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DESTRUCTION OF PAGANISM

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IN THE

ROMAN EMPIRE

FROM CONSTANTINE TO JUSTINIAN

THE CHANCELLOR'S ESSAY

1892

BY

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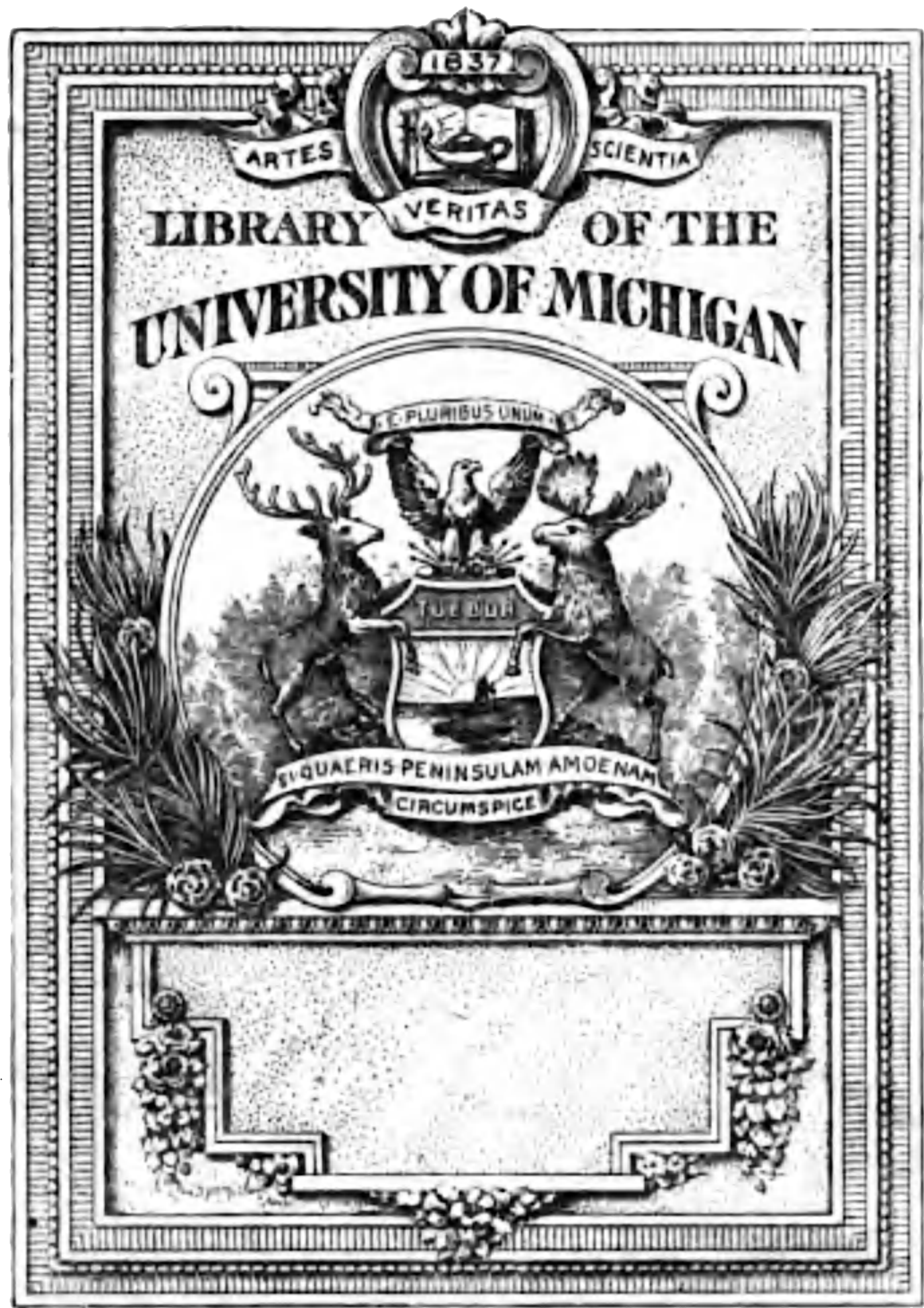
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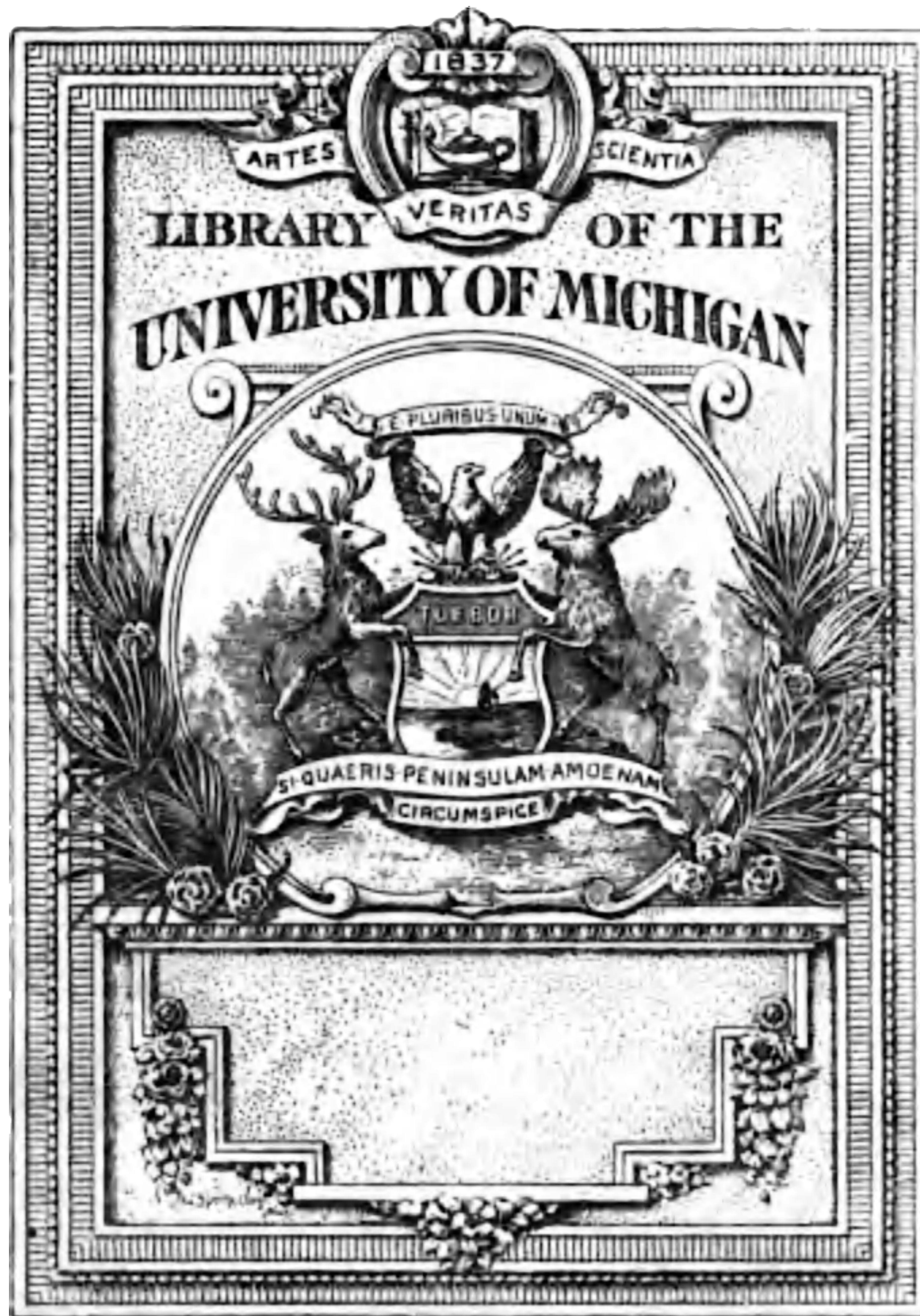
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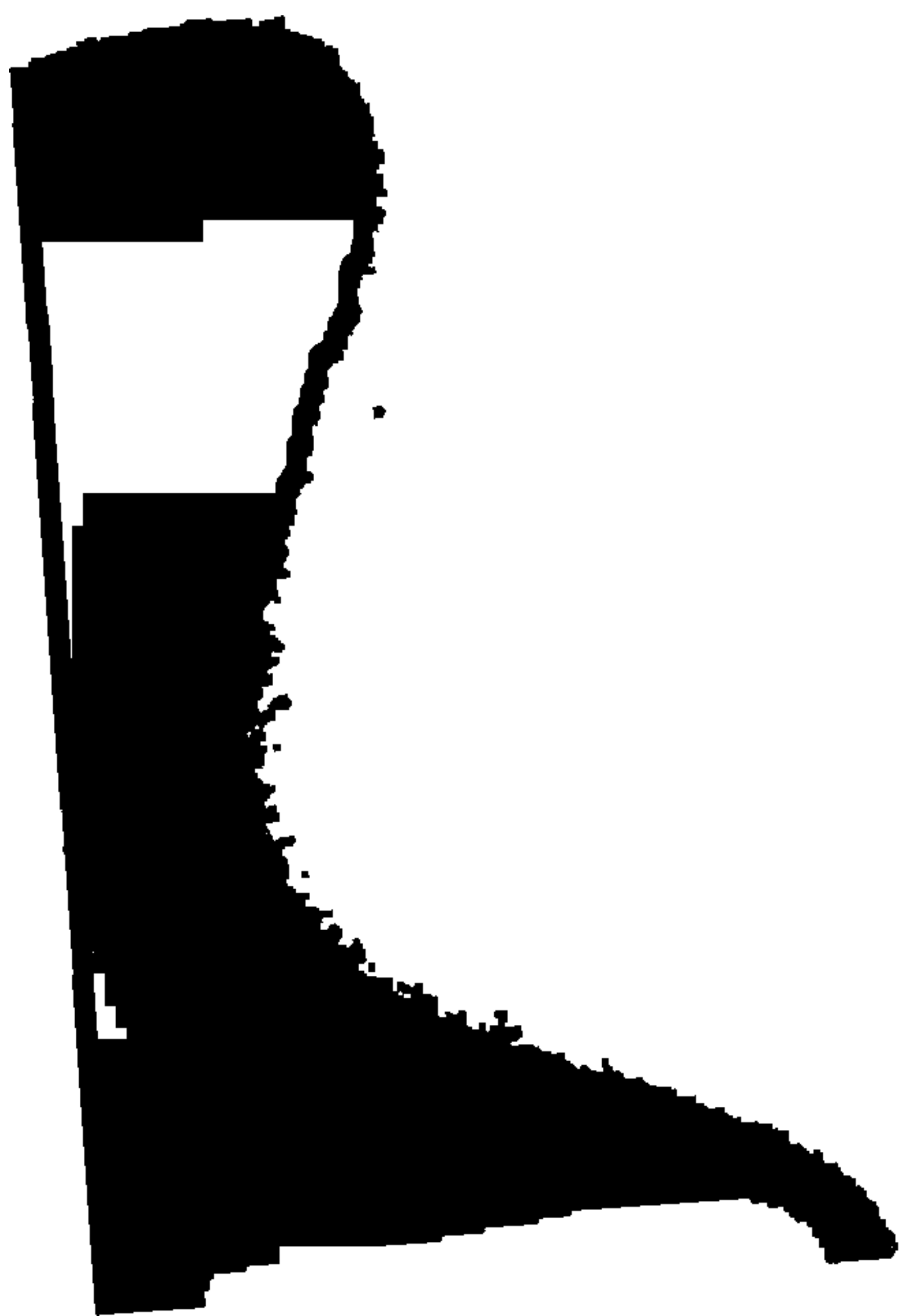


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THE DESTRUCTION OF PAGANISM IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

THOUGH the Romans to some extent brought about religious uniformity in the Empire by spreading the worship of their own gods, and by adopting those of their subjects, there was, of course, no such religion as Paganism—only a body of cults, not welded into a coherent whole, and presenting themselves under many different aspects.¹ The ceremonies and institutions of the old national faith hardly answered to any religious needs. The higher aspirations of the time found an outlet in the ecstatic devotion awakened by foreign rites and by the mysteries. But the worship of the deities of Olympus was the religion of the State, and, as such, was bound up with all the ordinary acts of life. The horror with which the Christian looked on the games, even on the bloodless combats of the circus, was justified by their intimate connection with Paganism;² nor could he avoid the pollution of demon-worship, as it seemed to him, in the transactions of the forum, or the deliberations of the Senate. Public life in Rome necessitated continual contact with, if not participation in, the forms of the old worship. The national religion appealed too, to the patriotism of all true sons of the Empire. The religion of Numa, as the nobles loved to call their strange medley of cults, was bound up with the past glories of Rome. The enthusiasm which the Vestal Virgins evoked was due to the fact that they were regarded as links with the past, rather than to any religious significance attached to their functions.

On purely political or sentimental grounds, then, the Roman nobles were deeply attached to Pagan forms of worship. They delighted in adding to their names the old titles of pontifex and augur, and derived from them much of their social standing. And the administration of the Empire was in the hands of the nobles, nor could the most Christian emperors carry on their government without them.

¹ "Rome prépara la grande idée de catholicité: tous les dieux devinrent communs à tous les peuples civilisés." Rénan. *Rel. de l'Ant.* p. 68.

² The eighth book of the "Apostolical Constitutions," canon 32, excludes from the Christian communion all those who take any active part in the games.

We may speak, then, of a political opposition to Christianity, which found its representatives among the chiefs of the Senate. It appealed to the strongest passions. Dislike of novelty was deeply ingrained in the Roman mind; and the natural conservatism of a class in possession made the men who administered the Empire jealous of any attempt to upset ancient ways of thought. Moreover, the education that formed the young Roman to take his part in public life was, and remained throughout, bound up with the mythology of Paganism. The old fables might have lost all belief, but they had not lost all charm for the imagination, and, by means of allegorical interpretations, were applied to defend the established religion. The schools were Pagan to the core, and so was the teaching of the rhetoricians and philosophers. Hence men of learning and culture were naturally inclined to Pagan forms of thought.

Nor was there wanting an outlet for piety and conviction. Both the superstitions of the crowd, and the spiritual needs of the more educated, found satisfaction in the strange faiths that were now acclimatized in Rome. Mithra, Cybele, and the Egyptian gods were ardently and sincerely worshipped. Noble and plebeian delighted in the taurobolium and the mysteries. The feelings evoked by these ceremonies were thoroughly in harmony with the teaching of the prevalent philosophy. The leaders of the Neo-Platonic school had conducted a polemic for a long time against Christianity, and Iamblichus devoted his life to that task. They all enjoined or allowed the practice of magic and incantations; nor indeed would the hold of such superstitions over all classes have been weakened without the countenance of Plotinus and Porphyry. Theurgy was one of the hardest rocks in the way of Christianity.

Paganism, then, had in it many elements of resistance, of which we have touched but a few. (The political interests of the Roman nobles, the devotion of many sincere believers, the teaching of philosophy, the ordinary course of the schools, and the superstitions of the people, all went to build up a powerful opposition to the Christian emperors.) The weaknesses of the established religious system come into a clearer light in the time of Julian. Two things strike us at once. (The Pagans had no definite dogmatic teaching, no sacred books whose unquestionable authority might be appealed to. There was also a complete want of organisation in the Pagan hierarchy. No common authority bound together the various orders of priests, who each asserted that theirs was the One God, and others only names for him.) (Whereas Christianity, while it was a persecuted religion, had the advantage of

intense conviction in most of its members, which led them to spread their faith as widely as they could. Further it enjoyed a well-organised and widely distributed body of ministers. Now, too, that there were Christians enough to disperse the old calumny of "Odium humani generis," the truths of the Gospels could obtain an easy victory in controversy with the crumbling belief of polytheism.

It is beside our subject to enquire far into the motives of Constantine's conversion. He himself always appeals to the good fortune that attended his arms, and contrasts it with the disasters of the persecutors. He worshipped, he said in after days, the God Who had brought him from Britain to the confines of Persia. At the time he started on his expedition across the Alps, he seems to have been, like his father, one of those philosophic and liberal theists who recognized the One God in the Sun, in Mithra, and in the God of the Jews. They sought to find in vague expressions, such as "Divina Mens," and "Divinitas," a formula to cover all creeds. In the edict of Milan Constantine appeals to the "Divinitas in sede cœlesti" to bless the Empire. This famous document was published by him and by Licinius in the year 313, after an interview held at Milan. One of similar import had preceded it by a year, but has not come down to us. The emperors accord to all their subjects freedom to profess whatever religion they wish. They extend, in fact, to the Christians a liberty which the policy of Rome had previously allowed, with rare exceptions, to all her dependents. The State religion is still as it was. The Emperor did not refuse to accept the title of Pontifex Maximus, and throughout his life he acted in his capacity of head of the national faith. Even when his conversion was complete, it was only as an individual that he abandoned the worship of the gods; as Emperor, he remained a Pagan. None the less, the blow dealt to Paganism was a fatal one. Dependent largely on external circumstances for support, without any living principle of growth, it was bound to fall when it ceased to be dominant. The defection of Constantine wounded it in its strongest point, its root in the organisation of the state, though this was not fully seen till the reign of Gratian. The intervening period may conveniently be characterised as that in which the principle of equality was secured and carried out to its logical consequences.

The majority of the Pagans did not, however, realize the situation. The Emperor had deserted the gods; it was a pity; but better times would come. In the meantime they maintained a contemptuous or indifferent silence as to the progress of Christianity, refusing to recognize publicly the

Emperor's change of faith, and ignoring, as far as possible, the alteration in the position of their religion.

It has often been said that Constantine abolished idolatry; a brief sketch of the events of his reign bearing on the struggle between the two religions, will show how little truth there is in that assertion. The proportion of Christians in the Empire has been variously estimated at one-twelfth or one-twentieth.¹ Whatever it was, the Pagans were much too numerous and too powerful for Constantine to entertain any such project. However, without directly attacking Paganism, at least in the West, he managed to deal it several indirect blows. In the year 313, the time for the secular games came round: but he passed over the occasion without celebrating them. Everywhere he built and endowed churches, protected and promoted the Christians in the imperial service, and, according to Eusebius, erected in Rome a statue of himself bearing the cross, with an inscription to the effect that by that sign he had liberated the Senate and people. In the same year he gave to the Catholic priests of Africa the much-coveted exemption from municipal burdens, a privilege afterwards extended to them throughout the world. The Church was also made a corporation capable of receiving legacies. In 321 he ordained that Sunday should be recognized as a holiday by the courts, calling it, however, "Dies Solis," to avoid wounding Pagan susceptibilities. But we find him on several occasions acting as the head of the national religion. He instituted games in memory of his victories over the Franks and the Sarmatians. In 320 the amphitheatre having been struck by lightning, a relation on the subject was made by the Senate to the Emperor. He replied, in his edict, that if the palace, or any other public building, was struck, the augurs were to be consulted about the portent. In the previous year he had forbidden by two edicts the private practice of divination, but, in doing so, only revived an old law of Tiberius. Indeed, fear of a rival and care for the public peace had led most of the emperors to be severe against those arts by which their own future greatness had been revealed to them. At the same time, he took the opportunity of affirming the liberty of religion—"adite aras publicas atque delubra," he says to the people of Rome, "nec enim prohibemus praeteritae usurpationis officia libera luce tractari." Sopater, the disciple of Iamblichus, lost his life at Constantinople on suspicion of having used magic to detain the corn-fleets.

¹ Chastel—*Destruction du Paganisme dans l'Empire d'Orient*—puts it at one-tenth in the East, one-fifteenth in the West.

Meanwhile, Licinius was carrying on an underhand persecution of the Christians in the East. Unable to attack them openly for fear of his colleague he forbade all communication between the bishops, dismissed the Christians in the army and in his service, and encouraged the magistrates to condemn them on false charges.

Constantine's second victory over Licinius in 324, was followed by the death of the latter, and the Empire was once more united. In the Eastern world the Emperor had a freer hand in religious matters. His new capital had no memories of the past to sanctify it, as Rome had. The sophists and rhetoricians took the place of the Roman nobles, as the principal mainstay of the old religion. The degenerate exponents of Hellenic culture could not appeal to any such conservative instincts as those of Western —

ERRATA.

- Page 18, line 20, *for* Hilarnius *read* Hilarinus.
 „ 23, line 2 from the bottom, *for* Robi *read* Probi.
 „ 25, line 6, *for* XV. *read* XV.
 „ 28, line 5, *for* use *read* rise.
 „ 29, line 14 from the bottom, *for* Antone *read* Aulone.
 „ 32, line 19 from the bottom, *for* Urous *read* Ursus.
 „ 33, line 14 and in note, *for* Merobandi *read* Merobaudis.
 „ 36, line 19, *for* Isorasius *read* Isocrasius.
 „ 37, line 4 from the bottom, *for* Angilas *read* Augilas.

CONCESSIONS IN CASE WERE RECALLED; prisoners for the faith were liberated; and a letter exhorting his subjects to embrace Christianity was published by Constantine throughout the Eastern provinces. The penalties against celibacy enacted by previous Emperors were now removed—a measure which marks the changed spirit of legislation. Gladiatorial combats were forbidden, though the games flourished. The laws against the private exercise of the arts of divination were now extended to the whole Empire. Anulinus, the

¹ Rhea and the Dioscuri also obtained temples.

governor of Africa, who had destroyed some churches, was compelled to restore them.

The Arian controversy troubled the Church during the later part of Constantine's reign, and absorbed much of the energy that might have been directed to extirpating idolatry. So far as he safely could, however, the Emperor carried on an active campaign against the idols. Commissioners were sent out to despoil deserted or unused temples. The work of destruction was carried on ruthlessly; the Emperor's emissaries did not in many cases stop to remove the statues, but contented themselves with stripping off the gold and silver plates, and "handed back to the priests what was useless." A determined attempt was made to stamp out some of the most abandoned cults that were practised in the maritime provinces from Syria to Egypt. At Heliopolis the temple was demolished, a church being built in its place, and the orgies long celebrated there were forbidden. The worship of Aphrodite was deeply rooted however, and Theodoret confesses that under Valens all the inhabitants of the place were Pagans. The grove and temple of the same goddess on a spur of Libanus named Aphaca were razed to the ground by soldiers. A similar fate befell the temple of Aesculapius at Aegae. The cult of Nilus at Alexandria was suppressed, and the priests banished. Many another ancient edifice no doubt suffered from the zeal of Constantine's commissioners, who took off doors and roof, and left the weather to accomplish what they had not either time or inclination to do. The Emperor understood his task; by this guerilla warfare he could accomplish piecemeal what would have cost him his throne to effect by a sweeping law, such as the ecclesiastical historians ascribe to him. Sanctuaries like the Serapeum at Alexandria were safe for many a long year. Active in the work of destruction himself, Constantine did not tolerate slackness in others. Eusebius tells us of his writing to the bishop of Caesarea to censure him for allowing a Pagan altar to stand under the oak of Mamre, where tradition said Abraham had entertained the angels. Steps were taken to extend Christianity beyond the bounds of the Empire. The missions to the Indians and the Iberi date from this reign, and the Christians of Persia were an object of solicitude to Constantine. He conceived himself, he tells us, as the bishop ordained by God to look after the external affairs of the Church; as such he presided at councils, and lent the weight of his authority to the decrees of the bishops.

Besides attacking the detached out-posts of Paganism,

he endeavoured to draw over to his religion all who could be influenced by Imperial favour. Individual Christians were appointed to offices. The inhabitants of Gaza saw their sea-port freed, and raised to the rank of a city, under the name of Constantia, as a reward for having cast its idols into the fire.

Constantina in Phoenicia also owed its name and privileges to a similar act of zeal. Nor can the exposure of the tricks of the priests, that followed on the visit of the Emperor's commissioners, have been without effect in sapping the devotion of the Pagans. But Arian and Homoousian were as ready to spill each others' blood as ever the persecutors had been, and the internal quarrels of the Church prevented her from making full use of the opportunity afforded by the long and prosperous reign of Constantine.

In the year 335, the Emperor issued a law confirming the flamens and duumvirs of Africa in their immunity from municipal charges. Although he no longer offered solemn sacrifice to Jupiter Capitolinus, yet he was still head of the Pagan hierarchy, and bound to look after their privileges. His coins still bore the images of the gods. One in particular is typical of his reign; on it the winged figure of Victory bears aloft the Labarum. His private sentiments were, however, no secret. On a visit to Rome in 326, his scoffs at the procession in honour of the battle at Lake Regillus caused a popular disturbance. The official world contented itself with ignoring the Emperor's creed as an individual. The panegyrics and inscriptions addressed to him breathed the spirit of Paganism, and congratulated him on the countenance of the very deities he had rejected. He was aware of his unpopularity in the capital of the Empire, and avoided it as far as possible. Diocletian's change of residence was one of those small things that paved the way for Christianity. In the West, Constantine could not venture to attack the temples. His efforts were directed to securing full liberty to the Christians, whom he had occasionally to protect from the attempts of their fellow subjects to make them participate in the worship of idols. Again and again he protested in his edicts that he gave liberty of conscience to all. The establishment of the principle of toleration was a task sufficient to occupy the reign of one Emperor.

Various explanations have been offered of the law abolishing Pagan sacrifices ascribed to Constantine by the ecclesiastical historians.¹ Some modern authors would

¹ Eusebius, for instance, says that after his victory over Licinius he forbade sacrifices. *Vita Cons.* ii. 44. No such law appears in the Theodosian code.

identify it with the enactment of 319 against nocturnal sacrifices. If this were so, Constantine could hardly have appealed to it as he did in 340.¹ Others consider it a concession wrung from the weakness of the Emperor by the Eastern bishops towards the end of his life.² At the close of his career he seems to have been somewhat more jealous of the liberty the Pagans enjoyed. Eunapius tells us that when Aedesius succeeded Iamblichus in 333, the philosophers had to preserve a discreet silence as to their religion. The question is of little importance, for, if the law existed, it has left no trace on the events of his reign. It is not yet worth while to produce evidence of Libanius' assertion that the ancient rites were freely practised, seeing that we shall find them in full swing half a century later. More important is it to attempt to estimate the nature of the blow struck at the national religion by Constantine's conversion. That event first showed that the civil power might be divorced from the dominant creed. Nor was that all; without the full concurrence of the head of the State, a state religion, such as that of Rome, was meaningless. The chiefs of the Senate might persist in praising the piety of the Pontifex Maximus to his face, but the seed was sown that would slowly and surely grow into the work of Theodosius.

The children of Constantine began their reign in the spirit of their father. The dead Emperor was deified by the Senate. Constans, sole Emperor of the West after 340, forbade the violation of Pagan tombs by the Christians, and issued orders for the preservation of the temples outside Rome. He bore like his father the pontifical robe. Nevertheless the brothers appear to have become impatient at the slow progress of Christianity. Many of the Christians called, like Firmicus Maternus, for violent measures. In 341 there was published in both halves of the Empire a law forbidding sacrifice in so many terms, which can hardly be taken to apply to nocturnal rites only. No penalty was attached to its violation, and there is nothing to show that it produced the slightest effect. Whatever alarm as to their ruler's real intentions may have been aroused among the Pagans, was taken advantage of by Magnentius, who rose against and murdered Constans. The usurper even allowed the celebration of nocturnal sacrifices. But three years saw the end of his reign.

¹ *Cod Theod.* xvi. 10 2. cesset superstitio nam quicumque contra legem divi parentis nostri ausus fuerit sacrificia celebrare.

² So Rüdiger — *De Statu Paganorum sub Imperatoribus Christianis*: in which case Eusebius' date remains to be explained. For the opposite view, compare Chastel, p. 64.

Constantius, who now once more re-united the Empire, was a man of suspicious and timid nature, ready to be carried to any lengths of violence when his fears were aroused. He carried on an active campaign against the diviners, punishing the practice of magic with death. Returning to the charge subsequently he ordered these "generis humani inimici" to be tortured and crucified. He was obliged however to treat the legitimate worship of the gods with more respect. Though he removed the altar of Victory from the Senate he renewed his brother's ordinance in favour of the tombs, and issued such regulations for the election of the priests of Africa as to raise the character and standing of the pagan clergy of that province.

Symmachus has given us an account of his visit to Rome. He treated the monuments of the ancient religion with respect, nay, he even displayed a lively interest in their history. He conferred the priesthoods on worthy candidates, and left the privileges of the Vestal Virgins intact; nor did he refuse to provide for the expenses of the national worship. During his reign the Pagan Hierarchy was complete. The colleges of pontiffs and augurs flourished side by side with the Patres of Mithra and the Galli of Cybele. Symmachus seems to have had reason to say of Constantius, "cumque alias religiones ipse sequeretur, has conservavit imperio." A less favourable judgment comes from the East. Libanius accuses him of being in the hands of the enemies of Sol Jupiter and the gods, and of neglecting the philosophers and rhetoricians. The Emperor, if he did not encourage, at least did not check the zeal of individuals. "Cyril the deacon" is mentioned by Theodoret as having destroyed idols at Heliopolis; and a similar proof of piety was given by Marcus, bishop of Arethusa. Hermits and anchorites had long been common in the eastern provinces, though monasteries had but recently been established. These solitaries were powerful allies of the clergy in their struggle with idolatry. To their devotion the destruction of many altars and statues was due. The Emperor also carried out his father's policy of making attacks upon the more defenceless buildings of the old religion.¹ Still his real crime in the eyes of Libanius was his neglect of learning. He could not dispense with the services of the Roman nobility, but he could afford to depress, as far as possible, the sophists of the East. While the priests and believers of the West maintained an obstinate silence in the face of the taunts of Christian apologists, their Eastern allies carried on a

¹ Libanius, Vol. i. p. 509. ed. Reiske. The officers of Constantius were "pasti templorum spoliis." Ammian. Marcell., xxii. 4, 3.

literary warfare with the fathers of the Church. Yet they were less dangerous than the class from which the governors of the provinces were drawn. The profession of teaching was everywhere in the hands of the Pagans. So completely did old traditions dominate the schools, that Victorinus, a celebrated professor of rhetoric at Rome, was forced, on becoming a Christian, to close his school and abandon the scene of the former triumphs of his eloquence. At Antioch Libanius seems to have been free to say anything he liked against the faith of the Emperor.

In the face of all the evidence to the contrary, Constantius, like his father, is credited with having abolished idolatry, only this time the statement is more circumstantial. We are told that immediately after his victory over Magnentius in 353, he ordered his subjects to close the temples and abstain from sacrifice under pain of death; moreover the same penalty was to be applied to the governors of the provinces if they neglected to punish the disobedient.¹ In 356 this law is reported to have been renewed.² Now if we consider only the simple fact, among a host of others, that the prefect of Rome, Memmius Orphitus, in the very year of publication of this law, was not only a pagan, but priest of Vesta and the Sun, we shall see reason to doubt its authenticity. Libanius' authority does not weigh as much in this case as that of a pagan naturally would. He hated Constantius sufficiently to say any evil of him that came into his mind. The theory of Labastie that the supposed laws are but private memoranda, found, so to speak, in the Imperial waste-paper basket by Theodosius, has been widely adopted. A more recent historian is inclined to give full credence to the laws. The supposition might be hazarded that in the course of time they have lost some important qualification of locality or circumstance. We know, at any rate, that the extent to which any Imperial ordinance was carried out, depended on the will of the members of bureaucracy, unless exceptional measures were taken to enforce it; and the pages of Ammianus, as well as the inscriptions of the time, prove clearly that these enactments never were put into operation. The attempts of such commonplace rulers as the sons of Constantine, to go beyond the principle of toleration

¹ *Cod. Theod. de paganis*, i. 4. Libanius *Oratio Pro templis* — 162 — Sozomenes, iv. 10. As there is a mistake in the date of the law as given in the Codex Theodosianus, Labastie refuses to believe that it was ever published.—Compare Chastel, p. 82. Beugnot simply shelves the question. *Destruction du Paganisme*, i. 138.

² *Cod. Theod.*, xvi. 10, 6—condemns to death, "quos operam sacrificiis dare vel simulacra colere constiterit."

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the various degrees in the cults of Mithra, of Cybele, and of Isis were well organised. But on the whole, the isolated state of the Pagan priests prevented their offering a solid front to the enemy. What was it to the votaries of Belenus in Gaul that the Phœnician Aphrodite suffered from the axe of the Christians? The remedy for this, too, was in Julian's scheme. When he had created a fitting body of priests, they were all to be under the careful supervision of the Emperor and other dignitaries of the national cult, while being constantly reminded of their solidarity in their struggle with the innovators.¹

The Emperor himself set an edifying example. Had he ever returned from his Persian expedition, said his contemporaries, there would have been no oxen left. He had always been in a special sense the votary of the Sun, but every god had a claim on his liberality. No opportunity of sacrifice was allowed to escape him. His activity was many sided. He attempted to revive the oracles that had everywhere fallen into discredit. But the sacred spring of Castalia refused even Imperial blandishments, and Apollo only awoke from the sleep of death to send to the eager sovereign that swan song which has charmed the ears of generations since. The spell of silence lay also on Delos and Dodona. Internal causes destined Julian's reform to failure, apart from the short duration of his reign. There was no question of a return to a purer form of faith, of an appeal from the corruptions of man to the Word of God. No common bond united the religion of the educated and the gross superstitions of the masses. A cult kept alive by custom or interest, a set of legends hopelessly confused and absurd, a pantheon recruited from every quarter of the world, such was the uncongenial atmosphere in which equilibrium was to be produced by means of the delicately balanced system of the Neo-Platonists. The philosopher could reconcile, more or less violently, his speculative monotheism with the hierarchy of Olympus²; but the mass of the people, attached to some one cult or other, could not be expected to appreciate the intricate working of the new Hellenic creed. In the cult of Mithra there were elements that recall the moral aspects of Christian doctrine; but an enlightened eye was needed to extract them out of the

¹ So Maximin Daza had ordered the appointment of an arch-priest in every province to give unity to the efforts of his subordinates against the Christians. Euseb *Hist. Eccl.* ix. 4.

² Compare the words of Maximus of Madaura to St. Augustine "We worship a single and supreme God, whose attributes we invoke by different names; and the gods whose statues adorn our streets are but the members of that one God." Aug. *Ep̄p̄.* (Bened. ed.), ii., 20, Epist. 16.

tangled mass. Like the mythical picture of Apollonius of Tyana, opposed by the philosophers to that of Christ, the copy was too evidently inferior to serve as more than a temporary substitute. The enthusiasm of the Emperor was thwarted by the general indifference. His religion was not that of the only solid support of Paganism left—the Roman aristocracy—and he neglected to appeal to the genuine feelings of the people. His open manifestations of contempt for the games, to which all classes of his subjects were attached, alienated from him their sympathies. Everywhere he found signs of decay. He has left us an account of his visit to the temple of Apollo at Daphne, near Antioch. On the day of the solemn festival of the year he found the shrine deserted, and the crowds of worshippers represented by one poor priest, who brought only a goose to offer to the god. In vain he wrote letters full of passionate appeals to the leaders of the Pagans, and himself descended into the arena with treatises against Christianity. They enjoyed the passing hour of sunshine, but would not bestir themselves to raise the world out of the incredulity and indifference with which it was filled.

The mere fact that a Pagan was on the throne was sufficient to draw away crowds from the church to the temple. Pegasius, a bishop of the Troad, was one of these useless converts. Hecebolus, the enemy of the Pagans under Constantius, was another, till the news of the Emperor's death came. But Proairesius, the Christian sophist, resisted Julian's overtures. The Emperor never promised to be impartial. He gave his favours freely to individuals and communities who manifested their attachment to the ancient cult. The soldiers were expected to testify their gratitude for a donative by burning incense to the gods. His hasty temper occasionally led him to acts of which he repented. Some Christians in the army, whose horror at having compromised themselves led them to break the bonds of discipline, were condemned to death at Athens, but forgiven before the sentence was executed. The greatest blot on his clemency is his persecution of Athanasius; but he restored to their homes all who had been banished for religious reasons by Constantius. He maintained the principle of toleration so far as to avoid actual compulsion. Even Theodoret is forced to confess that he abstained from forcing anyone to sacrifice. His own belief was too sincere for him to engage in such acts of violence. The privilege of taking part in the worship of the gods was not to be accorded to those who had abandoned them, until, at least, they had purified themselves by prayers and expiations. However, the Pagan communities did not everywhere lay themselves

under the same restraint. George, the Bishop of Alexandria, was murdered in a riot caused by his having exposed the mysteries of Mithra to ridicule. The Emperor wrote a letter of remonstrance to the turbulent populace of that city for taking the law into their own hands, but he does not appear to have punished the guilty. We hear also of outbreaks at Ascalon, Gaza, and other places. At Emesa a church was converted into a temple. Marcus, Bishop of Arethusa in Syria, suffered a cruel death at the hands of his enemies.

Vengeance was now taken on those who had been prominent in attacking the old religion. The Emperor compelled restitution from those who had plundered the temples, and restored what had been confiscated to the fisc. The local magistrates exceeded their instructions occasionally, and, on pretence of recovering sacred property, scenes of violence were enacted which moved the indignation of Libanius.¹ Julian endeavoured to replace the Church in the position in which it had been before Constantine. He did away with that monarch's grants of money and corn, and revoked the exemptions from municipal charges. It was in connection with education that he struck the only blow at Christianity by which, had time been given him, he might have produced a permanent effect. The Pagan character of the higher education of the Empire has been mentioned. Nothing is more unchangeable than the instruction given to the youth of a country. The courses that have once been followed tend to be persisted in without regard to the wants and needs of the time. It may be imagined that this was so in the Roman world, so conservative in all departments of life. Long after Theodoric had established his power in Italy, rhetoric was still the main study of youth, on the ground that speech rules the world. Still, whatever we may think of the education described by Quintilian, we must admit that it was justified by its fruits. The civilised world has but once tasted the Pax Romana, and then it was brought about and maintained by men trained for their part in the schools of the rhetoricians. To return to the subject, we find that the majority of teachers were Pagans, and that the instruction given was deeply dyed in the colours of polytheism. After the child had learned his letters, he was handed over to the grammarian to be taught to read and write correctly, and to understand the poets and prose-writers. To do this, an acquaintance with philosophy, history, science, and, above all, mythology was necessary; all these subjects were gradu-

¹ *Epistulae*, 1426. He interfered on behalf of the Christians in a letter to the prefect of Phoenicia. Ep. 730.

ally included in the grammarian's curriculum, till he was expected to give an "encyclopædic" education. This part finished, the youth was handed over to the rhetorician, who practised him in declaiming on the stock subjects. At a much later date, when Paganism was abandoned and proscribed, boys still thundered in the schools against the impiety of some imagined insult to Diana or a Vestal Virgin, or committed to heart the story of Venus' protection of the founder of Rome. When the teacher was a Christian, the instruction remained much the same. Virgil was expounded with equal vigour by the partisans of both religions. The boy's imagination was filled and probably charmed by the legends of the gods. His thought was formed in a Pagan mould, which many found it impossible to shake off in after years. In the face of these dangers not even the strictest Christians seem to have thought it possible either to break with the old, or to create a new education. Even Tertullian, who shut his books when he abandoned idolatry, allows that a Christian may go through the common course. A few defended the practice on the ground that, τὸ καλὸν ἔνθα ἂν ᾖ, ἴδιον τῆς ἀληθείας; all bowed before the practical necessity.¹

The names of a few of the higher teachers who had embraced Christianity have been mentioned. At this time there appear to have been in the East many Christians among the masters of the more elementary schools also. Their number was increasing, and would naturally continue to do so. In course of time it might be hoped that it would be possible to keep the instruction of Christians entirely in Christian hands. It was therefore a tremendous blow when Julian forbade the Galilean to expound the authors whose creed he professed to despise. "Let them go," said the Emperor, "let them go to the churches and explain Matthew and Luke." He professed to free them from the irksome task of delivering lectures on subjects of which their conscience disapproved. There was a certain want of dignity about the character of Julian that comes out in the somewhat petty sneers he was fond of uttering against the hated religion. His intention was obvious. Could the Christians be deprived of the liberty of teaching, their children would be forced to attend the courses of the ablest and most envenomed opponents of their creed. It was to be hoped that they would either adopt the beliefs with which their tender years had been nurtured, or drop out of the ranks of educated society altogether.²

¹ Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 16, where the whole question is reviewed.

² He did not forbid Christians to frequent the schools at all, as Socrates (*Hist. Eccl.* iii. 16) and Theodoret (iii. 8) represent. Compare St. Jerome

The blow was well aimed and caused great indignation and alarm. No effort had been made to organise a purely Christian system of education. The respect due to the sacred writings, joined with the admitted badness of the current versions, prevented the use of the Bible for that purpose; nor indeed could the precepts of the rhetoricians well be illustrated from it. Cassiodorus in his famous scheme only placed it at the end of the usual course. Two teachers of Laodicea, a father and son of the name of Apollinarius, set to work to supply a substitute for the books they were forbidden to use, by constructing epics and tragedies out of the Old and New Testaments. Had Julian reigned long enough to enforce his enactment for a generation or so, a real service might have been done to the Pagan cause. But he died a soldier's death in the war with Persia, and the brief reaction was over. His career showed the Pagan party what to hope for. Henceforward, while willing to serve the Christian Emperors loyally, they looked to the advent of one of their number to the throne as the sole means of recovering the ground they had lost. The reign of this ill-fated prince was too short to give his enterprise a fair trial.

We have attempted above to show that in itself it was foredoomed to failure. Some lessons may be drawn from its history. The weakness of paganism as a religion is manifest. As a habit of thought, as a matter of ancient custom or social observance, it was strong; but as such it was bound in the end to give way to a higher creed. The direction of Julian's reforms brings out the hopelessness of building upon the sophists and philosophers. In the future our attention must be concentrated on the upper classes in the West, and especially in Rome, since they remained the strongest bulwark of the dying faith. The world was not, of course, divided between the two opponents. Large numbers were content to watch the struggle and add their weight to the winning side.

The election of Jovian has been represented as a triumph for Christianity. A touching picture is drawn of the enthusiasm with which the army threw off its disguise, and called on a Christian Emperor to reign over Christians. As a matter of fact, it was the work of a few officers. The majority wished for the venerable Sallust, the confidant of Julian, a Pagan and a student of Neo-Platonic philosophy. Deceived by the resemblance of the new ruler's name to that

ad. Euseb. Chron. 99, *Orosius* viii. 30, and *St. Augustine's Confessions* viii. 5. He may have hoped that that would be the effect of his measures. Unless it were so, the complaints of the Christians seem rather exaggerated.

of their beloved chief, the soldiers took up the acclamations of "Jovian, Jovian," and in the midst of a disastrous retreat through a hostile country, the purple was hurriedly conferred. The victims were consulted before the march was continued. On his return, a deputation from the Senate of Constantinople, headed by the zealous Pagan, Themistius, met the new Emperor. Themistius delivered an eloquent speech on behalf of religious toleration, and Jovian gave his acquiescence to that policy. He restored in due course Constantine's grants to the Churches, and compelled one Magnus, who had destroyed a Christian place of worship at Berytus, to rebuild it. He paid fitting honours to the memory of his predecessor, while the ungrateful Senate of Rome passed over the decease of the latter with the usual formulas.

Before the year was out another Emperor succeeded to Julian's throne in the person of Valentinian. This prince reserved for himself the administration of the West, and handed over to his brother Valens the troublesome task of defending the Eastern Empire from the Goths. Valentinian had had the courage to protest against taking part in a Pagan ceremony under Julian; but he could not cast off the ancient traditions that clung to the official acts of the Emperor. In order to avoid the intercalary day of the bissextile year, which his subjects considered "nefas", he lengthened by twenty-four hours the customary interval between his election and inauguration. The news of Julian's death had been received with tumultuous joy by the Christians; altars and temples were overthrown, and some Pagan priests had to fly from the vengeance or the avarice of their adversaries. The Emperor professed toleration; "inter religionum diversitates medius stetit," Ammianus says of him. In the year following his election the goods of the temples, confiscated by Constantine and restored by Julian, were adjudged to the private domain of the Emperor. This would only affect those sanctuaries the neglect of which by their worshippers enabled the Christian rulers to deal with them as derelict. In 371, Valentinian gave to the provincial pontiffs on their retirement the rank and immunities of ex-counts, provided they had risen gradually to their position and acquitted themselves faithfully of their duties. His mind was dominated by the idea of *mos majorum*, which was the Pagan rallying-cry. The head of the State was still obliged to act as head of the state religion. His colleague was an Arian, and was too much engaged hunting the orthodox, to oppress his Pagan subjects. To the fact that he was an heretic, we owe the preservation by the ecclesiastical historians of the information, that in 373 the

festivals of Jupiter and Ceres were openly celebrated at Constantinople. During his presence at Antioch the Bacchanalia were celebrated without any interference. Indeed, complete liberty appears to have been enjoyed by the Pagans, with one exception. Libanius tells us that both Emperors forbade the sacrifice of victims, though not libations and bloodless offerings. Some places did not contain a single Christian. Carras, to which Protogenes was banished, was "full of the thorns of Greek superstition." During this period the quarrels of their adversaries, which often ended in bloodshed, gave the Pagans peace. A furious crusade against the diviners was however carried on in both East and West. In 364 Valentinian forbade nocturnal sacrifices. The Greeks complained that life would be insupportable to them without the consolations afforded by the mysteries, and, thanks to the influence of Praetextatus, their governor, one of the leaders of the Pagans, they obtained a remission of the law in their favour. It was severely executed by Apronianus, the prefect of Rome. All kinds of magic and incantations were made criminal. A coachman named ~~Hilarius~~ ^{Hilarius} was condemned to death for having apprenticed his son to a magician. Marinus, a famous advocate, paid with his life for having tried to win the affection of Hisparilla by sorcery. Everywhere the utmost vigilance was displayed, till even the enthusiasm of the populace was aroused to second the Emperor's efforts. The haruspices and augurs began to be afraid of showing themselves in public, being confounded in the popular mind with the practitioners of unlawful arts. The philosophers also suffered for having developed the theurgical leanings of Plotinus. Valens raged against the diviners in the East. After his victory over Sapor, a plot was dragged to light in which Palladius and others had resorted to magic to discover the name of his successor. Palladius confessed under torture, and his accomplices were put to death, among them being Maximus of Ephesus, son of an ex-prefect. Lollianus was even condemned to the same penalty for having copied a book on magic. Literature suffered from the fury of Valens, who burnt all the books to which suspicion could attach.

At last the Senate remonstrated. A new law was the result in which Valentinian is careful to explain that he had no hostile intentions towards the official practice of divination. It was only the unlawful pursuit of that science which was forbidden. By this ordinance, issued in 371, the exercise of their official functions by the college of augurs was formally authorized. The precise words are worth quoting as an illustration of Valentinian's attitude

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the opening of a new stage in the struggle, the present is a convenient opportunity to gather up some scattered facts tending to throw light on the state of Paganism throughout the Empire during this period. Precise information, it need hardly be said, is out of the question. Difficult to obtain for the two capitals of the world, it is impossible to expect it with regard to the provinces. In Rome the old religion was mainly defended as an ancient and venerable institution, which was the true cause of the city's greatness. The faith of the provincial rested on a different basis. The imperiousness of long established custom inclined the simple peasant or the citizen of a small town to continue the practice of his ancestral cult. To him, Providence was represented by the local deity, and superstition made up in intensity for what it lost in breadth. The corporations were a stronghold of Paganism, which seemed mixed up with their privileges and liberties; moreover, they were generally under the protection of some powerful noble in Rome, whose influence was exerted on behalf of the ancient religion. The decurions also generally sided on these matters with the Senate of Rome. Christian historians admit that idolatry reigned in Northern Italy. The Gospel had not been systematically preached there before the fourth century. Milan, the seat of an episcopal see, was the residence of the Imperial Court; yet Ausonius can speak of the "regio Herculei celebris sub honore Lavacri." The citizens of Florence were so attached to an old statue of Mars, that, on their conversion, they stipulated that this Palladium of the town should remain uninjured. At Volaterrae the powerful family of Coecina threw its weight into the Pagan scale. Central Italy was covered with bishoprics, in which, however, there was plenty of opportunity for missionary enterprise. Naples formed the centre of resistance to the new creed in Southern Italy. Sicily and the islands were strongholds of Paganism much later. Roman civilization was nowhere more successful than in Gaul, and Roman religion spread with it. The faith of the conquerors changed its character somewhat to meet the requirements of that "natio admodum dedita religionibus." The cult of the Emperors flourished and held together the various local worships. Three strains are traceable in Gaulish superstition. The southern provinces and the big cities had adopted the belief of the victors. Druidism lingered in the woods of the centre, holding sway over the hearts of the serfs. Along the Rhine and in parts of Alsace German immigrants had brought their own gods with them. The cult of Cybele reigned at Autun. The life of St.

Martin gives us most information about the religious state of Gaul in the latter half of the fourth century. Baptized in 354, he fixed his residence at Logogiacum, near Poitiers, whence he over-ran the country, axe in hand. The destruction of Paganism is really to be attributed more to these militant missionaries, of whom he is the pre-runner in the West, than to any other single cause. Their attacks were not authorized by law, but they performed more for Christianity than any Imperial edict. Sulpicius Severus tells us that before the arrival of Martin scarcely any of the inhabitants were Christians. He began to destroy temples and idols, trusting to his eloquence to soothe the anger of the peasantry. Nor did the exhortations of a man, whose earnestness and courage were so evident, fail of effect. The foundation of monasteries, which he was the first to introduce into the West, served to guard against a relapse. The Synod held at Cologne in 356 shows that Christianity had been propagated with success. As Helvetia remained idolatrous in the seventh century, it is a fair inference that she was so in the fourth.

Spain had also felt the charm of Roman civilization. But the adoption of the gods of the Scipios did not entail the banishment of those born nearer home. An inscription dedicated to "Martis socio Banduae" is typical of the relation between the two. At the beginning of the century some ardent followers of the old religion raised a monument at Tera to the "quattuor invicti Caesares," of whom the father of Constantine was one, giving his reason in the words "ob Christianorum, eorum pia cura, suppressam extinctamque religionem." There were then Pagans in Spain to whom the struggle was not a matter of indifference. It has been maintained that there were no regular churches in this country before 320. Whether correct or not, the hypothesis shows how few Christians there were. The remoteness of the province from the barbarians made it a favourite field for the investment of the Roman nobles, whose influence would be in favour of Paganism. Chiefs of the Pagan party, like Praetextatus, figure often in the list of governors. We need not be surprised to find Pacianus Bishop of Barcelona, saying of his flock at the end of the fourth century, "multi idolis mancipati."

Melcarth, confounded with Hercules, and the Dea Coelestis excited the devotion of the Carthaginians. Mauritania and Numidia held to their national deities. Aesculapius was particularly honoured at Byrsa, and Apollo had a noble shrine at Utica. In Egypt the persuasion, that impiety to the gods would be followed by a "bad Nile," often led to

outbreaks among the Pagans. Without the interference of the monks and solitaries of the desert, they would have been more than a match for the Christians, who generally got the worst of it at Alexandria till they had time to summon their allies. An unknown geographer of the time of Constantius writes that the gods were everywhere honoured, and that the altars smoked on every side in that city. Phoenicia, we have seen, persisted in preferring the attractions of Aphrodite worship to the claims of decency and the mandates of the Emperors. Antioch and Nicomedia passed as the two Christian cities in the world; yet St. John Chrysostom only lays claim to τὸ πλεόν τῆς πόλεως in the former. A fourth only of the people of Constantinople professed Christianity,¹ but from the remainder we must here, as elsewhere in the East, subtract the Jews. Greece was still faithful to the mysteries. At Athens the schools of philosophy represented the intellect of Paganism. In 396 we hear of sacrifices publicly conducted there after the earthquakes throughout the province.

The death of Valentinian in 375, left the burden of the Empire on the shoulders of Gratian, with whom the name of his infant brother Valentinian II. was joined by the soldiers. In 378, Valens fell in battle with the Goths, and Theodosius was called on to free the Eastern World from barbarians. Gradually the face of the religious struggle had changed. The Emperors now feel sure of their triumph, and begin to dispense with the caution they have hitherto displayed. Christianity succeeds in enlisting the civil power on its side, and the mask of toleration is cast off. A party had all along cried for repressive measures against the religion of the majority. The demand, in the earlier stages, betrayed a mistaken apprehension of the facts. The strength of Paganism might be unreal, but its aspect was formidable, and it was able to offer a lasting, if feeble, resistance.² Deep-rooted customs cannot be fought with fire and sword. Time was necessary to let the world get used to being governed by a Christian. That accomplished, the Emperors felt a forward movement might be made. At first, however, there was no hint of a change of policy. After the death of Valens, Gratian published a law ordaining the practice of toleration, some Eastern heretics alone being excepted from its provisions. The Emperor was addressed by the Senate in language redolent of Paganism. Themistius to his face

¹ Chrysostom, ix., 93—he speaks of the year 398, which, of course, is after this period.

² The word *pagani*—a sign of the growing weakness of that party—first occurs officially in an edict of Valentinian in 370. *Cod. Theod.*, xvi., 2, 18.

commended him to the care of the national gods. The dead Valentinian was deified with his son's concurrence.

The change that came in 382 may probably be referred to the influence of St. Ambrose. In that year the revenues of the temples were seized for the fisc; the privileges of the pontiffs, even of the Vestal Virgins, were revoked; and the altar of Victory was removed from the Senate to which Julian had restored it. This celebrated emblem of the falling cause had first been placed in the Curia Julia by Augustus. It consisted of a statue of Victory, standing on an altar, before which it was customary for each Senator to burn a few grains of incense before the opening of the sitting, making at the same time a vow of loyalty to the Emperor. The Christian minority complained bitterly of the presence of this relic of Paganism in an assembly where members of both religions met to deliberate. To the majority, it was precious as typifying the official character of their cult. Constantius incurred their hatred by his removal of the altar; but the step was premature, and since his time no Emperor had ventured to meddle with it till Gratian ordered it to be taken away. Religious equality was invoked. Was it just, said the Christians, to compel the Senators of their creed to pollute themselves by the presence of an idol, if they wished to exercise the functions of their order? The plea was a fair one, yet the real question at stake was not whether an act of religious justice should be done, but whether the national cult should still be recognized as having an official place in the Empire. The hopes of all active members of the Pagan party depended on the Senate. They had felt hitherto that, whatever their losses, the great council of the State was left them. If the altar went, with it went the character of that body as the representative and rallying point of Paganism. (The Senate was politically weak, but, amid the many changes whereby the Republic had passed into the despotism of Diocletian, it remained a visible link with the glorious past.) Amid the approaching destruction of the Empire, and signs of weakness on every side, it spoke to patriots of the *mos majorum*; it was the representative of the old Roman spirit and of the old gods whose favour had carried the eagles to the Danube and the Euphrates. Too weak to attack, too venerable to be attacked, its rôle was that of passive, but obstinate, resistance to the new order of things. There was, however, a Christian minority in that proud assembly of Pagan nobles. Besides the six hundred "domos de sanguine prisco" outside the Senate, six Senatorial families had embraced that religion—the Anicii, ~~Robi~~ ^{Probi}, Paulini, Bassi, Olybrii and Gracchi. Hitherto the minority

had not felt equal to attacking its adversaries on their own ground, but, under an Emperor who was determined to advance Christianity at all hazards, they began to feel strong enough to raise the question of the altar. When the Emperor's orders came a deputation of the Senate was despatched, on the advice of Prætextatus, to plead for its retention. The Christians declared that if this request were granted they would withdraw from the Senate, and Gratian, on the suggestion of St. Ambrose, told the members of the deputation that he would not listen to them, as they did not fairly represent the body to which they belonged. Finding remonstrance useless they returned to Rome.

At the end of 382 or the beginning of 383, the Emperor struck another blow at Paganism by refusing the pontifical robe, which the Senate sent him during his residence in Gaul. His predecessors had always accepted the office of Pontifex Maximus, leaving, no doubt, all effective superintendence to the college of pontiffs, but still acknowledging that they were the official head of the state religion. Symmachus in his "Relatio" even goes so far as to say that Constantine and Constantius belonged to two religions at once. Gratian's refusal of this title first broke the connection of the sovereign with Paganism. The Emperors had long been Christians as individuals; in future they would be so as Emperors. Nor was that all; the Roman hierarchy had now no longer a head, for no one but the Emperor could fill the office of sovereign pontiff. The justice of the gods, as many of his subjects declared, soon overtook the impious innovator. Maximus revolted and attacked him in the city of the Alemanni. The threats of Theodosius forced the usurper for a while to respect the rights of Valentinian II. Having subsequently driven his young colleague from Italy, he was defeated in battle by the Eastern Emperor, and put to death in 388.

Gratian made the first direct attack of importance upon Paganism. What was the state of that religion in his reign? Inscriptions show that the Roman nobles still added title after title derived from it to their names. Ardesius, the vicarius of Spain, was at once priest of Mithra, Diana, and Bacchus in 376. Rufus Albinus, the prefect of the city in 389-90, tells us that he was augur, cultor of the triplex Diana, antistes of the temple of Mithra, leader of the taurobolium, and hierophant of Hecate. Although the destruction of the cave of Mithra at Rome in 376 was attributed to the piety of the prefect Gracchus, yet the cult of that deity flourished.¹ The national gods were also honoured. Com-

¹ Beugnot considers it to have been an act of private violence, i. 387.

plete liberty seems to have been enjoyed for acts of Pagan worship, which were openly recorded in public places. On the request of the Senate, two statues were erected, by leave of Gratian, to Symmachus, one at Rome, the other at Constantinople; on the base of the latter he is described as "Pontifex Major XV., S. F." Petronius Probus, consul in 371, was probably a Christian, yet his statue bears the inscription "devotionis antistes," a fact which illustrates the conspiracy of silence as to the victories of the new creed. Isis, Anubis, and Hercules still figured on the Imperial coins.

In the time of Valentinian II., the agitation about the altar of Victory was renewed. One of his first acts had been to make Symmachus prefect of the city, and the Senate interpreted this as a sign of favour. A deputation was sent with the illustrious prefect as its orator. The discourse which he then pronounced forms a kind of Pagan confession of faith. He strikes the key-note of "mos majorum" in the opening lines. Again and again he returns to the point that the national religion is that under which Rome has grown great. "This worship has brought the world beneath my laws,"—it is the genius of Rome who speaks—"Those mysteries drove back Hannibal from my walls, the Senonians from the capital. Shall I change in my old age that which has been hitherto my salvation?" Symmachus protests also against the spoliation of the sacred property; whatever may be the Emperor's creed, the wealth of the national cult was given to the glory of Rome. To this sacrilege he traces the famine which had soon after scourged the provinces. In conclusion he demands the restoration of religious equality.

The Relation of Symmachus shows us the grounds on which the case for Paganism rested according to its ablest defenders. There is no word of its spiritual influence, nor even of the truth of its hazy creed; the real point contended for is that it is inseparably bound up with the glory and success of Rome.¹ This appeal to the conservative instinct of the Roman mind was skilful. It fell in with the natural bias of Roman thought while it aroused Roman patriotism. At the same time the events of the day gave a terrible significance to the threat that the neglect of the ancient rites would cause the gods to withdraw their protection. St. Ambrose met these arguments in the usual way by drawing attention

¹ Compare what Lactantius says—*Hæ sunt religiones quas sibi a majoribus suis traditas pertinacissime tueri ac defendere perseverant: nec considerant quales sint, sed ex hoc probatas atque veras esse confidunt, quod eas veteres tradiderunt, ii. 6.*

to the reverses Rome had suffered in Pagan times.) He manages to represent Christianity as claiming only an equal position before the law. Noteworthy is the sharp separation he makes between the two parties of the Senate, speaking of the Christian members almost as if they formed a separate body. But the real question at issue was which religion should be that of the State. The Emperor's answer assigned that position to Christianity. The decision makes clear the weakness of the Pagan party. It was a purely political trial of strength between the two, and the result showed that the Court felt it less dangerous to outrage Pagan feeling in its tenderest point than to run the risk of offending the bishops.

The indirect effect of Symmachus' Relation was immense. Admitted then and now to be superior to St. Ambrose's answer, it became the Testament of the Pagans, one of whose weak points was that they had hitherto had no symbol of their faith. For that purpose it was conceived with consummate skill. The very absence of all mention of the merits of the ancient faith was one source of its universal popularity. The Pagan worshipped his own gods, so that it was impossible to extol any one set of deities without alienating the followers of another; nor indeed could a Roman senator, pleading for the observance of ancient tradition, well afford to call to mind the foreign origin of the Persian Mithra, the Egyptian Isis, or the Phrygian Cybele, whose cults had then most power over men's hearts. But the majesty of Rome, as the visible head of the Empire and the guarantee of its permanence, was a point on which all could unite. The want of precision, too, in the references to the traditions of bye-gone days was calculated to make the effect of the manifesto greater. For in those troublous times men had to look for comfort either backwards or forwards. While St. Augustine's eyes were fixed on the City of God,—the kingdom that is not of this world,—the Pagans consoled themselves for barbarian victories by dwelling fondly on the echoes of the conquering days of Rome, and sought to strengthen every link that in their imagination made them one race with Marius and Scipio. They could not then accept their defeat, but could only hope in silence for better days, for another Julian—and that Julian, when found, was Eugenius, "magister scriniorum" and ex-professor of Rhetoric.

The young Emperor had in 391 issued a law summarily forbidding the exercise of Pagan worship. The patience of the Pagans was exhausted. He was slain by Arbogastes, a Frank and a Pagan, who in reality wielded the Imperial

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The Olympic games ceased from the time of Theodosius,¹ and all games and spectacles were forbidden on a Sunday. It was part of the policy of the Emperors to reform the civil law by giving a universal application to the special rules of Christianity. The use of ecclesiastical jurisdiction illustrates this; the Imperial authority intervened to give the sentences of the bishops' courts the force of law. When in Rome, however, Theodosius had to give games himself. It is curious to find him forbidding Christians to intrigue for Pagan priesthoods. In spite of the ruinous expenses entailed, the opportunities afforded for winning popularity by magnificent shows caused some of these posts to be coveted.

In 388 Theodosius entered Italy after the defeat of Maximus, and stayed there three years. A deputation came to him about the altar, and found him disposed to yield; but the influence of St. Ambrose prevailed. To this occasion is probably to be referred whatever incident gave rise to the story of his consulting the Senate as to the future religion of the empire. According to Prudentius he put the question to that body after the defeat of Eugenius, and a majority decided for Christianity. It has been shown that he was not in Rome after Eugenius' fall, and, besides the violent improbability of such a measure on his part, a plain mistake is involved in ignoring the decisive steps of Gratian. He may have exhorted the deputation that came to him to abandon their errors. (Zosimus informs us that he convened the Senate and urged them to become Christians.) A very practical step was indeed taken. Gratian's measure for the confiscation of the temple revenues was confirmed and carried out. The effect was that the public cult ceased.) The essence of the State worship, as apart from that of individuals, was that the Sacra should be "publico sumptu;" hence to deprive it of the support of the treasury was to bring it to an end in point of strict pontifical law. That done, Paganism as a religion ceased to exist, and nothing was left but a number of individuals still clinging to old customs. The Senate protested that the sacrifices were invalid unless paid for by public funds. The exact date of this measure is disputed. The authority of Rüdiger has induced us to refer it to the years following 388, but many historians prefer the period after the fall of Eugenius. The important point is the legal aspect of what at first looks a mere act of plunder.

In 392 Theodosius took up and strengthened Valentinian's law against entering the temples. The year before, penalties

¹ Cedrenus *Hist. Comp.* 326 (ed. Reg.). His words do not authorize the conclusion that the games ceased by the Emperor's order. Chastel attributes their end to the Gothic invasion—(p. 216).

had been enacted against officials guilty of this crime, but now to kill a victim amounted to treason, even to honour the gods by flowers, lights, or incense, entailed confiscation of the house so polluted, or, if the offence were in a public place, a fine of five pounds of gold. Henceforward the Pagans of the East may only worship the gods in the secret recesses of their minds. Still their personal belief was free. Through their mouth-piece, Libanius, they protested bitterly, calling on the Emperor to give them the same liberty that Julian allowed the Christians. But Theodosius was not the man to spare the weaker party; moreover, in these matters he looked on himself "less as an Emperor than as the servant of God." He knew, however, the weakness of the laws, and accordingly took steps to secure their being enforced. Cynegius, prætorian prefect of the East, was sent in 387 to close the temples throughout the country. But the attacks of the bishops and monks caused most destruction. Theophilus of Alexandria razed many temples in Egypt. Theodosius had given him leave to turn a deserted temple of Mithra to Christian uses. In the interior were found many objects connected with the cult, which were paraded through the streets in derision. A riot was the result, and military force had to be employed to expel the Pagans who garrisoned the Serapeum. Soon after this venerable edifice was demolished during the absence of its defenders at the games. Moving on to Canopus he destroyed there the temple and school, in which the Egyptian priests learned the hieroglyphics. The rest of the temples of Egypt were pulled down or turned into monasteries. At Apamea in Syria the Pagans were able to resist the attacks of the bishop Marcellus on the temple of Jove, till he obtained military assistance. He then ranged the country with his monks, overturning altar and temple, till he fell a victim to Pagan resentment at ~~Antone~~ ^{Antioch}. Aulo Flavian of Antioch displayed equal zeal, his monks even destroying the private houses of idolators. Not that this crusade was everywhere successful. The inhabitants of Petra and Areopolis in Arabia, and of Raphia and Gaza in Palestine, managed to defend their sanctuaries. Heliopolis also maintained its reputation. At Edessa, the capital of Osrhøene, an old building, once a temple, was used for meetings of the citizens. The Bishop Eulogius appealed to Theodosius to have it destroyed, but the Emperor allowed it to remain open on condition that no sacrifices were celebrated. However, during his absence in the West, the military dux forged a rescript and destroyed the harmless pile.

There is evidence for the continuance of Pagan rites under Theodosius and Valentinian. The cult of Ceres at Eleusis, of Neptune at Ostia, and of Jupiter and Juno at Rome, were in full swing. The Vestal Virgins were still in honour in the eternal city; and Isis had her worshippers. A Vestal Primigenia, who had brought disgrace on the body to which she belonged suffered the ancient punishment together with her lover Maximus. Mithra was above all popular. In 390, Pagonius Venustus held a taurobolium on the Vatican, and a taurobolium and criobolium are recorded for the very year of Theodosius' law forbidding sacrifice under pain of death. The festivals had fallen into considerable disorder but still went on. Ausonius in his *De Feriis Romanis* evidently speaks of existing feasts, as does Macrobius.

The Kalends of January were especially popular. To the old Saturnalia other feasts had been added till the whole lasted from the 17th to the 25th of December. When Theodosius reformed the kalendar, he had to leave that and other Pagan festivals.¹ The college of augurs no longer exercised their functions publicly, but their services were at the disposal of individuals. The Salii still chanted their songs in honour of Mars. We have a statue raised to Valerius Proculus in 390 by the corporations of butchers and pork-sellers, giving his religious titles, which illustrates the alliance between the nobles and the trade-guilds. Though a number of distinguished writers at the end of the fourth century were Pagans, yet in the West none wrote against Christianity. It was not fear that prevented them. In the East, where the danger was greater, Libanius, Eunapius and Zosimus attacked the weak points of their adversaries fiercely. The real truth was, that, on the whole, the Pagans of the West were indifferent. They looked on their creed as part of the established social order, and, as such, were willing to defend it, but as a religion they cared little what became of it. Libanius was a Pagan by conviction, who really believed the Hellenic gods superior to the Trinity. His pupils, spread throughout Egypt, Greece, and Syria, formed a well organized army of propagators of Pagan ideas under the master's guidance. The work was left to the rhetoricians, for, after the failure of Julian's reaction, the Neo-Platonists devoted themselves at Athens to forming all previous philosophy into a comprehensive system — a task which naturally left little time for religious polemic. The unknown translator of the so-called "Hermes Trismegistus" gave vent to a cry of despair over the religion

¹ The vintage-feast on October 15, the "vota pro salute principis," etc.

of Egypt ; soon, he tells us, nothing will be left of ancient piety, save the voice of tradition and a few lines graven on up-rooted altars.

After the death of Theodosius our story splits into two halves. In the West, the law of Honorius ordering the removal of statues from the temples was carried out even in Rome. Every form of Pagan rite was forbidden, and the bishops were charged with the execution of the law. The Counts Jovius and Gaudentius were sent to overthrow the temples of Africa. Honorius was foolish enough to deprive himself of the services of his Pagan soldiers, till the Rhaetian war forced him to recall Generides. The latter refusing to be an exception, the decree was rescinded. Nothing shows us better the defenceless state of the old religion than the account of Serena, wife of Stilicho, taking a necklace, which she fancied, from the deserted statue of Vesta. Stilicho removed the gold plates from the gates of the Capitol—a terrible sacrilege—and ordered the Sibylline books to be burnt. It is said that he educated his son Eucherius as a Pagan in order to secure the help of that party in his ambitious designs on the throne. The story may be a calumny, but it proves that the Pagans must have been numerous, though their cult was proscribed. All the temples which had not been destroyed, had been confiscated to the fisc, but the Council of Carthage, not content with this, demanded that they should be razed to the ground, especially on the African coast, where the Pagans were more obstinate. Stilicho refused the request, but Olympius, who succeeded him as favourite or master of Honorius, granted it. St. Martin's example was imitated in Spain, till the Government had to interfere to protect the "ornaments of the cities." However, the consuls still began the year by taking the auspices, and the old feasts in honour of the gods were still kept as days of general rejoicing. In 415, the money devoted to the games was expressly excepted from the confiscation of the property of Paganism. Honorius celebrated the secular¹ games in 404.

The majority of the Senate was now Christian. When in 410 the Tuscan soothsayers offered to deliver Rome by magic rites, the conscript fathers rejected their proposal. The hopes of the Pagans revived with the proclamation of Attalus, who had been brought up among them, and only recently baptized by an Arian bishop. Their hard lot had made them ready to welcome Rhadagasius some three years before. Now Tertullus, the prefect of the city, boasted that he would soon be pontiff also. The Goths, however, soon

¹ Sometimes said to be games in honour of Stilicho's victories.

tired of their puppet. The Fall of Rome really extinguished the Pagan party. The Roman nobles had posed as the vigilant guardians of her glory, and they never recovered the shock to their credit. The loss of the provinces impoverished most of the Senatorial families. The wretched fugitives who sought the protection of Count Heraclian had neither means nor influence to prolong the struggle. Besides, the political constitution that alone could support the dying creed passed away with the victories of Alaric. Everywhere, we read, (the Pagans, rudely awakened from their dreams turned for consolation in the ruin of their country to the bright hopes held out by Christianity.) Men thought more of the next world while this one was tumbling about their ears.

The province of Africa is especially prominent during this period. In 408 the Pagans of Calama celebrated a festival in the streets, and killed in the course of a riot one of the Christians who interfered with them. This outrage was followed by the indiscriminate plundering of innocent and guilty among the Pagans, and the Church of Africa obtained from Honorius a law forbidding them to assemble at all. Their ministers were ordered to leave Carthage, and the insignificant rustics who bore branches on their shoulders at village feasts in honour of Bacchus were subjected to fines. At Suffecta sixty Christians fell in a tumult caused by the overthrow of a statue of Hercules. The temple of the Dea Coelestis at Carthage, which had been closed, was consecrated as a church, while all other edifices belonging to the ancient cult were destroyed by the tribune ~~Ureus~~. The invasion of the Vandals put an end to these severities. In Gaul Druidism revived to some extent. At this time "Stirps Druidarum" is the highest praise Ausonius can bestow on the family of Patera. In Northern Italy, the cult of Saturn was still vigorous. Vigilius, Bishop of Trent, had found few Christians in his diocese in 385. He perished in 403 in the attempt to demolish a statue of Saturn in the valley of Radenna.

The overthrow of Paganism was now legally complete; it only remained to stamp out its embers. As a religious system we hear of it no more, but the process of destroying the rites and superstitions connected with it was naturally a long one. The briefest outline must suffice. As long as there were Emperors in the West, laws against the old faith continued. In 425, Valentinian forbade the employment of Pagans in the Imperial service, and pronounced the penalty of exile against them. These measures seem to have forced many into outward conformity, for in 426 we

have a law directed against those who "nomen Christianitatis induiti, sacrificia fecerint." St. Leo tells us that many Romans adored the rising sun, some in ignorance, some in the spirit of Paganism. So also many nominal Christians at Carthage worshipped the Dea Coelestis. The severe measures against Pagans in the Codex Theodosianus, which was put in force in the East in 438, were approved by the Senate and adopted for the West in 443. At last in 447 the law interfered to protect Pagan tombs from the Christians. The sack of Rome by the Vandals in 455 destroyed what little remained of the Pagan splendours of the Capitol. Still there were found even in high places some followers of idolatry. Venerius Volusinianus was prætorian prefect in 429. ~~Merobandi~~, the poet and general of the Roman troops ^{Merobau} in Spain under Valentinian, even dared to give public utterance to his sentiments.¹ In a poem addressed to Aetius he hints clearly enough that the "crudelis Enyo," who has stirred up the barbarians to destroy the peace of Rome, is a personification of Christianity. Marcellinus a general of Valentinian was noted for his skill in divination. In the time of Severus he ruled as an independent prince in Dalmatia. After the deposition of Avitus there had been a conspiracy among the Roman nobles to place him on the throne, and thus restore Paganism; but it came to nothing. With Anthemius there came a gleam of hope for toleration. He was a descendant of Procopius, the relative of Julian. Hercules vanquishing the Nemean lion appears on his money. His friendship for the philosopher Severus, whom he raised to the consulship in 470, may explain his attitude. But the influence of Pope Hilary proved too strong for the Imperial designs. During this reign the Lupercalia were still celebrated, for even Christians could not bring themselves to part with this ancient festival. At last Pope Gelasius succeeded in suppressing it in 496.

In spite of exceptions made in favour of some distinguished men, the few remaining Pagans of the great towns were forced to hide themselves. Their religion imposed ceremonies, not doctrines, and these were prevented by the vigilance of the magistrates. But the cult of the Lares and Penates was kept up in their homes. A poet of the fifth century speaks of Christ as the God "magnis qui colitur solus in urbibus." It was in the country and the small towns that Paganism was mostly found. Maximus, bishop of Turin, speaks of sacrifices by the peasantry in 440. It was a common experience to find in some lonely

¹ The works of ^{Merobaudis} Merobandi were "Christianized" by medieval copyists, as perhaps were those of Claudian.

spot a rude altar of turf, on which the still smoking embers betrayed the crime that had been committed. Only the want of some one to enforce the laws enabled the guilty to escape with their lives. The same bishop says that though the Christian Emperors made many excellent laws in favour of religion, several magistrates did not even give themselves the trouble to publish them. The master who knows that his slaves sacrifice, and does not prevent them, is guilty of their offence, he tells the Christians, urging them to apprehend the peasant priests of Diana. His treatise "contra Paganos" shows that there were still many adherents of the old cult. In 443 the Council of Arles reminded the bishops that they were guilty of sacrilege if they neglected to uproot stones and trees which were held in veneration. Sacrifice was offered to Apollo on Mount Cassinum till St. Benedict in 529 turned the temple into a chapel of St. Martin. We hear of Pagan rites in the grove of Terracina. In Sardinia, Corsica, and Sicily they remained longest. The cult of Hercules was popular, and sacrifices were freely made. Osiris was honoured in Elba. A Christian named Julia was crucified in Corsica in 445 for refusing to take part in a public sacrifice. The isolation of these islands explains the vigour of Paganism. St. Gregory the Great tells us that there were many Pagans in Corsica as late as 600. Writing to Bishop Januarius, he commanded him to put to death the slaves and imprison the free men who still clung to their ancient superstitions in Sicily.

The barbarian rulers of the West were, with the exception of the Franks and Saxons, under the influence of the Christian faith. They had adopted the religion of the people whose empire was the greatest—a curious comment on the pleas of such Pagans as Symmachus. The gradual change in habits brought about by their dominion gave the final touch to the work of Theodosius. The games fell out of favour, and Christian feasts were introduced to take the place of the old festivals.¹ Still, at the end of the fifth century, there were Pagans in Rome. Andromachus, who defended the Lupercalia against Pope Gelasius, is throughout addressed as one by his opponent. A contemptuous permission was accorded them to keep their festival by themselves if they would. A feast in honour of Castor and Pollux still remained in the middle of the sixth century!² Procopius tells us of a secret attempt to open the doors of the temple of Janus, during the

¹ The Purification for the Lupercalia, Christmas for the kalends of January, etc. Compare Fleury, *Eccl. Hist.* xx., 11, for a similar use of festivals in honour of the martyrs.

² According to the author of the *Cosmography of Ethicus*.

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Cyrus of Panopolis, a poet and a "Hellene," for many years prefect of Constantinople, was tried on the charge of being a Pagan. He was compelled to take orders, and made bishop of Cotyaeum in Phrygia, to remove him from a scene where his popularity made him dangerous. Not overt acts only, but private opinions are now punishable. In 449 the works of Porphyry were ordered to be burnt. The foundation of the University of Constantinople, designed to supersede Pagan Athens, was the work of Theodosius.

In 451 we find Marcian prohibiting any attempt to re-open the temples. The renewal of the laws against honouring the gods by flowers or libations shows that there were still Pagans who persisted in disobedience to the measures of the Emperors against their ceremonies. The revenues devoted to the games were confiscated.¹ Marriage with a Pagan was forbidden. The middle of the fifth century has been given as the date of the final dissolution of Paganism; but traces of it are to be found much later. Under Leo I. we hear of ~~Leontius~~ ^{Leontius} of Antioch, who was put on trial as a Pagan, and compulsorily baptized in the church of St. Sophia. Leo was the first Emperor to be crowned by the Patriarch of Constantinople. In 467 it was ordained that any house in which Pagan rites had been celebrated was to be confiscated to the fisc, the owner being banished or put to death. So great was the horror excited by idolatry that about this time a painter was condemned to lose his hand for having copied the features of Zeus in a picture of Christ. Zeno attacked the grammarians and rhetoricians. Pamprepius, the pupil of Proclus, was sentenced to exile on suspicion of having practised magic against the Emperor; but the protection of Illus secured him from the execution of the penalty. Agapius and Severianus also suffered under Zeno. The school of Edessa, in Western Mesopotamia, which was a centre of "Hellenism," was suppressed in 489. Six years previously Leontius, aided by Illus, had raised the standard of rebellion in Syria. The fact that he was crowned by the ex-Empress Verina makes it doubtful whether he openly attempted to revive Paganism; but he was at any rate the friend of Pamprepius. The conjunction of names is suspicious.

The Emperor Anastasius, who came to the throne in 491, was forced to sign a written declaration of orthodoxy before his coronation. He put an end to one relic of the old religion—combats with wild beasts in the amphitheatre. In 521, the Olympic games held at Antioch, which were more

¹ By a novel attached to *Cod. Theod.*, vi. 31.

bound up with Pagan memories than any other similar ceremony, were forbidden by Justin. The same Emperor forbade Jews, Pagans, and Heretics to exercise their religion, and excluded them from the practice of the liberal professions. While private opinions were yet free in the West, in the East it had been for some time the policy of the Imperial Government to attempt to put outside the pale of society those who clung to idolatry. Succeeding his uncle in 527, Justinian set himself to stamp out heresy and the remains of Paganism. In 530 he put down the Olympian games held at Elis. The same year Pagans were, in addition to their other disabilities, made incapable of giving evidence in a court of law, or of receiving an inheritance. Next year came a measure ordering that they should all be baptized, and threatening with death any who should dare to sacrifice. The heads of families who neglected to have those under their care baptized were to be outlawed. Three months grace was given them, during which they were to conform to the law. The numerous convictions for the crime of Paganism would seem to show that many were still faithful to the gods; but some doubt is thrown on this inference by the assertion of Procopius that those whose riches Justinian coveted were the first victims of his repressive measures. John, Bishop of Asia, was given a commission in 546 to seek out the Pagans in Constantinople. Among those whom he found and "converted" were Macedonius, the ex-referendarius, Asclepiodotus, the ex-prefect, and Thomas, the quaestor. The patrician Phocas alone took poison rather than abjure the gods. Tribonian, a quaestor of Justinian and one of the compilers of his code, is called by Hesychius Ἕλληνας καὶ ἄθεος, but his learning and his indifference may have been the foundation of the charge. The historian Procopius is also thought to have been a Pagan. Bishop John himself avers that in 556 he rooted out the incredible number of seventeen thousand Pagans in Caria, Lycia and Phrygia. The bishops received great powers in the civil administration from Justinian and were thus able to keep the magistrates up to the mark; but we hear of a few remnants of the old cult where episcopal vigilance was wanting. The same John, for instance, tells us that on the borders of Palestine a statue was still adored in 550, and that at Heliopolis the lightning in 554 struck a temple of Apollo. The inhabitants of two cities of Libya, Boreum and ~~Angilas~~ ^{Augila}, were almost entirely Pagans, a temple of Jupiter existing in the one place, and a shrine dedicated to Alexander of Macedon in the other. The efforts of Justinian to convert these idolaters were completely successful. Between 555

and 560 Narses suppressed the worship of Isis at Philae. In spite of the efforts of Justinian, some Pagans were found at Constantinople in 561. The Mainotes, who dwelt amidst the inaccessible defiles of Taygetus, defied alike the arms and the piety of the Emperor. Aphrodite and Poseidon were adored by them in the IXth century, till, after a gallant resistance, they yielded to Basil the Macedonian. These hardy representatives of Spartan freedom were probably the last Pagans, in the proper sense of that word, to abandon their cult.

In the time of Justinian there were philosophers at Alexandria, but the fame of the schools of Athens eclipsed them. A constant succession of teachers had carried on there the work of Proclus, "the hierophant of the whole world." Devoted to magic and theurgy they were objects of suspicion to their Christian neighbours, and the more famous leaders had occasionally to withdraw from the scene of their labours. We hear of Proclus praying in the temple of Aesculapius, to which he had paid a secret visit, but for the most part the school adopted the convenient doctrine that the gods were best honoured in the recesses of the mind. They studied with ardour the mysterious wisdom of Egypt and Chaldaea, and visions and dreams rewarded their efforts. The gods, banished from the light of day, seem to have found consolation in troubling the sleep of these Platonic dreamers. Such miracles as the halo which appeared about the head of Proclus attest the feeling of their own weakness in the school. The drain on his resources caused by the Persian wars led Justinian at the beginning of his reign to suppress the salaries of all the State-paid teachers. But while the schools of law at Berytus and of rhetoric at Constantinople were re-opened, those of philosophy were not. Such is the account given by historians of the closing of the schools of Athens in 529. Even if Justinian's edict was not a measure of persecution directed against the sole representatives of Hellenism, still his Empire was no safe place for a philosopher. Private convictions had long been amenable to the laws in the Eastern Empire, and the present occupant of the throne left no doubt that he meant to carry out the policy of his predecessors. Seven philosophers therefore set off to find a refuge at the court of Choseoes. Disgusted with what they saw there, they returned soon after to their native land, being expressly protected from Justinian by a clause in the treaty made by him with the Persian monarch.

With them the "golden chain" came to an end, and the last voice raised on behalf of the old religion was silenced. The same year saw the dissolution of the schools and the