

for example, which flowed through Rome, received more attention than a stream in an uninhabited area.

were spirits in the home as well as in the fields and woods, spirits of the kind of the cupboard, for example.¹⁴ Each household had its own *Lar* who protect the household if properly propitiated.¹⁵ It was the responsibility of the *Lares* to establish within the home a shrine, called a *lararium*, and to keep the household. As the early community at Rome expanded, the Romans recognized a whole neighborhood (*Lares Compitales*)¹⁶ and then *Lares* who protect the whole city (*Lares Publici* or *Praestites*).¹⁷

Seneca the Younger, *Letters* 41.3

er come upon a thick grove of ancient trees which rise far above the usual height and of the sky with their umbrella of intertwining branches, then the height of the forest ion of the spot and the wonder of so dense and uninterrupted a shade out of doors a belief in deity. . . . We venerate the sources of great rivers; we build altars where of water suddenly burst forth from hidden regions; we worship hot springs; and we ain lakes because of their darkness or depth.

A River Spirit

to Romanus¹⁸ translated below, Pliny describes a shrine established to spirit of the river Clitumnus.¹⁹ The shrine was located at the source of the tained a representation of the river god.²⁰ It was important to propitiate rivers in your area because you would not want the river to flood or dry you.²¹

Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 8.8

seen the source of the Clitumnus? If you have not yet seen it (and I suspect not; would have told me), do see it. I saw it, just the other day, and I'm only sorry that I . . . From the base of a small hill, which is covered with shady groves and ancient the spring. It bubbles out of several cracks, all of different sizes. Forcing its way out es, it then releases these eddies in a wide pool which is so clear and glassy²² that you hiny pebbles and the coins which have been thrown in.²³ . . . The banks are fully

spirit of the hearth fire; the *Penates* were the spirits of the cupboard or pantry. see note 39 of Chapter VIII.

alia, the festival at which these *Lares* were propitiated, see note 52 of Chapter VIII. protected the "family" of Rome. Propitiation of these *Lares* was entrusted to the state. Voconius Romanus, was a Spaniard living in Italy.

dem Clitunno, located in Umbria, between Trevi and Spoleto.

w how the spirit of the Clitumnus River was portrayed. In the *Aeneid* (Bk. 8.31-34), Vergil it of the Tiber River as an old man wearing a gray-green robe and a crown of reeds. us's prayer to the Tiber River in selection I.

as well known in the Roman world but was not widely used for windows. throwing coins into fountains and springs is very ancient.

clothed with ash trees and poplars whose green reflections appear in the clear stream like trees beneath the water. The coldness of the water could rival snow, as could its sparkle. Nearby is an ancient and holy shrine where Clitumnus himself stands, clothed in a *toga praetexta*. . . . All around are numerous shrines, each for a particular deity with its own name and its own rites.

Propitiating a Woodland Spirit

It was essential that a farmer maintain good relationships with the spirits who inhabited his property. In the passage translated here, Cato offers advice on how to propitiate the spirit of a grove of trees that one wanted to thin or cut down. Careful propitiation of deities was every bit as important to a farmer's success as careful choice of seed grain or correct plowing techniques. It is not surprising that Cato's handbook *On Agriculture*²⁴ should contain advice on religious ritual, since for Roman farmers religion was a practical aspect of farming.

404

Cato the Elder, *On Agriculture* 139, 140

When thinning a grove of trees, it is essential to observe the following Roman ritual. Sacrifice a pig as a propitiatory offering and repeat the following prayer: "Whether you are a god or goddess to whom this grove is sacred,²⁵ as it is proper²⁶ to sacrifice to you a pig as a propitiatory offering for the disturbance of this sacred place,²⁷ and therefore for these reasons whether I or someone I have appointed²⁸ performs the sacrifice, provided that it be performed correctly,²⁹ for this reason, in sacrificing this pig, I pray in good faith that you will be benevolent and well disposed to me, my home, my family,³⁰ and my children. For these reasons therefore be honored by the sacrifice of this pig as a propitiatory offering."

If you wish to plow the cleared land in the grove, offer a second propitiatory sacrifice in the same manner but add these words: "for the sake of doing this work."

A Multitude of Deities

Some spirits, such as river spirits or grove spirits, were localized. Others presided over processes rather than places. In their obsession with legalistic exactness, the Romans

²⁴For another selection from this handbook, see selection 207.

²⁵Roman prayers were very legalistic. Since the Romans did not know the sex of every single deity, they frequently addressed their prayers to "god or goddess." If the deity were female, and the suppliant said only "god," the deity could ignore his prayer. By using the "god or goddess" formula, the Romans left their deities no loopholes for ignoring prayers.

²⁶*it is proper*: it is a religious duty, an aspect of *pietas*.

²⁷Roman religion was concerned not with personal sin but rather with the violation of the rights of deities. The spirit of the grove has a right to remain undisturbed. The thinning of the grove is a disturbance and a violation, which must be expiated by prayer and sacrifice. The spirit does not examine the moral character of the suppliant before granting his or her prayer, but looks only to see if he or she has correctly performed the proper ritual of expiation.

²⁸*I or someone I have appointed*: more legalistic formulas. Ordinarily the *paterfamilias* or landowner was expected to perform the sacrifice, but since many landowners lived in the city, the farm manager would be given the authority to perform the necessary rituals.

²⁹It was essential that the ritual be performed correctly or the deity would not need to pay heed to it.

³⁰*family*: Latin *familia*, included not only relatives but also slaves.

goddess of love and beauty, seemed to preside over the same phenomena as the Roman spirit of fertility and procreation. Once the identification of the two had been established, the Romans began to attribute to their own deities, personalities, and mythologies of the Greek Olympians. Thus, the father and king of the gods, a position held by Zeus; Juno, the spirit whose special concern was the protection of women, became his wife of the gods, as Hera was wife to Zeus. The spirit Venus acquired the attributes of Aphrodite, the irresistible goddess who was born from the sea and beauty of the god of war. Minerva, the spirit of skilled workman-ship, was identified with Athena and became the Roman goddess of wisdom.⁵⁵ Ceres, the goddess of grain, was identified with Demeter and became the main goddess of grain production and agriculture. The Romans thus retained the spirits of their own religion but adopted the mythology and recognizable forms. The formerly vague spirits, Jupiter and Mars, now be portrayed in art and literature, where they looked exactly like the Greek gods. The Roman deities who were identified with the Greek gods assumed very broad areas of control over human life and overshadowed the minor spirits, who remained vague and shapeless,⁵⁶ but the minor spirits were honored until the end of the Roman period.⁵⁷

The passage, which is a translation of a hymn to Diana, indicates the transformation that took place when a Roman spirit became identified with a Greek deity. Diana had been a woodland spirit, probably the type of spirit who was initiated by someone clearing a grove⁵⁸ or hunting in a forest. However, she was identified in function with Artemis, the Greek goddess of woodland and hunting. She also took on the personality and appearance of Artemis. She became the daughter of Jupiter and Juno; the once vague spirit now became the daughter of Apollo, two other Greek deities. In addition, Diana assumed new functions. For example, like Artemis, Diana became the goddess of the moon as well as the hunt.

The hymn is a literary exercise rather than a prayer used at an actual ceremony, but it contains the formulaic elements of a Roman prayer: an invocation, a catalogue of his or her ancestry and powers, the reminder of a relationship and an appeal for assistance.

Catullus, *Poems* 34

In your care, we chaste girls and boys. Come, chaste boys and girls, let us sing in

⁵⁵ patron goddess of craftsmen; see Ovid's description of the circus *pompa* in selection 382. ⁵⁶ for example, Ceres was identified as a major deity who oversaw the various specialized

⁵⁷ (selection 405) was writing in the fifth century A.D. His criticism of the ancient belief in minor spirits and the belief that the functions of many of these minor spirits were absorbed by

O daughter of Leto,⁶⁰ mighty offspring of mightiest Jupiter, you who were born beside the Delian olive tree,⁶¹ queen of the mountains and the green forests and the trackless glens and the murmuring streams.

You are called Juno Lucina by women in the agony of childbirth.⁶² You are called powerful Trivia. You are called Luna, with your borrowed light.⁶³

You, goddess, measuring out the year's progress by your monthly phases, do fill the farmer's humble storerooms with fine produce.⁶⁴

Hallowed be thy name, whatever name it is that you prefer.⁶⁵ And, as in years past you have been accustomed to do,⁶⁶ so now, too, protect and preserve the race of Romulus with your kindly favor.

Importing Gods

The early Romans had learned about the Olympian deities from their Etruscan overlords or from their neighbors in the Greek colonies of southern Italy, and the assimilation of Greek elements into the Roman religion had been a gradual process. In the middle republican period, however, the Romans imported several deities directly from Greece and Asia Minor and introduced them suddenly into their state religion. The importations occurred at times of crisis, when the Romans felt they needed some extra help in dealing with a grave situation. The passage below describes the importation into Rome in 293 B.C. of Aesculapius, the Greek god of medicine.

408

A Book about Famous Men (anonymous) 22

Because of a plague, and on the advice of the Sibylline books,⁶⁷ the Romans sent ten envoys under the command of Quintus Ogulnius to bring Aesculapius from Epidaurus.⁶⁸ When they had arrived at Epidaurus and were admiring the huge statue of the god, a snake, which inspired respect rather than terror, slithered out of the temple, and to the amazement of all headed right through the middle of the city to the Roman ship where it coiled up in Ogulnius's cabin.⁶⁹ . . . When the ship was sailing up

⁶⁰ Catullus now begins the catalogue of Diana's ancestry and powers. Diana (Artemis) was the daughter of Jupiter (Zeus) and Leto, and the twin sister of Apollo. The catalogue was an essential element in Roman prayers. If one addressed the deity by the wrong name, he or she would not listen to the prayer. By listing the current ancestry and powers, one could make sure that the deity had to listen.

⁶¹ *Delian*: Diana and Apollo were born on the Island of Delos.

⁶² Diana has other names and other spheres of influence. The suppliant must mention these names or the deity might ignore the prayer. Diana was called Juno Lucina when she assisted women in childbirth. She was called Trivia when she was associated with witchcraft and the underworld. Diana was also Luna (the moon), sister of the sun.

⁶³ The Romans understood that the moon's light was only a reflection of the sun's.

⁶⁴ Diana was also a goddess of fertility (which may be her connection to Juno Lucina and childbirth).

⁶⁵ *whatever name it is that you prefer*: a formulaic expression found in most Roman prayers. This is an escape clause by which the suppliant covers herself in case she has missed one of the deity's names.

⁶⁶ The suppliant must remind the deity of their previous good relationship. A precedent has been set, and the deity should maintain it.

⁶⁷ *Sibylline books*: see selection 419.

⁶⁸ *Epidaurus*: a town in Argolis, Greece, which was the center for the worship of Aesculapius. People traveled long distances to visit the temple and sanctuary of Aesculapius at Epidaurus and seek a cure for their illnesses and afflictions. And many astonishing cures have been recorded. Although people believed the god had cured them, the priests of Aesculapius were apparently skilled in medicine, surgery, and pharmacology.

⁶⁹ Snakes were sacred to Aesculapius because they were a symbol of

the Tiber, carrying the snake to Rome, the snake jumped onto an island.⁷⁰ A temple was built there, and the plague subsided with remarkable speed.⁷¹

Welcoming the Gods of Your Enemy

The cautious Romans tried very hard not to offend any deity. When they were besieging an enemy city, they invited the protective deities of that city to leave and come to Rome where they would be worshipped. When the city was captured, the Roman soldiers were instructed to remove carefully the statues of the gods from the temples. This passage is a translation of the type of prayer made to the gods of one's enemy. Although the prayer is quoted by Macrobius, who was writing about A.D. 400, he claimed that it was a very ancient formula.

409

Macrobius, *Saturnalia Conversations* 3.9.7, 8

Whether you are a god or a goddess who hold under your protection the people and city of Carthage, and you also, almighty god, who have taken under your protection this city and this people, to you I pray, you I implore, you I respectfully ask to abandon the people and city of Carthage, to desert their structures, temples, sanctuaries, and urban area, and to leave them. I ask you to instill in that people and city fear, terror, and oblivion, and to come to me⁷² and my people when you have left these. I ask that our structures, temples, sanctuaries, and urban area may be more acceptable and more agreeable to you, and that you may take under your protection me and the people of Rome and my soldiers in such a way that we may know and perceive it. If you will do this, I vow that I will build for you temples and celebrate for you games.⁷³

New Identities for Roman Deities

As the Roman Empire expanded, the Romans continued to absorb the deities of the people they conquered. The inscriptions translated below, which were found in far-off Britain, indicate that the Roman god Mars, who had already been identified with Ares, the Greek god of war, was now also identified with local British deities.

410

CIL 7.36 (*ILS* 4586a), 84 (*ILS* 4540), 176

Peregrinus, son of Secundus, willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow⁷⁴ to Loucetius Mars and to Nemetona.

⁷⁰The island is in the middle of the Tiber. It is called the Tiber Island and is joined to the mainland by two bridges.

⁷¹Romans went to the temple to be healed. Sick slaves were sometimes abandoned there; see selection 222. There is still today a hospital on the island.

⁷²The commanding officer of the besieging troops would make the vow.

⁷³*games: ludi*; on vows to the gods and promises of *ludi*, see the introduction to the section on spectacles in Chapter XIV. The booty from the captured city would be sold to provide the funds for temples and games.

⁷⁴These inscriptions were found on objects such as altars or plaques which were given to the gods as votive offerings. A suppliant would say, "If you do this for me, I vow to give you an altar." If the god answered his prayer, the suppliant would fulfill his vow and set up the altar.

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⁷⁹*virgin goddess*

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⁸²*Priapus*: a guan

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ness. Our forefathers determined what they wished their children to learn and what schools they desired them to attend. These innovations in the customs and principles of our forefathers do not please us nor seem proper. Therefore it appears necessary to make our opinion known both to those who have such schools and to those who are in the habit of attending them, that they are displeasing to us."⁶³

LATIN THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Deeds and Sayings* II. II. 2

Indeed the manner in which the magistrates of olden times conducted themselves in order to maintain their dignity and the sovereign power of the Roman people can be understood by the fact that, among other evidences of how they acquired dignity, there was this practice, which they observed with great steadfastness, never to answer the Greeks except in Latin [for an instance see § 74]. Further, wresting from them the fluency of speech in which they excel, they forced them to speak through an interpreter, not only in our city, but also in Greece and Asia, in order, doubtless, to diffuse the Latin language among all peoples and to make it more respectable. Not that they lacked an interest in learning, but they thought that in every matter the Greek cloak should be subjected to the toga, thinking it an indignity that the weight and the majesty of the empire should be bestowed upon the allurements and delight of literature.

CATO'S HOSTILITY TO GREEK LEARNING

Plutarch, *Life of Cato the Elder* xxii. 1-xxiii. 3

When Cato was already an old man, Carneades the Academic and Diogenes the Stoic came as envoys from Athens to Rome. . . .⁶⁴ The most studious of the youth at once went to wait upon these men, and frequently heard them speak with admiration. But the charm of Car-

63. Similarly in 115 B.C. the censors Lucius Metellus and Gnaeus Domitius banned all dramatic performances from the city, excepting only a Latin flutist with singer, and also the dice game (Cassiodorus, *Chronicon*, Year 639).

64. These Greek philosophers, who came to Rome in 155 B.C., were accompanied by a third, Critolaus the Peripatetic. Cf. also Athenaeus, *Savants at Dinner* XII. 547a: "The Romans, therefore, the most virtuous of men in all things, did a good job when they banished the Epicureans Alcaeus and Philiscus from the city in the consulship of Lucius Postumius [173 B.C.] because of the pleasures which they introduced."

neades, which had a large and sympathetic wind. The report who charmed all into the young they were in ecstasies and they were consorting with discussion, caressed, fearing direction, showed deeds and military increased in the request became determined, and out of the city for letting them though they would anything they vote taken on home again to while the Roman magistrates.

He did this because he was mocked all against anything his age, he despised the Romans with Greek prophecy of made all Greek

Roman education before Rome. Here from, the

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neades, which had boundless power and a reputation equal to it, won large and sympathetic audiences, and filled the city with its sound, like a wind. The report spread far and wide that a Greek of amazing talent, who charmed and disarmed everybody, had infused a powerful passion into the young men, so that forsaking their other pleasures and pursuits, they were in ecstasies about philosophy. This pleased the other Romans, and they were glad to see the youth participating in Greek culture and consorting with such remarkable men. But Cato, when this passion for discussion came flowing into the city, from the beginning was distressed, fearing lest the youth, by diverting their ambitions in this direction, should prefer a reputation for speaking well before that of deeds and military campaigns. And when the fame of the philosophers increased in the city, and a distinguished man, Gaius Aclius, at his own request became their interpreter to the senate at their first audience, Cato determined, under a specious pretext, to have all philosophers cleared out of the city. And coming into the senate he blamed the magistrates for letting these envoys stay so long a time without settling the matter, though they were such persuasive persons that they could easily secure anything they wished; that therefore a decision should be made and a vote taken on the embassy as soon as possible, so that they might go home again to their own schools and lecture to the sons of the Greeks, while the Roman youth listened, as hitherto, to their own laws and magistrates.

He did this not out of hostility, as some think, to Carneades, but because he wholly despised philosophy, and out of a patriotic zeal mocked all Greek culture and learning. . . . And to prejudice his son against anything that was Greek, in a rasher voice than became one of his age, he declared, as it were with the voice of a prophet or seer, that the Romans would lose their empire when they began to be infected with Greek literature. But indeed time has shown the vanity of this prophecy of doom, for while the city was at the zenith of her empire she made all Greek learning and culture her own.

186. ROMAN EDUCATION

Roman education was characteristically utilitarian. In the early period, before Rome became a world power, the home was the center of education. Here, under the personal tutorship of the *paterfamilias* and the *matrona*, the sons of the ruling-class families were prepared for their future