

# Emperors and the Divine – Rome and its Influence

Edited by Maijastina Kahlos



COLLeGIUM

STUDIES ACROSS DISCIPLINES IN THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

VOLUME 20

Published in 2016  
by the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies  
P.O. Box 4 (Fabianinkatu 24)  
FI-00014 University of Helsinki  
Finland

ISSN 1796-2986

ISBN 978-951-51-2024-3

© Editors & Contributors 2016

---

COLLeGIUM: Studies across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences

**Editor-in-Chief**

Timo Kaartinen

**Managing Editor**

Maija Väättämoinen

**Editorial Board**

Thomas Devaney, Josephine Hoegaerts, Nora Hämäläinen, Simo Knuuttila, Klaus Laalo, Merja Polvinen, Mari Wiklund

**Board of Consulting Editors**

Laura Assmuth, Marghareta Carucci, Denis Casey, Douglas Davies, Charles Husband, Mika Kajava, Leena Kaunonen, Kuisma Korhonen, Dan Lloyd, Petri Luomanen, Matti Miestamo, Marianna Muravyeva, Andrew Newby, Mika Ojakangas, Tom Popkewitz, Katariina Salmela-Aro, Hanna Snellman, Koen Stapelbroek, Ian Thatcher, Kristiina Taivalkoski-Shilov, Miira Tuominen, Karen Vedel, Alan Warde

[www.helsinki.fi/collegium/journal](http://www.helsinki.fi/collegium/journal)

Cover picture: Constantine. Gold multiple medallion minted in Ticinum, 313 AD. Wt. 39.79 g. Busts of Constantine with Sol Invictus. Wikimedia Commons.

COLLeGIUM

STUDIES ACROSS DISCIPLINES IN THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

# Emperors and the Divine – Rome and its Influence

Edited by Maijastina Kahlos

## Contents

---

Introduction: Roman Emperors and the Divine: Shifts and Downshifts <i>Maijastina Kahlos</i>	1
<b>Emperors and Their Divine Honours</b>	
Rhetoric and Divine Honours: On the “Imperial Cult” in the Reigns of Augustus and Constantine <i>William van Andringa</i>	10
Emperor Meets Gods: Divine Discourse in Greek Papyri from Roman Egypt <i>Janneke de Jong</i>	22
Gods and Emperors at Aigeai in Sicilia <i>Mika Kajava</i>	56
<b>Emperors – Legitimation and Criticism</b>	
Gods of Cultivation and Food Supply in the Imperial Iconography of Septimius Severus <i>Jussi Rantala</i>	64
Tertullian’s Criticism of the Emperors’ Cult in the <i>Apologeticum</i> <i>Tobias Georges</i>	84
<b>Emperors and Christians – Identity Formation</b>	
“What Harm Is There for You to Say Caesar Is Lord?” Emperors and the Imperial Cult in Early Christian Stories of Martyrdom <i>Outi Lehtipuu</i>	96
The Emperor’s New Images – How to Honour the Emperor in the Christian Empire? <i>Maijastina Kahlos</i>	119
<b>Imperial Authority and Divine Knowledge</b>	
<i>Pontifex Maximus</i> : from Augustus to Gratian – and Beyond <i>Alan Cameron</i>	139
Ordering Divine Knowledge in Late Roman Legal Discourse <i>Caroline Humfress</i>	160
<b>Emperors – Praise and Mockery</b>	
Coping with Ancient Gods, Celebrating Christian Emperors, Proclaiming Roman Eternity: Rhetoric and Religion in Late Antique Latin Panegyrics <i>Chiara O. Tommasi Moreschini</i>	177
Satirical Apotheosis in Seneca and Beyond <i>Sari Kivistö</i>	210
List of Contributors	231

# Introduction: Roman Emperors and the Divine – Shifts and Downshifts

Maijastina Kahlos

University of Helsinki

In the course of history, the divine sphere has frequently been harnessed to serve the needs of political leaders. Political power has thus been legitimized as authorized by divine forces. In pre-modern societies, and especially in the Roman Empire, phenomena that people today call religion and politics were closely intertwined, even inseparable.<sup>1</sup> This can be perceived most clearly in the relationship of the Roman emperors to the divine – in their support of different deities, in their role as the mediators between the divine and humankind, and in their policies towards the many different cults and religious groups across a vast Empire. The manifestation of proximity to the divine was one of the most important ways of legitimating imperial power.

The articles of the present volume *Emperors and the Divine* analyse the various means by which imperial power was justified. Emperors supported cults of various deities, representing themselves as the guardians of the cosmic order, whether the fragile peace maintained between the human and divine spheres was a *pax deorum* or *pax dei*. They aimed to sustain and increase their authority as representatives of the divine, either as the companions and protégés of important gods or as (more or less) divine beings themselves. In this book, we will learn about the various ways in which the gods, including the Christian deity, were used for political purposes. Moreover, it will be asked how Roman emperors were made divine. Were they really regarded as gods? We will analyse how conceptions of the emperor as a representative of the divine sphere evolved from the Early Imperial Period to Late Antiquity, proceeding from Augustus to Constantine and the Christian emperors, and even to the rulers of the New Kingdoms. How did the titulature develop and what do these changes tell us about the encounter of religion and politics (if we abide by the use of these modern terms)? Furthermore, we will investigate how different individuals and groups, especially Christian groups, coped with this issue of emperors and the divine.

The articles of the volume *Emperors and the Divine* originate from the conference papers that were presented during a multi-disciplinary symposium at the Helsinki

---

<sup>1</sup> This has been pointed out in numerous contributions. For recent examples, see Galinsky 2011, 5–6; Friesen 2011, 24–25; Várhelyi 2010; Lenski 2009, 9–10; Gradel 2002, 5–6.

Collegium for Advanced Studies at the University of Helsinki in January 2014. The organization of the symposium was based on the idea that exchanges between scholars who share similar interests and a fascination with the ancient Roman world but differ in their approaches may possibly engender important cross-disciplinary dialogue. Consequently, *Emperors and the Divine* brings together scholars from a range of different disciplines – ancient history, the classics, comparative literature, archaeology, comparative religion, Biblical studies, church history and Roman law – to discuss common problems in the research of Roman emperors. Moreover, this volume combines the insights of scholars who work on the earlier Imperial Period and the later Imperial Period (Late Antiquity), research fields that too often tend to be approached as separate entities. Despite the diversity of the disciplinary approaches, the articles of this volume revolve around the theme of the Roman emperors' relationship with the divine sphere. Combining scholarly discussions on the Early Imperial Period with those on Late Antiquity also offers a potential to analyse the gradual shifts from the early Empire to the Christian Empire in a diachronic and more subtle way.

### Emperors and the Empire as an Imagined Community

The Roman Empire was an imagined community in the sense that most of the people who inhabited it did not know most of the people who belonged to it. They nonetheless considered themselves members of the same community, and they associated themselves with it.<sup>2</sup> It has often been noted that the Roman Empire was such a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural amalgamation that the only things that unified its myriads of villages, towns and cities were the emperor and the obligation to pay taxes. The taxation systems varied according to manifold contracts that the subjected communities had made with the Roman conquerors. At least theoretically, therefore, the person of the emperor was the most unifying factor in the whole Empire.

Roman imperial power exercised its supremacy not only through military might and violence, but also by means of religious practices. Religion was one of the most prominent ways in which the Roman social and political order was construed and maintained.<sup>3</sup> Roman supremacy was represented as divine in origin. In this order of things, an appropriate relationship with the divine and a correct interpretation of the divine were crucial in governing the Roman commonwealth.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For imagined communities, see Anderson 1991.

<sup>3</sup> For the dynamics between imperial power and provinces, see Ando 2000. For the role of religious practices in these relations, see Várhelyi 2010, 213.

<sup>4</sup> Elm 2012, 1–2 has shown how governing the *oikoumene* was seen in connection with a correct reading of the divine will and, especially during the Christian Empire, with a proper understanding of the nature of the divine.

In the Imperial Period, the welfare of the commonwealth was connected with the emperor, and the concept of *salus Augusti*, the personal health of the emperor, was associated with public welfare (*salus publica*).<sup>5</sup> Therefore, much was invested in the person of the emperor. His position was increasingly articulated and performed in cultic terms, as seen especially in the growing importance of the emperor's role in the sacrificial system. The rule of Augustus set a precedent in connecting the power and primacy of the emperor with memberships in the all-important priestly colleges and especially with the status of *pontifex maximus*.<sup>6</sup>

### Divine Companions and Divine Emperors

Imperial power was not automatically stable. It had to be continuously negotiated and legitimated at every level of law-making and government. The new rule of emperors turned to the divine sphere to legitimize their power. In this sense, they did not operate in a cultural vacuum but built on earlier Roman cultic and social structures. The same applied to Emperor Constantine and his Christian successors. The legitimation of power functioned on many levels, and imperial power had to conform to many already established rules and conventions of Roman society.<sup>7</sup>

Imperial authority was reinforced with the rhetoric of public welfare. As repeatedly asserted by verbal and visual means,<sup>8</sup> the order and welfare of the Empire – and even the whole of humankind – was based on the maintenance of good relations with the divine (*pax deorum* or *pax dei*). The emperors represented themselves as the guardians of these proper relations on behalf of the community, and it was the main responsibility of the emperor to ensure the benevolence of the divine forces towards the commonwealth. We could thus speak of the maintenance of public security or “national security”, and although this term is anachronistic, it illustrates well the significance of divine peace for ancient societies. We should not take the maintenance of good relations with the divine in Greco-Roman and Christian Antiquity only as a “religious” issue.<sup>9</sup> The continuity of ancient thought according to which the emperor must display intimate ties to a divine *comes* (or ‘companion’) can also be seen in Emperor Constantine's forging of relations with various divinities.

<sup>5</sup> Várhelyi 2010, 207.

<sup>6</sup> Gordon 1990, 206; Várhelyi 2010, 1, 211; Knust & Várhelyi 2011, 15. See also the contribution by Alan Cameron in this volume.

<sup>7</sup> For the many dimensions of the legitimation of power, see Beetham 1991, 15–16. For Emperor Septimius Severus and his legitimation strategies, see the article by Jussi Rantala in this volume.

<sup>8</sup> In anachronistic terms, this could be called imperial propaganda. Whether the word ‘propaganda’ should be applied to imperial self-fashioning and representation has, however, been debated in scholarship: for a survey, see Enenkel & Pfeijffer 2005, 1–9 and Weber & Zimmermann 2003, 11–32.

<sup>9</sup> The term “national security” is used by Drake 2008, 460; Drake 2011, 198.

The emperor himself could also become a divine being.<sup>10</sup> The concept of god in the Greco-Roman worldview diverged considerably from modern notions. Gods were regarded as immortal and had supernatural powers, but there were many kinds of deities – both major and minor gods with greater and lesser powers – in the divine hierarchy. There were, so to speak, different degrees of being a god. Divinity could be ascribed to special humans, for instance, if she or he had acquired exceptional powers and virtues and performed miracles. It was believed that divine elements existed everywhere in nature, in the cosmos and even in a human being.<sup>11</sup>

A number of cults could be organized for an emperor after his death, often in connection with the cults of other gods. There was not one centrally steered imperial cult, but rather, as Karl Galinsky puts it, a “vast panorama of variegated local practices that comprise the umbrella phenomenon that we call ‘the imperial cult’”.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, it would be more fitting to speak of imperial cults in the plural.<sup>13</sup> The various forms of emperor worship were an important way for provincials, especially in the East, to maintain good relations with the central government of the Empire. Nonetheless, it is imperative to stress that emperor worship by no means dominated all religious and societal life in the Empire.<sup>14</sup>

Christians principally acknowledged that, in addition to the Christian deity, beings existed in the world who could also be regarded as divine to a minor degree: for instance, angels and redeemed humans, especially martyrs and saints.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, the divinity of the Roman emperor and the worship paid to the emperor caused problems for Christians.<sup>16</sup>

In the course of the shift to Christianity after Constantine, the veneration of emperors was continued by Christian subjects, albeit often – but not always – in modified forms in which animal sacrifices were omitted. As Arnaldo Momigliano’s puts it, “it is not difficult to see that the Christian emperors were in no hurry to eliminate the imperial cult.”<sup>17</sup> A Christian emperor had to legitimate his power with the divine presence as intensely as his “pagan” predecessors. What was different was the notion that the emperor, as Noel Lenski aptly notes, “downshifted from the embodiment of the sacred to the conduit to it”.<sup>18</sup> The emperor was no longer officially

10 For the emperor’s funerals and the procedures of making him a god, see Arce 2000, 115–129.

11 West 1999, 38; Frede 1999, 43–59. As Price 1984a, 79–82 stresses, there was no generally accepted definition of what a deity was or what it took to become a god. See also Gradel 2002, 28.

12 Galinsky 2011, 3. This is why Beard, North & Price 1998, 348 have emphatically stated that there was “no such thing as ‘the imperial cult’”. See also van Andringa’s article in this volume.

13 As suggested, for instance, by Friesen 2011, 24.

14 Price 1984b; Galinsky 2011, 4–6.

15 For the Christian views of divine beings, see West 1999, 38; Frede 1999, 43–59.

16 The problems faced by Christians are discussed in the contributions by Tobias Georges and Outi Lehtipuu in this volume.

17 Momigliano 1986, 191.

18 Lenski 2009, 9–10. See also Galinsky 2011, 15.

a god, but he was still a representative of the divine sphere for his people. Another matter is how the ordinary people understood this subtle difference, indeed there was a great deal of room for ambiguity in the veneration of the emperor, as in many other religious issues in Late Antiquity.<sup>19</sup>

## From Loyalty and Flattery to Criticism and Mockery

*Emperors and the Divine* is divided into five sections. Section 1 discusses the divine honours received by the Roman emperors. William Van Andringa starts the first section and the whole volume with the article “Honours Worthy of a God: On the ‘Imperial Cult’ in the Reigns of Augustus and Constantine”, in which he examines the ambiguity of the religious language connected with the divine honours that Roman emperors received from Augustus onwards. Stressing the overlapping of the domains of politics and religion, Van Andringa explains the cult of the Roman emperor in the context of a religion that mixed a public cult with the functioning of the civic community. Rites and sacrifices were centred on the emperor and the gods who accompanied him. Van Andringa draws attention to the persistence of imperial ceremonies in the Christian Empire, and he interprets this continuity as confirmation of the ambiguities associated with the cult of emperors.

The other two contributions of the first section take us to the documentary evidence, papyri and inscriptions on the emperors and the divine. In her article “Emperor Meets Gods: Divine Discourse in Greek papyri from Roman Egypt”, Janneke de Jong discusses the different ways in which Roman emperors are presented in divine contexts in Greek papyrus texts from Egypt. This “imperial discourse” – meaning the totality of these expressions, both visual and verbal, made by both emperors and subjects in the form of one-way messages or dialogues – was one of the means of expressing and justifying Roman rule to the Empire’s widely diverging population. Applying a discourse approach, de Jong offers a new perspective to divine language in papyrus texts, showing that the use of divine language was more than a verbal elevation of the emperor and demonstrating that imperial titulature was both a product of, and a constructive element contributing to, the confirmation and reinforcement of the imperial power position. Thus, imperial titles were not only a significant tool for evoking divine associations, but changing titulature also illustrated important developments in imperial presentation.

Mika Kajava’s article “Gods and Emperors at Aigeai in Cilicia” discusses the Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor, analysing a number of altars and their dedicatory inscriptions. Some of these inscriptions are unpublished (D10, E14). Kajava shows that these dedicatory inscriptions testify to various local methodologies of jointly honouring the Roman emperors and their family members with local deities, and he undertakes a close analysis of the term ‘Sebastoi’, which appears in one of the inscriptions.

19 The ambiguities are discussed in the articles by William Van Andringa and Maijastina Kahlos in this volume.

Section 2 examines the ways in which emperors legitimated their position as well as the ways in which their divine status was questioned. In his essay “Gods of Cultivation and Food Supply in the Imperial Propaganda of Septimius Severus”, Jussi Rantala investigates the relationship between legitimizing imperial power and gods involved with cultivation, grain and food supply in Roman imperial propaganda during the reign of Septimius Severus. Analysing numismatic and literary evidence as well as inscriptions, Rantala shows how Annona, Ceres and Tellus were used to legitimize the power of Septimius Severus in the different periods of the emperor’s reign. Annona, the goddess symbolizing the imperial food supply, was connected with wars and other crises when the food supply of the capital often came under threat. When Severus returned to Rome, more emphasis was put on Tellus, a traditional goddess of agriculture and a deity connected with the Golden Age. Rantala also discusses the Secular Games (*Iudi saeculares*) organized during the reign of Septimius Severus.

Whereas Rantala analyses imperial propaganda, Tobias Georges offers a detailed investigation of the critical voices during the Early Imperial Period. In his article “Tertullian’s Criticism of the Emperors’ Cult in the *Apologeticum*”, Georges focuses on chapters 28–35 of that work, in which Tertullian strongly criticizes the emperors’ cult. Tertullian bases his argumentation on the concept of *maiestas*, drawing a categorical distinction between God and man. Tertullian acknowledges the emperors’ *maiestas*, but only as far as it is understood as a human being’s majesty subordinated to the *maiestas* of the one God. Georges shows that at the same time, Tertullian needed to underline the Christians’ loyalty towards the emperors and, accordingly, the specific kind of reverence that was still their due. According to Tertullian, Christians venerated emperors in the right way by praying for them, swearing by their *salus* and emphasizing their humanity.

The articles in section 3 examine how the divinity of the emperor influenced Christian identity formation both before and after the Constantinian shift. In her article “‘What Harm Is There for You to Say Caesar Is Lord?’ – Emperors and the Imperial Cult in Early Christian Stories of Martyrdom”, Outi Lehtipuu examines what kind of role the emperors played in early Christian narratives of martyrdom. She takes a sceptical stance towards the first-hand documentary nature of the earliest martyrologies (such as the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, *Acts of Justin and his Companions* and *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*), arguing that their conventional, literary style and intertextual links with other martyr accounts show that they should be treated as literary products rather than documentary material.

Maijastina Kahlos’s article discusses the ways in which the sacredness of the emperors was reinterpreted in the fourth and fifth centuries, during the long process in which the Empire was gradually Christianized. The Christian emperors expected to receive due reverence as before, and imperial images retained the associations and connotations of prestige, authority and divinity that they had earlier had. Kahlos’s analysis of fourth- and fifth-century Christian writers reveals a wide variety of attitudes towards emperor worship, depending on the socio-political

context of the writings, as seen, for instance, in the case of John Chrysostom’s homilies in connection with the Riot of Statues in Antioch in 387.

The contributions in section 4 analyse aspects of imperial authority in the religious sphere – in the fates of the title *pontifex maximus* as well as in ordering divine knowledge. Alan Cameron examines in his article the development of the imperial title *pontifex maximus* from Emperor Augustus (12 BCE) to Emperor Gratian (382 CE), and he argues for the transformation of the title into that of *pontifex inclitus* after Gratian. Cameron reinforces his argument with a thorough analysis of imperial titulatures. The title *pontifex maximus* formed a permanent element in the imperial titlature and was usually given priority in the list of titles. The prestige of the office was high, even though its actual powers were limited. Cameron demonstrates that the title *pontifex maximus* was changed to *pontifex inclitus* because Christian emperors were anxious to downplay the pagan associations connected with it but unwilling to give up their traditional claim to priestly authority.

Imperial authority is also an essential element in Caroline Humfress’s article “Ordering Divine Knowledge in Late Roman Legal Discourse”, which explores how relations between the human and divine were structured and ordered in the *Codex Theodosianus*, the Imperial codex of Emperor Theodosius II (in 438). Humfress widens the recent research on power and knowledge in the Roman Empire (see, for example, *Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire*, edited by J. König and T. Whitmarsh 2007) by suggesting that the *Codex Theodosianus* is to be understood as a work of Roman imperial knowledge-ordering. She analyses how knowledge about the divine was textualized in Book XVI of the *Codex Theodosianus*. The compilers subsumed a myriad of different religious practices within a structure capable of rationalization. The new legal taxonomies in the title of Book XVI – “pagans”, “Jews, Caelicolists and Samaritans” and “heretics” – were soon reapplied in Novel 3.1 by Theodosius II.

The last section is dedicated to literature and examines the two ways in which emperors are treated there: with praise and with mockery. Poets and rhetoricians not only knew how to write praises of emperors, but they were also capable of satire. Chiara O. Tommasi Moreschini’s contribution “Coping with Ancient Gods, Celebrating Christian Emperors, Proclaiming Roman Eternity: Rhetoric and Religion in Late Antique Latin Panegyrics” provides a thorough analysis of the various strategies used by the Latin poets of the fifth and sixth centuries to deal with the emperor’s divine status. Tommasi shows how old models continued to survive, despite being incorporated into a new context, in the exaltation of Rome and its emperors. She argues that the ritual of apotheosis (*relatio in numerum divorum*) underwent a profound transformation in which divinity came to be understood “as if the function only, and not the person of the emperor, were endowed with divine power”. Furthermore, Tommasi shows that late antique panegyric was a living and changing literary form, which was rooted in the Roman pagan past and transformed into a sophisticated, relevant and effective form of political interaction.

As opposed to the glorification of Roman emperors in ancient and late antique panegyric, satirical narratives mocked and subverted the authority of divine rulers. Sari Kivistö's article "Satirical Apotheosis in Seneca and Beyond" closes the volume with an analysis of the motif of apotheosis in these satirical narratives. Kivistö uses as the starting point Seneca's ancient satirical work *Apocolocyntosis Divi Claudii*, in which the death of Emperor Claudius and his ascent to heaven finally leads to his expulsion and exile to the underworld. Kivistö focuses on the later Neo-Latin tradition, which was inspired by Seneca's work. These later works also describe in the satirical spirit otherworldly journeys, ascents to heaven or descents to the underworld by rulers, theologians, heroes and poets. The satirical representations of apotheosis are based on reversal and subversion through which the mighty lose their worldly positions. No one can triumph over death, not even the world's most powerful.

## References

- Anderson, B. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Ando, C. 2000. *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Arce, J. 2000. Imperial Funerals in the later Roman Empire: Change and Continuity. In *Rituals of Power. From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*. Frans Theuvs & Janet L. Nelson (eds.). The Transformation of the Roman World 8. Leiden: Brill. 115-129.
- Beard, M. – North, J. – Price, S. 1998. *Religions of Rome I: A History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beetham, D. 1991. *The Legitimation of Power. Issues in Political Theory*. Basingstoke: MacMillan.
- Drake, H. A. 2008. Church and Empire. In Susan Ashbrook Harvey & David G. Hunter (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 446-464.
- Drake, H. A. 2011. Intolerance, Religious Violence, and Political Legitimacy in Late Antiquity. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79 (1): 193-235.
- Elm, S. 2012. *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Gregory of Nazianzus, Emperor Julian, and the Vision of Rome*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Enekel, K. A. E. – Pfeijffer, I. L. 2005. Introduction. In Karl A. E. Enekel & Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer (eds.) *The Manipulative Mode. Political Propaganda in Antiquity. A Collection of Case Studies*. Leiden: Brill. 1-12.
- Frede, M. 1999. Monotheism and Pagan Philosophy in Later Antiquity. In Polymnia Athanassiadi & Michael Frede (eds.) *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 41-67.
- Friesen, S. J. 2011. Normal Religion, or, Words Fail Us. A Response to Karl Galinsky's "The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider?" In Jeffrey Brodd & Jonathan L. Reed (eds.) *Rome and Religion. A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult*. Atlanta: SBL. 23-26.
- Galinsky, K. 2011. The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider? In Jeffrey Brodd & Jonathan L. Reed (eds.) *Rome and Religion. A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult*. Atlanta: SBL. 1-21.
- Gordon, R. 1990. The Veil of Power: Emperors, Sacrificers and Benefactors. In M. Beard & J. North (eds.) *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World*. London: Duckworth. 201-231.
- Gradel, I. 2002. *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Lenski, N. 2009. Introduction: Power and Religion on the Frontier of Late Antiquity. In A. Cain & N. Lenski (eds.) *The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity*. Farnham: Ashgate. 1-17.
- Momigliano, A. 1986. How Emperors Became Gods. *American Scholar* 55, 181-193.
- Price, S. R. F. 1984a. Gods and Emperors. The Greek Language of the Roman Imperial Cult. *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 104, 79-95.
- Price, S. R. F. 1984b. *Rituals and Power: the Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Várhelyi, Z. 2010. *The Religion of Senators in the Roman Empire. Power and the Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weber, G. – Zimmermann, M. 2003. Propaganda, Selbstdarstellung und Repräsentation. In Gregor Weber & Martin Zimmermann (eds.) *Propaganda – Selbstdarstellung – Repräsentation im römischen Kaiserreich des 1. Jhs. n. Chr.* Historia Einzelschriften 164. Wiesbaden: Steiner. 11-40.
- West, M. L. 1999. Towards Monotheism. In Polymnia Athanassiadi & Michael Frede (eds.) *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 21-40.
- Wright Knust, J. – Várhelyi, Z. 2011. Introduction. In Jennifer Wright Knust & Zsuzsanna Várhelyi (eds.) *Ancient Mediterranean sacrifice*. New York: Oxford University Press. 3-31.



# Rhetoric and Divine Honours: On the “Imperial Cult” in the Reigns of Augustus and Constantine

William Van Andringa

Princeton Institute for Advanced Study (Florence Gould Member) and  
Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies

*This article examines what the historians have called the “imperial cult” to describe a wide variety of homages celebrated in the imperial era for the emperor and the members of his family. From Augustus, a new religious language was organized around the imperial person on the rhetorical basis of *isotheoi timai*, of honours equal to those made to the gods. This type of amplified tribute, set up from Actium and exploiting the Caesarian heritage (*divus Julius*), founded the institutional architecture of the Principate, giving the Emperor a necessarily prominent position. In fact the cults and honours devoted to the emperor belongs to the rhetoric of power and explains in particular the great ambiguity of religious language developed around the imperial figure; it also explains the maintenance of the institution with Constantine and the Christian emperors, who kept the essential meaning of the institution based on an admittedly ambiguous ritual arsenal, but adapted to the celebration of the highest honours that shaped the imperial function.*

To the Memory of Simon Price

This article examines what the historians have called the “imperial cult” to describe a wide variety of homages celebrated for the emperor and the members of his family in the imperial era. The established cults and honours have indeed participated in a moving dialectic of power. The emperor and his subjects finally adapted to a monarchy that from an institutional point of view was not, and to an empire consisting of autonomous cities. A new religious language was thus organized around the imperial person on the rhetorical basis of *isotheoi timai*, of honours equal to those made to the gods. This type of amplified tribute, set up from Actium and exploiting the Caesarian heritage (*divus Julius*), founded the institutional architecture of the Principate, giving the Emperor a necessarily prominent position. This policy of reverence framed the power relations in the imperial era and often took the form of cults and rituals intending to raise the emperor to divine equivalence, which however fooled no one. Even when dead, the emperor was consecrated as *divus*, not as *deus*. The emperors were in a way and from an institutional point of view,

Majastina Kahlos (ed.)  
Emperors and the Divine – Rome and its Influence

COLLEGIUM

Studies across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences 20.  
Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies. 10–21.

gods without being gods, just as they were monarchs without being monarchs, since the powers shaping the imperial office simply made emperors official representatives of the Republic. This fact which belongs to the rhetoric of power explains the great ambiguity of religious language developed around the imperial figure; it also explains the maintenance of the institution with Constantine and the Christian emperors, who kept the essential meaning of the “imperial cult” based on an admittedly ambiguous ritual arsenal, but adapted to the celebration of the highest honours that shaped the imperial function. Therefore, to find a precise meaning for the varied terms used by Roman people to honour the emperor is just as difficult as solving the necessary ambiguities of political rhetoric.

Political rhetoric often uses linguistic shortcuts and ambiguities, which inevitably give rise to controversies, contradictions and endless debates. The Augustan regime is not an exception: it left us apparently contradictory literary and epigraphic testimonies on the cults delivered to the living emperor, while the Roman religious rules made any deification of the prince unthinkable, especially in the context asserted by the new political power of a restoration of the Republic and its traditional cults. This supposed contradiction of our sources is at the origin of a very abundant modern literature, produced on what the historians baptized as the “imperial cult”.<sup>1</sup> This term is, of course, a reducing concept in the sense that the term often recovers a large number of honours and rites celebrated for the emperor in his role as representative of the Roman Republic and thus of the State.<sup>2</sup> Another element, which does not hold in light of the documentation, is the strict separation which we make today between politics and religion, while in Roman times, both domains overlapped: in the city state, where the gods lived together with men, any political expression or social ritual necessarily conveyed a religious dimension.<sup>3</sup> In this particular case, imperial power could not exist without a specific religious expression or, to put it in another way, the power of the emperor necessarily had a place in public religion.<sup>4</sup> In Rome, political action is deified and plays a role in structuring the community. But that does not mean that the emperor is a god even after his death, when he becomes not a god, *deus*, but a kind of hero, a *divus*, through an institutional process ordered by the senate.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This term has, of course, been discussed and criticized for a long time. See, for example, Elias Bickerman in *Le culte des Souverains* 1972 and the discussion, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> One of the best introductions on the subject is Simon Price’s book, Price 1984b, especially 1-22 and 234–248. Among many other stimulating contributions are Bowersock 1994 and Gordon 2011 (both republished versions of previous articles).

<sup>3</sup> Scheid 1985.

<sup>4</sup> Imperial rituals were a way of conceptualizing the world. See, for example, Price 1984b, 7-8: “I do not see rituals merely as a series of ‘honours’ addressed to the emperor but as a system whose structure defines the position of the emperor.”

<sup>5</sup> On this distinction, see Price 1984a, 83 and Bowersock 1994, 330. Price notes in particular that from the cult of the deceased Julius Caesar, *divus* referred exclusively in official terminology to former emperors and members of their family. “They were thus,” he adds, “distinguished from the traditional *dei*.” On the process of divinization, see Arce 1988, esp. 127-131.

This ambiguity in our sources is quite obvious in a little story told by Suetonius, who plunges us into the reality of Augustus' reign (*Augustus* 98, 2.5). Shortly before his death in 14 CE, Augustus travels along the coastlines of Campania.<sup>6</sup> While he goes along the bay of Pozzuoli, the great harbour of the time, the passengers and the sailors of a ship from Alexandria who had just disembarked came to him, said Suetonius, "dressed in white, crowned with flowers and burning some incense, lavishing him with all their wishes of happiness, the most magnificent praises: it is thanks to you, they say, that we live, thanks to you that we can navigate, thanks to you that we enjoy our freedom and our properties."

Apparently, Augustus was so delighted by the honour that he gave forty gold coins to the people accompanying him, making them promise that they would spend the entire sum in the purchase of goods from Alexandria. If we follow Suetonius literally, the Alexandrians greeted Augustus with divine honours, this being indicated by the white clothes, a symbol of purity, floral wreaths and offerings of burning incense, which reflect the usual ceremonies celebrated for the immortal gods. Augustus for his part reacts not as a god, but as a good man and patron, by ordering his men to be pleasant to the Alexandrians.

Divine honours on one side and behaviour of a patron on the other, is that a double language? Certainly not, because the Alexandrians, who were known for their sycophancy and their excesses, chose to pay tribute to Augustus according to Greek tradition, by using *isothēoi timai*, that is equal honours to those celebrating the gods.<sup>7</sup> Of course, there is no worship here addressed to the living emperor, but distinguished, supreme honours, returned to the one who governed the world and who, by the peace that he instated during his reign, the *Pax Augusta*, made navigation possible and Alexandrian business prosper. Tacitus (*Annales* 6, 18) when talking about the *caelestes honores*, the divine honours given to Theophanes of Mytilene, was not at all shocked, only mentioning that it was simply *graeca adulatio*, a Greek tradition for honouring mortals. We can see the ambiguity of the religious language adopted by the Alexandrians, a language, however, which fooled nobody:<sup>8</sup> neither Augustus nor the Alexandrians themselves. It has all the subtlety of the honours due to an emperor but it also defines him as a mortal, albeit an exceptional man, an officer of the Roman Republic and a guarantor of its interests. In other words, even if the emperor was from the beginning granted with divine honours, the "imperial cult" has never been comparable to traditional cults. The main evidence, pointed out by Arthur D. Nock and Paul Veyne, is perhaps that there are no ex-voto proofs of fulfilled prayer involving any emperors on their own,

<sup>6</sup> On the impact of the emperor's travels and the variety of honours and rituals performed during his visits, see Millar 1977, 28-40.

<sup>7</sup> It did not mean, as pointed by Carter 1982, 203-204, that emperor worship becomes at this point in Suetonius' narrative a real and significant thing. For the "*timai* of the gods", see Price 1984a, 88 and Fishwick *ICLW*, I, 1, 21-31.

<sup>8</sup> On the ambiguity of language, see Price 1984b, 213: "Language sometimes assimilated the emperor to a god, but ritual held back."

alive or dead.<sup>9</sup> That is why Nock compared the cult of the emperors to the cult of the Roman standards in the army, arguing that the standards, like the emperor's images, were symbols rather than divine entities.<sup>10</sup> Tertullian (*Apologeticum* 32-33) is not at all afraid to say: "I would not call the emperor a god (*deus*), maybe because I do not know how to lie or because I would not like to laugh at him or because he would not like to be called a god." As noted by Glen Bowersock, this is again simply respectful language.<sup>11</sup>

Within the context of a religion mixing public cults with the functioning of the civic community, and the functions of the emperor gradually being assimilated with those of the State,<sup>12</sup> it is not difficult to understand that the accumulation of powers in the same person led to a game of one-upmanship and an increase in the number of tributes given to the emperor. In the same way, we can explain the institution of rites and sacrifices centred on the action of the emperor and the gods who accompanied him in the task of restoring the State. After the victory of Actium in 31 BCE, Octavian is installed in the position of his adoptive father Caesar, as head of the Roman world. The honours showered upon Octavian then, in a calculated graduation that literally, year after year and according to the decrees passed by the Senate, shaped the exceptional position of the emperor, made him a ubiquitous figure in public religious events.<sup>13</sup>

Cassius Dio (51, 19-20) gives us an impressive list of honours voted by the people after Actium: triumphs, quadrennial games celebrated for Augustus' health, prayers of thanksgiving decreed for the anniversary of his birth (September 23) and the announcement of his victory at Actium (September 2), tribunician power decreed for life with extended powers, and his association with the people and thus the Roman State in public prayers. A decree was passed which even established a libation in his honour at public and private banquets. The measure broadened the toast to the genius of the master of the house in domestic banquets to the public sphere; was not the emperor after all invested as the *pater patriae*, a title he received later in 2 BCE (Ovid, *Fasti* 2, 127-128)?

In 29 BCE, the senators took another series of actions, giving Octavian the honour to be mentioned on equal terms with the gods in their hymns, an enormous privilege that should of course not be understood as the recognition of parity with the gods. However, in the political language of the time it was a supreme honour, and so worthy of the gods (Cassius Dio 51, 20). Among the honours established

<sup>9</sup> Mentioned by Bowersock 1994, 172, cf. Nock 1972, 212: "It must be emphasized that no one appears to have said his prayers or did sacrifice to the living Augustus or any other living king in the hope of supernatural blessings"; see also Veyne 2005. This idea and the few and ambiguous exceptions (like *CIL* XIII, 1366) are discussed by Price 1984a, 91-92 and Fishwick 2012, 121-130.

<sup>10</sup> A modern and Christianizing assumption according to Price 1984, 11-12.

<sup>11</sup> Bowersock 1994.

<sup>12</sup> Van Andringa 2015.

<sup>13</sup> It is easy then to understand Tacitus' allusion (*Annales* 1, 10): *Nihil deorum honoribus relictum, cum se templis et effigie numinum per flamines et sacerdotes coli vellet.*

at that time, there is the celebration of public sacrifices to each on his return to Rome, the day of return being considered sacred. There is also the appointment of major public priests, even beyond the normal number allowed for each college, says Dio. Of course, we have to add the privileges conferred in 27 BC, which added to the language of the time another institutional layer to the regime (Cassius Dio 53, 16-17). In January 27, the name Augustus was given to Octavian, a title until then reserved for the gods, without forgetting to mention the honorary shield offered, listing the supreme values of the now state representative, namely military excellence (virtue), justice, mercy to the defeated enemy and *pietas* towards the gods of the Roman State.

Without going into detail, we can speak of a true sanctification or institutionalization (which is the same in antiquity) of the office through the accumulation of honours, which gradually incorporated Augustus, his powers and the highlights of his reign, into a public religion not just completed, but completely renovated for the occasion.<sup>14</sup> For this, Augustus used the institutional and religious language of the Roman Republic. This remark is not without importance, because it challenges the established notion of a cult or even a new religion that would simply be superimposed upon the traditional cults.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, on the one hand, ancestral cults, as has already been noted, were reformulated by introducing a new date for the holidays or a blended liturgy, whereas on the other, divine honours conferred on the emperor were in fact an extraordinary accumulation of worships celebrating the virtues or divine benevolence towards him, much more than a real personal cult of the emperor.

The facts are well known and belong in the restructuration of the monumental centre of Rome, the foundation of an altar to Fortuna Redux at the Porta Capena, the institution of Augustalia in 19 BCE on his return from the East, and the dedication of the altar of Peace in 9 BCE in front of the altar of the Augustan Providence in honour of the adoption of Tiberius by Augustus.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the altar dedicated to the (divine) power of Augustus, his *numen*, in 6 CE definitively sanctified the office.<sup>17</sup>

There was nothing shocking in these decisions or in bringing together the emperor and the gods of Rome, even though the accumulation of honours gave a central religious position to the Emperor, something clearly unprecedented in Roman public life. Indeed, in the preserved sources, Augustus always sets his actions in accordance with the traditions, the tradition of Rome, but also with the tradition of the city-states of the Empire as emperor worship was one of the ways

<sup>14</sup> Price 1984b; Zanker 1988.

<sup>15</sup> As noted by Simon Price in Beard, North, Price 1998, 206-207.

<sup>16</sup> Zanker 1988.

<sup>17</sup> The date is not certain, see Fishwick *ICLW*, vol. I, 1, 86-87. On the word *numen*, see Varro, *De lingua Latina* 7, 85: *numen dicunt esse imperium*; Festus, p. 172: *numen quasi nutus dei ac potestas*; also Dumézil 1966, 43-44: "le *numen* n'est pas une qualité inhérente à un dieu, mais l'expression d'une volonté particulière de ce dieu."

to define the relationship between the new power and the provinces.<sup>18</sup> Augustus intervened each time to determine the admissibility of honours bestowed in Rome and in all the cities of the Roman world. Representing the supreme interests of the Republic, it could not be otherwise. To return to the anecdote told by Suetonius, the absence of exuberant pageantry in the encounter of Augustus with the Alexandrians, manifesting with rites (worthy of a god) the honour of being received by the first of the Romans, is not surprising. Augustus reacted normally in his role of benefactor, of patron of the Roman citizens. This behaviour is, of course, just the opposite of Caligula's actions.<sup>19</sup> Philo (Legatio ad Gaium 164) reports that the bad emperor really thought "he was considered as a god by the Alexandrians, because they were using and abusing the sacred language that men reserved for gods." That again is because religious language was ambiguous, meaning that the "bad emperor" Caligula could present himself as a god. Fundamentally, the excess of honours adapted to the powerful position of the emperor made him worthy of being a god, but of course he was a man because, says Tertullian, if he was not a man he could not be an emperor.<sup>20</sup>

Like Romulus according to tradition, Augustus left to join the gods only at his death. Again, Augustus did not innovate and could be placed both in the old tradition (Romulus) and the recent one, with the deification of his adoptive father Caesar accompanied by the construction of a temple in 42 BCE.<sup>21</sup> Augustus was already officially the son of the divinity, he had finally just a step to climb to the divine. He was admitted among the immortals in a ceremony of apotheosis held on the Field of Mars. The funeral borrowed the ceremonial from the ceremonies marking the end of the Republic, giving once again the opportunity to multiply new honours and rituals.<sup>22</sup> But this time the honours went to a real member of the divine community. Augustus was declared immortal; he received priesthoods, among them the priesthood of Livia, his wife, and public rituals. A temple was built, like the temple built to the deified Caesar, while a golden portrait was placed in the Temple of Mars. If, however, the deified Augustus was now recognized as an official god of Rome, he joined the minor deities of the Roman Pantheon as shown by the epigraphic records of the Arval Brethren.<sup>23</sup>

The Roman Republic being at the head of an empire, it is not surprising that the cults created around the emperor and his power were established simultaneously

<sup>18</sup> Mitchell 1993, 103, quoted by Gordon 2011, 42.

<sup>19</sup> On the ambiguous behaviour of Caligula who made himself a god, Suetonius, *Caligula* 22 and Cassius Dio 59, 28, 2-3.

<sup>20</sup> On Tertullian and the "imperial cult", see Beaujeu 1972, 131-136 and the discussion, 137-142.

<sup>21</sup> Weinstock 1971, 385-410.

<sup>22</sup> Arce 1988, esp. 38-39.

<sup>23</sup> Scheid 1990, 417-421.

in Rome and in the provinces.<sup>24</sup> This is attested by Cassius Dio, who mentions a discussion on the subject between Octavian and the cities of Asia in 29 BCE.<sup>25</sup> Religion being an essential element in the language of power, the cults qualifying the imperial actions were also and without surprise seen by provincial communities as an appropriate and effective medium in organizing the relations with the first of the Romans.<sup>26</sup> Let us hear Cassius Dio again (51, 20, 8), who sums up the situation<sup>27</sup>:

Caesar, meanwhile, besides attending to the general business, gave permission for the dedication of shrines in Ephesus and Nicaea to Rome and to Caesar, his father, whom he named the hero Julius. These cities had at that time attained chief place in Asia and in Bithynia respectively. He ordered that the Romans resident in these cities should pay honour to these two divinities; but he permitted the aliens, whom he styled Hellenes, to consecrate shrines to himself, the Asians to have theirs in Pergamum and the Bithynians theirs in Nicomedia. This practice, beginning under him, has been continued under other emperors, not only in the case of the Hellenic nations but also in that of all the others, in so far as they are subject to the Romans. For in the capital itself and in Italy generally no emperor, however worthy of renown he has been, has dare to do this; still, even there various divine honours are bestowed after their death upon such emperors as have ruled uprightly, and, in fact, shrines are built to them.

Clearly, Octavian distinguishes between the originally privileged cities (Ephesus and Nicaea), together with the communities of Roman citizens settled in the Empire, and the 'foreign' cities, that is, incorporated into the Empire but without a Roman status. For the first, the cult making the link with Rome took the form of a combination of two full and complete deities, the goddess Roma and the '*divus*', or deified Caesar.<sup>28</sup> The other cities had permission to erect altars and temples dedicated to Augustus in total contradiction with the Roman laws. There is an ambiguity again which, however, can be explained. First, the attitude of Octavian is adapted to diverging situations of power, one related to Roman institutions (colonies and Roman cities, Roman citizens), the other to the barbarian populations or subjects, thus sharing a lower status. Another distinction is that the

24 As pointed out by Millar 1984, 53-55, the sudden outburst of the celebration of Octavian/Augustus was a new phenomenon.

25 Mitchell 1993, 100-107.

26 See Mitchell 1993, 103: "Emperor worship was not a political subterfuge (...) but was one of the ways in which Romans themselves and Provincials alongside them defined their own relationship with a new political phenomenon, an emperor whose power and charisma were so transcendent that he appeared to them as both man and god." Also Price 1984b, 235: "... the emperor was honoured at ancestral religious festivals; he was placed within the gods' sanctuary and temples; sacrifices to the gods invoked their protection for the emperor. There were also festivals, temples and sacrifices in honour of the emperor alone which *were calqued on the traditional honours of the gods*. In other words, the Greek subjects of the Roman empire attempted to relate their ruler to their own dominant symbolic system." (my italics).

27 According to the translation of E. Cary, The Loeb Classical Library.

28 Weinstock 1971, 401-410.

provincials were not at the same level as the Romans of Rome, so they saw the Emperor as further and higher up, which legitimized the different tone adopted by Octavian and which was continued by his successors. Nor am I forgetting that in this case Augustus was not worshiped alone but with the goddess Roma, the two entities forming one single cult, the cult of Roma and Augustus understood as an emanation of the Roman state and not as the associated cults of two gods, Roma and Augustus.

Direct worship of the emperor was, not surprisingly, understood by the Roman elites as a barbarian trait, which explains the wonder of Velleius Paterculus (2, 107) when he described a German leader crossing the River Elbe to touch Tiberius, then designated successor of Augustus, in a religious attitude deemed excessive (and barbaric) by the writer. For the populations submitted or being submitted, as in Germany, representatives of Augustus respected this principle by establishing altars to Augustus with or without the goddess Roma. That is also what happened in Spain with the so-called Sestinian altars, after the Governor Sestius, and in Lyon where Drusus, son of Augustus, in 12 BCE dedicated an altar to Rome and Augustus (Livius, *Periochae* 139).<sup>29</sup>

This provincial feature (also valid in some Italian cities), which we consider ambiguous today, did not give rise to any rejection or astonishment.<sup>30</sup> That the emperor was considered a god or godlike, especially outside of Rome, did not fall foul of an ontological truth:<sup>31</sup> the gods of polytheism simply had nothing to do with the God of the monotheistic religions, defined as a supreme and immaterial entity. This was in contrast to the worship of Augustus, a true incarnation of the Roman state under the most diverse forms and for the salvation of the Empire. The religious reverence of the Alexandrians who met Augustus at Pozzuoli had indeed this purpose: the future of the state now depended not only on the great traditional gods, but also on the emperor "who was at the helm", said Philo. This is indeed one of the great innovations, in religious terms, of the Augustan period.

The persistence of ceremonies in the Christian Empire provides a wonderful confirmation of this ambiguous definition given to the cult. And the very ever-changing nature of the language created by the honours and cults dedicated to the emperor which shaped the relations of power from Augustus finally explains how the so-called imperial cult was able to answer to the new religious situation. Indeed, with and after Constantine, the cult was not only tolerated, but even encouraged, in some way, at least in the communities which kept a strong relationship with imperial power, like Italian cities or new provincial capitals.<sup>32</sup> The deceased Constantine was

29 Van Andringa 2002, 33-44.

30 Gradel 2002.

31 Gordon 2011, 42.

32 In fact, new archaeological evidence like the abandonment of civic sanctuaries seems to indicate that public religion was no longer maintained or lacked the same energy in many Western city-states after the third-century crisis, Van Andringa 2014.

even proclaimed *divus*, with the Christian signification that he was received by the god into heaven, like the deified emperors (Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4, 73).<sup>33</sup> The title remained because the term *divus* was not equivalent to *deus* and exclusively attached to imperial power.<sup>34</sup> According to Jonathan Bardill, who comments on the coins celebrating the apotheosis,<sup>35</sup> “the hand emerging from the clouds might have been interpreted as belonging to any deity, including the Christian God,” even if Eusebius gives, of course, a Christian interpretation of that coin (Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4, 73-74). It seems that the ceremony of divinization was just adapted to the new imperial order where Christians and Pagans were living together.

The famous Hispellum rescript, which seems to be dated between Constantine's death on 22 May, 337 and the joint proclamation of his three sons as *Augusti* on 9 September, goes in the same direction.<sup>36</sup> First of all, the rescript is clearly a *political document*. In the Augustan tradition, it forms part of the official dialogue undertaken between a provincial community and Roman imperial power. The main request by the people of Hispellum is to obtain a locally elected priest who could oversee the theatrical and gladiatorial entertainments in the local sanctuary, thus making it unnecessary for them to travel to Volsinii through mountains and forests. Of course, this question was directly related to the *dignitas* conferred to the city of Hispellum. The city of Hispellum asks officially to bear the name of Flavia Constans, the possibility to build a temple to the gens *Flavia* (*in cuius gremio aedem quoque Flavia, hoc est nostrae gentis, ut desideratis, magnifico opera pereici volumus*) and to organize games or public ceremonies (*sollemnitatis editionum*). This follows exactly the normal procedure used in the relationships between the imperial power and the city-states. It is the usual language of power used by Augustus and his successors, but there was a new clause in the dialogue between the emperor and the local community. In his rescript, Constans imposed one condition on the people of Hispellum: their new temple “should not be defiled by the evils of any contagious superstition” (*ne... cuiusquam contagiose superstitionis fraudibus polluat*). Again, the ambiguity of politics. As noted by many commentators, the condition established by the imperial power is ambiguous and needs to be specified in clear terms, since the word *superstitio* could refer not only to sacrificial rites but to all kinds of practices deemed deviant and celebrated to the pagan gods. This clause may in fact just be political rhetoric, referring to any precise rite performed during the festival. Constans may deliberately have left the wording of his decree open to interpretation, but not because he was resigned to the reality that sacrifice to the members of the family could not be prevented. In fact, Constans was completely aware of how the ruling power was honoured by the performance of traditional rites

33 Arce, 1988, 159-168.

34 Price 1984a, 83.

35 Bardill 2012, 376-377.

36 Gascou 1967; Bardill 2012, 263-264; Goddard 2002. The date of the rescript is a much discussed issue.

shaped by *isotheoi timai*, but there was a restriction, the *contagiosa superstitio* which referred, probably, to the pagan cults precisely related to the emperor, among them the cults of traditional gods performed *pro salute imperatoris*. He wanted to avoid any risk of physical contact with the pagan gods, in the same way, if we can trust Eusebius (*Vita Constantini* 4, 16), that Constantine prohibited the display of his image in the temples of Constantinople in order to prevent any contagion. The restriction concerned parts of the traditional architecture of the cult and had been to avoid the usual proximity of the emperor with the traditional gods. But the *isotheoi timai*, whatever they were, white clothes, crowns of flowers, incense burning or such like, remained. That is exactly how in the fifth century Philostorgius criticized the Christians of Constantinople for sacrificing to the statue of Constantine and for honouring him with candles and incense *hos theoi*, like to a god<sup>37</sup> (Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2, 17). As confirmed by a law of 425 (*Codex Theodosianus* 15, 4, 1), there was nothing shocking in honouring the rulers using the traditional pagan way. The statues were considered *ornamenta* and a clear distinction was made between the *numen* of God and the human *dignitas* of the emperors.<sup>38</sup> Of course, we do not know what exactly the people of Hispellum did to respect the imperial statement, and they might have sacrificed to the gods elsewhere.<sup>39</sup> In fact, nothing indicates that the sacrifices were forbidden, it was just a matter of respecting the public position of the emperor and establishing at the same time a certain distance with the traditional gods.

I would not say then that the cult was secularized; quite the contrary, it kept the same ritual expressions. In fact, as Glen Bowersock has pointed out, it was certainly altered or even better reshaped without affecting the grandeur of the office or the State.<sup>40</sup> Official honours easily replaced the pagan cult, first because the ambiguity of religious language and the subtle gradation of *isotheoi timai* made this perfectly possible, and second because the distance between a cult and a supreme honour was simply very short. Tertullian (*Apologeticum* 32), more than a century before, recognized these nuances, having no objections to an oath *pro imperatoribus*, for the emperors, which he says was equivalent to an oath for the prosperity of the empire and Roman power. But of course, he objected to oaths sworn to the genius of an emperor. It was unthinkable for a Christian to pray to a pagan god, but not to an emperor, because everybody was conscious that the emperor was not a god and that honours conferred on emperors were first of all defined as *isotheoi timai*,

37 Philostorge, *Histoire ecclésiastique*, texte critique de J. Bidez et traduction de E. Des Places, Les éditions du Cerf, Paris, 2013: Livre II, 17.

38 *Si quando nostrae statuae vel imagines eriguntur seu diebus, ut adsolet, festis sive communibus, adsit iudex sine adorationis ambitioso fastigio, ut ornamentum diei vel loco et nostrae recordationi sui probet accessisse praesentiam. Ludis quoque simulacra proposita tantum in animis concurrentium mentisque secretis nostrum numen et laudes vigere demonstrant; excedens cultura hominum dignitatem superno numini reservetur.* On this text, see Goddard 2002, 1048-1049.

39 For a similar strategy, see Libanios, *Oratio* 30, 17.

40 Bowersock 1994.

honours worthy of a god or supreme honours. Thus, the transformation of the cult under Constantine means not the elimination of sacrifice, but the elimination of the associations between the pagan gods and the emperor. Reforming the language of honours and keeping part of the ceremonial, it was then possible to maintain the sense of the imperial cult and the ritual of power.

## References

- Arce, J. 1988. *Funus imperatorum: los funerales de los emperadores romanos*. Madrid: Alianza Edicional.
- Bardill, J. 2012. *Constantine, Divine Emperor of the Christian Golden Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beard M., North J., Price S. 1998. *Religions of Rome, vol. 1. A History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beaujeu, J. 1972. Les apologistes et le culte du souverain. In W. den Boer (ed.) *Le culte des souverains dans l'Empire romain*. Vandœuvres-Genève: Fondation Hardt. 101-136.
- Bowersock, G. W. 1994. The Imperial Cult: Perceptions and Persistence. In Bowersock, G.W. *Studies on the Eastern Roman Empire. Social, Economic and Administrative History, Religion, Historiography*. Goldbach: Keip. 171-185.
- Carter, J. M., 1982. *Suetonius. Divus Augustus, edited with introduction and Commentarii*. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press.
- Dumézil, G. 1966. *La religion romaine archaïque*. Paris: Payot.
- Fishwick, D. *ICLW = The Imperial Cult in the Latin West. Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire*. Vol. I-II, Leiden, 1987-1992.
- Fishwick, D. 2012. *Cult, Ritual, Divinity and Belief in the Roman World*. Ashgate Variorum.
- Gascou, J. 1967. Le rescrit d'HisPELLUM. *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire*, 79, 609-659.
- Goddard, C. J. 2002. Les formes festives de l'allégeance au Prince en Italie centrale, sous le règne de Constantin: un suicide religieux ? *MEFRA*, 114, 1025-1088.
- Gordon, R. 2011. The Roman Imperial Cult and the Question of Power. In J. A. North and S. R. F. Price (ed.) *The Religious History of the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews, and Christians*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 37-70.
- Gradel, I. 2002. *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*. Oxford: Oxford Classical Monographs.
- Millar, F. 1977. *The Emperor in the Roman World (31 BC – AD 337)*. Ithaca – New York: Cornell University Press.
- Millar, F. 1984. State and Subject: The Impact of Monarchy. In E. Segal & F. Millar (eds.) *Caesar Augustus. Seven Aspects*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nock, A. D. 1972. *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Price, S. R. F. 1984a. Gods and Emperors: the Greek Language of the Roman Imperial Cult. *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 104, 79-95.
- Price, S. R. F. 1984b. *Rituals and Power, The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Scheid, J. 1985. *Religion et piété à Rome*. Paris: Editions La Découverte.
- Scheid, J. 1990. *Romulus et ses frères, le collège des frères Arvales, modèle du culte public dans la Rome des empereurs*. BEFAR 275. Rome.
- Van Andringa, W. 2002. *La religion en Gaule romaine. Piété et politique (Ier-IIIe siècle apr. J.-C.)*. Paris: Errance.
- Van Andringa, W. (ed.) 2014. *La fin des dieux. Les lieux de culte du polythéisme dans la pratique religieuse du IIIe-Ve siècle*. Gallia. 71-1.
- Van Andringa W. 2015. "M. Tullius...aedem Fortunae August(ae) solo et peq(unia) sua". Private foundation and public cult in a Roman colony. In C. Ando & J. Rüpke (eds.) *Public and private in Ancient Mediterranean law and religion*. Berlin: De Gruyter. 99-113.
- Veyne, P. 2005. *L'Empire gréco-romain*. Paris: Seuil.
- Weinstock, S. 1971. *Divus Julius*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Zanker, P. 1988. *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

# Emperor Meets Gods: Divine Discourse in Greek Papyri from Roman Egypt<sup>1</sup>

Janneke de Jong

Radboud University Nijmegen

*Roman emperors communicated a number of qualities which constituted an ideological basis for their unique position of power. These qualities were expressed by both verbal and visual references to the emperor. Besides references to his dynastic lineage or to his military capability, a recurring line of imperial discourse is the use of divine association. Connections between emperors and divinity ranged from references to a quality of an emperor that evoked divine associations to identification with a specific god and could be brought about by emperors themselves or anyone else. This article discusses how and why Roman emperors are presented in divine contexts in Greek papyrus texts from Egypt. Even if the majority of papyrus texts were written for practical reasons and their relevance was limited to the persons to whom the documents concerned, many texts are instructive for how emperors were divinely embedded in language. By applying a discourse approach, I aim to show that Greek papyri can be read on several levels. In this way, I hope to offer a new perspective on how divine language in papyrus texts can be looked at and how these documents can be read within a wider imperial context.*

## Introduction: Imperial and Divine Discourse

The defeat of Marc Antony by Octavian is usually considered as the beginning of Rome's new political order in which power was concentrated in the hands of a single individual. Indeed, many innovations by Octavian, who in 27 BCE received the title Augustus, constituted the fundament of the governing system headed by an emperor, which was to be the political arrangement for the next centuries. Although Rome's military dominance implied that it could enforce its wishes, many documentary sources show that the discourse of running the empire was

<sup>1</sup> This article is based on a paper delivered during the HCAS Symposium *Emperors and the Divine. Rome and Its Influence*, Helsinki, Finland, 30-31 January 2014. I would like to thank Maijastina Kahlos for inviting me to this venue. Thanks are furthermore due to Liesbeth Claes, who read a preliminary version of this article, and to the anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions.

Maijastina Kahlos (ed.)  
*Emperors and the Divine – Rome and its Influence*

COLLEGIUM

Studies across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences 20.  
 Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies. 22–55.

one of *consensus* over the existing situation.<sup>2</sup> As the ultimate representative of Roman power, the emperor and his household featured as a focal point in multiple forms and media, by which Roman rule was expressed and justified to the widely differentiated population of the empire. This worked both ways: the visual and verbal messages that were communicated by the imperial centre emphasizing the emperor's qualities such as dynastic background, military capability, divine assent and other virtues or ideologies of empire were favourably responded to and replicated by subjects. One feature of the Roman Principate, then, seems to be that it was manifest throughout the empire through the use of a shared vocabulary and imagery.

We may label the totality of these expressions, both visual and verbal, both expressed by emperor and subjects, and both in the form of one-way directed messages or dialogues, as 'imperial discourse'.<sup>3</sup> The term discourse has been employed in the humanities and social sciences to analyse communicative statements for a multitude of purposes, such as communication of ideologies and establishing power relations, in which discourse is both a tool and a product.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the polysemy of the word 'discourse' gives room to study statements on multiple levels, ranging from simple factual statements to what may be called a *Wortprogramm*.<sup>5</sup> It also offers the opportunity to study multiple facets of statements: in the context of the Roman emperor, discourse can be dynastic, military, provincial, legal, etc. Thus, if statements explicitly link the emperor to the divine, we may speak of 'divine discourse'. In this contribution I aim to tackle the question how and why the emperor was verbally connected to the divine in Greek papyri from Roman Egypt (30 BCE-284 CE). This will be done by analysing some texts, paying attention to the communications and strategies encountered in them. I will pass over the question of the organization and impact of emperor cult in Egypt, which has been extensively and excellently analysed by Stephan Pfeiffer.<sup>6</sup> Instead of focusing on cult actions and temple contexts, I discuss a number of selected documents that I think are relevant because they exemplify how 'language of divinity' can be connected to imperial legitimation. With language of divinity, I mean words that

<sup>2</sup> Ando 2000 is fundamental for the idea of construction of consensus by the Roman empire; Noreña 2011 on the basis of an analysis of inscriptions and coins for the western Roman empire states that "the dissemination of specific imperial ideals was more pervasive than previously thought" (Quote from p. i.). A different type of consensus is discussed by Flaig 2011, who points to the ritualized transference of power to the emperor by senatorial decree and popular law.

<sup>3</sup> De Jong 2014; Benoist 2014a and 2014b (forthcoming).

<sup>4</sup> For general studies on discourse, see, for example, Van Dijk 2011; Blommaert 2005; Fairclough 1989.

<sup>5</sup> For the polysemy of discourse, see Benoist 2014a and 2014b (forthcoming). The term *Wortprogramm* is an analogy to the notion of *Bildprogramm*, which has probably most famously been applied to Augustus' selfpresentation since Zanker 1968 and 1987. With *Wortprogramm*, I mean a recurrent verbal communication of imperial ideologies, which may be expressed by the emperor or the imperial centre or by subjects. For an example of this in imperial titulature, see below and De Jong 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Pfeiffer 2010 and 2012.

identify the emperor with a specific god, equate him with a god or that associate him with a god or gods. In language, the divinity of the emperor could be referred to by various agents, such as subjects, representatives of the Roman administration and the emperor himself. Assuming that language use is a matter of choice, I will argue that this language of divinity was one of the most self-evident methods to express the relation between the emperor and subjects. I will first discuss some noticeable examples that illustrate diverse ways and contexts in which the emperor was linked to a deity or the divine in a specific or more general sense in words uttered by various actors. In the second part, attention will be paid to divine discourse in the particular case of imperial titles. Imperial titles were not only an important tool for evoking divine associations, but developments in titlature also illustrate developments in imperial presentation. This bipartite approach aims to demonstrate the importance of the use of 'divine imperial language' as an underlying principle when expressing Roman imperial power. Because of their specific everyday life reflective nature, Greek papyri offer valuable information on how this may have worked in various practical settings. Attempting a discourse analytical reading of verbal expressions of imperial divinity in Greek papyrus texts, I will argue that these demonstrate that there was a subtle interplay and reciprocity between emperors, representatives of the imperial administration and subjects in their divine conception of the emperor.

### Emperors as Gods: Some Examples

The use of papyri as a source for imperial history cannot be underestimated. Notwithstanding difficulties of methodology and interpretation imposed by the fragmentary state of many documents and the lack of context, their sheer quantity and their diversified contents make papyri a goldmine for studying many aspects of antiquity, such as the relation between Roman emperors and gods. However, in contrast to other documentary sources, such as images on coins, and artefacts, where visual references to and connections with gods are abundant, it might seem less easy to find direct links between an emperor and a god in papyrus texts. This is a direct consequence of the practical and private character of papyri.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, examples of various types of 'divine phrasing of emperors' are found among the tens of thousands of edited documents. I will discuss examples that illustrate various cases of connecting emperors with divinity: phrasing the emperor as a god (Claudius as θεός (god), emperors in oaths), equating an emperor to a specific god (Augustus as Zeus Eleutherios in oaths, Vespasian as son of Ammon, Commodus as Hercules Romanus), and evoking divine associations in titlature. These are not clear-cut categories, though: as we will see, the equation of Commodus with Hercules Romanus also belongs to the group of titlature. Furthermore, oath formulas use imperial titlature and hint at the emperor's divine status as he, or

<sup>7</sup> For an overview of the possibilities, but also discussions on the methodological problems of using papyri as historical sources, see Bagnall 1995; Hickey 2009; Palme 2009; Kelly 2011.

his τύχη (genius), is the object of the oath. Each example will be discussed for its communicative and strategic aspect, which, as I aim to show, allows one to read the documents on several levels.<sup>8</sup>

A good starting point is the famous letter of Claudius to the Alexandrians. A copy of the announcement of the letter by the prefect was preserved together with the letter itself on the back of a fiscal document.<sup>9</sup> The following selection shows different examples of putting the emperor Claudius in a divine framework:

(LI. 1-13) "Lucius Aemelius Rectus announces: as the whole city, owing to its numbers, was unable to be present at the reading of the most sacred letter and (the letter) most beneficent to the city, I have deemed it necessary to display the letter publicly in order that reading it one by one you admire the greatness of our god Caesar and be grateful for his goodwill towards the city. Year 2 of Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus Imperator, 14th of Neos Sebastos."

(LI.14-16) "Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus Imperator Pontifex Maximus holder of the tribunician power, consul designate, to the city of Alexandrians, greeting. [...] (l. 29-32) And first I permit you to keep my birthday as a *dies Augustus* as you have yourselves proposed; and I agree that everywhere the statues of myself and my family are erected[...] (ll. 40-42) it would perhaps be silly that I, allowing so many honours, would refuse the institution of a Claudian tribe and the establishment of groves according to Egyptian custom [...] (ll. 48-51). But I decline the appointment of a high priest to me and the building of temples, for I do not wish to be offensive to my contemporaries, and my opinion is that sacred things and the like have in all ages have been granted as prerogative to the gods alone [...]"<sup>10</sup>

Starting with the letter proper (in line 16), Claudius responds to three questions posed to him by two embassies of residents of Alexandria, one composed of Greek citizens, the other one of Jews. The first question concerns honours that the Greek Alexandrians had offered to Claudius, the second is about political matters, such as the request to grant a city council to Alexandria, and the third is to resolve the conflict that had arisen between the Alexandrian citizens and the resident Jews. Both the prefect's announcement of the letter and the question for permission to bestow honours on Claudius contribute to establishing a framework of divinity in which the emperor was put. The proposed variety of honours fits in with practices found for Hellenistic kings. For instance, installing priests for the ruler, erecting (cult) statues, and celebration of the king's birthday are recurrent elements in Hellenistic

<sup>8</sup> There is a multiplicity of definitions, approaches and methods to analyse discourse. In this paper, I look at the texts for what I label as a 'communicative' and 'strategic' aspect or level. With 'communicative', I mean the message of the text and the terminology used to express that message. With 'strategies', I mean the aim or effect of the expression, such as the use of ideology for legitimation.

<sup>9</sup> P.Lond. VI 1912 (Alexandria, 41 CE) = Select Papyri II 212; Pfeiffer 2010, 74, 81.

<sup>10</sup> Translation slightly adapted from that of A.S.Hunt and G.C. Edgar in Select Papyri II 212.



ruler celebrations.<sup>11</sup> After subordination of the former Hellenistic kingdoms, the worship of rulers continued to be an important communicative tool between Roman administrators (first governors, later emperors) and their new subjects.<sup>12</sup> This continuity may be recognized in the Alexandrians' proposals of divine honours for Claudius. Roman leading men became more and more involved in the politics of this longest-lasting Hellenistic kingdom, likely resulting also in their divine treatment in Egypt.<sup>13</sup> As for the origins of such (divine) honours for rulers, we may look at developments in the Hellenistic period.<sup>14</sup> Apart from distinguishing between a cult (divine honours for rulers as equal to gods) and honouring (divine honours to gods on behalf of rulers), Pfeiffer argues for a differentiated model of presentation and interpretation of rulers as gods, in which actions by and reactions of both rulers and subjects could and did vary.<sup>15</sup> From the beginning of their dynasty, votive inscriptions demonstrate that Ptolemaic kings and queens were sometimes honoured as gods by subjects. There are also indications that the Ptolemaic kings were actively involved in establishing a cult for themselves. Prime of place in this respect should be given to Ptolemy II, who installed a cult for the Sibling Gods, himself and his deceased sister and wife Arsinoe.<sup>16</sup> Such royal initiatives are furthermore reflected in the royal titulature appearing in date formulas in Greek and Demotic papyri.<sup>17</sup> The deceased predecessors of the Ptolemaic rulers appear as the 'objects' of the dynastic cult for which eponymous priests were responsible.<sup>18</sup> The Alexandrian Greeks' divine proposals to Claudius can thus be considered in the differentiated framework of Hellenistic ruler cult, with which the Romans had already become familiar in the Republican period when they gradually incorporated the Hellenistic

11 Chaniotis 2003, especially 436-437. Chaniotis 2003 also refers to the variations of the different Hellenistic ruler cults. Similarly, Roman emperor worship as a whole was not a uniform institution, but rather differently organized and practised throughout the empire. See, for example, Gradel 2002; Ando 2008; Peppard 2011 (especially chapter 2).

12 Chaniotis 2003, 442-443. For the conceptual difference between a ruler cult, in which the ruler is addressed as a god, and ruler worship, in which the ruler is honoured, but not as a god, see Pfeiffer 2008, pp. 31-32.

13 Chaniotis 2003, 442-443 states that: "Late Ptolemaic Egypt played a very important part in the transmission of the ruler cult to Rome", connecting this to divine honours for Julius Caesar, Marc Antony and afterwards for Octavian.

14 Chaniotis 2003; Pfeiffer 2008.

15 Pfeiffer 2008, chapter 4.2.5.

16 Pfeiffer 2008, chapter 4.3.2.

17 E.g. BGU VI 1227 (a receipt in Greek for a delivery of grain from the Oxyrhynchite nome, dated 259 BCE), ll. 1-7: Ἰβασιλεῦοντος Πτολεμαίου τοῦ ἑταίρου Σωτήρος (ἔτους) κζ' ἐφ' ἰσέρειω Μηδείου τοῦ Λαάγωνος Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ θεῶν Ἀδελφῶν ἑκατηφόρου Ἀρσινόης Φιλαδέλφου ἑταίρας τῆς Ἀνδρωκάδου μητρίδος Θῶουθ κη'. "When Ptolemy, son of Ptolemy Saviour was king, year 27, when Medeios, son of Laagon, was priest of Alexander and the Sibling Gods, when Mêtala, daughter of Androkades, was *kanêphoros* of Arsinoe the brotherloving, 29 of the month Thoth." The references to the priest(esse)s of the deceased Ptolemies demonstrates that cults to them were institutionalized. See the next footnote. For the statement that Demotic official documents follow the Greek practice of eponymous priests, cf. Hoffmann 2000, 80-81, providing as example the translation of the date formula of P.Tor.Botti 9.

18 Pfeiffer 2008, chapter 4.4. For Egyptian cults for the Ptolemies, see Idem 2008, chapter 5.

kingdoms into their empire. Claudius responded cautiously to the proposed honours. Whereas he accepted, for instance, the celebrations of his birthday and the naming of a district after his name, he refused the institution of temples or a high priest for himself.<sup>19</sup> His refusal of a temple and priests is, as Claudius states himself, motivated by his wish not to upset contemporaries by receiving what is due to the gods.<sup>20</sup> The divergence between the action manifested by the Alexandrians, who in their proposals framed him as a god, and the reaction by the emperor, who tries to avoid being honoured in a manner he connects with worship reserved for gods, may be taken to reveal not only the delicate political situation in Rome and Alexandria, but probably also a difference in attitude towards divine honours on both sides. The argument that temples and priests should be reserved for the gods demonstrates Claudius' political sensitivity, first and for all with respect to his own position as a new emperor. Pfeiffer notes that Claudius could emphasize the contrast between himself and his predecessor Gaius, who had behaved as if he were a god all too explicitly, by refusing a cult for himself.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, given the tensions between the Greeks and the Jews in Alexandria that had only a few years earlier resulted in violent confrontation, allowing the Greeks to dedicate a temple and a priest to the living emperor might have been sensitive to the Jews – even if at this time Claudius would not been brought into the synagogue.<sup>22</sup> Given Claudius' concern not to receive a temple or priests, it is the more interesting that the Roman prefect announced him as a god, and uses several other ideological terms. The letter by Claudius is described as "most sacred" (ἱερωτάτης) and "most beneficent" (καὶ εὐεργετικωτάτης ἐπιστολῆς) and is published, "in order that the greatness of our god Caesar" (τὴν τε μεγαλειότητα τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν Καίσαρος) is known to all.<sup>23</sup> The discrepancy between the prefect's announcement of "our god Caesar" and Claudius' own reply that he was not to be put on the same level with θεοί is striking. Whereas a century ago, Ulrich Wilcken felt the need to solve this, arguing that these could not have been the Roman prefect's words, and proposed to read θεῖος (adjective) instead of θεός (noun), the use of the noun has recently been explained as an example of Roman flexibility concerning Greek-speaking

19 Pfeiffer 2010, 74-87 for a discussion of the letter.

20 A similar refusal and motivation is given by Nero in a letter to the inhabitants of Arsinoe, in SB XII 11012.

21 Pfeiffer 2010, 86, corroborating this assumption by pointing to a similar refusal to receive a temple was issued to the Thasians in 42CE. For that inscription, see Oliver 1989, No. 23.

22 For the conflict between the Greeks and the Jews at Alexandria in the 30s, which is described in Philo, *In Flaccum*, see CPJ II; Pfeiffer 2010, 70-72; Harker 2008, 9-24; Van der Horst 2003.

23 These qualifications of the imperial letter as ἱερωτάτη καὶ εὐεργετικωτάτη and the emperor as θεός not only underline the ideology of the ruler as benefactor, but also evoke divine associations. For the ideology of administrators as benefactors (often combined with the notion of 'saviour'), cf. Nock 1951; Chalon 1964, 50, 98; Herklotz 2007, 261-263 (Augustan period); Catalaÿ, F. de, Lorber, C.C. 2011 (for Hellenistic rulers on coins). Μεγαλειότης as an equivalent of *maiestas* had a sacral association, cf. Gizewski 2014. This was applied to representatives of the Roman government. For references to the emperor, see BGU VII 1563, ll. 23-24 (Arsinoites, 1st-2nd c.); to the Roman empire P.Giss. I 40, 5 and 11 (Apollonopolites Heptakomias, ca. 215).

audiences and ambiances. However, it might well be that the Romans and Greeks did not experience a discrepancy and that the problem only arises from our anachronistic and supposedly rationalistic urge for absolute clarity. An explanation for the apparent discrepancy may be the conceptual difference in thinking about θεοί by Greeks and Romans.<sup>24</sup> According to Pfeiffer, the prefect did use the word θεός, because this matched the Greek (= Alexandrians') practice of referring to a ruler (in this case the emperor) as a god, in other words the Roman magistrate adapted his language to his audience's conceptions.<sup>25</sup>

Claudius' letter displays several levels of divine discourse. First, the letter itself reflects discourse as practical communication, connected to divinity here through the honours that are proposed. Considering the use of words, the vocabulary used had divine evocations, revealing yet another level of discourse and adding an extra dimension to the totality of the text. The use of the word θεός for the emperor does not demonstrate that he was considered a god, but it suggests that the prefect perceived it as proper Greek to refer to an emperor.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, it underlines the hierarchical superiority and the legitimacy of Claudius' position. Moreover, this linguistic reference would correspond quite well to the divine honours offered to Claudius that constitute one topic of his imperial reply. Strategically, the divine measures referred to reflect discourse as (intended) action or negotiation. The requests by the Alexandrian Greeks have provoked the emperor to respond and show how both parties find each other. In this, there appears to be a discrepancy between Roman and Greek attitudes towards divine worship of the ruler, on the

24 Price 1984.

25 Pfeiffer 2010, 75-76. As a parallel, Pfeiffer points to the divergency in translation of the Latin text in the *Kalendae* inscription from Priene, OGIS II 458. The Latin text has *principis nostri natalis* ("birthday of our *princeps*"), whereas the Greek translates this as ἡ τοῦ θειοτάτου Καίσαρος γενεθλίου ἡμέρα ("the birthday of the most divine Caesar"). This example demonstrates a divergence between Greek and Latin phraseology, according to which the translation of one into the other language adheres to its own cultural diction (however, here the parallel is not exact, as the Greek uses an adjective, not a substantive as in the papyrological letter. Perhaps a closer parallel can be found in BGU XI 2056, 3 (Alexandria 212), but only the Greek version has been preserved. This document announces the *abolitio memoriae* of Geta, decreed by a prefect who refers to Caracalla as θεοεισιτάτο[υ] βασι[λέως(?)). A papyrological parallel for a prefect referring to the living emperor as god may be found in SB XII 11236, 2-4 (Oxyrhynchites or Arsinoites, date in *HGV* is given as 120 or "after 138") where the prefect announces a decision of Hadrian Σεβαστὸς about the installation of a high priest: ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν καὶ θεός[ς] ἐνφανέστατος Αὐτοκράτωρ Καίσαρ Τραϊανὸς Ἀδριανός. There are only a few papyrological examples where the emperor (or his wife) is qualified as θεός/θεά. These cases are mostly related to Augustus, and very often in contexts where priests are involved or in oaths (see below). Furthermore, Tiberius and Claudius are stated as θεός in an oath formula in P. Vindob. Salomons 3 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 36 CE) and P. Vind. Tandem 10 (Herakleopolites?, 54 CE) respectively. The latter document contains declarations under oath (sworn in ii, lines 6-7 by θεὸν Τιβέριον Κλαύδιον Καίσαρ-]ρα] Αὐτοκράτωρ; in iii, lines 34-36 sworn by Τιβέριον Κλαύδιον Καίσαρ Σεβαστὸν Γερμανικὸν Αὐτοκράτορα) to appoint supervisors for imperial estates. The imperial estates are designated in fr. iii, lines 38-42 as οὐσία τῆς θεᾶς καὶ κυρίας Ἀγριππίνης Σεβαστῆς καὶ τῶν Ἑρμιᾶν οὐσίας τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ κ[υρίου] Τιβερίου Κλαυδίου Καίσαρος Σεβ[α]στοῦ Γερμανικοῦ Αὐτοκράτορος. The receiver of the oath is mentioned in iii 32-34: Gaius Julius Io[...], who as a priest and Alexandrian magistrate is the operator of the land. E.g. P.Oxy. XXV 2435 *recto*. Cf. SB I 3824 for Germanicus. Otherwise the qualification is only encountered in papyri in references to deified emperors, e.g. in P.Oxy. VII 1021 (Oxyrhynchus, 54CE). See De Jong 2006, 169-173.

26 Cf. Pfeiffer 2010, 88, arguing that neither the emperor nor the Alexandrians considered him a god, but that the proposed honours should be considered political negotiation.

Roman side probably strengthened by the political situation. The ultimate power for concrete action clearly lies with the emperor, whose consent or disagreement put in motion or prevented subsequent honorific actions of the Alexandrian Greeks.

Another example of divine discourse may be seen in the text that has been identified as the acclamation of Vespasian.<sup>27</sup> The words preserved indeed hint at a crowd being present in the hippodrome of Alexandria, exaltedly welcoming the emperor:

[ -ca.?- ]το[ -ca.?- ]	...
Τιβέριου Ἀλεξάνδρου -ca.?- ]	Tiberius Alexander
τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις -ca.?- ]	...the Romans
στον κ[ -ca.?- ]	...
5 [ -ca.?- ]σαντων[... ]οἰς συνη[ -ca.?- ]	...
[ -ca.?- ]σ[ -ca.?- ]των	...
[ -ca.?- ]	...
[ -ca.?- ]υς ὁ αὐτοκράτωρ μ[ -ca.?- ]	Imperator
[ -ca.?- εἰς] τὴν πόλιν τῶν ὄχλων -ca.?- ]	In(to) the city, while the masses
10 [ -ca.?- κ]ατ' ὅλον τὸν ἵπποδρόμον [ -ca.?- ]	Over the whole hippodrome
[ -ca.?- ]ρηι ὑγιαίνων κύριε Καίσαρ -ca.?- ]	Being healthy, lord Caesar
[ -ca.?- Ούεσπ]ασιανὸς εἷς σωτὴρ καὶ εὐεργέτης	Vespasian, the one saviour and benefactor
[ -ca.?- Ἀμμων]οῦ υἱὸς ὁ ἀνατέλλων εἰ -ca.?- ]	Son of Ammon/the sun who is rising
[ -ca.?- ]α φύλαξον ἡμῖν αὐτ[ὸν -ca.?- ]	Guard him for us
15 [ -ca.?- κύριε Σεβαστέ ε. ιεν σαρ[ -ca.?- ]	Lord Augustus, benefactor, the new Sarapis
[ -ca.?- ]α Ἀμμωνος υἱὸς κ. απλ[ -ca.?- ]	Son of Ammon
[ -ca.?- εὐ]χαριστοῦμεν Τιβερῶν [Ἀλεξάνδρῶν -	We thank Tiberius Alexander
[ -ca.?- ] Τιβέριος ηπ[. ]πισε[ -ca.?- ]	Tiberius
[ -ca.?- ] θεὸς Καίσαρ ε[. ] υγια[iv -ca.?- ]	God Caesar
20 [ -ca.?- ] θεὸς Καίσαρ Ούεσπασιανὸς -ca.?- ]	God Caesar Vespasian
[ -ca.?- ]ς κύριε Σεβαστέ ο[ -ca.?- ]	Lord Augustus

Lines 2 and 18 in all probability mention the prefect Tiberius Julius Alexander, while the terms αὐτοκράτωρ ('emperor', l. 8), Caesar (l. 11) with the addition θεός ('god', ll. 19 and 20) undoubtedly go with Vespasian (lines 12 and 20). Except as a saviour and benefactor (l. 12), he is hailed as the 'son of Ammon' (perhaps in l. 13, certainly in 16).<sup>28</sup> Recently, Harker argued that it was connected to the *Acta Alexandrinorum* literature, which he uses as a collective term for literary texts relating dramatic encounters of Alexandrian citizens with Roman emperors and documentary texts relating to all kinds of Alexandrian administration and Roman-Alexandrian interactions.<sup>29</sup> The text preserving the acclamation of Vespasian

27 SB XVI 12255= P.Fouad I 8 = CPJ II 418a (unknown provenance, end of first century CE). For a discussion of the text, see Harker 2008, 209 with further bibliography; Belayche 2010, 159-162. Greek papyri, with diacritical layout, have been taken from the edition available online through the Papyrological Navigator: <http://papyri.info/>.

28 Coles, Geissen, Koenen 1973, 235 suggest reading in l. 13: ὁ ἥλιος ὁ ἀνατέλλων. In l. 16 they restore: τῆ ἀληθείᾳ ὁ Ἀμμωνος υἱὸς. Nock 1957, 118 suggests reading in l. 15: Σάρ[απ]ις ὁ νέος. See Harker 2008, 209 for editions of and emendations to the text.

29 Harker 2008, 1-2; lb., 60-63 and 209 for SB XVI 12255.

probably reports a real event.<sup>30</sup> Even if the acclamation was a piece of literature, the scene that is sketched reflects what acclamation would have been like: a crowd shouting honours and good wishes to a high official in a dynamic setting of verbal and physical interaction.<sup>31</sup> In this case, the divine discourse culminates in the statement by the Greek-speaking crowd present in the hippodrome that Vespasian was the son of Ammon, which logically implied that the emperor was a god himself. According to Pfeiffer, the phrase ‘son of Ammon’ is part of a Greek tradition commemorating Alexander the Great’s welcoming by the oracle at Siwa. This acclamation could therefore serve as a double legitimation of Vespasian as emperor, by connecting him both to Alexander and to the god Ammon, appealing to both the Greek and Egyptian communities.<sup>32</sup>

Although literary historiographical accounts do not relate Vespasian’s imperial acclamation in Alexandria, they do describe Vespasian’s visit to Alexandria as an important event in his securing of the imperial position.<sup>33</sup> In his biography on Vespasian, Suetonius remarks that Vespasian, after having been acknowledged as emperor by troops and the prefect of Egypt Tiberius Julius Alexander, went to Egypt for more than its strategic importance: “He [Vespasian] lacked authority (*auctoritas*) and, as it were, a certain sovereignty (*maiestas*) as he was an unexpected and, moreover, a new emperor (*princeps*). These indeed were added.”<sup>34</sup> This is followed by the description of miracle healings and another miraculous event, which enforced Vespasian’s position and gave him the standing necessary to enter Rome as emperor. The success of the healing acts counted as divine assent of Vespasian and the successful staging and communication of these events according to Pfeiffer

30 Harker 2008, 61-63.

31 So far, exact parallels for imperial acclamations are lacking. For a theatrical setting in which the god Apollo announces the imperial accession of Hadrian to the present people, see P.Giss. 3 (Apollonopolis, after 117 CE). For an Alexandrian reputation in the staging of acclamations, cf. Suetonius, *Nero* 20.3. For acclamations of local magistrates as Okeanos in third- and fourth-century papyri, especially in P.Oxy. I 41 (Oxyrhynchus, early 4th c.) cf. Kruse 2006. Kruse convincingly argues that these acclamations should be considered “a dramatic production of the ritualised speech of the crowd...”, but his proposal to translate the vocative Ὠκεανέ simply as “Bravo”, “Long live”, “Hurrah” etc.’ (p. 308) is not convincing. First, because in Kruse’s translation of the Greek the uniformity in the acclamation present in the Greek is not reflected, consequently the repetitive effect is lost in the translation. Moreover, I think the association with Okeanos/Nile in Greek (or Greek-Egyptian) perception adds another dimension to this epithet, making it more than merely “a stereotypically used acclamation, with which one expresses approval”. (Kruse 2006, 308). Even if the epithet was used mechanically, it was the word Ὠκεανέ that was chosen to be used instead of a whole range of other possibilities. For a comparison with the use of honorific epithets encountered in P.Oxy. I 41 for local magistrates in Greek inscriptions, cf. Blume 1989.

32 For the Greek rather than Egyptian background of the connection with Ammon and the Greek origin of the comparison of Vespasian with the rising sun, see Pfeiffer 2011, 109-111.

33 Pfeiffer 2011, 112-119. Stories about two miraculous healings by Vespasian are attested with slight differences by Tacitus, *Histories* 4.81, Suetonius, *Vespasianus* 7.2-3 and Cassius Dio 65.8. However, it is difficult to relate these to Vespasian and the Alexandrian audience. Probably the intended effect would be legitimation of his imperial position.

34 Suetonius, *Vespasianus* 7.2: *Auctoritas et quasi maiestas quaedam, ut scilicet inopinato et adhuc novo principii, deerat: haec quoque accessit.* The translation provided above is my own.

are due to imperial propaganda.<sup>35</sup> As for the perception of these stories, Pfeiffer distinguishes between the perception of Vespasian’s actions by the senatorial authors (and by extension, the senatorial circle) in Rome on the one hand, and by the *plebs Alexandrina* on the other.<sup>36</sup> I agree with his analysis, but I think this gains even more weight by connecting the intended audience of the account of the events with the agency of the Alexandrians involved in the healing scenes: on the one hand they are passive/instrumental, on the other they have an active role. Whereas the intended audience must of course be looked for in Rome, the importance of the population of Alexandria in the descriptions was mainly as an instrument for conferring (divine) legitimacy to the new emperor. As the centre of imperial power, Rome was the place from where power was exerted and where influential senators (who were potential rivals) had to be won over to Vespasian’s case. The literary accounts confirm that Vespasian needed divine support with an eye to his acceptance in Rome.<sup>37</sup> Suetonius was of the opinion that Vespasian succeeded in this thanks to the miraculous incidents at Alexandria, as Suetonius’ structuring and phrasing of the events suggest.<sup>38</sup> Tacitus shares this opinion, as can be derived from his remarks that “...many wonders occurred which seemed to point him out as the object of the favour of heaven and of the partiality of the Gods” and that this even continued to be witnessed: “Persons actually present attest both facts, even now when nothing is to be gained by falsehood.” In other words, the fact that people, when they would no longer risk imperial revenge for statements that could damage the imperial image, stuck to their testimonies is taken by Tacitus as proof of the reality of the events.<sup>39</sup> Tacitus also describes how Vespasian himself initially hesitated to try and cure the people presenting themselves to him. After deliberation with experts about the possibilities of successful healing, Vespasian concluded that he should give it a try, as he could only gain from it: “at any rate, all the glory of a successful remedy would be Caesar’s, while the ridicule of failure would fall on the sufferers”. Again, the main point is the effect for Vespasian of an act

35 Pfeiffer 2010, 112-115.

36 Pfeiffer 2010, 115-116, argues that to the senatorial authors, Vespasian acted *through* the deity Sarapis, instead of acting as a deity himself. How the Alexandrians perceived the healing acts is less clear. They may have perceived this as acts of a deity, but not necessarily: in the Hellenized east, people were familiar with thaumaturges, who were not considered to be gods.

37 See Pfeiffer 2010, 111-115, and the table comparing the accounts of Suetonius, Tacitus and Cassius Dio.

38 Suetonius, *Vespasianus* 7.2: *...haec quoque accessi* (“...these indeed were added.”) and 8.1: *Talis tantaque cum fama in urbem reversus...* (“Returning to Rome under such auspices and attended by so great renown...”). Interestingly, Suetonius, *Vespasianus* 19.2 mentions that Alexandrians insultingly referred to this emperor: *Alexandrini Cybiosacten eum vocare perseveraverunt, cognomine unius e regibus suis turpissimarum sordium* (“The Alexandrians persisted in calling him Cybiosactes (‘seller of pickled tuna’), the surname of one of their kings who was scandalously stingy.”). However, this Alexandrian criticism is not relevant for my point here as it postdates Vespasian’s imperial accession, and has a different function in Suetonius’ account, namely to illustrate Vespasian’s character. For the tensions in Alexandria in response to the tax increase, see Pfeiffer 2010, 121-123.

39 Tacitus, *Histories* 4.81: “Persons actually present attest both facts, even now when nothing is to be gained by falsehood.”

in which some Alexandrians functioned mainly instrumentally and were described in a disparaging way.<sup>40</sup> The miracles are also mentioned by Cassius Dio, who describes them matter-of-factly as a sign of divine magnification, before continuing his account with the description of the relationship between the Alexandrians and Vespasian that grew tense during his emperorship. This latter point, however, has nothing to do with the events around the acclamation.<sup>41</sup>

So, (part of) the Alexandrian population played a role in the healing actions: the people healed were instrumental and the rest were present as spectators.<sup>42</sup> A more clearly active role – as an audience participating in the acclamation of an emperor – for the Alexandrian population can be derived from the papyrus discussed above. The Alexandrian population would have no concrete power to make a Roman emperor, but the Roman prefect of Egypt was able to facilitate Vespasian in his bid for power.<sup>43</sup> By staging the acclamation in the hippodrome, he used the Alexandrian population as an instrument to create acceptance for Vespasian. This is significant for his own loyalty and his active contribution in propagating the new emperor.

The papyrus is not only valuable for its political aspect or the practice of acclamation, which had been practised as an important power-confirming ritual in both Hellenistic royal contexts and Roman late republican and imperial contexts.<sup>44</sup> As a verbal presentation of this event, this papyrus document contains more than one message. First, in the communicative sense the text can be read as an account of a historical event. The verbal presentation of the emperor as “son of Ammon”, and perhaps as a “new Sarapis”, hence as a god, has ideological implications. This links the communicative aspect of this dialogue between the emperor and the crowd to its strategic implications, as it reflects the power relations in which the status of the emperor is acknowledged by the Alexandrian population and mentions the prefect whose support would prove fundamental for Vespasian. The context of the papyrus is restricted in the sense that it was written by someone interested in the event who was probably based in Egypt. Whether this acclamation would

40 *Ib.*: “...this nation [= people of Alexandria], devoted as it is to many superstitions... ” Probably this is also implied in the remark: “the ridicule of failure would fall on the sufferers”.

41 Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 65.8.2: “Yet, though Heaven was thus magnifying him, the Alexandrians, far from delighting in his presence, detested him so heartily that they were for ever mocking and reviling him. For they had expected to receive from him some great reward because they had been the first to make him emperor, but instead of securing anything they had additional contributions levied upon them.” Just as in Suetonius, *Vesp.* 19.2, Vespasian is described as avaricious, a qualification that can only have been introduced after his imperial rule had been going on for some time. Furthermore, in this chapter Dio describes Vespasian’s relationship with the Alexandrians as tense.

42 Note, however, that being present as a watching spectator may also be perceived as an active role. Here, I use the ‘watching’ of the spectators in opposition to the acting (healing) emperor on the one hand, and in opposition to the active participation by the spectators appearing in the papyrus SB XVI 12255 on the other.

43 Jördens 2009, 38. According to Suetonius, Tiberius Julius Alexander had already acknowledged Vespasian as emperor: Suetonius, *Vespasianus* 6.

44 The acclamation would have been familiar enough to both the Alexandrians and the Romans, even if these different groups may have experienced the ritual differently. For acclamations in the Hellenistic world, cf. Chaniotis 2005. For Roman acclamations, cf. Ando 2000, 199-205.

have been communicated in Rome remains an open question. One would expect that the Roman historiographers would recount such an important ritual moment, which would – just like the healing acts – reinforce Vespasian’s position. But the fact that they remain silent suggests that the acclamation of Vespasian was firstly of interest for an audience in Egypt, rather than in Rome, where people were more interested in other aspects of Vespasian’s stay in Egypt. Perhaps the acclamation as son of Ammon, hence as a god, might have raised eyebrows in Rome, although alleged descent of prominent men or families from gods was not unknown there – but was a different matter.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, Vespasian’s stay in Alexandria appears in a different form, for a different audience, and differently value-laden in its connection of Vespasian with divinity, in the Roman historiographical accounts.

Another case is presented by the emperor Commodus, who first associated and then identified himself with the demigod Hercules.<sup>46</sup> His description in historiographical sources has put him in line with emperors like Gaius, Nero and Domitian, who all had a reputation for cruel and mad behaviour. The third-century historiographer Cassius Dio, who had witnessed the emperor’s Herculization, relates that Commodus exuberant behaviour was publicly expressed in his taking on the name Hercules, having a golden statue made of himself, naming the months after himself and addressing the senate in the following way: “The Emperor Caesar Lucius Aelius Aurelius Commodus Augustus Pius Felix Sarmaticus Germanicus Maximus Britannicus, Pacifier of the Whole Earth, Invincible, the Roman Hercules, Pontifex Maximus, Holder of the Tribunician Authority for the eighteenth time, Imperator for the eighth time, Consul for the seventh time, Father of his Country, to consuls, praetors, tribunes, and the fortunate Commodian senate, Greeting.”<sup>47</sup>

Most of these titles were not uncommon.<sup>48</sup> However, the elements eliciting senatorial disgust were probably the unusual elements that identified Commodus as pacifier of the world and the Roman Hercules and call the senate ‘Commodian’. The introduction of these new titles may well be connected to the rebirth of Rome after it had been destroyed by a fire, and of Commodus as Hercules Romanus.<sup>49</sup> The new titlature recorded by Dio is confirmed by coins, inscriptions and papyri and was probably introduced in the second half of the year 192.<sup>50</sup> Evidence for

45 However, these at least were Roman gods. For example, Julius Caesar as a descendant of Venus Genetrix, cf. Weinstock 1971, 80-90. In the imperial period, the association of emperors with gods was frequent. However, identification with gods or as a god is typical for emperors who later received negative reputations, e.g. Caligula, Domitian, Commodus.

46 Hekster 2002, especially based on the imagery on coins and in statues and historiographical accounts. Pfeiffer 2010, 178-182, argues that Commodus’ divine presentation in Egypt was not at all excessive.

47 Cassius Dio, *Epitome* 73.15.

48 Kneissl 1969, 110-120, 185; Hekster 2002; Von Saldern 2004. Commodus was the first to use *Pius* and *Felix*. That it was not yet institutionalized appears from their occasional reversal in papyri, cf. Sijpesteijn 1988, 123-124; Peachin 1990, 1-2.

49 Von Saldern 2004; Kneissl 1969, 119-120.

50 Hekster 2002, 104-107 (coins).

this identification of Commodus with Hercules is hardly found in Egypt, apart from four attestations of the title in date formulas in papyri dated to the year 33 of Commodus' reign.<sup>51</sup> The evidence of these documents does not contradict the assumption that the scribe used these official titles as a result of official prescription: the only document with the Roman Hercules formula dated exactly (11 October 192) is PSI IX 1036, a lease contract of temple land from Oxyrhynchus. There are more dated documents after that, but these all have an abbreviated version of the imperial titulature<sup>52</sup> or only refer to "the year 33". The four instances of imperial titles containing the Roman Hercules formula reflect that in his 33th year of rule the emperor Commodus presented himself as the god Hercules. This context differs from the other examples discussed, where there was a direct interaction between emperor and subjects. In the case of Commodus, his Herculean title was most likely adopted by scribes in reaction to official prescriptions, not due to the personal initiative of the scribe or the person on whose behalf he was writing. As such, they responded to their ruler's wishes by complying with their directives. It is impossible to say anything about the scribes' personal attitudes or views on this, but the available papyrological evidence seems rather consistent in the possible types of titles. This would support the view that throughout the whole province the same scribal practice was adhered to, paying attention – through provincial mediation – to central demands. The Roman Hercules dating formula can be read on several levels; in the communicative sense it can be seen as a pragmatic tool to date the document. Strategically, the use of this official formula on the one hand confirms the acceptance by scribes of Commodus as emperor, whose name and titles constitute structural, authenticating elements of official documents. On the other hand, it shows Commodian ideology, in which Commodus identified himself with Hercules.

This example of Commodus' titulature demonstrates that imperial titulature can also be read as discourse. Although imperial titles are frequently encountered in papyri, they are much less often taken into detailed consideration. The next part of this paper will explore how titles set a good stage for conveying messages of divinity in variable and changing settings.

51 Pfeiffer 2010, 180-181. The formula in papyri runs: Αὐτοκράτορος Καίσαρος Λουκίου Αἰλίου Αὐρηλίου Κομόδου εὐσεβοῦς εὐτυχοῦς σεβαστοῦ Ἀρμενιακοῦ Μηδικοῦ Παρθικοῦ Σαρματικοῦ Γερμανικοῦ μεγίστου Βρετανικοῦ εἰρηνοποιοῦ τοῦ κόσμου εὐτυχοῦς ἀνικῆτου Ῥωμαίου Ἡρακλέους. P.Oxy. XXXI 2611, 27-30, career of an athlete (Oxyrhynchus, 192-193); PSI IX 1036, 25-29, a lease contract of temple land (Oxyrhynchus, 192); SB XVI 12239, 11-13, fragmentary petition by priests (Soknopaiou Nesos, 192-193); SB XX 14390, 2-8 opening of a document (Herakleopolites, 192-193).

52 The abbreviated formula is: (ἔτους) λγ Λουκίου Αἰλίου Αὐρηλίου Κομμόδου Καίσαρος τοῦ κυρίου, e.g. in P.Tebt. II 353, dated 10 Nov. For the abbreviation of secondary (or tertiary) regnal formulas with the titles *kyrios*, see Packman 1992, 62-63.

## Imperial Divinity Expressed in Titulature in Greek Papyri from the Roman Period<sup>53</sup>

As soon as Octavian had become the single most powerful man in Rome and of the Roman empire, the singularity of his position was underlined among other things by his assumption of a name that reflected his military (*Imperator*), dynastic (*Caesar; Divi filius*), and divine (*Divi filius; Augustus*) position. This format was followed by later imperial successors and developed into one of the distinctions of emperorship. Imperial titulature has both a static and a dynamic aspect to it, as 'basic' elements were combined with 'new' or variable elements. That is, in the course of time certain elements would be the frame of the titulature, which was elaborated with new elements, such as epithets.<sup>54</sup> Hence, titulature expressed the structural imperial elements, but also gave room to each emperor's individuality. So, titles identified the emperor as individual, as legitimate ruler and informed about his qualities. Indeed, imperial titles can be considered a specific form of imperial discourse, functioning as a vehicle for the communication of programmatic statements.

The imperial titulature in papyrus texts from the first three centuries CE have their own idiosyncrasies, but also follow patterns that are recognized in coins and inscriptions. They comprise one or more of the following constituents: the terms indicating the imperial position, the ruling emperor's personal name(s), honorific epithets, victory titles, dynastic reference to (fore)fathers or predecessors, or designated emperors, and republican offices. In the course of time, a development to a more elaborate series of titles can be discerned, resulting among other things from the competitive wish or need for succeeding emperors to surpass their predecessors. In most papyri the function of imperial titulature was to provide the document with a date. However, it is also used in oath formulas, in references to activities or possessions of the emperor, or to announce an emperor in a letter or edict. Greek papyri from Roman Egypt referred to the regnal year of the emperor, different from the consular dating used in Rome. This was a continuation of the pharaonic and Ptolemaic dating system, but adapted to the Roman political situation.<sup>55</sup> The form of the Roman date formulas might vary from the short xth

53 The following discussion is based on De Jong 2006, 84-135 and Appendix 3, where a full discussion of the attestations, context, meaning, connotation and origin of epithets in imperial titulature in Greek papyri from the third century and further bibliographical references are given. De Jong 2011 and 2014 also discuss (aspects) of imperial titulature, but from different angles and for different purposes.

54 Hammond 1957; Id. 1959; Syme 1958; Peachin 1990; Kienast 1996<sup>2</sup>.

55 Bagnall 2009, 182-183.

year of “NN the lord” to the use of an elaborate series of titles.<sup>56</sup> Regarding the rationale behind the use of specific titular formulas, we do not exactly know how scribes were informed about the correct imperial titles or how they were supposed to employ these. It is conceivable that this information was communicated by the prefect, who passed it on to the *strategoí* of the nomes, who in their turn informed the local communities of which the scribes were part. This titlature could then be labelled ‘official’ (as it originated from the authorities) and would provide the format for individual scribes. The variation in titles used consequently depended on a combination of factors, such as the needs of a document (documents with an official/legal character might be required to use ‘correct’ titlature), practical factors (time, space) and scribal choices or preferences. Nevertheless, titles are in many cases conventional enough for patterns, innovations and exceptions to be distinguished.

Divine discourse is encountered semantically in several elements that build the titlature. One could think of the element Σεβαστός (Augustus), or of the epithet Εύσεβής (Pius), that both have sacral connotations. In the third century, moreover, some dozen new epithets turn up in Greek papyri. Semantically, some of these epithets can also be categorized as expressions of imperial divinity.

Four of these are used in the titlature of designated emperors: γενναιότατος, ἐπιφανέστατος, ἱερώτατος, and σεβασμιώτατος. In a fundamental discussion of these epithets, Fritz Mitthof has pointed out that they all rendered the Latin

honorific epithet *nobilissimus*.<sup>57</sup> It is noticeable that one and the same Latin term was rendered by four different Greek words, and that the epithet was not used standardly for all designated emperors. After having used Greek epithets ‘at will’ – as it seems – for more than half a century from Valerian (260 CE) onwards, ἐπιφανέστατος seems to have become the fixed term. According to Mitthof, this was the result of interference by the central authorities in Rome with provincial practices. Indeed, these epithets were all used in date formulas. Therefore, in spite of their divergence from the standard Roman imperial titlature, I follow Mitthof’s conclusion in considering these new epithets ‘official’, noting that this official nature is not an impediment for variability of phrasing.

As indicators of the designated successor to the throne, these epithets functioned as structural elements in documents, which not only dated texts, but also communicated the identity of the emperor-to-be. Strategically, they conveyed a dynastic message, which also implied stability of the line of rulers. Moreover, taking into account the meaning of the epithets, we may assume that to a Greek-speaking audience they further evoked divine or sacral connotations: ἐπιφανέστατος, ἱερώτατος, and σεβασμιώτατος would be perfectly fit to provide a *Caesar* (by the third century this term indicated the designated emperor) with a divine aura. The word ἐπιφανής, for instance, related to ἐπιφάνεια, conveys the capacity of gods

<sup>56</sup> Bureth 1964, 6-7 states that a simplified title only came into use under the reign of Nero; *autokrator* became a structural part of the titles since Vespasian. The compilation of imperial titles in Greek papyri from Roman Egypt by Bureth is outdated. Moreover, the function and context of the titles are not analysed. Several factors could contribute to the choice of a particular title. It is likely that abbreviated titlature or short titles are used in documents that were written in great numbers, such as tax receipts. As tax receipts were also frequently written on *ostraca*, restricted space and saving time may be reasons to abbreviate or use short titles. Other factors influencing the formula used may have been the type of document, intended use or audience and the scribe’s personal choice.

<sup>57</sup> Mitthof 1993. For the employment of *nobilissimus* in Latin imperial titlature, see Instinsky 1952, 98-103; Pflaum 1970, 159-164; Noreña 2013. De Jong 2006, Appendix 3, gives the papyrological attestations of the Greek epithets rendering Latin *nobilissimus* in the titles of the *Caesares*. This table only indicates which epithet was used for which *Caesar*.

Greek epithet (NB: all in Latin as <i>nobilissimus</i> )	Attestation for	Employed in
γενναιότατος ('most noble')	Gordian III Marcus Julius Philippus	date/oath
γενναιότατος καὶ ἐπιφανέστατος	Marcus Julius Philippus	date/oath
ἐπιφανέστατος ('most notable', 'most manifest')	Licinius Cornelius Valerianus Carinus and Numerianus Numerianus	date/oath
ἱερώτατος ('most sacred')	Geta Maximus Gordian III Valerianus	date/oath
σεβασμιώτατος ('most august')	Herennius Decius Herennius Decius and Hostilianus	date/oath

to be present to show their power. As a royal epithet it had also been used for Hellenistic kings.<sup>58</sup>

To sum up, the distinction between the central Roman presentation of the designated emperor as *nobilissimus*, reflecting imperial self-presentation in the centre of power, and its varying Greek interpretation in the peripheral province of Egypt, shows the freedom of interpretation of imperial ruler presentation in a Roman province. This is closely connected with the ideology of ruler charisma, which in the Greek epithets is especially expressed in divine terms. As the designated emperor was guarded and approved by the gods, his position was legitimized and implied the promise of imperial dynastic continuity.

Interestingly, in third-century Greek papyri some further new epithets (other than the four discussed above) occur in references to the emperor(s).<sup>59</sup> Divine discourse is again semantically present, especially in three epithets: ἀνίκητος, θειότατος, and θεοφιλέστατος. Given its use in date formulas, ἀνίκητος may well have

58 Chaniotis 2003; Catalaÿ, F. de, Lorber, C.C. 2011, 434-455 (on coins of Hellenistic rulers). However, Price 1984, 86-87 and Chaniotis 2010, 129-130, also point to its non-cultic application. In the case of the epithet as part of the imperial titulature, I would argue that a divine association was at least possible and even probable, as it alternated with terms that were unambiguously connected to the divine sphere.

59 De Jong 2006, 98-130. Epithets appearing in references to emperors for the first time in the third century: ἀήττητος, αἰώνιος, ἀνίκητος, θειότατος, εὐμενέστατος, θεοφιλέστατος, μεγαλοδώρατος, μέγας. De Jong 2006, Appendix 3, gives their papyrological attestations. The following table presents the new 'divine' epithets in imperial titulature in the third century.

Epithet	Attestation for	Employed in reference to	Notes
ἀνίκητος ('un-conquered')	Aurelianus	Date, CE 272 and 273	Lat. invictus
θειότατος ('most divine')	Septimius Severus Septimius Severus and Caracalla Caracalla Valerianus and Gallienus	Official communication and petitions (address formula, imperial providence/administrator, emperors ordering)	Part of imperial titulature from 6th c. CE
θεοφιλέστατος ('dearest to the gods', 'most godloving')	Elagabalus Maximinus Thrax Decius	Correspondence between officials and petition: (imperial order/emperor/imperial statue)	In Byzantine period honorific title for members of the clergy

been an official epithet.<sup>60</sup> Concerning θειότατος<sup>61</sup> and θεοφιλέστατος,<sup>62</sup>, however, these epithets were only rarely used and appear outside the usual date or oath formulas. This could suggest that their employment should most likely be ascribed to individual scribes or to the author of the documents in question.<sup>63</sup> What I mean by 'author' here is the initiator of the document, on whose demand the document was written by a scribe. Interestingly, the initiators of most of the documents in which the epithet θειότατος is used, are provincial or nome administrators (*procurator*, prefect, strategos). The same observation can be made for the less frequent attestation of the epithet θεοφιλέστατος. This is used once in a petition addressed to the prefect<sup>64</sup> and once (or perhaps in two instances) in a letter circulating in a higher administrative context.<sup>65</sup> The choice to use one of these epithets did not depend on official prescriptions by the emperor himself, but on factors that lay with the initiator of the document or with the scribe, and which we can only guess at. Perhaps it was intended to express loyalty or piety or it just reflects a customary manner of speaking of the time, or – especially in petitions – it may have reinforced the claim by using powerful terms in a show of scribal inventiveness. Whatever the case (or combination of cases), the epithets were clearly considered appropriate.

Apart from the question by whom these epithets were invented, one may also ask who would have noticed such terminology, in other words, who was the audience? If we consider the documents themselves, we see that they are all addressed to nome administrators (*strategoï*), except for one petition in which emperors are addressed.<sup>66</sup> So, if these documents reached their addressees, they would have noticed the epithets. Whether or how this would be perceived by the addressee

60 Having in the first place a military connotation, this epithet is used for Aurelianus and may be linked to that emperor's special connection with Sol Invictus, so that the epithet's military resonance is extended to divine association by its connection to Sol. Actually, the fact that this epithet appears in the date formula of four documents with 'official' contents might indicate that it had official status (contrary to the conclusion of De Jong 2006, p. 109). P.Oslo III 96, ll. 10-15 (unknown, 272), P.Oxy. VII 1036, ll. 37-41 (Oxyrhynchus, 272), P.Agon 8, ll. 23-25 (Oxyrhynchus, 273), P.Ups.Frid. 6, ll. 17-19 (Oxyrhynchus, 273). For the use of the title invictus on coins and in inscriptions, cf. Watson 1999, 173-174. The occasion for Aurelianus's use of this title is probably connected with his defeat of Zenobia and his taking of Palmyra.

61 Referring to Septimius Severus in SB XVIII 13175 iv, l. 19 (provenance unknown, 194) and P.Achmim 8, l. 14 (Koptos, 197) to Septimius Severus and Caracalla in P.Oxy. IX 1185v., l. 21 (Oxyrhynchus, ca. 200), SB XII 10884, l. 6 (200-201), P.Oxy. XLVII 3364, l. 11 (Oxyrhynchus, 209), SB I 4284, l. 6 (Alexandria, 209); to Caracalla in BGU XI 2056, l. 3 (Alexandria 212); to Valerianus and Gallienus in P.Oxy. XLVII 3366 ii, l. 61a (Oxyrhynchus, 253-260).

62 Referring to Heliogabalus in P.Bub. I 4, 48, 6 (Bubastis, 221); to Maximus, son of Maximinus Thrax in SB I 421, l. 4 (Memphis, 236); to Decius in Stud.Pal. XX 54 ii, l. 11 = CPR I 20 (Hermopolis Magna, 250).

63 This goes for the epithets with only one attestation: αἰώνιος, εὐμενέστατος, μεγαλοδώρατος. Other epithets are with more attestations for the same emperor(s) are ἀήττητος and μέγας. The epithet ἀήττητος is especially employed in references to Septimius Severus and Caracalla, who presented themselves as emperors with military capability. See De Jong 2007.

64 Stud.Pal. XX 54 ii, l. 11 = CPR I 20 (Hermopolis Magna, 250). Probably also P.Bub. I 4, 48, 6 (Bubastis, 221).

65 SB I 421, l. 4 (Memphis, 236).

66 P.Oxy. XLVII 3366 ii, l. 61a (Oxyrhynchus, 253-260).

is a different question, and one that cannot be answered. Also, it is doubtful that an unambiguous answer could be given, as different addressees will have had individual perceptions and reactions.

Yet, as an eye-opener, it may be useful to consider the use of honorific epithets in inscriptions and the question who would have invented the epithets and who would possibly have been their receptor or audience. In his study of imperial ideology in coinage and inscriptions in the Western Roman Empire, Carlos Noreña proposes several possibilities for the source of ideological terms used in honorific inscriptions dedicated to the emperor.<sup>67</sup> One option would be that a dedicant invented an epithet himself. Another option was that dedicants found inspiration in the language used by the authorities through official channels, such as coins or decrees. Yet another possibility would be that high-placed locals, who were in contact with the highest imperial circles, for instance through embassies, had learned the appropriate language for communicating with these powerful people and passed their knowledge from experience on to the local level. Or the appropriate language was taken over from the provincial administrators who represented the central government and also had first-hand knowledge. As none of these possibilities can be irrefutably proved or disproved, the safest course is probably to assume that each epithet was the result of one or more of these forms of dynamic interaction between, and processes on, different administrative levels.<sup>68</sup> The main point, however, is the resulting ‘convergence of language’ between the imperial and local level, making a strong case for appropriation of imperial ideals by leading local persons, regardless of their exact motives.<sup>69</sup> Could this model also apply to the employment of epithets encountered in papyri? Did individual authors use words with which they were familiar through their involvement in, or knowledge of, imperial administration? It seems that a comparison of the new epithets appearing in Greek papyri in the third century with Latin legends on coins and Latin honorific inscriptions is skewed.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, in both cases we are dealing

67 Noreña 2011, 266-270, also addressing the question of audience. Noreña’s study is based on a comparison of imperial ideals advertised on coins minted in Rome and their appearance in local honorific inscriptions in the Western empire between 69-235 CE. He argues that the recurrence of official ideology in these inscriptions demonstrates that local elites appropriated the imperial ideological language to such a degree that it is justified to qualify its effect as ideological unification between state and local elite, in which each party had concurring, but also individual interests.

68 Noreña 2011, 268.

69 According to Noreña, the motive was rather to consolidate or promote their own local position than to express loyalty towards the emperor. However, cf. A.M. Riggsby’s cautioning against too rigorous a dismissal of the ‘loyalist’ motive (and his remark that Noreña himself relativizes his view) in his review on Noreña: <http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2012/2012-11-52.html> (consulted December 2015).

70 The various differences relate to the nature of the sources. Coins and inscriptions have a far more public character than papyrus documents. Second, the language of the sources: Noreña’s study is based on sources in Latin, whereas this contribution is based on Greek papyri, and on a set of different epithets. Moreover, a comparison of expressions in Greek papyri with imperial ideological terms as encountered on coins is difficult, as Egypt had a closed monetary system until the latter part of the third century. Searching <http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/intro/whatisrpc/>, I have found no attestations of the new imperial epithets used in Greek papyri in Egypt’s provincial coinage.

with communications originating within a broader imperial discursive framework. That is, the people speaking through inscriptions and in the documentary papyri discussed here, had learnt the proper way to do so. It is fair enough to assume that the epithets *θειότατος* and *θεοφιλέστατος* did not come from nowhere, but were familiar enough to be employed by imperial administrators in Greek references to the emperor. These imperial administrators belonged to the group of men educated in the use of adequate language to refer to the emperor. This fits Noreña’s assumption about the imperial administrators with ‘empirical’ knowledge. Besides this, that they were able to adapt to locally current linguistic expressions and/or their audience’s expectations was already demonstrated in the announcement of the letter of “our god Caesar” by the prefect Lucius Aemilius Rectus. Whatever the case, the effect and purpose of the epithets may have been to show to fellow administrators that one knew how to refer to the emperor, whose special position in this case was provided with a divine echo. In this way the higher officials who showed off by using appropriate language would underline their own position as intimates of the imperial administration.

One further point of notice is that most of the epithets discussed are superlative adjectives. In a discussion of Greek religious inscriptions in the Roman East from the imperial period, Angelos Chaniotis has pointed to the typical practice of using superlatives as epithets for deities that simultaneously served three purposes: to identify the specific god, to express a quality ascribed to that god, and to express the god’s unicity and preponderance over other gods.<sup>71</sup> As Chaniotis argues, the last point results from the omnipresent competition between rival communities to single out their own god. They did so, he postulates, by means of superlative epithets to designate deities in “acclamatory hyperbole”.<sup>72</sup> This was not a prerogative for deities, but could be applied to kings and emperors too.<sup>73</sup> The number of epithets encountered in the papyri under scope is much more restricted than of those in the inscriptions discussed by Chaniotis in their application to emperors or deities respectively. No doubt, again the nature of the sources is an important factor for this divergence. Nevertheless, some convergence can be detected in the fact that most epithets encountered in papyri are also attested in inscriptions and both papyrological and epigraphic epithets are in the superlative form. This elaboration may be explained as one of the developments of imperial titles by which each

71 Chaniotis 2010, 129-130. On p. 119, these inscriptions of religious contexts are specified as dedications, praises of gods, records of acclamations, etc. I would like to thank Nicole Belayche for alerting me to this tendency to use superlative epithets in the imperial period and their possible connection to acclamations.

72 Chaniotis 2010, 130-138, and especially footnote 80 for a list of examples of acclamatory epithets. On p. 135, he states: “Acclamations and ‘acclamatory epithets’ became in the imperial period an important medium for the conceptualization of divine presence and efficacy.” On pp. 136-138 Chaniotis argues that similar (or identical) language was used for reasons of competition: epithets may have been interpreted differently by different groups. Individual epithets underlining a quality of the deity implied that other (competing) deities lacked these.

73 Chaniotis 2010, 129-130.



emperor's elevation should be effectuated.<sup>74</sup> If the linguistic competition identified by Chaniotis in the epigraphic epithets for gods can be regarded as a sign of the time, the question is whether or how this relates to the development of imperial titulature. Again, the epigraphic religious epithets diverge from the papyrological epithets found in imperial titulature Greek, and the nature and function of the inscriptions also differ from those of the papyrological documents. But again there may be a discursive convergence in the mechanism of using superlative divine epithets. If this is accepted, the introduction of new divine epithets in imperial titulature in papyri can be taken as an indication that Greek imperial language in third-century Egypt shared an empire-wide trend in using elevating language. Perhaps this can be considered competitive behaviour, but it certainly shows that the authors of the documents concerned knew how to present themselves as initiated into the imperial language.<sup>75</sup>

### Emperors as Gods in Oaths

A specific function of imperial titles is also found in oath formulas.<sup>76</sup> The function of oaths is to affirm truth or the truthfulness of what is declared, often by swearing by a deity or by the ruler.<sup>77</sup> In Roman Egypt, the employment of the Roman emperor as the object of the oath can be seen as another example of divine discourse, as this employment is understood as equating an emperor with a god.<sup>78</sup> As the object of the oath, the emperor becomes the guardian of its truthfulness. A gradual development can be discerned from the practice of swearing oaths by the emperor directly into a standardized formula where the emperor's *τύχη* (Lat. *genius*) was the object of the oath.<sup>79</sup> This might point to administrative interference in the formulation of oaths.

Under the Ptolemies, royal oaths became the prescribed oaths for the conclusion of legal procedures. They were sworn by the current rulers and over the centuries

were elaborated by the enumeration of all predecessors and some deities.<sup>80</sup> In the early Roman period, the oath formula changed: the Roman emperor replaced the Ptolemaic king in the oath formula. Before the mid-first century CE, the emperor was the direct object of the oath, sometimes referring to him as Zeus Eleutherios. The most straightforward case is presented by a number of oath formulas dating to the reign of Augustus, with the following formulation: "I swear by Caesar Imperator, son of a god, Zeus Eleutherios Augustus."<sup>81</sup> Augustus' qualification as Zeus Eleutherios is encountered in Greek inscriptions and papyri from Egypt.<sup>82</sup> The designation Zeus Eleutherios was an appropriate designation for Augustus, who had liberated Egypt from the rule of Cleopatra and Marc Antony.<sup>83</sup> Pfeiffer suggests that "...eine offizielle Förderung dieser Gleichsetzung des Kaisers bestanden hat...".<sup>84</sup> A comparison of the dated papyri indeed suggests that there would have been some degree of provincial coordination in the formulation of the oath, although it does not seem to have been an immediate innovation.<sup>85</sup> Oath formulas dated to the initial years of Augustus' sole reign lack the qualification of Zeus Eleutherios.<sup>86</sup> The earliest dated

<sup>74</sup> For the increase of imperial titulature, cf. Bureth 1964; Kneissl 1969, 181-185, discusses developments in the employment of victory titles; Peachin 1990.

<sup>75</sup> This can be further corroborated by the introduction of honorific epithets for cities in Egypt in the third century. See, for example, Hagedorn. Cf. also the general increase in the use of epithets for designating individuals and institutions, for which see Hornickel 1930. In a way, the development of imperial titles *per se* can also be considered competition between emperors (especially in the way they positioned themselves in relation to their predecessors).

<sup>76</sup> As well as the use of epithets with divine connotations that came to be used in the third century.

<sup>77</sup> Seidl 1929, 12-18, 45-52; Thür 2014.

<sup>78</sup> Seidl 1933; Packman 1994; De Jong 2006, 70-73; Pfeiffer 2010, 302-304; De Jong 2011, 633-637.

<sup>79</sup> As the divine aspect of the emperor, his *τύχη* would be suitable as the object of the oath. This would equal the Roman type of oath with *genius*: Seidl 1933, 26-32; Pfeiffer 291-292, 302-304.

<sup>80</sup> E.g. BGU VIII 1735 (Herakleopolis, 98 BCE), ll. 3-7: ὀμνῶ βασιλ[έα] Πτολεμαῖον τὸν καὶ Ἀλέξανδρον θεὸν Φιλομήτορα καὶ βασ[ιλισσαν] Βερενίκην τ[ῆν] ἀδελφὴν θεὰν Φιλάδε[λ]φον [κ]αὶ θεὰν Εὐέργετιν καὶ θεὸν Εὐε[ργέτην] καὶ θεὸν Νέον [Φιλο]π[ά]τορα καὶ θεὸν Φιλομήτορα καὶ θεὸν Εὐπάτορα καὶ θεὸν Ἐπιφανῆ καὶ θεοὺς Φιλο[π]άτορας καὶ θεοῦς Ἀδελφ[οῦς] καὶ θεοῦς Σωτήρας καὶ τὸν Σάρα[πιν] καὶ τὴν Ἴσιν καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους θεοὺς πάντας καὶ πάσας ("I swear by king Ptolemy alias Alexander, motherloving god and queen Berenike his sister, brotherloving goddess and the goddess Benefactor and god Benefactor and god new fatherloving and god motherloving and god Eupater and god manifest and fatherloving gods and Sibling gods and Saviour gods and Sarapis and Isis and all other gods and goddesses."). For the Ptolemaic royal oath, see Pfeiffer 2008, chapter 5.2.5. For the Ptolemaic and Roman oath, see Seidl 1929 and 1933.

<sup>81</sup> The examples for this formula are listed in Appendix (2). Also Herklotz 2007, 350-355; Pfeiffer 2010, 55-57; 302-304.

<sup>82</sup> Pfeiffer 2010, 55-57 speculates it was brought to Egypt from the Greek East, but without further explanation of how and when; Herklotz 2007, 256-261, discusses the term in the Greek classical world and its absence in Ptolemaic royal titles. Herklotz 2007, 258, footnote 58 lists the attestations of the epithet in Greek papyri and inscriptions from Egypt.

<sup>83</sup> Herklotz 2007, 258. Pfeiffer 2010, 56-57.

<sup>84</sup> Pfeiffer 2010, 57.

<sup>85</sup> See the Appendix for an overview of the oath formulas referring to Augustus used. Notice the difference in chronology between type (1) without Zeus Eleutherios and type (2) with Zeus Eleutherios. The earliest dated document referring to Augustus as Zeus Eleutherios is dated 5-4 BCE. The rest of the documents containing that formula are all written at a later date. The only document that cannot be dated to an exact year is P.Rein. II 99, 2-4. The earliest attestation of Augustus' designation as Zeus Eleutherios is dated to 13/12 BCE (I. Portes 24 from Dendera), cf. Herklotz 2007, 258-260 and note 58 and Herklotz 2012, 13-14. In three Egyptian documents (two funerary stelai of a Memphite priests and priestess and one graffito), the earliest of which is dated 23 BCE, the term "he who has set free" appears. This is the year that the Memphite high priest of Ptah, Psenamun, buried his predecessor Imuthes-Petubastis. Interestingly, this Psenamun received the title "prophet of Caesar". So, it is tempting to consider that Augustus' designation in Greek as Zeus Eleutherios may have been inspired by its occurrence in the Egyptian priestly monuments.

<sup>86</sup> BGU XVI 2589 (Herakleopolites, 28 BCE); BGU XVI 2592 (Herakleopolites, 28 BCE); BGU II 543, 2-3 (Hawara (Arsinoites), 27 BCE); BGU XVI 2590, 5-6 (Herakleopolites, 25 BCE).

oath using Zeus Eleutherios is P.Oslo I 26, from the year 5-4 BCE.<sup>87</sup> Later oaths in texts from the reign of Augustus all follow the same pattern. That the formula was applied throughout Egypt cannot be proved with certainty, but a picture emerges on the basis of the preserved oath formulas that come from different nomes: apart from the Oxyrhynchite nome, the Herakleopolite and Arsinoite nomes are represented. The absence of the qualification of an emperor as Zeus Eleutherios in oath formulas for later emperors confirms its special connection to Augustus.<sup>88</sup>

The second case of using the emperor as a divinity to guard over the oath by making him the oath's object directly, is attested during the first and second centuries CE for emperors up to Antoninus Pius.<sup>89</sup> In none of these cases was the emperor associated with a specific god.

At some point in the first century CE, a new type of imperial oath was introduced, in which the emperor's τύχη was the object of the oath.<sup>90</sup> This might have resulted from interference by Roman authorities, but the procedure is far from clear. In any case, it did not lead to the disappearance of the oath by the emperor directly: for more than a century both oath types (with and without τύχη) are attested, until the τύχη type oath eventually became the standard oath type in the late second century. A remaining question is how this hybrid situation should be understood. Seidl, followed by Pfeiffer, explains the introduction of the τύχη oath as an act by the Roman government to offer the provincial inhabitants the opportunity "zu dieser vornehmeren Schwurformel zugelassen zu werden". The τύχη oath then became "...ein Mittelding...das sowohl den Römern als auch den Griechen und Ägyptern zugänglich sein sollte".<sup>91</sup> The introduction of the τύχη oath may then be understood as a way to assimilate to Roman practice for those who wanted. If this is true, the transformation of this oath practice is an indicator of the slowness of the process with which complete uniformity in the use of oaths was achieved: only much later does the τύχη type appear to have become the only imperial oath formula used.<sup>92</sup> Other factors that remain invisible may also have had an effect, such as scribal training that would have been increasingly influenced by Roman practices.

87 The dated documents using the Zeus Eleutherios oath formula in chronological order are: P.Oslo I 26, 38 (Oxyrhynchus, 5-4 BCE); W.Chr. 111 = CPR I 224, 1-2 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 6 CE); P.Oxy. II 253, 16-18 (Oxyrhynchus, 19 CE); P.Oxy. II 240, 3-4 (Oxyrhynchus, 37 CE). Undated is P.Rein. II 99, 2-4 (Oxyrhynchus, 30 BCE -14 CE).

88 That they could not be associated with Zeus Eleutherios is clear, as Egypt was liberated by Augustus and became part of the Roman empire after that: Herklotz 2007, 259.

89 Packman 1991, with examples for each emperor. An example of an oath sworn by Domitian is the declaration of a boy's credentials for his upcoming *epikrisis*, P.Oxy. II 257 (Oxyrhynchus, 94-95 CE), ll. 38-40: ὄμν[ύω] Αὐτοκράτορα Καίσαρα Δομι[τιανόν] Σεβαστὸν Γερμανικόν ("I swear by Emperor Caesar Domitianus Augustus Germanicus").

90 Packman 1994; Pfeiffer 2010, 303-304. The earliest τύχη oaths date to the reign of Vespasian: PSI XIV 1433 (Oxyrhynchus, 69 CE?), P.Oxy. XLIX 3508 (Oxyrhynchus, 70).

91 Seidl 1933, 30, quoted by Pfeiffer 2010, 304.

92 Or at least the only type that has been preserved in the documentary record.

Be this as it may, oaths are illustrative for divine discourse. On a communicative level, an oath was an instrument to guarantee the truth of a statement. In a strategic respect, swearing an oath created a moral obligation on the oath-taker and instantly made clear the (power) relation between oath-taker, oath-recipient and the established and accepted authority of the power guarding the oath. Moreover, swearing an oath by the emperor implied recognizing his divine status. The specific identification of Augustus with Zeus Eleutherios probably even added to paralleling the emperor as the highest authority to the most powerful of the gods, while at the same time he was presented as a liberator from the civil war with Marc Antony in the East, and in Egypt specifically as liberator from the Ptolemies. The succeeding emperors did not share this explicit equation to Zeus, but still served as oath guardians. It is probable that in the formulation of the oath, Roman authorities played a role. This is at least suggested by the overall standard form of the oath formula in the course of the imperial period. In yet another respect swearing an oath mattered to subjects. In documents, oaths come to us as written words, but it should not be forgotten that their actual significance was in their performative ritual.<sup>93</sup> People who swore oaths did so on specific occasions, in specific places, and under supervision by officials and witnesses. Speaking out an oath thus implied vivifying abstract formulas which for an oath-swearing subject may have had the effect of establishing or actualizing a link between himself and the oath-guarding emperor.

### Son of a God: Imperial Deification

So far, the focus has been on living emperors, but even dead emperors appear in papyri. They are referred to in documents relating to a past situation or event. But they might also be present in imperial communications of general importance, such as a decree, or in the following Greek translation of a Latin judicial verdict given by the emperor Antoninus Pius, whose titles are restored in lines 7-10<sup>94</sup>:

[. . . . Αὐτοκράτωρ]  
Καῖσαρ θεοῦ Ἀδριαν[οῦ υἱ]ὸς θεοῦ Τραι[ανοῦ Παρθικοῦ]  
υἱωνὸς θεοῦ Νέρ[ουα] ἔκγονος Τίτ[ου] Αἴλιος Ἀδριανὸς]  
Ἀντωνεῖνος Σεβ[αστ]ῆς Εὐσεβῆς...

"Imperator Caesar, son of god Hadrianus, grandson of god Trajanus Parthicus, descendent of god Nerva, Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius"

Regrettably, the contents of the document are largely lost. However, the part that is preserved contains a clear statement serving the emperor's dynastic and

93 However, for the possibility that there would only be a written oath, without a verbal statement, see Seidl 1929, 3-4; Id. 1933, 127-135.

94 P.Oxy. XLVII 3361 = SB XXVI 16670 (Oxyrhynchus, 154-161). Bringmann 1999.

divine legitimation. Antoninus Pius is referred to as “son of god (= deified, Lat. *divus*) Hadrian”, “grandson of god Trajan” and “descendant of god Nerva”.<sup>95</sup> The first point to notice is that this enumeration of predecessors evokes the suggestion of a real family line. Dynastic legitimation was an important branch of imperial discourse. As imperial continuity was perceived to benefit from dynastic succession, emperors cared to position themselves in relation to their predecessor. Thinking in family lines was deeply rooted in Roman society, and it is not surprising that imperial succession is one of the areas in which this is manifested.<sup>96</sup> The practice of adoption in Roman society was an important instrument to continue family lines.<sup>97</sup> The practice of adopting emperors in the second century may be considered not a strategy to guide imperial succession in the right direction, but rather a consequence of the fact that the ruling emperors concerned lacked natural sons to succeed them.<sup>98</sup> This is illustrated by the fact that, as soon as a male successor arose, as in the case of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, it was self-evident that he would be the successor to the throne. His whole education was intended to prepare him for this role.<sup>99</sup> An adoptive son counted as a natural son, which may be recognized in various presentations of the emperor as the son of his adoptive father.<sup>100</sup>

The second point of notice is that all ancestors of Antoninus Pius that are listed were deified, that is, they had received official recognition of divine status in the Roman context.<sup>101</sup> The Latin term for this was *divus*, which was translated in Greek as θεός.<sup>102</sup> Having deified ancestors would undoubtedly add to the perceived legitimacy of an emperor. That ruling emperors could and did link themselves to their deified ancestors is a well-known practice from public media, such as coins and inscriptions. But the memory of deified emperors was also preserved in documents originating in Egypt’s provincial administrative context. In P.Mich. XIV 676 (Oxyrhynchus, 272 CE), for example, a request is made for official confirmation of the status of a boy named Marcus Aurelius Thonis who had turned fourteen.

95 Note that the Greek term θεός is commonly translated as ‘deified’, as it is the Greek rendition of the Latin term *divus*. See Price 1984 for a discussion of this Latin and Greek terminology, which come from diverging conceptual systems and therefore has divergent connotations for their users. To remain as close as possible to the Greek, I translate θεός as ‘god’ here.

96 For the importance of family, ancestors and successors, see Flower 1996; Lindsay 2009. For the dynastic principle in imperial succession, see Lintott 1994; Ando 2000, 34-40; Hekster 2001; Id. 2002, 16-30; Peppard 2011, 50-85.

97 E.g. Corbier 199; Lindsay 2009 and 2011.

98 Cf. Hekster 2001.

99 Hekster 2002, 16-39.

100 A papyrological example in which Hadrian is presented as the son of Trajan is P.Giss. 3 (Apollonopolis Heptakomias, after 117).

101 Epigraphic evidence attests that Septimius Severus himself created a link with Pertinax, had himself adopted in the Antonine family, and referred to predecessors down to Nerva, cf. Ando 2000, 39-40, 182-188. On divine sonship, see Peppard 2011. On imperial consecration, see Price 1987; Gradel 2002, 261-371.

102 Price 1984 and *supra*, note 93; Mason 1974.

[ - - ] Marcus Aurelius Thonis, his mother being Thermouthion, being 14 years old in the present 3rd year, with no scar, apprentice [ - - ]. Therefore, having come for his examination, I declare that the great-grandfather of the grandfather of him who is coming forward, Apollonios, was selected at the selection of those from the Gymnasium, which took place in the 5th year of god Vespasian (τὴν γενομένην τῷ ε (ἔτει) θε[οῦ Ο]ύεσ[πασσιανοῦ] τῶν [ἐκ τοῦ γυμ]νασίου ἐπίκ[ρισιν] in the Broadstreet quarter in accordance with the proofs produced by him and that the great-grandfather of his father, Dionysios(?), also known as [ - - ], coming forward was selected in the 4th year of god Trajan in the said quarter and that his great-grandfather Diogenes coming forward was selected in the 11th year of god Aelius Antoninus in the said quarter and that his grandfather Amous - - - coming forward was selected in the 21st year of god Commodus in the said quarter and his father Kopreus coming forward was selected in the 5th(?) year of the reign after god Severus Antoninus upon the aforesaid proofs in the Lycians’ Camp quarter and that the great-grandfather of the great-grandfather of the mother of him (Thonis) who is coming forward, Sarapion, the son of Theoninos, belongs in the category of those selected in the 3rd year and in the 4th(?) year of Nero by Curtius Paulinus, tribunus militum, in the Myrobalanus quarter, and that the great-grandfather of her grandfather, Theon, coming forward was selected in the 4th year of Domitian in the said quarter and that the great-grandfather of her father, Sarapion, coming forward was selected in the 15th year of god Trajan in the said quarter and that her great-grandfather Euphellis coming forward was selected in the 21st year of god Aelius Antoninus in the said quarter and that her grandfather Anti- - - coming forward was selected in the 32nd year of god Commodus in the Myrobalanus quarter and that her father, Sarapion, coming forward was selected in the 4th year of god Alexander [...]<sup>103</sup>

The acknowledgment by the authorities that the boy belonged to the group of people who were of the gymnasial class implied not only public recognition of one’s social standing, but also privileges, such as paying a reduced poll tax rate. In order to obtain the status confirmation, the boy’s parents (or, as in this case the father had passed away, his guardian) needed to prove that he had the right credentials. Apparently, people were expected to come up with the relevant documents that would prove their own background. The boy’s family history is related on the paternal and maternal side to six and eight generations back respectively. The document itself is dated to 272 CE, whereas reference is made to the status check (*epikrasis*) of Apollonios, the great-grandfather of the grandfather of Thonis in the paternal line.<sup>104</sup> This ancestor was admitted in the official registers of the gymnasial class during the reign of Vespasian, who is referred to as deified here, just like other past

103 Translation from edition <http://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.mich;14;676>. However, I have adapted the conventional translation of θεός as “the deified” to “god”, cf. note 95.

104 On *epikrasis* see Nelson 1979.

and deified emperors. In the maternal line the ancestry goes further even back to the selection of Sarapion during Nero's reign, who is not qualified as θεός.<sup>105</sup>

Documents like these in the first place serve a pragmatic purpose for the family concerned and for the state as they communicate the proof and guarantee of the family's members' social status. Another message conveyed by the text is that of dynastic lineage, both in the private, familial, and in the public, imperial, sphere. The imperial dynasty functions, so to speak, as a chronological beacon for the family's history. As to the question whether and for whom it would be meaningful that these emperors from past times were specified as deified, it is hard to say. The papyri show that the qualification θεός was not always added when deified emperors were referred to. Unless this is to be explained by scribal inattentiveness, it may be supposed that there were no strict rules for the use of θεός when deified emperors were referred to.<sup>106</sup> The choice to have the divine line of emperors as a personal family beacon may have further served to underline the social order, of which the emperor in the end was the guarantor. But this may be making too much of it. It is more likely that the scribe was just doing his job, and by adhering to the proper language he underlined his own scribal authority. The strong imperial context for the document and the procedure are further reinforced by the presence of the imperial τύχη oath and the imperial titulature to date the document. Still on another level, deified emperors can be understood in the context of emperor worship and, as described above, for imperial legitimation, as having a deified predecessor would reinforce an emperor's prestige.<sup>107</sup>

## Conclusion

In this paper I discussed some differentiated ways of how, by whom and in what contexts Roman emperors were connected to gods in Greek papyri, which is manifest in the use of 'divine language'. The focus was on divine discourse in documentary papyri. The questions whether and by whom the emperor was *considered* a god or not have not been addressed, as they are less relevant than the fact that he could be *designated* as one in words by groups, scribes, administrators and in his own communications. By looking at various documentary examples in which emperors are embedded in divine terminology, which most frequently happens in titular dating and oath formulas, and analysing their divine statements, it was my aim to demonstrate that the use of divine language was relevant on several levels.

<sup>105</sup> Just as Nero (line 12), Domitian (line 14) is not qualified as a θεός. Heliogabalus is completely ignored: the year that dates his reign is circumscribed as "in the fifth year after the reign of the god Severus Antoninus (= Caracalla)". These emperors were not deified. In the case of Domitian and Heliogabalus, their memories were condemned. For this practice in papyri, see De Jong 2006 and 2008.

<sup>106</sup> De Jong 2006, 169-173.

<sup>107</sup> The imperial example is, of course, provided by Augustus, who deified his 'father' Caesar and who presented himself as *divi filius*. For the cult of *divi*, see Gradel 2002.

First, there is the communicative value of texts: considering the contents of a documents, a practical message is communicated. Next, texts can be considered for their strategic value. Except for practical messages, documentary texts can also be studied for underlying messages, through choices of specific value-laden words or formulas. By considering these not only in themselves, but also in a wider imperial context, they gain significance not only as pillars of imperial language, but of emperorship itself. Rather than being merely verbal recorders of messages, texts can be considered media that actively contribute to ordering political and social relations: behind the structures of texts, there is a dynamic world of formulas, rituals, and behaviour, in which the people to whom the documents mattered participated. The emperor was the ultimate embodiment of power, authority, and cohesion of empire and this is reflected in his recurrence in documentary texts, where he sometimes features in a historical dialogue with subjects and more often in a different dialogue with subjects, for instance when his titulature is used in dating or oath formulas. Also in itself, imperial titulature can be understood as both a product of, and a constructive element contributing to, the confirmation and reinforcement of the imperial power position. Apart from its practical functions, titulature was an institutionalized, yet personal, vehicle for communication and legitimation of an individual emperor's power position.

In conclusion, what I hoped to have shown is that reading the documentary papyri not only as communicative, but also as strategic messages is helpful in establishing how power was communicated and received, how both emperors and subjects participated in this, and how divine discourse had in all this a crucial role to play.

## Appendix: Oath Formulas in Papyri from the Reign of Augustus<sup>108</sup>

Listed below are all oath formulas in which the oath is sworn to Augustus. These are selected to indicate the variety of formulas in the earliest period, before Augustus was referred to as 'Zeus Eleutherios' in the oath. In P.Oxy. XII 1453 and BGU XVI 2590, he is qualified as θεόν (god). In P.Oxy. XII 1453, he is furthermore stated as coming ἐκ θεοῦ ('from a god'). In the other documents, the expression is Θεοῦ Υἱὸν ('son of a god'), which translates *divi filius*, referring to the consecration of his adoptive father Julius Caesar.

### (1) Earliest oaths without Zeus Eleutherios: varying formulas

P.Oxy. XII 1453, 10-11 (Oxyrhynchus, 30-29 BCE). Oath by temple lighters.

Oath: ὁμ[ν]ύομεν Καίσαρος θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ.

<sup>108</sup> The Greek, with diacritical layout, has been taken from the editions as they are made available online through the PN. Corrections of the Greek formulations (if applicable) will be found in the editions of the texts.

Date in line 20: α (ἔτους) Καίσαρος

BGU XVI 2589, 4 (Herakleopolites, 28 BCE). Declaration of cessation of land.

Oath: ὀμνύω(ι) Καισαρον Αὐτοκράτορα Θεοῦ Υἱόν.

Date in line 11: (ἔτους) β Καίσαρος

BGU II 543, 2-3 (Hawara (Arsinoites), 27 BCE). Contract of sale under oath.

Oath: ὀμνυμι Καίσαρα Αὐτοκράτορα Θεοῦ υἱόν.

Date in line 18: ἔτους τρίτου Καίσαρος

BGU XVI 2590, 5-6 (Herakleopolites, 25 BCE). Declaration of village elders under oath for maintenance of village dikes.

Oath: ὀμνύομεν Θεὸν Αὐτοκράτορα Καίσαρα Θεοῦ Υἱόν. Date in line 18: (Kaisaros washed out.

Possibly *hasta of kappa*).

Date preserved in ii, line 17, without Kaisaros.

P.Tebt 2 382, 20-22 (Ptolemais Euergetis, Arsinoites, 30-27 BCE). Declaration under oath of division of land.

Oath: ὀμνύο Καίσαραν θεοῦ υἱόν Αὐτοκράτορα.

BGU XVI 2592, 3-4 (Herakleopolites, 27 BCE-14 CE). Declaration under oath concerning the building of a house.

Oath: ὀμνυμι Καίσαρα Αὐτοκράτορα Θεοῦ Υἱόν Σεβαστόν.

Date in line 12-13 (?):[ Καίσαρ]ος

(2) *Oaths with Zeus Eleutherios: standardized formula*

P.Oslo I 26, 38-39 (Oxyrhynchus, 5-4 BCE). Oath on handing in a *hypomnema*.

Oath: ὀμνύωι Καισαρ Αὐτοκράτορα Θεοῦ υἱόν Δία Ἐλευθέριον Σεβαστ[όν].

Reference to year in line 9-10: ἐν τῷ ἐνεστῶτι κς (ἔτει) Καίσαρος

W.Chr. 111 = CPR I 224, 1-2 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 6 CE). Copy of a contract between Macedonian *katoikoi*.

Oath: ὀμνυ[μι] [Καίσαρα] Αὐτοκράτορα θεοῦ υἱόν Δία Ἐλευθέριον [Σεβαστόν]

Date in line 1: (ἔτους) λε Καίσαρος

P.Amst. I 28, 1-2 (Oxyrhynchites?, 3 BCE). Declaration about patrimonial goods.

Oath: ὀμνύω Καίσαρα Αὐτοκράτορα θεοῦ υἱόν Δί[α] ἔλεϋθέριον Σεβαστόν. Also reference to the year 28.

Date in line 7: (ἔτους) κη Καίσαρος

BGU XVI 2591, 2-3 (Herakleopolites, 2 BCE). Sale of a house under oath.

Oath: ὀμνύω Καίσαρα Αὐτοκράτορα Θεοῦ Υἱόν Δία Ἐλευθέριον Σεβαστόν.

Date in line 9: (ἔτους) κη Καίσαρος

SB XX 14440, 14-15 (Theadelphia, 12 CE). Census declaration.

Oath: ὀμνύω Καίσαρα [Α]ὐτοκράτορα Ἐλεϋθέριον θεοῦ <υἱόν> Δία Σεβαστόν.

Date in line 26: (ἔτους) μα Καίσαρος

P.Rein. II 99, 2-4 (Oxyrhynchus, 30 BCE -14 CE). Declaration of lease of land under oath. Oath:

ὀμνύω Καί[σαρα][Αὐτοκράτορα θεοῦ] υἱόν Δία Ἐλευθέριον[ν][Σεβαστόν].

Date in line 9 partly lost : ἔτος Κ[αίσαρος]

(3) *Oaths from the reign of Tiberius referring to Augustus as Zeus Eleutherios*

P.Oxy. II 253, 16-18 (Oxyrhynchus, 19 CE). Declaration under oath of anachoresis.

Oath: ὀμνύω Τιβέριον Καίσαρα Σεβαστόν Αὐτοκράτορα θεοῦ Διὸς Ἐλευθερίου Σεβαστοῦ υἱόν.

Date in line 24: (ἔτους) ε Τιβερίου Καίσαρος Σεβαστοῦ

P.Oxy. II 240, 3-4 (Oxyrhynchus, 37 CE). Oath by komogrammateus sworn by Tiberius, who is referred to as son of Zeus Eleutherios.

Oath: [ὀμνύω Τιβέριον Καίσαρα \Νέον/ Σεβαστόν Αὐτοκράτορα [θεοῦ Διὸς Ἐλευθε]ρ[ίου] Σεβαστοῦ υἱόν.

Date in line 9-10: (ἔτους) κγ Τιβερίου Καίσαρος Σεβαστοῦ

## References

Abbreviations of papyrological editions are according to the checklist, available online: John F. Oates, Roger S. Bagnall, Sarah J. Clackson, Alexandra A. O'Brien, Joshua D. Sosin, Terry G. Wilfong, and Klaas A. Worp, *Checklist of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets*, <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/texts/clist.html>, September, 2014.

### Websites

*Papyrological Navigator*, including *Duke Databank of Documentary Papyri (DDBDP)* – <http://papyri.info/>

Heidelberger Gesamtverzeichnis der Griechischen Papyrusurkunden Ägyptens (HGV) – <http://aquila.zaw.uni-heidelberg.de/>

### Classical authors

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*. Edition and translation by Cary, E. 1914-1927. Loeb Classical Library. Harvard: Harvard University Press

Suetonius, *Life of the Twelve Caesars*. Edition and translation by Rolfe, J.C., Bradley, K.R., Hurley, D.W. 1998. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Tacitus, *Histories*. Edition and translation by Moore, C.H., Jackson, J. 1962. Loeb Classical Library. London: Heinemann.

## Bibliography

- Ando, C. 2000. *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ando, C. 2008. *The Matter of the Gods: Religion and the Roman Empire*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bagnall, R.S. 2009. Practical Help: Chronology, Geography, Measures, Currency, Names, Prosopography, and Technical Vocabulary. In Id. (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 179-196.
- Baharal, D. 1996. *Victory of Propaganda. The Dynastic Aspect of the Imperial Propaganda of the Severi: the Literary and Archeological Evidence AD 193-235*. Oxford: Tempus Reparatum.
- Belayche, N. 2010. Deus deum ... summorum maximus (Apuleius): Ritual Expressions of Distinction in the Divine World in the Imperial Period. In Mitchel, S., Nuffelen, P. van (eds) *One God. Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 141-166.
- Benoist, S. 2014a (forthcoming). Identité(s) du prince et discours imperial, l'exemple des titulatures, des Sévères à Julien. In M. Crété (éd.) *Discours et systèmes de représentation: modèles et transferts de l'écrit dans l'Empire romain*. Lyon.
- Benoist, S. 2014b (forthcoming). Discours impérial et rhétorique de l'éloge, art oratoire et culture de l'écrit dans le monde romain. Quelques remarques conclusives. In M. Crété (éd.) *Discours et systèmes de représentation: modèles et transferts de l'écrit dans l'Empire romain*. Lyon.
- Blommaert, J. 2005. *Discourse. A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blois, L. de. 2006. Institutionalization and Sacralization of Emperorship in the Roman Empire, A.D. 222-268, Fifth Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Roman Empire, 200 B.C.- A.D. 476), The Impact of Imperial Rome on Religions, Ritual and Religious Life in the Roman Empire, 30 June 2004. Leiden: Brill. 268-278.
- Blume, M. 1989. À propos de P.Oxy. I 41. Des acclamations en l'honneur d'un prytane confrontées aux témoignages du reste de l'Empire. In Criscuolo, L., Geraci, G. (eds) *Egitto e storia antica dall'ellenismo all'età araba. Bilancio di un confronto. Atti del colloquio internazionale, Bologna, 31 agosto-2 settembre 1987*. Bologna: Cooperativa Libreria Universitaria Editrice Bologna. 271-290.
- Bringmann, K. 1999. Ein Dekret des Kaisergerichts. Bemerkungen zu P. Oxy. XLVII 3361. *Klio* 81, 491-495.
- Bureth, P. 1964. Les Titulatures impériales dans les papyrus, les ostraca et les inscriptions d'Égypte (30 a.C.- 284 p.C.) *Papyrologica Bruxellensia* 2. Bruxelles.
- Catalaï, F. de, Lorber, C.C. 2011. The Pattern of Royal Epithets on Hellenistic Coinages. In P. P. Iossif, A. S. Chankowski & C. C. Lorber (eds.) *More than Men, Less than Gods. Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship. Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Belgian School at Athens (November 1-2, 2007)*. Leuven: Peeters. 417-455.
- Chaniotis, A. 2003. The Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers. In A. Erskine (ed.) *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*. Malden: Blackwell, 431-445.
- Chaniotis, A. 2010. Megatheism: The search for the almighty god and the competition of cults. In S. Mitchell & P. van Nuffelen (eds.) *One God. Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 112-140.
- Coles, R. A., Geissen, A., Koenen, L. 1973. Some Corrections and Notes to P.Fouad. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 11, 235-239.
- Corbier, M. 1991. Divorce and Adoption as Roman Familial Strategies. In B. Rawson (ed.) *Marriage, Divorce and Children in Ancient Rome*. Oxford. 47-78.
- Dijk, T. A. van 1985. Introduction: Dialogue as Discourse and Interaction. In T. A. van Dijk (ed.) *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Vol. 3 London: Academic Press. 1-11.
- Dijk, T. A. van. 2011. *Discourse Studies. A Multidisciplinary Introduction*. London: Sage.
- Fairclough, N. 1989. *Language and Power*. London-New York: Longman.
- Flaig, E. 2011. The Transformation from Republic to Principate: Loss of Legitimacy, Revolution, and Acceptance. In J. P. Arnason, & K. A. Raaflaub (eds.) *The Roman Empire in Context. Historical and Comparative Perspectives*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell. 67-78.
- Flower, H. I. 1996. *Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Gizewski, C. 2014. Maiestas. In H. Cancik, H. Schneider (eds.) *Brill's New Pauly. Antiquity Volumes*. Brill Online: <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/maiestas-e718120> (visited 16 September 2014).
- Gradel, I. 2002. *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Grandvallet, C. 2007. L'affrontement idéologique entre Gallienus et Postumus. In O. J. Hekster, G. de Kleijn & D. Sloopjes (eds.) *Crises and the Roman Empire. Proceedings of the Seventh Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire, Nijmegen, June 20-24, 2006*. 337-351.
- Hammond, M. 1957. Imperial Elements in the Formula of the Roman Emperors during the first two and a half Centuries of the Empire. *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 25, 19-64.
- Hammond, M. 1959. *The Antonine Monarchy*. Papers and monographs of the American Academy in Rome 19. Rome.
- Harker, A. 2008. *Loyalty and Dissidence in Roman Egypt. The Case of the Acta Alexandrinorum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hekster, O. 2001. All in the family: The appointment of emperors designate in the second century AD. In L. de Blois (ed.) *Administration, Prosopography and Appointment Policies in the Roman Empire*. Amsterdam: Gieben. 35-49.
- Hekster, O. J. 2002. *Commodus. An Emperor at the Crossroads*. Amsterdam: Gieben.
- Herklotz, F. 2007. *Prinzeps und Pharaos. Der Kult des Augustus in Ägypten*. Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Antike.
- Herklotz, F. 2012. *Aegyptus Capta*. Augustus and the Annexation of Egypt. In C. Riggs (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 11-21.
- Hickey, T. M. 2009. Writing Histories from the Papyri. In Bagnall, R.S. (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 495-520.
- Hoffmann, F. 2000. *Ägypten. Kultur und Lebenswelt in griechisch-römischer Zeit. Eine Darstellung nach den demotischen Quellen*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- Hornickel, O. 1930. *Ehren- und Rangprädikate in den Papyrusurkunden. Ein Beitrag zum römischen und byzantinischen Titelwesen*. Dissertation Gießen.
- Jong, J. H. M. de. 2006. *Emperors in Egypt. The Representation and Perception of Roman Imperial Power in Greek Papyrus Texts from Egypt, AD 193-284*. Dissertation Nijmegen.
- Jong, J. H. M. de. 2007. The Employment of Epithets in the Struggle for Power. A Case Study. In O. J. Hekster, G. de Kleijn & D. Sloopjes (eds.) *The Representation and Perception of Roman Imperial Power. Proceedings of the Seventh Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Roman Empire, 200 BC – AD 476), Nijmegen, June 20-24, 2006*. 311-326.

- Jong, J. H. M. de. 2011. Celebrating Supermen. Divine honours for Roman emperors in Greek papyri from Egypt. In P. P. Iossif, A. S. Chankowski & C. C. Lorber (eds.) *More than Men, Less than Gods. Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship. Proceedings of the International Colloquium organized by the Belgian School at Athens, 1-2 November 2007, Studia Hellenistica* 51. Leuven: Peeters. 619-647.
- Jong, J. H. M. de. 2014. More than Words: Imperial Discourse in Greek Papyri. In S. Benoist (ed.) *Épigraphie et discours impérial: mettre en scène les mots pour le dire. Cahiers du Centre Gustave Glotz XXV*, 243-261.
- Jördens, A. 2009. *Statthalterliche Verwaltung in der römischen Kaiserzeit. Studien zum praefectus Aegypti*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Kienast, D. 1996 (1990). *Römische Kaisertabelle: Grundzüge einer römischen Kaiserchronologie*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Kneissl, P. 1969. *Die Siegestitulatur der römischen Kaiser. Untersuchungen zu den Siegerbeinamen des ersten und zweiten Jahrhunderts*. Hypomnemata Heft 23. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Kruse, T. 2006. The Magistrate and the Ocean: Acclamations and Ritualised Communication in Town Gatherings in Roman Egypt. In I. Berti (ed.) *Ritual and Communication in the Graeco-Roman World*. Kernos Suppl. 16. Liège. 297-315.
- Laurence, R., Strömberg, A. (eds) 2012. *Families in the Greco-Roman World*. London: Continuum.
- Lindsay, H. 2009. *Adoption in the Roman World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lindsay, H. 2011. Adoption and Heirship in Greece and Rome. In B. Rawson (ed.) *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds*. Oxford: Blackwell. 346-360.
- Lintott, A. 1994. The Emperor and his Army. *The Classical Review (New Series)* 44 (1), 130-132.
- Mason, H. J. 1974. *Greek Terms for Roman Institutions: a Lexicon and Analysis*. Toronto: Hakkert.
- Mitthof, F. 1993. Vom ἱερώτατος Kaiser zum ἐπιφανέστατος Kaiser. Die Ehrenprädikate in der Titulatur der Thronfolger des 3. Jh. n. Chr. nach den Papyri. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 99, 97-111.
- Mitthof, F. 2001. *Annona Militaris: Die Heerseversorgung im spätantiken Ägypten: ein Beitrag zur Verwaltungs- und Heeresgeschichte des römischen Reiches im 3. bis 6. Jh. N. Chr.* Firenze: Gonnelli.
- Nelson, C. A. 1979. *Status Declarations in Roman Egypt*. American studies in papyrology 19. Amsterdam.
- Nock, A. D. 1951. Soter and Euergetes. In S. L. Johnson (ed.) *The joy of Study: Papers on New Testament and related subjects presented to honor Frederick Clifton Grant*. New York: MacMillan. 127-148.
- Nock, A. D. 1957. Deification and Julian. *The Journal of Roman Studies* 47, 115-123.
- Noreña, C. F. 2011. *Imperial Ideals in the Roman West. Representation, Circulation, Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Packman Z. M. 1991. Notes on Papyrus Texts with the Roman Imperial Oath. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 89, 91-102.
- Packman Z. M. 1992. Epithets with the Title Despotes in Regnal Formulas in document dates and in the Imperial Oath. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 90, 251-257.
- Packman Z. M. 1992. Further Notes on Texts with the Imperial Oath. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 90, 258.
- Packman Z. M. 1993. Papyrus Texts with Oaths Referring to the ΚΟΡΥΦΗ. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 96, 111-116.
- Packman Z. M. 1994. Still Further Notes Papyrus Documents with the Imperial Oath. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 100, 207-210.
- Palme, B. 2009. The Range of Documentary Texts: Types and Categories. In R. S. Bagnall (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 358-394.
- Peachin, M. 1990. *Roman Imperial Titulature and Chronology, A.D. 235-284*. Amsterdam: Gieben.
- Peppard, M. 2011. *The Son of God in the Roman World: Divine Sonship in its Social and Political Context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pfeiffer, S. 2008. *Herrscher- und Dynastiekulte im Ptolemäerreich: Systematik und Einordnung der Kultformen*. München: C.H. Beck.
- Pfeiffer, S. 2010. *Der römische Kaiser und das Land am Nil. Kaiserverehrung und Kaiserkult in Alexandria und Ägypten von Augustus bis Caracalla (30 v. Chr.-217 n. Chr.)*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner.
- Pfeiffer, S. 2012. The Imperial Cult in Egypt. In C. Riggs (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 83-100.
- Pflaum 1970. *Titulature et rang social sous le haut-empire*. Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique.
- Price, S. R. F. 1984. Gods and Emperors: The Greek Language of the Roman Imperial Cult. *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 104, 79-95.
- Price, S. R. F. 1987. From Noble Funerals to Divine Cult: The Consecration of Roman Emperors. In D. Cannadine-S. Price (eds.) *Rituals of Royalty. Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Society*. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne. 56-105.
- Saldern, F. von. 2004. Einige Bemerkungen zur Kalenderreform des Commodus. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 146, 189-192.
- Seidl, E. 1929. *Der Eid im ptolemäischen Recht*. Diss. München.
- Seidl, E. 1933. *Der Eid im römisch-Ägyptischen Provinzialrecht*. München: Beck.
- Sijpesteijn, P. J. 1980. Remarks on Some Imperial Titles in the Papyri. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 40, 130-138.
- Sijpesteijn, P. J. 1982. Further Remarks on Some Imperial Titles in the Papyri. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 45, 177-196.
- Sijpesteijn, P. J. 1984. More Remarks on Some Imperial Titles in the Papyri II. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 54, 65-82.
- Sijpesteijn, P. J. & Liesker, W. H. M. 1986. More Remarks on Some Imperial Titles in the Papyri III. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 63, 281-290.
- Sijpesteijn, P. J. 1988. Commodus' Titulature in Cassius Dio LXXV 15.5, *Mnemosyne* 41, 123-124.
- Sijpesteijn, P. J. 1981. Vierzehn Wiener Papyri. *Aegyptus* 61, 69-92.
- Syme, R. 1958. Emperor Caesar: a Study in Nomenclature. *Historia* 7, 172-188 = *Roman Papers I* (1979), 361-377.
- Watson, A. 1999. *Aurelian and the Third Century*. London-New York: Routledge.
- Weinstock, S. 1971. *Divus Julius*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Whitehorne, J. E. G. 1989. Augustus as 'Theos' in Contemporary Papyri. *Proceedings of the XIXth International Congress of Papyrology*. Cairo. 421-434.
- Zanker, P. 1968. *Forum Augustum: das Bildprogramm*. Tübingen: Ernst Wasmuth.
- Zanker, P. 1987. *Augustus und die Macht der Bilder*. München: Beck.

## Gods and Emperors at Aigeai in Cilicia

Mika Kajava

University of Helsinki

*The article addresses some aspects of the Roman Imperial cult in Asia Minor by discussing a number of round altars from Aigeai in Cilicia. The dedicatory inscriptions of these monuments, some of which are unpublished (D10, E14), testify to various local methodologies of honouring the Roman emperors and their family members jointly with local deities. As they do not mention specific dedicators, the altars must have been set up on public initiative.*

From the port city of Aigeai (Ayas) in eastern Cilicia comes a remarkable set of round altars bearing two dedications each: one to poliadic (Dionysos – Demeter; Asklepios – Hygeia) or other deities, and the other to Roman emperors and their family members. Most of the latter are additions engraved on the back of the altars, although sometimes the original dedication was given to one or more deities and an emperor (or emperors) simultaneously. In no case is a dedicator recorded. Although the dossier is well known and has been studied in detail,<sup>1</sup> there are a number of issues that are still worth addressing. The evidence may be summarized briefly by presenting the dedications according to their original recipients.

A. Five joint dedications to Dionysos Kallikarpos and Demeter Karpophoros (or Karpotrophos; Διονύσω Καλλικάρπῳ καὶ Δήμητρὶ Καρποφόρῳ / -τρόφῳ), with later dedications on another side of the altar (except No. 5) to one or more members of the imperial house:

- 1) Dagrón & Feissel 1987, 121-124 No. 78 (cf. Sayar 2004b, 250-251 No. 65; Haymann 2014b, 269 No. 15): dedication to Septimius Severus and Caracalla, 209/211 CE.

\* For help and useful information I am indebted to Denis Feissel, Florian Haymann, Olli Salomies, Mustafa H. Sayar, Jean-Yves Strasser and the two anonymous readers.

<sup>1</sup> Strasser 2002 is a balanced and perceptive account of the evidence, showing, among other things, that the two dedications in Messina in Sicily, *IG XIV 402* and *SEG XLII 870*, the former of which is now lost, in fact come from Aigeai (thus already Robert 1973, regarding *IG XIV 402*). See also Pilhofer 2006, 111-112.

Majastina Kahlos (ed.)

Emperors and the Divine – Rome and its Influence

COLLEGIUM

Studies across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences 20.  
Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies. 56–63.

- 2) Wilhelm 1897, 60-61 (cf. *IGR III 924*; von Domaszewski 1911, 3-8; Robert 1973, 167-168; Sayar 2004b, 251-252 No. 67; Haymann 2014b, 269 No. 16; now in Plymouth, England): dedication to Caracalla and Julia Domna.
- 3) Jerphanion & Jalabert 1908, 475-477 No. 71 (cf. Sayar 2004b, 252-253 No. 69; Haymann 2014b, 269 No. 17): dedication to Caracalla and Julia Domna (republished in Dagrón & Feissel, p. 123).<sup>2</sup>
- 4) Heberdey & Wilhelm 1896, 16 No. 44 (cf. *IGR III 923*; *IGLS III 714*; Sayar 2004b, 252 No. 68; Haymann 2014b, 273 No. 22): καὶ τοῖς Σεβαστοῖς. Date uncertain, but not later than Severan times.
- 5) Sayar 2004b, 251 No. 66, with Pl. 13,4 (*SEG LIV 1479*; cf. Haymann 2014b, 274 No. 24): this case is somewhat peculiar, as Διονύσω Καλλικάρπῳ is inscribed twice and is followed by καὶ Δήμῳ / μ[ητρὶ Καρποφόρῳ] / καὶ Αὐτοκράτορι Καίσαρι, the unknown emperor thus appearing on the same side of the altar. See below for discussion.

B. Dedication to Demeter Karpotrophos, “other Sebastoi”, Hadrian, and Isis, with an added dedication on side B to Severus Alexander and others:

- 6) Sayar 2004b, 250 No. 64, with Pl. 13, 3 (*SEG LIV 1478*; cf. Haymann 2014b, 267 No. 10). Side A: Δήμητρὶ Καρποτρόφῳ, / τοῖς ἄλλοις Σεβαστοῖς / καὶ Αὐτοκράτορι / Καίσαρι Τραϊανῷ / Ἀδριανῷ καὶ Εἰσίδι. – Side B: Αὐτοκράτορι Καίσαρι Μ(άρκῳ) Αὐρηλίῳ / Σε[ουήρῳ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ] Εὐσεβεῖ / [Εὐτυχεῖ Σεβαστῶ] καὶ [---]. Judging by Feissel (1991, 53), the dedication continued with the mention of Julia Mamaea and the phrase καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις Σεβαστοῖς (“Julia Mamaea et aux autres Augustes”). Unfortunately, the photograph (Sayar 2004b, Pl. 13, 4) does not allow the texts to be read in their entirety. The text of side A in its published form is somewhat problematic; see below for discussion.

C. Three joint dedications to Asklepios and Hygeia (Nos. 7-8: Ἀσκληπιῶ / καὶ Ὑγείᾳ / Σωτηρίσιν / Πολιούχοις; No. 9: without epithets), two of which (Nos. 8-9) include later dedications to emperors. Nos. 7 and 8 ended up in Messina in Sicily (the former is extant, but the latter disappeared during the earthquake of 1908).

- 7) *SEG XLII 870* (cf. Manganaro 1996, with an erroneous attribution to Messina). This is the only altar of the set that was never rededicated to emperors; see Strasser 2002; Haymann 2014b, 266 No. 8.
- 8) *IG XIV 402* (cf. Manganaro 1996, with an erroneous attribution to Messina): dedication to Antoninus Pius; see Strasser 2002; Haymann 2014b, 268 No. 11.
- 9) Weiss 1982, 192-194 (*SEG XXXII 1312*; cf. Haymann 2014b, 271 No. 18): (A) joint dedication to Gordian III, *theoi Gordianoi* (Gordian I and II) and the *theoi*

<sup>2</sup> For the correct reading of the dedication to Dionysos and Demeter on the other side, see Robert 1973, 168 n. 27. In a copy reported by Jerphanion & Jalabert 1908, 476, the end of the fourth line of this text would read ΑΘΗΤΥ: perhaps “to Agathe Tyche” following the names of the other deities rather than a mistake of the copyist.



*Sebastoi* Alexander Severus, Caracalla and Julia Domna, 238 CE; (B) καὶ τοῖς Σεβαστοῖς; (C) joint dedication to Asklepios, Hygeia and *theoi Sebastoi*. This order of the dedications<sup>3</sup> was revised, probably correctly, on palaeographic and other grounds, by Dagron & Feissel 1987, p. 124: the dedication given to the two deities and the previous emperors (C) would have been the earliest one, perhaps amplified with one to the living *Sebastoi* (B), unless this latter is a superfluous equivalent of *theoi Sebastoi*. If the relationships between the texts can be established in this way, the dedication of 238 CE being the last in order, the altar with its dedicatory inscriptions would fit the general pattern described for the rest of the Aigeai material.

D. Joint dedications to unknown / non-poliadic deities and Julio-Claudians, along with others to later emperors.

- 10) unpublished, cf. Feissel 1991, 53: “au Dieu César et aux Augustes (face A), à Julia Domna et aux autres Augustes (face B)”. See below for the initial lacuna.
- 11) *IGR* III 921 (cf. *IGLS* III 715; Haymann 2014b, 264 No. 5): joint dedication to Augustus (*Theos Sebastos Kaisar*), Poseidon Asphaleios and Aphrodite Euploia, with “καὶ τοῖς Σεβαστοῖς” on another side (this addition is probably identical with *CIG* 4442, see Robert 1973, 166).

E. Probable joint dedications to gods and emperors. The original recipient(s), one or more deities, would have been recorded on one of the lost sides of the altars.

- 12) Dagron & Feissel 1987, 120-121 No. 77 (cf. Haymann 2014b, 268 No. 12): dedication to Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, 178 CE.
- 13) *IGR* III 922 (“ex schedis Instituti archaeologici Vindobonensis”; the copy was probably made by Rudolf Heberdey, who in the “Reisen” publication was responsible for eastern Cilicia, and thus Aigeai): dedication to Septimius Severus and to at least one of his sons.
- 14) unpublished, cf. Feissel 1991, 53: “Gallus et Volusien”.

In the Greco-Roman world there were multiple strategies of associating Roman rulers with gods: the adoption by emperors of divine epithets, the juxtaposition of emperor and god in art and architecture, and so on.<sup>4</sup> However, the method introduced in Aigeai is a particular one, as we are dealing with a complex composed of round altars very similar to each other in terms of shape and size,<sup>5</sup> which were all dedicated first to Greek gods and later to Roman emperors. Individual cases of altars of gods being redirected to rulers do exist, but such a large and coherent set as the one here considered strongly points to a local or regional tradition,

<sup>3</sup> Still commonly accepted, e.g., Ando 2012, 108-109.

<sup>4</sup> Price 1984, passim; Frija 2010.

<sup>5</sup> See Berges 1986 and 1996 for the typology.

which judging by the chronology of the added dedications seems to have endured through several generations.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, the set of altars from Aigeai, both as a whole and individually, probably also reflects Imperial propaganda or, at least, consent on the part of the Roman administration.

In their capacity as saviours and givers of prosperity, the deities documented on the altars were especially apt for imperial associations. While the two versions of Demeter and Dionysos were both associated with *karpós*, Asklepios and Hygeia were worshipped as saviours protecting the city (*sôtêres poliouchoi*), such qualities being widely used as vehicles for Imperial ideology. It seems equally understandable that Augustus had received an altar jointly with Poseidon Asphaleios (“Securer”) and Aphrodite Euploia (“Fair Voyage”): the former, the Earthshaker, is the one who also stabilizes the ground, and so he was besought as the Securer in the event of earthquakes, while Aphrodite had a significant role as the protectress of seafarers. On the other hand, since Poseidon the Securer was also called upon to calm sea storms, one wonders whether both deities, Aphrodite and Poseidon, had been offered sacrifices to guarantee safe sailing conditions for the emperor, perhaps on his sea voyage back from Syria in 20 BCE. It might also be the case that Augustus, who in the Greek East was sometimes hailed as “γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης ἐπόπτης” (or similar),<sup>7</sup> appears in the company of Poseidon and Aphrodite as the lord of the known world, whether land or sea.<sup>8</sup>

What is remarkable about these altars is that no dedicators are ever mentioned in their inscriptions. This is a strong indication of their public status and of a context which did not require further identification, the absence of a dedicator generally pointing to monuments that were not given by private individuals on their own initiative.<sup>9</sup> In the present case, one may assume that the public label of the altars was manifested by their display in some centrally located civic or religious place, where they had been dedicated by a public body, probably the city itself. Although little is known about their conditions of discovery (more precise information about find spots is recorded only for Nos. 1 and 9), it may well be that the majority of the altars came from, respectively, the sanctuaries of Demeter and Dionysos and of

<sup>6</sup> For altars to Augustus subsequently rededicated to other emperors, see the Athenian evidence discussed by Benjamin & Raubitschek 1959, passim.

<sup>7</sup> *IGR* I 901 = *IOSPE* II 354 (Phanagoria, Sarmatia); *IGR* III 719 (Myra, Lycia); *SEG* LVII 1665 (Tyberissos, Lycia; cf. Kajava 2011, 586-587); *I. Pergamon* 381 and 383a = *IGR* IV 309 and 315. The expression itself was probably a novelty introduced under Pompey.

<sup>8</sup> For a Coan round altar dedicated, in second use, to Claudius assimilated with Poseidon Asphaleios, see Berges 1996, 115 No. 24 (cf. p. 154) = *IG* XII 4, 417: Κλαυδίου / Καίσαρος / Σεβαστοῦ / Ποσιδῶνος Ἀσφα[λεῖ]ου, cf. Paul 2013, 139.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Robert 1973, 169; Strasser 2002, 157. See Kajava 2011, 574-575 for altars to emperors (especially the ruling emperor) by anonymous dedicators. Further Cilician evidence for the omission of dedicators in altar inscriptions to gods and emperors may be found in Hierapolis Kastabala (Heberdey & Wilhelm 1896, 27 No. 60a-b; Sayar & Siewert & Taeuber 1989, 9-33, Nos. 8-19) as well as in Anazarbos (Sayar 2000, 22 No. 10; 43 Nos. 41-43; 48-49 Nos. 54-57).

Asklepios.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, one might also consider a central public location like the local agora.<sup>11</sup> Either way, the original places of dedication must have been such that they did not leave the dedicators' identity ambiguous.

To conclude, let me add some observations on Nos. 5, 6 and 10, regarding their inscriptions and the identity of some of their recipients.

As noted above, the inscription of No. 5 is noteworthy due to the fact that the name of Dionysos Kallikarpos is recorded twice, and also because the emperor appears on the same side of the altar: Διονύσω / Καλλικάρπω / Διονύσω Καλλι- / κάρπω καὶ Δῆ/μ[ῆτρι Καρποφόρ]ω / καὶ Αὐτ[οκρά]τορι Καίσαρι [--]. However, this should not be taken to mean that the altar was addressed to the gods and to the emperor at the same time: the dedication to the divine couple is on the shaft of the altar, while that to *Autokrator Kaisar* is incised below the lower moulding and could well be a later addition. In fact, the considerable differences in lettering between lines 1 to 5 (especially regarding the sigmas and the omegas) suggest that the altar was first dedicated to Dionysos Kallikarpos alone, then jointly to Dionysos and Demeter, and finally to the Roman emperor (whether the monument also went collectively to *theoi Sebastoi* is not transmitted).

Side A of No. 6 (Δῆμητρι Καρποτρόφω, / τοῖς ἄλλοις Σεβαστοῖς / καὶ Αὐτοκράτορι / Καίσαρι Τραιανῶ / Ἀδριανῶ καὶ Εἰσίδι) is peculiar in several aspects. As already noted by Harry Pleket (at *SEG* LIV 1478), line 2 of A might belong to side B instead, and may well represent what, according to Feissel, followed the name of Julia Mamaea ("et aux autres Augustes", see above at No. 6). Since line 1 of A (Δῆμητρι Καρποτρόφω), inscribed on the upper part of the moulding, has cursive lettering, while lines 3-5 appear in a more regular and "monumental" script on the shaft under the moulding, it seems that the respective lines were written at two different stages. If so, the altar would have been first addressed to Demeter alone (unless the name of Dionysos has disappeared), then to Hadrian and Isis, and finally to a number of Severan dynasts.

A further point of interest concerns the goddess Isis. There is nothing peculiar about a deity appearing alongside a Roman emperor, but in a dedication like this, though it is not compelling, one might expect them to be recorded in the opposite order, that is, Isis preceding Hadrian. Moreover, if coupled with another recipient in this way, especially outside Egypt (where local gods often stood out in the company of the Ptolemies), rather than with an emperor, Isis would more naturally appear together with other gods, Sarapis in particular. Therefore, I wonder whether the singular presence of Isis in the dedication could be explained by the fact that, in this particular case, she in fact also incorporates Vibia Sabina, Hadrian's wife. We know

<sup>10</sup> The latter, in particular, was a major cult centre with a reputation comparable to that of the Asklepieia of Cos and Pergamon, see Robert 1973, 184-204; Ziegler 1994; Steger 2004, 97-99. Hadrian, perhaps styled as *neos Asklepios*, may have been the *synnaos* of the local god, see Haymann 2014a, 154-156 and 2014b, 82. Under Severus Alexander, the city was probably made *neokoros* for the god's temple, see Burrell 2004, 231. For the cult of Demeter and Dionysos at Aigeai, see Nollé 2003, 80-81; Sayar 2004a, 195.

<sup>11</sup> J. & L. Robert, *Bull. ép.* 1983, 447.

from the evidence of coins that Sabina was identified with Isis in Egypt,<sup>12</sup> as with many other deities in many other places, and since cults of Egyptian gods are well attested in Cilicia,<sup>13</sup> one might assume that Sabina was also associated with Isis (Euploia?) in Aigeai, just as she was equated with Artemis in other Cilician cities.<sup>14</sup> In any case, the dedication might be tentatively associated with one of Hadrian's journeys through the region, during which he probably visited Aigeai as well, and it seems more than once.<sup>15</sup> Note, finally, that Sabina may have accompanied Hadrian during one of the visits, perhaps in the summer of 129 CE.<sup>16</sup>

The unpublished dedication on side A of No. 10 would seem to begin with the mention of "God Caesar" but, as Denis Feissel kindly informs me, the item θεῶ Καίσαρι is in fact preceded by "καί", which must mean that the dedication also went to a god or goddess or to more deities, perhaps a pair such as Dionysos Kallikarpos and Demeter Karpophoros (/trophos), or Asklepios and Hygeia, or some other divine combination. However, whether the divine recipients were originally accompanied by "God Caesar", either alone or jointly with the "Sebastoi" (καὶ τοῖς Σεβαστοῖς), must remain uncertain, for these items may have been added later, either simultaneously or in two steps. In the former case, the term "Sebastoi" would likely refer to living members of the early Julio-Claudian house, although, considering that from about the mid-first century CE the expression (*Theoi*) *Sebastoi* began to include not only the living emperor and his family but also the previous rulers and their houses,<sup>17</sup> one could tentatively consider a somewhat later period as well. In either case, however, assuming that "*Theos Kaisar*" refers to Caesar the Dictator (and not to Augustus, who is "*Theos Sebastos Kaisar*" in No. 11, or to another Julio-Claudian Caesar), one should hypothesize that at Aigeai there was a cult of the Deified Caesar that still endured long after his death. This may not be excluded, as it is documented by other evidence that some Romans, Julio-Claudians and others, were occasionally worshipped posthumously over several decades.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, if the "Sebastoi" item is later than "God Caesar", as it may well be, it could date anywhere before the early 3rd century CE.

<sup>12</sup> Hahn 1994, 369 No. 317 (Alexandria, AD 130/131).

<sup>13</sup> See Ehling & Sayar 2004, 161-174 for Isis and Sarapis. In Mopsuestia in eastern Cilicia, a cult of these gods is attested from 86/85 BC: Sayar & Siewert & Taeuber 1994, 113-130 (= *SEG* XLIV 1227, cf. Rigsby 1996, 466-471 No. 217). On coins from Aigeai, Isis appears for the first time in the late Antonine period: *SNG Switzerland 1: Levante-Cilicia* 1734; *SNG France 2: BN* 2336.

<sup>14</sup> Hahn 1994, 289-290, 366-367 (Mopsos, Seleukeia on the Kalykadnos, Tarsos).

<sup>15</sup> A temple of Hadrian in Aigeai is referred to in the *Acts of St Thalelaeus (Acta Sanct. Mai. V, 180)*, cf. Price 1984, 272 No. 142 and Schorndorfer 1997, 203. Visits (four?) by Hadrian: von Domaszewski 1911, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Haymann 2014a, 153 and 2014b, 81, discussing numismatic evidence (according to Haymann, at least two visits by the emperor may be proved numismatically), and pointing out (2014b, 84) that if Isis Euploia is meant, the reference might be to an imperial sea voyage.

<sup>17</sup> Lozano 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Price 1984, 61. Dedications and honours to Caesar and Augustus in the East: Koortbojian 2013, 227-236.

At any rate, the altar dedication may suggest a cult for Caesar, which would not be surprising, considering that he had visited Aigeai and made it a “free city” in 47 BCE, in recognition of which the local people introduced a calendar era starting from that year. The city may well have bestowed divine cultic honours on Caesar already during his lifetime.

## References

- Ando, C. 2012. *Imperial Rome AD 193 to 284. The Critical Century*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Benjamin, A. & A. E. Raubitschek 1959. Arae Augusti. *Hesperia* 28, 65-85.
- Berges, D. 1986. *Hellenistische Rundaltäre Kleinasiens*. Diss. Freiburg.
- Berges, D. 1996. *Rundaltäre aus Kos und Rhodos*. Berlin: Mann.
- Burrell, B. 2004. Neokoroi. *Greek Cities and Roman Emperors*. Cincinnati Classical Studies new ser. 9. Leiden: Brill.
- Dagron, G. & D. Feissel 1987. *Inscriptions de Cilicie*. Travaux et mémoires du Centre de recherche d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance. Monographies 4. Paris: De Boccard.
- von Domaszewski, A. 1911. Mopsuestia und Aegeae. *Numismatische Zeitschrift* 44, 3-8.
- Ehling, K. & M. H. Sayar 2004. Der Isis- und Sarapiskult im Ebenen Kilikien. In M. Meyer & R. Ziegler (eds.) *Kulturbegegnung in einem Brückenland. Gottheiten und Kulte als Indikatoren von Akkulturationsprozessen im Ebenen Kilikien*. Asia Minor Studien 53. Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt. 161-174.
- Feissel, D. 1991. Nouvelles inscriptions de Cilicie et d'Antiochène. Rapport préliminaire sur une mission (juin 1988). *Anatolia Antiqua* 1, 51-54.
- Frija, G. 2010. Nommer les empereurs divinisés. Epiclèses et assimilations dans le culte impérial des cités grecques d'Asie à l'époque julio-claudienne. *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 12, 41-64.
- Hahn, U. 1994. *Die Frauen des römischen Kaiserhauses und ihre Ehrungen im griechischen Osten anhand epigraphischer und numismatischer Zeugnisse von Livia bis Sabina*. Saarbrücker Studien zur Archäologie und Alten Geschichte 8. Saarbrücken: Saarbrücker Druckerei und Verlag.
- Haymann, F. 2014a. The Hadrianic Silver Coinage of Aegeae (Cilicia). *American Journal of Numismatics* 26, 143-186.
- Haymann, F. 2014b. *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Identitätskonstruktion von Aigeai im römischen Kilikien (20 v. - 260 n. Chr.)*. Gephyra 8. Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt.
- Heberdey, R. & A. Wilhelm 1896. *Reisen in Kilikien*. Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Klasse 44,6. Vienna: Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- Jerphanion, G. de & L. Jalabert 1908. Inscriptions d'Asie Mineure [Pont, Cappadoce, Cilicie]. *Mélanges de la Faculté orientale. Université Saint-Joseph, Beyrouth (Syrie)* 3, 437-479.
- Kajava, M. 2011. Honorific and other dedications to emperors in the Greek East. In P. P. Iossif, A. S. Chankowski & C. C. Lorber (eds.) *More Than Men, Less Than Gods. Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Belgian School at Athens (November 1-2, 2007)*. Studia Hellenistica 51. Leuven / Paris / Walpole, MA: Peeters. 553-592.
- Koortbojian, M. 2013. *The Divinization of Caesar and Augustus. Precedents, Consequences, Implications*. Cambridge / New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lozano, F. 2007. *Divi Augusti and Theoi Sebastoi: Roman Initiatives and Greek Answers*. *Classical Quarterly* 57, 139-152.
- Manganaro, G. 1996. Asklepios e Hygieia “divinità salvatrici e protettrici della città” a Messina. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 113, 82-84.
- Nollé, J. 2003. Seleukeia am Issischen Golf. *Chiron* 33, 79-92.
- Paul, S. 2013. *Cultes et sanctuaires de l'île de Cos*. Kernos Suppl. 28. Liège: Presses Universitaires de Liège.
- Pilhofer, S. 2006. *Romanisierung in Kilikien? Das Zeugnis der Inschriften*. Quellen und Forschungen zur Antiken Welt 46. Munich: Herbert Utz.
- Price, S. R. S. 1984. *Rituals and Power: the Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rigsby, K.J. 1996. *Territorial Inviolability in the Hellenistic World*. Berkeley / Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Robert, L. 1973. De Cilicie à Messine et à Plymouth avec deux inscriptions grecques errantes. *Journal des Savants*, 161-211. Reprinted in Robert, L. 1990. *Opera minora selecta vol. 7*. Amsterdam: Hakkert. 225-275.
- Sayar, M. H. 2000. *Die Inschriften von Anazarbos und Umgebung*. I: *Inschriften aus dem Stadtgebiet und der nächsten Umgebung der Stadt*. Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 56. Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt.
- Sayar, M. H. 2004a. Fruchtbarkeitsgottheiten. In M. Meyer & R. Ziegler (eds.) *Kulturbegegnung in einem Brückenland. Gottheiten und Kulte als Indikatoren von Akkulturationsprozessen im Ebenen Kilikien*. Asia Minor Studien 53. Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt. 192-197.
- Sayar, M. H. 2004b. Appendix: Inschriften. In M. Meyer & R. Ziegler (eds.) *Kulturbegegnung in einem Brückenland. Gottheiten und Kulte als Indikatoren von Akkulturationsprozessen im Ebenen Kilikien*. Asia Minor Studien 53. Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt. 221-259.
- Sayar, M. H. & P. Siewert & H. Taeuber 1989. *Inschriften aus Hierapolis-Kastabala. Bericht über eine Reise nach Ost-Kilikien*. Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Klasse 547. Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- Sayar, M. H. & P. Siewert & H. Taeuber 1994. Asylie-Erklärungen des Sulla und des Lucullus für das Isis- und Sarapisheiligtum von Mopsuestia (Ostkilikien). *Tyche* 9, 113-130.
- Schorndorfer, S. 1997. Öffentliche Bauten hadrianischer Zeit in Kleinasien. Archäologisch-historische Untersuchungen. Charybdis 14. Münster: Lit Verlag.
- Steger, F. 2004. *Asklepiosmedizin. Medizinischer Alltag in der römischen Kaiserzeit*. Med-GG Beihefte 22. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner.
- Strasser, J.-Y. 2002. Deux autels de Messine rendus à Aigéai de Cilicie. *Epigraphica Anatolica* 34, 149-159.
- Weiss, P. 1982. Ein Altar für Gordian III, die älteren Gordiane und die Severer aus Aigeia (Kilikien). *Chiron* 12, 191-205.
- Wilhelm, A. 1897. Zu griechischen Inschriften. *Archäologisch-epigraphische Mitteilungen aus Österreich-Ungarn* 20, 50-96.
- Ziegler, R. 1994. Aigeai, der Asklepioskult, das Kaiserhaus der Decier und das Christentum. *Tyche* 9, 187-212.

# Gods of Cultivation and Food Supply in the Imperial Iconography of Septimius Severus

Jussi Rantala

University of Tampere

*This article deals with the question of the role of gods involved with cultivation, grain and food supply in the Roman imperial iconography during the reign of Septimius Severus. By evaluating numismatic and written evidence, as well as inscriptions, the article discusses which gods related to grain and cultivation received most attention from Septimius Severus, and how their use helped the emperor to stabilize his rule.*

*It appears that the three main deities used by Severus were Annona, Ceres and Tellus. The use of Annona and Ceres was concentrated in the first years of Severan rule, when the emperor was out of the capital and fighting wars. Apparently, the importance of Annona, the goddess symbolizing imperial food supply, was connected with the acts of the emperor: wars and other crisis were periods when food supplies to the capital were often under threat. When Severus returned to Rome for a somewhat longer period, more emphasis was put on Tellus, traditional goddess of agriculture and a deity connected with a Golden Age – as the emperor was now in the capital, this meant an age of peace and plenty for his subjects. As a result, it could be argued that the use of fertility gods was closely related to the acts of Severus himself – thus legitimizing his image as a protector of his subjects.*

## Introduction

The intention of this article is to approach the question of the relationship between legitimizing imperial power and gods involved with cultivation, grain and food supply during the reign of Septimius Severus in the late second and early third century CE. Evaluating numismatic evidence, as well as literature, my aim is to find out which gods related to grain and cultivation received most attention from the emperor, and how their use helped the emperor to stabilize his rule. Some observations will also be made on how they were connected to other gods with major importance for the Severan dynasty from the viewpoint of legitimizing power.

The early Severan period is an interesting era from this perspective, as Rome had just suffered a civil war, something the Romans had not experienced for over

a hundred years.<sup>1</sup> The result of this was that a new emperor without any direct connection to the earlier dynasty had risen to the throne. This situation provided a tough challenge for Severus. He had to demonstrate that he was the true and legitimate emperor and he had to keep the empire and especially the capital calm after a period of crisis.<sup>2</sup> The task was not made easier by the fact that Severus was not connected with the traditional elites of the capital; he can be considered an outsider, for some scholars even an “alien”.

Severus was a native of Lepcis Magna, North Africa. His “Africanness” has been a debated issue among modern researchers. Severus’ Punic roots are highlighted especially by Anthony Birley, and the emperor’s interest towards the cult of Serapis is also considered a sign of African identity.<sup>3</sup> These ideas are nowadays somewhat disputed. Lepcis Magna was more or less Romanized long before the birth of Severus, and the two families (the Fulvii and the Septimii) from which the family of Severus descended, were very much of Italian origin. Moreover, the Severan interest in Serapis can hardly be considered an African feature: the same god was given attention already by Vespasian (who was definitely not an African) long before Severus.<sup>4</sup> Ancient sources do not give much proof of Severus’ African identity either.<sup>5</sup>

To claim that Severus considered himself primarily an African might be an exaggeration, but as an emperor he most definitely was an “outsider” regarding the succession of the emperors, as he had no ties with the Antonine dynasty which had ruled Rome for about a hundred years before him.<sup>6</sup> As a result, he was obliged to put a great deal of effort into imperial propaganda to legitimize his power. Despite being a usurper, Severus tried to reassure Romans that he was a legitimate follower of Marcus Aurelius, the last emperor of the Antonine dynasty. His most famous act in this aspect was his self-made adoption, declaring himself a son of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus’ brother. Moreover, many other actions of his were very similar to those of Marcus Aurelius, and contemporary writers mention many prodigies and other occasions that can be found from the descriptions of Marcus Aurelius’ reign as well. They would appear to be Severus’ imperial propaganda, highlighting the similarities between him and Aurelius. Inscriptions, numismatic evidence and

<sup>1</sup> The previous civil war before Severus had taken place in 69, “the year of the four emperors”. As a result, Vespasian took power and established Flavian dynasty. See Greenhalgh 1975 for discussion.

<sup>2</sup> For Severus’ rise to power, see Birley 1999, 81-128.

<sup>3</sup> Birley 1999, 1-46. For Serapis, a god very popular especially in Egypt (with an immense temple in Alexandria) as an evidence of the “Africanness” of Severus, see McCann 1968, 53.

<sup>4</sup> Barnes 1967, 94-95; Takács 2008, 115-116.

<sup>5</sup> Neither Cassius Dio nor Herodian, two contemporary historians, mention anything about Severus as an African emperor. *Historia Augusta* claims that Septimius Severus’ sister did not know how to speak Latin, but this seems to be a joke: see Benjamin 2004, 333.

<sup>6</sup> This apparently was a major problem for Severus, as he eventually proclaimed himself to be the son of Marcus Aurelius. Birley 1999, 117.

portraits also show the similarities between Septimius Severus and his Antonine “father”.<sup>7</sup>

However, the political situation created chances for Severus to find some new ways to strengthen his position, and when we evaluate these “new ways”, we should naturally turn to the imperial policy of that period. Numismatic evidence is particularly important, as the coinage can be seen not only as a tool of trade, but also as a means for the emperor to transmit messages to his subjects, messages he considered important and wanted to highlight. While it is sometimes debated who was actually responsible for striking the coinage and choosing the subjects of the coins, it seems plausible that the emperor at least took part in the process of deciding the titles, portraits and other details which appeared on the new coinage.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, it is quite clear that people who received and handled this coinage thought that the coins (and the iconography they contained) were indeed endorsed by the emperor and his close officials.<sup>9</sup> Finally, it should be noticed that while it is true that the themes on the coinage remained very similar throughout the centuries, from one emperor to another, we can nevertheless notice small but important innovations, or different subjects presented on the coins receiving more emphasis than others during the reigns of different emperors.

The fact that traditionalism was so evident in the Roman coinage means that even small novelties in the coins are important. It usually benefited the new emperor to keep to traditional themes because it was a good way for him to tie his reign to the chain of earlier emperors, a tool which legitimized his power. Thus, whenever innovations are found in Roman coinage, they were truly considered important messages from the emperor, as they represented stepping outside the tradition.<sup>10</sup> The same can be said about another important source of ancient history, namely inscriptions. These public monuments, erected by emperors to commemorate their deeds, often followed the examples of earlier inscriptions. Consequently, when

<sup>7</sup> For Septimius Severus and his identification with the Antonines in his deeds and propaganda, see Baharal 1996: 20-42.

<sup>8</sup> Lusnia 1995, 120. Barbara Levick has argued that messages contained in Roman coinage were actually directed from below to the upper rungs of the political hierarchy. She rejects the claim that the emperor himself was active in choosing the subjects of the coins, and argues that this was done by officials, such as senatorial *tresviri monetales*, a high imperial official like the secretary *a rationibus*, or a lower mint official like the *procurator monetae*. Consequently, the coins' messages were created by lower officials celebrating and respecting the emperor (Levick 1982, 104-116). Levick's article has important observations which warn us not to oversimplify imperial practices concerning coinage policy. On the other hand, Andrew Wallace-Hadrill reminds us that coinage, even if the symbols it contained were selected by various imperial officials below the emperor, still invoked authority, and “the message of the coin is not an extra, over and above the mark of authority, but is part of the process of legitimization” (Wallace-Hadrill 1986, 84). In other words, coins played an important part in the imperial policy of strengthening the emperor's power. Taking this into consideration, it is very plausible that even if the various officials were responsible for choosing the coins' subjects, they must have known very well what the emperor expected from them, and the values on which the ruler wanted to base his power.

<sup>9</sup> Ando 2000, 212.

<sup>10</sup> Horster 2007, 292-293.

we find novelties and new practices among them, it may well point to something important.<sup>11</sup>

The literary sources from the Severan era include two contemporary historians, Cassius Dio and Herodian. With both there are, however, problems: Dio is sometimes described as an uncritical writer, lacking deep analysis and with an inability to notice great historical events of his own time.<sup>12</sup> Herodian is even more criticized, as he is claimed to be a “stylist” who just wanted to tell a good story without troubling himself too much with facts.<sup>13</sup> However, both writers do provide contemporary witness and are valuable as such – Dio from the very core of the empire, as he acted as a senator (and later even as a consul) in the Severan period. Even Herodian, despite his shortcomings, can be seen as a writer who provides a reasonably chronological account.<sup>14</sup> In addition to Cassius Dio and Herodian, Severus' biography in *Historia Augusta* provides much information about the era. Unfortunately, this source, which was written much later – a collection of biographies of emperors and major usurpers – is an extremely complicated case. Most of the biographies in *Historia Augusta* are widely considered to be unreliable fiction. It is, however, also understood that the first part of the collection is somewhat more reliable than later sections, and the biography of Septimius Severus belongs to this “better” part,<sup>15</sup> which somehow justifies its use – although with caution.

## Protectors of Supply and Fertility

When we take a closer look at the Severan coinage, there is especially one deity connected to grain that appears regularly – Annona. Strictly speaking, Annona was not a fertility goddess as such, as she was not directly responsible for securing growth or agriculture, but instead considered to be the divine personification of the grain supply to the city of Rome. Her close connection with the capital can be observed from the fact that almost all examples that we know of Roman coinage presenting Annona were minted in Rome; two exceptions being a coin type minted in Lugdunum (modern Lyons) and another in the Syrian city of Laodicea. The former example is from the reign of Nero, and possibly refers to imperial favours regarding the rebuilding of Lugdunum, as apparently the city had suffered a devastating fire in the year 65 CE (as reported by Seneca).<sup>16</sup> The case of Laodicea, a city in Syria, is related to the civil war between Severus and Pescennius Niger (in 193-194); after

<sup>11</sup> For discussion, see Rantala 2013, 22-24.

<sup>12</sup> Millar 1964, 118; 171.

<sup>13</sup> Birley 1999, 204.

<sup>14</sup> Rantala 2013, 27-28.

<sup>15</sup> Barnes 1978, 32-78.

<sup>16</sup> Seneca, *Epistulae ad Lucilium*, 91.

Severus had defeated his opponent he rewarded those cities who had shown him support. As a result, Laodicea became the new capital of the province, as well as receiving *ius Italicum* (an honour granting certain rights, tax exemption, etc.).

Despite not being a goddess of fertility in the narrower sense, Annona was closely connected to the goddess Ceres, who was more of a traditional goddess of growth. In fact, Ceres Frugifera, the bearer of crops, is another deity who often appears in Severan coinage. These two gods are the most important deities connected to grain and growth who can be found in the numismatic material from the first seven years of Severus' reign.

Annona was a figure who belonged to the so-called deified virtues.<sup>17</sup> The roots of worshipping these gods can be traced from the Republican period, when certain ideas received religious honours and attention due to their importance; these included Concordia (harmony), Fides (good faith), Fortuna (luck), Libertas (freedom), and many more. Their significance increased even more from the beginning of the Imperial period. During this era, new divine virtues appeared alongside the older ones; some of the deities, both old and new, received extensive cult worship and temples, while others had a more modest role in Roman religious life.<sup>18</sup>

Annona was one of the new deities. From the Imperial era on, the goddess was represented in iconography, and also appeared in cultic life. She was considered to be a figure who symbolized the emperor's power to care for his people by securing the food supply and the provisions of grain, although we cannot find her in the stories of Roman mythology. However, as a part of the imperial cult, dedications and offerings were given to her by private individuals who wanted to express their gratitude, or who were seeking favours. Generally, it could be argued that Annona was not, strictly speaking, an independent goddess, but rather from the very beginning, closely connected with imperial policy.

Annona appears in the coinage from the reign of Nero onward. During that time, the so called Cult of Virtues was created, in the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy.<sup>19</sup> From the very beginning Annona was often pictured together with Ceres; in addition, the goddess Abundantia was sometimes depicted with these two.<sup>20</sup> After Nero, Annona appeared before Severus in the coinage of Vespasian, Titus, Domitian, Trajan, Hadrian and Antoninus Pius. Trajan, especially, showed much interest in Annona. The goddess was one of the many virtues, alongside of deities such as Fecunditas, Spes, and Securitas, which highlighted the idea of a

17 Sometimes the gods of the group are called "personifications" or "deifications of abstract ideas", but as Fears (1981b, 832-833) has shown, this lacks justification in the ancient sources; hence, it would be much more appropriate to use the term "virtues".

18 Fears 1981b, 830-833, 889-910.

19 The Pisonian conspiracy was a plot against Nero that took place in 65 CE. The members of the conspiracy consisted of many prominent figures, including Senator Gaius Calpurnius Piso as the leader. The plan failed and 19 people were executed (or forced to commit suicide, including Seneca the Younger). Tacitus, *Annales* 15.48-74 is the main source for the conspiracy. Fears 1981b, 897.

20 Fears 1981b, 895-897.

return to old virtues; in addition, these virtues were supposed to highlight Trajan's reign as a new, prosperous era for humankind. This idea is related to the fact that Annona of Trajan often appeared with a child-figure, symbolizing the future of the empire.<sup>21</sup>

Severus started to use Annona in his coinage from the very early period of his rule onwards. Beginning in 194, the goddess appears regularly in Severan coins until 201 (except for the year 200), and then again in 206-207.<sup>22</sup> The first images of Annona displayed her standing, with her foot on a prow, with ears of corn and a cornucopia.<sup>23</sup> Another Severan image of Annona, presented the goddess standing and holding ears of corn, a *modius* and a cornucopia.<sup>24</sup> The third variant included the goddess seated, with ears of corn on her lap.<sup>25</sup> It is obvious that the prow indicated the grain supply to the capital (carried by ships, of course); ears of corn and a cornucopia, on the other hand, were very typical symbols of abundance, as well as *modius*, a Roman unit for dry measures. They appeared with many deities over the centuries, reminding people that the food supply was secure and that the grain storages were full.

As Annona as a symbol of the grain supply to the capital appears to be an important figure in Severan coinage, it is noteworthy that written sources covering the Severan period also point out how much effort the emperor put into securing a grain supply to the capital. In fact, it is claimed that the first act of Severus, after he had had his predecessor Julianus murdered, was to take care of grain distribution. This is reported in *Historia Augusta*, which also reports that later, during the civil war against Pescennius Niger, Severus sent troops to fight in North Africa and Egypt, two provinces critical for the food production (most of the grain distributed in the capital indeed came from these two districts). Apparently Severus was worried that Niger would be able to halt the food imports and weaken the position of Severus in Rome.<sup>26</sup> The same source also mentions how Severus later fought in North Africa against local tribes who had conquered Tripolis. Severus was eventually successful in his campaign and liberated the city.<sup>27</sup>

Severus did not only fight wars to show people his ability to secure a food supply; his politics included increasing the amount of food rations distributed to the people as well. Grain had already been distributed, of course, for many generations before Septimius Severus – the practice had started in the late republican era, and the imperial period saw the emperors continuing this tradition. Even if there are

21 Fears 1981b, 897.

22 Garnsey 1988, 226.

23 See e.g. *RIC (=Roman Imperial Coinage)* 4.1 nos. 57, 75, 107, 123 and 135 (Septimius Severus).

24 *RIC* 4.1 nos. 677, 681, 748 and 751 (Septimius Severus).

25 *RIC* 4.1 no. 156.

26 *Historia Augusta, Severus* 8.6.

27 *Historia Augusta, Severus* 18.3.

traces that Augustus tried to somewhat decrease the distribution system,<sup>28</sup> and that sometimes the process was temporary suspended, it became impossible to abolish; this would have been politically dangerous.<sup>29</sup> However, some reforms were occasionally made in the grain distribution policy. For example, it was probably Nero who included soldiers amongst those to whom the grain doles were granted. It was, however, Septimius Severus who started to distribute oil.<sup>30</sup> This was possibly done in 202, when he celebrated his tenth year in power. According to Cassius Dio, this occasion saw all kinds of spectacles, public banquets and gifts to celebrate Severus' return and his victories.<sup>31</sup> The number of people entitled to grain distribution – and to free oil – in the early third century was perhaps 200,000; this means that the vast majority of the inhabitants of the city did not receive free grain.<sup>32</sup> It still was, however, an impressive number and helped Severus to strengthen his position.

Ceres, another deity connected with fertility that appeared in Severan coinage, was one of the oldest goddesses of the Romans. Ceres had many roles, but as Ceres Frugifera, appearing in the Severan coinage with this epithet, she was considered a bearer of crops. As mentioned earlier, Annona often appeared as a companion of Ceres; in the coinage they can be seen together for the first time during the reign of Nero, and there is at least one Severan example (probably from the year 200 or 201) depicting Annona and Ceres as a pair in a very traditional manner, Annona holding a cornucopia and facing Ceres, with an altar and a ship also represented.<sup>33</sup>



Fig. 1 Sestertius of Nero, Lugdunum mint; struck in 66 CE, with Annona and Ceres depicted as a pair. On left Annona standing, facing right, holding cornucopia; on right, Ceres seated facing left, holding grain-ears and torch; modius on garlanded altar between them; ship's stern behind (RIC I 494). Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

<sup>28</sup> Suetonius, *Augustus* 42.3.

<sup>29</sup> Garnsey 1988, 211-214, 236-239.

<sup>30</sup> *Historia Augusta*, *Severus* 18.3; see also Garnsey 1988, 236-238. *Historia Augusta* claims that in the 270's emperor Aurelian started to distribute pork and cheap wine as well: see *Historia Augusta*, *Aurelianus* 35.2, 48.1.

<sup>31</sup> Cassius Dio 77.1

<sup>32</sup> The number of people living in the capital during the early third century is difficult to estimate. It is suggested that at the beginning of the imperial era the number of inhabitants amounted to about one million, and it apparently remained so until at least the mid-second century (see Garnsey & Saller 1987, 6 and 62). It is possible that the Antonine plague in the mid-second century decreased the number, although this is far from certain – see Bruun 2006, 207-214.

<sup>33</sup> RIC 4.1 no. 756 (Septimius Severus)

In the Severan coinage, Ceres was especially connected with the empress Julia Domna. This is by no means a Severan novelty; the deity can also be found in the coinage dedicated to most of the Antonine imperial women. There are, moreover, many other examples, like gems or statues identifying empresses with Ceres.<sup>34</sup> Julia Domna's coinage follows the imperial tradition quite closely, as the goddess is depicted holding various symbols of fertility, such as ears of corn or a basket of fruit.<sup>35</sup>

While images of Ceres reminded people about imperial rule and its devotion towards the goddess who protected agricultural security in the empire, it has also been claimed that imperial women were identified with Ceres because the goddess was a symbol of the ideal woman, placing an emphasis on such qualities as chastity, female fertility and motherhood.<sup>36</sup> From this point of view, it is noteworthy that as Severan coinage started to associate Julia with Ceres, the empress also received many titles honouring her as a "mother": in 195 she became *mater castrorum*, during the next year she became *mater caesaris*, and in 198 she received the title of *mater augusti et caesaris*.<sup>37</sup> This can be noticed from the coinage of the period as well: from 196 on, Julia was titled in various coins as *mater augustorum* and *mater castrorum* – and even *mater deum*.<sup>38</sup> The promotion of motherhood and chastity is also apparent in Severan legislation. During that period, much emphasis was placed on laws against adultery as well as laws promoting the family, proper morals, chastity, and so on.<sup>39</sup> As a result, it seems quite obvious that associating Julia Domna with "mothers" in the imperial propaganda is related to the general policy of Severus, which highlighted values closely related to ideal motherhood.

## Tellus and the Imperial Guardians

The third deity connected with grain and agriculture that received attention in the Severan iconography was Tellus. By the Severan period she was, as was the case with Ceres, already known by Romans for hundreds of years. Her temple on the Esquiline hill dates from 268 BCE, but apparently she was worshipped by the Romans even earlier. Ovid described Tellus as a patroness of places of cultivation; the poet stressed that she should not be confused with Ceres, who was goddess

<sup>34</sup> Keltanen 2002, 120-121, 146.

<sup>35</sup> RIC 4.1 nos. 546, 616<sup>a</sup>-618, 636, 848-850 (Julia Domna)

<sup>36</sup> Keltanen 2002, 121.

<sup>37</sup> Kettenhofen 1979, 83-85; later, her full title was *mater augusti/imperatoris et castrorum et senatus et patriae* – mother of the emperor, of the camps, and the senate and the fatherland. Later still, she was also known as *mater populi Romani* – mother of the Roman people. Levick 2007, 82.

<sup>38</sup> RIC 4.1 nos. 562-570 (Julia Domna).

<sup>39</sup> For Severan moral laws, see Birley 1999, 165 and Gorrie 2004, 61-65.

of the origins of cultivation.<sup>40</sup> Later Augustine, quoting Varro, mentioned that Tellus was sometimes associated with other deities considered as earth goddesses, such as Magna Mater, Ops, Proserpina and Vesta.<sup>41</sup> Even if Tellus was a very old deity among the Romans, she did not have a festival of her own in the Roman ritual calendar. However, she was worshipped in one of the most ancient rituals of Rome, *fordicidia*. This festival, which took place in April, celebrated the fertility of the land and flocks.<sup>42</sup>

Tellus was a goddess who appeared quite regularly in imperial iconography. She appeared already in Augustan art and poetry, but it was especially Hadrian who marked attention to the goddess. During his reign Tellus was connected with peaceful farming and working in the fields – in the Hadrianic coinage she was depicted as the goddess of agriculture in general. Of other pre-Severan emperors, Antoninus Pius and Commodus were rulers who quite often used Tellus for propaganda purposes.<sup>43</sup>



Fig.2 The female goddess of fertility in the Altar of Augustan Peace (built in 13 BCE), usually identified as Tellus. Photo: Jussi Rantala.

Septimius Severus continued the tradition of depicting Tellus in imperial coinage; she first appeared in the Severan coins in 200 or 201, portrayed with cornucopia and personifications of four seasons (e.g. with Autumn holding a basket

40 Ovid, *Fasti* 1.657 ff., 671 ff., 4.629 ff.

41 Augustine, *De civitate Dei*. 7. 23-24. When evaluating Augustine's text, some caution is needed, though, as his aim as a Christian writer was to display old gods in as bad a light as possible. Combining the rituals of Tellus with a deity like Magna Mater gave him a reason to condemn the worship of Tellus, as rituals for Magna Mater were often considered immoral or at least suspicious even among some supporters of Roman traditional religion.

42 Scullard 1981, 102.

43 Gesztelyi 1981, 442-445.

of fruit, suggesting the agricultural cycle and harvest). While this seems to be a very traditional approach in Roman iconography regarding the goddess, there are some other signs hinting towards Tellus' major importance for Septimius Severus.

An especially noteworthy detail is that during the Severan era, the goddess was connected with Bacchus and Hercules. These two deities were, of course, well known for centuries before Severus. In the imperial era Hercules was a particular favourite of many emperors, especially during the Antonine era. Many ancient sources indicate that particularly the last ruler of the dynasty, Commodus, passionately identified himself with Hercules.<sup>44</sup> The important role of Hercules continued during the Severan reign, but it seems that Severus wanted to promote him especially alongside another god, Bacchus (or Liber, as he was also known): Cassius Dio writes in his history how Severus used a considerable sum of money to build and repair temples in the capital; of the new buildings, he mentions especially the temple of Bacchus and Hercules.<sup>45</sup> There were good reasons for Severus to promote these two gods: they had some personal relevance for the emperor as they were the guardian deities of his home town Lepcis Magna. Bacchus and Hercules were, moreover, considered guardian deities of two princes, Caracalla and Geta. This was evident in Roman imperial policy, especially from the mid-190s onwards. During the first years of his reign, Severus made extensive use of Jupiter in his iconography: the coinage of the period demonstrates how a close relationship between the supreme god of the Roman community and the emperor was constructed in a very careful manner. Indeed, after 196 CE, only Severus himself was associated with Jupiter. However, Caracalla and Geta were from that point on linked closely with Bacchus and Hercules. These two gods thus became an essential part of the idea of continuity and the golden future of the empire as they were associated with imperial offspring.<sup>46</sup>

Tellus, Bacchus and Hercules were connected to each other in a very interesting piece of coinage, issued by Septimius Severus to celebrate the Secular Games (*ludi saeculares*), organized in 204 CE. The coin portrays Bacchus and Hercules, with Tellus and the emperor himself; the role of Tellus as a goddess of harvest and fertility is highlighted by representing her with a basket and ears of corn. *Victimarius* with a pig and a flute-player is also present. It apparently depicts a sacrifice that was offered during these celebrations.<sup>47</sup> In fact, the coin portrays in one single picture many important parts of Severan iconography. Tellus (with a basket and ears of corn) is probably referring to the age of plenty, when food supplies were, again, secured after the uncertain period of civil war. On the other hand, it represents the emperor sacrificing. Even if Severus was an African outsider and his wife a

44 Cassius Dio 73.7.2, 73.15.2-6, 73.20.2, 73.22.3; Herodian 1.14.7-9; *Historia Augusta, Commodus* 8.5, 8.9, 9.2, 10.9, 16.5.

45 Cassius Dio 72.16.3.

46 Fears 1981a, 114-115.

47 Cooley 2007, 392. The coin can be found in RIC 4.1 no. 761 (Septimius Severus).



Syrian princess, his religious policy regarding traditional state religion was very conservative.<sup>48</sup> Depicting the emperor sacrificing highlighted his *pietas* – dutiful respect towards the gods and the motherland. After the civil war this was something Severus wanted people to remember. Moreover, the coinage also shows dynastic aspirations, as a basically identical coin was issued at the same time, with a single exception: instead of Severus, it portrayed Caracalla, who by 204 CE had already taken the position of a co-ruler of Severus.<sup>49</sup>

Perhaps the most important aspect is, however, that the coin not only combined Tellus with Bacchus and Hercules, deities of major importance for the Severan dynasty, but also with one of the most significant events of the Severan period – *ludi saeculares*. This was a celebration which, in many ways, symbolized the whole Severan rule, and which included Tellus as one of the major deities of the occasion.

### Celebrating a New Golden Age

*Ludi saeculares* – or the Secular Games – was an ancient institution held long before Severus. The key to understanding their major significance for Severus is to realize their unique nature. This was guaranteed by their rarity alone; they consisted of a ceremony that was only supposed to be celebrated once in about a hundred years. The games had already been held in the republican period,<sup>50</sup> but it seems that the real start of imperial *ludi* occurred when Augustus held them in 17 BCE; even if our sources from the republican era are scarce, it is very probable that Augustus gave the games a new look. The purpose of the games was traditionally to celebrate a passing of an era, or an “age” (*saeculum*),<sup>51</sup> and this remained the case from the republican to the imperial era. However, it seems that in the pre-Augustan games this passing was considered a dark, frightening occasion, where the community jumped more or less into the unknown. Augustus though celebrated the festivals as the beginning of a new Golden Age, a new period of peace, prosperity and wealth.<sup>52</sup> Apparently, this approach remained more or less the same throughout the

48 Gorrie 2004, 66-67; Levick 2007, 124-144. As Levick mentions, Severan age did see the spread of so-called eastern cults, such as Mithraism and Christianity, but these were spreading from below, not from the top of the empire.

49 Caracalla's coin: RIC 4.1 no. 418.

50 This took place at least in 249 BCE and again in 146 BCE (Liv. 7.2). The festivals of 249 BCE are the first occasion that we can be quite sure of, although ancient authors report that there were three games before those: in 509 BCE (Censorinus 17.10; Plutarch, Publicola. 21; Valerius Maximus 2.4; Zosimus 2.1-3), 449 BCE (Censorinus 17.10) and 348 BCE (Censorinus 17.10; Zosimus 2.1-3). For questions of chronology, see Rantala 2013, 193-199.

51 The idea of “ages” or “eras” in history was quite common in antiquity – in Greek, Etruscan, as well as in Roman culture. Censorinus deals with both Greek and Etruscan views (17.1-5). It seems, however, that the Roman view was influenced especially by the Etruscans – at least in the late republican period. See Hall 1986, 2567-2569. The idea of *saeculum* is based on cyclic theories of time, which were very common thoughts in the ancient world. A great deal of research has been carried out on the subject, the classic study being Eliade 1949.

52 Beard, North, & Price 1999, 201-206.

imperial era, which saw the celebrations of six *ludi*, the Severan celebration being one of them in 204 CE.<sup>53</sup>

It appears that the imperial rituals remained quite unchanged over the centuries, although the fact remains that the Augustan and Severan games are the only occasions on which we have a good deal of evidence left, for an inscription containing the programme of the festival, erected in Campus Martius, survives from both festivals. The gruesome deities of the underworld, Dis and Proserpina, who had been the gods worshipped in the republican period, were removed from the programme. They were replaced by more “positive” gods and goddesses, who were worshipped for three consecutive nights and days: Moirae (the Fates), Eileithyia and Terra Mater received a sacrifice in the nocturnal rites in Campus Martius, whereas daytime rituals were dedicated to the “Olympian” Roman gods Jupiter, Juno, Apollo and Diana. The festivals also included purificationary rites (*sellisternium*) performed by 110 married women, and a hymn (*Carmen Saeculare*) that was sung by 27 boys and 27 girls at the end of the rituals.<sup>54</sup>

The programme of the *ludi* is interesting in its own right. Regarding deities of fertility, Tellus does appear in the records, although she carries her Greek name Terra Mater. She is clearly the same goddess, for Horace, who composed the *Carmen* performed in the Augustan Secular Games, calls the deity Tellus in his poem.<sup>55</sup> The inclusion of Tellus/Terra Mater in the Severan *ludi* is perhaps not a very interesting feature as such, as the emperor is here simply following Augustan tradition and uses almost the same programme. However, the remarkable detail is that Tellus is used in the Severan coinage to celebrate such an important and unique festival as the Secular Games of 204. In fact, we have no evidence that other emperors used Tellus when commemorating their own games – even if we have a considerable number of numismatic sources from earlier games, especially from those of Domitian in 88, Tellus is missing completely before Severus. This seems to indicate the important role reserved for the goddess of agriculture in the Severan Golden Age.

53 The celebrations which followed after Augustus were organized by Claudius in 47, only 64 years after Augustus, to celebrate the 800th birthday of Rome. The next occasion occurred in 88 organized by Domitian, then in 148 by Antoninus Pius. Severus held the games, as mentioned, in 204, and the last *ludi saeculares* were held by Philip the Arab in 248, celebrating the Roman millennium. Two cycles are noticeable: Claudius, Antoninus Pius and Philip the Arab held *ludi saeculares* to celebrate Rome's birthday (800, 900 and 1000 years, respectively), whereas Domitian and Septimius Severus followed the original imperial (Augustan) tradition. The immense propaganda value of the games is clear – Claudius was ready to celebrate the games only 64 years after Augustus, even if the proper gap between games should have been about one hundred years. Once these two cycles – Augustan and Claudian – were in place, future emperors followed them. For the list (and sources) of imperial games, see Pighi 1965, 102-103.

54 The inscriptions are *CIL* (= *Corpus Inscriptorum Latinarum*) 6. 32323 (Augustan) and 32326-32335 (Severan). They can also be found in Pighi 1965, 109-119, 140-175. In addition, there is a small fragment remaining from the Claudian inscription (*CIL* 6 32324, Pighi 1965 131-132). Numismatic evidence and literature provide some information on the other imperial *ludi*.

55 Horace, *Carmen Saeculare* 29.

The importance of *ludi saeculares* for Severan rule should not be underestimated. Their significance is better understood when we consider how little time Severus had spent in the capital during his reign before the games. From the year he became emperor (193) until the year 202, he had been in the city of Rome for only a few months. However, when he arrived at the capital in 202 and, after a journey to Africa, returned again in 204, he stayed for a few years in Rome and strengthened his position among the elite of the capital. The period from 202 on witnessed a series of grandiose celebrations, including the tenth anniversary of Severus' rule and, two years later, the *ludi saeculares*. An important part of strengthening the Severan rule was also the grand building programme which took place mainly in the first years of third century CE and was completed when Severus returned to the capital in 204: in fact, it seems that the *ludi saeculares* of 204 was a showcase for the magnificent new appearance of the city, as the rituals of the games were conducted in the parts of the capital which had received intensive restoration.<sup>56</sup>

The Severan *ludi saeculares* as an expression of an age of plenty and prosperity was highlighted by the *Carmen Saeculare*, performed, as explained, at the end of the ceremony. While the Augustan poem composed by Horace is preserved among the poet's works, the Severan *Carmen* is known only from fragments which are included in the inscription containing the programme of the Severan *ludi*.<sup>57</sup> The composer of this later poem is unknown as well. It is indeed an interesting detail that the poem is included in the Severan monument in the first place. When Augustus erected the inscription about the games of 17 BCE, the last part of the programme simply indicated that the poem was composed by Horace.<sup>58</sup> In the Severan inscription, the whole poem is included, and it differs significantly from Horace's text. We may therefore suggest that the poem from the Severan games was an excellent tool for the emperor to spread his own message. The Augustan programme already stood as an inscription in Campus Martius when Severus celebrated his own games; as Severus' aim was to assure people that his reign was a legal continuation of earlier imperial periods, he could not depart from the Augustan example too much. However, as the Augustan source did not include *Carmen* at all, Severus had a chance to emphasize the ideas he considered important by adding his poem in the actual inscription – without actually departing from the basic Augustan framework.<sup>59</sup>

The Severan *Carmen Saeculare* features many interesting details: some of them were indeed following the Augustan tradition – such as the invocation of Apollo and Diana at the very beginning of the poem – but mostly it was a

56 Gorrie 2004, 61-72.

57 *Carmen Saeculare* was probably performed in other imperial games as well, but we know practically nothing about the detail of those poems other than the Augustan or Severan versions.

58 *carmen composuit Q. Hor[ati]us Flaccus*. Pighi, comm. lud. quint. 149.

59 For discussion, see Rantala 2013, 127-133.

completely new work.<sup>60</sup> Of the many novelties in the poem, one interesting feature must be observed: the *Carmen* included a passage celebrating “shores and cities” and “golden fields” of the empire. In addition, the poem honours Neptune, god of the sea, who guaranteed the safe sailing of ships. The end of the poem asks for protection to “our leaders”, referring of course to Septimius Severus and his family.<sup>61</sup> These lines in the inscription could perhaps indicate how one of the most important aspects of the new Severan Golden Age was grain production (golden fields) as well as its safe passage to the capital (cities, shores and protection of Neptune). This would all be happening under the supervision of the “leaders” – Septimius Severus and the rest of the imperial family.

### Famines in the Empire: Fears and Responses

To understand the significance of the rather extensive use of a deity such as *Annona* in the Severan coinage, or the connection between *Tellus* and the new Golden Age propagated by Severus, we must realize the importance of food supply, and the fear of famine, among the populace of the capital. Generally, ancient literature provides many stories about famines and food crisis in Rome. However, it is very likely that, at least in the Roman imperial period, actual famines were quite rare. On the other hand, food crises, or food shortages, were more numerous. During the period from Augustus to the late second century, about twenty instances of food crises are mentioned in Roman literature. About half of these took place soon after the civil war, during the Augustan and Tiberian rule, and most of the cases occurred during the first century CE. From the beginning of the second century on, reports become rarer; there are just a couple of cases mentioned from the period of Hadrian to Marcus Aurelius, including the so-called Antonine plague, which included a food crisis, in the 160s.<sup>62</sup>

The response of the people to a food crisis, or to the possibility of a lack of grain, was often public protest, which was usually loud but seldom violent. Especially public shows were occasions where people could express their discontent towards the ruler, as the emperor himself usually witnessed public spectacles in the capital. It was also a custom that people made requests towards the ruler in public entertainments, and even if it was not necessary for the emperor to assent to these requests, he was nevertheless obliged to listen to the pleas of the people. Moreover, if the emperor turned down these appeals, he had to explain his decision. Generally speaking, attending public spectacles was usually a very safe practice for the emperor; the shows were well controlled and were not a real threat to the regime. It was considered a duty of the ruler to practise the virtue of

60 The poem can be found in Pighi, comm. lud. sept. Va 60-71.

61 Pighi, comm. lud. sept. Va 66-71.

62 Garnsey 1988, 218-225. For Antonine plague, see Bruun 2007.

*civilitas*, meaning that he should enjoy the pleasure of public entertainments with ordinary people. It could be claimed that the emperor acted as a first citizen among other citizens. At the same time this practice strengthened imperial power, as the emperor himself was present during the spectacular shows he had organized for his subjects.<sup>63</sup>

Even if the number of food crises decreased in the second century, it seems that a quite serious food shortage occurred in 189 under the rule of Commodus. This is attested by both Cassius Dio and Herodian. Herodian reports how a plague struck Italy, and was particularly devastating in Rome. According to the author, the fact that the capital was overcrowded and yet still received more immigrants made the situation even worse. The plague was followed by a food crisis, and Herodian blames an imperial slave called Cleander for the problems. As Herodian claims, Cleander bought most of the corn supply and then cut off its distribution. Then, when a food crisis occurred, he would increase his own popularity by distributing corn in a generous manner.<sup>64</sup> Cassius Dio reports, as well, the “grievous” famine, which was made worse by the bad policies of the officials. Dio writes how the grain commissioner Papirius Dionysius increased the severity of the food crisis in order to make people hate Cleander.<sup>65</sup> *Historia Augusta* also describes the events as a famine, and mentions that the troubles did not occur because of a shortage of grain as such, but because of the bad policies of the officials.<sup>66</sup>

According to contemporary writers, the protests following this particular food crisis were very fierce, and turned violent. The events began with a horse-race, where people expressed their disapproval about Cleander’s actions. Commodus had to flee and fighting between the mob and the Praetorian Guard broke out. Eventually the emperor became so frightened that he had Cleander executed.<sup>67</sup> It is rare to find reports about food riots where the emperor himself is threatened – the only comparable case from the imperial period seems to be the riot of 51, as reported by Tacitus. According to the historian, the people were furious because no food supplies were available in the city for fifteen days. As a result, the crowd rounded on emperor Claudius in the forum, and soldiers had to rescue him from the mob.<sup>68</sup>

Even if the actual famine was eventually avoided in 189, reports indicate that people in the capital were in a very revolutionary mood only a couple of years before Severus’ rise to power. As a result, it is a possibility that people again feared problems with grain distribution when Severus marched into Rome in 193 and took

power by killing emperor Didius Julianus. After all, conflicts endangered the normal life of the capital, including food supply and grain distribution, and thus the civil war that broke out between Severus and Pescennius Niger meant that the supply routes from the provinces to the capital were threatened.

We have already noticed how much effort Severus put into his actions to secure North Africa and the trade routes. These acts are naturally related to the very real threat of civil disturbances in the capital should the supply route be in any danger. Moreover, Severus reminded people about his efforts by releasing plenty of coinage including the goddess Annona, the protector of grain distribution and a symbol of the imperial security of the food supply. Indeed, there may be even more numismatic evidence pointing to Severus’ efforts.

In the first years of the third century CE a series of coins were issued celebrating imperial generosity, *indulgentia*, towards Italy and Carthage.<sup>69</sup> There have been a number of theories among scholars concerning which acts of generosity these coins represented. It has been suggested, for example, that this imperial favour towards Italy could point to the war against brigands that Severus conducted during that time, or to the project to repair Italian roads.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, it is not exactly known why Severus issued coins celebrating his generosity towards Carthage, although it might be connected with the fact that he did give much attention to his home province in North Africa.<sup>71</sup> Especially the city of Lepcis Magna received remarkable honours from the emperor.<sup>72</sup>

However, while it is possible that the fight against the brigands in Italy, or goodwill towards the emperor’s old home in North Africa were behind the Severan coinage propagating *indulgentia* towards these two areas, it does not necessarily exclude other possible messages that Severus wanted to bring forward. One should especially note the significance of *indulgentia*. It embraced the concept of generosity but had a strongly paternalistic flavour. It underlined that the relationship between the one who showed *indulgentia* and the one who received it was highly hierarchic. The concept is explained very clearly especially in the letters exchanged between Pliny the Younger and Trajan (written in the early second century CE). The letters indicate that *indulgentia* did not deal first and foremost with concrete favours, such as gifts, but instead it referred to permissions, granted by the emperor to his subjects, to do something they wished to do; in other words, it included allowance by the emperor to his subjects.<sup>73</sup> Given the highly paternalistic significance of

63 Cameron 1976, 157-193; Garnsey 1988, 240-242.

64 Herodian 1.12.3-4.

65 Cassius Dio 73.13-14.

66 *Historia Augusta, Commodus* 14.1.

67 Cassius Dio 73.13.3-6.

68 Tacitus, *Annales* 12.43; see also Suetonius, *Claudius* 18.2.

69 *INDULGENTIA AVGG IN ITALIAM: BMC V 282* (dedicated to Septimius Severus) and *BMC V 339* (Caracalla); *INDULGENTIA AVGG IN CARTH.: 4.1*, nos. 193, 266-267, 759-760, 763 (Septimius Severus); 594 (Julia Domna); 415, 418a, 471 (Caracalla).

70 See *BMC (=Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum)*, cli (brigands); Hill 1969, 178 (roads).

71 Levick suggests (2007, 133) that the generosity here implies the grant of *ius Italicum* to Carthage.

72 For Severus’ activities in North Africa, see Birley 1999, 146-154.

73 For discussion, see Rantala 2013, 139.

indulgentia, it is possible that the coinage in this case also points to the hierarchic idea of imperial power, signifying that the emperor really was the master of Italy and North Africa (Carthage being one of the most important cities in the province of Africa). In other words, it indicated that the emperor had strict control not only in Italy (where the capital was situated and where Severus distributed grain to the people), but also in North Africa, one of the most important grain producers in the empire. As a result, this might have been another way to assure the people in Rome that food supplies were secure and in the firm hands of the emperor.

## Conclusion

*Historia Augusta*, a problematic but nevertheless interesting source about the lives of Roman emperors, describes the Severan policy as follows:

*Rei frumentariae, quam minimam reppererat, ita consuluit, ut excedens vita septem annorum canonem populo Romano relinqueret.*<sup>74</sup>

As the source states here, Severus was so successful in organizing the food supply that while there was a shortage of grain when he became emperor, there was a surplus to the amount of seven years tribute when he died. Another passage from the same biography states that, at the end of the reign of Septimius Severus, there was enough grain not only for the people of the capital, but also for the whole populace of Italy for five years.<sup>75</sup> The problem is, though, that Cassius Dio and Herodian, two much more trustworthy historians, do not mention any trouble with food shortages during the Severan period. According to Peter Garnsey, this was due to the low quality of their histories and their poor coverage of the civil war era.<sup>76</sup> While this might be true, there could be another explanation as well.

It is, in fact, possible that the food shortage was actually exaggerated by Septimius Severus himself. Severus' biography in the *Historia Augusta* probably made much use of the emperor's self-made biography. Considering this, the story of the emperor receiving a city with no food but which he saved through his wise policy could come from this very source – at least the tone of the passage would indicate this.<sup>77</sup> There is even some kind of analogy with Augustus, who had in his propaganda stated how he “founded Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of

<sup>74</sup> *Historia Augusta*, Severus 8.4.

<sup>75</sup> *Historia Augusta*, Severus 23.2.

<sup>76</sup> Garnsey 1988, p. 226.

<sup>77</sup> The biography of Septimius Severus is mentioned in Aurelius Victor, *Caesares*. 20; *Historia Augusta*, Severus 3.2; *Historia Augusta*, Clodius Albinus 7.1; Cassius Dio 76.7.3; Herodian 2.9.4.

marble<sup>78</sup> – both emperors received a city with shortcomings, but left it in perfect condition.

If the public were afraid of food shortages (which they probably were, taking the problems with grain distribution in 189 as well as the civil war in the early 190s into consideration), Severus the usurper could legitimize his power more easily by presenting himself as a man who had the ability to secure the adequate distribution of food. Whether there really was a food shortage or not, we cannot know for sure; however, it is important to note that the internal crisis that usually meant at least a great fear of famine among the people of Rome, gave Severus an opportunity to show himself as a “saviour”. As we saw, wars were indeed one of the major causes for food shortages and famine in the Roman world, and the city of Rome (and the whole of Italy) was especially dependent on grain transportation from the provinces. The citizens of the capital knew this very well.<sup>79</sup>

If we evaluate the reign of Septimius Severus against this background, it is interesting that Annona appears to have a more prominent position in Severan iconography precisely during those occasions when Severus was out of the capital – especially in the first years of his reign. This would perhaps indicate that the emperor wanted to highlight a deity associated with grain supply and the ability of imperial power to secure it while he was away. It reminded people that even if the ruler was absent, he was fighting to secure trade routes from Africa to the capital, with a little help from divine forces. However, when Severus returned to the capital, first in 202 to celebrate his tenth year in power, and then for a longer period in 204–207, Tellus was given more attention. This seems logical enough: Tellus was an ancient fertility deity who was also associated with an age of plenty and abundance – a Golden Age. As a result, she was a perfect companion for the emperor who was now present in the capital celebrating his ten years in power and organizing Secular Games to declare that a new Golden Age had begun. This indicated that Severus himself was displayed as a man who had brought peace and prosperity to Rome. On the other hand, Ceres, another prominent cultivation deity, appears to be used in Severan propaganda especially to highlight the role of the empress Julia Domna. Connecting the goddess not only with the traditional themes of fertility and such, but also with motherhood, strengthened the dynastic aspirations of the Severan family.

Later, in 206–207, new issues concerning coins depicting Annona appeared again. Based on the use of Annona (and Tellus) in the earlier Severan iconography, it is possible that this prepared people for the fact that Severus would leave the capital again. As the man who had secured grain for the city was leaving, Annona reminded people that imperial rule still worked and took care of food distribution.

<sup>78</sup> Suetonius, *Augustus* 28.3.

<sup>79</sup> Tacitus, for example, strongly criticized the situation in which the empire had put itself, as he wrote how Italy used to export grain to distant countries, but was by his time, cultivating the fields of Africa and Egypt instead, and was dependent on the uncertainty of maritime transportation; Tacitus, *Annales* 12.43.

In 208 Severus left to conduct a military campaign in Britain – but never returned. Overall, the roles of the deities of food, agriculture and distribution in Severan policy seem to be closely connected with the acts of the emperor himself. The ruler was thus presented as a man who represented divine power on earth and even co-operated with the gods.

The reign of Septimius Severus appears to witness the creation of a new kind of relationship between the emperor and his subjects. The person of the emperor was highlighted, perhaps even more strongly than before, as an essential part of the people's welfare. This goal was achieved by various means. The most concrete mark of the emperor's goodwill, the distribution of daily food rations, was improved by the addition of oil to the provisions, and Tellus, goddess of fertility, received an important part in Severan propaganda, especially during the time the emperor was himself in the capital and putting on magnificent public spectacles. In addition, the continuous appearance of Annona on Roman coinage while Severus was not residing in the city of Rome seems to indicate that coinage was indeed used actively for imperial purposes. Whether the iconography was decided by the emperor himself or by some of his officials, at least Severan images of Annona seem to indicate that coinage closely followed the emperor's preferences and actions, and was consciously used to strengthen the desired image of an emperor.

## References

- Ando, C. 2000. *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Baharal, D. 1996. *Victory of Propaganda. The Dynastic Aspect of the Imperial Propaganda of the Severi: The Literary and Archaeological Evidence AD 194-235*. Oxford: Tempvs Repratvm.
- Barnes, T. D. 1967. The Family and Career of Septimius Severus. *Historia* 16, 87-107.
- Barnes, T. D. 1978. *The Sources of Historia Augusta*. Bruxelles: Collection Latomus.
- Beard M., North J., & S. Price. 1999. *Religions of Rome*. Vol. 1: A History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Benjamin, I. 2004. *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Birley, A. 1999 (1988). *Septimius Severus. The African Emperor*. London: Routledge.
- Bruun, C. 2007. The Antonine Plague and the Third-Century Crisis. In O. Hekster, G. de Kleijn, & D. Slootjes (eds.) *Crises and the Roman Empire. Proceedings of the Seventh Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire, Nijmegen, June 20-24, 2006*. Leiden: Brill. 201-217.
- Cameron, A. 1976. *Circus Factions. Blues and Greens in Rome and Byzantium*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cassius Dio 2005. *Roman History*. Trans. Earnest Cary. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Cooley, A. 2007. Septimius Severus: the Augustan emperor. In S. Swain, S. Harrison, & J. Elsner (eds.) *Severan Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 385-400
- Eliade, M. 1949. *Le Mythe de l'éternel retour: archétypes et répétition*. Paris: Editions Gallimard.
- Fears, J. R. 1981a. The Cult of Jupiter and Roman Imperial Ideology. In H. Temporini & W. Haase (eds.) *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.17.1. Berlin: de Gruyter. 3-141.
- Fears, J.R. 1981b. The Cult of Virtues and Roman Imperial Ideology. In H. Temporini & W. Haase (eds.) *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.17.2. Berlin: de Gruyter. 827-948.
- Garnsey, P. 1988. *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World. Responses to Risks and Crisis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Garnsey, P. & R. Saller 1987. *The Roman Empire. Economy, Society and Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gesztelyi, T. 1981. Tellus-Terra Mater in der Zeit des Prinzipats. In H. Temporini & W. Haase (eds.) *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.17.1. Berlin: de Gruyter. 429-456.
- Gorrie, C. 2004. Julia Domna's building patronage, imperial family roles and the Severan revival of moral legislation. *Historia* 53, 61-72.
- Greenhalgh, P. A. L. 1975. *The Year of the Four Emperors*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson
- Hall III, J. F. 1986. The Saeculum Novum of Augustus and its Etruscan Antecedents. In H. Temporini & W. Haase (eds.) *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.16.3. Berlin: de Gruyter. 2564-2580.
- Horster, M. 2007. The Emperor's Family on Coins (Third Century). In O. Hekster, G. de Kleijn & D. Slootjes (eds.) *Crisis and the Roman Empire. Proceedings of the Seventh Workshop of the International Network Impact of the Empire (Nijmegen, June 20–24 2006)*. Leiden: Brill. 291-309.
- Keltanen, M. 2002. The Public Image of the Four Empresses. Ideal Wives, Mothers and Regents? In P. Setälä, R. Berg, R. Hälikkä, M. Keltanen, J. Pölönen & V. Vuolanto (eds.) *Women, Wealth and Power in the Roman Empire*. Rome: Acta IRF. 105-146.
- Kettenhofen, E. 1979. *Die syrischen Augustae in der historischen Überlieferung. Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Orientalisierung*. Bonn: Rudolf Habelt Verlag.
- Levick, B. 2007. *Julia Domna. Syrian Empress*. New York: Routledge.
- Levick, B. 1982. Propaganda and the Imperial Coinage. *Antichthon* 16, 104-116.
- Lusnia, S. 1995. Julia Domna's Coinage and Severan Dynastic Propaganda. *Latomus* 54, 119-140.
- McCann, A. M. 1968. *The Portraits of Septimius Severus*. Rome: American Academy in Rome.
- Millar, F. 1964. *A Study of Cassius Dio*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pighi, G. B. 1965 (1941). *De ludi saecularibus populi Romani Quiritum libri sex*. Amsterdam: Verlag P. Schippers N.V.
- Rantala, J. *Maintaining Loyalty, Declaring Continuity, Legitimizing Power. Ludi Saeculares of Septimius Severus as a Manifestation of the Golden Age*. Tampere: Tampere University Press 2013.
- Scullard, H. H. 1981. *Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Takács, S. 2008. *Vestal Virgins, Sibyls, and Matrons: Women in Roman Religion*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Wallace-Hadrill, A. 1986. Image and Authority in the Coinage of Augustus. *Journal of Roman Studies* 76, 66-87.

## Tertullian's Criticism of the Emperors' Cult in the *Apologeticum*

Tobias Georges

University of Göttingen

*By referring to the topic of the emperors' cult in his Apologeticum (apol.), Tertullian was quite innovative. Like him, his Greek predecessors among the so-called apologists generally took persecution against the Christians as the starting point for their argumentation in favour of the Christians. However, the emperors' cult did not play a major role in their apologetic treatises. Tertullian, starting from his understanding of maiestas and his categorical distinction between God and man, in apol. 28-35 severely criticized the emperors' cult and, at the same time, underlined a specific kind of reverence for the emperors. An analysis of those chapters shows how he acknowledged the emperors' maiestas, but only as far as it was understood as a human being's majesty subordinated to the maiestas of the one God. Thereby, Tertullian had to admit that the Christians rejected the gods, but he denied that the Christians were transgressors of imperial policies.*

“So that is why Christians are public enemies, – because they will not give the emperors vain, false and rash honours ...”<sup>1</sup>

In these words from *Apologeticum* 35.1, Tertullian clearly expressed his opinion that the Roman authorities regarded the Christians as transgressors against imperial policies precisely because the latter abstained from the emperors' cult – which he referred to as “vain, false and rash honours” for the emperors. So it might be interesting to take a look at Tertullian's thoughts in the context of the topic “Emperors and the Divine”. Actually, by referring to the topic of the emperors' cult in his apologetic masterpiece, Tertullian was quite innovative: Like him, his Greek predecessors among the so-called “apologists”<sup>2</sup> generally took persecution

<sup>1</sup> Tertullian, apol. 35.1: *Propterea igitur publici hostes Christiani, quia imperatoribus neque vanos neque mentitentes neque temerarios honores dicant ...*. For quotations from Tertullian's *Apologeticum* (apol.), E. Dekkers' Corpus Christianorum edition is used; the translations of passages from the apol. follow Tertullian 1931 (transl. Glover). In passages where the Latin text used by Glover differs from Dekkers' edition, I have adjusted the translation to Dekkers' edition.

<sup>2</sup> On this group of authors, see Fiedrowicz 2000.

against the Christians as the starting point for their argumentation in favour of the Christians.<sup>3</sup> But the emperors' cult did not play a major role in their apologetic treatises<sup>4</sup> and in fact the emperors' cult does not seem to have been the specific reason for persecutions against the Christians.<sup>5</sup> However, Tertullian depicted the emperors' cult as an important element in this context when defending Christians in the *Apologeticum* (apol.) in chapters 28-34/35. Of course, by analysing his thoughts<sup>6</sup> we will not see “how the emperors' cult and its impact on the Christians really were”, but we will get an impression of how this concrete Christian author perceived and interpreted it. Furthermore, he might have shown a subtle sense of how the conflict between imperial power and Christian faith in Jesus Christ<sup>7</sup> was exemplified in the emperors' cult and its rejection by Christians.

The interesting thing in apol. 28-35 is that while elaborating on why the Christians were not giving divine reverences to the emperors, Tertullian was, at the same time, striving to underline the emperors' majesty and the Christians' loyalty towards it insofar as it was understood in a Christian sense. Referring to the topic of “Emperors and the Divine” one could say that Tertullian was forced to admit that the Christians rejected the pagan gods – whereby, in Roman eyes, they in fact violated the *pax deorum*. However, he denied that the Christians were transgressors of imperial policies and, to this goal, explained why the Christians had to reject the gods for the sake of the emperors. In this strategy, he could rely on an already existing Christian tradition (cf. Romans 13.1; Titus 3.1; 1 Peter 2.13-14; 1 Clement 61.1-2; Theophilus, Ad Autolycom 1.11.1-5).<sup>8</sup> But Tertullian, following this tradition, placed special emphasis on it and focused particularly on elements of the emperors' cult. This is why his thoughts will be analysed here.

For Tertullian's criticism of the emperors' cult and his great respect for the emperors as well, two aspects were crucial: the term *maiestas* (“majesty”) which itself, of course, was closely related to the emperors' cult,<sup>9</sup> and the categorical differentiation between God and human beings. This can be illustrated very well by going through chapters 28-34/35 of the apol., which is what I will do in the following. Before focusing on those chapters, the importance of the term *maiestas* for the whole apol. and its overarching structure shall be delineated. The function of chapters 28-35 for the context of the whole treatise will thereby become clear. I will not elaborate on the apol.'s origins and historical background; I will only mention

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Justin, 1 apol. 1-5; Tertullian, apol. 1-3.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Justin's apologies, which just briefly mention this topic, as, e.g., in 1 apol. 17.3. On this topic, see Georges 2011, 462; Heinze 1910, 437-439.

<sup>5</sup> See Wlosok 1978, 52.

<sup>6</sup> For the following analysis, I refer to my reflections in Georges 2012, 131-143.

<sup>7</sup> This conflict was indeed a major background for persecution. See Wlosok 1978, 52.

<sup>8</sup> See Georges 2011, 469-484.

<sup>9</sup> See Georges 2011, 469-470; Rankin 2001, 204.

here that it was composed as one of Tertullian's earliest works around the year 197<sup>10</sup> and was directed at an educated readership amongst whom the borderlines between pagans and Christians seem to have been quite fluid.<sup>11</sup>

Concerning the term *maiestas*, in Tertullian's times, it generally referred to the majesty, greatness and dignity that were attached to the emperors as well as the gods. Besides, it could also refer to the importance of the *populus Romanus* and the *res publica*.<sup>12</sup> That this term was crucial for the apol. can already be seen by its structure, in the fact that the term served to name one of the two main accusations against the Christians that Tertullian opposed in the apol.'s 50 chapters: In the fictitious scenario of a forensic speech before the "magistrates of the Roman Empire" (apol. 1.1), having countered the accusation of *laesa religio*, of violating religion, in apol. 10-27 (argumentatio, pars I), he refuted, in apol. 28-45 (argumentatio, pars II), precisely the charge of *laesa maiestas*, of violating the emperor's (apol. 28-36; argumentatio, pars IIa) and the Roman society's majesty (apol. 37-45; argumentatio, pars IIb). These refutations form the apol.'s core, and they were only followed, in apol. 46-50, by the *peroratio*.<sup>13</sup> On closer examination the importance of *maiestas* reached even beyond chapters 28-45. Tertullian opposed the accusation of *laesa religio* (apol. 10-27) by showing that the Christians were not violating true religion at all because the alleged gods that they refused to worship were mere demons and did not possess any divine majesty. It was only the one God who owned the highest, divine majesty; therefore, the Christians were the only true worshippers of God, and the charge of *laesa religio* was turned against the accusers who did not worship the true God. In this conception, the accusations of *laesa religio* and *laesa maiestas* turned out to be very closely interconnected.

So it can be observed already in apol. 10-27 (argumentatio, pars I) that Tertullian used the term *maiestas*, which the Christians seem to have been confronted with in the second charge (*laesa maiestas*), in order to transform it from a Christian perspective and turn it against the Christian God's opponents:<sup>14</sup> they were the ones who did not acknowledge the highest *maiestas* of the true God and who were therefore guilty of *laesa religio*. With his understanding of *maiestas* he could then also counter, in apol. 28-45 (argumentatio, pars II), the accusation of *laesa maiestas* that explicitly pointed to this term. In apol. 28-36 (argumentatio, pars IIa) he started to oppose primarily the accusation that the Christians violated the emperors' majesty, and in that context he naturally dealt with the emperors' cult. Then in apol. 37-45 (argumentatio, pars IIb) he defended the Christians against

<sup>10</sup> On dating and on the context the apol. originated from, see apol. Tränkle 1997, 444-449; Barnes 2005, 33-34

<sup>11</sup> On the addressees of the apol., see Georges 2011, 44-48.

<sup>12</sup> See Avenarius 2010, 1136-1153; Gizewski 1999, 710-712.

<sup>13</sup> On the structure of the apol., see Rambaux 1985, 4-7; Becker 1992, 24; Eckert 1993, 36-41.97-98.191-193; Tränkle 1997, 444-447; Fredouille 1998, 278.

<sup>14</sup> On this, see Georges 2007, 223-235.

the charge that they violated Roman society, an accusation which could also be expressed by the label *laesa maiestas*. For the present purpose, I will focus on the first part of Tertullian's argumentation against the second charge (apol. 28-36; argumentatio, pars IIa). As chapters 35-36 already built a bridge towards chapters 37-45 (argumentatio, pars IIb), I will concentrate on chapters 28-34.

In apol. 28-34, Tertullian countered the accusation of violating the emperors' majesty in three argumentations each of which was closely linked to an element of the emperors' cult.<sup>15</sup> In each of those argumentations he referred to the specific *maiestas* of the emperors and explained the Christians' behaviour that conflicted with Roman expectations but was, in Tertullian's eyes, the only reasonable behaviour, which showed that they were not transgressors of imperial policies.<sup>16</sup> In 28.1-32.1, he characterized the sacrifices to the gods on behalf of the emperors as senseless and opposed the Christian prayer for the emperors against the call for sacrifice. In 32.2-3, against the practice of swearing by the emperor's genius – which the Christians naturally refuted – he emphasized the Christians' swearing by the *salus* (the welfare) of the emperor. In 33.1-34.4, he justified the Christians' refusal to give divine names to the emperor.<sup>17</sup>

But having said that, in what way did Tertullian criticize the emperors' cult and, at the same time, emphasize the emperors' specific majesty and the Christians' loyalty towards it in apol. 28-35?

First of all, in apol. 28.1-2, Tertullian connected apol. 28-45 to apol. 10-27. He started with the Christians' general refusal to sacrifice to the gods – which had been crucial within the accusation of *laesa religio* – and from there he proceeded to the Christians' resistance when urged to sacrifice to the gods to secure the emperors' welfare: This resistance was crucial in the accusation of *laesa maiestas*. Right after this linking, Tertullian pointed to the topic of *maiestas* when, in 28.3, he stated:

So now we have come to the second charge, the charge of treason against a majesty more august... (*Ventum est igitur ad secundum titulum laesae augustioris maiestatis* ...)

The words *laesae augustioris maiestatis* (violation of a majesty more august) pointed to the idea of *maiestas* twice, alluding of course with the term *maiestas*, and beyond with the comparative *augustior*, to an even bigger greatness. This allusion was quite subtle. The comparative referred to the majesty that had been at stake when Tertullian had argued against the charge of *laesa religio*, that is, to

<sup>15</sup> On the sacrifices, on swearing by the emperor's genius, and on giving divine names to the emperor as part of the emperors' cult, see Wlosok 1978, 1-52.

<sup>16</sup> On the detailed structure of apol. 28-36, see Georges 2011, 455-457.

<sup>17</sup> Apol. 35.1-36.1 were connected to those argumentations because there Tertullian explained why the Christians did not join their fellow citizens in celebrating the emperors' festivals. However, as their focus was shifting they shall only be mentioned in passing.

the gods' or rather the demons' majesty that, in Tertullian's eyes, did not exist at all. So, with this comparative, Tertullian repeated his judgment from apol. 10-27: As the gods, being demons, had no *maiestas* at all, the Christians could not violate their *religio*. Therefore, the "majesty more august" was naturally the emperor's majesty. Tertullian's following statements in apol. 28-35 show that in fact he granted the emperors this *maiestas*, which he did not grant the demons. It must be noted that, first of all, in apol. 28.3, the words "majesty more august" served to deride the gods, and in order to confirm the emperor's higher majesty, Tertullian turned to his listeners saying:

For it is with greater fear and more violent timidity that you watch Caesar, than Olympian Jove himself.<sup>18</sup>

In the same line of thought, he then praised this behaviour<sup>19</sup> – of course, not without an ironic undertone – and explained his approval by the rhetorical question:

For who among the living, whoever he be, is not better than every dead man?<sup>20</sup>

This question played with the euhemeristic thesis that the gods had once been human beings and underlined the inferiority of the "dead" or the gods under the "living" men including the emperors.<sup>21</sup> However, with this reference to euhemerism, Tertullian already alluded to the basic premise that his acknowledgement of the emperor's majesty had, and which in 28.4 he then pronounced explicitly: The emperor's *maiestas* was, different from divine *maiestas*, only a human being's majesty. From that point of view, Tertullian ironically had to blame his listeners:

So that in this too you are found irreligious to those gods of yours, because you show more fear for the rule of a man.<sup>22</sup>

In apol. 29, Tertullian underlined the thesis that the emperors as "living" men were superior to the "dead" demons and that, therefore, only the former were able to have *maiestas*, that is, of course, human *maiestas*. He challenged his audience:

18 Tertullian, apol. 28.3: ... *siquidem maiore formidine et calidiore timiditate Caesarem observatis quam ipsum de Olympo Iovem.*

19 Tertullian, apol. 28.3: "Quite right too ..." (*Et merito ...*)

20 Tertullian, apol. 28.3: *Quis enim ex viventibus quilibet non omni mortuo potior?*

21 On Euhemerism, see Thraede 1966.

22 Tertullian, apol. 28.4: ... *adeo et in isto irreligiosi erga deos vestros deprehendimini, qui plus timoris humano domino dicatis.*

... and then impeach us on the charge of treason (*et ita nos crimini maiestatis addicite*), if it appears that ... demons, in their natures the worst of spirits, do any good service; ... if the dead can protect the living.<sup>23</sup>

In Tertullian's eyes, the charge of *laesa maiestas* originating from the Christians' refusal to sacrifice to the gods on behalf of the emperors would only have been justified if the gods had owned a higher majesty. But in fact, the gods had no *maiestas* at all. Therefore, the Christians did not violate the emperors' majesty either. In this perspective, Tertullian stated in apol. 29.4, once again highly ironically:

So, after all, our crime against the majesty of the emperors comes to this: that we do not subordinate them to their property ...<sup>24</sup>

Tertullian was convinced that the Christians could not violate the emperors' majesty if they did not subordinate them to the demons.

Thus, in apol. 28-29, Tertullian had laid the foundations for his criticism of the emperors' cult. He had explained why the Christians did not participate in the sacrifices: they rejected the Roman gods as demons, and therefore, they did not sacrifice to these gods on behalf of the emperors either. Furthermore, he had indicated what status he attached to the emperors: he granted them majesty, but not a divine one, only the majesty that befits a human being. In this context, in apol. 29, he had paid special attention to the demons' inferiority. Then, in apol. 30, he focused on the emperors' status as such, between the Christian God on the one side and the other human beings including the emperors and the demons on the other side. In apol. 30.1, he declared:

For we, on behalf of the safety of the emperors, invoke the eternal God, the true God, the living God, whom the emperors themselves prefer to have propitious to them beyond all other gods. They know who has given them the empire; they know, as men, who has given them life; they feel that He is God alone, in whose power and no other's they are, second to whom they stand, after whom they come first, before all gods and above all gods. Why not? Seeing that they are above all men, at any rate as living beings they are better than dead things.<sup>25</sup>

Tertullian here condemned senseless sacrifices on behalf of the emperors and lauded Christian prayer to the true God "on behalf of the safety of the emperors"

23 Tertullian, apol. 29.1: ... *si ... daemones, substantia pessimi spiritus, beneficium aliquod operantur, si ... mortui vivos tuentur.*

24 Tertullian, apol. 29.4: *Ideo enim committimus in maiestatem imperatorum, quia illos non subicimus rebus suis ...*

25 Tertullian, apol. 30.1: *Nos enim pro salute imperatorum Deum invocamus aeternum, Deum verum, Deum vivum, quem et ipsi imperatores propitium sibi praeter ceteros malunt. Sciunt, quis illis dedit imperium; sciunt, qua homines, qui et animam; sentiunt eum esse Deum solum, in cuius solius potestate sunt, a quo sunt secundi, post quem primi, ante omnes et super omnes deos. Quidni? cum super omnes homines, qui utique viventes mortuis antestant.*



instead. Whatever the emperors might have thought, in Tertullian's eyes, the emperors knew themselves that God's favour was more desirable than the demons' and, therefore, it made sense to pray to God instead of sacrificing to powerless demons. When Tertullian elaborated on this thought, he emphasized the categorical distinction between God and man. According to him, the emperors "know, as men (*sciunt, qua homines*), who has given them life" and "in whose power and no other's they are": it was "the eternal God, the true God, the living God", who was "God alone" (*Deus solus*). Against the background of the emperors' cult, here the borderline became very clear and Tertullian drew on it for the emperors' *maiestas*: as was the case for the gods, the emperors had no divine *maiestas*. The emperors' relation to God was the reason for their subordination. But, at the same time, it explained their superiority above all other men – and, of course, also above demons. From God's perspective, the emperors were "second". However, as God had given them the empire, they came, after God, "first", and they were "above all men", and of course – as Tertullian had explained in 28.3 and 29.1 – "above all gods", because "as living beings they [the emperors] are better than dead things". The emperors' position as "second" after God is what Tertullian, in apol. 35.5 then called the *secunda maiestas*.<sup>26</sup> With this term, his stress on *maiestas* and on the distinction between God and man coincided, and it illustrates how Tertullian could, at one and the same time, strictly criticize the emperors' cult and emphasize his reverence for the emperors.

In the following sentences of apol. 30, Tertullian underlined that the emperors' *maiestas* was conferred upon them by God and that it only persisted because it was the majesty of a human being – a being created by God to rule the empire. In this line of thought, in 30.3 he summarized:

So he [the emperor] is great, because he is less than heaven. He himself belongs to Him [God], whose is heaven and all creation. Thence comes the emperor, whence came the man before he was emperor ...<sup>27</sup>

Because of the emperors' "second majesty", Tertullian of course regarded it as a Christian duty to care for their welfare. But as their power and being originated from the one God, Tertullian concluded that the Christian prayer to God was the only right way to care for their *salus* [welfare]. That is what he elaborated on in apol. 30.4-32.1. In order to underline Tertullian's claim for loyalty, it suffices to quote apol. 30.4:

Looking up [to God] ... we [the Christians] are ever making intercession for all the emperors. We pray for them long life, a secure rule, a safe home, brave armies, a

<sup>26</sup> On this, see Straub 1986, 68-72.

<sup>27</sup> Tertullian, apol. 30.3: *Ideo magnus est, quia caelo minor est; illius enim est ipse, cuius et caelum est et omnis creatura; Inde est imperator, unde et homo antequam imperator ...*

faithful senate, an honest people, a quiet world – and everything for which a man and a Caesar can pray.<sup>28</sup>

In apol. 32.2-3, Tertullian turned to a new accusation against the Christians: to the charge of not swearing by the emperors' genius (cf. m. Scill. 5; m. Polyc. 9.2). In that context, it could be expected that his criticism of the emperors' cult would attack the emperors and their quasi-divine position more directly. In 28.1-32.1, Tertullian had attacked the gods and their role for the emperors' cult, but claimed that this criticism favoured the emperors. Now, his stress on the emperors' humanity seemed to turn explicitly against the divine honours the emperors were given. But, in fact, Tertullian goes on with the argumentation he had followed before: he distinguished between the emperors and their genius, identified their genius with demons, and so he could repeat his criticism of the demons, this time directed against their genius, and thus favour the emperors. Once he had stated that "genius is a name for demon",<sup>29</sup> he could play off the genius or demons against the emperors again: In apol. 32.2, he says:

We make our oaths, too, not by the genius of the Caesar, but by his health, which is more august than any genius.<sup>30</sup>

Thereby, against the practice of swearing by the emperors' genius, he set the Christians' swearing by the *salus*, the health or welfare of the emperors, and justified it by the fact that the emperors' *salus* was "more august than any genius", *augustior omnibus Geniis*. It is difficult to say what Tertullian exactly meant by swearing "by the emperors' *salus*".<sup>31</sup> Anyhow, with the justification for this practice, he referred to the idea of *maiestas* again: the genius were, as demons without *maiestas*, inferior to the august emperors. In this line of thought, Tertullian was able to underline the Christians' loyalty towards imperial policies again (cf. 32.2-3) while, at the same time, criticizing a major element of the emperors' cult. Thereby of course, implicitly, he sharply attacked the quasi-divine character of the emperors whose genius was honoured.

While Tertullian had up to this point avoided open criticism of the emperors, when he came to the next aspect within the accusation of *laesa maiestas*, the last one clearly referring to the emperors' cult, he finally could not prevent his criticism from explicitly turning against the emperors. In apol. 33.1-34.4, he countered the charge of *laesa maiestas* by justifying the Christians' refusal to give divine names

<sup>28</sup> Tertullian, apol. 30.4: *Illuc sursum suspicientes ... precantes sumus semper pro omnibus imperatoribus, vitam illis prolixam, imperium securum, domum tutam, exercitus fortes, senatum fidelem, populum probum, orbem quietum, quaecumque hominis et Caesaris vota sunt.*

<sup>29</sup> Tertullian, apol. 32.2: *Nescitis Genios daemones dici ...?*

<sup>30</sup> Tertullian, apol. 32.2: *Sed et iuramus, sicut non per Genios Caesarum, ita per salutem eorum, quae est augustior omnibus Geniis.*

<sup>31</sup> On this, see Georges 2011, 485-487; Rankin 2001, 211.

to the emperor (“god” and “lord”<sup>32</sup>). In the context of the emperors’ cult, the practice of giving divine names to the emperors was quite usual, even if it did not mean an identification of the emperors with the traditional gods.<sup>33</sup> At the point where the quasi-divine character of the emperors became undeniable, Tertullian had to voice his opposition. Underlining his personal commitment by turning to the first-person singular, he states in 33.3:

For I will not call the emperor God ...<sup>34</sup>

But again, he depicted his opposing view as the only one that did justice to the emperors. For this goal he referred once more to his idea of *maiestas* and to the differentiation between God and man. His refusal to call the emperor God originated again from a clear distinction between God’s and the emperors’ majesty he had delineated in apol. 33.2 by saying that “... I set the majesty of Caesar below God and the more commend him to God to whom alone I subordinate him.”<sup>35</sup> According to Tertullian, his refusal to call the emperor god was precisely the way to “commend him to God”, to make him please God. What Tertullian meant precisely by this becomes clear when in apol. 33.3-4 he presented the thought behind it that was clearly shaped by the contrast between God and man and reiterated the foundations of his criticism:

... he [the emperor] himself will not wish to be called God. If he is a man, it is a man’s interest to yield place to God. He is satisfied to be called Emperor. And a great name it is, too, that God gives him! The man denies he is Emperor, who says he is God. Unless he is a man, he is not Emperor. Even in the triumph, as he rides in that most exalted chariot, he is reminded that he is a man. It is whispered to him from behind: ‘Look behind thee; remember thou are a man.’ That he is in such a blaze of glory that the reminder of his mortal state is necessary for him – makes it more delightful to him. He would be less, if he were at that moment called a god, because it would not be true. He is greater, who is called to look back, lest he think himself a god.<sup>36</sup>

According to Tertullian, the name “Emperor” was “great” only because it was delivered by God, and the emperor himself was great only as far as he himself was

32 Facing the name “lord” for the emperor, Tertullian in apol. 34.1-2 refused to use it in a divine sense, but in an “ordinary way” (34.1), usual among human beings, he accepted it.

33 See Rankin 2001, 204-208.

34 Tertullian, apol. 33.3: *Non enim deum imperatorem dicam ...*

35 Tertullian, apol. 33.2: *... temperans maiestatem Caesaris infra Deum, magis illum commendo Deo, cui soli subicio.*

36 Tertullian, apol. 33.3-4: *... nec ipse se deum volet dici [imperator]. Si homo sit, interest homini Deo cedere. Satis habet appellari imperator: grande et hoc nomen est, quod a Deo traditur. Negat illum imperatorem, qui deum dicit: nisi homo sit, non est imperator. Hominem se esse etiam triumphans in illo sublissimo curru admonetur; suggeritur enim ei a tergo: ‘Respice post te! hominem te memento!’ Et utique hoc magis gaudet, tanta se gloria coruscare, ut illi monitio condicionis suae sit necessaria. Minor erat, si tunc deus diceretur, quia non vere diceretur. Maior est qui revocatur, ne se deum existimet.*

not called “god” (*Minor erat, si tunc deus diceretur ... Maior est qui revocatur, ne se deum existimet*; cf. 30.3: *Ideo magnus est, quia caelo minor est*). The emperor was characterized by being human and not divine. Therefore, even in the utmost demonstration of his majesty, that is, in the triumphal procession (*sublissimo curru; tanta ... gloria*), he had to be reminded of his humanity (cf. Juvenal 10.42; Plinius, nat. 28.39).<sup>37</sup>

When Tertullian claimed that the emperor knew himself that he was not but a man and that, therefore, he would not have wished to be called “god”, the subtle threat was evident: an emperor who claimed to be a god incurred the wrath of God. That was dangerous for him and, therefore, he could not want it.

This thought was even intensified in apol. 34, when in 34.3-4 Tertullian underlined the contrast between emperor or man and God:

Be you religious toward God, you who wish Him propitious to the emperor. Cease to believe there is another God; and cease in the same way to call him God, who needs God. If flattery does not blush at the lie, when it calls such a man God, let it fear the uncanny side of it.<sup>38</sup>

So here it became very clear that in Tertullian’s eyes the awe of God commanded that the emperor not be called God in spite of his majesty, because the emperor himself was dependent on God’s favour and, therefore, he had to be afraid of wrongfully being called God. So, the Christian attitude towards the emperor was to his own good. In fact, it was the only attitude that did him justice.

To sum up, with the analysis of apol. 28-34, it should have become clear how Tertullian criticized major aspects of the emperors’ cult while at the same time he tried to underline the Christians’ loyalty towards the emperors. To achieve this goal, his concept of *maiestas* and his categorical distinction between God and man was crucial. He had to criticize the emperors’ cult because he was convinced that the one God the Christians believed in was the only one possessing divine majesty. From that point of view, all cultic practices in favour of the emperors were directed towards the demons and, therefore senseless. As soon as the emperors’ veneration tended to give divine honours to the emperors, Tertullian had to oppose it because it started to make a deity out of the emperor who was just a human being. Having confessed his fundamental criticism Tertullian could, at the same time, stress the emperors’ majesty, a majesty that elevated him above all other human beings, but which remained a human majesty, and a second majesty originating from the one God and his divine majesty. In order to show how the emperors’ majesty should be

37 In the triumphal procession, the emperor was accompanied, on his chariot, by a slave standing behind him and saying to him: “Look behind thee; remember thou are a man!” By looking at the slave, the emperor who might have tended to overestimate himself because of his glory should be reminded that he was just a man. On this, see Georges 2011, 492-493.

38 Tertullian, apol. 34.3-4: *Esto religiosus in Deum, qui vis illum propitium imperatori. Desine alium deum credere atque ita et hunc deum dicere, cui Deo opus est. Si non de mendacio erubescit adulatio eiusmodi, hominem deum appellans, timeat saltem de infausto.*

venerated in the right way, Tertullian outlined how the Christians prayed for them, swore by their *salus* and emphasized their humanity. According to him, this was the only way one could avoid becoming a transgressor of imperial policies because it was the only way to do justice to the emperors.

This conviction was echoed when in apol. 35.5 Tertullian depicted the Christians' decent behaviour during the emperors' festivals as the "religion of a second majesty", *religio secundae maiestatis*. This term was very subtle. The wording *secunda maiestas* gave a precise label to the emperors' majesty and its status as Tertullian had described it in the chapters before. Beyond that, the term *religio*,<sup>39</sup> in Tertullian's use, oscillated between the worship of the one God and the veneration of human dignitaries as the emperors. In the first line, Tertullian used it for the Christian attitude towards the one God (cf. 13.1; 16.14; 24.1; 39.16) and the whole argumentation in apol. 10-27 tended towards this understanding. But with the term, he could also refer to the "Christians' religious awe ... of the emperor", to the *religio ... Christiana in imperatorem* (apol. 33.1). This means that Tertullian not only attributed majesty to God as well as to the emperors – as far as the latter was a second, human majesty – he could also apply terms like *religio* or *pietas* (cf. 33.1) in relation to divine and to imperial majesty. It seems that Tertullian enjoyed playing with these ambiguities. But he could only do so because for him it was highly evident that *religio* referring to divine majesty was categorically distinct from *religio* referring to the second majesty. While with those linguistic techniques he underlined his fundamental criticism of the emperors' cult, at the same time he emphasized how much the Christians venerated the emperors.

It is difficult to imagine that Tertullian succeeded in this way in convincing non-Christians that Christians were not transgressors against imperial policies.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, it helped him to depict a distinct Christian self-image.

## References

### Primary sources

- Justin 2009. *Apologies*. Ed. D. Minns & P. Parvis. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Juvenal and Persius 1940. Ed. G.G. Ramsay [Loeb Classical Library 91]. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.
- Novum Testamentum Graece 2012. Ed. Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung. Stuttgart (28th edition): Verlag der Deutschen Bibelgesellschaft.
- Pliny 1963. *Natural history*. Ed. H. Rackham. Volume 8: Libri XXVIII-XXXII. [Loeb Classical Library 418]. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.

<sup>39</sup> On the Roman use of the term *religio*, see Muth 1978, 290-354.

<sup>40</sup> As we do not have any evidence of pagan reactions, one can only speculate about the impact that apol. had in the pagan context. On the other hand, in the Christian context, the apol. had of course a certain reception. See Georges 2011, 48-50.

- Tertullian, Q. S. Fl. 1954. *Apologeticum*. Ed. E. Dekkers. In Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera I [Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 1]. Turnhout: Brepols. 77-171.
- Tertullian 1931. *Apologeticum*. Trans. T.R. Glover [Loeb Classical Library 250]. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.
- The acts of the Christian martyrs 1972. Ed. H. Musurillo. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- The apostolic fathers 2003. Ed. B.D. Ehrmann. 2 volumes [Loeb Classical Library 24/25]. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.
- Theophilus Antiochenus 1995. *Ad Autolyicum*. Ed. M. Marcovich [Patristische Texte und Studien 44]. Berlin & New York: De Gruyter.

### Secondary literature

- Avenarius, M. 2010. Maiestas (Crimen maiestatis). *RAC* 23. 1135-1156.
- Barnes, T. D. 2005. *Tertullian. A Historical and Literary Study*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Becker, C. (ed.) 1992. *Tertullian – Apologeticum. Lateinisch und deutsch*. München (4th edition): Kösel.
- Eckert, G. 1993. *Orator Christianus. Untersuchungen zur Argumentationskunst in Tertullians Apologeticum*. Stuttgart: Steiner.
- Fiedrowicz, M. 2000. *Apologie im frühen Christentum. Die Kontroverse um den christlichen Wahrheitsanspruch in den ersten Jahrhunderten*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh.
- Fredouille, J-C. 1998. Tertullien dans l'histoire de l'apologétique. In B. Pouderon & J. Doré (eds.) *Les apologistes chrétiens et la culture grecque*. Paris: Beauchesne. 271-281.
- Georges, T. 2007. Retorsio aus theologischer Perspektive. Gerichtsszene und maiestas in Tertullians Apologeticum. In F.R. Prostmeier (ed.) *Frühchristentum und Kultur* [Kommentar zu frühchristlichen Apologeten Ergänzungsband 2]. Freiburg: Herder. 223-235.
- Georges, T. 2011. *Tertullian – Apologeticum. Übersetzung und Kommentierung* [Kommentar zu frühchristlichen Apologeten 11]. Freiburg: Herder.
- Georges, T. 2012. Religio atque pietas Christiana in imperatorem – die Ergebnisheit der Christen gegenüber der kaiserlichen maiestas gemäß Tertullians Apologeticum. *Biblische Notizen* 155, 131-143.
- Gizewski, C. 1999. Maiestas. *DNP* 7, 710-712. Heinze, R. 1910. *Tertullians Apologeticum*, Leipzig: Teubner.
- Muth, R. 1978. Vom Wesen römischer 'religio'. *ANRW* II, 16 (1), 290-354.
- Rambaux, C. 1985. Observations sur la portée de l'Apologeticum de Tertullien. *Vita Latina* 97, 2-27.
- Rankin, I. 2001. Tertullian and the Imperial Cult. *StPatr* 34, 204-216.
- Straub, J. 1986. Des christlichen Kaisers secunda maiestas. Tertullian und die Konstantinische Wende. In J. Straub. *Regeneratio Imperii. Aufsätze über Roms Kaisertum und Reich im Spiegel der heidnischen und christlichen Publizistik II*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft. 63-74.
- Thraede, K. 1966. Euhemerismus. *RAC* 6, 877-890.
- Tränkle, H. 1997. § 474. Q. Septimius Florens Tertullianus. *HLL* 4, 438-511.
- Wlosok, A. 1978. Einführung. In A. Wlosok (ed.) *Römischer Kaiserkult*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft. 1-52.

# “What Harm Is There for You to Say Caesar Is Lord?”

## Emperors and the Imperial Cult in Early Christian Stories of Martyrdom

Outi Lehtipuu

University of Helsinki

*Recent scholarship on early Christian martyrdom tends to be sceptical towards the traditional picture according to which Roman emperors wanted to destroy the emerging Christianity and ordered numerous believers who did not take part in the imperial cult to be executed. The vast majority of sources are written from a Christian point of view; they are narratives of uncompromising commitment and the superiority of the Christian faith, not disinterested reports of what happened. No matter how slim the historical evidence on early Christian martyrdom, its ideological significance was remarkable – the sentiment of belonging to a persecuted minority was an important factor of Christian identity. Part of this ideology was to portray the emperor as an archenemy of Christianity, an agent of ultimate evil who is in constant warfare with the divine. Even though the emperors seldom appear in the trial scenes of martyrs, they have an important part to play in the stories of martyrdom. They are present through their officials and their decrees and it is these unjust imperial orders that result in martyrdom. Martyrdom, however, is seen as a God-given fate and the martyr as a triumphant hero, which makes the emperor, despite his apparent victory, an eventual loser. While the battle between the martyr and the emperor is cast on a cosmic level, the authority of the emperor and his entitlement to honours on the mundane level are not questioned.*

The cry “The Christians to the lions!” was heard increasingly in every part of the city. At first not only did no one doubt that they were the real authors of the catastrophe, but no one wished to doubt, since their punishment was to be a splendid amusement for the populace. [...] Caesar wished to drown the memory of the fire in blood, and make Rome drunk with it; hence the flow of blood promised to be grand.<sup>1</sup>

The vivid and passionate description of the persecution of Christians in Nero’s Rome in Henryk Sienkiewicz’s novel *Quo Vadis* illustrates well how the history of

the nascent Christian movement has traditionally been understood.<sup>2</sup> From Tacitus’ brief mention that Nero made Christians scapegoats for the fire of Rome in order to direct suspicion away from himself,<sup>3</sup> the pious imagination of Sienkiewicz and many others has painted a gruesome picture of how thousands of Christians were dragged to prisons and arenas to be exposed to wild animals, burnt alive and crucified. Being a Christian was life-threatening but the “surpassing measure of cruelty was answered by an equal measure of desire for martyrdom, the confessors of Christ went to death voluntarily, or even sought death [...]”<sup>4</sup>

Recent research on martyrdom tends to be sceptical towards this popular narrative. Even though there is little doubt that Christian populations experienced suspicion, hostility and outright violence, traces of any systematic persecution, especially before the middle of the third century, are scanty. Scholars frequently characterize measures taken against Christians as local, sporadic, and short-lived.<sup>5</sup> Yet, they do not usually doubt that Christians were killed. The devastating events of recent, fully-documented history have shown that official, state-initiated persecution based on ethnicity or religion is entirely possible.<sup>6</sup> What scholars do question is whether Christians were killed because they were Christians.<sup>7</sup> Ancient evidence for the persecution of Christians mostly derives from Christian sources that have a strong ideological bias. The few non-Christian sources that we have do not shed much light on the question.

In this essay, I approach the topic of emperors and the divine from the perspective of the stories of early Christian martyrdom and ask how emperors are represented in them. A brief answer is that both emperors and the divine play significant roles in martyrdom but on opposite sides. Typically, these narratives portray the emperor and those who act on his behalf in an utterly negative light, as ruthless enemies of God and the Christian faith. Be that the mad Nero<sup>8</sup> or the “accursed wild beast”

<sup>2</sup> The influence of the novel – which guaranteed to its creator the Nobel Prize in literature in 1905 – was greatly enhanced by its adaptation in film. The Hollywood spectacle *Quo Vadis* was released in 1951 and became a record-breaking success.

<sup>3</sup> Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44. In addition, Sienkiewicz has used several other ancient sources. The cry “Christians to the lions!” resembles Tertullian’s famous statement, “If the Tiber rises to the walls, if the Nile does not rise to the fields, if the sky is rainless, if there is an earthquake, a famine, a plague, immediately the cry arises, ‘The Christians to the lion!’” (*Apology* 40.1). The name of the novel *Quo Vadis* comes from the story of Peter’s martyrdom in the *Acts of Peter*.

<sup>4</sup> Sienkiewicz 1897, 395.

<sup>5</sup> One of the first scholars to argue this was Geoffrey de Ste Croix in his seminal 1963 article.

<sup>6</sup> I am thinking of the victims of the Holocaust in particular but other examples could be given, too. It is not hard to imagine a historian of the fourth or fifth millennium working on incomplete source materials and claiming that the persecution of Jews in Nazi-Germany was “local, sporadic, and short-lived”. Such an analogy makes me reluctant to make strong historical claims that might diminish and disregard the sufferings of real people in the real past.

<sup>7</sup> Castelli 2004, 35–39; Middleton 2006, 1–3; Moss 2013, 127–162.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Eusebius, *Church History* 2.25.2.

<sup>1</sup> Sienkiewicz 1897, 394.

Decius,<sup>9</sup> or the “lawless and sacrilegious” Diocletian,<sup>10</sup> the ruler of the Roman Empire is a satanic figure, second only to the devil himself. In the first part of the essay I illustrate that such portrayals are partisan caricatures and do not tell about actual emperors. I briefly outline why the present-day standard scholarly view has distanced itself from the traditional understanding of Roman emperors as personal foes of Christianity. Next I discuss the challenges pertaining to the use of martyrological accounts as historical sources and give my reasons for treating them as literature which tells more about Christian self-understanding than about Roman attitudes towards Christians. In the second part of the essay, I analyse the roles emperors play in these literary accounts.

My basic claim is a simple one: even though seldom present at the trial and death of martyrs, emperors are significant characters in the stories of martyrdom. They are indirectly present through their decrees and through their representatives, the local officials. Their involvement is needed, for the contest of the martyr is not a local battle against random local authorities. It is a cosmic warfare between God and his adversary, the devil. While martyrs represent God, the most suited agent of the supreme evil is the highest worldly ruler, the giver of laws and decrees that are in conflict with divine orders. This, however, is not the whole picture. Emperors have a double role to play: they are advocates of evil but simultaneously they are guarantors of orderly life. In the martyr stories, the emperor’s power and his entitlement to honours are not disputed, as long as they do not threaten the sovereignty of God. While martyrs are represented as the embodiment of uncompromising commitment, they can still appear as loyal to the empire.

My main sources comprise early Christian martyr acts that claim to report how men and women suffer and die for Christ because they do not submit to the imperial orders to sacrifice for the well-being of the emperors. In addition, I draw examples from some other texts, such as some apocryphal acts of apostles, which frequently end with a depiction of the apostle’s death as a martyr. Martyr accounts do not form a unitary body of literature; there are several types of accounts and they have been classified in different ways.<sup>11</sup> A basic distinction has been made between martyr *acta* in the strict sense, written in a form of an official report of a court hearing, and *passiones*, narratives describing the imprisonment, trial, and death (or some of these elements) of a martyr or a group of martyrs, but these categories are not clear-cut and sometimes these different forms are combined. For the sake of convenience, I refer to all of them as martyr acts. Dating this source material is difficult, at times impossible. The matter is further complicated by the fact that many of the martyr acts are compilations or otherwise heavily redacted documents, or extracts from a larger literary work, or known in several more or less divergent versions. In my analysis, I concentrate on ideological representations reflected in

<sup>9</sup> Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* 4.

<sup>10</sup> *Martyrdom of Dasius* 1.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Musurillo 1972, I–lvii.

texts that serve as examples of a genre, not on historical questions related either to the events described in the stories or to their textual history. While it is true that the imperial power and the execution of the imperial cult did not continue unchanged over the centuries, much of the rhetoric against emperors remained the same.<sup>12</sup>

## Did Roman Emperors Persecute Christians?

The negative picture of Roman emperors in the early Christian martyr literature tells very little about the emperors’ attitudes towards Christians. The answer to the question whether Roman emperors persecuted Christians depends on the way one defines persecution – and also on the way one defines Christianity. As several scholars have reminded us, persecution is not a neutral word; its use entails taking a stance, usually siding with the (alleged) victim. What from a non-Christian viewpoint counts as justified and reasonable prosecution of disobedient, disloyal, even criminal individuals, becomes in the Christian understanding unjust and irrational persecution of innocent victims.<sup>13</sup> There are no simple answers to the question what ‘really’ happened, for historical understanding always entails meaning-making.<sup>14</sup> A death only becomes a martyr’s death when so understood and so remembered.<sup>15</sup>

What is less frequently commented on in relation to early Christian martyrdom is the diversity of the early Christian movement.<sup>16</sup> Not all who called themselves Christians were the same and not all approached martyrdom in a similar fashion. In early Christian texts there are both accusations of escaping martyrdom and of embracing martyrdom too eagerly.<sup>17</sup> Even though martyr acts paint a picture of steadfast heroes who never compromise their faith, in reality there were also

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Flower 2013, 40–41, who makes the same point concerning late antique invective.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Moss 2013, 151, 162; Middleton 2015, 210–11.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Grig 2004, 14; Middleton 2006, 2.

<sup>15</sup> Castelli 2004, 34. Similarly, Daniel Boyarin emphasizes that martyrdom is not simply the action of a violent death; it is a “discourse”. He explains: “For the ‘Romans,’ it didn’t matter much whether the lions were eating a robber or a bishop, and it probably didn’t make much of a difference to the lions, either, but the robber’s friends and the bishop’s friends told different stories about those leonine meals. It is in these stories that martyrdom, as opposed to execution or dinner, can be found, not in ‘what happened.’” Boyarin 1999, 94–95.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Lieu 2002, 226–228.

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.24.6; 4.33.9; Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 1.5, 11, 13; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 4.10.76–77; *Testimony of Truth* (NHC IX,3) 33,24–34,6.

many Christians who were willing to sacrifice.<sup>18</sup> There were several ways Christians accommodated their faith to the lifestyles and customs of their Roman society; the dividing line between “Christian” and “pagan” was not always clear-cut.<sup>19</sup> One of the crucial aims of many martyr acts is to sharpen this distinction, to separate Christians from their non-Christian society, represented by the cruel torturers of the martyrs. Moreover, they often aim at constructing an image of true, “orthodox” Christians, obedient to their Lord even to the point of death, as opposed to their “heretical” rivals.<sup>20</sup> From a Roman point of view, there was no difference between “true” and “false” Christians and it seems that followers of Marcion and Montanus were put to death side by side with other Christians. From the Christian point of view, this made all the difference and those who died with false religious beliefs were not recognized as martyrs.<sup>21</sup>

The imperial assaults on Christ-believers are widely believed to have started with Nero in 64 CE. If we follow Tacitus’ report, Nero did not attack Christians because he opposed their religious beliefs but because of their (alleged) involvement in arson. Other sources further complicate the picture for Suetonius and Cassius Dio, both of whom tell about the fire and accuse Nero of starting it, do not mention Christians in this context.<sup>22</sup> None of these authors was Nero’s contemporary, which makes it hard to evaluate the reliability of Tacitus’ narrative.<sup>23</sup> Did he know details which the others either did not know or considered too insignificant to mention? Be that as it may, the silence of other sources shows that blaming Christians for the fire was not knowledge which was shared by everyone.

Another early non-Christian source that describes Roman relations to early Christians is the famous correspondence between Trajan and Pliny the Younger, the governor of Bithynia. It reveals that Christians faced trials, that their hearings involved torture, and that those who, after several hearings, insisted in refusing to venerate Roman gods were executed on the spot – apart from Roman citizens who were transferred to Rome. However, it also reveals that Pliny is uncertain

18 There is evidence for different ways of coping with the threat of a death penalty. Some fled, others obtained forged testimonies concerning sacrificing. When a certain Copres who was going to court about a property dispute found out that he would be compelled to sacrifice there, he gave power of attorney to a friend who went to court in his place. See Luijendijk 2008, 216–224. Another type of evidence can be found in Cyprian’s treatise *De lapsis*, where he tackles the question of what to do with those who had fallen away from faith (the so called *lapsi*, the “lapsed”). Cf. *Martyrdom of Pionius* (15, 20) which tells of a certain Euctemon and “many others” who chose to offer sacrifice.

19 Cf. Markus 1990, 27–43.

20 Cf. *Acts of Justin* 2.3; *Martyrdom of Montanus and Lucius* 14.3; *Martyrdom of Dasius* 3.

21 Cf. *Martyrdom of Pionius* 21.5; Eusebius, *Church History* 5.16.20–22; 7.12.

22 Suetonius, *Nero* 38; Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 62.16–18. In addition, Pliny the Elder mentions the fire in passing (*Natural History* 17.1) without referring to Christians.

23 Tacitus and Suetonius wrote in the beginning of the second century, Cassius Dio approximately a hundred years later. Tacitus was probably born before the fire broke out – his birth is traditionally dated to the 50s CE – but he was a young boy presumably living in provincial Gaul at the time and was unlikely to have witnessed the fire himself. It is possible that he had heard stories about the fire from those who remembered it, but the same holds true for Suetonius, which makes the differences in their reports all the more noteworthy.

why Christians should be condemned. Does being Christian suffice or should the accused have committed crimes?<sup>24</sup> The Emperor’s reply appears moderate: those who are formally accused and found guilty must be punished, but Christians should not be actively sought out and anonymous accusations should be ignored.<sup>25</sup> Even though this seems to have been the main policy of the Roman officials toward Christians up to the middle of the third century,<sup>26</sup> Christian sources from this period have a totally different story to tell: they claim that an accusation that someone is a Christian is sufficient to earn a death penalty.<sup>27</sup>

Around the middle of the third century, Decius issued a decree compelling everyone to sacrifice to traditional Roman gods and to taste the offering.<sup>28</sup> The text of the edict has not survived but there are a fair number of sources describing its effects.<sup>29</sup> Among the most important are the so-called *libelli*, which were issued as certificates that sacrifices had been performed. About fifty such papyrus documents have been found so far, all from Egypt and all dating to the same year, 250 CE.<sup>30</sup> All of them declare in a highly formulaic manner that the carrier of the document has constantly sacrificed to the gods and has now performed a sacrifice in the presence of an official witness, in accordance with the edict’s decree. Christian sources often claim that Decius’ edicts were directed against Christians, but this is far from clear. There is nothing in the *libelli* that would indicate that those who performed a sacrifice were Christians; on the contrary, the affirmation that the person “has always sacrificed to the gods” would be untrue in the case of a Christian. If, however, they were not Christians, who were they? Was everyone in the Empire tested in this way – including slaves and people of lower classes?<sup>31</sup> Was it reasonable – or indeed possible – to demand a certificate from every one?<sup>32</sup> If only some were tested, why were some people chosen to show their allegiance in this special way?

24 Pliny, *Epistles* 10.96.

25 Pliny, *Epistles* 10.97.

26 Barnes 2010, 10–11.

27 Cf. Justin, *2 Apology* 2.7, 9–20; *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 14.

28 Cf. Eusebius, *Church History* 6.41.10–13.

29 See, e. g., Cyprian, *De lapsis*. Even though Cyprian’s texts must be treated as conscious literary representations of a situation in which his own episcopal authority was at stake, they evince beyond doubt that the imperial decree caused turmoil in North Africa. Cf. Grig 2004, 27–33.

30 Luijendijk 2008, 157–174. She gives the number of *libelli* as forty-six and introduces four of them in more detail. These are the ones found in Oxyrhynchus.

31 According to the known texts, women and children were among those who performed the sacrifice.

32 Cf. Gruen (2001, 18–19), who argues that imperial edicts were more a demonstration of power than a basis for actual practices. In discussing the alleged expulsions of Jews from Rome he claims that in practical terms, the Roman officials “did little or nothing to discourage Jews from dwelling in the city”. Cf. Van den Lans 2015.

Recent scholarly opinions tend to construe Decius' decree not as motivated by any particular hostility toward Christians but as reflecting his attempt to consolidate political unity by demanding a unified religious practice.<sup>33</sup> It is fair to presume that Decius might have approved of Christians worshipping their God as long as they would have offered a sacrifice to the emperor along with it.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, it is also fair to presume that there were more Christian victims after the issuing of the decree simply because not many other people would have had reasons to refuse to sacrifice.

Actions that threatened Christians continued in Valerian's reign in the 250s and, after a more tranquil phase, under Diocletian in the beginning of the fourth century. Again, there is no doubt that these were hard times for many Christians, but similar uncertainties and ambiguities concerning the motives behind imperial actions pertain to these periods, too. The only sources we have are written from a Christian point of view that depicts the emperors as the very embodiment of evil with the sole purpose of harassing the church. Compared to the many Christian accounts on persecution and martyrdom, the silence of non-Christian sources is all the more striking.<sup>35</sup> Christian bias is also evident in the name that is traditionally linked to Diocletian's time, "the Great Persecution". The name fits the drama of the Christian master narrative where the darkness is at its darkest just before the dawn, i.e., the most severe persecution takes place just before the times of trouble come to an end. In real terms, both the intensity and the duration of the persecution varied in different parts of the Empire.<sup>36</sup>

Diocletian began his reign after a long period of political turbulence and his edicts can be seen as part of his larger reforms to secure tranquillity and social stability in his vast empire.<sup>37</sup> Christians, now grown in number, posed a threat to these intents by their unwillingness to take part in the civic religiosity. Yet, it is impossible to tell whether Diocletian acted specifically against Christians or whether Christians became victims only when they were not willing to compromise. Again, there were Christians who chose to comply with the orders of the edicts and there must also have been non-Christian victims – brutal treatment and the death penalty were common punishments for all kinds of crimes.

33 Rives 1999, 140–144; Selinger 2004; Castelli 2004, 27; Brent 2010, 117–49.

34 Rives 1999, 142.

35 This quantitative imbalance makes it easy to side with Keith Hopkins, who claims that "Christians needed Roman persecutions, or at least stories about Roman persecutions, rather more than Romans saw the need to persecute Christians". Hopkins 1998, 198.

36 In Britain, Gaul and Spain, for example, toleration seems to have been endorsed as early as 306, only three years after Diocletian's edict. Barnes 2010, 111–150.

37 Williams 1985, 174.

## Martyr Acts as Historical Sources

Most torturing and killing would have happened without anyone reporting them. Even though there are numerous stories of martyrs, most scholars regard the majority of them as "unrealistic and anachronistic fiction".<sup>38</sup> At the same time, there is a persistent yearning for historicity. Many scholars hold fast to the reliability of a handful of stories, claimed to be more or less contemporary to the events they describe.<sup>39</sup> These include texts such as the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, written in a letter form but believed to contain an eyewitness report on Polycarp's hearing and execution; the *Acts of Justin and his Companions*, taken to be based on official court records; and the *Passion of Perpetua*, claimed to be partly written by the martyred woman herself. There probably was a Polycarp and he might have faced a violent death. There certainly was a Justin – if the *Acts of Justin* tell about the second-century apologist Justin Martyr, as is usually presumed – and there might have been a Perpetua, who chose to die for her faith despite the many pleas of her father and others. However, I side with those scholars who maintain that the stories of their trial and death are not eyewitness reports. At least, they are not only that. Their highly stylistic and ideological features show that they are products of a thorough process of meaning-making. No matter if written on the spot, some days or years after the events they describe, or completely fabricated, they all reflect common patterns of behaviour and reasoning in the past they are reporting.<sup>40</sup>

My scepticism is not grounded on any outright denial of the possibility of first-hand testimonies. It is quite conceivable that Christians had the opportunity to make copies of official court records, as Timothy D. Barnes argues.<sup>41</sup> However, the fact that this was possible does not mean that this is what actually happened.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, it can be imagined that a late-antique woman with literary skills might have had the materials, means and time to write a diary even while in prison, but, again,

38 Barnes 2012, 19.

39 For example, Barnes lists nineteen "authentic or contemporary" martyr acts; Barnes 2010, 355–359.

40 As my colleague Anna-Liisa Tolonen reminds me, eyewitness reports are not necessarily more reliable than other types of sources but can be just as stylistic and ideologically charged.

41 Barnes 2010, 55; 2012, 18–19.

42 Barnes (2010, 58) himself notes how "writers of hagiographical fiction quickly learned how to use the documentary style".

not everything that is within the limits of the possible automatically happens.<sup>43</sup> My scepticism concerning the first-hand nature of these martyr acts is based on the texts themselves, their literary character, their contents, and their textual history.

The greatest challenge in using even the earliest martyr stories as historical reports is their conventional, literary style and their close intertextual links with other similar accounts.<sup>44</sup> Certainly, resemblance to other stories and a conventional style as such do not have to be signs of fabrication; perhaps dying martyrs deliberately imitated Christ or their predecessors.<sup>45</sup> The authors who penned their stories might have used culturally credible images and stylistic features that, according to their taste and experience, belonged to martyrological discourses. Many of the echoes of earlier literary models are no doubt intentional, as Thomas Heffernan notices in his recent commentary on the *Passion of Perpetua*.<sup>46</sup> However, the recurring, stereotypical elements and almost formulaic expressions easily conceal the unique – if martyr acts were images, they would resemble icons, not documentary photographs.

The idea of being unjustly killed for one's faith has been part of the Christian self-image from as early as we can tell. Partly this is based on the model of the sacrificial death of Jesus – and *imitatio Christi* might lead to a similar fate.<sup>47</sup> According to the Gospel story, Jesus predicted to his disciples James and John that “the cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be

43 The idea of hearing the *ipsissima vox* of a martyr – let alone a female martyr – is thrilling and several scholars are reluctant to let go of the authenticity of Perpetua's prison diary; see, e. g., Cooper 2013, 106; Heffernan 2012, 3–8; Castelli 2004, 85–92. Cf., however, Bowersock (1995, 34), who is generally rather optimistic about finding first-hand evidence in martyr acts, but states “Whether Perpetua's words, in whatever language, allow us to hear an authentic and distinctive woman's voice [...] is much more doubtful. How would we tell?” Other more sceptical voices are found in Kraemer & Lander 2000; Moss 2013, 117–124. One argument for the authenticity of Perpetua's text is the presence of personal details, such as her description of the pain in her breasts, engorged with milk; cf. Hunink (2010, 150): “Why would any other Christian author take the trouble of empathizing with Perpetua's worrying about the [...] pain in her breasts?” This is a curious detail but, in my opinion, it is just as hard to explain why an elite woman would describe her aching breasts in a text which is not a private diary but a literary composition with “a more deliberate reflective and occasionally allusive style” and “a deliberate thematic theology” (Heffernan 2012, 4). Whoever wrote this part of the text, be that Perpetua or someone else, created a representation of what she might have experienced and felt instead of describing her actual inner feelings and emotions. On the tendency to add “useless details” to create a “reality effect”; see Barthes 1986, 141–148.

44 An example of such frequently occurring literary elements are visions and dreams of the martyr. Polycarp has a vision three days before he is captured and understands that he will be burnt alive; *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 5. Perpetua has a series of visions. Particularly her vision of her dead brother who suffers in a dark place (*Passion of Perpetua* 7) seems to be inspired by the story of the rich man and Lazarus in the Gospel of Luke; cf. *Luke* 16:19–31. Both stories include a plea for a brother/brothers, both depict the dead sufferers as thirsty and unable to get water to drink, and in both there is a great chasm separating the blessed and the damned.

45 Cf. Moss 2013, 85. “Just because a story is clichéd does not, of course, mean that it is necessarily untrue.”

46 Heffernan 2012, x.

47 Cf. *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, where the narrator emphasizes how Polycarp accepted his fate “just as the Lord did” (ὡς καὶ ὁ κύριος) in order to show an example for imitation. On martyrdom as *imitatio Christi*, see Moss 2010.

baptized”, which was taken to mean martyrdom.<sup>48</sup> Similar self-fulfilling prophecies can also be found elsewhere in the New Testament. The suffering of Christians was seen in line with the conviction that true prophets have always been persecuted. As Jesus had taught: “Rejoice and be glad when people revile you and persecute you [...] on my account, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”<sup>49</sup>

Martyrdom belonged to the religious and philosophical discourses that early Christians shared with others.<sup>50</sup> The idea of a morally superior victim opposing a cruel tyrant and choosing a noble death was a well-known literary and cultural paradigm in Graeco-Roman antiquity.<sup>51</sup> A particularly interesting point of comparison for Christian martyr acts is the so-called *Acts of the Pagan Martyrs*, a set of papyrus documents found in Egypt that claim to record trials of some Alexandrians who opposed Roman rule and suffered for their conviction.<sup>52</sup> Despite the fragmentary condition of these texts, it is easy to see that, like their Christian counterparts, they are not documentary records but literary products with an ideological agenda.

Early Christian martyrdom also shares several features with Jewish traditions.<sup>53</sup> Most prominent martyr figures in early Jewish texts include the three young men in the fiery furnace and Daniel in the lions' den – even though these heroes did not die for their faith but were miraculously saved.<sup>54</sup> Particularly significant was the memory of the so-called Maccabean martyrs.<sup>55</sup> Stories were told about the elder Eleazar and seven brothers who, along with their mother, were killed by the Syrian king Antiochus IV Epiphanes because they refused to obey his orders to reject Jewish ancestral customs. When Eleazar refuses to eat pork, those in charge of the sacrifice pity him and give him another type of meat advising him to pretend that it was pork, but Eleazar refuses this and is beaten to death.<sup>56</sup> In a similar fashion, the seven brothers and their mother who refuse to obey the orders of the king are brutally tortured. Before their deaths, they give speeches about God's justice,

48 *Mark* 10:39. Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 4.9.75; John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Acts* 26.

49 *Matthew* 5:12.

50 Grig 2004, 10–11.

51 Seeley 1990, 113–141; Moss 2012, 26–37; Middleton 2015, 217–224.

52 Grig 2004, 60–61; Moss 2013, 74–76. See the texts in Musurillo 1954.

53 Cf. however, Bowersock (1995, 28), who claims: “Martyrdom had nothing to do with Judaism or with Palestine. It had everything to do with the Graeco-Roman world, its traditions, its language, and its cultural tastes.” Such a dichotomy between “Judaism” on the one hand and the “Graeco-Roman world” on the other, is no longer tenable. Early Jewish stories of martyrdom – just like early Christian martyr acts – were born in the “Graeco-Roman world” (to use Bowersock's terminology) and cannot be separated from their broader cultural milieu. Cf. Boyarin (1999, especially 93–126), who emphasizes the “inextricably intertwined” religio-cultural histories of Judaism and Christianity.

54 *Daniel* 3:1–30 and 6:2–25 respectively. They can be compared to Thecla, who likewise was condemned to death (twice) but was saved through divine intervention. Yet early Christian writers remember her as a protomartyr, the female counterpart to the first male martyr Stephen.

55 Seeley 1990, 83–112. The story is told in *2 Maccabees* and *4 Maccabees*.

56 *2 Maccabees* 6:19–20.



their future vindication, and the punishments that await the tyrant and all those who fight against God.<sup>57</sup> Several Christian martyr acts are replete with allusions to these stories and literary features such as a tyrant's unjust decree, the believers' uncompromising commitment, and even the compassion of officials recur time and again.<sup>58</sup>

Just like their non-Christian antecedents, Christian martyrs also show resolute persistence and steadfastness. Martyrs never hesitate or recant; they never express fear or anxiety. On the contrary, they gladly accept their sentence and go rejoicing to their death. A stereotypical feature in practically all martyr acts is the martyr's acclaim "I am a Christian".<sup>59</sup> Often this is the answer of the prospective martyr no matter what the interrogator asks.<sup>60</sup> It is clear that such stories are not disinterested court protocols but "tendentious speech-acts",<sup>61</sup> reporting an ideal in which the martyrs boldly confessed their faith.<sup>62</sup> Instead of presenting "how things really were" it represents "how things should have been".<sup>63</sup>

In addition to such stereotypical features, another challenge related to ancient martyr acts – and ancient literature in general – is the fact that we know very little about their textual history. The manuscripts we have are medieval copies and it is often impossible to say what kinds of alterations the text has gone through in the transmission process. This is especially obvious with composite texts, such as the *Passion of Perpetua*, where her "diary" is incorporated into a larger whole edited by someone else. Even if we imagine that a person imprisoned to wait for her execution would write down notes – which seems fanciful, if we take the description of the conditions of the confinement seriously<sup>64</sup> – how much did the editor alter the text? Moreover, how intact did it remain in the copying process? All known manuscripts

57 Even though these stories were about Jewish martyrs who "died for the law" (cf. Rajak 1997), Christians adopted them so thoroughly that the brothers and their mother became Christian saints, revered both in the east and the west. For example, John Chrysostom maintained that the Maccabean martyrs "received their wounds for Christ's sake". See Mayer 2006, 125.

58 Explicit references to the Maccabean martyrs appear, e.g., in the *Martyrdom of Marian and James* as well as the *Martyrdom of Montanus and Lucius*. In both stories, the mother of the martyrs appears and rejoices "like the mother of the Maccabees" when she sees the persistence of her son.

59 The confession Χριστιανός (Χριστιανή) εἰμι / *Christianus (Christiana) sum* appears in practically every martyrological account in Musurillo 1972. Lieu (2002, 213) calls this the "determinative moment" of martyr acts.

60 Cf. the report of Sanctus' interrogation: "To all of their questions he answered in Latin: 'I am a Christian!' He kept repeating this again and again instead of giving his name, birthplace, nationality, or anything else; and the pagan crowd heard not another word from him." *Martyrs of Lyons* 20.

61 Grig 2004, 60.

62 Brent Shaw (2003, 553) has pointed out that the closest counterparts for such detailed depictions of court hearings are "found in the world of fiction", that is, in ancient novels. It seems to me that there is much in the acts of martyrs that indeed belongs to the world of fiction.

63 Cf. Perkins 1995, 200.

64 Perpetua describes her prison as dark, crowded and stiflingly hot; *Passion of Perpetua* 3.5–6.

are medieval (tenth century or later).<sup>65</sup> If Perpetua herself wrote anything in the third century, it is impossible to know how similar it was to what we now have.

Despite these difficulties, many scholars, Vincent Hunink among them, take as their starting point the "wise principle that the burden of proof rests on those who doubt or reject the textual data from antiquity, not on those who accept them".<sup>66</sup> While I agree that extreme scepticism leads to absurdity, I do nevertheless maintain that "the hermeneutics of suspicion" is needed, especially with such tendentious texts as martyr acts. Deep down, it is a question of how scholars weigh the often inconclusive and indirect historical evidence. Personally, I cannot help but wonder how much the readiness to accept Perpetua's diary as written by the martyr herself has to do with the fact that the majority of scholars working on the text, myself included, represent the western, Christian (or post-Christian) culture which makes Perpetua part of "our" heritage and "our" history. Would the conclusion be different if the *Passion of Perpetua* were, say, a story of an early Islamic martyr?

To summarize what I have said this far, the vast majority of our evidence of the persecution of early Christians comes from Christian sources. They tell about the deaths of Christians from a Christian standpoint; more particularly, from a certain Christian standpoint which claims to be the only true and orthodox view. A true Christian stays firm and accepts death gladly for his or her faith. Those who recant show by their actions that they were not Christians in the first place. The martyr acts are retrospective descriptions of a Christian ideal of unwavering commitment, a model to be followed by everyone who shares the same faith.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, they create a distinctive Christian version of the past; a version to consolidate the identity of true believers.<sup>68</sup>

## Emperors and the Imperial Cult in Martyr Stories

No matter how slim the historical evidence about early Christian martyrdom is, its ideological importance can hardly be overestimated. Sentiments to do with suffering and the threat of persecution were crucial elements of Christian identity formation.<sup>69</sup> The emperor and the imperial cult played a significant role in this process – despite the fact that the emperor himself is seldom an actor in the drama in early martyr texts. Imperial power and the demands of imperial veneration

65 There are altogether ten manuscripts, nine in Latin and one in Greek, helpfully collected, introduced and discussed by Heffernan 2012, 369–430.

66 Hunink 2010, 150.

67 Cf. Lieu 2002, 218.

68 It is noteworthy that early Jewish accounts of martyrdom, aimed at reinforcing Jewish identity, also begin to flourish at approximately the same time in late antiquity; Bowersock 1995, 9–10; Boyarin 1999, 115–119.

69 Perkins 1995; Lieu 2002, 211–231.

form the evil other against which the divine truth manifests itself. Even though the emperor has supreme worldly power and can use it to destroy Christians, there is no doubt who is the ultimate winner of the battle, and indeed several martyr acts employ military language to describe the contest (*ἀγών*) of the martyrs. Imperial officials appeal to law, order and piety and while in the worldview of the stories these are all good and praiseworthy, the highest law and true devotion do not belong to the emperor but to God. In the following, I give several examples of martyr texts and the roles which the emperor and the imperial cult play in them.<sup>70</sup> I first discuss how the absent emperor is made present in the stories through his decrees and his representatives. Next, I take up the topic of authority and the limits of imperial authority. Closely related to this are questions of piety, prayer, and sacrifice; the prospective martyrs repeatedly express their willingness to pray and sacrifice – but not to the emperor. They pray to God alone, but willingly on behalf of the emperor. Finally, I show how the evilness of the emperor is elevated to a cosmic level; the emperors appear as personifications of the devil. At the same time, their local representatives can show a more compassionate side trying to persuade Christians to change their mind. This, however, does not diminish their diabolic nature.

### *The Absent Emperor Made Present*

In the earliest Jewish martyrological traditions, such as in the stories of the Maccabean martyrs, it is the king himself who interrogates the brothers and who orders them to be executed. Similarly, Daniel and the three men who were cast into the fiery furnace directly confront the king. Early Christian martyr acts differ from this model as the emperor is usually absent from the scene. One of the rare Christian stories where the dying martyr encounters the emperor himself is the account of the martyrdom of the apostle Paul. First, the emperor Nero interrogates Paul personally and sends him to be beheaded. Even though he is not present at the execution, he sends messengers to see if Paul has already died and receives the news that milk flowed from the body of the apostle at the moment of his death. Later, Paul appears to the emperor, as he had predicted, and threatens Nero with terrible punishments.<sup>71</sup> In the description of the death of the apostle Peter, Nero is not personally involved, but when he hears that the prefect Agrippa has executed Peter, he becomes angry, for “he had intended to punish him the more cruelly and severely”.<sup>72</sup>

The role of the emperor in most early Christian stories is more oblique and indirect. Typically, the name of the emperor during whose reign the event is taking place is mentioned, usually at the beginning of the story, sometimes at the end. In

<sup>70</sup> If not otherwise noted, the translations I use are from Musurillo 1972.

<sup>71</sup> *Martyrdom of Paul* 4–6.

<sup>72</sup> *Martyrdom of Peter* 41; transl. Elliott.

addition to Decius and Diocletian, Marcus Aurelius, Commodus, Geta, Valerian, Maximian, Gordian and others are also mentioned. Often they are accused of ungodliness, injustice and other vices. A reference to the emperor gives a flavour of historicity to the story. Moreover, it functions as a reminder for the martyrs and, even more importantly, for the readers and listeners of the story, that it is the emperor who is behind the ordeals of Christians. The emperor has the power to pardon<sup>73</sup> and it is the emperor who orders executions.<sup>74</sup> The imperial decree is such an important *topos* in martyr acts that it also appears in stories that claim to report incidents that took place at times when no such imperial decrees were issued. A case in point is the *Acts of Justin*, which situates the martyr’s death “in the days of the wicked defenders of idolatry, [when] impious decrees were posted against the pious Christians in town and country alike”.<sup>75</sup>

The emperor is also present through his image. Imperial images were sent and statues erected all over the provinces as symbols of the emperor’s presence even in his absence. In some martyr acts, it is explicitly the image of the emperor that the prosecuted Christians must venerate.<sup>76</sup> Since offering sacrifice to gods is an imperial order, refusing to obey means blasphemy not only against gods but also against the “august emperors”.<sup>77</sup> The emperor is also present through his representatives, local governors or proconsuls, usually referred to with titles such as ἀνθύπατος, ἑπαρχος, ἡγέμων, *proconsul*, *procurator* or *praeses*. Sometimes a difference is made between the emperor and his local functionary. For example, the governor Perennis is persuaded by Apollonius’ determination and tells him: “I should like to release you, but I am prevented by the decree of the Emperor Commodus.”<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, in his *Apology*, allegedly addressed to the Emperor Pius and the Roman senate, Justin Martyr recounts the martyrdom of Ptolemaeus and Lucius and differentiates between the unjust prefect Urbicus and the just emperor. According to the story, Lucius protests against the death sentence the prefect has passed on Ptolemaeus claiming that it “does not befit the emperor Pius, his philosopher son and the holy senate.”<sup>79</sup> More customarily, however, no difference is made between different agents. For example, in the *Martyrdom of*

<sup>73</sup> *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* 1.

<sup>74</sup> *Martyrs of Lyons* 1.47; *Martyrdom of Apollonius* 45.

<sup>75</sup> *Acts of Justin* 1 (Recension B). The death of Justin must have occurred around the year 165, when there is no evidence of any such imperial decrees. Cf. my discussion above.

<sup>76</sup> E. g., *Martyrdom of Dasius* 7, 8; *Martyrdom of Apollonius* 7.

<sup>77</sup> Πολλὰ ἔασας σε φλυαρῆσαι εἰς βλασφημίαν ἡγαγον τῶν θεῶν καὶ τῶν Σεβαστῶν. *Acts of Carpus, Papyrus, and Agathonice* 21.

<sup>78</sup> Θέλω σε ἀπολύσαι, Ἀπολλῶ, κωλύομαι δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ δόγματος Κομόδου τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος. *Martyrdom of Apollonius* 45.

<sup>79</sup> οὐ πρέποντα Εὐσεβεῖ αὐτοκράτορι οὐδὲ φιλοσόφῳ Καίσαρος παιδί οὐδὲ τῇ ἱερᾷ συγκλήτῳ κρίνεις. Justin Martyr, 2 *Apologia* 2.16.

*Polycarp*, the governor, the executioners, the “tyrant” (τύραννος) and the devil all merge together.<sup>80</sup>

There is some variation in the stories concerning how the martyrs react to the imperial orders. In some cases, the accused at least claim that they do not know anything about these decrees. When the proconsul asks Crispina whether she is “aware of what is commanded by the sacred decree”, she denies this and the proconsul has to explain: “That you should offer sacrifice to all our gods for the welfare of the emperors, in accordance with the law issued by our lords the reverend Augusti Diocletian and Maximian and the most noble Caesars Constantius and Maximus.”<sup>81</sup> In other stories, however, the martyr is not ignorant of the decrees. When the prefect refers to the imperial orders, Julius replies: “I am aware of them but I am a Christian and I cannot do what you want; for I must not lose sight of my living and true God.”<sup>82</sup>

Both narrative solutions emphasize the superiority of Christianity in comparison to the Roman gods and their protector, the emperor. When the martyrs claim their ignorance, their indifference towards the worldly rule and worldly powers is underlined. On the other hand, Julius shows this indifference despite the fact that he is aware of the imperial orders. At the same time, the innocence and moral superiority of Christians is underlined. They have done nothing wrong; on the contrary, they live a “blameless life”,<sup>83</sup> just as any pious Roman would live, and yet they are convicted.<sup>84</sup> It does not make a difference whether Christians are aware of the command of the emperor, for they are also aware of the orders of God and act accordingly.<sup>85</sup>

80 *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 2.4–3.1. Cf. *Martyrs of Lyons* 1.27.

81 *Anullinus proconsul dixit: Praecepti sacri cognouisti sententiam? Crispina respondit: Quid praeceptum sit nescio. Anullinus dixit: Ut omnibus diis nostris pro salute principum sacrifices, secundum legem datam a dominis nostris Diocletiano et Maximiano piis Augustis et Constatio et Maximo nobilissimis Caesaribus. Martyrdom of Crispina* 1.2–3. Cf. the bishop Fructuosus who declares, “I do not know their orders. I am a Christian.” *Martyrdom of Bishop Fructuosus and his Deacons, Augurius and Eulogius* 2.3.

82 *Praeses dixit: Numquid ignoras praecepta regum, qui iubent immolare diis? Iulius respondit: Non ignoro quidem; sed ego Christianus sum et hoc facere non possum quod uis, nec enim me oportet Deum meum uerum et uiuum obliuisci. Martyrdom of Julius the Veteran* 1.4.

83 ὁ ἑπαρχὸς Ἰουστίνῳ εἶπεν· Τίνα βίον βιοῖς; Ἰουστίνος εἶπεν· Ἄμεμπτον καὶ ἀκατάγνωστον πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις. *Acts of Justin* 2.1–2.

84 Christians as “embodiments of innocence” (Castelli 2004, 47) is a recurrent *topos* in several martyrologies. For example, Speratus protests: “We have never done wrong; we have never lent ourselves to wickedness. Never have we uttered a curse [..].” *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* 2; cf. *Martyrdom of Ptolemaeus and Lucius* 16; *Martyrdom of Apollonius* 4.

85 καὶ φησιν ὁ νεωκόρος· Οἴδατε πάντως τὸ διάταγμα τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος ὡς κελεύει ὑμᾶς ἐπιθύειν τοῖς θεοῖς, καὶ ὁ Πιόνιος ἔφη· Οἴδαμεν τὰ προστάγματα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν οἷς κελεύει ἡμᾶς αὐτῷ μόνῳ προσκυνεῖν. *Martyrdom of Pionius* 3.2–3.

## Limits of Imperial Authority

The worldly rules of the emperor clash constantly with the divine rule of God. Further in the narrative of the martyrdom of Julius we find the following exchange:

Maximus said: “If you do not respect the imperial decrees and offer sacrifice, I am going to cut your head off.”

“That is a good plan!” answered Julius. “Only I beg you, good prefect, by the welfare of your emperors, that you execute your plan and pass sentence on me, so that my prayers may be fulfilled.”

[..]

“You are being offered advice,” said Maximus. “For if you endured this for the sake of the civil law, you would have eternal glory.”

Julius replied: “I surely suffer for the law – but it is the divine law.”

Maximus said: “You mean the law given you by a man who was crucified and died? Look how foolish you are to fear a dead man more than living emperors!”<sup>86</sup>

Faithfulness to the divine law is the reason for martyrdom in Jewish martyr texts.<sup>87</sup> It is also an important *topos* in many Christian ones. Both Julius and his interrogator speak of the law but they give it very different meanings. While the governor sees the civic law as the highest authority, Julius and other Christians emphasize that there is another, divine law that surpasses any imperial laws. Julius declares that he is prepared to suffer for the laws, but for the right laws. From the perspective of the Roman governor, however, dying for a crucified man is foolishness<sup>88</sup> and any sensible person would understand that the one to deserve honours is the living emperor, not a dead criminal. The governor’s words contain an ironic twist since the intended (Christian) reader knows that it is exactly this crucified criminal whose authority exceeds that of the emperor.

At the heart of the conflict lies, as Elizabeth Castelli has observed, a dispute over whose sense of order and justice prevails.<sup>89</sup> Some martyr accounts explicitly equate the divine law with the gospels. For example, in the Greek recension of the *Acts of Euplus*, the martyr comes to his hearing carrying “the holy gospels”, which are later identified as the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The governor calls them “wicked” since they go “against the edicts of our emperors” but for Euplus they are the “law of the Lord my God which I have received from him”.<sup>90</sup>

86 The key passage runs as follows: *nam si pro patriae legibus patereris, haberes perpetuam laudem. Iulius respondit: Pro legibus certe haec patior, sed pro divinis. Martyrdom of Julius the Veteran* 3.1–3.

87 In *4 Maccabees*, the word νόμος occurs approximately forty times; Rajak 1997, 53.

88 Cf. Paul’s declaration in *First Corinthians*: “We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Cor. 1: 23–24.)

89 See her insightful discussion in Castelli 2004, 33–68.

90 *Acts of Euplus* 1.2. Cf. *Martyrdom of Felix* 15.

The prosecuted Christian is usually ready to acknowledge the power of the emperor to a certain limit but it is crucial that this limit is not crossed. Martyrs are depicted as embodying the maxim “give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”<sup>91</sup> Thus, Apollonius declares that the Saviour has taught us to “obey any law passed by the emperor and to respect him”;<sup>92</sup> and Polycarp is willing to “pay respect to the authorities and powers that God has assigned us”.<sup>93</sup> The emphasis, however, lies in the fact that it is God who has entrusted the emperor with worldly power. The emperor is fully human and has received his authority, God willing, from other humans. Thus, he is in no way comparable to God, whose “divine decree cannot be quelled by a human decree”.<sup>94</sup>

### *Prayer and Sacrifice belong to God Alone*

The insurmountable divide between God and the human emperor becomes clear in the following words of Apollonius addressed to his interrogator, the proconsul Perennis:

Would you want me to swear that we pay honour to the emperor and pray for his authority? If so, then I should gladly swear, calling upon the one, true God, the One existing before all ages, who was not fashioned by human hands, but rather appointed a human among humans to be ruler over the earth.

[...]

With all Christians I offer a pure and unbloody sacrifice to almighty God, the lord of heaven and earth and of all that breathes, a sacrifice of prayer especially on behalf of the spiritual and rational images that have been disposed by God’s providence to rule over the earth. Wherefore obeying a just precept we pray daily to God, who dwells in the heavens, on behalf of Commodus who is our ruler in this world, for we are well aware that he rules over the earth by nothing else but the will of the invincible God who comprehends all things<sup>95</sup>

91 *Mark* 12:17 and parallels, explicitly alluded to in the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* 9: “Pay honour to Caesar as Caesar; but it is God we fear.”

92 [...] ἔτι δὲ νόμῳ τῷ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ δοθέντι πείθεσθαι, βασιλέα τιμᾶν [...] *Martyrdom of Apollonius* 37.

93 δεδιδάγμεθα γὰρ ἀρχαῖς καὶ ἐξουσίαις ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ τεταγμέναις τιμῆν. *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 10.2.

94 οὐ δύναται νικηθῆναι τὸ δόγμα τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπὸ δόγματος ἀνθρωπίνου. *Martyrdom of Apollonius* 24.

95 βούλει δὲ ὀμνῆναι με ὅτι καὶ βασιλέα τιμῶμεν καὶ ὑπὲρ τοῦ κράτους αὐτοῦ εὐχόμεθα; ἡδέως ἂν ὀμῶσαιμι ἀληθεύων τὸν ὄντως θεὸν τὸν ὄντα τὸν πρὸ αἰώνων, ὃν χεῖρες οὐκ ἐποίησαν ἀνθρώπων, τούναντίον δὲ αὐτὸς ἀνθρώπων ἀνθρώπων ἔταξεν βασιλεύειν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. [...] θυσίαν ἀναίμακτον καὶ καθαρὰν ἀναπέμπω κάγω καὶ πάντες Χριστιανοὶ τῷ παντοκράτορι θεῷ τῷ κυριεύοντι οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς καὶ πάσης πνοῆς, τὴν δι’ εὐχῶν μάλιστα ὑπὲρ ἀσωμάτων καὶ λογικῶν εἰκόνων τῶν τεταγμένων ὑπὸ τῆς προνοίας τοῦ θεοῦ βασιλεύειν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. διὸ καθ’ ἡμέραν κατὰ πρόσταγμα δικαίας ἐντολῆς εὐχόμεθα τῷ καταοικοῦντι ἐν οὐρανοῖς θεῷ ὑπὲρ τοῦ βασιλεύοντος ἐν τῷδε τῷ κόσμῳ Κομόδου, εἰδότες ἀκριβῶς ὅτι οὐχ ὑπὸ ἄλλου τινός ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ μόνης τῆς τοῦ ἀνίκητου θεοῦ βουλής, τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνπεριέχοντος, ὡς προεῖπον, βασιλεύει ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. *Martyrdom of Apollonius* 6; 8–9.

Apollonius is ready to pay honour to the emperor who is his rightful ruler in the world, but for him this means praying on the emperor’s behalf to God, the maker of heaven and earth. Christians are even willing to sacrifice but not to the traditional gods. Instead, they are ready to give themselves as a sacrifice to their God.

A similar ambiguity that takes place concerning the law also occurs in relation to sacrifice and prayer. Both Christians and their Roman prosecutors use the same language but they talk past each other. What from the Roman perspective represents the highest form of piety is for the Christian a sacrilege and vice versa; what Christians call piety, Roman officials call folly.<sup>96</sup> An example of how differently a martyr and her Roman interrogator understand what is pious and what sacrilegious is offered in the *Martyrdom of Crispina*:

“So our gods are not acceptable to you!” said Anullinus. “But you shall be forced to show them respect if you want to remain alive for any worship at all!”

“That piety is worthless,” replied Crispina, “which forces people to be crushed against their will.”

Anullinus said: “But all we ask of your religion is that you bow your head in the sacred temples and offer incense to the gods of Rome.”

“I have never done this since I was born,” replied Crispina; “I do not know how; nor will I ever do it so long as I live.”

“Do so now,” said Anullinus, “if you wish to escape unharmed from the sanctions of the law.”

“I do not fear anything you say,” replied Crispina. “That is nothing. But if I deliberately choose to commit a sacrilege, the God who is in heaven will destroy me at once, and I shall not be found in him on the last day.”

“You will not commit sacrilege,” said Anullinus, “if you obey the sacred edicts.”<sup>97</sup>

The exchange between Crispina and her interrogator reveals how impossible it is for the interrogator to understand Crispina’s commitment, which to him is pure obstinacy. From his point of view, his demand is not unreasonable; on the contrary, by doing what he commands Crispina would show the right kind of obedience and piety. However, the edicts he calls sacred are for Crispina blasphemous.

Even though the martyrs share the language of their wider Roman culture, their speech remains unintelligible to their Roman partners in dialogue. From a Roman perspective, Christians are senseless in their refusal to take part in public piety since in this way they threaten the welfare of the whole society. The images of the emperors must be venerated for they guarantee the presence of the emperors who

96 ἐπηρώτησε: Τῆς μωρίας διδάσκαλος ἦς; ἀπεκρίθη: Τῆς θεοσεβείας. *Martyrdom of Pionius* 19.7; cf. *Martyrdom of Agapē, Irenē and Chionē* 6.

97 *Anullinus dixit: Ergo isti dii a te non sunt accepti? quibus cogere exhibere famulatum ut salua peruenias ad deuotionem. Crispina respondit: Nulla deuotio est quae opprimi cogit inuitos. Anullinus dixit: Sed ut iam deuota sis quaerimus, ut in templis sacris flexo capite diis Romanorum tura immoles. Crispina respondit: Hoc non feci aliquando ex quo nata sum, nec noui, nec facio usquequo uixero. Anullinus dixit: Sed fac, si uis a legume seueritate immunis euadere. Crispina respondit: Quod dicis non timeo; hoc nihil est: Deus autem qui est in caelis, si consensero esse sacrilega, simul me perdet, ut non inueniar in illo die uenturo. Anullinus dixit: Sacrilega non eris si sacris obtemperes iussionibus. Martyrdom of Crispina* 2.1–3.

“give us peace, give us our rations and every day concern for our every advantage,” as the commander Bassus explains to the martyr Dasius.<sup>98</sup> For this reason the Roman officials are hard put to understand the Christian stubbornness, which they interpret as a crime of treason against the emperor.<sup>99</sup>

### *Emperors and Martyrs in a Cosmic Battle*

Christian martyrs see it the other way around. Participation in the imperial cult would compromise their faith and jeopardize their future salvation. Crispina tries to explain that she cannot obey the imperial order for that would mean her destruction.<sup>100</sup> Emperors and their representatives who insist on demanding sacrifice are seen as diabolic. Roman authorities are not only repeatedly deemed lawless and impious but they are also portrayed as doing the devil’s work. It is the devil who is the ultimate agent in destroying Christians and who conspires with pagans – and sometimes also with the Jews.<sup>101</sup> The executioners with their inhuman cruelty are *ministri diaboli* “the devil’s servants”<sup>102</sup> and the real enemy of the Christians is not visible but the one “that cannot be seen with bodily eyes”.<sup>103</sup> Martyrdom is not only a combat between the emperor and Christians; it is a cosmic battle between the devil and God, where the deaths of the martyrs contribute to the final victory.<sup>104</sup>

Curiously, the demonic Roman authorities are often also portrayed as showing compassion and pity toward the martyrs. In several accounts, the officials do their best to persuade Christians to submit and offer the required sacrifice, pleading with them time and again to be sensible and delaying the pronouncement of their sentence in order to give them time to change their mind.<sup>105</sup> A case in point is the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, from where the citation in my title is taken.

98 Δεήθητι τοῖς εἰκόσι τῶν δεσποτῶν ἡμῶν τῶν βασιλέων τῶν τὴν εἰρήνην παρεχόντων καὶ ὄρωρμένων ἡμῖν τὰ σιτηρέσια καὶ ἐπὶ πάσῃ λυσιτελείᾳ ἡμῶν ἐφ’ ἐκάστης ἡμέρας φροντίδα ποιουμένων. *Martyrdom of Dasius* 7.1.

99 *Martyrdom of Agapē, Irenē and Chionē* 4.3.

100 *Martyrdom of Crispina* 2.2 (see footnote 97 above). Cf. *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 11.2: “The fire you threaten me with burns merely for a time and is soon extinguished. It is clear that you are ignorant of the fire of everlasting punishment and of the judgment that is to come, which awaits the impious.” Further references to the coming judgment can be found, e.g., in *Martyrdom of Apollonius* 42; *Martyrdom of Pionius* 4.16, 24: 7.4.

101 Cf. *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 12; 13; 17.2; 18.1; *Martyrdom of Pionius* 4.8; 13.

102 *Martyrdom of Julius the Veteran* 4.5.

103 *Martyrdom of Agapē, Irenē and Chionē* 1.1.

104 Middleton 2006, 6.

105 *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* 1; *Martyrdom of Apollonius* 2, 7, 13, 45; *Martyrdom of Dasius* 10; 18–19; *Martyrdom of Julius the Veteran* 2.4–6; *Martyrdom of Pionius* 4.1, 5.3, 8.1–4, 15.2, 16.1, 17.1, 20.2.

The police captain Herod with his father Nicetes came up to meet Polycarp [...] [and] tried to persuade him, saying: “Now what harm is there for you to say ‘Caesar is lord,’ to perform the sacrifices and so forth, and thus save your life?”

At first, Polycarp would not answer them; but when they persisted, he said: “I do not intend to do what you advise.”

They then gave up their attempt to move him and spoke threateningly to him [...].<sup>106</sup>

The governor tries the same. He first does his best to persuade the young Germanicus – who dies before Polycarp – by appealing to his youth and then the aged Polycarp by appealing to his old age. When persuasion has no effect, he continues with threats.

Such efforts by Roman officials may serve several narrative functions and readers may understand them in different ways. They might be taken as signs of calculation to diminish the troubles of the executors. They might also be taken as signs of sympathy, a tentative positive reaction to the Christian proclamation. Be that as it may, this more compassionate side of the Roman officials does not diminish their guilt and cruelty. On the contrary – they are asking the martyrs to recant and, thus, to be eternally damned. In so doing, they are acting in the devil’s service. Moreover, it underlines the injustice of the verdict – even the Roman officials know that the martyrs are innocent of any crime. It also shows the severity of the tortures; the martyrs suffer so much that even the wicked are moved. Most importantly, it serves as a sign of Christian determination. Nothing, be that reason or threat, can make them recant.

A martyr story typically ends with the martyr rejoicing over his or her fate and thanking God for it.<sup>107</sup> When Apollonius hears his sentence, he acknowledges the part the proconsul has played in it: “Proconsul Perennis, I also thank my God for this sentence of yours which will bring me salvation.”<sup>108</sup> Phileas takes one step further and thanks the emperors for his salvation: “I owe thanks to the emperors and to the prefect that I have been made a coheir of Christ Jesus.”<sup>109</sup> The emperor, without being aware of it, partakes in and contributes to God’s plan. The devil may delight in every martyr that is slain but what he sees as a victory is actually his loss.<sup>110</sup> The ultimate agent of this cosmic drama is neither the emperor nor the

106 καὶ ὑπήντα αὐτῷ ὁ εἰρηνάρχος Ἡρώδης καὶ ὁ πατήρ αὐτοῦ Νικήτης [...] ἔπειθον [...] λέγοντες· Τί γὰρ κακόν ἐστιν εἰπεῖν· Κύριος Καῖσαρ, καὶ ἐπιθύσαι καὶ τὰ τούτοις ἀκόλουθα καὶ διασώζεσθαι; ὁ δὲ τὰ μὲν πρῶτα οὐκ ἀπεκρίνατο αὐτοῖς, ἐπιμενόντων δὲ αὐτῶν ἔφη· Οὐ μέλλω ποιεῖν ὃ συμβουλευέτε μοι. οἱ δὲ ἀποτυχόντες τοῦ πείσαι αὐτὸν δεῖνὰ ῥήματα ἔλεγον [...] *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 8.2–3.

107 Cf. *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* 17; *Acts of Cyprian* 5; *Martyrdom of Crispina* 4.1–2; *Martyrdom of Pionius* 20.

108 Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου, Περέννιε ἀνθύπατε [...] καὶ περὶ τῆσδε τῆς ἐμοῦ σωτηριώδους ἀποφάσεώς σου. *Martyrdom of Apollonius* 46.

109 *Ego autem magnam ago gratiam regibus et praesidatui quoniam coheres factus sum Christi Iesu. Acts of Phileas* 8.2.

110 Cf. *Martyrdom of Apollonius* 47.

devil. It is God himself who shows through the steadfastness of his martyrs the superiority of true Christian faith.<sup>111</sup>

### Concluding Remarks: Emperors and the Divine in Early Christian Martyr Stories

“What harm is there for you to say Caesar is lord?” From the Roman interrogator’s point of view the question is purely rhetorical; there is no reason not to perform the required sacrifice, there is nothing to lose and everything to win. Christians can continue to worship their God as long as they fulfil their civic duties and participate in the imperial cult. The viewpoint promoted in martyr acts is completely opposite: there is everything to lose and nothing to win. Complying with the emperor’s orders means committing sacrilege and idolatry and being deprived of salvation. In the narratives, no compromise is possible and no compromise is made.

The traditional outlook of studies in early Christianity has taken this kind of dichotomy between Christian and pagan at face value and emphasized the differences between Christian beliefs and Greco-Roman cultural practices. The martyr acts, however, reveal that Christian ideology was deeply embedded in the structures and practices of Roman imperial society within which it was born.<sup>112</sup> They employ the same language and operate with similar concepts as were used in the broader late antique discourses. Moreover, they acknowledge the authority of the emperor on worldly matters and represent Christians as loyal to Rome as they can without endangering their loyalty to God. Despite their hostile rhetoric towards the emperor and his officials, martyr acts reveal a willingness to be part of the Roman society under the emperor’s rule.<sup>113</sup> Martyrs are not only exemplary Christians, they are also exemplary subjects who do not challenge the emperor’s God given authority and who are willing to pray for the well-being of their ruler. Polycarp’s noble life is described as πολιτεία, citizenship,<sup>114</sup> Speratus assures us that he has lived honestly and payed taxes for everything he has bought,<sup>115</sup> and Julius the Veteran emphasizes his faithful military service.<sup>116</sup>

How can such a double strategy of representing the emperor both as the ultimate evil and as the rightful ruler be explained? Several scholars have pointed out that hostile language towards others in ancient texts is often a sign of unclear

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Bowersock 1995, 52.

<sup>112</sup> Perkins 2009, 3; Castelli 2004, 75.

<sup>113</sup> Flower 2013, 63-67.

<sup>114</sup> *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 17.1. While Polycarp’s πολιτεία refers to his life as a Christian, as a “citizen” of a Christian γένος (cf. Lieu 2002, 53, 222–223), connotations to the wider civic life can also be associated with it.

<sup>115</sup> *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* 6.

<sup>116</sup> *Martyrdom of Julius the Veteran* 2.1-2.

boundaries; in a situation where borderlines are fuzzy and undefined, they need to be strengthened on a rhetorical level. The black-and-white picture of martyr acts depicting Christians and pagans as two separate and easily recognizable groups did not coincide with the everyday reality where Christians did not always differ much from their non-Christian neighbours.<sup>117</sup> Portraying the emperor in a diabolic light and placing him in the invisible battle against the divine helped to create a boundary that set Christians apart from others – and yet, as the boundary manifested itself on a mythical level, there was no need to compromise the everyday coexistence by erecting visible boundary markers.

### References

- Barnes, T. D. 2010. *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Barnes, T. D. 2012. Early Christian Hagiography and the Roman Historian. In P. Gemeinhardt & J. Leemans (eds.) *Christian Martyrdom in Late Antiquity (300 – 450 AD): History and Discourse, Tradition and Religious Identity*. Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 116. Berlin: De Gruyter, 15-33.
- Bowersock, G. W. 1995. *Martyrdom and Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Boyarin, D. 1999. *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Brent, A. 2010. *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Castelli, E. A. 2004. *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Cooper, K. 2013. *Band of Angels: The Forgotten World of Early Christian Women*. New York: Overlook.
- Flower, R. 2013. *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grig, L. 2004. *Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity*. London: Duckworth.
- Gruen, E. 2002. *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Heffernan, T. J. 2012. *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hopkins, K. 1998. Christian Number and its Implications. *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, 185–226.
- Hunink, V. 2010. Did Perpetua Write Her Prison Account? *Listy filologické* 133, 147–155.
- Kraemer, R. S. & S. L. Lander. 2000. Perpetua and Felicitas. In P. F. Esler (ed.), *The Early Christian World*. London & New York: Routledge, 1048–1068.
- Lieu, J. 2002. *Neither Jew Nor Greek? Constructing Early Christianity*. London & New York: T & T Clark.
- Luijendijk, A. M. 2008. *Greetings in the Lord: Early Christians and the Oxyrhynchus Papyri*. Harvard Theological Studies 60. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

<sup>117</sup> Markus 1990, 27–29; cf. Boyarin 1999, 16-19; Lieu 2002, 230.

- Markus, R. 1990. *The End of Ancient Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mayer, W. 2006. *St. John Chrysostom the Cult of the Saints*. Selected Homilies and Letters Introduced, Translated, and Annotated by W. Mayer with B. Neil. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.
- Middleton, P. 2015. Noble Death or Death Cult? Pagan Criticism of Early Christian Martyrdom. In O. Lehtipuu & M. Labahn (eds.), *People under Power: Early Jewish and Christian Responses to the Roman Empire*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 207–229.
- Middleton, P. 2006. *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict in Early Christianity*. Library of New Testament Studies 307. London: T&T Clark.
- Moss, C. R. 2013. *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Moss, C. R. 2012. *Ancient Christian Martyrdom: Diverse Practices, Theologies, and Traditions*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Moss, C. R. 2010. *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Musurillo, H. 1954. *The Acts of the Pagan Martyrs: Acta Alexandrinorum*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Musurillo, H. 1972. *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Perkins, J. 2009. *Roman Imperial Identities in the Early Christian Era*. Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies. London & New York: Routledge.
- Perkins, J. 1995. *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Rajak, T. 1997. Dying for the Law: The Martyr's Portrait in Jewish-Greek Literature in M. J. Edwards & S. Swain (eds.), *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 39–67.
- Rives, J. B. 1999. The Decree of Decius and the Religion of Empire. *The Journal of Roman Studies* 89, 135–54.
- Seeley, D. 1990. *The Noble Death: Graeco-Roman Martyrology and Paul's Concept of Salvation*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 28. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Selinger, R. 2004. *The Mid-Third Century Persecutions of Decius and Valerian*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Shaw, B. D. 2003. Judicial Nightmare and Christian Memory. *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11, 533–563.
- Sienkiewicz, H. 1897. *Quo Vadis: A Narrative of the Time of Nero*. Translated from the Polish by J. Curtin. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and co.
- Ste Croix, B. A. G. de. 1963. Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted? *Past and Present* 26, 6–38.
- Van der Lans, B. 2015. The Politics of Exclusion: Expulsion of Jews and Others from Rome. In O. Lehtipuu & M. Labahn (eds.), *People under Power: Early Jewish and Christian Responses to the Roman Empire*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 33–77.
- Williams, S. 1985. *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery*. New York: Routledge.

# The Emperor's New Images – How to Honour the Emperor in the Christian Roman Empire?

Maijastina Kahlos

University of Helsinki

*This article discusses the sacredness of Roman emperors during the late Roman Empire, in the fourth and fifth centuries C.E. as the Empire was gradually Christianized. I shall argue that the imperial ideology with the sacred emperor, which had developed in the preceding centuries, was adopted with a few modifications. The most important of the modifications was “tidying up” of emperor worship using animal sacrifices. Imperial images for the most part retained the associations and connotations they had earlier had with prestige, authority and divinity. In this article, I discuss the difficulties and ambiguities with the sacredness of emperors in the Christianizing Empire, focusing on imperial images.*

*The analysis of a few fourth- and fifth-century Christian writers (for example, Eusebius of Caesarea, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, the anonymous Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii, Philostorgius, Severianus of Gabala and Pseudo-Theophilus of Alexandria) reveals a varied and complex set of attitudes towards traditional emperor worship, depending on the socio-political context of the writings. All these views must be examined as part of the debates in which they participate, as in the case of John Chrysostom's homilies in connection with the Riot of Statues in Antioch in 387, or Philostorgius' statements as connected with the disputes between Homoian and Nicene Christians.*

## The Sacred Emperor and his Images

In an anonymous theological tractate *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii*, dated between the late fourth and late fifth centuries,<sup>1</sup> the fictive discussants – a Christian Zacchaeus and a ‘pagan’ Apollonius – debate the worship of cult statues (*simulacra*) including those of emperors. The Christian Zacchaeus draws a clear distinction between the worship of the emperors as deities and the reverence paid to the emperors as mortals. Zacchaeus assures us that the reverence paid to Christian emperors had nothing to do with the errors of ‘pagans’.

---

1 For the dating and identification, see Claussen 1995, 589-614.



The *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii* belongs to a genre of question-answer literature in which fictive figures discussed several issues, one posed questions and the other answered those questions. Even though the discussions were most likely fictitious, the questions raised in these treatises were important for the writer's community. Therefore, the writer of the *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii* discusses many kinds of issues such as miracles, Christian and pagan alike, and the ascetic way of life. Among these other issues, the Christian Zacchaeus and the 'pagan' Apollonius dispute the worship of cult images including those of emperors.<sup>2</sup>

The 'pagan' Apollonius says, "we [that is, pagans] worship (*adoramus*) the images (*simulacra vel imagines*) of those whom we believe to be gods according to the true religion, or whom – as taught by the traditions of the ancient predecessors – we do not know not to have been gods."<sup>3</sup> Then Apollonius asks why Christians ("you"), to whom that kind of thing is an abomination, venerate the images of humans, in the form of reverence paid to the rulers even as public adoration (*sub regum reverentia etiam publica adoratione veneramini*), and thus give to humans the honour that should be given to a god only, as Christians themselves announce.<sup>4</sup> Apollonius adds, "even though this is illicit and against the law, why do you do this, Christians? Or why do not your priests prohibit this ...?"<sup>5</sup> Why then this adoration? is the awkward question of Apollonius. One can infer that non-Christians may have challenged Christians (especially newly converted, uncertain Christians) with these kinds of problems and that is why this inquiry ended up in this question-answer treatise.

The writer of *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii* offers a solution to the perplexed Christians: the Christian Zacchaeus replies that Christians draw a clear distinction between the worship of the emperors as deities and the reverence paid to the emperors as mortals. He states that it was not allowed for Christians to adore the elements, angels, or any power of heaven, earth or air. He assures his reader that the ceremonies that pagans reprimand Christians for do not constitute a cult to a divinity (*non aliquem divinum deprehenditis cultum*).<sup>6</sup> Zacchaeus explains that the person (that is, the emperor), whose image is greeted, is not called a god; the images are not adored with incense; there are no more altars left for worship; instead, these altars are erected in memory of the merits of the emperor (that is, as

<sup>2</sup> *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii* 1.28. Ed. Feiertag 1994.

<sup>3</sup> *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii* 1.28.2: *Nos enim eorum simulacra vel imagines adoramus, quos vel vera religione deos credimus, vel antiquorum traditionibus docti deos non esse nescimus.*

<sup>4</sup> *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii* 1.28.3: *Vos vero, quibus istud abominatio est, cur imagines hominum, vel ceris pictas, vel metallis defictas, sub regum reverentia etiam publica adoratione veneramini, et, ut ipsi praedicatis, deo tantum honorem etiam hominibus datis?*

<sup>5</sup> *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii* 1.28.4: *Quod si et illicitum legique contrarium est, cur hoc facitis, christiani, aut cur hoc vestri non prohibent sacerdotes, ...?*

<sup>6</sup> *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii* 1.28.5-9. Zacchaeus (1.28.6-8) speaks of imprudent reverence continued as a habit and admits that this is abhorred by the more strict Christians.

monuments).<sup>7</sup> Zacchaeus declares: "You can see that in this there is nothing similar to your errors."<sup>8</sup>

This passage in *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii* illustrates the ambiguities connected with the sacredness of emperors in the Christianizing Roman Empire. It is these ambiguities that I examine in this article, looking at the ways in which the sacredness of the emperors was (re)interpreted in Late Antiquity – the fourth and fifth centuries.

Imperial images continued to be venerated in the Christian Empire even though it is often presupposed that the reverence paid to imperial images was reduced as the result of the Christianization process. How did the subjects of the Christian Empire deal with the tradition of emperor worship that had been one of the customary ways of showing loyalty to emperors? It was the expectations for imperial subjects to express their devotion to the ruler that had caused problems for Christians in the early imperial period. Another question is how the sacredness of the emperors was understood in Christian terms. For whom was the veneration of imperial images problematic and for whom was it not that problematic after all? In which cases did ecclesiastical leaders regard the reverence paid to imperial images as idolatry, and in which cases as allegiance due to a Christian ruler?

The imperial ideology with the revered emperor, developed in the preceding centuries, was adopted with a few modifications. One of the most important modifications was the "tidying up" of emperor worship using animal sacrifices.<sup>9</sup> Imperial images for the most part retained the associations and connotations they had earlier had with prestige, authority and divinity. The analysis of fourth- and fifth-century Christian writers, for example, Eusebius of Caesarea, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Philostorgius, Severianus of Gabala and Pseudo-Theophilus of Alexandria, will reveal a varied and complex set of attitudes towards emperor worship.

As the famous maxim from religious studies states, myths may perish – rituals endure.<sup>10</sup> This investigation will show that this was also the case with the veneration of imperial images in Late Antiquity: the rituals connected with imperial images persisted even though the ideological framework was modified from the polytheistic Roman civic religion into the Christian Empire.

In order to provide a background for the sacredness associated with late antique emperors, I will start with the allegiance shown to imperial images. Second, I will analyse late antique views on imperial images, and their sacredness and functions will be connected to the ancient theories of images in general. The famous Riot of

<sup>7</sup> *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii* 1.28.8: *non tamen deus dicitur, cuius effigies salutatur, nec adolentur ture imagines aut colendae aris superstant, sed memoriae pro meritis exponuntur, ...*

<sup>8</sup> *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii* 1.28.9: *Vides ergo nihil vestris erroribus simile in hoc esse quod arguis.*

<sup>9</sup> For the continuity of the emperor worship in the fourth century, see Salzman 1990, 131-146.

<sup>10</sup> Also used by Lund Warmind 1993, 211.

Statues in 387 will be discussed from the perspective of the allegiance shown to imperial images. Then we will take a look at Christian writers' various views on the veneration of imperial images, both critical and approving, and will set these views into their proper contexts. Finally, I will show what changes and continuities in the sacredness of the emperor can be seen in the attempts to regulate his veneration in late antique legislation.

## The Imperial Image Honoured

For an ordinary inhabitant of the Empire, the emperor's image, bust or statue was the only thing that she or he ever saw of the ruler. Imperial images were still ubiquitous in late Roman daily life: they were present in prominent public places such as market places. The imperial image was an essential component in law courts, and the governors of provinces invoked imperial images when they needed to appeal to imperial authority. At formal public ceremonies, in which loyalty was shown to the reigning emperor, his image was displayed in his stead.<sup>11</sup>

In legislation, honorary inscriptions, coins and panegyrics, the imperial image was connected with the sacred and the divine, but what did this mean? Sabine MacCormack has written that "in some way the imperial images partook of the nature of the sacred" and Luke Lavan speaks of "a religious aura" of imperial statues in Late Antiquity.<sup>12</sup> I think it is expedient to approach the question with examples of the regulations concerning imperial images and the use of imperial images.

Stoning an imperial image was a grave transgression and could result in imprisonment. Even the accusation of a false accusation of insulting an imperial image was severe enough, as the allegation against Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296-373) hurled by his ecclesiastical opponents in the council of Tyre in 335 shows. Athanasius' adversaries accused him of making false accusations against a presbyter who allegedly had thrown stones at imperial statues (βασιλικὰς εἰκόνας)<sup>13</sup>

Disrespect shown to imperial images and to the images of the reigning emperor in particular – whether this disrespect was real or alleged – could also be used as a weapon against ecclesiastical opponents in the fifth and sixth centuries as some cases in connection with the church councils of Chalcedon 451 and Constantinople 553 respectively indicate. The Patriarch Dioscorus of Alexandria was claimed to have shown disrespect to imperial images, and the monophysite monk Isaac the Persian was purported to have destroyed an image of Emperor

11 For the ubiquity and different functions of imperial images, see Lavan 2011b, 457; Ellingsen 2003, 34-35; Ando 2000, 212, 232-233; Kolb 2001, 46-49; Pekáry 1985; and Bowersock 1982, 173.

12 MacCormack 1981, 67-68 and Lavan 2011b, 459. Lavan explains this religious aura as a consequence of centuries of the imperial cult: the statues of living reigning emperors were increasingly considered to have powers similar to the cult images of deceased deified emperors. See also Niemeyer 1968, esp. 18-27.

13 *Sozomen*, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.25.

Justinian. An ecclesiastical opponent who really or allegedly showed disrespect to or even damaged imperial images could thus be argued to be disloyal to the reigning emperor.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, overthrowing a reigning emperor's statues was a sign of rebellion. For instance, in connection with an unsuccessful military coup in 354 against Gallus, Emperor Constantius' erstwhile co-ruler, and thereby against the emperor himself, it was presumed that the rebels would first overthrow Constantius' statues (*post statuas Constantii deiectas*) and then proceed with other actions.<sup>15</sup> All kinds of alterations or unauthorized copies of imperial images were severely forbidden. In a law of 381, copying "the sacred imperial features and thus assailing the divine countenance" and thus "sacrilegiously imitating their venerable images" (*qui sacris oris imitator et divinorum vultuum adpetitor venerabiles formas sacrilegio eruditus impressit*) is listed in the same line with such crimes as parricide, incest and poisoning.<sup>16</sup>

Allegiance was shown through images; for instance, military oaths of allegiance were taken in front of the emperor or the emperor's image. This had been a long-standing practice to confirm the allegiance of the subjects, civilian and military alike but was primarily military. Correspondingly, defacing images of an emperor was a symbolic act of rebellion. Pulling down and destroying the image of the ruling emperor was a sign of revolt,<sup>17</sup> as it had already been during the early Empire, when the soldiers of the legions of Germania inferior – instead of taking the oath of allegiance in the New Year to the emperor's image in 69 – had thrown stones at Galba's images (*saxa in Galbae imagines iecerint*) and the legions of Germania superior had smashed his images (*dirumpunt imagines Galbae*).<sup>18</sup>

Imperial decrees represented the emperor in a similar way and could encounter similar signs of respect and violation respectively. Any damage done to the physical item of the emperor's declarations was considered treason.<sup>19</sup> When imperial decrees were read aloud publicly, the people were expected to listen to them with solemn awe. John Chrysostom (c. 350-407) compares the awe when listening to imperial laws with the fear one should feel when listening to the word of God, which should be feared even more:

A profound silence reigns when those letters are read. There is not the slightest noise; everyone listens most attentively to the orders contained in them. Whoever makes the

14 See Browning 1952, 20, with examples: Council of Chalcedon: *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* II, 1, col. 220; Council of Constantinople: Mansi 8, 898A-C.

15 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 14.7.12.

16 *Codex Theodosianus* 9.38.6 (in 381).

17 Ellingsen 2003, 32-33; MacCormack 1981, 67-68; Browning 1952, 20; Kruse 1934, 12-18, 57-60 with several examples.

18 Tacitus, *Historiae* 1.55. Browning 1952, 20; Ando 2000, 240-241.

19 For imperial law as divine, see Matthews 2000, 181-182 and Lavan 2011b, 462. For examples, see e.g., Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 13.2-3 and Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 8.5.

slightest noise, thereby interrupting the reading, runs the greatest danger. All the more should one stand with fear and trepidation ... in order to understand what is read.<sup>20</sup>

The imperial image could make a solemn arrival, *adventus*, into towns and cities instead of the emperor in person, and the same ceremonies were applied to the image as to the emperor. For example, the arrival of the images of the western emperor Anthemius (r. 467-472) in Constantinople replaced the arrival of the emperor himself.<sup>21</sup> Provincials received the *adventus* of the imperial image as if they were welcoming the emperor in person. Furthermore, petitions could be made to the statue of a reigning emperor.<sup>22</sup> Fugitives could claim asylum at imperial statues, and in a law of 386 by Theodosius I, for example, the right of asylum at imperial statues (*ad imperatoria simulacra*) was confirmed.<sup>23</sup>

## Images and Prototypes

The emperor's presence was reproduced in his image. As I mentioned above, the imperial image could be treated as if it were the emperor himself, with ceremonies, pomp and adoration.<sup>24</sup> Correspondingly, violations against the imperial image were taken as offences against the emperor himself. Basil of Caesarea (c. 330-379), for instance, remarks that a person who treats an imperial image (βασιλικὴν εἰκόνα) shamefully (καθυβρίσας) is condemned as if this person offends the emperor himself.<sup>25</sup> Ambrose of Milan (c. 340-397), probably echoing Basil, states that whoever treats an imperial statue (*statuam ... imperatoris*) shamefully is regarded as having committed an offence against the emperor.<sup>26</sup>

This notion is linked with ancient ideas about the connection between the image and the prototype, the object that the image depicted. In Greco-Roman Antiquity, there prevailed many divergent views and theories concerning the connection

<sup>20</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilia in Genesim, Patrologia Graeca* 53, col. 112. Translation by Matthews 2000, 188.

<sup>21</sup> The protocol was recorded in the *Book of Ceremonies* by Constantinus Porphyrogenitus (*De Cerimoniis* 1.87). For a discussion, see MacCormack 1981, 67-69; for the text, see Kruse 1934, 29.

<sup>22</sup> A description of such an *adventus* is found in the panegyric by Procopius of Gaza (*Panegyricus*, 1). MacCormack 1981, 68-69 and Lavan 2011b, 461, with further examples.

<sup>23</sup> *Codex Theodosianus* 9.44.1 (in 386): *Eos, qui ad statuas vel evitandi metus vel creandae invidiae causa confugerint, ante diem decimum neque auferri ab aliquo neque discedere sponte perpetimur; ita tamen, ut, si certas habuerint causas, quibus confugere ad imperatoria simulacra debuerint, iure ac legibus vindicentur; sin vero proditi fuerint artibus suis invidiam inimicis creare voluisse, ultrix in eos sententia proferatur.* Browning 1952, 20; Kitzinger 1954, 123; Lavan 2011b, 461; Niemeyer 1968, 23-24.

<sup>24</sup> Ellingsen 2003, 30; Lavan 2011b, 459.

<sup>25</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *In Isaiam* 13.267 (*Patrologia Graeca* 30, col. 589A-B). Browning 1952, 20.

<sup>26</sup> Ambrose, *Expositio in psalmum CXVIII*, 10.25 (*Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 62, 219): *et qui statuam contempserit imperatoris, imperatori utique cuius statuam conspuit fecisse videtur iniuriam.*

between an image and its prototype. Greco-Roman writers thought that cult images were animated by a positive divine presence; similarly, the image of an emperor contained his presence on some level.<sup>27</sup>

Intellectuals debated for centuries whether images were to be regarded as gods themselves. Some had defended the cult of images, arguing that people did not venerate mere objects themselves but revered the divinities that these images represented. For example, the second-century Platonist Celsus, who reproached Christians for not believing in images, argued that everyone knew that images were not gods but only images representing gods. In the late third century, Porphyry, when discussing the statues of gods, stated that images were visible symbols of the invisible.<sup>28</sup> Plotinus writes that ancient sages wanted to secure the presence of divine being by making shrines and images (ἀγάλματα). Accordingly, even though the images were not divine as such, they carried something of the identity and power of the divine that they stood for.<sup>29</sup>

Emperor Julian's (r. 361-363) discussion on the image of Magna Mater is part of this long debate. He asserts that the image is "no human thing, but really divine, not lifeless clay but something having life (ἔμπνουν) and divinity".<sup>30</sup> Julian, on the other hand, insists that the images of the gods are by no means the gods themselves in the same manner as the images of the emperor are not the emperor. Images nevertheless are not just material, stone or wood. Julian explains that "he therefore who loves the emperor delights to see the emperor's statue". This is compared with seeing the son's statue: he who loves his son delights to see his son's statue. And he "who loves the gods delights to gaze on the images (ἀγάλματα) of the gods, and their likenesses (εἰκόνας), and he feels reverence".<sup>31</sup> Thus, images were usually, to some extent at least, thought to contain something of the divine nature of its prototype, a god or a godlike emperor.

Comparisons to imperial images in late antique literature, especially in theological considerations, pagan and Christian alike, tell us something about the prevailing conceptions about imperial images. The explanatory power of imperial images can be seen in the deliberations of Christian writers such as Athanasius of Alexandria, Severianus of Gabala and a Coptic writer (Pseudo-Theophilus of

<sup>27</sup> MacCormack 1981, 67-68; Kitzinger 1954, 123; Lavan 2011b, 459-460.

<sup>28</sup> Celsus in Origen, *Contra Celsum* 7.62. Porphyry in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 3.7.1-3. Kahlos 2007, 170-171, with further discussion and references.

<sup>29</sup> Plotinus, *Enneades* 4.3.11. For an analysis of images in Late Antiquity, see Francis 2009, 296 and Francis 2012, 146-147, who stresses the cultural and intellectual continuity of the conceptions of images and imaging common to pagan and Christian thinkers alike. Both pagans and Christians understood images of gods as possessing power and life; for pagans it was divine and for Christians it was demonic. See also Saradi-Mendelovici 1990, 57-58.

<sup>30</sup> Julian, *Oratio* 5.161a Hertlein = p. 448 Wright. The term ἔμπνουν can also be translated as having soul. Francis 2009, 295; Francis 2012, 146-147.

<sup>31</sup> Julian, *Epistula ad sacerdotem* 294c-d Hertlein = p. 310 Wright. Francis 2009, 295; Francis 2012, 146-147.

Alexandria).<sup>32</sup> These writers used imperial images as points of comparison in which imperial images, a phenomenon familiar to the audience, are meant to make the subtle theological argumentation more understandable.

For instance, around 360 in the middle of the Christian doctrinal disputes, Athanasius in his treatise against the Arians (that is, Homoians whom he called Arians) explained his views of the relationship between the Father and the Son of the Trinity and used the relationship between the emperor and his image as a point of comparison. To elucidate how the Son is the image of the Father, he explains the imperial image:

In the image (εἰκών) [of the emperor] there is the character (εἶδος) and the form (μορφή) of the emperor ... For the emperor's likeness (ὁμοιότης) is exact in the image, so that the one gazing at the image sees the emperor in it, and again the one gazing at the emperor recognizes that he is the one in the image.

Then Athanasius explains that the image could say:

"I and the emperor are one; I am in him and he is in me. That which you see in me you behold in him, and what you look upon in him, you behold in me." Therefore whoever adores the image (προσκυνῶν) also adores (προσκυνεῖ) the emperor in it, for the image is his form (μορφή) and character (εἶδος).<sup>33</sup>

This passage shows that this comparison was comprehensible for Athanasius' audience – or at least, Athanasius in interaction with his listeners assumed so. In the process of successful communication, a speaker needed to use arguments and scenarios that sounded plausible to an audience. Therefore, we may presume that Athanasius' listeners took it for granted that the emperor and the imperial image were 'one' and that the imperial image was adored as if it was the emperor who was adored. The imperial image carries the power of the emperor as well as sharing the nature and character of the emperor. In other words, the imperial image was understood as a direct substitute for the emperor's person, carrying all his authority – the authority connected with his position.<sup>34</sup>

The early fifth-century bishop of Gabala, Severianus, who made a comparison with the ubiquity of imperial images and the ubiquity of the Christian god, also had the same understanding. Because the emperor could not be present everywhere in his empire, it was necessary to have the emperor's portraits (τὸν χαρακτεῖρα

<sup>32</sup> Ando 2000, 238 with further examples. Ando 2000, 238 connects the explanatory power of imperial images with the fact that emperors were the most common and least controversial figures in Late Antiquity.

<sup>33</sup> Athanasius, *Oratio contra Arianos* 3.5 (*Patrologia Graeca* 26, 329-332). Translation by Francis 2009, 296. See also Francis 2012, 148; Lund Warmind 1993, 216-217; and Ando 2000, 239.

<sup>34</sup> Similar comparisons are made by Basil of Caesarea, *De spiritu sancto* 18.45 (*Patrologia Graeca* 32, 149), Ambrose, *Expositio in psalmum* CXVIII 10.25 (see n. 40) and Ambrose, *In epistulam ad Colosseos* 2.16-17 (*Patrologia Latina* 17, 432). Francis 2009, 296; Lavan 2011b, 461; Stewart 1999, 169-170; Brubaker 1995, 4-5; Murray 1989, 298.

τοῦ βασιλέως) in public places: at tribunals, in marketplaces, at meetings and in theatres. His image must be present in all places where his magistrates act, "so that he might sanction whatever transpires". Then the invisibility of the Christian god is explained with this analogy to the Roman emperor: "For the emperor, being a man, cannot be everywhere; God, being God, simply cannot be seen by men."<sup>35</sup>

In a Coptic text, often attributed to Theophilus of Alexandria, but unfortunately not exactly datable, the imperial image is also used as a point of comparison as the writer explains the power and sacredness that the image of the Theotokos, the Virgin Mary, has:

For if the image of the emperor of this world, when painted and set up in the midst of the market-place, becoming a protection to the whole city, and if violence is committed against any one, and he goes and takes hold of the image of the emperor: then no man will be able to oppose him, even though the emperor is naught but a mortal man; and he is taken to a court of law. Let us, therefore, my beloved, honour the image of our Lady the veritable Queen, the holy Theotokos Mary, the mother of our God.<sup>36</sup>

The Coptic writer assumes that his audience takes the power and sacred nature of the imperial image – for instance, he refers to its protective function ("a protection to the whole city") and its function as an asylum ("he goes and takes hold of the image of the emperor, then no man will be able to oppose him").<sup>37</sup>

## The Imperial Image Violated

The issue of imperial images was by no means just a topic among philosophers and theologians but a life-and-death question for people living ordinary lives. The aftermath of the so-called Riot of Statues in Antioch in 387 shows how drastic measures the government could take in dealing with the violators of imperial images. This infamous incident is reported by John Chrysostom in his homilies and by Libanius (c. 314-392/393) in his speeches.<sup>38</sup>

During the reign of Emperor Theodosius I (r. 379-395), the riot began as a reaction to the imperial edict that announced a new tax that would bring a considerable increase in taxation. The Antiochian people attacked the palace

<sup>35</sup> Severianus of Gabala, *De mundi creatione* 6.5 (*Patrologia Graeca* 56, 489). Engemann 1988, 1039.

<sup>36</sup> Pseudo-Theophilus of Alexandria, "A homily on the Virgin by Theophilus, Archbishop of Alexandria" in Worrell 1923, 375. Translation by Worrell (here modified). MacCormack 1981, 67-68; Ando 2000, 236; Kitzinger 1954, 125.

<sup>37</sup> The later development of Byzantine icons has often been connected with the veneration of imperial images, e.g., by Kitzinger 1954, 121-125. Now, more recently Mathews (2001, 163-177) has pointed out that the developing Christian cult of icons can be seen as a parallel with the private cult of images among the pagans at the same time.

<sup>38</sup> John Chrysostom, 21 *homiliae ad populum Antiochenum de statuis* (*Patrologia Graeca* 49); Libanius, *Orationes* 19-23.

of the provincial governor and showed their irritation by pulling down wooden panel pictures with the emperor's portrait and casting down the bronze statues of the imperial family, that is, the emperor, his wife Eudoxia and his son Arcadius. The riot was eventually suppressed and the ringleaders arrested and punished. Emperor Theodosius threatened the people of Antioch with further, more extensive punishments: he wanted to strip the city of its several privileges, cut off the *annona* and close down the hippodrome, theatres and baths. Furthermore, many members of the city council were ordered to be imprisoned. People even feared that the emperor would order his soldiers to massacre the populace and sack the city.<sup>39</sup> These were threats of considerable punishments and reflect the importance of imperial images and their symbolic function.<sup>40</sup>

Both the Christian presbyter John Chrysostom and the pagan teacher of rhetoric Libanius defended their city-folk intensively. John Chrysostom delivered twenty-one homilies in which he defended the people in the aftermath of the riot. He describes the punishments inflicted on the Antiochians as completely out of proportion to the offence they committed against the imperial images and reminds his audience – the people, the imperial court and the emperor – that this is nothing compared to the insults that are directed against God every day.<sup>41</sup> In another sermon, John Chrysostom puts his criticism of excessive chastisement into the mouth of a monk: the statues that had been thrown down were again set up; thus the damage had been speedily rectified. This is then compared with the capital punishments that were impending upon the rioters. The monk declares:

... if you put to death the image of God, how will you be again able to revoke the deed! Or how can you reanimate those who are deprived of life, and restore their souls to their bodies?<sup>42</sup>

Accordingly, John Chrysostom argues that the insults to the imperial images are nothing compared to the impending punishments that are offences against the images of God – humans. I will return to John Chrysostom's defence below.

For his part, Libanius delivered five speeches that discussed the riot. In his oration 19, addressed to the emperor, he asks the emperor to cease from his

anger and revoke the punishments.<sup>43</sup> He attributes the riot to some supernatural (demonic) intervention, trying to discharge the people from responsibility in this way.<sup>44</sup> Libanius argues that in the past, sensible rulers have pardoned outbreaks of the people and that an emperor should be like a father who treats the recklessness of his sons gently.<sup>45</sup> In another oration, Libanius compares the violation of imperial images to the insults hurled against the gods and stones thrown at heaven. Yet the gods refrain from punishing people even though they have the power to punish them. Thus in his speech Libanius reminds the emperor of divine patience in the face of insults in a way similar to that of John Chrysostom. Libanius states that the emperor will show himself to be more of a peer to the gods (θεοῖς ἴσος) by not taking pleasure in punishing his subjects, even if the punishments are justified.<sup>46</sup>

As mentioned above, an attack against the image of the emperor could be taken as an attack against the person of the emperor and consequently be seen as treason. This is how John Chrysostom portrays the tearing down of imperial images: "And now this is the first and only instance of insurrection [of Antioch] against its rulers."<sup>47</sup> Besides an act of treason, the attack was also a sacrilege against the sacredness of the emperor. Libanius admits that those attacking imperial images were οἱ συνασεβήσαντες, guilty of sacrilege, and insulting imperial images was βλασφημία.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the response of the emperor had to be immediate and suitably austere.<sup>49</sup> Emperors, as Harold Drake describes their position, "sat on the horns of a dilemma: too much force turned them into rogue emperors, unfit to govern by the rules of *civilitas*; too little simply invited contempt".<sup>50</sup> Thus, balancing between *civilitas* and sternness, the emperor had to punish, or at least severely threaten to punish those who had destroyed imperial images.

Destruction of a private person's statues was an assault against an individual's social persona.<sup>51</sup> In the case of the emperor much more was at stake, as we saw above. Loyalty was publicized by showing respect for imperial images, whereas seditious action was often channelled by violating them.

43 Libanius, *Oratio* esp. 19.38; 19.45. Even though Libanius (*Oratio* 19.2-4) speaks as if he were present in the imperial palace, we do not know whether he really gave the speech in front of the emperor. Mitchell 2007, 18.

44 Libanius, *Oratio* 19.7: δαίμονος; 19.29: δαίμονι πονηρῶ; 19.31: τι δαιμόνιον; 19.34. John Chrysostom (*Homilia de statuis* 21.1-3) also shifts the responsibility to demons. In addition, by referring to people with recourse to their god, Libanius insinuates that the rioters were mainly Christians (*Oratio* 19.25; 20.3).

45 Libanius, *Oratio* 19.11; 19.18; 19.48-49; for examples from the past, see also *Oratio* 20.25-30.

46 Libanius, *Oratio* 20.11-13.

47 John Chrysostom, *Homilia de statuis* 3.3.

48 Libanius, *Oratio* 19.36; also 20.10; 21.5.

49 For the fears of the Antiochians, see Libanius, *Oratio* 23.12-14.

50 Drake 2011, 211.

51 Stewart 1999, 161. For the importance of destroying the face in particular, see Stewart 1999, 167.

39 Libanius, *Oratio* 21.5-6; 22.7-8. For the riot and the evaluations of John Chrysostom's and Libanius' accounts, see Browning 1952, 15-16; Sandwell 2007, 129, 173-174; Leppin 1999, 103-123. The ringleaders were clique leaders of the theatre factions. Apparently the riot was not a religious conflict (Leppin 1999, 121; Engemann 1988, 1044) even though the riot has also been seen in connection with the growing tension between different religious groups in Antioch (e.g., Mitchell 2007, 325).

40 Browning 1952, 15 n. 40 compares imperial images to the flags and coats of arms of modern times.

41 John Chrysostom, *Homilia de statuis* 3.18 (*Patrologia Graeca* 49, col. 56-57).

42 John Chrysostom, *Homilia de statuis* 17.3 (*Patrologia Graeca* 49, col. 173).

Magistrates expected the imperial images to be regarded as sacrosanct, revered and inviolate. Various acts such as ill-mannered gestures or altering or defacing images could be interpreted as disrespect towards the emperor and regarded as acts of *lèse majesté*. Forging or defacing the image of the emperor on coins was also an act of high treason, a notion that was still valid in the Late Roman Empire as the law of 389 in the *Theodosian Code* shows.<sup>52</sup> In one of his homilies, John Chrysostom reproaches the makeup of women and compares the female face to an image of the emperor: he remarks that a person who would try to make changes to an image of the emperor after it was set up, would eventually incur extreme danger.<sup>53</sup>

### The Veneration of Images – Blame and Approval

To return to the questions posed in *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii* at the beginning of this article: How should Christians deal with the power and presence of the emperor in imperial images in a Christianizing Empire? What would be the appropriate way of showing loyalty to Christian emperors and the proper way to venerate imperial images: with or without incense and an altar, and with or without animal sacrifices?

During the early imperial period, this had been a sore point for Christian groups. On one hand, for many Christians the adoration given to the emperor as to a god compromised the Christian teaching that veneration was due to the Christian deity only. It is nonetheless worth remembering that the adoration shown to the emperor, or to the gods in general, was not an issue to all Christians, as many complaints by leaders of Christian groups reveal.<sup>54</sup>

A number of Christian apologists in the first to the third centuries condemned the reverence paid to the emperor and his images. In the late second century, Theophilus of Antioch, for instance, had shown an uncompromising attitude: “Why do the Christians not worship the emperor? Because he is not a god, but a man, appointed by God, not to receive homage, but to give judgment rightly.”<sup>55</sup> Tertullian explained in *Apologeticum* in 197 that it was because of the refusal of Christians to venerate the emperor that they were harassed by Roman authorities: “So that is why Christians are public enemies – because they will not give the emperors

vain, false and rash honours.”<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, to be able to cope with imperial authority Christians had to demonstrate their loyalty to the emperor in some way. Christian apologists were at pains to convince their audience that Christians were loyal subjects of the emperor and took part in social life just like any other Roman. Tertullian assured his listeners that Christians prayed for the welfare of the emperor (*pro salute imperatoris*).<sup>57</sup>

In the early Empire, sacrifice had been an essential part of the public Roman religion, emperor worship included. In their aim at religious unity and control of their subjects in the third century, emperors Decius and Valerian had ordered the whole population of the Empire to perform Roman rites as a mark of their loyalty to the Empire and the emperor. The crucial test was the performance of sacrifice, thus participating in the sacrificial system of the Roman society. Making sacrifices, especially animal sacrifices, became another sore point for many Christians and a defining line in Christian self-understanding. It was imperative for ecclesiastical leaders to convince others that Christians never made sacrifices – either now or in the past.<sup>58</sup>

Christian writers made their revulsion of animal sacrifices – blood, flesh and smoke – manifest.<sup>59</sup> The Christian disgust for blood sacrifices is reflected in the legislation of Christian emperors in the fourth and fifth centuries. In the imperial decrees that restricted the performance of many kinds of sacrifices, Christian emperors announced their resentment towards animal sacrifices.<sup>60</sup> Emperor Constantine, for instance, condemned blood sacrifices in his speeches and correspondence.<sup>61</sup> The imperial government nonetheless wanted to retain the old-style civic festivities and spectacles that were important to the people. A decree of 392, for instance, mentions the sorrow that would be produced if theatrical

56 Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 35.1: *Propterea igitur publici hostes Christiani, quia imperatoribus neque vanos neque mentitentes neque temerarios honores dicant* . . . . For the discussion on Tertullian and his stance on the worship of emperors, see Tobias Georges' article in this volume.

57 Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam* 2.6-8; also Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 30.4. Similar assurances are found in Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum* 1.11; Athenagoras of Athens, *Legatio pro Christianis* 37.2-3; Cyprian, *Ad Demetrianum* 20; Arnobius, *Ad nationes* 4.36.

58 For the issue of making sacrifices, see e.g. Harl 1990, 7-27; Bradbury 1994, 120-139; Belayche 2002, 101-126; Belayche 2005, 343-380; Kahlos 2007, 119-126 and Ullucci 2012, esp. 137-144.

59 E.g., Prudentius, *Contra orationem Symmachi* 1.8 described the togas of the respectful pagan senators as tinted by blood and smoke. For Christian disgust about blood sacrifices, see Kahlos 2013, 159-171; Kahlos 2007, 120-123; Bradbury 1994, 129.

60 E.g., *Codex Theodosianus* 16.10.13 (in 393): *abominanda sacrificia*. It is important to remember that not all sacrificial rituals were forbidden once and for all; the main target was animal sacrifices. Emperors such as Constantine and Constantius II were primarily worried about private sacrifices and private divination. From *Codex Theodosianus* 16.10.10 (in 391) onwards, legislation against magical practices was gradually extended to cover pagan sacrifices, and the total abolition of pagan sacrifices was completed in the early fifth-century legislation of Arcadius and Honorius.

61 Constantine in Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.10 and Constantine, *Oratio ad sanctos* 11. Eusebius (*Vita Constantini* 2.45.1) claimed that Constantine banned all sacrifices, but this has raised a wide dispute among modern scholars. For a survey of the discussion, see Kahlos 2007, 122 n. 43.

52 *Codex Theodosianus* 9.21.9 (in 389): *Falsae monetae rei, quos vulgo paracharactas vocant, maiestatis crimine tenentur obnoxii*. Engemann 1988, 1040; MacCormack 1981, 67-68. For various cases during the early Empire, see Ando 2000, 236-239.

53 John Chrysostom, *Homilia in Matthaicum* 30.6 (*Patrologia Graeca* 57, col. 370).

54 As Outi Lehtipuu also reminds us in her article in this volume.

55 Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum* 1.11.

spectacles were forbidden.<sup>62</sup> As a compromise between the traditional needs of the people and the demands of sacrifice-loathing church leaders, the imperial legislators ended in tidying up civic celebrations of their cultic features, that is, sacrifices. A decree of 399 declares that amusements shall be performed for the people as before but without sacrifices and superstition.<sup>63</sup>

In the fourth century, Christian emperors in their legislation most likely and Christian bishops certainly supported the veneration of emperors without animal sacrifices. Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-339/340) in his *Life of Constantine* states that Emperor Constantine forbade the setting up of imperial images (εἰκόνας αὐτοῦ) in temples of idols (εἰδώλων ἐν ναοῖς) in order to avoid being “contaminated by the error of forbidden things even in replica” (μέχρι σκιαγραφίας τῆ πλάνη τῶν ἀπειρημένων μολύνοιο). Eusebius’ reference to forbidden things has usually been interpreted as a reference to animal sacrifice. Thus, at least for some Christians and Christian emperors, the combination of the reverence shown to imperial images and some traditional (‘idolatrous’) practices constituted a danger.<sup>64</sup> Let us have a look at what Gregory of Nazianzus says about this sort of combination.

In his invective against Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 330-390) lists the usual honours that a ruler receives – Gregory more or less tolerates these honours though he does not appreciate them very much. These are the royal customs among all peoples and also among the Romans: honouring rulers with public images (εἰκόσι δημοσίαις), then also crowns and diadems, the dye of the purple robe, and so forth. In addition to these, “rulers require adoration (προσκύνησις) in order to appear more august (σεμνότεροι) and not only that they are to be adored in person but also their statues and pictures (ἐν πλάσμασί τε καὶ χρώμασιν) in order that the reverence (σέβας) is more insatiable and more complete”.<sup>65</sup>

These are understood as the customary honours of the emperor. What were the limits of customary or acceptable honours of the emperor? What kind of veneration or adoration or reverence for the emperor was appropriate? What is disturbing in Emperor Julian, in the eyes of Gregory, is the element of idolatry that Julian cunningly tries to sneak into these customary imperial honours. Gregory states that Julian machinates traps for weaker Christians by mixing, like poison into food, impiety (τὴν ἀσέβειαν) with the customary honour of the emperors and by thus putting together the Roman laws and the worship of idols (εἰδώλων προσκύνησιν)

62 *Codex Theodosianus* 15.6.1 (in 392).

63 *Codex Theodosianus* 16.10.17 (in 399).

64 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.16. Lavan 2011b, 460. The ambiguous wording of this passage as well as other similar Constantinian ambiguities, e.g., in the rescript of Hispellum, could have been interpreted both as forbidding sacrifices in general or prohibiting magical practices. Salzman 1987, 172-188; Kahlos 2009, 101; Garnsey – Humfress 2001, 163-164. See also the discussion on the rescript of Hispellum in the article by Van Andringa in this volume.

65 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 4.80. Then follows a list of different representations of actions such as subduing and slaughtering barbarians, depicted in various forms. For discussions on this passage, see Ando 2000, 231; Elm 2012, 354-355; and Engemann 1988, 1043.

and connecting his own images with those of demons (ταῖς εἰκόσι συμπαραγράφων τοὺς δαίμονας). Consequently, by paying honour to the emperor, people paid the same honour to the idols. If one shunned paying honour to the idol, one insulted the ruler because the worship of the two was combined. According to Gregory, only a few, more cautious and intelligent Christians could escape Julian’s trap; many, more ignorant and simple Christians were, however, caught.<sup>66</sup> Thus, the combination of the reverence shown to the imperial image and the worship of what Gregory calls idols is condemnable, not the veneration of imperial images as such.

In his church history, the Eunomian Christian writer Philostorgius (368-439) criticized the cult of the Nicene Christians in front of the image of the deceased Constantine. He mentions Christians “worshipping with sacrifices (θυσίαις) the image of Constantine set up upon the porphyry column, paying homage to it with lamp-lighting (λυχνοκαίαις) and incense (θυμιάμασι) or praying (εὐχὰς) to it, as to a god (ὡς θεῷ) and making apotropaic offerings (ἀποτροπαίους ἱκετερίας).<sup>67</sup> Hence Philostorgius condemns practices connected with the reverence paid to the imperial image of the departed Constantine. It is worth noting that this criticism comes from the context in which the Eunomian Christian disapproves of the activities of his Christian rivals, the Nicene Christians. Practices such as sacrifices and prayers, addressed to the imperial image as if it were a god, were included in the disparagement and meant to embarrass the rival group.

Similarly, we need to put John Chrysostom’s discussion on the reverence paid to the imperial images into its proper context. He defends the Antiochian people after the Riot of Statues that we discussed above and represents the chastisement inflicted on the Antiochians as too severe in regard to the offence. As was noted above, he argued that the offence against the imperial family was nothing in comparison with the insults against God. The insults against imperial images were only insults against images, “not done to his face” (οὐ κατ’ ὄψιν), “nor while he was present to see or hear it” (οὐδὲ παρῶν καὶ ὁρῶν καὶ ἀκούων), and nevertheless none of those who perpetrated these deeds obtained forgiveness from the emperor. Furthermore, he reminds his audience that humans were the image of God. He then remarks that the bronze statue of the emperor was not even of the same substance as the emperor. And yet people who had insulted it had to pay the penalty.<sup>68</sup> I am inclined to see John Chrysostom’s ideas about imperial images as part of his defence of the Antiochian people. The same applies to John Chrysostom’s other homily that was discussed above and in which he presents the

66 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 4.81.

67 Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.17. Ed. Bidez 28. For the cult adoration paid to Constantine’s image, see Amidon 2007, 35 n. 49; Bowersock 1982, 181; the imperial statue was celebrated annually with hymns, acclamations and a procession. Constantine’s image was also venerated annually in Constantinople and Rome: Lavan 2011b, 465; Lund Warmind 1993, 215.

68 John Chrysostom, *Homilia de statu* 3.18 (*Patrologia Graeca* 49, col. 56-57). John Chrysostom reinforces his argument with references to biblical passages.

reproach as the words of a monk. Imperial images that had been violated would be set up again anyway but the rioters put to death cannot be reanimated.<sup>69</sup>

The power of imperial images and public reverence paid to them were accepted by ecclesiastical writers without any particularly adverse remarks, for example, in the passage of Athanasius discussed above. In the Christianizing Empire, the emperor remained a more or less sacred person – the representative of God on earth. His images continued to retain sanctity and were still objects of reverence. As the passages of Gregory of Nazianzus imply, the reverence of imperial images was taken as a matter of fact to be dutifully carried out and was not widely questioned by Christians. Even as connected with the cult of the old gods, the veneration of imperial images was not always a problematic issue for many Christians.

### Imperial Images in Legislation

It is understandable that the veneration of imperial images needed to be regulated and controlled by the emperors themselves. In a law of 425 Emperor Theodosius II wanted to control ceremonies connected to imperial images:

If at any time, whether on festal days, as is usual, or on ordinary days, statues or images of us are erected, let the magistrate be present without employing any vainglorious heights of adoration, but so that he may show that his presence has graced the day, the place, and our memory.<sup>70</sup>

What this “vainglorious heights of adoration” or “overzealous element of worship” (*adorationis ambitiosum fastigium*) ever meant was probably resolved by local administrators. The law continues:

Likewise, if our images are shown at public spectacles, they shall demonstrate that our divinity (*numen*) and praises live only in the hearts and secret places of the minds of those who attend. Worship in excess of human dignity (*excedens cultura hominum dignitatem*) shall be reserved for the supernal divinity (*superno numini*).<sup>71</sup>

This concerns veneration of imperial images subject to certain controls. Thus, the divinity, *numen*, of the emperor should be venerated within limits, but it is

69 John Chrysostom, *Homilia de statuis* 17.3 (*Patrologia Graeca* 49, col. 173).

70 *Codex Theodosianus* 15.4.1 (in 425): *Si quando nostrae statuae vel imagines eriguntur seu diebus, ut adsolet, festis sive communibus, adsit iudex sine adorationis ambitioso fastigio, ut ornamentum diei vel loco et nostrae recordationi sui probet accessisse praesentiam*. Translation by Pharr 1952 (modified).

71 *Codex Theodosianus* 15.4.1 (in 425): *Ludis quoque simulacra proposita tantum in animis concurrentum mentisque secretis nostrum numen et laudes vigere demonstrent; excedens cultura hominum dignitatem superno numini reservetur*. As Ando (2000, 237) remarks, “addressing public veneration of their portraits alludes to this belief, even as it reveals its authors’ utter lack of reflection on the religious import of the traditional vocabulary of Roman legislation”; see also Lavan 2011b, 460; Browning 1952, 20, n. 84; Garnsey – Humfress 2001, 164.

worth noting that the legislator still retains the term *numen* for the emperor. The emperor is *numen* but the highest honours, “worship in excess of human dignity”, should be reserved for the *supernum numen* only. As Glen Bowersock points out, this distinction follows the Roman tradition in which the emperors from Emperor Augustus onwards shunned excessive worship, thus keeping the separation between the divine emperor and the true deity.<sup>72</sup>

Along with these constraints from Theodosian legislation, it is clear at the same time that imperial images were an essential and vital part of societal life.<sup>73</sup> How effective this regulation by Theodosius II was is another question.<sup>74</sup> What is important here is the tidying-up process of emperor worship led by the Christian emperors. Most likely this process led to veneration without sacrifices, if only that could be controlled. But processions with imperial images continued; imperial images were ubiquitous and present in the cityscape. Imperial images for the most part retained the associations and connotations they had earlier had with prestige, authority and divinity. Occasions connected with loyalty and power relations remained largely the same.<sup>75</sup> Here we can return to the aphorism mentioned at the beginning of the article: myths may perish – rituals endure. Rituals connected with imperial images had become such an essential part of the life of Greco-Roman communities that they seem to have been more persistent than beliefs that were in the process of change in the Christianizing Empire.

### Conclusion

In the Christianizing Empire, Christian rulers expected to be shown due allegiance and reverence as before. The imperial ideology with the divine emperor, established during the previous centuries, was modified by abolishing animal sacrifices. Imperial images nonetheless retained their position in public celebrations, maintaining their prestige, authority and divinity. The reverence paid to imperial images continued to be an expression of loyalty. The writings of fourth- and fifth-century Christian authors reveal that reverence paid to the emperors and their images led to ambiguity about the status of the emperor’s divinity. These notions were intensely discussed and debated among Christians themselves, and even with pagans as the anonymous *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii* may indicate.

72 Bowersock 1982, 180.

73 The importance is stressed by Bowersock 1982, 179-180.

74 A similar question can be posed about how the legislation of Theodosius II forbidding many ‘pagan’ practices was ever put into effect; see Millar 2006, 117-123; Kahlos 2009, 91-92, 108.

75 Lavan 2011b, 460-465 speaks of an imperially-led reform and writes that there “had been some concessions to Christianity, but this was a tidying-up of existing practice rather than a positive Christianisation”. For expurgated forms of the imperial cult, see also Barnes 1996, 174 and Galinsky 2011, 15.



The Riot of Statues in Antioch in 387 shows that imperial images were still central symbols of allegiance in public life; the imperial government interpreted their destruction as a sacrilege and a rebellion, and the punishments could be severe. The imperial image represented the emperor and it was to be esteemed with appropriate ceremonies as if it were the emperor himself. These conceptions of the emperor and his image were intrinsically connected with the prevailing general ideas of the image and its prototype. The cult images of gods were believed to contain something of the divine nature of the gods, and accordingly, imperial images contained the presence of a godlike emperor. The explanatory power of imperial images was taken for granted in the theological argumentation by Athanasius of Alexandria, Severianus of Gabala and the Coptic writer, the so-called Pseudo-Theophilus of Alexandria.<sup>76</sup>

Late antique Christian writers take the veneration of imperial images as a self-evident part of public life. For example, the critical voices by John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nazianzus and Philostorgius must be pondered in their specific contexts. John Chrysostom's criticism of imperial images is part of his defence of the Antiochian people in connection with the Riot of Statues: in order to diminish the transgression of the rioters he needed to minimize the importance of imperial statues.

For his part, Gregory of Nazianzus condemned the honours paid to imperial images when they were connected with the cult of the old gods during Julian's reign. It was the combination of the reverence shown to the emperor's images and the 'idolatry' that was condemnable for Gregory, not the veneration of imperial images as such. When the Eunomian church historian Philostorgius sneers at the Christian veneration of the deceased Constantine's image, his criticism is to be understood as an attempt to embarrass Christian rivals, the Nicene Christians. In this disparagement, Philostorgius highlights such perplexing features as sacrifices and prayers addressed to the imperial image as to a god. In the imperial legislation, attempts were made to control the ways in which the emperor and his image were venerated. The highest honours were reserved for the supreme god, but it was made clear that the emperor was a *numen* as well. The show with imperial images went on in the public life of Late Antiquity.

## References

- Aalders, G. 1969. Nomos empsuchos. In P. Steinmetz (ed.) *Politeia und Res publica. Beiträge zum Verständnis von Politik, Recht und Staat in der Antike, den Andenken Rudolf Starks gewidmet*. Wiesbaden: Steiner. 315-329.
- Ando, C. 2000. *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

<sup>76</sup> It is noteworthy that arguments based on the worship of imperial images were later reused in the context of the Iconoclastic Controversy: see Kitzinger 1954, 124.

- Barnes, T. D. 1996. Christians and the Theater. In W. J. Slater (ed.) *Roman Theater and Society*. Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press. 161-180.
- Belayche, N. 2002. Sacrifice and Theory of Sacrifice during the "Pagan Reaction": Julian the Emperor. In A. I. Baumgarten (ed.) *Sacrifice in Religious Experience*. Leiden: Brill. 101-126.
- Belayche, N. 2005. Realia versus leges? Les sacrifices de la religion d'état au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle. In S. Georgoudi & R. Koch Piettre & F. Schmidt (eds.) *La cuisine et l'autel. Les sacrifices en questions dans les sociétés de la Méditerranée ancienne*. Brepols: Turnhout. 343-370.
- Bowersock, G. W. 1982. The imperial cult: perceptions and persistence. In B. F. Meyer & E. P. Sanders (eds.) *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition in the Greek and Roman World* vol. 3. London: SCM Press. 171-182.
- Bradbury, S. 1994. Constantine and the Problem of Anti-Pagan Legislation in the Fourth Century. *Classical Philology* 89, 120-139.
- Browning, R. 1952. The Riot of AD 387 in Antioch. *Journal of Roman Studies* 42, 13-20.
- Brubaker, L. 1995. Introduction: The Sacred Image. In R. Ousterhout & L. Brubaker (eds.) *The Sacred Image. East and West*. Urbana – Chicago: University of Illinois Press. 1-24.
- Claussen, M.A. 2011. Pagan Rebellion and Christian Apologetics in Fourth-Century Rome: The Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46, 589-614.
- Drake, H.A. 2011. Intolerance, Religious Violence, and Political Legitimacy in Late Antiquity. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79.1, 193-235.
- Ellingson, G. 2003. Functions of Imperial Images in Tetrarchic Politics. *Symbolae Osloenses* 78, 30-44.
- Engemann, J. 1988. Herrscherbild. In E. Dassmann et al. (eds.) *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 14. Stuttgart: Hiersemann. 966-1047.
- Francis, J. A. 2009. Visual and Verbal Representation: Image, Text, Person, and Power. In P. Rousseau (ed.) *A Companion to Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. 285-305.
- Francis, J. A. 2012. Late Antique Visuality: Blurring the Boundaries between Word and Image, Pagan and Christian. In D. Brakke, D. Deliyannis & E. Watts (eds.) *Shifting Cultural Frontiers in Late Antiquity*. Farnham: Ashgate. 139-149.
- Galinsky, K. 2011. The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider? In Jeffrey Brodd & Jonathan L. Reed (eds.) *Rome and Religion. A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult*. Atlanta: SBL. 1-21.
- Garnsey, P. & Humfress, C. 2001. *The Evolution of the Late Antique World*. Cambridge: Orchard Academic.
- Gradel, I. 2002. *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Harl, K.W. 1990. Sacrifice and pagan belief in fifth- and sixth-century Byzantium. *Past & Present* 128, 7-27.
- Kahlos, M. 2007. *Debate and Dialogue: Christian and Pagan Cultures, c. 380-430*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Kahlos, M. 2009. *Forbearance and Compulsion: Rhetoric of Tolerance and Intolerance in Late Antiquity*. London: Duckworth.
- Kahlos, M. 2013. Polluted by Sacrifices – Christian Repugnance at Sacrificial Rituals in Late Antiquity. In S. Katajala-Peltomaa & V. Vuolanto (eds.) *Ancient and Medieval Religion in Practice*. Rome: Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae. 159-171.
- Kitzinger, E. 1954. The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8, 83-149 = reprinted in Kitzinger, E. 1976. *The Art of Byzantium and the Medieval West, Selected Studies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 90-156.

- Kolb, F. 2001. *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- Kruse, H. 1934. *Studien zur offiziellen Geltung des Kaiserbildes im römischen Reiche*. Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums 19.3. Paderborn: Schöningh.
- Lavan, L. 2011. Political Talismans? Residual 'Pagan' Statues in Late Antique Public Space. In L. Lavan & M. Mulryan (eds.) *The Archaeology of Late Antique 'Paganism'*. Leiden: Brill. 439-477.
- Leppin, H. 1999. Steuern, Aufstand und Rhetoren: Der Antiochener Steueraufstand von 387 in christlicher und heidnischer Deutung. In H. Brandt (ed.) *Gedeutete Realität. Krisen, Wirklichkeiten, Interpretationen (3.-6. Jh. n. Chr.)*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner. 103-123.
- Liebeschuetz, J. H. G. W. 1972. *Antioch. City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Lund Warmind, M. 1993. The cult of the Roman Emperor before and after Christianity. T. Ahlbäck (ed.) *The Problem of Ritual*. Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis 15. Åbo: Åbo Akademi. 211-220.
- MacCormack, S. 1981. *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mathews, T. F. 2001. The Emperor and the Icon. In J. R. Brandt & O. Steen (eds.) *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia* 15 (n.s. 1). Rome: Institutum Romanum Norvegiae, Bardi Editore. 163-177.
- Matthews, J. F. 2000. *Laying Down the Law: A Study of the Theodosian Code*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- McCormick, M. 1986. *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Millar, F. 2006. *A Greek Roman Empire. Power and Belief under Theodosius II 408-450*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mitchell, S. 2007. *A History of the Later Roman Empire AD 284-641: The transformation of the ancient world*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Murray, C. S. 1989. Artistic idiom and doctrinal development. In R. Williams (ed.) *The Making of Orthodoxy. Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 288-307.
- Niemeyer, H. G. 1968. *Studien zur statuarischen Darstellung der römischen Kaiser*. Berlin: Gebr. Mann.
- Pekáry, T. 1985. *Das römische Kaiserbildnis in Staat, Kult und Gesellschaft, dargestellt anhand der Schriftquellen*. Berlin: Gebr. Mann.
- Salzman, M. R. 1987. Superstitio in the Codex Theodosianus and the Persecution of Pagans. *Vigiliae Christianae* 41, 172-188.
- Salzman, M.R. 1990. *On Roman Time: The Codex Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban life in Late Antiquity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sandwell, I. 2007. *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity. Greeks, Jews and Christians in Antioch*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Saradi-Mendelovici, H. 1990. Christian Attitudes towards Pagan Monuments in Late Antiquity and Their Legacy in Later Byzantine Centuries. *Dobarton Oaks Papers* 44, 47-61.
- Smith, R. R. R. 1997. The Public Image of Licinius I: Portrait Sculpture and Imperial Ideology in the Early Fourth Century. *Journal of Roman Studies* 87, 170-202.
- Stewart, P. 1999. The destruction of statues in Late Antiquity. In R. Miles (ed.) *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity*. London: Routledge. 159-189.
- Ullucci, D. 2012. *The Christian Rejection of Animal Sacrifice*. New York: Oxford University Press.

# Pontifex Maximus: from Augustus to Gratian – and Beyond

Alan Cameron

Columbia University

*This article explores the development of the imperial title pontifex maximus from Emperor Augustus (12 BCE) to fourth-century Emperor Gratian (382 CE) as well as the transformation of the title into that of pontifex inclitus after Gratian. Following the precedent of Augustus, every emperor down to Gratian (d. 383) was pontifex maximus. The title pontifex maximus formed a standing element in the imperial titulature, usually in first place in the litany of titles. The article demonstrates that the title pontifex maximus was modified into pontifex inclitus from Gratian on. Christian emperors were anxious to eliminate the pagan associations of pontifex maximus but they were reluctant to give up their traditional claim to priestly authority.*

The story of the emperor as *pontifex maximus* is framed by Augustus (12 BCE) and Gratian (382 CE). Actually, in his quest to accumulate religious authority in the Roman state Augustus was following the precedent of his adoptive father (*pontifex* in 73, *pontifex maximus* in 63, *augur* in 47).<sup>1</sup> In order not to seem to be in a hurry to become *pontifex maximus* he was prepared, as he spells out in detail in the *Res Gestae*, to wait 24 years till the death of the triumvir Lepidus. Yet at the same time he flagrantly violated all precedent in contriving to become a member of all the other priestly colleges, and boasted about that too in the *Res Gestae*.<sup>2</sup>

Why was it so important to be *pontifex maximus*? The greater part of what it is no exaggeration to call Augustus's religious program was completed long before he became *pontifex maximus* in 12 BCE.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, while the prestige of the office was high, its actual powers, largely consultative, were limited. Since Augustus possessed overwhelming executive power lacking to any earlier *pontifex maximus*, almost everything he did even in the religious sphere far exceeded the formal limitations of the office.

A perhaps more intriguing question is why he wanted all the other priesthoods, which in themselves conferred very little power. In part, the answer must be that

---

1 For Caesar's priesthoods, Weinstock 1971, 28-34.

2 Augustus, *Res Gestae* 7.3 and 10.2.

3 For a recent survey, Scheid 2005, 175-94.

Augustus wanted a *monopoly* of whatever religious power was available. Each priestly college had a different area of specialization, and despite his grand title, the *pontifex maximus* had no authority over the other colleges. Since he was obviously the most influential member of every college, no one else could hope to match his authority. The ordinary members of all the other priesthoods must have seen their own influence diminish.

Second, membership of the colleges he had done so much to restore to their former dignity (and in the case of the Arval Brethren virtually invent) was highly prized. The traditional way to get into the colleges had always been co-optation by existing members. By being a member, inevitably the most important member, of all the colleges, Augustus was always able to nominate anyone he wished to any college while ostensibly just acting as a colleague among colleagues. The truth is that he had in his gift an almost unlimited number of prizes that cost him nothing and did not involve granting any actual power to potential rivals – in a way like British knighthoods or peerages. It had always been an honour to become a priest. Augustus turned it into a reward for loyalty.

Following Augustan precedent, every emperor down to Gratian (d. 383) was *pontifex maximus*. According to the early sixth-century historian Zosimus, Gratian finally repudiated the office as “not lawful for a Christian”. Since no later emperor is attested with the title, Zosimus’s evidence has usually been accepted, despite his notorious unreliability. After all, so it was assumed, sooner or later a Christian emperor was bound to reject the pagan title. In a recent study I argued that the problems with this chapter of Zosimus are much more serious than hitherto appreciated, and proposed an entirely different account of the final transformation of the imperial *pontifex*.<sup>4</sup> Though accepted by many, this solution was unwelcome in the usual conservative quarters, and the main purpose of this article is to respond to criticisms<sup>5</sup> and fortify my thesis with new arguments.

But first, a few more preliminaries. To start with, every new emperor had to wait for the next pontifical election, held in March, but from the accession of Nerva on, in 96, he received the pontificate together with the rest of his imperial powers and membership of the other major colleges (augurs, *quindecimviri*, *epulones* and Arval brethren) by senatorial decree. Furthermore, from an early date every heir apparent was awarded membership of the four major colleges and the Arval brethren before his succession (we have coins proclaiming the future emperor Nero’s membership in all five *ex senatus consulto*).<sup>6</sup> *Pontifex maximus* formed a standing element in the imperial titulature, usually in first place in the litany of titles (examples are cited below). In addition, right down into the third century the emperor is regularly shown

4 Cameron 2007, 341-84.

5 Paschoud 2006, 67-69 and Paschoud 2012, 359-88 at 362-64; I also respond to a number of points in Rüpke 2008, 57-66; Cracco Ruggini 2011, 405-423, while occasionally questioning my emphasis follows my general interpretation. Stepper 2003 is a mine of information on imperial priesthoods.

6 For the sources, Stepper 2003, 50.

on the coinage sacrificing.<sup>7</sup> The emperor became virtually the only person shown in art performing sacrifice. As Beard, North and Price put it, “Roman religion was becoming tied to a particular person,” the emperor.<sup>8</sup>

In the first two centuries of the empire, despite spending long periods abroad, whether campaigning (like Trajan, Marcus or Severus) or sightseeing (like Hadrian), emperors were normally resident in Rome and fulfilled in person the most important ritual duties of the *pontifex maximus*, underlining the centrality of his role in Roman society. When they were away from Rome, pontifical duties were fulfilled by a *promagister*, presumably a senior member of the college, only known from inscriptions.<sup>9</sup> Some have argued that the appointment of a deputy is a sign of the decreasing importance of the emperor’s role as *pontifex*,<sup>10</sup> but the first known dates from 155 CE, and it has plausibly been suggested that the office was a creation of Hadrian, to perform pontifical duties during his extended absences from Rome.<sup>11</sup> If so, that might suggest conscientiousness rather than neglect. According to the *Historia Augusta* (22. 11), despite these absences Hadrian “observed Roman rituals very scrupulously and did his duty as *pontifex maximus*,” one of the few literary references to an emperor actually performing pontifical duties. The situation was in any case hardly new. Julius Caesar cannot have performed his duties as *pontifex maximus* when away campaigning in Gaul for eight years.

When Marcus Aurelius and his adoptive brother Lucius Verus became joint emperors in 161, only Marcus took the title *pontifex maximus*, logically enough. There should only be one *maximus*. But when Pupienus and Balbinus took power jointly on the death of Maximin in 238, illogically enough both were proclaimed *pontifex maximus*. In 369 Valentinian I, Valens and Gratian are all three styled *pontifex maximus* (see below). From the second half of the third century on emperors spent less and less time in Rome. How did this factor, nicely called “die Romferne” by German scholars, affect the emperor’s role as *pontifex maximus*? Obviously an absent emperor could not attend the meetings of the various colleges or the festivals in person. But as we learn from the *Acta* of the Arvals, imperial nominations to the priesthoods were often made by letter. For example, *ex litteris Imp(eratoris) C[ae]sar[is] Traiani Hadriani Augusti fratrem arvaem cooptaverunt*.<sup>12</sup> Pliny wrote to Trajan asking for an augurate or septemvirate when he was on the far side of the Roman world fighting in Dacia (*Epistula* 10.13).

Rüpke, determined to minimise imperial participation in the priestly colleges, claims that after 204 “there are no recorded instances of personal participation by

7 Manders 2012, 133-154.

8 Beard et al. 1998, vol. I, 186.

9 Van Haepelen 2002, 197-201.

10 Manders 2012, 143 n. 218.

11 Hammond 1959, 69.

12 Scheid 1998, no. 68. I. 28-30; cf. 69. 23; 114. I. 20.

the reigning emperor in the periodic meetings of any college,” apparently regarding the practice of communication by letter as implying a more distant and less significant relationship. But surely the fact that (for example) Trajan took the trouble to write to the college of augurs on Pliny’s behalf from the Danube frontier suggests the very reverse. According to the *Historia Augusta*, Alexander Severus (222-235) “paid great deference to the *pontifices*, *quindecimviri* and augurs, even permitting some religious cases that he had already decided himself to be reopened and differently resolved” (*Vita Alexandri Severi* 22.5).<sup>13</sup> The implication is that in the ordinary way the emperor now decided cases on his own, without needing to attend meetings or consult his fellow priests. It was enough that he communicated his decisions or nominations in a letter. Emperors consulted their fellow pontiffs at least as late as the reign of Trajan, but even on routine issues that fell within the purview of the college, such as the transfer of buried remains, unusually well documented in our sources, we find emperors answering requests in person by issuing subscriptions addressed to individuals.<sup>14</sup>

By the mid third century the title *pontifex maximus* appears less often on the coinage; in addition coins tend to represent the gods the emperor worshipped rather than the emperor himself sacrificing.<sup>15</sup> As for inscriptions, according to Rüpke “There was no longer any interest in the title, and its use was avoided, perhaps intentionally.” The latter point at any rate is simply untrue. The title is certainly found less often on dedications, but that does not prove lack of “interest,” much less that it was “avoided.” Take the tetrarch Galerius, Caesar from 293 to 305, Augustus from 305 to 311. To be sure few of his inscriptions offer the title, but those that do give it in its regular place in the full imperial titulature. In illustration, here is a recently published dedication from Macedonia:<sup>16</sup>

*Imperator Caesar Galerius Valerius Maximianus Pius Felix Augustus, pontifex maximus, Germanicus maximus VI, Sarmaticus maximus V, Persicus maximus II, Britannicus maximus, Carpicus maximus V, Armeniacus maximus, Medicus maximus, Adiabenicus maximus, tribunicia potestate XVII, imperator III, pater patriae, proconsul...*

The full style was still calculated with some care. Even the victory titles are given iteration numbers, commemorating not just victories won by Galerius himself, but all victories won by all members of the imperial college.<sup>17</sup> Here the year (307/308) is the seventeenth of Galerius’s tribunician power, but only his third as *imperator*,

<sup>13</sup> Of course, this *vita* is largely late fourth-century fiction, but presumably this detail at any rate reflects how it was hoped or expected that a “good” imperial *pontifex* would act.

<sup>14</sup> Millar 1977, 359, 361.

<sup>15</sup> Manders 2012, 133-145.

<sup>16</sup> AE 2002, 1293, from Heraclea Sintica, 307/308: Lepelley 2004, 221-31; Corcoran 2006, 231-240. Here and later I both expand and supplement without indication abbreviations and restorations that are not in doubt.

<sup>17</sup> Barnes 1982, 27.

meaning Augustus (305). That is because he received the tribunician power when he was created Caesar in 293.<sup>18</sup> If he had been consul (here correctly omitted, since he was not), that would have been registered before *imperator* with the iteration number.<sup>19</sup> It was not till he became Augustus that he was able to add the title *pontifex maximus*. Dedications naming all four members of the first tetrarchy give the title to only Diocletian and Maximian. Likewise dedications naming Constantine together with his three or four sons as Caesars style only Constantine himself *pontifex maximus*. The fact that the title was strictly limited to Augusti is clear proof of its continuing significance.

The emperor’s formal titulature, originally no more than a line or so, had grown exponentially over the years. It is understandable, given considerations of space and the complexities of the constantly changing iteration numbers, that in most contexts an abbreviated style came into general use, already by the third century often no more than *pius felix Augustus*, after Constantine *pius felix triumphator semper Augustus*. Michael Peachin’s study of imperial titulature from 235 to 284 lists separately examples with just the first half of the standard official formula, *Imperator Caesar* (name) *pius felix Augustus*, from formulae containing the second half as well, namely *pontifex maximus tribunicia potestate consul pater patriae proconsul*.<sup>20</sup> Thomas Grünewald’s collection of more than 500 Latin inscriptions of Constantine distinguishes between “Standardtitulatur” (by which, significantly enough, he means the short style) and “erweiterte, klassische Kaisertitulatur”.<sup>21</sup> It is only the latter, a much smaller group, that ever includes *pontifex maximus*. So while it happens to be true it is nonetheless misleading to say that most Constantinian inscriptions omit the title. For it is not just *pontifex maximus* they omit, but the entire second half of the standard formula. There is not the slightest reason to believe that Constantine avoided the *pontifex* title. Grünewald cites 43 examples. In most cases the decision to use the short rather than long form is not likely to have been made at a high level, let alone by the emperor himself. The importance of the document and in some cases even the space available on the stone must have been factors.

According to Rüpke, after Constantine “the title is extremely rare” (p. 62). That is true but irrelevant, a consequence of the increasing rarity of the full style and the decline of the epigraphic habit. Only three examples survive for Constantius II. Yet during his one brief visit to Rome in 357 Constantius filled vacancies in the priestly colleges (*replevit nobilibus sacerdotia*).<sup>22</sup> To the so far uncontested assumption that he did this in his capacity as *pontifex maximus*, Rüpke objects that “the only explicitly attested electoral function of this office was confined to the *flamen*

<sup>18</sup> Though in a document of 311 Galerius is given as *trib. pot. xx imp. xix*: for the details, Barnes 1982, 26.

<sup>19</sup> For the complicated consular proclamations in 307-308, Bagnall et al. 1987, 150-151.

<sup>20</sup> Peachin 1990, 105, also distinguishing a third group with “exact chronological indications”.

<sup>21</sup> Grünewald 1990, 179-272.

<sup>22</sup> Symmachus, *Relatio* 3.7.

*Dialis* and *virgines Vestales*,” and that he was simply “participating in senatorial appointments.” This is an excessively legalistic approach and probably not correct even on these grounds. No electoral functions were involved. Since the imperial *pontifex* had for centuries automatically been a member of all the other colleges, he was entitled to nominate new candidates for each one. Pliny asked Trajan to nominate him for one of the two colleges where there was a vacancy, the augurs and the *septemviri epulonum*. By 357 it had been many decades since any new member of the colleges had received the honour of nomination by the (normally absent) imperial *pontifex maximus*. Having just made a concession to Christian senators (the removal of the altar of Victory from the senate house), Constantius tactfully conceded another to pagan senators.

“Julian of course constitutes the notorious exception,” Rüpke concedes, citing four inscriptions with a *passim*, as though they were countless. There are indeed more for Julian (22 out of a total of 192) than (say) for Constantius II (though not nearly as many as for Constantine).<sup>23</sup> We may even be able to date the earliest epigraphic evidence: four milestones on the road between Serdica and Naissus.<sup>24</sup> It was when he stopped off at Naissus on his way from Paris to Constantinople that Julian heard the news of Constantius’s death, probably towards the end of November 361. Historians have used these inscriptions as evidence for when Julian “assumed” the title. From the fact that there is no earlier epigraphic evidence it has been inferred that he waited till Constantius’s death. Arce argues for October/November 361, adding that in March 362 he was “using” the title regularly; K. Dietz and S. Conti agree that the news of Constantius’s death marked the turning point.<sup>25</sup> When publishing the well-known dedication in Israel that proclaims Julian *templorum restaurator*, A. Negev wrote of Julian “renew[ing] this old imperial title”.<sup>26</sup>

There is no question that Julian saw the office of *pontifex maximus* as in some way authorizing his religious policies, “rejoicing”, as Libanius put it, “in the title of priest no less than in that of emperor” (χαίρει καλούμενος ἱερεὺς οὐχ ἦπτον ἢ βασιλεύς).<sup>27</sup> In one letter he appealed to what he rightly styled his ancestral title (εἰμί κατὰ μὲν τὰ πάτρια μέγας ἀρχιερεὺς) and in another referred to his status as ἀρχιερεὺς μέγιστος.<sup>28</sup> Both Socrates and Sozomen say that after he became Augustus Julian started calling himself ἀρχιερεὺς. According to Stepper this meant

that he “mit Amt und Titel sichtbar in Erscheinung trat”,<sup>29</sup> surely in fact no more than a reference to Julian’s own claims in his letters.<sup>30</sup>

The fact is that he neither renewed nor even assumed the title. He did not need to. It came to him automatically on the death of Constantius, as it had to all his predecessors (and at least four successors), Christians no less than pagans, for the past three and a half centuries. Arguably (and certainly on a retroactive computation) it came to him the moment he assumed the title of Augustus in Paris in February 360. Nor is there anything provocatively pagan about his *pontifex* dedications. All but three are entirely conventional. Here is one picked at random, a milestone from near Sirmium:<sup>31</sup>

*Imperatori Caessari domino nostro Fl. Claudio Iuliano pio felici victori ac triumphatori semper Augusto, pontifici maximo, imperatori VII, conssuli III, bono rei publicae nato, patri patriae, proconsuli.*

As on thousands of exactly similar documents, the pontificate is registered in its standard place between the words *Augusto* and *imperatori*. The only even slightly irregular version appears on three milestones found close together on the same Roman road near Turin:<sup>32</sup>

*imperator Caesar, pontifex maximus, Fl. Claudius Iulianus semper Augustus.*

The jumbled word order (*pontifex maximus* after *Caesar* rather than *Augustus*) is surely an error rather than an attempt to emphasize the pontificate, especially since all three lack the last four titles and even *d(ominus) n(oster)* before the proper name.

Arce notes that one milestone also bears the names of Valentinian and Valens, who did not (he adds) delete Julian’s pontificate.<sup>33</sup> Why should they have? This presupposes that any Christian would have found the title offensive, an unmistakable indication of Julian’s paganism. Yet both Valentinian and Valens (and Valentinian’s son Gratian) bore it themselves, as attested by the following full style dedication, commemorating the erection of a bridge in Rome in 369.<sup>34</sup>

23 Conti 2004; for an earlier collection, Arce 1984, 101-176.

24 Conti 2004, nos. 58-61.

25 Arce 1984, 124, no. 19; Dietz 2000, 811-812; Conti 2004, 49.

26 Negev 1969, 172.

27 Libanius, *Oratio* 12.80.

28 Julian, *Epistula* 88 and 89, in J. Bidez, *L'empereur Julien: Lettres* (Paris 1960), pp. 151. 6 and 166. 14.

29 Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.1.39 and Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.1.2; Stepper 2003, 214 n. 17.

30 So G. Sabbah in Sabbah, Festugière, Grillet, *Sozomène, Hist. Eccl.* v-vi (Paris 2005), p. 80 n. 5.

31 ILS 753 = Arce 1984, p. 109 no. 97; Conti 2004, p. 123 no. 91. As before, for ease of comprehension I have expanded all abbreviations without indication. The double s is found in a number of Julian inscriptions.

32 Arce 1984, p. 103, nos. 25-27; Conti 2004, nos. 80-82.

33 Milestones often bear the names and titles of successive emperors.

34 ILS 771; it will shortly become clear why I have highlighted all the occurrences of *maximus*.

*Domini nostri imperatores Caesares Fl. Valentinianus pius felix maximus victor ac triumphator semper Augustus, pontifex maximus, Germanicus maximus, Alamannicus maximus, Francicus maximus, Gothicus maximus, tribuniciae potestatis VII, imperator VI, consul II, pater patriae, proconsul; et Fl. Valens pius felix maximus victor ac triumphator semper Augustus, pontifex maximus, Germanicus maximus, Alamannicus maximus, Francicus maximus, Gothicus maximus, tribuniciae potestatis VII, imperator VI, consul II, pater patriae, proconsul; et Fl. Gratianus pius felix maximus victor ac triumphator semper Augustus, pontifex maximus, Germanicus maximus, Alamannicus maximus, Francicus maximus, Gothicus maximus, tribuniciae potestatis III, imperator II, consul primum, Germanicus maximus, Alamannicus maximus, Francicus maximus, Gothicus maximus, tribuniciae potestatis III, imperator II, pater patriae, proconsul... pontem felicis nominis Gratiani in usum senatus ac populi Romani constitui dedicarique iusserunt.*

This is the latest surviving dedication on which an emperor is styled *pontifex maximus*, in fact three emperors, one of them none other than Gratian. Pursuing his conviction, largely based on a misunderstanding of the growing epigraphic silence, that emperors had in effect ceased to be *pontifex maximus* even before the end of the third century, Rüpke found it hard to take this very precise and solid evidence at face value. “It cannot be stressed enough,” he argued, “that the only post-Julian evidence for the pontificate of emperors” concerns a bridge. That is to say, we are asked to believe that this is not really a reference to the office of *pontifex maximus* but, in the bridge-building context, an etymological play on words, “showing the extent to which it had already lost prestige...an attempt to ‘manage’ a title that, as a component of the imperial title, was seen as being as problematic as it was traditional”.<sup>35</sup>

Quite apart from the sheer improbability of a pun on the imperial titulature in a public dedication, there are a number of more specific objections. There was no need to employ the full style in its entirety, complete with iteration numbers, just to make a pun on pons. A second dedication on the very same bridge uses the abbreviated style: *Gratiani triumphalis principis pontem...ddd. nnn. Valentinianus, Valens et Gratianus victores maximi ac perennes Augusti incohari, perfici dedicarique iusserunt*.<sup>36</sup> More important, the argument presupposes that *pontifex maximus* still had embarrassing pagan associations, best cloaked in some way. But if so, why not simply drop it, or (like almost such dedications) use the short style? If this is the latest surviving example of the full imperial titulature, it is also correct and regular in every detail, prominently displayed on a public monument in Rome, cast-iron evidence that all three emperors were laying claim to the title as late as 369.

<sup>35</sup> Rüpke 2008, 63a.

<sup>36</sup> ILS 772. Note too ILS 769 (365/367) from a slightly earlier bridge in Rome: *Imperatori Caesari domino nostro Fl. Valenti, maximo, pio, felici, victori ac triumphatori semper Augusto...Valentiniani pontis.*

It is regularly stated that, since Theodosius I is never attested with the title, he never bore it and that it must therefore (as Zosimus claims) have been Gratian who repudiated it. But since we have no Theodosian dedication that offers the full style, the argument is worthless. Indeed, if (as I argue below) Gratian’s action should be dated to 382, for the first three years of his reign Theodosius almost certainly did bear the title – and Valentinian II for the first eight years of his. In 2007 I cited a Byzantine text that describes “Theodosius the Great” as “priest as well as emperor”.<sup>37</sup>

Most of those who have discussed the question have been unaware that we do in fact have two documents that offer the full style for three much later emperors, one eastern, the other western.<sup>38</sup> First a letter of Marcian and Valentinian III, dated to 452, preserved in the *Acta* of the Council of Chalcedon:<sup>39</sup>

*Imperatores Caesares Flavius Valentinianus, pontifex inclitus, Germanicus inclitus, Alamannicus inclitus, <Francicus inclitus>, Sarmaticus inclitus, tribuniciae potestatis vicies septies, imperator vicies septies, <consul septies> et Flavius Marcianus, pontifex inclitus, Alamannicus inclitus, Francicus inclitus, tribuniciae potestatis ter, imperator iterum, consul...*

And second a letter of the emperor Anastasius addressed to the senate of Rome in 516:<sup>40</sup>

*Imperator Caesar Flavius Anastasius, pontifex inclitus, Germanicus inclitus, Francicus inclitus, Sarmaticus inclitus, tribunici<ae potestatis> XXV, imper<ator> XXV, consul tertio,<sup>41</sup> pius, felix, victor ac triumphator semper Augustus, pater patriae, proconsul...*

While none of the three emperors is styled *pontifex maximus*, all are nonetheless styled *pontifex*, not *maximus*, but an entirely new title, *pontifex inclitus*. No less important, every *maximus* we see in ILS 771 has been replaced by an *inclitus*<sup>42</sup> in these two documents, not only the *maximus* in *pontifex maximus*, but the *maximus* added to all the victory titles. On this basis I argued in 2007 that Gratian did not in fact *repudiate* the office of *pontifex maximus*, but “redefined his priestly authority in less specific terms”.

<sup>37</sup> Pseudo-Gregory II (715-731), ed. J. Gouillard, “Aux origines de l’iconoclasme: le témoignage de Grégoire II”, *Travaux et Mémoires* (1968), 300-303, with Dagron, *Emperor and Priest* (Cambridge 2003), 162; Cameron 2007, 367.

<sup>38</sup> An honorable exception is Rösch 1978, 85-88 (cf. Stepper 2003, 219), who comes close to my own position, though ascribing the initiative to Theodosius rather than Gratian. I regret not doing justice to his work in 2007.

<sup>39</sup> ACO II. 3. 346. 38-347. 3; supplements courtesy of Tim Barnes, on the assumption (possibly unjustified) that the originals were correct in every detail.

<sup>40</sup> *Collectio Avellana* no. 113.

<sup>41</sup> Anastasius’s third (and last) consulship actually fell in 507, and was apparently just repeated thereafter.

<sup>42</sup> Manuscripts often offer *inclitus*, but for the sake of uniformity I write *inclitus* throughout.

Paschoud dismissed both documents as too “tenuous and late” to undermine the authority of Zosimus.<sup>43</sup> Yet Zosimus was an incompetent eastern historian, especially ill-informed about western affairs, writing more than a century after the event, while both these texts are official, contemporary documents, apart from one or two mechanical omissions and mistaken expansions of abbreviations correct down to the iteration numbers. The letter of Marcian correctly includes both members of the imperial college, with his senior (though younger) colleague Valentinian III correctly named first. One and quite possibly probably both are actually earlier than Zosimus.<sup>44</sup> Paschoud was unwilling to see any connection between Gratian supposedly repudiating the office of *pontifex maximus*, and his successors officially proclaiming themselves a different sort of *pontifex*.

Above all, he ignored the surprising (and revealing) substitution of *inclitus* for the *maximus* added to victory titles, first found for L. Verus. It has been argued that this innovation was a compensation for Verus not being able to share the supreme pontificate with his senior colleague Marcus,<sup>45</sup> which if true would be highly relevant to my argument. However that may be, an intensifying *maximus* soon became standard in victory titles,<sup>46</sup> however many there might be. The heading to the letter of Galerius quoted above offers no fewer than eight victory titles, every one followed by an intensifying *maximus*. Given the hundreds of examples of victory titles plus *maximus*, there can be no doubt that in the imperial letters of 452 and 516 *inclitus* was substituted throughout for the formerly standard *maximus*. This is especially conspicuous in the four victory titles each of Valentinian III and Marcian.

Constantine introduced yet another *maximus* into the imperial titulature, to mark his status as senior Augustus, after his name and before *pius felix...Augustus*. To quote just one out of more than a hundred examples, *domino nostro Constantino maximo pio felici victori ac triumphatori semper Augusto*.<sup>47</sup> This *maximus* is common but not invariable in the titulature of later emperors, sometimes illogically applied to the entire imperial college, as in *ILS 771*, to Gratian no less than Valentinian and Valens, in the sequence *pius felix maximus...Augustus*.

It is true that the letters of Marcian and Anastasius are 70 and 130 years respectively later than Gratian, but the substitution of *inclitus* for what we may style the Constantinian *maximus* can be traced back to within one year of Gratian's death. There are several early fifth-century examples: another letter of Valentinian III and Marcian quoted in the Chalcedon *Acta*, *Victores Valentinianus et Marcianus incliti triumphatores semper Augusti* (451); a letter of Theodosius II to Valentinian III (447), *domino Valentiniano inclito victori ac triumphatori semper Augusto*; and

two letters of Honorius, *Victor Honorius inclitus triumphator semper Augustus* (419).<sup>48</sup> But the earliest by far are the numerous imperial apostrophes in the *Relationes* of Symmachus from 384: *domine imperator Valentiniane inclite victor ac triumphator semper Auguste*; *domini imperatores Theodosi et Arcadi incliti victores ac triumphatores semper Augusti*; and *domini imperatores Valentiniane Theodosi et Arcadi incliti victores ac triumphatores semper Augusti*. It has not, I think, been previously noticed<sup>49</sup> that in every case this *inclitus* replaces what would have been a *maximus* in documents drafted before Gratian.

While it is hard to imagine what reason anyone could have for changing the *maximus* in *maximus Augustus* or *Germanicus maximus*, it is obvious why it was thought high time to do something about *pontifex maximus*. Of course, it would have been far easier just to drop the title altogether – as indeed Gratian has hitherto been thought to have done. Instead it was decided to solve what must finally have been recognized as a problem by substituting a different epithet. The *maximus* had to go, but some new, uncontroversial limiting epithet had to be found. A Christian emperor could not call himself simply *pontifex*, which would (falsely) imply that he was a cleric. Why *inclitus* was chosen, an elevated, archaic word, found in epic and the historians, but with no documented history in formal imperial titulature, is anyone's guess.<sup>50</sup> The choice was presumably in itself unimportant, so long as the new epithet had no pagan associations.

It seems that Christian emperors from Gratian on, while evidently anxious to eliminate the pagan associations of *pontifex maximus*, were nonetheless reluctant to give up their traditional claim, going back to Augustus himself, to some sort of priestly authority. In the full style the formulae *maximus Augustus*, *pontifex maximus* and *Germanicus maximus*, *Sarmaticus maximus* etc. were uncomfortably close to each other. Even if *pontifex* was stripped of its *maximus*, there were enough left in the context to recall the now embarrassing combination. Better get rid of every *maximus*. Whence the global substitution of *inclitus* for *maximus* throughout. Perhaps the most intriguing feature of *inclitus* is how colourless and unspecific a substitution it seems for the emphatic superlative *maximus*. *Pontifex inclitus*, “famous priest,” is curiously unemphatic. Paschoud objected to my explanation that *inclitus* “does not have a very strong technical sense”. This is certainly true, but misses the point. That surely was the point: an entirely unspecific, uncontroversial epithet.

43 “des éléments ténus et très postérieurs,” Paschoud 2006, 68.

44 That is to say, on Paschoud's own date for Zosimus: see his *Zosime, Histoire nouvelle* I2 (Paris 2000), xvi.

45 Hammond 1957, 53-54.

46 Kienast 1996, 40-41.

47 *CIL* VI 1142 = no. 243 in Gr̄newald's catalogue; see too his word index at pp. 266-68.

48 Theodosius II, *Novel* 2; ACO II. 4. 167. 1; *Collectio Avellana* nos. 35 and 37. R̄sch 1978, 162-170 quotes many more examples, going down to Heraclius, mostly Greek with *inclitus* rendered ἔνδοξος (see note 50).

49 Not even by myself in 2007.

50 For examples applied informally to emperors (*inclute princeps* and the like), see Cameron 2007, 373-74. For ἔνδοξος as the Greek equivalent for *inclitus* (e.g. Νικηταὶ Οὐαλεντινιανὸς καὶ Μαρκιανὸς ἔνδοξοι τροπαιοῦχοι ἀεὶ σεβαστοὶ, ACO II. 1. 10. 5; R̄sch 1978, 44, 167-70). Paradoxically, the superlative ἔνδοξότατος was applied to Caesars and lower officials (R̄sch 1978, 44; Bagnall and Worp 2004, 221).



It is hard to believe that the three substitutions were made independently of each other or at different times. We have seen that the substitution of the “Constantinian” *maximus* in the imperial titulature first appears in the *Relationes* of Symmachus, datable between June/July 384 and Jan. / Feb. 385, barely a year after Gratian’s death. The latest dedication to feature the traditional *maximus* throughout is *ILS* 771 of 369. Apparently something happened between 369 and 384/5 to cause the *pontifex maximus* title to become unacceptable. This brings us, finally, to Zosimus.

The chapter in question (4.36) is a fictionalized history of the supreme pontificate from King Numa to Gratian, ignoring the entire Republican period, glossing *pontifex* as γεφυροῦς (rather than Plutarch’s more accurate γεφυροποιός),<sup>51</sup> and deriving it from a bridge in mythical Thessaly! I discussed the passage at length in 2007, arguing that it was “a tissue of ignorance and misinformation from start to finish”.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless most moderns passionately defend the passage as describing a key moment in the war against paganism. Yet nothing elsewhere in Zosimus suggests that Gratian pursued any such policy. And why should anyone have thought that repudiating a title born for three quarters of a century by Christian emperors would be (to quote Henry Chadwick) a “dramatic break with the pagan past”.<sup>53</sup>

The passage is a digression from Zosimus’s main narrative. Half the chapter deals with pre-history, and the preceding chapter (4.35) has already recorded the defeat and death of Gratian. All that need concern us here are the two following sentences:

- 1) As soon as each [emperor] assumed supreme power, the priestly robe (ιερατικὴ στολή) was brought to him by the *pontifices* and he was styled *pontifex maximus*...
- 2) But when the *pontifices* brought the robe to Gratian *in the usual way* (κατὰ τὸ σὺνηθεῶς), he rejected their request, considering it impious for a Christian to wear such garb.

First of all, the “priestly robe” is Byzantine fiction, only otherwise known from a fanciful description by John the Lydian.<sup>54</sup> More important, Paschoud still clings to the traditional assumption that the second sentence describes an actual meeting, in Rome, between Gratian and pontiffs – supplying the desired clash between

51 Plutarch, *Numa Pompilius* 9. 65; for other Greek terms used for *pontifex*, Mason 1974, 115-116.

52 Cameron 2007, 343-354. Paschoud 2006, 68 reproaches me for exaggerating the shortcomings of the passage, disingenuously referring to Van Haepelen 2002 for a more sympathetic evaluation. But this is because she follows Paschoud’s now generally discredited claim that Zosimus’s main source Eunapius drew on a contemporary Latin source, the *Annales* of Nicomachus Flavianus (Van Haepelen 2002, 32, 162, 176-83).

53 Chadwick 1976, 114; countless similar verdicts might be cited.

54 Cameron 2007, 352-54; see too Stepper 2003, 216-19 and Rüpke 2008, 65, explanations improbable in themselves and presupposing the essential historicity of Zosimus.

Christian emperor and pagan aristocrats.<sup>55</sup> Paschoud dates this meeting to autumn 376, during what he claims to have been Gratian’s only visit to Rome. The fact is that Gratian *never* visited Rome.<sup>56</sup> In any case, the qualifying “in the usual way” shows that Zosimus does not even purport to be describing an actual encounter but is simply transferring to Gratian the meeting between pontiffs and emperor on his assumption of power described in the first sentence, evidently assuming that nothing had changed since the Julio-Claudians. But by Gratian’s day emperors had for centuries simply assumed the pontificate together with all their other titles on their proclamation, wherever they happened to be at the time.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, since it had been at least a century since any emperor assumed power in Rome, it was certainly no longer “the usual way” for new emperors to be greeted by a deputation of pontiffs. With or without the mythical robe, the imperial pontificate had long ceased to be in the gift of the pontiffs – or even the senate.

Nothing could be more false than the following recent statement:<sup>58</sup>

Gratian refused to take up the role of *pontifex maximus*, which meant [that] the state cults became separated from the formal government apparatus and that their correct observance was no longer officially connected to the prosperity of the state.

The fact that in the year 369 three Christian emperors, one of them a child, none of whom had ever visited Rome, *all* bore the title is proof enough that it was no longer a key link between pagan cults and “government apparatus”. Perhaps more important still, the fact that in the past century the emperors had paid no more than four or five brief visits to Rome meant that the college of pontiffs must have grown accustomed to handling its affairs without a *pontifex maximus*. Indeed, the more or less permanent absence of the imperial *pontifex* must have allowed the rank and file *pontifices*, and the other priestly colleges as well, to recover something of the independence they enjoyed in pre-Augustan times. Pagans of the generation of Symmachus cannot possibly have seen any advantage in having the emperor as *pontifex maximus*, whether pagan or Christian. A Christian emperor might be persuaded, as Constantius II was on a rare visit, to nominate a few nobles for the priestly colleges. But when Gratian removed the altar of victory and withdrew public subsidies from the cults, it was one of the rank and file pontiffs, Symmachus, who led the opposition against the imperial *pontifex maximus*!

55 As indeed did I in my earlier paper, Cameron 1968, 95-102; so too Cracco Ruggini 2012, 416.

56 Paschoud 2006, 68 and Paschoud 2012, 363, relying on an article by Girardet 2004, 109-44, which actually produces better arguments against a visit; see now decisively against, Kelly 2013, 393-397.

57 Kienast 1996, 27.

58 Demarsin 2011, 9-10.

Finally, it is clear from the combination of sentences 1 and 2 that Zosimus thought Gratian refused the title on his accession.<sup>59</sup> If he meant 367, when Gratian was proclaimed Augustus at the age of eight that is disproved by *ILS* 771 of 369. If he meant 375 when he took over the reins of power on the death of Valentinian I that is disproved by two passages of Ausonius's *Gratiarum Actio* for his consulship. Long taken as proof that Gratian was still *pontifex maximus* when the speech was delivered in the second half of 379, both passages have been implausibly reinterpreted by Paschoud and Van Haepere.

First § 35:

*unus in ore omnium Gratianus, potestate **imperator**, virtute **victor**, **Augustus** sanctitate, **pontifex** religione, indulgentia **pater**, aetate **filii**, **pietate** utrumque.*

One name is on the lips of all, Gratian: in virtue of his power, **Emperor**; of his courage, **Victor**; of his sanctity, **Augustus**; of his devotion, **Pontifex**; of his tenderness, **Father**; of his age, Son; of his **Piety**, both.

The words in bold type are all elements of the long form of the imperial titulature (with *pater* implying *pater patriae*, and *pietate* implying *pious*). That Ausonius did indeed have Gratian's official titulature in mind is confirmed by the fact that in § 9 he praises him as *Germanicus*, *Alamannicus* and *Sarmaticus*, the first two titles confirmed by *ILS* 771 of 369, the last otherwise undocumented and presumably acquired later, in commemoration (it seems) of a victory over the Sarmatians actually won by Theodosius.<sup>60</sup> That is to say, Ausonius must have had in front of him another, slightly later dedication to or letter from Gratian in the full style, perhaps the very letter from which he quotes in § 51. Why would Ausonius have included *pontifex* to illustrate Gratian's qualities if it were no longer part of the current imperial titulature?

Second, §§ 41-42:

*comitia* consulatus mei armatus exerces. **tributa** ista quod in urbe Sirmio geruntur, an, ut quod in procinctu, **centuriata** dicentur? an ut quondam **pontificalia** vocabuntur, sine arbitrio multitudinis sacerdotum tracta collegio? sic potius, sic vocentur quae tu **pontifex maximus deo participatus** habuisti.

You hold the elections for my consulship under arms. Are they elections of the *comitia tributa* because they were held in Sirmium? Or the *comitia centuriata* because they were held on active service? Or what used to be called pontifical elections, handled in the priestly college without reference to the people's will. That would be best, let the elections be so called that you held as *pontifex maximus* and a participator in the designs of God.

<sup>59</sup> Paschoud 2012, 363 claims that Zosimus "does not say anything of the sort". Not directly and explicitly, perhaps, but "in the usual way" clearly refers back to "as soon as each assumed supreme power", obviously meaning on his accession.

<sup>60</sup> So Errington 1996, 448-450.

Ausonius here directly styles Gratian *pontifex maximus*, usually taken as proof positive that he had not yet repudiated the title by late 379. Yet according to Paschoud,<sup>61</sup>

when the Christian Ausonius addressed the Christian Gratian, it is clear that the *religio* referred to was the Christian religion, the deity that of the Christians. Ausonius flattered a Christian emperor in making him a pontiff, *even supreme pontiff of the new religion, shortly after the moment when he had ceased to be pontifex maximus of the old religion* (my italics).

No one disputes that Gratian and Ausonius were Christians. Indeed Ausonius goes on to quote (§ 51) from a personal letter in which Gratian says that he followed the prompting of God himself – obviously the Christian God – in nominating Ausonius. Yet there are nonetheless serious problems with this interpretation. Paschoud, like Van Haepere, makes much of the fact that the term *pontifex* had long been applied to Christian bishops. There are indeed scores of examples.<sup>62</sup> It was one thing to flatter a Christian emperor by praising his piety, which Ausonius does at 42, 63, and 66. But Ausonius goes much further than this. Nor does he just compare Gratian to a priest. Rather he states that he is a priest. In Christian terms this was not only untrue, but would have horrified the church. Fifth-century popes indignantly rejected the idea of an emperor claiming to be a priest.<sup>63</sup>

Moreover Ausonius calls Gratian precisely *pontifex maximus*, and no Christian bishop is so styled before the Renaissance.<sup>64</sup> As Kajanto put it "*Pontifex maximus*, in contrast to simple *pontifex*, was...clearly avoided in Christian nomenclature". It is surely inconceivable that Ausonius would have been tactless enough to call Gratian *pontifex maximus* after he had repudiated the title as "impious for a Christian". The true explanation must be that Ausonius was writing (a) when Gratian still bore the title; and (b), more importantly, *before* imperial use of this originally pagan title became controversial. Gratian's full official style in 379 must still have included the title *pontifex maximus*, as we know it did ten years earlier in 369 (*ILS* 771). A few pages later Ausonius does compare Gratian to a priest, but *not* to a Christian priest (§ 66):

*In cibis autem cuius **sacerdotis** abstinentior caerimonia? ... aperto conclavis tui non sanctorum ara **vestalis**, non **pontificis** cubile castius nec pulvinar **flaminis** tam pudicum.*

In the matter of food, which priest's ritual was more self-denying? ... The altar of Vesta is not more hallowed than the privacy of your bed-chamber, the bed of a *pontifex* is not more chaste, the couch of a *flamen* is not more pure.

<sup>61</sup> Paschoud 1975, Ch. 3; Paschoud 2012, 363.

<sup>62</sup> Assembled by Van Haepere 2003, 137-159.

<sup>63</sup> Texts cited by Cameron 2007, ignored by Paschoud.

<sup>64</sup> Kajanto 1981, 37-51 (quotation from p. 45).

Sandwiched between *Vestales* and *flamines*, this *pontifex* at any rate can only be a pagan *pontifex*. Since Vestals were required to be virgins, the first comparison is understandable, if still somewhat surprising in a Christian writer. For example Mamertinus on Julian (*Iectulus... Vestalium toris purior*, *Pan. Lat.* iii. 13. 3). But there was no obligation on pontiffs to be chaste, and it was only images of the gods, not *flamines*, who reclined on pulvinars. Yet however poorly he understood its details, Ausonius is manifestly drawing here on the imagery of pagan cult.

To look at the question from a more literary point of view, what can have prompted the bizarre antiquarian comparison of Ausonius's appointment as consul to the pontifical elections of long ago? At § 13 Ausonius boasts that he had not been obliged to undergo the ordeal of the old-time election process, the canvassing, bribery, handshaking and so forth, a commonplace of the imperial *gratiarum actio*. There are similar developments in Mamertinus's *gratiarum actio* to Julian in 362 (*Panegyrici Latini* 3.19.1) and Symmachus's speech on behalf of his father, who died consul designate in 376 (*Oratio* 4.7). To contrast receiving the consulship as a gift from the emperor with the corruption and bustle of republican elections at least made sense in a consular *gratiarum actio*, but where do Ausonius's *pontifical* elections come from? Once again, the only plausible explanation is that Gratian still actually bore the title *pontifex maximus*. This must be what gave Ausonius the idea of adding this particular embellishment to the motif of old-style consular elections that he found in Mamertinus and Symmachus, which then led him to the even more extravagant comparison with Vestals and *flamines*.

So every detail in Zosimus's account of Gratian's supposed repudiation of the supreme pontificate is false. Nonetheless, behind this garbled story must lie some confrontation that drew attention to the pagan origin of what had for centuries been an uncontroversial imperial title. Christian emperors had borne the title *pontifex maximus* for nearly sixty years without apparently causing a stir among the faithful. There is no hint of any sort of protest before Zosimus. The church historian Eusebius quotes the proclamation ending persecution of Christians issued under the names of Galerius, Constantine and Licinius, giving Constantine the title *pontifex maximus* without comment, ἀρχιερεὺς μέγιστος in what he implies is his own Greek translation.<sup>65</sup>

So the date Gratian modified (rather than repudiated) his pontifical title must fall between 379 (the date of Ausonius's *gratiarum actio*) and his death in 383. The obvious solution is 382 and the occasion the controversy over the removal of the altar of Victory from the senate house and the withdrawal of public subsidies from the Roman cults. It is easy to believe that in the course of this controversy someone drew attention to the embarrassing fact that, in his capacity as *pontifex maximus*, the emperor was still technically head of the Roman cults. This date and occasion have (of course) been suggested before, but on the assumption that rejection of the pontifical title was an integral, deliberate and provocative part of

<sup>65</sup> Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 8.17.3-5; improved text in Barnes 1982, 22-23.

a campaign against paganism.<sup>66</sup> I suggest rather that it was an unanticipated and inconspicuous consequence of the affair. The title had been borne by Christian emperors for so long that no one can have believed that it any longer had any real pagan content. Least of all in 382, given the open conflict between rank-and-file *pontifices* and imperial *pontifex*. Furthermore the full style was now so seldom used that few outside the administration were perhaps even aware that *pontifex maximus* remained an element in the emperor's full titulature.

In the past it used to be thought that it was Julian's flaunting of the title in connection with his pagan revival that led Gratian to refuse it. Tempting as this might seem, it fails to explain why Julian's Christian successors, Jovian, Valentinian, Valens and indeed Gratian himself, continued to bear the title for another twenty years.<sup>67</sup> Why did they keep a title one might have thought irretrievably tainted by Julian's excesses? Why indeed did Constantine, the first Christian emperor, not at once drop the title? It cannot be argued that he unthinkingly perpetuated a fossilized titulature. Constantine seems in fact to have taken a keen interest in his official titulature, since he made no fewer than three modifications in the traditional litany of titles: the *maximus* before Augustus to indicate that he was senior Augustus, and the addition of *invictus* and *triumphator*.<sup>68</sup> But *pontifex maximus* he left alone. I think we are bound to conclude that, by Constantine's day, if not long before, the scope of the office was no longer thought to be confined to the traditional cults of Rome.

Some have seen the actual priestly functions of the imperial *pontifex* as essentially confined to the meetings of the Roman colleges and the cults of Rome. By the third century the combination of "die Romferne" and the increasing isolation and sacralization of the emperor are held to have rendered this limited power less useful to him. This is why Rüpke made so much of the supposed disappearance of the title from the imperial titulature. It is true that pontifical law was not supposed to extend beyond Italy. But that does not mean that the power of the imperial *pontifex* was limited to Italy.

Beginning already with Augustus, emperors were regularly consulted and gave rulings on non-Roman cults. With dedications all over the Roman world proclaiming him *pontifex maximus*, it is hardly surprising that provincials saw the emperor as the final court of appeal on such matters. Suetonius describes Augustus "sitting in judgment of a case at Rome" involving the privileges of Eleusinian priests; when issues of secrecy came up, he dismissed his *consilium* and heard the disputants in private. Marcus too decided disputes about eligibility for Eleusinian priesthoods, far from both Rome and Athens, at Sirmium.<sup>69</sup> In earlier times such disputes had been

<sup>66</sup> So Cameron 1968.

<sup>67</sup> There is no surviving evidence for Jovian (a gap that could be filled by a single dedication in the full style), but if he had rejected the title, it is surely inconceivable that the Christian Valentinian would have restored it.

<sup>68</sup> Grünwald 1990, 87, 136, 147 and *passim*.

<sup>69</sup> Suetonius, *Augustus* 93; Jones 1971, 166-167.

settled in the court of the *basileus archon* at Athens.<sup>70</sup> Evidently Athenian grandees with Roman connections saw the imperial *pontifex* as a more satisfactory solution to their disputes.

The emperors themselves probably could not have said which of their many hats they were wearing when they gave this or that ruling, dealing as they did with petitions of all sorts from all over the Roman world. But an entire large category of these petitions is concerned with temples, priesthoods and festivals.<sup>71</sup> Moreover a number of emperors – Hadrian is only the best documented case – held eponymous priesthoods and sponsored the building or restoration of temples and maintenance of festivals in many cities, especially in the eastern provinces. As Mary Boatwright put it, “as local priest [the emperor] replicated *in situ* his position as *pontifex maximus* and the accumulator of multiple religious positions in Rome”.<sup>72</sup>

Historically by far the most important area in which the imperial *pontifex* extended his judicial purview was disputes between Christians. Notoriously Constantine’s first foray into Christian territory was in response to a petition to adjudicate a dispute between Donatists and Catholics in North Africa. Forty years earlier the pagan emperor Aurelian adjudicated a dispute between Paul, bishop of Antioch, and the faction that had deposed him. Aurelian also introduced what was probably an eastern cult of the Sun into Rome, with a splendid temple and a new college of priests, styled *pontifices solis*. The old college of pontiffs was thereafter known as *pontifices maiores*. That is to say, unlike Elagabalus, Aurelian incorporated the priests of his new eastern deity within the framework of the existing, centuries-old priestly colleges of Rome, under his supervision as *pontifex maximus*.<sup>73</sup>

It is unrealistic to attempt to identify the actual powers available to an all-powerful ruler in any given capacity. Did Augustus think he was acting as *pontifex maximus* when he decided on the privileges of Eleusinian priesthoods? But one thing is surely clear: the scope of the office that he passed down to his successors was already radically different from and more all-embracing than the one held even by his adoptive father. As Dio put it, “by virtue of being consecrated in all the priesthoods, and of their right to bestow most of those positions on others... [the emperors] hold in their hands supreme authority over all matters both profane and sacred” (53.17.8). Given the all-inclusiveness of the emphatic but conveniently unspecific *maximus*, there was no reason why emperors and subjects alike should not think that the field covered by a *pontifex maximus* included Christianity.

“It must in effect have been in his capacity as *pontifex maximus*”, I wrote in 2007, “that Constantine and his Christian successors legislated about church affairs, endowed churches and convoked councils to deliberate church doctrine”. So too

<sup>70</sup> Rhodes 1981, 636-637.

<sup>71</sup> See the section “Temples, Priesthoods and Festivals” in Millar 1977, 447-56.

<sup>72</sup> Sherk 1993, 285-288; Boatwright 2000, 57-72 and 127-143; quotation p. 58. There is a particularly large dossier of imperial letters at Delphi concerning festivals and the oracle (Millar 1977, 450-451).

<sup>73</sup> Watson 1999, 188-198.

some earlier scholars.<sup>74</sup> “Must” certainly goes too far, and I now doubt whether Constantine appealed to any special or specific powers inherent in the office. Similarly while much has been made of Julian’s appeal to his status as *pontifex maximus*, it should be noted that no part of his pagan program owed anything to any actual powers or functions of the *pontifex maximus*. Julian never visited Rome, and probably knew very little about the nature and competence of the Roman priestly colleges. But given Constantine’s desire to bring unity to the new faith he had chosen and Julian’s to revive the worship of the old gods he thought neglected, both surely found some personal support or justification in the fact that their imperial title included priestly oversight, however vaguely defined, of their realm.

Another perspective may be no less important. Up till Constantine it is unlikely that anyone except the unsuccessful litigant objected to emperors deciding cases about priesthoods, temples or festivals. But once an emperor began taking sides in the doctrinal controversies of the church, his authority to do so at once became an issue. Whether or not any Christian emperor explicitly relied on the title when convoking councils or deposing bishops, it may have been thought that to abandon it would weaken his claim to play the major role in Church affairs that was Constantine’s fateful legacy to his successors. Whence the need to modify rather than abandon the title. If this is correct, the pontifical title had perhaps already lost exclusively pagan connotations even before Julian’s attempted pagan revival.

## References

- Arce, J. 1984. *Estudios sobre el emperador F. Cl. Juliano: Fuentes literarias, Epigrafía, Numismática*. Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas.
- Bagnall, R. S., A. Cameron, S. R. Schwartz & K. A. Worp. 1987. *Consuls of the later Roman Empire*. Atlanta GA: Scholars Press.
- Bagnall, R. S. & K. A. Worp 2004. *Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt*, Second edition, Leiden: Brill.
- Barnes, T. D. 1982. *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Beard, M., J. North & S. Price 1998. *Religions of Rome I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bidez, J. 1960. *L'empereur Julien: Lettres*. Paris: Belles lettres.
- Boatwright, M.T. 2000. *Hadrian and the Cities of the Roman Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Cameron, A. 1968. Gratian’s repudiation of the pontifical robe. *Journal of Roman Studies* 58, 95-102.
- Cameron, A. 2007. The Imperial Pontifex. *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 103, 341-84.
- Chadwick, H. 1976. *Priscillian of Avila*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Conti, S. 2004. *Die Inschriften Kaiser Julians*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner.

<sup>74</sup> Cameron 2007, 360, with bibliography.

- Corcoran, S. 2006. Galerius, Maximinus and the titlature of the third tetrarchy. *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 49, 231-240.
- Dagron, G. 2003. *Emperor and Priest*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Demarsin, K. 2011. Paganism in late antiquity: thematic essays. In K. Demarsin & M. Mulryan (eds.) *The Archaeology of Late Antique "Paganism"*. Leiden: Brill. 3-40.
- Dietz, K. 2000. Kaiser Julian in Phönizen. *Chiron* 30, 807-855.
- Errington, R. M. 1996. The Accession of Theodosius I. *Klio* 78, 437-453.
- Girardet, K. 2004. Die Erhebung Kaiser Valentinians II. *Chiron* 34, 109-144.
- Gouillard, J. 1968. Aux origines de l'iconoclasme: le témoignage de Grégoire II. *Travaux et Mémoires* 3, 243-307.
- Grünwald, T. 1990. *Constantinus Maximus Augustus: Herrschaftspropaganda in der zeitgenössischen Überlieferung*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner.
- Hammond, M. 1957. Imperial elements in the formula of the Roman emperors during the first two and a half centuries of the empire. *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 25, 17-64.
- Hammond, M. 1959. *The Antonine Monarchy*. Papers and monographs of the American Academy in Rome 19. Rome.
- C. P. Jones. 1971. A New letter of Marcus Aurelius to the Athenians. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 8, 161-183.
- Kajanto, I. 1981. *Pontifex maximus* as the title of the Pope. *Arctos* 15, 37-51.
- Kelly, G. 2013. The Political Crisis of AD 375-376. *Chiron* 43, 357-409.
- Kienast, D. 1996 (1990). *Römische Kaisertabelle: Grundzüge einer römischen Kaiserchronologie*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Lepelley, C. 2004. Une inscription d'Heraclea Sintica (Macédoine) récemment découverte, révélant un rescrit de l'empereur Galère restituant ses droits à la cite. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 146, 221-231.
- Manders, E. 2014. *Coining Images of Power: Patterns in the Representation of Roman Emperors on Imperial Coinage, AD 193-284*. Leiden: Brill.
- Mason, H. J. 1974. *Greek Terms for Roman Institutions: a Lexicon and Analysis*. Toronto: Hakkert.
- Millar, F. 1977. *The Emperor in the Roman World*. London: Duckworth.
- Negev, A. 1969. The Inscription of the Emperor Julian. *Israel Exploration Journal* 19, 170-173.
- Paschoud, F. 2006. *Eunape, Olympiodore, Zosime: Scripta Minora*. Bari: Edipuglia.
- Paschoud, F. 2000 (1971). *Zosime, Histoire nouvelle* 1 (Livres I et II). Paris: Belles lettres.
- Paschoud, F. 1975. *Cinq études sur Zosime*. Paris: Belles lettres.
- Paschoud, F. 2012. On a recent book by Alan Cameron: *The Last Pagans of Rome*. *Antiquité Tardive* 20, 359-388.
- Peachin, M. 1990. *Roman Imperial Titulature and Chronology, A.D. 235-284*. Amsterdam: Gieben.
- Rhodes, P. J. 1981. *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Cracco Ruggini, L. 2011. Pontifices: un caso di osmosi linguistica. In P. Brown & R. Lizzi Testa (eds.) *Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire: The Breaking of a Dialogue*. Christianity and history 9. Vienna/Berlin: Lit Verlag. 405-423.
- Rüpke, J. 2008. *Fasti Sacerdotum: A Prosopography of Pagan, Jewish and Christian Religious Officials in the City of Rome, 300 BC to AD 499*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rösch, G. 1978. ONOMA ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΣ: *Studien zum offiziellen Gebrauch der Kaisertitel in spätantiker und frühbyzantinischer Zeit*. Byzantina Vindobonensia 10. Vienna.
- Scheid, J. 1998. *Commentarii fratrum Arvalium qui supersunt*. Rome: École française de Rome.
- Scheid, J. 2005. Augustus and Roman Religion: Continuity, Conservatism, and Innovation. In Karl Galinsky (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 175-194.
- Sherk, R. K. 1993. The Eponymous Officials of Greek Cities V. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 9, 267-295.
- Stepper, R. 2003. *Augustus et sacerdos: Untersuchungen zum römischen Kaiser als Priester*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner
- Van Haepelen, F. 2002. *Le collège pontifical (3ème s. a. C.-4ème s. p. C.)*. Bruxelles: Brepols.
- Van Haepelen, F. 2003. Des pontifes païens aux pontifes chrétiens: Transformations d'un titre. *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 81, 137-159.
- Watson, A. 1999. *Aurelian and the third century*. London: Routledge.
- Weinstock, S. 1971. *Divus Julius*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

# Ordering Divine Knowledge in Late Roman Legal Discourse

Caroline Humfress

University of St Andrews

*In the celebrated words of the Severan jurist Ulpian – echoed three hundred years later in the opening passages of Justinian’s Institutes – knowledge of the law entails knowledge of matters both human and divine. This essay explores how relations between the human and divine were structured and ordered in the Imperial codex of Theodosius II (438 CE). Deliberately side-stepping vexed categories such as ‘Christian’, ‘pagan’, ‘heresiological’ etc., the essay self-consciously frames the question as one of ‘knowledge-ordering’ in order to develop a broader framework concerning relations between emperors and the divine. How was knowledge about the divine textualised in Book XVI of the Codex Theodosianus and with what implications for a late Roman imperial ‘ordering of knowledge’?*

## Introduction

Knowledge (*prudentia*) of the law entails knowledge (*notitia*) of matters both human and divine, and knowledge (*scientia*) of the just and unjust ...<sup>1</sup>

Recent scholarship on power and knowledge under the Roman Empire has drawn attention to “the wide spread of the knowledge-ordering obsessions” of Greco-Roman (elite) writers during the first to fourth centuries CE.<sup>2</sup> I intend to widen those knowledge-ordering obsessions further by suggesting that the *Codex Theodosianus* (438 CE) should also be understood as a work of Roman Imperial knowledge-

<sup>1</sup> Justinian, *Digest* I.1.10.2 (Ulpian, Rules book 1): *luris prudentia est divinarum atque humanarum rerum notitia, iusti atque iniusti scientia*. See also Justinian, *Institutes* I.1.1. On the lexicological differences between *prudentia*, *notitia* and *scientia* as ‘knowledge’ see MacCormick 2001.

<sup>2</sup> König 2009, 79. Also König and Whitmarsh 2007 and König and Woolf 2013. On knowledge-ordering more generally see Blair 2010 (who mainly focuses on the Renaissance and Early Modern periods).

Maijastina Kahlos (ed.)  
Emperors and the Divine – Rome and its Influence

COLLEGIUM

Studies across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences 20.  
Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies. 160–176.

ordering.<sup>3</sup> More particularly, I will argue that the designation and arrangement of the title-rubrics within Book XVI of the Codex Theodosianus was intended to showcase a new, imperial and Theodosian, ordering of knowledge concerning matters human and divine.

König and Whitmarsh’s 2007 edited volume, *Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire* is concerned primarily with the first three centuries of the Roman empire and does not include any extended discussion of how knowledge was ordered and structured in Roman juristic or Imperial legal texts.<sup>4</sup> Yet if we classify the *Codex Theodosianus* as a specialist form of Imperial prose literature, rather than classifying it initially as a ‘lawcode’, the text fits neatly within König and Whitmarsh’s description of their project:

Our principal interest is in texts that follow a broadly ‘compilatory’ aesthetic, accumulating information in often enormous bulk, in ways that may look unwieldy or purely functional to modern eyes, but which in the ancient world clearly had a much higher prestige than modern criticism has allowed them. The prevalence of this mode of composition in the Roman world is astonishing... It is sometimes hard to avoid the impression that accumulation of knowledge is the driving force for all of Imperial prose literature.<sup>5</sup>

The fifth-century *Codex Theodosianus* shares in the broad Roman “compilatory aesthetic” identified here by König and Whitmarsh. In its extant form, the *Codex* is made up of excerpts from around 2,700 Imperial constitutions – each entry complete with an attribution to the issuing emperor(s) and a consular date.<sup>6</sup> According to the Emperor Theodosius II’s 429 CE address to the Constantinopolitan Senate, the *codex* was to include *all* the constitutions issued by Constantine and emperors up to and including himself that had the force of edicts or “rest[ed] on the strength of sacred [imperial] generality”.<sup>7</sup> Exploring how the compilers of the *Codex Theodosianus* selected, categorized and structured their raw material literally showcases Roman

<sup>3</sup> Mommsen 1905. As Mommsen’s Prolegomena (volume I.1) lays out, the manuscript support for Books VI–XVI of the *Codex Theodosianus* is relatively good but only about one third of the original content of Books I – V survives. Mommsen reconstructed his version of Books I – V mainly using the early sixth-century compilation known as the *Breviarium* of Alaric (the *Lex Romana Visigothorum*). Krüger 1923, however, also (rightly) includes constitutions from the *Codex Iustinianus* in his reconstructed text.

<sup>4</sup> But see the suggestive comments in the essay by Serafina Cuomo in König and Whitmarsh 2007.

<sup>5</sup> König and Whitmarsh 2007, 3. On the *Codex Theodosianus* [CTh] as a ‘literary’ work see Vessey 2003.

<sup>6</sup> For the total of around 2,700 constitutions see the discussion at Matthews 2000, 75, footnote 49. On the complexities arising from the requirement to record consular dates for each entry in the *Codex* see also Matthews, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> CTh I.1.5 (Mommsen, 1905: 28, lines 2–4). CTh I.1.6, given at Constantinople and dated December 20 435, repeats the same order with the clarification that this is to include all the edictal and general constitutions which have been ordered to be valid or have been posted in definite provinces or districts (Mommsen 1905: 29, lines 1–2). For further discussion see Matthews 2000, 62–7.

imperial power at work: "...mapping and colonising the enormous expanse of pre-existing knowledge".<sup>8</sup>

Having gathered together imperial constitutions from diverse archives across the Empire – both central and provincial – the compilers of the *Codex Theodosianus* relocated (minimally-edited) extracts from those discrete texts into a new physical archive: a single-volume *codex*.<sup>9</sup> With almost 1,600 years of hindsight, the classification of this single-volume *codex* as a lawcode may seem natural and obvious to us today – especially given the present-day prevalence of both formal and substantive legal codifications across national, international and global contexts. Yet in addition to the specific Roman legal precedents explored below in Section 2 (including the Gregorian and Hermogenian codes of the Diocletianic era), the *Codex Theodosianus* also needs to be understood in relation to wider Greco-Roman knowledge-ordering projects. More specifically, the structuring of material within the *Codex Theodosianus* depends upon and demands an 'archival thinking', which in turn underpins a highly specific set of relations between knowledge, power and authority:

Archival thinking encourages a specific approach to knowledge, as manipulable, discrete fragments. Like Propp's structuralism, Lévi-Strauss' mythography or Barthes' cultural semiology, the [Greco-Roman] texts analysed in this volume characteristically conceive of their primary operation as the analysis of raw material (whether 'reality' or pre-existing text) by a process of itemisation. 'Knowledge' is to be conceived of as an aggregate of discrete particles that are to be subjected to a process of analytical ordering.<sup>10</sup>

'Archival thinking' is, of course, related to questions concerning the physical materiality of archives: for example, were written records stored with a view to retrieval and future use or merely deposited as 'heaps of documents'?<sup>11</sup> König and Whitmarsh's specific use of 'archival thinking', however, draws our attention to the kind of mental architecture, the systems of knowledge and power, that underpinned imperial texts. It is this specific sense of 'archival thinking' that I am interested in exploring in relation to the *Codex Theodosianus*.

The analytical ordering of the *Codex Theodosianus* comprises sixteen books, with discrete excerpts from imperial constitutions arranged chronologically under thematic rubrics (*tituli*). The overarching structure of books, thematic-titles and

<sup>8</sup> Phrase quoted from König and Whitmarsh 2007, 29. See further the discussion in Section 2 below on the *CTh* project as specifically envisaged in 429 AD.

<sup>9</sup> On the current debate surrounding the archival sources for the *Codex Theodosianus* see the essay by Huck, the 'Réaction' by Sirks and the subsequent response by Huck in Crogiez-Pétrequin and Jaillette 2012, 79-127, together with the essay by Sirks ("Where did the Theodosian compilers take their texts from?") in the same volume, 153-164.

<sup>10</sup> König and Whitmarsh 2007, 35 (defining 'archival thinking' using Foucault).

<sup>11</sup> Kelly 1994, 166. On late Roman legal / bureaucratic archives see the works cited in footnote 9 above.

separate (extracted) texts creates a relationship between 'discrete parts' and 'architectonic whole': a relationship which König and Whitmarsh, referring to earlier Greco-Roman prose and verse texts, describe as simultaneously 'imperial' and 'archival'. Moreover, according to König and Whitmarsh, both modes of thinking – the imperial and archival – share a common rhetoric of 'unity in diversity'.<sup>12</sup> This rhetoric of 'unity in diversity' is clearly evident in Theodosius II's *Novel* 1, dated February 15, 438; the text that confirmed the Code's validity and ordered the posting of edicts, so that news of Theodosius' achievement would "come to the knowledge of all peoples and all provinces":

Wherefore we have cleared away the cloud of volumes on which many lives have been exhausted explaining nothing; We confirm this abridged knowledge (*scientia*) of the divine imperial constitutions from the time of the Sainted Constantine ... However, their own immortality has not been taken away from any of the previous Emperors, the name of no lawgiver has perished; rather, they [their laws] have been changed by the clarification of Our jurisconsults for the sake of lucidity, and they are joined with us in an august fellowship.<sup>13</sup>

The same rhetoric of 'unity in diversity' underpins the *Codex Theodosianus* as a whole, including – as I will argue in Section 3 below – Book XVI, the book '... entièrement consacré à la religion'.<sup>14</sup>

The *Codex Theodosianus* is more than an authoritative collection of late Roman imperial constitutions: it effectively constitutes Roman law as an object to be known imperially i.e., through a specific 'imperial and archival' cultural logic and epistemology.<sup>15</sup> In a straightforward sense, Book I defines who and what constitutes authoritative legal knowledge, both for the purposes of the 438 CE code's compilation and more generally with reference to forensic practice.<sup>16</sup> The *Codex Theodosianus* addresses itself to an intended audience of present and future legal practitioners, including litigants, magistrates and other judicial and administrative officials: it was to be valid in all cases and in all courts and was to "leave no place for any new constitution that is outside itself, unless that constitution had been

<sup>12</sup> König and Whitmarsh 2007, 36.

<sup>13</sup> Theodosius II, *Novel* 1.3 (Meyer and Mommsen 1905, 4: lines 18-20 and 23-25. Trans. Pharr et al, revised).

<sup>14</sup> Phrase quoted from Rougé and Delmaire 2005, 53. Honoré 1998, 129 argues that the promoters of the *CTh* had a directly political aim to unify the laws of east and west.

<sup>15</sup> Recent studies exploring the complexities of 'legal knowledge production' include Darian-Smith 2013, 97-166; Sarat, Douglas and Umphrey 2007; and Valverde, 2003.

<sup>16</sup> "The first book of the *Theodosian Code* presents what might well be called the juridical foundations of the late Roman state" (Matthews, 2000, 101). Note that if *CTh* I.1 (in the extant text) is read synchronically then *CTh* I.1.1 orders that any edicts or constitutions found henceforth without their date of issuance recorded shall lack authority; *CTh* I.1.2 states that no person can be ignorant or pretend ignorance of the constitutions "which have been carefully weighed with long deliberation by Our Serenity" (trans. Pharr); *CTh* I.1.3 states that all constitutions regulate for the future; and the single sentence *CTh* I.1.4 reads: "A general regulation must be preferred to a special grant of imperial favor"; and *CTh* I.1.5 and 6 relate to the compilation of the *CTh* itself.

promulgated after the Code's publication".<sup>17</sup> To a certain extent Roman forensic practice demanded archival thinking. Security of legal tenure and private property, for example, required a stable and 'verifiable' legal past. As *CTh* I.1.5 (issued by Theodosius II at Constantinople and dated March 26 429) implies, however, the kind of archival thinking that is evident in the *Codex Theodosianus* was part of a broader, socio-cultural, logic:

Although it would be simpler and more in accordance with law to omit those constitutions which were invalidated by later constitutions, and to set forth only those which must be valid, let us recognize that this code and the previous ones were composed for more diligent men, to whose scholarly efforts it is granted to know those laws also which have been consigned to silence and have passed into desuetude, since they were destined to be valid for the cases of their own time only.<sup>18</sup>

The *Codex Theodosianus* does not lay down the law; instead it provides its elite, specialist readers with the tools – epistemological and material – to produce their own 'valid' legal knowledge *as defined by and through the Codex itself*.

On one level, the title-rubrics contained within each book of the *Codex Theodosianus* create a referable structure for those who seek to consult it on particular topics. On another level, the title-rubrics map and colonize the fields within which 'valid' late Roman legal knowledge could be produced. Section 2 below: "Reading the *Codex Theodosianus* as a work of imperial 'knowledge-ordering'" analyses how, exactly, this imperially commissioned and promulgated *codex* ordered and structured late Roman legal knowledge. Having explored the importance of knowledge-ordering in the *Codex Theodosianus*, Section 3 turns to Book XVI in particular, analysing how its specific title-rubrics map out and colonize a legal field that we today would term 'religious'.

### The *Codex Theodosianus* as a Work of Imperial 'Knowledge-ordering'

"One important starting point is to underscore the extent to which taxonomic contexts matter."<sup>19</sup>

The *Codex Theodosianus* is a work of late Roman imperial knowledge-ordering that belongs to a specific sphere of erudition and practice: law. It was by no means the first authoritative collection of Roman law. For example, the structure of books II to V of the *Codex Theodosianus* – the main 'private law' books – was based around the *Edictum Perpetuum* (the revision of the Roman Praetor's *Edict* into a fixed form,

<sup>17</sup> *CTh* I.1.6 (Mommsen 1905, vol. I.2, 29: lines 18-20).

<sup>18</sup> *CTh* I.1.5 (Mommsen, 1905, vol. I.2, 28: lines 10-14. Trans. Pharr). Compare Theodosius II, *Novel* I.1pr. For further discussion see Honoré 1998, 142-9 on 'conflicting laws'.

<sup>19</sup> Lehoux 2012, 136.

c. 130 CE, by the jurist Salvius Julianus at the request of the emperor Hadrian), as well as the Classical jurisprudential tradition of commentary *Ad edictum*.<sup>20</sup> Nor was the *Codex Theodosianus* the first collection of imperial constitutions. Justinian's *Digest* contains sixteen fragments from a work entitled *Libri Constitutionum* by the jurist Papius Iustus, who seems to have focused mainly on paraphrasing private rescripts (imperial responses to petitioners) from the Antonine era.<sup>21</sup> The two Diocletianic Codes, compiled by the jurists Gregorius and Hermogenian – perhaps with some kind of official authority – also concentrate on imperial rescripts.<sup>22</sup> The *Codex Gregorianus* collected together material from the 130s CE up to the 290s, dividing it into books and titles; whilst the *Codex Hermogenianus* collated rescripts from 293 and 294 and divided them into titles only.<sup>23</sup> There is also archival and jurisprudential evidence for late Roman individuals collecting and (re-)copying sets of imperial constitutions to serve the needs of specific situations and contexts.<sup>24</sup> The *Codex Theodosianus*, however, was the first of its kind: the first systematically-ordered collection of Imperial constitutions to bear the name of an emperor and to be imperially-promulgated as such.

Book 1, title 1 of the *Codex Theodosianus* includes two excerpts directly relevant to the compilation of the *Code* itself. *CTh* I.1.5 is an excerpt from a text dated 26 March 429, originally addressed to the senate of Constantinople and probably drafted by the then *quaestor sacri palatii*, Antiochus (Chuzon). *CTh* I.1.6, dated 20 December 435, has no addressee recorded and is possibly an extract from a memorandum addressed to a newly reconstituted editorial committee, about to embark on the next stage of editing raw material for inclusion in the *Code*.<sup>25</sup> *CTh* I.1.5 begins by ordering that a collection of 'general' imperial constitutions, from the time of Constantine to the present, shall be compiled "after the pattern of the Gregorian and Hermogenian Codes" (*Ad similitudinem Gregoriani atque*

<sup>20</sup> The reconstruction of the *Edictum perpetuum* by Riccobono 1941, 335-89 is based on a reconstruction from juristic sources by Lenel 1927. The *Edictum perpetuum* was divided into discrete *tituli* according to subject; juristic commentary on the edict followed this structure. Corcoran 2013, 5 notes that a wider use of *tituli* in jurisprudential literature dates to the later third and fourth centuries AD and is probably related to a shift in technology from roll to codex.

<sup>21</sup> Volterra 1968.

<sup>22</sup> On the two Diocletianic Codes and their authority see Corcoran 2013. Matthews 2001, 15-6 notes that the authors of the Visigothic *interpretationes* to Alaric's *Breviarium* understood Gregorius and Hermogenian as jurists, to be classified alongside Gaius, Papinian and Paul (rather than as bureaucratic officials).

<sup>23</sup> Neither are extant. For further discussion see Corcoran 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Copies collected in private archives: for example, P. Vindob. G 25945 and from a later period, the *Sirmondian Constitutions*. Copies for academic and / or practical purposes: The *Fragmenta Vaticana* has imperial constitutions on specific topics arranged under titles, with interleaved quotations from Classical jurists (see further de Filippi 1998), as does the late Roman text known as the *Consultatio veteris cuiusdam iurisconsulti*.

<sup>25</sup> Matthews 2000, 64.



*Hermogeniani codicis...*).<sup>26</sup> *CTh* I.1.5 then goes on to specify how the new projected Codex must be structured and arranged:

First, the titles [*tituli*], which are the definite designations of the matters therein shall be so divided that, when the various headings have been expressed, if one constitution should pertain to several titles, the materials shall be assembled wherever each is fitting. Then, if any diversity should cause anything to be stated in two ways, it shall be tested by the order of the readings, and not only shall the year of the consulship be considered, and the time of the reign be investigated, but also the arrangement of the work itself shall show that the laws which are later are more valid.<sup>27</sup>

The (excerpted) constitutions were to be ordered chronologically under thematic titles that accurately designated their content. If a single constitution contained material that was relevant to more than one title, then it was to be divided up and each discrete excerpt was to be copied in its correct place, under its corresponding title. Note that in order to understand the material collected under a specific title, users of the *Code* had to read that material in a linear way: the (excerpted) constitutions were to be interpreted in relation to each other, in a chronological sequence within each title.<sup>28</sup> The arrangement of the *Codex Theodosianus* into books and thematic titles was not simply for the convenience of the code-makers: each title-heading within the *Codex* was intended to act as an explanatory lemmata for its contents. The title-rubrics effectively provided the authoritative context in which the excerpted constitutions were to be understood.

The importance that Theodosius II and his advisors attributed to this architectonic structure – books, subdivided into thematic titles, followed by (chronologically-ordered) discrete excerpts – can be seen in the 429 CE plans for a further *Codex*, to follow on from Theodosius II's first compilation:

Moreover, from these three codes [the Gregorianus, the Hermogenianus and the first 'Theodosianus'] and from the treatises and responses of the jurists which are attached to each of the titles, through the services of the same men who shall arrange the third code [i.e., the first 'Theodosianus'], there shall be produced another code of Ours. This code shall permit no error, no ambiguities, it shall be called by Our name and shall show what must be followed and what must be avoided by all.

The desire to produce a second *Codex*, a *Codex* that would “exclude every contradiction of law” and “undertake the guidance of life”, was not realized by either the 429 editorial committee or the reconstituted 435 committee.<sup>29</sup> The important point to note here, however, is that the projected juristic material – the ‘treatises

<sup>26</sup> See below for further discussion.

<sup>27</sup> Mommsen 1905, vol I.2, 28: lines 4-8 (trans Pharr).

<sup>28</sup> These provisions are repeated again in *CTh* I.1.6.

<sup>29</sup> Quotations from *CTh* I.1.5. For a broad comparison, see König, 2009 75 on the ‘totalising ambition’ of knowledge-ordering in the Hellenistic period.

and responses’ of the experts – was to be selected and arranged according to the titles within the code(s).<sup>30</sup> Whether we should think in terms of contemporary legal experts (perhaps from the recently re-ordered Constantinopolitan law school) producing an authoritative running commentary, or of the Theodosian editorial committee itself selecting and copying relevant sections from (Classical?) juristic texts, the jurisprudential material was supposed to be structured according to an order of knowledge already established by Theodosius II's *Codex*.

The functional importance of the title-rubrics, moreover, is demonstrated by a change in citation practices after the publication of the 438 CE Code. Imperial constitutions were cited subsequently using their title headings within the *Codex*: for example, when Theodosius II's 429 constitution announcing the *Codex* project was read out to the Roman Senate on 25 December 438 it was identified as *ex codice Theodosiano, libro primo, sub titulo 'de constitutionibus principum et edictis'*.<sup>31</sup>

The title-rubrics of the *Codex Theodosianus* were thus integral to both its compilation and use. How did the Theodosian commissioners decide on the wording and ordering of these title-rubrics within the 438 *Codex*?<sup>32</sup> As we have seen, Theodosius' (first) *Codex* was to be modelled on the Gregorian and Hermogenian Codes. Neither of these Diocletianic Codes survive, but their structure has been partially reconstructed from other sources:

The Gregorian Code comprised at least thirteen books, although most modern scholars tend to give it fifteen. This may explain why the Theodosian Code extended also to fifteen books, if we disregard the unprecedented ecclesiastical Book XVI; unless, that is, the total represents the Gregorianus and Hermogenianus together as a sixteen book opus. The greater size and scale of the Gregorian Code meant that it could have been more lavish in its title divisions than the Hermogenianus. For instance, where Hermogenian used a joint title *de pactis et transactionibus*, the Gregorianus seems, like the Justinian Code, to have used two adjacent titles *de pactis* and *de transactionibus*. Thus the Gregorianus is the more likely model for the imperial codes.<sup>33</sup>

Each of the (probably) fifteen books of the Gregorianus were sub-divided according to thematic headings and organised chronologically; that order is likely to have followed the *edictum perpetuum* up to book 12, with non-edictal material

<sup>30</sup> The *Breviarium of Alaric* (506 CE) follows the first model, providing Visigothic *interpretationes* (clarificatory notes) for each discrete text within the Gregorian, Hermogenian and Theodosian Codes (in addition to *interpretationes* on post-438 *Novellae* and various jurisprudential treatises). Justinian's *Digest*, on the other hand, is closer to the second model. On the recent reorganisation of the Constantinopolitan law school and the possible involvement of individuals from that law school in compiling the *CTh*, see Matthews 2000, 83.

<sup>31</sup> *Gesta Senatus Romanus*, 4. The Visigothic *interpretatio* to the *Breviary of Alaric* also I.4.1 cites *CTh* I.1.5 by its rubric.

<sup>32</sup> On the structure of the titles see Mommsen 1905, vol. I.1: xiii-xviii; Harries, 1998 (focused mainly on books I to VI of the *CTh*); Matthews 2000, 78-83 and 289-92; and Corcoran 2013. For more general discussion on the structure of law books, see Wibier 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Corcoran 2013, 10.

added into the final books.<sup>34</sup> For the most part, the 438 *Codex Theodosianus* also structures its private law material (mainly contained in books II through to IV) according to the *tituli* of the *edictum perpetuum*, with book V also bearing some relation to the praetorian structure.<sup>35</sup> As Harries states, books II through to V of the 438 CE Code are “framed by two obviously non-Edictal books”: Book I on law and high-ranking officials and Book VI on official questions of precedence affecting the senatorial order and the imperial administration.<sup>36</sup> Apart from some private law material included in Book VIII, the rest of the 438 CE *Codex* is concerned with administrative and public law. The *Codex Theodosianus* thus follows a broad, pre-existing, juristic principle that material outside the edictal framework is to be added to later books or titles.<sup>37</sup> The titles in Book IX relating to criminal law and those in Books X and XI relating to the imperial *fiscus* and taxation may also be derived from corresponding titles in the Diocletianic era codes containing non-edictal material. “However, most scholars tend to think that the Diocletianic codes were a poor model for arranging the extensive public law material of the Theodosian Code, and that in those areas Theodosius’s compilers may have needed to exercise greater innovation”.<sup>38</sup> In any case, neither the Gregorian nor Hermogenian Code could offer (direct) precedents for the thematic *tituli* that divide up Book XVI of the 438 CE *Codex Theodosianus*.<sup>39</sup>

In sum, the titles within each of the sixteen books of the *Theodosian Code* create a taxonomic structure that maps out ‘the’ late Roman legal field, establishing an authoritative interpretative structure for legal scholars and practitioners alike.<sup>40</sup> If we turn now to Book XVI of the *Codex Theodosianus* it should be clear that this book offers more than a systematic collection of imperial constitutions relevant to what we would term religion. Book XVI effectively re-archives the religious past according to a new Imperial order. As we shall see via a brief analysis of Theodosius II’s *Novel 3* (dated January 31 438 and as such the first extant ‘new constitution’ to be published after the Code’s completion), the title-headings of Book XVI structure and organize the religious past into new, authoritative, categories and taxonomic classifications.

34 Sperandio 2005: 389–95 attempts to reconstruct a list of titles for the *Codex Gregorianus* (see also Sperandio 2007). For the possible arrangement of *tituli* within the single book of the *Codex Hermogenianus*, see Cendrelli 1965.

35 Harries 1998, esp. 71-8.

36 Harries 1998, 75.

37 See Corcoran 2013, 9 for examples where non-praetorian private law (“Civil law or that based upon later *leges* or *senatus consulta*”) was included in the final books or titles of Classical juristic works.

38 Corcoran 2013, 10.

39 Corcoran 2013, 12 asks whether either Diocletianic Code might have contained anti-Christian texts “as we know was the case for Ulpian’s *De officio proconsulis* Book VII”. Diocletian’s rescript on the Manichees (either 297 or 302) was copied into the *Gregorianus*, although perhaps at a later date.

40 For a specific example see Humfress 2011.

## **Codex Theodosianus Book XVI and ‘Knowledge of Matters Both Human and Divine’**

Of course lawyers recognized that legal arguments had to do with things in the world, but the ‘real’ or ‘material’ existence of these things was eclipsed by the existence that they came to have within the discursive or rhetorical frame of legal debate...<sup>41</sup>

The final book of the *Codex Theodosianus* has rightly been described as the “unprecedented ecclesiastical book XVI”.<sup>42</sup> Yet the idea that “knowledge of the law entails knowledge of matters both human and divine...” was by no means new.<sup>43</sup> Classical Roman jurists categorized religious law – law concerned with maintaining correct relations between the *res publica* and the gods – under the category of Roman public law.<sup>44</sup> During the early Principate public law was connected with the maintenance of the *res publica* for the sake of ‘public interest’ (*utilitas publica*); hence the third-century CE jurist Marcian advises that it is the duty of provincial governors to track down and punish those who commit sacrilege against the gods, as well as thieves, kidnappers and hijackers.<sup>45</sup> According to the emperor Decius (249 CE) maintaining correct relations between the human and the divine necessitated an empire-wide supplicatio of the gods, a legal requirement that effectively marked out Christians and Jews (in different ways) and formed a further precedent for subsequent prosecutions concerning religious beliefs and practices.<sup>46</sup>

The scholarly efforts of most Roman Classical jurists, however, were focused upon private law: the branch of law that governed relations between citizens (and subjects). Determining ‘correct’ legal relationships between men might also, of course, demand taking into account what was due to the gods. Questions concerning a god’s ownership of property could arise in lawsuits concerning land, boundaries or taxation: for example, during the reign of Domitian a group of Egyptian villagers apparently defended themselves against a charge of non-payment of taxes with the plea that they were tax-exempt, because their village

41 Pottage, 2014, 151.

42 Corcoran 2013, 10 (quoted above). See also Guinot and Richard 2008, Crifo 1999 and Aubert and Blanchard 2009. On the manuscript sources and tradition for CTh Book XVI see Mommsen 1905, Prolegomena (volume I.1), xc-xcii and Magnou-Nortier 2002.

43 For a brief overview in relation to the archaic and Classical periods of Roman law see Riggsby 2010, 205- 213; also Watson 1992, Ando and Rüpke (ed.) 2006 and for the later Empire, Lizzi Testa 2009. The quotation is from Justinian *Digest* 1.1.10.2 (Ulpian, *Rules book 1*), as in footnote 1 above.

44 Stated by Ulpian *Institutes* book I, as excerpted in Justinian’s *Digest* at 1.1.1.2.

45 Justinian *Digest* 48.13.4.2 (Marcian, *Institutes* Book 14), see also *Digest* 1.18.13pr (Ulpian, *On the Office of the Proconsul* Book 7). Book 7 of Ulpian’s *On the Office of the Proconsul* contained ‘anti-Christian’ material (see further Marotta 2004, 80-87 and Nogrady 2006, 40-75).

46 Further discussion in Selinger, 2004; Luijendijk, 2008: 157-174; Kahlos 2009; and Barnes 2010. Note that Galerius’ edict (posted at Nicomedia on 30th April 311) granted freedom of worship to Christians ‘provided that they do nothing to disturb good order’ and ‘pray to their god for our safety and for that of the *res publica* and themselves, so that from every side the *res publica* may be kept unharmed...’ (trans. Creed).

was dedicated to the god.<sup>47</sup> ‘Sacred’ property was no longer available for human ownership or use. Regulating legal relations between Roman citizens might also demand taking into account what was owed to the gods in other contexts. For example, according to a third-century CE commentary on the *Edictum perpetuum*, individuals appointed to priesthoods could be exempted from acting as arbitrators in civil suits, in recognition – stated the jurist Paul – of both the honour due to them and to “[...] the majesty of the god for whose rites the priests ought to be free”.<sup>48</sup> In a broader philosophical context, some Roman jurists – alongside other (elite) early Imperial writers – drew attention to the close connection between Roman law and religion. Ulpian, for example, states that knowledge of the law is something sacred.<sup>49</sup> According to the third-century CE jurist Marcian, law itself is an invention and gift of the gods.<sup>50</sup>

Various precedents for the material collected together in the final book of the *Codex Theodosianus* thus existed within earlier Roman private and public law. If, however, the 429 CE plan for a second, complete, *Codex Theodosianus* – bringing the Gregorian, Hermogenian and Theodosian Codes together with juristic material – had been achieved, it is extremely difficult to think of which pre-existing juristic treatises and opinions could have been attached, according to subject matter, to the titles of Book XVI. As Jill Harries suggests, the fact that Book XVI is the final book of the Code perhaps implies a certain ‘outlier’ status: “While this is not to argue that Christian legislation was merely an untidy afterthought, its late placement would appear to suggest that the legal advisers of the ‘*pious princeps*’ still saw laws on Christianity as, in legal terms, outside the categories within which, as lawyers and administrators, they were accustomed to operate”.<sup>51</sup> Neither the *Edictum perpetuum* nor any previous collections of imperial constitutions, including the Gregorianus and Hermogenianus, offered specific precedents for how to structure and order the material in Book XVI. Theodosius II’s editorial panel(s) – comprised of bureaucratic and legal officials – had to come up with the headings for the titles within Book XVI from scratch. In other words, they had to subsume a myriad of different religious practices within a structure capable of rationalisation. It is this level of formal ‘knowledge-ordering’ – an intellectual scaffolding specifically constructed, as previously noted, with diligent and scholarly men in mind – that I am interested in here.<sup>52</sup>

47 P. *Vindob. Worp.* 1 as noted by Crook 1995, 72.

48 *Digest* 4.8.32.4 (Paul, ad. ed., 13).

49 Justinian, *Digest* 50.13.1.5 (Ulpian 8 *omn. trib.*). Compare Aulus Gellius *Attic Nights* 14.4.3 defining the judge as ‘a priest of justice’ (a phrase borrowed from the philosopher Chrysippus).

50 Justinian *Digest* 1.3.2 (Marcian, 1 *Institutes*), quoting the Attic orator Demosthenes.

51 Harries 1998, 78. In contrast, Justinian’s *Codex* places its book of religious and ecclesiastical material at the beginning of the text.

52 On the intended audience of the *Theodosian Code* see footnote 18 above.

Book XVI is ordered into eleven titles: Title one, *de fide catholica* (on the ‘catholic’ / ‘universal’ faith); title two, *de episcopis, ecclesiis, et clericis* (concerning bishops, churches and clerics); title three, *de monachis* (concerning monks); title four, *de his qui super religione contendunt* (concerning those who argue about religion); title five, *de haeticis* (on heretics); title six, *ne sanctum baptismum iteretur* (holy baptism not to be repeated); title seven, *de apostatis* (concerning apostates); title eight, *de Judaeis, Caelicolis, et Samaritanis* (concerning Jews, Caelicolists and Samaritans); title nine, *ne Christianum mancipium Judaeus habeat* (no Jew shall have a Christian as a slave); title ten, *de paganis, sacrificiis, et templis* (concerning pagans, sacrifices and temples); and title eleven, *de religione* (concerning religion). Where did the topics for these eleven titles come from?

This is not simply a question of what raw material was available to Theodosius II’s editorial committee. The second volume of Rougé and Delmaire’s *Les Lois Religieuses des Empereurs Romains de Constantin à Théodose II (Sources Chrétiennes 531)* contains three hundred and seventy one pages of text, with translation and commentary, from Books I to XV of the *Codex Theodosianus*.<sup>53</sup> In some cases the rationale for placing a discrete text under a specific book and title is clear: for example, extracts from imperial constitutions relating to *maleficium* (harmful magic), divination and tomb violation were placed under titles in Book IX of the *Theodosian Code*, alongside other public ‘crimes’ such as homicide and adultery (as defined by earlier statute legislation).<sup>54</sup> Similarly, the exemption of Christian clerics from certain types of compulsory public burdens is listed under Book XI, title 16: *de extraordinariis sive sordidis muneribus* (extraordinary and menial compulsory burdens), alongside the other individuals and groups who shared similar exemptions.<sup>55</sup> We also, however, find two of the same texts from Book XI repeated under Book XVI, title 2: *de episcopis, ecclesiis, et clericis* (concerning bishops, churches and clerics).<sup>56</sup> The Theodosian editorial committee thus deliberately selected the material that went into Book XVI, at the same time as placing a significant body of other ‘religious’ material elsewhere in the *Code*.<sup>57</sup> What, then, can the title-headings of Book XVI itself tell us about the (second) Theodosian editorial committee’s structures of thought?

If we survey the range and ordering of title-headings within Book XVI we can see how the time-honoured imperial duty of ensuring the *pax Romana* is now framed as a concern to maintain ‘correct’ relations exclusively with the Supreme

53 Rougé and Delmaire, 2009, 28-399 (based on Mommsen 1905). See also the general table of religious laws between 313-438 CE in Rougé and Delmaire 2005, 37-52.

54 For further discussion with specific reference to magic and heresy see Minale, 2013.

55 *CTh* XI.16.15 and *CTh* XI.16.21-22.

56 *CTh* XI.16.21-22 = *CTh* XVI.2.30.

57 As Rougé and Delmaire 2005, 35-6 explain, “Il est impossible de faire l’histoire de la législation religieuse des empereurs à partir du seul Code Théodosien et de ses annexes, les Constitutions sirmondienne...” not least as a lot of ‘religious legislation’ survives outside the *CTh*.

God of the Christians. Leaving aside titles one and eleven for the moment, the title-headings of sections XVI.2 and XVI.3 focus on the (religious) experts and specialists responsible for maintaining good relations with the Christian God: bishops, clerics, and monks. Note that throughout the constitutions excerpted under XVI.2 there is a careful weighing of interests: bishops and clerics are essential to the 'state' and are thus to be supported by imperial patronage, including the endowment of property, privileges and exemptions, but not to the detriment of the empire as a whole.<sup>58</sup> The specific religious power and expertise of [Christian] monks is acknowledged by their inclusion as a category at XVI.3. But as the two constitutions excerpted under this title demonstrate, monks also posed challenges, to public order.<sup>59</sup> Title XVI.4 "concerning those who contend about religion" contains six excerpted constitutions, each with a highly specific original context – nonetheless the logic underlying the positioning of this title-heading within Book XVI seems clear. Those who contend about religion threaten the safety and prosperity of the empire, as do heretics (XVI.5), apostates (XVI.7), Jews, Caelicolists and Samaritans (XVI.8) and pagans (XVI.10) – albeit in different ways and to differing extents. Title XVI.6, in comparison, deals with those who threaten human-divine relations by the incorrect performance of sacred rituals: Christian baptism is not to be repeated. Maintaining 'correct' relations with the Christian God also meant adjusting (some) human hierarchies, hence the rubric of XVI.9: "Jews cannot have Christians slaves". As we shall see further below, the title-headings of Book XVI map out a specific and precise terrain.

The two title-headings that frame Book XVI are *de fide catholica* (XVI.1) and *de religione* (XVI.11). Title one contains four excerpted imperial constitutions, each offering a definition of the catholic faith: it is exclusive, hence there are heavy penalties if 'men of the Christian religion' are appointed as custodians of temples (XVI.1.1); it is defined by apostolic discipline and evangelical doctrine, as established by specific church councils (XVI.2.1, section 1; XVI.1.3; and XVI.1.4); it necessitates being in communion with and in the fellowship of 'acceptable priests' (XVI.1.2, XVI.1.3 and XVI.1.4); and it determines property rights over churches, as well as the right of voluntary assembly (XVI.1.2 preamble, XVI.1.3 and XVI.1.4). The three excerpted constitutions in title eleven showcase imperial authority in relation to religious matters. For example, in its original context the final constitution included in Book XVI (*CTh* XVI.11.3, issued by the emperor Honorius at Ravenna on October 14, 410) was part of a highly specific measure targeting Donatists in North Africa; but the careful placing of this extract is meant to refer the reader back to the entire contents of Book XVI: "We abolish the new superstition and We command that those regulations in regard to the Catholic law shall be preserved unimpaired and

<sup>58</sup> See for example *CTh* XVI.2.3. Compare Valentinian III *Novel* 3pr (to Maximus Praetorian Prefect, 439 CE) which states that there are (now) too many Christian clerics for the public good.

<sup>59</sup> The first constitution excerpted under this title refers to monks as a 'profession' and orders that they should live in desert places i.e., not in cities (*CTh* XVI.3.1). The second excerpted constitution abolishes the first (*CTh* XVI.3.2).

inviolable, as they were formerly ordained by antiquity or established by the religious authority of Our Fathers or confirmed by Our Serenity" (trans. Pharr). Book XVI thus ends by underscoring its own authority and message.

On the level of knowledge-ordering, the imperial and archival thinking evident in Book XVI of the *Codex Theodosianus* has two main effects. Firstly, it achieves 'unity through diversity'. The constitutions excerpted under the specific titles are by no means univocal; the most striking example of this belongs to *CTh* XVI.5 and concerns whether Eunomians could make wills and take by will:

Six laws deal with this question. A western text of 389 [*CTh* XVI.5.17] denies them testamentary capacity. An eastern law of 394 allows it [*CTh* XVI.5.23], but is repealed on the death of Theodosius I [*CTh* XVI.5.25], only to be restored later in the same year [*CTh* XVI.5.27], the restoration being confirmed in 399 [*CTh* XVI.5.36] and removed again in 410 [*CTh* XVI.5.49].<sup>60</sup>

The archival structure of the *Codex* - the fact that it was produced for 'more diligent men' as *CTh* I.1.5 puts it – permits this kind of diversity, by order of Theodosius II. There is thus a unity to Book XVI that is centred on Theodosius II himself. As the preamble to Theodosius II's first (extant) constitution to be promulgated after the *Codex Theodosianus* states:

Among the other anxieties which Our love for the state has imposed upon Us for Our ever watchful consideration, We perceive that an especial responsibility of our Imperial Majesty is the pursuit of the true religion. If we shall be able to hold fast to the worship of this true religion, We shall open the way to prosperity in human undertakings. This We have learned by the experience of Our long life, and by the decision of our pious mind We decree that the ceremonies of sanctity shall be established by a law of perpetual duration, even to posterity.<sup>61</sup>

The eleven titles of Book XVI effectively map out the parameters of Theodosius II's 'especial responsibility'. The second effect of Book XVI's imperial and archival thinking is that its title-headings function as imperial endorsements of new taxonomies: 'pagans' (linked with sacrifices and temples), 'Jews, Caelicolists and Samaritans', 'heretics'. Again, we find these new legal taxonomies being quickly reapplied in Theodosius II, *Novel* 3.1:

For who is so demented, so damned by the enormity of strange savagery, that, when he sees the heavens with incredible swiftness define the measures of time within their spaces under the sway of the divine guidance, when he sees the movements of the stars which control the benefits of life, the earth richly endowed with the harvests, the waters of the sea, and the vastness of this immense achievement confined within the boundaries of the natural world, he does not seek the author of so great a mystery, of

<sup>60</sup> Honoré, 144

<sup>61</sup> Theodosius II, *Novel* 3.1, preamble (dated Jan 31, 438, issued at Constantinople and addressed to the Praetorian Prefect Florentius).

so mighty a handiwork? We learn that the Jews, with blinded senses, the Samaritans, the pagans, and the other breeds of heretical monsters dare to do this...<sup>62</sup>

The ordering of legal knowledge in Book XVI of the *Codex Theodosianus* – in particular the wording, subjects and structuring of its eleven titles – is specific to the age of Theodosius II.

## Conclusion

If we want to understand the knowledge-ordering in Book XVI of the *Codex Theodosianus* we need to understand religion and politics in the era of Theodosius II.<sup>63</sup> The *tituli* and excerpted material in Book XVI were not, however intended to draw a map as similar as possible to its territory. As Alain Pottage states in the quotation given at the beginning of section 3 above: “Of course lawyers recognized that legal arguments had to do with things in the world, but the ‘real’ or ‘material’ existence of these things was eclipsed by the existence that they came to have within the discursive or rhetorical frame of legal debate”.<sup>64</sup> We cannot assume that the categories found in Book XVI are a ‘natural’ or ‘accurate’ reflection of realities on the ground; instead, they offer us an imperial – and imperialist – ordering of late Roman law and religion.

Legal knowledge, however, is not simply constituted by emperors and their legal *codices*: “Legal knowledge refers to the ensemble of forms of knowing, theorizing, judging, analyzing and reflecting that constitute the practices of legal actors”.<sup>65</sup> We thus need to ask how litigants, legal and bureaucratic officials, Christian ecclesiastics and other individuals and groups made use of the archival and imperial thinking that underpins *Codex Theodosianus* Book XVI, in specific and concrete contexts.

## References

- Ando, C. & J. Rüpke (ed.) 2006. *Religion and Law in Classical and Christian Rome* (Potsdamer altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge 15). Stuttgart: Steiner.
- Aubert, J.-J. & Ph. Blanchard (eds) 2009. *Droit, religion et société dans le Code Théodosien: Troisièmes Journées d'étude sur le Code Théodosien, Neuchâtel, 15-17 février 2007*. Geneva: Université de Neuchâtel.
- Barnes, T. D. 2010. *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

<sup>62</sup> Theodosius II, *Novel* 3.1, section 1.

<sup>63</sup> See for example Honoré 112-8 and 125 on Antiochus (Chuzon)'s involvement with ecclesiastical politics, including the Council of Ephesus and its aftermath (431-435 CE). Antiochus was promoted to the role of president of the reconstituted *Codex Theodosianus*' editorial committee in 435 CE.

<sup>64</sup> Pottage 2014, 151.

<sup>65</sup> Riles 2007, 885.

- Blair, A. M. 2010. *Too Much to Know. Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Cenderelli, A. 1965. *Ricerche sul "Codex Hermogenianus"*. Milan: A. Giuffrè.
- Corcoran, S. 2013. The Gregorianus and Hermogenianus assembled and shattered. *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome* 125.2 < mefra.revues.org/1772> (visited 15 January 2015).
- Crifo, G. 1999. Considerazioni sul linguaggio religioso nelle fonti giuridiche tardo-occidentali. *Cassiodorus* 5, 123-142.
- Crogiez-Pétrequin, S. & P. Jaillette (eds.) 2012. *Société, économie, administration dans le Code Théodosien*. Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion.
- Crook, J. A. 1995. *Legal Advocacy in the Roman World*. London: Duckworth.
- Darian-Smith, E. 2013. *Laws and Societies in Global Contexts*. Contemporary Approaches. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- de Filippi, M. 1998. *Fragmenta Vaticana: storia di un testo normativo*, 2nd ed. Bari: Carucci Ed.
- Guinot, J.-N. & F. Richard (eds). 2008. *Empire Chrétien et Église aux IVe et Ve siècles. Intégration ou 'concordat'? Le Témoignage du Code Théodosien*. Paris: Cerf.
- Harries, J. D. 2013. Encyclopaedias and Autocracy: Justinian's Encyclopaedia of Roman Law. In J. König & G. Woolf (eds.) *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 178-196.
- Harries, J. D. 1998. How to make a law-code. In M. Austin et al. (eds.) *Modus Operandi: Essays in Honour of Geoffrey Rickman*. London: BICS supplement 71. 63-78.
- Honoré, T. 1998. *Law in the Crisis of Empire 379-355AD*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Humfress, C. 2011. Bishops and Law Courts in Late Antiquity: How (Not) to Make Sense of the Legal Evidence. *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 19 (3), 375-400.
- Kahlos, M. 2009. *Forbearance and Compulsion: The Rhetoric of Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Late Antiquity*. London: Duckworth.
- Kelly, C. 1994. Later Roman bureaucracy: going through the files. In A.K. Bowman and G. Woolf (eds.) *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 161-176.
- König J. & G. Woolf (eds.) 2013. *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- König, J. 2009. *Greek Literature in the Roman Empire*. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press.
- König, J. & T. Whitmarsh (eds.) 2007. *Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Krüger, P. 1923. *Codex Theodosianus. Fasc. 1 (Books 1-6)*. Berlin: Weidmann.
- Lehoux, D. 2012. *What did the Romans Know? An Inquiry into Science and Worldmaking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lenel, O. 1927. *Das Edictum Perpetuum*. Leipzig: Tauchnitz.
- Lizzi Testa, R. 2009. *Augures et Pontifices: Public Sacral Law in Late Antique Rome*. In A. Cain & N. Lenski (eds.) *The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity*. Farnham: Ashgate. 251-278.
- Luijendijk, A.-M. 2008. *Greetings in the Lord: Early Christians and the Oxyrhynchus Papyri*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- MacCormick, N. 2001. De Iurisprudentia. In J.W. Cairns & O. Robinson (eds.) *Critical Studies in Ancient Law, Comparative Law and Legal History*. Oxford and Portland Oregon: Hart Publishing. 79-82.
- Magnou-Nortier, E. 2002. *Le Code Théodosien, Livre XVI et sa Réception au Moyen Âge*. Paris: Cerf.
- Marotta, V. 2004. *Ulpiano e l'impero II: studi sui libri de officio proconsulis e la loro fortuna tardoantica*. Naples: Jovene.

- Matthews, J. 2001. Interpreting the interpretations of the Breviarium of Alaric. In Mathisen, R. W. (ed.) *Law, Society, and Authority in Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 11-32
- Matthews, J. F. 2000. *Laying Down the Law: A Study of the Theodosian Code*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Meyer, P. M. & Th. Mommsen (eds.) 1905. *Theodosiani libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis et Leges Novellae Ad Theodosianum Pertinentes*. Volume II. Reprinted 1954. Berlin: Weidmann.
- Minale, V. M. 2013. *Legislazione imperiale e manicheismo da Diocleziano a Costantino. Genesi di un'eresia*. Naples: Jovene Editore.
- Mommsen, Th. (ed.) 1905. *Theodosiani libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis et Leges Novellae Ad Theodosianum Pertinentes*. Volumes I.1 & I.2. Reprinted 1954. Berlin: Weidmann.
- Nogrady, A. 2006. *Römisches Strafrecht nach Ulpian: Buch 7 bis 9 De officio proconsulis*. Berlin: Weidmann.
- Pottage, A. 2014. Law after anthropology. Object and technique in Roman law. *Theory, Culture & Society* 31 (2-3), 147-166
- Riccobono, S. 1941. *Fontes Iuris Romani Antejustiniani. Pars Prima. Leges*. Florence: S.A.G. Barbèra.
- Riles, A. 2007. Knowledge about Law. Art. *International Encyclopedia of Law and Society*. 885-888. Cornell Legal Studies Research Paper No. 05-034 <papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\_id=851885> (visited 21 January 2015).
- Riggsby, A. M. 2010. *Roman Law and the Legal World of the Romans*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Rougé, J., Delmaire, R., Huck, O., Richard, F. & L. Guichard. 2009. *Les Lois Religieuses des Empereurs Romains de Constantin à Théodose II. Volume II Code Théodosien 1-XV, Code Justinien, Constitutions Sirmondianes* [with the Latin text of Mommsen, Meyer and Kreuger]. Sources Chrétiennes 531. Paris: Cerf.
- Rougé, J. & R. Delmaire 2005. *Les Lois Religieuses des Empereurs Romains de Constantin à Théodose II. Volume I: Code Théodosien XVI* [with the Latin text of Mommsen]. Sources Chrétiennes 497. Paris: Cerf.
- Sarat, S., L. Douglas, M. & M. Umphrey (eds.) 2007. *How Law Knows*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Selinger, R. 2004. *The Mid-Third Century Persecutions of Decius and Valerian*, 2nd ed. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Sirks, A. J. B. 2007. *The Theodosian Code: A Study*. Friedrichsdorf: Editions Tortuga.
- Sperandio, M. U. 2007. Il codex e la divisione per titoli. *Atti dell'Accademia Romanistica Costantiniana* 16, 435-472.
- Sperandio, M. U. 2005. *Codex Gregorianus: origini e vicende*. Naples: Jovene.
- Valverde, M. 2003. *Law's Dream of a Common Knowledge*. Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Vessey, M. 2003. Sacred Letters of the Law: The Emperor's Hand in Late Roman (Literary) History. *Antiquité Tardive* 11, 345-358.
- Volterra, E. 1968. L'ouvrage de Papirius Justus Constitutionum Libri XX. Reprinted in Volterra, E. 1993. *Scritti Giuridici* Vol. V. Naples: Jovene. 165-173.
- Watson, A. 1992. *The State, Law, and Religion: Pagan Rome*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- Wibier, M. 2014. The topography of the law book: common structures and modes of reading. In Jansen, L. (ed.) *The Roman Paratext: Frame, Texts, Readers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

# Coping with Ancient Gods, Celebrating Christian Emperors, Proclaiming Roman Eternity: Rhetoric and Religion in Late Antique Latin Panegyrics

Chiara O. Tommasi Moreschini

Università di Pisa, Dipartimento di Civiltà e Forme del Sapere

*The present contribution provides an examination of the relationship between the emperor and the divine sphere in Latin panegyric poetry of the fifth and sixth centuries. Following the path magisterially set forth by Claudian, poets like Sidonius Apollinaris and, later on, Corippus employ the same literary genre to praise the newly-come Germanic kings or the Eastern Emperor. They have, however, to face a profoundly transformed historical and political realm, not to mention a different approach towards religion. Whereas Panegyrici Latini and Claudian could make wide use of mythological similes to celebrate Rome, her grandeur and the deeds of the emperor, his successors deal with the ancient gods in quite a clear-cut or, so to say, crystallized way. They show a conservative (and, to some extent, nostalgic) attitude and still believe in the endurance of Rome, which is fated to last eternally. The sacralization of Rome (with the concurring ideas of a Christian providence and the literary cliché of pagan aeternitas) is integrated within the frame of an empire that has become totally Christianized and, especially in the East, finds in political theology a privileged terrain to establish its roots. In particular the link between Christianity and the emperor as vicar of God is well outlined by the symbolism of court ceremonial and gesture, which panegyrics describe in great detail.*

*The ties between Us and Our people have always  
stood upon mutual trust and affection.  
They do not depend upon mere legends and myths.  
They are not predicated on the false conception that the Emperor is divine.*  
Imperial rescript issued by Hirohito on Jan 1st 1946

Maijastina Kahlos (ed.)  
Emperors and the Divine – Rome and its Influence

COLLEGIUM

Studies across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences 20.  
Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies. 177–209.

## Introductory Remarks: Panegyric Literature and its Rhetorical Strategies

This article will discuss some rhetorical devices in Latin panegyrics,<sup>1</sup> both in prose and in verse, which are most suitable for being interpreted from a religio-historical perspective, in order to construct a consistent ideological strategy capable of outlining the fundamental tenet of a heavenly-favoured form of regality and an eternally enduring providential empire. After a general introduction providing an overview of recent scholarship, the main thrust of the paper focuses on some relevant cases, showing how similar themes recur in various authors and periods. These range from the imagery of light, the phoenix and the goddess Rome, as well as the idea of eternity and everlasting empire, or divine protection granted to a good ruler. Particular attention is given to the collection of the so-called *Twelve Panegyrics*, which shares (although in a trivialized way) some interesting patterns with contemporary philosophy, and to lesser-known poets like Sidonius and Corippus, who make use of ideas dating back to the Theodosian age (and even earlier, to Virgil's *Aeneid*). Because of their importance, in itself deserving of a study, and on account of an increasing amount of secondary literature, authors from that period such as Claudian and Ambrose are not considered *per se*, but insofar as they represent a yardstick for demonstrating both the continuity and change evident in the theme of “religion and power” – a theme particularly disposed to a multifaceted approach. A striking case is represented by the development of a new style of Christian language, which however is grafted onto traditional pagan motifs. The paper offers a diachronic analysis of these texts, with cross-references outlining the most relevant similarities and differences. Therefore, it focuses on different panegyrics treating the same emperor, or, more often, follows the development of a single motif in different authors. A detailed and more extensive treatment of Sidonius and Corippus has already been put forward in papers specifically dedicated to these two authors.<sup>2</sup>

The recent scholarly revival of panegyric literature has come after a long period in which, although it was not actually condemned, such a genre provoked discomfort in many readers. This was mainly on account of its encomiastic features, which often merged with overt aspects of promotion, not to mention the implicit message wherein a panegyric might spring from lies or a distortion of the facts, as acknowledged in a well-known retraction passage of the *Confessions*, where, recalling his career as a professional orator at the court in Milan, Augustine explicitly

links praise and lies.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Late Antique panegyrics were far more to blame, because of the biases that affected the literary production of the last centuries of the Roman Empire, whereas, rather paradoxically, the organized propaganda machine of Augustus did not suffer the same fate, but was counted as further proof of his political cleverness and insight.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, since many modern sensibilities had, as Nelis puts it, “difficulty in taking seriously the extravagant and highly mannered rhetoric of much ancient encomium”, some interpreters sought (without being persuasive, in my opinion) “to find in it destabilizing elements which permit them to offer readings in which mockery and insincerity come to the surface”.<sup>5</sup> This surely oversimplified picture is now, for the most part, water under the bridge, for, together with a general re-evaluation of the last centuries of the Roman empire, scholars have underlined not only some salient features characterizing the structure of panegyrics and encomia, but also their cultural significance or their connections with artistic creations. Such panegyrics which were established in order to reinforce, through different means, both visual and literary, a consistent image of imperial power and, in the last analysis, the creation of consensus.<sup>6</sup>

The ‘rediscovery’ of the rhetorical treatises by Menander, propitiated by the English translation and commentary of Russell and Wilson in the early Eighties and, ten years later, by Laurent Pernot’s influential study on the rhetoric of praise, led to a deeper understanding of the composition strategies. Such strategies were developed from a series of fixed schemes, and, at the same time, offered confirmation of the hypothesis already put forward at the beginning of the twentieth century, that Late Antique prose panegyrics (among which the so-called λόγος βασιλικός) were mainly drawn from manuals, in particular Menander’s Περὶ Ἐπιδεικτικῶν. To this famous treatise it is also worth adding a list of attributes recorded by Pollux (1, 41-42), which consists of standard epithets for a sovereign.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the amount of encomiastic literature from the fourth, fifth and even sixth century is surely unprecedented, not only in quantity, but also in formal structure, as witnessed by the reformulation, when not strictly speaking of an actual creation, of poetical panegyric, ingeniously achieved by Claudian.<sup>8</sup> As either

1 The author wishes to thank Maijastina Kahlos for her kind invitation to contribute to the volume and Elizabeth MacDonald and Mark Shackleton for revising the English text.

2 Tommasi 2013 and 2015.

3 *Confessiones* 6, 6, 9: “and how didst Thou deal with me, to make me feel my misery on that day, when I was preparing to recite a panegyric of the Emperor, wherein I was to utter many a lie, and lying, was to be applauded by those who knew I lied, and my heart was panting with these anxieties” (transl. by E. B. Pusey).

4 See at least the epoch-making book by Zanker 1987. For a literary perspective that involves religion, see also Citroni (2015).

5 Nelis 2011, 262, who shares the idea that these encomia are to be interpreted as serious: in particular he deals with the praise of Nero in the first book of Lucan’s *Civil War* – a passage for which it is still worth reading Nock 1926; see also the insightful reading put forward by Penwill 2010.

6 For a general reassessment of these categories, see also Ando 2000.

7 Russell Wilson 1981; Pernot 1993. It seems worth remembering that Eduard Norden, in his magisterial commentary on the *Aeneid* (Leipzig-Berlin 1903), explicitly employed Menander to discuss the final lines containing the eulogy of the dead Marcellus.

8 A thorough history of this genre is provided by Schindler 2009.



a concise, systematic and simple celebration of the emperors and their virtues (as in the case of the prose panegyrics) or a sophisticated means of asserting their almost supernatural power, by equating the praised ruler with an epic hero (as in the poetical works), these works represent an unparalleled means of political communication. At the same time, they offer proof of how classical forms inherited from the past could adapt themselves to the new sensibility of a deeply changed environment.<sup>9</sup> It should be added that the emperor's public or private virtues (which in the rhetorical treatises also relied on philosophical concepts) were quite often integrated into the ceremonial, the individual stages of which had the function of universalizing them.<sup>10</sup>

Notwithstanding some intrinsic difficulties involved in adapting the modern idea of propaganda and the creation of consensus to ancient contexts, where it often remains unknown how the addressees of an official encomium reacted and, above all, it is impossible to determine the precise audience of a panegyric speech, which was frequently delivered at a spectacular ceremony,<sup>11</sup> Having said that, it seems sound nonetheless to agree with the conclusion reasserted by many scholars – namely that official panegyric or cognate works like the *gratiarum actiones* (“thanksgiving speeches”) can to some extent be considered a means of publicity and a way of legitimizing imperial power, if not of reconstructing a consistent theory of imperial power. At the same time, they are often a means of performing a bottom-up form of communication, and thanks to a powerful mediator, elevating the diplomatic aspirations of the local community towards the emperor.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, an effective means of propaganda has been identified in other communicative forms performed by the collectivity, such as Christian liturgies; on the other hand, scholars have outlined the flexibility of panegyric elements, which also appear in other genres, mainly historiography.<sup>13</sup> Such eulogies were obviously meant to

9 An interesting perspective is offered by Formisano 2008, who outlines the fact that, together with the celebration of the ruler, a panegyric was a glorification of its talented and skilled author. Likewise, George 1998 concludes her remarks on Merovingian panegyric by stating that for a trained poet, the composition of a eulogy, where the deployment of the full panoply of the genre interacted with a sensitive capability of adapting to each person and circumstance, meant being part of a glorious literary tradition, while at the same time offering a demonstration of active political engagement as a consequence of the public role of the poet himself.

10 MacCormack 1981, 76.

11 Consolino 2011, who also reconstructs the main lines of the debate that arose in the aftermath of Alan Cameron's seminal book (1970) dedicated to *Poetry and Propaganda* in Claudian, namely, whether it is lawful to label ancient panegyric as propaganda, insofar as a concept that implied the engagement and involvement of a larger number of persons was unknown in ancient societies. It should also be remarked that the word propaganda at the beginning (which, as is known, goes back to the Congregation *de propaganda fide*, established by Pope Gregory XV in 1622) and even in its 'secular' usage (during the French Revolution and onwards) did not possess the negative nuance that we are accustomed to in the wake of its use by many totalitarian regimes in the last century.

12 Sabbah 1984.

13 See, e.g., the various essays collected by Whitby 1998. For recent attempts at considering other forms such as hymns as panegyrics, see Williams 2013. In the following pages we will consider Ambrose's funeral orations as partly falling into the province of panegyric. For a parallel perspective, such as the poetry promoted by the imperial court in Medieval China, which can be considered a kind of panegyric, see Fu 2008.

stress how gifted the orator was and to promote a message capable of influencing and orienting public opinion, while documenting the technical skill and sensitive awareness of their author. In this regard, it is also important to hint at the close links that panegyric literature shares with the art of that time: as already outlined by Gibbon, who described Late Antique ceremonies as “splendid theatre”,<sup>14</sup> this idea of a spectacular representation delighting all the senses, which would be gradually developed in both political ceremonial and liturgy, has been stressed in many recent works. As is well known, the connection between literature and the visual arts in Late Antiquity also gave rise to the widespread use of descriptions, which were an effective device for reflecting on the nature of art and aesthetic values and advancing a laudatory function. On a larger scale, official monuments or coinages are patently to be understood as capable of channelling a particular ideology or message that spread directly from the political authority.<sup>15</sup> From this perspective, the relationship between written media and art might perhaps be worth investigating further, taking into account McLuhan's famous (and sometimes questioned) statement about hot and cool media, according to which different media invite different degrees of participation on the part of a person who chooses to ‘consume’ them and that a medium affects the society in which it plays a role, not by the content delivered through the medium, but by the characteristics of the medium itself.<sup>16</sup>

## Religious Elements in Encomiastic Literature

The excellent and in many respects pioneering study by Sabine MacCormack on *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* must be credited with providing an extensive survey of some key tenets in panegyric literature. Her comparison of panegyrics with artistic products such as triumphal arches, coins and ivory diptychs show the deeply political significance and impact of the images represented, as well as the iconographic changes which resulted from the gradual Christianization of the empire. The final chapter, significantly entitled “The Parting of the Ways”, marks the independence achieved by the Christian ideology of power and, so to speak, its political theology during the three centuries that divide Constantine and Heraclius, even though traces of the classical way of celebrating an emperor still emerge here

14 *Decline and Fall*, I. 2, Chap. 16: “By a philosophic observer, the system of the Roman government might have been mistaken for a splendid theatre, filled with players of every character and degree, who repeated the language, and imitated the passions, of their original model”: cf. also MacCormack 1981, 9. Ware 2012, 26 notes that Claudian's poetry shares many details with prose panegyrics and also emphasizes the spectacular dimension. Van Nuffelen 2012 discusses the intermingling of religion and politics in these and similar ceremonies. For the iconography of the triumph, see McCormick 1986; on the *adventus*, Dufraigne 1994 and Guidetti (forthcoming).

15 See Tommasi 2010 and, more recently, Rees 2013.

16 McLuhan-Fiore 1967. See also his pioneering posthumous study on media and religion (McLuhan 1999).

and there. Indeed, “the new religion was expressed by adding to the old imagery without destroying it”.<sup>17</sup>

Bearing in mind the strong intertwining and interdependence of religion and politics that permeated Roman society, MacCormack concentrates her inquiry on three significant moments – *entrée*, funeral and accession – which are also chosen for their religious implication. If the coming of the emperor could function as a reassertion of his status as *deus praesens*, who, rising like a star, endows the multitude of the subjects with his benevolent gifts, the very moment of death was a prelude to his deification and apotheosis, whereas the enthronement represented an official sanctioning of his power thanks to a supernatural agency, insofar as he ruled by the will of God and acted as vicar on behalf of the divinity (especially according to the Christian political theology inaugurated by Eusebius).<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, panegyric literature, when elaborating the aforementioned rhetorical schemes, inclined to confer a religious nuance on many stock motifs, such as the emperor's lineage and birth or the celebration of his deeds (in both peace and war, according to the stock division between *πράξεις κατὰ πόλεμον* and *κατ'εἰρήνην*), usually by means of examples and *synkriseis*, and one must not forget the concluding prayer and wishes for a future and success.

A characteristic statement of Greco-Roman paganism such as the cult of the ruler, which was widespread especially in the first three centuries of our era, contributed to reinforcing the already strong link between religion and power.<sup>19</sup> Fostered by an all-pervasive and efficacious promotion machinery, and practised as the official state cult of Rome, as municipal cults in cities in the empire, or even as private worship, the cult of the ruler was surely meant as an act of homage made in return for the bestowal of particular benefits upon the community, which then acknowledged the sovereign as gifted with superhuman power. Moreover, it can be understood as a powerful response to the need for unity and common beliefs in a pluralistic society.<sup>20</sup> Quite significantly, however, while the emperor's worship enjoyed a large cultic diffusion and is attested mainly in epigraphic sources, the contemporary literary theorizations of the βασιλικοί λόγοι (“imperial orations”) put it in the shade, and do not offer any explicit hint as to the divine nature of the

17 MacCormack 1981, 58.

18 For a paradigmatic text such as Eusebius' biography of Constantine, see Cameron and Stuart Hall 1999. A useful survey on the fourth century can be found in Heim 1992, while general perspectives on ancient and modern political theologies are investigated by Bettiolo and Filoramo 2002 and Filoramo 2005.

19 On the idea of divine kingship in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern civilization, see the classical monographs by Frankfort 1948 and the more recent perspectives collected in Brisch 2012.

20 Among an increasing number of studies it is worth mentioning here at least Taeger 1957-69; Den Boer 1973; Fears 1977; Price 1984. Martin 1982 deals with the theme of providence. For more on the idea of late antique sovereignty, see the classic study by Straub 1939.

emperor.<sup>21</sup> This attitude has been explained as being the symptom of a deliberate wish not to confuse the two plans of the all-powerful God and human rulers or, in literary terms, as a legacy of the classical genre of the encomium, which was clearly distinct from the hymn.<sup>22</sup> Therefore all the allusions to the religious sphere which we read in these eulogies may be considered a substitute for the emphasis put on the relationship between the emperor and the supernatural dimension; nonetheless, they increase noticeably during Late Antiquity, as the panegyric production of the period attests to. It is thus possible to outline some elements pertaining to ‘religion’ (in a broader sense) in works of this kind, in order to reconstruct a consistent picture of the intermingling of political power and theology as it appears in encomiastic literature. As a matter of fact, the insistence on the eternity of the empire and of the powerful link between the emperor and a godhead is also enriched by the constant use of basic and fully understandable metaphors, such as metaphors of light.

### Prose Panegyrics and the Trivialization of Philosophical Motifs

Whatever its purpose actually was, the collection of the twelve *Latin Panegyrics*, assembled and edited by the rhetorician Pacatus Drepanius, himself the author of the last speech which he dedicated to Theodosius,<sup>23</sup> adopts a varied approach in its treatment of religious matter, which depends, of course, both on the different writers and their stylistic features and on the different historical circumstances surrounding the performance of each piece. Moreover, there is no need to remember the gradual switch from paganism (still evident in the first speeches, dedicated to pagan emperors like Diocletian and his colleague Maximian, overtly equated with their prophylactic gods, Jupiter and Hercules respectively)<sup>24</sup> to Christianity, via a hybrid condition where the audience was supposed to be a mixed one, as happens in the age of Constantine. For the sake of brevity it is not possible to consider here the lengthy debate involving the conversion of Constantine – whether it was advocated by sincerity, flattery, tolerance or mere convenience – which in part seems to contrast with other evidence suggesting a persistent attachment to the old religion. Be that as it may, a sensitive awareness is displayed in the careful use of official formulas, which can also explain the inconsistent terminology in

21 A striking exception is represented by an account in Philostratus (*Vitae Sophistarum* 1,25, 533), who mentions that Polemon, in praising the restoration of the Olympieion in Athens accomplished by Hadrian, and in the presence of the emperor himself, stated that such an achievement had been made possible thanks to agod.

22 Campanile 2001.

23 For all the problems involved, see Nixon and Rodgers 1994; Rees 2002. As is well known, the first speech is Pliny's panegyric to Trajan, which we will not take into account for chronological reasons.

24 See, e.g., *Panegyrici Latini* 2,1; 2,11 and 2,13; 6,8. Further, more complex, references are discussed at greater length in the following pages.

defining Constantine's consecration and his status as *divus* or in the employment of iconography fitting for both a Christian and a pagan audience.<sup>25</sup> A remarkable case is offered by some allusions in the poetical works of Optatianus Porphyrius, where some connections with panegyric literature are worth outlining.<sup>26</sup>

Besides stereotypical references in the *Latin Panegyrics* to the sacred nature of the emperor, his fortune (*fortuna* or *felicitas*) and the divine power that assists him,<sup>27</sup> and even to cities or objects related to him,<sup>28</sup> it is also possible to come across a subtler approach to religious matter, which, for example, is reflected in the repeated wishes for eternity<sup>29</sup> and harmony<sup>30</sup> or in the emphasis of the sudden, epiphanic appearance of the emperor, together with the swift accomplishment of his deeds, often favoured by the gods.<sup>31</sup>

In this opening passage of *Panegyric 2*, expressions like *deus praesens*; *divina origo* (2,2) also recur. In addition, the prince's deeds are *miracula* (4,1) and he acts

25 For the present inquiry it is worth mentioning Calderone 1973; De Giovanni 2003; Tabata 1995 and Cecconi 2012 on the Hispellum inscription; Carlà, Castello 2010. The Italian *Enciclopedia Costantiniana* (Rome 2013) offers an updated outline of the many questions arising from such an emblematic figure. In this context Eusebius' *Triakontaterikos*, the discourse written to celebrate the thirtieth regnal year of Constantine, is particularly meaningful. It shows many parallels with the Hellenistic treatises Περὶ βασιλείας and with Menander's work, but shows some connections with the Platonizing idea of a universal monarch as well: see the detailed analysis provided by Amerise 2005, with further bibliography.

26 Wienand 2012, 366 ff.

27 See e.g.: *Panegyrici 2*, 1 (the numbering is in accordance with Galletier's edition): the usual apostrophe *sacratissime imperator* (which also recurs at the end, chap. 13; and elsewhere in the other orations: 3,1; 3,5; 3,6; 8,1; 9,12) is reinforced by the idea that the honours he deserves are equal to those of the gods, since he is a *numen* (*numen* is also largely employed, as is *deus*, *divinus*, *divinitas*: 3,2; 4,1-2; 15; 6,12; 8,7; 9,5; 12,17-18). See also Marotta 2010.

28 See, e.g., 3,1: *sacrosantum faenus*; 4,1: *divinae aures*; 4,8: *divinae expeditiones*; 4,19: *caelestis exercitus*; 6,3: *divinum iudicium* and *caelestes vultus*; 6,6: *fastigium divinae potestatis*; 8,1: *vox divina*; 10,1: *beata devotio*. The Tiber is sanctus (9,18) and the splendour of the monuments equates Rome, an *urbs sacra* (9,1), with the sky (7,22).

29 As is stated in 2,2; 3,3 (a very significant passage where the idea of *aeternitas* is considered immutable and fixed, and Diocletian is equated with Jupiter, who defeats the Titans). The same tenets are repeated in some of the panegyrics to Maximian (4,13: moreover, his *adventus* is that of a god); Constantine: 5,16; 6,2; the empire is imperishable, the princes are eternal and the perpetual offspring of the previous emperors; 6,13 (*di immortales, quanta romano imperio renovastis, quae iam, ut res est, cesserant vetustati*, therefore putting forward the idea of the *renovatio imperii*) and, above all 10,6: *constituta enim et in perpetuum Roma fundata est, omnibus qui statum eius labefactare poterant cum stirpe deletis*. ("Rome has been established and founded for eternity, since all who could weaken her condition have been destroyed root and branch". Here and in the following passages we have adopted the translation by Nixon and Rodgers 1994.

30 The theme of the concordia between the two Caesars is alluded to in 2,10: *vos vero qui imperium non terrae, sed caeli regionibus terminatis, tantam vim, tantam potestatem mutuo vobis impartire divinae profecto immortalisque fiduciae est, quam cupiditas nulla perturbet* ("but you, whose command is not confined by earthly boundaries, but reaches the heaven, by sharing with you such great power, demonstrate a divine and truly immortal loyalty, which no covetousness disturbs"). Ware 2012, 71, stresses how Claudian, the more the political situation changed, switches from the theme of the *unanimi fratres* Arcadius and Honorius to that of the division and enmity between the two.

31 4,17: the emperor wins because the gods decreed so; 10,7: victory could be achieved either through a god or through the army's affection for Constantine. In the same text (chap. 14) the Gallic victory is like a miracle performed by the divinity (*divinitus*) and Constantine himself appears like a god; he is protected by a god (26); *divina Gloria, Fama, Victoria* and the elements themselves helped him (32).

by means of *providentia* (2,5; 4,6; 5,5); he is endowed with godlike virtue (2,5) or benevolence (5,15); or fortune (3,18; 7,2); his piety is strictly linked to their virtue (3,6). To sum up, the present emperor ought to be praised just as we are used to worshipping and celebrating gods (7,1), because there is an explicit correspondence between earthly and heavenly sovereignty (7,1). A statue in the shape of a god is said to have been a tribute by the Senate to Constantine (9,25). It is worth remembering the insistently religious language put forward in 5,1: Constantius' words and senses are celestial and divine; in this same context, moreover, the author develops the metaphor of the temple with its sacred mysterious penetralia and cell.

The equation to a god is extremely widespread, for example in 3,4; 3,10-11 *vestrum numen effulsit* (your divine power shone like an epiphany or a sudden miracle); 8,10; 9,7 (a propos of the *adventus*); 11,9; 12,10 (the swift action of Theodosius) and 21. 7,7 offers an interesting treatment of this motif, for the emperor is said to arrive not by means of public service, but on a divine chariot. Usually the comparison between Jupiter, the heavenly ruler, and the earthly sovereign – the emperor – is achieved by employing cosmic metaphors such as the all-encompassing sight of the sun, or his benevolent nod<sup>32</sup> and, last but not least, by recalling the struggle between Jupiter and the Titans or the Giants to describe the overcoming of the barbarians and, conversely, the return of a golden age.<sup>33</sup> It is also worth remembering the image developed in 4,3-4, an eternal spring, where the four elements rejoice all over the world because of the divine splendour of the emperor, whose eyes shine and whose solicitude protects his subjects.

In 2,4 the traditional metaphor of the ship of state is followed by an allusion to the gigantomachy; in 11,13 Julian's adversaries are depicted like chthonian monsters that hate light; in 12,34 Theodosius' enemies are dragon-like monsters defeated by the celestial gods. Later on (chapters 30 and 39), divine revenge over the wicked is taken and victory is announced by prodigies and testified to by divine favour. This had been a propagandistic motif since the Hellenistic period, and would be

32 2,3: after having described his traditional attributes, the nimbus and the crown, the emperor is represented as a god who placates the storms; 2,6: an explicit parallel with Jupiter (who, nonetheless, seems slower than the emperor – thus provoking a sort of grotesque effect; the same grotesque effect in 8,13: *hoc nobis est ista largitio quod Terra matrem frugum, quod Iuppiter moderator aurarum: quidquid illi parcius dederant, nobis tamen ex beneficio tuo natum est* ("that largesse of yours is for us what Earth is, mother of crops, and Jupiter, master of the winds; whatever they have given too sparingly is produced for us from your benefaction"); 2,7: the emperor's deeds are a new, great miracle (*novum et ingens miraculum*), and, once again, there is a parallel with Jupiter's nod; 6,14, once again the image of the emperor as similar to Jupiter recurs; 11,28: Julian's visage is like that of a god, whose gestures command the elements; moreover (22), his outstanding career is compared to exceptional events in nature. In 6,5 the idea that the ruler holds the weight (*moles*) of so great a virtue is probably a legacy of Stoicism.

33 See, e.g., 5,18: *adeo, ut res est, aurea illa saecula, quae non diu quondam Saturno rege vigerunt, nunc aeternis auspiciis Iovis et Herculis renascuntur* ("thus in actual fact that golden age, which once flourished briefly when Saturnus was king, is now reborn under the auspices of Jupiter and Hercules"); 10,38; in 2,13 Rome is said to be *felix*, even happier than when it was ruled by Romulus and Remus.

employed, like many other such motifs, by later poets such as Claudian, Sidonius and Corippus.<sup>34</sup>

Mythological similes are sometimes used to ennoble the emperor,<sup>35</sup> as is the insistence on brightness and radiance.<sup>36</sup> In 10,29 the golden shining of his arms, especially the shield, is recorded (likewise in 6,6). The death of Constantius Chlorus at York merges the 'exotic' localization at the boundaries of the Northern Ocean with the image of the perpetual light the dead emperor enjoys in a sort of paradise, where he has been welcomed by Jupiter (7,7). Once again, the sensitiveness displayed in the image of the welcoming god must be underlined, whose hand, in extending towards Constantius, shares many points of contact with consecration coins of the same era.

In addition, quite interestingly, the coming of Constantine from a far region like Britannia is paralleled to other gods who came from far regions, like India or Egypt (7,9)<sup>37</sup>; besides, the same Constantine is said to be escorted by Apollo (7,21) and possesses the beauty of a god (7,17).<sup>38</sup> There are also some passages mentioning prodigies and miracles in connection with the newly-enthroned emperor.<sup>39</sup>

A final aspect should be outlined, namely, the constant reference to a 'divine mind' or 'instinct' that guides and addresses the emperor, whose soul is eternal and heavenly. Among the numerous, often stereotypical references,<sup>40</sup> two passages referring to Constantine are worth being quoted:<sup>41</sup>

you must share some secret with that divine mind, Constantine, which has delegated care of us to lesser gods and deigns to reveal itself to you alone

<sup>34</sup> An important analysis of this motif is provided by Cracco Ruggini 1983; any relationship between the *Panegyrici Latini* and the contemporary giant-columns that represents an anguipede overthrown by a god remains uncertain, even though they can be considered representative of a peculiar *Zeitgeist*. The reprises in Corippus are outlined in Tommasi 2007, 187, with further references. For Sidonius, see the very beginning of *Carmen* 6, along with the considerations of Furbetta 2010-2011. Claudian's treatment of the theme (besides his two minor poems on the subject, see e.g. 8,108 and 28,185), is outlined by Ware 2012,129 ff.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. 11,8.

<sup>36</sup> See expressions like *fulgor oculorum*, *totius corporis circumfusa maiestas*, *oris dignitas* (9,19) or *salutare sidus and splendor* (11,2 and 3) or the solar imagery that concludes 4,2.

<sup>37</sup> A similar motif is developed in Claudian 24,58 ff.

<sup>38</sup> A similar reference occurs in 6,6, with the expression *divina species*.

<sup>39</sup> The most significant is the episode of the Palladium (according to the tradition, a chryselephantine statue of Minerva, which was counted among the seven pledges that were supposed to guarantee the Roman state) and its mysterious fall from the sky, which Mamertinus skilfully links to Julian's sudden appearance. The passage has been thoroughly examined by Lagioia 2004.

<sup>40</sup> *Divina mens*: 2,8; 5,6; 6,7; 5,8 (*pro divina intellegentia mentis aeternae*); 5,15 (*sacra mens; sacrum pectus*); 3,8 (*divinus impetus*); 10,17 (*instinctus divinus*); it is also worth remembering Constantine's victory obtained by means of 'divine inspiration [*instinctu divinitatis*]', as stated in the commemorative inscription on his triumphal arch), on which see Hall 1998 and Lenski 2008.

<sup>41</sup> 9,2: *habes profecto aliquod cum illa mente divina, Constantine, secretum, quae delegat nostri diis minoribus cura uni se tibi dignatur ostendere*; 8,10: *sic ingenui largique fontes ut ubique prosint ire festinant, sic celeriter in terras caelo missa perveniunt, sic denique divina illa mens, quae totum mundum hunc gubernat, quidquid cogitavit facit*.

and

so do natural and copious springs hasten to flow so that they may be beneficial everywhere; so do things sent from heaven arrive swiftly on earth; so finally does that divine mind, which governs the whole of this world immediately put into effect whatever has conceived.

This idea seems to rely on a sort of trivialized philosophy, perhaps Platonism or, most probably, Stoicism, whose influences, as is well known, still affect much literature of the Constantinian age. Stoic influences are, in fact, to be understood in the fiery and immortal nature of the soul (3,8: *igneae immortalesque*), as well in the tenet that divinity is vivified by perpetual motion (9,22: *quae divinitas perpetuo vigen motu?*). The statement in 3,13 is also very important: the two emperors are compared to the sun and the moon, so that no part of the world is deprived of their presence, even when they are absent. This idea is reinforced in the following chapter by means of a famous Virgilian line, whose pantheistic accents made it one favoured by philosophers, *lovis omnia plena*.<sup>42</sup> Significantly enough, a divine mind encompassing the universe is recorded in the famous lines of the concluding prayer in 9,26, whose henotheistic flavour we have already discussed:<sup>43</sup>

For this reason, you, supreme creator of things, whose name you wished to be as many as the tongues of the nations (for what you yourself wish to be called we cannot know), whether you are some kind of force and divine mind spread over the whole world and mingled with all the elements and move of your own accord without the influence of any outside force acting upon you, or whether you are some power above heaven which look down upon this work of yours from a higher pinnacle of Nature: you, I say, we beg and beseech to preserve this prince for all ages.<sup>44</sup>

Panegyric literature, therefore, while re-elaborating schemes that had long since been codified, such as virtues, lineage and deeds, tended to confer on them a universalistic dimension, without separating it from the religious one. The religious dimension found its completion in the final prayer for good fortune and prosperity. This statement is much more significant when one considers that the

<sup>42</sup> As is testified to by Augustinus, *De Consensu Evangeistarum* 1,22,31; Servius, in *Vergilii Bucolica*, ad loc.

<sup>43</sup> Tommasi 2012, 205 ff., with further references to contemporary philosophical trends. See also Gee 2013, 174-175. It seems worth noticing, however, Stoic images like the one of the god as sower and the reminiscence of Virgil, *Aeneid* 6,724-727: *Principio caelum ac terras camposque liquentis / lucentemque globum lunae Titaniaque astra / spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus / mens agitat molem et magno se corpore miscet*, and Lucan, 9,580: *Iuppiter est quodcumque uides, quodcumque moueris*.

<sup>44</sup> *Quamobrem te, summe rerum sator, cuius tot nomina sunt quot gentium linguas esse voluisti - quem enim te ipse dici velis, scire non possumus - sive tute quaedam vis mensque divina es, quae toto infusa mundo omnibus miscearis elementis, et sine ullo extrinsecus accedente vigoris impulsu per te ipsa movearis, sive aliqua supra omne caelum potestas es, quae hoc opus tuum ex altiore naturae arce despicias: te, inquam, oramus et quaesumus ut hunc in omnia saecula principem serves*.

apex of the imperial panegyric coincides with an age largely pervaded by religious anxiety and in particular by the idea that the cycles of destiny were fated to come to pass.<sup>45</sup> Interestingly enough, the intermingling of the cosmic and the political imagery, which had been used to express and assert a multilevel hierarchy of the divine realms from the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *On the Kosmos* onwards, also enjoys a remarkable treatment in Plotinus, who describes the procession of his supreme principle equating it to the retinue of the Persian king – a passage which seems inspired by contemporary customs:<sup>46</sup>

Before the great King in his progress there comes first the minor train, then rank by rank the greater and more exalted, closer to the King the kinglier; next his own honoured company until, last among all these grandeurs, suddenly appears the Supreme Monarch himself, and all – unless indeed for those who have contented themselves with the spectacle before his coming and gone away – prostrate themselves and hail him. In that royal progress the King is of another order from those that go before him, but the King in the Supreme is no ruler over externs; he holds that most just of governances, rooted in nature, the veritable kingship, for he is King of Truth, holding sway by all reason over a dense offspring his own, a host that shares his divinity, King over a king and over kings and even more justly called father of Gods.

In this connection, it also seems worth recalling the eighteenth treatise in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which probably dates back to the age of Diocletian and close to Menander's precepts on the celebration of a sovereign. Although it appears quite eccentric with respect to the Hermetic collection, and its stylization has been judged as rather plain or even dull, this text represents another witness to the idea – widespread in philosophical milieus – that the cosmic order, where a beneficent king rules over the elements and the minor gods, is reflected in the terrestrial realms. In addition, an explicit connection between the supreme ruler of the universe and the earthly sovereign is at the very end, after having been introduced by means of appropriate similes, such as that of musicians tuning their instruments and singing hymns to a king; or that of the children's cheering of their father, who, notwithstanding their lisps, accepts their homage and rejoices:<sup>47</sup>

Therefore, let us praise god, but next let us descend to those who have received their sceptres from him. We began with kings, and the practice we had with them also accustomed us to giving panegyrics and singing reverent hymns to the almighty, so we must first begin our praise with god and use it as training and then exercise the training

45 See already Seston 1947, 252; and particularly Mazzarino 1974, 17, who recalls the coins' legends *fatīs victricibus* (probably the Parcae). Seminal indications on the links between religious themes and late antique panegyrics are offered by Béranger 1970 and Rodgers 2012 (1986).

46 Enn. 5,5 (32), 3, quoted in McKenna's translation. The text is discussed by Soares Santoprete (forthcoming).

47 A similar image is presented in *Panegyrici Latini* 6,9: the emperor is compared to a god, who forgives humans when they complain about them by pretending they neglect human affairs.

through god; the purpose is to have in us the exercise of reverence for god as well as praise for kings.<sup>48</sup>

It follows the prescription of celebrating the ruler as giver of peace and promoter of harmony.

## Poetical Interpretations of Eternity and Sovereignty: Claudian

Together with the increasing perception of a sacred aura, a further step towards the sacralization of power is represented by the use made of panegyric poetry, whose structure (from the hexameter onwards) immediately recalls hymn formulas or epic imagery. The superimposition of epos on eulogy resulted therefore in a hybrid genre, whose exact status has been much debated.<sup>49</sup> In any case, panegyric poetry, which enjoyed a certain popularity after the example provided by Claudian, aimed not only at mythologizing the sovereign or legitimizing his politics, but it tended also to reassert and defend the role of the elites, whose prerogatives and integrity appeared endangered, especially in the fifth century. Needless to say, however, it also had to face a profoundly transformed historical and political realm, not to mention a different approach towards religion. Thanks to the sensitive deployment of an archaic style of vocabulary, the constant re-use of classical imagery and the refined allusions to history and mythology, poetical panegyrics undoubtedly reflect and combine different tendencies. They simultaneously embody the efforts of an elite to seek refuge in literacy and survive after momentous catastrophes and are a way to exorcise the fear of the barbarians. They also display a conservative (and, to some extent, nostalgic) attitude by continuing to believe in the endurance of Rome, which is destined to last eternally.<sup>50</sup> The sacralization of Rome (with the concurring ideas of a Christian providence and the literary cliché of pagan aeternitas)<sup>51</sup> is integrated within the frame of an empire that has become totally Christianized and, especially in the East, finds in political theology a privileged terrain in which to establish its roots. An important and in some respects brilliant witness to the persistence of these motifs is offered by Claudian's poetry. While a thorough investigation of his entire production would alone deserve a specific study,

48 *Corpus Hermeticum* 18,15, which we quote in B.P. Copenhaver's translation.

49 See recently Müller 2011, 83 f., Gillett 2012 and Ware 2012, 53 ff. on the blending of epic and encomium owing to the innate encomiastic elements of epic.

50 Tommasi 2013, with further references, among which are the classical works by Paschoud 1967 and Brodka 1998. See also Inglebert 1996 and the monographic issue 2 (2007) of the online journal *Camēnae* sponsored by the University of Paris IV Sorbonne (<http://www.paris-sorbonne.fr/article/camēnae-no-2-juin-2007>, retrieved July 2014).

51 See the still invaluable considerations put forward by Charlesworth 1936.

but would risk being an addendum to recent insightful analyses,<sup>52</sup> highlighting the treatment of some significant themes may conversely function as a touchstone or a better understanding of the way these trends are dealt with in subsequent poetry. Such is the case of the emphasis on the continual perpetuity of the empire, divinely ordained, where contemporary Rome and the threats she had to face are reformulated in epic terms, by epitomizing history.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, although the divine machinery appears in a classical fashion, the gods are transformed and are rather to be interpreted as the driving forces in an eternal struggle between good and evil,<sup>54</sup> at the end of which Rome is nonetheless destined to be victorious and the emperor is accompanied by divine favour.<sup>55</sup> In any case, the almost overwhelming use made of mythological similes is meant to enrich laudatory modules thanks to the implicit equation between the human world and the divine sphere. In this respect personification too plays an important role: an interesting example is provided by the virtues a good ruler ought to possess, which are described in 22,6-7 (*Clementia* as a cosmic force) and 100-101 (*Iustitia; Patientia; Temperies; Prudentia; Constantia*). One wonders whether this can be considered a legacy of the specifically Roman tendency to worship abstract entities.<sup>56</sup>

It would seem that Franz Altheim's well-known statement that the causes of Rome's greatness lay exclusively in religious belief, *pietas* and *fides*, and that obedience to the divine will made her great,<sup>57</sup> ought to be qualified by taking into account a variety of different factors and causes. Nonetheless, old models continue to survive, despite being incorporated into a new context, as we tried to demonstrate in a recent contribution, which was dedicated to the late antique development of the Virgilian idea of an *imperium sine fine*, limitless and endless (with sensitive use of negative particles to emphasize both temporal eternity and spatial limitlessness),<sup>58</sup>

52 Such as those by Müller 2011 and Ware 2012. See also the classical pages by Cameron 1970, 439 ff. and the still invaluable contribution by Duval 1984, who contextualizes Claudian's relationship to the emperors by diachronically examining his different poems.

53 Ware 2012, 90. Müller 2011, 232, notes the development of these motifs especially in *Carmen* 24. On Claudian's treatment of Rome, see also Consolino 2002 and Zarini 2007. A long celebration of Rome's history appears in Sidonius Apollinaris (*Carmen* 7), which was discussed in Tommasi 2014.

54 Ware 2012, 44 and 49 ff.

55 See, e.g., 7,87 ff. and 96 ff.

56 Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* 2,23,61; Arnobius, 4,1; Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* 1,20,1.

57 Altheim 1938, 411 ff.

58 Vergilius, *Aeneis* 1,277-8, with the sensitive considerations by Turcan 1983. Ware 2012, 101, offers an example of how Claudian deals with this theme, emphasizing his connections with Ovid and the cosmological motifs implied in his *carmen perpetuum*. An interesting passage here is 8,284 ff., which seems permeated by Stoic reminiscences in a political context (already in Aelius Aristides, 794 Dindorf, as noted by Barr 1981, *ad loc.*). See also 24,159: Rome is endless (*nec terminus umquam / Romanae ditionis erit*), whereas the other empires of the past have come to an end. There are, however, limits that humans must not transgress (8,304), for otherwise a good ruler will turn into a haughty tyrant.

it was embodied thus by the concrete presence of the emperor.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, the idea of the *Urbs aeterna* became a powerful device in the Roman religious structure and theological framework, and was enhanced by its association with the goddess Roma since the early imperial period.<sup>60</sup> More importantly, it was linked with concepts like the renewal of the centuries, the golden age and the assimilation of Rome with the cosmos, as summarized in the other Virgilian line, *magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo* and in Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*.<sup>61</sup> In this context it is worth remembering Claudian's description of the Cave of Time (22,424-425), represented as a snake devouring its own tail, which is an original way of revisiting the motif of *aeternitas*.<sup>62</sup> By the beginning of the fifth century, therefore, the eternity of Rome came to coincide with the notion of a universal empire,<sup>63</sup> established and ordered by providence, where even the defeat of enemies was part of a natural law (it goes without saying that, once again, the Virgilian lines about the taming of the proud and the subject being forgiven constituted a powerful intertext).<sup>64</sup> This feeling would be increasingly reinforced by the gradual embodiment by the sovereign of the idea of empire itself and found sanction in the charismatic perspective characterizing the later phase of the empire.<sup>65</sup>

It may be possible to see an anticipation of this in the idea of the divine mind that assisted the emperor and addresses his acts.<sup>66</sup>

## Crucial Transformations in the Age of Theodosius

59 MacCormack 1981, 61.

60 On Roma as goddess, see Mellor 1981; Müller 2011, 232 and 355 ff. (on Claudian). An interesting literary example is represented by Melinno's Greek hymn in praise of Rome, which has been variously dated (from the third century E to the second CE) – an important text that has not escaped the philologists' attention (as Degl'Innocenti Pierini 2010, 130, claims), for it was discussed earlier by Norden 1913. For Late Antiquity it will be sufficient to recall here the famous passage in Rutilius Namatianus (1,47 ff.), where Rome is addressed as *dea*. A recent analysis is provided by Schierl 2013, with further references; see also Tommasi 2015.

61 Ware 2012, 171 ff. As we suggested elsewhere (Tommasi 2013) Sibylline literature can also be advocated as a source of inspiration: it is worth remembering that Norden (1924) had earlier proposed a link between Virgil's fourth eclogue and the Sibylline oracles.

62 Tommasi 2012, 115. In addition, at the beginning of *Carmen* 28 Claudian introduces the ancient Roman goddess of *Fortuna Redux*, thus hinting at the theme of an eternal return (see also 8,4: *reduces fasces*).

63 See, for example, Claudian 8,42 ff. (Theodosius' exploits are introduced by describing all the regions of the empire).

64 See, e.g., 8,113-14. Cf. also the treatment of Victoria as a goddess in 24,204 ff.

65 Ware 2012, 52 shows that Honorius is represented as a counterpart of Jupiter and notes the symbolic purport of Rome, which "stood for the principles of *imperium sine fine* that were established by Augustus and given expression in the *Aeneid*", so that the city is honoured as much as the emperor.

66 As stated above, with many examples of the idea of a *mens* or *νοῦς* that inspires and directs the acts of the ruler: this sensitive observation by MacCormack (1981, 83) can be proved in the light of our previous observations about its traces of Stoicism.

In the decisive century running from the Tetrarchs to the death of Theodosius (395), the complex ritual of *apotheosis*, or *relatio in numerum divorum*, underwent a deep transformation, ultimately culminating in its abolition.<sup>67</sup> This is to be understood not only as the natural end of a practice strongly connoted in a pagan sense (even though the attitude towards it of many Christian writers, including Augustine, was rather bland), but as a development of its inner essence, because, at least from the Tetrarchy onwards, divinity had come to be understood as if the function only, and not the person of the emperor, were endowed with divine power.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, the emergence of an idea such as that regarding ‘holy men’ was superimposed on the purely political implication of the apotheosis and favoured its metamorphosis.<sup>69</sup>

Such an achievement was made possible by a slight change in the usual meaning of consecration, the assignation of which nevertheless remained a prerogative of the Senate.<sup>70</sup> If the last sovereign to whom *caelestes honores* were attributed is Constantius Chlorus, father of Constantine, consecration is attested throughout the fourth century, up to Theodosius senior, father of Theodosius I, and many of the emperors of that period still bear the title of *divus*. It may be of some interest to observe that a poet with archaic leanings like Sidonius, in the middle of the fifth century, employs the technical term *divus* to designate dead emperors; the same happens in Corippus.<sup>71</sup> As a pagan, Claudian naturally addresses the emperor in classical terms as a *praesens deus* and openly describes Theodosius’ apotheosis.<sup>72</sup>

At the same time, both Christian and pagan authors were concerned with the idea of eternity, sanctioned and guaranteed by God, which meant that they also had to face more concrete issues, such as dynastic succession. The external apparatus and the performance of an imperial funeral also represented a crucial component in ensuring a smooth transition to the rule of a new emperor.

A case like that of Theodosius I, the emperor who legitimized Christianity as the state religion of the empire, is particularly significant. As we have already observed, Pacatus’ speech, delivered in 389, is still suitable for addressing a

67 Tommasi 2005, with previous literature; see recently Abbondanza, Coarelli and Lo Sardo 2014; Gnoli and Muccioli 2014. For the particular case of apotheosis in the fourth century Cracco Ruggini 1977 is still fundamental; see also more recently, Bonamente 1988; 2002; 2013; 2014; 2014a; 2014b. Teja 2014 discusses Christians reactions to imperial cult, on which see also Brent 1999.

68 Seston 1947, 197.

69 This crucial passage is discussed by Cracco Ruggini 1977, 450 ff. (where the differences between saints, sages and divinized emperors are outlined) and 463. See also Bonamente 2011.

70 Cracco Ruggini 1977, 455.

71 Sidonius, *Carmina* 2,210 and 318 (and I. 481, *divale sidus*); Corippus, *Laus Iustini* 3,127; this custom also remains in official documents like *Novellae* 1,2 (447 CE) and *Codex Iustinianus* 1,17,1.

72 *Decus aetherium* (7,175), followed by the golden age theme. This imagery is mostly employed in *Carmen* 28 (the panegyric for Honorius’ sixth consulship): I. 36, Rome is said to be inhabited by a god; 55, Theodosius as *divus*, who reached the Olympus (101); see also *numen* (II. 17 and 656); *imperii praesens genius* (612); 27,23, *en princeps, en orbis apex aequatus Olympo!* Although Cameron 2011 discusses Claudian’s supposed paganism, we nonetheless prefer to maintain the usual interpretation and consider him a worshipper of traditional religion.

mixed audience, on account of its use of neutral terms appropriate for both pagans and Christians,<sup>73</sup> despite his open characterization of Theodosius as a god, as is the case of the temple erected to the highest goodness: *sacrae aedes et dicata numini summo delubra* (12,21).<sup>74</sup> Again, chapter six presents some themes that we already outlined, such as the emperor’s *felicitas*, his divine soul and the capability exceptionally awarded to him, namely to investigate the *arcanum caeleste*. Indeed, the final lines in this chapter depict Theodosius as a god, for they state that it is he “who is adored by people, to whom private and public prayers are addressed all over the entire world, from whom a man about to make a voyage seeks a calm sea, a man about to travel a safe return, a man about to enter battle a happy omen”.<sup>75</sup>

The same fluctuation can be observed a propos of Theodosius’ death: if Claudian, still in keeping with pagan tradition, describes it as a catasterism or transformation into a star,<sup>76</sup> conversely the Christian bishop Ambrose, writing a funeral sermon in praise of the *christianissimus princeps* Theodosius,<sup>77</sup> provides overt opposition to the consecration ritual by emphasizing the idea of Theodosius’ dead body juxtaposed with Christ’s living one. At the very beginning, however, he moves along the lines of the classical tradition when the celestial prodigies announcing Theodosius’ death are described.<sup>78</sup>

### Idealized Portraits of Christian Rulers: Ambrose, Prudentius, Ennodius

Ambrose’s text deserves some closer attention, because it is to the insightful approach of the Milanese bishop, who follows a path already inaugurated by Eusebius,<sup>79</sup> that we owe the rethinking and formulation of an alternative for the

73 It has been recently suggested, however, that the orator was a Christian: cf. Turcan-Verkerk 2003, who also inclines to credit him as the author of a lost poetical panegyric usually attributed to Paulinus Nolanus (*infra* n. 86); Cameron 2011, 227 ff.

74 See also, e.g., 12, 2: after the opening cosmic imagery, it is stated that the emperor is to be worshipped (*te adorandum*); his godlike status is reasserted in chapter 4: *deum dedit Hispania quem videmus*; and at the very end: 12,47: *adnuente numine tuo*.

75 *Qui gentibus adoratur, cui toto orbe terrarum privata vel publica vota redduntur, a quo petit navigaturus serenum, peregrinaturus reditum, pugnaturus auspiciam*. Chapter 18 alludes to the usual theme of the divine mind that guides the prince’s deeds (*sacra mens tua; maiestatis tuae particeps deus; vis divina*), because he knows the heavenly secrets (12,19: *consciis caelestis arcani*).

76 MacCormack 1981, 124 ff. and 140. In *Carmen* 28, Italy is inserted in a cosmic eulogy (19 ff.) and the emperor is a *sidus* (23): for a detailed commentary on the passage, cf. also Dewar 1996, 78.

77 For its ideological thrust, see Bonamente 1979; Consolino 1984a. A global portrait is offered by Groß-Albenhausen 1999.

78 Although this tradition also seems to be shared by Christians, for the Gospels record darkness obscuring the earth when Jesus died.

79 Another interesting author to consider is Juvenecus, who states that Constantine would receive his peace through Christ (4,806 ff.).

traditional themes of apotheosis and divinization.<sup>80</sup> It displays the intermingling of different forms of both classical and Biblical origin,<sup>81</sup> among which the panegyric certainly plays a role, although with substantial differences in style and content. Lacking the fripperies of the panegyric speech, the emperor is treated as a Christian ‘everyman’, that is without any reference to his ancestors (or *genos*, according to the traditional reference list) and without any flattery implied in the usual panegyric form. Relying on Eusebius, who did not deify the subject, but presented the emperor as receiving his status directly from God, Ambrose further accentuates the submission to divine law.<sup>82</sup> In more solemn a way than he did in the *De obitu Valentiniani*, where imagery of Paradise borrows many elements from the locus *amoenus* imagery and the beauty and youth of the dead king are emphasized, Ambrose is also concerned with the idea of the transmission and legitimization of power,<sup>83</sup> especially considering that Theodosius’ heirs, and in particular Honorius, were quite young and inexperienced. Such a legitimization is achieved by superimposing the patriarchal image of Jacob onto that of the dead emperor (3), therefore implying that Honorius is, like Joseph, destined to accomplish great deeds,<sup>84</sup> and, even more significantly, it culminates in the final section (43 ff.), which recalls the story of Helena and her finding of the true Cross – a legend of probable Western origins, which Ambrose is the first to fashion, probably following a brief allusion in Eusebius.<sup>85</sup> The choice of linking Helena, mother of Constantine and endowed, like Mary, with a salvific and providential function, to the Theodosian family, is a skilful device that allows Ambrose to fulfil a twofold purpose. On the one hand, he is able to show that Constantine’s dynasty finds its natural completion in that of Theodosius. On the other, in a wider perspective, by means of stating that a nail of the cross was encapsulated in the imperial crown and another one in the bit of the imperial horse (47), he is able to confer the cross with a deep political meaning, transferring the theme of the legacy of the Christian faith to political power and extending it to all Christian rulers. Finally, the newly-established paradigm of the Christian ruler – modelled on the Old Testament ‘kings’ like Moses (with the emphasis on legal aspects), David or Solomon – who was able to gain his victories without bloodshed and thanks to his unshakable faith, and whose piety, compunction, mildness, philanthropy, and mercy were added to ‘classical’ (i.e. pagan) virtues such as clemency and fortune (*felicitas*).

80 Bonamente 2014a and 2014b.

81 Duval 1977.

82 As interestingly suggested by Lunn Rockcliffe 2007, 191.

83 Bonamente 1977.

84 This comparison can be paralleled with that put forward by Claudian, who, moving alongside the Virgilian model, superimposes another famous pagan familiar model onto the emperor and his son, namely that of Aeneas and his son Ascanius (Ware 2012, 57 and 69).

85 See the pioneering considerations put forward by Consolino 1984b.

Together with Ambrose, to whom we owe this complex picture, other writers share this view. If too little is known about Paulinus’ lost panegyric, which was probably dedicated to exalting the battle of Frigidus and the defeat of the ‘pagan’ tyrannical usurpers, Roman hegemony acquires a specific function in the context of Christian salvation history.<sup>86</sup> By stressing the advancement of history and the progressive substitution of the old religion with the new (and better) one, Prudentius’ *Contra Symmachum*, an original mix between epos and apologetics, seems to offer confirmation of the crucial link between religion and the state. Thus, when he outlines the triumphant history of Rome, its progresses and its victories, Prudentius accepts the so-called *Reichstheologie* in the tradition of Origen and Eusebius (it is worth remembering here the long-lasting scholarly debate involving the favour gained by Christian monotheism insofar as it reflected the divine supremacy parallel to that of the emperor).<sup>87</sup> The senators are described as eager to abandon the old errors in which they lived and follow Christ. Theodosius, who establishes peace and overcomes the barbarians, is praised as the saviour of the Roman state, even surpassing great Republican heroes such as Marius and Cicero. He endows Rome with eternal youth and vigour, giving her safety and peace. Therefore, the attempt by the dwindling and waning pagan party to revive its traditions, is displayed against the larger background of history. Obviously, as a poet, the backbone of Prudentius’ ideology may be found in the *Aeneid* and its teleology, which encompasses the civilizing mission of a pious hero. Generally speaking, the sense of a mission hallowed by gods was a characteristic of the Augustan period, when world domination appeared to be assured. Throughout the entire poem, Prudentius develops his own consistent conception of Rome, her past and her present. Certainly, according to a still invaluable analysis by E. K. Rand, “the attack on Symmachus is an obvious form of Christian apologetics, which here as in Augustine’s *City of God* passes into a larger literary form”, but, even more significantly “it is an apology not so much for Christian belief as for Christian culture”, so that “his purpose is not to supersede pagan culture, but to include it”. According to Rand, this is demonstrated by the fact that the poet “read the old authors with minute understanding and with deep delight”.<sup>88</sup> According to the functional and useful idea of *chresis*,<sup>89</sup> however, Virgilian motifs are here radically subverted or reformulated.<sup>90</sup> Both the old pagan gods and the new menaces threatening the empire are fated to be overthrown by the positive values of Roman culture and, evidently, by Christianity.

86 On which see Duval 1984, 139 and, in more detail, Sivan 1995; Pricoco 1998.

87 Zarini 2010, 96, labelled this phenomenon ‘trivialized Eusebianism’; see also Zarini 2015. Bonamente 2011 sensitively outlines the development from ‘pagan’ *divus* to Christian ‘saint’. Fontaine 1984 provides an insightful analysis of how Christian poetry dealt with the figure of the prince.

88 Rand 1920, 83.

89 As discussed by Gniska 1984 and 1993.

90 Döpp 1988. See also Barnes 1976 and Bureau 2009 (who compares Claudian’s *Panegyric for Honorius’ Sixth Consulship* and Prudentius’ *Contra Symmachum*).



A deep link with Ambrose (with some slight changes, however, for example in the motif of bloodless victory, which is here reformulated in the sense that the king deliberately opts for peace) is established in the prose panegyric composed by Ennodius in 507 or 508 and dedicated to the Ostrogothic king Theoderic.<sup>91</sup> Developing the theme of the *rex* as priest, which in all likelihood is modelled on David rather than the *pontifex maximus* of the Roman tradition, and celebrating the Gothic king as *summi Dei cultor* (thus omitting the sensitive issue of Arianism), Ennodius explicitly connects the success and the merits of Theoderic to his faith (chapters 50, 80) and mentions Providence as a companion to his deeds (*advocasti Providentiam, actuum tuorum comitem*, 51). This can perhaps be considered a reversal of the theme of the comitatus gods of pagan panegyrics. Furthermore, the description of the kingly virtues attests to God, for there is none among men from whom Theoderic could have assimilated the qualities that he exhibits: 59, *o geminam in uno principe virtutum plenitudinem, quae Deum resignat auctorem, quia non habet inter homines a quo videatur sumpsisse quod exhibet*. In any case, already in the introductory section, among the traditional topoi of inadequateness for the task of celebrating such mighty a sovereign, Ennodius provides an explicit comparison between the godhead and the ways to praise him. On the other hand, Ennodius revisits themes that are strongly rooted in classical panegyrics, such as the idea that the victorious sovereign is capable of subduing nature and taming the elements (7-10) or the rejuvenation of Rome thanks to his power and valour (56).

### Sidonius Apollinaris

This latter image also recurs in Prudentius, Claudian and Sidonius Apollinaris: it must therefore be considered a classicizing relic that demonstrates the persistence of the eternity motif. In Sidonius the contrast between Rome's description as a dowager and her regained youth thanks to the mature Avitus (whereas a young prince like Valentinian III provoked her ruin) is central to understanding the entire panegyric,<sup>92</sup> whose complex texture also emerges by taking into account some echoes of Rutilius, for example as far as the image of Rome destined to "flash forth out of her calamities; since from her very beginning it hath been her fixed destiny to grow greater by misfortunes" is modelled on Rutilius Namatianus 1,140, *ordo renascendi est crescere posse malis*.<sup>93</sup> The mention of Claudian faces us with a

91 Edited and commented on by Rota 2002.

92 Delivered in 456 on the eve of Avitus' (significantly, Sidonius' father in law) accession to the throne in the wake of the momentous assassination of Valentinian III and the sack of Rome by the Vandals.

93 For a more detailed discussion of Sidonius' treatment of elements pertaining to the religious sphere in Sidonius, see Tommasi 2015. This passage has been discussed thoroughly by Brocca 2003-2004; for the image of Rome rejuvenating (employed also by Ambrose and Symmachus in the famous controversy on the altar of Victory) see, among others, Roberts 2001. In *Panegyrici Latini* 6,11 and 10,13 a prosopopoeia of Rome recurs as well.

well-known way of dealing with laudatory and celebrative motifs, such as the favour of the gods who uphold their protégé during a crucial battle (interestingly enough, Ambrose shares with Claudian the idea that the ruler is close to God (*proximus deo / proximus dis*)<sup>94</sup>; the willing submission of the elements to a victorious hero; the radiance that shines from the ruler, who is regarded as the sovereign of the entire cosmos; the prodigies surrounding him and foreshadowing his deeds; the providential link with a city, which may be the legacy of a municipal consuetude; and the rejoicing of nature during the accession to the throne of a new sovereign. All these authors are capable of integrating religious themes into their works. Nevertheless, while Claudian manages to make extensive use of mythological similes to celebrate Rome, her grandeur and the emperor's deeds, his successors deal with the ancient gods in quite a 'crystallized' or stereotypical way. For example, the theme of the returning golden age characterizes all three panegyrics written by Sidonius ("who accomplished his task with some vigour and more imagination than he is usually credited with"),<sup>95</sup> who, once again follows in Claudian's steps.<sup>96</sup> Whereas the image of the *fulva ... saecula* significantly concludes the poem dedicated to Avitus, this possibility is evoked either as a wish or a promise in the other poems, such as the panegyric to Anthemius, delivered in 468: the Earth herself endows Anthemius with the prediction of a golden age, and his own birth or infancy is accompanied by marvels or prodigies – the same propitious omens that shone on other famous infants. In particular it is worth recalling here the flames surrounding Ascanius' head (in which the old Indo-European motif of the *xvarenah* or glory may be identified)<sup>97</sup>; the dream that came to Cyrus' grandfather; the she wolf that suckled Romulus (significantly called Quirinus); Alexander the Great and Augustus conceived by a snake-god; and eagles surrounding the head of many persons fated to be great heroes (the eagle appears likewise as a symbol of royal apotheosis). The young Anthemius is then paralleled to the young Hercules, whereas the recurring idea of the purple clearly alludes to his royal lineage – a standard motif in many eulogies.<sup>98</sup> The panegyric of Anthemius introduces the theme of the appeasement of the rivalry between Rome and Constantinople, by

94 Ambrose, *De Obitu Theodosii* 7 and Claudian, 24,130 (Stilicho); 17,227. Significant differences between Claudian's and Prudentius' treatment of Theodosius, and in particular of the battle at Frigidus, motivated by religious matters, are outlined by Gualandri 2000.

95 MacCormack 1981, 223.

96 Claudian explicitly links the inauguration of a consulship to the idea of renovation and a golden age, emphasizing its cosmic dimension; see 22,474: *aureus et nomen praetendit consulis annus; / inque novos iterum revoluto cardine cursus / scribunt aethereis Stilichonis sidera fastis*.

97 On the surviving traces of which, see Tommasi 2006. The same prodigy is recorded by Claudian, 8,192ff., who manages therefore to establish a link between the young Honorius and Ascanius (Ware 2012, 97): significantly enough, Claudian introduces this simile after having described Honorius' arrival in Constantinople, which is, in turn, compared to the sun dissipating the foggy clouds (170 ff.); the image recurs in 28,537 ff. as well. In the same poem dedicated to Honorius' fourth consulship, Claudian had already stated that the most famous oracles predicted the glory of the future prince (142 ff.).

98 MacCormack 1981, 193 and 204, paralleling Claudian, 8,121 ff.

means of the famous personification of Aurora, which is meant to hint at the east, the land where the sun rises and where the new emperor comes from.<sup>99</sup>

It is no wonder, therefore, that there is such insistence on the imagery of light and brightness, which is usually employed in encomiastic literature,<sup>100</sup> especially in privileged places such as the introduction or conclusion. A particularly interesting passage may be found in Claudian's preface to the panegyric for the third consulship of Honorius (*Carmen* 6), where an elaborate simile compares the poet and the emperor (also addressed to as *deus*, l. 16) to the eagle's chicks that become accustomed to gazing at the sunlight; the result is an implicit homage to the emperor as an earthly sun. Sidonius too, in the opening lines of *Carmen* 7, dedicated to Avitus, provides an explicit comparison between the sun and the emperor: *Phoebe, peragrato tandem visurus in orbe / quem possis perferre parem, da lumina caelo / sufficit hic terries*;<sup>101</sup> the astronomical image is immediately followed by a further apostrophe to the stars, in order to celebrate the perpetual radiance of Rome, who is capable of recovering from her calamities, just as the stars rise again day after day. The same imagery appears at the end of the poem (ll. 576 ff. and 598 ff.), where the dawn of a new day provides a careful *Ringkomposition*, which is enriched by the historical accuracy of the costume alluded to by the poet, namely the crowning of the emperor by the soldiers<sup>102</sup> and by the image of the golden ages spun by the Parcae.

In this context an important reference needs to be made to the phoenix theme, which is recalled by Sidonius in both the Panegyric to Avitus (lines 353-6) and to Anthemius (lines 407-17). In the first passage the poet clearly establishes a link between the mythical bird that rises from its ashes and Rome that rises from her calamities, while in the second the idea of unity and harmony is stressed. It seems superfluous to recall how the symbolism of the phoenix is one favoured in Late Antiquity by both pagans and Christians.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, its connections with the sun (in all likelihood of Egyptian origin) and with the rejuvenation of the world or a new

99 A possible precedent is Claudian, 28,84. See Kelly 2012.

100 See, e.g., Statius, *Silvae* 4, 1, 3, *atque oritur cum sole novo, cum grandibus astris / clarius ipse nitens et primo maior Eoo* (hinting at Domitian); *Panegyrici Latini* 2,3: the emperor is like the sun, therefore in pronouncing his eulogy, the orator turns towards the east; see also Claudianus, 8,170 (discussed at n. 97).

101 ("O Sun-god, now at last the circle of thy wandering thou canst see one that thou art able to brook as thine equal; so give thy rays to heaven, for he is sufficient to lighten the earth". Transl., here and in the following passages, by W.B. Anderson).

102 *Tertia lux refugis Hyperiona fuderat astris: / concurrunt proceres ac milite circumfuso / aggere composito statuunt at torque coronant / castrensi maestum donantque insignia regni; / nam prius induerant solas de principe curas* ("the third day had spread the sun's light over the retreating stars: the lords of the land assemble in haste and with soldiers all around set him on a mound-platform; there they crown their sorrowing chief with a military collar and present him with the outward emblems of sovereignty (hitherto the only attribute of an emperor he had assumed was his cares)"). A similar custom is also recorded by Corippus (see n. 117), while the allusion to the anxieties of the prince and the subsequent comparison to Hercules' labours are fully in line with a Stoic interpretation of the suffering hero.

103 See van den Broek 1971, 217.

era, come at the end of a section where Avitus is twice invoked as *orbis salus* (l. 339) and *spes orbis* (l. 352). The same theme recurs at greater length in the eulogy to Anthemius (ll. 407-17), with particular emphasis on the marvellous lands of the Orient, where the phoenix too dwells among exotic plants and flowers.

Sidonius' imperial panegyrics, richly stylized and highly elaborated, provide a consistent reassessment of the theme of the providentiality of the empire and the glorious destiny of Rome by means of an accurate selection of the motifs suitable for the different circumstances. No wonder therefore that after the momentous calamities of 455 the theme of the resurrection of Rome is stressed, whereas the imagery of light and harmony between East and West is underlined in the poem to Anthemius. Sidonius' optimistic, sometimes illusory, confidence in the *res Romana* leads him to describe, in persistently classical terms that avoid any reference to the Christian religion, a nostalgic realm whose elements reinforce the theology of victory and aim at testifying to the everlasting power of the Roman empire, where even past misfortunes can be integrated into a providential scheme.

## Corippus

The same confidence in endurance and eternity to which the Roman Empire is destined sustains Corippus' poems. It may be worth considering it in more detail than has been done by earlier interpreters. Generously interspersed with classic reminiscences, his works stand as a swan song to Latin ideals, but nevertheless paves the way for the further development achieved in Byzantine poetry or ceremonial. Moreover, his case is emblematic, insofar as he celebrates the classical values of *Romanitas* in a Virgilian Latin style before a Greek-speaking audience, be it the Byzantine generals in the newly-conquered Carthage or even the imperial couple of Justin II and Sophia.<sup>104</sup> Once again, the boundaries between epic and panegyric seem to intermingle: while his first poem, the *Iohannis*, may definitely be considered an epos combined with eulogistic elements, the *Laus Iustini* represents the apex of the development of poetical panegyric in a Christian sense. In particular, the link between Christianity and the emperor as vicar of God clearly emerges, not only in the description of court ceremonial and its fixed gestures, but also in the way its symbolism is underlined. In addition, the idea that God helps and assists the Roman sovereign (by letting him triumph over his enemies) is fundamental. Notwithstanding the highly idealized portraits and the tendency towards a rarefied atmosphere, there are some indications that point to contemporary situations and therefore add a touch of 'realism'. In the *Laus Iustini*, furthermore, it seems that the division between the sacred and secular sphere has been abolished, for religion is all pervasive and even those details which may pertain to purely political aspects receive a religious connotation. For example, Justin is advised in a dream by the

104 For a global perspective and an updated bibliography on Corippus, see Goldlust 2015.

Virgin of the death of his uncle Justinian and his future accession to the throne (1,32 ff.),<sup>105</sup> and consequently, in order to fulfil the ceremonial, the imperial couple goes to the basilica of Saint Sophia, therefore allowing the poet to present a poetical paraphrase of the Creed of Chalcedon (4,293 ff.).<sup>106</sup> Justinian's burial is also particularly significant, the complex ceremony of which is described in two different sections, in the middle of Book One (his funeral robe) and at the beginning of Book Three (the embalment) respectively.<sup>107</sup> The emperor's appearance is calm and dignified, his death is compared to sleep, the corpse shines as if alive (*non mutans morte colorem / solito candor nitens*, 1,237-8), because he has died in the peace of God, leaving a legitimate heir. Indeed, the accession of the new sovereign to the throne is constantly presented as having been disposed and ordered by God in person (1,85 and 182): therefore the inevitable sorrow for the deceased prince can be integrated into a dynastic perspective, where the ideal of continuity is also stressed.<sup>108</sup>

However much you are moved by the love for your virtuous father, let not your love for your country come second to that you have for him. Your uncle himself as he was dying ordered you to hold sway. See the greatness of the old man's farsighted concern for our city and the world together. God has brought about on your behalf all that he wished to happen. Mount your father's throne, and rule the world in subjection to you, mighty emperor. A golden age shall dawn when you are on the throne, nor will the Roman court be seen to change its ruler.

That the succession has taken place in fulfilment of a fixed order is reasserted in Justin's speech about the mutual ties that bind the different social classes (a passage which seems inspired by the apologue of Menenius Agrippa and is not exempt from some paternalistic nuances).<sup>109</sup> The final section of an otherwise unfinished poem reasserts the theory that imperial power comes directly from God. The mention of Saint Sophia, the imperial basilica, which is even more splendid than the renowned temple of Solomon, also points to the same idea. While it was Justinian himself who had the temple built, its project was nevertheless already in the mind of God (4,266 ff.). The cathedral and the imperial palace are closely

105 As usual in Christian hexameter, the model poet nevertheless remains Virgil.

106 It can be added that in book eight of the *Iohannis* there is also a description of the Mass, which probably found its model in a passage of Prudentius' *Contra Symmachum* 2,708 ff. For a detailed examination of this and other prayers, see Tommasi 2004-2005.

107 Carile 2014 draws attention to this description and to the development of the imperial funeral in the Byzantine court.

108 1,178 ff.: *Quantumcumque boni moveat dilectio patris, / non sit amor patriae patrio minor. Ipse tenere / sceptrum tuus moriens te iussit avunculus ore. / Aspice quanta fuit nostrae simul urbis et orbis / provida cura seni. Pro te deus omnia fecit, / quae fieri voluit. Solium conscende paternum, / et rege subiectum, princeps fortissime, mundum. / Aurea nascetur vobis regnantibus aetas, / nec mutans dominos Romana videbitur aula.* The passage, here and elsewhere, is quoted in Av. Cameron's translation.

109 2,185 ff., on which Tommasi 2013, 284.

paralleled, for they represent the two powers, the spiritual and temporal, of which however the first takes precedence.<sup>110</sup>

According to Averil Cameron, the intermingling of classical elements and Christian customs attests to the liminal and transitional moment represented by the reign of Justin II, where the same tensions can also be observed in the visual arts.<sup>111</sup> Though patently Christian and deeply rooted in Christian symbolism, in this period it is possible to notice an attempt at revitalizing some Roman customs, not only the triumph, but the remarkable consular adventus and all its apparatus, which significantly is set on Sunday morning in a shining Constantinople.<sup>112</sup> Such a dialectic may be applied to many passages in Corippus' panegyric, for example the end of book one, where people gathering in the Hippodrome to celebrate Justin are paralleled with birds acclaiming the resurrection of their king, the phoenix, and the name of Justin is explained through the symbolism of its initial letter, the 'holy iota'. It is possible to suggest that Corippus is inspired by Sidonius, but even more by Claudian, who employed the same idea of rejoicing birds to describe the jubilant crowd welcoming Stilicho,<sup>113</sup> whereas Sidonius celebrates the greatness of Rome by means of the same image and establishes a connection between the bird resurrecting from its ashes and Rome recovering from her ruins. Many elements seem to concur in such a complex image, which appears carefully chosen: Corippus definitely employs the simile of the phoenix welcomed by her fellow-birds with the aim of stressing the harmony between the crowd and the emperor, whose analogy with the sun is reinforced by the well-known notion that the phoenix is also a solar symbol. Moreover, although relying on a classical iconography strongly permeated by pagan ideology, like that of the circus races, Corippus bends it in a clearly Christian sense, as suggested by the reference to God, the true sun, and the Incarnation. There is no need to stress once again the importance of light imagery in this context (which is particularly privileged, for it represents the conclusion of a book). It may be that this passage can be perceived as an ultimate echo of the rhetorical theme of the magistrate or emperor, who has to be welcomed like a star or the rising sun through universal consensus, and is sometimes linked with seasonal imagery.<sup>114</sup> Insistence on brightness is a key motif throughout the entire poem and is a patent reminder of the Christian, but previously pagan, association with the sun, and therefore with heavenly protection which allows darkness and

110 4,288: *principis haec, haec aula Dei. Deus illud utrumque / glorificavit opus, sed maiestatis honore / plus templum terroris habet* ("This is the hall of the emperor and this of God. God glorified both buildings, but the temple inspires more fear by the glory of its majesty").

111 Cameron 1975-76 and Tommasi 2010.

112 See in particular 4,105 ff. The passage imitates the opening of Claudian's *Carmen* 3.

113 Claudian, 22,414 ff. with the sensitive observations of Ware 2012, 111 ff., who recalls also the solar imagery which recurs elsewhere in Claudian (1,1 ff.). See also n. 100.

114 See MacCormack 1981, 21 and 202, with the perceptive observation that the technical term ἀπαντήσις designating the emperor's official entrance is the same employed for Christ's entering Jerusalem; the unanimous acclamation is interpreted in the lines of the saying *vox populi, vox Dei*, thus meaning that the people acclaim together an emperor ratifying God's will.

evil to be overwhelmed. No wonder, then, that the description of the throne hall (3,179 ff.) is openly paralleled to the vault of heaven – a passage for which, among other references, we suggested as a model for the opening section of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where Olympus is compared to the Augustan palace. In addition, Corippus emphasizes the sacral aura emanating from the richly-adorned hall and from the throne itself, decorated by winged Victories (according to an iconography that underwent slight transformations in the passage from paganism to Christianity), so as to present the arrival of the emperor as an epiphany.<sup>115</sup> The same epiphanic theme also recurs in the consular procession of Book Four, where, once again, much emphasis is given to the jubilant crowd. Likewise the apparently static description of the official clothes and the crowning of Justin (2,100 ff.), where, once again, the brightness of gold, purple and jewels gains a strong symbolic purport,<sup>116</sup> conveys the suggestion that the emperor is like the rising sun and functions as an anticipation of the final, hyperbolic simile, which also takes as its starting point the raising of Justin on a shield – a ceremony known as 'lever du roi', which has its roots in ancient military customs and would have lasted for many centuries.<sup>117</sup> The crowning by the soldiers is also ratified by ecclesiastical power (2,159 ff.) and by the senators, among the jubilant acclamation of the crowd (2,178 ff.), which praises the emperor's mercy and *clementia*.<sup>118</sup> The people are shown acclaiming Justin in two other passages (3,76 ff. and 4,131 ff., the latter one occurring at the end of the description of the *adventus* and the consular procession, which was usually characterized by an imperial donation to the people): both express the idea of the rejuvenation of the cosmos and the return of a golden age, therefore embodying the wishful expectations of eternity.<sup>119</sup>

'After its old age,' they said, 'the world rejoices to grow young again, and the golden age is rising in your time, Justin, hope of the city and the world, light of the Roman

115 On this passage, see Carile 2008 and Tommasi 2010. It is worth remembering that the inner chamber of the emperor is also described as being bright and resembles the house of the Sun-god (1,97 ff.).

116 For a similar description, see Claudian 8,518; 552; and 594.

117 2,137 ff. (and, previously, Claudian 28,632 ff.). This custom is magisterially discussed by Kantorowicz 1963. See also MacCormack 1981, 194 and 251.

118 2,357 ff. The cancelling of debts and the clemency towards prisoners was one of the inaugural acts of a new ruler: Corippus' passage, however, is permeated by a strong Christian flavour, for Justin is considered an image of Christ and thus his clemency is closer to Christian mercy than to the classical virtue.

119 'Post senium' dicunt 'sese iuvenescere mundus / gaudet, et antiquae repetit primordia formae. / Ferrea nunc abeunt atque aurea saecula surgunt / temporibus, lustine, tuis, spes urbis et orbis, / Romani iubar imperii, decus addite cunctis / retro principibus, cuius sapientia victrix / obtinuit patrii fastigia maxima regni.' Once again we are faced with the theme of the *renovatio imperii*, on which see nn. 29, 62 and 96, together with Straub 1972-1986; see also a similar tenet in Claudianus, 8,619: *prospera Romuleis sperantur tempora rebus / in nomen ventura tuum. Praemissa futura / dant exempla fidem: quotiens te cursibus anni / prafecit, / totiens accessit laurea patri* ("prosperity awaits our empire; thy name is earnest for the fulfilment of our hopes. The past guarantees the future; each time that thy sire made thee chief magistrate of the year the laurels of victory crowned his arms"); and 28,640: *iamque novum fastis aperit felicibus annum* ("and now, his double head crowned with laurel, Janus opens the New Year with auspicious calendar", transl. by M. Platnauer).

Empire, glory added to all the emperors who have reigned before, whose conquering wisdom has gained the highest peaks of your father's throne.'

and

'With you as consul and with you as emperor, may the world flourish in blessedness. Greetings, not the first among emperors in order of number, but first in order of merit, bestower of riches, bestower of honour, peak of freedom, head of the world, sole virtue and manifest safety of all, restorer of an honourable name. The ancient fasti restore a new age; you have renewed the ancient age of Augustus Caesar; but yours is more famed and greater. The first year of yours welcomes your joys with you in happiness and the New Rome celebrates more prayers with your triumphs'.<sup>120</sup>

Therefore, following the path magisterially set forth by Claudian, poets like Sidonius Apollinaris and, even later, Corippus, employ the same literary genre to praise (and legitimize as emperors) the outsiders of provincial aristocracy or the Eastern Emperor. Far from being pure flattery, Late Antique panegyric literature shows a consistent moral stance that integrates a live and changing literary tradition rooted in the Roman pagan past in order to transform it into a sophisticated, relevant and effective form of political interaction. More generally, in addition to the persistent secular idea of the providential empire when dealing with these themes, Corippus, however, seems inspired by Christian political theorizations such as those of Ambrose or Augustine, and offers an interesting perspective on the relationship between religion and power, setting the ruler in harmony with – when not in subordination to – the Church (as is clear, for example, in the figure of Justinian in the *Iohannis* or the imperial couple in the *Laus*).<sup>121</sup>

## Bibliography

- Abbondanza, L., Coarelli, F., Lo Sardo, E. (eds.) 2014. *Apoteosi. Da uomini e dei. Il mausoleo di Adriano. Catalogo della mostra*. Rome: Munus-Palombi.
- Altheim F. 1938. *A History of Roman Religion*. Transl. H. Mattingly. London: Methuen.
- Amerise, M. 2005. Eusebio di Cesarea, *Elogio di Costantino. Discorso per il trentennale. Discorso regale*. Introduzione, traduzione e note. Milan: Paoline.
- Ando, C. 2000. *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

120 'Consule te felix, te principe floreat orbis. / salve, Augustorum numeri non ordine prime, / sed meriti, largitor opum, largitor honorum, / libertatis apex, mundi caput, unica virtus / et rerum manifesta salus, reparator opimi / nominis. Antiqui redeunt nova saecula fasti. / Augusti priscum renovasti Caesaris aevum: / clarius est meliusque tuum. Tua gaudia tecum / hinc vester primus feliciter excipit annus, / votaue plura tuis celebret nova Roma triumphis.'

121 For applying such a remark to the case of Corippus we are partly indebted to the insightful analysis of Venantius' panegyric poetry put forward by George 1998, who states that Venantius himself relies on similar concepts derived from Christian theorists.

- Barnes, T.D. 1976. The Historical Setting of Prudentius' *Contra Symmachum*. *The American Journal of Philology* 97, 373-386.
- Barr, W. 1981. *Claudian's Panegyric on the Fourth Consulate of Honorius*. Introduction, text, translation and commentary. Liverpool: Francis Cairns.
- Béranger, J. 1970. L'expression de la divinité dans les panégyriques latins. *Museum Helveticum* 27, 242-254.
- Bettiolo, P., Filoramo G. (eds.) 2002. *Il Dio mortale. Teologie politiche tra antico e contemporaneo*. Brescia: Morcelliana.
- Bonamente, G. 1977. Fideicommissum e trasmissione del potere nel De obitu Theodosii di Ambrogio. *Vetera Christianorum* 14, 273-280.
- Bonamente, G. 1979. Potere politico e autorità religiosa nel «De obitu Theodosii» di Ambrogio. In *Chiesa e società dal secolo IV ai nostri giorni. Studi storici in onore di P. Ilarino da Milano*, vol. 1. Rome: Herder. 83-133.
- Bonamente, G. 1988. Apoteosi e imperatori cristiani. In G. Bonamente, A. Nestori (eds.) *I cristiani e l'impero nel IV secolo*. Macerata: Università degli Studi, 107-142.
- Bonamente, G. 2002. Il ruolo del senato nella divinizzazione degli imperatori. In J. M. Carrié, R. Lizzi Testa (eds.) «*Humana sapit*». *Etudes d'antiquité tardive offertes à Lellia Cracco Ruggini*. Turnhout: Brepol. 359-381.
- Bonamente, G. 2011. Dall'imperatore divinizzato all'imperatore santo. In P. Brown, R. Lizzi Testa (eds.) *Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire: The Breaking of a Dialogue (IVth-VIth Century A.D.)*. Proceedings of the International Conference at the Monastery of Bose (20-22 October 2008). Wien: LIT Verlag. 339-370.
- Bonamente, G. 2014a. Teodosio il Grande e la fine dell'apoteosi imperiale. In R. Lizzi Testa, M.V. Escribano Pano (eds.) *Politica, religione e legislazione nell'impero romano (IV e V sec. d.C.)*. *Política, religión y legislación en el impero romano (ss. IV y V D.C.)*. Bari: Edipuglia. 17-36.
- Bonamente, G. 2014b. Teodosio I, imperatore senza apoteosi. In T. Gnoli, F.M. Muccioli (eds.) *Divinizzazione, culto del sovrano e apoteosi. Tra Antichità e Medioevo*. Bologna: Bononia University Press. 359-378.
- Brent, A. 1999. *The Imperial Cult and the Development of Church Order: Concepts and Images of Authority in Paganism and Early Christianity before the Age of Cyprian*. Leiden: Brill.
- Brisch, N. (ed.) 2012. *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Brocca, N. 2003-2004. Memoria poetica e attualità politica nel panegirico per Avito di Sidonio Apollinare. *Incontri triestini di filologia classica* 3, 279-295. <openstarts.units.it/dspace/bitstream/10077/921/1/17%20BROCCA.pdf> (visited March 2014).
- Brodka, D. 1998. *Die Romideologie in der römischen Literatur der Spätantike*. Frankfurt etc.: Peter Lang.
- Bureau, B. 2014. Idealised Past and Contested Tradition: Claudian's Panegyric for the Sixth Consulship of Honorius and Prudentius' *Contra Symmachum*. In B. Alroth, C. Scheffer (ed.) *Attitudes towards the Past in Antiquity. Creating Identities*. Proceedings of an International Conference held at Stockholm University, 15–17 May 2009. Stockholm: Stockholm University. 301-310.
- Calderone, S. 1973. Teologia politica, successione dinastica e consecratio in età costantiniana. In W. van den Boer (ed.) *Le culte des souverains dans l'empire romain*. Vandœuvres-Genève: Fondation Hardt. 215-261.
- Cameron, Alan. 1970. *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Cameron, Alan. 2011. *The Last Pagans of Rome*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cameron, Averil. 1975-1976. Corippus poem on Justin II: a terminus of antique art. *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa* 5, 129-165.
- Cameron, Averil & Hall, S. 1999. *Eusebius' Life of Constantine*. Translated with Introduction and Commentary. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Campanile, M.D. Ancora sul culto imperiale in Asia. *Mediterraneo antico* 4, 473-488.
- Carile, A. 2008. The Holy palace in Constantinople New Rome. *Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage* 2. <conservation-science.cib.unibo.it/article/view/504/488>
- Carile, A. 2014. Funerali e sepolture imperiali a Costantinopoli fra realtà e leggenda. In T. Gnoli, F. M. Muccioli (eds.) *Divinizzazione, culto del sovrano e apoteosi. Tra Antichità e Medioevo*. Bologna: Bononia University Press. 379-390.
- Carlà, F., Castello, M. G. 2010. *Questioni tardoantiche: storia e mito della "svolta costantiniana"*. Rome: Aracne.
- Cecconi, G. A. 2012. Il rescritto di Spello: prospettive recenti. In G. Bonamente, N. Lenski, R. Lizzi Testa (eds.) *Constantine Before and After Constantine. Costantino prima e dopo Costantino, Atti del Convegno internazionale (Perugia, Spello 27-30 aprile 2011)*. Bari: Edipuglia. 273-290.
- Charlesworth, M. P. 1936. Providentia and Aeternitas. *Harvard Theological Review* 29, 107-132.
- Citroni, M. 2015. Autocrazia e divinità: la rappresentazione di Augusto e degli imperatori del primo secolo nella letteratura contemporanea. In D. Mantovani (ed.) *Il princeps romano: autocrate o magistrato? Fattori giuridici e fattori sociali del potere imperiale da Augusto a Commodo*. Atti del Covegno CEDANT: Centro di Studi e Ricerche sui Diritti Antichi, Istituto Universitario di Studi Superiori, Pavia, 16-20 gennaio 2012. Pavia: IUSS Press, 239-291.
- Consolino, F. E. 1984a. L'optimus princeps secondo S. Ambrogio: virtù imperatorie e virtù cristiane nelle orazioni funebri per Valentiniano e Teodosio. *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 1025-1045.
- Consolino, F. E. 1984b. Il significato dell'inventio crucis nel de obitu Theodosii. *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere di Siena* 5, 161-180.
- Consolino, F. E. 2002. *La prosopopea di Roma e i primi due libri delle Laudes Stilichonis*. In J. M. Carrié, R. Lizzi Testa (eds.) «*Humana sapit*». *Etudes d'antiquité tardive offertes à Lellia Cracco Ruggini*. Turnhout: Brepols. 7-23.
- Consolino, F. E. 2011. Panegiristi e creazione del consenso nell'Occidente latino. In G. Urso (ed.) *Dicere Laudes: Elogio, Comunicazione, Creazione del Consenso*. Pisa: ETS, 299-336.
- Cracco Ruggini, L. 1977. Apoteosi e politica senatoria nel IV s. d. C.: il dittico dei Symmachi al BritishMuseum. *Rivista Storica Italiana* 89, 425-480.
- Cracco Ruggini, L. 1983. Bagaudi e Santi innocenti: un'avventura fra demonizzazione e martirio. In E. Gabba (ed.) *Tria corda. Scritti in onore di Arnaldo Momigliano*. Como: New Press. 121-142.
- De Giovanni, L. 2003. *Costantino e il mondo pagano. Studi di politica e legislazione*. Naples: D'Auria.
- Degl'Innocenti Pierini, R. 2010. Quando si invoca una città: Cordova in AL 409 R.2 (= 12 Zurli) e alcune variazioni elegiaco-epigrammatiche dell'inno alla patria. *Paideia* 65, 117-135.
- Dewar, M. J. 1996. *Claudian, Panegyricus de sexto consulatu Honorii Augusti*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Döpp, S. 1988. Vergilische Elemente in Prudentius 'Contra Symmachum'. *Hermes* 116, 337-342.
- Dufraigne, P. 1994. *Aduentus Augusti, aduentus Christi. Recherche sur l'exploitation idéologique et littéraire d'un cérémonial dans l'antiquité tardive*. Paris: Institut des Études Augustiniennes.
- Duval, Y. M. 1977. Formes profanes et formes bibliques dans les Oraisons funèbres de saint Ambroise. In *Christianisme et formes littéraires de l'antiquité tardive en Occident*. Vandoeuvres- Genève: Fondation Hardt, 235-301.
- Duval, Y. M. 1984. La figure de Théodose chez Claudian. In *La poesia tardoantica. Atti del V corso della Scuola Superiore di Archeologia e Civiltà Medievali presso il Centro di Cultura Scientifica E. Majorana – Erice 6-12 dicembre 1981*. Messina: Centro di Studi Umanistici. 133-185.
- Fears, J. R. 1977. *Princeps a Diis Electus: The Divine Election of the Emperor as a Political Concept at Rome*. Rome: American Academy.
- Filorama, G. (ed.) 2005. *Teologie politiche. Modelli a confronto*. Brescia: Morcelliana.
- Fontaine, J. 1984. La figure du prince dans la poésie latine chrétienne de Lactance a Prudence. In *La poesia tardoantica. Atti del V corso della Scuola Superiore di Archeologia e Civiltà Medievali presso il Centro di Cultura Scientifica E. Majorana – Erice 6-12 dicembre 1981*. Messina: Centro di Studi Umanistici. 103-132.
- Formisano, M. 2008. Speculum principis, speculum oratoris. Alcune considerazioni sui panegyrici latini come genere letterario. In L. Castagna, C. Riboldi (eds.) *Amicitiae templa serena. Studi in onore di Giuseppe Aricò*. Milano: 581-599.
- Frankfort, H. 1948. *Kingship and the Gods. A Study of the Ancient Near East Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Furbetta, L. 2010-2011. Alcune riflessioni sul carm. 6 di Sidonio Apollinare. *Respublica litterarum* 23-24, 148-163.
- Gee, E. R. G. 2013. *Aratus and the Astronomical Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- George, J. W. 1998. Venantius Fortunatus: Panegyric in Merovingian Gaul. In M. Whitby (ed.) *The Propaganda of Power: the Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity*. Leiden: Brill. 225-246.
- Gnilka, Ch. 1984-1993. *Chresis: Die Methode der Kirchenväter im Umgang mit der antiken Kultur*. Basel: Schwabe.
- Gnoli, T., Muccioli, F. M. (eds.) 2014. *Divinizzazione, culto del sovrano e apoteosi. Tra Antichità e Medioevo*. Bologna: Bononia University Press.
- Goldlust, B. (ed.) 2015. *Corippe, un poète entre deux monds*. Lyon: Presses de l'Université.
- Groß-Albenhausen, K. 1999. *Imperator christianissimus. Der christliche Kaiser bei Ambrosius und Johannes Chrysostomus*. Frankfurt am Main: Marthe Clauss.
- Gualandri, I. 2000. Claudiano e Prudenzio: Polemiche a distanza. In F. E. Consolino (ed.) *Letterature e propaganda nell'occidente latino da Augusto ai regni romanobarbarici*. Rome: Herder. 145-171.
- Guidetti, F. (forthcoming). I rituali di adventus in epoca tetrarchica: per la ricostruzione di un evento cerimoniale tardoromano. In W. Eck, S. Puliatti (eds.) *Diocleziano. La frontiera giuridica dell'Impero*. Pavia: IUSS Press.
- Heim, F. 1992. *La Théologie de la victoire de Constantin à Théodose*. Paris: Beauchesne.
- Inglebert, H. 1996. *Les Romains chrétiens face à l'histoire de Rome. Histoire, christianisme et romanités en Occident dans l'Antiquité tardive (IIIe-Ve siècles)*. Paris: Institut d' Études Augustiniennes.
- Jones Hall, L. (1998). Cicero's instinctu divino and Constantine's instinctu divinitatis. The Evidence of the Arch of Constantine for the Senatorial View of the Vision of Constantine. *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, 67-671.
- Kantorowicz, E. H. 1963. Oriens Augusti – Lever du Roi. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17, 117-177.
- Kelly, G. 2012. Claudian and Constantinople. In L. Grig & G. Kelly (eds.) *Two Romes. Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity*. New York: Oxford University Press. 241-264.
- Lagioia, A. 2004. L'“epifania” di Giuliano in Illiria e il Palladio: (Paneg. 11, 6, 4). *Invigilata Lucernis* 26, 123-137.
- Lenski, N. 2008. Evoking the Pagan Past: *Instinctu divinitatis* and Constantine's Capture of Rome. *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1, 204-257.
- Lunn-Rockliffe, S. 2008. Ambrose's imperial funeral sermons. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 59, 191-207.
- MacCormack, S. 1981. *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*. Berkeley-London-Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Marotta, V. 2010. Gli dèi governano il mondo. La trasmissione del potere imperiale in età tetrarchica. *Polis. Studi interdisciplinari sul mondo antico* 3, 170-188.
- Martin, J. M. 1982. *Providentia deorum. Recherches sur certains aspects religieux du pouvoir impérial romain*. Rome: École Française de Rome.
- Mazzarino, S. 1974. *Antico, tardoantico ed era costantiniana*. Bari: Dedalo Libri.
- McCormick, M. 1986. *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West*. Cambridge and Paris: Cambridge University Press and éditions de la Maison de Sciences de l'Homme.
- McLuhan, M. 1999. *The Medium and the Light: Reflections on Religion*. Toronto: Stoddart.
- McLuhan, M. & Fiore, Q. 1967. *The medium is the Massage. An Inventory of effects*. New York: Bantam.
- Mellor, R. 1981. The Goddess Roma. In: *ANRW II 17/2*. Berlin-New York: De Gruyter. 951-1030.
- Müller, G.M. 2011. *Lectiones Claudianae. Studien zu Poetik und Funktion der politisch-zeitgeschichtlichen Dichtungen Claudians*. Heidelberg: Winter.
- Nelis, D. 2011. Praising Nero (Lucan, De Bello Civili 1.33-66). In G. Urso (ed.) *Dicere Laudes: Elogio, Comunicazione, Creazione del Consenso*. Pisa: ETS. 245-256.
- Nixon, C. E. V. & Rodgers B. S. 1994. *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini. Introduction, Translation and Historical Commentary*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Nock, A. D. 1926. The proem of Lucan. *The Classical Review* 40, 17-18.
- Norden, E. 1913. *Agnostos Theos. Untersuchung zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede*. Leipzig-Berlin: Teubner.
- Norden, E. 1924. *Die Geburt des Kindes*. Leipzig-Berlin: Teubner.
- Paschoud, F. 1967. *Roma Aeterna. Études sur le patriotisme romain dans l'Occident latin à l'époque des grands invasions*. Rome: Institut Suisse.
- Penwill, J. 2010. Damn with Great Praise? The Imperial Encomia of Lucan and Silius. In A. Turner, F. Vervaeet, K.O. Chong-Gossard (eds.) *Private and Public Lies: The Discourse of Despotism and Deceit in the Graeco-Roman World*. Leiden: Brill, 211-229.
- Pernot, L. 1993. *La rhétorique de l'éloge dans le monde gréco-romain*. Paris: Institut des Études Augustiniennes.
- Price, S. R. F. 1984. *Rituals of Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Pricoco, S. 1998. Ancora sul Panegirico di Paolino di Nola per Teodosio e il nuovo concetto cristiano del potere imperiale. *Cassiodorus* 4, 225-246.
- Rand, E. K. 1920. Prudentius and Christian Humanism. *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 51, 71-83.
- Rees, R. 2002. *Layers of Loyalty in Latin Panegyric: AD 289-307*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rees, R. 2013. The look of the Late Antique Emperor and the art of praise. In: R. Rees, H. Lovatt, C. Vout (eds.) *Epic Visions. Visuality in Greek and Latin Epic and its Reception*. Cambridge University Press. 99-121.
- Roberts, M. 2001. Rome Personified, Rome Epitomized: Representations of Rome in the Poetry of the Early Fifth Century. *American Journal of Philology* 122, 533-565.
- Rodgers, B. S. 2012. *Divine Insinuation in the Panegyrici Latini*. In R. Rees (ed.) *Oxford Readings in Latin Panegyric*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 289-334 (= *Historia* 35 [1986], 69-104).
- Rota, S. 2002. *Magno Felice Ennodio. Panegirico del clementissimo re Teoderico* (opusc. 1). Rome: Herder.
- Russell, D. A. & Wilson, N. G. 1981. *Menander Rhetor*. Edited with Translation and Commentary. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Sabbah, G. 1984. De la Rhétorique à la communication politique: les Panégyriques latins. *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé: Lettres d'humanité* 43, 363-388.
- Schierl, P. 2013. ... quod sine fine placet. Roma renascens bei Rutilius Namatianus und Prudentius. In K. Pollmann & H. Harich Schwarzbauer (eds.) *Der Fall Roms und seine Wiederauferstehungen in Antike und Mittelalter*. Berlin: De Gruyter. 233-263.
- Schindler, C. 2009. *Per carmina laudes: Untersuchungen zur spätantiken Verspanegyrik von Claudian bis Coripp*. Berlin-New York: De Gruyter.
- Sivan, H. 1995. The Last Gallic Prose Panegyric: Paulinus of Nola on Theodosius I. *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* 4. Brussels: Latomus. 577-594.
- Soares Santoprete, L. G. (forthcoming). *Plotin: Traité 32 (V, 5), introduction, traduction, commentaire, notes, bibliographie et index*. Paris : Cerf.
- Straub J. 1972-1986. *Regeneratio imperii – Aufsätze über Roms Kaisertum und Reich im Spiegel der heidnischen und christlichen Publizistik*. Darmstadt: 1972-1986.
- Straub, J. 1939. *Vom Herrscherideal in der Spätantike*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Tabata, K. 1995. The date and setting of the Constantinian inscription of Hispellum (CIL 11., 5265=ILS 705). *Studi Classici e Orientali* 45, 369-405.
- Taeger, F. 1957-1960. *Charisma. Studien zur Geschichte des antiken Herrscherkultes*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Teja, R. 2014. Non tamen deus dicitur cuius effigies salutatur: el debate sobre el culto imperial en el imperio cristiano. In T. Gnoli, F.M. Muccioli (eds.) *Divinizzazione, culto del sovrano e apoteosi. Tra Antichità e Medioevo*. Bologna: Bononia University Press. 343-357.
- Tommasi, C. O. 2004-2005. Aspetti cletici e aretalogici nelle preghiere corippee. *Koinonia* 28-29, 217-244.
- Tommasi, C. O. 2015. Teo-teleologia in Sidonio Apollinare: tra modulo encomiastico e provvidenzialità dell'impero. In M. Cutino, F. Gasti (eds.) *Poesia e teologia nella produzione latina dei secoli IV-V*. Pavia: University Press. 73-105.
- Tommasi, C. O. 2005. Apotheosis. In L. Jones (Editor-in-Chief) *Encyclopedia of Religion*. 2nd Edition. Detroit: Thomson. 437-441.
- Tommasi, C. O. 2006. Ascagne et la 'splendeur royale'. À la recherche d'une image Indo-Européenne à Rome. *Revue des Études Latines* 84, 112-146.
- Tommasi, C. O. 2007. Exegesis by Distorting Pagan Myths in Corippus' Epic Poetry. In W. Otten, K. Pollmann (eds.) *Poetry and Exegesis in Premodern Latin Christianity. The Encounters between Classical and Christian Strategies of Interpretation*. Leiden: Brill, 173-197.
- Tommasi, C. O. 2010. The Role and Function of Ecphrasis in Latin North African Poetry (5th-6th century). In V. Zimmerl-Panagl, D. Weber (eds.) *Text und Bild*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. 255-287.
- Tommasi, C. O. 2012. *The Bee Orchid. Religione e cultura in Marziano Capella*. Naples: D'Auria.
- Tommasi, C. O. 2013. Imperium sine fine after 410. The Attempt at an Impossible Accomplishment in some Poetical Latin Sources. In K. Pollmann, H. Harich Schwarzbauer (eds.) *Der Fall Roms und seine Wiederauferstehungen in Antike und Mittelalter*. Berlin: De Gruyter. 265-291.
- Tommasi, C. O. 2014. L'utilisation du passé pour célébrer le présent: Esquisses d'histoire romaine chez Sidoine Apollinaire. In A. Délattre, A. Lionetto (eds.) *La Muse de l'éphémère - Formes de la poésie de circonstance de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*. Paris: Garnier. 185-202.
- Tommasi, C. O. (forthcoming). Teo-teleologia in Sidonio Apollinare: tra modulo encomiastico e provvidenzialità dell'impero. In M. Cutino, F. Gasti (eds.) *Poesia e teologia nella produzione latina dei secoli IV-V*. Pisa: ETS.
- Turcan, R. 1983. Rome éternelle et les conceptions gréco-romaines de l'éternité. In *Roma Costantinopoli Mosca (Da Roma alla Terza Roma, Studi I)*. Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane. 7-30.
- Turcan-Verkerk, A. M. 2003. *Un poète Latin chrétien redécouvert: Latinus Pacatus Drepanius, panégyriste de Théodose*. Brussels: Éditions Latomus.
- van den Boer, W. (ed.) 1973. *Le culte des souverains dans l'empire romain*. Vandœuvres-Genève: Fondation Hardt.
- van den Broek, R. 1971. *The Myth of the Phoenix according to classical and early Christian Tradition*. Leiden: Brill.
- Van Nuffelen, P. 2012. Playing the ritual game in Constantinople (379-457). In L. Grig, G. Kelly (eds.) *Two Romes. Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity*. New York: Oxford University Press. 183-201.
- Ware, C. 2012. *Claudian and the Roman Epic Tradition*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Whitby, M. (ed.) 1988. *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity*. Leiden: Brill.
- Wienand, J. 2012. *Der Kaiser als Sieger. Metamorphosen triumphaler Herrschaft unter Constantin I*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.
- Williams, M. S. 2013. Hymns as Acclamations: The Case of Ambrose of Milan. *Journal of Late Antiquity* 6, 108-134.
- Wu, F. 2008. *Written at Imperial Command: Panegyric Poetry in Early Medieval China*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Zanker, P. 1987. *Augustus und die Macht der Bilder*. München: Beck.
- Zarini, V. 2007. Trois éloges comparés de Rome: Ammien, Claudien, Rutilius. *Camena* 2, 1-15 <paris-sorbonne.fr/IMG/pdf/Vincent.pdf> (visited July 2014).
- Zarini, V. 2010. Les forces du bien et du mal dans la poésie de Corippe. In Y. M. Blanchard, B. Pouderon, M. Scopello (eds.) *Les forces du bien et du mal dans les premiers siècles de l'Eglise*. Paris: Beauchesne. 91-104.
- Zarini, V. 2015. Théologie du pouvoir et poésie latine dans l'Antiquité tardive (IVe-VIe s.). De la conversion du messianisme virgilien à la distance critique envers le pouvoir. In M. Cutino, F. Gasti (eds.) *Poesia e teologia nella produzione latina dei secoli IV-V*. Pavia: University Press. 1-12.

## Satirical Apotheosis in Seneca and Beyond

Sari Kivistö

Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies

*My article has as its starting point the well-known ancient satirical work, L. Annaeus Seneca's Divi Claudii apotheosis per saturam, also known as Apocolocyntosis Divi Claudii. Seneca's satirical novel describes the death of the Emperor Claudius and his ascent to heaven where his request for deification is discussed by the gods. The gods decide to deny Claudius admission to Olympus, a decision followed by his expulsion and dispatch to the Underworld for his many crimes. My main concern is with the later Neo-Latin tradition: Seneca's work inspired many imitators, including Erasmus of Rotterdam and Daniel Heinsius, who described other-worldly journeys, ascents to heaven or descents to the Underworld in the spirit of the genre. These later works included descriptions of the apotheoses of various authorities, (in)famous poets, emperors and allegorical figures. I will examine the functions of the apotheosis motif in the satirical literature written in imitation of Seneca, and I will show how the motif of the elevation into the divine status was used to ridicule authorities and examine conflicting value systems.*

This article examines the motif of apotheosis in satirical narration, which was intended to mock and subvert the authority of divine emperors and kings as well as that of famous theologians and poets. In ancient religious (and political) life as well as in panegyric literature, an apotheosis was a heroic and solemn event, the highest possible honour bestowed upon humans. It was reserved for exceptional individuals who, by being elevated to heaven, achieved heroic status; this function of apotheosis was familiar from ancient Greek hero cult and numerous mythical stories about such legendary characters as Icarus, Erigone, Chiron, Merops and the Pleiades (see Bechtold 2011, 73; see also Diels 1922). In Rome, deification was granted to emperors and other heroes as a reward and (at least in theory) according to their virtuous life, exceptional military or political achievements and other services to the empire (Bosworth 1999).<sup>1</sup> The Stoics especially stressed the importance of virtue in gaining access to heaven, and the souls of great men were

<sup>1</sup> Bosworth (1999, 6) notes that the accounts of Greek heroes (such as Heracles and Dionysus) served as models for praising Augustus, and the idea that excellence on earth elevated man to the divine was a pure Hellenistic doctrine.

Maijastina Kahlos (ed.)  
Emperors and the Divine – Rome and its Influence

thought to traverse the air like stars (Pandey 2013, 422). The Stoics believed that men of great virtue and status received a higher position in the afterlife than did ordinary men, especially if they had contributed to the welfare of the state.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, satirical narratives were usually opposed to the acts of glorification and commemoration inherent in classical panegyric. Instead of depicting rulers as objects of veneration, satires have used the apotheosis motif to ridicule the cults of historical and living persons and their solemn celebrations. In some satires the apotheosis motif was expanded from a brief episode to a longer narrative. The tradition of satirical apotheosis was influenced by the Roman Stoic Seneca and his *Divi Claudii apotheosis per saturam*, also known as *Apocolocyntosis Divi Claudii* (or *Ludus de morte Divi Claudii*), the most famous instance of this theme and considered the earliest extant example of ancient Menippean satire (Paschalis 2009, 198). As M. D. Reeve has argued (1984, 205-207), the phrase *per saturam* in the book's title does not actually mean 'satirical' but refers to the structure of the book, which combines prose and poetry; thus, *per saturam* means that Seneca wrote his work in a mixture of prose and verse. However, given the style and contents of the story, it is obvious that *Apocolocyntosis* is also satirical in the modern sense of the term, that is, the narration is satirically critical, humorous and mocking in tone.

The form of prosimetrum was characteristic of Menippean satire, which was a popular genre especially in the Renaissance and had its origins in Menippus's and Varro's satires, Lucian's dialogues and Seneca's work.<sup>3</sup> Many Renaissance satires also described ascents to heaven or descents to the Underworld in the spirit of Seneca and other ancient texts. Given the later literary traditions, it is notable that Seneca's work includes the three-level structure, which has been considered a central feature of Menippean satire.<sup>4</sup> Fantastical, other-worldly journeys form another related element frequently encountered in this genre, where the characters observe events from unusual viewpoints, such as from heaven or from high up in the sky (Riikonen 1987, 24).

In addition to satire, the other keyword of my paper is apotheosis. The concept of apotheosis has been studied in relation to the worship of emperors as divine (see, e.g., Gradel 2002). In these discussions apotheosis is sometimes used

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Gradel (2002, 266), with reference to Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*. Cicero here noted how human virtue was rewarded and those who had helped their country had a special place in heaven.

<sup>3</sup> On the ancient tradition of Menippean satire and some of its medieval representatives, see Relihan (1993). Menippus's satires are not extant. Relihan (1993, 30-34) argues that the three most important subtexts of ancient Menippean satire were *The Odyssey*, *Old Comedy* and Plato's myth of Er (*Republic* 614B-621B). Plato here described how human souls were judged according to their merits and virtues, so that the just were sent upwards and the unjust downwards to the Underworld.

<sup>4</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin (1984, 116) has observed that in Menippean satires the action often takes place on these three different ontological levels. This structure also had an influence on the medieval mystery play, while voyages, quests, pilgrimages and other spatial displacements provided structural elements in many kinds of medieval narratives (Vitz 1989). Bakhtin gives a list of Menippean features, but he does not focus only on ancient Menippean satires (he identifies Menippean features in Dostoevsky's novels).



synonymously with *consecratio*, but as I understand these concepts here, they are distinct, albeit related, terms. *Consecratio* refers to the ritual act of making someone a god, whereas apotheosis means the act in which the deified man's soul rises to heaven and takes its place among the gods (see McIntyre 2013, 224-225; Bickermann 1929). The notion of the soul's ascent was based on old philosophical ideas. In the Dream of Scipio (in *De re publica* 6.16) Cicero famously described how, by cultivating justice and piety, great men could return to their proper place among the stars (see also Price 1987, 76). Max Radin (1916) has suggested that apotheosis meant less the process by which a man was raised to divinity and more the idea that the man was returned to his former divine state. Plato's dialogues were also important literary and philosophical predecessors of this topic in the sense that in several dialogues Plato discussed the upper earth where the soul ascends after dying (see, e.g., *Phaedo* 114B-C; Steadman 1972, 22-23). Ancient philosophical discussions readily inspired parodic and satirical interpretations of apotheoses; for example, for the Epicureans it was ridiculous to represent gods as if they existed in a human-like form. This view is also under discussion in Seneca's work, where the kind of god Claudius might become is playfully debated with the ironic conclusion being that he most resembles a Stoic god who is both headless and heartless (8.1; Dormeyer 2004, 135).<sup>5</sup>

During the era of Christian antiquity (between ca. 200-600), the soul's ascent was also discussed, and it was believed that upon a person's death his body was left on earth, while his soul was carried off to Hades, there to await resurrection (see Kajanto 1978). Until the resurrection, the souls of the dead thus remained in Hades, and only the souls of martyrs went directly to heaven.<sup>6</sup> Satirical representations have focused on the scene of the flight from earth and on the intermediate state in which a person is dead, but his soul has not yet entered either heaven or hell, but is on its way.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> In this short presentation, it is impossible to give a full account of ancient ideas of afterlife. As a general rule one could note that all humans were widely assumed to possess a spirit that lasts beyond death (Levene 2012, 61). However, there are different interpretations on what happens in apotheoses. Levene supports the view that in descriptions of apotheosis the process of creating an immortal god out of a human includes a transformation of essence rather than merely a survival of the spirit beyond death (63). On the ancient ideas of afterlife, see, e.g., Hope (2009, 97-120), Casey (2009), Drozdek (2011, who focuses on afterlife in Greek philosophy). Hope (111) notes that ideas of afterlife were also related to ancient mystery cults (including the cult of Mithras) that were widely practised in the Roman Empire. In the cult of Mithras the soul's ascent to heaven was a journey of purification through different spheres. Orphism also supported the idea that one's future life depended on righteous living during the earthly existence (see Casey 2009, 89). For Plato, the soul was the true human reality and independent of the body, and death released the soul of the virtuous into a fullness of life (see, e.g., Casey 2009, 94-100, esp. 98; Drozdek 2011, 190-228, who examines Plato's ideas about the soul, its immortality and the hereafter).

<sup>6</sup> Kajanto (1978, 34) notes that "the conviction that the soul descends from the ether or from the stars, is imprisoned in the body, and returns to its native place upon a person's death, was a commonplace in the philosophical and religious thought of late antiquity." On the return of the soul to heaven in funerary inscriptions, see Bechtold (2011, 376-382), Sanders (1991, 101).

<sup>7</sup> This order of events could also be compared with Christian narratives, but that question must be left for another occasion. On Christian ascension narratives of Christ, see Parsons (1987), and compared with Seneca, see Dormeyer (2004). Relihan (1993, 194) claims that in the Middle Ages, Menippean satire was known as a Christian and philosophical genre. Written in the footsteps of Boethius, Menippean satire was mainly concerned with the relationship between Christian faith and secular knowledge.

The tradition of satirical apotheosis had its origin in ancient times, but the primary aim of this article is to study a handful of later Neo-Latin satires that used the apotheosis motif. These Neo-Latin works are in general not very well known and deserve to be brought together here so that the literary tradition using this motif is discernible. While highlighting selected politically and religiously critical representatives of the Latin tradition, I will also discuss the role of apotheosis in satirical narratives in general. I will explore the recurring narrative elements of satirical deifications – some of them interestingly stemming from ancient deification narratives and practices – and try to answer the question of how the motif of apotheosis has served the satirical criticism of various authorities. Although satires use mythological motifs, they use them for demythologized versions of the ascent genre. Since Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* was a major incentive for later satirists to describe the act in which a deified man's soul rises to heaven, I will first briefly discuss Seneca's work, before turning to the later tradition, which is my main focus here.

## Seneca's Deified Emperor

The plot of Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* is rather simple: we follow Emperor Claudius's death and his ascent to heaven where his request for deification is discussed by the gods at their divine council. The council meeting resembles a democratic and free debate, during which the gods (including Janus the gatekeeper) decide to deny Claudius admission to Olympus. This decision is followed by his expulsion and descent to the Underworld to which he is condemned for his many crimes. He ends up becoming a slave to a former freedman called Menander in the Underworld. Claudius is thus dead and hence a rather passive character who undergoes judgement and existential adventures on three levels – earth, heaven (Olympus) and the Underworld. Seneca's work contains the main elements of later satirical apotheosis narratives: the protagonist's arrival at the gates of heaven, his request for admittance, the following debate among the gods (in later satires often a trial scene), and his expulsion and descent to the Underworld. Yet another explicit satirical feature here is that Seneca combines bodily noises with apotheosis, describing how the soul of the emperor leaves the body through farting (4.3).

Emperor Claudius died of mushroom poisoning, possibly by his wife Agrippina, in 54 AD. *Apocolocyntosis* was written in the same year shortly after Claudius's death and Nero's accession, and it has been considered the most direct political attack on a Roman emperor to be preserved (Paschalis 2009, 199). Claudius's physical peculiarities (a limping gait, stuttering) and moral failings are openly mocked. Simon Price (1987, 87) calls it a biting critique of the deification of Claudius and claims that this emperor's particular (moral) failings and cruelties were the reasons for not deifying him in this satire. Some critics have suggested that the text was written to please Claudius's successor, Nero (see, e.g., Riikonen 1987, 41). This interpretation

is based on Pliny's remark in his *Panegyricus* (11.1), where he suggests that Nero deified his predecessor only to ridicule him (*Dicavit coelo . . . Claudium Nero, sed ut irrideret*).<sup>8</sup> The work may have been written for the ritual context of Saturnalia, when different institutions were subject to be being freely mocked (see Versnel 1993, 109). Seneca's work has also been read as an indication of the critical attitudes of the Roman elite towards imperial deifications and emperor worship, but Spencer Cole (2006, 175-176) has stressed that by aggressively resisting the deification of Claudius, Seneca may in fact have defended the sanctity of this imperial cult practice.

We know that Claudius was buried with regal pomp and given divine honours (see, e.g., Paschalis 2009, 198). In his article on the deification of Claudius, Duncan Fishwick (2002) has observed that Seneca's description of the funeral and apotheosis of Claudius follows the same order of events as was given in Tacitus' account of Claudius's death (*Annales* 12.69; 13.2), including various honours decreed by the Senate and investing the deceased with his own priests. Both accounts also mention the funeral, and Fishwick (2002, 349; see also Gradel 2002, 299-300) reasons that in Seneca's version, the funeral was celebrated after the deification, as the practice had changed by Claudius's time. This seems historically plausible, although Suetonius (*Claudius* 45) presents a different order whereby the funeral precedes the senatorial decree of deification (Fishwick 2002, 342).<sup>9</sup> This controversial topic has been debated rather extensively (see Gradel 2002, 299-304), but I am less interested in historical accuracy here, because, firstly, Seneca may have indulged in literary license (see, e.g., Fishwick 2002, 342) and, secondly, the actual order of events is after all less important in a paper that focuses on apotheosis as a literary motif. But it should be noted that in the satirical plot, it is crucial that the real decree of deification (or usually the refusal) always follows rather than precedes the ascension.

Seneca's narrative includes many elements which are familiar from epic poetry, historiography and more serious accounts of imperial ascensions, such as the use of a witness who has seen the rise to heaven.<sup>10</sup> It is assumed that at this point the dead person was already a god and did not need to wait for the Senate's declaration. The use of the conventional motif of witnessing can be interpreted as a parody of historians' typical appeals to truthfulness and veracity. In Seneca's book, a very unreliable witness first testifies to Claudius's ascension (1.2), and then

8 See also Suetonius, *Claudius* 45; Tacitus, *Annales* 12.69. On apotheosis in Seneca's satire, see also Dormeyer (2004); Gradel (2002, 325-329); on Seneca's satire in general, see Relihan (1993, 75-90). On the motif of apotheosis in later (non-satirical) literature, see, e.g., Steadman (1972, which focuses on Chaucer).

9 For funerals of emperors, see Price (1987); Davies (2000), who notes that the decision of apotheosis for a dead emperor rested with the Senate (at least during the early Imperial period). Hope (2009, 92) also claims that the apotheosis of an emperor was not automatic, but the funerals of emperors reflected their abilities to rule well.

10 On the conventional although debatable narrative elements related to apotheosis (such as witnesses, comets and other omens) and on the use of a witness in ancient historiography, see Gradel (2002, 295-297).

Claudius himself witnesses his own funeral when he passes from heaven to the Underworld (12.1-3; see Paschalis 2009, 208; Gradel 2002, 295). This excess of testimonies creates a parodic tone in the narration.<sup>11</sup>

The consecration of an emperor usually also involved other symbolic events and visual tokens.<sup>12</sup> The indications of divinity included the creation of the statues of the deified person's cult or such unusual events as a comet, which appeared in the sky upon Caesar's death during the games held in his honour and was thought to indicate that Caesar's soul was being taken up to the immortal gods on high (cf. Suetonius, *De vita Caesarum* 88; Pandey 2013; Fishwick 2002, 343; Price 1987, 72). Another standard procedure during the funeral was the release of an eagle, which bore the soul of the dead emperor to heaven.<sup>13</sup> Graeco-Roman ascension narratives also contained such features as mountains, thunderbolts, whirlwinds and clouds.<sup>14</sup> We do not find these elements in Seneca, but some of them appear in later tradition, as will be shown below.

Seneca was not the only writer in Rome to make scornful comments about apotheoses. Another Roman satirist, Juvenal, mentioned Claudius's apotheosis in his sixth verse satire (6.619), where he referred to Agrippina and the mushroom poisoning. Juvenal remarked that Agrippina's act merely stopped an old man's heart and in this sense was an easy ending. Juvenal says that the man was forced to 'descend' into the sky – by using the verb *descendere* he suggests that the proper direction for the emperor to go would have been downwards and towards the underworld. Juvenal's main target in this misogynist satire was the female character: he warned that all women are ready to poison their husbands and torture them using even more severe means.

Imperial apotheoses are also found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; Seneca (*Apocolocyntosis* 9.5) referred to Ovid's playful accounts of deification and saw

11 On the unreliable witness and its effects on the narration in Seneca, see Relihan (1993, 78-79). Paschalis (2009, 198) argues: "The Apocolocyntosis parodies epic descents and historiographical topoi as well as the mythological otherworld of punishment and reward, ideas of afterlife, and imperial deification."

12 These symbols have been discussed, for example, by Fishwick (2002); on the tradition of imperial consecration in Rome, see Price (1987); Gradel (2002).

13 Gradel (2002, 291-295, 305ff.; Cassius Dio 56.42,3); in the case of an empress the bird was often a peacock. On imperial ascents, see, for example, Joachim Busse's *Apotheosis imperatorum Romanorum* (Wittenberg, 1662), in which Busse explained the origins and the reasons for the practice of consecrating emperors; these reasons included, among other motivations, adulation and superstition. Busse described the typical imperial funeral, and mentioned the eagle, which was released from the midst of the funerary smoke when the emperor was incinerated and which was believed to carry the soul of the dead person to heaven. The eagle was also often depicted in coins commemorating the past emperor. In his *Tractatus historicus de apotheosi, sive consecratione, imperatorum Romanorum* (Strasbourg, 1730), Johann Daniel Schöpflin also studied the concept of apotheosis in general and then focused on Roman emperors (and female empresses) in particular. He examined ceremonies related to deification and those different signs, symbols (eagle, peacock) and moral qualities that were associated with dead emperors in pictorial representations after consecration. On Claudius, see Schöpflin (1730, 27-28).

14 See Parsons (1987, 138), who argues that these features were common with the Jewish assumption stories, but the references to mountains, clouds and angels played a more important role in pagan literature.

Claudius's case as a sequel to Ovid's humorous series of deified human beings. Ovid made extensive use of the fabulous apotheosis motif and described the deification of the mythical founder of Rome, Romulus (14.805-828), and his wife Hersilia (14.829-851) in a manner that imitates Homeric gods' solemnly driving their chariots through the air in the *Iliad*. Ovid account is also consistently playful and toys with the motifs of apotheosis:

Omnipotent Jupiter nodded, and, veiling the sky with dark clouds, he terrified men on earth with thunder and lightning. Mars knew this as a sign that ratified the promised ascension, and leaning on his spear, he vaulted, fearlessly, into his chariot, the horses straining at the blood-wet pole, and cracked the loud whip. Dropping headlong through the air, he landed on the summit of the wooded Palatine. There he caught up Romulus, son of Ilia, as he was dealing royal justice to his people. The king's mortal body dissolved in the clear atmosphere, like the lead bullet, that often melts in mid-air, hurled by the broad thong of a catapult. Now he has beauty of form, and he is Quirinus, clothed in ceremonial robes, such a form as is worthier of the sacred high seats of the gods. (14.816-828; trans A. S. Kline)<sup>15</sup>

Metamorphosis was an important theme in apotheosis narratives, since the whole idea implied a transgression from one kind (human) to another (divine).<sup>16</sup>

In addition to Roman writers, Lucian wrote satirical dialogues that described downward journeys and trips to the upper spheres. His *Dialogues of the Dead* show how important authorities are punished in the Underworld, whereas *Passing of Peregrinus* concludes with a vision of a vulture which parodically rises to heaven, lampooning imperial deifications. In Lucian's *Assembly of the Gods* the gods complain that their dwelling place, Olympus, is becoming over-populated as men are being deified without merit, and they complain about the proliferation of barbarian gods on Olympus (Relihan 1993, 132). While ridiculing polytheism, this statement may also reflect the fact that the system of imperial deifications had gradually become more common and, as funerary inscriptions show, in the fourth century apotheosis was gradually extended to all levels of Roman society, including to ordinary men.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, criticism of apotheosis was increasing, and in the Christian views that held a more monotheistic image of god, such an abundance of deified mortals was problematic and meant the worship of the dead as gods.

<sup>15</sup> On Romulus' ascension, see also Price (1987, 73-74).

<sup>16</sup> On apotheoses in *Metamorphoses*, see Feeney (1991, 205-214). See also Levene (2012), who discusses whether gods and humans were distinguished by kind and as fundamentally distinct species of being in ancient Rome. Levene supports the view that in Rome people did not merely move from one status to another in narratives of apotheosis, but transgressed a real ontological boundary.

<sup>17</sup> For examples of pagan and Christian funerary epitaphs, see the various articles in Sanders (1991). I thank the editor of this volume for this reference; she has also noted that during the Empire, imperial apotheosis was becoming more 'democratic' in the sense that it spread widely to all levels of Roman society, and immortality ceased to be the privilege of heroes and emperors. Kahlos (1998, 208) points out how the iconography of the imperial apotheosis was adapted to describe the ascent of normal individuals in numerous funerary inscriptions in which the deceased either becomes a god or ascends to the gods (i.e., two different narrative traditions).

Christian polemicists were openly hostile to the deification of wicked emperors (Price 1987, 99). For example, in his *Adversus nationes* (1.64) Arnobius asked why men worshipped violent tyrants by erecting temples and altars, although these tyrants did not fear the gods; rather they slaughtered men and thus should be hated (see also Tertullian, *Ad nationes* 1.10.29-33). Along with this criticism the state cult of the Divi and the consecrated members of the imperial family began to collapse after the middle of the third century (see Gradel 2002, 356-369).

Joel Relihan has observed that in antiquity there was "a long tradition of comic depictions of heavenly examinations and rejections of potential divinities" (1993, 122). Towards the fourth century such Menippean forms and symposia became increasingly popular in literature (see Riikonen 1987, 10), which may reflect the need to change old rituals and reconstruct new world images. For example, Emperor Julian (fl. 360s) described in his Greek satire on the symposium of the gods known as the *Caesares* (or *Convivium*) a feast set in the Homeric heaven and offered to the gods and Roman emperors by Romulus. An essential element of this satirical symposium is a comic contest for deification, after which one winning emperor will be admitted to heaven. In late antiquity, for example, in Paulinus's and Prudentius's works, the right to ascend directly to heaven was granted to all righteous souls (and not just to martyrs; see Kajanto 1978, 37), but Julian's comic and corrupt heaven has no respect for virtue or other merits. Thus, not only is the applicant who is looking for divinity ridiculed, but so is the whole of heaven, with its gods and the system of supernatural judgement depicted as foolish.<sup>18</sup> According to some interpretations, the divine council is often a parodic mirror of the Roman Senate (Gradel 2002, 326). Later Martianus Capella described the apotheosis of personified Philology in his *De nuptiis*, where virtue is considered sufficient justification for apotheosis.<sup>19</sup>

Seneca contributed to this theme by introducing a single unworthy applicant and relying on the specific nature of Roman apotheosis (Relihan 1993, 122). My main concern here is to examine the motif of apotheosis in selected later satires that were influenced by Seneca's work.

## Erasmus's Deified Pope from 1517

Seneca's novel was lost during the Middle ages but recovered in early sixteenth century (Jones 1981, 6). It enjoyed widespread influence during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (de Smet 1996, 56), when writers published satirical

<sup>18</sup> On Julian's work, see Relihan (1993, 119-133, on the comic contest for deification see esp. 120-127). It is worth noting that Jesus is one of the gods in Julian's heaven. Divine councils (which decided the fate of an individual) were also common in satirical literature of the early modern period, but I have to leave that discussion for another occasion. One of the most famous Neo-Latin representatives of this topic was undoubtedly Justus Lipsius's dream vision *Somnium* (on this satire, see, e.g., De Smet 1996, 88ff). Likewise, I have left aside the rich tradition of satirical underworld narratives and concentrated on the more specific and unstudied apotheosis motif.

<sup>19</sup> On Capella's work, see Relihan (1993, 137-151).

apotheoses of various authorities, newly deceased popes and rulers. In German carnival literature the motif of apotheosis had already been used in such farces as “The Apotheosis of Pope Joan” (ca. 1480), but the most influential example of the later Latin tradition was the dialogue entitled *Iulius exclusus e coelis* (1514, published 1517), which is usually attributed to Erasmus of Rotterdam and became very popular, being reprinted many times.<sup>20</sup> The name Julius does not refer to Julius Caesar, who first received divine honours from the Roman state and became the model for later deifications (see Price 1987, 71), but rather to Pope Julius II, who died in 1513. Funerary inscriptions have shown that in late antiquity (during the fifth and sixth centuries) the souls of popes were thought to ascend to heaven immediately after death (Kajanto 1978, 46); here, however, Erasmus’s satire describes how the entrance to heaven is not free, but has value precisely because it is closed and many are excluded (see Vitz 1989, 77).

The story does not describe Julius’s actual apotheosis or physical ascent, as did some later satires (see below), but concentrates on a dialogue between Julius and St Peter set at the gate of Christian heaven. The dialogue on the threshold of the gates of heaven acts as a specific ceremony or a test (or a concrete turning point) in which the powerful become powerless. According to Mikhail Bakhtin (1984), trials and gates were traditional places of ultimate decisions and crises and offered a place for reviewing and summing up one’s life and testing the truth.<sup>21</sup> Dialogues on the threshold had their predecessors, for example, in the Socratic dialogues and in Plato’s *Apology*, where Socrates speaks in defence of himself. Bakhtin (1984, 110-111) has argued that in the Socratic dialogues, the truth was produced in the dialogic interaction between the discussants. The satirical trial scenes follow the structure of Socratic and dialogical search for truth, in which the protagonist is provoked to speak and thereby disclose his false opinions, but the satirical perspective often makes the outcome of these conversations predictable.

Julius is surprised that the doors do not open to him, and he suspects that someone has changed the lock. While Seneca’s Claudius was accompanied by the Goddess Fever, Julius is followed by his Genius who suspects that his master has brought the wrong key, namely the key to his money chest, which is the key of power and not of wisdom and which does not open the gates of heaven. This claim underlines that worldly prestige has lost its effectiveness in heaven, and Julius is basically made powerless after his death. Another feature typical of

20 On Seneca’s work as a source text for Erasmus’s satire, see Colish (1976). Colish notes that there are many thematic similarities between Seneca’s and Erasmus’s satires (starting from the protagonists, who are recently deceased and notorious historical figures). She mainly focuses on the availability of Seneca’s text to Erasmus and concludes that Erasmus probably studied three fifteenth-century manuscripts of *Apocolocyntosis* at Oxford in the early 1510s. I will concentrate here on the literary side of Erasmus’s dialogue; for its historical context and religious arguments, see, for example, McConica (1974); Fabisch (2008).

21 According to Bakhtin (1984, 116), the threshold dialogue was also widespread in the Middle Ages – there were peasants arguing at the gates of heaven – and during the Reformation in the so-called literature of the heavenly gates (*Schwellendialoge, Himmelsporten-Literatur*). It should be noted that the idea of an access to the other world by means of gates was familiar already in ancient Egypt.

satirical narratives is that former popes and rulers try to enter heaven by force or flattery instead of earning the status of divinity through virtue or merit. Pope Julius aggressively tries to kick the door in and threatens the gatekeepers with excommunication until St Peter arrives; then in order to decide whether Julius should be admitted to heaven, Peter investigates his case in a typical trial sequence.<sup>22</sup>

Satires focus on the idea of justice and reward, and the trial scene is a literal setting in which the former life of the dead person is scrutinised in order to assess his virtues and vices. As can be readily imagined, the trial scene reveals that the kings, popes and eminent theologians depicted in satires were not true benefactors who should gain direct access to heaven, but only cared about themselves and their own welfare.<sup>23</sup> Julius’s true nature becomes clear when his secret habits and immoralities are thoroughly examined during the divine mock trial. Whereas Claudius was interrogated by a divine council, Julius’s life is examined by St Peter, the acknowledged gatekeeper of the Christian heaven. In a meticulous scrutiny the pope tells about his worldly career and even though he believes he is recounting his great deeds, he is found guilty of many ‘standard’ papal crimes, ranging from lust and nepotism to pederasty and many other sins. Not even military achievements bring divine status if they are the central merits in a pope’s career. Erasmus severely criticizes the warrior pope’s military obsession by depicting him at the gates of heaven with a number of mutilated warriors who smell of gunpowder.

Julius was known for enjoying war and sending troops to various fights and battlefields across Europe; according to this satire, he had made a contract with his soldiers, promising that those who fought for him and the church would fly straight to heaven, no matter what they had done in their former lives. Erasmus introduced cruelty and violence to the pope’s severest moral failings and used simple satirical tools while denouncing him. St Peter feels sick as he studies the applicant, whose rotten nature reeks of the sewer, the stench that comes from him being a literal representation of his character; the pope belches and smells as if he has just come from a very long drinking party. The narration underlines that Julius does not bear a trace of being an apostolic man (*vir apostolicus*) or a vicar of Christ (*vicarius Christi*); thus, he is unfit to be taken to heaven. In the conclusion Julius is considered an outstanding example of rotten theologians, those who lose their position as first among equals. St Peter, in contrast, holds the true spiritual and political power in these narratives: he is the decision-maker in whose hands lays the judgement of deification, which was not a mere formality, but a political and moral decision granted only to men who passed St Peter’s moral test. Erasmus

22 Trial narratives formed a popular rhetorical genre in the Renaissance period. The philosophical and rhetorical traditions met, for example, in early modern fictitious courtroom defences, which were situated in court before an opposing party and a judge – a similar trial scene was found in Erasmus’s *Moria*. In these playful courtroom narratives the personified Gout (or various other ills) acted as an advocate to defend herself against common opinion, rumours, impugment of her reputation and false accusations presented against her by the crowd. See Kivistö (2009, Ch. 3).

23 It should be noted that the Christian tradition places less emphasis on the effects of human work or merit, and more on divine grace.

constructed a clear moral confrontation between the corrupt secular papacy and the simplicity of the apostolic Church (see McConica 1974, 454).

Erasmus's satire points out that the protagonists of satirical apotheoses usually represent power positions, institutions and ideologies. Menippean satires did not merely criticize the individual who was being tested, but focussed also on the ideas and ideologies for which the person stood (see Bakhtin 1984, 114). Satires ridicule the human rituals and practices of elevating some mortals above others and lifting them to the status of divinity by following arbitrary religious customs. While Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* was a political satire on a deceased tyrant, Erasmus's target was another living ritual related to the place of the papacy. Jones (1981, 9) has rightly noted that Erasmus was writing from within the Christian tradition and thus was commenting on a completely different religious system than Seneca. Erasmus shows how the human hierarchies of the Catholic Church look silly to men who do not participate in them; the pope is just another mad tyrant whose cult seems fossilized and corrupt to outsiders who do not belong to the religious elite who maintain the ritual. While new cults grew up and priesthoods were given to Roman emperors when they died, in these later satires popes and theologians had their priests, cults and temples (to themselves) while they still lived. Pope Julius was worshipped and honoured as a deified hero and saviour during his lifetime, but after his death his cult dissolved. As a pope, he was supposed to be the successor to Christ and his servant, but Julius's profane life made him unworthy of this Christian heritage. Erasmus's satire was typical of the age of religious turmoil, and it was overlaid with moral functions and protests against the Catholic habit of assuming that a pope's power had a divine origin. It was also used for anti-Catholic polemics in other European countries. It was, for example, translated into English in 1673 by English Protestants and used in their assaults on the alleged corruption of Catholicism (Dodds 2009, 236).

### Geldorp's Deified Inquisitor of 1559

Erasmus's popular dialogue served as a model for many satires that are less well known today. One adaptation was by the Dutch humanist and theologian, Heinrich Castritius Geldorp (Henricus Geldorpius, 1522-1585), whose *Ruardi Tappart . . . Apotheosis* (1559) describes the apotheosis of Ruard Tapper (1488-1559), a chancellor and scholastic theologian from Leuven who was notorious for his activities as a fanatical and ill-mannered inquisitor. The writer of this satire, Geldorp, had initially been a Catholic, but then turned to Calvinism, which may

partly explain his vitriolic tone.<sup>24</sup> The description of the apotheosis appears in the Franeker edition of 1643 preceded by two short verse satires and followed by some pasquinades.<sup>25</sup>

Satires often concretize abstract concepts as if they were literal. Although Seneca did not provide any detailed information as to how Claudius approached Mount Olympus (Paschalis 2009, 211), here the ascension is narrated as if it were an earthly journey and a strenuous climb to heaven. The climber, Ruard, complains that the path is surprisingly narrow, meandering and slippery, and he doubts whether such a modest path can actually lead to heaven.<sup>26</sup> There is no place to stop, no one to ask for advice. The arduous path reminds one of the hard path of virtue – another important theme of its own and found in allegorical representations; while the path of virtue is narrow and trodden by very few, the wider route of vice is easy to walk, yet more crowded. Ruard is sweating and short of breath as he climbs, and the muddy path stains his clothes. The dirt is meant to mock the theologian and underline the dirtiness of his soul; his appearance also reminds one of the wicked souls in Plato's Myth of Er (*Republic* 614D) who are coming up from the earth full of squalor and dust; likewise, Ruard is unable to free himself from earthly gravity. Ruard is accompanied by Genius, his inner spirit or guardian angel, who often appears as a young boy in visual imagery. Genius was familiar from Roman imperial narratives, but here he represents the individual conscience of the protagonist on his pilgrimage.<sup>27</sup> When Ruard complains that his legs are fatigued, Genius delivers a moral condemnation and openly ridicules his master, reminding him that those very same legs were quick to take him to the princely court in his former life. In the representations of ancient imperial ascensions the usual visual elements included a horse-drawn chariot, falling stars and other sublime signs and symbols depicting the flight of the soul through the air and its rise to heaven, whereas here the journey upwards is emphatically difficult, corporeal and made on foot.<sup>28</sup> The theologian's body does not vanish, but is taken to heaven, at least as much as his soul. The

24 On Calvin's ideas about deification, see Mosser (2002). He argues that deification was not foreign to Western Christianity, but it was present in Calvin's theology as it was in the patristic tradition, and deification should not be considered as an example of the corrupting influence of Greek philosophy on Christianity. Mosser argues (53), however, that Calvin described pagan notions of deification as false and traced the condemnable rise of polytheism to the practice of deification. Mosser also notes that Finns have discovered deification in Luther.

25 Geldorp's pamphlet was also printed in several editions and translated from Latin into Dutch in 1572. Pasquinades were lampoons situated in a public place and known as another type of irreverent literary genre. The name pasquinade comes from the statue of Pasquino in Rome on which short lampoons were posted (and they were also dealing with Julius II). The statue of Pasquino can be considered a satirical counterpart to the cult statues that were erected to deified emperors. Ruard's apotheosis is here followed by a short pasquinade entitled *Evangelium Secundum*, which describes the family tree of the Anti-Christ. He is the son of the devil, who gave birth to a pope, whereas simony gave birth to cardinals, who gave birth to courtesans, who gave birth to papal bishops, etc.

26 Geldorp (1643, 21): *Nam angusta haec via est & flexuosa; quodque . . . mihi plane ignota, nec unquam talis credita, quae ducit in coelum.*

27 On the role and worship of the emperor's Genius in the Roman state cult, see Gradel (2002, 162-197). See also Levene (2012).

28 On star symbolism and apotheosis in antiquity, see Bechtold (2011).

arduousness of the upward climb can be read allegorically, illustrating the difficulty of rising above one's earthly and sinful self to become godlike.

It is noteworthy that Ruard seeks admission to heaven splendidly dressed – a feature that was mocked in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* quoted above and in Erasmus's Julius, who wore a triple crown and a pallium shining with gold and jewels, indications of his worldly power; he was also fully armed. This attire was supposed to be emblematic of Julius's nearly divine power and supreme status on earth, but for the reader these triumphal features parody divine epithets. Ironically, the expensive, festive (pontifical or funeral) clothing reflects luxurious living and makes an evident contrast to the truly Christian humble soul. Ruard is equally well prepared for his long trip, wearing several layers of clothing, and he has also drawn a garment over his head in the Roman manner.<sup>29</sup>

In trying to enter heaven, Ruard has recourse to his usual habits of flattering and lobbying, and he presents a bunch of ritual documents, papal privileges and diplomas to testify to his divine attributes, as he believes that no one will be taken to heaven without a pope's blessing. He boasts that in princely courts he was already adored as a tutelary deity (*numen tutelare*) and an oracle who worked miracles (*pro miraculo*),<sup>30</sup> and he desires to continue his godlike status. However, his explanations and official papers do not convince St Peter, who is guarding the gates. Wondering at Ruard's opulent clothing and dirty appearance, which resembles the look of a charcoal-burner, St Peter requests Ruard to tell the truth about himself.

Unlike the pious souls, whose admission is welcomed with the congratulations of the angels and heavenly music, travellers such as Ruard are subject to a rigorous moral examination. The dialogue again revolves around a trial sequence, during which St Peter observes Ruard's character and openly makes fun of him. The historical Ruard Tapper had plentiful experience in sitting and judging heresy trials, but here he is forced to sit through his own interrogation. St Peter laughs at his stories, calling them the best comedy he has heard for a while. St Peter also laughs at certain jokes about Ruard's farting. He feels sick (*mihi nauseam movent*) listening to the list of Ruard's theological titles. St Peter has never heard of Ruard's predecessors and such scholastics as Jacobus Latomus, an eminent theologian from Leuven, who was known as an opponent of Erasmus and Luther and said to be the most feared theologian in Leuven. Equally unknown is the defender of Catholicism Johann Eck along with others of his ilk, which suggests that scholastic theologians and anti-Protestant polemicists were carried off directly to the Underworld. We learn that while the gates of heaven were sometimes spontaneously opened to pious souls who were carried to heaven on the wind, for men like Ruard the doors are heavy and ultimately remain closed.

29 Geldorp (1643, 26): *Sed unde tandem tam lutulentus ades? Tam soleatis crepidis, tot interulis, thoracibus, togis, penulis, soccis, iisque omnibus duplo suffultis insutus? Quid capite obvoluto venisti instar morientis puerperae? Tam promissis unguibus, ut ligones videri possint? Illotis manibus?*

30 Ibid. (27): *Regum mensis non ut conviva, sed numen quoddam tutelare totius Monarchiae assedi: quod dicebam, quod suadebam, oraculum erat: quoties quid faciebam, ita omnes me suspiciebant, ut coelique erebique potentem.*

The trial discloses Ruard's luxurious living on earth with other impious scholastic theologians, and accordingly, the decision is made that Ruard will join Pope Julius II in the Underworld where he belongs by reason of his inquisitional activities, hypocrisy and other sins familiar from medieval and Renaissance anti-clerical and anti-scholastic satire. The dialogue ends with a scene in which Ruard wonders where all the shadows and darkness have suddenly come from and what is all the mourning and crying he hears around him. The last words (in verse) are uttered by the chorus of the Underworld and by the guard of the passage, Cerberus. The ferocious snarling and growling of the dog amusingly resembles the name of the main character: "Ru, ru ru ru, ruar ar ar arrr, ruarr, ruart." It is noteworthy that in satires, the ascent to heaven is always the beginning of the story and not an ending as it might be in a person's real life. On the other hand, satirical apotheoses usually end in the Underworld, when the applicant is denied access to heaven, but gains admittance to another place among other sinful souls.

In their earthly lives Ruard and the other protagonists of satirical deifications were so dignified that all doors were open to them, if by no other means then at least through money or threats. Ruard Tapper had assumed an almost a divine status in life and was a frequently seen guest at princely courts and among those who held worldly power. But at the gate of heaven, these alleged miracles seem ridiculous, Ruard and other previously powerful figures become weak, submissive and less threatening. Satirical criticism was directed at men who adopted the position of gods during their lifetime, and also at all those who supported such a false system by granting divine status to mortals. Erasmus and Geldorp criticized the systems of papal and other divinities, which were supported and perpetuated by human hierarchies and in which the leaders' positions were confirmed by tradition. Later eighteenth-century theologians observed that apotheosis reflects corrupted habits and the decay of religion in general if the object of tribute and worship was the mediator of God's word rather than God (see Fallon 2007, 9).

## Other Historical Figures at the Gates of Heaven

Another early modern satire using a similar plot structure in which the goal is heaven was *Virgula divina* (1609) by the Dutch philologist, satirist and humanist Daniel Heinsius; it was directed against his contemporary, the writer Kaspar Schoppe (see De Smet 1996, 170). The title refers to a divine rod as a symbol of power and authority of God, but it also connotes the moral sentence and content of satire; Varro gave the same title to one of his satires, which has been preserved only in fragments. Heinsius was familiar with Seneca's work: he composed a dissertation on Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* and also wrote many other Latin satires. In his dissertation on Seneca's satire (*De libello L. Annaei Senecae in Claudium, sive Claudii Apocolocyntosi, & praesertim de inscriptionis causa dissertatio*, 1619), Heinsius claimed that Claudius was considered the stupidest of the Roman emperors

and a symbol of the unflattering characteristic of *stupiditas*, which he discusses here in detail. Heinsius stressed that Seneca's book was not about Claudius's death as much as it was about what happened after his death, including the cult surrounding his idolized figure and his consecration.<sup>31</sup> Heinsius playfully stated that Claudius achieved immortality by eating a (poisonous) mushroom. Heinsius's dissertation largely centred on a hilarious commentary on the title of Seneca's satire and the medical and humorous dimensions of the pumpkin (*colocynta*).<sup>32</sup>

In his *Virgula divina* Heinsius imitated Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* by describing the death of Schoppe's father (whom he called Lucretius Vespillo) and the father's unsuccessful claim to divine status (see de Smet 1996, 170). The ascent to heaven is again described as an extremely laborious and physical climb up Mount Olympus.<sup>33</sup> Vespillo briefly pauses in the middle of the climb to take a breath, giving the whole story an amusingly realistic tone, while underlining that the protagonist has already taken his last breath. According to a more fantastical explanation given in Heinsius's text, Vespillo pauses to watch his own funeral, as did Claudius in Seneca's satire while on his way to Hades. While listening to his funeral dirge, Vespillo observes whether people handle his body properly and according to his merits. The satirical tone intensifies when, after a hard nine-day climb, Vespillo finally reaches the top of the mountain and transgresses the limit between earth and heaven. There he meets the Horae, the goddesses of seasons who guard the gates of Olympus. The goddesses turn out to be very worldly figures, at least in the protagonist's eyes. Contemplating the movements of their celestial bodies, he describes their heavenly beauty in terms that resemble passionate love poetry, praising their milk-white skin, the divine splendour of their teeth, their purple lips, sweet kisses and round trembling breasts. The Horae are portrayed as wearing seductive, transparent clothing and embodying the joys and sensual pleasures of heaven. The ascent is far from being a solemn, otherworldly event; indeed, it is full of both mundane and erotic tones in the manner of many ancient (rather than Christian) depictions of the earthly paradise and its erotic delights.<sup>34</sup> Once again the ascent is followed by a trial scene or questioning of the dead man's life course and morality. Rather than being praised for his merits and lavished with celestial rewards, the protagonist, in this case, Vespillo, is found guilty of many crimes and sins, as is usual in satires; like Seneca's Claudius, Vespillo is turned down by the gods and sent to the Underworld in punishment.

31 Heinsius (1657, 534) claimed that Seneca had two targets for his satire: *Nam et Claudii stupiditatem et religionem stultam Romanorum, ac praesertim morem consecrationis, sive apotheosim, ab Augusto introductam, lepide sugillat.*

32 On the process of pumpkinification in Seneca's satire, see also Braund (1998, 298-301).

33 Cf. Dante's *Divina Commedia*, in which he described Purgatory as a mountain with seven levels. Another similarity between Dante's epic and satirical apotheoses is that before the poet approaches God, he undergoes an examination in the three theological virtues (faith, hope, charity) by Peter, James and John (Casey 2009, 286).

34 On the delights of earthly paradise, see Casey (2009, 295).

Other texts in the later tradition include *Elixir calvinisticum* (1615) by the French Jesuit François Garasse (1585-1631). His work ridicules the recently (1614) deceased philologist Isaac Casaubon, who asks to be admitted to heaven but is denied access, and, as Ingrid De Smet has nicely observed, passes to the Underworld through Great Britain, the shortest way to Hell.<sup>35</sup> This satire plays with star imagery and various literary allusions, showing how, instead of deification (turning men into gods), satirical protagonists are forced to experience other kinds of bodily metamorphoses (into plants and animals) as a satirical reversion of deification. In Seneca's work the transformation was called 'pumpkinification'; in Garasse's text famous literary men are turned into spiders, scorpions, vipers and other unpleasant creatures as indications of their poisonous character.<sup>36</sup> Apotheosis meant a transition from a worldly self to a more transcendent or spiritual self, but just like Claudius's afterlife was envisaged as a continuation of his earthly living (Paschalis 2009, 206), in the same way the popes, rulers and intellectuals depicted in these stories refuse to undergo any fundamental change. On the contrary, they try to enter heaven without abandoning their former bad habits and assume that they can continue their corrupt ways even after death.

Parodic apotheosis scenes have been rather common in literature throughout the ages, from the finale of Goethe's *Faust* to smaller works. Lord Byron's *Vision of Judgment* (1822) was another, much later, hilarious description of an apotheosis in poetic form, hurling attacks against the late King George III.<sup>37</sup> In its key passage this satirical piece of poetry described how St Peter, again sitting by the celestial gate, suddenly hears an unusual noise – "a rushing sound of wind, and stream, and flame, / in short, a roar of things extremely great" (16). St Peter assumes that it is just another star gone out, but a cherub informs him that it is actually George III, who is now dead. Despite his powerful position on earth, the newcomer is not immediately identified, like Seneca's Claudius, who at first was not even recognized as human (5.3),<sup>38</sup> and Erasmus's Julius, who was called a monster. St Peter inquires, "And who is George III?" and learns that he is the king of England. He recalls that the previous royal ruler who tried to enter heaven was the headless king of France. The poem describes how the king is transported to heaven in an imperial manner by a chariot of angels, and his fate is discussed there in the same way as in similar satires. The motif of apotheosis was sometimes used to criticize one's fellow poets, and here Byron ridiculed his contemporary, the poet laureate Robert Southey, for writing flattering panegyrics and serious-minded texts of adoration in praise of

35 On this satire and its historical context, see De Smet (1996, 188-190).

36 The sentence given here goes as follows: *In Bufonem ipse vertatur, Baudius in araneam, Buchananus in scorpium, Anticoto in viperam . . .* (Garasse 1615, 43-44).

37 On Byron's satire and its debt to Erasmus's Julius, see Jones (1981).

38 See Braund (1998).

King George III.<sup>39</sup> The representation of apotheosis parodied the solemn ways of celebrating political or other leading social figures and was meant to disparage serious eulogies and their conventions. Byron's main target of criticism was the high-minded exaltation of mortal figures and the sublime poetics it entailed.<sup>40</sup>

### The Gate Closes

The central idea in the satirical representations of apotheosis was based on a structure of reversal and subversion. In the Neo-Latin satires discussed above the ascent to the heaven is depicted as corporeal and strenuous, not a light rise to the heavens, and the ascent is usually supplemented with descent. While serious and solemn apotheosis narratives extolled the merits of heroes and saints, satires played with the idea that people who have been on the highest level in the human social or ecclesiastical hierarchy are now subject to divine judgement and a drastic decrease in their social capital. As Simon Price has stated (1987, 56), the apotheosis of Roman emperors offered a key to understanding their power, and power is also the key word in satires, which are meant to be narratives of how someone powerful loses his worldly position. The satirical subversion of official power was visible, for example, in Erasmus's *Iulius exclusus*, which was highly critical of the traditional position of the papacy; although the text described a heavenly journey, Erasmus was mainly concerned with earthly matters. In the medieval world the pope had been the living god, whose power was unquestioned; there was no sphere beyond his control, as he was the vicar of Christ and his divine rights (see Wilks 1964). Erasmus, however, ridiculed the divine nature of the papacy by stripping all power from the newly dead pope whose former position of divinity and pre-eminence was acquired from tradition and long-held policies or perhaps by flattery or fear, not through virtue or merit. Instead of being elevated to an even higher status (that of god) through an ascension, the protagonist becomes – through the satirical act of subversion – powerless and passive when he dies.

39 Poets, such as Homer who was an important intertext of apotheosis narratives, were also sometimes adored as divine. On Homer's cult and consecration, see Gispert Cuper's (1644-1716) *Apotheosis vel consecratio Homeri* published in 1683. Cuper was a classicist and professor from Deventer, who described in his work the later celebration and adoration of Homer. Statues, temples and cults were dedicated to Homer as the greatest of all poets. Cuper concentrated on the consecration and cult of Homer and did not discuss his ascension to heaven.

40 The parodic motif has even found its way into Finnish satirical and political literature. In Sasu Punanen's causerie, "Maallista ja taivaallista" (Earthly and Heavenly, in *Punakaarti, kuningas, vehnäpulla ja porvari*, 1928), upper-class conservatives are amazed that socialists and those who fought with the Reds in the Finnish Civil War were allowed to enter heaven. Equally welcomed to heaven were all those who died in military prison camps. Some literary representations gave divine status to exceptional athletes. The mythical athlete Elmo in Juhani Peltonen's eponymous novel (1978) was an outstanding fictive sports hero who outplayed his competitors in every possible field from races and skiing to ice hockey and football. In a fairytale-like ending, Elmo is shot into the sky like a human cannonball out of an Austrian circus and thus humorously elevated to the status of divinity.

The satires studied above had a characteristic repertoire of recurring narrative elements – a hard climb, the gates of heaven, high hopes and usually also expensive garments, which bespeak vanity and former luxurious living. Sometimes the ancient motif of the ascent to heaven was modified into the motif of the path to virtue, an important motif of its own that had its roots already in Greek literature and Hesiod. Neo-Latin satires also use the narrative potential of upward and downward movement here. According to the views of some philosophical schools in antiquity the human soul has a natural inclination to move upwards,<sup>41</sup> whereas the satirical movement is ultimately in the opposite direction, downwards. Moreover, the protagonist is not an active agent of this movement; he does not perform an action, but rather undergoes it as a passive object, forced to obey the impetus given to the movement by the satirist.<sup>42</sup> One could also argue that former heroes who, in more flattering narratives were sent off to heaven without dying, are now forced to acknowledge their mortal condition and face death, which means an end to their human power. The satirical argument emphasizes that the fate of eminent men was by no means distinct or different from the fate of the common man, since no one can triumph over death.

The contrast between inside and outside is also important for the satirical plot. The dichotomies of inside and outside or open and closed were familiar from medieval narratives and from Guillaume's *Roman de la Rose*, for example, which amassed different words of entry and described the protagonist's desire to enter a closed space (such as a garden) as a symbol of his erotic or religious desire.<sup>43</sup> Such narratives were composed of acts of entering or being refused entry or being expelled; also conversations about the hero's request to enter were important textual elements (Vitz 1989). In the same way, in the satires discussed above the expectations of the protagonist are frustrated when he is left out and literally expelled from paradise instead of being allowed to enter into the realm of the sacred. The satirical characters can have an existence only outside heaven. The gate remains closed as a sign of simple negation and condemnation by the satirist.

The satires discussed above were rather unequivocal in their denunciation of their targets. They show a clear moral commitment rather than adopting a relativist attitude to moral or philosophical values, as did some Menippean satires in the Lucianic spirit (see Duncan 1979, 89). The allegorical representation is combined with serious moral overtones, whereby the profane dialogue ultimately becomes a detailed indictment of the protagonist's sins, faults and crimes. The questioning presented by St Peter reveals false gods, un-deifies the vicious protagonists and thus affirms moral justice at the point of death. Moral failings and cruelties on earth

41 See Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* (1.17.40): . . . *hae rursum rectis lineis in caelestem locum subvolent, sive ipsa natura superiora adpetente sive quod a gravioribus leviora natura repellantur.*

42 As Joel Relihan (1993, 83) has noted, the passivity of the main character is essential in Menippean narratives and is crucial to their action, as death propels the protagonist forward.

43 See Vitz (1989, Ch. 3), who also interprets this structure of desire through sexualized metaphors of attempted penetration.



were the main reasons for excluding formerly powerful men from heaven, since in the moralizing satirical poetics, virtue was needed to earn a place among the gods. In satires men are emphatically represented as deified *men*, whose earlier exceptional position was granted by humans. As Ittai Gradel has pointed out in his studies on heavenly honours, “humans can, according to Seneca, elevate a man to heaven; only the gods, however, decide if he will actually be admitted” (2002, 329). This notion nicely sums up one of the key arguments in religious satire, which underlines that human beings cannot decide about divinity.

## References

- Bakhtin, M. 1984. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Ed. and trans. C. Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bechtold, C. 2011. *Gott und Gestirn als Präsenzformen des toten Kaisers: Apotheose und Katasterismos in der politischen Kommunikation der römischen Kaiserzeit und ihre Anknüpfungspunkte im Hellenismus*. Göttingen: V&R unipress.
- Bickermann, E. 1978. “Die römische Kaiserapotheose.” In Antonie Wlosok (ed.) *Römischer Kaiserkult. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft*, 82-121. (Originally published in ARW 27 (1929), 1-31.)
- Bosworth, B. 1999. “Augustus, the Res Gestae and Hellenistic Theories of Apotheosis.” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 89, 1-18.
- Braund, S. M. & P. James 1998. “Quasi homo: Distortion and Contortion in Seneca's Apocolocyntosis.” *Arethusa* 31 (3), 285-311.
- Busse, M. J. 1662. *Apotheosis Imperatorum Romanorum descripta dissertatione historica*. Wittenberg.
- Casey, J. 2009. *After Lives. A Guide to Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cole, S. 2006. “Elite Scepticism in the Apocolocyntosis: Further Qualifications.” In K. Volk & G. D. Williams (eds) *Seeing Seneca Whole: Perspectives on Philosophy, Poetry and Politics*. Boston: Brill. 175-182.
- Colish, M. L. 1976. “Seneca's Apocolocyntosis as a Possible Source for Erasmus' Julius Exclusus.” *Renaissance Quarterly* 29 (3), 361-368.
- Davies, P. J. E. 2000. *Death and the Emperor. Roman Imperial Funerary Monuments from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- De Smet, I. A. R. 1996. *Menippean Satire and the Republic of Letters, 1581-1655*. Genève: Librairie Droz.
- Diels, H. 1922. “Himmel- und Höllenfahrten von Homer bis Dante.” *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum, Geschichte und deutsche Literatur* 49, 239-253.
- Dodds, G. D. 2009. *Exploiting Erasmus: The Erasmian Legacy and Religious Change in Early Modern England*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Dormeyer, D. 2004. “Die Apotheose in Seneca 'Apocolocyntosis' und die Himmelfahrt Lk 24,50-53; Apg 1,9-11.” In J. Mrázek & J. Roskovec (eds.) *Testimony and Interpretation: Early Christology in Its Judeo-Hellenistic Milieu. Studies in Honour of Petr Pokorný*. London: T & T Clark International. 125-142.
- Drozdek, A. 2011. *Athanasia. Afterlife in Greek Philosophy*. Spudasmata 137. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag.
- Duncan, D. 1979. *Ben Jonson and the Lucianic Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Erasmus of Rotterdam 1968 (1517). *The Julius exclusus of Erasmus*. Trans. P. Pascal. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Erasmus of Rotterdam 1968. *Ausgewählte Schriften*. Bd. 5. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Fabisch, P. 2008. *Julius exclusus e coelis: Motive und Tendenzen gallikanischer und bibelhumanistischer Papstkritik im Umfeld des Erasmus*. Münster: Aschendorff.
- Fallon, D. 2007. “That Angel Who Rides on the Whirlwind: William Blake's Oriental Apotheosis of William Pitt.” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 31 (2), 1-28.
- Feeney, D. C. 1991. *The Gods in Epic. Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fishwick, D. 2002. “The Deification of Claudius.” *Classical Quarterly* 52 (1), 341-349.
- Garasse, F. 1615. *Elixir Calvinisticum seu lapis philosophiae reformatae*. In Ponte Charentonio.
- Geldorp, H. C. 1643 (1559). *D. Ruardi Tappart, Enchusani, haereticae pravitatis primi & postremi per Belgium inquisitoris, Cancellarii Academiae Lovaniensis, Apotheosis*. Franeker.
- Gradel, I. 2002. *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Heinsius, D. 1617. *Virgula divina, sive apotheosis Lucretii Vespillonis*. Leiden.
- Heinsius, D. 1619. *De libello L. Annaei Senecae in Claudium, sive Claudii Apocolocyntosis, & praesertim de inscriptionis causa dissertatio*. In *Daniel Heinsii Orationum editio nova*. Amsterdam: Elsevier (1657). 526-545.
- Hope, V. M. 2009. *Roman Death. The Dying and the Dead in Ancient Rome*. London: Continuum.
- Jones, E. 1981. “Byron's Visions of Judgment.” *Modern Language Review* 76 (1), 1-19.
- Kahlos, M. 1998. *Saeculum Praetextati*. Helsinki. Diss.
- Kajanto, I. 1978. “The Hereafter in Ancient Christian Epigraphy and Poetry.” *Arctos* XII, 27-53.
- Kivistö, S. 2009. *Medical Analogy in Latin Satire*. Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Levene, D. S. 2012. “Defining the Divine in Rome.” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 142, 41-81.
- Lord Byron 2009. The Vision of Judgement. Ed. P. Cochran. <petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/the\_vision\_of\_judgement3.pdf> (visited 1 October 2014)
- McConica, J. K. 1974. “Erasmus and the 'Julius': A Humanist Reflects on the Church.” In C. Trinkaus & H. A. Oberman (eds) *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*. Leiden: Brill. 444-471.
- McIntyre, G. 2013. “Deification as Consolation: The Divine Children of the Roman Imperial Family.” *Historia* 62 (2), 222-240.
- Mosser, C. 2002. “The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification.” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55 (1), 36-57.
- Nauta, R. R. 1987. “Seneca's Apocolocyntosis as Saturnalian Literature.” *Mnemosyne* 40 (1-2), 69-96.
- Pandey, N. B. 2013. “Caesar's Comet, the Julian Star, and the Invention of Augustus.” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 143 (2), 405-449.
- Parsons, M. C. 1987. *The Departure of Jesus in Luke-Acts: The Ascension Narratives in Context*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 21. Sheffield: JSOT Press.

- Paschalis, M. 2009. "The Afterlife of Emperor Claudius in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*." *Numen* 56, 198-216.
- Price, S. 1987. "From Noble Funerals to Divine Cult: The Consecration of Roman Emperors." In D. Cannadine & S. Price (eds) *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 56-105.
- Radin, M. 1916. "Apotheosis." *The Classical Review* 30 (2), 44-46.
- Reeve, M. D. 1984. "Apotheosis . . . Per Saturam." *Classical philology* 79 (4), 305-307.
- Relihan, J. C. 1993. *Ancient Menippean Satire*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Riikonen, H. K. 1987. *Menippean Satire as a Literary Genre, with Special Reference to Seneca's Apocolocyntosis*. Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica.
- Sanders, G. 1991. *Lapides memores: païens et chrétiens face à la mort: le témoignage de l'épigraphie funéraire latine*. Ed. A. Donati et al. Faenza: Fratelli Lega Editori.
- Schöpflin, J. D. 1730. *Tractatus historicus de apotheosi, sive consecratione, imperatorum Romanorum*. Strasbourg.
- Seneca, L. Annaeus. 1999. *Apokolokyntosis*. Ed. G. Binder. Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler.
- Steadman, J. M. 1972. *Disembodied Laughter: Troilus and the Apotheosis Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Versnel, H. S. 1993. "Two Carnavalesque Princes: Augustus and Claudius and the Ambiguity of Saturnalian Imagery." In Siegmund Döpp (ed.) *Karnevaleske Phänomene in antiken und nachantiken Kulturen und Literaturen*. Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 99-122.
- Vitz, E. B. 1989. *Medieval Narratives and Modern Narratology: Subjects and Objects of Desire*. New York: New York University Press.
- Wilks, M. 1964. *The Problem of Sovereignty in the Later Middle Ages: The Papal Monarchy with Augustinus Triumphus and the Publicists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## List of Contributors

**William Van Andringa** is Professor of Roman Archaeology at the University of Lille 3 and currently a research fellow in Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies. His recent books include *Quotidien des dieux et des hommes: la vie religieuse dans les cités du Vésuve à l'époque romaine* (Rome, 2009) and *Pompéi: Mythologie et Histoire* (Paris 2013). He recently edited *La Fin des Dieux* (Paris 2014) and *La naissance des capitales de cités en Gaule Chevelue* (Paris 2015).

**Alan Cameron** is Charles Anthon Professor Emeritus of Latin at Columbia University. His previous works include *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Clarendon, 1970) and *The Greek Anthology: From Meleager to Planudes* (Clarendon, 1993) and *Greek Mythography in the Roman World* (Oxford University Press, 1993). He has recently published *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

**Tobias Georges** did his doctorate *Quam nos divinitatem nominare consuevimus: Die theologische Ethik Peter Abaelards* and his habilitation *Tertullians Apologeticum. Übersetzung und Kommentierung* in church history at the University of Halle. He was junior professor at the interdisciplinary Courant Research Centre EDRIS (Education and Religion from early imperial Roman times to the classical period of Islam), University of Göttingen in 2009-2015, and since 2015, he is Professor of the History of Christianity and its Interreligious Encounters at the University of Göttingen.

**Caroline Humfress** is Professor in Mediaeval History at University of St Andrews. She has published *Orthodoxy and the Courts in Late Antiquity* (2007) and *The Evolution of the Late Antique World* (with Peter Garnsey) (2001). She is currently finishing a monograph *Multi-legalism in Late Antiquity* for Oxford University Press.

**Janneke H. M. de Jong** is Assistant Professor in Ancient History at Radboud University Nijmegen. Her special field is Greek papyrology and her doctoral thesis is *Emperors in Egypt. The Representation and Perception of Roman Imperial Power in Greek Papyrus Texts from Egypt, AD 193-284* (2006).

**Maijastina Kahlos** is an historian and a classicist (University of Helsinki). She was a research fellow in Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies 2011-2014 and works currently as a research fellow in the Centre of Excellence 'Reason and Religious Recognition', funded by the Academy of Finland. She has published the monographs *Vettius Agorius Praetextatus: Senatorial Life in Between* (AIRF, 2002), *Debate and Dialogue: Christian and Pagan Cultures, c. 360-430* (Ashgate, 2007) and *Forbearance and Compulsion: Rhetoric of Tolerance and Intolerance in Late Antiquity* (Duckworth, 2009) and edited *The Faces of the other: Religious Rivalry and Ethnic Encounters in the Later Roman World* (Brepols, 2012).

**Mika Kajava** is Professor of Greek Language and Literature at the University of Helsinki. He was a research fellow in Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies 2001-2004. He has published widely on ancient epigraphy, religion and society, recently *Studies in ancient oracles and divination* (ed., AIRF, 2013).

**Sari Kivistö**, Docent of Comparative Literature (University of Helsinki) is Director of the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies. She has been a Collegium Fellow in Helsinki in 2004-2007 and 2007-2009, an Academy of Finland Research Fellow in 2009-2014 and Deputy Director of the Helsinki Collegium in 2010-2015. Kivistö's research interests include the history and theory of satire, Latin and Neo-Latin literature, and the classical traditions. Her previous research projects have focused, for example, on scholarly vices and conflicting disciplines in the early modern universities (*The Vices of Learning*, 2014, Brill) and on medical satires (*Medical Analogy in Latin Satire*, 2009, Palgrave Macmillan).

**Outi Lehtipuu** is a Senior Research Fellow at the Academy of Finland and Lecturer in New Testament and Greek at the University of Helsinki and in 2015-2016 a visiting scholar at Harvard Divinity School. Her most recent publications include *Debates over the Resurrection of the Dead: Constructing Early Christian Identity* (Oxford University Press, 2015) and *People under Power: Early Jewish and Christian Responses to the Roman Empire* (ed., Amsterdam University Press, 2015).

**Jussi Rantala** is a researcher at the University of Tampere. His research interests include questions related to identity, religion, and power in ancient Rome. His doctoral thesis is *Maintaining Loyalty, Declaring Continuity, Legitimizing Power. Ludi saeculares of Septimius Severus as a Manifestation of the Golden Age* (2013).

**Chiara O. Tommasi** teaches History of Religions at the University of Pisa. She has published extensively on fifth and sixth century Latin poetry and on 'esoteric' trends in Late Antiquity. Her most recent monograph *The Bee Orchid. Religione e Cultura in Marziano Capella* appeared 2012. She is currently working on a monograph about Lucan and religion, and on a commentary on Arnobius' *Against the Pagans*.