Paganism and Pagan Survivals in Spain up to the Fall of the Visgothic Kingdom
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Paganism and Pagan Survivals in Spain During the Fourth Century

[28] The period to which the present chapter is devoted is delimited by two important events in the history of the Spanish Peninsula. It begins with the Council of Elvira on the eve of the Edict of Toleration. The records of this important assembly, besides giving us our first idea concerning the organization of the Church in Spain, contain the reaction of the Catholics to the paganism which surrounded them. This council shows forth conditions as they were at the end of the period in which paganism enjoyed special privilege at the hands of the government. With the Edict of Toleration its position of privilege before the law was taken away and it was to enjoy only the religious liberty extended to all; soon it was to be proscribed. This period of roughly a hundred years was brought to an abrupt close and the development of culture in Spain was profoundly altered by the invasion of the barbarians at the beginning of the fifth century.

THE COUNCIL OF ELVIRA

The town of Elvira (Illiberis) where the bishops of Spain met was situated in the province of Baetica near the site of the present city of Granada. Practically all students of early Church history are agreed that the council was held before the Edict of Toleration (313) and during the time when Constantius Chlorus was Caesar of the West (293-306). While some historians assert that the bishops met at Elvira before the persecution of Diocletian in Spain (303-305), internal evidence seems to indicate that the bishops assembled only after the persecution had ended, that is, about the year 306. Thus the council discussed the punishment to be meted out to informers (delatores) to Christians who had sacrificed to the gods, and also the question whether a person who had been killed in the act of destroying a pagan idol was entitled to the honors of martyrdom. Such problems were more likely to arise after a persecution than during a time when the Church was at peace.

Nineteen bishops attended the council, the most noted of them being Osius, who played such an important part in the ecclesiastical history of the subsequent period. All of the five provinces into which the Iberian Peninsula had been divided by Diocletian were represented at the council, and hence it may be called a "national" council. There was one bishop from Galicia and one from Tarraconensis; three bishops came from Lusitania, five from Carthaginiensis, and the remainder from Baetica. Twenty-four priests were also present, four of whom came from Carthaginiensis, and the other twenty from Baetica. Of the eighty-one canons which were enacted at Elvira, over twenty were concerned with paganism.

In the first canon the bishops declared that a member of the church who had worshiped an idol should not be admitted to "communion" even at the end of his life. Hefele thought that the word
"communio" in these canons had the meaning of the Holy Eucharist. But the Latin "communio" seldom meant the Eucharist before the fourth century was well advanced. The more usual meaning was "communion with the Church," and a careful reading of the canons of Elvira indicates that the word is used in them in this sense. The council inflicted the penalty of perpetual exclusion from the Church for seventeen offenses. Rigorous though it was the severity of the bishops was not that of the Novatians, who denied that the Church had power to forgive sins committed after baptism. There are various other canons of Elvira which permit a sinner to return to the Church after he has performed the specified penance. This severe penalty of permanent excommunication, decreed by the bishops of Elvira, was perhaps the most effective means of preventing the faithful, living in the midst of a pagan society, from taking part in idolatrous worship and committing adultery and murder. The bishops were more lenient towards a catechumen (christianus) who had sacrificed to the gods and allowed him to be baptized after he had performed penance for ten years.

A problem closely connected with idolatry arose in regard to the Christian flamines. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Spain had been very devoted to the imperial cult and in practically every town of any size there was to be found a priest who presided over the worship of the emperors. In practice civil and religious functions were inseparable in the pagan Roman administration and Christians could not hold office without coming in contact with the pagan religion as a part of their official duties. The bishops of Elvira were forced to express their attitude on the question whether a Christian could accept the office of flamen without giving up his membership in the Church. Three canons of the council dealt with this difficult problem. A Christian flamen who took part in the pagan sacrifices and in the "murder" and "immorality" which accompanied them was to be perpetually excluded from the Church. The Christian flamen, therefore, according to this decision was absolutely forbidden to participate in pagan worship under the severest ecclesiastical penalty. The "murder" and "immorality" to which the council referred probably meant the gladiatorial combats and scenic presentations furnished to the people for bestowing the office. A flamen, however, who abstained from all sacrifice during his term of office (generally one year), but who at his own expense paid for the gladiatorial combats and theatrical performances was to be readmitted to the Church at the end of his life if he performed the prescribed penance. The "crown" was the head-gear worn by the flamen during his term of office and which he was permitted to wear when his official duties were over. The above regulations prove that it was only with the greatest difficulty that a man could assume the duties of flamen and not be perpetually excluded from the Church. The fact, however, that one who held this office could at times avoid the duty of offering sacrifice shows that the imperial cult in Spain was losing its religious character and becoming a civil function.

A less difficult problem arose in the case of a Christian who might be called upon to fill the office of chief municipal magistrate, that is, to serve as a duumvir. During the year that he held this office a duumvir was forbidden to attend church. A. Dale and G. Bareille thought that this regulation had been made because the magistrate would have to pass sentence of death and imprisonment, and such punishments were odious to the early Christians. But the reason for the council's action was rather because all Roman civil functions were closely connected with religious worship, and to prevent the danger of scandal to the other members of the community the duumvir was requested to stay away from the church during his period of office. This ecclesiastical compromise was made, as Hefele wisely points out, to prevent local enactments unfavorable to the Church.
With the spread of the Church throughout Spain the bishops of Elvira were confronted with the problem whether Christians should be allowed to marry pagans, Jews and heretics. From the wording of the canon which discusses the marriage of a Christian and a pagan, it is evident that in Spain as elsewhere at this time Christianity had spread more rapidly among the women than among the men, for the canon refers to the "abundance of young women" in the Church. (23) The bishops censured the marriage of a Christian woman to a pagan, but attached no ecclesiastical penalty to the prohibition. On the other hand they excluded from the Church for the period of five years those Christian parents who allowed their children to marry heretics or Jews. (24) It was considered that there was greater danger to the faith of the Christian wife and offspring in a marriage with a heretic or Jew than with a pagan, another proof that paganism in Spain was losing its grip on many of its adherents. The bishops, however, threatened Christian parents who allowed their daughter to marry a pagan flamen with the penalty of perpetual excommunication from the church. (25) The wife of a flamen (called flaminica) usually took an active part in the imperial cult, and hence the reason for the council's severity. It is to be noted that the council inflicted this penalty only upon the parents who permitted their daughters to marry a flamen.

The Council of Elvira furthermore gave its decision upon three problems that concerned especially the wealthy members of the Church. It was customary in Roman times for the person in charge of heathen games and processions to lend ornaments and dress as stage-properties or for decoration; occasionally he might borrow these things from his acquaintances. (26) As such requests might be addressed to the wealthy Christians, the council declared that anyone who permitted his clothes and ornaments to be used in pagan celebrations or games was to be excommunicated from the Church for a period of three years. (27) Another pagan practice caused embarrassment to the wealthy Christians. In Roman times the pagans were wont to offer part of the produce of the soil to their gods, which offering they regarded as a necessary expense. Hence the pagan "tenant would demand that in the settlement of accounts he should be credited with these legitimate expenses and a corresponding reduction made in his rent." (28) The council forbade a Christian landowner to agree to this arrangement, for such a mode of action would have meant the tacit approval of idolatrous worship. Failure to obey this command entailed a penalty of five years exclusion from the Church. The council also advised the wealthy Christians to have all pagan idols removed from their homes; if, however, their removal might arouse the pagan slaves to violence, the owner might allow these images in his home but was to refrain from doing anything that implied an approval of idolatry. With the same intention of not antagonizing the pagans by the destruction of idols the council prudently decided that a person who was killed in the act of destroying pagan images was not entitled to the honors usually paid to martyrs for the faith. (31) The dread of doing anything that might encourage idolatry led the bishops at Elvira to enact the famous canon which forbade the use of pictures on the walls of the church. (32) Some Catholic writers give ingenious interpretations of this canon. Bellarmine, for example, thought that only mural paintings were forbidden because there was danger lest the pictures be treated with disrespect when the walls of the church disintegrated. De Rossi asserted that paintings were allowed in the catacombs, but not in places such as Spain, where the churches were exposed to the gaze of the pagans. Other writers thought that the council forbade only those paintings which represented the divinity, not images of Christ and the saints. (33) But they read into a canon a meaning which is not there. The bishops forbade "what is worshiped and adored" to be painted on the walls of the churches. Some non-Catholic writers quote this canon as a proof that in the early Church there was an express disapproval of all images, but they exaggerate its meaning. The bishops did not issue any doctrinal statement in regard to images; they merely passed a disciplinary measure, because in the pagan surroundings there was grave danger that the images in the churches would be worshiped and adored. Furthermore, this was only the
decision of a provincial, or at most of a national council, that was characterized by rigorism.

The council also visited perpetual excommunication upon anyone who had by magic caused the death of another. The reason for this severity was that the practice of magic included also the practice of idolatry. (35)

Two of the canons of Elvira concern the conduct of Christians at the cemeteries. The bishops forbade women to spend the night there in vigil, because under the pretext of assembling for prayer they secretly committed crimes. (36) The second canon forbade the use of lighted candles during the day at the tombs of the deceased "for the spirits of the saints are not to be disturbed." (37) Very probably, as Hefele suggests, the bishops were referring to the pagan belief that the soul still remained within the tomb, and to the pagan practice of lighting candles before the resting-place of the dead. (38) For such beliefs and practices may have been continued among the converts to Christianity. This canon would seem to have been prompted by some local superstition.

Recent archaeological discoveries offer concrete evidence of abuses very similar to those which gave concern to the bishops of Elvira. Excavations made in a Christian cemetery of the fourth or fifth century at Tarragona reveal several indications of pagan practices followed there. (39) The practice of having funeral banquets there is attested by six tables, semi-circular in shape and with a depression in the center. Two of these tables are covered with red stucco, and red was among the pagans the color of the dead. Near one of the tombs were found fragments of glass, some coins, ashes, and bones, remains presumably of a banquet held there. In two instances tubes were found leading down into the tomb where the body reposed. (40) A vial in one grave contained the remains of milk. A coin was discovered resting on the head of a corpse. This is presumably to be traced to the common pagan practice of placing money with the deceased person so that he might be able to pay Charon for bringing him across the river Acheron. There was one sealed tomb found which contained no body. It was evidently a cenotaph, reflecting the pagan belief that the spirit of a deceased person whose body could not be found required a tomb as a place of abode. (41)

As Père Delehaye points out various practices, pagan in origin, in connection with the burial of the dead were deeply rooted in the customs of the people and lasted on into Christian times. (42) Many of them are plainly connected in their origin with the belief that the soul of the deceased continued to live in or about the tomb. However, frequently they had lost their superstitious meaning and were retained merely by custom.

The Council of Elvira laid down various regulations in regard to the admission of pagans into the Church. The bishops required the catechumens to spend two years in preparation for the sacrament of baptism. (43) Flamines, however, because of the dangers to which their sacerdotal duties exposed them, were to wait three years before being admitted to the Church. (44) Actors and charioteers were obliged to give up their professions before the bishops would admit them to membership in the Church. (45) During their period of probation the catechumens had to give concrete evidence of their good faith and sincerity. If they committed sins of adultery or murder, the sacrament of baptism was to be postponed until the hour of death. The council permitted any of the faithful to baptize a catechumen who was at the point of death. (46)

Such then was the legislation at Elvira in regard to paganism and related matters. The bishops realized the difficulties of their flock in a world officially and actually pagan. They were anxious to have Christians live in peace with their neighbors and willing to have them participate in the normal secular activity about them. The pagan members of the communities in which the Christians lived were not to be especially antagonized. Violent and imprudent zeal against the objects of pagan cult was
discouraged. A Christian might even allow his slaves to keep pagan images in his home when their removal would give rise to violence and bloodshed. Though a Christian holding public office was exposed to the danger of compromising his faith, the bishops specified conditions under which such office might be held. On the other hand the bishops attempted no compromise with pagan practices or sacrifices. The most rigorous of spiritual penalties was visited on any Christian who paid worship to the gods or directly approved of pagan practices: he was to be [38] cut off perpetually from membership in the Church. Such stern measures were evidently necessary to prevent defection from the faith, for at the time the council was held paganism was the official religion and was closely bound up with many phases of civil and social life.

The fact that so many bishops of Spain were able to meet after the persecution of Diocletian proves that the hierarchy was firmly established in the Romanized southern and eastern sections. The canons in regard to the pagan priests, magistrates and wealthy Christians clearly indicate that Christianity had already penetrated into the upper classes of Spanish society. While the exact number of Christians in the Peninsula at this time is of course impossible to determine, Spain probably possessed one of the largest Christian communities in the western portion of the empire. [47] The epoch-making events that opened the fourth century were to witness the gradual decline of paganism and the predominance of Christianity throughout the greater part of the Peninsula.

Probably in the very year that the bishops of Spain had assembled (306) Constantine was acclaimed emperor by the soldiers of his father, Constantius Chlorus. A few years later (313) the Edict of Toleration was issued in which Christianity was placed on an equal footing with paganism. [48] The property which had been taken from the Christians was now restored to them; they were able to build churches and the clergy received many of the privileges which the pagan priests enjoyed. Though Constantine was not baptized until the end of his life, his legislation was impregnated with the spirit of Christianity. Thus he commanded the observance of the Sunday, forbade the people of the cities to engage in servile work on this day, established episcopal courts, facilitated the holding of Church councils, and used the power of the State to prevent the rise and spread of heresy and schism. "His (Constantine's) vision," says Norman Baynes, "was that of a Roman empire sustained by a Christian God and founded on an orthodox faith." [49]


Constantine throughout his life remained faithful to the principle of religious liberty which he had proclaimed in 313. This toleration, however, was not extended to the practice of magic and divination, which was sternly prohibited under penalty of death. [51] One fact moreover in the life of the great emperor indicates the ever-widening gulf between him and the pagan religion. Shortly before his death in 337 the people of Umbria asked Constantine if a temple might be erected in his name. The ruler agreed to their request, but expressly stipulated that no sacrifices were to be offered there. [52] Constantine's refusal to have sacrifices offered in his name dealt a severe blow to the imperial cult which was closely bound up with the worship of the reigning emperor.

Constantius (337-361), his son and successor, [53] did not follow this policy of toleration. In a famous edict of 341 he gave orders that all superstitions should cease and the folly of sacrifices should be abolished. [54] A later edict of this same Arian emperor commanded the closing of all pagan temples, and those found guilty of offering sacrifices were to be put to death. [55] These laws of Constantius were [40] an important factor in arousing the pagans of the empire to action, and in 361 the legions of Gaul unfurled the standard of revolt and acclaimed as emperor Julian, a cousin of Constantius and an apostate from Christianity. On the way to give battle to the usurper Constantius died and for the first
time since Licinius the empire was governed by a pagan.

Julian did not attempt any violent persecution of the Christians and even urged the Arian and Catholic leaders to settle the differences between them, hoping thereby to cause dissension in the ranks of the Christians. He gave orders, however, that the temples of the pagans which the Christians had seized were to be returned to their original owners, and forbade Christian teachers to practice their profession. His efforts were also directed to the reestablishment of paganism in the form of what has been described as a "mosaic of decadent philosophy, bloody sacrifices, rituals old and new, 'spiritualism' and divination of all sorts." But as Julian reigned only two years (361-363) his efforts to revive paganism and weaken Christianity were doomed to failure.

Jovian, the immediate successor of Julian, reigned only eight months, but the mere fact that a Christian became emperor meant that Christianity had definitely triumphed. Valentinian I (364-375), who followed Jovian on the throne, did not antagonize the pagans and proclaimed religious liberty throughout the empire. But like Constantine, Valentinian I refused to tolerate the practice of magic and divination. The civil authorities of the fourth century believed that magic and divination could be used for harmful purposes and that a person might use the information obtained from a magician or diviner to foster rebellion. That their fears were not unfounded is evident from the fact that in 372 a man named Theodore plotted against the life of Valentinian I, because he had been told by a magician that he was to be the next emperor. During the reign of this emperor there were four edicts issued against the practice of magic and divination, and even the study of magic was punishable by death.

A decided change in the imperial policy towards paganism came during the brief reign of Gratian (378-383). Under the influence of St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, Gratian renounced the title of Pontifex Maximus, and had the Altar of Victory removed from the Roman senate despite the opposition of Symmachus and other pagan senators. This same emperor also withdrew from the pagan priests many of the privileges which up to then they had continued to enjoy. But still there was no official proscription of paganism until the year 392, when the emperor Theodosius (379-395), a Spaniard by birth, forbade not only the offering of bloody sacrifices, but also pagan religious rites in honor of the lar, the genius, or the penates. A person found guilty of offering bloody sacrifices was to be put to death, while one who practiced other pagan rites was threatened with the loss of his property. The laws against all forms of paganism were continued by the successors of Theodosius, and the significant fact is that in the last quarter of the fourth century the heathens were no longer designated by the term "gentiles," but by that of "pagani." This distinction clearly indicates that paganism was becoming more and more confined to the people of the country districts.

RESULTS OF THE ANTI-PAGAN LEGISLATION IN SPAIN

The effectiveness of this anti-pagan legislation is clearly evidenced in Spain, where only a few pagan inscriptions dating from the fourth century have been found. Two inscriptions made during the reign of Constantine show that many still looked upon him as a god. These two inscriptions, found at Cordova, were dedicated by persons "most devoted to the divinity and majesty" of the emperor. After his death an inscription to Constantine gave him the title of "divus," but probably by this time the word "divus" had lost all its pagan significance. Thus Constantius in a law forbidding all pagan sacrifices referred to his father as "divus Constantinus." There are three inscriptions to the "divinity and majesty" of Constantius at Tarragona, Cordova and Coimbra. A painting made in the year 388 shows how pagan symbolism and mythology continued to exert an influence upon Christian art. This picture represents the emperor Theodosius seated with the co-emperors, Arcadius and Honorius, on
either side of him. In the lower part of the picture is a recumbent female figure partly clad, wearing a crown of leaves and fruit, who represents Ceres, the goddess of fertility. About her are the genii or amores bearing fruits and flowers. As far as the writer knows there are no pagan inscriptions in Spain that can be traced beyond the year 388.

Only one law in the section of the Theodosian code devoted to paganism refers to Spain by name. In the year 395 the reigning emperors, Arcadius and Honorius, ordered that no one at any time or place might enter a pagan temple to offer sacrifices. The officials throughout the empire were warned that any neglect in the execution of this order would bring upon them the penalty of death. Four years later, however, these same emperors felt it necessary to make an exception for Spain. In a rescript to Macrobius, the vicarius of Spain, and Proclianus, the vicarius of the Five Provinces, they reminded these officials that the temples and ornaments of the pagans were not to be destroyed, and that any document brought forward in justification of such destruction was to be at once forwarded to them. This prohibition to destroy the pagan memorials of Spain did not proceed from any artistic motive, for in the same year (399), the emperors ordered the pretorian prefect, Euthychianus, to destroy the temples of the pagans where this could be done "sine turba ac tumultu." Probably, therefore, as Geffcken supposes, the emperors had to take into consideration in issuing this order to the officials of Spain and Gaul that there were still many pagans in these regions who would be offended at the destruction of these artistic memorials.

Another law in the Theodosian Code referred to the Nemesiaci, a society also mentioned on an undated inscription at Evora in modern Portugal. The emperors, Honorius and Theodosius II, in 409/412, issued an edict which ordered these Nemesiaci, and also other members of the societies of the Vitutiatii, Signiferi, Cantabraritii, to return to their native cities. Was the society of the Nemesiaci a religious society at the time this edict was issued? St. Paulinus of Nola (354-431) in a letter to a certain Jovius refers to the cult of Nemesis in such a general way that it is difficult to determine whether or not he is describing an actual cult of the goddess. Commodian, who wrote his Instructiones either about 250 or 450, explains in this poem how the Nemesiaci were wont to dance about a wooden image of the goddess, pretended that they were prophets, told the fortunes of the spectators, and then proceeded to collect money. Most probably Commodian lived in the third century, and though the Nemesiaci may have been devotees of the cult of Nemesis in his time, by the beginning of the fifth century this society presumably had lost its religious significance. The emperors would hardly have tolerated any distinctly pagan society at a time when the practice of paganism was a penal offense, in some cases punishable by death. A further indication of the non-religious character of the Nemesiaci is the fact that their name appears only in the part of the Theodosian Code devoted to corporations (de collegiatis); had they been members of a religious society, mention would have been made of them in the sixteenth book of the code where pagan practices are expressly prohibited.

The writers of the fourth century give a little clearer picture of the paganism in Spain than do the inscriptions and the Theodosian Code. Thus Macrobius, a pagan author of the late fourth century, may be referring to an actual pagan cult when he speaks in his Saturnalia of "the Accitani, a people of Spain, who worship with the greatest devotion an image of Mars adorned with rays, to which they give the name Neton." The Accitani lived, as far as is known, in the northeast section of Baetica. An undated inscription to the god Neton has been found near the city of Merida. J. MacCulloch believes that Neton is derived from the same root as the name of the god of war among the Irish, who was called Net.

During the fourth century Spain was not deeply affected by any of the heretical movements, which in other countries prevented the growth of the Church, and impeded the struggle against paganism. For
a brief time, however, in the middle of the century, the Luciferian controversy regarding the 
readmission to the Church of the bishops who had lapsed into Arianism provoked much bitterness 
among the Spanish hierarchy. The leader of the Luciferians there, Gregory, bishop of Elvira, is 
mentioned by name in the Libellus precum, which the Luciferians addressed about the year 384 to the 
emperors Valentinian, Theodosius and Arcadius. This work, in which the Luciferians asked the 
emperors to protect them from the attacks of their powerful enemies, gives some indication of the 
pagan survivals in Spain in the second half of the fourth century. Bishop Osius, who has already been 
mentioned as present at the Council of Elvira, had signed the heretical decrees of the Council of 
Sirmium in 357. When he returned to Spain, Gregory, bishop of Elvira, claimed that Osius was not 
etitled to be a bishop in the Catholic Church. The matter could not be settled in the ecclesiastical 
tribunals, so it was brought before the vicarius of Spain, Clementinus. This official, according to 
the Libellus precum, was not a Christian, but a pagan. Later in the same report the writers narrate the 
persecution which two bishops of the province of Baetica carried on against Vincent, a follower of 
Gregory of Elvira. These bishops so inflamed the people against this priest (Vincent) that they went to 
his church, broke down the doors, stole the sacred vessels and ornaments, and "what is horrible to 
relate, took the altar from the church and placed it before an idol of the temple." These two extracts 
show that in Spain as elsewhere throughout the empire pagan officials continued to hold high office 
under the Christian emperors and that all pagan temples and idols in the Peninsula had not yet 
been destroyed.

The writings of the Spanish poet Prudentius, and Orosius, the friend of St. Augustine and author of the 
Adversus paganos, throw no light upon the state of paganism in Spain in the late fourth and early fifth 
century. But a letter of Pope Siricius, sent to Bishop Himerius of Tarragona in 385, proves that 
paganism had not entirely disappeared from northeastern Spain. Bishop Himerius had written to the 
Pope, requesting his advice on various problems that had arisen in his diocese. The Pope in his reply 
expressed his joy at the "innumerable people who are seeking baptism." These words are indeed 
significant, for eastern Tarraconensis had been the center of the imperial cult in Spain. But there was 
also a dark side to the picture. Many of the Christians had fallen into apostasy and returned to the 
worship of idols. Siricius forbade these apostates to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord. If, 
however, they repented of their sins and did penance for the remainder of their life, they were to be 
received into the Church at the hour of death, for "the Lord does not desire the death of the sinner, but 
that he be converted and live." Probably these last words of Siricius were meant as a rebuke to the 
bishops of Elvira, who had laid down the principle that a Christian who had fallen into idolatry should 
not be readmitted to the Church even at the end of his life.

Pacianus, bishop of Barcelona, in the closing years of the fourth century, indicates in a work entitled 
Paraenesis that some of the people were still practicing paganism. Thus he says that while 
certain sins can be atoned for by the practice of good works, idolatry, murder and fornication were to be 
fearsed "as the breath of the basilisk, as a cup of poison, and as an arrow of death." St. Jerome 
attributed to Pacianus a work called Cervus, which is no longer extant. This book had been written 
to combat the superstitious practice in vogue among some of the people of clothing themselves in the 
skins of deers and taking part in immoral rites. St. Caesarius of Arles (470-540) and the Council of 
Auxerre (573/603) later condemned this same abuse which, according to them, took place on the 
Kalends of January. The efforts of Pacianus to uproot this pagan survival do not seem to have been 
successful, for in the Paraenesis he exclaims: "What a miserable man I am! What a crime I have 
committed! I think that they would not now know how to make the deer (cervulum facere) if I had not 
told them about it in my condemnation." The significance of this pagan practice which Pacianus is
the first to mention is not quite clear. Perhaps the people by clothing themselves in the skins of the
deer were paying honor to an animal totem which their ancestors had worshiped. The last indications of pagan survivals in Spain during the fourth century are a number of tracts written by a Priscillianist about the year 384. In the first of these tracts the writer expresses his contempt for the pagan gods, and adds that he only read the fables of the pagans for the instruction of his mind. But evidently the episcopal synod (this tract is addressed to the beatissimi sacerdotes) suspected the orthodoxy of the writer and demanded a more explicit condemnation of paganism. The writer then proceeds to anathematize all belief in the cult of Jupiter, Mars, Mercury and other pagan deities. In the course of this apology he singles out for special condemnation the practice of some who assert that the sun and moon are gods and consecrate their crops to them in the hope that if anyone had placed a curse on their crops the sun and moon deities would remove it. The bishops would hardly have been so insistent upon the detailed renunciation of all belief in the pagan deities if their cult had entirely disappeared.

FINAL REMARKS

The fourth century, which opened with the persecution of the Christians by Diocletian, ended with Christianity triumphant, at least in the cities of Spain. The extant records of this period indicate that the pagans of Spain did not resist as violently as those of Africa the coming of Christianity. The Church in Spain had not been distracted by the Arian controversy, and the Novatians and Luciferians do not seem to have exerted much influence in the Peninsula during this period. Hence the ecclesiastical authorities were able to concentrate their efforts upon the evangelization of the people. The work of conversion was but a matter of time, for the pagans no longer had any legal right to offer sacrifices, their temples had been closed, and the practice of paganism in any form was a penal offense. But in the closing years of this century there arose in Spain the heresy known as Priscillianism. This heretical movement caused a serious division among the Spanish hierarchy and thereby prevented a full concentration of effort against the survivals of paganism. It also introduced pagan principles and practices. Consequently before discussing the effects produced by the barbarian invasions upon paganism in Spain it will be necessary to devote a special chapter to the origin, teachings, and spread of Priscillianism.

Notes for Chapter Two

1. For the extensive bibliography on this council, cf. Hefele-Leclercq, Histoire des conciles, I, 212, 213.
2. Ibid., 215-220
3. Canon 73.
4. Canons 1, 24, etc.
5. Canon 60.
7."Placuit inter nos: qui post fidem baptismi salutaris adulta aetate ad templum idoli idolaturus accesserit et fecerit, quod est crimen capitale, quia est summi sceleris, placuit nec in finem eum communionem accipere."
8. Konziliengeschichte, I, 155; the Thesaurus linguae latinae, III, 1965, 55, also gives the meaning of communio in the canons of Elvira as Eucharist. This needs correcting. H. Leclercq, Histoire des conciles, I, 218, rejects this meaning of communio at the Council of Elvira as Eucharist.


12."Flamines qui post fidem lavacri et regenerationis sacrificaverunt, eo quod geminaverint scelera, accedente homicidio, vel triplicaverint facinus, cohaerente moechia, placuit eos nec in finem accipere communionem."--Canon 2.


14."Item flamines, qui non immolaverint, sed munus tantum dederint, eo quod se a funestis abstinuerint sacrificii, placuit in finem eis praestare communionem, acta tamen legitima poenitentia." - Canon 3.

15.  "Sacerdotes, qui tantum coronas portant nec sacrificant nec de suis sumptibus aliquid ad idola praestant, placuit post biennium accipere communionem." - Canon 55.


19."Magistratus vero uno anno, quo agit duumviratum, prohibendum placet, ut se ab ecclesia cohibeat." - Canon 56.


24. Canons 16 and 17.


27. "Matronae vel earum mariti vestimenta sua ad ornandam saeculariter pompam non dent; et si fecerint, triennio abstineantur." - Canon 57.


30. "Admoneri placuit fideles, ut in quantum possunt, prohibeant ne idola in domibus suis habeant: si vero vim metuunt servorum vel se ipsos pueros conservent, si non fecerint, alieni ab ecclesia habeantur." - Canon 41. The pagan idols were usually statues or images of the gods. The place in the home where they were kept was called lararium or sacrarium. Cf. H. Blümmer, Die römischen Privataltertümer, p. 51.

31. "Si quis idola fregerit et ibidem fuerit occisus, quatenus in evangelio scriptum non est, neque inveniatur sub apostolis umquam factum, placuit in numerum eum non recipi martyrum." - Canon 60.

32. "Placuit picturas in ecclesia esse non debere, ne quod colitur et adoratur in parietibus depingatur." - Canon 36.

33. These writers are cited by Bareille, "Elvire," Dict. de théol. cath., IV, 2382, 2383.


35. "Si quis vero maleficio interficiat alterum, eo quod sine idolatria perficere scelus non potuit, nec in finem impertiendam illi esse communione." - Canon 6.

36. "Placuit prohiberi ne foeminae in coemeterio pervigilent, eo quod saepe sub obtentu orationis latenter scelera committunt." - Canon 35.

37. "Cereos per diem placuit in coemeterio non incendi, inquietandi enim sanctorum spiritus non sunt. Qui haec non observaverint, arceantur ab ecclesiae communione." - Canon 34.


40. On these tubes in pagan cemeteries, cf. J. Sandys, A Companion to Latin Studies, 4 ed., p. 183 and the accompanying bibliography. Wine, oil, etc., were poured into them for the spirits of the deceased. Delehaye mentions that in the Christian period perfumes were poured into the tombs: v. Prudentius, Cathemerinon, X, 169-172, and Peristephanon, XI, 193, 194; cf. Les origines du culte des martyrs, 2 ed., p. 29.


42. Les origines culte des martyrs, 2 ed., p. 29.


44. "Item flamines si fuerint catechumeni et se a sacrificiis abstinuerint, post triennii tempora placuit ad baptismum admittere." - Canon 4.

46.Canon 38.


49.Constantine the Great and the Christian Church, p. 30.


52.C. I. L., XI, 5265; H Dessau, Inscriptiones latinae selectae, n. 705.

53.The extant evidence does not permit us to pass judgment on the attitude toward paganism of the other sons of Constantine. Cf. de Labriolle, op. cit., p. 180.

54.Cesset superstition, aboleatur sacrificiorum insania." - Codex Theodosianus, XVI, 10, 2 (hereafter referred to as C. T.).

55."Placuit omnibus locis adque urbibus universis claudi protinus templae et accessu vetito omnibus licentiam delinquendi perditis abnegari. Volumus cunctos sacrificialis abstiner. Quod si forte alicuius hujusmodi perpetraverit, gladio utore sternatur." - C. T., XVI, 10, 4. J. Maurice, "La terreur de la magie au IVe siècle," Revue historique de droit français et étranger, 4 série, VI (1927), 108-120, believes that those sacrifices only were meant which were associated with magic. A careful reading of the law does not substantiate this view. Cf. de Labriolle, op. cit., pp. 182, 183.


58."Testes sunt leges a me in exordio imperii mei datae, quibus unicumque, quod animo inbibisset, colendi libera facultas tributa est." - C. T., IX, 16, 9.


60.C. T., IX, 16, 7.8.9.10.

61.Ibid., IX, 16, 8: "Cesset mathematicorum tractatus. Nam si qui publice aut privativ in die nocte deprhenus fuerit in cohibito errore versari, capitali sententia feriatur uterque. Neque enim culpa dissimilis est prohibita discere quam docere."


63.The opening words of this important edict (C. T., XVI, 10, 12) are as follows: "Nullus omnino ex quolibet genere ordine hominum dignitatum vel in potestate positus vel honore perfunctus, sive potens sorte nascendi seu humilis genere condicione fortuna in nullo penitus loco, in nulla urbe sensu carentibus simulacris vel insontem victimam caedat vel secretiore piaculo larem igne, mero genium, penates odore veneratus accendat lumina, inponat tura, serta suspendat."


68. *C. I. L.*, II, 2206, 4108, 5239.

69. Such is the interpretation of this painting given by Hübner, *C. I. L.*, II, 58.

70. *C. T.*, XVI, 10, 13.


72. *C. T.*, XVI, 10, 16.


74. *C. I. L.*, II, 5191; see above, p. 20.

75. *C. T.*, XIV. 7, 2.


78. J. Waltzing, *Étude historique sur les corporations professionnelles chez les romains*, II, 138, is also of the opinion that the society of the *Nemesiaci* had become secularized by the beginning of the fifth century.


80. Hübner, "Acci," Pauly-Wissowa, I, 139, 140, thinks that Macrobius borrowed his information about this god from Varro.


85. This official is not listed in the *TLL, Onomasticon*, or in Pauly-Wissowa.

86. "...quod horribus est dicere, ad cumulum perpetrami sacrilegeii, ipsum altare Dei, de Dominico sublatum, in templo sub pedibus idoli posuerunt." - Chap. 20.


89. "Adjectum est etiam quosdam Christianos ad apostasiam, quod dici nefas est, transeuntes et idolorum cultu ac sacrificiorum contaminatione profanatos: quos a Christi corpore et sanguine, quo dudum redempti fuerant renascendo, jubemus abscidi. Et si resipiscientes forte aliquando fuerint ad lamenta conversi, his, quamdiu vivunt, agenda poenitentia est, et in ultimo fine suo reconciliationis gratia tribuenda, quia, docente Domino, nolumus mortem peccatoris sed ut convertatur et vivat." - Chap. 3.

90. Edited in Migne, P. L., XIII, 1081-1090. A critical edition of the writings of Pacianus is in progress and will appear in the *CSEL*.


92. "Pacianus scripsit varia opuscula de quibus est Cervus..." - *De viris inlustribus*, ed. E. Richardson, Texte und Untersuchungen zur altchristlichen Literatur, XIV (1896), 106.


97. Cf. J. Löhr, "Tierkultus," *Reallexikon*, VII, 123, 124. H. Obermaier, *Fossil Man in Spain*, pp. 129, 130, describes a painting found in a cave near Málaga, dating from the paleolithic age, in which the people are wearing the masks of animals, and taking part in a dance. He believes that they were probably engaged in some superstitious or magical rite.

98. Edited by Schepss, *CSEL*, Vol. XVIII. The authorship of these tracts will be discussed in the following chapter.


