

Latin Text, DĒ BELLŌ GALLICŌ 6.16.8–13, p. 165

10 *Alii immānī magnitūdine simulācra habent, quōrum contexta viminibus membra vivīs hominibus complent; quibus succēnsīs circumventī flammā exanimantur hominēs. Supplicia eōrum quī in fūrtō aut in latrōciniō aut aliquā noxiā sint comprehēnsī grātiōra dīs immortalibus esse arbitrantur; sed, cum eius generis cōpia dēficit, etiam ad innocentium supplicia dēscendunt.*

Literal Translation Molinarius

Others have likenesses [i.e., figures in human shape] of a huge size, whose limbs, woven with wickerwork, they fill with live human beings; which [likenesses] having been set afire [i.e., after these wickerwork figures have been set on fire], the human beings, surrounded by flame, are killed. The punishments of those [people], who either in theft or in highway robbery or by some crime have been caught, they consider more pleasing to the deathless gods; but, whenever a supply of this sort is lacking, they sink even to the sacrifices of innocent [people].

Literal Translation McDevitte

Others have figures of vast size, the limbs of which formed of osiers they fill with living men, which being set on fire, the men perish enveloped in the flames. They consider that the oblation of such as have been taken in theft, or in robbery, or any other offense, is more acceptable to the immortal gods; but when a supply of that class is wanting, they have recourse to the oblation of even the innocent.

Discussion Questions

1. In Caesar's representation, were the Gallic gods just or unjust in craving the sacrifice of criminals? Of innocent victims?
2. Caesar describes living human beings being burned alive inside huge wicker work structures constructed to resemble human beings. Do you think that would have been shocking to his readers? Why or why not?
3. To what extent are Gallic executions similar to or different from the Roman practice of crucifixion? How would you compare Gallic executions to the Roman practice of condemning criminals to fight in gladiatorial combats or with wild animals?