

Paganism

Written by W.J.Pais

Paganism, in the broadest sense includes all religions other than the [true](#) one revealed by [God](#), and, in a narrower sense, all except [Christianity](#), [Judaism](#), and [Mohammedanism](#). The term is also used as the equivalent of [Polytheism](#).

[Christian](#) ritual developed when, in the third century, the [Church](#) left the [Catacombs](#). Many forms of self-expression must needs be identical, in varying times, places, cults, as long as [human nature](#) is the same. Water, oil, light, [incense](#), singing, procession, prostration, decoration of altars, vestments of [priests](#), are naturally at the service of universal religious [instinct](#). Little enough, however, was directly borrowed by the [Church](#) — nothing, without being "baptized", as was the Pantheon. In all these things, the spirit is the essential: the [Church](#) assimilates to herself what she takes, or, if she cannot adapt, she rejects it (cf. Augustine, Epp., xlvii, 3, in P.L., XXXIII, 185; [Reply to Faustus XX.23](#); Jerome, "Epp.", cix, ibid., XXII, 907). Even pagan feasts may be "[baptized](#)": certainly our processions of 25 April are the Robigalia; the Rogation days may replace the Ambarualia; the [date](#) of [Christmas Day](#) may be due to the same [instinct](#) which placed on 25 Dec., the Natalis Invicti of the solar cult. But there is little of this; our wonder is, that there is not far more [see Kellner, "Heortologie" (Freiburg, 1906). See

CHRISTMAS

;

EPIPHANY

. Also Thurston, "Influence of Paganism on the Christian Calendar" in "Month" (1907), pp. 225 sqq.; Duchesne, "Orig. du Culte chrétien", tr. (London, 1910) passim; Braun, "Die priestlichen Gewänder" (Freiburg, 1897); Idem, "Die pontificalen Gewänder" (Freiburg, 1898); Rouse, "Greek Votive Offerings" (Cambridge, 1902), esp. c.v]. The cult of

saints

and

relics

is based on natural

instinct

and sanctioned by the lives, death, and

tombs

(in the first instance) of

martyrs

, and by the

dogma

of the

Communion of Saints

; it is not developed from definite instances of hero-worship as a general rule, though often a local martyr-cult was purposely instituted to defeat (e.g.) an

oracle

tenacious of pagan life (P.G., L, 551; P.L., LXXII 831;

Newman

, "Essay on Development, etc.", II, cc. ix, xii., etc.; Anrich, "Anfang des Heiligenkults, etc.", Tübingen, 1904; especially Delehaye, "Légendes hagiographiques,"

Brussels

, 1906). Augustine and Jerome (Ep. cii, 8, in P.L., XXXIII, 377; "C. Vigil.", vii, ibid., XXXIII, 361) mark wise tolerance: Duchesne ["Hist. ancienne de l'église", I (Rome, 1308), 640; cf.

Sozomen

,

Church History

VII.20

] reminds us of the occasional

necessary

repression:

Gregory

, writing for

Augustine of Canterbury

, fixes the

Church's

principle and practice (Bede, "Hist. eccl.", I, xxx, xxxii, in P.L., XCV, 70, 72). Reciprocal influence there may to some small extent have been; it must have been slight, and quite possibly felt upon the pagan side not least. All

know

Paganism

Written by W.J.Pais

how

[Julian](#)

tried to remodel a pagan

[hierarchy](#)

on the

[Christian](#)

(P. Allard, "Julien l'Apostat", Paris, 1900).

[More](#)