

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 Ambarvalia; 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](#)

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how

[Julian](#)

tried to remodel a pagan

[hierarchy](#)

on the

[Christian](#)

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

[More](#)