social rejoicing, and in the later months of purificatory anticipation of the coming year.

1. Festivals of Spring.—The old Roman year—as may be seen clearly enough from the names of the months still known by numbers, September, October, etc.—began in March: according to tradition Romulus reckoned a year of ten months altogether, and Numa added January and February. The Spring months properly speaking may be reckoned as March, April, and May. In March there were in the developed Calendar no festivals of an immediately recognisable agricultural character, but the whole month was practically consecrated to its eponymous deity, Mars. Now, to the Roman of the Republic, Mars was undoubtedly the deity associated with war, and his special festivals in this month are of a warlike character: on the 9th the priests (*Salii*) began the ancient custom of carrying his sacred shields (*ancilia*) round the town from one ordained resting-place to another: on the 19th, Quinquatrus, the shields were solemnly purified, and on the 23rd the same ceremony was performed with the war-trumpets: the Equirria [61](horse-races) of March 14 may have had an agricultural origin—we shall meet with races later on as a feature of rustic festivals—but they were certainly celebrated in a military manner. Yet there is good reason for believing that Mars was in origin associated not with war, but with the growth of vegetation: he was, as we shall see, the chief deity addressed in the solemn lustration of the fields (*Ambarvalia*), and if our general notion of the development of religion with the growing needs of the agricultural community crystallising into a state be correct, it may well be that a deity originally concerned with the interests of the farmer took on himself the protection of the soldier, when the fully developed state came into collision with its neighbours. If so, we may well have in these recurring festivals of Mars the sense, as Mr. Warde Fowler has put it, of 'some great *numen* at work, quickening vegetation, and calling into life the powers of reproduction in man and the animals.' Possibly another agricultural note is struck in the Liberalia of the 17th: though the cult of Liber was almost entirely overlaid by his subsequent identification with Dionysus, it seems right to recognise in him and his female counterpart, Libera, a general spirit of creativeness.

[62]The character of April is much more clearly marked: the month is filled with a series of festivals—all of a clearly agricultural nature—prayers for the crops now in the earth, and the purification of the men and animals on the farm. The series opens with the Fordicidia on the 15th, when pregnant cows were sacrificed: their unborn calves were torn from them and burnt, the ashes being kept by the Vestal Virgin in Vesta's storehouse (*penus Vestæ*) for use at the Parilia. The general symbolism of fertility is very clear; the goddess associated with the festival is Tellus, the earth herself, and the local origin of these festivals is shown in the fact that not only was the sacrifice made for the whole people on the Capitol, but separately in each one of the *curiae*. The Fordicidia is closely followed by the Cerealia on the 19th—the festival of another earth-goddess (*Ceres, creare*)—more especially connected with the growth of corn. A very curious feature of the ritual was the fastening of fire-brands to the tails of foxes, which were then let loose in what was afterwards the Circus Maximus: a symbol possibly, as Wissowa thinks, of sunlight, possibly of the vegetation-spirit. But the most important of the April ceremonies is undoubtedly the Parilia of the 21st, the festival of the very ancient [63]rustic *numen*, Pales. Ovid's[9] description of the celebration is so interesting and so full of the characteristic colour of the Roman rustic festivals that I may perhaps be pardoned for reproducing it at greater length. 'Shepherd,' he says, addressing the rustic worshipper, 'at the first streak of dawn purify thy well-fed flocks: let water first

besprinkle them, and a branch sweep clean the ground. Let the folds be adorned with leaves and branches fastened to them, while a trailing wreath covers the gay-decked gates. Let blue flames rise from the living sulphur and the sheep bleat loud as she feels the touch of the smoking sulphur. Burn the male olive-branch and the pine twig and juniper, and let the blazing laurel crackle amid the hearth. A basket full of millet must go with the millet cakes: this is the food wherein the country goddess finds pleasure most of all. Give her too her own share of the feast and her pail of milk, and when her share has been set aside, then with milk warm from the cow make prayer to Pales, guardian of the woods.' The poet then recites a long prayer, in which the farmer first begs forgiveness for any unwitting sins he may have committed against the rustic deities, such as trespassing on their groves or sheltering [64]his flocks beneath their altar, and then prays for the aversion of disease and the prosperity of crops, flocks, and herds. 'Thus must the goddess be won, this prayer say four times turning to the sunrise, and wash thy hands in the running stream. Then set the rustic bowl upon the table in place of the wine-bowl, and drink the snowy milk and dark must, and soon through the heaps of crackling straw leap in swift course with eager limbs.' All the worshippers then set to leaping through the blazing fires, even the flocks and herds were driven through, and general hilarity reigned. Many points of detail might be noticed, such as that in the urban counterpart of the festival, which Ovid carefully distinguishes from the country celebrations, the fire was sprinkled with the ashes from the calves of the Fordicidia and the blood of Mars' October horse—another link between Mars and agriculture. But it is most interesting to note the double character of the ceremony—as a purification of man and beast on the one hand, and on the other a prayer for the prosperity of the season to come. Three special festivals remain in April. At the Vinalia (*priora*) of the 23rd, the wine-skins of the previous year were opened and the wine tasted, and, we may suppose, supplication was [65]made for the vintage to come, the festival being dedicated to the sky-god, Iuppiter. At the Robigalia of the 25th the offering of a dog was made for the aversion of mildew (*robigo*), to Robigus (who looks like a developed eponymous deity) at the fifth milestone on the Via Claudia—the ancient boundary of Roman territory. The Floralia of the 28th does not occur in the old Calendars, probably because it was a moveable feast (*feriae conceptivae*), but it is an unmistakeable petition to the *numen* Flora for the blossoming of the season's flowers.

May was a month of more critical importance for the welfare of the crops, and therefore its festivals were mostly of a more sombre character. The 9th, 11th, and 13th were the days set apart for the Lemuria, the aversion of the hostile spirits of the dead, of which we have already spoken, and a similarly gloomy character probably attached to the Agonia of Vediovis on the 21st. But of far the greatest interest is the moveable feast of the Ambarvalia, the great lustration of the fields, which took place towards the end of the month: the date of its occurrence was no doubt fixed according to the state of the crops in any given year. As the individual farmer purified his own fields for the aversion of evil, so a solemn [66]lustration of the boundaries of the state was performed by special priests, known as the Arval brethren (*fratres Arvales*). With ceremonial dancing (*tripudium*) they moved along the boundary-marks and made the farmer's most complete offering of the pig, sheep, and ox (*suovetaurilia*): the fruits of the last year and the new harvest (*aridae et virides*) played a large part in the ceremonial, and a solemn litany was recited for the aversion of every kind of pest from the crops. In Virgil's account the prayer is made to Ceres, and we know that in imperial times, when the Ambarvalia became very closely connected with the worship of the imperial house, the centre of the cult was the earth-goddess, Dea Dia; but in the earliest account of the rustic ceremony which we possess in Cato, Mars is addressed in the unmistakeable character of an agricultural deity. 'Father Mars, I pray and beseech thee that thou mayest be gracious and favourable to me, to my home, and my household, for which cause I have ordained that the offering of pig, sheep, and ox be carried round my fields, my land, and my farm: that thou mayest avert, ward off, and keep afar all disease, visible and invisible, all barrenness, waste, misfortune, and ill weather: that thou mayest suffer our crops, our corn, our vines and bushes [67]to grow and come to prosperity: that thou mayest preserve the shepherds and the flocks in safety, and grant health and strength to me, to my home, and my household.' We have perhaps here another rustic ceremony addressed in origin to all *numina*, whom it might concern, and, as it were, specialising itself from time to

time in an appeal to one definite deity or another, but it is also clear evidence of an early agricultural association of Mars. The Ambarvalia is one of the most picturesque of the field ceremonies, and a peculiarly beautiful and imaginative description of it may be found in the first chapter of Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*.

In June and July the farmer was waiting for the completion of the harvest, and the great state-festivals of the period are not agricultural.

2. Festivals of the Harvest.—In August the farmer's hopes are at last realised, and the harvest is brought in. The season is marked by two closely connected festivals on the 21st and 25th in honour of the old divinity-pair, Consus (*condere*), the god of the storehouse and Ops, the deity of the wealth of harvest. At the Consualia, an offering is made by the *flamen Quirinalis*, assisted by the Vestal virgins, at an underground altar in the Circus Maximus, specially uncovered for the [68]occasion: here we have probably not so much the notion of a chthonic deity, as a relic of the simple practices of an early agricultural age, when the crops were stored underground. The beasts who had taken part in the harvest were released from their labours during the day, and were decorated with flowers: the festival included a race of mules, the regular Italian beasts of burden. Four days after this general festivity occurred the second harvest-ceremony of the Opiconsivia, held in the shrine (*sacrarium*) of the Regia, and attended only by the *pontifex maximus* and the Vestal virgins. This is clearly the state-harvest of the regal period, the symbolic storing of the state-crops in the sacred storehouse of the palace by the king and his daughters. Both festivals are significant, and we shall meet with Consus and Ops again in close connection in December. The *Portunalia* of the 17th may have been another harvest-home, if we can believe the old authorities, who tell us that Portunus was a 'god of doors' (*portae*).

The *Vinalia Rustica* of August 19 we cannot sufficiently interpret through lack of information: it cannot, of course, have been the festival of the vintage, for it is too early: it may have been a propitiatory ceremony for the ripening grapes, in [69]which case it was probably connected with the *auspicatio vindemiae*, in which the *flamen Dialis* (note again the association of Iuppiter and the vine) solemnly plucked the first grapes; or it may be a festival of wine, not vines, in which case its main feature would most likely be the opening of the last year's vintage.

September contains no great festival, and the harvest-season closes on October 11 with the *Meditrinalia*—the nearest approach to a thanksgiving for the vintage. On that day the first must of the new vintage and the wine of the old were solemnly tasted, apparently as a spell against disease, the worshipper using the strange formula, 'I drink the new and the old wine, with new wine and old I heal (*medeor*) disease.' This ceremony gave its name to the festival and was the cause of the subsequent evolution of an eponymous deity, Meditrina, but there is little doubt that in origin here, as in the other wine-festivals, the deity concerned was at first Iuppiter. Among the other rustic ceremonies of the month we may notice the festival of springs (*Fontinalia*) on October 13: wells were decorated with garlands and flowers flung into the waters.

3. Festivals of the Winter.—The winter-festivals cannot be summed up under one general [70]notion so easily as those of spring or summer, but they fall fairly naturally into two groups—the festivals immediately connected with agricultural life and those associated with the dead and the underworld or with solemn purification. The main action of the farmer's life during the winter is, of course, the sowing of the next year's crop, which was commemorated in the ancient festival of the Saturnalia on December 17. Though the Saturnalia is perhaps the most familiar to us of all the Roman festivals, partly from the allusions in the classics, especially in Horace, partly because it is no doubt the source of many of our own Christmas festivities, it is yet almost impossible now to recover anything of its original Roman character. Greek influence set to work on it very early, identifying Saturnus with Cronos and establishing him in a Greek temple with all the accompaniments of Greek ritual. All the familiar features of the festival—the freedom and license of the slaves, the giving of presents, even the wax-candles, which are the prototype of those on our own Christmas-tree—are almost certainly due to Greek origin.

We are left with nothing but the name Saturnus (connected with the root of *semen*, *serere*) and the date to assure us that we have here in reality a genuine Roman festival of the sowing of [71]the crops. Of a similar nature—marking, as Ovid tells us, the completion of the sowing—was the *feriae sementivae* or Paganalia, associated with the earth-goddesses, Ceres and Tellus. Meal-cakes and a pregnant sow were the offerings, the beasts who had helped in the ploughing were garlanded, and prayer was made for the seed resting in the ground. A curious feature of the winter worship is the repetition of festivals to the harvest deities, Consus and Ops, separated by the same interval of three days, on December 15 and 19: it may be that we have here an indication of the final completion of the harvest, or, as Mr. Warde Fowler has suggested, a ceremonial opening of the storehouses, to see that the harvest is not rotting. Among the other country festivals of the period we may notice that of Carmenta, on the 11th and 15th of January: she seems to have been in origin a water-*numen*, but was early associated with childbirth: hence the rigid exclusion of men from her ceremonies and possibly the taboo on leathern thongs, on the ground that nothing involving death must be used in the worship of a deity of birth. The repetition of her festival may possibly point to separate celebrations of the communities of Palatine and Quirinal. At this time, too, occurred the rustic ceremonies [72]at the boundaries (*Terminalia*) and the offering to the Lares at the 'marches' (*Compitalia*), of which we have spoken in treating of the worship of the house.

The other group of winter-festivals is of a much more gloomy and less definitely rustic type, though they clearly date from the period of the agricultural community. Of the Feralia of February 21, the culmination of the festival of the kindred dead (*Parentalia*), we have already spoken. The Larentalia is a very mysterious occasion, and was supposed by the Romans themselves to be an offering 'at the tomb' of a legendary Acca Larentia, mistress of Hercules. But we have seen reason to think that Larentia was in reality a deity of the dead, and the 'tomb' a *mundus*: if so, we have another link between the winter season and the worship of the underworld. There remains the weird festival of the Lupercalia on February 15, to which we have had occasion to refer several times, and which has become more familiar to most of us than other Roman festivals owing to its political use by Mark Antony in 44 B.C. As we have argued already, it seems to belong to the very oldest stratum of the Palatine settlement, and we may therefore appropriately close this account of the early festivals with a [73]somewhat fuller description of it. The worshippers assembled at the Lupercal, a cave on the Palatine hill: there goats and a dog were sacrificed, and two youths belonging to the two colleges of Fabian and Quintian (or Quintilian) Luperci had their foreheads smeared with the knife used for the sacrifice and wiped with wool dipped in milk—at which point it was ordained that they should laugh. Then they girt on the skins of the slain goats and, after feasting, ran their course round the boundaries of the Palatine hill, followed each by his own company of youths, and striking women on their way with strips, known as *februae* or *Iunonis amicula*, cut from the goats' hides. Here we have a summary of many of the important points which we have noticed in the rustic festivals: from the pre-Roman stratum comes the idea of communion with the sacrificed animal in the smearing of the blood and the wearing of the skin, and also the magic charm involved in the striking of the women to procure fertility: it is typical of the true feeling of Roman religion that we cannot with any certainty tell what deity was associated with the rite, though probably it was Faunus: the rustic character of the ceremony is indicated by the bowl of milk in which the wool was dipped and the sacrifice of [74]goats: the idea of lustration is clearly marked in the course round the boundaries: the original Palatine settlement stands out in the limits of that course and the site of the Lupercal, and the later synœcismus is seen in the, presumably subsequent, addition of the second college of Luperci. A careful study of the Lupercalia as an epitome of the character and development of the Roman agricultural festivals, though it would not show the brighter aspect of some of the spring and summer celebrations, would yet give a true notion of the history and spirit of the whole.

[9] Ov., *Fast.*, iv. 735.

[75]

CHAPTER VII^{ToC}

WORSHIP OF THE STATE

Since, in the matter of religion, the Roman state is in the main but the agricultural household magnified, we shall not, in considering its worship, be entering on a new stratum of ideas, but rather looking at the development of notions and sentiments already familiar. To deal, however, with the state-worship in full would not only far exceed the limits of this sketch, but would lead us away from religious ideas into the region of what we might now call 'ecclesiastical management.' I propose therefore to confine myself to two points, firstly, the broadening of the old conceptions of the household and the fields and their adaptation to the life of the state, and secondly—to be treated very shortly and as an indication of the Roman character—the organisation of religion.

1. Development of the Worship of House and Fields.—Here we shall find two main [76]characteristics. The state in the first place, as we have several times hinted in anticipation, establishes its own counterpart of the household and rustic cults and adapts to its own use the ideas which they involve: in the second, and particularly in connection with some of the field-deities, it evolves new and very frequently abstract notions, foreign to the life of the independent country households, but necessary and vital to the life of an organised community. Let us look first at the fate of the household deities.

Ianus.—We left Ianus as the *numen* of the house-door: he passes into the state exactly in the same capacity: the state too has its 'door,' the gate at the north-east corner of the Forum, and this becomes the seat of his state-cult—the door which, according to Augustan legend, is opened in the time of war and only shut when Rome is at peace with all the world. But reflection soon gets to work on Ianus: a door has two sides, it can both open and shut; therefore, as early as the song of the Salii, he has developed the cult-epithets 'Opener,' 'Shutter' (*Patulci, Cloesi*), and as soon as he is thought of as anything approaching a personality he is 'two-headed' (*bifrons*), as he appears in later representations. The door again is the first thing you come to in entering [77]a house: the 'door-spirit' then, with that tendency to abstraction which we shall see shortly in other cases, becomes the god of beginnings. He watches over the very first beginning of human life in his character of *Conseivius*; to him is sacred the first hour of the day (*pater matutinus*), the Calends of every month, and the first month of the year (*Ianuaris*); to him too is offered by the *rex sacrorum* the first sacrifice of the year, the Agonium on the 9th of January. In this capacity, moreover, his name comes first in all the formulæ of prayer, and he is looked upon—not indeed as the father of the gods—for that is a much too anthropomorphic notion—but as what we might now term their 'logical antecedent': *divum deus*, as the song of the Salii quaintly puts it, *principium deorum*, as later interpretation explained it. Yet through all he remains the most typical Roman deity: he does not acquire a temple till 217 B.C., nor a bust until quite late, nor is he ever identified with a Greek

counterpart. In his capacity as *pater matutinus* he has a native female counterpart in Matuta, a dawn-deity, who becomes a protectress in childbirth, and as such is the centre of the matrons' festival, the Matralia of June 11.

[78]**Vesta.**—The history of Vesta is perhaps less romantic, but it affords a more exact parallel between household and state. In the primitive community the king's hearth is not merely of symbolical importance, but of great practical utility, in that it is kept continually burning as the source of fire on which the individual householder may draw: hence it is the duty of the king's daughters to care for it and keep the flame perpetually alight. In Rome the temple of Vesta is the king's hearth, situated, as one would expect, in close proximity to the *regia*. The fire is kept continually blazing except on the 1st of March of every year, when it is allowed to go out and is ceremonially renewed. The Vestal virgins, sworn to perpetual virginity and charged with the preservation of the sacred flame, are 'the king's daughters,' living in a kind of convent (*atrium Vestæ*) and under the charge of the king's representative, the *pontifex maximus*. It is their duty too, as the natural cooks of the sacred royal household, to make the salt cake (*mola salsa*) to be used at the year's festivals and to preserve it and other sacred objects, such as the ashes of the Fordicidia, in the storehouse of Vesta (*penus Vestæ*). In the month of June from the 7th to the 15th, with a climax on the 9th, the day [79]of the Vestalia, the matrons who all the year round have tended their own hearths, come in solemn procession bare-footed to make their homely offerings at the state-hearth, and the virgins meanwhile offer the cakes that they have made. For eight days the ceremony continues, during which time the bakers and millers keep holiday; the days are *religiosi* (marriages are unlucky and other taboos are observed) and also *nefasti* (no public business may be performed); until the ceremony closes on the 15th, with the solemn cleansing of the temple and the casting of the refuse into the Tiber, and then the normal life of the state may be renewed—Q. St. D. F. (*Quando Stercus Delatum Fas*) is the unique entry in the Calendars. This is all less imaginative than the development of Ianus, but the underlying feeling is intensely Roman and there could be no clearer idea of the natural adaptation of the household-cult to the religion of the state.

Penates, Lares, and Genius.—The other household deities too have their counterpart, though not so prominently marked, in the worship of the state. The magistrates, on entering office, took oath by Iuppiter and the *Di Penates populi Romani Quiritium*, and that the conception was as wide in the [80]state as in the household is shown by the fact that on less formal occasions the formula appears as *Iuppiter et ceteri di omnes immortales*. The Penates of the state then would include all the state-deities; but that their original character is not lost sight of we can see from the statement of Varro that in the *penus Vestæ* (the 'state storehouse') were preserved their *sigilla*—not apparently sensuous representations, but symbolic objects, such as we have seen before in cases like that of the *silex* of Iuppiter. The *Lares* again find their counterpart in the *Lares Praestites* of the state, and their rustic festival, the Compitalia, has its urban reproduction, which, as it involved considerable license on the part of populace and slaves, was often in the later period of the Republic a cause of serious political disturbance. Even the Genius, though rather vaguely, passes over to the state and we hear of the *Genius populi Romani* or the *Genius urbis Romæ*, with regard to which Servius quotes from an inscription on a shield the characteristic addition, *sive mas sive femina*: in much later times we find the exact counterpart of the domestic worship of the Genius of the *pater familias* in the cult of the Genius of the Emperor—the foundation of the whole of the imperial worship.

[81]We have observed already how the cults of the fields were taken over by the state and their counterparts established in the great festivals of the Calendar. Naturally enough most of the deities concerned, existing only for the part they played in these festivals, retained their original character without further development. But with a few it was different: it was their fate to acquire new characteristics and new functions, and, developing with the needs of the community, to become the great gods of the state: of these we must give some brief account.

Iuppiter.—We have known Iuppiter hitherto either in connection with certain very primitive survivals,

or in the genuine Roman period as a sky-*numen*, concerned with the grape-harvest in the two Vinalia and the Meditrinalia, and the recipient at the family meal of a *daps* as a general propitiation before the beginning of the sowing. As sky-god he passes to the state: *Lucetius (lux)* is his title in the song of the Salii and to him are sacred the Ides of every month—the time of the full moon, when there is most light in the heavens by night as well as day. In his agricultural connection he has his wine-festivals in the state as in the country, and the household *daps* becomes the more elaborate *epulum Iovis*, [82]in which the whole community, as it were, entertained him at a banquet. As a sky-deity, too, he is particularly concerned with the thunderbolt and the lightning-flash (*Iuppiter Fulmen, Fulgur*), and to him are sacred the always ominous spots which had been struck by lightning (*bidentaliam*): with the more alarming occurrence of lightning by night he has a special connection under the cult-title *Iuppiter Summanus*. But as the little community grew, and especially perhaps after the union of the two settlements, the worship of Iuppiter Feretrius, associated with the sacred oak upon the Capitol—the hill between Palatine and Quirinal—comes more and more into prominence as a bond of union and the central point of the state's religious life: it tends indeed to take the place of priority, which had previously been occupied by Ianus. The community goes to war with its neighbours, and after a signal victory the *spolia opima* must be dedicated on the sacred oak: indeed Iuppiter is in a special sense with them in the battle and must now be worshipped as the 'stayer of rout' (*Stator*) and the 'giver of victory' (*Victor*). War is a new province of the state's activity, but, characteristically enough, it does not evolve its own *numen*, but enlarges the sphere of the somewhat elastic [83]spirits already existing. So too in the internal organisation of the state there is felt the need of a religious sanction for public morality, and Iuppiter—though vaguely at first—takes on him the character of a deity of justice. In this connection he is primarily the god of oaths: we have seen how his sacred *silex* was used in the oath of treaty: it is also the most solemn witness to the oath of the citizen. Iuppiter Lapis becomes specially the *Dius Fidius*, a cult-title which subsequently sets up for itself and produces a further offshoot in the abstract *Fides*. Finally, towards the end of our period the Iuppiter of the Capitol emerges triumphant, as it were, from his struggle with his rivals and, with the new title of Iuppiter Optimus Maximus,—the 'best and greatest,' that is, of all the Iuppers—takes his place as the supreme deity of the Roman state and the personification of the greatness and majesty of Rome itself. To his temple hereafter the Roman youth will come to make his offering when he takes the dress of manhood; here the magistrates will do sacrifice before entering on their year of office: here the victorious general will pass in procession with the spoils of his victory: on the walls shall be suspended treaties with foreign nations and [84]offerings sent by subject princes and states from all quarters of the world: all that Rome is to be, will be, as it were, embodied in the sky-spirit of the sacred oak, the god of justice and of victory in war.

Iuno.—Iuppiter carries with him into the state-worship his female counterpart, Iuno, with his own characteristics, in a certain degree, and his own privileges. She is *Lucina* and *Fulgura* as he is *Lucetius* and *Fulgur*: white cows are her offerings as white steers are his: as the Ides are sacred to Iuppiter, so—though they are not a festival—are the Calends to Iuno. But from the first she shows a certain independence and develops on lines of her own. In the curious ceremony of the fixing of the Nones (the first quarter of the month), held on the Calends in the *curia Calabra*, she seems to appear as a moon-goddess: the *rex sacrorum*, after a report from a *pontifex* as to the appearance of the new moon, announces the result in the formula: 'I summon thee for five (or seven) days, hollow Iuno' (*dies te quinque [septem] kalo, Iuno Covella*: hence the name *Kalendae*). But far more prominently—either as a female divinity herself, or, as some think, owing to the supposed influence of the moon on female life—does Iuno figure as the [85]deity of women, and especially in association with childbirth and marriage. As *Lucina* she is, as we have seen, the presiding deity of childbirth, and her festival on the 1st of March, though not in the Calendars (because confined to women and not therefore a festival of the whole people), attained immense popularity under the title of the *Matronalia*. She has too a general superintendence of the rites of marriage, and the various little *numina*, who play so prominent a part in the ceremonies, tend to attach themselves to her as cult-titles. The festival of the servant-maids in honour of Iuno Caprotina on the 7th of July shows the same notion of Iuno as the women's goddess,

which appears again in common parlance when women speak of their Iuno, just as men do of their Genius. Later on Iuno acquires the characteristics of majesty (*Regina*) and protection in war (*Curitis*, *Sospita*), partly no doubt as Iuppiter's counterpart, but more directly through the introduction of cults from neighbouring Italian towns.

Mars.—We have seen reason to believe that in the earlier stages of Roman religion Mars was a *numen* of vegetation, but though the Ambarvalia was duly taken over into the state-cult and attained a very high degree of importance, yet [86]there can be no doubt that in the state-religion Mars was pre-eminently associated with war. Iuppiter might help at need in averting defeat and awarding victory, but it was with Mars that the general conduct of war rested. His sacred animal is the warlike wolf, his symbols the spears and the sacred shields (*ancilia*), which during his own month (*Martius*)—the 1st of which is his special festival—his priests (*Salii*) wearing the full war-dress (*trabea* and *tunica picta*) carry with sacred dance and song round the city. His altar is in the Campus Martius, outside the city-walls and therefore within the sphere of the *imperium militiae*, and the other festivals associated with him are of a warlike character: the races of the war-horse (Equirria) on March 14 and February 27, and the great race on the Ides of October, when the winner was solemnly slain: the lustration of the arms at the Quinquatrus on March 19 and the Armilustrum of October 19—at the beginning and end of the campaigning season: and the lustration of the war-trumpets on the 23rd of March and the 23rd of May. But above all in honour of Mars is held the great quinquennial *lustrum* associated with the census, when the people are drawn up in military array around his altar in [87]the Campus Martius and the solemn offering of the *suovetaurilia* (is this a faint relic of his agricultural character?) after being carried three times round the gathered host, is offered on his altar in prayer for the military future of the state. Hardly any god in the state-cult has his character so clearly marked, and we may regard Mars as a deity who, taking on new functions to suit the needs of the times, almost entirely lost the traces of his original nature.

Quirinus.—Iuppiter and Mars then became the great state-deities of the developed community and to them is added, as the contribution of the Colline settlement, their own particular deity, Quirinus. He, like them, has his own *flamen*; like Mars he has his *Salii*, and his festival finds its place in the Calendars on February the 17th. But of his ritual and character we know practically nothing: the ritual was obscured because his festival coincided with the much more popular festival of the *curiae*, the *stultorum feriae*: of his character, we can only conjecture that he was to the Colline settlement what Mars was to the Palatine, whereas later after the complete amalgamation he seems to have been distinguished from Mars as representing 'armed peace' rather than war—an idea which is borne out by the [88]associations of the closely allied word *Quirites*. Be that as it may, we have in Iuppiter, Mars, and Quirinus the great state-triad of the synœcismus, who held their own until at the beginning of the next epoch they were supplanted by the new Etruscan triad of the Capitol, Iuppiter, Iuno and Minerva.

2. Organisation.—It might perhaps be thought that the organisation of religion is a matter remote from its spirit, and is not therefore a suitable subject for discussion, where the object is rather to bring out underlying motives and ideas: but in dealing with the Roman religion, where ceremonial and legal precision were so prominent, it would be even misleading to omit some reference to the very characteristic manner in which the state, taking over the rather chaotic elements of the agricultural worship, organised them into something like a consistent whole. Its most complete achievement in this direction was without doubt the regulation of the religious year. We have spoken many times of the Calendars (*Fasti*): it is necessary now to obtain some clearer notion of what they were. In Rome itself and various Italian towns have been found some thirty inscriptions, one almost complete (Maffeiani), the others more or less fragmentary, [89]giving the tables of the months and marking precisely the character and occurrences of every day in the year. We may take as a specimen the latter half of the month of August from the *Fasti Maffeiani*.

B. F.	D. C.
C. C.	E. OPIC. NP.
D. C.	F. C.
E. PORT. NP.	G. VOLT. NP.
F. C.	H. NP.
G. VIN. F.P.	A. F.
H. C.	B. F.
A. CONS. NP.	C. C.
B. EN.	

In the first column are given the nundinal letters of the days, showing their position in the eight days' 'week' from one market day (*nundinae*) to the next. In the second column are noted first the great divisions of the month, Calends, Nones, and Ides, and then the religious character of each individual day is indicated by certain signs, whose explanations throw a good deal of light on Roman religious notions. It will be seen that the letters of most frequent occurrence are F, C, and N (or in our extract NP): these correspond to the broad distinction between [90]days profane and sacred. F (*fastus*) denotes a day on which the business of the state may be performed, on which the praetor may say (*fari*) the three words, *do, dico, addico*, which summed up the decisions of the Roman law: C (*comitialis*) marks a day on which the legislative assemblies (*comitia*) may be held: it is by implication F as well. N (*nefastus*), on the other hand, denotes the sacred day, consecrated to the worship of the gods, on which therefore state-business may not be transacted: similarly the very mysterious and much disputed sign NP, whether it differs in precise signification from N or not, certainly marks a day of sacred character. EN, which occurs once in this extract (from *endotercisus*, the old Latin form of *intercisus*) signifies a 'split' day (*dies fissus*), the beginning and end of which were sacred, while the middle period was free for business. In the second column also (in large letters in some of the other Calendars) are named the *feriae publicae*, the great annual state-festivals, fixed for one particular day (*feriae stativae*): such, in this case, are the Portunalia, Vinalia, and Consualia.

These *fasti* were exhibited in the Forum and on the walls of temples, and the conscientious Roman could have no possible difficulty in [91]finding out when he might lawfully transact his business and what festivals the state was observing: of the 355 days of the old Calendar 11 were *fissi*, 235 were *fasti* (192 *comitiales*), and 109 *nefasti*. We may remark as curious features in the Calendar, denoting rigid adherence to principle, that with one exception, the Poplifugia of July 5, no festival ever occurs before the Nones, that with two exceptions, the Regifugium of February 24 and the Equirria of the 14th of March, no festival falls on an even day of the month, and that there is a marked avoidance of successive feast-days: even the three days of the Lemuria allow an interval of a day between each.

In the matter of ritual and observance, state-organisation—and its absence—are alike significant. Of the general exactness of ritual and its specific variations on different occasions a fair notion has perhaps already been gathered; it may help to fill out that notion if we can put together a sketch of the normal process of a sacrifice to the gods. Before the sacrifice began the animal to be offered was selected and tested: if it had any blemish or showed any reluctance, it was rejected. If it were whole and willing, it was bound with fillets (*infulae*) around its [92]forehead, and long ribbons (*vittae*) depending from them. It was then brought to the altar (*ara*) by the side of which stood a portable brazier (*foculus*). The celebrant—magistrate or priest—next approached dressed in the *toga*, girt about him in a peculiar manner (*cinctus Gabinus*), and carried up at the back so as to form a hood (*velato capite*): the herald proclaimed silence, and the flute-player began to play his instrument. The first part of the offering was then made by the pouring of wine and scattering of incense on the brazier: it was followed by the ceremonial slaughter (*immolatio*) of the animal. The celebrant sprinkled the victim with wine and salted cake, and made a symbolic gesture with the knife. The victim was then taken aside by the attendants (*victimarii*), and actually slaughtered by them: from it they extracted the sacred parts (*exta*), liver, heart, gall, lungs, and midriff, and after inspecting them to see that they had no abnormality—but not in the

earlier period for purposes of augury—wrapped them in pieces of flesh (*augmenta*), cooked them, and brought them back to the celebrant, who laid them as an offering upon the altar, where they were burnt. The rest of the flesh (*viscera*) was divided as a sacred meal between the celebrant and his friends—or in [93]a state-offering among the priests, and probably the magistrate. We cannot refrain from remarking here the extreme precision of ritual, the scrupulous care with which the human side of the contract was fulfilled and the—almost legal—division of the victim between gods and men. But though the ritual was so exact, one must not be led away by modern analogies to suppose that there was ever anything like a rigid constraint on the private citizen for the observance of festivals. The state-festivals were in the strictest sense offerings made to the gods by the representative magistrates or priests, and if they were present, all was done that was required: the whole people had been, by a legal fiction, present in their persons. No doubt the private citizen would often attend in large numbers at the celebrations, especially at the more popular festivals, but from some, such as the Vestalia, he was actually excluded. On the other hand, though it did not demand presence, the state did—at least theoretically—demand the observance of the feast-day by private individuals. The root-notion of *feriae* was a day set apart for the worship of the gods, and on it therefore the citizen ought to do 'no manner of work.' The state observed this condition fully in the closing [94]of law-courts and the absence of legislative assemblies, and in theory too the private citizen must refrain from any act which was not concerned with the worship of the gods, or rendered absolutely necessary, as, for instance, if 'his ox or his ass should fall into a pit.' But it is characteristic of Rome that the state did not seek for offence, but only punished it if accidentally seen: on a feast-day the *rex sacrorum* and the *flamines* might not see work being done; they therefore sent on a herald in advance to announce their presence, and an actual conviction involved a money-fine. Perhaps more scrupulously than the *feriae* were observed the *dies religiosi*, days of 'abstinence,' on which certain acts, such as marriage, the beginning of any new piece of work, or the offering of sacrifice to the gods, were forbidden: such, in the oldest period, were the days on which the *mundus* was open, or the temple of Vesta received the matrons, the days when the *Salii* carried the *ancilia* in procession, and the periods of the two festivals of the dead in February and May; but for eluding their observance too devices were not unknown.

In the state-organisation of religion, then, we seem to see just the same features from which we started: as a basis the legal conception of [95]the relation of god to man, as a result the extreme care and precision in times and ceremonials, as a corollary in the state the idea of legal representation and the consequent looseness of hold on the action of the individual.

[96]

CHAPTER VIII [ToC](#)

AUGURIES AND AUSPICES

So far we have been considering the regular relations of man and god, seen in recurring or special offerings, in vows and in acts of purification and lustration—all based on the contract-notion, all endeavours on man's part to fulfil his bounden duty, that the gods may be constrained in turn to theirs. But so strong was the feeling of divine presence and influence in the Roman's mind, that he was not

content with doing his best by these regular means to secure the favour of the gods, but wished before undertaking any business of importance to be able to assure himself of their approval. His practical common-sense evolved, as it were, a complete 'code'—in the flight and song of birds, in the direction of the lightning-flash, in the conduct of men and animals—by which he believed that the gods communicated to him their intentions: sometimes these indications (*auspicia*) might be vouchsafed by the gods [97]unasked (*oblativa*), sometimes they would be given in answer to request (*impetrativa*): but as to their meaning, there could be no doubt, provided they were interpreted by one skilled in the lore and tradition of augury. We may observe here, though our evidence is much slighter, the same three stages which we have noticed in the sacrificial worship, the homely domestic auspices, the auguries of the agricultural life, and the organised system in the state.

In the household the use of auspices was in origin at any rate very general indeed: 'Nothing,' Cicero tells us, 'of importance used to be undertaken unless with the sanction of the auspices' (*auspicato*). The right of interrogating the will of the gods, rested, as one might expect, with the master of the house, assisted no doubt by the private augur as the repository of lore and the interpreter of what the master saw. But of the details of domestic augury we know but little. Cato in one passage insists on the extreme importance of silence for the purpose, and Festus suggests that this was secured by the master of the house rising in the depths of the night to inspect the heavens. We have seen already that the taking of the auspices played [98]an important part in the ceremonies of betrothal and marriage, and that the indications of the divine will might be very varied we may gather from a story in Cicero. An aunt wishing to take the auspices for her niece's betrothal, conducted her into an open consecrated space (*sacellum*) and sat down on the stool of augury (*sella*) with her niece standing at her side. After a while the girl tired and asked her aunt to give her a little of the stool: the aunt replied, 'My child, I give up my seat to you': nothing further happened and this answer turned out in fact to be the auspicious sign: the aunt died, the niece married the widower and so became mistress of the house.

Of augury in agricultural life we have some indication in the annual observance of the 'spring augury' (*augurium verniserum*) and the midsummer ceremony of the *augurium canarium*, which seems to have been a combination of the offering of a red dog (possibly to avert mildew) and an augury for the success of the crops. To the rustic stratum possibly belongs also the *augurium salutis populi*, though later it was a yearly act celebrated whenever the Roman army was not at war and so became connected with the shutting of the temple of Janus.

[99]The state greatly developed and organised the whole system of auguries and auspices. The college of augurs ranked second only in importance to the pontifical college, and their duties with regard to both augury and auspice are sufficiently clear. Like the *pontifices* in relation to cult, they are the storehouse of all tradition, and to them appeal may be made in all cases of doubt both public and private: they were jealous of their secrets and in later times their mutual consciousness of deception became proverbial. The right of augury—in origin simply the inspection of the heavens—was theirs alone, and it was exercised particularly on the annual occasions mentioned and at the installation of priests, of which we get a typical instance in Livy's account of the consecration of Numa.

The auspices on the other hand—in origin 'signs from birds' (*avis, spicere*)—were the province of the magistrate about to undertake some definite action on behalf of the state whether at home or on the field of battle. Here the augur's functions were merely preparatory and advisory. It was his duty to prepare the *templum*, the spot from which the auspices are to be taken—always a square space, with boundaries [100]unbroken except at the entrance, not surrounded by wall or necessarily by line, but clearly indicated (*effatus*) by the augur, and marked off (*liberatus*) from the surroundings: in the comitia and other places in Rome there were permanent *templa*, but elsewhere they must be specially made. The magistrate then enters the *templum* and observes the signs (*spectio*): if there is any doubt as to interpretation—and seeing the immense complication of the traditions (*disciplina*), this must often have been the case—the augur is referred to as interpreter. The signs demanded (*impetrativa*) were originally always connected

with the appearance, song or flight of birds—higher or lower, from left to right or right to left, etc. Later others were included, and with the army in the field it became the regular practice to take the auspices from the feeding of the sacred chickens (*pulli*): the best sign being obtained if, in their eagerness to feed, they let fall some of the grain from their beaks (*tripudium solistimum*)—a result not difficult to secure by previous treatment and a careful selection of the kind of grain supplied to them. But besides this deliberate 'asking for signs,' public business might at any moment be interrupted if the gods voluntarily sent an indication of [101]disapproval (*oblativa*): the augurs then had always to be at hand to advise the magistrates whether notice should be taken of such signs, and, if so, what was their signification, and they even seem to have had certain rights of reporting themselves (*nuntiatio*) the occurrence of adverse ones. The sign of most usual occurrence would be lightning—sometimes such an unexpected event as the seizure of a member of the assembly with epilepsy (*morbus comitialis*)—and we know to what lengths political obstructionists went in later times in the observation of fictitious signs, or even the prevention of business by the mere announcement of their intention to see an unfavourable omen (*servare de caelo*). The complications and ramifications of the augur's art are infinite, but the main idea should by now be plain, and it must be remembered that the kindred art of the soothsayer (*haruspex*), oracles, and the interpretation of fate by the drawing of lots (*sortes*) are all later foreign introductions: auspice and augury are the only genuine Roman methods for interpreting the will of the gods.

Here then in household, fields, and state, we have a second type of relation to the gods, running parallel to the ordinary practice of sacrifice and prayer, distinct yet not [102]fundamentally different. As it is man's function to propitiate the higher spirits and prevent, if possible, the wrecking of his plans by their opposition, so it is his business, if he can, to find out their intentions before he engages on any serious undertaking. As in the *ius sacrum* his legal mind leads him to assume that the deities accept the responsibility of the contract, when his own part is fulfilled, so here, like a practical man of business, he assumes their construction of a code of communication, which he has learned to interpret. In its origin it is a notion common to many primitive religions, but in its elaboration it is peculiarly and distinctively Italian, and, as we know it, Roman.

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CHAPTER IX [ToC](#)

RELIGION AND MORALITY—CONCLUSION

It might be said that a religion—the expression of man's relation to the unseen—has not necessarily any connection with morality—man's action in himself and towards his neighbours: that an individual—or even a nation—might perfectly fulfil the duties imposed by the 'powers above,' without being influenced in conduct and character. Such a view might seem to find an apt illustration in the religion of Rome: the ceremonial *pietas* towards the gods appears to have little to do with the making of man or nation. But in the history of the world the test of religions must be their effect on the character of those who believed in them: religion is no doubt itself an outcome of character, but it reacts upon it, and must either strengthen or weaken. We are not therefore justified in dismissing the 'Religion of Numa' without inquiry as to its relation to [104]morality, for on our answer to that question must largely depend our

judgment as to its value.

We are of course in a peculiarly difficult position to grapple with this problem through lack of contemporary evidence. The Rome we know, in the epochs when we can fairly judge of character and morality, was not the Rome in which the 'Religion of Numa' had grown up and remained unquestioned: it had been overlaid with foreign cults and foreign ideas, had been used by priests and magistrates as a political instrument, and discounted among the educated through the influence of philosophy. But we may remember in the first place that even then, especially in the household and in the country, the old religion had probably a much firmer hold than one might imagine from literary evidence, in the second that national character is not the growth of a day, so that we may safely refer permanent characteristics to the period when the old religion held its own.

It may be admitted at once that the direct influence on morality was very small indeed. There was no table of commandments backed by the religious sanction: the sense of 'sin,' except through breach of ritual, was practically [105]unknown. It is true that in the very early *leges regiae* some notion of this kind is seen—a significant glimpse of what the original relation may have been: it is there ordained that the patron who betrayed his client, or the client who deceived his patron, shall be condemned to Iuppiter; the parricide to the spirits of his dead ancestors, the husband who sells his wife to the gods of the underworld, the man who removes his neighbour's landmark to Terminus, the stealer of corn to Ceres. All these persons shall be *sacri*: they have offended against the gods and the gods will see to their punishment. But these are old-world notions which soon passed into the background and the state took over the punishment of such offenders in the ordinary course of law. Nor again in the prayers of men to gods is there a trace of a petition for moral blessings: the magistrate prays for the success and prosperity of the state, the farmer for the fertility of his crops and herds, even the private individual, who suspends his votive-tablet in the temple, pays his due for health or commercial success vouchsafed to himself or his relations. 'Men call Iuppiter greatest and best,' says Cicero, 'because he makes us not just or temperate or wise, but sound and healthy and rich and wealthy.' Still less, until [106]we come to the moralists of the Empire, is there any sense of that immediate and personal relation of the individual to a higher being, which is really in religion, far more than commandments and ordinances, the mainspring and safeguard of morality: even the conception of the Genius, the 'nearest' perhaps of all unseen powers, had nothing of this feeling in it, and it may be significant that, just because of his nearness to man, the Genius never quite attained to god-head. As far as direct relation is concerned, religion and morality were to the Roman two independent spheres with a very small point of contact.

Nor even in its indirect influence does the formal observance of the Roman worship seem likely at first sight to have done much for personal or national morality. Based upon fear, stereotyped in the form of a legal relationship, *religio*—'the bounden obligation'—made, no doubt, for a kind of conscientiousness in its adherents, but a cold conscientiousness, devoid of emotion and incapable of expanding itself to include other spheres or prompt to a similar scrupulousness in other relations. The rigid and constant distinction of sacred and profane would incline the Roman to fulfil the routine of his [107]religious duty and then turn, almost with a sigh of relief, to the occupations of normal life, carrying with him nothing more than the sense of a burden laid aside and a pledge of external prosperity. Even the religious act itself might be without moral significance: as we have seen, the worshipper might be wholly ignorant of the character, even the name of the deity he worshipped, and in any case the motive of his action was naught, the act itself everything. Nor again had the Roman religion any trace of that powerful incentive to morality, a doctrine of rewards and punishments in a future life: the ideas as to the fate of the dead were fluctuating and vague, and the Roman was in any case much more interested in their influence on himself than in their possible experiences after death.

The divorce then between religion and morality seems almost complete and it is not strange that most modern writers speak of the Roman religion as a tiresome ritual formalism, almost wholly lacking in ethical value. And yet it did not present itself in this light to the Romans themselves. Cicero, sceptical as

he was, could speak of it as the cause of Rome's greatness; Augustus, the practical politician, could believe that its revival was an essential condition for the [108]renaissance of the Roman character. Have we, in our brief examination of its characteristics, seen any features which may suggest the solution of this apparent antagonism? Was there in this formalism a life which escapes us, as we handle the dry bones of antiquarianism?

In the first place there may be a danger that we underrate the value of formalism itself. It spells routine, but routine is not without value in the strengthening of character. The private citizen, who conscientiously day by day had carried out the worship of his household gods and month by month observed the sacred abstinence from work on the days of festival, was certainly not less fitted to take his place as a member of a strenuous and well-organised community, or to serve obediently and quietly in the army on campaign. Even the magistrate in the execution of his religious duties must have acquired an exactness and method, which would not be valueless in the conduct of public business. And when we pass to the origin of this formalism—the legal relation—the connection with the Roman character becomes at once more obvious. The 'lawgivers of the world,' who developed constitution and code to a systematised whole such as antiquity had not dreamed of before, [109]imported, we may say if we like, their legal notions into the sphere of religion: but we must not forget the other side of the question. The permanence and success of this greater contract with higher powers—the feeling that the gods did regard and reward exact fulfilment of duty—cannot have been without re-action on the relations of the life of the community: it was, as it were, a higher sanction to the legal point of view: a pledge that the relations of citizen and state too were rightly conceived. 'There is,' says Cicero, speaking of the death of Clodius in the language of a later age, 'there is a divine power which inspired that criminal to his own ruin: it was not by chance that he expired before the shrine of the Bona Dea, whose rites he had violated': the divine justice is the sanction of the human law. Even in the fear, from which all ultimately sprang, there was a training in self-repression and self-subordination, which in a more civilised age must result in a valuable respect and obedience. The descendants of those who had made religion out of an attempt to appease the hostile *numina*, feeling themselves not indeed on more familiar terms with their 'unknown gods,' but only perhaps a little more confident of their own strength, [110]were not likely to be wanting in a disciplined sense of dependence and an appreciation of the value of respect for authority, which alone can give stability to a constitution. If fear with the Romans was not the beginning of theological wisdom, it was yet an important contribution to the character of a disciplined state.

But, as I have hinted in the course of this sketch more than once, the answer to this problem, as well as the key to the general understanding of the Roman religion, is to be found in the worship of the household. If we knew more of it, we should see more clearly where religion and morality joined hands, but we know enough to give us a clue. There not only are the principal events of life, birth, adolescence, marriage, attended by their religious sanction, but in the ordinary course of the daily round the divine presence and the dependence of man are continually emphasised. The gods are given their portion of the family meal, the sanctified dead are recalled to take their share of the family blessings. The result was not merely an approach—collectively, not individually—to that sense of the nearness of the unseen, which has so great an effect on the actions of the living, but a very strong bond of family union which [111]lay at the root of the life of the state. It would be difficult to find a clearer expression of the notion than in the fact that the same word *pietas*, which expresses the due fulfilment of man's duty to god, is also the ideal of the relations of the members of a household: filial piety was, in fact, but another aspect of that rightness of relation, which reveals itself in the worship of the gods. No doubt that, in the city-life of later periods, this ideal broke down on both sides: household worship was neglected and family life became less dutiful. But it was still, especially in the country, the true backbone of Roman society, and no one can read the opening odes of Horace's third book without feeling the strength of Augustus' appeal to it.

And if we translate this, as we have learned to do, into terms of the state, we can get some idea of what the Romans meant by their debt to their religion. As the household was bound together by the tie of

common worship, as in the intermediate stage the clan, severed politically and socially, yet felt itself reunited in the gentile rites, so too the state was welded into a whole by the regularly recurring annual festivals and the assurance of the divine sanction on its undertakings. It might be that in the course of time [112]these rites lost their meaning and the community no longer by personal presence expressed its service to the gods, but the cult stood there still, as the type of Rome's union to the higher powers and a guarantee of their assistance against all foes: the religion of Rome was, as it has been said, the sanctification of patriotism—the Roman citizen's highest moral ideal. It has been remarked, perhaps with partial truth, that the religion of the *Æneid*—in many ways a summary of Roman thought and feeling—is the belief in the *fata Romae* and their fulfilment. The very impersonality of this conception makes it a good picture of what religion was in the Roman state. It was not, as with the Jews, a strong conviction of the rightness of their own belief and a certainty that their divine protectors must triumph over those of other nations, but a feeling of the constant presence of some spirits, who, 'if haply they might find them,' would, on the payment of their due, bear their part in the great progress of right and justice and empire on which Rome must march to her victory. It was the duty of the citizen, with this conception of his city before his eyes, to see to it that the state's part in the contract was fulfilled. From his ancestors had been inherited the tradition, which told him the when, [113]where, and how, and in the preservation of that tradition and its due performance consisted at once Rome's duty and her glory. 'If we wish,' says Cicero, 'to compare ourselves with other nations, we may be found in other respects equal or even inferior; in religion, that is in the worship of the gods, we are far superior.' The religion of Rome may not have advanced the theology or the ethics of the world, but it made and held together a nation.

[114]

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