

GODS AND EMPERORS: THE GREEK LANGUAGE OF THE ROMAN IMPERIAL CULT

THE Greeks under Roman rule suffer from a double prejudice.¹ On the one hand, Hellenists lose interest in the Greeks after the classical period; on the other, Roman historians find it hard to avoid a Romanocentric perspective. This double prejudice becomes particularly acute when the issue is the religious language used by the Greeks to refer to the Roman emperor. For example, the Greeks called the living emperor both *theou huios* ('son of god') and also *theos* ('god'). The language looks odd from the perspectives both of classical Athens and of imperial Rome. One way to make sense of it is to treat it as a translation out of Latin. Thus the bizarre practice of calling the emperor *theou huios* is seen as perfectly natural because it is simply the translation of *divi filius*. Why natural? Because, as the heirs of Rome, we can attempt to ignore the cultural differences between us and the ancient world. But the tactic of treating Greek as a translation out of Latin does not always work. Calling the living emperor *theos* cannot be seen as a translation of *divus*, a term which applies only to dead emperors. Modern scholars are therefore forced to treat the usage as 'deviant', the product of either folly or flattery. In fact the failure of *theos* to translate *divus* undermines the first assumption that *theou huios* is a translation of *divi filius*.

The first section of this article examines the usage of *theos*, both in general and in relation to the Roman emperor; it shows that *theos* is a very different term from *divus* and that its predication of the emperor must be understood in a Greek context. The second section explores some of the implications of this point by looking at other related aspects of the language used both in describing and in addressing the emperor in religious contexts. The third and final section reflects on the significance of this language for our understanding of Greek religion. Does *theos* compare unfavourably with 'God'? Does its predication of the emperor fit the common view of the Greek gods as anthropomorphic?

I

Theos, though a basic term of Greek religion, has never been given a detailed semantic study.² Scholars, in their eagerness to examine what the Greeks thought about their gods, have generally not paused to consider the prior question—what does *theos* mean? There is, however, one point of general agreement: *theos* is not a name, like 'Tiberius'.³ Take, for example, the two sentences 'This is Tiberius' and 'This is a *theos*'. The first is, logically speaking, a statement of identity; it merely asserts the identity of 'This' and 'Tiberius' without adding any other information. By contrast, 'This is a *theos*' has the same grammatical form as the first sentence, but is logically different. It says something about the subject of the sentence; that is, *theos* is a (logical) predicate.⁴ So far so good. But what sort of predicate is *theos*? What were the conditions for its use?

As a preliminary move I want to set out three possible types of predicate. There are, first,

¹ I should like to thank Mary Beard and Lucia Nixon who have greatly improved this article. The analysis runs parallel to that of my book *Rituals and power: the Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge 1984). I refer to corpora of inscriptions by the standard abbreviations; those not listed by J. J. E. Hondius, *Saxa loquuntur* (Leiden 1938) are mainly to be found in the series *Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien* (Bonn 1972–).

² See, however, W. Pötscher, *Theos. Studien zur älteren griechischen Gottesvorstellung* (Diss. Wien 1953); W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der arch. u. kl. Epoche*

(1977) 406–8.

³ U. von Wilamowitz, *Der Glaube der Hellenen i* (Berlin 1931) 17–18; C. Habicht, *Gottmenschentum und griechische Städte*² (Munich 1970) 157; cf. M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion ii*² (1961) 197–8. See contra Pötscher (n. 2) 187–218.

⁴ For this distinction see, for example, P. F. Strawson, *Subject and predicate in logic and grammar* (London 1974). Of course it is possible to convert *theos* into a name by adding the definite article. 'This is the *theos*' is comparable to 'This is Tiberius'.

predicates such as 'is a Knight', which are simply a matter of human ascription. X 'is a Knight' if and only if he has been made a Knight by the monarch. The predicate does not inform one of X's nature or characteristics. A second class of predicate is exemplified by Roman Catholic uses of 'is a Saint'. The ascription of this status is unlike the arbitrary dubbing of a Knight. A decision is made by a body of the Roman Catholic Church (the Congregation for the Causes of Saints), but the elaborate procedure is designed to discover the facts of the case.⁵ Was the 'candidate' really a perfect exemplar of the holy life? The final ceremony, performed by the Pope, does not so much create as recognize a Saint. Thirdly, predicates like 'is a person' lack clear criteria for use. The paradigm case of 'is a person' is an adult human being of 'normal' intelligence and physique, who has both rights and responsibilities. But when one or more of the features of the paradigm are absent (as with a foetus immediately after conception, or a patient suffering from irreparable brain damage) it ceases to be clear that the predicate still applies. Irresolvable arguments arise because the predicate 'is a person', like 'is a Saint', claims to recognize the way things are; but, unlike 'is a Saint', it has no institutional control.

To which of these three categories does *theos* belong? No ancient source offers a semantic analysis of *theos* and we therefore have to tease out assumptions which were not normally made explicit. A Greek debate on the limits of polytheism shows that the term *theos* is in fact comparable to 'person'. Carneades, a member of the Academic school of philosophy in the second century BC, propounded a series of arguments about the gods, which proceed on a 'little by little' basis from secure premises to unacceptable conclusions. One specimen of these arguments, as reported by Cicero, runs:⁶

If gods exist, are the nymphs also goddesses? If the nymphs are, are the Pans and Satyrs also gods? But they are not gods; therefore the nymphs also are not gods. Yet they possess temples vowed and dedicated to them by the nation. Therefore the other gods who have had temples dedicated to them are not gods either.⁷

Cicero makes clear that Carneades did not advance these arguments 'with the object of establishing atheism . . . , but in order to prove Stoic theology worthless'. One part of the Stoic project was a rational theology which proposed to justify popular polytheism by showing that the innumerable individual deities were aspects of one cosmic deity. Carneades' aim was to show that this project was a failure because of its inability to discriminate between deities such as Zeus, whose divinity was not in question, and other beings who were clearly not gods. He placed the Stoics in a fork: either nothing is god or everything is god.

Carneades' concern was not to draw out the semantic implications of his 'little by little' reasoning, but his arguments are of interest in this context because they appeal to common Greek usage; his case against the Stoics was telling only if his own usage of *theos* was not aberrant. Arguments of similar type can be used on numerous other predicates (e.g. ones concerning size or colour), but Carneades' arguments (the most celebrated ones of this type in antiquity) do help to characterize the term *theos*. They make clear that there were no uncontroversial criteria for the predication of *theos*. The boundaries of the concept were not unequivocally defined.

The implication of this is that *theos* is the same sort of predicate as 'person'. Admittedly *theos* has sometimes been seen as 'a sort of rank or status achieved through merit, with no implication whatever of divine nature. . . . Essentially the conferring of divinity was a political act that

⁵ P. Molinari, *New Catholic Encyclopedia* iii (1967) 55–9.

⁶ Sextus Empiricus, *contra mathematicos* ix 182–90 and Cicero, *de natura deorum* iii 43–52, quoted from 43: 'si di sunt, suntne etiam Nymphae deae? si Nymphae, Panisci etiam et Satyri? hi autem non sunt; ne Nymphae [deae] quidem igitur. at earum templa sunt publice vota et dedicata. ne ceteri quidem ergo di, quorum templa sunt dedicata.' See on this type of argument P. Couissin, 'Les

sortes de Carnéade contre le polythéisme', *REG* liv (1941) 43–57; J. Barnes, 'Medicine, experience and logic', in *Science and Speculation*, ed. J. Barnes et al. (Cambridge 1982) 24–68; and esp. M. F. Burnyeat, 'Gods and heaps', in *Language and logos*, ed. M. Schofield, M. C. Nussbaum (Cambridge 1982) 315–38.

⁷ Cicero's use of the argument shows that *deus* is comparable to *theos*.

granted honours due for benefactions.⁸ In other words *theos* is like Knight—a purely honorific term. My argument places it in a quite different category. Unlike ‘is a Knight’ and ‘is a Saint’ there were no institutional controls and no uncontroversial criteria for the use of ‘is a *theos*’. As with ‘is a person’, ‘is a *theos*’ makes a statement about the world which is not based on human fiat. There are unproblematic uses of both concepts (e.g. of Zeus or of healthy adults) but at the edges problems arose. Were the nymphs, or satyrs, or emperors *theoi*? The elasticity of the term meant that the emperor *could* be included. We need now to see in some detail *how* *theos* was predicated of the emperor. Was its predication of the emperor aberrant in comparison to its predication of the traditional gods? How are we to explain its seemingly random usage?

Theos was predicated quite commonly of both Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors. As early as the fourth century BC one Greek writer commented that it was easier for Philip of Macedon now to become a *theos* than it had been for him to reach his present position of political supremacy.⁹ Alexander and his successors were from time to time called *theoi*, both in their lifetimes and posthumously.¹⁰ In Egypt there were official cults of the *Theoi Adelphoi* (‘God Brothers’) and *Theoi Soteres* (‘God Saviours’),¹¹ and Antiochos IV of Syria (175–164 BC) placed, for the first time, the title of *theos* on his coins.¹² The term was also applied sporadically in the second and first centuries BC to Roma, the personification of the power of Rome.¹³

The Roman emperors did not use *theos* of themselves when communicating in Greek with their subjects.¹⁴ The significant exception was Gaius who railed against a Jewish embassy because the Jews failed to recognize him as a *theos*.¹⁵ Claudius, Gaius’ successor, reasserted the norm of imperial behaviour in publicly criticising Gaius’ foolish and mad attempt to force the Jews to call him *theos*.¹⁶ Despite the standard imperial attitude, the Greek subjects of the emperor repeatedly referred to him as *theos*. There are numerous uses in the lifetime of Augustus,¹⁷ and this continues through the first and second centuries AD.¹⁸ However, in the third century *theos* was rarely applied to a living emperor;¹⁹ instead the adjectival form *theios* (‘divine’) was used.²⁰ The expectation that a ruler would be acclaimed as *theos* is neatly illustrated by the aspirations of an outsider. Both Jewish and Christian sources note that Herod Agrippa, the Roman client ruler of Judaea, was called *theos*, and was immediately struck down by the True God for his presumption.²¹

The uses of *theos* in imperial contexts are similar to two of its uses in connection with the traditional gods. First, ‘the *theos*’ on its own could refer unambiguously to the emperor. For example, a text recording the building of imperial temples and the celebrating of imperial festivals by a local benefactor twice says that he displayed piety towards ‘the god’.²² The reference to the emperor, Augustus, was clear. Similarly the assembly of the province of Asia when reforming the calendar to begin on Augustus’ birthday talks easily about ‘the birthday of the god’ and about the earlier decision of the assembly ‘that a crown be awarded to the one

⁸ D. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West* i (Leiden forthcoming), following Habicht (n. 3).

⁹ Isoc. *Ep.* 3.5.

¹⁰ Habicht (n. 3) 156–9; E. Badian, in *Ancient Macedonian Studies in Honor of Charles F. Edson* (Thessaloniki 1981) 27–71, esp. 54–9.

¹¹ P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford 1972) 215–20.

¹² O. Mørkholm, *Studies in the Coinage of Antiochus IV of Syria* (Copenhagen 1963) 68–74.

¹³ R. Mellor, *ΘΕΑ ΠΩΜΗ* (Göttingen 1975) 112.

¹⁴ Habicht indeed argues that Augustus explicitly prohibited the Greeks from using it themselves: in *Le culte des souverains dans l’empire romain*, Entr. Hardt xix (Vandoeuvres 1973) 41–88.

¹⁵ Philo, *Leg.* 353.

¹⁶ Josephus, *AJ* xix 284.

¹⁷ F. Taeger, *Charisma* ii (Stuttgart 1960) 187 n. 3;

Habicht (n. 14) 84.

¹⁸ E.g. Tiberius, *Ann. Ep.* 1934 89; Claudius, *IGR* iii 328; Nero, P. Le Bas, W. H. Waddington, *Inscriptions grecques et latines* . . . iii (1870) 600a; Domitian, *I.Priene* 229; Hadrian, *IGR* iii 286; Antoninus Pius, *IGR* iv 594; Commodus, *TAM* ii 829. Cf. also P. Veyne, *Latomus* xxi (1962) 57; M. Le Glay, *BCH* c (1976) 351–3.

¹⁹ See, however, Plautilla, F. Imhoof-Blumer, *Kleinasiatische Münzen* (Vienna 1901) 106 no. 11, 107 no. 6; *SNG von Aulock* 2412–15, 2694–6; Julia Domna, *IGBulg* ii 623; Julia Mamaea, *IGBulg* ii 640; Gordiani, T. E. Mionnet, *Description de médailles antiques* . . . iii 545 no. 45; also Julian, *Side Agorası ve Civarındaki Binalar* (Ankara 1956) 81 no. 48.

²⁰ Price (n. 1) ch. 9.

²¹ Josephus, *AJ* xix 345, 347; *Acts of Apostles* xii 22.

²² *IG* xii suppl. 124 (Eresus).

suggesting the greatest honours for the god'.²³ There was no need for the assembly to spell out that 'the god' was Augustus. This use of *theos* to refer to whichever particular deity was in mind at the time can be documented as early as Homer.²⁴

Secondly, *theos* was added to the name of the emperor (e.g. *theos Nero*).²⁵ Some scholars have suggested that this usage was peculiar to imperial contexts and implicitly distinguished the emperor from the traditional gods, who did not need to be called *theos*.²⁶ In fact the same usage is found in connection with the gods. By the imperial period it was common to refer to *theos* Dionysos or *thea* Aphrodite.²⁷ While *theos* was sometimes used when the standing of the deity had been threatened²⁸ or as part of a phrase in apposition to the name of the deity (such as 'the leading gods Artemis and Apollo'),²⁹ in most cases *theos* is added to the bare name of the god without any discernible reason for emphasis.³⁰ Thus the use of '*theos Nero*' is not a mark of uncertainty about the emperor's status; it is in line with contemporary religious usage.

There was considerable fluidity in the uses of *theos*. First, it was employed in both religious and non-religious situations. While the inscriptions below imperial statues in the sanctuaries of the gods sometimes called the emperor *theos*,³¹ statues erected elsewhere in secular contexts were described in the same way,³² and secular buildings such as porticoes, theatres and baths were dedicated to the *theoi* emperors.³³ Secondly, within religious contexts the emperor was called *theos* in what seems a haphazard fashion. Priesthoods, for example, sometimes simply give the name of the emperor and sometimes add *theos* or another divine name. Thus only a quarter of the civic priesthoods of Augustus term him *theos* in his lifetime.³⁴ The flexibility of usage is illustrated by the difference between the titles of the two priesthoods of Augustus held by one man from Bargylia in Caria in about AD 80.³⁵ This man was high priest of the goddess Roma and of the god Sebastos Caesar (either in another town or in the provincial assembly), high priest of Emperor Titus and priest of Artemis Kindyas and Sebastos Caesar (both at Bargylia).

This all seems very confusing, as if the Greeks used *theos* completely at random. In fact the reason for the variability in usage is that there were no institutional procedures nor established criteria controlling the predication of *theos* of the emperor. When a city came to pass a decree it was not concerned to debate the status of *theos* but to establish a cult of the emperor.³⁶ The clearest expression of the procedure is a decree of the city of Acraephae passed after Nero had restored freedom to Greece.³⁷

²³ R. K. Sherk, *Roman documents from the Greek East* (Baltimore 1969) no. 65 lines 41 and 43 (a slightly superior text is in U. Laffi, *SCO* xvi [1967] at p. 22). Cf. also *I.Olympia* 53.8 and 37 and *OGIS* 456.17.

²⁴ References in G. François, *Le polythéisme et l'emploi au singulier des mots THEOS, DAIMON* (Paris 1957) 317–23.

²⁵ *SNG Copenhagen Aeolis* 139–43 (Cyme), *Phrygia* 567–8 (Laodicea), 702 (Synaos).

²⁶ L. Cerfaux, J. Tondriau, *Le culte des souverains dans la civilisation gréco-romaine* (Tournai 1957) 191.

²⁷ L. Robert, *Hellenica* xiii (1965) 176 analyses the data from Aphrodisias; e.g. *ἱερεὺς διὰ βίου θεοῦ Διονύσου* (*MAMA* viii 454), *τοῦ ἱεροῦ θεᾶς Ἀφροδείτης* (*MAMA* viii 521).

²⁸ *Syll.*³ 867 = *I.Ephesos* ia 24.

²⁹ *IGR* iii 583–4 = *TAM* ii 188–9.

³⁰ As Robert notes, the development of this usage has not received detailed study. It seems to be largely a phenomenon of the later Hellenistic and Roman periods, but it has roots in Homer (*Od.* xiii 189–90; xix 396–7). I can discern no significance in the variations in the titles of joint priesthoods of a traditional god and the emperor (e.g. *IGR* iv 229, 984; *TAM* ii 1200).

³¹ *IGR* iv 180 = *I.Lampsakos* 11; *Hist. Zeits.* xxix (1921–2) 217 n. 1; *BCH* ix (1885) 79 no. 10.

³² *SEG* xxiii 450 (Demetrias).

³³ *SEG* xix 760 (Ilyas); *IGR* iv 808 (Hierapolis); *IGR* iii 664 = *TAM* ii 408 (Patara); *I.Labraunda* ii 65.

³⁴ Namely, *IGR* iv 256 = *I.Assos* 15; *IGR* iv 1302 = *I.Kyme* 19; *Altertümer von Pergamon* viii.3 (1969) 164–5.

³⁵ *BCH* v (1881) 191 no. 14 with *BCH* xviii (1894) 25 no. 21 and C. Fayer, *Il culto della dea Roma* (Pescara 1976) 142–3. It is possible that the use of *thea* with Roma influenced the imperial usage in the first priesthood.

³⁶ See, however, the (obscure) debate in Athens about Alexander: Badian *loc. cit.* (n. 10).

³⁷ *ILS* 8794 = *Syll.*³ 814: ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς τῶν Σεβαστῶν διὰ βίου καὶ Νέρωνος Κλαυδίου Καίσαρος Σεβαστοῦ Ἐπαμεινώνδας Ἐπαμεινώνδου εἰπεν-προβεβουλευμένον ἑαυτῷ εἶναι πρὸς τε τὴν βουλὴν καὶ τὸν δῆμον ἐπιδή ὁ τοῦ παντὸς κόσμου κύριος Νέρων, αὐτοκράτωρ μέγιστος, δημαρχικῆς ἐξουσίας τὸ τρισκαίδεκατον ἀποδεδειγμένος, πατὴρ πατρίδος, νέος Ἥλιος ἐπιλάμψας τοῖς Ἕλλησιν προειρημένους εὐεργετεῖν τὴν Ἑλλάδα, ἀμειβόμενος δὲ καὶ εὐσεβῶν τοὺς θεοὺς ἡμῶν παριστανομένους αὐτῷ πάντοτε ἐπὶ προνοίᾳ καὶ σωτηρίᾳ, τὴν ἀπὸ παντὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος αὐθιγενῆ καὶ αὐτόχθονα ἐλευθερίαν πρότερον ἀφαιρεθεῖσαν τῶν Ἑλλήνων εἰς καὶ μόνος τῶν ἀπ' αἰῶνος αὐτοκράτωρ μέγιστος φιλέλλην γενόμενος

The high priest of the emperors for life and of Nero Claudius Caesar Sebastos, Epameinondas son of Epameinondas spoke: . . . 'Since Nero the lord of the whole universe, greatest emperor, holding the tribunician power for the thirteenth time elect, father of his country, dawned as a new Sun for the Greeks, especially chosen to benefit Greece, and revered our gods in return for the fact that they had always stood beside him for his care and protection; and, being the one and only emperor for all time, mightiest philhellenic Nero Zeus Eleutherios (Zeus of Freedom) gave, granted and restored the indigenous and immemorial freedom previously removed from the Greeks to its ancient condition of autonomy and freedom . . .; therefore it was decided by the magistrates, councillors and people to dedicate for the present an altar by [the statue of] Zeus the Saviour, inscribing it "to Zeus Eleutherios Nero for ever" and to establish statues in the temple of Apollo Ptoios jointly with our ancestral gods of Nero Zeus Eleutherios and of Thea Sebaste Messalina. . . .'

The city did not have an elaborate procedure with clear criteria, like that of the Vatican for canonization, which unequivocally judged that Nero was to be identified with Zeus Eleutherios. The emperor had made a magnanimous restoration of freedom and the city responded with a decision to establish a cult.

The terminology and the associated procedure for divinizing an emperor were very different in Rome. There the official position was clear. The emperor was not a *deus* ('god') in his lifetime, but after his death he might be made a *divus*.³⁸ In the Republican period *divus* and *deus* had been used interchangeably; two scholars of the first century BC (Varro and Ateius) attempted to distinguish between the terms, saying that *divi* were eternal but *dei* (like the *dii manes*, or spirits of the dead) were honoured because of their consecration.³⁹ In fact their prescriptive definition was unsuccessful; the two terms were distinguished in official usage, but in the reverse sense. From the cult of the deceased Julius Caesar onwards *divus* referred exclusively in official terminology to former emperors and members of their family. They were thus distinguished from the traditional *dei*.⁴⁰

There were a standard procedure and clear criteria for the creation of a *divus*. After the emperor's funeral the senate met and could decide to establish an official cult of the former emperor (or to do nothing, or to damn the emperor's memory). In the first century AD, five emperors and eight members of the imperial family received these 'heavenly honours'.⁴¹ This may all sound very 'political', but despite pressures, the procedure was not like the arbitrary dubbing of a knight. The senate, like the Vatican, was traditionally the supreme religious arbiter and in the case of former emperors it took a decision on the basis of the report of a witness who had seen the soul of the emperor rising to heaven. The creation of a *divus*, like that of a Saint, was

[*Νέρων*] Ζεὺς Ἐλευθέριος ἔδωκεν, ἐχαρίσατο, ἀποκατέστησεν εἰς τὴν ἀρχαιότητα τῆς αὐτονομίας καὶ ἐλευθερίας, προσθεὶς τῇ μεγάλῃ καὶ ἀπροσδοκῆτῳ δωρεᾷ καὶ ἀνείσφοριαν, ἣν οὐδεὶς τῶν πρότερον Σεβαστῶν ὀλοτελῆ ἔδωκεν· δι' ἃ δὴ πάντα δεδογμένον εἶναι τοῖς τε ἀρχουσι καὶ συνέδροις καὶ τῷ δήμῳ καθιερώσαι μὲν κατὰ τὸ παρὸν τὸν πρὸς τῷ Διὶ τῷ Σωτῆρι βωμόν, ἐπιγράφοντας, Διὶ Ἐλευθερίῳ [*Νέρων*] εἰς αἰῶνα, καὶ ἀγάλματα ἐν τῷ ναῷ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος τοῦ Πτωίου συνκαθειδρύνοντας τοῖς [ἡμῶν] πατρίοις θεοῖς [*Νέρωνος*] Διὸς Ἐλευθερίου καὶ Θεᾶς Σεβαστῆς [*Μεσσαλίνης*], ἵνα τούτων οὕτως τελεσθέντων καὶ ἡ ἡμετέρα πόλις φαίνεται πάσαν τειμὴν καὶ εὐσέβειαν ἐκπεπληρωκυῖα εἰς τὸν τοῦ κυρίου Σεβαστοῦ [*Νέρωνος* οἶκον.] εἶναι δὲ ἐν ἀναγραφῇ τὸ ψήφισμα παρὰ τε τῷ Διὶ τῷ Σωτῆρι ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ ἐν στήλῃ καὶ ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος τοῦ Πτωίου.

This assimilation had extra resonance because of the ancient cult of Zeus Eleutherios celebrated by the League of Greeks at the neighbouring Plataea. Cf. R. Etienne, M. Piérart, *BCH* xcix (1975) 63–7; W. C. West, *GRBS* xviii (1977) 315–16. Note that *Sebastos* is

the Greek equivalent of *Augustus* (see n. 45).

³⁸ S. Weinstock, *Divus Julius* (Oxford 1971) 386–92; E. Bickerman, 'Consecratio', in *Culte des souverains* (n. 14) 3–25 and 'Diva Augusta Marciana', *AJP* xcv (1974) 362–76. See further W. Schwering, 'Deus und divus. Eine semasiologische Studie als Ergänzung zum Artikel *divus* in Thesaurus linguae latinae', *Indogermanische Forschungen* xxxiv (1914–15) 1–44.

³⁹ Servius on *Aen.* v 45 (= Varro *fr.* 424 *Grammaticae Romanae fragmenta*, ed. Funaioli). The Ateius is either Ateius Praetextatus, a contemporary of Varro (*fr.* 12 Funaioli), or Ateius Capito, an Augustan writer (*fr.* 15 Funaioli). See also Servius on *Aen.* xii 139 (= Varro, *de lingua lat. fr.* 2, Goetz-Schoell).

⁴⁰ *Deus* was used 'unofficially' of emperors (and others) (I. M. Le M. Du Quesnay, *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar* iii (1981) 104, on the late Republic; *TLL* s.v. 'deus', col. 891. 10–78), but this shows only that *divus* might be seen as a subset of *deus*; there remains a contrast with the undivided category of *theos*.

⁴¹ For a list see R. Cagnat, *Cours d'épigraphie latine*⁴ (1914) 170–2 with E. Stein, *Hermes* lii (1917) 571–8.

the recognition of a state of affairs. It was also a definitive recognition. When the senate had decided, there was none of the semantic fuzziness about *divus* which is characteristic of the predication of *theos*.

The Greeks did not create a category comparable to *divus*. It was not that they were ignorant of the official Roman system. Roman silver coinage, which circulated widely in the Greek world, featured the Roman titles. Milestones, put up by the Roman authorities, generally gave the emperor's titles.⁴² Letters from the emperor to Greek cities started with the full official titulature. For example, a letter from Nero to Rhodes begins: 'Nero Claudius, son of *theos* Claudius, grandson of Tiberius Caesar Sebastos and Germanicus Caesar, great-grandson of *theos* Sebastos, Caesar Sebastos Germanicus, high priest, holding tribunician power, to the magistrates, council and people of Rhodes, greetings.'⁴³ The emperor refers correctly to Claudius and Augustus, and not to Tiberius and Germanicus, as deified. The Greeks thus knew that in Rome the living emperor was not *deus* or *divus* and they could tell which emperors were *divi filius*. But they did not establish a simple term as a precise translation of *divus*. Occasional periphrases, such as 'the heavenly emperor' or 'the emperor among the gods', were employed, mainly in heavily Romanized contexts,⁴⁴ but generally the term used was *theos*. It is therefore tempting to suppose that *theou huios* can be seen as a translation of *divi filius*.

The numerous instances of the phrase *theou huios* in imperial titles in documents produced by the Greeks themselves might seem to be translations from Latin bearing the same meaning as the 'original'.⁴⁵ They may indeed often function as equivalents of the Latin *divi filius*, but their meaning cannot be the same since they form part of a different conceptual system.⁴⁶ The *theos* element of *theou huios* retained the elusivity of the common Greek usage of *theos*. So, while it was impossible to refer to the living emperor as *divi filius divus*, because he only became *divus* after his death, the Greeks could refer to the living emperor as *theou huios theos* ('god, son of god'). For example, a statue was erected of 'Emperor Caesar, son of *theos*, *theos* Sebastos, who has performed incomparable deeds for all people'.⁴⁷ This modified phrase could even be used in conjunction with 'translations' of further Roman titles. In the lifetime of Augustus there was a 'priest of Roma and Emperor Caesar, son of *theos*, *theos* Sebastos, high priest and father of his country'.⁴⁸ The fact that the Greeks could use *theou huios theos*, even in conjunction with other Roman titles, shows that they did not regard the simple *theou huios* in the same way as the Romans saw *divi filius*. It had a different range of evocations, forming part of a radically different conceptual system.

⁴² E.g. *IGR* iii 82, 138, 145; iv 267, 599–601. *IGR* iv 924–6 are peculiar in beginning τοῖς θεῶν ἐπιφανεστάτοις (reign of Septimius Severus).

⁴³ *IGR* iv 1124 = *Syll.*³ 810: [Νέρων] Κλαύδιος, θεοῦ Κλαυδίου υἱός, Τίβεριου Καίσαρος Σεβαστοῦ καὶ Γερμανικοῦ Καίσαρος ἔγγονος, θεοῦ Σεβαστοῦ ἀπόγονος, Καίσαρ Σεβαστός Γερμανικός, ἀρχιερεὺς, δημαρχικῆς ἔξουσίας, αὐτοκράτωρ, Ῥοδίων ἀρχουσι βουλῆ [δῆ]μω χαίρειν.

⁴⁴ *IGR* iii 83 = *ILS* 5883 = *ÖJh* xxviii (1933) Beib. 64 no. 13 (Amastris): *divi Aug. perpetuus sacerdos* | ὁ τοῦ ἐπουρανίου θεοῦ Σ(ε)βαστοῦ ἀρχ[ιερεὺς διὰ βίου?]; J. Reynolds, *Aphrodisias and Rome* (London 1982) no. 22. 6; *IGR* iv 1150 = *ASAA* xxvii–xxix (1949–51) 284 no. 38 (Camirus): *τετειμημένος ἐς τὸ διενεκές ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν θεοῖς Αὐτοκρατόρων*; *SEG* xi 492–3 (Laconia): ὁ ἐν θεοῖς Ἀδριανός.

⁴⁵ Note also how the Greek 'sebastophantes' used wrongly to be equated with the *flamen Augusti*, the standard term for an imperial priest in the western empire; in fact the *sebastophantes* probably displayed an imperial image in the imperial mysteries, which are unique to the Greek world (H. W. Pleket, *HThR* lviii [1965] 338–41). It is also wrong to imagine that *Sebastos*

is an exact translation of the Latin *Augustus*. It did indeed become the standard equivalent almost instantaneously (e.g. *SEG* xxvi 1243 = *I.Ephesos* iii 902), but its semantic motivation is more strongly religious than *Augustus*. It also functioned differently; 'the *Sebastoi*' may refer to two joint *Augusti*, but it may equally refer to a sole emperor and his collective ancestors: e.g. *IGR* iv 1676 (Apollonia, Mysia; AD 40–1); *IGR* iv 1509 = *Sardis* vii.1 45 (c. AD 80); *IGR* iii 493 (Oenoanda; Trajanic); *IG* v.1 380 (Sparta; AD 115).

⁴⁶ Thus the question whether *theou huios* was used of someone who was not *divi filius* is irrelevant to my case.

⁴⁷ *IGR* iv 201 = *I.Ilion* 81: *Αὐτοκράτορα Καίσαρα θεοῦ υἱὸν θεὸν Σεβαστόν, ἀνυπερβλήτοις πράξεσιν κεχ[ρη]μένον καὶ εὐεργεσίας ταῖς εἰς ἀπ[αν]τας ἀνθρώπους*. Cf. *IGR* iv 309–11, 314 (Augustus, Pergamum); L. Robert, *RPh* xiii³ (1939) 181–3 = *Opera Minora Selecta* ii 1334–6 (Tiberius, Myra); *IGR* iii 286 (Hadrian, Isaura).

⁴⁸ *IGR* iv 1302 = *I.Kyme* 19, lines 54–7: *ἐπὶ ἱερέος τῆς Ῥώμας καὶ Αὐτοκράτορος Καίσαρος θεῷ υἱῷ θεῷ Σεβάστω ἀρχιερεὺς μεγίστω καὶ πατρὸς τῆς πατρίδος*. Cf. *IGR* iv 594 (Synaos).

The mismatch between the list of Roman *divi* and the imperial cults in the Greek world supports this point. The thrust of the Greek system was towards the figure of the reigning emperor, and cults (i.e. priests or temples) are attested for almost all the reigning emperors in the first century AD. In particular, as we have already seen (p. 81), *theos* was frequently used of the living emperor. The creation of a *divus* made little difference in the Greek world. Greek cults were generally not initiated specifically for a *divus*;⁴⁹ indeed cults of the reigning emperor did not often outlast his reign, even if he was deified in Rome. When, as with cults of Augustus, they did endure, the Roman ceremonial made no difference. The titles of civic priesthoods of Augustus continued to refer to him in different ways, sometimes as *theos*, sometimes not.⁵⁰

Some scholars tend to treat *theos* as meaningful only when it translates *divus*. This view of the relationship between the Greek and Roman systems seems to lie behind the modern dictionaries of Greek terms for Roman institutions.⁵¹ The Greek entries in such dictionaries are deemed to have meaning only as bits of ersatz-Latin. That is, correctness of translation is the sole criterion of significance. Of course, if a Greek wanted to say *divi filius* he would say *theou huios*, but functional equivalence is not the same thing as identity of meaning.⁵² Compare, for example, the French, German and Turkish words used in the same alcoholic context as 'Cheers!': *santé*, *prost* and *şerefe* are functional equivalents, but have quite different 'meanings'—'health', 'advantage' and 'honour'. Nor can the minds or intentions of the Greek speakers serve as a criterion of meaning independent of the two languages.⁵³ Intentions may indeed be independent of languages, but they do not give meaning to words. Humpty Dumpty was wrong to say that when he used a word it meant just what he chose to make it mean. We should therefore not imagine that the Greeks were really thinking in Latin, but had the misfortune to express themselves in Greek. The predication of *theos* of the emperor, though it is in certain contexts equivalent to *divus* in Latin, has meaning in the context of general Greek usage of *theos*.

II

Theos belongs to a range of Greek religious terms which will repay analysis. In part this will fill out our understanding of *theos*. After all, no term can be understood on its own; comparison and contrast are essential.⁵⁴ In addition, analysis of the whole set of terms will show how they locate the emperor between human and divine. The argument involves a challenge to our Christianizing assumptions. We have strong views about the nature of God and how He should be addressed, but our ideas about the invisibility of God and the importance of prayers do not necessarily apply to the Greek world. The analysis will fall into two sections: first, the religious terms used to describe the emperor and his cult; secondly, the religious language addressed to the emperor.

(i) An analysis of the religious descriptions of the emperor may begin with the practice of assimilating the emperor to particular named deities.⁵⁵ This practice, which we have already noted briefly (p. 83), is a stronger variant of the general predication of *theos*. The names of

⁴⁹ L. Robert, *Hellenica* ii (1946) 37–42.

⁵⁰ E.g. *IGR* iv 454 (Pergamum; AD 16): τὸν νεωκόρον θεῶς Ῥώμης καὶ θεοῦ Σεβαστοῦ Καίσαρος; *IGR* iii 360=L. Robert, *Les gladiateurs dans l'Orient grec* (Paris 1940) no. 97 (Sagalassos; 2nd cent.): ἀρχιερέα τοῦ Σεβαστοῦ. The provincial assembly of Asia, however, attempted to follow the lead of Rome; its high priest was 'of *theos* Sebastos' only after Augustus' death (W. H. Buckler, *RPh* ix³ [1935] 177–88).

⁵¹ H. J. Mason, *Greek terms for Roman institutions* (Toronto 1974). Note the review by M. Crawford, *JRS* lxiix (1979) 249–50.

⁵² W. V. O. Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge, Mass. 1960).

⁵³ G. W. Bowersock, in *Culte des souverains* (n. 14) 199: 'It is evident that cultivated Greeks at least were fully conscious of the difference between *divus* and *deus*, even if they were obliged to render both by the same word'.

⁵⁴ See e.g. P. Ziff, *Semantic Analysis* (Ithaca 1960). An obvious area of contrast, which I do not discuss here, is between 'god' and 'hero': see Price (n. 1) esp. ch. 2. I note here that the pagan use of 'son of god' probably has no bearing on early Christian usage: see M. Hengel, *The Son of God* (London 1976) 30.

⁵⁵ P. Riewald, *De imperatorum romanorum cum certis dis et comparatione et aequatione* (Diss. phil. Halle xix. 3 1912) has much of the evidence.

emperor and god are sometimes simply collocated ('Tiberius Claudius Caesar Sebastos Germanicus Zeus Saviour and Agrippina Sebaste Demeter Karpophoros [Harvest-bringer]');⁵⁶ sometimes they are separated by *neos* ('new'): ('Emperor Caesar Trajan Hadrian new Dionysos Olympios Panhellenios').⁵⁷ The most common assimilation (to give the figures for the evidence from Asia Minor) was between the emperor and Zeus (26), though twelve of the instances are for Hadrian alone. Next in frequency were assimilations with Helios (12) and Dionysos (8). Empresses were assimilated to female deities, especially Hera (18), Aphrodite (11) and Demeter (5).

The practice of assimilating emperor and deity looks very odd to our eyes. We might be tempted to think that it implies that the emperor was an incarnation of the deity in question, but incarnation is a concept which only becomes important with the birth of Christ.⁵⁸ Our difficulties arise because we cannot see how the collocation of two names (e.g. 'Tiberius' and 'Zeus') establishes a relationship between two separate beings. 'Zeus' is of course in some ways the familiar name for an individual anthropomorphic deity, but it is important to see that it *can* also operate as a predicate referring to a certain type of divine power (a point to which we shall return, section III). If 'Zeus' can thus operate like *theos*, it becomes possible to understand the addition of Zeus to the emperor's name as the predication of divine power of him.

The range of such predications, which also seems confusing, is comprehensible in the light of the three-fold structures of Greek religion. First, at the most general level, there was the hierarchy of the Olympian pantheon which was recognized by all Greeks. The position of Zeus at the head of this pantheon explains why the emperor was so frequently assimilated to him; an additional reason in the case of Hadrian was his close contact with Zeus through his completion of the temple of Zeus in Athens. Secondly, at the level of individual cities, a particular deity might acquire through local cults and festivals greater importance than he or she held at the Panhellenic level. This explains many of the other assimilations. For example, it was natural to assimilate the emperor to Apollo and Asklepios in their sanctuaries on Cos.⁵⁹ Thirdly, there is a small category of unique assimilations which were made in response to particular local circumstances but which did not relate to a local cult. For example, Hadrian was once assimilated to Zeus Kynegesios (Zeus of Hunting) as a result of his exploits in a bear hunt in Mysia.⁶⁰ Assimilations of this sort also reflect a feature of Greek religion. It was always possible to respond to peculiar events by postulating an intervention by the appropriate deity.

If assimilations tempt us to think of the Incarnation, the use of the next term *theos epiphanēs* recalls the Epiphany—God made manifest in the world. Hellenistic kings from Ptolemy V onwards used *Epiphanēs* as part of their official titles, Antiochus IV of Syria combining it with *theos* (n. 12). The emperor too was often described as *theos epiphanēs* or, in the superlative form, as *epiphanestatos theōn*, 'most *epiphanēs* of the gods'. For example, a statue base referred to Claudius as 'Tiberius Claudius Caesar Sebastos Germanicus *theos epiphanēs*, saviour of our people too'.⁶¹ Similarly Marcus Aurelius and Commodus were honoured as 'Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus *theōn epiphanestatos*, master of land and sea, and Emperor Commodus Caesar, *theōn epiphanestatos*, master of land and sea'.⁶² Scholars have often seen *epiphanēs* as 'a peculiarly

⁵⁶ A. Maiuri, *Nuova silloge epigrafica di Rodi e Cos* (Florence 1925) no. 468.

⁵⁷ SEG xv 530 (Chios).

⁵⁸ A. D. Nock, *JHS* xlviii (1928) 30–8 = *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* (Oxford 1972) 144–52. For a poet as 'new Homer' see A. E. Raubitschek, *Hesp.* xxiii (1954) 317–19 and *I.Side* 107.

⁵⁹ *Hist. Zeits.* xxix (1921–2) 217 n. 1 (Apollo); *AA* 1903 193, *IGR* iv 1053, 1061 (Asklepios).

⁶⁰ L. Robert, *BCH* cii (1978) 437–52 = *SEG* xxvii 809.

⁶¹ *TAM* ii 760c (Arneae): *Τιβέριον Κλαύδιον Καίσαρα Σεβαστόν Γερμανικόν, θεόν ἐπιφανή,*

σωτήρα καὶ τοῦ ἡμετέρου δήμου, Ἀρνεατῶν ἡ βουλή καὶ ὁ δῆμος ἐτίμησεν ταῖς πρώτ[αις] τειμαῖς]. Also e.g. *IGR* iii 680 = *TAM* ii 420 (Patara), *IGR* iv 986 (Samos). I discuss *ἐμφανής* and *ἐπιφανής* together as I cannot detect any significant differences between them (*cf.* LSJ s.vv.).

⁶² C. H. E. Haspels, *The Highlands of Phrygia* (Princeton 1971) 333 no. 93: *αὐτοκράτορα Μᾶ(ρκον) Αὐρήλιο[ν] Ἀντωνεῖνον, θεῶν ἐνφανέστατον, γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης δεσπότην, καὶ αὐτοκράτορα Κόμοδον Καίσαρα, τῶν θεῶν ἐνφανέστατον, γῆς θαλάσσης δεσπότην.* Also e.g. *IGR* iii 704 iii. 14–16 (Cyanaeae), *SEG* xvi 758 (Derbe), *IGR* iv 341 (Pergamum).

religious term',⁶³ both in the context of the cult of the traditional gods and of the emperor, and they translate *epiphanēs* as 'manifest' and *epiphaneia* as 'manifestation'. But *epiphanēs* is not a uniquely religious term; it has a broad range of uses in purely secular contexts, where it can best be translated not as 'manifest' but as 'distinguished' or 'prominent'. For example, countless inscriptions were set up 'in the most prominent' part of a square or sanctuary; people belonged to 'the most distinguished' (*epiphanestatos*) family,⁶⁴ while *epiphaneia* could refer to the sudden 'appearance' of the enemy in battle.⁶⁵ *Epiphanēs* was thus a word with a convenient width of meaning which could refer to both divine and non-divine.⁶⁶

Our preoccupation with the problem of God's presence in the world leads us to imagine that '*epiphanēs*' was particularly useful in solving the problem of the physical presence of the emperor in contrast with the gods who were generally not visible to human eyes. One might think that *theos epiphanēs* was a response to the visible presence of the emperor in the provinces, but it could be used of an emperor who never visited the Greek world (n. 61). Alternatively, one might think that the use of the superlative was a way of handling the visible presence of the emperor in Rome; unlike the traditional gods, who were manifest only from time to time, the emperor was 'the most manifest of the gods'. But this idea is refuted by the fact that the traditional gods too were often described not only as *theos epiphanēs* but also as *epiphanestatos tōn theōn*.⁶⁷ *Theos epiphanēs* therefore seems to be applied to the emperor and the gods in the same way.

Our Christianizing perspective is in danger of blinding us to the fact that the earthly presence of the emperor posed no problem for the Greeks. After all, the physical appearance of the traditional gods was always possible. For example, a second-century AD priestess at Didyma asked the oracle there for advice because she was worried 'since, from the time that I took up the priesthood, the gods have never appeared (*epiphaneis*) so much, both in the forms of girls and women and also in the forms of men and children'.⁶⁸ These appearances which so worried the priestess were normally taken to be a sign of divine favour. An Ephesian decree of the same period claims that the worship of Artemis was extremely widespread 'because of the clear *epiphaneiai* that were made by her' (n. 28). The notion of *epiphaneia* was thus appropriate for the emperor's birthday and accession. The assembly of the province of Asia stated that 'the birthday of the god (*sc.* Augustus) marked for the world the beginning of good tidings through his coming'.⁶⁹ The emperor's accession was described in similar terms: 'When the announcement was made of the rule of Gaius Caesar Germanicus Sebastos, which had been hoped and prayed for by all people, there was no limit to the world's joy; every people has been eager for the sight of the god, since the happiest era for mankind has now begun.'⁷⁰ The predication of *theos epiphanēs* implied that the emperor was present in the world like one of the traditional gods.

The mortality of the ruler, like his physical presence, might seem to be another problem which needed solution. Ever since Homer the gods had been *athanatoi* ('deathless'). The gods did not die; the emperor did. In fact there was no real difficulty, as *athanatos* could be applied to the emperor in various ways. Immortality was predicated of the individual emperor. A Greek civic

⁶³ Mellor (n. 13) 114; similarly Weinstock (n. 38) 296–7 and M. Le Glay, *BCH* c (1976) 353, 365. See generally F. Pfister, *RE* suppl. iv (1924) 277–323 and E. Pax, *RAC* v (1962) 832–909.

⁶⁴ *Syll.*³ 796 B 10; *IGR* iii 628 = *TAM* ii 288.

⁶⁵ *LSJ* s.v. *ἐπιφάνεια*.

⁶⁶ Nock (n. 58) 38–41 = *Essays* 152–6.

⁶⁷ F. Steinleitner, *Die Beicht im Zusammenhange mit der sakralen Rechtspflege in der Antike* (Leipzig 1913) 15–21; *Altertümer von Pergamon* viii. 3 no. 101.

⁶⁸ *I. Didyma* 496 with L. Robert, *Hellenica* xi–xii (1960) 543–6: *ἐπεὶ, ἐξότε τὴν ἱερατείαν ἀνείληφεν, οὐδέποτε οὕτως οἱ θεοὶ ἐνφανεῖς δι' ἐπιστάσεων γεγένηται, τοῦτο μὲν διὰ παρθένων καὶ γυναικῶν, τοῦτο δὲ καὶ δι' ἀρρένων καὶ νηπίων, τί τὸ τοιοῦτο*

καὶ εἰ ἐπὶ αἰσίω; Cf. *POxy* 1381 (2nd cent. AD).

⁶⁹ Sherk (n. 23) 65, lines 40–1: *ἤρξεν δὲ τῶν κόσμων τῶν δι' αὐτὸν εὐαγγελίῳ ἢ γενέθλιος ἡμέρα τοῦ θεοῦ. 'Epiphaneia' was not often used explicitly. For imperial visits *epidemia*, which lacks religious overtones, was more frequent. Cf. also *parousia* (L. Robert, *Hellenica* xiii (1965) 129–31).*

⁷⁰ *IGR* iv 251 = *I. Assos* 26: *ἐπεὶ ἡ κατ' εὐχὴν πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἐλπισθεῖσα Γαίου Καίσαρος Γερμανικοῦ Σεβαστοῦ ἡγεμονία κατήγγελλται, οὐδὲν δὲ μέτρον χαρᾶς εὐρηκε ὁ κόσμος, πᾶσα δὲ πόλις καὶ πᾶν ἔθνος ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ ὄψιν ἔσπευκεν, ὡς ἂν τοῦ ἡδίστου ἀνθρώπου αἰῶνος νῦν ἐνεστώτος, ... Cf. *IGR* iv 1102, a dating formula.*

decree describes an emperor making a benefaction 'so that the greatness of his immortality should be in this matter too the more splendid',⁷¹ and the emperor's rule was also said to be immortal.⁷² The emphasis on imperial rule offered an easy transition to the immortality of the emperors collectively. A priesthood on Cyprus was devoted to 'The Immortality of the Sebastoi';⁷³ and Livia was praised in a decree because 'she created the race of the Sebastoi in accordance with the most sacred succession of the *epiphaneis theoi*, a house incorruptible and immortal for all time'.⁷⁴ The assimilation to particular deities, the addition of *epiphanēs* to *theos* and the use of *athanatos* all tended to strengthen the primary predication of *theos* of the emperor.

The terms used to describe the cult express more hesitation about the position of the emperor. The cult could be described as *isotheoi timai*, a phrase which is not easy to translate.⁷⁵ '*Timai*' ('honours') was used not only in secular contexts, but also of divine cult, for which there was no specific Greek word; 'the *timai* of the gods' is thus, for what it is worth, the nearest Greek equivalent to 'religion'.⁷⁶ An *isotheos* was one 'equal (*isos*) to the gods' and *isotheoi timai* can thus be paraphrased as 'honours equivalent to those paid to the gods'. As has often been observed, the phrase both compares and distinguishes ruler cult from the cult of the gods.⁷⁷ *Isotheoi timai* were modelled on the cult of the traditional gods but were distinguished from them. The emperor could be called *theos*; his honours were equivalent to those given to the traditional gods, but they were not the same.

Eusebeia ('piety'), which is what the imperial cult was designed to express, again classifies the emperor with the gods, but here too nuances emerge. Some scholars have attempted to deny the existence of the concept in the imperial cult; 'the provincial priesthoods were viewed as civic duties suitable for the wealthy and ambitious but in no sense a display of piety'.⁷⁸ Ambition and rivalry on the part of individuals and communities were of course important, but they do not undermine the significance of *eusebeia* as the virtue which was displayed in the cults. Imperial priests and others were regularly praised for having displayed piety towards the Sebastoi;⁷⁹ one local benefactor who performed imperial sacrifices and built imperial temples in his native city and in the provincial capital made 'not only the city but also the rest of the province witness to his piety towards the god' (*sc.* Augustus).⁸⁰ The display of *eusebeia* was even enshrined in the oath of loyalty taken by the island of Cyprus at the accession of Tiberius: 'We and our descendants will heed and obey by land and sea and will regard with loyalty (*eunoēsein*) and revere (*sebasesthai*, the verbal form of *eusebeia*) Tiberius Caesar Sebastos, son of Sebastos, with all his house'.⁸¹

⁷¹ IGR iv 145 = *Syll.*³ 798 (Cyzicus): ἐπειὶ ὁ νέος Ἥλιος Γάιος Καίσαρ Σεβαστὸς Γερμανικὸς συναλαμψαί ταῖς ἰδίαις ἀγαῖς καὶ τὰς δορυφόρους τῆς ἡγεμονίας ἠθέλησεν βασιλέας, ἵνα αὐτοῦ τὸ μεγαλεῖον τῆς ἀθανασίας καὶ ἐν τούτῳ σεμνότερον ᾗ . . . Cf. the reference by a Roman governor to the immortality of Livia (*I.Ephesos* i a 17.65).

⁷² IGR iv 144 = SEG iv 707 (Cyzicus). See generally H. U. Instinsky, 'Kaiser und Ewigkeit', *Hermes* lxxvii (1942) 313–55.

⁷³ SEG xvii 750.

⁷⁴ SEG xxviii 1227 (Tlos): συνεσταμένη δὲ καὶ Σεβαστῶν γένος κατὰ διαδοχὴν ἱερωτάτην θεῶν ἐπιφανῶν οἶκον ἀφθαρτον καὶ ἀθάνατον εἰς τὸν αἰὶ χρόνον.

⁷⁵ Nilsson (n. 3) ii 140–1; Habicht (n. 3) 196. Also *I.Side* 101 = *Ann. Ep.* 1966 462 (Pompey) and *IG* v.1 435 (procurator of Augustus).

⁷⁶ J. Rudhardt, *Notions fondamentales de la pensée religieuse* . . . (Geneva 1958) 57; Habicht (n. 3) 211–12.

⁷⁷ So too Is-Olympic games were modelled on (*isos*) the traditional games at Olympia, down to the details of organisation, but they were not held at Olympia.

⁷⁸ G. W. Bowersock, in *Culte des souverains* (n. 14) 182–4.

⁷⁹ E.g. IGR iii 473 (Balbura); IGR iv 98 (Mytilene); IGR iii 493 (Oenoanda); IGR iv 1155 (Sandaina); *Ann. Ep.* 1972 626 (Side); IGR iii 1507 (Termessus minor).

⁸⁰ *IG* xii suppl. 124. 25–6 (Eresus): οὐ μόνον τ[ὴν πόλιν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰν] [λο]ίπαν ἐπαρχίαν μάρτυρα ποιήμενος τὰς εἰς τὸν θεόν εὐσε[βεῖα]ς. Cf. also IGR iv 1608c = *I.Ephesos* vii.2 3801 ii; *I.Ephesos* ii 236.

⁸¹ *JRS* 1 (1960) 75–9 = SEG xviii 578 = P. Herrmann, *Der römische Kaisereid* (Göttingen 1968) 124 no. 5: αὐτο[ῖ] τε καὶ οἱ ἔκγονοι ἡμῶν ὑπακούσεσθαι πειθαρχήσειν κατὰ τε γῆν καὶ κατὰ θάλατ[ταν] εὐνοήσειν σεβάσκεισθαι vacat Τιβέριον Καίσαρα Σεβαστοῦ υἱὸν Σεβαστῶν σὺν τῷ ἅπαντι αὐτοῦ οἴκῳ. Cf. S. Weinstock, 'Treueid und Kaiserkult', *Ath. Mitt.* lxxvii (1962) 306–27. Note also the importance of *asebeia* ('impiety') to the emperor: *Thasos* ii 185 = SEG xviii 350; Reynolds (n. 44) no. 62; *Hist. Zeits.* xxix (1921–2) 222 n. 2 (Cos). The oaths of Paphlagonia (n. 88) and Assos (n. 70) call only for the subjects to *eunoēsein* the emperor.

The use of *eusebeia* represents a significant choice of terms. *Eunoia* ('loyalty') was what local citizens displayed towards their own communities. It was also sometimes called for in oaths of allegiance to the emperor, but *eusebeia* was a stronger term, not used of allegiance to local communities. The importance of the distinction between these terms is well illustrated by the honours awarded to a man on Samos 'for his *eusebeia* towards the Foundress Hera, Caesar Germanicus Sebastos son of Germanicus (i.e. Gaius) and his house' and also for 'the *eunoia* and munificent disposition' which he showed to the city and its association of elders (*gerousia*).⁸² *Eusebeia* was a concept which helped to define the religious domain of the Greeks, remaining important down to the end of antiquity.⁸³ The display of piety to the gods through the regular performance of cult secured a stable order; it was even responsible for specific divine interventions.⁸⁴ The display of *eusebeia* to the emperor emphasized that the subjects were dependent on the emperor as on the gods.

Eusebeia was, however, compatible with honours not strictly divine.⁸⁵ The city of Cyzicus passed a decree 'concerning *eusebeia* towards Sebastos (the emperor Gaius) and honours towards the kings' and we might expect that the decree offered the emperor divine honours in contrast to those given to his client kings. In fact this was not the case. The ritual prescribed by the decree for the visit of the client kings (and their mother) to the city was prayers by the priests and priestesses at the temples of the gods 'on behalf of the eternal duration of the emperor and the safety of the kings'.⁸⁶ The formula raises the emperor above his client kings, but the prayers were to the gods on his behalf. The city's *eusebeia* did not raise the emperor to a par with the gods. The complex comparison and differentiation of emperor and gods which is implicit in the term *isotheoi timai* is also present in the term which sums up the aim of the imperial cult.

(ii) The second type of language which I wish to consider is that addressed to the emperor in the cults. I leave to one side the ways in which subjects addressed the emperor in person.⁸⁷ They are poorly documented in the early empire, though it is clear that the terms which we have just been discussing were unacceptable in Rome. There the emperor was treated as citizen, not as god. In the provinces, however, the forms of address employed in the rituals, like the individual terms discussed above, establish a complex relationship between the emperor and the gods. These forms of address fall into three main categories: oaths, praise and prayers.

(a) Oaths promising loyalty and obedience to the emperor were sworn in the names of the gods and of the emperor. For example, the Cypriot oath to Tiberius (n. 81) was 'in the name of our Akraia Aphrodite', other local gods of the island 'and the descendant of Aphrodite Sebastos *theos* Caesar and the eternal Roma'. Here Augustus is invoked posthumously, but another oath, taken when Paphlagonia was incorporated into the Roman empire (3 BC), called upon the living emperor: 'Zeus, Earth, Sun, all the gods and goddesses and Sebastos himself'.⁸⁸ Augustus is placed at the end of the witnesses to the oath and distinguished from the sequence of gods and

⁸² IGR iv 981: εὐσεβείας μὲν [ἔν]εκεν τῆς [εἰ]ς [τ]ῆν [ἀρ]χηγέτιν Ἡραν καὶ Καίσαρα Γερμανικοῦ υἱὸν Γερμανικὸν Σεβαστὸν καὶ τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ, εὐνοίας δὲ καὶ φιλοδόξου διαθέσεως εἰς τὴν πατρίδα καὶ τὴν γερουσίαν. Cf. *Milet* i.3 134.

⁸³ Rudhardt (n. 76) 11–17; D. Kaufmann-Bühler, *RAC* vi (1966) 985–1052; Burkert (n. 2) 408–12. A new term *thrēskeia*, also meaning 'piety', but with a more specifically religious connotation, appeared in the Roman period (L. Robert, *Études épigraphiques et philologiques* [Paris 1938] 226–35; *Hellenica* ii [1946] 132–3) and is attested twice of the emperor: Sherk (n. 23) no. 65 lines 25 and B 5; *REG* xix (1906) 100 no. 14.

⁸⁴ See the texts on the aid of Hekate and Zeus to Stratonicea: *I.Stratonikeia* i 10, 14, 20; ii.1 512, 1101 (with L. Robert, *Études Anatoliennes* [Paris 1937] 29, 516–23).

⁸⁵ *Eusebeia* was also shown to family and friends: Dio *Or.* xxxi 12–15; *Ath. Mitt.* lxxv (1960) 162, no. 60; *Syll.*³ 1107; *IG* ii² 1275.

⁸⁶ IGR iv 145 = *Syll.*³ 798: εὐξασθαι μὲν ὑπὲρ τῆς Γαίτου Καίσαρος αἰωνίου διαμονῆς καὶ τούτων σωτηρίας.

⁸⁷ Note that 'Menander Rhetor' ends his recommendations for a speech to the emperor by stressing the importance of prayers to the gods for the emperor (ed. D. A. Russell, N. G. Wilson [Oxford 1981] 92).

⁸⁸ IGR iii 137 = *OGIS* 532 = *ILS* 8781 = *Studia Pontica* iii 66: δμνύω, Δία, Γῆν, Ἥλιον, θεοὺς πάντα[ς καὶ πά]σας καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν Σεβαστ[τ]ὸν εὐνοή[σειν Καί]σαρι Σεβασταίῳ καὶ τοῖς τ[έ]κ[ν]οις ἐγγό[νοις τε] αὐτοῦ πάν[τ]α [τ]ὸν τοῦ [βί]ου χρόνον κ[αὶ] λό[γω]ι [κ]αὶ ἔργωι καὶ γνώμη[ι] . . .

goddesses; after all, the oath expressed loyalty to Augustus as reigning emperor. Another way of handling the logical difficulty of invoking the emperor in oaths of loyalty was to swear by the Fortune (*tyche*) of the emperor. This was one of the demands made of the Christians. For example, when Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, was brought before the governor, he was ordered to swear by the Fortune of the emperor, to repent and say 'Away with the Atheists'.⁸⁹ Polycarp was not prepared to compromise his Christian principles, but could in good conscience say 'Away with the Atheists'. For him the Fortune of the emperor was unacceptably pagan, but the term did not imply the divinity of the emperor.

(b) The offering of praise to the emperor at imperial festivals, like oath-taking, did not necessarily imply the divinity of the emperor, but it was clearly modelled on the praise given to the gods. Two different parts of the festivals are involved. First, at the celebrations of the actual rituals there were high-ranking officials whose specific task was to praise the emperor. A choir established by the province of Asia sang hymns in honour of Augustus⁹⁰ and other officials praised the emperor in verse.⁹¹ In prose *theologoi* honoured the emperor at the imperial temples of Pergamum and Smyrna.⁹² They were sufficiently important for their name to serve as the model for a new official, the *sebastologos*, who served in the provincial cult of Gaius at Miletus.⁹³ The offering of ritual praise to the emperor has sporadic precursors in the praise accorded to Hellenistic rulers,⁹⁴ but behind this lies the cult of the gods. The titles of the imperial officials can all be paralleled in divine cults and the singing of hymns was important in many traditional cults.⁹⁵ Praising both kings and emperors was calqued on the cult of the gods.

Secondly, festivals included competitions, not only in athletics and music, but also in imperial *encomia*. We hear of one Coan who 'in all the most distinguished cities of Asia won competitions in *encomia* to the founder of the city Sebastos Caesar and the benefactors Tiberius Caesar and Germanicus Caesar and all their house and to all the other gods in each city'.⁹⁶ Contests in praising the emperor in prose and verse were widespread in the Greek world, both at festivals in honour of the emperor and as part of the festivals of traditional gods.⁹⁷ Unfortunately the *encomia* themselves do not survive, but these competitions do merit our attention. Again they are set in a religious context. Not only were some of the competitions held at festivals of the gods, but there were also, from the first century BC onwards, similar competitions in honour of the gods themselves, a development which may be due to the increased importance attributed to hymns in the cult proper.⁹⁸ The religious context is also emphasized by the wording of the text in honour of the Coan, who recited *encomia* not just in honour of Augustus and his family, but also for 'all the other gods in each city'. Both ritual and competitive praise of the emperor located him in the company of the gods.

(c) Prayers, like praise, have divine resonances, but it is much harder to establish either the

⁸⁹ R. Knopf, G. Krüger, G. Ruhbach, *Ausgewählte Märtyrerakten*⁴ (Tübingen 1965) 3–4.

⁹⁰ *I.Ephesos* i a 17.56–61; *IGR* iv 353: ὑμνωδοὶ θεοῦ Σεβαστοῦ καὶ θεᾶς Ῥώμης.

⁹¹ *Thesmodoi: Forschungen in Ephesos* ii 27 = *I.Ephesos* i a 27. 457–8, 533; 'composer and reciter of poems for the god Hadrian' (μελοποιου καὶ ῥαψωδοῦ θεοῦ Ἀδριανοῦ): *BCH* ix (1885) 124–8 = *I.Ephesos* i a 22. 3–4, 63–4.

⁹² L. Ziehen, *RE* v A (1934) 2031–3; L. Robert, *RPh* xvii³ (1943) 184–6.

⁹³ *I.Didyma* 148 with L. Robert, *Hellenica* vii (1949) 210.

⁹⁴ *I.Erythrae* 205 (paean to Antiochus); *IG* vii 417.68 (for the Romans at Oropus).

⁹⁵ Nilsson (n. 3) ii 377–81.

⁹⁶ Robert, *Etudes* (n. 83) 23, who notes that the text needs republishing: [νικ]άσαντα ἐ[γκ]ωμίους [ἐν] ταῖς ἐπισημοτάταις τᾶς Ἀσίας πόλεσι ἐς τε τὸν κτίσταν

τᾶς πόλιος Σεβαστὸν Καίσαρα καὶ τὸς εὐεργέτας Τεβέριον Καίσαρα καὶ Γερμανικὸν Καίσαρα καὶ τὸν ὄλον οἶκον αὐτῶν καὶ [ἐς τὸς ἄλλ]οις τὸς ἐν ἐ[κ]άσταις ταῖς πόλεσι θεός· — καὶ Παναθήναια — Ἰσθμια.

⁹⁷ J. Frei, *De certaminibus thymelicis* (Diss. Bâle 1900) 34–41; Robert, *Etudes* (n. 83) 21–30. Add *Ann.Ep.* 1974 602 and *SEG* xxix 452 (Thespieae); *Corinth* viii. 1 14.87 and 19.1–3, 5–7; viii.3 153 with L. Robert, *REG* lxxix (1966) 743; *Hesp.* xxxix (1970) 79–83 = *Ann.Ep.* 1969–70 587 with J. and L. Robert, *REG* lxxxiv (1971) 434 no. 307 (Caesarea, Corinth); *Hesp.* suppl. xii (1967) 189 line 22 (Athens, fragmentary). Note also the epideictic speeches delivered by Aelius Aristides at meetings of the provincial assembly (*Orr.* xxiii, xxvii, xxviii, xxxiv K).

⁹⁸ E.g. Apollo at Didyma: L. Robert, *Hellenica* xi–xii (1960) 446–9. Robert suggests that the praise earlier given to the Romans acted as a spur.

facts or the correct perspective on them. It is generally accepted that no one prayed to the emperor for his aid in sickness or shipwreck.⁹⁹ I want to argue that personal prayers were indeed made to the emperor, both living and dead, and that prayers had a prominent place in the ideology of the imperial cult. But first it is necessary to question the Christianizing presuppositions with which scholars usually approach the subject. Two opposing conclusions have been drawn from the alleged absence of prayers to the emperor: first, that the imperial cult was essentially political and not religious; secondly, that the imperial cult was of a higher spiritual type than the contemporary religions because the emperor was not bound by the mechanical and demeaning contract of the *do ut des*.¹⁰⁰ Both conclusions depend on the assumption that personal prayers are a fundamental aspect of true religion.¹⁰¹

This assumption is peculiar to Christianity. Within the Christian tradition prayers are of fundamental importance. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (xi 672) describes them as 'a necessary means of salvation'. Heiler's classic comparative study of prayer is firmly rooted in this tradition. Setting out to 'write a history of religion by writing a history of prayer' he started by claiming that 'religious people, students of religion, theologians of all creeds and tendencies, agree in thinking that prayer is the central phenomenon of religion, the very hearthstone of piety. Faith is, in Luther's judgement, "prayer and nothing but prayer".'¹⁰² The ranking of different types of prayer, which lies behind the positive evaluation of the alleged absence of prayer to the emperor, is also a concern of Christianity. In the words again of the *New Catholic Encyclopaedia* (xi 667), 'the commonest type (of personal prayer) is the petitionary prayer, which, in accordance with primitive man's childlike selfishness, is concerned almost exclusively with his own material well-being'. But personal prayers are not a universal characteristic of religions. For example, the religious system of the Dinka, who live in the southern Sudan, is based chiefly on collective prayer. 'It is rare to see a Dinka pray individually. On occasions of difficulty or danger he may address a short petition for help to Divinity or divinities, but much the greater and more important part of religious practice is collective and formal.'¹⁰³ There is no more reason to apply the criterion of private prayer to Greek than to Dinka religion.

Prayers in the imperial cult must be analysed from the point of view both of practice and of theory. The aspects of practice which are particularly controversial are prayers by private individuals and the votive offerings made as the result of successful prayers.¹⁰⁴ The emperor received a scattering of these votive offerings, of which the clearest example reads:

To Emperor Caesar Trajan Hadrian Sebastos and the people the votive (*euchēn*) was set up by Salmon son of Theon, priest of Zeus and sacrificer for the Sebastoi, along with his wife, at a cost of 200 denarii.¹⁰⁵

Similarly an imperial procurator dedicated a votive to the emperor Commodus.¹⁰⁶ Both these

⁹⁹ A. D. Nock, *Gnomon* viii (1932) 517–18; *CAH* x (1934) 481. He later collected a number of exceptions to his rule: 'Deification and Julian', *JRS* xlvii (1957) 115–23 = *Essays* (n. 58) 833–46.

¹⁰⁰ W. den Boer, 'Heerserscultus en ex-voto's in het Romeinse Keizerrijk', *Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen*, Afd. Letterkunde xxxvi.4 (1973); he repeated the case in *Entr. Hardt* xxvi (1980) 36–41.

¹⁰¹ There has been a similarly misconceived discussion about miracles. Many have felt that their extreme rarity is crucial (Nock, 'Deification and Julian' [n. 99]), though S. Morenz (*Würzburger Jb. f. d. Altertumswissenschaft* iv [1949–50] 370–8) attempted to use one miracle to show that the imperial cult was not an empty shell. But it is arbitrary and ethnocentric to use the 'royal touch' as the criterion of significance; the practice is found almost exclusively in France and England and for peculiar historical reasons.

¹⁰² F. Heiler, *Prayer* (trans. 1932) xiii. H. S. Versnel, 'Religious mentality in ancient prayer', in *Faith, hope and worship*, ed. Versnel (Leiden 1981) 1–64 accepts that 'it is possible to describe a phenomenology of prayer in general' (p. 3).

¹⁰³ G. Lienhardt, *Divinity and experience* (Oxford 1961) 219.

¹⁰⁴ Votives were made only by individuals; B. Kötting, *RAC* ix (1976) 1069–70 gives the exceptions.

¹⁰⁵ *SEG* ii 718 (?Pednelissus): *Ἀυτοκράτορι Καίσαρι Τραιανῶι Ἀδριανῶι Σεβαστῶι καὶ τῶ δήμῳ τὴν εὐχὴν Σάλμων Θ[έ]λονος? ἱερεὺς Διὸς καὶ προθύτης τῶν Σεβ[ε]στών γεγόμενος [ἀνέθη]κεν σὺν γυναικί (δηνάρια) ὄ.*

¹⁰⁶ *MAMA* i 23 (Laodicea Combusta). See also *IGR* iv 363 (Pergamum, *τύχη ἐπήκοος* of emperor); *MAMA* vi 370 (Synnada) is perhaps a votive jointly to Zeus and the emperor; *Denk. Öst. Ak. Wiss.* lxxv.1 (1952) 40 no. 78 (Claudiopolis, Antinous); *IGR* iv 93

votives were made to the living emperor, but literary texts also refer to the practice of private prayers to the dead emperor. Suetonius talks of the ritual at the column dedicated to Caesar in the forum at Rome: 'at this for a long time they used to sacrifice, undertake vows and settle disputes by swearing by Caesar'.¹⁰⁷ So too in fifth-century Constantinople, it is said, people propitiated with sacrifices and lamps the image of Constantine set on a column, honoured it with incense and uttered prayers as to a god.¹⁰⁸ Votives must not be privileged in our evaluation of the imperial cult; after all, votives were not made to all deities equally. Asklepios, the healing god, received far more than Zeus, but he did not challenge Zeus' position at the head of the pantheon.¹⁰⁹ But on this, admittedly partial, scale the imperial cult does not appear absurd.

Prayers also formed an important part of the public expectations of ruler cult. The poets assumed that the emperor both living and dead could be called on in prayer.¹¹⁰ Horace, looking forward to the return of Augustus from Spain, describes the peacefulness of Italy: the countryman

returns joyfully (from his vineyard) to his cups and invites your presence (Augustus) as a god at the second course; he plies you with many a prayer, with pure wine poured from the cups, and mixes your divinity with the household gods, like Greece in her memory of Castor and mighty Hercules.¹¹¹

Ovid also elaborates the theory of prayer to the emperor. Writing from miserable exile on the Black Sea after the death of Augustus he carefully proclaims his virtues, stressing that his piety was known to the locals.

The foreign country sees that there is a shrine of Caesar in our house. There stand beside him his pious son and priestly wife (Tiberius and Livia), deities as important as him who has now been made a god. To make the household group complete, both of the grandsons stand there, one next to the side of his grandmother, one next to his father. When the day rises from the East I always offer to them prayers and incense.¹¹²

At the end of the poem is a prayer to Augustus, who was among the stars; the hope was that the deceased Augustus might mitigate the punishment which the living Augustus had given. This public expectation of prayers even involved a denial of the legitimacy of prayers to other people. The Sage Apollonius of Tyana was allegedly brought to trial before the emperor Domitian because people had called him a god and prayed to him.¹¹³

(Mytilene) may be a prayer to Zeus and Augustus, but the text is uncertain (*IG* xii suppl. p. 23); *IG* iv 584 (Argos), votive ? to Titus; *PSI* 1261, a private letter from Egypt (212–17), talks of the 'fortune' (*τύχη*) of the emperor saving someone, presumably following a prayer.

¹⁰⁷ *Div. Jul.* 85: 'apud eam (*sc.* columnam) longo tempore sacrificare, vota suscipere, controversias quasdam interposito per Caesarem iure iurando distrahere perseveravit (*sc.* plebs).'

¹⁰⁸ Philostorgius, *Kirchengeschichte* (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller xxi³ [1981] 28 no. 17). Cf. S. Weinstock, *RE* xxiii (1957) 824–5 on *propitius*.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. the disparity between the numbers of votives for Apollo and Dionysos (Z. Taşhköğlü, *Anadolu'da Apollon kült'ü ile ilgili Kaynaklar* [Istanbul 1963]; W. Quandt, *De Baccho ab Alexandri aetate in Asia Minore culto* [Diss. phil. Halle xxi.2 1913]) or in the usage of *epēkoos* (O. Weinreich, 'ΘΕΟΙ ΕΠΗΚΟΟΙ', *Ath. Mitt.* xxxvii [1912] 1–68 = *Ausgewählte Schriften* i [Amsterdam 1969] 131–95).

¹¹⁰ *V. G.* i 40–2, *Aen.* i 286–90. Cf. earlier Plut. *Dion* 29; hymn and prayer to Demetrios Poliorketes (*Ath.* 253e); and the Jewish response to Antiochos Epiphanes (*Jud.* iii 8; *Dan.* vi 6–14). Such prayers had a long

history: A. *Supp.* 980–2, Eupolis, *Demoi* (*fr.* 117 K), Xenophon of Ephesus i 12. Similarly Prudentius, looking back from a Christian perspective at the beginning of the fifth century, assumed that prayers formed a part of the ruler cult: *c. Symm.* i 245–8, 271–7.

¹¹¹ *Odes* iv 5:

hinc ad vina redit laetus et alteris
te mensis adhibet deum;
te multa prece, te prosequitur mero
defuso pateris et Laribus tuum
miscet numen, uti Graecia Castoris
et magni memor Herculis.

¹¹² *Epist. ex Pont.* iv 9:

nec pietas ignota mea est: videt hospita terra
in nostra sacrum Caesaris esse domo.
stant pariter natusque pius coniunxque sacerdos,
numina iam facto non leviora deo.
neu desit pars ulla domus, stat uterque nepotum,
hic aviae lateri proximus, ille patris.
his ego do totiens cum ture precantia verba,
Eoo quotiens surgit ab orbe dies.

See also the earlier *Trist.* iii 8. 13–14 and v 2. 43–78. *Livey* i 16 talks of prayers to the apotheosized Romulus.

¹¹³ Philostr. *VA* viii 5 (p. 299 Kayser), 7 (p. 310).

Panegyrics also played upon the importance of prayers to the emperor. A second-century panegyric of Rome talks in elevated terms about how everyone, at the mere mention of the emperor's name, stands up and 'praises and worships him and utters a two-fold prayer, one on the ruler's behalf to the gods and one to the ruler himself about his own matters'.¹¹⁴ Two fourth-century speeches elaborate the idea of prayer to the ruler himself. A speech idealizing the late emperor Julian, written perhaps two years after his death in 363, includes a striking account of prayers to him:

I have mentioned representations (of Julian); many cities have set him beside the images of the gods and honoured him as they do the gods. Already people have requested some benefits of him in prayer, and it was not in vain. To such an extent has he literally ascended to the gods and received a share of their power from them themselves. They were right, then, those people who nearly stoned to death the first messenger to bring news of his end for telling lies about a god.¹¹⁵

A generation later (in 389) another panegyric generalizes the importance of these prayers:

(The emperor) should be such as is adored by the peoples, to whom private and public vows are made by the whole world, from whom the future sailor seeks a calm sea, the future traveller a safe return, the future fighter good omens.¹¹⁶

The ideal ruler was the recipient of world-wide prayers.

III

Theos was predicated quite commonly of the Roman emperor (as earlier of Hellenistic kings). It was added to the name of the emperor and on its own it could refer to a specific emperor. Both uses were in keeping with the contemporary usage in connection with the traditional gods. The predication of *theos* was matched by other linguistic practices: the emperor was assimilated to particular named deities; he was described as *epiphanēs* or *epiphanestatos tōn theōn*; the cults themselves were designed to express *eusebeia* towards the emperor. The whole linguistic system of which *theos* forms a part has to be interpreted primarily as the application of traditional Greek categories; *theos* has a different meaning from the Latin *divus*.

The predication of *theos* does, however, remain puzzling to our eyes. We might wonder whether *theos* could be used of the emperor because it was a weak term in contrast with Christian

¹¹⁴ Aristides, *Or.* xxvi (K) 32 (with comments of J. H. Oliver, *The Ruling Power*, Trans. Amer. Philos. Soc. xliii. 4 [Philadelphia 1953] 918): οὐδείς δὲ ἐφ' ἑαυτῷ τηλικούτον φρονεῖ, ὅστις τοῦνομα ἀκούσας μόνον οἶός τ' ἐστὶν ἀτρεμεῖν, ἀλλ' ἀναστὰς ὑμνεῖ καὶ σέβει καὶ συνεύχεται διπλὴν εὐχὴν, τὴν μὲν ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ τοῖς θεοῖς, τὴν δὲ αὐτῷ ἐκείνῳ περὶ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ. I assume the double prayer to be more significant than the change of preposition in the two limbs. The speech dates to AD 143; R. Klein, *Die Romrede des Aelius Aristides* (Darmstadt 1981) 77.

¹¹⁵ Libanius, *Or.* xviii 304: ἐπεὶ δὲ εἰκότων ἐμνήσθην, πολλαὶ πόλεις ἐκείνον τοῖς τῶν θεῶν παραστήσαντες ἔδεσιν ὡς τοὺς θεοὺς τιμῶσι, καὶ τις ἤδη καὶ παρ' ἐκείνου δι' εὐχῆς ἤτησέ τι τῶν ἀγαθῶν καὶ οὐκ ἠτύχησεν. οὕτως ἀτεχνῶς παρ' ἐκείνου τε ἀναβέβηκε καὶ τῆς τῶν κρειττόνων δυνάμεως παρ' αὐτῶν ἐκείνων μετείληφε. βέλτιστοι δὲ ἄρα ἦσαν οἱ

καὶ τὸν πρῶτον ἄγγελον τῆς τελευτῆς μικροῦ καταλεύσαντες ὡς θεοῦ καταψευδόμενον. Nock, 'Deification and Julian' (n. 99) argued for Christian influence on this passage, but my other parallels show that this is not a necessary assumption.

¹¹⁶ *Panegy. Lat.* xii 6.4 (Budé): 'talem esse debere qui gentibus adoratur, cui toto orbe terrarum privata vel publica vota redduntur, a quo petit navigaturus serenium, peregrinaturus reditum, pugnaturus auspiciū.' Some scholars believe that language of this sort is merely metaphorical, a rhetorical commonplace found in Pliny, *Pan.* iv 4. I do not believe that the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical is clear or useful; still less do I accept that only the 'literal' is significant. A more helpful position, which I cannot argue here, is presented by D. Sperber, *Rethinking Symbolism* (Cambridge 1975).

uses of 'God'—while the Greeks played around with predicates, Christians have in 'God' the logically proper name of the Supreme Being. In fact this Christianizing denigration of Greek religion is based on an inadequate examination of Christianity itself. Theologians and philosophers from Aquinas onwards have recognized that 'God' is a descriptive, predicable term.¹¹⁷ It is otherwise impossible to understand how Christians and pagans can talk to one another. The pagan who says that his idol is God and the Christian who contradicts him must be using 'God' in the same sense; if 'God' were a proper name, it would be logically impossible, rather than merely wicked, to predicate it of lumps of stone. This point about Christian usage helps to explain how Greek theologians of the early Church were able to predicate *theos* of humans who were brought near to God, both in this life and in the next.¹¹⁸ Thus both pagan Greeks and Christians use *theos*/God as a predicative term.

The predication of *theos* placed the emperor within the traditional religious system. He was located in an ambivalent position, higher than mortals but not fully the equal of the gods. The cult he received was described as *isotheoi timai*, and the *eusebeia* which the cult displayed was compatible with honours not fully divine. We might be tempted to conclude from this that the emperor was analogous to a Christian saint; saints receive elaborate cults without usurping the honours due to God. In fact the analogy does not hold. According to the official Roman Catholic position saints act as intermediaries for us with God. They do not themselves receive our prayers, but are invoked as intercessors with God on our behalf.¹¹⁹ But the emperor did not hold this position of intercessor with the gods. He was both in need of divine support and also god-like. Thus, in one of the panegyrics I cited above, there was a two-fold prayer, to the gods on behalf of the emperor and to the emperor himself. This clearly expresses the ambivalence of the imperial cult.

Was the application of *theos* to the emperor a consequence of the anthropomorphism of the Greek gods? If the gods are conceived in human form, it is surely not difficult to conceive of the emperor as a god. Yet this modern emphasis on anthropomorphism is misguided. The Greek gods were not actually people; they were at most *like* people and picturing them in this way was merely one (dominant) strategy for making them comprehensible. Homer's gods, who are often seen as absolutely anthropomorphic,¹²⁰ also have more fearsome elements in their makeup.¹²¹ Similarly the human forms of divine statues, partly a product of the epic tradition, obviously did not encapsulate the whole truth about the Greek gods.¹²² 'The Greek gods are powers, not persons. Religious thought is a response to the problems of organizing and classifying these powers.'¹²³ I have argued that in order to understand the Greek language of the imperial cult we

¹¹⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia 13. 9–10; P. Geach, *God and the soul* (London 1969) 57–8, 108; also M. Durrant, *The logical status of 'God'* (London 1973) ch. 1. Note the debate in the early church inspired by the challenge of Arius: R. D. Williams, 'The logic of Arianism', *JThS* xxxiv (1983) 56–81, esp. 81 (though note the very different emphasis in R. C. Gregg, D. E. Groh, *Early Arianism—a view of salvation* [London 1981]).

¹¹⁸ G. W. Butterworth, 'The deification of man in Clement of Alexandria', *JThS* xvii (1915–16) 157–69; J. Gross, *La divinisation du chrétien d'après les pères grecs* (Paris 1938). Note also the Indians' predication of *deva* ('god') of their kings: J. Gonda, *Ancient Indian kingship from the religious point of view* (Leiden 1966) 24–33.

¹¹⁹ C. O'Neill, *New Catholic Encyclopedia* xii (1967) 962–3. Anglicans, for whom the practice of invocation was proscribed by one of the 39 Articles, tend to be unhappy and ignorant about the invocation of saints. Note the interesting Anglican controversy reflected in

D. Stone, *The Invocation of Saints*² (London/N.Y./Bombay 1909).

¹²⁰ P. Chantraine, *La notion du divin depuis Homère jusqu'à Platon*, Entr. Hardt i (1954) 60: 'L'aspect humain des dieux est un trait essentiel. L'anthropomorphisme des dieux n'est pas seulement plastique, il est fondamental.'

¹²¹ J. Griffin, *Homer on life and death* (Oxford 1980) ch. 5.

¹²² R. L. Gordon, 'The real and the imaginary: production and religion in the Graeco-Roman world', *Art History* ii (1979) 5–34.

¹²³ J. P. Vernant, *Myth and thought among the Greeks* (London 1983) 328. Cf. Rudhardt (n. 76) 55–111, and 'Considérations sur le polythéisme', *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* xvi³ (1966) 353–64, = *Du mythe, de la religion grecque et de la compréhension de l'autrui* (Geneva 1981) 71–82. For a helpful survey of other literature on the naming of gods see B. Gladigow, *RAC* xi (1981) 1202–38.

must have a clear notion of traditional Greek religious terminology. A Greek maxim makes explicit an important aspect of the traditional system and shows how in consequence the emperor could be incorporated within it:

What is a god? The exercise of power.
 What is a king? God-like.¹²⁴

S. R. F. PRICE

Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford

¹²⁴ *Philol.* lxxx (1924–5) 339 with *RhM* cxii (1969) 48–53.

τί θεός; τ[ὸ] κρατοῦν·
 τί βασιλεύ[ς]; ἰσ[ό]θεος·

I quote these two maxims from a longer list of maxims

preserved on a second-century AD papyrus, but the ideas they express were commonplace. Cf. Artemidorus, *Oneirocr.* ii 36, 69, with F. J. Dölger, *Antike und Christentum* iii (1932) 128–31.