

RELIGIOUS RITES IN VIRGIL'S WRITINGS

Religion plays an important role in Virgil's writings and even a cursory reading reveals the influence of religion on certain language uses, customs, and ideas described by the poet. This influence can be amply shown in the description of rites, to which more than one hundred passages are devoted. These passages may be studied from several points of view. One may examine to what extent they conform to the rules of the rites of the official religion. One may also try to find out whether the religious ideas reflect or represent a certain social stratum or the policy of the rulers. In this article I have chosen to examine these texts from a literary point of view. Other aspects should not of course be ignored and, indeed, we can learn much about Virgil's literary art by comparing his description of rites with the official formulae prescribed by religion — as far as these are known.

Commenting on the first rite in Book IV of the Aeneid, A.S. Pease writes: "Virgil loves to describe religious rites".¹ There is much truth in this saying; and it helps to explain the appearance of many a rite. But even if we assumed that it was the poet's love of religious rites that led him to insert all those passages into his writings, we would not exhaust our treatment of this subject. The poet is an artist even in his love, and this becomes clear when one analyses the composition of the passages in which rites are reported, as I shall try to show.²

I

It is generally agreed that pedantic adherence to ceremonial details was a basic and essential feature of the religious rites of the Romans, and was characteristic

¹ A.S. Pease, *P. Virgili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Quartus* (Cambridge Massachusetts, 1935) 132 (henceforth cited as Pease) 132. See also A. Cartault *L'art de Vergile dans l'Eneide* (Paris, 1926) 1.305.

² I shall leave out of my account the problem of imitation and originality. Admittedly it is a literary problem that has some bearing on Virgil's technique of describing rites, but to discuss it adequately calls for a special treatment. Let it suffice here to say that certain rites have their counterparts in the works of Virgil's predecessors, especially Greek poets. Compare, e.g., *Aen.* 5.547–584 with *Il.* 23.653ff., *Aen.* 3. 360ff. with *Od.* 9. 375ff., *Aen.* 11. 87–90 with *Il.* 17. 426–427. Cf. also the rite of treaty and oath between Aeneas and Latinus in *Aen.* 12. (concerning the duel between Aeneas and Turnus) with a similar one between Paris and Menelaus in *Il.* 3. Likewise I shall not deal with the question of how Virgil treats the different stages of Roman religion. Generally speaking, Virgil is ready to ascribe ideas and customs of one period, or one people, to another.

of their legal system as well.³ The Romans themselves were aware of the fact that they differed from other peoples in their exacting fulfilment of ritual formulae. Gellius writes: *veteres Romani cum in omnibus aliis vitae officiis tum in constituendis religionibus atque in dis immortalibus animadvertendis castissimi cautissimique*.⁴ As is well known, one meaning of the word *religio* is: scrupulous performance of certain formulae that aims at creating the correct relationship with the gods and the supernatural forces.⁵ Thus the religious rites of the Romans were executed according to rigid rules that laid down the way the worshippers had to prepare themselves beforehand, how the victims were to be prepared, and the exact actions to be carried out during the rite. Therefore we must examine whether the Virgilian account of rites is consistent with these rules or whether the poet feels himself free to adapt the "raw material" to his own needs. E. Norden maintains that Virgil was very meticulous in his description of sacrifices — this was in tune with the strong religious nature of his epic and the character of his hero that had already been shaped by tradition. According to Norden, Virgil is in this respect *erroris ignarus*.⁶ However, we shall see that things are not as simple as that.

Rites were performed *conceptis verbis*. When a worshipper entreated gods, certain, specific verbs were employed, and these can be found in Virgil's writings. Thus we have *adorare deos*,⁷ *venerari*,⁸ and *vocare deos*.⁹ Yet Virgil does not always employ the technical verbs; the appeal to the gods is noted by other means. We may cite the following three instances:

et caelo palmas cum voce tetendit (*Aen.* 2.688);

ac talis effundit ad aethera voces (*Aen.* 8.70);

Ac tali fugientem est voce secutus (*Aen.* 9.17).

In these instances the verb is replaced by the word *vox*. It appears that the poet sought to vary his description, and to avoid using the same formula

³ "The old Roman worship was businesslike and utilitarian. The gods were partners in a contract with their worshippers, and the ritual was characterized by all the hard and literal formalism of the legal system of Rome. The worshipper performed his part to the letter with the scrupulous exactness required in pleadings before the praetor", S. Dill, *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire* (The Meridian Library, New York 1958²) 75. Cf. G. Appel, *De Romanorum Precationibus* (Gissae 1909) passim; W.W. Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People* (London 1911) 170–1. Fowler makes some reservations. He does not consider prayers as contracts or magic formulae. See *op. cit.* 185, 188–190.

⁴ 2.28.2. Cf. Cic. *ND* 2.10: *at vero apud maiores tanta religionis vis fuit ut quidam imperatores etiam se ipsos dis immortalibus capite velato certis verbis pro re publica devoverent*, that is, the rite ought to be performed with certain fixed words. For examples of formulae in prayers see Appel, *op. cit.* 9–11 (nos. 6–11).

⁵ W.W. Fowler, *Roman Essays and Interpretations* (Oxford 1920) 10ff.

⁶ E. Norden, *P. Vergilius Maro Aeneis Buch VI* (Leipzig 1920) 131.

⁷ *Aen.* 2.700; 3.437; 10.677.

⁸ *Aen.* 3.34; 84; 697.

⁹ *Aen.* 3.264; 4.680; 5.234, 686; 6.247.

throughout. This variety could in fact be achieved within the limits of the religious conventions because, as Appel has shown, there were quite a number of words used to designate the appeal to the gods.¹⁰ What is noteworthy is that Virgil employs almost all the possible verbs.

It was the ritual convention to name the gods in paryers.¹¹ This usage is found in almost all the prayers of Virgil's writings, e.g.: *Juppiter omnipotens, precibus si flecteris ullis*.¹² But there are several exceptions. Note, for instance, the following:

numina magna vocat meritosque indicit honores:

*'di, prohibete minas; di, talem avertite casum . . .'*¹³

The man is clearly entreating certain deities, but without designating them by their express names.¹⁴ It appears, again, that Virgil felt free to deviate from the normal patterns of appealing to gods.

As it was not always clear to which deity one had to appeal, certain circumstantial ways were invented to overcome the difficulty. Commenting on *quisquis es* in *Aen.* 4.577, Servius writes: *secundum pontificum morem qui sic precantur: 'Iuppiter omnipotens vel quo alio te nomine appellari volueris'*. Thus, in the first book of the *Aeneid*, Venus appears before her son disguised as a Carthaginian woman. Aeneas suspects that she is not a mortal but cannot decide whether she is a nymph or Diana, and therefore says: *sis felix nostrumque leves, quaecumque, laborem* (*Aen.* 1.330). According to Servius *quaeque* means *seu Diana seu nympha*. A few more examples of such usage can be found.¹⁵ As the Romans wanted to be sure in these matters they added an appeal to all the deities.¹⁶ According to this custom Virgil ends his invocation at the beginning of the first book of the *Georgics* with *dique deaeque omnes*. Again, the verse *et vos agrestum praesentia numina, Fauni* (*Georg.* 1.10) is praised by Servius: *et bene di diversis rebus dicturus diversa invoact numina. hoc enim et in sacris fieri solebet, ut post specialia ad eam rem, de qua agebatur, invocata numina omnes dii vel deae confuse invocarentur*.¹⁷ However, such an expression is rare in Virgil's writings.

¹⁰ Appel, *op. cit.* 64–68.

¹¹ Appel, *op. cit.* 75.

¹² *Aen.* 2.689. *V.* also *Aen.* 1.71; 3.221; 4.206; 5.10–1; *Georg.* 1.13f.

¹³ *Aen.* 3.264f. Admittedly Servius (*ad. Aen.* 3.264) writes: *hoc est Iovem Minervam Mercurium*, but he is surely wrong. In *Aen.* 3.633 it is difficult to say who are the *magna numina*, and in *Aen.* 3.697 it is quite clear that they cannot be identified with the deities mentioned by Servius. At any rate, the important thing is that the name of the deity should be pronounced in the prayer itself, which here is omitted by the poet.

¹⁴ *V.* also *Aen.* 1.93; 6.187; 11.301.

¹⁵ *V. Aen.* 4.576–7; 9.22.

¹⁶ *V. Appel, op. cit.* 83.

¹⁷ *V.* also *Aen.* 8.013 with Servius *ad. loc.*

To call on the deities by employing their own epithets was part of the rite. *Onnipotens* is especially characteristic of Iuppiter, and so it is generally employed by Virgil.¹⁸ Every god, however, may be called *pater*.¹⁹ The naming of the deity's powers in appeals was also customary, e.g. Cloanthus' prayer in the ships' race: *di, quibus imperium est pelagi, quorum aequora curro*.²⁰

Certain phrases appear repeatedly in appeals to the gods,²¹ notably the request to listen to the prayer. But it is the use of the verb *audire* after the prayer that is interesting. Before shooting the arrow at Numinus, Ascanius prays to Jupiter, but he does not say *audi, Iuppiter*. Virgil continues with the following: *audii et caeli genitor de parte serena intonuit laevum*.²² This example sheds some light on Virgil's methods of dealing with the conventions of religious rites. He employs the patterns of speech used in prayers, but he allows himself to deviate from the fixed formulae according to his tastes.

Having examined the patterns of speech in prayers, let us turn to Virgil's description of the participants in rites. The worshippers had to be clean and pure.²³ In some cases Virgil takes heed of this requirement. Thus Dido orders her nurse to tell her sister Anna to purify herself before the expiation rite (*Aen.* 4.635). Yet the actual act of purification is hardly described at all. Take, for instance, the rite of sacrifice in *Aen.* 3.118–120:

*Sic fatus meritos aris mactavit honores
taurum Neptuno, taurum tibi, pulcher Apollo,
nigram Hiemi pecudem, Zephyris felicibus albam.*

The poet describes the victims in detail, but completely neglects to describe how the participants prepare themselves for the rite.²⁴

The man at prayer employs certain typical gestures. He touches the statue of the deity or the altar, or he may hold out his hands towards the altar or the place where the deity is supposed to be.²⁵ This conventional position is found in Virgil's writings. e.g.:

*hic Hecuba et natae nequiquam altaria circum,
praecipites atra ceu tempestare columbae,
condensae et divum amplexae simulacra sedebant*.²⁶

However, Virgil more often describes the man at prayer as lifting his palms

¹⁸ *Aen.* 2.689; 4.206; 5.687; 7.141; 9.625. But *V.* also *Aen.* 1.731.

¹⁹ *Aen.* 2.691; 5.690; 10.421; 11.789; 12.178, 180; *Georg.* 2.4. Servius *ad. Aen.* 1.699 writes: *quia pater proprie omnium deorum epitheton est, ut ubique ostendit Vergilius*.

²⁰ *Aen.* 5.235. *V.* also *Aen.* 2.525; 4.607–610; 6.264; 9.404–405.

²¹ Appel, *op. cit.* 119. *V. Aen.* 4.612; 8.574.

²² *Aen.* 9.630f. For similar examples *V. Aen.* 4.220; 10.424; 464; 11.794.

²³ Fowler, *The Religious Experience* (*cit.* n. 3 *supra*) 178; Appel, *op. cit.* 185–187.

²⁴ See *Aen.* 3.543–547; 4.200–205; 7.133–147.

²⁵ On the origin of the custom, with numerous examples, see Appel, *op. cit.* 192–198.

²⁶ *Aen.* 2.515–7; see also *Aen.* 4.219f; 6.124 (with Servius *ad. loc.*); 12.201.

and raising his eyes. A typical example is Anchises' prayer before the departure from Troy:

*At pater Anchises oculos ad sidera laetus
extulit et caelo palmas cum voce tetendit.*

Tendere, palmae, cum voce, ad sidera are quite technical terms in such situations.²⁷

In some cases the position of the man at prayer is only partially described, e.g.:

et pater Anchises passis de litore palmis magna numina vocat (Aen. 3.263 f.).

The following example is briefer (Pallas' prayer): *magnumque ita ad aethera fatur (Aen. 10.459)*. The raising of the arms and the eyes is not mentioned, but this is implied in the phrase *ad aethera*. At times Virgil does not even hint at this gesture.²⁸ There is no stereotype account of the preparations that must be made before the performance of religious rites; though Virgil employs typical religious phrases, he changes them from one instance to another, and does not keep to a fixed formula.

Having seen details and patterns of speech, we may now examine entire accounts of rites beginning with the rites described in *Aen. 4.56-64*. Dido regards her love for Aeneas as a crime. She reveals her secret to her sister Anna, and yet swears to remain loyal to her dead husband Sychaeus. Anna, who realizes the religious doubts Dido entertains, encourages her and advises her to seek the gods' pardon by offering a sacrifice; this is therefore, an expiatory rite for Dido's breaking of her vow. One can easily recognize in this passage words appropriate to rites. The verb *adire* is a technical term for such occasions,²⁹ as is also the word *pax*.³⁰ According to Servius *mactare* is a *verbum sacrorum*, and *lectas*, too, is a correct word: *non cavat 'lectas', moris enim fuerat ut ad sacrificia eligerentur oves, quibus nihil deest*. Note that *bidentes* is a ritual word,³¹ and the combined words *lectas de more bidentes* seem very suitable for such an occasion.³² Following the conventional ceremony, the gods to whom the sacrifice is made are mentioned in line 58 as is Juno with fitting attribute on this occasion.

It appears then that Virgil's account employs the technical terms typical of

²⁷ *Aen. 2.687f.* See also 1.93; 2.153; 5.233ff; 8.69-70; 10.667; 12.196.

²⁸ See *Aen. 3.34*; 9.784; 10.420; 11.784; 12.776.

²⁹ See Pease *ad loc.*, and *T.L.L. s.v.* col. 624.1ff.

³⁰ In prayers one commonly asks for *pax* as well as *venia* (mentioned in line 50). Cf. *Georg. 4.535*; *Aen. 3.261, 370*. See also Pease on *venia* in line 50 and on *pacem* in line 56. According to R. Heinze, *Virgils epische Technik* (Leipzig 1902) 128, notes 1 and 2, *pax* means *pax deorum*; every prayer and sacrifice was intended to gain the favour of the gods, and this is the meaning of gods' *pax et venia*.

³¹ V. Pease *ad Aen. 4.57*.

³² Cf. *Aen. 5.96*; 6.39; 8.544.

religious rite. Yet on other matters the poet does not adhere to the conventional parts of the rite. There is not even one word about purification, obligatory in such cases. One cannot know for sure the exact identity of the sacrificers, Dido and Anna, or Dido and the *vates*. There is no mention of a prayer, though as a rule this accompanied a sacrificial rite. Lines 58–9 vividly illustrates the poet's tendency, and his ability to give a literary elaboration to the fixed religious formula:

legiferae Cereri Pheoboque Patrique Lyaeo Iunoni ante omnis.

Donatus comments on this passage: *quam splendida dictio, quam artificiosa, quae in ordinatione verborum novissimam posuit Iunonem nec tamen novissimae sacrificatum memoravit, addendo enim 'ante omnis' ostendit ipsa prima sacrificiorum honores exhibitos.*³⁴ Virgil then basically preserves the normal pattern, but by slight modification gives the passage individual and exclusive character. Furthermore, the passage in fact contains an account of two rites: a sacrifice of expiation (56–59), and a divination by inspection of the entrails of the victims (60–64). This kind of combination is evidently a deviation from the fixed rules.³⁵

The most significant aspect of Virgil's handling of religious rites is the generality of his account. Faithful adherence to the religious formulae calls for enumeration of details, which is the very thing Virgil avoids here. He only hints at the fact that several sacrifices took place.³⁶ The description of the actions in the first part is quite vague, to no small measure due to the use of the plural *mactant, exquirunt, adeunt*. My own conclusion is, then, that Virgil's account of religious rites is general and does not go into details, and therefore does not and cannot conserve the conventional religious formulae in their entirety.³⁷

To sum up this section, Virgil appears to follow the ritual formulae in his usage of verbs and patterns of speech. But it is worth observing that the rigid formality of the technical terms used in rites permits of some variety, which is fully used by Virgil. Virgil also feels free at times to deviate from the fixed linguistic patterns. Virgil's account is very free. The description of the actions performed in rites is selective — some actions are often omitted according to the poet's choice. Finally, Virgil's account is above all typical in its generality.

³³ Fowler, *The Religious Experience*, 181 (n. 3 supra).

³⁴ See also R.G. Austin, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos liber quartus* (Oxford 1955) *ad loc.*

³⁵ The lack of precision in Virgil's account can be seen in the fact that it is not clear whether lines 60–62 belong to the first rite or to the second.

³⁶ See Pease (*op. cit.*) and J. Conington, *The Works of Virgil*, vol. 2, *The first six books of the Aeneid*, with a Commentary by John Conington (London 1884) *ad line 56*.

³⁷ For a different approach see *Il.* 1.435–453–18 verses devoted to a description of a sacrificial rite and containing all the details. Homer obviously does not always give a full account, but in Virgil's writings most of the rites are briefly described.

The poet is sparing in narrative detail. It is clear that he employs the ceremonial, religious elements as raw material to be adopted and shaped according to his poetic aims and needs.

II

Virgil's literary elaboration of religious rites can most effectively be examined by classification of the rites and by comparing instances of the same type of rite. There are simple and complex rites. The simple group includes sacrifices of diverse sorts, prayers, oaths, and vows. The complex ones include rites for purification, burials, oracular consultations, founding of cities, special rites for certain deities, magical rites, etc.³⁸ Prayers and sacrificial rites are the most common, prayers appearing in the *Aeneid* and sacrifices in all Virgil's writings. Special rites for deities can be found in the *Aeneid*, the *Georgics*, and the *Eclogues*. There are only a few purifying rites, some in the *Aeneid* and one in the *Georgics*. Two magical rites are described, one in the *Aeneid* and one in the *Eclogues*. There are some oracular rites in the *Aeneid* and only one in the *Eclogues*. Founding and augural rites appear in the *Aeneid* alone. Similarly oaths, vows, burial rites, and rites for the dead are to be found only in the *Aeneid*.

We may first note that religious rites are quite evenly distributed through Virgil's writings, though slightly more frequent in the *Aeneid*. This is not true of distribution according to types of rites. Rites of sacrifice are to be found everywhere — and rightly so because this is a basic and simple rite which is also included in complex rites. On the other hand one notes with surprise that there is only one prayer outside the *Aeneid*. The basic, simple rite of prayer constitutes a means by which the feelings of the characters are expressed, and so is commonly used in the *Aeneid*,³⁹ and one therefore needs to seek the cause of its absence in the *Georgics* and the *Eclogues*. The explanation is that for Virgil prayers are, in the first place, a literary means of describing emotions and feelings of persons. In the *Georgics* there are no active characters and hence there is no place for prayer. In the *Eclogues* there are characters but no prayers, but there dialogue replaces them, as the literary tool for expression of feelings and thoughts.⁴⁰

Now to the rites that appear in the *Aeneid* alone. It is quite clear that the literary genre is the determining factor here. Augural, burial and founding rites have place in epic poetry and not in didactic poetry, to which genre belong the *Georgics* and the *Eclogues*. The same may be said of oracular

³⁸ For a full, classified list see the Appendix.

³⁹ V. infra, p. 58 f.

⁴⁰ No conclusion can be inferred from the appearance of the special rites for certain deities in each of Virgil's writings. The special rites are the one for Hercules in *Aeneid* 8, the one for Daphnis in *Eclogue* 5 and the one for Bacchus in *Georgics* 2.

rites; there is one instance in the *Georgics* (4.445 ff.) but this is an exceptional case. The legend of Aristaeus is not an integral part of this poem, and it is only this legend that gives occasion for this rite.⁴¹ Oaths and vows might appear in didactic and pastoral poems, but why Virgil avoids these kinds of rites in the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* is not clear — probably this is accidental. The two magical rites described by Virgil are intended to arouse love. Obviously these rites are not typical of any of Virgil's works. By describing them he is able to develop his themes: Dido's attempt to bring back Aeneas, and Alpheisiboeus facing a similar problem.⁴² On the whole, we may conclude, the poet gives each of his works its fitting rites — and this is one of the aspects of the literary elaboration of the religious raw material.

The descriptions of rites of the same kind usually differ from one case to another. Let us first take oracular rites. They consist of two parts, the request and the answer. Sinon describes an oracular rite to Priam (*Aen.* 2.114–9) in very brief fashion. The request is not described at all while the answer is not given directly by Apollo's priest but quoted by the envoys. The poet obviously is not interested in details and in vivid reconstruction of the situation but wishes only to underline the answer:

*"sanguine placastis ventos et virgine caesa,
cum primum Iliacas, Danaï, venistis ad oras:
sanguine quaerendi reditus animaque litandum / Argolica".*

A long account of oracular request is given in the seventh book of the *Aeneid*. Moved by two omens, Latinus consults the oracle of his father Faunus (81–101). This rite differs in some respects from ordinary oracular rites. In the first place, Latinus is the one who asks for the oracle, and is also the medium by which the answer is given. Secondly, the oracle is to be attained by sleeping in the deity's temple and by a nightly dream.⁴³ The important point is that in this instance we have a full account of the rite; the poet describes the location of the deity, the peculiar character of this place and the method of consulting the deity. Latinus' way of consulting the oracle is recounted as well as the full answer he receives. The next instance is again different: Aristaeus' request to the oracle is very short (*Georg.* 4.447–449). Virgil omits all details of the ritual, and rightly so because they do not fit into the situation. The

⁴¹ See W.Y. Sellar, *Virgil* (Oxford 1897) 251. It does not matter if one does not accept Servius' testimony (*ad. Ec.* 10.1; *Georg.* 4.1), as the Aristaeus' legend is an epyllion — a different kind of poetical genre. For the controversy about this part of the poem see L.P. Wilkinson, *The Georgics of Virgil* (Cambridge 1969) 108–120, 325–326 (with detailed bibliography).

⁴² C. Bailey finds some hints of magic in Virgil's writings. *V. his Religion in Virgil* (Oxford 1938) 5–6, yet magical rites are very rare in Virgil's writings.

⁴³ Servius *ad Aen.* 7.88 writes: *incubare dicuntur proprie hi qui dormiunt ad accipienda responsa; unde est ille incubat Iovi, id est dormit in Capitolio, ut responsa possit accipere.*

answer, however, takes up 74 lines,⁴⁴ and gives the poet occasion to recount the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice. Evidently it is the poet who decides whether the account of the rite, or a certain part of it, be short or long or emphasized — according to his taste and aims.

Accounts of burial rites are instructive, too. Virgil tells of Caieta's burial in one and a half lines (*Aen.* 7.5–6). He is not interested in the rite but wants to explain how the place-name Caieta is derived from the name of Aeneas' nurse. In contrast, the account of Polydorus' burial extends over eight lines (*Aen.* 3.62–8). The first sentence is a kind of introduction and a title for the whole passage — Polydorus was buried anew.⁴⁵ And then: they heaped the earth over the mound, erected altars to the ghost, adorned them with chaplets, the women untied their hair according to custom,⁴⁶ they offered milk and blood; then the spirit rested in the tomb and they loudly uttered the last call.⁴⁷ This account denotes the main actions of the ritual, yet the poet omits secondary actions and details that presumably seem unnecessary on this occasion!

Some accounts of burial rites are long and detailed. This holds good for Misenus' burial. It starts with the Sibyl's announcement to Aeneas that he has to bury one of his friends (*Aen.* 6.149–152). The cutting of the trees for the funeral pyre is extensively described (6.176–184). Finally the funeral itself is depicted (6.212–235). There is no doubt that this time simple reference to the main and accepted actions of the rite is not sufficient for the poet. He has reasons of his own for recounting almost every detail carefully and fully.⁴⁸ Similarly the description of Pallas' burial is elaborated, but in some respect different. We first hear of this rite when Aeneas captures prisoners of war in order to sacrifice them (*Aen.* 10.517–520). The rite itself is described in Book 11 and consists of several passages. The first one is Aeneas' lamentation (41–58). The second passage contains the funeral procession from the Trojans' camp to Pallanteum (59–99). The third passage comprises the announcement of Pallas' death to Pallanteum, the arrival of the funeral procession and Evander's lament (139–181). However, the burial itself is not mentioned at all. Virgil then shifts the scene to the Trojan camp, and we are

⁴⁴ Cf. *Georg.* 3.84–98; 356–462.

⁴⁵ Conington, *op. cit.* (n. 36 supra) ad 3.62 argues that *instaurare* denotes a sacrifice and solemn action, hence it is not to be inferred that this is a new burial of Polydorus, differing from the first one. T.E. Page, *P. Virgili Maronis Aeneidos Lib.III* (London 1894) 37, however, refers to Liv. 5.52, and argues that *instaurare* is a technical term denoting the repetition of a religious ceremony due to some error or omission in the first performance. I think this is the right interpretation. V. Servius ad. *Aen.* 3.68: *et hunc constat non legitime sepultum fuisse, rite ergo reddita legitima sepulta, redit anima quietem sepulcri*, and cf. Bailey, *Religion in Virgil* 247.

⁴⁶ See Appel, *op. cit.* (n. 3 supra) 203.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Aen.* 6.325–330.

⁴⁸ V. *infra*, p. 61

told of the burial of the dead Trojans. Thus though the account is detailed and extends over several score lines, only the first stages of the rite are described. It is noteworthy that by stopping his account at this point, Virgil avoids recounting the sacrificing of the prisoners of war.⁴⁹

Finally we may examine Virgil's accounts of the founding of cities. In Book 3 Aeneas tells how after leaving Troy he arrived at Thrace and started founding a city:

*Sacra Dionaeae matri divisque ferebam
uspicipibus coeptorum operum, superoque nitentem
caelicolum regi mactabam in litore taurum* (19–21).

The rite includes the sacrificing and the obtaining of the necessary *auspicia*. This is the only account in the Aeneid of the religious rites that accompanied city founding, and it is not a long one. Afterwards the Trojans tried to found a city in Crete, in accordance with Anchises' interpretation of the Delian oracle. However, there is no mention of the religious rite (*Aen.* 3.132–137). In Book 5 Aeneas decides to found a city after he has had a dream. By drawing a furrow he establishes the boundaries (5.544). Now this ploughing of the boundaries is clearly a religious act,⁵⁰ but its ritual character is not hinted at by Virgil in this case; in fact he makes no mention of the religious rite here. How can we account for Virgil's silence?

The poet gives details of the religious rite when he comes to describe city foundation for the first time. The circumstances of the case are portrayed quite extensively and some lines are naturally devoted to the religious ceremony. Furthermore, the rite provides the reason for leaving the place, because the *auspicia* are unlucky. Conversely, it is unnecessary and undesirable to describe the foundation rite in Crete. It is unnecessary because the Delian oracle had already ordered the building of the city, it is undesirable because the attempt failed. Had Virgil said the *auspicia* were lucky, a contradiction would have resulted. Had he said the *auspicia* were unlucky, he could not have narrated the Trojans' adventures in Crete and the nightly vision of the Penates — essential to his plot. He solved the difficulty by omitting the religious ceremony altogether.

The omission of the religious rite in Book 5 may be explained by the special circumstances and by the need for variety. It was only after he had a nightly dream, in which his father instructed him to found the city, that Aeneas stopped hesitating about the founding of the city (721–728); thus, there is supernatural approval of the undertaking. The taking of the *auspicia* then may seem unnecessary, though the rite obviously should have been performed. Two other reasons for Virgil's omission may be suggested. In lines 743–745 we have an

⁴⁹ In this respect his account differs from that of Homer. See *Il.* 23.175. Cf. U. Quinn's remarks on the "variation of speed" in the Aeneid: *Virgil's Aeneid* (London 1968) 88ff.

⁵⁰ V. also Serv. *ad Aen.* 5.755.

account of a religious ceremony; to describe another a few verses later could perhaps be considered inappropriate. Last, but not least, Virgil's main point is to denote the very founding of the Trojan city, the famous Segesta — all other details are unimportant from his point of view and may be neglected.

Virgil's description of religious rites varies. He may extend his account on one occasion, emphasize certain points and ignore others on another occasion, or omit to mention the ceremony even though there is no doubt that it must have taken place. In this way he gives variety to his accounts, adapts them to the special situations and motivates the plot. Evidently the religious aspect of the rites is subordinate to the literary aims of the poet.

III

To assess Virgil's success, or failure, in the use of religious rites for literary purposes one ought to consider whether they become an integral part of the poems or are artificially inserted. Let us start with the following instance. As the Trojans are about to eat the food they have hunted in the Strophades, they are attacked by the Harpies. After they have fought them off, Celaeno prophesies strangely that the Trojans will build the walls of their city in Italy only after eating their tables (3.255–258). The frightened Trojans make sacrifices and Anchises prays to the gods to guard them from the evil omen. Now sacrifices and prayer are natural reactions for religious and pious people — and the Trojans are depicted as such by Virgil throughout the Aeneid. Such people would try to avert the omen in this very way, and therefore the prayer fits well into the situation.⁵¹

The following instance is in some respect different. When the Trojans arrive in Italy from Epirus they perform a ritual:

*tum numina sancta precamur
Palladis armisonae, quae prima acceperat ovantis,
et capita ante Phrygio velamur amictu,
praeceptis Heleni, dederat quae maxima, rite
Iunoni Argivae iussos adolemos honores,* (Aen. 3.543–571).

It is quite understandable that the Trojans pray to Pallas as she had a temple nearby (531). But in the main the Trojans perform the ritual to carry out Helenus' instructions (403–409, 435–490). Thus external reasons serve as a justification for the description of the ritual in this instance. Yet there is also an inherent reason: the deep emotions of the wanderers arriving at the promised land burst out and are expressed through the medium appropriate to their religious conceptions.⁵²

In a few cases external reasons for the appearance of the religious rites can

⁵¹ See also Aen. 3.176–8; 5.233–8; 6.85–92; 8.572–88; 12.776–80.

⁵² Cf. Aen. 3.523–5; 7.133–47.

be found. Aeneas sacrifices the sow and her offspring to Juno (8.84–85) following the appearance of the god Tiberinus in his nightly dream (8.43–45, 59–61). The religious rites performed in Book 6 of the *Aeneid* have their foundation in earlier instructions.⁵³ But in the following case Virgil does not give any explanation at all. By chance Aeneas comes to Evander to ask for help precisely on the day when the ritual for Hercules is being performed (8.102–194). This coincidence was obviously planned by Virgil for it enabled him to recount the legend of Cacus and Hercules and the ritual performed to Hercules at the Ara Maxima. No doubt the recounting of this episode and the ritual is neither essential nor necessary to the plot. The only argument that can be offered for its justification is that generally speaking such stories are legitimate in epic poems.⁵⁴

On the whole we may say that Virgil attempts to integrate the religious rites into the natural development of the plot. If a certain rite is out of place, the poet has probably failed to keep up to his own standards. As we have seen, there are two ways by which this integration can be achieved: internal, this being preferred by the poet, and external. Now the rites may originate in one of two motives. There is religious origin, that is, rites appear at those times or events in which Roman religion requires its believers to perform rites. The second motive may be called human, that is, the poet is aware of the fact that on certain occasions and under certain circumstances the individual is in such an emotional state that his feelings erupt and express themselves through the conventional medium, the religious rite. Some examples will help to clarify and illustrate this distinction. State undertakings had to begin with certain religious rites according to the rules of Roman religion, and this convention is followed by Virgil.⁵⁵ Supernatural phenomena (*omina*, *prodigia*, *monstra*) and night dreams required religious rites and Virgil complies with this rule.⁵⁶ Now to illustrate the personal motive: Cloanthus is leading in the ships' race held in honour of Anchises, but sees that Mnesteus is about to overtake him. Hard pressed, Cloanthus prays to gods and makes vows in order to win the race (5.233–238). We see that a man in an embarrassing situation or in distress turns to the deities for help. Obviously in such cases we should not expect a complete rite according to all the rules, but only the outline or some features of the rite. This occurs most often in prayers, oaths and vows.⁵⁷ In these cases the poet clearly employs the religious rite as a technical, literary means to bring out the feelings and emotions of his characters.

⁵³ *V. Aen.* 3.441–462; 5.731–739.

⁵⁴ For a possible Homeric example see the opening of *Od.* 3.

⁵⁵ *V. Aen.* 3.19–21, 8.639–641; 12.169–215.

⁵⁶ *V. Aen.* 2.261–266; 3.176–178; 8.69–78; 9.16–24. It is well to bear in mind that fears and the inability to understand natural phenomena engendered the religious rites.

⁵⁷ See *Aen.* 1.92–101; 8.572–578; 9.403–409; 624–629; 11.784–793.

The question to be asked is why Virgil prefers this kind of device. He seems to be more interested in the emotional development and in the feelings of his characters than in the external plot.⁵⁸ A psychological account is not suitable for an epic poem as it induces the poet to describe human feelings as he sees them.⁵⁹ If the poet wishes to present an unemotional, objective account, as he ought to do, he has to employ other means, the dialogue or monologue for instance. Yet the most common form in Virgil's writings for this purpose is the religious rite — prayers, oaths and vows. These appear often in moments of climax. The deep emotions the character experiences and the atmosphere of a given situation vividly emerge with the help of these means. As an example let us take the following case: Iarbas loves Dido but she refuse to marry him. Then he receives word of Dido's love for Aeneas (4.198–218). He is portrayed as a religious person, carefully performing the religious ritual down to the last detail. He is shocked when he receives the news and this shock is revealed in his prayer to Jupiter. Iarbas, the pious, religious person, reaches the verge of heresy in this prayer. Thus the poet depicts his emotional shock with the help of religious rites — Iarbas' religiousness is illustrated by the sacrifices he performs, while the prayer reveals his doubts and heretical thoughts.

Religious rites play an important role in Aeneas' progress from Troy to Italy. In narrating Aeneas' voyages Virgil faced a problem. Traditional legends concerning the voyage were extant including tales of the founding of several cities. The poet could not ignore this tradition, but had to recount the foundings and explain why Aeneas continued his wandering. One of the means used to overcome this difficulty, which served to develop the plot, was the religious rite.⁶⁰ Aeneas receives his first instruction to leave Troy in nightly dreams, in which his duty is revealed (2.268–295). When he tries to continue fighting Venus appears and convinces him to stop his vain attempt (2.588–623). Later another difficulty arises as Anchises refuses to leave Troy. It is only by certain *prodigia* that he is persuaded to obey the instruction (2.679 ff.). The Trojans arrive at Thrace and begin to found a town, but then a *monstrum* induces them to leave the country (3.59–61). When they come to Delos, Aeneas consults the oracle of Apollo on where to found the city. As Anchises misinterprets the god's response, they turn to Crete. Then they realize that this is not the promised land. Again they intend to consult the Delian oracle, but a dream reveals the destined place to Aeneas.⁶¹ However, certain points remain obscure, so that on his arrival at Buthrotum Aeneas asks another oracle with the help of

⁵⁸ Cf. Heinze, *op. cit.* (n. 30 supra) 252.

⁵⁹ It should be admitted, however, that Virgil sometimes expresses his own reactions, e.g. *Aen.* 4.65–6, though such cases are rare.

⁶⁰ Cf. Heinze *op. cit.* (n. 30 supra) 99–102, 302–303, 330–335.

⁶¹ According to Heinze, the dreams are in fact oracular consultation (p. 313), but it is hardly right to consider them rites. Cf. Boas, *Aeneas' Arrival in Latium* (Amsterdam 1938) 181.

Helenus, and this oracle leads him to Italy. We see then that *auspicia*, oracular, and augural rites guide Aeneas whenever and wherever he loses the right direction. As the Aeneid has a religious outlook, this is a legitimate means. We have to bear in mind that it was fate's will that Troy should be destroyed and that Aeneas should come to Latium and found a new city. Aeneas learns of his destiny with the help of religious rites. From the literary point of view the rites are a convenient device, as the poet can leave the destined land vague, and it is only gradually revealed to Aeneas.

Prayers sometimes serve to link and develop the plot from one scene to another. Thus Iarbas' prayer helps to put an end to the love between Aeneas and Dido. Jupiter responds to the entreaties of Iarbas and sends Mercury to remind Aeneas of his duty. Another example is Aeneas' prayer to find the golden bough (*Aen.* 6.186–189). Before he can start searching for the bough he has to bury Misenus. The cutting of the trees for the funeral is related in 177–183. Aeneas takes part in this work, and facing the forest realizes how difficult it will be to find the bough, hence he offers a prayer. However, it is certain that he has not left his friends, and the poet does not mention the usual position of man at prayer stretching his arms upwards.⁶² The doves then appear and he can easily leave his comrades. Obviously it is through the prayer that we learn of Aeneas' thoughts, and it is the prayer that leads from one situation to another.

Virgil employs a religious rite to create a contrast with another scene. In Book 11 of the Aeneid Turnus leads his men against the enemy (474 f.). The poet depicts the procession of the Latin queen with her daughter and many women ascending to Pallas' temple. They light incense and entreat the goddess to defeat the Phrygian robber (475–485). The account of the religious rite emphasizes the contrast between the warriors of the town setting out for battle and that part of the population that can take part in the war by prayers alone. On the one hand, we see Turnus acting hurriedly and giving hasty commands (460–467), on the other hand, the rite is conducted slowly and heavily: "*subvehitur magna matrum regina caterva dona ferens*" (479 f.). Virgil does not insert any intermittent or conjunctive words between the prayer and the portrayal of Turnus rushing to war (485 ff.), which makes the contrast more emphatic.

Finally I would like to examine the role of religious rites in Book 6 of the Aeneid. We have seen that Virgil usually gives short accounts of religious

⁶² Conington, reading *voce* and not *forte* (*ad Aen.* 6.180), argues that this is not a prayer but a wish. But according to Norden, *op. cit.* (n. 6 supra) 189, this is prayer, distinguished by the speedy answer, and therefore he reads *forte*. Admittedly some details, characteristic of prayers, are missing, but this is so because we have here a silent prayer carefully adapted to the special circumstances.

rites.⁶³ However, the religious rites in the first part of Book 6 (up to 203) are extensively depicted. There is a bipartite oracular rite (35–155), then comes the funeral of Misenus (171–182, 215–235), and finally before Aeneas' descent to the underworld there is a sacrifice (243–254). This method is exceptional in Virgil's writings, and the poet thereby retards and slows down the development of the plot. Virgil probably wished to indicate the difficulties Aeneas faced when he complied with his father's instruction to descend to earth. The rites conducted illustrate the difficulties. As the description expands and the deeds Aeneas has to carry out multiply, he is delayed and cannot achieve his aims. Meanwhile a special atmosphere is created, and all this adds up to form a fitting introduction to the unusual performance of Aeneas.

Norden censures the sacrifices described before the descent. He argues that this rite is unnecessary because the person who has the golden bough is entitled to enter the underworld; there is no need of a sacrifice.⁶⁴ But there is no contradiction, and the rite fits in well with the previous rites and with what follows. True, the golden bough is a kind of entrance ticket to the underworld. But it is hardly credible that a man who is about to stand such a trial would not prepare himself by purification. As a matter of fact, the sacrifice is a purification ritual, which fact can be learned from the Sibyl's order: *duc nigras pecudes, ea prima piacula sunt* (153). Later when they are passing by Tartarus, Aeneas asks the Sibyl about the nature of the place (560 f.), and she answers that there Rhadamanthus interrogates and punishes sinners: *quae quis apud superos furto laetatus inani distulit in seram commissa piacula mortem* (568 f.). Rhadamanthus clearly punishes only those sinners who have not atoned for their sins before death.⁶⁵ Hence, as Aeneas is about to descend to the underworld he too should make atonement for his sins, that is the sacrifices he offers serve another, distinct purpose from that of the golden bough. In addition, they help to create the special atmosphere required before the descent.

To sum up, in many cases the religious rite is a framework and a literary device through which Virgil depicts human feelings, dramatic moments, and times of emergency. Virgil also uses religious rites to give reason to the development of the plot, to hold up the action, to create a contrast or to link passages.

⁶³ V. supra p. 52

⁶⁴ Norden, *op. cit.* (n. 6 supra) 121, 198.

⁶⁵ Cf. Bailey, *op. cit.* (n. 42 supra) 86.

APPENDIX

This is a classified list of religious rites in Virgil's writings. It should be borne in mind that in several cases it is very difficult to decide to which type the rite belongs, or whether what we have is a rite or only some remnant of it. Despite these shortcomings this list can show the types of rites Virgil describes and their distribution throughout his poems.

PRAYERS

Aeneid: 1, 92-101, 731-735 (with libation); 2.689-704; 3.34-36, 261-266, 525-529, 543-547 (with sacrifice), 633-634; 4.203-218; 5.233-238 (with vow), 685-692; 6.185-189, 193-197; 8.69-78, 512-583; 9.16-22, 403-409, 624-629; 10.251-255, 420-423, 459-463, 667-679; 11.477-485, 784-793; 12.776-780 (with vow).

Georgics: 1.498-501.

SACRIFICES AND LIBATIONS

(excluding those cases which are part of more complex rites)

Aeneid: 1.637, 728-737 (with prayer); 2.132-133 (preparations), 201-202; 3.118-120, 176-178 (with prayer), 231-354, 526-529 (with prayer), 543-547 (with prayer); 4.56-61, 198-202, 453-455; 5.743-745; 6.243-254, 883-886; 7.125-140 (with prayer); 8.84-85, 541-545.

Aclogues: 1.43.

Georgics: 3.21-25, 486-493; 4.378-385 (with prayer), 534-558.

OATHS

Aeneid: 2.152-159, 431-434; 3.599-601; 7.234, 593; 9.257-261, 300, 429; 12.496.

VOWS

Aeneid: 3.222-223; 5.233-238, 514; 7.471; 9.24; 12.780.

FUNERALS AND RITUALS FOR THE DEAD

Aeneid: 3.62-68, 301-305, 768-714 (No details are given of Anchises' burial for several reasons. Aeneas is seized by sorrow and grief and cannot give a detailed account of the burial. This is a climax point that might only be weakened by the funeral details, and so Virgil prefers to have Aeneas end his story. Finally, as a substitution, Virgil gives a commemoration rite in honour of Anchises on the anniversary of his death in Book 5); 5.44-103 with 605 and 762-763; 6.176-183, 212-235; 7.5-6; 10.517-520; 11.2-11, 41-99, 131-81, 184-212.

ORACULA

Aeneid: 2.114-119; 3.84-99, 358-472; 6.36-155; 7.81-101.

Georgics: 4.447-527.

STATE RITES

Aeneid: 2.172–179 (augural), 687–691 (augural); 3.19–21 (city foundation); 7.65–80 (augural); 8.639–641 (alliance); 11.54; 12.110–120, 169–215 (alliance), 257–260.

PURIFICATIONS

Aeneid: 3.278–280; 4.635; 6.229–230, 635–636.
Georgics: 1.345–346.

MAGIC RITES

Aeneid: 4.484–521.
Eclogues: 8.64–104.

VARIA

Aeneid: 3.697; 4.61–64 (divination), 607–621 (curse); 7.601–622 (the opening of the gates of Janus' temple); 8.102–106, 175–181, 268–305 (ritual for Hercules) 714–719.
Eclogues: 5.67–75 (ritual for Daphnis).
Georgics: 1.338–350 (Ambarvalia?); 2.380–396 (ritual for Bacchus).

THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

ISRAEL SHATZMAN