

THE OWL.

VOL. V.

OTTAWA UNIVERSITY, SEPTEMBER, 1891.

No. 1

CÆSARISM AND CHRISTIANITY.*



FOR 753 years the power of Rome had been growing into fulness. Founded by the leader of a band of outlaws, it had first become a prosperous kingdom, then a powerful republic, mistress of the world. This republic, at first very jealous of anything which tended to revive the monarchy, had taken care that the government should be vested in the hands of many. Its greatest warrior and statesman had been assassinated because he seemed to aim at absolute rule; yet a dozen years later his nephew was entrusted with greater powers than the great Julius could have possibly desired. Commander of all the forces both on land and sea, perpetual Consul, Proconsul, Senator, President of the Senate and Tribune, Censor, Prætor, and Sovereign Pontiff, Augustus Cæsar was the sole ruler of the Roman dominions from the Atlantic Ocean to the Caspian Sea, from the Rhine and the Danube to the African deserts. From then until now Cæsarism and absolutism have been convertible terms.

It was when the new emperor was at the zenith of his power that he ordered that memorable census to be taken, on the occasion of which, in the far off province of Judea, "Joseph went up out of the city of Nazareth to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child." Mary's child was born in the humblest surroundings, yet his coming strangely agitated the heavy poisonous atmosphere of King Herod's court. All the male children of two years old and under, in

Bethlehem and its borders, were slain, and the danger was thought to be averted. But *the Child* escaped, grew up to manhood, became a public teacher of whom it was said, "Never man spoke as this man,"—a teacher who taught "as one having power." But at last he was brought before the Roman governor and accused of sedition. "We have found this man perverting our nation," it was said to Pilate. The charge was supported by the most flimsy evidence, and the governor would have set him free but for the half-veiled threat, "If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend." Why did Herod with such savage earnestness seek the life of the Carpenter's Son? Why did the fair-minded Pilate hasten to sign the death warrant when taunted by a Jewish rabble? Because something told these deputies of Cæsar that one had appeared on earth who was to be Cæsar's deadly foe. Jesus of Nazareth had always obeyed the laws of the Roman province of Judea, he had even exerted his miraculous power that he might pay the money tribute required of him,—but he had made a declaration which has placed him and his in conflict with Cæsarism to the end of time: *Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and to God the things that are God's.* Cæsar had declared that *all* things belonged to Cæsar; Christ declared that *some* things did *not* belong to Cæsar. Well might the Jews cry out to Pilate, "If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend." For this man it was who said, that Cæsar should no longer bind the souls of his subjects with the chains which bound their bodies. On the day when Christ, without asking Cæsar's leave, sent forth his Apostles to teach

* Read in the School of Theology on June 10th, 1891.