MORAL AND RELIGIOUS LEGISLATION IN THE LATE REPUBLIC AND THE AUGUSTAN PRINCIPATE

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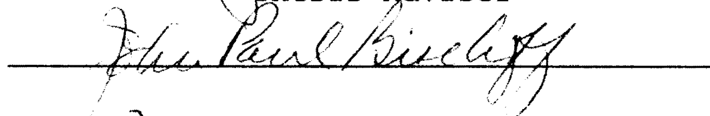

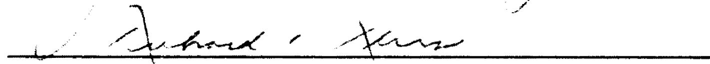

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The political and social chaos evident in the latter years of the Roman Republic has prompted much research in the fields of political and religious evolution. So, too, have the social reforms of the Emperor Augustus. Historians have marked the Republican period as a time of turmoil, both socially and politically. Furthermore, these same scholars have interpreted the first years of the Empire as a time of renewal, regeneration, and new faith in the Roman state, both in its political power and religious vitality. Research in these two integrally connected periods in the history of Rome has focused mostly on them as quite distinct and unconnected. While the political, social, and religious changes in both periods elicit a variety of historical prose, historians have failed to explain these changes in a clear, concise manner that attempts to unite them with a common theme.

The final century of the Roman Republic saw vast changes in its social order. Displacement of families in the countryside, joblessness, poverty, and general dissatisfaction with those who governed led to a diminished sense of loyalty to and faith in the once revered Republic.

Because the Republic existed as an ideal, as a notion of governance that depended on faith and investment in its principles to survive, the last one hundred years before the Principate dealt a final, fatal blow to Rome's innovative form of government. Economic and social dissatisfaction led directly to the weakening of family ties. As the foundation of traditional mores and rites, the disintegration of the family meant the dissolution of the values and the long-held religious beliefs that for years had given a sense of order and continuity to Roman society. Thus, the breakdown of the Republican ideal and the disintegration of the family left a vacuum in Rome's moral and religious order, a vacuum that Augustus Caesar attempted to fill with legislation designed to recall the glory of the Roman Republic.

It is important at this juncture to delve into another facet of Roman life in the late Republic, one that may help elaborate the changing mindset in the period beginning with the fall of the Republic and ending with the reforms of the First Man of a new Rome. To understand fully how a state went from what seemed to be a slow disintegration of religion and morality to the intense legislation of the same, it is first necessary to comprehend the meaning of and define the most significant, the most sacred of all entities to the Roman mind--the state, the Res Publica.

The Res Publica, the public thing or being, is the key to understanding the notion of morality and religion in the Republican period. For while such a concept may not seem to

have much to do with concerns of a sacred and moral nature, it existed as the very center of both in Republican Rome. Historian Donald Earl explains that the Res Publica was more an emotion than it was an intellectual concept. Indeed, it was not a description of a form of government, it was a promise of the purpose of government.[1] The purpose, in a sense, was to act as the spiritual core, the raison d'etre, of the Roman people. However, there is another factor in understanding this union of citizens, this pledge of loyalty. That is the Roman family. As the central social unit, the Roman family, with its patriarchal structure, enforced and helped define the Res Publica. It justified the social hierarchy and the structure of the government. It acted as a model for both the state religion and the moral consciousness of Rome. The breakdown of the Roman family and the resulting dissolution of the ideals that held the Res Publica together necessitated a change in the way the government legislated morality and religion.

A review of the literature that outlines a study of the social and institutional collapse of the Res Publica and the legislative response of the Principate necessitates a look at works concerning religion and society in the Republic and in the Empire. Most of the literature of both periods do not deal with morality as a main topic; however, it appears alongside descriptions of the social order and in reference to the impact of religious ritual. Religion, its rural

development, and its evolution within the state provide an historiographical outline. This blueprint allows us to trace the varying theories that explain the social and institutional transitions in the Republic and the accompanying responses in the Empire.

The historiographical response to religious reform in the Principate has been varied, depending on the methodological approach; however, those interested in the period tend to acknowledge two general themes. The first is concerned directly with Rome before the ascension of Octavian. A number of scholars make a case for religious declension in the late Republic. Still others prefer to deal directly with Augustus, and their work tends to focus on Augustus's response, namely his reforms. The scholarship on this question is divided between those who perceive the actions of the emperor as a genuine attempt to return to Republican values, and those who perceive his legislation as political and social manipulation.

Before reviewing the secondary literature, a brief glimpse of the primary sources concerned with Augustus provides some insight to contemporary attitudes. The poets Horace and Virgil, while not able to make a wholly convincing case for the benevolent nature of their emperor, do represent those who view Augustus as somewhat of a savior. While Augustus patronized them, and thus commissioned them to write for and about him, we cannot

immediately deem their work useless. If nothing else, it must represent the popular sentiment. Both men agreed that religion and morality were slowly evaporating from Roman life as the Republic moved toward its final demise. Augustus represented a messiah, a strong and righteous ruler who inaugurated a golden age by restoring the lost mores and values of the old Republic.[2]

The works of Tacitus and Suetonius, produced later, exist at the opposite end of the spectrum. Tacitus's histories reveal a certain cynicism, a dark and pessimistic notion that the death of the Republic did not mean the beginning of a golden age for Rome; rather, it meant the sudden and tragic end of the freedoms and promises that republican government represented. Suetonius concurs in his equally cynical rumor-mongering. Augustus did not restore Republican traditions and long-held values. He destroyed them.[3]

The secondary literature is not as simple and does not fit as neatly into two distinct categories. Instead, chronology divides the historiographical response. The early approaches to the question, represented here by Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, are scientific. More specifically, Fustel de Coulanges used the methods of the French positivists in responding to the question of religious declension in the Roman Republic. His Ancient City is an exploration of the private cult of the ancient

Romans. The nineteenth-century historian traces religious ritual and its transition from that of the family to that of the state. He contends that the state institutionalized the familial cult. This was completed at the end of the Republic, the same time that Fustel de Coulanges notes the disappearance of the Roman love of freedom. He cites quarreling and the rise of political factions, and insists that now two groups divided Rome, the aristocracy and the masses. His work, while it does not directly address the Augustan reforms and is not primarily concerned with religious declension in the late Republic, does acknowledge a certain decline in traditional religious fervor.[4]

The second chronological category appears at the beginning of the twentieth century and continues through midcentury. The Constitutionalists tend to emphasize political developments and the evolution of religion as it affects the state. T. R. Glover's The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire, published in 1910, stresses the view that the demise of the Republic was due in part to religious declension. Glover sees Augustus as a shrewd politician who endeavored to restore traditional religion as a means of controlling an unruly populace.[5]

Perhaps one of the most influential historians concerned with this period, Lily Ross Taylor, underscores the significance of political manipulation in the imperial cult. Taylor contends that the influx of eastern religious

beliefs influenced the development of the cult of the emperor. Octavian took advantage of these beliefs at the death of his uncle and forged a cult around the newly-deified Julius Caesar. The Divinity of the Roman Emperor, published in 1931, insists that religious declension did occur in the late Republic. Yet more strongly, Taylor stresses that the actions taken by Augustus concerning religion were essentially political.[6]

A. H. M. Jones, another Constitutionalist, concurs with Taylor. Jones's Augustus developes the argument that the Roman aristocracy was tending toward disbelief in the late Republic. Jones contends that the government allowed temples to fall into disrepair and manipulated religion for political purposes. The Augustan revival represented an attempt to revive not only the traditional values and mores of old Rome, but also the patriotism that once accompanied the state spiritual creed. The value of the imperial cult, then, was as a means of encouraging loyalty towards Rome.[7]

Published later, Continuity and Change in Roman Religion is John Hugo Wolfgang Liebeschuetz's attempt to interpret the evolution of Roman religion and its sometimes tenuous connection with the state. Unlike many scholars, Liebeschuetz does not note religious declension in the late Republic. Political manipulation of religion, namely of divination, was not a sign of moral or religious decay. In fact, the majority of Romans remained faithful to

traditional Roman beliefs in the years before the Principate. Many of Augustus's reforms were simply accommodations made to the traditional sense of religious propriety among most Romans. However, Liebeschuetz contends that the imperial cult was basically a secular institution, as most Romans did not believe in the divinity of the living emperor. Furthermore, the cult was an attempt to cultivate much needed loyalty.[8]

Concurring with Liebeschuetz, Alan Wardman does not cite religious decay in the late Republic. Wardman, in his Religion and Statecraft Among the Romans emphasizes that by its nature polytheism does not decline or expand. The revival of traditional Roman gods in the Principate meant the demise of other gods. Further, historical accounts of religious manipulation signify discontent with the existing system. Augustanism represented satisfaction, as Augustus subordinated religion to politics to gain some sort of control over the Empire. His restoration of archaisms, however meaningless, only validated his rule because the population saw that the chaos of the past century had ended. The reasons for the disappearance of the disorder was almost irrelevant.[9]

Mikhail Ivanovich Rostovtzeff uses a very different approach to the Augustan reforms. A classical economist, Rostovtzeff believes that the Emperor provided a means of expression for middle and lower class Romans. His reforms

represented a compromise of conflicting forces. The conflict did not erase class differences; for the class differences became even greater. Further, Augustanism was not a restoration of old Republican systems and values. Rather, it represented a consolidation of a religious and political entity created by the Civil War. In addition, Rostovtzeff asserts that thousands of Romans held the contention, made by Virgil and Horace, that Augustus was a sort of messiah. Basically, Rostovtzeff's work represents an exploration of class conflict and the social and economic policies in the Empire.[10]

Exemplifying a typical anthropological approach, S. R. F. Price analyzes sacrifice in the imperial cult. His article "Between Man and God" stresses that offerings made to the cult were made to Augustus's genius, his guardian spirit, and not to the Emperor himself. He argues against the widely held belief that a ruler cult is evidence of an empty and dying religion. Instead of treating the institution as a political entity, Price views it as a truly religious one. He goes on to argue against any sign of religious declension in the late Republic.[11]

Alban Dewes Winspear and Lenore Kramp Geweke write in Augustus and the Reconstruction of Roman Government and Society that Augustus did not calculate the loyalty and cohesion he could foster through his religious reforms. Attempting a political and sociological approach, they look

at both literature of the period and the actual reforms of the Emperor. The authors contend, after consultation with the works of Cicero, that moral and religious declension did occur in the last years of the Republic. Augustus simply accepted a waning religion and reorganized it.[12]

Archaeology provides answers to many pertinent questions concerning Roman religion, and John Ferguson has made use of archaeological finds to formulate the argument in his work The Religions of the Roman Empire. Ferguson analyzed the evidence and on the basis of years of excavations, wrote an account of the various gods and cults of the Empire. He describes the individual histories of each cult and the worship involved. He is convinced, in the case of Augustus and the imperial cult, that the sole intent of emperor worship, as far as the Roman government was concerned, was wholly political.[13]

Keith Hopkins with Death and Renewal has attempted a demographic study of the social reproduction of the senatorial class of the late Roman Republic. By compiling lists of politicians and reviewing how many sons followed their fathers in choice of profession, Hopkins illustrates the ways in which families could move in and out of the political elite. His examination of funerals and of funerary bequests is in essence a sociological look at beliefs in life after death and in the custom of establishing familial monuments. Hopkins concludes that in

the latter years of the Republic, the increasing number of public bequests signifies a decline in the tradition of family rites and of the collective power of kinsmen. Men no longer trusted children to continue their legacies. This in turn points to the slow demise of familial and religious tradition. Such is not the case in the Principate, where Hopkins sees a definite rise, or perhaps renewal, of the collective mentality of the family.[14]

Contemporary research in the area of social history has made use of sociology, anthropology, and often even psychology. While these three disciplines tend to be limited when directing study toward Rome, the student of Roman history is fortunate in that there is no shortage of Constitutional historians. And although much of this work will focus on social history and much the source material will be the literature of the period, constitutional history is essential in relegating the Roman state to its appropriate level of significance where the Roman people are concerned. It is also essential in understanding the constitutional development of Rome. In addition, politics and religion were often inextricably connected in Rome. So while much of the subject matter here deals more with the social evolution of the Roman state, the existence of the Res Publica has necessitated an integration of both social and political history for the purposes of understanding the tremendous changes in Roman morality and religion and for

the purposes of understanding the means by which Augustus sought to reinstate, at least in spirit, the Roman Republic.

End Notes

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CHAPTER II

RELIGION IN THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

From Rome's inception, religion was very much a part of the state's character. Numa Pompilius, the first King of Rome, warned Romans early that they should "apply their minds to religion as to a most serious business."[1] Rome evolved and grew, so did the state religion. In fact, the official sacred creeds of the state became fused with Rome to the point that religion existed to ensure the strength and stability of the state. Religious festivals called upon the gods to bless Rome and keep it safe from harm's way. The state religion was exactly that--a religion existing first for the state, and then perhaps for the individual. Of course, Romans in the city and countryside generally heeded and carried out their sacred rites. Religion was an integral part of their lives, as it was an integral part of the state. Thus, the dissolution of the family meant family worship began to dissolve. The breakdown of the state led to a breakdown of the Roman religious tradition. Though Roman religious worship, both official and private, was a very powerful means to showcase loyalty, devotion, and goodwill towards Rome, its evolution was also indicative of the collapse of the Res Publica.

A genuine appeal to piety on behalf of Roman officials and the belief in the ius divinum, the divine law, exemplified early religious fervor. Many state priests and priestesses devoted their lives to ensure the honor and strength of Rome was maintained. The Vestal Virgins are perhaps the best known religious officials of ancient Rome. The principal duty of the Vestal Virgins was to tend the holy fire, to make certain that it was constantly lit; for the extinguishing of the flame was an omen indicating the destruction of the state.[2] In fact, the hearth fire symbolized the very life of Rome, and the state charged the Vestals with the care of that symbolic life. The primary concern of the Vestals, then, was not personal spiritual fulfillment, nor was it the promulgation of state religious practices throughout Rome. The Vestals existed to maintain the vitality of the Res Publica, if only in a symbolic way.

The Roman domestic cult was a significant part of any Roman household and as such, it became influential in establishing a state religion. A basic belief in numen, spiritual power inhabiting everything, and in the genius, the spiritual double or soul of a person, molded ancient concepts of deities. Likewise, the state as a being also possessed numen, and the replenishing of state numen was a primary concern throughout the Republic.[3] The most common method of replenishing the spiritual energy necessary to maintain Rome was by offering the gods of the state and the

state live animals.[4]

From such practices arose a public religion, one which was used often for maintaining security and devotion within Rome. For instance, in the third century B.C. when the Gauls occupied Rome, Fabius, the pontiff, performed a sacrifice on the Quirinal Hill. He returned to his countrymen "safely, protected by the sacred character of the mission."[5] Just before the Gallic occupation, Rome received an oracle foretelling the Gallic War.[6] To appease the gods, the state sacrificed a Gaulish man and woman and a Greek man and woman, "a sacrifice wholly alien to the Roman spirit."[7] Nevertheless, Rome was in a state of anxiety, and the gods needed numen to defend the city against barbarians. In fact, Livy confirmed this interpretation in writing that the Romans made supplications "to alleviate men's anxiety concerning their relations with the gods."[8]

Rome continued to assimilate domestic religion, particularly in establishing figures to conduct worship. The pater familias was the priest of the household and thus presided over sacred rites. In the rural community, the first priests consisted of the patres familiarum who regulated worship in the paganalia.[9] When the state accepted the task of securing divine favor for the populace, the early kings established priestly positions to conduct religious matters. Numa Pompilius, the first king of Rome, appointed priests "with conical top-knots. He likewise

established the priests of Volturnus, of Palatua, of Furina, of Flora, of Falacer, and of Pomona."[10] Numa designated the Salii priest for Mars and the virgins for Vesta. He then named Numa Marcius the first Pontifex. His duties were to make decrees concerning public and private worship and to formulate a standard religious law "lest any confusion should arise . . . . through the neglect of ancestral rites and the adoption of strange ones."[11] Numa's interest in religion extended to his governance. He established state worship and through this "induced a fierce people to rule with piety and justice an empire which they had acquired by violence and injustice."[12]

The ultimate goal for state religious officials was to obtain a pax deorum, a peace with the gods.[13] Numa attempted this peace by allowing pontifices and flamines to have precedence over all other priests.[14] Early pontiffs, then, occupied an extremely important, and in many ways powerful, position. Their prestige did not wane as Rome itself gained power.

Throughout the Republic, the priesthoods developed into offices which wielded authority and earned a great amount of reverence. The organization of the clergy began with the Pontifex Maximus who was the chief priest. Second was the King of the Sacred Rites, the Rex Sacrorum. The Board of Pontiffs, Collegium Pontificum, was third in the hierarchical scheme. The College included all flamines

serving Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus, Saturn, and other gods of the Roman state.[15] In the early years of the Republic the Flamen Dialis, the priest of Jupiter, was particularly significant for he embodied holiness and divine power. The Flamen Dialis's particular importance stemmed from Jupiter's position as the most powerful deity in the Roman pantheon and as a symbol of the Roman state. The Flamen Dialis dressed and presented himself as a magistrate. A lictor attended him, and the Flamen wore the purple-edged toga. The priest was present at meetings of the Senate and had his own official seat. His job was not to conduct the worship of Jupiter alone; rather, his entire family assisted him, one of the few examples of women actually having a role in the state religion. As he was the priest of the chief Roman deity, the Flamen Dialis could not see or be near anything considered base or unholy. He was supposed to represent the supreme greatness, perfection, and continuity of the Roman state. He could not see work and death and could not touch slaves, horses, and other impious things. He also could not have contact with anything suggesting war or bondage. This meant he could not wear a ring, unless it was not a complete circle, nor could he walk under a trellis because the vines were suggestive of fastenings.[16] When the magistrates discussed relocating to Veii in 390 B.C., they could not do so because the Flamen Dialis could not "lie for a single night outside the city, without sin."[17]

Inclusive with religious offices was the use of divination to enhance further the power of state religion. Divination was present at the beginning of the state and comprised "ritual, auspices, and the third additional division consisting of all such prophetic warnings as the interpreters of the Sybil or the soothsayers have derived from portents and prodigies."[18] More than anything else, divining assured the public that the gods were concerned about Rome.[19]

The College of Augurs was the most powerful tool for public divination in the Republic. Composed of sixteen members, the College was to interpret divine approval or disapproval of proposed actions by watching the feeding patterns of chickens, the flight of birds, and by observing any other occurrence which seemed extraordinary.[20] The augurs did not have the exclusive right to see such signs, however. Roman citizens could observe auspices and report them to the Senate if the portents appeared to concern the state.[21] In building the city in the eighth century B.C. Romulus "obeyed the augural omens," as did Numa Pompilius who gave the augur a position in the state religion.[22] In fact, Numa did not attain the kingship until the augur had witnessed signs of divine approval.[23] In 491 B.C. Titus Latinius, a plebeian, dreamt that Jupiter told him to inform the Senate that the god was not happy with the lead dancer in his festival. Latinius ignored the dream. Consequently,

his son died, and he himself became very ill. Carried into the Senate on a litter, the man delivered his divine message. He walked out on his own, completely healed.[24] Latinius thus demonstrated that portents were signs of active deities. Those who had received divine inspiration had to heed the message and obey it fully, for the consequences could be fatal.

Such was the genuine concern for the gods' approval. When the Gauls approached the city in 296 B.C., the public reported many strange portents. Jupiter's altar bled for three days. On another day honey poured from it, and milk spewed forth the following day. The magistrates immediately employed the seers to interpret the disastrous signs.[25] During the Hannibalic War in 206 B.C. a hermaphrodite lamb was born. At the same time the doors and altar of Neptune's temple "ran with copious sweat."[26] Even later in the Republic, at the death of the great general Scipio Africanus in 129 B.C., the statue of Apollo, god of war, "wept for three days, so that the Romans on the advice of the soothsayers voted to hew the statue in pieces and to sink it in the sea."[27] Perhaps one of the most ominous portents, for Pompey and particularly for the Republic, was one which appeared in 48 B.C. The night before the confrontation with Pompey, Caesar's army reported seeing "a flame from heaven [that] flew through the air from Caesar's camp to Pompey's, where it was extinguished."[28] From its foundation and

throughout the Republic, Rome remained aware of the divine presence. Many truly believed that the ability to interpret divine will was a gift bestowed on man "by the immortal gods for the ascertainment of future events."[29]

Less influential than the College of Augurs were the haruspices. Originally from Etruria, the haruspices determined divine approval by examining the entrails of sacrificial animals.[30] The consuls consulted them in 340 B.C. during the Latin revolt. The soothsayers "pointed out to Decius that the head of the liver was wounded on the friendly side; but that the victim was in all other respects acceptable to the gods."[31] Though seeking the advice of the haruspices was not uncommon in the Republic, these particular seers did not have the appeal that the augurs possessed.[32]

The Quindecimviri formed another sphere of public divination. This body of soothsayers kept the Sibylline Oracles, a collection of divine texts. When necessary, the Quindecimviri consulted the oracles and offered recommendations accordingly.[33] For instance, in 218 B.C. the sky rained pebbles and lightning lit the city. The Sibylline books insisted that such weather was an omen announcing the approaching Carthaginian army and that all citizens must act to placate the gods. Everyone participated in a display of religious fervor, and the omens ceased.[34] This account further illustrates the genuine

zeal for and faith in religion during the early and middle Republic. When Numa Pompilius established the national cult in the eighth century B.C., he insisted that the Roman officials and the Roman people apply themselves fully to religious worship. He set a standard for the religious conduct and practice in Rome. Of course moral codes of behavior and the social hierarchy also enforced this conduct. Nevertheless, Numa's establishment of religion in Rome conditioned Republican responses to more unconventional worship.[35]

Although before the time of the Christian persecutions the Roman government had tolerated a great deal of diversity of religious practices, the Republic saw instances of suppression and even banning of certain cults. In short, toleration ended when social disorder threatened. Livy records that in 428 B.C. foreign superstitions followed a drought and plague. Livy describes these as "outlandish and unfamiliar sacrifices" offered to appease heaven's anger. He then states that "the aediles were then commissioned to see to it that none but Roman gods should be worshipped, nor in any but the ancestral way."[36] Again in 213 B.C. Livy records the senate's decree that "No one should sacrifice in a public or consecrated place according to a strange or foreign rite," a proclamation made after Roman rites were abandoned due to the excessive length of the Punic War.[37]

Perhaps one of the most notorious conflicts with a cult

occurred in 186 B.C. Because the Roman state disliked anything resembling a secret society, the Senate took action against a large group who indulged in the worship of the Greek god Dionysus, otherwise known to the Romans as Bacchus. The frenzied worship of the Bacchanalia incited fear of chaos among the magistrates. Postumius, a consul at the time, purportedly warned the Senate that "its [the cult's] objective is the control of the state."[38] This warning was enough for the Senate, who, according to Livy, destroyed all forms of Bacchic worship except in cases where an ancient altar or image had been consecrated. The Senate provided, however, that if a person felt compelled to worship in this way, he must first obtain permission from the Senate. If permission was granted, no more than five persons were allowed to take part in the rite, and there was to be no common purse or priest.[39] Thus, the Senate prevented any further uprisings by not allowing any real organization among the group. The significance of the Bacchanalian incident extends beyond the way in which Rome dealt with foreign rites. Part of the threat of the Bacchic revelers was their sex. As women, the Bacchants were engaging in secret, foreign superstitions. Perhaps even more disturbing, according to historian John Scheid, was the fact that they were initiating their own young sons into the group. The state saw the women as usurping the role of the state and the pater familias, as the Bacchic group seemed to

pose a threat to the civic initiation of young Roman citizens. Though the government did allow some assembly of Bacchants after the initial incidents, the state made certain it had put the women back in their proper place. The state turned them over to their fathers and husbands and advised them to punish the offenders. It was absolutely necessary to reassert the old patriarchy, for social order depended upon it.[40]

Roman dealings with both the cult of Isis and the Jews were also indicative of the necessity of maintaining social order and a sense of loyalty first and foremost to Rome. The goddess Isis was imported from Egypt and quickly became popular. The foreign and feminine nature of the cult once again threatened the state and the traditional patriarchal Roman system. Between 58 and 48 B.C., the Senate ordered temples to Isis torn down on four separate occasions. Finally, after Isis was "Romanized" and the threat was lessened, the worship of the Egyptian goddess became legal in Rome.[41] Similarly, the very foreign worship of the Jews and the closed nature of their society posed a threat to Roman social order. The expanding Empire had to assure the loyalty and devotion of its citizens. Roman intervention during the Republican period was a direct result of the government's sense that the synagogues were disorderly and promoting a sort of chaos.[42] The most important thing for the continuity of Rome was maintaining order and loyalty to

the state. The government accomplished this feat by making the state the central focus of religion.

Both religious officials and Roman citizens were convinced of the spiritual vitality of their republic. The historian Florus recorded one such example of patriotism and loyalty. When the Gauls were approaching the city walls in the third century B.C., the pontiffs and priests buried all sacred objects, as did the Vestals.[43] In fact, a plebeian named Albinius abandoned his own wife and children to help the Virgins escape, thus demonstrating "to such an extent, even in the utmost extremities, did the respect for religion prevail over personal affection."[44] However, respect for religion in these terms was equivalent to respect for the state of Rome. Albinius abandoned his own family to ensure the safety of state religious officials; he also did so to ensure the continuation of Rome.

The public nature of Roman religion and the source of its creeds and practices made it very much a part of the state. Rome not only adopted and molded its spiritual beliefs, but the state also identified with its religious creed. Those very religious beliefs had everything to do with the existence of the state, with the belief in the power and the sanctity of Rome. They fashioned a loyalty to the state, that was, on occasions, helped along with the suppression of certain rites and the promotion of others. It is essential then to include a discussion of Roman

religion when identifying the social causes and consequences of the collapse of the Republic. The identity of the Res Publica, the spiritual vitality of the state was tied to religious worship. Likewise, the moral codes of Republican Rome were bound up with the ideal of Republican government. The state suffered irreversible damage when both began to disintegrate.

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CHAPTER III

MORAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE REPUBLIC

When Rome annihilated Carthage in the Second Punic War, her long-time foe and her greatest enemy was gone. According to the Roman writer Sallust, this momentous occasion marked the beginning of the end of Roman integrity, of strict Roman morality:

> When Carthage, the rival of Rome's dominion, had been utterly destroyed, and sea and land lay every where open to her sway, Fortune then began to exercise her tyranny, and to introduce universal innovation. To those who had easily endured toils, dangers, and doubtful and difficult circumstances, ease and wealth, the objects of desire to others, became a burden and a trouble. At first the love of money, and then that of power, began to prevail, and these became, as it were, the sources of every evil. For avarice subverted honesty, integrity, and other honorable principles, and, in their stead, inculcated pride, inhumanity, contempt of religion, and general venality.[1]

Indeed, many contemporary and modern historians agree: the waning years of the Roman Republic saw a sort of social chaos. Many describe it as a decline in the adherence to old Roman standards of conduct, to the old Roman morality. But it was more than that. It involved the breakdown of an ideal and a social structuring. Much of this breakdown was due to the fact that wealthy Romans for years had been buying up land in Italy, leaving landless farmers to gravitate toward Rome. Their desperate treks only added to

the growing number of unemployed in the city. The uprooting and displacement of families shook the moral foundations of the nuclear and extended unit. The family had always formed the basis of morality and ethics. Likewise, the Res Publica inculcated morals and values into the hearts and minds of Romans. The slow demise of the Res Publica and of the association of Romans with each other, as nuclear and extended families and as citizens of the state, sent chaos into the order of the old Roman morality.

Moral and ethical codes of behavior in the Roman Republic developed much along the same lines as did religion. Morality began with the family and the place of each individual within the unit. This basic social structure extended to the state as Rome grew. And as it did with religion, Rome inadvertently adopted the familial structure and incorporated it into the state's own social and moral consciousness. Thus, at the height of the Republican period, the state itself, along with the basic unit, the family, existed as the focal point and the determining factor of social and moral structure.

The first point to consider in outlining the sources and development of Roman morality is the Roman family. The structure of the family in Republican Rome and the changes that took place toward the end of the Republican period are indicative of a failing social system. For the basic social unit, the family, was beginning to break down.

The pater familias was the head of the Roman family, and as such, he held the power of life and death over his own children. But the title pater familias was not one a man adopted immediately upon the birth of his first child. The pater familias was the moral and religious head of a family, subject to the authority of no other man. Thus, if a grandfather was still alive, he would be the pater familias of the entire family, a factor which held family units together, under the law as well as practically. Roman law and tradition gave to the pater familias the responsibility of punishing the moral wrongdoings of those under his authority. It was up to him to uphold Roman values, even if it meant banishing or killing a child for committing a crime against the state, the family, or the gods.[2]

As mentioned previously, the state turned women over to their paters familiarum after the Bacchic incident for punishment. Later, in the Principate, Augustus exercised his power as pater familia by banishing his daughter and granddaughter for their moral offenses.[3]

In the final decades of the Roman Republic, the power of the pater familias was especially important in father/daughter relationships. Traditionally, when a woman married, she left her father's house and he relinquished his power over her forever. She then became the property, as such, of her husband. Upon his death, she was in most respects her own free agent. However, toward the last

century B.C., marriages with manus, the authority of the husband over his wife, began to decline. Instead, women remained under the patria potestas of their own fathers. According to Yan Thomas in "The Division of the Sexes in Roman Law," this was a result of the slow disintegration of the claims of family interests.[4] It was simply easier and less expensive for the woman to remain under the legal guardianship of her father. By the time of Augustus, there were fewer marriages among the elite. Marriage and producing heirs meant the division of family property. Some families could not afford to allow their sons or daughters to marry, as daughters inherited equally under Roman law.[5] Thus, with the power over a wife in the hands of her father, there was less to bind the nuclear family. Furthermore, by the last years of the Republic, fewer people were marrying at all. The Roman family structure was weakening, and the Roman moral unit was beginning to break down. The larger unit, the Res Publica, was similarly in danger.

Moral legislation during the Republican period of Rome was sparse. In fact, morality, its link to the state, and its codes in the Republic were such an oddity during this time period that few historians, contemporary and otherwise, address the issue. One historian, however, did leave us an explanation as to why the government of the Republican period did not devise laws governing morality. Livy writes about the early years of Rome:

> Now that it seemed to them (people of Rome) that concern for human afairs was felt by the heavenly powers, had so tinged the hearts of all with piety, that the nation was governed by its regard for promises and oaths, rather than by the dread of laws and penalties.[6]

The few issues the state addressed--whether or not religious acts were carried out in good faith, whether or not the gods were pleased with the religious actions of certain Romans--were quite unrelated to how and if the state, apart from its spiritual creeds, influenced the moral and ethical codes of Romans.

All that exists that might be considered legislation of morality came from the Theodosian Codes. Title 12:1 addressed incest: "Capital punishment to a man who takes a daughter of a brother or sister as his wife."[7] Title 12:24 deals with the rape of virgins and widows. It states in effect that if a man violates a girl or woman with or without her will, both will be punished if she does not shout aloud.[8] Title 12:25 involves the rape of holy maidens. The law states that a man will be punished for rape whether or not the maiden was a complying partner. The punishment was either death or exile.[9] Strangely enough, the only codes that one might consider moral dealt with sexual relations. Later, in the Principate, many of the moral laws enacted by Augustus also had to do with sexual relations. The difference, however, was that Augustus made a strong, legislative appeal to the morality of the Roman people. In the Republic, the law did not, for the most

part, address the morality of Romans. Even the aforesaid laws were enacted more to preserve a man's honor. The problem, though, with using these codes as evidence of moral legislation during the time of the Republic is that we have no certain knowledge that these sexual codes were even written down during the Republic. It is most probable that they were simply social mores that were later encoded during the Empire.

What did seem to influence morality in Republican Rome was less a law than it was a concept, an ideal fashioned over years of allegiance to a state that grew more and more powerful. Donald Earl in his The Moral and Political Tradition of Rome elaborates on the meaning of this concept of virtus. Virtus, he claims, stands for the entire aristocratic ideal. It stands for the winning of glory by executing great deeds for the fatherland and posterity, according to standards of conduct that the legendary founders laid out in the very beginnings of the state.[10]

Virtus, a latin word akin to virtue, signified a way of life. It meant bringing honor and glory to the state and one's ancestors. It imposed a moral code which was far more powerful to the nobiles than any legislation could ever be. Virtus went beyond the patriotism expressed by one young tribune in the first Punic War who vowed to a consul that he would give his life for the Republic.[11] For further explanation, perhaps the best teacher is Cicero. In his

treatise On Moral Obligation, Marcus Tullius Cicero pointed out that robbery or theft from another was justifiable if one can bring great advantage to the state by doing so. If one can not, then such action is wrong.[12] Yet in The Laws, Cicero cites nature as the source of justice. He explains:

> And if nature is not to be considered the foundation of justice, that will mean the destruction [of the virtues on which human society depends]....Virtues originate in our natural inclination to love our fellow-men, and this is the foundation of justice.[13]

However, W. Den Boer insists that the concept of universal humanity that Cicero constructs in such works is based more on a pattern of family and fatherland and on one's obligations to each. His stress is not on a shared humanity, because beyond the state, a shared humanity did not exist. The only loyal association, Boer asserts, is of citizens in the Res Publica.[14]

Toward the last years of the Roman Republic, the loyal association of Romans began to disintegrate. Many scholars cite an increase in the manipulation of religious festivals and religious signs and omens by state officials as proof of this so-called disintegration. In addition, if in fact virtus and an uncompromising allegiance to Rome is what formed the basis of moral codes in the Republic, this too began to fall apart, damaged by both internal and external forces. First and perhaps most important, many of the elite who had traditionally upheld the notion of virtus were seeking their own glory, riches, and powers quite in

opposition to the welfare of Rome. Second, an influx of eastern religions and philosophies deemphasized the attaining of moral goodness for the benefit of the state.

Many scholars have argued that the signs of neglect and manipulation of the state religion that began to show by the last century before the collapse of the Republic were also indicative of the general social disintegration. Perhaps, but religion and morality in Rome were often quite separate, except where family or the state connected them.

It is interesting to note the new influx of eastern philosophies that dealt directly with morality and ethics. Because Romans considered Greece the center of culture and learning, many new religious and philosophical ideas found their way to Rome, becoming increasingly popular and influential among the elite by the last century of the Republic.

Epicureanism was especially popular in the Rome of the late Republic. Epicurus, a Greek philosopher, had propagated the theory of a sort of hedonism characterized by the avoidance of unnecessary pain and the attainment of pleasure. Many young Romans saw this as a license for indulgence. The Roman state naturally regarded it as an attack on traditional Roman mores and values. Epicureanism seemed to go completely against the age-old Roman attitudes of self-discipline and control. It influenced art and literature, helping to shape such works as Lucretius's De

Rerum Natura.[15]

Another threat, though very different in theory, to the moral tradition of Rome was Stoicism. Founded by the Greek Zeno, Stoicism found a following among the Roman elite. A philosophy that stressed that virtue was based on knowledge and that goodness was found in nature and in everyone, Stoicism deemphasized the stress that the state inadvertently put on ethical and moral duty. Cicero, a follower of Stoicism himself, helped explain some of the basic tenets of the philosophy in his De Natura Deorum:

> Virtue no one ever imputed to a god's bounty. And doubtless with good reason; for our virtue is a just ground for others' praise and a right reason for our own pride, and this would not be so if the gift of virtue came to us from a god and not from ourselves.[16]

Of course, Roman religion did not emphasize that the gods dictated or were even concerned about morality. However, the entire philosophy behind the Res Publica stressed that ethical behavior came from a desire to win glory for the state, and that this was the aim of such actions. Stoicism denied this. It proposed that people had the capacity to be good and should do so for the sake of doing what was right. It was threatening for this very reason. The perpetuation of loyalty and cohesion in the Republic was crucial for the continuity of the state.

It is not impossible in the modern state to realize the immense loyalty that can be felt for one's fatherland. The emotions accompanying patriotism are strong, sometimes

violent, sometimes all-encompassing. Dissatisfaction, boredom, hunger, and the denial of necessities can break such loyalties among the common man. With the nobiles, such loyalty may collapse amidst the appearance of ambition, the desire for personal glory. Historian Donald Earl explains that the Republic tradition of virtus had stressed that only by attempting to benefit the state could a man win glory and prestige in Roman society. But when prestige and glory were sought for personal aims and for the detriment of the state, the end of the Republic was near. For the very class that had most closely identified itself with the true meaning of the Res Publica, the nobiles, had in their own lust for personal power destroyed the ideals that the Res Publica stood for. They had denied the notion of eternal loyalty and the quest for eternal greatness in Rome. When they did so, they encouraged the bulk of the Roman population to do likewise.[17]

The destruction, then, began in the year 133 B.C. when a group of senators murdered the tribune Tiberius Gracchus.[18] Gracchus was unique, innovative and popular with the masses. When wealthy landowners began to usurp public lands, leaving the poor with even less, Gracchus passed a land bill entitling them to their rightful property. Gracchus's distinction lay in the fact that he had not only challenged the senators, many of whom were the usurping landholders, but he had also taken his bill

directly to the people. Such an action made him popular with the masses, but caused dissension among the wealthier Romans, and mistrust among the common man.[19] Likewise, Tiberius's brother Gaius, as tribune in 123-122, proposed such grand programs of reform, including state-subsidized wheat rations, the extension of Roman citizenship in Italy, and the planting of colonies, that once again the enormous popularity and power of one individual threatened the Roman elite. Gaius's status among the people of Rome again led to dissension and to his early death.[20]

According to the historian Sallust, a more direct attack on the unity of Rome and the loyalty of its citizens began with the formulation of Marius's army. As landholding requirements had kept most poorer Romans from joining the military, Marius's open recruitment of men who relied on him for their livelihood and for land upon retirement meant the creation of a new army, one whose loyalty did not necessarily rest with the Res Publica.[21] Similarly, Sulla raised his own army and marched on Rome in an act of civil war. When he declared himself dictator, he stressed what was already becoming quite apparent--that the power of select individuals was growing ever stronger, while the ties of unity were quickly disintegrating.[22] Likewise, the power of Pompey, the loyalty of his army, and the popularity and power he maintained in the Roman provinces proved a nemesis to the operation of the government at Rome and a

threat to the ambitious Julius Caesar.

The final step in bringing about the collapse of the Republic, however, may have been the compact made between three great powers in the year 60 B.C. The triumvirate formed by Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus contained enough influence and power to ensure that one if not all of these men would dominate Rome.[23] And of course a sharing of power meant an eventual vying for dominance. Thus occurred the Civil War of 49 B.C., the death of Pompey, and the declaration that made Julius Caesar "Dictator for Life."[24]

Finally, the quest for individual power by families who had once symbolized the power and unity of Rome led to the disintegration of the Repubic. It was not only the political entity of the Republic that was destroyed, it was the social structure that also died. The poor, an ever increasing segment of the population in Republican Rome, made up the bulk of Roman society. Uprooted farmers and desperate city poor were all dissatisfied with the government and anxious for change. The creation of latifundia or large estates in the countryside only meant the displacement of thousands of rural families, families that had once formed the foundation of traditional mores and values for themselves and for the Res Publica. Left without land and employment their faith in the Republic began to crumble. Grand schemes of change, posed by the likes of the Gracchi, and promises of steady income that private armies

gave easily lured them. Their loyalty to Rome was slowly fading, and the very group that had defined loyalty to the state, the elite, encouraged that fading.

The destruction of the Roman family, of that most basic social unit, meant the collapse of the entire social web that existed for and as a part of the state. Inevitably came the demise of the ideals that held the Republic together. No longer were men fighting to ensure the posterity of Rome; they were now working relentlessly to ensure their own power. The virtus men once sought for Rome was now *gloria* sought for self.

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CHAPTER IV

THE RELIGIOUS LEGISLATION OF AUGUSTUS

Religion in the Roman Republic was a means to express loyalty to the state and to ensure the prosperity of Rome. It bound folk of different economic and social levels together in the name of posterity--in the name of the Res Publica. While the evidence is overwhelming that in the late Republic religious officials and ceremonies and festivals often existed to manipulate public opinion, the religion of the Republic as a whole worked as an integral part of the state. It elevated Rome to the level of a spiritual entity, an entity worth believing in, preserving, and fighting for. With the collapse of the Republic, the meaning of the Res Publica changed. The state had become tainted, manipulated. If the Roman state was ever going to see security and lasting harmony, the Res Publica either had to be redefined or reestablished. Loyalty and unity must again reign in Rome and one of the first means of achieving this was to regain the Roman confidence in its religion. This is exactly what Augustus set out to accomplish with the many religious reforms of the Principate.

The Emperor Augustus desperately needed to recall a glorious past, to put Roman minds at ease and to assure them

that Rome's glory and greatness were not lost. A significant part of this former glory was bound up with Rome's religious convictions and practices--practices which symbolized the steadfastness and moral fortitude of the people. As previously noted, contemporaries cited religious decay as one of the most pressing problems in the late Republic. A Rome that was going to prosper and grow stronger had to address not only the problem of the decline of the traditional religious rites and beliefs, but also the influx of foreign rites--rites that appeared more personal and spiritual than the distant rituals of old Rome. Augustus realized that an enduring empire must rebuild both the outer structures and the inner faith in traditional creeds.

Augustus saw the first step in renovating the religion of Rome as addressing her outermost features, performing a face-lift, so to speak. Suetonius mentions that Augustus built three new temples: the Forum with the Temple of Avenging Mars, the Temple of Jupiter the Thunderer, and the Palatine Temple of Apollo.[1] He restored temples that either had been allowed to fall in ruin, or had burned during Rome's civil strife.[2] In addition, he encouraged wealthier citizens to fund the restorations of buildings of past religious significance. According to Suetonius, Romans responded eagerly.[3] Perhaps the most telling proof of Augustus's attempt to renew the face of Rome's ancient

religion is in his own words. In his Res Gestae Augustus writes, "Eighty-two temples in the city in my sixth consulship (28 BC) with the authority of the senate I repaired, passing over none which at that time [ought to have been repaired.]"[4] There is no doubt that when Augustus boasted, "I found Rome built of bricks; I leave her clothed in marble," he was not exaggerating.[5]

The great building spree that characterized much of the early part of Augustus's reign is not the only sign of his attempt to recall Rome's glorious religious past. In addition to providing the structures in which Romans were meant to worship, the Emperor provided the men and women necessary to encourage such worship. Because of the deteriorating interest in traditional religion and the steady decline in the number of state priests--vivid proof in the public's disinterest--Augustus applied himself to the process of renewing the priesthoods, of filling in the chasm of religious leaders. Besides attempting to replenish the rather depleted number of young women in the College of Vestal Virgins, a difficult chore when so many noble Roman families were trying to keep their daughters out of the College and instead marry them off to form beneficial alliances, Augustus increased the number of priesthoods by reviving certain priestly positions. Suetonius names the augury of the Goddess Safety and the position of Flamen Dialis as two such offices left vacant for years. The

Emperor Augustus later renewed them.[6]

Not all contemporaries viewed the Emperor's actions as worthy of drawing together a rather large and disparate empire. Consider, for instance, the very cynical remarks of the poet Seneca:

> I came into the Capitol where the several deities had their several servants and attendants, their lictors, their dressers, and all in posture and action, as if they were executing their offices; some to hold the glass, others to comb out Juno's and Minerva's hair; one to tell Jupiter what o'clock it is; some lasses there are that sit gazing upon the image, and fancy Jupiter has a kindness for them. . . . All these things a wise man will observe for the laws' sake more than for the gods; and all this rabble of deities, which the superstition of many ages has gathered together, we are in such manner to adore, as to consider the worship to be rather matter of custom than of conscience.[7]

Another revival of the traditional Roman religion was the renewed celebration of certain obsolete rites. Augustus boasted of bringing back to Rome the notorious Secular Games: "On behalf of the Quindecimviri and as master of that (Priestly) College and with Marcus Agrippa [I presented] the Secular Games in the consulship of Gaius Furnius and Faius Silanus (17 BC)."[8] The Games, the purpose of which was to provide a period of intense purification for Rome, a sort of spiritual cleansing, were well-publicized. Augustus specifically intended them to revive certain memories of the past, while simultaneously extinguishing less pleasant ones, most notably the recent years of civil strife. Inscribed on marble in Rome is a

decree acknowledging the significance of the event:

> Whereas the consul Gaius Silanus said that the Secular Games would take place [in the present year] after very many [years, conducted by Imperator Caesar] Augustus and Marcus A[grip]pa, (both) holding the tribunician power, [and that because it is fitting that as many people as possible should see them] for religious reasons and because [nobody will be present a second time] at such a spectacle, [it seemed right to permit] those not yet married [to be present on the days] of those Games without [detriment to themselves].[9]

In addition to the pomp and ceremony of the notorious Secular Games, Augustus revived the ancient Lupercalia Festival and the Festival of the Cross-Roads.[10] Like the Secular Games, the purpose of renewing these ancient rites was to recall the religion of the past. Indeed, recalling so many of the religious traditions of Rome's past, even those that had long been forgotten, was an obvious attempt to restore faith in Roman institutions. But if the restoration of Rome's former religious glory was Augustus's aim, why then did he alter certain Roman rituals, introducing rites and beliefs that were foreign to Rome? The inspiration for these new practices, the introduction of the Lares Augusti in place of the district lares, the cult of the Genius (the divine spirit) of Augustus, were eastern in origin.[11] Perhaps the answer lies in the new religious consciousness of Rome in the early Empire.

The influx of Greeks and Egyptians brought an entirely new way of approaching divine matters. The Romans had long seen the distinction between man and god. Though certain

Romans had displayed incredible courage, almost divine wisdom, they were yet mortal. No Roman ever disputed that fact. But the eastern cults drew a less distinct line between the human and divine. Certainly ruler worship existed in Egypt long before the Ptolemies. And Alexander brought a form of Persian ruler worship back to Greece, a concept that up to that point had been foreign to the Greeks. But the Romans had long balked at such practices, viewing them as barbaric and simple. Rome held much of eastern religion in contempt until the time of the late Republic.[12] However, when Roman institutions, secular and sacred, began to fail, many Romans in urban and rural areas alike began to take heed of the newly introduced eastern views. Despite their very strange and different approach to the supernatural, the eastern religions offered a sort of mysticism that gave the worshipper a more intimate part in the worship. It allowed him more control--something everyone desires in times of great chaos and uncertainty.[13]

Of course, this new interest in the mystical and mysterious beliefs of the east was not lost on the astute Emperor of Rome. If people had deemed Alexander worthy of worship, why not Augustus? This is not to say that ego was the primary reason behind Augustus's promotion of a new cult centered around his now deified father, though it could very well have been a factor. Ronald Syme proposes an

interesting theory regarding Augustus's motives for promoting the cult of the dead Julius Caesar. Syme suggests that the politically-wise Augustus realized that the most efficacious method of dissociating himself from Caesar was to elevate him to the status of god, removing him as far as possible from the role of father and mentor to the new emperor. However, why would Augustus want to dissociate himself from the great Roman martyr? Syme explains that Julius Caesar destroyed the Republic; Augustus made his public goal the restoration of the Republic. In summary, Syme writes, "He [Augustus] exploited the divinity of his parent and paraded the titulature of 'Divi Filius.' For all else, Caesar the proconsul and dictator was better forgotten."[14] However, this approach does not fully explain the willingness of Augustus to accept his association with divinity and his active attempt to promote himself as one who would soon be enrolled among the ranks of the divine. Augustus clearly saw that this type of association could be profitable politically. He needed to promote the cult of Julius Caesar to legitimize his claim as the rightful ruler of Rome, particularly in the wake of Marc Antony's claim to the throne. Augustus's association with divinity assured his political position.

The Emperor did not stop at promoting Divus Julius. As the historian Florus suggested, the name Augustus "was thought more sacred and venerable, in order that, while he

still lived on earth, he might in name and title be ranked among the gods."[15] Indeed, Tacitus wrote that on the day of Augustus's state funeral, it was said about the Emperor: "No honor was left for the gods, when Augustus chose to be himself worshipped with temples and statues, like those of the deities, and with flamens and priests."[16] In fact, Augustus did not seem at all to want to disassociate himself with divinity. Though he purportedly refused outright worship of himself in Rome, he did not discourage sacrifices and libations to his genius. In fact, the historian Cassius Dio recorded that in 29 B.C. the Senate declared that at all banquets, public and private, a libation must be poured to Augustus. In addition, the once prudent and conservative governing body of Rome mandated that the name of the man who had brought the civil wars to an end should be included in hymns equally with the names of the gods.[17] The poet Horace, a contemporary of the Emperor, sings his praises:

> Every Roman walks his own hills,
> Marrying vines to widowed elms,
> Then feasts at his own table, rejoicing,
> Pouring a libation to Caesar as if
>
> To a god. He worships Caesar, with prayers
> And wine poured from bowls, Caesar
> Joined with his household gods--as the Greeks once
> Did in honoring Hercules and Castor[18]

It seemed that with the ever increasing diversity of the Roman population, Augustus wanted to appeal to as many aspects of the varying religions represented in Rome as possible. His merging of eastern and western rites and

beliefs was good business when eastern philosophies not only existed in Rome, they were influencing traditional Roman rites.

Augustus did not discourage, and in fact often promoted, his own cult in the provinces. His reasons for doing so are not difficult to fathom. Politically, a cult was the perfect answer to an ever-expanding empire's problem of loyalty and cohesion.[19] In a very real sense, Augustus was the ultimate figurehead for the state. He provided in himself something substantial, something concrete in which non-Romans could believe. He attempted to mold his own personage into the very thing the Res Publica stood for in the Republic--a spiritual, unifying embodiment of Rome. For to the inhabitants of the provinces, the Roman Empire itself was nothing more than an abstract concept representing oppression and taxation. Augustus, however, was the son of the newest god in the Roman pantheon, and a future deity himself. Though according to Suetonius, the Emperor did not allow the voting of temples to him in the provinces[20], the historian Dio tells a different story:

> Caesar, meanwhile besides attending to the general business, gave permission for the dedication of sacred precincts in Ephesus and in Nicaea to Rome and to Caesar, his father.
>
> He commanded that the Romans resident in these cities should pay honour to these two divinities; but he permitted the aliens, whom he styled the Hellenes, to consecrate precincts to himself.
>
> For in the capital itself and in Italy generally no emperor, however worthy of renown he has been, has dared to do this; still, even there various divine honours are bestowed after their

> death upon such emperors as have ruled uprightly, and, in fact, shrines are built to them.[21]

Supporting Cassius Dio's remarks are inscriptions found in various Roman provinces, inscriptions that relate, beyond a doubt, the reverence and divine honors reserved for the Emperor. One inscription, dated 4-3 B.C. from Myra in Lycia reads, "Divine Augustus Casear, son of a god, imperator of land and sea, the benefactor and saviour of the whole world, the people of the Myrians."[22] Archaeologists have found another such inscription in Narbo. Dated 12-13 A.D., the marble reads:

> O divinity of Caesar Augustus, father of his country, when I give and dedicate this altar to you today, I shall give and dedicate it under those regulations and rules which I shall publicly proclaim to be the foundation of this altar and this inscription.[23]

Perhaps the evidence that best demonstrates the extent of the cult of the living Emperor, though, is the remains of a letter written approximately five years before the beginning of the common era. The letter, found in the province of Sardis, addresses "Charinus, son of Charinus, of Pergamum, the high priest of divine Rome and of Imperator Caesar Augustus."[24] This shred of correspondence is most telling, for it reveals that Augustus had not merely a few token statues and temples as symbols of loyalty to Rome and to the Emperor; he had priests. Priests, as an attempt at organization, are the one ingredient that signifies a cult. Clearly Caesar did allow the voting of temples to himself in

the provinces, contrary to Suetonius's assertion. In fact, the shrewd Emperor of Rome may have even encouraged such activity.

The final confirmation of Augustus's attempts to align himself with the supernatural powers of the Roman world came upon his death. An expraetor swore he had seen the spirit of the Emperor soar toward the heavens as the corpse of Augustus burned upon the funeral pyre.[25] Alas, Rome enrolled the founder of its Empire into a pantheon that, only a short while before, had consisted of the most powerful deities, beings far removed from the mortal world of the rulers of Rome.

When Augustus returned to Rome at the end of the civil wars, he found a city, an empire, disconnected from its past and completely uncertain of its future. The influx of easterners in Rome meant new and foreign rites, beliefs, and practices. Furthermore, if we are to believe many historians, confidence and interest in the state religion was waning. In fact, the state religion itself, both its outer trappings and inner workings, was disintegrating. These factors no doubt contributed to an identity crisis Romans were already experiencing. An astute leader would have to act fast, to avoid any further unrest, to ensure the future and the might of Rome, and to secure his own position. The Emperor used his own funds and called on wealthier citizens to use theirs to restore the former

majesty and dignity to Rome's state religion. In addition, he renewed festivals, replenished priestly positions, and promoted Rome's ancestral religion. But he did not stop there. An extraordinarily shrewd politician, Augustus incorporated some of the beliefs and traditions practiced by provincials. As he realized he could not eradicate significant aspects of the culture of outlying provinces, Augustus used them to his advantage. Emperor worship hardly had roots in Italy, but Augustus's manipulation of his own cult proved an effective means of unifying an expansive empire. His resurrection of rites and hallowed places within Rome itself also proved effective. The reforms of Augustus addressed the collapse of order, the collapse of faith in the Roman Republic. They attempted to bring back the cohesion, the faith in values and institutions that the Res Publica had once known and stood for. For the time being, the religious reforms of Augustus provided him with Roman confidence and exultation over a newly-recovered Roman patriotism.

End Notes

1. Suetonius, 69-70.

2. Ibid., 71.

3. Ibid., 70.

4. Robert K. Sherk, trans. and ed., The Roman Empire: Augustus to Hadrian (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 46.

5. Suetonius, 69.

6. Ibid., 71.

7. Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Seneca's Morals of a Happy Life, Benefits, Anger and Clemency, trans. Sir Roger L'Estrange, new edition (Chicago: Cornelius H. Shaver, 1882), xviii.

8. Sherk, The Roman Empire: Augustus to Hadrian, 47.

9. Ibid., 21.

10. Suetonius, 71.

11. Wardman, Religion and Statecraft Among the Romans, 76.

12. Lily Ross Taylor's The Divinity of the Roman Emperor superbly details the practice of ruler worship in the ancient world. Though she does ignore the great ancient civilizations of China and Japan, she provides an historical outline of the concept and its development up to and beyond the rule of Augustus.

13. Franz Cumont, Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism (New York: Dover Publications, 1959), 10.

14. Ronald Syme, "A Roman Post-Mortem," Essays on Roman Culture, ed. A. J. Dunston (Toronto: Samuel Stevens, 1976), 151.

15. Florus, 406.

16. Tacitus, 7.

17. Cocceianus, 6:55.

18. Horace, 93-94.

19. When I speak of cult, I speak of a cult to the Emperor's living spirit, not worship directed toward a deified emperor.

20. Suetonius, 84.

21. Cocceianus, 6:57-59.

22. David C. Braund, Augustus to Nero: A Sourcebook on Roman History, 31 B.C. - A.D. 68 (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 40.

23. Ibid., 61.

24. Ibid., 60.

25. Suetonius, 111.

CHAPTER V

THE MORAL LEGISLATION OF AUGUSTUS

The historian Livy, writing during the early years of the Principate, insisted that Roman moral consciousness was not what it used to be: "Of late, riches have brought in avarice, and excessive pleasures the longing to carry wantonness and license to the point of ruin for oneself and of universal destruction."[1] Yet many modern and some ancient historians argue that the beginning of the end of Roman integrity came during the last century of the Republic, when unity gave way to chaos and loyalty to the state gave way to loyalty to the individual. The loss of faith in the government and the collapse of Republican institutions led to a vacuum in the Roman moral and religious order. This breakdown of a unified set of ethics and moral codes, codes that had defined the Res Publica, did not go unnoticed by Romans or by the young Octavian. Augustus, the first emperor of a new Rome, clearly saw the void left by the demise of the Republic and acted quickly to fill that vacancy with legislation designed to recall the Res Publica, in spirit if not in reality.

In the last century of the Republic, men and women remembered tales of a strict Roman morality, morality

practiced by such Romans as Scipio Africanus, and of the most stringent Roman constitution represented by the years when Romans feared foreign aggression. Romans longed for a return to those days, a return to the morality of the early Republic. Tacitus wrote that upon the ascension of Augustus, "the state had been revolutionised, and there was not a vestige left of the old sound morality."[2] Augustus attempted to return the spirit of the Res Publica to Rome. He did so in part by recalling the stringent moral codes of the early Republic. He tried to transport Romans back to a time when the state was thought to be divinely blessed, due in large part to its strict attention to morality.

Ironically, the Republic had not legislated morality--it existed as a result of the Res Publica. As long as the state was the core of the consciousness of the people and as long as the _nobiles_ sought glory for Rome, morality was maintained in the desire to keep Rome great and assure divine blessing. Historian W. Den Boer concurs that in a regulated state like that of Rome, though moral consciousness and a sense of guilt undoubtedly existed, morality was most importantly a public phenomenon experienced as a threat to the existence of the community. It was thus intricately tied with the state.[3] When the meaning of the Res Publica changed, when great soldiers and statesmen began to seek glory for themselves instead of for Rome, the ancient, unwritten codes of moral and ethical

behavior no longer held. It was now up to the new Emperor to legislate morality and inculcate old Roman ethics into the minds and souls of the Roman people. Whether or not there actually was a fallen morality in the final days of the Republic and the early days of the Empire is debatable. While Suetonius and the poet Horace believed that crime and flagrant promiscuity were proof of the degeneracy of the Roman people, Seneca disagrees: "You are wrong, Lucilius, if you think that our age is peculiar for vice, luxury, desertion of moral standards, and all the other things which everyone imputes to his own time. These are the faults of mankind, not of any age. No time in history has been free from guilt."[4] Contemporaries overwhelmingly cite crime and sexual recklessness as proof of a new immorality. The poet Catullus laments:

> But now, alas, our many crimes have driven far
> from polluted earth the righteous powers of
> heaven.
>
> For, since o'er justice lust and wrong prevail;
> Since brother brother slays in horrid strife;
> And children cease their parents to bewail;
>
> The father would abridge his first born's life
> To revel freely in a second wife;
> The mother e'en contracts an impious tie
> With her unconscious child;--a world thus rife
> of sin, scorn purer spirits; they deny
> Their presence to our feasts, and hid in darkness
> lie[5]

It was not only poets who bewailed the new social problems that had befallen Rome. The historian Suetonius vividly described the lawlessness that existed throughout

the city and on the highways. Much of the chaos, he insists, was a result of the civil wars, but some of it sprung to life right after the war. In writing of the bandit parties that endangered travel Suetonius says:

> Numerous so-called 'workmen's guilds', in reality organizations for committing every sort of crime, had also been formed. Augustus now stationed armed police in bandit-ridden districts, had the slave-barracks inspected, and dissolved all workmen's guilds except those that had been established for some time and were carrying on legitimate business.[6]

In fact, masses of unemployed, disenfranchised farmers had begun flocking to Rome as early as the late second century B.C. The usurpation of land by the elite left thousands of people without home or occupation. They naturally drifted toward the center of activity resulting in the very lawless bands that Suetonius refers to. Such a mass displacement affected more than the economy. It went to the core of Roman society--the family. Families were uprooted and broken apart as groups of people left their farms and migrated to Rome.[7]

Many historians, both ancient and modern, have seen the decline in Roman morality as more specifically focused on sexual degeneracy. Theodore Mommsen, in his Roman Penal Law, asserts that the lenient attitude concerning incontinence in the Republic was indicative of a general decline in morality.[8] Indeed, historian Otto Kiefer points out that Roman sexual habits became more sadistic toward the

end of the Republican era.[9] Prostitution was rampant in the Rome of the late Republic and early Empire. Adultery had become commonplace. The great Republican poet Catullus wrote extensively of his lover Lesbia, a married woman who not only disregarded the vows she had made to her husband, but also betrayed her lover Catullus. The poet articulately laments her morality and her dark heart.[10]

Social chaos existed during the time of the civil wars and immediately afterward. And according historian Keith Hopkins in his work Death and Renewal, this chaos went to the very core of Roman society--the Roman family. In looking at the increasing number of public bequests at the end of the Republican era, Hopkins has concluded that such an increase signifies a decline in the tradition of family rites. Children were no longer trusted to carry on their fathers' legacies. This, Hopkins says, points to the slow demise of familial and religious rites. After the ascension and the reforms of Augustus, there was a definite renewal in the collective mentality of the family.[11] If in fact there is truth in Hopkins's thesis, that the power of the family, the consciousness of kinsmen, was in decline, then Augustus's task of reforming public morality had to begin in the Roman home and extend to public life.

Suetonius writes that the Senate voted Augustus Caesar the task of supervising public morals--a lifelong appointment.[12] Caesar certainly accepted the position as a

way to recall old Republican virtues. But the morality of Rome and its citizens was of greater concern, for a return to the revered morality of the past meant a certain satisfaction on the part of Rome with the present, a certain acceptance of the new guard. For the Emperor of Rome, this appointment came as an opportunity to establish social stability, something he needed desperately to hold successfully the position he now occupied.

The laws with which Caesar dealt in his new capacity were concerned with adultery, extravagance, unchastity, bribery, and the encouragement of marriage among the Senators and Equestrians, many of whom had preferred to prolong bachelorhood.[13] Dio, among others, wrote that Augustus devised a system which pressured young men of the noble families of Rome to marry.[14] Many men, particularly the more aristocratic ones, had declined to enter into matrimony, mostly under the influence of families who preferred not to split the family inheritance.[15] If Augustus was going to reestablish Roman social order, he must reestablish the family, the pater familias as the moral and legal head of the family, and the patrician sector of the population.

It is the latter that Roman historian E. T. Salmon addresses in an essay entitled "Augustus the Patrician." Salmon asserts that Augustus initiated a plan to refurbish the patriciate as part of a scheme to retain the old Roman

traditions, including religious traditions. This secret scheme was not on Augustus's public agenda. More members of the patriciate were necessary to carry out Roman ritual. Roman state religious ritual had been a very necessary part of the governance of Rome and the maintenance of public support and confidence since the very beginnings of the city. Unfortunately, from the time of the late Republic into the early Empire, important religious offices had been left vacant, presumably because no one cared to fill them and there was a shortage of qualified candidates. To acquire more Roman patricians, Augustus bestowed the rank on some families of the equestrian order.[16]

Among Augustus's most notorious ventures was his attempt to apply pressure to young men of the nobility to force them to marry and begin families. Tacitus cynically asserts,

> Henceforth our chains became more galling, and spies were set over us, stimulated by rewards under the Papia Poppaea law, so that if men shrank from the privileges of fatherhood, the State, as universal parent, might possess their ownerless properties.[17]

Furthermore, the historian Dio explains that Augustus "laid heavier assessments upon the unmarried men and upon the women without husbands, and on the other hand offered prizes for marriage and the begetting of children."[18] Thus Augustus's attempts at stabilizing the Roman social order by renewing the moral traditions of the Republic began with his forays into the most intimate and personal sectors of Roman

lives.

To assure further that Romans were lawfully fulfilling their social and familial duties, Augustus initiated a secondary program to deter men and women from engaging in what might be regarded as immoral acts. His reasons for addressing Roman private morality stem once again from the breakdown of the Roman family. Without the cohesiveness of the family, the moral authority of the pater familias was lost. It was up to Augustus to guide Romans morally in the way the pater familias had once done. First, the Emperor decreed adultery a public offense for women. The punishment for such an offense went as far as exile. Second, Augustus decreed that men could only have extra-marital relations with prostitutes.[19] To make certain that Romans were not tempted to break the Emperor's new laws, Augustus instituted certain rules for public behavior. According to Suetonius:

> whereas men and women had hitherto always sat together, Augustus confined women to the back rows even at gladiatorial shows: the only ones exempt from this rule being the Vestal Virgins, for whom separate accommodation was provided, facing the praetor's tribunal.[20]

As one assigned to promote traditional Roman morality and avert unseemly behavior, Augustus's policy was concise and direct: If the problem was flagrant sexuality and promiscuity, the solution was to keep men and women away from each other.

In his scrutiny of Roman morality and his attempts to restore the old moral codes of the past, Augustus did not

hesitate to do whatever he deemed necessary to restore public order and a sense of decorum to the people. The Emperor attacked directly what he saw as the evils facing Romans. Most noticeably, Augustus's plan of reconstructing the Roman social order began with the basic social and moral unit--the family. He used examples wherever possible, even if this meant sacrificing his own kin. In the case of his daughter and his granddaughter, that is exactly what it meant.

The story of the two Julias is relevant because of the public nature of the crimes and the punishments. Both women shamed Augustus and his family by flagrantly courting men of all sorts, despite their noble positions in Roman society, and despite the fact that they were married. Augustus's heartache upon acknowledging the indiscretions of his daughter, Julia, were apparent when he wrote a letter exposing her sins to the Senate. He was so ashamed, so upset, that he was not present to read the letter himself. Augustus's response to both women was severe, to say the least; it was also very public. Even the Senate and the people of Rome begged the Emperor to allow his daughter Julia to return to Rome from her imprisonment on an island in the Mediterranean. But Augustus would not budge. He could not, for Julia was to serve as an example, as was her daughter.[21] Augustus was determined to play the role of the pater familias, the moral authority of his family. He

set himself up as an example and a reminder of the basis of morality and moral order in Roman society.

Both Augustus's daughter and granddaughter fit neatly into Augustus's scheme to revise public morality. Through them the Emperor could attest that he was as committed to saving the old moral and social traditions of Rome as his legislation showed him to be. Augustus, in encouraging Roman nobility to dedicate their young daughters to the depleting College of the Vestal Virgins, had once announced that if he had had a granddaughter who was of age, he would have dedicated her to the state in like manner.[22] So he verified those words by dedicating both Julias to the public recollection of old Roman morals. It seems that for the first Emperor of Rome, nothing was too great a sacrifice, nothing was too much to encourage stability and establish himself as the right and proper ruler. To recall Rome's past morality, Augustus himself had to act as the consummate pater familias. If the Emperor was going to restore Roman society to the loyal association of citizens it once was, he must start with the imperial family. The Emperor and his family must serve as reminders of the moral codes of the Res Publica.

Augustus Caesar's attempts to influence the morality and social condition of the Roman people did not stop with legislation, with bonuses upon marriage or the birth of a child, or with the examples he provided with his own family.

One of the Emperors most enduring legacies to Rome and to its social and moral constitution was the influence he had over literature and the lettered elite of the early Roman Empire. As Zvi Yavetz remarked in an article "The Res Gestae and Augustus' Public Image," written propaganda for the poorer citizens of Rome would have to be short and concise. But the Emperor could use his patronage of poetry and history, to influence the upper and middle classes.[23] Thus Augustus patronized such great Romans and patriots as Virgil. In fact, Virgil's epic work, The Aeneid, might best be described as a Julian-centered rewrite of an old Roman myth concerning the foundations of Rome. As Virgil tells it at the beginning of the first book of his tale, the Julian clan was directly descended from the gods Venus and Mars. In addition, the gods had preordained Rome's greatness, strength, and moral fortitude upon the founding of the city.[24] Certainly Virgil's Aeneid, besides being an enduring work of literature, was a powerful attempt to justify and solidify Augustus's position. It was also an obvious attempt to recall Rome's former glory and reassure Romans of its future greatness.

Besides encouraging works that glorified Rome, Augustus discouraged artists who he believed promoted licentious behavior and immoral living. One such poet was Ovid, and Augustus went beyond discouraging him--he banned him.[25] The reasons behind such actions stemmed from some of the

popular literature of the day. Jasper Griffin in his Latin Poets and Roman Life points out that as young Romans read such great artists as Menander, Terence, Callimachus and Meleager, writers who not only described the life of pleasure, but also promoted it, they began to imitate it. Their literary world focused on things Greek, things exotic and erotic; thus, their own lives took on such characteristics in an attempt to duplicate what they believed was fashionably going on around them.[26] Pleasure and erotica were, in the late Republic and early Principate, major themes in Roman literature. If in fact these works could and were influencing the behavior of Romans, particularly the elite, Augustus attempted to put a stop to it by cutting it off at the source. Banning Ovid because of the explicit nature of his poetry was one such attempt to curb the movement away from literature of the flesh and toward literature that sang the glory and resounding greatness of Rome.[27]

The breakdown of order during the civil wars not only meant chaos in the capital, it pointed toward something more disturbing, more severe. The events leading up to the disintegration of the Republic indicate a changing society, a public moving away from traditional rites and values. It was these traditional rites and values that bound Romans to each other and to the state. It gave them a sense of identity and it promoted social harmony. Perhaps more

important for a ruler, it perpetuated the notion of the state as the focal point of society. Augustus recognized this. He recognized that the meaning of the Res Publica had changed and that the forces, particularly the most powerful force--the family, that gave Romans a sort of collective moral consciousness no longer existed. He realized that he would have to replace these forces with something, and so he replaced them with legislation. It was his legislation that attempted to recapture the spirit, loyalty, and confidence of the Republic. Shrewd and creative, his laws did not only touch on public codes of morality, they also found their way into the most intimate reaches of people's lives. They influenced marriage, family planning, and literature. Such was the importance of establishing social harmony and stability, the first emperor of Rome could not leave anything to chance. For if he did not assure the continuity of Rome, the state itself was in danger of collapsing.

End Notes

1. Livius, 1:7.

2. Tacitus, 3.

3. W. Den Boer, 93.

4. Otto Kiefer, Sexual Life in Ancient Rome (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1934), 47.

5. Catullus, The Complete Poems, trans. F. A. Wright (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1926), 248.

6. Suetonius, 72.

7. Beard and Crawford, Rome in the Late Republic, 17.

8. Theodore Mommsen, Roman Penal Law (New York: Collier, 1913), 60.

9. Kiefer, 5.

10. Catullus wrote many poems about Lesbia, all of which are contained in The Complete Poems.

11. Hopkins, Death and Renewal, 86.

12. Suetonius, 69.

13. Ibid., 73.

14. Cocceianus, 6:327.

15. Corbier, "Family Behavior of the Roman Aristocracy, Second Century B.C.-Third Century A.D.," 176.

16. E. T. Salmon, "Augustus the Patrician," Essays on Roman Culture, edited by A. J. Dunston (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, Ltd., 1976), 16.

17. Tacitus, 7.

18. Cocceianus, 6:323.

19. Sarah B. Pomeroy, Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 159-60.

20. Suetonius, 80.

21. Ibid., 89.

22. Ibid., 71

23. Zvi Yavetz, "The Res Gestae and Augustus's Public Image," Caesar Augustus: Seven Aspects, ed. Fergus Millar and Erich Segal (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 13.

24. Virgil, 75.

25. Ovid, Tristia, trans. Arthur Leslie Wheeler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 23.

26. Jasper Griffin, Latin Poets and Roman Life (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 19.

27. Ibid., 35.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

To understand fully the relationship between religion, morality, and the state in the Roman Republic and Principate, it is first necessary to understand what social scientists tell us about the way in which religion and ethics function within cultures. The study of religion, any religion, usually brings with it a focus on an accompanying ethical system. In fact, most modern religions have instituted a code of morals and values that is directly linked to the belief and practice of the religion. Anthropologists agree. Renowned scholar Bronislaw Malinowski tells us that "every religion . . . provides its followers with an ethical system."[1] The very nature of religion it seems suggests an emphasis on the molding of morality. As religion is essentially social in character, it requires the individual to function effectively within the group. Functioning means that each person must sometimes sacrifice his or her own comfort for the sake of others. In addition, the members of the congregation share a sense of responsibility toward each other. Each person takes on a role and must carry out his or her duty to continue as a member of the group.

Certainly duty and correctly defining roles within a unit were crucial in Roman social life. The role of the father toward his children, the wife toward her husband, the freeman toward the slave, and the man toward his neighbor were all outlined. Moral responsibility was clear and connected to that inextinguishable social and religious unit, the family.[2] But ultimately, there was a higher unit, one whose boundaries the Roman family defined--the Res Publica. It was the existence of this unusual entity that made Rome slightly different from other cultures. It is this existence that enables the historian to study Roman religion and morality as two forces inextricably tied, not to one another, but to Rome itself. The existence of the Res Publica, of its function of molding religion, morality, and all concepts of state and governance in the Republic, was crucial. With its dissolution and the accompanying dissolution of social and moral order, the Republic was but a shell, a hollow reflection of its former self, whose only hope of renewal lay in the resurrection of the old Roman spirit.

The prominent Roman historian J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz has attempted to define the role of religion in governing Roman moral behavior. He asserts that the Roman gods were not concerned with Roman moral or ethical behavior. Religion in Rome, according to him, was taught on an entirely secular level.[3] Liebeschuetz's appraisal of the

function of religion in regards to morality is quite opposite to the view that most anthropologists provide. But it is essential to understand that in Rome, the forces that guided the moral conduct of individuals were not the same as the pantheon that had been created over the course of centuries. Romans did not fear divine or civil retribution. Instead, they desired to preserve and perpetuate the state. There existed a belief that Rome was divinely blessed and preordained to conquer and rule. It was the breakdown of this definition of the state, of this way of seeing the function and the destiny of Rome, that heralded a need for moral legislation in the period after the demise of the Roman Republic. And it was the breakdown of the Roman family that perpetuated the slow disintegration of the Res Publica. Interestingly enough, the metamorphosis of the Res Publica is also what led to the legislation and renewal of Roman religion in the years of Augustus's rule.

The Roman world in the late Republic was no doubt chaotic. Civil strife had destroyed much of the social order; this does not necessarily imply, however, that Romans had lost complete faith in their institutions and that they were no longer a religious people. Despite the views of prominent historians, such as J. H. W. Liebeschuetz and Alan Wardman, who emphasize that religious decay did not occur in the years preceding the Principate, there is evidence to suggest that the Romans, though not completely abandoning

their ancestral religion, had begun to express dissatisfaction with its institutions. While agreeing that political manipulation of religious offices took place more often, Liebeschuetz contends that it was simply an expression of discontent with a failing political system, not a failing religious system. However, T. R. Glover and A. H. M. Jones stress a tendency toward disbelief and outright manipulation of traditional beliefs and practices. We do know that social strife had slowly enveloped the people of Rome, and that according to contemporaries, crime and neglect of religion was rampant. More significantly, the evidence provided by scholars such as Keith Hopkins indicates that the family was no longer a cohesive social unit. Without this basic core of society, chaos was bound to invade Rome. The evidence handed to us by Cicero, Horace, Livy, Juvenal, and Catullus offers proof that disorder reigned in the Rome of the late Republic. What Augustus did to remedy this social plight is both fascinating and a lesson in political manipulation.

Problems besieged the first emperor of Rome from the moment his feet touched Roman soil. The most pressing and serious problem was how to retain his power. Ever astute, Augustus saw the state religion of Rome as a means to legitimize his own claim to the throne and a new form of government. In addition, he viewed Rome's religious creed as a means to restore social order, further securing his

position at the forefront of Roman politics. Remaking himself into the son of a god, into a future deity himself, certainly helped to forge some sense of loyalty, at least in the provinces. And Augustus's rounds of temple-building and religious renovation restored the exterior of the great belief set that had brought order and continuity to generations of Romans. But to his advantage, Augustus understood the history and culture of Rome as well as any Roman citizen possibly could. He understood that the absence of legislation in the Republic with regard to religion and particularly morality did not mean that Romans were not heedful of both.

As a Roman, as a member of an old Roman family, Augustus realized the existence of both the state religion and the ethical system that Romans had for generations propounded as their own was bound up with the way in which Romans defined the state. As the Republic began to crumble, as the loyalty which Romans for generations had shown to their fatherland began to die away, the advancement of the individual began to replace it. As the unity of the family began to falter, loyalty to individual persons who held power and money took its place. The Res Publica was no longer the center of a Roman's world and Augustus recognized this. He astutely realized that the cohesion and stability of the old Roman Republic must be regained, and the only way to do this was by legislation. He could not completely

reverse what one hundred years of civil strife had brought about, but he could attempt a new interest in the state religion and legislate laws for the following of the old morality. He could attempt by example and strategy to reestablish the Roman family as the stable core of society it once was. Perhaps by starting with the foundation, the Emperor just might be able to rebuild Rome.

Augustus's assessment of the social situation of Rome at the end of the civil wars was both accurate and necessary. The social order had to be restored and the faith in the government and state itself had to be regained. The future of Rome itself rested on it. In hindsight, however, two more aspects significant in their implications emerge. First, in the waning years of the Repubic, the individual and not the state or the community became the focus of many Romans. Perhaps this change in character, this new approach, conditioned the Roman world for a new and world-altering philosophy that would invade Rome a century later.

Certainly one of the most fascinating aspects of the period of the ascension of Octavian is the new political order he introduced. Though Rome was fast on its way toward something like the empire in the waning days of the Republic, the political stability that Augustus brought with his reign was a turning point in Roman history. In terms of Roman religious history, another factor emerged. Tacitus

wrote that in the reign of Augustus's stepson, Tiberius, a procurator by the name of Pontius Pilatus gave orders for the execution of a man who claimed to be a prophet, a man whom the people called Christus.[4]

Rome's eventual response to the followers of Christus is well known and documented. What remains to be seen is whether the breakdown and reinvention of the Republic and of the social order helped condition Romans for a wholly new religious approach. Christianity was so innovative in that it was centered on the individual. A person could seek salvation by following certain codes of conduct, performing certain rituals, and abiding by a propounded ethical system. In the religion of the Republic, rites and rituals were performed to quell the gods, ease fears about the future, and assure the perpetuity of the state. Christianity, on the other hand, did not ask that rituals be performed out of some fear of an unknown and uncontrollable future. The future was very much in the hands of the individual who chose to lead a life in the footsteps of the man called Christ. How was such individualism accepted by many who came from a clearly group-oriented society? And did the traditional orientation of Rome as a society unified by its belief in the sanctity of the state help condition the eventual negative response by many Romans and by the Empire to the new religious movement? It certainly must have laid a foundation for both the acceptance and denial of

Christianity in the Roman Empire.

Secondly, and more contemporaneously, the example of Rome as a state that replaced its dying traditions, values, and culture with legislation is certainly not an isolated one. As a society becomes more diverse, more complex, and as more ideas and cultures are introduced, groups tend to lose much of their heritage. Though at times cultural diversity creates an enhancement of traditions and practices, often it introduces a plethora of new ideas that either challenge or remake the old ones. In addition, Rome is not alone in attempting to replace the values and the structure of the old order with legislation. Certainly, the attempt of modern states to legislate familial harmony, the relations of men and women, husbands and wives, and parents and children, is an attempt to replace with laws what the traditional structure of the family and the influence of religion had once controlled. Where do such notions of social interaction come from but the basis of all social units--the family.

For now, it is enough to examine the political and social legislation of a man who came from the countryside of Italy and eventually went on to recreate Rome into an entity only slightly reminiscent of the one he had found. Augustus's impact on Rome is so significant, for he redirected the course of Rome's destiny. He seized a state that was spiritually and constitutionally dying, a state

whose very soul was near extinction. His approach was quick and all-encompassing. For though he could not save the Republic, nor give it back its soul, he successfully fashioned an empire unified partly by the traditions of the old Republic, partly by the legislation and manipulation of its new emperor. He not only worked off of Rome's history and traditional culture, he was sufficiently shrewd to incorporate enough of the increasingly popular religious and social trends of the provinces to make palatable his new legislation, yet still maintain a semblance of the old Rome. In so doing, a whole new spirit was born of the ashes of the Roman Republic.

End Notes

1. Bronislaw Malinowski, <u>The Foundation of Faith and Morals</u> (London: Humphrey Milford, 1936), 2.

2. Sir Henry Sumner Maine, <u>Ancient Law</u> (New York: Dorset Press, 1986), 105.

3. Liebeschuetz, <u>Continuity and Change in Roman Religion</u>, 40.

4. Tacitus, 304.

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