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VIOLENCE, RELIGION AND POLITICS:
THE LATE REPUBLIC AND AUGUSTAN AGE

by

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for the degree of Master of Arts
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ABSTRACT

Religion in the Late Republic was fused to politics. This study considers the relationship between violence, religion, and politics in the Late Republic and Augustan Age. It contends that Roman religion could encourage or discourage violence based upon the circumstances. The strain of Roman expansion on its political and religious institutions contributed to the civil discord that characterized the Late Republic, which created circumstances that were flexible enough for perspectives on each side to see the violence as justified. The ambition of a tribune, a sacrosanct office, could lead to circumvention of the traditional practices of the Senate, causing a religious dilemma if violence was used as a response. Powerful politicians also used religion to legitimize their abuses or obstruct the political aims of their opponents, leading to a contentious atmosphere fraught with violence. The influence of Greek philosophy on religion and morality was of concern for many Romans themselves. These concerns were not laid to rest until the Augustan Age had reshaped Rome's political and religious institutions, which was accompanied by an outpouring of literature embedded with religious symbolism.

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ABBREVIATIONS

App.	Appian
<i>B Civ.</i>	<i>Bella civilia (The Civil Wars)</i>
<i>Pun.</i>	<i>The Punic Wars</i>
Caesar	Caes.
<i>B Civ.</i>	<i>Bellum Civile (The Civil War)</i>
<i>B Gall.</i>	<i>Bellum Gallicum (The Gallic War)</i>
Cic.	Cicero
<i>Cat.</i>	<i>In Catilinam (Against Cataline)</i>
<i>Div.</i>	<i>De divinatione (On Divination)</i>
<i>Dom.</i>	<i>De domo sua (On Her Home)</i>
<i>Mil.</i>	<i>Pro Milone (On Behalf of Titus Annius Milo)</i>
<i>Nat. D.</i>	<i>De natura deorum (On the Nature of the Gods)</i>
<i>Off.</i>	<i>De officiis (On Obligations)</i>
<i>Phil.</i>	<i>Orationes Philippicae (Philippics)</i>
<i>Pis.</i>	<i>In Pisonem (Against Lucius Calpurnius Piso)</i>
<i>Rep.</i>	<i>De republica (On the Republic)</i>
<i>Sest.</i>	<i>Pro Sestio (On Behalf of Sestius)</i>
<i>Tusc.</i>	<i>Tusculanae disputationes (Tusculan Disputations)</i>
<i>Vat.</i>	<i>In Vatinius (Against Vatinius)</i>
Hor.	Horace
<i>Carm.</i>	<i>Carmina (Odes)</i>
<i>Epod.</i>	<i>Epodi (Epodes)</i>
Lucil.	Lucilius
Lucr.	Lucretius
<i>DRN</i>	<i>De rerum natura (On the Nature of Things)</i>
Nic. Dam.	Nicolaus Damascenus
Pind.	Pindar
<i>Ol.</i>	<i>Olympian Odes</i>
Pl.	Plato
<i>Resp.</i>	<i>Respublica (Republic)</i>
Plaut.	Plautus
<i>Merc.</i>	<i>Mercator (The Merchant)</i>
Plut.	Plutarch
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antonius</i>

<i>C. Gracch.</i>	<i>Gaius Gracchus</i>
<i>Cat. Mai.</i>	<i>Cato Maior (Cato the Elder)</i>
<i>Mar.</i>	<i>Marius</i>
<i>Ti. Gracch.</i>	<i>Tiberius Gracchus</i>
Polyb.	Polybius
Sall.	Sallust
<i>Cat.</i>	<i>Bellum Catilinae (Cataline's War)</i>
<i>Hist.</i>	<i>Historiae (Histories)</i>
<i>Iug.</i>	<i>Bellum Iugurthinum (Jugurthine War)</i>
Suet.	Suetonius
<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Divus Augustus</i>
Vell. Pat.	Velleius Paterculus

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Polybius, a Greek historian of Republican Rome, provides valuable insight regarding Graeco-Roman perceptions of religion. “Since the common people everywhere are fickle – since they are driven by lawless impulses, blind anger, and violent passion – the only option is to use mysterious terrors and all this elaborate drama to restrain them. I very much doubt that the men who in ancient times introduced the masses to the idea of the gods and the concept of Hades just happened aimlessly to do so.”¹ Polybius’ work suggests many of the Roman elites themselves would have been aware of the view that religion was designed to prevent uncontrolled violence and was created out of a culturally hegemonic relationship between the elite and the masses. He also clearly establishes a link between Roman religion, morality, and fear of punishment in the afterlife. His work touches upon the vengeance, wrath, and terror that the Romans perceived their gods to inflict upon the impious. This also alludes to the multifaceted link between religion and violence, in which religion simultaneously helped to restrain unwarranted violence and established that fear and violence could be used as a recourse for wrongdoing.

Polybius’ access to the political elite of Rome offers us an outsider’s perspective on Roman culture and politics. He claimed that one of the factors that separated Rome from other cultures and provided cohesion for the state was a superior devotion to their gods and religious practices.² Polybius contrasted contemporary Roman moral and religious fiber to their Greek counterparts, the former of which he viewed as superior, suggesting that the intellectual elite of

1. Polybius, *The Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield (New York: Oxford University press, 2010), VI.56.

2. Polyb. VI.56.

the latter might succumb to political corruption more easily or abolish religion altogether.³ The desire of Romans to honor the *mos maiorum* (the customs of their ancestors) was a powerful element of Roman culture that helped to preserve their religious traditions and combat any religious skepticism, which was usually elevated in Greek philosophy, put forward by members of the Roman elite. Swain and Davies agree that “It should not be assumed that the upper classes took a skeptical attitude towards religion or interpreted it in a more philosophical manner, while the *plebs* clung to their superstitions.”⁴ Romans saw worthy ancestors, both real and legendary, as heroic figures that embodied Roman characteristics like *virtus* (vigor, strength, or general manliness), *fides* (good faith or trust), and *pietas* (a sense of the duty owed to one’s parents, close family, country, and religion).

In addition to potential punishment in the afterlife for wrongdoing, which was alluded to by Polybius, Rome’s heroes and those of esteemed virtue and honor were thought to have earned a place of peace in the afterlife, known as Elysium. This concept is perhaps one reason the Romans took such great care to honor and emulate the customs of their ancestors. Beard points out how Polybius acts as a “political anthropologist”⁵ in his examination of Roman culture, particularly that of Roman funerary customs.⁶ Funerals, as Polybius described them, touched upon the very essence of the Roman *mos maiorum*. According to Polybius, the corpses of deceased nobles in Rome were ceremoniously placed upright upon the *rostra* in the forum while

3. Polyb. VI.56.

4. H. Swain and M. E. Davies, *Aspects of Roman History, 82BC-AD14: A Source-Based Approach* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 315.

5. M. Beard, *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome* (New York: Liveright, 2015), 186-87.

6. Polyb. VI.53-54.

a eulogy was delivered highlighting their achievements. Members of the family would sit in the audience dressed as other deceased family members, wearing wax masks that resembled them. After the eulogy, the deceased family members would be honored with recognition of their achievements, keeping their memory alive.

Polybius writes that “the most important thing is that young men are inspired to heroic feats of endurance for the common good, in order to gain the glory that accrues to the brave.”⁷ Preservation of the *mos maiorum*, the need to honor one’s ancestors and to live up to their achievements was rooted within Roman culture, including its religion, and could often be the inspiration for further violence. After the supposed creation of the state religion by Numa, the second of seven somewhat mythical kings beginning with Romulus, the Romans had developed a religious system linked to politics and, by the Middle Republic, focused on maintaining the *pax deorum* (the peace of the gods). From the origins of Roman religion, nearly annual warfare occurred for centuries. The Romans had seen their military success as a result of their piety, their *virtus* and their general military superiority as having been a people descended from Mars (the god of war and supposed father of Romulus).

Lopez-Ruiz points out that what we see as Roman mythology was much more significant to Roman culture than modern usage of such stories as a backdrop for fictional entertainment would suggest.⁸ She goes on to say that “gods were real (worshipped, prayed to, feared) in a world organized to a great degree around religious festivals and daily rituals. Heroes, on the other hand, were central in ancient people's perception of their remote past and recent history as

7. Polyb. VI.54.

8. C. Lopez-Ruiz, *Gods, Heroes, and Monsters: A Sourcebook of Greek, Roman and Near Eastern Myths in Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), xvii.

well (stories about city founders, lawgivers, beginnings of institutions, etc.)”⁹ Stories of heroism and those with religious significance were constantly intermingled. The hero usually owed his greatness to divine powers, whether that be due to the strength granted to heroes who had descended from gods, the destiny determined by the Fates, or gifts granted by gods, which could be material or spiritual. If the Romans were to emulate the customs of their ancestors, much of that would involve violence. Romulus, for example, killed his own brother for violating Rome’s boundaries. Collectively, the legends surrounding Rome’s origins, including those regarding Rome’s first seven kings, demonstrate that the Romans viewed their religion to have significance in the very foundation of their nation, which was seen as an incremental process that involved numerous heroic figures who accomplished their goals with the help of the gods. It is surprising that works on the subject of violence in the Roman Republic have generally considered violence within the context of politics, gladiators, warfare, and private and public violence, but almost never within the context of religion, legend, and their impact on the shape of violence during this period.

1.1 Defining Religion and Violence

Lopez-Ruiz demonstrates that overuse of the term “mythical” might undermine our understanding of the cultural significance of heroes, legends, epic poetry and religious practice to ancient societies like Rome.¹⁰ ‘Mythology’ in reference to Roman religion presents problems because modern usage of the term is inherently dismissive, suggesting that Roman religious

9. Ibid., xvii-xviii.

10. Ibid., xvii-xviii.

beliefs were somehow unfathomable. On the other hand, some have questioned whether the term “religion” should be used in reference to what has often been deemed as “Roman religion” by a host of scholars, including Beard and Lintott, leading to the question of how historians should define and approach religion.¹¹ Answers to this question within a historical context are usually shaped by contemporary societal problems, cultural influences and religious thought. Authorship on the subject is bound to religious bias regardless of a scholar’s declared faith because of the influence of religion on one’s cultural world views.¹²

Barton and Boyarin argue that the modern English “religion” is an anachronistically inadequate translation for *religio* that obscures the true meaning in Latin and is a practice that should therefore be abandoned.¹³ While the former assertion is partially true, Barton and Boyarin themselves demonstrate that there is no adequate English alternative. In making their point, they unfairly claim that to translate *religio* as “religion” is akin to translating unknown ingredients in a Chinese cookbook as simply ‘food.’¹⁴ More appropriately, it is analogous to substituting unavailable ingredients with similar, locally available substitutes; it gives us a general sense of the flavor, but it doesn’t entirely do justice to the authentic version of the dish. Modern

11. A. Lintott, *Violence in Republican Rome*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 31-32; M. Beard, J. North, and S. Price, *Religions of Rome*, vol. 1, *A History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). The authors frequently use the term “religion” in discussions related to ritual practice, sacrosanctity, or gods.

12. A. Toynbee, *An Historian’s Approach to Religion*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 8-11. When comparing similar concepts from disparate religions, Toynbee notes two prevailing trends of mid-twentieth century historians. The first tendency of historians, which he relates to a world view in which prevailing religious ideologies consider the universe to possess a cyclical rhythm governed by impersonal law, is to deprive history of its significance, but results in works that are of a less ego-centric (and implicitly ethno-centric) nature. The second tendency, which he relates to a world view in which prevailing religious ideologies consider the universe noncyclical and emphasize the free will of man, is to maximize the significance of a history or its individual actors, but often causes a relapse into a more ego-centric history.

13. C. A. Barton and D. Boyarin, *Imagine No Religion: How Modern Abstractions Hide Ancient Realities* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), loc. 71-91, Kindle.

14. *Ibid.*, loc. 194-201, Kindle.

definitions of “religion” are equally misleading in reference to Hinduism or Buddhism, both of which are as similar to Western notions of philosophy as they are to religion. Yet, both reveal beliefs about intangible or supernatural aspects of the universe, such as the nature of the spirit, reincarnation, enlightenment, nirvana, or particular deities. Similarly, Stoic and Epicurean philosophies had profound implications for the religious beliefs of those who subscribed to them, which is well-illustrated in Cicero’s work, *De natura deorum*.

Definitions of *religio* are generally based upon two understandings of the etymology. Cicero claims that *religio* is derived from *legere*, which can mean “to read” or “to collect, gather together,” or “pick.”¹⁵ Lactantius sees the use of *religio* in Lucretius as having been derived from *ligare*, often taken in an immaterial sense, meaning “to bind together, connect, unite.”¹⁶ Gothóni recognizes that both etymologies are possible, but argues “only Cicero’s etymology is in accordance with the Latin idiom,” arguing for a reinterpretation of *religio* within the scholarly circles of theology and religious studies.¹⁷ Gothóni points out that Cicero’s contemporaries used *religio* in a variety of contexts; it was used to refer to the solemnity of an oath, the sacrosanctity of certain times and spaces, and most importantly, a “feeling of awe for the supernatural.”¹⁸ Saler, largely in agreement, demonstrates that the usage of *religio*, while different from modern

15. Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, rev. ed., trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library 268 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), II.72; *Cassell’s New Latin Dictionary*, 5th ed., comp. D. P. Simpson (New York: MacMillan, 1968), s.v. “lĕgo, lĕgĕre.” Cicero’s distinction between *religio* and *superstitio* also demonstrates their close relationship. *Superstitio* seems to refer to exaggerated, self-detrimental, and privately held beliefs or practices related to supernatural powers. *Religio* emphasized practices, observances, and rituals that were public in nature, reflective of the *mos maiorum* and the belief in supernatural powers.

16. *Cassell’s New Latin Dictionary*, s.v. “lĭgo, -are.”

17. R. Gothóni, “Religio and Superstitio Reconsidered,” *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 21, no. 1 (1994): 37.

18. *Ibid.*, 38-39.

definitions of “religion,” was as varied in its meaning as the modern term.¹⁹ *Religio*, he suggests, held multiple, sometimes contrary meanings both diachronically and synchronically, but he agrees that is commonly expressed feelings of awe or scruples related to supernatural powers, ideologically connecting *religio* to Roman values.²⁰

Barton and Boyarin argue that authors like Cicero and Lucretius meant to convey “emotional and psychological remedies” for the problems of the Late Republic, emphasizing the emotional aspects of *religio* while stripping it of a relationship to the divine.²¹ They emphasize Lucretian etymology, arguing that ordinary Romans did not seek from *religio* any sort of love, salvation or transcendence, but material aid.²² Barton and Boyarin contend that in return for receiving such aid, Romans would be bound to anyone who would to provide it, thus offering love or loyalty to anyone who could help, which was not necessarily a divine or supernatural entity.²³ This assessment is based largely on usages of *religio* which are apparently devoid of any supernatural significance. Barton and Boyarin, for example, use Plautus’ *Mercator*, in which Charinus is convinced by his friend Eutyclus to stay in Athens, as evidence for a definition of *religio* devoid of the divine.

The decision to stay, Barton and Boyarin write, was “Spoken as an aside by Charinus: ‘That man (Eutyclus) causes me to have second thoughts / makes me pause and ponder; I’ll turn

19. B. Saler, “Religio and the Definition of Religion,” *Cultural Anthropology* 2, no. 3 (1987): 395-98.

20. *Ibid.*, 396-97.

21. Barton and Boyarin, *Imagine No Religion*, loc. 450-516, Kindle.

22. *Ibid.*, loc. 517-30, Kindle.

23. *Ibid.*, loc. 528-36, Kindle.

around and go over to him.’ (*Religionem illic (mi) obiecit: recipiam me illuc.*)”²⁴ de Melo translates the passage more simply as “He’s given me scruples; I’ll return there.”²⁵ This passage alone can be misleading, but when considered in context, however, the significance of divinity is more apparent. After Eutyclus asks Charinus not to leave, at least not without himself, the latter asks who it is that is calling him back and Eutyclus replies that it is *Spes*, *Salus*, and *Victoria*, the goddesses of hope, salvation, and victory, respectively.²⁶ Furthermore, just prior to Charinus’ decision to stay, Eutyclus points out the ill omens of the gods should he pursue his course: “Can’t you see how a black cloud and rain are threatening from the direction you’re facing? Look to the left, how the heaven is full of brightness and how the gods are telling you to turn there.”²⁷ It is to this that Charinus makes his reply, which makes translation of the passage as “he [Eutyclus] has presented me with religious evidence; I’ll return there,” seem more probable.²⁸ The Lucretian etymology emphasizing binding certainly holds weight, but is more convincing in the sense of a binding oath with the gods, or an oath sworn amongst men, which, if broken, could incite the anger of the gods. In another sense such an etymology also makes sense in terms of being bound to the duties associated with the *mos maiorum*, which were themselves often religious in nature and served as sort of cultural adhesion for the Republic.

Cicero’s use of the Latin *religio* poses a particular problem for Barton and Boyarin because they’re forced to admit that Cicero sometimes uses the term in a way that might

24. Ibid., loc. 541-3, Kindle.

25. Plautus, *The Merchant*, ed. and trans. W. de Melo, Loeb Classical Library 163 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), line 881.

26. Plaut., *Merc.* lines 865-70.

27. Plaut., *Merc.* lines 878-80.

28. Plaut., *Merc.* line 881.

reasonably be adapted and translated as the modern English, “religion.”²⁹ Barton and Boyarin also concede that Beard rightfully argues that Cicero was the first Roman to introduce religion independently as a topic of discourse.³⁰ Cicero, they contend, permanently altered the meaning of *religio* through his use of the word, which was of particular consequence due to the prolific nature of his work. The debate over which etymology is most accurate will likely remain forever unsolved, but emphasis on their similarities rather than differences is of greater value for this study. The dictionary definition of *religio* embodies elements of Ciceronian and Lucretian etymologies, which is how I will use the term in this work.³¹

Finding a definition that is widely agreed upon for “religion” in a modern context is as challenging as defining *religio*. Debates surrounding a proper definition for “religion” largely center on attempts to resolve nominal definitions with the real-world use of the term, the latter of which encompasses a broad number of ideologies, making it difficult to construct a definition that universally embodies them all. Toynbee argues that the primary purpose of religion is to curb natural human weaknesses, such as our self-centered human nature, and to address human “yearning and suffering.”³² According to Toynbee, all religions possess some form of worship, either of nature, man, or an absolute reality embodying both.³³ The most significant aspect of Toynbee’s approach is the view of religion as provision for absolute truths in response to

29. Barton and Boyarin, *Imagine No Religion*, loc. 390-449, Kindle.

30. *Ibid.*, loc. 459, Kindle.

31. *Cassell’s New Latin Dictionary*, s.v. “rēligiō... (1) as a quality of persons, *scrupulousness, conscientious exactness*: a, primarily, *respect for what is sacred, religious scruple, awe*... In a bad sense, *superstition*. b, *strict observance of religious ceremonial*... c, in gen., *moral scruples, conscientiousness*... (2) as a quality of gods and religious objects, *sanctity*... Transf., *an object of worship, holy thing or place*.”

32. Toynbee, *Historian’s Approach to Religion*, 289.

33. *Ibid.*, 16.

impossible questions about the nature the universe, which helps to define “religion” in a sense that embodies all of what are frequently referred to as such.³⁴

Spiro defines “religion” as “an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings.” For Spiro, religion is an ontological cultural system in which the efficacy of such interactions is unable to be scientifically proven.³⁵ Interaction, he says, “refers to activities which are believed to carry out, embody, or to be consistent with the will or desire of superhuman beings or powers” or those that “influence superhuman beings to satisfy the needs of the actors.”³⁶ Spiro’s definition emphasizes the significance of superhuman powers, such as gods, as the defining element of religion, demonstrating the weakness of Durkheim’s definition, which emphasizes sacrosanctity and ritual practice as the central elements of religion.³⁷

Durkheim’s reluctance to support a definition based upon interaction with superhuman powers is related to his argument that “religion” is often used to refer to sets of beliefs that consist of no superior spiritual being.³⁸ Durkheim would argue that religion as “a whole,” of which he considers rites and ceremonies to be a component, “cannot be defined except in relation to its parts.”³⁹ Yet, he also contends that we cannot define rites without first defining beliefs,

34. Ibid., 1-15.

35. M. Spiro, “Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation,” in *Language, Truth, and Religious Belief: Studies in Twentieth-Century Theory and Method in Religion*, ed. N. K. Frankenberry and H. H. Penner (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 148.

36. Ibid., 148.

37. É. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. J. W. Swain (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915; Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2008), 37.

38. Ibid., 24-35.

39. Ibid., 36.

which is an admission that religious beliefs are what drive religious rites.⁴⁰ One could argue that beliefs are the defining element because they are the impetus for religious practices. Any definition that fails to establish the explanation of otherwise unknowable characteristics of the universe as a key feature of religion also fails to embody its totality. Geertz is keen to establish a link between symbolism, which he views as a synthesis of a culture's ethos, and "conceptions of a general order of existence," but the definition falls short in its initial phraseology because "religion" is something more than a "system of symbols."⁴¹ King further demonstrates that "beliefs" should play a role in defining and describing Roman religion in particular, demonstrating how Roman religious beliefs manifested themselves in rituals of reciprocity rather than spiritual loyalty or devotion to a single god.⁴²

For the purpose of this study I adapt the definitions "religion" offered by Spiro and Toynbee. Their definitions could be modified to more accurately define "religion" in a universal sense as follows: religion is a culturally patterned system of belief that is both insusceptible to scientific proof and provides absolute truths regarding the nature or purpose of the universe, including the unproven existence of supernatural powers. This definition does not require that supernatural powers are necessarily considered to have the capability of spiritual interaction or the desire and ability to help man, but the traditional Roman religion of the Republic saw the existence of the gods and their providence over man as absolute truths. "Religion" can be used to refer to beliefs regarding the causes of otherwise inexplicable occurrences or events; this

40. Ibid., 36.

41. C. Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *Language, Truth, and Religious Belief*, 178-79.

42. C. King, "The Organization of Roman Religious Beliefs," *Classical Antiquity* 22, no. 2 (2003): 275-312.

includes beliefs regarding the nature of the spirit, the afterlife, gods, fate, or the supernatural. Any moral code that guides an individual or clearly influences one's behavior as the result of religion, including ritual observances or devotions, can be viewed as an implementation of religious belief.

One of the differences between Abrahamic religions and the religious beliefs of the Roman Republic is that the latter did not possess a strict doctrine or unchanging set of beliefs and practices. The Rome of the Late Republic envisioned its world as one in which the favor of the gods could mean the difference between success and failure, life and death. Swain and Davies write that "The Romans always sought *pax deorum*, peace under the will of their pantheon of gods, and believed that communication with the gods was achieved through prayer, sacrifice, and divination,"⁴³ which were publicly overseen by a college of pontiffs. The will of the gods could be discerned from observing the skies (heavens), the flight paths of birds, the entrails of a sacrifice or consulting the Sybilline books.⁴⁴ The Sybilline books were generally consulted as a last resort to restore the *pax deorum* if the Romans felt it had been breached.⁴⁵ According to Orlin, the Sybilline response to restore peace could be a permanent ritual or vowing of a temple or, more commonly, the performance of a ritual or sacrifice, such as *lectisternium*, *supplicatio* or *lustratio*.⁴⁶

43. Swain and Davies, *Aspects of Roman History*, 15-16.

44. L. R. Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), 81-87.

45. E. Orlin, *Temples, Religion, and Politics in the Roman Republic* (Boston: E.J. Brill, 1997), 86.

46. Ibid., 92. *Lectisternium* (the couching of the gods) was a ceremony in which statues of the gods were rested upon couches at a table, provided a meal, and given offerings. *Supplicationes* were public days of prayer and thanksgiving, which could be given to appease the gods or celebrate a military victory. *Lustratio* was a purification ritual that followed a census in Ancient Rome or was used for other purification purposes and involved the sacrifice

Since Roman religion and politics were inseparable in the Republic, much more is available to scholars of public religion, which is why this work will focus primarily on that aspect of Roman religion.⁴⁷ According to Beard and Crawford, “private acts of devotion were rare in the Republic,”⁴⁸ but this does not mean that religion was not fulfilling its purpose; nor was a private relationship with the gods through prayer a significant element of Roman religion in the same way it is for Christianity. The public religion of Rome included four leading priestly colleges with positions that were filled by senators during the Late Republic: the pontiffs, augurs, *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*, and *septemviri epulones*.⁴⁹ The four priestly colleges together saw to it that rituals were performed properly, helped determine how to respond to success or disaster, and organized games or ceremonies of religious significance. Unlike a Catholic priest, however, it was not a role of Roman priests in the Republic to provide moral or spiritual support to individuals.

While the first instinct of a Judaeo-Christian observer might be to consider the violence of the Late Republic as a religious failure or the religious practices of the Roman Republic to be

of a pig, sheep, and bull (*suovetaurilia*). Other rituals, ceremonies, and festivals were called for on various occasions or in times of crisis. *Parentalia*, for example, was a festival in honor of dead ancestors.

47. M. Beard and M. H. Crawford, *Rome in the Late Republic*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 1999), 25-39. Roman religion was embedded within the political and vice versa. The authors justify the choice to focus on the “official” religion because it is the only form with enough evidence for a meaningful study.

48. *Ibid.*, 26.

49. Swain and Davies, *Aspects of Roman History*, 15-16, 315-23. Priests oversaw rituals and served as advisors on religious matters (though not on a personal, spiritual level). Augurs divined omens from the flight paths of birds. The *quindecimviri sacris faciundis* were responsible for consulting the Sybilline Books. The *septemviri epulones* organized the feast of Jupiter. The Rex Sacrorum, Pontifex Maximus, and *flamines maiores* composed the most significant pontifices in Roman religion. While the three principal deities in Roman religion were Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, known as the Capitoline Triad, the *flamines maiores* of the Late Republic were representative of the Archaic Triad, which was composed of Jupiter, Quirinus (an epithet for Janus, one and the same as the deified Romulus), and Mars. In addition, there were *haruspices*, who divined omens from the entrails and liver of animals. The Vestal Virgins tended the flame of Vesta, the goddess of home and hearth, whose flame was thought must stay lit in order to avoid disaster for Rome.

utterly amoral, Roman religion did possess a moral element. Liebeschuetz argues that Roman religion was moralistic, but that the primary difference in morality between Paganism and Christianity is that the morals of the latter were explicitly codified in laws and commandments, whereas the morals of the former were not as clearly defined.⁵⁰ As long as Romans felt violence was justified or for the benefit of the Rome and its people, they did not fear of punishment for it by the gods in their current life or in any Roman version of an afterlife. Under the proper circumstances, Roman religion was permissive of violence since it possessed no commandment like “Thou shalt not kill.” Unjustified violence in the Late Republic, however, could have moral consequences, particularly if one subscribed to the concept of punishment the afterlife (*Tartarus*). The discord and tumult of the Late Republic could itself even be viewed as a divine retribution of the gods for a breach of the *pax deorum*. Any discussion of violence, however, particularly within a religious context, must first be qualified with a discussion of what is meant by “violence.”

Gaddis, although reluctant to provide a firm definition of “violence,” yields valuable insight into its meaning, writing that “We could provisionally define violence as a use or display of power that others consider wrong or hurtful or that transgresses their ethical or moral norms.”⁵¹ While one could argue that for an act to be considered one of “violence” it need not transgress “ethical or moral norms,” the remainder of his statement is unequivocally true.⁵² The greatest value in his discussion of how historians should interpret violence is the understanding

50. J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), xiv.

51. M. Gaddis, *There Is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), loc. 238-332 of 11786, Kindle.

52. *Ibid.*, loc. 238-332 of 11786, Kindle.

that violence need not involve actual physical force, giving it a meaning that is comparable to “violation.”⁵³ A threat of physical force, demonstration thereof, or simply the rhetorical use of physical force in speech or writing is a form of violence. As Gaddis points out, a political system that compels its subjects through force or its threat might also be considered violent.

Gaddis places the greatest significance on what violence meant to those involved, including how violence was represented or justified and how it was challenged by those who opposed violent acts. Gaddis’ work “takes as its premise that violent acts cannot be understood apart from the moral and ideological context in which they take place.”⁵⁴ In consideration of how “religion” is defined in this work, the ideological context in which violence takes place is of paramount importance. Gaddis has provided a model for interpreting violence that is of particular value for this work; his view that debates related to power and authority were part in parcel of arguments over the appropriate use of violence is a concept that is applicable to many events in the Late Republic.⁵⁵ Cicero’s execution of participants in the Catilinarian conspiracy is a perfect example. While the civil struggles of the Late Republic were not between two clearly defined religious groups, such violence carried with it a religious significance and symbolism that is often ignored as historians emphasize the more obvious political consequences. Consequently, violence and religion have most often been the subjects of separate studies. Harrison, for

53. *Ibid.*, loc. 238-332 of 11786, Kindle.

54. *Ibid.*, loc. 65 of 11765, Kindle.

55. *Ibid.*, loc. 243 of 11765, Kindle.

example points to the lack of focus on the relationship between war and religion within the historiography of the Late Republic.⁵⁶

1.2 The Historiography of Religion and Violence

One of the most important debates among historians of religion in the Late Republic is the question of whether religion was in a state of decline during this period. The traditional historical perspective assumes so, arguing that the frequent addition of gods to the Roman pantheon within a relatively conservative political and religious culture is evidence for such decline.⁵⁷ Taylor argues that the declaration of *supplicationes* and religious festivals by pontiffs or the recommendation of a repetition of rituals or games were often politically motivated efforts to impede legislation since these days were marked in the Roman calendar as *dies nefasti*, which meant it was illegal to conduct business or hold *comitia* (political and legislative assemblies).⁵⁸ This traditional view of religious decline is one that goes hand in hand with political deterioration, evidenced by violence and discord. The most convincing authors have all refuted this claim in one way or another, using different evidence to support various arguments.

North, for example, reconciles the view of Roman religion as conservative with the adoption of foreign gods in Rome by showing how it was much easier to introduce a new ritual, present a different way to perform an existing one, or add a new god to the pantheon than it was

56. S. Harrison, "Epicurean Subversion? Lucretius's First Proem and Contemporary Roman Culture," in *Lucretius and the Early Modern*, ed. D. Norbrook, S. Harrison, and P. Hardie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 37.

57. Taylor, *Party Politics*, 76-97.

58. "The ancient Roman calendar, which was still in force, marked every day with a special sign. The most common marks, as we know them from thirty-five odd calendars preserved on stone or plaster, were *N(e-fastus)*, wrong in the sight of god, *F(astus)*, right in the sight of god, and *C(omitialis)*." Taylor, *Party Politics*, 78-80.

to abandon an old god or invalidate an old tradition.⁵⁹ Rather than a signal of decline, Orlin sees the adoption of foreign deities as an effort to maintain the *pax deorum* or repay a god for success in battle.⁶⁰ Rüpke suggests that engagement with Greek philosophical and rational discourse after the rapid expansion of Roman territories in the second century BCE was the primary cause for adoption of foreign deities.⁶¹ New authorship on the subject has largely disproven the idea that religion was in a state of decline during the Late Republic, though their rationale for proving it is different.

Another one of the key debates within the historiography, which often stems from the question of religious decline, is the extent to which religion provided a moral compass. Liebeschuetz argues that Roman Paganism was not only moral, but that a great deal of continuity existed in Roman morality stretching from Republican Paganism to the Christianity of the late imperial Rome.⁶² Galinsky's work seems to support the view that Roman religion had at least some moralistic component by the Augustan Age, arguing more of a middle ground that Roman religion was neither "actively moral" nor entirely disconnected from morality.⁶³ Galinsky also shows how virtues were frequently embedded within material culture and texts of religious significance.

Whether the wealthy elite of the Late Republic generally held genuine religious beliefs is also debated within the historiography of religion in Republican Rome. Some historians have seen

59. J. A. North, "Conservatism and Change in Roman Religion," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 44 (1976): 1-8.

60. Orlin, *Temples, Religion and Politics*, 5.

61. J. Rüpke, *Religion in Republican Rome: Rationalization and Ritual Change* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 3.

62. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change*, 307.

63. K. Galinsky, *Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 289.

religion as a convenient political tool used by the wealthy elite to incite the masses, whose religious adherence was generally more ardent. Gelzer states that Caesar “personally had no faith in the religion of Rome, and only used it as a political weapon.”⁶⁴ This idea is also frequently drawn from readings of Cicero, who often used religion for political advantage. Are these examples, however, reflective of the political elite as a whole? Other historians suggest this is not the case, including Spaeth, who provides evidence for the importance of religious piety to the social elite by examining their attempt to placate the goddess Ceres after the death of Tiberius Gracchus.⁶⁵ Orlin tends to agree with interpretations of Roman religion as more than a mere political weapon used by the wealthy elite.⁶⁶ Politics and religion were closely related, but it is interesting that the political violence of the Late Republic is seldom considered within this context.

A common perception by historians of violence in the Late Republic is best summarized by Keaveney, who writes that “the Romans were becoming habituated to violence and it was beginning to be regarded as a natural way to solve political issues both domestic and foreign.”⁶⁷ The traditional perspective shrouds the Late Republic in extreme violence that signaled inevitable revolution. Authors like Gruen, however, contend that even though the period saw heightened violence, it should not be taken as a teleological indicator of an inevitable or easily predictable revolution.⁶⁸ Gruen puts forth a growing population as one of a number of explanations for

64. M. Gelzer, *Caesar: Politician and Statesman*, trans. P. Needham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 326.

65. B. S. Spaeth, “The Goddess Ceres and the Death of Tiberius Gracchus,” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 39, no. 2 (1990): 182-95.

66. Orlin, *Temples, Religion and Politics*, 90.

67. A. Keaveney, *The Army in the Roman Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 2.

68. E. S. Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 498.

heightened violence at this time. Indeed, Beard and Crawford argue that as the Republic expanded its territories, more was at stake for the upper echelons of political office; there were provinces and proconsulships to dole out where wars could be waged, meaning that fabulous wealth was at stake for ambitious politicians.⁶⁹

Within the historiography of violence in the Late Republic, there is debate as to whether or not the lack of a police force contributed to the heightened violence. Scholars on the subject generally agree that even during the Early Republic, Roman officials were reliant solely on obedience to the legitimacy and authority of their position in order to arrest agitators in a mob; citizens would need to use force in order to prevent or arrest a criminal.⁷⁰ Lintott, however, points out that there had been relative political peace and virtually no instances of political violence in previous centuries despite the lack of a police force.⁷¹ Lintott examines how older systems of popular justice, in which crowds took part in the punishment of well-known criminals, and self-help, which is a more liberal use of our notion of self-defense that encompasses a right to vengeance, influenced Roman law and could be exploited by politicians of the Late Republic.⁷²

For the Rome of the Late Republic, fighting was a way of life and plunder a heavily relied upon source of financial gain. Beard highlights the value Romans placed on “success in fighting,”⁷³ but argues that in this aspect they were no different from other Italian peoples.

69. Beard and Crawford, *Rome in the Late Republic*, 2.

70. B. Lutz and J. Lutz, “Political Violence in the Republic of Rome: Nothing New under the Sun,” *Government and Opposition* 41, no. 4 (2006): 495; W. Nippel, “Policing Rome,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 74 (1984): 23.

71. Lintott, *Violence in Republican Rome*, 6-34.

72. *Ibid.*, 16, 22, 58.

73. Beard, *SPQR*, 162.

Roman leaders were simultaneously religious, political, and military figures, which partly explains why at least some forms of violence were perfectly acceptable by religious, moral, and legal standards. Beard also points out the dual meaning of the words *hostis*, which could be used to mean either “foreigner” or “enemy,” and *militae*, which could mean either “abroad” or “on military campaign.”⁷⁴ The Roman justification for violence in the form of military campaigns is important for this study because they often share similarities to justifications for political violence. In the Late Republic and as Octavian sought to secure power after Caesar’s death, military conflicts became increasingly political. Domestic enemies in such conflicts were often represented as foreign by Roman politicians who sought to justify themselves and garner the support of the masses. Due to the significance of the *mos maiorum* and the obligations that came with it, a break with Roman tradition could also be used by political opponents to undermine their adversaries. But Roman religion at once emphasized tradition and allowed for the adoption of new practices.

Gaughan has argued that there was no law that prohibited murder or considered it a crime throughout most of the Republic (until the time of Sulla).⁷⁵ It is known that Roman law, the earliest of which is the Twelve Tables, grew out of the Roman political and thus its religious structure. Since politics were bound to Roman religion, one could extend Gaughan’s argument to say that murder was not prohibited by religion and that political violence inherently had a religious element. If Swain and Davies rightly claim that “it was self-evident to the Romans that

74. *Ibid.*, 162.

75. J. E. Gaughan, *Murder Was Not a Crime: Homicide and Power in the Roman Republic* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 1.

struggles for political power involved struggles for religious power”⁷⁶ then it would be self-evident that political violence was also religious violence. Political violence is, therefore, an ideal place to begin a consideration of the relationship between religion and violence.

76. Swain and Davies, *Aspects of Roman History*, 316.

CHAPTER 2: FROM CATO TO SULLA

2.1 Consolodation of Roman Power in the Mediterranean

The Third Punic War was controversial, some senators in the Late Republic viewed the war as something agitated by the Romans themselves as a result of their own hubris.⁷⁷ The war was resisted by those who supported Scipio Nasica Serapio, who viewed it as neither necessary nor just; as such, the war was considered by some as a break with tradition and potentially even the *pax deorum*. Opponents thought the war reflected the growing greed and deteriorating morals of many senators who supported it. Baronowski argues that the war was undertaken not in defense of Rome itself, but as an aggressive action to consolidate Roman power in North Africa, expropriate fertile land for growing crops, and satisfy the desire for plunder of Rome's rank and file.⁷⁸ Supporters of the war, like Cato the Elder, argued that Carthage needed to be destroyed in order to secure the safety of Rome, otherwise she would always be threatened. "*Carthago delenda est*" or "Carthage must be destroyed" was a phrase repeated by Cato the Elder at the end of each address to the Senate, the negative of which was repeated by Scipio Nasica in the years leading up to the Third Punic War.⁷⁹ O'Gorman shows how the rhetoric of Cato the Elder influenced both the decision to go to war and the rhetoric of Cicero almost a century later.⁸⁰ The

77. E. O'Gorman, "Cato the Elder and the Destruction of Carthage," *Helios* 31, no. 1-2 (2004): 111.

78. D. W. Baronowski, "Polybius on the Causes of the Third Punic War," *Classical Philology* 90, no. 1 (1995): 26-29.

79. Plutarch, *Cato Major*, trans. B. Perrin, Loeb Classical Library 47 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), XXVII.1-2; O'Gorman, "Cato the Elder," 110-11.

80. O'Gorman, "Cato the Elder," 112. Cato's phraseology was adapted by Cicero, who repeated contextual variations of "Cataline must die."

concerns for morality later expressed by authors like Sallust were reinforced and informed by earlier debates over the war with Carthage.

O’Gorman considers not only how opponents of the war focused their arguments around morality but also how its proponents were at least partially driven by moral outrage since, in their view, the prosperity of Carthage had caused its people to become overindulgent and excessively preoccupied with pleasure seeking.⁸¹ In order to illustrate the close proximity of Carthage and the danger it represented, Cato released a few large, ripe figs from the folds of his toga in front of the gathered Senate body, claiming that they had come from Carthage in only three days.⁸² O’Gorman argues that the figs also represented the luxury, success, enjoyment and immorality, which Cato meant to portray as the real danger.⁸³ Plutarch tells us that Cato the Elder, while a new man, was “the oldest of the old” in the way of tradition, implying a certain familial and religious piety.⁸⁴ Cato was said to have cherished a picturesque lifestyle of rural simplicity that so many upper class Romans frequently mused over but rarely fulfilled.

The import of Greek culture, such as new deities, poetry, and philosophy, all of which had an influence on the direction of Roman religion, unnerved some Romans who saw extravagance and effeminacy as threats to their cultural identity.⁸⁵ While Cato was, in large part, disdainful of

81. Ibid., 105.

82. Plut., *Cat. Mai.* XXVII.1-2.

83. O’Gorman, “Cato the Elder,” 105-107.

84. Plut., *Cat. Mai.* I.2; Beard, *SPQR*, 203-8. The stereotype of a quintessential Roman was “down-to-earth, no-nonsense,” and “hardy.” This image, which is how Cato is represented by Plutarch, was projected back upon Roman ancestry, reflecting the idealistic appreciation of a simple, agrarian life within the Roman aristocracy. In 204 BCE, the import of the Cult of Cybele, the mother goddess, from Troy, which was thought of as Rome’s ancestral home, raised questions about what it meant to be Roman. The image of the goddess was unlike other gods in the Roman pantheon, a black meteorite whose priests were effeminate and self-castrated.

85. Plut., *Cat. Mai.* XVI. As censor, Cato sought to curb the “luxury and effeminacy of the time.”

Greek culture and philosophy, Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy, which condemned “pleasure as ‘the greatest incentive to evil,’ and the body as ‘the chief detriment to the soul,’” was compatible with his own ideology and validated his contempt for extravagance.⁸⁶

Many of the moral qualms that Romans expressed regarding Carthage were the same concerns that authors of the Late Republic, including Cato himself, increasingly expressed for Rome itself. One could argue that a crisis of morality stemming from differing positions on politics and tradition grew as Rome expanded its power. By the end of the 3rd century BCE, Cato had already expressed moral concerns for Scipio Africanus’ lavish spending and overindulgent campaign lifestyle while in Africa during the Second Punic War.⁸⁷ Cato thought Scipio’s behavior was not in keeping with the *mos maiorum* nor a positive influence for Roman soldiers, who were liable to similar vices, likening Scipio not to “commander of an army, but master of a festival.”⁸⁸

As a censor, Cato expelled Lucius Quintius from the Senate because, during a lavish banquet, the latter had his lictor behead a prisoner who was already sentenced to death for the entertainment of a young friend.⁸⁹ The young man, according to Plutarch, said that he had once left a gladiatorial show to join Quintius even though his “heart was set on seeing a man slaughtered,” which sparked the beheading.⁹⁰ Plutarch’s explanation seems to suggest that Cato found the context of a lavish banquet and the relationship between Quintius and the young man,

86. Plut., *Cat. Mai.* II.3, XXIII. On Cato’s regard and disdain for Greek philosophy and culture.

87. Plut., *Cat. Mai.* III.5-8.

88. Plut., *Cat. Mai.* III.7.

89. Plut., *Cat. Mai.* XVII.

90. Plut., *Cat. Mai.* XVII.2.

which was implicitly sexual, more severe than brutalizing a prisoner for entertainment. A different context for the beheading, even if executed for mere enjoyment, would likely not have led to expulsion and therefore would have gone unmentioned in Plutarch's account of Cato. This points to a set of traditional morals in Rome focused on gaining glory for Rome, enhancing the community, living frugally, and showing devotion to one's family (to include upholding the dignity of their ancestral memory) rather than placing value on individual life above all. This is effectively demonstrated by Cato, who prided himself on upholding the *mos maiorum*, including its religious components.

Debates surrounding the Third Punic War further invigorated moral controversy and helped to shape the direction of moral discourse in the Late Republic. The destruction of Carthage and Corinth within mere months of each other in 146 BCE left Rome as the supreme power of the Mediterranean, enabling the type of overindulgent upper-class prosperity that the Senate had disdained in Carthage and feared from closer contact with Greek culture. Lintott argues that "Moral failure did in fact contribute to the overthrow of the Roman Republic, but it lay in the choice of means more than the choice of ends."⁹¹ He contends that tradition encouraged violence, which implies that religion also encouraged violence, since the *mos maiorum* was equally bound to religion and politics.⁹²

The changes that accompanied the expansion of Rome into an empire, including the adoption of foreign culture, complicated the politics of the Late Republic, which had proven increasingly inadequate for ruling a large empire, and contributed to its end. Plutarch writes that

91. Lintott, *Violence in Republican Rome*, 208.

92. *Ibid.*, 208.

Cato, in an attempt to “prejudice his son against Greek culture,” declared to him “in the tone of a prophet or a seer, that Rome would lose her empire when she had become infected with Greek letters.”⁹³ Cato’s concept of an empire was one ruled by the Republic; in this sense the empire as he had known it was irrevocably changed, which coincided with the influence of foreign culture and problems introduced by the governance of a larger empire. The *mos maiorum* at once valued preservation of political and religious tradition and was open to the incorporation of new ideas, but its flexibility also meant that tradition could be a matter of perspective. The election of Scipio Aemilianus to the consulship (147 BCE) before he had reached the legal age to stand for election, for example, established a precedent that broke with tradition.⁹⁴ Over a century later, Octavian could legitimize his own underage election to various offices with the help of such examples.

Appian suggests that Roman soldiers writing to their families and envoys to the Senate, after Scipio Aemilianus’ success as a military tribune in the war against Carthage, expressed their admiration of his prowess and prayed for his return as a consul.⁹⁵ The idea that Scipio alone could defeat Carthage is positioned by Appian as a divinely inspired prophecy of the people fulfilled by fate.⁹⁶ As a military tribune, Scipio had daringly saved four Roman cohorts trapped in retreat by Hasdrubal; afterwards the army, according to Appian, thought Scipio possessed the same divine favor as his grandfather to see the future.⁹⁷ The Roman populace and those who

93. Plut., *Cat. Mai.* XXIII.2-3.

94. Appian, *The Punic Wars*, in *Roman History*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. B. McGing, Loeb Classical Library 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1912), XVII.112.

95. App., *Pun.* XVI.105, XVI.109, XVII.112.

96. App., *Pun.* XVI.109, XVIII.122. According to Appian, “It was fated that Carthage should fall.”

97. App., *Pun.* XV.103-4.

supported Scipio conveniently redefined tradition, “exclaiming that by the laws handed down from Tullius and Romulus the people were the judges of the elections, and that, of the laws pertaining thereto, they could set aside or confirm whichever they pleased. Finally one of the tribunes of the people declared that he would take from the consuls the power of holding an election unless they yielded to the people in this matter.”⁹⁸ Thus, Scipio Aemilianus became consul, despite his age.

As successful politicians were also successful commanders, it was natural that the principles of war could translate to personal beliefs. Baronowski supports this view, showing how Polybius contrasts aggression against Carthage to self-defense in much the same way that the two are conceptualized in private law.⁹⁹ Similarly, Lintott says of the Roman statesman’s “propensity to use violence in civil life to enforce political beliefs and personal claims, with or without official sanction,” that “its causes were the nature of Roman society and law, the character of the Republican constitution itself, and not least their cult of the expedient when using force on other human beings.”¹⁰⁰ Appian, for example, scripts a debate in the Senate in which Publius Cornelius, in support of destroying Carthage at the end of the Second Punic War, says that “In war, gentlemen, that which is expedient is alone advantageous.”¹⁰¹ In this particular debate, the Senate had decided on peace; one of the arguments in favor of peace, we should note, was not to incite the anger of the gods. The argument of expediency in supporting the destruction of Carthage demonstrates how Romans considered whether or not war was an appropriate course

98. App., *Pun.* XVII.112.

99. Baronowski, “Polybius on the Causes of the Third Punic War,” 21.

100. Lintott, *Violence in Republican Rome*, 207.

101. App., *Pun.* IX.62.

of action, which is strikingly similar to their rationale regarding political and private violence.¹⁰² It also shows us that religion was not openly accepting of all violence, it moderated its use, supporting only that which was considered just.

Gruen is right in his conclusion that it is impossible to pinpoint an exact time or event in which the Republic began its collapse.¹⁰³ The politics of the Republic prior to the destruction of Carthage, as Cato the Elder demonstrates, were not free from heated debates or denunciation of morality. Yet, concerns expressed through rhetoric were certainly more than simply, as Gruen contends, “invective, patent exaggeration” or “a part of the standard forensic vocabulary that Romans took for granted and not very seriously.”¹⁰⁴ The patterned concern for morality by various actors in the Republic (Cato the Elder, the Younger, Sallust, Lucretius, Cicero, and others) over more than a century suggests that they had identified a problem that was never adequately addressed.

Romans sometimes expressed concerns about the loss of the Republic altogether, such as Scipio Aemilianus after the destruction of Carthage.¹⁰⁵ These concerns were often expressed as efforts to preserve Republican values in response to fears of declining morality, challenges to Roman cultural identity, and permanent alterations of the status quo. Roman politicians sought to preserve a positive memory of their achievements for posterity. Cato the Elder, for example, erected the Basilica Porcia and had planned the construction of various other temples and public

102. App., *Pun.* IX.57-65

103. Gruen, *Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 498-99.

104. Ibid., 499; R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (1939; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 149-52. Gruen's claim is partly based on Syme.

105. Scipio Aemilianus quoted Homer afterwards to the effect that “The day shall come in which our sacred Troy / And Priam, and the people over whom / Spear-bearing Priam rules, shall perish.” App., *Pun.* XIX.132.

works. Roman identity, values, and the preservation of memory were literally and symbolically related to Roman religion. Republican concerns for its preservation and the relationship between sacred space and memory in the Roman Republic were expressed prior to the internecine violence of the Late Republic. For Cato's achievements as censor, a statue in the temple of Health was erected in his honor with the inscription, according to Plutarch, "that when the Roman state was tottering to its fall, he was made censor, and by helpful guidance, wise restraints, and sound teachings, restored it again."¹⁰⁶ Debates over morality and how to properly uphold the values of the *mos maiorum* would ultimately contribute to the civil violence that began with Ti. Gracchus in 133 BCE. Religious views reciprocally influenced morals, politics, and tradition, making such debates integral to a discussion of religion and violence.

Prior to the destruction of Carthage, Roman envoys offered the alternative to relocate Carthage further inland, which was little more than a voluntary form of cultural destruction.¹⁰⁷ Charles-Picard writes that the Roman offer to have Carthage moved inland in order to avoid the destruction of its people "was intended to re-integrate them into that order of things which conformed to the plans of Providence and to the laws of wisdom which Rome felt she had been called upon to establish."¹⁰⁸

The moral crisis of the Late Republic was not resolved in Roman discourse until Augustan moral reforms, which were positioned as a restoration of middle Republican values and traditions; yet in reality it was also a synthesis inclusive of Caesarian values and the

106. Plut., *Cat. Mai.* XIX.3-4.

107. O'Gorman, "Cato the Elder," 115.

108. G. C. Picard and C. Picard, *The Life and Death of Carthage: A Survey of Punic History and Culture from its Birth to the Final Tragedy*, trans. D. Collon (New York: Taplinger, 1969), 292.

influence of Greek customs.¹⁰⁹ The controversy surrounding the Third Punic War demonstrates how the Romans thought an unjust war was ill fated due to its disruption of the *pax deorum* and a just war was thought to bring prosperity and the gods' protection. Whether or not violence was considered just, which was always a subjective matter, helped determine whether or not it was religiously advisable. The traditions and rituals of the early Republic often endured and became more formalized. Lintott demonstrates that many of the older traditions of popular justice and ritualized self-help were assimilated into Late Republican law and could be used by politicians to incite violence against their opponents.¹¹⁰ Similarly, traditional standards for justifying war and keeping the *pax deorum* could be applied to political violence, which was often committed on a more personal level.

2.2 The Sacrosanctity of the Tribune: Voice of the Plebs

The period that historians refer to as the Late Republic has often been viewed as starting around the time of Tiberius Gracchus' death; Appian, for example, begins *The Civil Wars* with his murder. Appian sees this as the first of a series of civil disturbances that arose out of an economic crisis, which resulted in an increasing gulf between rich and poor, after Rome became the de facto ruler of the Mediterranean. Rome had seen a mass influx of land and wealth into Rome after the elimination of their key rivals, but the benefits of this wealth did not commensurately reach all the citizens of Rome and its Italian allies. Thus, Ti. Gracchus, the descendant of multiple proud families, sought a way to enhance his own prestige and live up to

109. Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, 80-83.

110. Lintott, *Violence in Republican Rome*, 20-22.

the expectations of his family by positioning himself as a champion of the people who saw themselves increasingly displaced. The murder of Ti. Gracchus, as well as the subsequent murders of C. Gracchus, Fulvius Flaccus, and Appuleius Saturninus, who pursued similar political goals by claiming to enrich the masses, serve as useful examples for explaining the nature of violence and its relationship to religious belief in the Late Republic. All of these figures were populist tribunes, all were murdered, and in all cases the violence is saturated with religious motivation and symbolism.

It is true that Appian has been criticized by modern historians for his lack of concern with dates and his penchant for drama at the expense of chronology.¹¹¹ The latter is primarily a concern as it relates to the year after Caesar's death and the former does not prevent Appian from providing a relatively accurate narrative critique of other periods with the advantage of sources that are no longer available. For example, he shows his ability to understand multiple perspectives in that he seems to sympathize with the purpose of Gracchan proposals and the plight of common people, but he also inculcates the brothers for their aggressive methods.¹¹² Furthermore, despite the occasional error in his narrative, Appian still provides a perspective on the rationale of what would constitute moral justification for violence in Republican Rome. Appian seems to suggest that in the Republican view, the Gracchi were justifiably exterminated, which is based off his own understanding of Republican morals and religious traditions.

111. Swain and Davies, *Aspects of Roman History*, 5.

112. Appian, *The Civil Wars*, trans. J. Carter (New York: Penguin, 1996), 1.10-11, 1.27. The arguments of Tiberius' supporters and opponents are considered. The view that Tiberius "gave no consideration to the difficulties surrounding" his reforms is basically the same critique of Gaius, whose laws were viewed as impossible to enforce.

In Appian's narrative, despite any positive intent of the Gracchi, both are ultimately demagogues causing violent disturbances and therefore are seen by their opponents as religious pollutants, disturbing an otherwise sacred space. Appian's work suggests that in the religious tradition of Rome, violence was justifiable if one could rationalize it as the defense of Rome or the sacrosanctity of its magistrates, priests, rituals, or sacred spaces.¹¹³ While tribunes themselves were sacrosanct, their own violation of another tribune, sacrosanct ritual, or space could lead to violence. Compelling argument has already been made regarding the legitimization of state-sanctioned violence in the case of both Gaius and Ti. Gracchus.¹¹⁴ Certainly Polo's overall argument is not to be denied; a critical component to justifying the murder of the Gracchi was the brothers' alleged aspirations for tyrannical rule, which is exemplified by the efforts of the *optimae* faction to preserve their view of them in the Roman memory.¹¹⁵ Polo makes a valid argument regarding the fabrication or exaggeration of archaic examples of tyrannicide that were injected into the *mos maiorum* in order to add legitimacy to the Senate's actions.¹¹⁶ The present argument would add that the *optimae* view of the Gracchi as religious pollutants who had violated the sacrosanctity of Rome and threatened the *mos maiorum* was an equally important

113. "The victorious voters went home to the country, which they had left for the occasion, but the losers stayed in the city, still smarting and putting it about that Gracchus would be sorry, as soon as he became a private citizen, that he had committed an outrage against a sacred and inviolate office and had planted such seeds of discord in Italy." App., *B Civ.* 1.13. Ti. Gracchus had successfully voted M. Octavius, a fellow tribune, out of office.

114. F. P. Polo, "The 'Tyranny' of the Gracchi and the Concordia of the Optimates: An Ideological Construct," in *Costruire la Memoria: Uso e abuso della storia fra tarda repubblica e primo principato*, ed. R. Cristofoli, A. Galimberti, and F. R. Vio (Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2016), 5-33.

115. *Ibid.*, 12, 16-17.

116. *Ibid.*, 22-24; Polo discusses the stories of Sp. Cassius, Sp. Maelius and Manlius Capitolinus and their peculiar similarities with those of the Gracchi.

factor for the Senate to legitimize such violence, which is also evident in the attempts of the *optimata* faction to preserve their view of the Gracchi.

Appian writes “No sword was ever brought into the assembly, and no Roman was ever killed by a Roman, until Ti. Gracchus, while holding the office of tribune and in the act of proposing legislation, became the first man to die in civil unrest, and along with him a great number of people who had crowded together on the Capitol and were killed around the temple.”¹¹⁷ This leaves the impression that Gracchus’ opponents saw themselves as justified in the eyes of the gods. Granted, there were many temples in and around Rome that served as meeting places for the Senate and for a multitude of purposes. Armies were also prepared in the Campus Martius near the temple of Mars and led from there; only after the traditional distinctions of the *pomerium* had already been blurred by the combined military and civil authority of Augustus was there a temple to Mars inside the *pomerium*.¹¹⁸ In the Late Republic, violence shared a certain relationship to religion in that temples were vowed in exchange for success in war, sacrifices took place in sacred spaces, and military exercises, like military commands, were allotted their appropriate space outside the *pomerium*.

The right to command, *imperium*, was a power that was restricted primarily to consuls or praetors and was only valid outside the *pomerium* after performing the appropriate rituals; the only exceptions to this, in which the Senate authorized *imperium* to be held by an individual within the *pomerium*, was under the extraordinary circumstances of either a triumph, an

117. App., *B Civ.* 1.2.

118. Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome: A History*, 180. The temple was erected in 2 BCE. In the Late Republic a temple to Mars could only be found outside Rome’s sacred religious boundary, the *pomerium*, which separated civil space from military affairs.

appointed dictatorship, or the issuance of the *senatus consultum ultimum*, the first of which was issued against C. Gracchus.¹¹⁹ The violence surrounding the murder of Ti. Gracchus and many of his followers in 133 BCE, however, was not only near a temple, but was carried out by the Pontifex Maximus, Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica on the Capitoline, within the *pomerium*.¹²⁰ It is clear that Appian sees Tiberius' murder as the start of a more distinct period of civil unrest initiated by a religious figure justifiably seeking to eliminate a social and religious pollutant as well as a challenge to the status quo.

There is certainly an element of narrative drama, yet still a powerful kernel of truth to the religious symbolism expressed interpreted by Baker, who writes of Nasica setting out to murder Tiberius. "Then," as Baker puts it, "in the manner of a priest before a sacrifice, Nasica pulled his toga around his head and left the Senate House."¹²¹ Appian also suggests that Nasica's gesture could have been meant to inspire his followers by his implicitly priestly and certainly distinctive garb; but writes that it could have also been in shame that Nasica attempted to conceal his face from the gods.¹²² In either case, this alludes to the significance of Nasica's position as Pontifex Maximus in leading the subsequent murder of Ti. Gracchus and many of his followers. Of clear presence in the Republican Roman conscious was whether violence was abhorrently gratuitous

119. F. K. Drogula, "Imperium, Potestas, and the Pomerium in the Roman Republic," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 56, no. 4 (2007): 419-52.

120. "After taking their decisions, they went up to the Capitol. The first among them, leading the way, was the chief priest, as he is called, Cornelius Scipio Nasica." App., *B Civ.* 1.16. For evidence that the *pomerium* was extended in archaic times by Titus Tatius to include the Forum Romanum and the Capitoline, see Tacitus, *Annals*, trans. by C. Damon (New York: Penguin, 2012), 12.24.

121. S. Baker, *Ancient Rome: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London: BBC Books, 2006), 97.

122. App., *B Civ.* 1.16.

or justifiably warranted in the eyes of the gods, which suggests that religious considerations significantly influenced violent behavior and restraint from violence.¹²³

Appian's narrative clearly demonstrates the significance of religion in violent episodes such as this, but it would be a mistake to interpret religious concerns as the sole motive for the perpetration of such violence. The initial conflict grew out of pragmatic concerns surrounding Tiberius' proposed land bill, which sought to renew and enforce a limitation on the use of what was already in theory public land. In reality, this was land controlled by the wealthy, who had individually controlled and held large portions that were utilized for their own profit after paying only a small tax for its use. The proposed limit of no more than 500 *iugera* per person plus half that for children was viewed by those already in control of such land as problematic for various reasons, aside from simply the obvious loss of profit. The land had often been used to invest in and build establishments, some had borrowed money with the land as collateral, promised portions as inheritance or dowry, or had even established family tombs. Tiberius argued that the use of slaves by the wealthy to cultivate such land was leading to the displacement of less fortunate Roman citizens, who were liable to military service and afterwards found no jobs as a result of growing slave numbers. Appian suggests that Tiberius and his supporters feared for the growth of its own citizen population as a result of these hardships and therefore Rome's ability to protect itself with a citizen army.

In Appian's narrative it is evident that civil discord arose from pragmatic non-religious considerations that result in a disruption of the status quo. Yet, even in such disputes, religious considerations played an important role in attempting to resolve conflict and in rationalizing a

123. App., *B Civ.* 1.12. Tiberius also had a guard stationed to intimidate Marcus Octavius, who faced angry voters ready to forcibly remove him.

justification for the use of violence to do so. The inviolability and sacrosanctity of the office of tribune was of particular consequence in Appian's narrative. Since tribunes were supposed to represent the interests of the common people, Ti. Gracchus sharply criticized his fellow tribune, Marcus Octavius, who at the behest of a wealthy senator, continuously vetoed the vote for proposed land law to benefit the people. Therefore, Gracchus endeavored to have Octavius removed from a sacrosanct office, which was from his own perspective legitimate, since it was determined by a vote of the people against a tribune who was seen as having abandoned his duty. Before the final vote of the plebian assembly was cast, Appian recounts that Tiberius had begged Octavius to change his course and that he "called on the gods to witness that it was with reluctance that he brought dishonor on a fellow-magistrate, and having failed to convince Octavius carried on with the vote."¹²⁴ When Octavius was subsequently removed from office, Tiberius' opponents claimed that he had violated the sacrosanctity of a tribune, for which, they openly declared to exact vengeance once Tiberius himself had given up the title.¹²⁵ Thus, as the conflict escalates, both sides demonstrate the concern that their actions be justified in the eyes of their gods.

That the office of tribune was sacrosanct and inviolable contributed significantly to the conundrum of how to deal with a contentious tribune. A tribune could freely exploit the power of the office, undermining the will of the people who had voted him into office or obstructing the otherwise regular proceedings of the senate by exercising his right to prohibit (veto) the actions of any Roman citizen, including senators or fellow tribunes. Furthermore, tribunes had the power

124. App., *B Civ.* 1.12.

125. App., *B Civ.* 1.13.

to put laws before the plebian assembly for a vote. Gruen is right to point out that legislation was most often initiated by the Senate, even when proposed by a tribune.¹²⁶ Yet, while Senatorial decrees generally had the force of law in practice, they were not, strictly speaking, binding law. Tribunes, therefore, held significant powers to subvert the Senate or the people at their own discretion, sometimes leading to an unruly atmosphere under the leadership of an ambitious tribune. The abuse of almost unlimited tribunal veto power developed into a key factor for the ultimate demise of the Republic, despite the fact that a relatively small number of the ten annually elected tribunes actually generated considerable controversy.¹²⁷ The power of tribunes and the fear of subversion that they inspired could lead to accusations by the senate of tyrannical ambitions on the part of populist tribunes. Roman religious traditions and the *mos maiorum* were reflected in the symbolic nature of actual violence.

Accusations were hurled, for example, that Ti. Gracchus sought to depose his fellow tribunes by force and, as Appian writes, “make himself tribune for the following year without election.”¹²⁸ These allegations and the view that Tiberius had initiated the violence within Rome’s sacrosanct boundary, whether accurate or not, provided sufficient moral justification in Roman tradition from the viewpoint of his opponents. It is no accident that the Senate met in the temple of Fides and that Nasica’s followers left from there to murder Tiberius. How could the defense of the city be viewed as religiously immoral when Romulus himself, who had slain his own brother for jumping Rome’s walls, was thought to have been deified? The murder of Ti.

126. Gruen, *Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 211-12.

127. On the development of veto power, see Beard, *SPQR*, 247; For arguments against on Gruen, *Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 23.

128. App., *B Civ.* 1.15. Remarks on the location of Tiberius’ murder.

Gracchus at the doorway to a temple with statues of former kings was symbolic;¹²⁹ Roman tradition has it that the last king of Rome was forcibly overthrown as a tyrant, his son killed after the rape of Lucretia, and an oath sworn to defend Rome against future kings. In the Roman view, there was little difference between king and tyrant, but proconsuls and propraetors frequently came into contact with kings while governing various provinces and the authorship of the Late Republic often expresses concern for influence of foreign culture.

A portion of the Roman elite saw the influence of Hellenistic culture on the Roman people as a particular problem. Appian, for example, mentions that Caepio (often regarded as Scipio), during his consulship, removed a theatre supported by Lucius Cassius because he thought it was “not in the public interest for Romans to become completely used to Greek luxuries.”¹³⁰ Greek material and cultural imports presented a particular challenge to the status quo because they were thought to influence the Roman elite in an amoral fashion. Concern for the state of Roman morality was expressed by both Sallust and Cicero. Greek gods were generally compatible with Roman religion and culture and Roman religion had always been open to expansion of its pantheon or addition of religious rituals, yet resistant to the abandonment of tradition.¹³¹ But other aspects of Greek culture were also being imported, particularly art, which was perceived as lavish by certain members of the Roman aristocracy, and the importation of Greek philosophies like Epicureanism, which was often seen as related to overindulgence of

129. App., *B Civ.* 1.16.

130. App., *B Civ.* 1.28.

131. J. A. North, “Conservatism and Change in Roman Religion,” 8.

sensual pleasure.¹³² Cicero's view of Epicureanism as an attack on Roman religion, morality, and the *mos maiorum* was not new to his generation.¹³³

Appian suggests that C. Gracchus and Fulvius Flaccus apparently disregarded the curse and ill omen surrounding the land that was once the site of Carthage, their chosen location in an attempt to form a new colony. By the time of Gracchus, education in Greek philosophy was increasingly common.¹³⁴ As early as the fourth century BCE there is evidence of relatively modest contact with Pythagorean and other Greek philosophy. By the late second century BCE a number of examples have been cited to suggest greater influence of Greek philosophies like Stoicism and Epicureanism.¹³⁵ Sedley suggests that by 155 BCE Roman politicians had come into closer contact with various Greek schools of philosophy, namely Stoa, the Academy, and Peripatos, which initiated Roman engagement with philosophical thought.¹³⁶ While these philosophical ambassadors to Rome did not include members of the Epicurean school, Sedley suspects this is partly due to Roman philosophical interests and the somewhat apolitical nature of

132. P. Morel, "Cicero and Epicurean Virtues (De Finibus I-2)," in *Cicero's De Finibus: Philosophical Approaches*, ed. J. Annas and G. Betegh (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 78. Morel highlights the perceived "subordination of morality to pleasure" in Epicureanism.

133. "Epicurus however, in abolishing divine beneficence and divine benevolence uprooted and exterminated all religion from the human heart." Cic., *Nat. D.* I.121. See I.111-117 for a critique of Epicureanism and sensual pleasure. Cicero describes the Peripatetic view that if the gods exist, they're not absent providence.

134. M. Beard, "Cicero and Divination: The Formation of a Latin Discourse," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 76 (1986): 37-38. Beard suggests that prior to the second century BCE, philosophical activity in Rome was comparatively minimal and philosophical activity was limited to relatively small groups of elites. She points out that by the end of the second century BCE, some Romans were philosophical experts "in their own right."

135. *Ibid.*, 37-40.

136. D. Sedley, "Epicureanism in the Roman Republic," in *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism*, ed. James Warren (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 29.

a purely Epicurean philosophy.¹³⁷ There are multiple references in the early to mid-second century BCE of Greek philosophers, including two Epicureans, being banished from the city, implicitly after promoting their beliefs.¹³⁸

Plutarch comments on the remarkable education of the Gracchi and Greek scholars that surrounded their mother.¹³⁹ A number of historians have minimized the extent to which Greek education influenced the reforms of the Gracchi. Dudley, for example, argues that Blossius' encouragement of Gracchan land reform is best understood in the context of his "allegiance to the Campanian democratic party, rather than as a Stoic philosopher."¹⁴⁰ Ossier argues that Ti. Gracchus was more powerfully influenced by Roman tradition than Greek education in the proposal of such contentious land laws.¹⁴¹ He cites as evidence the Licinio-Sextian laws of the 4th century BCE, the revolutionary traditions of early Rome, including the Conflict of the Orders, and democratic leanings that he associates with both a trend in the 2nd century BCE and the defection of Tiberius to the Claudian faction.¹⁴² Even Ossier, however, would admit that it is plausible Greek influence played some role in the controversial Gracchan land reforms. The arguments of Dudley and Ossier regarding Tiberius are inadequate to explain the departure from

137. "Epicureans often enough found themselves at the civic margins, not only for their political minimalism but also because of the suspicion of atheism." *Ibid.*, 30. Quote is in reference to Rome, ca. 155 BCE.

138. *Ibid.*, 30.

139. Plutarch, *Tiberius Gracchus*, trans. B. Perrin, Loeb Classical Library 102 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921), I.5

140. D. R. Dudley, "Blossius of Cumae," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 31 (1941): 96.

141. J. F. Ossier, "Greek Cultural Influence and the Revolutionary Policies of Tiberius Gracchus," *Studia Historica: Historia Antigua* 22 (2004): 64.

142. *Ibid.*, 65-67.

religious tradition of his brother Gaius, who attempted alongside Flaccus to create a new colony of Italian people near Carthage.

After its destruction, Aemilianus had vowed Carthage should never be occupied again. Gaius' defiance of the *mos maiorum*, at least in the way much of the senate understood it, ultimately ended in violence, which was a consistent theme in the civil struggles of the Late Republic.¹⁴³ Since F. Flaccus was suspected of murdering Scipio Aemilianus in 129 BCE, potentially implicating Gracchus, any disregard for religious tradition in regards to Carthage would have been seen as a disgrace to Aemilianus' memory and potential evidence against the alleged in his murder.¹⁴⁴ While both Appian and Plutarch suggest the Senate might have fabricated religious omens to prevent Gaius from starting the colony, they also imply that to propose the colony in the first place was to brush aside the senatorial decree declaring the land accursed.¹⁴⁵ It is impossible to know what influenced C. Gracchus' to disregard traditional religious mores. One should certainly avoid considering all dissension from Roman religious tradition as a result of Greek philosophical importation, but it is impractical to believe that education in such spheres had no effect in encouraging the abandonment of tradition.

As Appian would have it, C. Gracchus and F. Flaccus returned to Rome frustrated after augurs had declared the intended colony to be ill-omened due to its location and the reported destruction of its boundary markers by wolves.¹⁴⁶ Gracchus and Flaccus then challenged the

143. App., *B Civ.* 1.24.

144. Plutarch, *Caius Gracchus*, trans. B. Perrin, Loeb Classical Library 102 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921), X.4-5

145. App., *B Civ.* 1.24; App., *Pun.* XX.135; Plut., *C. Gracch.* XI.1.

146. App., *B Civ.* 1.24.

authority of the augurs and senators, essentially accusing them of falsely reporting the auspices. By this point, Gracchus and Flaccus could more easily be painted as a challenge to the status quo and the *mos maiorum*. But it was the sacrosanct setting of the violence and its perpetration against a Roman performing a religious ritual that solidified Gracchus a pollutant in Appian's narrative.¹⁴⁷ When Gracchus and Flaccus assembled their clients, who were armed with daggers, in the sacrosanct area of the Capitol, which would have been illegal in such a space, Appian continues a narrative that from a traditional Roman moral and religious perspective would perfectly justify the violent retaliation of the senate. As Gracchus paced and pondered his next course of action with armed clients about him, he encountered, Appian tells us, "Antyllius, who was one of the ordinary citizens who happened to be making a sacrifice in the portico."¹⁴⁸ Gracchus' glance at Antyllius was misinterpreted by the armed men, who then killed Antyllius. According to Plutarch, Antyllius was stabbed to death with the writing styli of Gracchan supporters as he carried the entrails of Opimius' sacrifice.¹⁴⁹ When Gracchus sought to explain himself, Appian writes "they all turned aside from him as though he were polluted by blood."¹⁵⁰ Plutarch suggests that Opimius urged his supporters to vengeance for Antyllius' murder as if he had been given the justification he had hoped for in order to eliminate a political rival.¹⁵¹

Whether the story unfolded exactly it has been told, it captures how Roman religion demanded vengeance for unjust forms of violence. While violence outside of Rome or against a

147. App., *B Civ.* 1.24-26; Appian generally reserves "pollution" throughout his text for cases in which violence would constitute a religious atrocity, the *lustratio* afterwards was intended to expel such pollution.

148. App., *B Civ.* 1.25. Antyllius was murdered on the Capitol by supporters of C. Gracchus.

149. Plut., *C. Gracch.* XIII.3-4

150. App., *B Civ.* 1.25.

151. Plut. *C. Gracch.* XIII.4.

non-citizen was more broadly justifiable in the Roman view, the path was narrow in regards to violence committed against another Roman. This was particularly true one who held a sacrosanct office or of violence within the confines of the pomerium. A murder on the Capitol, which was within the *pomerium* even before the expansion of its boundary by Sulla and later emperors (most famously Vespasian) was difficult to defend.¹⁵² This opened the door to justifiable retaliation against Gaius and his supporters, demanding that a *lustratio* follow in order to purify the city and restore the *pax deorum*.¹⁵³ The story is absent a number of political considerations surrounding the death of C. Gracchus, but it says something about the way Appian perceived the relationship between violence and religion in the Late Republic. The narrative establishes senatorial justification for the first decree of a *senatus consultum ultimum*, which was meant to purge Rome of a pollutant and threat, not only to its own safety but to the religious and political traditions embodied by the *mos maiorum*.

Although Appian sympathizes with the intended purpose of Gracchan reforms and the circumstances of the initial violence, maintaining that Gaius had not really given any order initiating violence, he ultimately views Gracchus as a demagogue and his reforms as flawed.¹⁵⁴ While a man of good intention, C. Gracchus had disrupted the status quo by inciting the masses with an attractive law that was, as Roman opposition saw it, impossible to enforce.¹⁵⁵ By choosing a forbidden site for his colony, questioning the authority of Roman religious practice,

152. Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome: A History*, 83. The authors show that the Capitol was within the *pomerium* before the time of the Gracchi and propose the theory that temples to Venus and Cybelle (foreign deities) were only established within because of their familiarity to Roman religion.

153. App., *B Civ.* 1.26; Orlin, *Temples, Religion, and Politics*, 190. Temples solidified the *pax deorum*.

154. App., *B Civ.* 1.27.

155. App., *B Civ.* 1.24.

and ultimately bringing armed men within its sacred boundary, he had become a threat to religious and political tradition, thereby justifying his murder in the eyes of his opponents. The pollution of violence within the Capitol was cleansed by the purification ritual, *lustratio*, that followed.¹⁵⁶

After the death of Gaius, construction on a temple of *Concordia* began, though it is unclear whether the construction was entirely new or a renovation of an existing temple. The inscription on the temple, “A work of mad discord produces a temple of Concord,”¹⁵⁷ begs the question: who had disturbed the peace, Opimius or C. Gracchus? Plutarch suggests it was an inscription carved by opponents of Opimius, who were vexed by the temple. Gracchan supporters, who hated Nasica and Opimius for their murders, later consecrated the places where the Gracchi were slain.¹⁵⁸ Plutarch suggests Opimius dedicated the temple in a celebratory or triumphant manner, which, in light of the many people killed in addition to C. Gracchus and F. Flaccus, disturbed a large portion of the population, who saw the Gracchi as their champions.¹⁵⁹ Usually a temple was vowed upon setting out for war against a foreign enemy, constructed upon success in war, and dedicated to the god to whom it had been promised, often on an *ad hoc* basis by the initiative of a single magistrate.¹⁶⁰

The vowing of a Roman temple constituted something of a mutual promise: the god or goddess’ help in war for the construction and dedication of a temple to that god. Despite

156. App., *B Civ.* 1.26.

157. Plut., *C. Gracch.* XVII; For discussion, see also Polo, “The ‘Tyranny’ of the Gracchi,” 19.

158. Plut., *C. Gracch.* XVIII.

159. Plut., *C. Gracch.* XVII.5-6. Plutarch says victims numbered three thousand.

160. Orlin, *Temples, Religion, and Politics*, 1-9.

Plutarch's suggestion that the inscription was a condemnation of Opimius, supporters of either side may have viewed the actions of the other as "mad." The *optimata* faction of the Senate would have seen the temple as a monument to restored order after the expulsion of the Gracchi, it was their attempt to preserve in Roman memory a view of the violence as religiously sanctioned and appropriately justified.¹⁶¹ It is possible that the story of Gracchus escaping to "a sacred grove of the Furies," to whom the souls of evildoers were delivered for punishment in the afterlife, before being beheaded was meant to establish a similar type of religious validity to his murder (though it is unclear if he had killed himself or commanded his servant to do so before his head was taken for reward).¹⁶² Regardless of perspective, the incident demonstrates that it was important to have religious support to legitimize one's actions, particularly when they transgressed the conventions of the *mos maiorum*. Perceived threats to the *mos maiorum* could be remedied by violence, religiously approved, and later reconciled with the *pax deorum*, which suggests that violence in Roman culture was thought to be a simple fact of life, a viable solution, and a necessary evil.

Polo ends his argument by suggesting that authorship other than Cicero shows how the *optimates* were the challenge to the *mos maiorum* by impinging upon the rights of the citizens and perpetrating violence on the Gracchi.¹⁶³ This argument is based on the exile of Scipio Nasica after Ti. Gracchus' murder and the assumption that Nasica was acting on the periphery or outside of the law in doing so. Gaughan, however, has argued that murder was not yet officially even a

161. Polo, "The 'Tyranny' of the Gracchi," 13-14.

162. Plut., *C. Gracch.* XVII.1-5; On the punishment of evildoers in Tartarus, see V. M. Hope, *Roman Death* (London: Continuum, 2009), 105.

163. Polo, "The 'Tyranny' of the Gracchi," 29.

crime until the time of Sulla.¹⁶⁴ One could argue that Appian clearly considers the *populares* as the agitators of change, albeit from a perspective that is distinctly sympathetic with both the *optimata* and *populare* view. The pattern that begins with the first few instances of political violence within Appian's first book is that the *optimata* faction retaliates against violence initiated by the *populares* and that coincides with some religious atrocity.¹⁶⁵ Appian sympathizes with the *optimates* for their attempts to maintain order and preserve the *mos maiorum*, but is critical of any misdeeds. Appian is both critical of Sulla for his seizure of power and marches on Rome, but sympathetic to his position and praises him for relinquishing power. The grand picture of Appian's first book, however, suggests that the Republic remembered the disturbances from Gracchus to Spartacus' revolt as something of a divine punishment.¹⁶⁶ The state of affairs in Appian's narrative devolved to utter sacrilege by the time of Sulla and Marius' dispute. The greatest sacrilege of all seems to be merciless violence among Romans, particularly within otherwise sacred spaces like Rome itself. Much of this violence is of course perpetrated by Sulla, but it is an overzealous response to the unrestrained violence and agitation of the *populares*, who are generally portrayed as the antagonists.

As an urban praetor in 89 BCE, Sempronius Asellio presided over a court to determine whether the traditional Roman law and custom of prohibiting money lending at interest should be overturned in the wake of the Social War. Asellio was viewed by his opponents as a supporter of

164. Gaughan, *Murder Was Not a Crime*, 1.

165. App., *B Civ.* 1.15-33. On the murders of the Gracchi, F. Flaccus, A. Saturninus and P. Furius.

166. App., *B Civ.* 1.121. On the reconciliation of Pompey and Crassus, for example, Appian writes that "At first they both refused, but when some persons gifted with divine inspiration foretold the most terrible consequences if the consuls continued to disagree, the crowd wailed, and in deep dejection, still remembering the disasters of the time of Sulla and Marius, made another appeal to them."

the traditional prohibitive laws on money lending and was ultimately murdered. Appian writes that Asellio, “in the act of making a libation, and wearing the holy gold-embroidered robe of a sacrificant, was murdered early in the day, in the middle of the forum, next to sacred utensils.”¹⁶⁷ In the commotion, Asellio had hidden from his pursuers at an inn near the temple of Vesta. Mistaking him for having entered the temple, the perpetrators had searched for him there and encroached upon the sacred place of the vestal virgins, which was a space that no man was supposed to enter. Asellio, as a defender of the *mos maiorum*, was piously making a sacrifice to the Dioscuri (Castor and Pollux) when he was disturbed and ultimately killed.

Asellio’s murder is indicative of the economic crisis that troubled the Late Republic and Keaveny suggests that the murderers were Asellio’s creditors.¹⁶⁸ A number of indebted politicians, including Cataline and Sulla himself, had devised plans to cancel debts, in whole or in part.¹⁶⁹ Appian suggests that Asellio was ultimately dragged back out into the forum and killed; the nature of the murder as described by Appian is chaotically disruptive of religious tradition. The perpetration of unjust violence within the Rome’s sacred boundary, the *pomerium*, or in particular, within the forum itself was inherently seen as a crime against the gods.¹⁷⁰ So too was the perpetration of violence against a Roman in the performance of a sacred ritual. The crime of causing violence in a sacred space or against a sacrosanct individual was itself the only justification for violence within that same space or against a perpetrator who was himself

167. App., *B Civ.* 1.54.

168. A. Keaveny, *Sulla: The Last Republican*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 56.

169. *Ibid.*, 56.

170. For evidence of what constitutes a crime “committed against the immortal gods,” see Cicero, *De Haruspicum Responsis*, trans. N. H. Watts, Loeb Classical Library 158 (Cambridge: Harvard University press, 1923), 5, 39, 57-58. For more discussion, see Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome: A History*, 137-38.

otherwise inviolable. Retaliation against such perpetrators would have been perfectly justified under the circumstances, rewards were offered for proof about his murder.¹⁷¹ Traditional Roman religion saw violence as a legitimate answer to violence, but it also sought to curb the initial violence by making it profane under the wrong circumstances.

Such religious profanities blurred the traditional framework of Roman values and created an atmosphere in which future generations could view violence in such spaces as potentially legitimate in light of their ancestors past behaviors. According to Appian's account, Quintus Pompeius' son was killed by supporters of Publius Sulpicius and Gaius Marius while speaking in the forum.¹⁷² Appian says very little of the murder, but the passage demonstrates that such violence was not viewed as unprecedented and that violent political behavior in response to civil disagreement was becoming a pattern with prepackaged justifications. The theme of the murder is consistent with that of Scipio Nasica in that Sulla sought to justifiably extinguish political opponents (in 88 BCE, Sulpicius, a tribune, was murdered, but Marius escaped) by labeling them as threats and enemies of Rome. By attempting to convince supporters that his actions were against enemies of Rome in order to "free her from her tyrants,"¹⁷³ Sulla hoped to mask an otherwise religious atrocity as a justifiable necessity for the defense of Rome.¹⁷⁴ Attempts to

171. App., *B Civ.* 1.54.

172. App., *B Civ.* 1.56.

173. App., *B Civ.* 1.57.

174. App., *B Civ.* 4.95-97; Appian puts words into Cassius' mouth via a speech in which the latter refers to the heads of recent politicians as atrocities. Given the sacrosanct nature of the body of the tribune and of the space in which they were displayed, it is implicit that "atrocities" is imbued with a religious connotation. This is reinforced by Cassius' assertion that he had the gods and justice on his side. Mentioned here to illustrate that the murder of such figures by Sulla might easily constitute a religious atrocity and that claiming to defend Rome, particularly from tyrants, was a political defense in which one could hope to justify themselves and avoid such labels.

justify violence were set in a framework of religious significance in which various perspectives could simultaneously claim vindication.

2.3 Marius and Sulla: Power, Religion and Memory

Power was framed religiously for the most notable political figures. Keaveny writes that the *popularis* movement challenged the privileged position of the *nobiles* (any member of a family whose ancestry included a Roman consul), who had seen their status as something owed them “almost by divine right.”¹⁷⁵ The legend that Gaius Marius had been prophesied to hold seven consulships after “seven eaglets landed in his lap”¹⁷⁶ as a boy is a perfect example of how a *novus homo* could hope to entrench the family legacy in divinely sanctioned power. Appian suggests that it was a sort of “religious fear” that prevented his would-be captors from murdering him as he fled to Africa after Sulla’s march on Rome in 88 BCE.¹⁷⁷ It is no secret that many families of noble ancestry claimed descent from a Roman god. The privilege of the *nobiles* and their domination of the Senate and consulship has led most authors to reflect upon the aristocratic nature of political life in the Late Republic. Keaveny, for example, paints a picture of senatorial usurpation of power, particularly in foreign affairs, from a complacently willing Roman citizen body who, more in theory than in practice, held sovereignty in the Late Republic.¹⁷⁸ Millar, however, challenges the concept of *clientela* ascribed to by historians like

175. Keaveny, *Sulla: The Last Republican*, 22.

176. App., *B Civ.* 1.61, 1.75.

177. App., *B Civ.* 1.61-62.

178. Keaveny, *Sulla: The Last Republican*, 1-3.

Gelzer and Brunt, who view Late Republican politics as being largely controlled by patrons (mainly *nobiles*) who could mobilize clients with voting rights.¹⁷⁹

As Marius sought to curry the favor of the people, he accepted a number of honors that legitimized his power. Immediately after a scene of horrific violence at the Battle of Vercellae, in which the Cimbrian women, upon witnessing the loss, killed themselves and their relatives, including children, in order to avoid Roman enslavement, Plutarch describes how Marius was brought offerings and libations alongside the gods.¹⁸⁰ Beard argues that “Marius,” as she puts it, “seems to have set a pattern for the cult of the living,” himself attempting to appropriate the attire of the gods by wearing triumphal dress in normal Senate gatherings.¹⁸¹ Plutarch shows that Sulla would attempt to stain the memory of the battle by claiming that its initial miscalculations were a sign of the gods’ displeasure, but demonstrates Marius’ confidence that the gods were on his side as he had claimed victory before battle upon examining the entrails of a sacrifice.¹⁸²

Marius’ seventh election to the consulship and his having been named by the people as Rome’s third founder ultimately helped to crystalize his almost godlike status, but Sulla later sought to alter that memory in every way possible.¹⁸³ In an illuminating study on memory, Steinhölkamp argues that Sulla sought to systematically supplant the memory of Marius, whose

179. F. Millar, *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 8-9.

180. Plutarch, *Marius*, trans. B. Perrin, Loeb Classical Library 101 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920), XXVII.1-6.

181. M. Beard, “Religion,” in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd ed., vol. 9, *The Last Age of the Roman Republic, 146-43 B.C.*, ed. J. A. Crook, A. Lintott, and E. Rawson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 752.

182 Plut. *Mar.* XXXVI.2-3.

183. Plut. *Mar.* XXXVII.5.

monuments were often destroyed, through the erection of his own statues and buildings in spaces of sacral aura.¹⁸⁴ Stein-Hölkeskamp considers the most resonating form of remembrance for the people of Rome to be the monumental kind. The gilded equestrian statue, which Stein-Hölkeskamp points out was in the numinous space of the forum, was, according to Appian, given the inscription “Cornelius Sulla, Leader, Favoured of the Gods.”¹⁸⁵ As she points out, Sulla’s equestrian statue, the Bocchus monument, his expansion of the curia (renamed the Curia Cornelia), and his rebuilding of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, which had burned down during civil war in 83 BCE, were far from keeping with the traditional modesty of ancestors like Cato the Elder; Sulla had violated the Senate’s authority over self-glorification in sacrosanct spaces.¹⁸⁶ Violence was becoming increasingly glorified as well in such spaces. Lucretius Ofella, for example, beheaded Marius’ son, then consul despite his age, and sent it to Sulla, where it was displayed in the forum in front of the *rostra*.¹⁸⁷

From a modern perspective the Sullan proscriptions, which set a precedent for those of Second Triumvirate, could be considered quite cruel in that families, including women and young children, were often targeted alongside proscribed political opponents. Yet, Lintott argues that Republican Rome had a very different view of cruelty, which helps us to understand how justifications for violence were interpreted in a political context.¹⁸⁸ The use of violence in a

184. E. Stein-Hölkeskamp, “Marius, Sulla, and the War over Monumental Memory and Public Space,” in *Memory in Ancient Rome and Early Christianity*, ed. Karl Galinsky (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 215-18.

185. *Ibid.*, 216; App., *B Civ.* 1.97.

186. Stein-Hölkeskamp, “Marius, Sulla, and the War over Monumental Memory.” 219-224.

187. App., *B Civ.* 1.94.

188. Lintott, *Violence in Republican Rome*, 33-51.

politically expedient manner or in defense of the state, particularly where there was precedent in the *mos maiorum*, could be accepted as a justifiable necessity.¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, it was the father of the proscribed families who could be considered cruel for what were viewed as choices that had placed their loved ones in such a position.¹⁹⁰ Even in a political context, revenge could be considered self-help, which expanded upon the notion of self-defense, was legal, and even encouraged throughout the community. The severity of violence was less important than the justification or the person against whom it was committed for determinations of what constituted cruelty. For example, the punishment of a Roman citizen in the manner of a slave was considered cruel, regardless of its severity.

From the *optimata* perspective, for example, it would have been considered particularly cruel that the son of Sulla's colleague as consul, Q. Pompeius Rufus, was murdered mid-speech in the forum, presumably upon the sacrosanct space of the *rostra*.¹⁹¹ This occurred during a violent protest against the consuls' proclamation of "several days' suspension of public business, as was done for the religious festivals,"¹⁹² which was intended to delay voting on a law that would offer Italians greater equality in voting than they had initially enjoyed as newly converted citizens of Rome as a result of the Social War. The *populares* would have viewed their violent encroachment on the space as justified since the attempted veto of the suspension by their sacrosanct representative, the Tribune Publius Sulpicius, had been ignored. In addition to the

189. *Ibid.*, 48.

190. *Ibid.*, 47.

191. When the Senate met in public, magistrates spoke from the *rostra*, "also defined as a *templum*." Beard, "Religion," 731; See also, Cicero, *In Vatinius*, trans. R. Gardner, Loeb Classical Library 309 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 24. Cicero refers to the *rostra* as a "sacred spot."

192. App., *B Civ.* 1.55.

violation of sacrosanct spaces and people leading to violence, sacred oracles and objects could also intimate violence.

Appian writes of an oracle to Sulla regarding his enquiry on the future:

*Hearken to me, O Roman. Great power on the race of Aeneas,
Cherishing them with her care, has Cypris conferred. But be sure to
Pay the immortals their dues every year. Nor forget you this precept:
Bring gifts ever to Delphi. There is, as you climb from the sea
Up to the Taurus snows, where named by its dwellers for Venus
Stands lofty the Carian city, a goddess, to whom if you humbly
Offer an axe, you shall take for yourself o'ershadowing power.*¹⁹³

In response to the oracle, Sulla had sent an axe and golden crown with an inscription about his own dream of Aphrodite (Venus) using them in battle, demonstrating that violent objects could themselves be consecrated and considered sacred.¹⁹⁴ Appian gives us this oracle after Sulla had established control of Rome, the proscriptions had been carried out and the vast majority of his political opponents eliminated, with essentially only Sertorius in Spain as any form of real threat to resist him. Appian tells us that Faustus, which means something similar to “‘auspicious’ and ‘favoured by Venus,’” was an epithet of Sulla in addition to the name given to his son.¹⁹⁵ The perception of Sulla as favored by the gods demonstrates how Romans could perceive violence as being the will of the gods, so long as they were given the proper offerings and the circumstances were appropriate to justify the use of politically expedient violence. If one were to take such oracles and attempts to establish the gods’ endorsement of Sulla as fabrications of the leader

193. App., *B Civ.* 1.97.

194. For a further example, see Plutarch, *Caesar*, trans. B. Perrin, Loeb Classical Library 99 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919), X.4-7.

195. App., *B Civ.* 1.97.

himself, the passage still communicates something about how one could hope to successfully legitimize power in Republican Rome.

Even in death, Sulla's power was a thing to be feared by those who had opposed him. Appian's description of the funeral testifies to the success of pro-Sullan efforts to shape memory and legitimacy through religious symbolism. After Sulla had laid down his power and retired to Cumae, Appian claims that he had dreamt of a "divine spirit calling him" and the next day prepared his will, fell ill to a fever, and died that night.¹⁹⁶ His body was carried on a gilded bier over a hundred miles to Rome, accompanied by an intimidating number of his former soldiers, who carried his fasces and lavish gifts. When they arrived, Sulla was given a lavish funeral in the manner described by Polybius; it was in fear that priests, senators, and magistrates escorted Sulla's corpse.¹⁹⁷ After everyone had spoken on Sulla's accomplishments, Sulla's body was burned on a pyre in the Campus Martius and laid to rest there, where "only the emperors are buried."¹⁹⁸ Sulla's tomb would, therefore, reside in a space where triumphant generals could see it upon entering the city, where people would visit the temple to Mars, or give thanks to the gods for military success.

For supporters within the citizen body and soldiers who had served under Sulla, the regular use of epithets like "Felix" or "Faustus" would have been reminders of his legitimacy. The "linguistic link: the conjunction *felix faustusque*, 'fortunate and prosperous,'" Harrison claims, "echoes a traditional Roman religious formula for an auspicious outcome to prayers and

196. App., *B Civ.* 1.105. Further evidence of the Roman belief in an afterlife.

197. App., *B Civ.* 1.106.

198. App., *B Civ.* 1.107

the like,”¹⁹⁹ which is a concept that would not have been lost upon Sulla. He would try to legitimize his unprecedented power within the Republic as a necessity for reforms that would uphold and defend of the *mos maiorum*. Gruen claims, for example, that the Sullan reforms, while a modification of the traditional governmental hierarchy, were also an attempt to preserve Roman tradition since they established a broader government that might appease the changing citizen body, which had expressed its discontent through dissension.²⁰⁰ By offering a greater opportunity for involvement in the Senate of various Italians, equites, and junior offices of the army, Sullan reforms, Gruen argues, helped to guarantee a greater loyalty to the Roman system of government and its leadership.²⁰¹

Sallust offers a glimpse of the importance of religion to the citizen body in a scripted speech of C. Aurelius Cotta, consul of 75 BCE, to the people of Rome.²⁰² He suggests that it was through both *virtus* and the help of the gods that one might overcome adversity.²⁰³ Crimes of particular religious profanity, such as parricide, which was an abhorrent violation of the Roman value, *pietas*, were thought to be cause for the greatest punishment in the afterlife.²⁰⁴ Sallust correlates the preservation of one’s fatherland and household gods to *dignitas*, something which he himself likely felt denied of in exile.²⁰⁵ There could be no *dignitas* in being deprived of one’s

199. Harrison, “Epicurean Subversion?,” 37-38.

200. Gruen, *Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 8-9.

201. *Ibid.* 8-9.

202. Sall., *Hist.* 2.47.

203. Sall., *Hist.* 2.47.1.

204. Sall., *Hist.* 2.47.3.

205. Sall., *Hist.* 2.47.4.

home and household gods; the passage would also suggest that Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon, which he claimed was in defense of his own *dignitas*, was also in defense of the sacrosanctity of his home and household gods.

CHAPTER 3: RELIGION AND THE REVOLUTION

Sullan reforms were, in part, a backlash to the changing political atmosphere of a growing empire and the complications of its incorporation, which disrupted the *mos maiorum*, religion, and politics. These concerns were ultimately not put to rest by Sulla, but his reforms came at time when Roman identity had been and continued to become increasingly challenged. Sulla had identified a problem in radical tribunes, whose exercise of veto and legislative power coupled with sacrosanctity could be used in a demagogic fashion to rouse the populace. The limitations on these powers and the making of the magistracy into a political dead end would ultimately be repealed by Pompey, another so-called champion of the people.

The First Triumvirate would prove themselves welcome companions to recent changes in religion and politics, accepting god-like honors abroad and, particularly in the case of Caesar, at home.²⁰⁶ Rome had long incorporated new deities into its pantheon, but many of the more recent additions, gods worshipped in far flung places, were patently un-Roman and distinguished as such by contemporaries.²⁰⁷ The cults of Bacchus, Cybele, Isis, and possibly even before the end of the Republic, Mithridates serve as examples. These gods were recognized, but in many instances Romans were forbidden from full participation in their rites and rituals. Furthermore, Greek philosophic thought, employing its own forms of scientific logic and rationalization, fostered skepticism in some circles.

206. Beard, "Religion," 749-55.

207. *Ibid.*, 763-5.

Roman religion, however, had its own mutual influence on the provinces, who adopted Roman gods and the deification of Rome itself, attesting to her religious fortitude.²⁰⁸ The *mos maiorum* and its self-evident truths, which were evidenced by the success of Roman ancestors, stood in the face of change and served for many as the only argument needed to refute new and incompatible ideas. Unchanged, for example, was the idea that the victories of Roman commanders could be attributed (albeit retrospectively) to the will of the gods. In this aspect, religion helped Romans to make sense of complexities of their world; it offered explanations for defeat, victory, war, violence, or political events.

3.1 The Seeds of Revolutionary Discord

As a supporter of the Marian faction in Rome, Caesar's family had lost much of their wealth and prestige. Caesar had sought the *flamen dialis* at an early age, for example, but this was put to an abrupt end when Sulla returned to Rome, defeated Marius, and annulled such appointments. Throughout Caesar's life, religion was of paramount importance to restoring the honor and power of his family. The incident in which his wife, Pompeia, became suspected of adultery during the sacred rites of the Bona Dea was an example of unacceptable disgrace that must be stamped out. When Caesar was asked why he left his wife, "'Because,' said Caesar, 'I thought my wife ought not even to be under suspicion.'"²⁰⁹ As Plutarch immediately points out, these words also helped Clodius, a political ally at the time, escape prosecution.

208. Ibid., 765-8.

209. Plut., *Caes.* X.6.

The relative laxity of punishment for Clodius' alleged crimes against the gods, for which Plutarch expresses his disdain, has been interpreted as a sign that Roman religion was declining in importance compared to previous generations.²¹⁰ Later scholarship, like that of Tatum shows that, on the contrary, Cicero's sincerity in his prosecution of Clodius upholds the significance of religion in the Late Republic.²¹¹ Tatum writes that "Clodius' sin ruptured the *pax deorum*, to be sure, but *instauratio* [the repetition of the ritual] was sufficient to mend it."²¹² The religious issue was easy enough to resolve in this instance, but the incident was just the beginning of a decade long feud between rival politicians. By the end of the 50s BCE, the factional gang violence between supporters of Milo and Clodius made the Republic almost ungovernable.

Caesar had set the tone for the turmoil of the 50s BCE during his contentious consulship of 59, which witnessed the use of armed thugs to dissuade resistance to land laws aimed at pleasing Pompey and Crassus. Further complicating matters was the breakdown of traditional norms related to religion and the *mos maiorum*. Caesar, as Pontifex Maximus and consul expedited Clodius' request to be made plebian so that he could stand for the tribune of 58 BCE, which required pontifical and senatorial approval after a formal examination as well as adoption into a plebian family.²¹³ Clodius was adopted by Publius Fonteius, who was young enough to have been his son.²¹⁴ Since the procedure did not follow religious tradition and Clodius

210. Plut., *Caes.* X.4-7; D. F. Epstein, "Cicero's Testimony at the Bona Dea Trial," *Classical Philology* 81, no. 3 (July, 1981): 230.

211. W. J. Tatum, "Cicero and the Bona Dea Scandal," *Classical Philology* 85, no. 3 (July, 1990): 204-8.

212. *Ibid.*, 204.

213. Gelzer, *Caesar: Politician and Statesman*, 77.

214. Cicero, *De Domo Sua*, trans. N. H. Watts, Loeb Classical Library 158 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1923), 35-36.

continued to use the same name, Cicero attacked the adoption as an invalid mockery.²¹⁵ Other of Caesar's acts were, his opponents claimed, invalid based on religious tradition, namely religious obstruction (*obnuntiatio*) by Bibulus, Caesar's fellow consul.

Obnuntiatio normally involved the consul's personal appearance in the forum in order to declare ill omens after taking the auspices.²¹⁶ Bibulus' obstruction, as Dio describes, was the declaration of "a sacred period for all the remaining days of the year."²¹⁷ As Suetonius would have it, he "announced adverse omens," but both agree that Caesar's supporters destroyed his *fascēs* and attacked him along with the tribunes that had been convinced to veto the bill.²¹⁸ In any case, Caesar saw to it that Pompey's land bill was passed. Thereafter, Bibulus could not leave his house due to fear of violent protestors, who harassed him, threatened his life, and tried to bring him to jail, reminiscent of Lintott's description of *occentatio*.²¹⁹ From a Caesarian perspective, his actions may be seen as justified in that Bibulus had trampled on tradition by manipulating Roman religion to obstruct a popular law; it was quite unconventional to simply send letters declaring ill omens or sacred days to prevent the passage of a bill, which were all the more suspicious considering Bibulus was unwilling to support legislation virtually everyone else unanimously wanted.²²⁰ Caesar's opponents, however, could argue that the legislation was

215. Cic., *Dom.* 34-39.

216. Beard, "Religion," 739.

217. Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 9 vols., trans. E. Cary and H. B. Foster, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914-27), XXXVIII.6.1-6.

218. Suetonius, Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, vol. 1, rev. ed., trans. J. C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library 31 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), *Iul.* XX.1-2.

219. Cic., *Vat.* 21-24; Lintott, *Violence in Republican Rome*, 8.

220. Dio XXXVIII.4.3; Cic., *Vat.* 21. See Cic. on the questionable nature of Bibulus' constitutional views.

invalid, Bibulus had reported ill omens, forced to do so from his home because of the profanity of violence against a consul and the sacrosanct bodies of three tribunes in the forum. Simply disregarding these events as evidence of religious decline fails to take differing perspectives into account. It was easy enough for Caesarians to point out Bibulus' religious abuse, but virtually anyone looking long and hard enough could legitimately find ill omens and Bibulus likely saw through Caesar's scare tactics on behalf of the Triumvirate.²²¹

Lintott contends that the main argument of Caesar's opponents to delegitimize his acts was on the basis of violence alone.²²² Beard argues that the religious obstruction was the precise reason for the controversial nature of Caesar's acts.²²³ Clodius' legislation as a tribune in 58 BCE suggests Beard is more accurate since it demonstrates the fear that Caesar's acts could be rendered invalid due to religion. Cicero expresses his outrage: "a law was passed that the auspices should have no validity, that no one should announce unfavourable omens, that no one should veto a law, that it should be permissible for laws to be passed on all *dies fasti*, that the Aelian Law and the Fufian Law should be invalid. Who cannot see that by this single bill the constitution was utterly destroyed?"²²⁴

As a tribune in 58 BCE, Clodius also successfully passed a retrospective bill to the effect that anyone who had sentenced a Roman citizen to death without trial should be exiled.²²⁵ As

221. Taylor, *Party Politics*, 82. Augurs watching the heavens "usually saw bad signs."

222. Lintott, *Violence in Republican Rome*, 145.

223. Beard, "Religion," 740.

224. Cicero, *Pro Sestio*, trans. R. Gardner, Loeb Classical Library 309 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 33-34.

225. T. P. Wiseman, "Caesar, Pompey and Rome, 59-50 B.C." in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd ed., vol. 9, *The Last Age of the Roman Republic, 146-43 B.C.*, ed. J. A. Crook, A. Lintott, and E. Rawson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 380.

consul in 63 BCE, Cicero had put to death, under the authority of the *senatus consultum ultimum*, a number of alleged Catilinarian conspirators. The conspiracy, backed by a relatively large number of supporters and an army outside of Rome, was an attempt to take control of the government, kill elected magistrates, and burn its buildings. It was a physical threat not simply to Rome as a whole, but included plans to eliminate Cicero specifically.²²⁶ Sallust portrays Cataline and his co-conspirators as irreligious, immoral, and destitute, which he relates to their unsustainable lifestyles; Cataline himself is specifically accused of crimes against the gods.²²⁷ Cicero was acting not only in his own defense, but also with the authority to take extraordinary measures to protect the city, to include executive privileges even within the pomerium.²²⁸ The conspirators' association with Cataline's irreligious and immoral behavior was a further symbolic justification for their execution.

As Beard points out, there was also something also symbolic about Cicero's chosen location, the Temple of Jupiter, to reveal what he had uncovered about the conspiracy and later the Temple of Concord to deliberate on what should be done with the prisoners, who were ultimately executed.²²⁹ While the senate normally assembled in temples like these, Cicero's choice signified that Cataline had struck at the heart of Rome itself, the Capitoline Triad, and later that the only way to restore order was to eliminate the threat. In his first speech, Cicero ends saying:

226. Sallust, *Cataline's War, The Jugurthine War, Histories*, trans. A. J. Woodman (New York: Penguin, 2007), *Cat.* 43.2. All references to this translation unless otherwise noted.

227. Sall., *Cat.* 10.1-16.5.

228. For Roman concepts of self-help, see Lintott, *Violence in Republican Rome*, 22-24; On the *senatus consultum ultimum*, see Drogula, "Imperium, Potestas, and the Pomerium," 447-51.

229. Beard, *SPQR*, 34-35.

With omens such as these, Catiline, go forth to your impious and wicked war, and bring sure salvation to the Republic, disaster and ruin upon yourself, and destruction upon those who have joined you in every crime and act of treason. You, Jupiter, whom Romulus established with the same auspices as this city, whom we justly call the Supporter of this city and empire, will keep him and his confederates from your temple and those of the other gods, from the houses and the walls of the city, from the lives and fortunes of all her citizens. And these men, the foes of loyal citizens, public enemies of their native land, plunderers of Italy, men who are joined together in an evil alliance and companionship of crime, these men alive or dead you will visit with eternal punishment.²³⁰

The execution of the conspirators was certainly sanctioned by the Senate, which had created emergency powers for itself in substitution for the temporary office of dictator, as Mitchell argues.²³¹ But it is in this context that we can begin to understand the view held by many members of the Senate, which was that the executions were sanctioned by the gods themselves. In his next and final speech before the Senate, Cicero begins by claiming that it was by the will of the immortal gods that he was fated to deliver Rome from danger.²³² The ritualistic, public nature of the executions further attests to the gods' approval.²³³

When Cicero returned from exile in 57 BCE, it was not without contest. Clodius' gangs, which included some gladiators, forcibly put a stop to voting on a bill for his return earlier that year.²³⁴ The gang violence between Milo and Clodius had become so problematic that by the end of the years 54-53, the consuls of 53-52 had not yet been elected. Though likely an exaggeration, Sallust writes to Caesar requesting his return to Rome to restore order and in reference to the

230. Cicero, *In Catilinam*, trans. C. Macdonald, Loeb Classical Library 324 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 1.33.

231. T. N. Mitchell. "Cicero and the Senatus 'consultum ultimum,'" *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 20, no. 1 (1971): 59-61.

232. Cic., *Cat.* 4.2.

233. Millar, *The Crowd in Rome*, 110.

234. A. W. Lintott, "Cicero and Milo," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 64 (1974): 63.

years 54-52 BCE, says that “forty senators and many young men of excellent promise have been butchered like so many sacrificial victims.”²³⁵ Animosity lingered on both sides until, in 52 BCE, Cicero defended Milo, who was prosecuted for Clodius’ murder under the *lex Pompeia de vi*. After the murder, this law was passed by Pompey, who was elected sole consul in order to restore order and make a special inquiry (*quaestio*) into those responsible for the murder.²³⁶ Lintott argues that after Cicero’s return from exile, he had become accustomed to the use of violent tactics for political ends and was unopposed when he thought the ends justified the means.²³⁷ It was with great care for his own well-being that Cicero would defend Milo.

Clodius was popular among the people, who brought his body into the city, held a funeral in a manner similar to that described by Polybius, and burnt it upon a pyre inside the senate house, which had been reconstructed by Sulla to seat an expanded Senate, destroying the building and the adjacent Basilica Porcia along with it.²³⁸ The curia was itself sacrosanct, but also symbolic of the type of oppression some people had hoped Clodius would end. While Pompey had already restored the tribunate, the building represented an attempt to rob the people of their sovereignty and limit the powers of the tribunate. The perspective of those who burnt it may have very well been that the curia was already profaned. It was clear that the *mos maiorum* meant something different to those most in grief over Clodius’ death than it did to the *optimata* faction that had supported Sulla. Ultimately, Cicero failed in his defense, delivering a less note-

235. Sallust, *Letters to Caesar*, ed. and trans. J. T. Ramsey, Loeb Classical Library 522 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), II.4.2.

236. Wiseman, “Caesar, Pompey and Rome,” 409-12.

237. Lintott, “Cicero and Milo,” 64.

238. Regarding its renovation, see Stein-Hölkeskamp, “Marius, Sulla, and the War over Monumental Memory,” 221; On its burning, see Wiseman, “Caesar, Pompey and Rome,” 407-8.

worthy speech in the face of an angered audience than he had later written and published; Milo was exiled and shortly thereafter Cicero was elected as an augur.²³⁹

Cicero had used religion politically in his defense of Milo, just as he had in his prosecution of Piso, it had become a common rhetorical element whether the speech was intended for broader audiences or the political elite; he attributes the death of Clodius to the will of the gods, either Jupiter Latiaris or Bonae Deae.²⁴⁰ While the political purposes of the published speech are clear, it serves as evidence of how one could hope to effectively convince others that a murder was justifiable. It was in the eye of the beholder as to whether or not violence against an enemy could be justified as divine will. Showing that a victim lacked moral integrity was key to defending the murder of another citizen. An effective method to demonstrate a lack of moral integrity would be to present evidence of irreparable crimes against the gods. Cicero's previous use of religion in an attack on Piso was against the latter's plunder of an ancient shrine to Zeus in Greece.²⁴¹ He alludes to the significance of religion also by revealing that slaves could not legally be compelled to testify against their masters except for crimes committed against the gods.²⁴²

The battle of the Bovillae and against Cataline pitted Romans against one another. In the fight against Cataline, some fought against, but as Sallust points out, others were happy to plunder for spoils; thus, he ends his narrative writing that “throughout the entire army, delight,

239. Cicero, *Philippics*, ed. and trans. D. R. S. Bailey, rev. J. T. Ramsey and G. Manuwald, Loeb Classical Library 189 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 2.4; Wiseman, “Caesar, Pompey and Rome,” 411-12.

240. Cicero, *Pro Milone, In Pisonem*, rev. ed., trans. N. H. Watts, Loeb Classical Library 252 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), *Mil.* XXXI.85-86; *Pis.* XXXV.85.

241. Cic., *Pis.* XXXV.85.

242. Cic., *Mil.* XXII.59. The footnote by Watts helps to clarify this.

sorrow, grief and joy were variously experienced.”²⁴³ The lines between political and military violence were becoming increasingly blurred. In Lintott’s examination of self-help, he demonstrates the relationship between *vi* (force), *vir* (man), *vis* (violence), and *vindicatio* (“a declaration of force,” he says and often, drawing upon Cicero, “the force by which we repel violence,” sometimes through vengeance), determining that civil law was largely based upon archaic traditions of ritualized self-help.²⁴⁴ Lintott accepts that some relationship between *religio*, ritual, and *vindicatio* exists and argues that expediency was a way in which one could hope to justify political violence.²⁴⁵ Similarly, expediency was a convenient argument for those who supported the destruction of Carthage almost a century earlier, making military engagements, particularly in the Civil Wars, relevant to any discussion of political violence.

In the *Gallic War*, Caesar suggests that the gods played a role in avenging Lucius Cassius through his victory against the Helvetii. After three-quarters of the enemy army had crossed the river Arar, he destroyed the rest, writing “And so, whether by accident or by the purpose of the immortal gods, the section of the Helvetian state which had brought so signal a calamity upon the Roman people was the first to pay the penalty in full.”²⁴⁶ The intermingling of religion and “nationalism” suggests that many Romans, who seem to have had a sense that the gods were on their side, thought themselves destined for superiority over other cultures and that the gods might punish those who stood in their way. Whether they were the victims or the aggressors, it was

243. Sall. *Cat.* 61.9.

244. Lintott, *Violence in Republican Rome*, 29-34, 49.

245. *Ibid.*, 48-49.

246. Caesar, *The Gallic War*, trans. H. J. Edwards, Loeb Classical Library 72 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1917), I.12.

possible to construe religious beliefs in such a way as to believe Rome was right, good, and just. As Rome entered into civil war, religious justifications were important for determining how leaders, who were expected to be absent vainglory or reasonable alternatives, were remembered.

According to Plutarch, Caesar sacrificed in consideration of offering battle at Pharsalus so that a *haruspex* could divine omens from the entrails of a sacrificed animal.²⁴⁷ The omen, according to Plutarch, was a reverse in fortune and a decisive battle within three days. As Caesar was at a disadvantage, it seems clear that the omen was ultimately thought of as favorable, despite the riddling of the seer. A shooting star appeared to fall into Pompey's camp, passing over Caesar's and foretelling his victory at Pharsalus.²⁴⁸ The night before the unplanned battle, Pompey was also said to have dreamt of "himself in his theatre applauded by the Romans."²⁴⁹ This was apparently a sign, his supporters thought, of victory, which encouraged him to offer battle on unfavorable terms. Although urged on by impatient supporters, Pompey would have more easily achieved victory if he had waited. Retrospectively it was easy for Romans to write such omens into the narrative of Pharsalus, which says something about the religious beliefs of Republican Rome. Such omens were the circumstances under which the memory of Caesar's victory rang true for his supporters; they served as a justification of his actions, which some may have perceived as the will of the gods.²⁵⁰

As Gelzer points out, Caesar tends to give the appearance that he knew how to reach out and seize something at the opportune time, particularly in his discussion of the Battle of

247. Plut., *Caes.* XLIII.2.

248. Plut., *Caes.* XLIII.3.

249. Plut., *Caes.* XLII.1.

250. For discussion of self-evident religious truths in Republican Rome, see Beard, "Religion," 729-34.

Pharsalus.²⁵¹ Caesar and his supporters could justify his actions by depicting him as favored by the gods or carrying out their will. Gelzer argues that religion was merely a disingenuous political tool for Caesar, preferring to translate *fortuna* as luck.²⁵² Yet, agency was often attributed to fortune as though it were the goddess Fortuna herself, breathing life into the word, which differs from modern understandings of luck as an inanimate concept. One particular passage in Caesar's *Civil Wars* goes into greater depth on the subject, suggesting a genuine belief in the goddess.

Caesar writes “But fortune, whose power is very great in all spheres, but particularly in warfare, often brings about great reversals by a slight tilt of the balance; and so it happened on this occasion.”²⁵³ This reference is to the personification of Fortuna, which is surprising because Caesar’s *dignitas* was of paramount importance to him; yet, rather than attribute the victory to his own prowess, he credits Fortuna, suggesting they were his own beliefs. What little remains of Lucilius, to whom Horace often refers, tells us that winning through fortune or luck lacks honor and glory.²⁵⁴ Lucilius also alludes to the relationship between fortune and fate.²⁵⁵ The Greek goddess Tyche, who was the embodiment of both, was related to the Fates (*Moirai*) and Furies; she was thought to play a role in determining one’s destiny.²⁵⁶ Violence was, therefore, part of a

251. Gelzer, *Caesar: Politician and Statesman*, 327.

252. *Ibid.*, 326.

253. Caesar, *The Civil War*, trans. J. F. Gardner (New York: Penguin, 1967), III.68.

254. Lucilius, *Remains of Old Latin*, vol. 3, rev. ed., trans. E. H. Warmington, Loeb Classical Library 329 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), XIII.477-478.

255. Lucil., XIII.473.

256. Pindar, *Olympian Odes*, rev. ed., ed. and trans. W. H. Race, Loeb Classical Library 56 (Cambridge: Harvard University press, 2012), Ol. 2.21-41.

grander scheme in the Roman perspective, it was a means to an end and could be used to achieve bad or good; it was in and of itself neither, but simply a part of life.

Upon his return to Rome, Caesar triumphed, afterwards giving gifts to his soldiers, holding large banquets, and “furnishing spectacles of gladiatorial and naval combats in honour of his daughter Julia, long since dead.”²⁵⁷ Triumphs were normally a testament to the glory of Rome and often included spectacles, such as gladiatorial events, but when held as a result of civil war could be quite offensive.²⁵⁸ Triumphs in honor of a successful commander carried an implicit religious symbolism not unlike the funeral of a well-known individual, the events were quite similar in that they were meant to glorify and recount Roman achievements. Gladiatorial games themselves had spiritual significance as a potential form of sacrifice and were traditionally held at funerals.²⁵⁹ The fact that triumphs were met with great cheer in victory over a foreign nation and viewed distastefully in civil war reinforces the idea of a fusion of national pride and religiosity in Republican Rome. Religious beliefs could more easily justify violence against a foreign enemy, it was for the glory and greatness of Rome and was part of their destiny. Only after peace had been realized could they reconstruct the past as the will of the gods, that it was by design that they should have endured such difficulties. Plutarch writes that Caesar’s last triumph “vexed the Romans as nothing else had done... and it was not meet for Caesar to

257. Plut., *Caes.* LV.2.

258. Plut., *Caes.* LVI.4.

259. A. Futrell, *Blood in the Arena: The Spectacle of Roman Power* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 3.

celebrate a triumph for the calamities of his country, priding himself upon actions which had no defence before gods or men except that they had been done under necessity.”²⁶⁰

While Plutarch can be, as Swain and Davies point out, “strongly anti-Caesar,” he provides useful insight on more than lives, including Roman religious traditions and remnants of otherwise lost histories.²⁶¹ Plutarch demonstrates moments of both great disdain and admiration for Caesar’s actions, as his *Lives* pair that of *Caesar* and *Alexander the Great*, it represents a comparative study depicting both good and bad. Plutarch praises Caesar for his clemency and courage, but is ambivalent about his ambitious nature and constant need for greater glory.²⁶² Caesar is relatively emotionless in his writing regarding the death of Pompey in the *Civil War*, which is towards the end of the portion that he is believed to have written himself.²⁶³ Plutarch gives reason to believe that Caesar wept upon seeing the decapitated head of his former friend, Pompey.²⁶⁴

The use of gods to justify a death, war, or victory in is often retrospective in Roman writing, but the interpretation of omens could also alter future decisions. Plutarch mentions that Caesar, due to an omen of constant success for the Scipios in Africa, had put an unrelated soldier whose last name was Scipio on the front lines in Africa while fighting Cato and Metellus Scipio.²⁶⁵ Greek and Roman authors frequently attributed success in battle to the will or favor of

260. Plut., *Caes.* LVI.4.

261. Swain and Davies, *Aspects of Roman History*, 6.

262. Plut., *Caes.* LVII.3, LVIII.2.

263. *Caes.*, *B Civ.* III.104.

264. Plut., *Caes.* XLVIII.1-2.

265. Plut., *Caes.* LII.2-4.

the gods, most of the authors writing on the Late Republic and Augustan Age are no exception. Caesar's style is very matter-of-fact, but the unknown author or authors of the last three books of what are collectively known as Caesar's *Civil Wars* were less adherent to Caesar's style. Gardner suggests the likelihood that Hirtius was the author of *The Alexandrian War*; the same author who had written the last book of the *Gallic War*.²⁶⁶ While Caesar was in communication with Pharnaces regarding the atrocities committed to Roman traders in Pontus, Pharnaces asked for the same mercy that had been given to Deiotarus since the former, unlike the latter, had not fought on the side of Pompey. The author writes that Caesar said, “as for this good deed you speak of, it was far more profitable for Pharnaces, who avoided being defeated, than it was for me, to whom the immortal gods granted the victory.”²⁶⁷ The author later mentions that the gods helped them in victory over Pharnaces, as the Romans were surprised by an attack while they had the town of Zela under siege, writing that the Romans were helped greatly “by the kindness of the immortal gods, who participate in all the fortunes of war.”²⁶⁸ From a traditional Roman perspective, therefore, military success was at least partially attributed to the favor of the gods and piety of the Romans themselves.

It is somewhat difficult to know the extent to which the retelling of legendary narratives or military campaigns could have been a contributing factor to violence both for the wealthy elite or the masses, just as it is difficult to prove, with far more evidence available, that violence in television inspires violence for our youths. What is clear is that there are parallels between the

266. J. Gardner, introduction to *B Civ.*, 29.

267. [Aulus Hirtius?], *The Alexandrian War*, trans. J. F. Gardner (New York: Penguin, 1967), sec. 70.

268. [Hirtius?], *The Alexandrian War*, sec. 75.

violent narratives contained within the Roman Religion, and Roman perceptions of violence that actually occurred. How a culture constructs their identity and views their history, however, says quite a bit about their world view. Unlike most widely-spread religions today, which have a negative view of violence, Roman religion accepted it as a part of life and even embraced it under certain circumstances. The nature of Roman religion was that it embodied both good and evil, no one god was entirely good or bad, it was filled with themes and stories of violence.

Within the Roman sphere of influence the religious practices of many peoples were comparable to those of the Romans themselves. According to Plutarch, the holy women of German tribes were thought to divine omens from a stream's winding path or noises in the forest.²⁶⁹ Caesar also considers the religious beliefs of Gaul, telling us that there were two wealthy and respected classes in Gaul, knights and Druids, the latter of whom were "concerned with divine worship, the due performance of sacrifices, public and private, and the interpretation of ritual questions."²⁷⁰ Druids had the power to judge other Gauls for criminal acts or prohibit them from public sacrifices, which brought about the assumption that they were "impious or criminal."²⁷¹ The Druids therefore, like many Romans saw sacrifice as a means of devotion to the gods, emphasized piety and had a system of values that was linked to their religious beliefs.

Authors like Polybius, Caesar, and Lucretius demonstrate that religion was a subject of interest prior to Cicero's later works. Human sacrifice was not something that Romans were entirely unfamiliar with; in addition to the rituals Caesar describes of the Druids, the

269. Plut., *Caes.* XIX.4.

270. Caes., *B Gall.* VI.13.

271. Caes., *B Gall.* VI.13.

Carthaginians had previously practiced human sacrifice, and Homeric epic contained archaic examples of the practice.²⁷² Though the instances are infrequent, largely misunderstood, and generally outside normal religious practices of the Republic, as Beard points out, “In 228, 216, and 114/13 B.C., for example, the Romans practised a form of human sacrifice, burying alive two Gauls, male and female, and likewise two Greeks.”²⁷³ Futrell argues that gladiatorial games aided the transference of the deceased into the afterlife and offered the condemned gladiators the chance of dying a more meaningful, glorious and honorable death.²⁷⁴

According to Caesar, the Gauls believed that their spirits were immortal and would be conveyed to another body after death, which bears a resemblance to the Roman notion of reincarnation in Virgil’s *Aeneid*.²⁷⁵ When Aeneas travels to the underworld, led by the oracle Sibyl, he finds his father, Anchises, in Elysium (the side of the underworld reserved for the heroic and pious). There, his father explains to him that after a thousand years, the shades of the departed drink from the river Lethe, forgetting their former lives, and their spirits are drawn into another body.²⁷⁶ The fact that Caesar considered the religious practices of Gallic tribes, which are seemingly in some agreement with Romans and other people within their sphere of influence, shows how these various cultures communicated religious ideas. Gallic gods were easily equated to Roman gods and strikingly similar to the Roman Archaic and Capitoline Triads:

272. Picard, *The Life and Death of Carthage*, 46-48; on Homeric sacrifice, see Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, trans. M. F. Smith (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001), 1.82-6.

273. Beard, “Religion,” 733-4.

274. Futrell, *Blood in the Arena*, 3, 7.

275. Caes., *B Gall.* VI.14.

276. A. Mandelbaum, trans. *The Aeneid of Virgil: A Verse Translation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), VI.940-993. All book and line references are to this version unless otherwise noted.

Among the gods, they most worship Mercury. There are numerous images of him; they declare him the inventor of all arts, the guide for every road and journey, and they deem him to have the greatest influence for all money-making and traffic. After him they set Apollo, Mars, Jupiter, and Minerva. Of these deities they have almost the same idea as all other nations: Apollo drives away diseases, Minerva supplies the first principles of arts and crafts, Jupiter holds the empire of heaven, Mars controls wars.²⁷⁷

The passage attests to the great degree of continuity that existed between the religious beliefs of Rome and many of the cultures they came into contact with. For all the similarities, there were also great differences, many of which led the Romans to believe they were superior to other cultures. But it was Greek culture that overshadowed Rome to the greatest degree, such that the *mos maiorum* came into question, causing many Romans to question traditional religion.

3.2 Roman Engagement with Epicureanism

By the early second century BCE Epicureanism had already influenced small groups of the Roman elite; yet, by the 50s BCE the influence of Epicureanism was far more significant, affecting a much broader audience.²⁷⁸ Epicurean philosophy had profound implications for the religious beliefs of its adherents. This study argues that Lucretius sought to challenge Roman religion by attempting to disprove traditional religious views, undermining religious practices, and thus fracturing the *mos maiorum*.²⁷⁹ Cicero's concern regarding the increasing popularity of Epicureanism is likely one of his inspirations for writing his philosophical treatises. He suggests that it was the ease with which people could obtain Epicurean sources and grasp the material that

277. Caes., *B Gall.* VI.17.

278. Beard, "Cicero and Divination," 38. The first groups of Roman philosophers were small. Sedley, "Epicureanism in the Roman Republic," 30. Epicureans around 155 BCE were "at the civic margins."

279. Harrison, "Epicurean Subversion?," 29-43. Lucretius' work as a countercultural response to violence.

led them to absorb and embrace the philosophy. Cicero attests to the growing popularity of the philosophy after the writings of the Epicurean C. Amalfinius in Latin and compares this to the relative lack of Latin sources for what he sees as truer philosophies, such as Stoicism.²⁸⁰

Lucretius' work is the most valuable source available on Roman Epicureanism and is the earliest extant Latin source.

Lucretius demonstrates that Epicureanism was as much a religious belief as a philosophy on how to live one's life. The philosophy carried with it a doctrine regarding the nature of the gods and answers to the mysteries of the universe. Epicureanism was based on assumptions that it viewed as rational explanations regarding the nature of the universe, including the nature of the gods, promising that people could live mortal lives like gods on Earth.²⁸¹ This Epicurean form of enlightenment was thought to be the best that mortals could hope to attain given the belief that there was no afterlife. Epicurean philosophy argued that the gods, in anthropomorphic form, did in fact exist, but they would not involve themselves in the affairs of men due to their state of existence in perfectly uninterrupted bliss and harmony.

While Lucretius does not describe the earth as a divinity itself, he demonstrates how Epicurean philosophy credited the earth with human creation and saw the existence of Earth and life as an inevitable natural phenomenon caused by the endless flux of atomic particles.²⁸²

280. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, rev. ed., trans. J. E. King, Loeb Classical Library 141 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945), 4.3.

281. M. F. Smith, introduction to *On the Nature of Things* by Lucretius, rev. ed., trans. M. F. Smith (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001), xii. Smith argues that Lucretius thought Epicurean enlightenment could lead to a life worthy of the gods, a virtual heaven on earth. Gods were thought to have differed from men primarily in that they were perfect and, therefore, their atomic structure was indefinitely replenished. Smith's translation is used in subsequent *DRN* footnotes.

282. Lucr., *DRN* 1.951-1051, 5.780-836.

Worship of the gods was encouraged; their images were both inspiration and proof of their existence;²⁸³ they were viewed as examples of perfection rather than being directly involved in human affairs.²⁸⁴ Lucretius shows how Epicureans thought that a state of tranquility was required for the reception of divine imagery into the mind and that such imagery reciprocally enhanced that peace.²⁸⁵ He also raises Epicurus, who is certainly portrayed as something more than human, to almost divine status in a panegyric that parallels his opening prayer to Venus.²⁸⁶ These are characteristics of various definitions of religion: Epicureanism had identified sacrosanct objects worthy of worship (the gods), provided answers to the mysteries of the universe, including how to live “a life worthy of the gods” here on earth, and encouraged a tranquil mind with which to better receive their imagery.²⁸⁷ While Epicurean answers to questions of the universe were based on a sort of rational logic similar to science, they were also insusceptible to it in that their unproven assumptions were taken as absolute truths.

Lucretius’ unorthodox combination of philosophy with poetic verse leads to some interesting compromises with Epicureanism. Epicurean philosophy holds that divine providence is a fallacy, yet Lucretius’ proem appeals to Venus for peace throughout all lands, alluding to a dire state of affairs in the Late Republic. *DRN* amounts to something of a paradox in that the very philosophy Lucretius sought to make more appealing through poetry is undermined by his own invocations and prayers appealing to the gods; for example, he appeals to Venus for peace and to

283. Lucr., *DRN* 1.1-43. Lucretius invokes Venus for inspiration.

284. Lucr., *DRN* 6.68-79. Lucretius suggests the benefits of the gods’ divine images.

285. Smith, introduction to *DRN*, xxix. Smith discusses the Epicurean view that the gods’ existence was self-evident due to human sensation (visions of and belief in them), which was a basic criterion of truth.

286. Lucr., *DRN* 1.1-49, 3.1-30. Invocation of Venus and eulogy of Epicurus, respectively.

287. Lucr., *DRN* 3.19-22; Smith, introduction to *DRN*, xxix.

the Muse Calliope to guide his pen.²⁸⁸ Harrison interprets Lucretius' proem as a countercultural reaction offering a "model of peace" in response to the civil and foreign violence that had characterized much of the late 60s through 50s BCE, such as the Catilinarian Conspiracy, the Gallic Wars, and gang warfare that eventually led to the death of Clodius at the hands of Milo.²⁸⁹ Apart from offering a message of peace, Lucretius' brand of Epicureanism was inherently subversive in a number of ways.

Harrison writes that Lucretius' work demonstrates how "key Roman ideas and practices are appropriated and inverted in a new counter-cultural literary world which argues for a different set of values."²⁹⁰ The Epicurean message valuing peace also discouraged involvement in politics on the basis that such pursuits generally led to unhappiness, which itself runs contrary to the traditional Roman values of duty and public service, which are reflected in the works of Cicero.²⁹¹ Religion being bound to politics and the *mos maiorum*, this was yet another assault on all three. Lucretius also sought to redefine the traditional notion of *pietas* (a duty owed to one's father, family, or the gods), writing that it consisted of "possessing the ability to contemplate all things with a tranquil mind."²⁹²

It was an irrational fear of death, in the Epicurean view, that was at the root of Roman troubles. Lucretius even went so far as to say that it was fear of death that caused a lack of

288. Lucr., *DRN* 1.29-1.49, 5.92-5.

289. Harrison, "Epicurean Subversion?," 31-34. A call to peace in regards to foreign war, Harrison argues, suggests Lucr. wrote *DRN* to C. Memmius C. f., tribune of 54 BCE, rather than to C. Memmius L. f., praetor of 58.

290. *Ibid.*, 40.

291. Lucr., *DRN* 3.995-1010.

292. Lucr., *DRN* 5.1203-4.

morality resulting in civil war during the Late Republic.²⁹³ Fear of punishment in the afterlife was framed as the impetus for such irrational fears, but “death,” Lucretius protested, “is nothing to us.”²⁹⁴ He meant that, in the Epicurean view, because the mind and spirit (*animus* and *anima*), like the body, are considered mortal, we cease to exist after death; no pain or suffering can be felt, just as in life there is absence of death. Lucretius gives readers the sense that violence and death were natural, even unavoidable facts of life. Lucretius even attributes key Roman military successes, including those in the Punic Wars, to the conquering of such fears.²⁹⁵ That violence and death were seen simply as facts of life is evident in Lucretius’ frequent use of the spear to illustrate his point. Lucretius uses the throwing of a spear at the edge of the universe to prove it is infinite, arguing that it would either hit matter causing it to stop (and proving that something must lie beyond) or would continue its course into the void.²⁹⁶ He also uses the example of a spear driven into the body to demonstrate the Epicurean view that the mind was material in nature because it suffered in dizziness with the body upon receiving such a blow.²⁹⁷

Harrison’s argument that Lucretius aimed at peace and promoted new values is certainly valid, but it carries with it caveats regarding the Epicurean view of death and implicitly some forms of violence. The evidence for Harrison’s argument is stronger in its reference to civil rather than foreign violence and is also sounder in consideration of the body of philosophy itself. One could easily argue that Lucretius’ proem was a literary device reflective of tradition and was

293. Lucr., *DRN* 3.59-73.

294. Lucr., *DRN* 3.830.

295. Lucr., *DRN* 3.830-42, 3.1011-23.

296. Lucr., *DRN* 1.968-73.

297. Lucr., *DRN* 3.161-76.

referring to personal, individual struggles to achieve a state of tranquility and enlightenment. The inclination towards such a style of poetry demonstrates the extent to which traditions of religious significance permeated Roman culture. Even as Romans began to mingle with Epicurean philosophical thought, traditional culture was imparted upon new ideas in a way that helped to familiarize them. Thus, Lucretius coats what he sees as the “foul-tasting” medication that is Epicurean philosophy with the “honey” of his poetry, the “charm of the Muses.”²⁹⁸

The Roman view of Greek culture as a foreign invasion was common, as Harrison points out.²⁹⁹ Most cultural imports from Greece were compatible with Roman religion, but Epicureanism fundamentally challenged traditional religious ideas. The increasing influence of Epicurean philosophy in the Late Republic was a challenge to the *mos maiorum*, but Lucretius’ concerns also indicate the strength of traditional religion in the Roman Republic. Lucretius, therefore, makes it clear that he intended to prove false a number of superstitions and religious beliefs that led to various ritual practices he saw as absurd. Throughout his text, Lucretius, argues that traditional religious rites and practices, such as sacrifice and augury, are misguided.³⁰⁰ He writes that he will “explain all the other terrestrial and celestial phenomena that, when observed by mortals, make them perplexed and panic-stricken and abase their minds with the dread of the gods and crush them right down in the dust, because their ignorance of the causes obliges them to attribute everything to the government of the gods and to admit their

298. Lucr., *DRN* 1.921-50, 4.1-25. Lucretius repeatedly draws this comparison.

299. Harrison, “Epicurean Subversion?,” 40.

300. Lucr., *DRN* 6.80-91; Smith, *DRN*, p. 180n14. Memmius is warned against traditional augury, much of which was assimilated from Etruscans, alluding to the commonplace practice of dividing the sky into sixteen parts to divine meaning from the entrance and exit points of lightning.

sovereignty.”³⁰¹ Thunder, lightning, volcanic eruptions, the flooding of the Nile, and the lethal fumes of lake Avernus are all given rational explanations in order to free Romans from the fear of the gods.³⁰²

Horace provides a perfect example of how rationalizing natural phenomena was critical for Epicureanism to convince adherents it was the one true philosophy, suggesting that a bolt of lightning from a clear sky could lead adherents to desert the philosophy entirely.³⁰³ While Epicurean philosophy tried to scientifically rationalize natural phenomena it was ultimately flawed in its explanations, which was something that a number of Romans would have seen through. Horace suggests this could cause acceptance of Rome’s religious traditions, including the presence of the underworld, which reinforces the idea that Lucretius’ target audience would have subscribed to the idea of divine providence and an afterlife.³⁰⁴ Lucretius suggests that, despite any displays of bravado, many people feared Tartarus as a place of punishment in the afterlife for mortal sins, which differs from Polybius’ view that such fear would discourage immorality and unjust forms of violence.³⁰⁵

While Lintott argues that many Roman elites would have shared the view of Lucretius regarding the absence of an afterlife, his argument demonstrates that this view was against the traditional grain.³⁰⁶ Cicero’s comments support the idea that traditional religious beliefs in Rome

301. Lucr., *DRN* 6.48-55.

302. Lucr., *DRN* 6. The entire book is devoted to rational explanations of natural phenomena.

303. Horace, *The Odes and Epodes*, ed. and trans. N. Rudd, Loeb Classical Library 33 (2004; repr., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), *Carm.* 1.34; Smith, *DRN*, p. 185n25.

304. Hor., *Carm.* 1.34.

305. Lucr., *DRN* 3.41-54; Polyb. VI.56.

306. Lintott, *Violence in Republican Rome*, 45.

were accompanied by the concept of an afterlife, though the public religion was relatively silent on the concept. Cicero tells us of a man who had a near death experience and was said to have witnessed the afterlife, writing that this man revealed how “The things that are told of the immortality of the soul and of the heavens [are not] the fictions of dreaming philosophers or such incredible tales as the Epicureans mock at, but the conjectures of sensible men.”³⁰⁷ In addition to a concept of the afterlife, Lucretius suggests that some Romans would have subscribed to notions of the transmigration of souls, making it a point to prove the concept of metempsychosis to be false.³⁰⁸ Metempsychosis was common in poetic portrayals of the afterlife, legends of Aeneas’ journey into the underworld and Plato’s Myth of Er are perfect examples.³⁰⁹ Lucretius saw such legend as influential amongst the masses and elite of Roman society. For all his disdain of poetic misrepresentations of divinities, Lucretius is profoundly influenced by Homeric epic.³¹⁰

As a poet philosopher, Lucretius suggests that at least some Romans questioned whether religious beliefs might lead to violence. In fact, he argued that fears of death and the afterlife could even cause people to betray their country.³¹¹ According to Lucretius, rather than religious belief preventing wickedness, he believes that “in fact more often it is that very superstition that has perpetrated wicked and irreligious deeds. Consider how at Aulis the elite of Greece’s

307. Cicero, *On the Republic*, trans. C. W. Keyes, Loeb Classical Library 213 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), VI.III. Cicero’s existing text is fragmentary. The bracketed text was added by Keyes.

308. Lucr., *DRN* 3.741-75.

309. Plato, *Republic*, vol. 2, *Books 6-10*, ed. and trans. C. Emlyn-Jones and W. Preddy, Loeb Classical Library 276 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), X.614-21.

310. Lucr., *DRN* 1.102-26, 6.624-41. Lucretius encourages his audience to accept that so called “fable-mongers,” like Ennius and Homer, invented such superstitions, causing people to fear gods, death, and punishment in the afterlife. He also argues that past artists had depicted shades or spirits as being endowed with the five senses because it was the only way anyone could envision them wandering about the underworld.

311. Lucr., *DRN* 3.59-73. Such fears were thought to lead to violence, corruption, and betrayal.

chieftains, the flower of its manhood, foully polluted the altar of the Virgin Goddess of the Crossroads with the blood of Iphianassa.”³¹² This passage is an example of how Lucretius saw his audience as having taken epic poetry as historically accurate and therefore illustrative of actual religious practice. It is also reflective of the Roman consciousness of the close relationship between their own religious tradition and that of Greece. Harrison accurately represents Lucretius’ treatment of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia as an “extreme instance of *religio*” and an episode that “has been rightly seen as an indirect assault on Roman Republican religious practice.”³¹³

This work argues that the growing popularity of Epicureanism, contrary to its intended message, contributed to the internecine political tensions of the Late Republic and the breakdown of consensus that preceded its end. The “ideological transformation for the average Roman” was not necessarily as significant as Harrison would argue.³¹⁴ Despite the self-professed Epicurean claim that it was preferable to avoid political life, there were many Roman Epicureans participating in political life by the mid first century BCE. Most of the Epicureans that we know of in the Late Republic were public figures who adopted convenient portions of the philosophy rather than demonstrating strict adherence to its entirety. Such a paradox might be explained by any combination of the following: an individual misunderstanding of the philosophy in its entirety, selective use of the philosophical aspects that were most convenient in one’s life, an understanding of the practical necessity of a political structure in Roman society, or the tendency

312. Lucr., *DRN* 1.82-6.

313. Harrison, “Epicurean Subversion?,” 36.

314. *Ibid.*, 41.

of Roman elites to adhere to the cultural obligations of the *mos maiorum*, which would encourage one to emulate the deeds of their political predecessors. The concept that fear of death was irrational or that sensation was the highest form of truth would have been easier in practice for Roman elites to accept than the Epicurean idea of limiting one's desires to prevent suffering or actively withdrawing themselves from public life. It would be easy to mistake the Epicurean emphasis on sensual pleasure as immorality, when the reality was that Epicureanism discouraged pleasures that would ultimately result in greater pain, including love.

Epicurean philosophy was, therefore, frequently misinterpreted as excessively hedonistic, contributing to rising fears of declining religious and moral values like those expressed by Sallust and Cicero, who demonstrate the disruption to the status quo and *mos maiorum*. Republican authors searching for answers regarding the moral quandaries of the Late Republic often blamed Epicurean philosophy for encouraging hedonism, whether that was its intent or not. Epicureanism was seen as an irreligious, essentially atheistic philosophy from the traditional Roman perspective or even that of a Stoic or Peripatetic philosopher, which is evidenced by the fact Lucretius specifically sought to address this early in his work.³¹⁵ Lucretius' work is reflective of the problems facing the Republic; a number of Lucretius' contemporaries would have seen their ancestors as having been more pious, more successful, possessing more fruitful land, and leading a life of simplicity and happiness.³¹⁶

It would seem quite natural that Epicurean philosophy might find a warmer welcome among the Caesarian party than the Pompeian because Caesarians, like Epicureans, could

315. Lucr., *DRN* 1.80-83.

316. Lucr., *DRN* 2.1157-74; Beard, *SPQR*, 435.

similarly be viewed as a challenge to the status quo. While Caesar himself was fond of Epicurean ideas, the fact remains that the growing popularity of the philosophy ensured that there were self-professed Epicureans, those educated in the philosophy, and those influenced by it on both sides of the civil wars.³¹⁷ Cicero, for example, was educated in the philosophy by the most notable Epicureans of his time, Phaedrus and Zeno of Sidon. While Epicureanism was not the irreligious philosophy its critics made it out to be, its relative compatibility with atheism due to its negative view of divine providence made it attractive to those who dissented from traditional Roman religious views.

3.3 The Influence of Greek Thought

The incorporation of Greek philosophical thought, which was of particular moral and religious significance, into the community of the Late Republican social elite contributed to a growing division in Republican politics and influenced the nature of violence. On the one hand, Stoic and Peripatetic thought reinforced many traditional Roman values, religious beliefs, and traditions. On the other hand, Epicurean thought challenged the status quo, undermining traditional beliefs by the denial of divine providence and the suggestion that worldly pleasures were amongst the loftiest pursuits.

Cicero's *De natura deorum* examines how Stoic, Epicurean, and Peripatetic scholars understood the existence of gods and expounds a number of debates related to Roman religion at the time. There were four main points of contention between these schools and their perception of the gods. The first point was whether or not the gods existed (all three schools professed that

317. F. C. Bourne, "Caesar the Epicurean," *The Classical World* 70, no. 7 (April - May, 1977): 417-18.

they did believe in their existence) and how that was proven. The second debate surrounded the form and nature of the gods; were they anthropomorphic or, if not, what was their form? Third was the question of whether the gods governed the universe or possessed any degree of control over it. Finally, did the gods possess concern for the fortune and fate of mankind? One of the key differences between Epicureanism and Stoicism was that the Epicureans thought that the gods existed, but played no role in the governance of mankind or the universe.³¹⁸ Stoics, on the other hand, believed in the divine providence of the gods; they governed our universe and cared for the affairs of mankind, controlling our fortune and fate.³¹⁹ The Peripatetic view, Cicero's professed school of choice, was more complex, it emphasized that it is easier to raise doubt than to prove or refute the nature of the gods and therefore suggested determinations of probability were a more prudent course than positive assurance.³²⁰

The views of each school are of particular consequence for understanding how various Romans understood the world, their religion, and morality. Thus far, much of the arguments made in this text have been based on a mixture of the views of all three schools with an emphasis on the Stoic view. The Stoic view suggested that proof of the gods' existence was manifest by observing the stars, by the fact that belief in gods was virtually ubiquitous among mankind, and from reported sightings of gods or records reporting their help in military struggles.³²¹ The Stoics refuted the idea of anthropomorphism, they saw the gods as perfect, the world itself as a god possessing divine wisdom, and therefore the perfect form, which was also the form of the gods,

318. Cic., *Nat. D.* I.45.

319. Cic., *Nat. D.* II.3.

320. Cic., *Nat. D.* I.12, III.1.

321. Cic., *Nat. D.* II.4-6.

as being that of a sphere.³²² The regularity of the stars and planets was considered by the stoics as proof of divine wisdom.³²³ They saw heat as the essence of one's soul and believed that the world and all living things as therefore possessing a soul.³²⁴ The Romans viewed our world as the center of the universe with the stars and sun revolving around it; not only did fate and divine providence exist in the Stoic view, but they believed that everything happening now will happen again with the world ending and beginning in divine conflagration.³²⁵ The Stoics also saw virtue, intelligence, and reason as the most excellent attributes, which the world therefore possessed.³²⁶

In contrast, the Epicurean school contended that gods existed essentially because of mankind's belief in them; they argued that mankind has a universal and naturally given prior knowledge of the divine.³²⁷ The Epicurean view saw the form of the gods as anthropomorphic because the human form was considered the most beautiful of all beings and the gods were considered superior to mankind.³²⁸ The form of the gods was seen as incorporeal, they possessed only a semblance of human form. Epicureans viewed the gods as perfect beings, incapable of favor or anger, in a state of eternal bliss within their celestial bodies, and untroubled by human affairs (toils that would disturb their peace).³²⁹ The gods were worthy of being worshipped by virtue of their divinity and perfection. The Peripatetic view saw Epicureanism as absurd in this

322. Cic., *Nat. D.* II.45.

323. Cic., *Nat. D.* II.43

324. Cic., *Nat. D.* II.32.

325. Cic., *Nat. D.* II.118.

326. Cic., *Nat. D.* II.38-39.

327. Cic., *Nat. D.* I.43-45.

328. Cic., *Nat. D.* I.46-49.

329. Cic., *Nat. D.* I.45, I.50-51.

regard. Cicero, scripting the passage as the words of Cotta, the Peripatetic, writes “I always find it much easier to think of arguments to prove a thing false than to prove it true... Ask me what I think that the divine nature is like, and very probably I shall make no reply; but inquire whether I believe that it resembles the description of it which you [Velleius, the Epicurean] have just given, and I shall say that nothing seems to me less likely”³³⁰ Cicero ends his text, which is essentially a scripted conversation between three Roman senators, with the Peripatetic view, suggesting that Velleius had been somewhat convinced by Cotta’s Peripatetic discourse and with Cicero himself more convinced by Balbus, the Stoic.³³¹

Roman Peripatetic scholars saw the existence of the gods as most evident in the *mos maiorum*, they believed in the gods because of their faith in their ancestors, who had handed such beliefs down to them. Since Romans in the Republic held those they viewed as their ancestors in high regard, some of whom were in truth only legend, this argument was highly credible. The rationale was that if the ancestors of Rome’s great families, who were often viewed as better men than themselves, believed in the existence of the gods, were successful as a result, and had handed down traditions to maintain the *pax deorum*, then such beliefs should be revered and respected. After all, they had founded Rome, conquered Italy, Carthage, and Greece, thus leaving Roman posterity as the masters of the Mediterranean.

Perhaps no passage more clearly legitimizes Polybius’ assertion of the importance of ancestral emulation in Roman culture than Cicero’s comments to his son when he writes of his achievements, including his defense of the state in the Catilinarian Conspiracy; “So what

330. Cic., *Nat. D.* I.57.

331. Cic., *Nat. D.* III.95.

achievement in war was ever so great, or what triumph is comparable? To you, Marcus my son, I can make this boast, for this fame of mine is your inheritance, and my deeds are for you to imitate.”³³² One of Cicero’s acts as consul was to put to death a number of suspected conspirators under authority of the *senatus consultum ultimum*, for which he was exiled after his consulship (Roman magistrates could not be prosecuted during their tenure in office). In addition to instructing his son outright to imitate himself, Cicero also encourages him by offering examples of how other men’s sons sought to follow the paths of their fathers and forbears, frequently seeking military glory.³³³ Imitating the noble deeds of one’s ancestors was deemed as proper *decorum*, but to dishonor one’s forbears, their virtues, and achievements was considered by Cicero to be sacrilegious.³³⁴

By the end Late Republic, however, some Roman authors expressed the sense that the very virtues that had enabled Roman ancestors to achieve such heights had been abandoned, which placed an increasing focus on morality, duties, and obligation for Roman authorship. In addition to answering questions of the gods’ existence and their form differently, the three schools of thought influenced the morality of those who subscribed to them in various ways.

In contrast to Stoic and Peripatetic philosophy, Epicureanism was seen to promote hedonism, there was the outside perception that their utmost devotion to pleasure was a concern. If the gods were not to be feared and were not concerned with the lives of men, who was to enforce moral standards? Therefore, violence from a purely Epicurean perspective could easily

332. Cicero, *On Obligations*, trans. P. G. Walsh (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1.77-78.

333. Cic., *Off.* 1.116, 1.121.

334. Cic., *Off.* 1.121.

be construed as perfectly acceptable if it led to one's own happiness. On the other hand, violence from the Stoic view gave its followers the opportunity to explain the violence as destiny after such acts had already been committed. The Peripatetic view was essentially an admission that one could not hope to prove much in the way of divine nature. But Peripatetics were generally more critical of Epicureanism due to the greater moral dilemma it was perceived to cause and the extent to which it undermined traditional religious beliefs of Rome and the *mos maiorum*.

Roman epic poetry simultaneously anthropomorphizes gods, emphasizes the fate of men and the divine power of governance that the gods possessed over mankind. The gods are frequently given to their own passions and whims. Epic poetry is a perfect example of how Romans could incorporate various elements of multiple schools into religious views to form unique perspectives that did not fit neatly with any individual school of thought. Works of authors like Cicero and Lucretius demonstrate how Greek culture, literature, philosophy, and religion came into increasing contact and dialogue with Roman society and culture. It is of no surprise, however, that none of the major philosophical schools saw poets as quite accurately representing the nature of the gods. While Epicureanism anthropomorphized deities, its religious model otherwise differed on a more fundamental level than competing Greek philosophies because it denied divine providence.³³⁵ Stoicism, on the other hand, denied anthropomorphism but subscribed to divine providence, the latter of which is more in line with Epic poetry because it presents gods as interfering in the lives of people and taking sides when they are at odds with one another, sometimes in violent fashion. Plato himself was concerned that the violent nature of

335. Cic., *Off.* 1.42-43, 2.69-72.

religiously infused epic poetry and literature would send the wrong message to Greeks.³³⁶ This demonstrates the validity of using such works to examine the connection between violence and religion, particularly since Cicero himself professes to be a Peripatetic and a follower of Plato.³³⁷ Yet when Cicero chose the school in which he wished to instruct his son regarding duties and moral obligation, Stoicism was his school of choice due to his interpretation of its high moral standards.³³⁸

Cicero's *De Officiis* demonstrates the concern of contemporaries for the morality of Romans and their posterity by the end of the Late Republic. Cicero's *De Officiis* is reflective of the influence of Greek thought upon the Roman elite as it is essentially a reflection of Cicero's Romanized understanding of Stoic and Peripatetic philosophy regarding morality. In it Cicero expounds four essential groups of virtues that honorable men should live by.³³⁹ Firstly wisdom and prudence (*sapientia et prudentia*), of which the most important aspect is a search for truth. Secondly, good faith and a concern for the common good and service to one's community, of which his description includes *iustitia* and *fides*. Thirdly, a strength or loftiness of spirit, which is somewhat similar to our modern definition of ambition (yet different from *ambitio*, which was used political canvassing or vote seeking, usually in an implicitly questionable fashion). Finally, moderation and self control, in which he emphasizes a calm demeanor, regularity, and good judgement in appropriate or fitting (*decorum*) behavior for various circumstances.

336. Pl., *Resp.* III.391.

337. Cic., *Off.* 1.2.

338. Cic., *Off.* 1.6.

339. Cic., *Off.* 1.15.

Cicero demonstrates that classic legends, stories involving gods, heroes other religious elements might serve as examples to follow or as lessons on morality. Cicero uses an example of the promise Neptune kept to Theseus, which caused the death of Theseus' son; this is provided as an example of an instance in which one should not honor a promise because it is not beneficial to the recipient.³⁴⁰ As another of example, Cicero also contrasts the personalities of Ulysses and Ajax to show how his concept of proper *decorum* can change depending upon one's character. The examples used also demonstrate the influence of Greek legend, myth, and religious beliefs upon Roman elites, who increasingly came into contact with Greek culture after the destruction of Corinth in 146 BCE.

Sallust's writings frequently allude to what he sees as the deterioration of Roman morals by the end of the Late Republic. In the Sallustian view, the Catilinarian conspiracy embodies everything that is wrong with the Republic by his lifetime; he extolls the *virtus*, morality, and achievements of his Roman ancestors, who he says accomplished much more with relatively less.³⁴¹ Roman expansion and the success of previous Romans added credibility to the notion that Roman politicians should uphold the *mos maiorum* (or at least give the appearance of such) in order to realize continued success. As Sallust describes it, his ancestors had justly responded to violent threats by force in order to defend Rome, its people, political system, and sanctity. Sallust's ancestors "greatest competition for glory," he writes "was amongst themselves: each hurried to be the one to strike an enemy, to scale a wall and to be observed while doing such deeds; they considered this to be their riches, this to be a good reputation and great nobility. They

340. Cic., *Off.* 1.32.

341. Sall., *Cat.* 5.8-7.7.

were hungry for praise, generous with money; they wanted mighty glory, honourable riches.”³⁴² Whereas he saw his ancestors fighting for the defense, glory, and benefit of Rome, Sallust describes the fighting of his own age as result of political and military greed, immorality, and corruption. Sallust’s praise of Roman ancestry is something of a reverie, but it expresses the Roman elite’s sense of morality. What he is really imparting upon them is, in part, his own idealized version of Roman perfection.

Sallust also alludes to the increasing competition of Roman politics as the empire grew, which should not be discounted as a factor in increasing violence. *Libertas* was seen as one of the defining strengths and characteristics of the Republic in terms of enabling Roman expansion, but it had led to the development of a highly competitive political atmosphere. Increased political competition was in part due to relatively new and lucrative provincial governing positions, held by proconsuls and propraetors. Mary Beard also points out that the increased size of the Senate, expanded citizenship, and Sullan reforms were factors for intensified political competition.³⁴³ Sallust views the increased competition as a result of avarice; he writes “For avarice undermined trust, probity and all other good qualities; instead, it taught men haughtiness, cruelty, to neglect the gods, to regard everything as for sale.”³⁴⁴ Sallust’s work, therefore, suggests that some Romans thought religion was in a state of decline and that this contributed to the particularly cruel and violent nature of the Roman Civil War. This is one perspective, however, and concern for the morality of Rome was nothing new, as Cato the Elder demonstrates. As Sallust’s narrative

342. Sall., *Cat.* 7.6.

343. Beard, *SPQR*, 245-247.

344. Sall., *Cat.* 10.4.

transitions from the virtuosity of Roman ancestry to the immorality of his contemporaries, he writes “Fortune began to turn savage and to confound everything.”³⁴⁵ While the deity *Fortuna* is used as something of a literary device in this instance, it hints at the paradox that would exist in religious neglect and violence for those who subscribed to the notion of fate.

Cicero suggests fundamental differences of belief on a philosophical, moral, and religious level with members of the Caesarian party. While both Sallust and Cicero suggest a moral dilemma in Rome, they sat on different sides of the war. Cicero writes “Once you have a situation in which more than one person cannot be pre-eminent, such a power struggle usually ensues that it becomes most difficult to maintain a ‘sacrosanct alliance’. The shameless conduct of Gaius Caesar recently illustrated this: he undermined all laws, divine and human, in order to establish that dominance which his erroneous belief had targeted for himself.”³⁴⁶

345. Sall., *Cat.* 10.1.

346. Cic., *Off.* 1.26.

CHAPTER 4: RELIGIOUS CHANGE IN THE WAKE OF CAESAR

4.1 Caesar's Assassination

The portrayal of Caesar as a tyrant was critical for the conspirators of his assassination to justify themselves in the Senate as defenders of the Republic. M. Brutus, for example, particularly emphasized the importance of killing only the tyrant, opposing Cassius' suggestion that Antony should be murdered alongside Caesar.³⁴⁷ Brutus had refused Caesar's promise to make him consul, suggesting that his motives were purer than Cassius, the latter of whom had become irritated with the delay of his promised consulship.³⁴⁸ Caesar's supporters would argue that the conspirators had "impiously plotted against him" and thrown "the city into disorder when at last it possessed a stable government."³⁴⁹ While the government was relatively stable in comparison to the previous five years, Antony's placement of a crown upon Caesar's head, highlighting the increasingly monarchical nature of his rule, during the Lupercalia may well have pushed the conspirators to the brink.³⁵⁰

It was symbolic of the increasing divergence from Republican tradition that characterized recent events and it fueled the flames of enmity already kindled within M. Brutus, whose perspective of the *mos maiorum* would have emboldened the tyrannicide; his ancestor, Lucius Junius Brutus, was said to have taken command of a revolt against the last king of Rome after

347. Velleius Paterculus, *Compendium of Roman History*, trans. F. W. Shipley, Loeb Classical Library 152 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924), II.lviii.2-3.

348. Vell. Pat. II.lvi.3.

349. Dio XLIV.1.2-2.1.

350. App., *B Civ* 2.109-111.

the rape of Lucretia by the king's son. According to tradition, L. Junius Brutus, holding the bloody dagger Lucretia used to kill herself, swore an oath to expel the king, compelling his comrades to do the same. The revolt ended in the death of the king's son, Sextus Tarquinius, and the foundation of the Republic.³⁵¹

M. Brutus' demeanor, according to Plutarch, was also considerably shaped by his study of philosophy.³⁵² Sedley argues that Brutus was influenced primarily by Platonism in his role as a leading conspirator in Caesar's assassination, providing evidentiary examples of various Platonist tyrannicides, such as Chion, who murdered Clearchus in 353/352 BCE.³⁵³ Yet, Sedley also admits that it is possible to justify tyrannicide from the vantage point of numerous philosophies and accepts that Antiochus' Old Academy, the Platonic school under which Brutus primarily studied, appropriated a number of Stoic principles.³⁵⁴ S. Swain suggests that Brutus was accepting of both Platonism and Stoicism, the latter of which was underplayed by Plutarch.³⁵⁵ The significant influence of Stoicism on Augustan moral, religious, and political reforms leads to the question of how the philosophy could also encourage tyrannicide or even suicide (at least to end a life of certain suffering), as in the case of Brutus and Cato.

Compelling argument is made by Brunt that suggests Stoicism rejected tyranny rather than monarchy and that the Stoics admired Cato for his constancy rather than the ideological

351. Livy, *History of Rome*, vol. 1., *Books 1-2*, trans. B. O. Foster, Loeb Classical Library 114 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919), I.LIX.1-2.

352. Plutarch, *Brutus*, trans. B. Perrin, Loeb Classical Library 98 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918), I.3.

353. D. Sedley, "The Ethics of Brutus and Cassius," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 87 (1997): 53.

354. *Ibid.*, 42, 53.

355. S. Swain, "Plutarch's Lives of Cicero, Cato, and Brutus," *Hermes* 118, no. 2 (1990): 203.

defense of the Republic.³⁵⁶ One could certainly argue that philosophy played some role in the motives of the conspirators. Cassius was an Epicurean and would have been familiar with its ideology related to death, in which there could be no suffering, and pleasure, which encouraged the pursuit of happiness above all. As Sedley points out, many of the discussions that led to the inclusion of new conspirators were of a philosophical nature.³⁵⁷

Yet, the most convincing argument explaining the motivations of the conspirators remains the defense of the *mos maiorum* and Republican values. Stronger evidence exists in the Republican rejection of monarchy and the Roman equation of monarchy to tyranny. Further driving the conspirators' antagonism towards Caesar would have been the numerous religious honors poured upon him by the Senate, which were inconsistent with the *mos maiorum* and likely designed by his opponents to foster mistrust.³⁵⁸ The rights and privileges accorded to Caesar included, amongst others, the right to wear triumphal dress for any occasion, being named "father the country," the placement of his statue inside all Roman temples, the erection of a temple to Concordia Nova, the establishment of a cult and priesthood offering yearly prayers and sacrifices in his honor, and the decree that his son should be made Pontifex Maximus.³⁵⁹ These honors suggest would seem to suggest that Caesar could be considered a living deity from the perspectives of many onlookers. Beard, North, and Price argue that there was no clear answer as to whether or not Caesar was viewed by contemporaries as a god, but he was certainly seen as

356. P. A. Brunt, "Stoicism and the Principate," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 43 (1975): 9, 31-32.

357. Sedley, "The Ethics of Brutus and Cassius," 44.

358. Dio XLIV.3.1-7.4.

359. Dio XLIV.3.1-7.4.

something more than human and his status was the culmination of a trend that increasingly associated successful politicians with the gods.³⁶⁰

4.2 The Vengeance of the Second Triumvirate

The idea that righting a wrong, defending oneself, protecting another, or even seeking vengeance were considered acceptable responses to violence in the Late Republic is most effectively demonstrated by Cicero, particularly because he was widely considered a man of upstanding integrity and morality. While Cicero suggests that revenge and punishment for aggression are valid in responses, he does suggest that there should be limits when remorse was shown by the offender.³⁶¹ That Cicero shows moral concern for placing restraints on vengeance rather than opposing it outright can be taken as evidence of its prevalence.

Even as a moralist, Cicero's work shows that warfare or personal violence in defense of oneself or the Republic was no quandary at all. This was to include even revenge, depending upon the gravity of a grievance.³⁶² Cicero writes "When a person fired by anger or other violent feeling launches an unjust attack upon another, he is, it seems, laying hands on a fellow-member of the community; and the man who does not repel or oppose some wrong when he can do so, is as much at fault as if he were abandoning parents, friends, or country."³⁶³ Furthermore, Cicero's defense of Milo eight years prior to writing *De Officiis* hinges upon the defendant's slaves having justly sought retribution in killing Clodius. Vengeance would also serve as a legitimizing

360. Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome: A History*, 140-42.

361. Cic., *Off.* 1.33.

362. Cic., *Off.* 1.11.

363. Cic., *Off.* 1.23.

force for Augustus as he sought to consolidate the Caesarian party behind him in the wake of Caesar's death. Augustus' moral initiative after civil war had ended in Rome would emphasize the sort of restraint, contrition and clemency that Caesar had shown his defeated foes.

Such discrepancies between clemency and violence create something of a conundrum that can be best explained by power politics. When politicians sought to seize power, violence more often prevailed; clemency was only seen as a useful tactic after power had been seized for simply preserving and solidifying that power. The extent to which military violence was commonplace in the Roman Republic is evidenced by the efforts at establishing a fetial code and fair conduct in war. The code established provisions for returning to normalcy and peace after war, forgiving those who had lost, and incorporation of conquered peoples into the Republic. "In this respect justice has been observed so scrupulously by fellow Romans that those very men who conquered cities or nations in war and then admitted them to their protective discretion, subsequently became their patrons in accordance with ancestral custom."³⁶⁴ Additionally, such codes forbade discharged soldiers from engagement even with current enemies. The conscious effort to establish a code to return to normalcy after a conflict speaks to the ubiquity of military violence in the Roman world by demonstrating the relative ease with which Romans could overcome the grave nature of violent conflicts while turning former enemies into allies. Such codes also suggest how Romans sought to limit unnecessary violence and saw military conflicts as inevitable facts of life.

In his explanation of justice and the duties of war, Cicero provides the example of Regulus, who in the Second Punic War was thought to have sworn an oath to trade Carthaginian

364. Cic., *Off.* 1.35-36

prisoners in exchange for Romans once he arrived in Rome, but upon his return decided to break the oath by advocating the Senate not to release the prisoners; he was said to have returned to Carthage to suffer his punishment.³⁶⁵ (This is also found in Horace, *Odes* 3.5.) The Senate, according to Cicero, had supposedly punished Romans for breaking oaths to the enemy on numerous occasions.³⁶⁶ While the stories he tells of such punishment are not necessarily historically accurate, the examples reflect the ideological austerity of Rome regarding the sacred, binding nature of oaths. His work is also indicative of the Roman Senate's concern for maintenance of the *pax deorum* and the Late Republican idea of what was required to do so. Even accepting the help of a deserter from the enemy could be seen as dishonorable, as Roman soldiers had sworn an oath and accepting such help from an assumed oath-breaker might incite the anger of the gods. In order to maintain peace with the gods, war had to be properly declared by fetial priests who first sent notice of Roman grievances to the incumbent party and prior to war cast a spear into enemy territory to signify its beginning. The idea was that war was just only in response to aggression and when enemies had been given the opportunity to resolve disputes, but it was not difficult to devise a grievance.

Further suggesting the commonplace nature of military violence in Republican Rome is that by the end of the Late Republic, the extent of Rome's influence had expanded into an empire, civil military conflicts became increasingly common, and the semantics of Roman vocabulary changed to reflect those developments. *Hostis* is explained by Cicero to have been traditionally used to for both 'enemy' and 'alien' (or 'foreigner'), but by the end of the Late

365. Cic., *Off.* 1.39.

366. Cic., *Off.* 1.40.

Republic, *hostis* was usually taken to mean ‘enemy.’ By this time, ‘enemy’ and ‘alien’ also had more specific terms: *perduellis* and *peregrinus*, respectively.³⁶⁷ ‘Foreigner’ was no longer tantamount to ‘foe’ because civil strife required distinction between the two and because those that were previously considered foreigners now made up a significant portion of Rome’s citizen body. Since Roman magistrates could simultaneously hold power in political, priestly, and military positions, the values and views of one naturally influenced that of the others. Cicero himself suggests that a consideration of Roman military practice is relevant for understanding political violence. In fact Cicero contends Ti. Gracchus’ murder was more beneficial to Rome than Publius Nasica’s destruction of Numantia and that, as he says, “it had also a military aspect, since it was achieved by a show of force.”³⁶⁸

While moral and religious justifications for vengeance could be rationalized from various perspectives, the nature of a crime and the status of the victim often served as a basis. The conspiracy to murder Caesar is described as sacrilegious by Ovid, in this instance because Caesar was the Pontifex Maximus at the time.³⁶⁹ This would have served as merely one factor that helped Augustan supporters to justify vengeance. Ovid, however, positions Caesar's greatest act as being the father of Augustus, establishing his one-dimensional view and establishing the need to rationalize the death of so great a Roman hero. Allen Mandelbaum translates a passage of Ovid regarding Caesar’s murder, "Such were the cries of Venus in distress; across the sky they went - useless laments. But they did stir the gods - who could not break the ancient Sisters'

367. Cic., *Off.* 1.37.

368. Cic., *Off.* 1.76.

369. A. Mandelbaum, trans. *The Metamorphoses of Ovid: A New Verse Translation* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1993), XV.773-798. All book and line references are to this version.

ironclad decrees yet gave sure signs that grief was imminent."³⁷⁰ Ovid's reference is to the Parcae, the sister goddesses of fate, establishing that Augustan supporters could retrospectively consider Caesar's death and, by extension, revenge for it, as fate. This was significant because it helped legitimize Augustus' power and supported the notion that he was a moral and just ruler despite the violence he was partially responsible for during the revolution.

Ovid's poetry continues with religiously formulated symbolism designed to further dramatize the death of Caesar and herald the coming of Augustus, the latter of whom could now be seen as having necessarily sought vengeance for an adopted father whose murder was a stain on the state and its religion. The passage continues with omens that had supposedly signaled Caesar's assassination, which included the readings of a sacrifice (*haruspicy*), random droplets of blood mixed with rain, changing colors of the sun and of Venus (Lucifer, the Morning Star), and a restless Rome wandering with spirits. "Though the gods had sent these omens, that was not enough to curb the course of fate and human plots. So unsheathed swords were to profane the shrine: no other place was chosen for the crime – Caesar was to be slaughtered in the Curia."³⁷¹ The significance here is not in any factual accuracy of Ovid's description of events, but it demonstrates how the location chosen for Caesar's death was of particular significance, heinous from the perspective of Caesarian supporters and further vindicating any vengeance taken on his behalf.

370. Mandelbaum, *Metamorphoses of Ovid*, XV.773-798.

371. Mandelbaum, *Metamorphoses of Ovid*, XV.799-820.

Suetonius' biography of Augustus suggests that the obligations of vengeance were the initial cause for civil war after Caesar's death.³⁷² While negotiations that eventually led to the Second Triumvirate were taking place, Antony, who threatened to join forces with Brutus and Cassius if his offer was refused, reminded Augustus that it was more incumbent upon him to avenge an adopted father and uncle than it was for Antony to avenge a friend.³⁷³ Nicolaus of Damascus called it "Profane to leave the murder of Caesar unavenged."³⁷⁴ What these three historians demonstrate is threefold. First, that seeking vengeance for the murder of a relative or friend was considered one's duty in Roman society. Secondly, it shows how the Romans were dedicated to honoring the family name and to guarding the *mos maiorum*, particularly when an injustice had dishonored the family name. Finally, that leaving a friend or family member unavenged would be in contempt of the sacred religious principles of Rome. The religious significance for seeking vengeance is further illustrated in Nicolaus of Damascus' claims that Caesar's soldiers revered him as a god and were thus readily willing to endure anything for whomever they viewed as a legitimate successor.³⁷⁵ Augustus, in order to raise support from the colonies of soldiers established by Caesar, subsequently "sacrificed to the gods for a propitious outcome, asking that they assist him in his just and glorious undertaking."³⁷⁶

372. Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, vol. 1, rev. ed., trans. J. C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library 31 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), *Aug.* X.1.

373. *Vell. Pat.* II.lxv.1.

374. Nicolaus of Damascus, *Life of Augustus*, trans. J. Bellemore (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1984), XXXVII.106.

375. *Nic. Dam.*, XXIX.117.

376. *Nic. Dam.*, XXXI.132.

One of the dilemmas faced by Roman authors was how to address the marked violence of Augustus in his youth, some of which was unwarranted by Roman standards. Suetonius does his best to portray Augustus as a leader of great virtue, honor, dignity and morality. His efforts came with great difficulty, however, when Suetonius describes how Augustus, after being opposed in his candidature for tribune, attempted an assassination of Antony.³⁷⁷ The office of tribune was only open to senators and since Augustus was not yet a senator, he would not have technically been eligible for tribune. Suetonius, however, attempts to justify the attempt on the basis that Antony had offered his support in exchange for a bribe and had besieged Decimus Brutus in Mutina, the latter of whom, despite his involvement in the assassination of Caesar, was considered the rightful governor of Cisalpine Gaul since Caesar's acts had been ratified by the Senate after his death.³⁷⁸ Augustus' role in the Battle of Mutina is an equally challenging scenario from Roman moral perspective.

If Octavian's aim was to avenge Caesar, it is hard to explain how any aid to D. Brutus or the Pompeian party would further that cause, but the war was legitimized by the Senate. Velleius Paterculus described the Senate as deceitful in its true intentions regarding Octavian, he writes "now that their fears had vanished, their real feelings broke through their disguise, and the Pompeian party once more took heart."³⁷⁹ After Antony fled, Octavian refused further aid to D. Brutus in the aftermath of Mutina, won support from deserters of D. Brutus' cause, and could now promote himself as a champion of the Republic. The solution of later Roman authors was to

377. Suet., *Aug.* X.3.

378. Suet., *Aug.* X.2.

379. Vell. Pat. II.lxii.1-2.

simply gloss over inconsistencies, focus on final outcomes, and emphasize the more virtuous acts of the Augustan persona.

When civil war was at an end, Romans would explain Octavian's violence during the struggle as just retribution for the death of Caesar, symbolic of the expulsion of a religious pollution. Augustus was later viewed as having improved Rome in terms of bringing relative peace and morality, through his generosity to the people, and in terms of restoration and building projects; his violence was either forgiven or justified on these grounds from the perspective of many Romans. The example of clemency set by Caesar that was later followed by Augustus could work both ways, it was not only a form of forgiveness, but an attempt at a clean slate; forgiveness for any of his own wrongs was something Augustus would expect of those to whom he had shown mercy. This is exemplified in his *Res Gestae*, in which he tiptoes around the violence he had caused and focuses on the end results.

The perpetrators of Caesar's assassination, had they ultimately succeeded in restoring the Republic, would have had to rationalize their violence in much the same way. Their justification was along the lines of retaliation for and protection against an attack on the Republic and with it the religion that Caesar had, from their perspective, profaned. Cicero's *Philippics* illustrate the perspective of the Pompeian party, who were astonished at the thought of Caesar's deification and post mortem honors, viewing M. Brutus as the hero of the Republic.³⁸⁰ Cicero writes of Caesar's assassination, "Will you never understand that you have to make up your mind whether the authors of that deed are murderers or champions of freedom?"³⁸¹

380. Cic., Phil. 1.9, 1.13.

381. Cic., Phil. 2.30.

Throughout the second Philippic (generally considered the most famous and effective), Cicero slowly builds up attacks on Antony that have a religious significance and makes his most vehement expression, essentially the climax of his argument, that Antony should have died along with Caesar. The attacks build in frequency and significance. Prior to his assertion that Antony should have also been assassinated, there are a few brief attacks of such a nature against Antony. First for having armed men posted at the “sanctuary of Concorde.”³⁸² Second for Antony’s violation of “religious bars”³⁸³ and a Sibylline oracle while part of A. Gabinus’ army. As he reaches his conclusion, the attacks build up. Cicero first positions him as an “impious madman... enemy to gods”³⁸⁴ for having appropriated Pompey’s property in an auction at the temple of Jupiter Stator. Antony is later accused of instigating war against the Senate, Roman people, and their gods.³⁸⁵ Cicero then makes a more serious and lengthy religious accusation which later resurfaces, accusing Antony of reporting false auspices as an augur, which was allegedly in order to get himself elected to consul rather than Dolabella.³⁸⁶ Cicero then proceeds to attack Antony (who was virtually nude, degrading his consulship) for placing a diadem on Caesar’s head at the Feast of Lupercalia.³⁸⁷

Cicero then makes his boldest and most shocking statement, writing “what is more unseemly than that he who put on the diadem is alive, when all admit that he who thrust it aside

382. Cic., Phil. 2.19.

383. Cic., Phil. 2.48.

384. Cic., Phil. 2.64.

385. Cic., Phil. 2.72.

386. Cic., Phil. 2.80-83. Cicero later ridicules Antony’s augural abilities, 2.99.

387. Cic., Phil. 2.85.

was rightly done to death!”³⁸⁸ From the perspective of the Pompeian Party, Caesar had left his province and marched on Rome, therefore his assassination was viewed as justified. The conspirators were careful not to plan the act in a location within the *pomerium*. The Curia Pompeia, however, was itself a sacrosanct location for Senate meetings, and was the site of Caesar’s murder. One of Cicero’s key attacks against Antony is based on the use of armed guards in the temple of Concord, which was somewhat more severe as the location was within the *pomerium* and therefore viewed as a sacred space.³⁸⁹ Furthermore, the violence would have been seen by the Pompeian side as unprovoked and even more importantly, it prevented Cicero from ever entering the temple to defend himself against Antony’s speech, to which the second Philippic was an undelivered (at least oratorally) response.

Cicero goes on in his second Philippic to denounce the use of *lectisternium* or *supplicatio* in honor of Caesar, he had previously warned that he thought it a sacrilege that could bring disruption to the *pax deorum*.³⁹⁰ Undoubtedly, Cicero saw rhetorical attacks against the religious integrity of a fellow Roman as a convincing means (though certainly not the only means) of defamation. The religious references made are often related to some sort of violence, threat of violence, or fear of retribution from the gods. The sacrosanctity of the *pomerium*, which defined Rome proper and its augural boundary, as well as the sacrosanct confines of spaces like the *curiae* were intended to help prevent violence and ensure that Senate gatherings were safe and secure. As Antony had blatantly violated that trust without the appropriate authority, Cicero

388. Cic., Phil. 2.86-87.

389. Cic., Phil. 2.112.

390. Cic., Phil. 2.110, 1.13.

would have been encouraged to garner support for Brutus, who he saw as a hero worthy of imitation and praise within the Roman *mos maiorum*.³⁹¹ Ultimately, Cicero's attacks were designed to encourage the assassination of Antony, who he portrayed as a moral, social, and religious pollutant.

The proscriptions implemented by the Second Triumvirate were in retaliation to opposition like that of Cicero towards Antony and represented most extreme applications of vengeance in the Late Republic. Many of these proscriptions had no basis for justification within the traditional norms of Roman religion. According to Appian, who was writing centuries later with greater freedom to highlight the atrocities of Octavian, the pretext for the proscriptions was to avenge the conspirators in Caesar's murder, but even sympathizers and men known to be outside Rome on the day of the assassination were added to the lists.³⁹² Dio's relatively forgiving attitude of leniency towards Octavian is probably reflective of his partiality towards monarchy as a form of government; Dio portrays Antony as the most savage of the triumvirs.³⁹³ V. Paterculus, who carefully wrote under the reign of Augustus' adopted son, Tiberius, demonstrates how Augustus controlled the narrative and saw to it that most of the blame fell on Antony for the proscriptions, which was an effort to distance himself from the stains of his former persona.³⁹⁴ Paterculus' harsh condemnation of Antony for the proscription and brutal beheading of Cicero serves as a convenient vehicle for distraction from Augustan moral inconsistency, revealing a necessarily biased perspective.

391. Cic., *Phil.* 2.114.

392. App., *B Civ.* 3.95.

393. Dio XLVII.8.1. On his attitude towards monarchy, see Dio XLIV.2.1-5.

394. Vell. Pat. II.lxiv.3-4, II.lxvi.1-5.

Octavian used military power to intimidate political rivals, ensuring his appointment to the consulship after the death of Hirtius and Pansa at Mutina, which he was suspected to have facilitated while fighting on their side.³⁹⁵ Yet, in between Octavian's appointment to the consulship and the proscriptions of Second Triumvirate, Dio offers a portent to legitimize Augustan power, writing "that an eagle settled upon his [Octavian's] tent and killed two crows which had attacked it and were trying to pluck out its feathers—a sign which gave him the victory over both his rivals."³⁹⁶ According to Appian, after Octavian became consul, twelve vultures appeared during his sacrifice, which was the same omen Romulus had received before the city's foundation.³⁹⁷ It seems clear that these were attempts to promote the Augustan narrative in order to justify any violence in his youth as a necessary means to an end.

The pattern continues throughout the remaining conflicts of Octavian at Philippi, Perusia, Sicily, and Actium. Octavian sought to minimize or justify his own violence, take credit for any glory, and vilify Antony. For example, Paternus emphasized the necessity of Octavian's actions against Brutus and Cassius at Philippi to avoid the perception that there was any joy to be found in fighting fellow Romans, emphasizing Octavian's willingness to grant clemency to figures like Corvinus.³⁹⁸ He writes that "The cruel treatment of the people of Perusia was due rather to the fury of the soldiery than to the wish of their Commander [Octavian]. The city was burned. The fire was begun by Macedonicus..."³⁹⁹ After being defeated in Sicily and fleeing to Asia,

395. Dio XLVI.43.1-44.5.

396. Dio XLVII.1.3.

397. App. *B Civ.* 3.94.

398. Vell. Pat. II.lxxi.1-2.

399. Vell. Pat. II.lxxiv.4.

Paterculus contends that it was upon Antony's orders that Sextus Pompey was killed by Titius.⁴⁰⁰ Furthermore, Lepidus had claimed victory for himself after the war against Sextus Pompey, which was something that Augustus would later put an end to; with the permanent consular and proconsular authority, the victory of subordinate could be claimed only on his behalf.⁴⁰¹

Augustus would try to absolve himself of the most extreme horrors, justify others as fate, and shift the focus to his restoration of Republican traditions, morals, and religion. These had been forgotten; they were the cause not only for the fall of the Republic, but the failure of his fellow triumvirs. It was lack of *virtus* that Lepidus, who is portrayed as the leech of the triumvirate, was criticized for. Paterculus goes so far as to suggest that it was by Octavian's *virtus*, *pietas*, and *clementia* that Lepidus, then Pontifex Maximus, was spared after attempting to take credit for success in Sicily and force Octavian to leave.⁴⁰²

Octavian would portray Antony as the aggressor in their final conflict, the common narrative was that it was Antony's arrogance, hubris, and licentiousness as a consort to Cleopatra that had emboldened him to challenge Rome. Antony was ridiculed for his impersonation of the god Liber, riding the Bacchic chariot as if leading a triumph in the East and styling himself as "Father Liber."⁴⁰³ Octavian's propaganda campaign carried a religious undercurrent that sought to depict Antony and Cleopatra as crazed agents of un-Roman gods and religious practices outside the traditional norms. Cleopatra was herself considered a goddess to the Egyptians and the Bacchic cult, while eventually accepted into the Roman pantheon in a limited form, had

400. Vell. Pat. II.lxxix.5-6.

401. Vell. Pat. II.lxxx.2-3, II.lxxxi.3, II.lxxxii.1. Agrippa rewarded for his service, but Octavian gets credit.

402. Vell. Pat. II.lxxx.1-4.

403. Vell. Pat. II.lxxxii.4.

represented something clearly foreign. Syme notes that Antony had previously been associated with Dionysus (Bacchus), likely due to his penchant for drinking.⁴⁰⁴ He also equates Horace's use of the phraseology, "fatale monstrum," to the portrayal of Cleopatra as a fury.⁴⁰⁵ Augustus criticized Antony for associations with foreign deities, yet he promote his own cult worship throughout the East. In Athens he would eventually be seen as the savior of the city.

After Sullan retaliation for Athenian support of Mithridates, the people of Athens found themselves in the difficult position of choosing sides amongst Roman factions in three critical battles fought in Greece.⁴⁰⁶ Caesar had already forgiven Athens for its support of Pompey when Cicero put forth a motion, which was passed by the Senate, to grant amnesty for their past acts (likely for their earlier support of Mithridates) in the wake of Caesar's death.⁴⁰⁷ Siding with the Senate in support of Brutus and Cassius, the Athenians had erected their statues beside those of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, as if the two Roman heroes had followed the examples of their earlier, Greek tyrannicides.⁴⁰⁸

At Actium, the Athenians were compelled to support Antony, who was revered as a god (the New Dionysus) and descendent of Heracles.⁴⁰⁹ Bowersock points to Athenian prudence in choosing to support the Triumvir that had been previously appointed to command their province,

404. Syme, *Roman Revolution*, 273-4; G. W. Bowersock, "The New Hellenism of Augustan Athens," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Classe di Lettere e Filosofia*, 4th ser., 7, no. 1 (2002): 2.

405. *Ibid.*, 275, 299; Hor. *Carm.* 1.37.21.

406. Dio XLII.14.1-3, XLVII.20.4, L.15.2-3; Bowersock, "The New Hellenism of Augustan Athens," 1.

407. Vell. Pat. II.lviii.4; Dio XLII.14.1-3.

408. Dio XLVII.20.4; A. E. Raubitschek, "Brutus in Athens," *Phoenix* 11, no. 1 (Spring, 1957): 4-5.

409. Dio L.15.2-3; Plutarch, *Antony*, trans. B. Perrin, Loeb Classical Library 101 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920), LX.2-3.

but whether it was due to compulsion or prudence, Antony's failure would have initially seemed yet another stroke of misfortune upon an already strained Athens.⁴¹⁰ Amongst numerous ill omens said to have portended Antony's defeat, Plutarch writes that "In Patrae, while Antony was staying there, the Heracleium was destroyed by lightning; and at Athens the Dionysus in the Battle of the Giants was dislodged by the winds and carried down into the theatre."⁴¹¹ After Actium, Octavian sought to make amends with the Athenians, who he portrayed as having been under duress; for some time the city had been under strain to provide Antony with grain and supplies.⁴¹² After Octavian made a relatively expedient order to distribute grain intended for Antony's troops, the remnants of which had fled upon his arrival, many considered him the savior of Athens.⁴¹³

Augustus, therefore, came to be seen not simply as the new father of Rome, but also of Athens. Authorship like that of Thompson, for example, has shown that throughout the Greek world, the divinity of Augustus Soter (savior) came to be associated with Zeus Soter.⁴¹⁴ Bowersock argues that portraying Antony or Augustus as a "new" form of an existing deity allowed Athenians to incorporate prominent Romans into their pantheon without altering existing gods, helping them to preserve Hellenism in a new form.⁴¹⁵ Most importantly, these divine

410. Bowersock, "The New Hellenism of Augustan Athens," 1.

411. Plutarch, *Ant.* LX.2-3.

412. Plut., *Ant.* LXVIII.4-5.

413. Plut., *Ant.* LXVIII.4-5; M. C. Hoff, "Augustus, Apollo, and Athens," *Museum Helveticum* 49, no. 4 (1992): 224.

414. H. A. Thompson, "The Annex to the Stoa of Zeus in the Athenian Agora," *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens* 35, no 2 (Apr. – Jun. 1966): 183-4.

415. Bowersock, "The New Hellenism of Augustan Athens," 1.

associations with the living and the building projects initiated by Augustus in Athens are reflective a mutual cultural influence between Rome and its provinces. Roman leaders had increasingly adopted relationships to divinity that were previously more characteristic of the East, but became important avenues for legitimizing power.

Augustus, for example, claimed that his birth was the result of miraculous conception between his mother, Atia, and the god Apollo.⁴¹⁶ While this is reminiscent of the legend of Romulus, who was said to have been the son of Mars and a vestal virgin, it was unusual in Republican history for someone to claim direct descent as the son of a divinity. It was more common in the East for a king to be revered as or claim birth from a god; Alexander the Great, for example, claimed to have been the son of Zeus, though he assumed divine status infrequently and with great care amongst his Greek contemporaries.⁴¹⁷ The imperial cult in its varied forms outside of Rome helped Augustus to solidify his power and authority throughout the Roman Empire and unite it under a new peace that was made possible through war.

4.3 Roman Legend in the Augustan Age

The legendary origins and religion of Rome are filled with violent themes and narratives, many of which parallel the violence of the Late Republic and Roman Revolution. The Augustan Age left us with rich examples of poetry and history from authors like Livy, Virgil, and Ovid, among others. These authors help us better understand how Romans understood their origins, explained violence, justified it, and the place of religion in their world. It was through violence,

416. Dio 45.1.2-3; Hoff, "Augustus, Apollo, and Athens," 225.

417. Plutarch, *Alexander*; trans. B. Perrin, Loeb Classical Library 99 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919), III.2, XXVII.5-6, XXVIII.1-3.

for example, that the legendary figure Aeneas had succeeded in securing his and Rome's destiny. From the Roman point of view, their heritage began with the violence of the Trojan War, which forced Aeneas to flee and make his way to Italy, somewhere near Rome. The story involves death, struggle, and violence as the Trojans make their way to Italy, and just after Aeneas had stepped onto Italian soil to build a home for himself and the Trojans, they were met by warfare to repel them.⁴¹⁸ Aeneas and his followers took by force the land they needed and were supposedly fated to have. The victory of Aeneas in war against the Etruscans and Rutulians, his marriage to Lavinia, and the founding of Lavinium were the first steps towards the development of Rome from their perspective.⁴¹⁹

Virgil's *Aeneid* ends with Aeneas considering mercy for Turnus, but when he sees that his enemy is wearing the belt of Evander's son, Pallas, whom he had sworn to protect, Aeneas cannot contain his rage and kills Turnus.⁴²⁰ The final scene is a grim one, filled with religious significance as it represents the expulsion of a social and religious pollution. As Turnus' soul resentfully flees to join the shades of the underworld, the reader is left with the Stoic symbolism that the world has been set to right.

Allen Mandelbaum translates Virgil as "It is Pallas who strikes, who sacrifices you, who takes this payment from your shameless blood."⁴²¹ Stahl argues that Mandelbaum accurately translates *immolat* as sacrifice,⁴²² though some would argue it might be metaphorically altered to

418. Mandelbaum, *Aeneid of Virgil*, I.1-18.

419. Mandelbaum, *Aeneid of Virgil*, I.10-11.

420. Mandelbaum, *Aeneid of Virgil*, XII.1252-71.

421. Mandelbaum, *Aeneid of Virgil*, XII.1267-68.

422. H. Stahl, introduction to *Virgil's Aeneid: Augustan Epic and Political Context*, ed. H. Stahl (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 1998), xxiii.

be translated as slaughter or slay in this instance.⁴²³ Fairclough, however, translates the passage as “Pallas it is, Pallas who sacrifices you with this stroke, and takes retribution from your guilty blood!”⁴²⁴ This translation adds even more religious significance, suggesting that Turnus only fate could be atonement through the shedding of his own blood, fulfilment of Aeneas’ promise to defend Pallas. If one takes the term more literally to mean sacrifice, it is with the understanding that Turnus’ death was mandated by the fates and the principal Roman god, Jupiter, (Juno’s efforts prove futile) in order that the Romans might prosper. Even if we take it as to “slaughter or slay,” the dual meaning and symbolism of *immolat* would not have been lost upon the Romans. It alludes to the necessity of Turnus’ death in much the same way the Gracchi are portrayed.

The death of Turnus simultaneously corrects a wrong and fulfills his obligation to the future Rome; it is symbolic of Aeneas’ defeat of the Rutulian and Etruscan alliance, which inaugurates a brief peace and earns Aeneas the post-mortem epithet, Jupiter Indiges.⁴²⁵ Aeneas and Romulus are both seen as fathers of the Roman people, either deified or imbued with something of a divine quality, legends that Augustus at once promoted and used to legitimize the deifications of Caesar, himself, and important family members after death. Augustus’ “claim,” Beard writes “to descend directly from Aeneas helped to portray the emperor as a fulfilment of

423. *Cassell’s New Latin Dictionary*, 5th ed., comp. D. P. Simpson (New York: MacMillan, 1968), s.v. “immōlo -are.” The definition “to sprinkle with sacred meal; hence, to sacrifice, immolate” can be altered or transferred metaphorically as in “to devote to death, slay: Pallas te immolate, Verg.”

424. Virgil, *The Aeneid: Books 7-12*, rev. ed., trans. H. R. Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library 64 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), XII.948-950.

425. Livy, I.II-III. Livy refers to the security of Ascanius’ throne as a minor after the death of Aeneas.

Roman destiny, as the ordained refounder of Rome.”⁴²⁶ The appropriation of a fatherly role like “refounder” presaged an almost divine power and authority.

Just before Pallas dies in battle in the *Aeneid*, he prays “O father Tiber, give the steel I poise good fortune, passage through Halaesus’ chest; this done, an oak made sacred to you will have all his weapons and his warrior’s spoils.”⁴²⁷ The passage clearly suggests that from the Roman perspective, this battle is a circumstance in which the gods would sanction violence with the proper offerings or sacrifice. Shortly thereafter Virgil writes that Pallas again prays, this time to Hercules, that he might kill Turnus and strip him of his weapons.⁴²⁸ This prayer, however, is repressed by Jupiter as the Fates have already spun, measured, and cut the lives of all involved. The concept of Fate in Roman religion would have been a concept that most Stoic thinkers would have subscribed to and that was compatible with Roman religious tradition.⁴²⁹ The concept suggests that much of the violence that occurred was not only inevitable, but the will of the gods (the Fates were themselves gods). Since the Stoics were rather more concerned with morality for its own sake than Epicureans, one is left with the sense that much violence could easily be considered justifiable, unavoidable, or necessary in order to further the Roman state (thus serving the Roman religion), and therefore perfectly acceptable. The Augustan Age and Augustan culture, which to some extent was manufactured by Augustus himself, saw a marked interest in and awareness of Stoic thought, which is evident in the art and poetry Augustus patronized. Edwards, for example, points to the Stoic expression and phraseology consistent

426. Beard, *SPQR*, 369.

427. Mandelbaum, *Aeneid of Virgil*, X.585-588

428. Mandelbaum, *Aeneid of Virgil*, X.638-643.

429. Cic., *Nat. D.* II.12, II.73. Throughout the second book, on Stoicism, fate is a consistent theme.

through Virgil's *Aeneid*, which is significant because it demonstrates how Stoicism, in many aspects, reinforced traditional beliefs of Roman religion.⁴³⁰

Livy, who wrote under Augustus, lived from approximately 59 BCE to 17 CE and his work reflects the views of an intellectual who lived through the end of the Republic and the whole of the Augustan Age. Livy's great care in dealing with both the gods and the legends of Rome's origins reflect the importance of religion to the Roman elite and for Augustus in projecting a moral image of himself, advancing his moral agenda for Rome, and justifying the previous violence that he had undertaken. Regarding the legendary narratives of Rome's origins, Foster writes that "he [Livy] apparently regards them as possessing a certain symbolic truth, at least."⁴³¹ Similarly to the vow made by Pallas, the legend of Romulus having vowed the temple of Jupiter Stator while fighting a battle against the Sabines, one that the Romans had provoked, albeit for the advancement of Rome, suggests that, at least in war, the gods approved of violence.

The Roman belief of military and religious superiority over other nations appears to be related to their own beliefs about their cultural heritage and the fate of Rome to be a great and powerful nation. In his preface, Livy writes "it will be a satisfaction to have done myself as much as lies in me to commemorate the deeds of the foremost people of the world."⁴³² Livy alludes to the greatness of Rome and considers himself a historian striving to provide a more accurate history than previous historians. Livy goes on to start his history of Rome with what is regarded as the mythical foundations of Rome. Livy himself addresses the lack of proof

430. M. W. Edwards, "The Expression of Stoic Ideas in the Aeneid," *Phoenix* 14, no. 3 (Autumn, 1960): 151.

431. B. O. Foster, introduction to *History of Rome*, vol. 1., Books 1-2, trans. B. O. Foster, Loeb Classical Library 114 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919), xxi.

432. Livy, bk. I, preface, sec. 3.

regarding such legends as history, later writing that “I shall, for my own part, attach no great importance.”⁴³³ Yet in his preface he also resolves to neither confirm nor deny the accuracy of legends regarding the early origins of Rome. After Livy's short preface, his style encourages its readers to forget they are legend and he writes as if the stories of Aeneas, Romulus and Remus were unquestionable fact. Livy expresses an awareness that readers may criticize him for his portrayal of such legends as fact, but for whatever reason, cannot bring himself to tell the tale as fictional one. His reluctance to suggest that the origins of Rome are pure legend suggests that some Romans would have regarded such stories as truth. For example, the first statement in his first book establishes that the story of Aeneas is generally accepted by many Romans, giving the impression that it held some truth about the history of Rome.⁴³⁴ Whether he viewed all the fabulous details of such legends as truth or not, he certainly seems to write as if the overarching narrative is true in his belief. Furthermore, he demonstrates that many Romans considered the story an unquestionable truth about the origins of their nation that should be treated with pride and care.

Livy explains that, according to Roman tradition, Lavinium was simply the first of a series of Latin cities that were founded near Rome. Traditionally, the next was Alba Longa, which was founded due to overpopulation of Lavinium, by Ascanius, Aeneas' son. A series of kings reigned until one, Numitor, was forced out by his brother, the usurper, Amulius. Livy writes, “but the fates were resolved, as I suppose, upon the founding of this great City, and the

433. Livy, bk. I, preface, sec. 8-9.

434. Livy, I.I.1.

beginning of the mightiest of empires, next after that of Heaven.”⁴³⁵ Livy then goes into the story of Romulus and Remus, who he claims were rescued from a flooded and therefore sluggish river by a she-wolf who suckled them until they were found by a shepherd. They ultimately fought to restore their grandfather, Numitor, to his throne, and later resolved to establish what would ultimately be called Rome. Livy demonstrates that religion was of chief importance to the traditional founders of Rome, who not only claimed descent from gods, but had chosen to let omens determine the eldest of the twins and thus the one who would have the honor of naming the city.⁴³⁶ The omens were confusing to both, in that one received them far sooner, the other in greater volume. Ultimately, Romulus killed his own brother for jumping the walls of Rome after this quarrel, which, according to tradition, determined how the city got its name.⁴³⁷ Livy also establishes that the Romans acknowledged sacrifice as an ancient custom, as his description of the first sacrifice to Hercules near the Tiber was believed to have set a tradition that lasted through Livy's time for the Pinarii family.⁴³⁸

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* demonstrates how Romans were keenly aware of the relationship between animal butchery, sacrifice, meat consumption, and violence. Positioning a passage of his poetry from the perspective of Pythagoras, Ovid writes of the relationship between flesh eating men and savage beasts, denouncing the killing of animals simply for the purpose of human consumption. However, he also describes the justice in killing savage beasts that menace man,

435. Livy, I.IV.1-2.

436. Livy, I.VI.4.

437. Livy, I.IV-VII.

438. Livy, I.VII.15.

and of sacrificing animals that harm the crops of men or gods.⁴³⁹ Ovid's scripting of Pythagoras continues explaining the profanity associated with consuming flesh, particularly because of the belief that souls were reincarnated within other beings, and the killing of helpless animals that were of more use alive or which were a helpful friend in man's labors.⁴⁴⁰ Violence, however, that was unprovoked, purely for one's own gratification, committed against a friend or guest, however, was a profane sacrilege. Ovid's work helps to establish that many Romans shared an awareness of the relationship between violence and religion in the form of animal sacrifice, one in which killing for a just cause was perfectly acceptable. That Romans were conscious of the relationship between religious belief, violence, and morality is further demonstrated by their engagement with Greek philosophy, debates over the nature of the gods, and moral obligations.

4.4 The Deeds of the Divine Augustus

Augustus frames his achievements as a return to traditions that had been ignored in the Late Republic, including the restoration of its neglected religion. In the *Res Gestae*, Augustus portrays himself as a pious leader who not only saved Rome from tyranny, but restored its temples (eighty-two he claims), priesthoods, morals, and traditions to the former glory of the Middle Republic.⁴⁴¹ This connection confirms the link between morality and religion. Galinsky argues that the gods were thought to protect the community as long as its citizens acted in an overall moral fashion; he sees the neglect or dilapidation of temples as being related to religious

439. Mandelbaum, *Metamorphoses of Ovid*, XV.72-175.

440. Mandelbaum, *Metamorphoses of Ovid*, XV.150-175.

441. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, trans. F. Shipley, Loeb Classical Library 152 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924), 1, 7, 8, 20, 34.

decay, symptoms of immorality.⁴⁴² A number of historians, including Crook, Lintott, and Rawson, have “Most emphatically repudiated... the stereotype (believed in by many Romans themselves) in which the alleged decline was measured in terms of the decay of respect for the traditional religion.”⁴⁴³ That religion was even in decline during the Late Republic is a matter of debate. The restoration of temples by Augustus was one of the ways he, like his predecessors in the Republic, could use religion to legitimize power.⁴⁴⁴ With consistent political power he could monopolize this avenue in much the same way Sulla had during his time as a dictator.

While Augustus built and restored many temples, Beard, North and Price mention that three temples stand out as the best examples of the religious and political change he brought about: Cybele (Magna Mater), Apollo, and Mars Ultor.⁴⁴⁵ The location and imagery of the temples projected Augustan authority and values, establishing legitimacy for his special powers. These temples reveal a pattern of religious and historical iconography rooted in violent themes that serve to legitimize the power of Augustus and express the justice that he served by stamping out those who had wronged himself and Rome. The temples to Cybele and Apollo, for example, displayed statues and imagery of the Danaids (origin of the word “Danaans,” used by Homer to refer to the Greeks), who, according to legend, conspired with their father to kill all but one of Aegyptus’ (their uncle) fifty sons after being compelled them to marry them.⁴⁴⁶ Danaus quarreled

442. Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, 289-90.

443. J. A. Crook, A. Lintott, and E. Rawson, “Epilogue: The Fall of the Roman Republic,” in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd ed., vol. 9, *The Last Age of the Roman Republic, 146-43 B.C.*, ed. J. A. Crook, A. Lintott, and E. Rawson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 773.

444. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 20.

445. Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome: A History*, 197-200.

446. *Ibid.*, 198-99; Apollodorus, *The Library*, vol. 1, *Books 1-3.9*, trans. J. G. Frazer, Loeb Classical Library 121 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921), II.i.4-5.

with his brother and fled Egypt in fear after receiving the advice of Athena, which enabled the refounding of Argos upon its surrender by Gelanor. The story, therefore, draws a number of parallels with that of Rome's own history and its refounding under the Augustan principate.⁴⁴⁷

The vowing (in 42 BCE, prior to the battle of Philippi), eventual construction, and dedication of a temple to Mars Ultor serves as an example of how military, civil, and political violence became fused during the civil wars, all of which were subject to similar standards of justification. It was through military force that the personal and political grievances of Octavian were rectified, at least from the perspectives of his supporters, and it was Mars the Avenger that was thought to have ensured his success. Though the temple was not finished until some forty years later, Bowersock points out that coinage was minted by 19 BCE in honor of Mars Ultor and a monument at Nicopolis after Octavian's victory over Antony was constructed in honor of Mars (though likely without the epithet Ultor) and Apollo.⁴⁴⁸ This construction of the first temple to Mars within the *pomerium* is reflective of how religious ideologies shifted with the political changes.⁴⁴⁹ In the Late Republic, as we have seen, there were few exceptions with which one could hold imperium within the *pomerium*, but as this had now changed with the special powers of Augustus, so too had the notion of where a temple to the god of war might be deemed appropriate.⁴⁵⁰

A great deal of religious change necessarily accompanied the political in a system that uniquely bound the two. Whereas an individual under the Republic was generally limited to

447. Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome: A History*, 199.

448. Bowersock, "The New Hellenism of Augustan Athens," 3-4.

449. Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome: A History*, 199.

450. *Ibid.*, 180.

becoming a member of a single priestly college, Augustus had made himself a member of each of the four major priestly colleges and revived some minor colleges that had fallen into abeyance.⁴⁵¹ The changes were not necessarily indicative of the relative religious strength in comparison to the Late Republic. The destruction of prophecies and tight control that Augustus placed on the Sibylline books was not simply to end their shameful abuse for political ends, as Galinsky contends.⁴⁵² The destruction was itself an abuse as it ensured that no future or existing prophecy could undermine the *auctoritas* of the emperor. True, the Flamen Dialis had remained vacant from at least 86 BCE to 11 BCE, when Augustus revived the office. Yet, the priesthood had previously meant that the highest office in the land was unattainable, which was now indefinitely the case under the sole rule of an emperor, despite having retained the consulship in name if not in original form. Furthermore, when Augustus became the Pontifex Maximus after the death of Aemilius Lepidus, though he gave some semblance of being elected, there were no further elections to that priesthood since each consecutive emperor ascended to the role.

Under Augustus, the Pontifex Maximus became the head of all priestly colleges in Rome, rather than simply the head of a single college, that of the pontiffs; the emperor was also a member of each priestly college, whereas in the Republic it was extremely rare for a senator to be a member of more than one.⁴⁵³ While the Pontifex Maximus had previously been required to live in specified housing next the Forum and temple of Vesta, Augustus made his own residence

451. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 7.

452. Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, 293-4; Suet. *Aug.* XXXI.1.

453. Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome: A History*, 191-92.

the priesthood's new official quarters. He incorporated a temple to Apollo and a shrine to Vesta within his own palace, highlighting his close association to divinity.⁴⁵⁴

There were certainly positive changes in Roman religion under Augustus. The Arvales Fratres, whose sacrifices were thought to enhance agriculture, were restored under Augustus, who himself was a member alongside a number of brothers who had previously opposed him during the civil wars; as Galinsky points out, the brotherhood served as a vehicle for reconciliation.⁴⁵⁵ Augustus performed the census on three occasions, the first of which had not been performed in forty-one years amidst the turmoil of the Late Republic, giving him religious access to oversight of the lustration ritual that accompanied its close.⁴⁵⁶

By making himself sacred in perpetuity and assuming the power of tribune rather than the office itself, he made himself inviolable, which was a step towards his deification. By the end of the war against Sextus Pompey in 39 BCE, according to Appian, the triumvirs were given sacrifices as if they were gods and Octavian had been “given a place among their gods” across town in Italy.⁴⁵⁷ “The Consecration of an altar to Pax Augusta in the Campus Martius,” in which annual sacrifices would be made, solidified the status of Augustus as a deity in Rome itself.⁴⁵⁸ The *Res Gestae* describes the achievements of Augustus, but they're also the achievements the sum of which had brought the men before him a similar, almost divine status.⁴⁵⁹ Some of the *Res*

454. Ibid., 189-91.

455. Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, 292-3.

456. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 8.

457. App., *B Civ.* 5.74, 5.132; Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, 313.

458. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 12.

459. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 21-34. Construction of temples, distributions of money to the people, gladiatorial events and spectacles, ridding the sea of pirates, and expansion of Rome's territory.

Gestae describes the roles that the gods were thought to fulfil, such as the protection of the city itself and the care of its citizens. It supports Augustus' claim as the founder of a new Rome, "Father of my country."⁴⁶⁰ Even a godlike figure would not shy from violence if it meant justice for a father, friend, or Rome itself. The *Res Gestae* serves not only as justification for the violence of Octavian's early career, which was to avenge the injustice of his father's murder, but as affirmation of Augustus' divine status and an explanation for his transformation.⁴⁶¹

460. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 35.

461. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 2.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Perhaps no author better summarized the continuous theme in Rome of encouraging violence in a limited context than V. Paterculus, who concluded his work as follows:

Let me end my volume with a prayer. O Jupiter Capitolinus, and Mars Gradivus, author and stay of the Roman name, Vesta, Guardian of the eternal fire, and all other divinities who have exalted this great empire of Rome to the highest point yet reached on earth! On you I call, and to you I pray in the name of this people: guard, preserve, protect the present state of things, the peace which we enjoy, the present emperor, and when he has filled his post of duty—and may it be the longest granted to mortals—grant him successors until the latest time, but successors whose shoulders may be as capable of sustaining bravely the empire of the world as we have found his to be: foster the pious plans of all good citizens and crush the impious designs of the wicked.⁴⁶²

In this work I have sought to expand the historiography of religious violence in Rome beyond the traditional confines of Pagan-Christian interaction, showing how religion influenced the violence of the Late Republic and shaped how violence was interpreted in the Augustan Age.

As religion and politics were united within the Republic, we cannot consider the political violence of the Late Republic apart from its religious element. Likewise, as politics was inherently fused with military command, we cannot ignore the political or religious context of military engagements, particularly those of a civil nature. Empire did not happen in a single year, 146 BCE, but Rome's rapid expansion beginning in the third century BCE began slowly to introduce political, religious, and other practical problems that would eventually need to be addressed. By the mid-second century BCE, Romans had begun to question the morality of themselves and those with whom they intended to go to war.⁴⁶³

462. Vell. Pat. II.cxxxi.1-2.

463. O'Gorman, "Cato the Elder," 105-107; Plut., *Cat. Mai.* XVI.

The apparent disregard for the religious and political tradition that characterized many efforts of Roman politicians to devise practical solutions to current problems should be attributed to their novelty rather than a lack of respect for the *mos maiorum*. In much the same way that Greek philosophy sought to provide practical, material explanations for nature of the universe, politicians sought to deal with problems that their political and religious institutions could only address by altering the meaning of the *mos maiorum*.⁴⁶⁴ The two were flexible enough to do so, it was not inevitable that Rome should, by the end of the first century BCE, be ruled by an individual. It was expected, however, that such change would strain on the institutions in place.⁴⁶⁵ Just as Roman religion would have to find a way to incorporate the foreign, so would its political system.

The sacrosanct nature of the tribune combined with the unlimited power to veto created a contentious environment when the few who had the ambition sought to assert the sovereignty of the people, circumventing the traditional process of gaining Senate approval before putting legislation to vote. As religion was embedded in the culture and politics of Rome, nearly all political violence was infused with some sort of religious symbolism. It was frequently a member of a priestly college who encouraged or inflicted such violence, sometimes in a consciously religious fashion, as in the deaths of the Gracchi.

Furthermore, religion was used as a means of legitimizing political or military power. Leaders sought to justify their abuses as the defense of Rome or the will of the gods. As commanders, politicians and often priests, leaders often conflated their responsibilities, meaning

464. Harrison, "Epicurean Subversion?," 40.

465. Crook, Lintott, and Rawson, "Epilogue: The Fall of the Roman Republic," 769-73.

that justifications for military exercise and political violence were one and the same; in many cases during the civil wars, military violence was also political violence. Religion helped these same leaders to mold the memory of themselves for Roman posterity through monuments, literature, historical accounts, and oratory, including their eulogies at funerals.

Undoubtedly there were abuses of Roman religion and there were those who did not heartedly subscribe to the beliefs that drove its ritual practices. Yet, when considered holistically, it is undeniable that religion was of real importance to the vast majority. Religions did play a significant role in the increasingly violent political atmosphere of the Late Republic, particularly when used in an obstructive manner.

As Rome came into closer contact with Greek philosophy, Roman authors sought to use such knowledge to provide solutions to contemporary problems. The implications that these philosophies had for Roman religious beliefs contributed to the innovation of religious discourse as Romans sought to respond to the questions that were raised. The success of Roman ancestors could be used as unequivocal proof of the validity of their religion.

There are clear parallels between the violent narratives contained within texts of religious significance and Roman perceptions of violence that actually occurred. In the legends pertaining to Rome's origins, the gods exemplified authority by right of force. How Rome constructed its identity and history says quite a bit about the Roman world view. It was through force that Rome had established itself as a city and its increasing dominance of the Mediterranean. By the Late Republic, Romans had appropriated portions of Homeric epic as part of their own heritage, ultimately rewriting the story's end. Rome had at once assimilated the foreign and asserted its own cultural dominance partially through violently themed literature of religious significance.

The Augustan age saw the rise of an individual political, military, and religious leader, which dampened contests for glory or for reaching the heights of political or religious office, as these things were indefinitely claimed by the emperor himself. Ending the religious abuse of obstruction was in the emperor's own interests as he sought to consolidate his power. Augustus worked diligently to reconcile his violent past with the projection of Augustus and to mask the inconsistency of packaging one-man rule as a return to tradition. The revival of religious institutions, offices, and restoration of temples along with his moral program reflect those efforts.

Unlike most widely-spread religions today, which have a negative view of violence, Roman religion accepted it as a part of life and even embraced it under certain circumstances. The nature of Roman religion was that it embodied both good and evil, no one god was entirely good or bad, it was filled with themes and stories of violence. Roman religion offered explanations for violence. Various forms of violence could be considered not only warranted, but fated or even glorious. Religion was not, however, the reason for Roman violence, but it helped to provide a rationale as to when and whether it was appropriate. Unwarranted violence could be punished in life or in the Roman view of the afterlife, the wicked had their place of punishment.

Many factors affected the Roman propensity for violence, including socioeconomic factors like land distribution, food scarcity, the gulf between rich and poor, and lack of proper policing, to name a few. Religiously rooted tendencies to emulate one's ancestors, avenge friends or family, or progress the interests of Rome were factors that contributed to violence. But religious beliefs could be flexibly shaped to vindicate the use of violence for individuals and groups who sought to justify their actions. Religion provided a model that discouraged violence thought to be unjust, yet encouraged violence as an answer to such injustice.

It would be difficult to pinpoint a single event that led to the fall of the Republic,⁴⁶⁶ but over time Roman culture and politics had both gradually and incrementally changed to a point where greater opportunities existed for ambitious commanders to assert political dominance; the Senate was often at their mercy to relinquish that power. Religion did very little to impede such violence, and in fact served as a flexible platform in which perpetrators of political violence could hope to justify themselves to supporters and future generations of Rome. It was easy enough for one to construe violence in a way that Roman religion would encourage, but this is merely one of a great number of factors that enabled the fall of the Republic. Roman religion expanded with Rome and the *mos maiorum*, the purpose of which was always to preserve Republican ideas and values. The *mos maiorum* had become so open to interpretation by the diversity of its authors' ideas and examples that it ultimately contributed to the transition from Republic to imperial regime, which was a transformation under the guise of tradition.

466. Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 498.

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