THE RELIGION OF ANCIENT GAUL AND CÆSAR WORSHIP.

BY THE EDITOR.

HISTORY as taught in schools gives us much information concerning the progress of political events. We learn how Rome conquered one country after another and we are told even the details of the battles through which the fate of nations was decided. But our sources as to the economical and cultural history of the world are very few and we have to piece together our knowledge concerning the development of religious institutions from stray bits of information incidentally mentioned in connection with political events. Thus our comprehension of the gradual progress of religious, economical and social conditions remains to a great extent a matter of conjecture. Nevertheless some facts of history stand out clearly and allow us to note the changes which have set in from time to time, and the most important transformation of the old religions is what might be called the foundation of an official state religion in the reign of Augustus. This transformation of the local worship in the several provinces was accomplished with great discretion and it was of extraordinary importance because it gave stability to the empire by adding a religious sanction to the order established by conquest.

Religion played a greater part in ancient history than we are commonly aware of, and the office of Pontifex Maximus, or high priest, was more significant than it might seem, judging from our usual treatment of history.

When the empire was established the Pontifex Maximus of Rome became superior also to the Roman priests in the provinces, and especially in the colonies and municipal towns. His authority from what might be called a bishop of Rome changed into that of a bishop of bishops, or pope, and we can here clearly understand how the religious rites and institutions of pagan Rome prepared the way for the superiority of Christian Rome.
The first great province which added an untold increase of power to the Roman empire was Gaul. Sicily, Africa, Macedonia, Greece, Spain and Pergamon were prosperous and rich countries, but none
of them possessed a population of such native vigor as this northern province which had been added by Caesar to the sway of Rome's dominion. Italy had lost its warlike strength to a great extent, and Gaul offered new resources for recruiting soldiers and officers. Caesar had understood how to turn the capabilities of the Gauls to use, and we must assume that great as he was in the field he was still greater in statesmanship. He must have known how to gain the confidence and friendship of those Gallic people who saw their own advantage in a connection with their more civilized, richer and more powerful southern neighbors. He must have established trade and commerce, and the cities were satisfied with the new government not only because it was firmly established through Roman victories, but also because the old misrule of local aristocracies was superseded by a wider outlook and the hope of establishing peaceful connections with countries beyond their own borders. The Gallic youths of rural districts enlisted in the Roman legions for love of booty as well as the expectation of a comfortable life after retirement in some military colony, and such well organized conditions must have done more than victories on the battle-field to establish Roman authority in this large country of a restless population.

The most important step, however, which finished the conquest definitely was the religious change which gradually abrogated ancient Gallic religion, and replaced it by the political institution of Caesar worship.

We must assume that the introduction of this Caesar worship was no difficult matter because the idea of a god-man, of a hero, of a saviour, was common among all the pre-Christian nations, and it appears to have been an essential feature of the faith also of ancient Gaul. To replace the language was even less difficult probably through the fact that the ancient Celtic dialects belonged to a family next in kin to Latin, and so the change was in some degree the establishment of a literary dialect over those which had not yet been fixed in writing. Briefly stated, Roman power and civilization were organized while the languages as well as the religious cults of the provinces were not organized and so it was easy for Roman institutions to replace those of native origin.

The ancient religion of Gaul has practically disappeared, and we know only a little of it through some monuments that have been discovered in various parts of France. A few of these relics are purely Celtic, but most of them show the influence of Greco-Roman civilization. Some Gallic gods have been changed into their analogous Greco-Roman figures, to Apollo, Mercury, Vulcan, Jupiter,
Hercules, etc., but others have preserved their original barbarian form. Among the latter we find a god with horns called Cernannos, presumably a god of vegetation, or a personification of all nourishing nature. Another god represents a trinity, and this seems to have
been the chief deity of Gaul, which may have been one reason why he resisted longest the Romanizing influence.

Jupiter, the Greek Zeus, has been identified with the Gallic god of the wheel who must have been very popular all over Gaul, for there are innumerable statues of him found on the left bank of the Rhine. He carries a wheel in one hand and sometimes a thunderbolt in the other, which proves that he was a sun god and at the same time the thunderer. An altar now in the Maison Carrée at Nimes must have been dedicated to him, for on the front it bears his two symbols.

The trinitarian god of Gaul has been preserved in several monuments, of which perhaps the oldest is the altar of Beaune, where he sits between two other gods of whom the one is horned while the other, a plain human figure, is assumed to be the Gallic Apollo. Another monument to the old trinitarian deity is a short pillar found at Rheims representing him with three faces looking in three differ-
ent directions. The least archaic form of this same deity has been found at Autun which minimizes the two heads. It seems to be a concession to the more artistic and cultured taste that spread after the Roman conquest, for it shows one face in front which is normal, while the other faces on either side are not made prominent, which arrangement takes away the ugliness of a three-faced monstrosity.

An interesting account of the Gallic Hercules so called, is preserved by Lucian who under this name describes a Celtic divinity of eloquence. He says:

"The Gauls call Hercules in their own language Ogmios, but they picture him quite different than the Greeks and indeed strange enough. I have seen his portraiture once where he is represented as an old bald-headed man, his hair gray as much as there is left of it, his face full of wrinkles and of as swarthy a complexion as that of old sailors. One might have taken him for Charon or Iapetus or some other inhabitant of Tartarus, indeed for anything but for Hercules. But his dress was quite Herculian, for he carried the lion
skin on his back, a club in his right hand, a bow in his left and a quiver over his shoulder. In this respect he was a true Hercules. My first thought was that this burlesque figure had been drawn for the purpose of ridiculing the Greek gods, perhaps in revenge for the robberies which Hercules had committed in Gaul, when he was searching for the oxen of Geryon.

"The most peculiar feature of this picture I have not yet told, for this old Hercules drew after him a great number of people who were fettered to him by their ears, the chains being made of gold and amber as light and delicate as are the necklaces of our ladies. It might have been easy for his prisoners to break their brittle fetters and run away, but they never thought of it. There was not one who resisted or tried to free himself and they all followed their leader joyfully and praised him highly. Some of them were so delighted with their state that they ran ahead of him so long as their chain permitted in order to be near him. Yea, I could see that they would have been very sorry if they had been set at liberty. But the most nonsensical part of this picture appeared to me this that the artist in his perplexity how this Hercules should hold the chains
since he had his hands full, attached them to the tongue of the god which for this purpose had been perforated at its tip, and he turned his head towards his prisoners with a bland smile."

It is obvious that Ogmios is not Hercules, but some deity which represents the power of persuasion or the superiority of mind, but neither the heroism of the Greek Heracles nor the rustic sportiveness of the Italian Hercules.

The Celtic god Esus seems to correspond to the Teutonic Bal-

![GALIC TRIAD ON AN ALTAR AT RHEIMS.](image)

The three-headed god has divided: Esus-Jupiter is attended by his Roman family Apollo and Mercury.

dur, for he is represented as cutting the mistletoe, the sacred plant which was assumed to have grown from seed that fell from heaven. As such he has been identified by an inscription on the bas-relief of an altar, the fragments of which have been found on the site of Notre Dame of Paris. Baldur was the god of light who at the summer solstice was killed through the intrigue of the winter god Hödur, but the festival of his return to life was celebrated in the winter solstice at Yule tide. The mistletoe, the innocent cause of
his death, appears green in midwinter giving promise in the darkest days of the year of the return of spring and a resurrection of Baldur.

The details of Celtic mythology have been lost, but we may be sure that the Gauls possessed in Esus a similar if not the very same figure as the Teutonic Baldur, and we notice the strange though unquestionably accidental similarity in sound with the personal name of the Christian Saviour, Jesus.
GALLOC ADAPTATIONS OF ROMAN GODS.
That the Gauls believed in an immortality of some kind is considered as assured, but the relics we find indicate that Greco-Roman ideas must have supplanted their aboriginal custom at a very early date, at least among the aristocratic classes. A vase, containing the ashes of a certain Myrrhina, now preserved in the Louvre, shows the typical picture of the dead being led by Mercury after the prototype of the Orpheus basreliefs, and so we learn that views similar
to those of the Orpheus cult which was still unforgotten in the times of Christianity, had a hold upon Gallic imagination. We may well assume that the ancient Gauls had practically the same ideas of immortality and that Mercury and Orpheus took the place of some more primitive Gallic divinities, who had charge of the souls in the land of the dead.

And how did the Romans deal with these deities, who, as we learn, were worshiped by a regular priestly class, called the Druids? How did Rome succeed in avoiding a religious conflict between her own religious system and the conservative Gallic orthodoxy? In the Augustan age the Romans simply introduced into Gaul the worship of Rome and Augustus, and left the old clergy alone. There was no suppression of the old faith, no antagonism, no persecution, and yet the druidic religion was doomed to merge into Roman Cæsar worship simply by discontinuing the influence of the Gallic clergy with their primitive superstitions. The barbaric rites of the druidic worship, such as human sacrifices, were forbidden by a decree of the Roman Senate. Otherwise no one was hindered or
disturbed in his religious faith. On the other hand the new priests of Rome were favored by the government and enjoyed the advantage of having political connection with the capital. The ceremonies were brilliant and in the form of public festivities that attracted the crowds and appealed to popular imagination, while the ancient druidic rites, so far as we can judge, were gloomy and quite incompatible with the spirit of a progressive civilization.

The decisive step of laying the foundation of the new religion was taken in the year 12 B. C., when upon the invitation of Drusus deputies of the three Gallic provinces assembled at Lyons to erect

![PRAETORIAN GUARDS.](image)

an altar dedicated to Rome and to Augustus, and a nobleman of the Aeduan tribe was elected by the assembly to officiate as high priest at the inauguration of the new temple.

This institution of Cæsar worship in the shape of a religious faith, believing in a saviour who was the representative of God on earth, and the incarnation of all authority, became the cement which rendered the foundation of the Roman Empire enduring for several centuries. The organization that resulted therefrom, the institution of imperial priests inspected and controlled by their provincial high priest, who in his turn was subject to the Pontifex Maximus at
Rome, became the prototype of the political institution of the Roman Catholic Church.

Rome had conquered the world by the sword, but the immortal city became naturally the victim of its own method. He who wielded the sword became the master of Rome, and this lot, after several vain attempts by Marius, Sulla, and others, fell into the hands of Cæsar. Cæsar had trained his army in Gaul and though the officers were Romans, many of his men were native Gauls. It was thus possible that they could be used as well for the cause of Rome as against it.

Cæsar's successor Augustus had reorganized the army and made
it a permanent institution, on the one hand subjecting it to a severe discipline, on the other hand holding out to the veterans the promise of an honorable retirement. He established the rule that recruits should first serve in the regular army and not until they had been tried and found reliable were they transferred to the Praetorian guards. The Emperor had more than twenty-five legions recruited from countries outside of Italy, and this arrangement gave him absolute control over the army which depended solely upon him, and
had no bonds of allegiance to either the Roman consuls, the Roman senate, or the Roman people.

Republican Rome had conquered the provinces, but it is very
doubtful whether she could have continued to hold them. Foreign
countries had been subjugated and were governed by proconsuls who
in the name of Rome committed all kinds of extortions and robberies
enriching themselves at the cost of their provinces. This unfair
method of government changed under Augustus who systematized the administration and strengthened his hold on the provinces by abolishing the prerogative of Rome to be exempt from taxation.

When Augustus died the tradition of the worship of a vice-gerent on earth did not die with him. On the contrary, it continued to be a factor in the consolidation of the Empire and laid the foundation of the belief in a monarchy by God’s grace, which is still upheld in the opinion of the conservatives of Europe.

We must remember that the word Augustus is not a name but a title, and it means the August One, which is equivalent to His Holiness, or the Sacred One, or the Venerable One. In his will which has been inscribed on bronze tablets and is preserved in the Augusteum built for that purpose in Rome and in other temples all over the Roman Empire, Augustus narrates not only his deeds and the acts of his generosity, but also his priestly honors. Indeed he dwells on them with evident satisfaction. In the tenth section we read:

LIVIA AS CYBELE.
"My name, by a decree of the Senate, has been inserted in the Salian Hymn, and a law made that I should be sacrosanct and that I should possess for life the office of tribune. The people offered me the supreme pontificate held by my father before me; but I would not replace any living man in this office. So only some years afterwards when this priesthood became vacant by the death of him who had seized it in our civil dissensions, was I installed in its possession, and so great a crowd gathered from all Italy to attend the meeting on this occasion as had never before been seen; this was during the consulate of P. Sulpicius and C. Volgius."

Augustus further points out with pride that he was the man who restored peace to the Empire. He says in Section XIII:

"The temple of Janus Quirinus, which, according to the command of our fathers, is never closed except when peace prevails over all lands and seas subject to the Romans, had been closed, as our annals attest, but twice since the foundation of Rome; but under my government thrice has the Senate proclaimed that it should be closed."

A second copy of this testament was discovered by M. G. Perrot
on an expedition dispatched to Asia Minor by Emperor Napoleon III.¹

The senate decreed the apotheosis of Augustus, and the worship of him as the guardian of imperial Rome was kept up throughout the

Empire. By the decree of the senate an Augustan Flamen was installed in all large cities, and at Rome a college of 21 pontiffs was established who were chosen by lot from the foremost families.

¹A full account of the Augusteum of Ancyra where the will of Augustus had been preserved intact together with the Greek translation, is published in Perrot’s book Exploration archéologique de la Galatie et de la Bithynie.
The first members were Tiberius, Drusus, Claudius and Germanicus, all belonging to the imperial family. Patriotic Romans introduced the worship of the divus Augustus in their own household, and Livia, the widow of Augustus, was created priestess of her deified husband. In a subterranean passage which is still in existence she went every morning from her own house to the Emperor's former residence, which had been changed by a decree of the Senate into a sanctuary, a kind of museum, and there she attended to her sacerdotal duties, burning incense before his image.

While the idea of a saviour, a god-man, a prince of peace, became fully established over the whole empire, the successors of Augustus proved very little worthy of this ideal and the result was that the people no longer associated it with a man wielding temporal power. The early Christians believed that the kingdom of Christ was not of this world, but of the world to come, and only later on when Rome ceased to be the capital of Italy, when for a time Ravenna, and again for a time Verona, had taken the place of Rome, when Germanic conquerors quarreled among themselves for the possession of the countries that once constituted the Roman Empire, then only the old institution of a highest pontiff in Rome, which had never been entirely forgotten, rose to new life in the shape of papacy and found a ready supporter in Pepin, the Franconian Major domus who in dispossessing the weak legitimate King acquired through his alliance with the church a new legitimacy which henceforth was styled "by the grace of God."

Livia was an ideal wife, and her advice often proved helpful to her husband. Ovid says of her that she had the beauty of Venus and the morals of Juno. Augustus, whose third wife she was, extolled her deportment and recommended her as a model to the Roman matrons. From Claudius Nero, her first husband, she had two sons, Tiberius and Drusus, but she had no children from Augustus. The daughter of Augustus, his only child, Julia, was born to him by Scribonia, his second wife, who had been first married to Agrippa, the old trusted general of Augustus, and after Agrippa's death to Tiberius, the son of Livia. The princess Julia was very different from Livia, who was at the same time her step-mother and her mother-in-law. Julia gave so much offense by frivolity that the Emperor finally banished her to the island Pandataria.