Living off the dead : the relationship between emperor cult and the cult of the saints in late antiquity

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LIVING OFF THE DEAD:
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPEROR CULT AND THE CULT OF THE SAINTS IN LATE ANTIQUITY

a thesis

By

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Throughout antiquity people were concerned with their relationship with the god or gods they put their faith in. Whether that higher power was *Jupiter Optimus Maximus* or Jesus Christ, people were legitimately worried about their standing with their respective God or gods. As a result, each society developed means of maintaining good relationships with their gods.

The religions of the Roman Empire and Christianity seemed to be polar opposites. During the period they were in co-existence, the proponents of each took it upon themselves to point out the differences between each religion. In reality, both Roman religion and Christianity shared many common threads, and many aspects of Christianity developed directly out of Roman religion.

So while on the surface, Christianity and Roman religion seemed entirely different, it is clear that Christianity drew on certain aspects of Roman religion when establishing major tenets of Christian beliefs. The following paper will argue that two seemingly unrelated aspects of Christianity and Roman religion, emperor cult and the cult of the saints, were in fact directly connected and that the cult of the saints drew directly from emperor cult.

Emperor cult developed in an effort to show reverence to deceased emperors and to establish a connection between living emperors and their deified predecessors. Emperor cult matured alongside a plethora of other cults, and consequently was integrated into the pantheon of official cults of

the Roman Empire. The cult of the saints also developed in an effort to display reverence to the deceased martyrs and holy persons of the Christian faith. The cult of the saints, however, played a more significant role in the development and establishment of the Christian religion than did emperor cult in the religion of Rome.

Both emperor cult and the cult of the saints were firmly established over the majority of civilized world. From the Christian west through Asia minor and the East, there are viable examples of both forms of cult and their involvement in society. However, the attitudes and roles of the cults of emperors and saints were drastically different in Asia minor and the East than they were in the West. For that reason, this paper will focus mainly on emperor cult and the cult of the saints in the West. In addition to focusing mainly on the West, this paper will be limited to a specific timeframe for each cult. The examples of emperor cult began with the apotheosis of Julius Caesar (c.a. 42 B.C.E.) and roughly ended with the rule of Constantine the Great (early 4th century C.E.). The timeframe involved in the study of the cult of the saints is not as specific, but roughly begins in the third-century C.E. and ends in the eighth-century C.E.

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You're Better off Dead

Both the cult of the Saints and Emperor Cult were focused around what scholars have termed the 'holy' or 'special dead.' While the living certainly were important to both cults, without a dead emperor or holy man there could be no deified emperor or saint to establish a cult to. Each form of cult had very different beginnings but was formed based on the same principal—the need of the living to somehow connect themselves with the sacrosanct individual[1] who provided a link between "heaven and earth."[2]

While the practice of Emperor Cult officially began with the apotheosis of Julius Caesar during the reign of Augustus, it drew on earlier examples of ruler apotheosis, going back to before the Roman Republic. The founder of Rome, Romulus, had been deified and worshipped "under the name Quirinus with rites that placed him not with the dead but with the gods."[3] In addition, in the East and in many of the provinces controlled by the Romans, ruler worship was commonplace.[4] With the founder of the city of Rome placed among the gods, there was ample precedent for emperor apotheosis prior to the fall of the Republic and the consequent deification of Julius Caesar.[5] As

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[1] Alan Thacker, *"Loca Sanctorum: The Significance of Place in the Study of the* Saints" in Alan Thacker & Richard Sharpe, eds., *Local Saints and Local Churches* (Oxford, 2002), 1.
[2] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Phoenix, 1982), 1.
[3] Lily Ross Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor* (Middletown, 1931), 45.
[4] S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge, 1984), 23-52. Also see Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1992), 142.
[5] There are also many cases of extraordinary men from the Republic who, while not officially worshiped as gods, were unofficially worshiped and sacrificed to after their deaths. Examples include, Scipio Africanus, the Gracchi brothers, and Lucius Cornelius Sulla. For more on the

Appian tells us "Octavian [Augustus]...decreed divine honors to his father [Caesar]. From this example the Romans now pay like honors to each emperor at his death if he has not reigned in a tyrannical manner or made himself odious, although at first they could not bear to call them kings even when alive."[6] Emperor cult continued to develop throughout the history of the empire and continued well into the period when Christianity became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire.

The cult of the Saints developed under much less auspicious conditions. Under the Roman prosecution of the Christian faith, the bodies of martyrs, holy men and other religious persons became sacred relics and the deceased were raised to the level saints.[7] The cults that sprang up around the saints provided a much needed connection for Christians between the living and those in heaven, as well as a tangible example of the rewards of extreme piety in the Christian faith, even under persecution.[8] After Christianity became the dominant faith in the West, the cults of the saints still fulfilled a vital role in the spread of Christianity by providing a means of centralizing holy authority and examples of extreme Christian piety to be highly praised by all good Christians.[9]

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elevated status of these men after their death see Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor* (Middletown, 1931), 54-57.

[6] Appian. *BC* 2. 148

[7] James Howard-Johnston & Paul Antony Hayward, eds., *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1999), 5.

[8] Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 3.

[9] Peter Brown, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianization of the Roman World* (Cambridge, England, 1995), 58.

With a short background of the respective histories of both emperor cult and the cult of the Saints, we must ask the question: who became saints and deified emperors? While this may seem straightforward in the case of emperors, it was in fact rather confusing in that not all emperors were deified, and there were a number of factors that determined an emperors' eligibility for the Imperial cult. In the case of Christianity, almost any Christian had the potential to become a saint; it was taken for granted that "all Christians were potentially 'holy'."[10] However, attaining sainthood was not as clear cut as leading a pious and holy existence, there were many factors, both religious, and political that determined a holy persons 'eligibility' for sainthood.

In order for a man to become a deified emperor, he first must have been an emperor.[11] This limited the number of men eligible for cult status, in addition to the number of other requirements, chief among which was having ruled justly and fairly. If an emperor ruled poorly or was an unusually brutal ruler, as was the case with emperors Tiberius and Caligula, they were not considered for deification by the Senate or their successors. In fact, if an emperor was particularly disliked by the people and his successor, instead of apotheosis they were subjected to *damnatio memoriae*, with their name removed from public monuments and erased from the public calendar of

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[10] Peter Brown, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianization of the Roman World*, 58.
[11] Members of the royal family were also eligible for apotheosis, although this will be discussed in detail later in the paper.

events.[12] Many emperors were not in power long enough to make an impression, and consequently were never considered for deification (as was the case with many of the soldier emperors in the mid 3rd century C.E.).[13] So while not every emperor was deified, most emperors would at least be eligible for some form of emperor cult providing they had met the above mentioned requirements, although, as we shall see many never were deified despite their qualifications.

Provided that an emperor had ruled well, there were usually a number of biographies written concerning his rule and accomplishments. These writings were quite useful when establishing a cult to an emperor and were used as a promotional tool. Once deified it was important to establish a cult to the deified emperor as a means of providing a central location for worship of the emperor. The cult would usually have its own temple and priesthood devoted to remembering and honoring their particular emperor. There are exceptions where multiple deified emperors were worshiped in the same temple (the deified Julius Caesar and the deified Augustus for example), but it was usually done deliberately to establish a connection between the two deified emperors. Most importantly (at least in practicality), an emperor could not be deified with out the help of the living. Apotheosis required a living emperor and the senate to embrace the apotheosis of the deceased

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[12] Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 236.
[13] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 287. This is not to say that the process of apotheosis was not abused by the emperors of Rome. There are many instances of distant cousins, nieces, nephews, or adopted parents being deified as part of the royal cult. However, in most cases they were not worshiped in the same manner as deified emperors themselves.

emperor and to create and maintain the cult of a deified emperor. In fact, the living had the most to gain from the deification of an emperor.

The majority of persons who became saints were "either a martyr who died for his or her faith, or a holy man or woman singled out for posthumous commemoration and veneration, or someone with more dubious credentials."[14] In the early days of Christianity, Peter Brown's assertion that all Christians were potentially "holy" held true, with truly pious Christians being raised to the status of saints regardless of their social backgrounds.[15] There were, however, a few 'requirements' for eligibility for sainthood. First, it was necessary for the venerable qualities of a potential saint to be known to a large number of people. The potential saint also needed to be viewed as 'more holy' by their religious peers.[16] This piety could entail a superior religiosity or a reputation for notable feats, especially miracles. These miracles ranged from curing a cripple[17] to bringing the dead back to life.[18]

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[14] Johnston & Hayward, eds., *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 5.

[15] Alan Thacker, *"Loca Sanctorum: The Significance of Place in the Study of the* Saints" in Alan Thacker & Richard Sharpe, eds., *Local Saints and Local Churches*, 2. For an in depth evaluation of the early holy men of Christianity see Peter Brown's *The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity* (The Journal of Roman Studies, Vol. 61, 1971), p. 80-101.

[16] Howard-Johnston, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, 6.*

[17] Acts 3.1-10 Once, when Peter and John were going up to the Temple for the prayers at the ninth hour, it happened that there was a man being carried along. He was a cripple from birth; and they used to put him down every day near the Temple entrance called the Beautiful Gate so that he could beg from the people going in. When this man saw Peter and John on their way into the Temple he begged from them. Peter, and John too, looked straight at him and said, 'Look at us" He turned to them expectantly, hoping to get something from them, but Peter said, 'I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!' Then he took him by the right hand and helped him to stand up. Instantly his feet and ankles became firm, he jumped up, stood, and began to walk, and he went with them into the Temple, walking and jumping and praising God. Everyone could see him walking and praising God, and they recognized him as the man who used to sit begging at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple.

Another essential requirement for eligibility for sainthood was the establishment of a cult, centered around the tomb of the deceased holy person (a plethora of holy relics also helped in the establishment and promotion of a saint's cult).[19] Most important for the establishment and promotion of the cult of a saint was "the composition of a written record of his or her life and deeds, which might then propagate and perpetuate his or her reputation."[20] The importance of Hagiography to the cult of saints was perhaps immeasurable, but will be discussed in greater detail later in the paper.

As we shall see, after Christianity became the dominant religion in the Roman west, the 'qualifications' for those who became saints changed. "Certain powerful figures, usually churchman, who were deeply implicated in the sometimes murky politics of their times, might be invested after their deaths with sanctity by their partisans."[21] Bishops and other high ranking church officials came to dominate the ranks of those chosen to be saints due to their political connections and not necessarily their sanctity.

As mentioned above, the role of each cult in their respective societies was similar; each cult provided a much needed connection between the 'divine' and those bound to the earth. According to Alan Thacker, "Christians developed an extraordinary need to identify with a particular

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[18] Acts 9.36-43

[19] Paul Anthony Hayward, "Demystifying the role of sanctity in Western Christendom," in J. Howard-Johnston and P. A. Howard (eds.), *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown* (Oxford, 1999"), 115.

[20] Howard-Johnston, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 6.

[21] James Howard-Johnston, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown*, 6.

spiritual patron, active among them in a special way and potent in intervening with their God on their behalf."[22] The same was true for Romans participating in the Imperial cult. The Imperial cult did not have the same authority and importance in Roman society that the cult of the saints had in Christian society. This was simply because there were a plethora of other gods and cults that Romans could ask for help. Christians, on the other hand, were left with their only real option being the cult of the saints if they wished for a holy intervention on their behalf.

The tradition of appealing to the gods for relief from earthly woes was firmly entrenched in Roman religion. This was also one of many religious traditions that were carried over from the 'pagan' religions of Rome to the traditions of Christianity that shows itself in both emperor cult and the cult of the saints.

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[22] Alan Thacker, *"Loca Sanctorum: The Significance of Place in the Study of the* Saints" in Alan Thacker & Richard Sharpe, eds., *Local Saints and Local Churches*, 1.

Location! Location! Location!

The golden rule of Real Estate has held true throughout the centuries. Location was just as important during the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity as it is today. The concept of 'place' was extremely important to both emperor cult and the cult of the saints. Each cult needed its own centralized location that provided a focal point for worship, temples and churches, a place for pilgrimages, and also a centralized point of the deified individuals power.

In the case of cults of the saints, place was of the utmost importance for the spread and success of both cults and Christianity in general.[23] Places of Christian worship were largely focused in specific areas, centered on holy shrines or churches containing the remains or relics of saints. As Roman law dictated that all bodies be removed outside of a city's walls, the majority of Christian centers of worship were located just outside of a cities walls,[24] Rome being the prime example.[25] These places became the centers of individual saint's cults.[26]

Each saint had their own central shrine usually containing bodily remains and other relics where their cult was centered. A centralized location provided a place for worshipers to make pilgrimages in order to feel closer to

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[23] Alan Thacker, *"Loca Sanctorum: The Significance of Place in the Study of the* Saints" in Alan Thacker & Richard Sharpe, eds., *Local Saints and Local Churches*, 2

[24] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 3.

[25] Alan Thacker, *"Loca Sanctorum: The Significance of Place in the Study of the* Saints" in Alan Thacker & Richard Sharpe, eds., *Local Saints and Local Churches*, 3.

[26] Alan Thacker, *"Loca Sanctorum: The Significance of Place in the Study of the* Saints" in Alan Thacker & Richard Sharpe, eds., *Local Saints and Local Churches*, 9.

that saint and through that saint, God.[27] These cult shrines were viewed as the nexus of an individual saint's *virtus* and 'power' on earth.[28] In fact, saints were thought to be present at their tombs: "Here lies Martin the bishop, of holy memory, whose soul is in the hand of God; but he is fully here, present and made plain in miracles of every kind."[29] It was at these centralized locations that the relationship between patron and saint developed to full form.

According to Peter Brown, "the Church was an artificial kin group."[30] This kin group was based on a family structure with the patrons of the church and even church officials themselves being seen as the 'children' of both God, and, more importantly, the saints.[31] In these centralized locations were the remains of these 'holy fathers' who were certainly more pious and holy than the average Christian, which resulted in their deification. The saints were among God's chosen servants, but they had at one time been human, and lived among their Christian brethren. These holy Christians were thought to be "simultaneously present in heaven in spirit, and on earth in their physical remains" and "they could act as channels of communication between the two realms."[32] This allowed them to still be approachable to the

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[27] Paul Antony Hayward, "*Demystifying the Role of Sanctity in Western Christendom*" in Johnston & Hayward, eds., *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 116.
[28] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 3.
[29] E. Le Blant, *Les Inscriptions Chrétiennes de la Gaule* (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1856), 1:240.
[30] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 31.
[31] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 38.
[32] John Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300-1200* (Oxford, 2000), 1.

rest of humanity as a "protector with whom one could identify as a fellow human being, relations with whom could be conceived of in terms open to the nuances of know human relations between patron and client..."[33]

The saints filled a paternal role for their followers by providing a familiar patron/client relationship.[34] Location was extremely important in fostering these relationships. Just as the shrines and churches to the saints provide a centralized location for worship where the saints *vertus* was at its greatest, so too did the 'pagan' temples dedicated to the deified Roman emperors.

Temples were extremely important to the cults of deified emperors. Just as the temple of *Jupiter Optimus Maximus* was the central place of worship for Jupiter, so too was the temple of *Divus Julius Caesar*.[35] As there were no dead bodies involved, most Roman temples were built within the city walls, usually in the cities' forum. The temples to *Divus Julius Caesar* and the other deified emperors were no exception. The temples of deified emperors in the city of Rome itself were of more significance than those scattered throughout the empire.

While Rome was without a doubt the center of emperor cult in the Empire,[36] there were numerous other temples and shrines dedicated to

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[33] Paul Antony Hayward, "*Demystifying the Role of Sanctity in Western Christendom*" in Johnston & Hayward, eds., *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 116-117.
[34] Peter Brown, *Authority and the Sacred*, 73.
[35] Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, 54.
[36] Ducan Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West: Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire* Vol. II, I (Leiden, The Netherlands, 1991), 483.

emperor worship throughout the Empire.[37] The main temples were, however, the places where a deified emperor's priesthood was most significant, the celebrations in his name and of his accomplishments were the most lavish, and were thought to be the favored temples of the deified emperor.

The ruling Roman emperor was thought to be the *pater patriae* of the Roman Empire and its citizens,[38] just as a deified emperor was seen in a paternal manner as a divine protector of the Roman people and Empire. "May that day be long distant and alter than our own age, when, leaving the earth which he rules, Augustus our head attains heaven, and listens to our prayers though absent."[39] As we have pointed out, deified emperors differed from saints in their paternal duties simply because there were countless more divinities in the Roman pantheon that could be solicited for divine aid, whereas Christian options for divine patrons were rather limited. There can be little doubt, however, that the paternal role of the saint in Christianity was certainly linked to 'pagan' rites of the Roman Empire and was based on the paternal relationships between pagan gods and their followers. Indeed it seems only logical that the paternal role of saints would be based, at least partly, on the paternal role of deified emperors, especially considering the deified Christian emperors during the transition from 'paganism' to Christianity.

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[37] Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, Vol. II, I, 522.
[38] Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 67. Also see Sabine G. MacCormack, *Art and Cermony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1981), 170.
[39] Ovid, Metamorphoses, 15, 868-870.

We have determined that both emperor cult and the cult of the saints had centralized places of worship, where the *auctoritas* and *virtus* of the deified individual were at their greatest. A centralized sanctified location was not enough, however, to promote either a single emperor or saint cult. Logically there were a number of other factors that contributed to the success and growth of a cult's status and following.

Chief among these factors was the written word. A deified emperor could only be as successful as his living accomplishments allowed him to be. Consequently many emperors had records of their lives written; the first was Augustus. The many writings concerning Augustus' life and deeds were rather inaccurate, but were quite useful as political tools to promote the cult of the *Divus Augustus*.[40] Perhaps the most recognizable life of Augustus was written by Suetonius, titled *Divus Augustus*. Suetonius writes that Augustus was descended from the god Apollo and based his birth and adolescence on the early life of Alexander the Great.[41] Stories of Augustus' virtue and piety lent to his renown as a ruler and the majesty of his ruler cult.[42] The stories concerning Augustus' birth and life served as prototypes for future emperors' lives which would be embellished to further promote their own divine cults and successors. These writings, though clearly not based around facts, served

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[40] Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 236-237.
[41] Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 233. Also see Simon Price, *"From Noble Funerals to Divine Cult: The Consecration of Roman Emperors"* in Simon Price & David Cannadine, eds., *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1992), 81.
[42] Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 158.

as political propaganda for the active promotion and spread of all emperor cults throughout the Empire.

The most important tool for establishing and promoting the cult of a saint was "the composition of a written record of his or her life and deeds, which might then propagate and perpetuate his or her reputation."[43] The writing of saints' lives, known as hagiography, filled a similar role as the biographies of deified emperors, though hagiography was even more influential on the development and success of the cults of the saints. Every major and many minor saints' lives were chronicled by admiring bishops or others wishing to promote a saint's cult.[44] These biographies helped spread the word of a saint's life, teachings, sufferings, miracles, and most importantly, helped promote the cult site with which a saint was associated. However, the recordings of the saints' lives were not based on facts. Though there might be small truthful details in the writings, they were largely fictional accounts used to highlight the ideal traits and lifestyle of a holy person.[45] Just as Suetonius' *Divus Augustus* was used as a blueprint for the writing of futures emperors' lives, Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* was a blueprint for all the future writings on saints' lives.[46] The early Christian lives were usually represented as entirely accurate accounts of events of a

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[43] Howard-Johnston & Hayward, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 6.
[44] Noble & Head eds., *Soldiers of Christ*, xxvi.
[45] Averil Cameron, *"On Defining the Holy Man"* in Howard-Johnston & Hayward, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 39.
[46] Averil Cameron, *"On Defining the Holy Man"* in Howard-Johnston & Hayward, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 38.

holy person's life; in reality they were largely propaganda and were "written as ideals of a Christian life" and were "used to establish a repertoire of positive role models...."[47]

Beyond establishing positive role models for the Christian community at large, many saints' lives had an entirely more selfish purpose. Many lives were often commissioned by bishops or other church officials wishing to promote their own particular saint and gain recognition for the relics and remains that they possessed, consequently garnering the bishops more political and religious authority.[48] The hagiographies of saints' lives, while usually fictitious, were useful tools for living Christians, particularly clergymen. These stories provided examples of the kinds of miracles required for eligibility for sainthood, in addition to the different kinds of relics that were available and the powers they possessed. Bishops found the writings of saints' lives particularly useful, though we will discuss the potential for political, fiscal, and personal gain associated with the cult of the saints later. Writings of saints' lives also outlined the proper manner in which to honor saints and their remains, as well as recording numerous minute details concerning saint cult and its ceremony that would otherwise be lost.

As we have already discussed, place was extremely important to both emperor cult and the cult of the saints. In addition to place, the physical

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[47] Paul Antony Hayward, "*Demystifying the Role of Sanctity in Western Christendom*" in Howard-Johnston & Hayward, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 119.
[48] Paul Antony Hayward, "*Demystifying the Role of Sanctity in Western Christendom*" in Howard-Johnston & Hayward, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 124.

structures themselves, including temples, shrines and places of worship that sprouted in these holy places were also important to the founding and growth of any new cult. Before we can discuss temples and shrines, however, it is necessary to examine the ceremonies surrounding apotheosis and sainthood, as well as the ceremonies dedicated to the founding of these holy structures.

Once it was established that an emperor or holy person was a qualified candidate for cult status, there was a significant amount of effort needed to establish, promote and maintain an individual cult for either an emperor or a saint. In the case of both emperor cult and the cult of saints, there was a set "formula" or pattern involved in the establishment and promotion of each cult.

Having determined who was eligible for apotheosis for emperor cult, it is necessary to examine what happened once an emperor was deemed worthy of cult status. We have literary examples of the ceremony of deifying an emperor, the most complete being the apotheosis of *Divus Julius Caesar* and *Divus Augustus*. In addition, in the case of emperor cult, Augustus actually laid out a formula for apotheosis of future emperors.

While Julius Caesar was the first deified emperor,[49] the real tradition of apotheosis and emperor cult began with Augustus, Caesar's heir. In the case of Julius Caesar, the beginning of a 'formula' for deification was evident, but

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[49] Simon Price, "From Noble Funerals to Divine Cult: the Consecration of Roman Emperors," in D. Cannadine and S. Price (eds.), *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies,"* (Cambridge, 1992), 71.

Augustus played a major role in the establishment and promotion of the cult of *Divus Julius Caesar*, and the consequent formula for apotheosis.

The first step toward apotheosis and the establishment of a cult was endorsement by the Senate. Without the approval of the Senate an emperor could not become a member of the imperial cult.[50] After the Senate approved the deification of an emperor, the next step in his formulaic apotheosis was ascension to the heavens, which usually occurred after the funeral. The funeral itself also had a set formula, based largely on the instructions laid down by Augustus, which were followed for Augustus' own funeral, fully described by Dio:

> Then came his funeral. There was a couch made of ivory and gold and adorned with coverings of purple and gold [the same had occurred at Julius Caesar's funeral[51]]. In it his body was hidden in a coffin down below; but a wax image of him in triumphal garb was visible. This image was borne from the palace by the officials elected for the following year, and another of gold from the senate-house, and still another upon a triumphal chariot. Behind these came the images of his ancestors and his deceased relatives (except that of Caesar because he had been numbered among the demigods.) and those of other Romans who had been prominent in any way, beginning with Romulus himself." After a funeral oration read by Tiberius "The same men as before took up the couch and carried it through the triumphal gateway, according to a decree of the senate...When the body had been placed on the pyre in the Campus Martius...the centurions took torches conformably to a decree from the senate, and lighted the pyre from beneath. So it was consumed, and an eagle released from it flew aloft, appearing to bear his spirit to heaven. When these ceremonies had been performed, all the other people departed; but Livia remained on the spot for five days in company with the most prominent knights, and then gathered up his bones and placed them in his tomb.[52]

With the funeral over, an ex-praetor claimed to have witnessed the spirit of Augustus ascending to heaven. There is obviously a precedent here based on the examples of witnesses swearing that they saw the spirits of both Romulus

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[50] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 321
[51] Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 80.
[52] Dio 56.34 and 42, tr. E. Cary.

and Julius Caesar ascend to heaven. However, the image of the eagle bearing Augustus' spirit to heaven is significant and would become an important symbol of emperor cult. There are also instances of "miracles" occurring during or after the funerals of certain emperors, and these "miracles" would certainly have enhanced the august status of a recently deified emperor and re-enforced interest in that particular emperor's cult.[53]

With an emperor's soul placed safely among the gods by means of the wings of an eagle and his apotheosis complete, the next step was the physical establishment of the cult of a deified emperor. This was accomplished by creating temples and shrines dedicated to the deified emperor, and associating certain images with the cult of deified emperors. Again, Augustus established the model for temples and shrines dedicated to the deified emperor *Divus Julius Caesar*.

Deified emperors were officially part of the state religion of Rome. Newly deified emperors were incorporated into the state religion in three ways: they received a new name, a state dedicated temple, and a priestly college was established for the worship of the deified emperor.[54] The new name left no doubt that the deified emperor had become a state god and was not simply a "mortal" residing among the gods. In the case of Augustus, for example, he received the name *Divus* Augustus, which was meant to clearly separate the deified Augustus from the memories of the mortal Augustus.

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[53] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 322.
[54] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 274.

Every emperor chosen for apotheosis received the new title of *divus*, and the designation played a major role in the establishment of emperor cult.[55]

The dedication of temples to deified emperors also helped establish an emperor's cult in multiple ways. A temple was a physical memorial, plainly in view to remind the public of the deeds and achievements of a particular emperor. In addition, a temple provided a physical location to involve the deified emperor in public religious festivities. Temples also provided a place to promote the imagery associated with emperor cult including statues and images of the deified emperors. The most recognizable image of Roman emperor cult was the eagle, and was commonly found in deified emperors' temples.[56] Just as the image of a cross or a crown of thorns instantly brought to mind thoughts of Jesus Christ and the martyrs for Christians, the image of the eagle reminded Romans of the cult of deified emperors.

Lastly, by creating a priesthood, the Senate and living emperor insured that the deified emperor would be remembered by the public, priests, Senate and people of Rome.[57] Every temple dedicated to a deified emperor required priests to maintain the temple and the cult and nearly every major city in the Empire (both east and west) had temples established to the cults of many emperors.[58] In addition to the plethora of public temples, there is evidence of

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[55] Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 241.
[56] Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 165.
[57] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 274.
[58] S. R. F. Price, *The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge, 1984), 58.

a significant private cult to the emperor, including offerings and rituals to the deified emperor made in the homes of private citizens.[59]

Temples and priests were important in promoting and maintaining emperor cults, for the cults of saints, temples and priests were invaluable. Once a holy person was deemed pious enough for sainthood, the next step was to develop a physical location for their particular cult. As mentioned above, the location of a cult usually centered around the place of the death of a saint or the resting place of their remains.

The death of a 'holy man' destined for sainthood was a joyous occasion and as we shall see, many lives and deaths were well documented in the form of hagiographies. In the *Life of Saint Anthony*, Athanasius portrays St. Anthony on his deathbed and outlines his final thoughts on how to be a good Christian,[60] but more importantly, Athanasius describes the fate of Saint Anthony's body and possessions. According to Athanasius, St. Anthony said to his aids: "divide my garments. To Athanasius the bishop give one sheepskin and the garment whereon I am laid...To Serapion the Bishop give the other sheepskin, and keep the hair garment yourselves."[61] St. Anthony left his few worldly possessions and these instantly became holy relics capable of capturing and transmitting St. Anthony's holy spirit here on earth.[62] The example of St. Anthony's possessions being distributed as relics

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[59] Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 151.
[60] Athanasius *Life of Saint Anthony*, 91.
[61] Athanasius *Life of Saint Anthony*, 91.
[62] Athanasius *Life of Saint Anthony*, 92.

is a rather tame example of the fate of saints' possessions after their deaths.

In Constantius of Lyon's *The Life of Saint Germanus of Auxerre*, a more typical description of the divvying of a saint's possessions is offered.

> Then came the division of what he had left behind him. The empire and the church each claimed a share; and over his scanty possessions there arose a dispute such as we associate with great riches—there was so little for them to seize, poor heirs of a mere benediction! The empress took the reliquary; Bishop Peter annexed the cloak with the hair-shirt inside it. The six prelates, to make sure of having something associated with the saint, were glad to tear to pieces what remained. One had his pallium, the second his girdle, two divided his tunic, and two his soldier's cape.[63]

The motivation and eagerness displayed in retaining possession of Saint Germanus' belongings was derived from various individual's desires to possess an item that contained the aura of the saint. The desire to obtain saints' possessions was all part of the establishment of saint's cults. A saint's possessions were thought to be endowed with special cult status and regarded as holy relics. The most holy of relics, however, were the actual saints' bodies, bones and/or graves.

St. Germanus' life also provides examples of the power that saints' graves, bodies and bones were thought to possess. It was the bodily remains that had shrines and churches built over them. As Rome was the center of the persecutions of the Christian martyrs, there were innumerable bodily remains and consequently Rome was the center of many of the most 'prestigious' cults of Saints, including S.S. Peter and Paul.[64]

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[63] Noble & Head eds., *Soldiers of Christ*, 104-5.

[64] Alan Thacker, *"Loca Sanctorum: The Significance of Place in the Study of the* Saints" in Alan Thacker & Richard Sharpe, eds., *Local Saints and Local Churches*, 3.

While Rome was the center of the most prestigious saints' cults, lesser known provinces were not left without prestigious cults of saints, St. Germanus being the perfect example. It was St. Germanus' desire to have his body buried in his home province of Gaul and Constantius of Lyon ends his narration of St. Germanus' life with the assurance to his readers that St. Germanus' body was returned to its proper final resting place. Furthermore, he assures his readers that Germanus' body continues to perform miracles everyday. "Such were the services of love with which he was brought back to his own see, where his body is buried but he himself lives on in his daily miracles and his glory."[65] Now that we have properly discussed the process by which both emperor cult and the cult of the saints were established, it is necessary to examine the physical structures that both cults were set in.

The physical dedication of a temple to a deified emperor was perhaps the most important aspect of maintaining emperor cult and assuring that a particular *divus* did not pass into oblivion.[66] Without a physical temple, the cult of a deified emperor could simply pass into the void, whereas a physical temple would have to be torn down or rededicated for the cult of an emperor to be forgotten. In Rome, temples dedicated to deified emperors were built in prestigious locations, either the Forum Romanum, or the Campus Martius, near the physical remains of Augustus and other *divi* and their family

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[65] Noble & Head eds., *Soldiers of Christ*, 106. cf. Constantius of Lyon, *The Life of Saint Germanus of Auxerre*, 46.
[66] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 345.

members.[67] The temples being located in prominent locations assured that the cults would not be forgotten, nor neglected, and that the deified emperors would be continually worshiped and celebrated.[68] The temples of the *divi* were built in the same manner as other Roman gods' temples, and in general did not deviate from the standard design, though the temple of *Divus Julius Caesar* did have a funerary altar of the pyre, though this was the exception, and not the rule.[69] These temples would serve as the places where celebrations of the *divi* as well as sacrifices to the *divi* took place. Celebrations could range from birthday celebrations to funeral celebrations, and even celebrations of military or political accomplishments.[70]

Beyond the state sponsored emperor cults there were significant private cults and worship paid to the *divi* throughout the empire. In addition to the priests of each individual *divi*, beginning with the apotheosis of Augustus, the senate also created a sacred college of the noblest senators, the *sodales Augustales*.[71] These priests devoted themselves to the worship of Augustus and those related to the Julii. Similar priestly colleges were created to oversee the worship of other families of the *divi* as well.

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[67] Simon Price, "From Noble Funerals to Divine Cult: the Consecration of Roman Emperors," in D. Cannadine and S. Price eds., *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies,*" (Cambridge, 1992), 68, 78.
[68] S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial cult in Asia Minor*, 61.
[69] S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial cult in Asia Minor*, 78.
[70] Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, Vol. II, I, 483, 487-88. These celebrations of *divi's* birthdays continued well into the 5th century A.D. and included the celebrations of 'Christian' emperors Constantius II, Theodosius II, and Valentinian III.
[71] Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 230.

The structures built to facilitate worship of saints and their cults did follow the layouts of traditional churches and other Christian structures. However, the structures designed specifically around cults of saints did develop their own distinct adaptations to better highlight the saints' relics they possessed. Just as we have demonstrated above that celebrations of birthdays and deaths of *divi* took place at their temples, so too did celebrations of birthdays and deaths of saints take place at their shrines.[72] In the tomb of St. Peter, for example, a *tropaion* was built over the apostles grave as a means of celebrating his accomplishments as a Christian.[73] Each saints' shrine or church usually possessed an altar that sheltered the bodily remains or relics of a saint, which was used to celebrate the Eucharist.[74]

Just as it was an honor for emperors to be buried near the remains of Augustus and his family, or have a temple erected near them in the Campus Martius, so to was it an honor to be buried *ad sanctum*, or next to a saint. There are numerous examples of bodies being excavated near the bodies of saints, who most likely wished to be closer to the saint in the hopes of benefiting from their sanctity.[75] Maximus of Turin wrote "It was provided by our ancestors that we should join our bodies to the bones of the saints for inasmuch as the underworld feared them punishment would not touch us...Sleeping with the holy martyrs, we have escaped the shadows of hell—if

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[72] Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300-1200*, 10.
[73] Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300-1200*, 11.
[74] Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300-1200*, 12.
[75] Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300-1200*, 14.

not by our own merits at least as shares in holiness."[76] Consequently, shrines of saints were built to accommodate the aforementioned needs of their living patrons.

These accommodations and how they developed are clearly evident from the excavations and remains of the numerous shrines of cults of the saints. Christians began to construct, or even relocate Churches over the graves of the saints, and as we have already mentioned, ideally the principal altar was located over the grave, usually aligned in an east-west orientation. This, in turn, lead to the building of tomb or relic chambers beneath the altar, allowing patrons to get even closer to the saint's remains.[77] As these shrines needed to be built over graves, it lead to the building of churches in or next to graveyards, located outside the centers of cities where these shrines were the only 'attraction' in the area. This resulted in a change of location for primary religious centers, from 'pagan' temples located in the center of cities and in very public places to churches located in decentralized areas outside of cities.

Consequently, around these church shrines sprang up new centers of focus dedicated to the worship of cults of saints. In addition to relic chambers there is evidence that relic shafts were installed to allow better access to the contents of the grave. These relic shafts are similar to and possibly developed from the libation holes found in Roman coffins, which "allowed relations of

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[76] Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300-1200*, 14 Cf. the epitaph of Ursinainus, *Katalog der frühchristlichen Inschriften in Trier* (Berlin, 1958), item 466.
[77] Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300-1200*, 40.

the deceased to pour offerings into the sarcophagus at the annual celebration

known as the *refrigerium*…The purpose was to create a channel of contact

with the dead person."[78] These relic shafts, while possibly stemming from

'pagan' sarcophagi, were far more useful for Christian worshipers. They

allowed objects to be lowered down the shaft and come in contact with a

saint's remains, which conveniently allowed worshipers to create secondary

relics through contact with the remains.[79] Though all these measures seemed

to allow better access to worshipers and give better access to the saint's

remains and through those remains his or her 'holiness'; there was one major

convenient result: it gave more power and control to the bishops or monks in

possession of saints' remains and shrines.

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[78] Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300-1200*, 64.
[79] Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300-1200*, 64.

Hit the Road Jack: the Cults Go Mobile

As we have already established that a sense of place was paramount to the success of emperor cult and the cult of the saints, the question begs to be asked: "How did both emperor cult and the cult of the saints spread if they were tied to one location?" The answer lies in many aspects of each cult that we have already mentioned, including relics, histories of emperors' lives, and of course hagiography. The holy dead needed to have the ability to utilize their *virtus* and influence among the heavens at any given time or place, and not just be limited to a certain day of festivities or a certain place where their remains laid.

As in the examples of the lives of SS. Anthony and Germanus of Auxerre, the worldly possessions of saints were in high demand, largely because of the essence of the saint that was thought to exist in their possessions and especially their remains. "Possessions of the saint, such as clothing or crosses, or tokens that had touched the saint's corpse, such as bits of cloth or vials of water—also assumed the status of relics."[80] However, how much of the saint or their possessions needed to be in residence for the saint's presence and spiritual authority to be effective? As we shall see, something as bizarre as relics of 'Our Lady's Milk' at Wisborough Green, Sussex,[81] or even rather minute 'contact relics' (items that did not belong to the saints, but that had come in contact with a saint's remains or possessions) could be used to

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[80] Noble & Head eds., *Soldiers of Christ*, xvii.
[81] Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300-1200*, 6.

spread the word and increase the popularity of a saint.[82] Contact or secondary relics "offered a means of resolving the dilemma inherent in the necessity for the saint to be at once a strongly and corporeally localized presence and a universally accessible patron to the widely dispersed clientage who might invoke him in prayer."[83]

Indeed as Paulinus of Nola attests, "Although...all the saints are present throughout the world...the grace which flows from an interred saint is not confined to where his whole body lies. Wherever there is part of the blessed body...in even the least dust of the saints, great power proclaims the potency of the apostolic remains."[84] So if even the dust from a saint possessed enough *praesentia* of the saint to channel miracles,[85] then logically so too would any objects that came in contact with the remains of a saint. As we have seen with the relic chambers and shafts that proliferated saints' shrines, there were ample opportunities for the creation of secondary or contact relics. These secondary relics could include cloth, oil, or any object that had come in contact with a saint. There are other secondary relics that were obtained in a more fantastic manner than simply lowering them down a relic shaft. Gregory of Tours tells of a story concerning the moving of the bodies of SS. Gervasius and Protasius. After their bodies had been moved into the church a board fell upon them while mass was being celebrated, drawing blood from

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[82] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 88.
[83] Alan Thacker, *"Loca Sanctorum: The Significance of Place in the Study of the* Saints" in Alan Thacker & Richard Sharpe, eds., *Local Saints and Local Churches*, 6.
[84] Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen* 27.440-8.
[85] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 88.

the corpses, which was quickly soaked up using cloths, robes, and even church curtains, consequently creating a plethora of relics.[86]

As we have discussed, the major demand for relics came from churches and clergy members. While these relics were desirable for their holiness and the spiritual aspect of feeling closer or connected to a saint, they also served a few practical aspects. Relics were almost a necessity for the building of a new church, or even for celebrations of major church anniversaries or events as a means of legitimizing the proceedings. Relics served as instant authority for bishops or clergymen who might not have been able to demonstrate their 'holiness' in a spectacular or miraculous manner. While some bishops possessed enough asceticism to garner respect from their communities, others need the divine aid of relics to maintain control over their religious community. Relics served as a shortcut to holiness and controlling a holy relic resulted in miracles and an instant connection to a saint and through the saint, God.[87]

As relics were in high demand simply for the perceived sense of divine approval that they brought with them, obtaining relics through almost any means necessary became a priority for many clergymen. Conversely, the clergy who controlled the bulk of saints' relics aimed to control relics and the relic 'trade' that developed. These clergymen could show their goodwill to their fellow clergymen by sharing relics with certain other churches or

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[86] Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, c. 46.
[87] Paul Antony Hayward, "*Demystifying the Role of Sanctity in Western Christendom*" in Howard-Johnston & Hayward, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 126.

bishops. "The passing of relics from one community to another, or their discovery, heightened the special status of the members of the Christian elite by making them privileged agents, personally involved in administering the loving kindness of God."[88] Once a church or bishop obtained a relic, they were used in much the same way as hagiography, as a means of promoting a church or shrine, and a saints' ability to bestow miracles.[89]

Bishops and other clergymen were not the only ones who desired relics. Non-clergy Christian worshipers desired relics as a means of having a personal connection to a saint, and as a result, being able to directly petition the saint for intervention with God on their behalf.[90] There were also a number of somewhat less pious worshipers who used their social or political standings to acquire relics of their own. The Byzantine empress Constantina asked Gregory the Great for a relic of St. Paul, requesting his head or another part of his body; she was refused by Gregory, and was given a contact relic instead.[91] The numerous requests from bishops, worshipers, and even world rulers or nobility resulted in a thriving and profitable trade in relics and contact relics.[92] Some of these relics were real, some were not, due in large

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[88] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 94-95.
[89] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 90-91.
[90] Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300-1200*, 69.
[91] Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300-1200*, 23. A similar instance occurred when prince Justinian wrote to Constantinople for a fragment of the body of St. Peter, he was refused and sent a cloth that had touched the body through a relic shaft. Cf. Peter Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 88.
[92] Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300-1200.* 22.

part to bishops like Ambrose, who seemed to have a never ending supply of dirt soaked with the blood of saints to distribute as relics.[93]

While relics certainly were the easiest means of instantly mobilizing a saint's cult and *praesentia*, there were a number of other means by which cults of saints were spread throughout the world, among which were Christian monks. Monks were essentially a wandering Christian 'army' devoted to spreading the religious faith. Cults of the saints were often used as a backdrop for bishops to recruit able-bodied men for their 'religious armies'; often with the intent of threatening force.[94] Furthermore, many monks saw the particular saints that they were devoted to as a holy protector who represented their interests in heaven and served as a direct link between them and heaven.[95] While monks certainly did aid in promoting cults of saints, they were not the major factor responsible for the success of cults of saints in the Western Empire. Monks were more important as easily mobile forces who could either back or oppose political and religious leaders.

Emperor cult was designed to be more mobile than the cult of the saints. As we have discussed, while a sense of place, shrines and temples were certainly important, there was an inherent mobility in all Roman cults, and emperor cult was no different. One significant reason for emperor cult's increased mobility was its usefulness in uniting newly conquered peoples

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[93] Alan Thacker, *"Loca Sanctorum: The Significance of Place in the Study of the* Saints" in Alan Thacker & Richard Sharpe, eds., *Local Saints and Local Churches*, 12.
[94] Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, 97, 146-148.
[95] Paul Antony Hayward, *"Demystifying the Role of Sanctity in Western Christendom"* in Howard-Johnston & Hayward, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 136-137.

under one ruler and promoting the Roman Empire all at the same time. In the provinces in the West, it was quite common for one of the first cults promoted in a newly conquered province to be that of a deified emperor. Emperor cult in the provinces helped in the process of Romanization, while still providing a focus for locals on one united source of Roman power and authority: deified emperors.[96] Emperor cult's usefulness in settling new territories assured that there was at least one emperor cult in every province. In addition, each province usually followed the calendar set down at Rome, which resulted in further entrenchment of emperor cults in the provinces.

The calendar at Rome was extremely important to any activity, religious, political or other, that took place in Rome and throughout the Empire. The calendar set at Rome was followed throughout the provinces, which resulted in connecting the people of the provinces to Rome and cementing their *Romanitas*. The calendar for Rome included the birthdays of *divi* and called for celebrations and sacrifices, both public and private.[97]

Public sacrifices at Rome were offered by the Arvals on the Capitoline Hill and celebrated not just birthdays of *divi*, but also anniversaries of military victories and other accomplishments.[98] In the case of Augustus, the calendar called for celebrations of "his victories in Sicily and at Actium, his entry into Alexandria, the death of Anthony…[and] Augustus' return to

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[96] Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, Vol. II, I, 389.
[97] Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, Vol. II, I, 379.
[98] Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 67.

Rome in 19 B.C."[99] As the calendar set down by Rome was followed in the provinces, all of the celebrations and sacrifices held in honor of emperor cult in Rome took place in one form or another in every major city in the provinces.[100]

Just as there were examples of public emperor cults in Rome and in the provinces, so to were there examples of private worship of emperor cults. Some examples of private worship may have been prompted by public decree, but there are also examples of private worship of emperor cults not compelled by public proclamation. These examples of private worship prompted by public decree usually occurred when a governor or other authority figure declared that all peoples in the province should sacrifice and celebrate in honor of the birthdays, victories or deaths of certain *divi*.[101] As far as private worship performed by individuals, there are numerous examples of busts and other portraits of *divi*.[102] These busts were worshiped in much the same manner as the *lares* of each family were honored—with libations and sacrifices made in their honor.[103] In addition, living emperors placed busts of *divi* among their own *lares* in an attempt to link themselves to gods and create a connection between themselves and great emperors of the past.[104]

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[99] Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, Vol. II, I, 484, 487-489.
[100] Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, Vol. II, I, 522.
[101] Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, Vol. II, I, 530.
[102] Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, Vol. II, I, 533.
[103] Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 151.
[104] Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 185.

Both public and private worship of emperor cults was centered around the calendar at Rome which laid out all the birthdays, celebrations, triumphs, and any other significant event related to the cults of the *divi*. The calendar was certainly important to provincial leaders as it provided a connection to Rome, but the importance of the calendar to the spread of emperor cult and as a connection to Rome is most visible when examining the Roman army.

There were members of the Roman army stationed throughout the known world, and one way in which they maintained a connection to Rome was through the Roman calendar. The army followed the calendar set down by Rome; there was no real influence of local celebrations on the calendar that the Roman military followed. Consequently, the units of the Roman army stationed in Gaul, Africa or any other province in the West all celebrated the birthdays, victories and other accomplishments of the *divi*.[105] These celebrations did not just focus on major *divi* like Augustus, but also included many minor *divi* such as Claudius and Nerva.[106] The military celebrations for the *divi* were often times equal to the celebrations of the "greater gods" such as Jupiter or Mars.[107]

The importance given to emperor cult in the army had an express purpose. The celebration of emperor cult provided a living history lesson for the Romans deployed to the provinces. It taught them about Rome's greatest leaders and military victories. Celebrations of emperor cult provided a
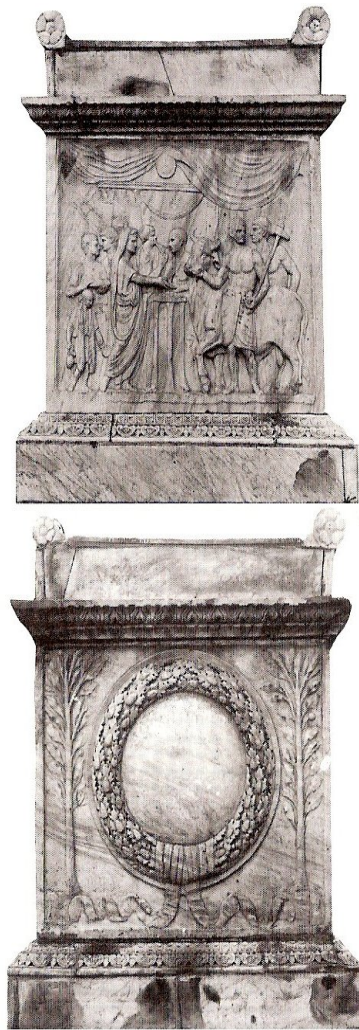
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[105] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 341.
[106] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 340.
[107] Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, Vol. I, II, 346.

unified direct connection to Rome for the soldiers and provincials and taught local civilians the history of Rome.[108]
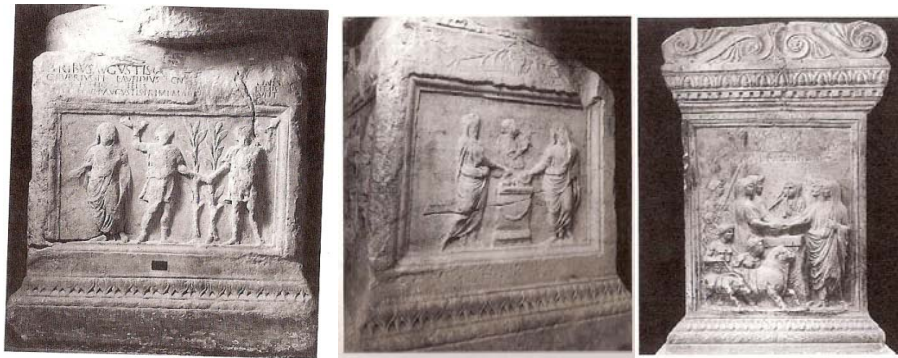
Just as relics both big and small helped in spreading the cult of the saints, there were also a number of transportable 'relics' and paraphernalia associated with emperor cult. These included small busts, wax effigies, portraits, larger statues, and perhaps most common and useful in promoting the spread of emperor cult, coins.

Sacrificial altar in the imperial temple in the Forum of Pompeii [109]

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[108] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 341.

The major temples dedicated to the *divi* were filled with schwag associated with emperor cult. There were numerous paintings and sculptures that depicted sacrifices made to emperors and their cults. Many examples of private altars depicting the *lares* associated with private worship of emperor cult also survive. It was the smaller items, however, that were associated with emperor cult that gave emperor cults a large part of their global mobility, such as the following Cameo.[110]

Multiple sacrificial altars dedicated to and used in emperor cult[111]

Cameo of emperor Claudius (41-54 C.E.) ascending on the back of an eagle.

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[109] The front of the altar depicts a sacrifice to the emperor, probably Augustus, performed by a *flamen*, the back of the altar depicts imperial emblems, the oak wreath and laurels decreed to Augustus by the Roman Senate.

[110] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 312,

[111] Two sacrificial altars depicting the *genius Augusti* and the *lares Augusti* as well as the libations and sacrifices given to the *Augusti*, including a pig for the *lares* and a bull for the *genius*.

The small carving pictured above is the perfect example of the small paraphernalia associated with emperor cult. It has all the major symbols associated with emperor cult, from the eagle carrying the deified Claudius skyward to Claudius being crowned by a winged victory.

The most successful ad campaign for emperor cults was coins. Just as coins had been used to promote gods or Roman victories during the Roman Republic, during the Empire they served as a means of promoting the living emperor and his accomplishments, as well as a means of promoting, celebrating and remembering the accomplishments of deified emperors and their cults. Beginning with Augustus and his celebration of the deification of Julius Caesar, coins became a major medium for spreading emperor cults. These coins could portray anything from the comet that took *divius Julius* to the heavens to the symbol of the eagle that was so closely associated with the Roman army also bearing the spirits of the *divi* to heaven.

Coin from the rule of Augustus, Obverse: head of Augustus.

Reverse: Comet with 8 rays and "DIVUS JULIUS"

Obverse: Head of Antoninus Pius,   **Reverse: Eagle standing on altar.**

encircled by DIVVS ANTONINVS.   **encircled by CONSECRATIO**

Obverse: Head of *divus Antoninus Pius*, Reverse: Honorary column surmounted by statue of *divus pius*, marking the spot of his cremation

All coins commemorating the *divi* contained images associated with emperor cult, ranging from eagles to altars and sacrifices. In addition, they usually made mention of the deified emperor whom they were meant to honor and occasionally mentioned specific events being celebrated by the particular coin. Nearly all examples of coins commemorating emperor cults or events associated with emperor cult also had some image or reference to the current, living emperor. These coins were extremely important in making a connection between a deified emperor and their successor. These coins also served as a means of advertising the dedications and temples the living emperor had made on behalf of the cult of deified emperors. Ultimately, emperor related numismatics served as a reminder for everyone that used them who the current emperor was, who they were descended from

and which *divi* they chose to associate themselves with. The ability of a living emperor to connect themselves to the *divi* was of paramount importance, and coins were used to the living emperor's fullest advantage in promoting themselves and their predecessors.

Coins may have been the most effective means of promoting emperor cult. They were used throughout the Roman empire, were sought after by all the public (because of their financial worth), and were produced and hoarded in large quantities. The coins with images of emperor cult were used every day by everyone in the Roman empire and beyond and consequently had a huge influence in spreading the affluence and popularity of emperor cult.

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Riding Divine Coattails: The Personnel of the cults

While all of the details of emperor cult discussed above explain how the cult of the saints and emperor cult were founded, promoted and maintained, we have yet to examine why. What were the motivations behind the promotion of both cults? While it might seem unnecessary to point out the obvious, the reasons for promoting the cults were not based on the desires of those being worshiped. Deified emperors and saints were not the ones profiting from the promotion of their cults. The benefits of promoting both cults went directly to the living, specifically those who were promoting the cults. The following section is an examination of the motivations of the living in their promotion of the cult of the saints and emperor cult, as well as the profits, including pecuniary, political, and spiritual.

Emperor cult was extremely useful in promoting the interests of the living and it should be generally accepted that the promotion and establishment of emperor cult was not based on the desires of the dead. Everyone involved in the promotion of emperor cult benefited from the popularity of a deified emperor and their cult. From the living emperor all the way down to the priest of a deified emperor, each person involved had their own motivations in promoting emperor cults and each person stood to gain in one way or another. As Michael Mullins so aptly asserted when discussing the deified Augustus' cult, "The cult served well the aims of the government, evoked feelings of patriotism and loyalty through the huge and

heterogeneous empire, [and] provided opportunities for prominence and advancement through the priesthoods created…."[112]

The living emperor himself potentially had the most to gain in promoting the cults of his predecessor. Whether a living emperor focused on his direct predecessor or earlier *divi*, by promoting a deified emperor the living emperor established a crucial connection to the legitimacy of past rulers.[113] Augustus himself was the first to benefit from the *auctoritas* of his predecessor when he and the senate deified *Julius Caesar*. "Octavian [Augustus]…decreed divine honors to his father [Caesar]. From this example the Romans now pay like honors to each emperor at his death if he has not reigned in a tyrannical manner or made himself odious, although at first they could not bear to call them kings even when alive."[114] Augustus showed great honor to Caesar, but perhaps most importantly, Augustus brought honor and authority to himself and his heirs when he became the descendent of a god. By deifying Caesar, dedicating temples and monuments in Caesar's name and by establishing a state cult responsible for honoring and celebrating the deified Caesar, Augustus reminded every onlooker how important Julius Caesar was.[115] Consequently, Augustus also re-enforced his own power and importance as the "son" of a god.[116]

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[112] Michael Mullins, *Called to be Saints: Christian living in First-Century Rome* (Dublin, 1991), 38.
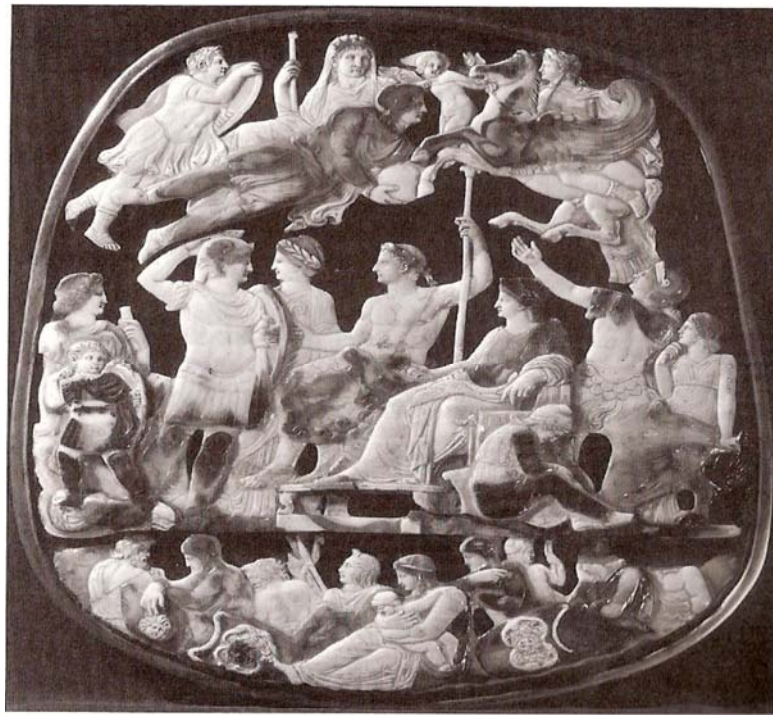[113] Sabine G. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1981), 105.
[114] Appian. *BC* 2. 148
[115] Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 242.
[116] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 263.

Another example presents itself in the case of Augustus's apotheosis and subsequent promotion by his living heir Tiberius. According to the ancient writer Dio, Tiberius did everything in his power to promote the cult of the deified Augustus by erecting temples and shrines to the dead emperor in as many areas of the Empire as possible.[117] In addition, Tiberius did not just support the establishment of shrines and temples; he made sure to publicly display his respect for the deified Augustus. "In the case of the statues and the shrines which were being erected to Augustus, whether by communities or private individuals, he [Tiberius] either dedicated them himself or instructed one of the *pontifices* to do so."[118]

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[117] Dio 56.46.3

[118] Dio 57.10.1

[119] Figures shown include the newly crowned emperor Tiberius and his mother Livia (seated), above Tiberius in heaven is *divus Augustus*, wearing a crown. Also featured is a globe above

The motivation behind Tiberius' wholehearted promotion and endorsement of the deified Augustus was certainly self-serving. Tiberius was not the blood heir of Augustus, but had been adopted prior to Augustus' death; consequently, his claim to the 'throne' was tenuous, at best. It was, therefore, in Tiberius' best interest not only to promote the cult of the deified Augustus, but continue his involvement with the cult as a public reminder of their relationship. There are numerous other examples of living emperors linking themselves to a specific deified emperor, ranging from Nero promoting the deified Claudius to Trajan promoting the deified Nerva.[120]

Emperors were not the only ones who were significantly invested in the promotion of emperor cult. The Senate was involved in the affirmation of every emperor before they became a *divi* and stood to gain from the influence they exerted over the process of apotheosis. In addition, the senate also was actively involved in the dedications of temples, declarations of festivals and the general promotion of the honors of the *divi*.[121] The Senate could also exert its influence if an emperor had dealt poorly with the Senate or the people while alive and deny that particular emperor deification.

As we have already discussed above, there were priesthoods dedicated to each *divi*, and just as living emperors benefited from the *divi*, so too did the priests of the *divi*. As there is evidence of countless temples and shrines to

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the head of Tiberius signifying world domination and a benevolent transfer of power from *divus Augustus* to his successor Tiberius. cf. Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 314.
[120] Price, "From Noble Funerals to Divine Cult," 81-2.
[121] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 261.

numerous *divi* all over the empire, it follows that there were priests at these shrines and temples dedicated to the service of the *divi*. The priests of each emperor cult gleaned significant influence and authority from their appointments to priesthoods. "In North Africa, a priesthood of the Imperial cult stood at the summit of the positions which religion could offer to eminent citizens."[122] This was true throughout the empire, especially in Rome itself. In a prestigious location like Rome, the priests in charge of the temples of the *divi* were prominent men of rank and honor, often drawn from senatorial ranks.

The positions of the *flamines* of any emperor cult were coveted and normally held by senators or men of great importance. According to Simon Price, the *flamines* of deified emperors "continued to include the most prestigious members of the senatorial order. Honoring former emperors was thus one of the expected roles of distinguished senators."[123] As we have shown, Rome was certainly the center of the cults of the *divi* and held the most opportunity for gain by the priests of the *divi*. The cult of the *divi* also prospered in the provinces (priests of *divius Augustus* are found in thirty-four different cities in Asia Minor[124]) and the opportunity for personal gain and prestige was also present. "The cult was doubtless most popular with the

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[122] Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York, 1986), 39.
[123] Price, "From Noble Funerals to Divine Cult," 79.
[124] S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial cult in Asia Minor*, 58.

provincial nobility who valued it for the distinction which its priesthood gave them."[125]

These positions in priesthoods were sought after and difficult to attain. In fact, many priests would hold their position for life and afterwards attempt to pass on their position and the prestige of the priesthood to their own family members.[126] There were also positions for curators of the temples of *divi*, and these curators were also men of rank and social importance.[127] In addition to political gain, there was an opportunity for financial gain: "Worship of the Emperor was a cue for profit and yet more holidays."[128] The priests in charge of emperor cults had significant funds at their disposal to maintain their cults.

Simply by counting the sheer number of festivals, sacrifices, and celebrations in the name of the *divi*, the staggering amount of funds at the service of the priests of deified emperors becomes evident. Whether it was the dedication and support of a temple of *divus Augustus* in Tarraco[129] or the hundreds of annual celebrations of birthdays, accomplishments, and deaths of *divi*,[130] there were clearly vast amounts of money dedicated to the promotion of emperor cult, and these funds were entrusted to the priests and others involved with the cults. Perhaps the best demonstration of the amount

[125] Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 212-213.
[126] S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial cult in Asia Minor*, 63.
[127] Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, Vol. I, II, 247.
[128] Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 40.
[129] Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 231.
[130] Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, Vol. II, I, 489.

of money used for emperor worship comes from the period when emperor worship was in decline. When the emperor Maximinus (235-8 C.E.) needed money to fund his military campaigns he appropriated the funds of many of the public cults, including the funds set aside for the cults of the *divi*.[131] Clearly, if the funds of the *divi* were worth looting, there was a considerable sum involved.

The church in the early Christian period was attempting to replicate an artificial kin group of "family members" related through their devotion and faith to Christianity.[132] There was ample opportunity for men of rank and intelligence to step into the role of patron over these artificial kin groups as Bishops. Often these Bishops were learned men of great piety and devotion and often they were not. Simply due to the sheer number of cults of saints and shrines scattered throughout the Christian world, there were innumerable chances for men to take advantage, whether it be politically, religiously or fiscally, of the cult of the saints. There was opportunity for personal gain in the cult of the saints, the largest offenders were the bishops, but corruption carried all the way down to the lowly priest or monk.

Just as the living emperor had the most to gain by promoting and connecting himself to a deified emperor, bishops had the most to gain by promoting the cult of the saints. A bishop usually promoted the cult of a saint that they were involved with, meaning that they had control over some

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[131] Herodian 7.3.5 cf. *Herodian of Antioch's History of the Roman Empire*, trans. Edward C. Echols (Berkeley,1961).

[132] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 31.

form of relic, whether it be the saint's bodily remains, or simply contact

relics. Control over these relics was viewed as an endorsement from God and

"heightened the special status of the members of the Christian elite by

making them privileged agents, personally involved in administering the

loving-kindness of God."[133] Even Ambrose himself acknowledged the

influence that his discovery of the bodies of saints brought to him. "Although

this is a gift from God, yet I cannot deny the grace and favor which the Lord

Jesus has bestowed on the time of my priesthood; for because I have not

gained the status of a martyr, I have at least acquired these martyrs for

you."[134] Beyond being favored by God, bishops with control over the remains

or relics of a saint saw themselves as the channel through which the right

hand of God acted.[135]

Beyond controlling saints' relics, bishops also controlled the stories that

surrounded these relics and saints, often having lives of saints, or

hagiographies, scripted to fit the facts as the bishops themselves saw them.

Hagiographies often

"present themselves as completely reliable accounts of what really happened, but they were
in reality a kind of propaganda...many have no explicit purpose other than to win
recognition for the merits of a particular saint or relic, but behind such efforts lay struggles
to defend the faith and to legitimize the authority of particular persons and groups within
the Christian community that shaped the ways in which they defined the nature of sanctity
itself."[136]

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[133] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 94-95.
[134] Ambrose, *Letters* 22.12
[135] Paul Antony Hayward, "*Demystifying the Role of Sanctity in Western Christendom*" in
Howard-Johnston & Hayward, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 117.
[136] Paul Antony Hayward, "*Demystifying the Role of Sanctity in Western Christendom*" in
Howard-Johnston & Hayward, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 124.

As the Christian era progressed and persecutions of Christians, and the number of new martyrs dwindled, bishops were forced to turn inwards to find new models of Christian piety, leading to the promotion of bishops and other pious individuals to the level of saints. This often led to saints being "taken from the highest echelons of the church hierarchy; they were bishops, abbots, and abbesses (often of royal blood), who had lead exemplary lives, and whose cult was promoted by their immediate successors."[137] These successors in turn would be promoted to the level of saints upon death, and we see here a familiar pattern from emperor cult. Control over a particular see often remained with one family over a number of generations because they were able to trace their ancestry back through every bishop and saint celebrated in the area. Bishops were not the only members of the church that gained from the cult of the saints, anyone near the location or involved with a cult of a saint gained somehow, whether it was monetarily, spiritually, politically, or otherwise.

With so much perceived religious authority and influence surrounding the cult of saints, significant opportunities for personal, political and pecuniary gain were available to those who controlled or regulated the cults of saints. Financial gain could come from many aspects surrounding saint cults; it could come from the physical building of shrines and temples,[138] or even catering to the flocks of patrons who came to worship at these shrines.

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[137] Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300-1200*, 69.
[138] Alan Thacker, *"Loca Sanctorum: The Significance of Place in the Study of the* Saints" in Alan Thacker & Richard Sharpe, eds., *Local Saints and Local Churches*, 14.

A popular saint's shrine in a relatively remote location could completely alter the physical area surrounding a shrine and bring immeasurable income and popularity to a place that otherwise would be relatively unknown.

An excellent example is St. Martin's tomb in Tours, which became the most important saint's tomb in Gaul, and brought significant numbers of pilgrims to an otherwise unimportant area.[139] Even in Rome, the center of saint cult in the West and a thriving metropolis, saint cults drew significant numbers of pilgrims. "The Roman [saint] cults acquired international significance, attracting pilgrims from far and wide and transcending the boundaries of city and province...."[140] There was also serious potential for financial gain dealing in and trading both legitimate and fake saint relics. As secondary relics were an essential part of establishing any saint cult, there was a constant demand for objects which had somehow been imbued by a saint's aura. This resulted in a thriving 'trade' in saints' relics which were considered more precious than gold. St. Polycarp's relics were considered by his followers "dearer...than precious stones and finer than gold."[141] While many of these relics were in fact legitimate, many traders fabricated the provenance behind some relics in order to satisfy the growing demand of church leaders, pilgrims and wealthy patrons.[142] Beyond financial gain, there

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[139] Noble & Head eds., *Soldiers of Christ*, xxvi.
[140] Alan Thacker, *"Loca Sanctorum: The Significance of Place in the Study of the* Saints" in Alan Thacker & Richard Sharpe, eds., *Local Saints and Local Churches*, 3.
[141] Noble & Head eds., *Soldiers of Christ*, xx.
[142] Alan Thacker, *"Loca Sanctorum: The Significance of Place in the Study of the* Saints" in Alan Thacker & Richard Sharpe, eds., *Local Saints and Local Churches*, 15.

was great opportunity for social gain surrounding the establishment of saint cults. As we have already seen, those who profited from emperor deification were the living, especially the living emperor and the *flamen* responsible for maintaining, supporting, celebrating and honoring the deified emperors. The same was true for the cult of the saints. Certainly the cult of the saints benefited from new patronage. The individual bishops, monks and priests who controlled the sites of saint worship also gained social credibility and authority from their positions in saint cults.

As the cults of the saints grew in popularity, the bishops that controlled these cults found themselves imbued with new power, not just over their relics, but over the populace at large as well. Bishops and other religious leaders had taken over the patrician role in society that emperors, senators and other elites filled prior to Christianity.[143] "For the Christian bishop was held by contemporaries to owe his position in no small part to his role as the guardian of the poor. He was the 'lover of the poor' par excellence."[144] The bishop had become the ultimate fatherly figure in the artificial kin group that was Christianity; the poor became their "flock," the wealthy their financial backing, and the educated elites their trusted advisors. Perhaps the greatest example of the power and authority that was at the disposal of a bishop was

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[143] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 38-39.
[144] Peter Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the later Roman Empire* (Hanover, NH., 2002), 1.

the confrontation between the bishop Ambrose of Milan and the Emperor

Theodosius I, with the Emperor, not the bishop, backing down.[145]

Interestingly, many of the same families involved as priests in emperor

cults were also involved in the cults of the saints. Just as members of the

Roman aristocracy gained authority and credibility from their positions as

flamines in state cults (including emperor cult), so too did their decedents

draw authority and power from their positions as bishops in the church.[146]

"In this new world order, men from the old Roman elite turned to

ecclesiastical careers as a means of retaining and exercising power...[and] the

great majority of saints came from the families of the aristocracy."[147] The

members of the aristocracy who held these bishoprics had the most to gain by

promoting and establishing the cult of a particular saint, especially if that

saint happened to be their ancestor.[148] If a bishop could trace his ancestry back

to a saint (especially a prominent saint), it helped to cement a bishop's

authority over the patrons in his church. In addition, it lent authority to a

bishop's influence among other bishops and helped to ensure that a bishop

could pass his authority and position onto his descendents.

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[145] For more on the confrontation of Ambrose and Theodosius I, see H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance*, (Baltimore, 2000), 441-483.
[146] Paul Antony Hayward, "*Demystifying the Role of Sanctity in Western Christendom*" in Howard-Johnston & Hayward, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 117.
[147] Noble & Head eds., *Soldiers of Christ*, xxvii, xxxiv
[148] Howard-Johnston, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 7, 17.

One Plus One Equals One

In his *Meditations*, Marcus Aurelius advises to "reflect continually how all things such as they now are, in time past also were; and consider that they will be the same again."[149] Beyond being applicable to all history studies, his advice is particularly appropriate when considering the cult of the saints and emperor cult. These two cults came to prominence in extremely different social, religious and political atmospheres, yet they share so many commonalities it would be difficult for them not to have been related. Having amassed a significant number of the similarities between the two cults, it now is necessary to examine how these two seemingly unrelated aspects of two societies actually were closely related. Having explored the inner workings and conditions of each cult, it seems necessary to ask what role each cult played in their respective societies.

Both the cult of the saints and emperor cult filled similar roles in their respective societies; they were bastions of power for those involved with each cult. As we have mentioned above, there was a remarkable amount of continuity between those in charge of the emperor cult and those in charge of the cults of the saints. The same families that had held positions of prestige and authority as priests of emperor cults eventually were the same families that took over bishoprics and controlled the cults of the saints.

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[149] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 10.27

We are examining a period of history that is an excellent demonstration of how gradual and fractured the "transition" from paganism to Christianity was. There was no definite point where all pagan traditions were abolished and Christian traditions took over. Instead it was a slow process of the transition of power and authority from one to the other, and often times this transition was incomplete with remnants of pagan traditions and practices being absorbed into Christian practices. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the massive topic of the shift from paganism to Christianity. However, this shift is inexorably tied to our discussion of emperor cult and the cult of the saints, and consequently some exploration of this "transition" is necessary to truly understand the relationship between the two forms of cult.

In late antiquity the concept of "*do ut des*" was one that every member of society was familiar with. Roger Beck aptly states that paganism's "aim was reciprocity, as encapsulated in the simple Roman formula, *do ut des*: 'I, the mortal, give, so that you, the immortal, might give in return.'"[150] That which the mortal gave usually consisted of material things, whether they were animals, agricultural products or precious metals. In return for these worldly things, the gods granted good harvests, success in war, or whatever was sought by mortals. This form of patronage was a basic tenet of paganism and translated down to relationships between mortals as well. The wealthy elites

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[150] Roger Beck, "The Religious Market of the Roman Empire: Rodney Stark and Christianity's Pagan Competition", Leif E. Vaage (ed.), *Religious Rivalries in the Early Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity* (Cambridge,1992), 244.

of Roman society were essentially patrons of the poor. They gave vast sums of money for games, or bread, or other provisions enjoyed by the masses. The elites who were priests were also seen as patrons. They were in charge of dispensing the monies involved in their respective cults, and while some of these monies went to building temples or shrines, they also gave monies for celebrations, feasts and sacrifices in the name of their cults. The same was true for the priests of emperor cult. With the rise of Christianity, these relationships did not immediately fizzle out. In fact, many were adopted into Christianity to make the transition from paganism to Christianity more appealing to the masses.[151]

As Christianity grew into the dominant religion in the empire, these blatantly pagan religious practices were gradually phased out or abolished by zealous bishops or other ecclesiastical leaders. While church leaders may have succeeded in removing most pagan religious practices, they could not erase the past pagan social constructions that were woven into the fabric of ancient society. "While pagan worship might be abolished, the past remained a pagan place. Those who entered the Church brought with them the shadow of an untranscended, ancient way of life."[152] It was here that we see the threads that connect two seemingly unrelated religious traditions like emperor cult and the cult of the saints. On the surface emperor cult and the cult of the saints appear so religiously estranged that it seems impossible that

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[151] H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance*, 72.
[152] Peter Brown, *Authority and the Sacred*, 24.

for them to be connected, let alone one being based on the other. Upon closer inspection we see that there are numerous religious similarities when one removes the overwhelming difference—namely monotheism versus polytheism. In the preface of his book *Constantine and the Bishops*, H.A. Drake states "If there has been one paramount error in the study of Christianity in the fourth century, that error has been to use theological tools to understand political problems. The result is serious misdiagnosis of the causes, origins, and nature of Christian coercion."[153] Drake's point applies to our study of emperor cult and the cult of the saints. While these both may have been religious institutions, they were also major social institutions and their social overtones are where we find the overriding similarities between these two cults.

As we have discussed, emperor cult and the cult of the saints did have numerous religious similarities, ranging from who was qualified to be a saint or deified emperor, the process of apotheosis, or how each cult was promoted and spread throughout the empire. Even the use of generic writing formulas in promoting both cults or the use of centralized temples, shrines or churches, or the influence of the Roman army or the wandering Christian monks in spreading their respective cults demonstrate the number of religious and procedural similarities between the emperor cult and the cult of the saints. This paper has demonstrated that the major similarities become evident

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[153] H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance*, xvi.

when examining the personnel of each form of cult and their role in societies. As we have seen, it was the personnel that demonstrated that the cult of the saints drew directly from emperor cult.

There is a significant difference that must be pointed out: emperor cult existed in a polytheistic society whereas the cult of the saints existed in a monotheistic society. What this means when examining their similarities is that the cult of the saints had significantly more wealth, patronage and influence than emperor cult simply because emperor cult had to compete with the numerous other cults in the Roman empire. With this point aside we can now further examine what connected the two cults in terms of their personnel and their involvement in their respective societies.

We have already demonstrated that the priests and other members involved in emperor cult held highly desirable positions, had a significant amount of influence and funds, and were among the elites of the empire. The same was true for bishops; they had control over cults of saints which in turn meant an enormous amount money, authority (both religious and social), and patrons of the saints at their immediate disposal. What connected these two groups of people in two different religions was that both groups were made of elites, and they filled the same role in their respective societies.[154]

The priests of emperor cult were men trained in the *paideia* who acted as patrons within society. They were part of the glue that held their society

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[154] Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, 121.

together. These priests were the educated nobles and senators who had control over large numbers of the lower-classes and had an active relationship with the *living* emperor in addition to their role in emperor cults. These priests were the ones who took care of the poor by throwing games in honor of the dead emperor and giving bread and other necessities to the poor in the name of the deified emperor.

The bishops who controlled the cult of the saints were the same men that had previously controlled the pagan cults. Christians realized that they could do with just one God, but could not do without the *padeia* that was such a part of pagan society. "[I]ntellectuals of the second century were the first Christians who extensively used and enjoyed the treasure chest of Greek culture and *paideia.* They re-thought the Christian doctrine on the basis of pagan philosophical presuppositions."[155] Bishops were the men educated in the *paideia*, and used their education and social standing to separate themselves from blatantly pagan practices while retaining their previous social standing, authority and cultural pagan roots.[156] Bishops "had persuaded themselves that the ignorant rustics would more cheerfully renounce the superstitions of Paganism if they found some resemblance, some

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[155] Peter Lampe, *Early Christians in the City of Rome. Topographical and Social Historical Aspects of the First Three Centuries*, cf. Jürgen Zangenberg and Michael Labahn, eds., *Christians as a Religious Minority in a Multicultural City*, (London, 2004), 28.
[156] Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, 76, 119.

compensations, in the bosom of Christianity...." The bishops themselves were part of that resemblance of paganism.[157]

The bishops even took over the role of the protector of the poor; they were the patrons of the lower classes.[158] They took it upon themselves to help the poor by feeding them or giving them shelter. Bishops even had control over huge sums of money that they used in the same manner as their pagan predecessors. The cult of the saints was the one area where the Christian elites could show their fiscal support and superiority to the rest of the population. As Peter Brown states:

"The saint was the good *patronus*: he was the *patronus* whose intercessions were successful, whose wealth was at the disposal of all, whose *potentia* was exercised without violence and to whom loyalty could be shown without restraint. The bishop could stand for him. Lavish building, splendid ceremonial, and even feasting at such a shrine washed clean the hard facts of accumulated wealth and patronage...the cult of the saints was a focus where wealth could be spent without envy and *patrocinium* exercised without obligation."[159]

This is not to say that bishops did not sometimes abuse their wealth and authority. Often times money for clothing for the poor was put into the funds for a new shrine or simply used for the benefit of the bishop and his retinue.[160] Bishops even competed with each other for control over the poor by trying to buy the public through alms giving and extreme shows of generosity,[161] not unlike the competition between pagan cults trying to buy popularity from the mob.

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[157] Paul Antony Hayward, "*Demystifying the Role of Sanctity in Western Christendom*" in Howard-Johnston & Hayward, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 116.
[158] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 38-39.
[159] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 41.
[160] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 121.
[161] Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, 90.

Perhaps the greatest indication of the connection between emperor cult and the cult of the saints is the similar relationship that the priests and bishops had with the emperor. As we have already seen, the emperor during the Roman empire was directly involved with emperor cult and had a close relationship with the priests of emperor cult. The emperor also had close relationships with many other priests from other cults during the empire. With the rise of Christianity the emperor no longer consulted with senators, priests and other pagan elites; he now associated with the bishops.[162] The overriding difference between the relationship between the emperor and bishops and their pagan predecessors was that "Christian bishops developed out of an alternative tradition, independent of both empire and emperor, secure in a local power—their congregations—which imperial senators lacked."[163] Bishops operated independently of the emperor, their authority came from a higher power, and consequently the emperor had to deal with bishops on a more level footing.

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[162] H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance*, 482.
[163] H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance*, 467.

Conclusions

Throughout the course of this paper we have examined two seemingly unrelated cultural institutions: emperor cult and the cult of the saints. We have compared and contrasted these bastions of faith and power in their own respective societies. We have examined the personnel, structures, images, ceremonies, and many other aspects of both emperor cult and the cult of the saints and we have found both cults to be strikingly similar. They existed in seemingly drastically different societies, but upon further examination we find that in fact both societies were remarkably similar. We also see that each society only represented themselves to be different in an attempt to come to terms with their own mixed identities. In order to appeal to the masses as different, Christianity made a point of showing how different it was from paganism, and as a religion it was different enough. It was Christianity as a social construction that was so similar to pagan society.

By looking at emperor cult and the cult of the saints as social organizations rather than religious organizations we are able to see the remarkable similarities between these two cults. Emperor cult and the cult of the saints filled the same role in their respective societies, were run by the same men and women, and were guided under the stable leadership of the same families. The religious similarities that we see in emperor cult and the cult of the saints were carried over via the social constructions shared by each cult. By examining in great detail the religious similarities of emperor cult

and the cult of the saints, this paper has lead to the discovery of the social

similarities of the two cults, and we have seen that emperor cult did directly

contribute to the cult of the saints, through both social and religious threads.

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