DE NATURA RELIGIONIS ROMANUM: A RE-APPRAISSAL OF THE ROLE OF ROMAN PRIVATE CULT RITUAL AND PRACTICE

by

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in
Religious Studies

Charlotte

2014

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ABSTRACT

THOMAS ROBERT YOUNG: De natura religionis Romanis: a re-appraisal of the role of private cult ritual and practice (Under the direction of DR. JOANNE ROBINSON)

This study questions the contemporary privilege afforded Roman civic cult and its relationship with the divine over the private cult of the individual or group. Exploring the historical underpinnings of the civic cult theory as exemplified by such works as that of produced by Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome* (1998), the study traces the civic cult theory's connection to and rejection of early developmental theories championed by theorists like W. Warde Fowler and Harry J. Rose. The study claims that while both the civic cult theory and its predecessor were right to emphasize the importance of ritual in Roman cultic practice, both were in error in their positions regarding the place of private cult in Roman society by the late Republic and Early Empire. As such, it is claimed that the position presently assigned to Roman private cultic practice by contemporary scholarship requires re-evaluation and its role in Roman culture requires interpretation using contemporary theory as well as material, epigraphic, and textual evidence. The study re-evaluates the role of private cult as well as undertakes a reinterpretation of such cult in terms of how it advances its agenda through ritual practice in part by documenting the widespread evidence of private cult practices in everyday Roman life. The study furthermore advances the claim that private cult was an autonomous and legitimate sphere of Roman cult which involved individuals, families and small groups and was integrally connected with public cult in a number of fundamental ways. This argument

has several parts. First, the study argues that participation in private cult was robust, involving ritual undertaken by a host of individuals not affiliated with the Roman State cult, and was manifest in diverse fashion, from ritual acts undertaken at sacred groves and domestic *lararia* to innovative ritual performance in festivals and processions. Secondarily, private cult, while not an evolutionary stage on the way to the civic cult, was nonetheless integrally connected with public cult through the use of ritual and individual participation in the civil cult. Finally, the study argues that both private cult and the civic cult, through orthopraxic ritual, sought to create a "subjunctive" reality.

DEDICATION

To Kim, Sarah and Henry

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgement is gratefully made to my thesis committee for their roles in helping me complete my academic journey, both before and after this thesis project.

Dr. Jeremy Schott was my first graduate school professor at UNC-Charlotte. His seminar, "Augustine of Hippo," introduced me to this fabulous figure and to the larger field of Roman Studies. My debt to him is immense and continues to bear fruit to this day.

Dr. Sean McCloud can claim responsibility for introducing me to theory and its importance to any intellectual undertaking, particularly academic religious study. His seminar has provided me the ability to access the thinking of Durkheim, Weber, Berger, and Bourdieu. To him I owe a debt of gratitude for deepening my thinking and adding dimensionality to my writing.

Credit due to Dr. James Tabor comes from his willingness to supervise my directed readings on the intersection between Roman traditional cult and Christianity as well as stimulating my late-awakened interest in archeology and Roman material culture of the first and second centuries. Before taking his course on early Christianity, my point of reference was mainly the text. His guidance and instruction has helped me to place texts in context and to appreciate the more visceral side of the historical record.

Finally, I am most humbly in debt to Dr. Joanne Robinson. Despite a heavy teaching load and other academic responsibilities, Dr. Robinson early on in my graduate

academic career became an amazing mentor, from her help with the rudiments of Ecclesiastic Latin semester after semester, to directing my readings on Boethius and Cassiodorus, and more formally, imparting in the classroom her wisdom and teaching the skills necessary to be a teacher in religious studies. Most recently, she has agreed to take of responsibilities as the primary reader and advisor for this thesis, all at a time when she was assuming the responsibilities of being a Department Chair. Ever a source of encouragement and good advice, this thesis project and my graduate education have magnificently prospered as a result, to which I remain truly thankful.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The recent study of Roman "religion" has been dominated by a concern for the Roman civic cult and its relationship with the divine over the private cult of the individual or group.[1] By "civic cult" it is meant those rites and practices, such as public processions, prayers, vows, and sacrifices, sanctioned by and accommodated by the Roman State for the purpose of supplicating the divine. In all cases, the civic cult ritual was undertaken or authorized by the college of pontiffs, augers and haruspices. "Private cult", on the other hand, involves those rites and practices, including processions, prayers, vows and sacrifices, undertaken to supplicate the divine but initiated or authorized by the individual, the family, or the small group.[2] Though united by their dependence upon ritual as a nexus to the gods, the two sets of cultic practices are differentiated by the person or entity initiating or authorizing the ritual transaction. The now standard work of Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome* (1998), illustrates well the privileged status afforded the Roman civic cult where references made to the ritual

[1] See H. J. Rose, *Ancient Roman Religion* (London, New York: Hutchinson's University Library, 1948); Robert Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1996); Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome*. Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Clifford Ando, *The Matter of the Gods: Religion and the Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

[2] This definition somewhat echoes that provided by Pompeius Festus who categorized public and private cult by who provided the financial backing for given rites. See John Bodel,"An Outline of Roman Domestic Religion," in *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity*, ed. John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 249. While looking to who pays may be instructive, not all private worship involved a pecuniary transaction. Accordingly, using Festus' basic framework, the term "authorization" is substituted as a more robust basis for distinction.

practices outside of the state cult take up a mere sixteen pages of the 388 pages of text.[3] This is not the only example of such civic cult chauvinism. More recently, James B. Rives' 2007 introductory text, *Religion and the Roman Empire*, likewise affords nominal coverage to Roman private ritual practice, affording a mere fifteen pages of the total 215 pages of text.[4] One significant implication of such privilege being afforded to the civic cult is that it is viewed not only as more important than private cult but that civic cult is deemed to be the pre-eminent vehicle for Roman cult practice.[5]

With such emphasis on civic cult, scholars have severely neglected questions of how those outside of the civic cult—individuals, families and small groups—defined their relationship to the Roman gods. Indeed, the accepted model of Roman religious practice posits that private ritual practices engaged in by those outside the civic cult are bracketed; that is, they are in essence disconnected from the public civic cult.[6] Furthermore, under the view of the civic cult theorists, most Romans played little necessary role in civic cult ritual practice beyond passive on-looking. This view places the individual, family, or small group outside the realm of ritual engagement, possessing no clear avenue for undertaking ritual, other than the domestic realm, that would be pleasing to the gods and bring about their blessing.[7] It seems inexplicable that such private cult activities should not have some more significant role in the larger matrix of Roman ritual practice. Given the textual, epigraphic, and material evidence that exists for

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[3] Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome*, Vol. 1. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
[4] James B. Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007). See also Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, 1987) (7 of 681 pages); H.J. Rose, *Ancient Roman Religion*. (London, New York: Hutchinson's University Library, 1948) (48 of 157 pages).
[5] Beard, North, Price, 12-13.
[6] Beard, North, Price, 13.
[7] Beard, North, Price, 13

substantiating private ritual practices, it is very hard to ignore the evidence for private cultic practice found through Roman household altars, hearths, and shrines; at grottoes, sacred groves, and boundary stones; and in the private sanctuaries of *collegia*.

Documenting the widespread evidence of private cult practices in everyday Roman life is one of the central tasks of this paper. Two questions will naturally arise when such evidence is demonstrated: first, why has scholarship in Roman Studies largely bracketed private cult away from public cult and confined the individual, the family and the small group to practices with little implication for the Roman State at large? Second, is such a division justified by the textual, epigraphic and material evidence? This paper will answer these questions by first arguing that this marginalization and bifurcation from civic cult is in part the product of a now outmoded understanding of private cult as an evolutionary precursor of a more developmentally sophisticated public civic cult. Informed by Emile Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* and James Frazier's *The Golden Bough*, scholars such as Johann Adam Hartung, Theodore Mommsen, Georg Wissowa, W. Warde Fowler, and Harry J. Rose crafted an understanding of private cult in the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries that portrayed private cult as a remnant of a distant past.[8] Under what will be termed the "developmentalist" theory, Roman ritual cult evolved from an initial stage of animistic worship where various *numa*, or willful spiritual forces, were worshipped as gods, to deistic worship where the worship of *numenal* forces was formalized and the forces were

[8] See Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995); W. Warde Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People, from the Earliest Times to the Age of Augustus* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1971); H. J. Rose, *Ancient Roman Religion.* London (New York: Hutchinson's University Library, 1948); Cyril Bailey, "Roman Religion and the Advent of Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, ed. S.A. Cook, F.E. Adcock, and M.P. Charlesworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954).

personified as gods.[9] Finally, this developmentalist theory posits that Roman cult, following the evolution of the Roman State, matured and entered its final stage, which was characterized by worship of a formal pantheon of state gods as well as worship of gods of foreign extraction, some of whom were adopted into the civic cult.[10] Negatively portrayed by developmentalist scholars, this later aspect of Roman cult was blamed for stunting traditional ritual practices, paralyzing the traditional Roman ritual cults' vitality, and leading to a dilution of Roman cult's nation building properties.[11]

The developmentalist position readily integrated the private cult practices of the family (*familia*), the clan (*gens*) and the town (*pagus*) as an evolutionary precursor to the civic cult, the former forming a seminal core from which clung the accretion of later ritual development.[12] It also emphasized the *orthopraxic* rather than *orthodoxic* nature of Roman cult as one which highlighted right ritual action over right belief. According to the developmentalists, ritual was utilized by the Romans principally for the value it had for the maintenance of the *pax deorum*, where proper ritual was rewarded by blessings from the gods which ensured a tranquil Roman State.[13] This emphasis on orthopraxic ritual was to be the sole legacy of the developmentalist understanding of Roman cult practice, where the concept was readily adopted by the "civic cult" theorists who were to supplant the developmentalists in the later quarter of the twentieth century. Advanced by contemporary scholars like Mary Beard, Clifford Ando, John North, Simon Price, Ramsey MacMullen, and James B. Rives, such anti-developmentalist approaches, here labeled the "civic cult" theory, abandon the idea that any seminal period every existed in

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[9] Bailey, 429-430; 439-441.
[10] Bailey, 439-454.
[11] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 287.
[12] Bailey, 439.
[13] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 157-158; 169-172.

Roman ritual history. Instead, these scholars portray Roman cult practice as one largely dominated by the civic cult whose project was, as the developmentalists had argued, solely occupied with the project of orthopraxy.[14] The civic cult theorists acknowledge private cult practices, but advance no theoretical model to connect these two spheres--even the possibility of such is rejected out of hand, all without credible explanation.[15]

In their rejection of the developmentalist' evolutionary approach, the civic cult theorists have bracketed private cult away from the civic cult. Still, it remains unanswered why the connection between private and public cult remains severed and why private cult undertaken by the individual is portrayed by modern scholarship as being an incidental and, apparently, an unimportant phenomena. One of the central arguments of this study is that these two scholarly positions, both the developmentalist and civil cult theories, are markedly in error and that Roman private ritual practice requires re-interpretation using contemporary theory as well as material, epigraphic, and textual evidence. In the process of so doing, the study argues that private cult is an autonomous and legitimate sphere of Roman cult which involved individuals, families and small groups and was integrally connected with public cult in a number of fundamental ways. This argument is advanced in several ways. First, the study argues that participation in private cult was robust, involving ritual undertaken by a host of individuals not affiliated with the Roman State cult, and was manifest in diverse fashion, from ritual acts undertaken at sacred groves and domestic *lararia* to innovative ritual

[14] Beard, North, Price, 216.

[15] For example, James B. Rives, in describing private cult states, "It would be misleading to see household cults and civic cults as an opposition of "private" and "public; although they existed in separate spheres, there were significant link between them. At the same time, they did not fit together into a seamless and all-embracing system. Just as individuals could pursue their own religious interests with little or no interference from public authorities, so too could households worship whatever deities they liked." Rives, 121.

performance in festivals and processions. Next, private cult, while not an evolutionary stage on the way to the civic cult, was nonetheless integrally connected with public cult through the use of ritual and individual participation in the civil cult. Finally, and most significantly, the study argues that both private cult and the civic cult, through orthopraxic ritual, sought to create a "subjunctive" reality. By a subjunctive reality it is meant that Roman cult practices sought to transcend their temporal and physical circumstances in the present reality, moving from the world "as is," to an "as if" world where the blessings of the gods were assured.

As stated above, the second claim of this study argues that both private and public cult practices relied upon ritual in similar ways, albeit in differing circumstances. "Ritual," as it is meant in this study, includes such practices as prayer, vow, procession, consecration, or sacrifice engaged in to positively influence the gods, to understand the gods' intentions, and to bring about a subjunctive reality of blessing and abundance. These tools advanced the welfare of those within the Roman state and the state itself, from the *pater familias* who sought the blessing of his family, to the *pater* over the *mithraium* who sought the spiritual advancement of the cult's membership, to the *flamen dialis* who sought the blessing of the State by Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Additionally, these tools provided those who used them with religious knowledge. Finally, the use of ritualistic tools within the Roman culture in which they arose led to a discourse between the ritualistic actor and Roman culture, at once helping to maintain the greater culture while individual variations in ritualistic practice led to a modification of that culture.

The arguments advanced by this paper will draw upon the insights of several theorists in the area of Roman studies and ritual practice. The first, James L. Mackey, has

expanded the conceptual framework for understanding the way the Romans had knowledge of the gods' will and intentions, going beyond augury and divination to also consider such mechanisms as prayer and epiphany.[16] His insights directly contribute to the claims advanced in this study that such ritual acts as prayer, practiced by individuals, families and groups outside the civic cult, advanced a number of goals beyond mere orthopraxy, like creating discourse and communication with the gods, bringing about purification and healing, and contributing to identity. Additionally, the scholarship of Adam B. Seligman, Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett, and Bennett Simon, as well as Andreas Bendlin and Louise Revell, assist the claims of this study in that they also redefine ritual. According to Revel, ritualistic practices developed Roman ritual identity, both on the individual level and on the greater cultural level, where the culture informed the ritual but each unique performance of ritual likewise altered cultural norms as well.[17] Bringing in Revel's insight fortifies this study's claims that Roman private cult had an integrated relationship with public cult, and that Roman ritual practice was more than mere orthopraxy but had implications for private and public Roman identity as well. Finally, according to Seligman, Weller, Puett and Simon, ritual performance works toward the realization of a subjunctive universe that transcends the realities of the present world.[18] This scholarship supports the claim made in this study that ritual, in its pursuit of orthopraxy, sought transcendence from temporal uncertainties about the gods' intentions to a realm in which it was *as if* the blessings of the gods were assured.

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[16] Mackey, J. L., (2009). *Rethinking roman religion: Action, practice, and belief.* (Order No. 3388068, Princeton University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* , 234. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/304982534?accountid=14605. (304982534).
[17] Louise Revell, *Roman Imperialism and Local Identities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
[18] Adam B. Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its consequences: an essay on the limits of sincerity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008).

This study utilizes textual sources and material artifacts such as statuary and *lararia* to advance its claims. As the intent of the study is to gain a robust understanding of traditional Roman ritual practice, the study focuses on the first two centuries before and after the Common Era, roughly constituting the period described by Varro and Livy, and encompasses practices that prevailed in both the late Republic as well as the Early Empire. Geographically, the study is focused upon the Italic peninsula and, in particular, Roman Campania where the material culture utilized is to be found.

The study is composed of eight chapters aside from this introduction. Chapter Two seeks to provide the historical context for the academic study of Roman ritual as it relates to both civic and private cult practices. Outlining first the developmentalist views of scholars like W. Warde Fowler, which identified Roman ritual development in terms of evolutionary progression, the chapter then highlights the reaction of such civic cult theorists as Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price to developmentalist theories, positing instead of evolutionary development a view of Roman ritual practice where the civic cult, once created by Numa Pompilius, eclipsed, subsumed and marginalized private cult practices. Finally, the second chapter highlights the most recent criticism of the civic cult theorist's position, where currently accepted notions about religious knowledge and the potentiality of ritual practice are scrutinized. Chapter Three of the study explores the nature, extent and magnitude of private cult practice. This chapter, relying on Livy and Cicero, examines the development of the State civic cult by the early Roman king Numa Pompilius as a means of legitimizing his rule. The chapter furthermore shows how the civic cult was created to be supplementary and an addition to existing private cultic rites that already were in place in the early Roman state. Chapter Four undertakes the first of a

series of topographical inquiries into private cult practices, beginning with the individual and his or her relation to private cult. The chapter first defines what private cult meant to the Romans, then goes on to describe the variety of Roman *numena* and individual deities. Finally, the discussion turns to examining the ritual acts engaged in by individuals within the context of private cult, including the rituals of *invocation*, or recognizing the gods at the beginning of an important undertaking to assure its success; *adoration*, or personal ritual acts such as the *adorare* to show respect for the gods; and the ritual use of anatomical votives and sacred water for the purpose directly communicating with the gods, healing and purification. Chapter Five continues the exploration begun in the preceding chapter by examining domestic private cult. The chapter lays particular emphasis upon the *lararium* and the ritual centered around this household shrine as well as the ritual division of the household between secular and sacred space as being the primary manifestations of private cult in the household. The examination of domestic cult also continues the discussion begun in the previous chapter of how ritual was more than an orthopraxic *quid pro quo* with the gods, but could also accomplish aims such as developing the ritual identity of the household, creating a subjunctive, "as if" world where the individual could be in a world blessed by the gods, as well as influencing ritual practices in the local community. Chapter Six takes the analysis and description of private cult a step farther, entertaining discussion of private cult as it was involved in the processes of death and burial. Examining similar ritual tools that were used in the domestic setting, the chapter illustrates how these were applied to achieve purification of the home after the passing of an individual and how the deceased was ritually conveyed to new, consecrated ground. Chapter Seven is the first chapter that

shows how private and public cult could have a direct involvement and mutual dependence upon one another, showing how private cult could be found within the cult practices of the wider community. The role of the individual in the festivals and processions of the civic cult are reviewed as well as the way innovated ritual in these contexts lead to development of identity, purification, and even increased fertility. In Chapter Eight, the discussion changes to the role of private ritual cult in voluntary associations, or *collegia*. Special emphasis is placed upon the *collegia* associated with the god *Mithras* and how ritual practice there led to religious knowledge as well as created a subjunctive state where it was "as if" cultic participants engaged in cosmic soul travel through the aid of ritual symbols and architecture. Finally, Chapter Nine is a concluding chapter which seeks to recapitulate the study's findings as they relate to the central claims that private cult practice was a robust, and widespread phenomena, that private cult was integrally connected with public cult through private cult's orthopraxy and search for religious knowledge, and that both private cult and the civic cult, through orthopraxic ritual, sought to create a "subjunctive" reality.

CHAPTER 2: THE ROMAN CIVIC CULT THEORY: ITS ORIGIN AND PROBLEMS

From the Developmentalist Theory to the New Civic Cult Orthodoxy

The first systematic study of Roman cult as a whole is attributable to the work of Johann Adam Hartung in his *Die Religion der Römer* published in 1836.[19] Hartung, along with Theodore Mommsen, and Georg Wissowa, is credited with developing the idea of Roman cult as a national cult, the earliest manifestations of which reflected an essential and true spirit of the Roman people, becoming corrupted by outside cultic influences as Rome expanded.[20] Taking up the quest to expand the scholarship involving this same cult, W. Warde Fowler in *The Religious Experience of the Roman people, from the earliest times to the age of Augustus (1899)* and *The Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic; an introduction to the study of the religion of the Romans* (1933) likewise championed the theory of Roman cult as one which developed into a national cult, and also expanded the theoretical underpinnings for this claim. [21] Under the theory explicated by Fowler, Roman cult began with animistic worship. *Numa*, or willful spirits, were believed by the Romans to have resided within both animate and inanimate objects, times, as well as seasons, giving the object, time, or season efficacy over the world.[22] Such efficacy might make the object dangerous, infectious, unclean, or holy (*sacra*).[23] Such objects or places where objects were found to be unclean were viewed as *taboo* until such time as they were purified and, according to Fowler, it was the business of ". .

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[19] Johann Adam Hartung, *Die Religion der Römer* (Erlangen: J.J. Palm 1836); Andreas Bendlin, "Looking Beyond the Civic Compromise: Religious Pluralism in Late Republican Rome," in *Religion in Archaic and Republican Rome and Italy: Evidence and Experience*, ed. Edward Bispham, and Christopher John Smith (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000), 116.

[20] Theodore Mommen, *The Earliest Inhabitants of Italy*, tran. George Robertsson (London: John H. Parker & Son 1858), 25;. Georg Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (Munich: C.H. Beckshe 1902); Bendlin, 117-118; Mackey ,3-4.

[21] W. Warde Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman people*, 24-25. While Fowler makes no overt reference to Emile Durkheim, his application of the idea of taboo, totem, and magic for the most part track Durkheim's treatment in his *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912) .

[22] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 40.

[23] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 27.

.organized religious life of the family and State" to undertake necessary acts of purification.[24]

In addition to claiming that the concept of *taboo* applied to Roman cultic practice, Fowler likewise included the concepts of *totemism* and magic. Fowler, deferring to James Frazier's definition, defined *totemism* as that phenomena which related to the primitive worship of animals on account of a perceived benefit associated with the animal, either ". . .in the positive shape of protection, advice, and help which the animal affords the man, or in the negative shape of abstinence from injuries which is in the power of the animal to inflict."[25] Magic, on the other hand, Fowler himself defined as "the exercise of a mysterious mechanical power by an individual man, spirit, or deity, to enforce a certain result."[26] Fowler claimed magic was in widespread abundance in Roman cult, at least with respect to the cult practices of the family, though some examples of magic he claimed also to have existed in the civic cult of the Roman state.[27] Being a source of power and efficacy for the individual over the world, magic in the private sphere took the form of either beneficial or destructive magic and could be dispensed through a number of mediums, the most common of which was the spell (*carmen*).[28] Because of magic's empowerment of the individual, oficials in the Roman state treated in suspiciously since it fostered an improper regard (*impietas*) for the power of the divine.[29] Unlike the case of *taboo* or *magic*, Fowler acknowledged only some possibility that *totemism* could be

[24] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 41.
[25] Frazier, 617.
[26] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 47.
[27] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 50-53.
[28] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 57-58.
[29] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 57.

applied to Roman cult, chiefly in matters related to military ensigns (standards) and tribal names.[30]

The cult of the Roman family arose from ritual practices involving *taboo, totem*, and *magic*, a development which occurred, according to Fowler, at such time as the Romans became a sedentary, agricultural people.[31] The Roman family (*familia*), was a subdivision of the tribe (*populus*), which was itself divided into clans (*gentes*), all members of which ". . . [bore] the same name, and were believed to descend from a common ancestor."[32] According to Fowler, the *familia*, as the word was used by the Romans, had connotations both socially and economically, relating to both a house situated upon land and those who dwelled in the home.[33]

Turning away from developmental concerns, Fowler also theorized about the bi-furcation between the sacred and the profane as it related to the Roman family. According to Fowler, the cult of the Roman family was informed by the topology of the home. Central to the Roman home was the hearth (*focus*),which not only served the practical function of being a source of warmth and nourishment, but was also the seat of *Vesta*, the spirit of fire ". . . and the spiritual embodiment of the physical welfare of the family." [34] Aside from the *hearth*, the *penus* or storeroom of the household was likewise of critical importance to the Roman household.[35] The spiritual guardians of the storeroom, *di penates*, dwelled in this part of the home *en masse*, and ". . .together with

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[30] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 25.
[31] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 68.
[32] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 69.
[33] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 70.
[34] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 73.
[35] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 73. See also Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, trans. W. Beloe. (St. Paul's Churchyard: J. Johnson 1795), 1:235, who defines *penus* in the terms of the items which might be in the storeroom which can be consumed by eating or drinking.

Vesta represent[ed] the material vitality of the family."[36] Another significant element of Roman domestic cult involved the *Genius* of the head of the *familia*, or the *paterfamilias*. Like *di penates*, the *Genius* was a guardian spirit which enabled the *paterfamilias* and the adult males within a family to ". . . fulfil the work of continuing the life of the *gens*."[37] Of the grouping of the household spirits of *Vesta*, *di penates*, and the *Genius*, it was the latter who was most concerned with the particular welfare of the family. Finally, the last critical recipient of family devotion was the *Lar familiaris*, the presiding spirit of the land, and in particular, the land of the allotment where the *familia* and the household stood.[38] Along with other *familia* of the gens whose combined territorial footprint comprised the *comita*, the *Lar familiaris* would be worshipped by each family in the *gens* at such places where the land overlapped.[39]

Fowler's contention was that the fundamental concepts of *totem*, *taboo*, and *magic*, initially being derived from animistic worship, eventually evolved into the private cult of the family which in turn evolved into the public civic cult.[40] Regarding the latter evolution, Fowler relates that it was the natural product of economic growth. The municipality (*pagus*), being a greater economic unit than that of the family and clan that composed it, were, as Fowler relates, possessed of spiritual forces. These forces with time came to be associated with individualized priesthoods. The *Rex*, or king, and the *flamen*, who provided the objects of their worship cult titles, were ". . . of immense importance in the development of a spirit into a deity."[41] As Fowler describes the process,

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[36] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 74.
[37] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 75.
[38] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 77
[39] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 77-78.
[40] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 116.
[41] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 119.

> When a spirit was named and localized as a friendly being at a particular spot within the city, which is made over to him, and where he has his *ara*; when the ritual performed at this spot is laid down in definite detail, and undertaken by an individual appointed or this purpose by the head of the community with solemn ceremony; then the spirit, hereto but vaguely conceived, must in course of time become individualized. The priestly if not the popular conception of him is fixed; there is now no question who he is or how he should be called. . . Once provided with a *flamen* and an ordered cult of sacrifice and prayer. . . he had now in him the possibility of turning into a *deus* personally conceived, if he came by the chance. [42]

Thus, through identification of an unnamed *numenal* force with a locality and formalization of ritual associated with that force by the pontiffs of the community, the force became personalized. This personalization was, according to Fowler, a necessary first step along the way to the final development of Roman civic cult, characterized in time by formal worship of an ever-expanding pantheon of traditional gods and gods of foreign extraction adopted by the Romans for their efficacy in furthering the welfare of the Roman state.

One final issue requiring discussion as it relates to the developmentalist theory is the orthopraxic nature of Roman rites and practices. As ritual worship became formalized in municipalities, the *ius divinium* was developed to govern the relations between humans and the divine.[43] As Fowler has related it, the *ius* was a set of rules for the ". . . maintenance of right relations between the citizens and the deities; as ordaining what things [were] to be done or avoided in order to keep a continual *pax*, or quasi-legal covenant between the two parties."[44] It also placed emphasis on the orthopraxic nature of Roman cult, where ritual was undertaken principally for the value it had for the

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[42] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 123-124.
[43] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 169.
[44] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 169.

maintenance of *religio* and *pietas* which, when preserved, maintained the peace (*pax*) of the Roman state. The concept of *religio* implied a mental state of devotion to the gods and the proper ritual which would flow from such devotion.[45] *Pietas,* on the other hand, was a ". . . a virtue of obedience to the will of the [gods]."[46] The manner by which the *pax* was maintained was a matter of process. Quoting again from Fowler:

> First, the deities must be duly placated, and their powers kept in full vigor, by the ritual of sacrifice and prayer, performed at the proper times and places by authorized persons skilled in the knowledge of that ritual. Secondly, there must be an exact fulfilment of all vows or solemn promises made to the deities by the State or its magistrates, or by such private persons as might have made similar engagements. Thirdly, the city, its land and its people, must be preserved from all evil or hostile influences, whether spiritual or material or both, by the process broadly known as *lustratio*, which we commonly translate purification. Lastly, strict attention must be paid to all outward signs of the will of the gods, as shown by omens and portents of various kinds.[47]

Thus, by the latter stages of Roman cultic evolution, a substantial formalization of cult ritual had transpired. While this formalized ritual countenanced respect for the gods, the overarching idea was not an adherence to orthopraxic notions of being free of sin but rather orthopraxic concern, that a failure to approach the gods in the proper way and to perform rituals in the proper way would simply violate the bargain between the Romans and their gods. As a result of their breach of the sacred contract, the Romans would lose the benefit of divine blessing, something the Roman state could not afford.

While the developmentalist theory W. Warde Fowler advocated was first set forth by Hartung, Mommsen, and Wissowa. Fowler's unique contribution was to combine with

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[45] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People,* 461-462.
[46] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People,* 462.
[47] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People,* 171.

this theory the sociological conclusions of James Frazer, Robertson Smith, and Frank Byron Jevons.[48] As a result, the final form of the developmentalist theory molded by Fowler would place heavy emphasis of the evolution of Roman cult, from animistic ritual to private domestic cult ritual from which animism developed, and finally the civic cult, which was the highest evolutionary tier.[49] In this way, the developmentalist theory maintained a continuous thread from private cult to public cult, with ritual being the means of reaching the gods and orthopraxy being the common aim of all cultic practices designed to secure the blessing of the gods. Thirty years after Fowler published most of his principle work in the area of Roman cult, his mature version of the developmentalist theory had become the established view in works like Eli Edward Buriss*' Taboo, Magic, Spirits; a Study of Primitive Elements in Roman Religion* and H.J. Rose's *Roman Religion,* the later placing special emphasis upon the accretion of foreign influences."[50]

An evolutionary theory such as that advanced by a developmentalist like Fowler was significantly vulnerable. By claiming the existence of a native cult which evolved over time into a civic cult, characterized in large part by foreign cultic accretions, the archeological record would be expected to be stratified in such a way that early native rites and practices found on the Italic peninsula would be clearly differentiated from later,

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[48] James Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1900); Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1889); Frank Byron Jevons, *An Introduction to the History of Religion* (London: Methuen & Co. 1896).

[49] Certainly, there had been examples where each sphere of Roman religious practice was studied in isolation. For example, Attilio de Marchi's *Il Culto privato di Roma antica. I. La religione nella vita domestica by Attilto de-Marchi* (1896) thoroughly and scrupulously catalogued the many aspects of domestic cult, though consciously straying from any attempt to explain it theoretically or relate any contextual relationship with the civic cult. De Marchi, Attilto*. II Culto privato di Roma antica. I La religione nella vita domestica*. (Milano, Hoepli. 1896).

[50] Eli Edward Buriss, *Taboo, magic, spirits; a study of primitive elements in Roman religion* (New York: Macmillan Co. 1931);Rose, H.J. *Ancient Roman Religion* (New York: Barnes and Noble (1995), 10.

non-Italic influences.[51] In other words, the oldest material culture found in the deepest layers would show no signs of foreign influence. By the later part of the twentieth century, this fundamental vulnerability of the developmentalist position became a fatal liability when challenged by such scholars as Mary Beard, John North, Simon Price and Michael Crawford, who successfully managed to undermine the archeological foundation of the developmentalist position.[52]

In their criticism, these scholars argued, among other things, that the extant archeological evidence was incompatible with claims of ". . .an early, uncontaminated, native strand of genuine Roman religion."[53] Among the more compelling evidence adduced by these scholars were certain archeological discoveries in the city of Rome which demonstrated that, as early as the 6th century B.C.E., the Romans were borrowing from the Greek ritual practices of the Southern Italian colonies, thus significantly undercutting the idea of the existence of any untainted period in the history of Roman ritual development.[54] Beyond mere criticism, however, these scholars likewise formulated a number of significant claims of their own regarding the place and position of private cult ritual and practice, those claims readily summarized in Beard, North and Price's *Roman Religion.* According to these authors:

> [T]here is no sign in Rome of any specifically religious group: groups, that is, of men or women who had decided to join together principally on grounds of religious choice. Of course, there were all kinds of groups in which religion played a part: from an early republican date, for example, various associations (*collegia*), such as burial or dining clubs, associated themselves with a divine patron, and were called after the deity. So too

[51] See Beard, North Price, 10-12. The
[52] John A. North "Conservatism and Change in Roman Religion," in *Papers of the British School at Rome* 44 (1976), 1-12; Mary Beard and Michael Crawford, *Rome in the Late Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1985) ;Beard, Price, North, 13-14.
[53] Beard, North, Price, 10-12.
[54] Beard, Price, North, 10-12.

> individual citizens might act together with others in carrying out religious duties and ritual--their families, their *gens*, their fellow craftsmen or senators; but these communities formed on the basis of birth, occupation, domicile, or rank, not through any specifically religious conviction.

This quote addresses obliquely the idea in Fowler's work that the evolutionary process in Rome never stopped. While the final development of Roman cult was characterized by worship of a formal civic cult pantheon of state gods, gods of foreign extraction nevertheless were also adopted into the civic cult.[55] Developmentalists like Fowler and Cyril Bailey negatively portrayed this later aspect of Roman cult's evolution as detrimental in its effect on traditional cult's vitality.[56] According to Fowler, there was ". . . a tendency towards emotional religion independent of the old State worship; the philosophy of individualism was to complete the work of emancipation in the last two centuries B.C.E.. The old State religion remained, but in stunted form and with paralyzed vitality."[57] Christianity and various other "mystery religions" were the direct manifestation of the general trend toward "emotional religion."[58] However, it was Christianity, more than its competitors like *Mithraism* or the worship of *Isis*, that helped propagate ideas that were altogether undeveloped in Roman cult up to the first century C.E.. These ideas, which Beard, North and Price attack, included general notions of duty to one's fellow man, concepts like belief and faith, and the tendency to assemble based upon commonly shared beliefs and faith.[59]

In contrast to the developmentalist position of continued evolution, Beard,

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[55] Bailey, 439-454.
[56] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 287.
[57] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 287.
[58] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 452-457.
[59] Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 452-457.

North and Price, who are the leading proponents of the "civic cult theory," have rejected notions that the Romans ever formalized structures of belief, faith or assembly based upon either of these in Roman cult. Instead, these theorists make the claim that, outside of Christianity, individuals within Roman society did not unite on religious grounds. Rather, while such occasions for coming together might incidentally involve the invocation or veneration of a deity, the primary purpose was secular, whether to further the ends of a guild, or to promote the welfare of a family or clan. Furthermore, such notions as belief or faith, while present on the individual level, did not have any widespread effect among Roman society in general. Quoting again from Beard, North and Price:

> At the social level, there were no autonomous religious groups, with their own special value systems, ideas or beliefs to defend or advocate; hence there was little chance that religion in itself would ever represent a force for advocating change or reform. *At the individual level, it meant that men and women were not faced with the need to make (or even the opportunity for making) acts of religious commitment*; that in turn implies *that they had no religious biographies, no moments of profound new experience or revelation such as to determine the course of their future lives. . . . these experiences, beliefs, and disbeliefs had no particularly privileged role in defining an individual's actions, behavior or sense of identity*. (emphasis added)[60]

This repudiation of the developmentalist theory, similar to such repudiation found in the work of a number of prominent contemporary scholars, formulates a new orthodoxy regarding the nature of Roman cult.[61]According to the civic cult theorists, the individual

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[60] Beard, North, Price, 42-43. These sentiments are likewise to found in J.B. *Rives, Religion and Authority in Roman Carthage from Augustus to Constantine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 5-11 and Clifford Ando, "The Ontology of Religious Institutions," *History of Religion*s 50, no. 1 (August 2010), 60-64.

[61] Similar anti-developmentalist sentiments can likewise be found in James B. Rives, *Religion and Authority in Roman Carthage from Augustus to Constantine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 5-

in Rome is defined as a free agent, able to pursue or reject whatever approach to the gods the individual thought appropriate without consequence or concern for beliefs or faith. Furthermore, because there were no communities of shared belief to define the contours of a particular faith with regard to the gods, an individual was without commitment to any cultic program, even to the State, whose civic cult program was in any case only to be carried out by professionals. Thus, an individual's behavior with relation to the gods, according to the civic cult theorists, was at best meaningless, empty ritualism which carried on not because of any fundamental belief or faith but rather due to Roman conservatism.

The civic cult theory of Roman cult, where a chasm has been constructed between the *sacra private* and the *sacra publica*, is a far cry from the view that preceded it. In its rejection of an evolutionary link between the two spheres of Roman cult practice, the civic cult theory has created a bracketed situation in which no continuity exists between the disparate cultic practices of the individual and the collective. Moreover, this view has limited Roman cult to a singular dimension of ritual. According to the civic cult theory, any ritual act, whether prayer, vow, divination, or sacrifice, was engaged in for strictly orthopraxic purposes. This meant that the Romans were either trying to placate the gods through their *pietas* and *religio* or trying to obtain knowledge of the gods' attitude and intent.[62] Within such a context, the civic cult theory severely limits ritual, excluding the possibility that ritual can work toward ends other than orthopraxy, like the establishment of private or public identity, the formulation of discourse, bringing healing or

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11; Clifford Ando, "The Ontology of Religious Institutions," *History of Religion*s 50, no. 1 (August 2010), 60-64;

[62] Clifford Ando, *The Matter of the Gods: Religion and the Roman Empire*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

purification, or toward the end of developing belief. This limited view of ritual has itself exposed the civic cult theory to considerable criticism.

Criticism of the Civic Cult Theory

Some scholarship has sought to challenge quite a few of the civic cult's fundamental claims.[63] A major complaint directed against the civic cult theory is that it limits ritual to the sole objective of orthopraxy. For example, on this point, scholar J.L. Mackey has argued for the existence of meaning which he terms "beliefs" in Roman cult, belief existing as an antecedent to ritual action.[64] Mackey specifically rejects the dichotomy formulated by John North and others between ritual and belief, where Roman cult is characterized strictly in terms of ritual action while belief is something one encounters only when dealing with Christianity.[65] Rather, he provides a variety of evidence to challenge the claim that Roman cult was comprised of ritual acts of limited purpose. One of Mackey's prime sources is Lucretius. According to Mackey, Lucretius and his fellow Epicurians claimed that cult ritual practices where ". . .chronologically and logically secondary to the religious beliefs that caused them." [66] Moreover, Mackey claims that once established, cult ritual and belief stood in a "relationship of reciprocal reinforcement" of each other where ". . .[c]ult has the capacity to implant horror-awe of the gods predicated on belief in their superhuman causal agency--in its participants, and horror in turn motivates further act of cult."[67] Thus for Lucretius, ". . . the credal

[63] James B. Rives, "Graeco-Roman Religion in the Roman Empire: Old Assumptions and New Approaches" *Currents in Biblical Research* 8 (2010), 240-297 (Retrieved from http://cbi.sagepub.com.librarylink.uncc.edu/content/8/2/240.full.pdf+html .
[64] Mackey, 234.
[65] Mackey, 10.
[66] Mackey, 42.
[67] Mackey, 43.

minimum of (traditional) religious action was the belief that the gods exist and that cult activities are efficacious means by which to interact with them."[68]

Mackey also points to ritual prayer and epiphany as evidence of Roman ritual practices having the capability of instilling religious knowledge and meaning.[69] In both cases, the experiential cues that came from ritual prayer and its contextual circumstances (temples and altars, on the one hand, and the words and ritual recitation of the prayer on the other), helped produce a rudimentary "folk theology."[70] Prayer and its circumstantial context was able to accomplish the development of such a folk theology by providing the ". . .inference systems of the Roman mind with enough data for those systems to [enable the individual to infer] . . .a great deal about the gods from the religious activity he observed around him. Thus, no two Romans w[ould] have had exactly the same concept of the gods—there was no formal creed—but their folk theologies w[ould] have converged enough to facilitate coordinated religious action." [71] Mackey thus challenges the notion that ritual, as undertaken by the Romans, was meaningless or merely action calculated to further narrow orthopraxic ends. Rather, ritual should be viewed as a more robust mechanism from which it is possible to obtain religious knowledge and derive religious meaning, both before and after the ritual act, even if formal structures for generating a system of meaning are lacking.

Louise Revell has likewise argued in the course of her work on Roman identity that the process of creating that identity was a discourse--not just in the public realm by the Roman elite but also by the individual who ". . . through mundane activities

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[68] Mackey, 61.
[69] Mackey, 61-99; 100-117.
[70] Mackey, 62.
[71] Mackey, 62.

(including ritual and practice). . .actively created their own identity, at the same time as they reproduced the social structures which held the empire together."[72] Quite contrary to the civic cult posited by current scholarship with its top down orientation, Revell makes a claim for individual empowerment in the process of the construction of the social reality of Roman society and culture, even while recognizing that the individual, when compared to the elites, was a lesser figure with significantly less power to alter the overall dynamic.[73] As Revell states,

> [T]he moment of performance is also the moment of reproduction, of both the conditions which govern the action and agent's understanding of themselves and their world. These routine actions of daily life are founded in encounters and interaction with others, and can be viewed as a form of communication, both in the immediate situation and across time-space. Thus, repetitive routines contain the elements which will reaffirm the structures of society and a person's own identity, grounded in social norms.

According to Revel, the individual engaged in ritual communicates through a number of mediums, including ". . .the spaciality of the body; its positioning, gestures, dress and relationship to others" as well as the associated material culture in which ritual is undertaken, including architecture.[74]

Finally, Andreas Bendlin has challenged the idea that the rigid dichotomy posited by the civic cult between public and private rites and practices has any evidentiary validity.[75] While acknowledging examples of public supplication and procuration undertaken on all levels of society instigated by the pontiffs and haruspices and the Roman Senate, Bendlin denies the possibility of a widespread and coordinated intrusion

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[72] Revell, 9.
[73] Revell, 9.
[74] Revell, 12.
[75] Bendlin, 115-138.

by the civic cult into the lives of the inhabitants of Rome.[76] This is precisely the claim of the civic cult theorists, where private cult, to the extent that it was practiced, was by and large eclipsed by the public cult or subsumed by its imposed requirements on the individual, however few those might be. Rather, Bendlin claims that such a dualism of private and public cult and the subordination of the former to the latter should be abandoned in favor of an understanding of Roman cult where there were created ". . .innumerable religious hybrids of societal as well as sub-societal expectation and individual realization."[77] Thus, as with Revell's argument of a discourse between private and public ritual, Bendlin claims that the intersection of the public and the private spheres of Roman cult gave rise to hybridization.[78] Furthermore, he makes claims for ". . .a deregulated religious pluralism where worshippers with various commitments and heterogeneous needs instrumentalize a plurality of decentralized and non-exclusive providers of material as well as immaterial commodities."[79] In other words, Bendlin asserts what he will describe as a market metaphor as an appropriate lens for viewing Roman cultic rites and practices, where the cult worshipper was courted for his allegiance among many competing cultic choices other than those promulgated by the civic authorities, where individual choices would be made for cultic expression with the combined and overall effect of altering the very fabric of the Roman civic cult.

The perspectives of Revell and Bendlin are important in that they directly challenge the civic cult theorists' notion that private cult and the private individual were relatively unimportant when it comes to the actual working of Roman cultic practice.

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[76] Bendlin, 126.
[77] Bendlin, 132.
[78] Bendlin, 132.
[79] Bendlin, 134.

Rather than being an idle bystander deferring to civil authorities who undertook the bulk of cultic undertakings, the individual instead is portrayed as a vital factor in Roman cult. Furthermore, as Revell and Mackey have illustrated, the civic cult theorists can fairly be criticized for their adherence to a narrow view of the potentialities of ritual where ritual is merely an orthopraxic exercise, that is, it is designed merely to secure the blessings of the gods and to gain insight into the gods' will and intentions.

With these criticisms of the new orthodoxy in mind, it is appropriate to return to the central questions of this study. As has been discussed earlier, the developmentalist approach failed to properly account for the place of private cult in the overall scheme of Roman cultic practice. This was due to its unwarranted emphasis upon an evolutionary link between private and public cult which provided a connection through Rome's cultic evolution. The civic cult theorists, having largely discredited this developmentalist claim, have never seen fit to re-connect private and public cult. Indeed, such an undertaking, as it has been shown, would be antithetical to the civic cult theory's project, which was to portray public civic cult as an all-eclipsing, all-subsuming specter which recognizes the phenomena of private cult but assigns it no real importance. Contemporary criticism of the civic cult theory has troubled the unequal dichotomy claimed to exist between private and public cult, the narrow role the civic cult theory affords to ritual, and the existence of significant questions about public cult's ability to be an all-pervasive phenomena. It is therefore appropriate to reconsider the validity of the civic cult theory's characterization of private cult.

Now that the initial ground work is established and problem defined, the following chapters of this study will first establish that individual participation in private

cult practice was robust and widespread and that it was integrally connected with public cult through its use of ritual. This ritual not only acts designed to secure the blessings of the gods but also to obtain religious knowledge, obtain purification, initiate and carry on discourse between the Romans and the gods, and affirm both a collective and an individualized Roman identity. Furthermore, the study will establish that the Romans, through the private, ritualistic practices of the individual, the family, and the voluntary association, sought to create a subjunctive reality. The subjunctive reality that was created through Roman private cult was, not merely one which envisioned individual prosperity and abundance but was also one which contributed to the realization of public prosperity and abundance. Additionally, the subjunctive reality that private cult ritual sought was one of transcendence from temporal uncertainties about the gods' intentions to a subjunctive "as if" world in which it was as if the blessings of the gods were assured.

In the chapter that follows, the individual and his or her relation to private cult will be examined. In the subsequent exploration of the wide range of activities that encompassed private cultic activity, it will be shown how aspects of each of the three claims central to this paper can be demonstrated through the multiple instances of ritual that are portrayed, including invocation, consecration, fertility rites, veneration, prayer, the creation of a subjunctive reality, and purification.

CHAPTER 3: THE NATURE, EXTENT, AND MAGNITUDE OF CULTIC PRACTICES IN THE ROMAN REPUBLIC AND EARLY EMPIRE.

One of the more remarkable claims made by the civic cult theorists is that the individual Roman is largely excluded from public cult practices and, outside of those private cult practices of the family, the individual has no significant role to play with regard to the Roman gods. Instead, it is claimed by the civic cult that a professional class of pontiffs, haruspices, and augers undertook those rites and practices which were necessary to the State civic cult and the preservation of the *pax deorum*.[80] While evidence for these claims certainly exists, it is sufficiently matched by contrary evidence which shows, among other things, significant involvement by individuals with ritual in both the private and public cultic spheres. Before such evidence is revealed, it is important to establish an understanding of who the Romans worshipped, what motivated the Romans to engage in cultic ritual behavior, and what rites counted for its proper performance (*religio*).

A. Cornelius Gellius attributed to Marcus Varro, the second century B.C.E. historian and philosopher, the line, "*best it is to be religious (religentem), lest one superstitious (religiosus) be*."[81] To be "*religentem*" is, according to Gellius, to be properly devoted to the gods, whereas an ". . . extreme and superstitious devotion . . ." to

[80] Beard, North, Price, 48.
[81] A. Cornelius Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, IV.9 (339.) Gellius attributes the line to Varro's *Grammatical Commentaries*.

the gods is improper.[82] Plutarch had a similar take on the differentiation of the two terms as well, attributing to the superstitious individual a hatred of the gods which put the individual in a state of enmity:

> [You] see what kind of beliefs the superstitious have about the gods--that they are hasty, faithless, fickle, revengeful, cruel, and quick to take offense-whence it must follow that a superstitious man both hates and fears them. How can he help it, when he thinks that the worst of his troubles have come to him through them, and will come through them again? Hating and fearing the gods, he is then their enemy.[83]

Finally, Valerius Maximus, in the first century C.E., defined *religio* as the rendering of proper course and observance of matters pertaining to the gods, even in the face of hardship.[84] Thus, on the authority of Gellius, Plutarch, and Valerius Maximus, the Romans defined *religio*—the closest thing the Romans had for the word "religion"—as engaging in appropriate cultic activity as was owed to the gods: proper devotion through observation of appropriate ritual carried out with a proper *mens rea*, characterized by respect rather than fear. Varro, in his *De gente populi Romani libri IIII*, qualified this devotion further, requiring such respect for the gods as to not be led astray by the poets who characterized the gods with human failings and foibles. Varro's claim came within the context of his description of the historical narrative concerning the Roman gods, where he divided this narrative into three categories, first, the *fabulous*, or that derived from myths and fables; second, the *natural*, or that which is derived from philosophy; and

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[82] Gellius, IV.9(339).
[83] Plutarch, "Superstition" in *Selected Lives and Essays*, trans. Louise Ropes Loomis (Roslyn, New York: Walter J. Black, Inc. 1951), 377.
[84] Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Sayings and Doings,*Vol. I. trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2000), 21.

third, the *civil*, or that which is the product of the city and its priests. [85] Offended by the anthropomorphism inherent within fables, Varro attempted to separate the *fabulous* narrative from that of the *natural* and the *civil*, giving only credence to the latter two categories.[86]

To Varro, the Roman gods who were spoken of in the *natural* and *civil* narratives were of two essential camps, those that were "select" who had responsibility, as Augustine relates, for ". . .higher administration in the world," and the "common" gods.[87] Of the former class were included *Janus, Jupiter, Saturn, Genius, Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Vulcan, Neptune, Sol, Orcus, father Liber, Tellus, Ceres, Juno, Luna, Diana, Minerva, Venus* and *Vesta*.[88] These gods, while generally devoted to higher purposes, were nonetheless involved in a variety of transactions which might otherwise be considered mundane. For instance, *Janus* was the god of entrances and beginnings and would therefore have responsibilities for such tasks that ranged from providing efficacy for a seed's growth to responsibility for interface among the four quarters of the world.[89]

Quite apart from the select gods, the Romans also identified with a host of lesser gods who generally were responsible for a particular domain or function. Thus, for example, with regard to children, the god *Vitumnis* imparted life to a fetus and the god *Sentinus* granted that same fetus sensation while the goddess *Mena* gave to boys good minds.[90] In the same way, as things would relate to the household, the god *Jugatinus*

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[85] Augustine, *De Civite Dei*, trans. Marcus Dods (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica 1952), VI.5, 234-235. Varro also merits occasional reference in Aulus Gellius' second century *Noctes Atticae*, but these are largely philological.
[86] Augustine, VI.6 (236-37).
[87] Augustine, VII.1-2 (244).
[88] Augustine, VII.1-2 (244).
[89] Augustine, VII.3 (245); 7-8, (248-249).
[90] Augustine, VII.1-2 (244).

presided over the union of men and women, the god *Domididucus* was also involved with assuring that a woman was securely in the home, a task concerning which the god *Domitius* also was involved.[91]

Thus Varro provided a picture of the Roman gods which was bifurcated based upon the particular realm of responsibility claimed by the deity. The natural consequence of this bifurcation was for the individual Roman to call upon the appropriate god or gods depending upon the individual's circumstances and needs. Thus, those who would seek the protection of a married woman in her home from the terrible god *Silvanus*, who would otherwise seek to sexually molest her, would invoke the gods *Intercidona, Pilumnus* and *Diverra*. The ritual required three men to engage in the act of striking the threshold of the woman's home with a hatchet, a pestle and a broom, each of these actions corresponding respectively to the special agricultural domain of the three afore-mentioned gods.[92] Likewise, according to Varro, the devotees of *pater Liber* and his consort *Libera*, celebrated the wine-drenched rites of the *Bacchanalia*, a festival whose rituals solely belonged to those who had been initiated, not by the Roman state which at one point condemned it and sought its destruction.[93]

With this account of who the Roman gods were, the cultic motivation of the Romans and what constituted proper worship, a proper foundation now exists to appropriately examine the evidence to ascertain the roles and the realms of private and public cult. In terms of the first inquiry, a good place to begin is with the authority relied upon by the civic cult theorists in supporting their claims about the civic cult.

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[91] Augustine VI.9 (240).
[92] Augustine, VI. 9 (239-240).
[93] Augustine, VI.9 (239).

Long viewed as the standard work in the exposition of the civic cult theory, Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price, in their *Religions of Rome,* lay heavy emphasis on Titus Livy's *History of Rome* in developing their civic cult model.[94] They acknowledge that the arguments for doing so encounter a number of difficulties, most notably that of a first century C.E. author relating the cultic history of the Archaic and Early Republican period. Nonetheless, their rebuttal to such an argument is that Roman cultic practice was a conservative enterprise and that even though some of the details Livy conveys might have been erroneous, the broad outline he produced would likely have some degree of validity.[95] Accepting these authors' choice of Livy as a vehicle for plumbing the depths of Roman cultic history, it is readily possible to find evidence for the construction of the civic cult that plays so much a part in the civic cult theory. However, the civic cult that emerges is neither all-pervasive and dominant nor is private cult confined to the margins as alleged by the civic cult theorists.

As Livy has related, Roman civic cult arose with the ascension of Numa Pompillius, the successor to Romulus, the Roman king, or *Rex*, traditionally identified with the founding of the Roman State. Numa Pompillius' first act as *Rex* was to impose ritual formalism upon the State. As Livy has described the events surrounding this act, such formalism was part and parcel with Numa's attempt to legitimize his rule through identification with the gods, carried out by Numa through his careful cultivation of the belief among the Romans that he was ". . .in the habit of meeting the goddess Egeria by night, and that it was her authority which guided him."[96] Egeria was, according to Ovid, a

[94] Beard, North, Price, 16-17.
[95] Beard, North, Price, 17.
[96] Livy, *The Early History of Rome,* trans. Aubrey De Selincourt (London: Penguin Books 1961), 1.19 (28).

nymph, who provided Numa knowledge of such things as the celestial year and how to propitiate the wrath of Jupiter, among other things.[97] Through her advice, it was claimed, Numa instituted laws and cultic rites, most notably the civic cult apparatus which was to govern Rome's relationship with the divine.[98] Livy also has related that, beginning with the development of a ritual calendar in which sacred days were set apart from secular, Numa also appointed priests (*pontiffs*), notably the *Flamen Dialis*, who was devoted to *Jupiter* and who was also given special prerogatives.[99] Numa additionally instituted the priesthoods for *Mars* and *Quirinus*, the Vestal virgins and the twelve *Salii*, or leaping priests, who were devoted to *Mars Gradivus*.[100] Over all of these Numa appointed a *pontifex*, or chief priest, from among the senatorial class with whom Numa provided detailed instructions regarding ritual observances. Most significantly, the *pontifex* was assigned final authority over all ritual observances in Rome. According to Livy

> [Numa] gave the pontifex the right of decision in all other matters connected with both public and private observances, so that ordinary people might have someone to consult if they needed advice, and to prevent the confusion which might result from neglect of national . . .rites and the adoption of foreign ones.[101]

It is important to recognize the civic apparatus that was developed and set in motion by Numa Pompilius. However, the proper analogy that is to be drawn from Livy's account is not the one advocated by the civic cult theorists where the civic cult is the dominant and exclusive cult. Rather, Livy is clearly describing the existence of a federalism which Numa imposed upon all Roman ritual observances. While this federalism gave

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[97] Ovid, *Fasti*, trans. Sir James Geroge Frazer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1959), iii.289 (141); iii.(131, 154; Livy, 1.19 (38).
[98] Livy, 1.19-1.20 (38-39).
[99] Livy, 1.20 (39).
[100] Livy, 1.20 (39).
[101] Livy, 1.20 (39).

preeminent authority to the *pontifex*, Numa nevertheless did so acknowledging that private cultic practices would not only continue on but would be of such critical importance to the welfare of the state that they would need oversight and direction. This is important evidence for several reasons. First, it readily affirms the continued vitality of private cult which had existed from Rome's foundation and was to continue into the Republic and Empire. Second, it recognizes that private and public cult are two interrelated and mutually supportive spheres of Roman ritual worship. Quite contrary to the civic cult theorist's claim, their own evidence strongly suggests that public civic cult was merely a check on potential excesses that might arise in the private sphere, making the public cult a regulatory but not a disenfranchising agent.

Fortunately, it is not necessary to rely exclusively on Livy to establish the autonomous relationship of private cult from that of public cult. Cicero, in his *De Legibus*, relates with particularity that Roman law had long recognized private cult as having a vital and yet autonomous relationship to public cult.[102] Citing the Twelve Tables (*Duodecim Tabulae)*, the earliest legal code of the Romans dating from the fifth century B.C.E., and the sacred law contained within them, Cicero relates

> No one shall have gods to himself, either new gods or alien gods, unless recognized by the State. Privately, they shall worship those gods whose worship they have duly received from their ancestors. In cities they shall have shrines; they shall have groves in the country and homes for the *Lares*. They shall preserve the rites of their families and their ancestors.[103]

The legal history of Rome, according to Cicero, provides both for the civic cult, which acts to regulate the worship of the gods through the oversight of the Senate, and for

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[102] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Legibus*, trans. Clinton Walker Keyes (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959),II.viii-18-19 (393); Arthur E.R. Boak, *A History of Rome to 565 A.D.* (New York: The Macmillan Company 1955),78-79.
[103] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Legibus,*II.viii-18-19 (393).

private cult, which, while largely self-regulating, is subject to State oversight to assure that worship is confined to those gods inherited from one's ancestors (i.e. the *Lares* and the *di penates*). Moreover, regardless from which sphere ritual acts originate, the gods worshipped will be afforded appropriate dwellings, whether this be, by way of example, the shrine, the sacred grove or the individual home *Lararium*.

Cicero further sets forth the legal structure imposed upon the civic cult for the provision of appropriate ritual and sacrifice. In the process, he notes that the law requires that "[t]hose who are ignorant as to the methods and rites suitable to . . .public and private sacrifices shall seek instruction from the public priests."[104] Cicero's statement of the Roman law is a clear recognition of the autonomy of both the public and private realms of ritual practice. He admits that, outside of the civic realm, an individual can be quite capable of administering proper rites to the gods. The only qualification he raises is that, if a question of appropriate ritual and sacrifice arises, the public pontiff is to be consulted and presumably has the final say.

Having established that private cult and the civic cult occupied different yet equally legitimate spaces in Roman culture with the civic cult exercising supervisory jurisdiction over private cult, it should be pointed out that both private cult and public cult were nonetheless united in their dependence upon ritual. Ritual has long been viewed as a complex action capable of accomplishing many aims. In the nineteenth century, Claude Levi-Strauss has argued that ritual is the conduit for the formation of belief, where ritual and belief exist in a symbiotic relationship where one is as necessary as the

[104] Cicero, *De Legibus*, II.viii.19 (395).

other for its existence.[105] Likewise, Emile Durkheim has likewise argued for a view of ritual that allows a social group to reaffirm itself periodically and gain knowledge of the world.[106] More contemporaneously, Catherine Bell, Jeffrey C. Alexander, and Jason L. Mast have construed ritual as constructing both meaning as well as discourse.[107] Roman private cult as well as the Roman civic cult involved ritual acts such as prayer, procession, divination, purification, rites related to fertility, consecration, and sacrifice. Contrary to the arguments of the civic cult theorists who would largely confine ritual to the single sphere of orthopraxy, Roman cult undertook ritual for more than orthopraxic ends, particularly in the realm of private cult. As will be discussed in Chapter 4 and 6, private ritual could be instrumental in helping to establish purification or healing. This will be shown through the ritual use of anatomical terracotta's, which when displayed or buried, were used to obtain a cure for a particular disease; or the ritual use of sacred water, which, when drawn from a source associated with a deity, could be used to purify an individual or their livestock; or the use of ritual sacrifice to return the home of a dead person to the harmony that existed prior to the person's death. [108] Ritual acts could also be used to establish communication and discourse with the gods through prayer, offered directly by the individual or inscribed on lead tablets deposited in mineral rich hot springs and healing waters.[109] Roman ritual acts could also be a basis for establishing identity. As will be outlined in Chapter 5 of this study, ritual undertaken by the family involved choosing household gods worshipped, as well as the style and location of *lararia*, the

[105] Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Naked Man: Introduction to a Science of Mythology*, Vol. 4. trans. John Weightman and Doreen Weightman (New York: Harper and Row 1981).
[106] Durkheim, 427-431.
[107] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1992);
[108] See Chapter 4 and 6, *infra*.
[109] See Chapter 4, *infra*.

domestic cult site for the worship of the household gods. These individual ritual choices reaffirmed the Roman identity of the family but the individual variations in the ritual helped to establish the family's particular identity.[110] Additionally, through the ritual acts of consecrating sacred space in the household from secular, pedestrian usage, the Roman family opened up an additional possibility for ritual. This involved the creation of a subjunctive "as if" world. Adam B. Seligman, Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett, and Bennett Simon in their work, *Ritual and its Consequences*, have formulated a paradigm for understanding ritual that centers around the negotiation of a fragmented and fractured world.[111] According to the authors, ritual has traditionally been interpreted as an attempt by its practitioners as either to "[interpret] ritual in according to a harmonious worldview or seeing the functioning of ritual as leading to harmony."[112] Such an interpretation suffers from the same evolutionary thinking that informed the developmentalist's view of Roman ritual practice, where "ritual was associated with a more primitive cultures, where the emphasis was on conformity to and harmony *with* a larger social and cosmological whole." As the authors further relate:

> Such an evolution was often presented in positive terms, as a heroic release of the individual from conformity to a ritually based traditional order, and of the future freed from the fetters o the past. But it could also be presented in negative terms, as a shift away from a harmonious world and toward one of alienation. Whether presented positively or negatively, however, the model was the same: ritual was associated with a pre-modern world and was read in terms of harmony and conformity to tradition.[113]

Rather than ritual confronting harmony and conformity to tradition, Seligman, Weller, Puett and Simon argue that ritual confronts instead the world "as it is" by attempting to

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[110] See Chapter 5, *infra.*
[111] Seligman, 30.
[112] Seligman (with emphasis added), 30.
[113] Seligman, 30-31.

transcend it, if only temporarily, through engaging in subjunctive, "as if" world building. Thus,

> [t]he creation of "as if" worlds is a central aspect of ritual action, which we see as necessary for human life. The subjunctive aspect of ritual is crucial to many forms of civil social behavior. . . Thus, it is not enough for kings to be kings, they must act as if they were kings. Justice must not just be meted out, it must seem to be meted out.

Ritual's purpose is to confront the fragmented world and make t whole again, not with the idea of triumph but rather with the idea that ". . .the workings of ritual are always in the realm of limited and the ultimately doomed."[114] As such, ritual requires constant repetition and constant creativity and adjustment to enable (temporary) mastery over life's many complex situations.[115] "Ritual is part of a never ending attempt to take particulars. . .and build an order out of them. Ritual, therefore, means ceaseless work. It is a recurrent, always imperfect project of dealing with patterns of human behavior—patterns that are always at risk of shifting into dangerous directions—or of unleashing demons."[116] Thus, the project of ritual practice, according to these authors, is hardly complete in any real way but ". . . can, for periods of time, create pockets of order in which humans can flourish."[117]

Applying such concepts to Roman cult practice in general, it becomes apparent that a great deal of ritual practice, both public and private, was devoted to the idea of "getting it right" with the gods and returning conditions to those they would have ordained. In the public cult sphere, getting it right meant scrupulous attention to details of

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[114] Seligman, 30.
[115] Seligman, 42.
[116] Seligman, 42.
[117] Seligman, 42.

" . . . even minor items of religious significance."[118] As related by Valerius Maximus, the Roman State assured to this end that

> rituals [were] performed: in commending, by prayer; in demanding, by vow; in discharging, by offer of thanks; in enquiring, whether by entrails or lots, by solicitation of response; in performing of customary rite, by sacrifice, wherewith also warnings of prodigies or lightnings [were] expiated.

Indeed, this last element, the *expiation* of *prodigies*, or unusual events which were thought to be signs of the gods' displeasure, from the unaccountable rise in the water level of the Alban Lake, to strange human speech from livestock, to bleeding ears of corn, required ritual practice to adjust itself to assure that the blessings of the gods would continue to flow.[119] Prodigious events were a sure sign that the Romans were not getting things right and that the gods wanted reform. In the public realm, the orthopraxic exchange of the civic cult was anything but assured. Rather, it took place in a fragmented and fractured world where capricious gods could suddenly and without warning change the rules of the game. Thus, during the year of Hannibal's invasion in 217 B.C.E., following a series of *prodigies* reported originating as far from Rome as Sardinia and Sicily, the Senate voted for a departure from the ritual procedures previously in place to bring about an *expiation*.[120] This entailed ". . .that those *prodigies* should be expiated, some with greater, some with the lesser victims; and that a supplication for three days should be performed at all the shrines; that when the *Decemvirs* should have inspected the books, all other particulars should be conducted in such manner as the gods should

[118] Valerius Maximus, I.8 (21).
[119] Valerius Maximus, I.6 (65-69).
[120] Livy, XXII 1.8-20 (413-414).

declare, in their oracles, to be agreeable to them."[121] Roman public ritual and practices, if the claims of Seligman, Weller, Puett and Simon are adopted, employed repetition, creativity and innovation in order to maintain and recreate the subjunctive world where the gods and humans were working together in harmony and where the gods could be relied upon to hold up their end of an implied bargain.

In the same way, Roman private cult also utilized ritual to counteract the fractured aspects of daily life. These fractures included crops that would fail, infertility that would result in childlessness, and sickness of members of a family that would lead to death. Ritual acts performed within the private cult setting could address such discontinuity in the everyday flow of events, allowing a transcendence of the ragged world "as it was" to deliverance to a whole and harmonious world that "could be". With this in mind, private cult ritual divided the home between secular and sacred spaces to bring this subjunctive realm into the midst of the family. Private cult ritual likewise enabled the home to be purified of its defilement upon the occurrence of death in the household, returning it to a state as if the death had not occurred. Finally, private cult could be innovated in ways sufficient to meet needs, reconstituting itself on occasions where ritual had failed to have the desired effect in the past such that the gods displeasure could be transcended and things would return to a state of blessing once again. Finally, Roman ritual acts could also bring about meaning. As will be outlined in Chapter 8, the worship of the god *Mithras* by members of a *mithraium* involved a ritualized initiation which, through the

[121] Livy, XXII. 1.8-20 (413-414).

use of ceremony, symbolism and architecture, gave the initiates an understanding of and belief in the *mithraic* doctrines of the cosmic journal of the soul.[122]

Having outlined the substantive nature of Roman cult, the next chapters will seek to illustrate the ways in which private cult manifests itself in a topographical manner. Starting first with the individual's relation to private cult, the inquiry will expand to private cult and the family, private cult and funerary practice, and private cult as it existed within festivals and processions of the civic cult. The final topographical inquiry will involve exploring the role of private cult in voluntary associations, particularly Roman *collegia*. In every inquiry, private cult will reveal itself as a vital phenomenon which actively involving individuals, families and small groups in ritual acts designed to achieve a host of aims, from bringing about the blessings of the gods, to purification and healing, and to creating a subjunctive world.

[122] See Chapter 8, *infra.*

CHAPTER 4: PRIVATE CULT RITES AND PRACTICES AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Both Livy and Cicero have been shown to support the claim in this study that private cult has its own authorization and legitimacy outside of the public cult, regulated only by the *pontifex* of the public cult. Given this self-authorization and legitimacy, questions will naturally arise as to the nature of private cult, how the individual engaged in private cult, and what interaction, if any, private cult had with the public civic cult. These questions are best answered with a topographical examination of private cult, where revelation of the many dimensions of private cult, from the ritual acts of individuals, to those of the family to those of voluntary associations, can be obtained. Such an investigation will also reveal the interplay private cult had within the structures of the civic cult, from individual participation in festivals to processional activities. This chapter will focus on the inquiry concerning the individual and their relation to private cultic activities while subsequent chapters will explore private cult from the perspective of the family and the interplay between the private and public cult activities.

The first century B.C.E. author Marcus Terentius Varro illustrates well the individual engaging in private cultic ritual in such a way that he enables a grasp of private cults essential quality: ritual expression that is properly couched in piety (*pietas*) and devotion (*religio*) undertaken in a face-to-face manner between the worshipper and his gods. In his agricultural treatise, *Rerum Rusticarum*, Varro begins his work with an immediate example of the physicality of the author's devotion, where he invokes the gods

in a visceral, almost instinctual manner to align to his purpose, the "twelve divinities who are the tutelaries of husbandry":

> First, I call upon Father *Jupiter* and Mother *Earth*, who fecundate all the processes of agriculture in the air and in the soil, and hence are called the great parents.
>
> Second, I invoke the *Sun* and the *Moon* by whom seasons for sowing and reaping are measured.
>
> Third, I invoke *Ceres* and *Bacchus* because the fruits they mature are most necessary to life, and by their aid the land yields food and drink.
>
> Fourth, I invoke *Rogibus* and *Flora* by whose influence the blight is kept from crop and tree, and in due season they bear fruit (for which reason is the annual festival of the *Robigala* celebrated in honor of *Robigus*, and the fruit of floralia in honor of *Flora)*.
>
> Next I supplicate *Minerva*, who protects the olive; and *Venus*, the goddess of the garden, wherefore is she worshipped at the rural wine festivals.
>
> And last: I adjure *Lympha*, goddess of the fountains, and *Bonus Eventus*, god of good fortune, since without water all vegetation is starved and stunted and without due order and good luck all tillage is in vain.[123]

Varro directly addresses his gods face-to-face according to his needs and demonstrates how his actions are in conformity with the actions of others as well. Varro does this through his reference to the cultic activities in rural communities, first of the *Robigala*, and then the rural wine festivals or the *Vinalia.* Varro's invocation and supplication is deliberately calculated not only to meet his needs but is also designed not to offend. He is categorical and complete in his approach to invocation and supplication, addressing no less than a dozen deities so that not only will his endeavor to write an agricultural treatise succeed but that it will not in any way be thwarted by a slighted god or goddess. Varro is seen then to

[123] Varro, "Rerum Rusticarum," in *Roman Farm Management: the treatises of Cato and Varro done in English*, tran. Fairfax Harrison (New York: The MacMillan Company 1915), 51.

demonstrate *pietas* in his careful and inclusive attitude which results in appropriate *religio,* thereby guaranteeing the success of his literary enterprise.[124] Finally, while it is clear that the author seeks the favor of the gods through his ritual acts, he is nonetheless seeking to accomplish more than an orthopraxic exchange. Rather, Varro, through his invocation an supplication to the gods, wishes to engage in a communicative discourse with the named deities.

Varro's personal, face-to-face approach to ritual is replicated by the first century land surveyor, Siculus Flaccus. In his *De Agorum Conditionibus et Constitutionibus Limitum*, Flaccus illustrated the way in which landowners sanctified boundaries of two or more landowners, stating

> [W]hen they set up the stones [*terminus*], they stood them erect on firm ground, close to the place where they had dug the hole in which they were about to place it, and they adorned it with ointments, fillets, and garlands. Above the hole in which it was to be set a sacrifice was offered; an animal was slain and set afire with torches; its blood was allowed to run down into the hole, and incense and fruit [or grain, *fruges*] were thrown into it. So also honeycombs and wine and other things, which it was customary to offer to the boundary stone, were added. When the whole sacrifice [*dapidus*] had been burned up, the stone was let down upon the still warm remains and it was settled firmly in place. Pieces of stone were laid about it and tamped down hard, to hold it secure. The sacrifice was brought by the owners of the property between which the boundary ran.[125]

As was the case with Varro, one finds Flaccus describing rites that were appropriately devoted and fittingly directed to the gods who were of immediate relevance. These private individuals directly approached the god (probably *Terminus* since this *numen* was in some circumstances portrayed as being the occupying force within a stone) and sought

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[124] H. J. Rose, *Ancient Roman Religion* (New York: Barnes and Noble 1995), 87

[125] Siculus Flaccus,"De Agorum Conditionibus et Constitutionibus Limitum" in *Ancient Roman Religion.* ed. Frederick C. Grant (New York:The Liberal Arts Press 1957), 9.

to propitiate the spirit for the benefit of those landowners on the boundary.[126] While not as categorical and cautious as the approach taken by Varro, the boundary rites described by Flaccus nevertheless observe the requirements of *pietas* and *religio*, where consideration is made to what is necessary to gain the god's approval and then followed up with appropriate ritual, in this case, sacrifice.

Lucius Apuleius' second century C.E. writings likewise illustrate this face-to face approach and firmly illustrate both *pietas* and *religio*. Ritual acts designed to venerate the gods were firmly integrated with an individual's life processes. The religious wayfarer, according to Apuleius, sought to invoke the blessings of the gods wherever he encountered them. Thus, the pilgrim, ". . .when some grove or sacred alcove present[ed] itself to them on their way. . . ma[de] a suit to the gods, to set down fruit, and to sit down for awhile."[127] When passing a temple or sacred building, *pietas* required recognition of the presence of any deity that might be in residence followed by appropriate *religio*. At minimum, this would require the *adorare*, or the kiss of veneration.[128] Of the textual references to *adorare*, Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History* described the act as "[i]n adorando dextram ad osculum referimus totumque corpus circumagimus" ("In veneration, we kiss the right hand and we bring back around the whole body").[129] Apuleius himself, writing in his work the *Metamorphosis*, makes a more explicit statement of the gesture, stating that "[e]t admoventes oribus suis dexteram primore digito in erectum pollicem residente, ut ipsam Venerem prorsus deam religiosis

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[126] For reference to *Terminus* and stones, see W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals*, 326.
[127] Apuleius, "Florida" in *Apuleius: Rhetorical Works* trans. Stephen Harrison, John Hilton and Vincent Hunink (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001), 136.
[128] Apuleius, "Apology" in *Apuleius: Rhetorical Works* trans. Stephen Harrison, John Hilton and Vincent Hunink (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001), 79.
[129] Marti Berthe,"Proskynesis and Adorare," *Language*. 12, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1936): 273-279.

adorationibus venerabantur."("And you move by the mouth on the right side the first finger in extension to the place of the thumb, as you yourself pay straight forward homage to Venus by sacred worship").[130] An individual passing a sacred grove, holy grotto or altar might wish or even feel compelled to go beyond mere summary ritual and engage in a plenary ritual practice. In such circumstances, according to Apuleius, wayfarers could demonstrate a more robust ritual practice by placing wreaths of flowers on altars and hides and horns on trees, such as the beech, sacred to *Diana*, or the oak, sacred to *Jupiter* and his consort, *Juno*.[131]

Aside from the manner in which individuals engaged in ritual, it is also instructive to consider the medium through which ritual was undertaken to appeal to the gods. Sickness and a need for healing was one such occasion in which a particular medium was used in conjunction with ritual acts to enable the individual to personally sought to engage the gods to bring about their help in times of crisis. Beginning in the fourth century B.C.E., anatomically shaped terracottas representing internal and external organs, heads, limbs, ears, eyes, genitalia and feet were dedicated at sanctuaries by individuals seeking cures for disease.[132] These votives were ". . .offered up as part of a ritual act, and then displayed in the sanctuary or ritually buried" in a sacred precinct.[133] Since they were mass produced and were of little artistic merit, these terracottas have been considered to be a form of low-cost offering to the gods by the poor.[134] What is most significant about

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[130] Berthe, 279.
[131] Apuleius, *Florida*, 137; James George Frazier, *The Golden Bough* (New York:Collier Books 1950),75, 174.
[132] Beard, North, Price 12-13; Fay Glinister, "Reconsidering 'religious Romanization' in *Religion in Republican Italy*, ed. Celia E. Schultz and Paul B. Harvey, Jr. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006), 10.
[133] Glinister, 10.
[134] Glinister, 10-11.

these terracottas, however, is that, while they were mass produced, they were also produced in such variety as to allow the individual the opportunity to particularize their ritualistic act, selecting the appropriate votive (i.e. genitalia) which matched the particular circumstances (i.e. impotence or infertility), next choosing the appropriate god and sacred precinct to make a dedication of the votive (i.e. Tiber Island at the sanctuary of the healing god *Aesculapius*).[135] Not every location where terracottas have been found have overt implications with healing. As one scholar has noted, anatomical terracottas ". . .appear most often at sanctuaries without any clear health connections at all."[136] Nonetheless, such appeals by individuals who employed votives undertook a personal appeal to the general *numinal* powers and the gods to bring health to the individual outside of the context of the State ritual structure.

A similar medium of ritual devotion can be found among Romans who employed "sacred water" for purposes of healing, cleansing, and purification.[137] Sacred water was water that was obtained from a source that had close affinity with a deity. As with the ritual use of terracotta votives, individuals who employed sacred water did so often without the assistance of a *flamen* or *pontiff*.[138] However, unlike supplication undertaken with terracottas which appealed to the generic potency of the gods, the place from which the sacred water was obtained was largely associated with a deity or *numen*.[139] Water was used to purify the individual and the individual's live-stock, and it could be used to

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[135] Glinister, 12.
[136] Glinister, 13.
[137] Ingrid Edlun-Berry, "Hot cold, or smelly: the power of sacred water in Roman religion 400-100 B.C.' in *Religion in Republican Italy*, ed. Celia E. Schultz and Paul B. Harvey, Jr. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006), 163.
[138] Edlum-Berry, 170.
[139] Edlum-Berry, 173

enhance the goods of a merchant before sale.[140] As Macrobius has stated, the proper use of water was necessary to approach the realm of the sacred, where ". . .someone intending to sacrifice to the heavenly gods washes his body clean" but to approach the gods of the underworld it is enough "merely to sprinkle oneself."[141]

Individual ritual was hardly confined to purely orthopraxic ends. Sometimes the *quid pro quo* commonly found in ritual undertakings was mixed with other motives. While water could also be used as a medium to bring about healing, it could also be a means of transmitting messages and prayers to the gods or *numenal* forces. For example, in Roman *Aquae Sulis*, the Hamble Estuary, and in other locales, various curse tablets have been discovered in mineral rich hot springs and other healing waters. The tablets, composed on a lead-tin alloy, were thinly hammered sheets in which a text has been incised.[142] The subject of the text was in the form of a prayer seeking the assistance of a god to extract retribution or to otherwise correct a wrong. Thus, a tablet found in the Hamble Estuary reads:

> domine Neptune, / tibi dono hominem qui / (solidum) involavit Mu- / coni et argentiolos / sex. ideo dono nomina / qui decepit, si mascel si / femina, si puuer si puue- / lla. ideo dono tibi, Niske, / et Neptuno vitam, vali- / tudinem, sanguem eius / qui conscius fueris eius / deceptionis. animus / qui hoc involavit et / qui conscius fuerit ut / eum decipias. furem / qui hoc involavit sanguem / eiius consumas et de- / cipias, domine Nep- / tune.
>
> Lord *Neptune*, I give you the man who has stolen the solidus and six argentioli of Muconius. So I give the names who took them away, whether male or female, whether boy or girl. So I give you, *Niskus*, and to *Neptune* the life, health, blood of him who has been privy to that taking-away. The mind which stole this and which has been privy to it, may you take it away. The thief who stole this, may you consume his blood and take it away, Lord *Neptune*[143]

Seeking the assistance of *Niskus* and *Neptune*, the former god being associated with the latter, the author of the curse tablet seeks an exchange of the unknown thief's "life, health, and blood" in return for rectification of their crime against the author of the tablet.

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[140] Edlum-Berry, 170
[141] Macrobius, *Saturnalia* II (Cambridge:Harvard University Press 2011), 3.1.6 (5)
[142] British Academy, "A Corpus of Writing-Tablets from Roman Britain" http://www.csad.ox.ac.uk/rib/ribiv/jp4.htm (accessed September 6, 2014). Translation that of the British Academy.
[143] British Academy, "A Corpus of Writing-Tablets from Roman Britain" http://www.csad.ox.ac.uk/rib/ribiv/jp4.htm (accessed September 6, 2014).

The ritual act was done without the assistance of *pontiffs* or *flamen*. Moreover, the undertaking was initiated with proper consideration for *pietas* and *religio,* where all relevant gods were acknowledged and invoked, and where the appropriate ritual and medium for ritual was employed. Finally, like Varro's invocation, the Hamble Estuary curse tablet demonstrates that ritual could transcend mere orthopraxic ends and could seek direct communicative discourse with the pertinent gods.

In summary, Roman rites and practices not only existed outside of the confines of the civic cult but provided a robust and autonomous outlet for the individual to have their needs met. This occurred through orthopraxic exchange such as where healing and purification were sought but could also involve ritual based discourse with the gods. These private cultic practices involved the individual being engaged, face-to-face with the gods and, as in the case of the terracotta anatomical votives, provided an opportunity to be innovative with the ritual, thereby creating a unique ritual identity within the context of the overall culture.

While the preceding examples all involved the individual supplicating the gods on their own behalf, it is also important to recognize that cultic rites and practices undertaken by individuals could and frequently did address the needs of others as well. Beginning with the family or *familia*, private cult could also address the needs of the tribe or *gens*, the village or *pagus*, and the country or *patria* without the benefit of official state sanction. The next section will extend the examination of the topography of private cult from the individual in the family, noting the trends that have already begun to be developed where the individual is actively engaged in cultic activity outside of the civic cult; where ritual is the primary component of the cultic activity, and where ritual

accomplishes not only orthopraxic ends but other important tasks like providing a basis for discourse with the gods, bringing about healing and purification, and giving rise to an individualized ritual identity within the context of the larger cult.

CHAPTER 5: ROMAN PRIVATE CULT AND THE HOUSEHOLD

The Roman household was the primary vehicle for the sustenance of the family as well as the primary cultic center for the devotion and supplication of the gods of the family. By household, it is meant not only a nuclear family of a husband, wife and his children but also all the immediate dependents of the family, including household slaves and freemen in the employ of the household. The head of the household, the *paterfamilias*, was responsible for practicing ritual for the family and the family's slaves as well as assuring the correct and proper observance of necessary rites and practices.[144] Other persons, such as the slave charged with housekeeping, also had responsibilities, which included, aside from maintaining the house ". . . neat in appearance, . . .[and] swept and garnished, . . . she should see that the hearth is swept and clean. On the *Kalends*, the *Ides*, the *Nones* and on all feast days, she should hang a garland over the hearth. On those days also she should pray fervently to the household gods."[145] Part of that responsibility of the *paterfamilias* involved the placement, construction and maintenance of household shrines. Cicero relates that his household gods were maintained in a shrine, which included among the other images a statue of *Minerva*,

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[144] Cato, *De Agricultura*, CXLIII (35).

[145] The *Kalends* was the first day of the month or the day of the new moon. The *Nones* were the day of the half moon, eight days prior to the Ides; the *Ides* was the day of the full moon and was the 13th day of the month (February) and the 15th on months with 31 days. See W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals* at 7-8. See also Cato, *De Agricultura*, CXLIII (36).

"protectress of Rome."[146] One may imagine how these gods were arrayed through the mental imagery provided by Petronius' character Encolpius, who, arriving at the villa of the wealthy patrician Trimalchio, described a shrine he encountered in the interior of Trimalchio's villa:

> In one corner was a large cabinet, which served as a shrine for some silver statutes of the household deities with a marble figure of Venus and an impressive gold casket in which, they told me, the master's first beard was preserved.[147]

Such shrines, or *lararia*, have been recovered in homes in Campania, most notably in Ostia and Pompeii.[148] There are two elements *lararia* share in common. First, every *lararium* provided some visual representation of the household gods.[149] These images, which might involve the household *di penates, Lares*, or *Genius*, could be statuary placed within the shrine or painted representations of the same.[150] Secondarily, each *lararium* provided some means to engage in the ritual sacrifice owed to the household gods, most typically through the provision of an altar.[151] As Michael Lipka has noted in his work with regard to households in Pompeii, the number of gods worshipped, particularly the *di penates*, could vary dependent on the needs and predilections of the owner of the house, with gods added or subtracted based upon the needs of the day.[152] In terms of structure, *laraia* could take the form of a simple niche, an "*aedicula*" or a more formalized structure, or consist merely of a wall painting.[153] The choice of the location of a

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[146] Cicero, "*De Legibus*" in *Classics in Translation* ed. Paul MacHendrick ad Herbert M. Howe (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1952), II.42 (156).
[147] Petronius, *The Satyricon*, trans. J.P. Sullivan (London: Penguin Books 1986),XV.29(53).
[148] George K. Boyce, "Corpus of the Lararia of Pompeii" *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 14 (1937), 10.
[149] Boyce, 10.
[150] Boyce, 10.
[151] Boyce, 10.
[152] Michael Lipka, "Notes on Pompeian Domestic Cults," *Numen* 53, Fasc. 3 (2006), 344.
[153] Boyce, 10-11.

household shrine in many cases yielded to practical considerations such as the need for fire, the need to ventilate smoke, and the need to dispose of ashes. As a result, *lararia* have frequently been found in the hearth areas of the kitchen, in the garden, or in the atrium, but would rarely be found in bedrooms, banquet rooms or studies.[154] The choice of the form of a *lararia* and its particular construction by the *paterfamilias* gave rise to what Louis Revell would consider religious discourse ". . . which reaffirmed the structures of society and the person's own [ritual] identity."[155] Those social structures, as they involved the head of the household, included not only duty and obligation to the family but the very idea of how ritual acts were to be undertaken.

Take, for example, the *lararium* found in the Pompeian house of Julius Polybius (Figure 1). This home, a *villa* or a larger *domus*, or traditional one-story Roman house, located in the northeastern quarter of the city, contains a *lararium* next to a stove.[156] The structure itself is a wall painting whose field contains a number of figures, including the *paterfamilias* and his wife (center right and left) making a sacrifice on the household altar, representations of the *Lares* in the form of a serpent (*agathodemon),* a youth playing a flute, a youth bearing offerings, as well as representations of *Lares* on either side of the worshipping couple.[157] Aside from this, the field also contains a variety of floral motifs, in the form of a border and decoration at the bottom of the field. Julius Polybius, as the *paterfamilias*, had a range of options with regard to the form of the

[154] Lipka,329.
[155] Revell, 12.
[156] Pierre Giovanni Guzzo and Antonio d'Ambrosia, *Pompeii* (Naples:Electra Napoli 2009),138.
[157] Guzzo and Ambrosia, 138.

Figure 1: Lararium from the House of Julius Polybius.

Source: Alfredo & Pio Foglio, *Pompeii* (Naples: Electra Napoli 2009),138

lararium but chose the painted form as the most efficacious way to satisfy his family's needs. Likewise, he had a choice of representational forms, color schemes, and organization within the frame of the painting's borders. By making such choices, the *paterfamilias* personally negotiated the form of his family's *lariarial* worship. His choices formed a discourse, with the conversation taking place between the ritual forms undertaken by the *paterfamilias* and his family and the ritual forms inherited from familial ancestors. On a larger scale, these ritual choices made on the household level also had implications for Roman society in general, with innovation on the domestic level altering the overall meaning and definition of what it meant to engage in ritual acts as a Roman.

Family-based worship as well involved proper veneration and sacrifice to the *di penates*, the gods of the household. Apulieus, in his *Apology*, references one of his

household gods to whom he would address regular prayers.[158] The statue was of *Mercury* and was made of ebony, the wood being fashioned from a box which had been skillfully disassembled and reformed by the master craftsman Cornelius Saturninus.[159] Apuleius relates that, with regard to household gods of this type, he was in the habit of carrying ". . . wherever I go, a statuette of some god, keeping it among my books. On feasts I offer up incense and wine to it, and sometimes an animal victim."[160] Apuleius' testimony provides significant insight into how an individual negotiated private worship of household gods. Veneration first included the choice of god and choice of materials for fashioning the god's image. In Apuleius' case, this was ebony. Citing Plato, he believed that the use of other materials would either bring about envy (silver and gold) or would otherwise be impious (ivory).[161] Ritual veneration also involved choices of sacrifice, which might be as meager as incense and wine or as elaborate as an animal sacrifice. As was the case with the ritual choices made in the *House of Julius Polybius*, Apuleius makes choices that are based upon his individual needs and circumstances. His ritual is fundamentally orthopraxic, designed to obtain the blessing and protection of the *di penates* over his household. However, Apuleius' innovation in his ritual acts creates a personal ritual identity. Moreover, these same acts allow Apuleius to engage in a discursive activity, the conversation being a triangulated one involving Apuleius' innovated ritual forms, those ritual structures inherited from his ancestors, and those ritual structures practiced in his greater urban community.

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[158] Apuleius, *Apology*, 84.
[159] Apuleius, *Apology*, 84.
[160] Apuleius, *Apology*, 85.
[161] Apuleius, *Apology*, 86-87.

The 1891 excavation of the garden shrine of the *House of Cenaculo* in Pompeii (Figure 2), found in Regio II in the eastern part of the city, provides additional evidence with regard to domestic ritual regarding the *di penates*. The most elaborate of the three

Figure 2. Garden Shrine of House of Cenaculo

Source: George K. Boyce**,** *Corpus of the Lararia of Pompeii*. Rome: Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome 14. (1937), 37, no.108, Pl. 8,1.

lararia found at the villa (the other two being in the kitchen and in the vestibule), the garden shrine ". . .was given strong architectural emphasis. . .[with] a projecting floor and frame in the form of an *aeaedicula*-facade, complete with polychrome stucco decoration."[162] Within the niche, " . . . a figure of Hercules was depicted next to an altar on the one side and a hog on the other, apparently a sacrificial scene.[163] What was most significant about this *lararium* was the fact that it was unearthed with a full set of the

[162] Lipka, 330.
[163] Lipka, 330-331.

household *di penates*, along with the ashes of a sacrifice, *in situ*.[164] Among the objects were included ". . .a bronze statuette of Mercury, a terracotta figurine of Minerva, along with a bronze statuette of devotional figure and a small round altar with the remains of sacrificial ashes."[165] The evidence presented through the finds of the *House of Cenaculo,* including the number of shrines, the household gods chosen, and the materials from which the gods were manufactured, all represent personal choices made by the *paterfamilias.* These choices were made to meet the needs of the household but at the same time engaged with and modified both the ritual forms received from the *paterfamilias*' ancestors as well as the general Roman cultural framework from which such ritual, in part, arose. This variation within the ancestral and general cultural parameters can also be identified with regard to the objects used for supplication (in this case a burnt offering) and the manner in which the three shrines were utilized in the household (i.e. whether the family used one shrine while the slaves used another, whether each was used for particular gods, etc.). By making such choices, the *paterfamilias* personally negotiated the form of his family's *lariarial* worship. His choices formed a discourse between the *paterfamilias* and his family and the familial ancestors, this discourse being the formal interplay between the innovated ritual practice of the Polybius household and that received from the family ancestors. On a larger scale, these ritual choices made on the household level also had implications for Roman society in general, with innovation on the domestic level altering the overall meaning and definition of what it meant to engage in ritual acts as a Roman.

[164] Lipka, 331.
[165] Lipka, 331.

The remaining elements of family-based private cult involved the *Genius* of the head of the *familia*, the *paterfamilias*. Every individual was believed to have their own *Genius*, the spirit being responsible for the bringing the individual to life and guarding the individual throughout their life.[166] However, it was the *Genius* of the household, as a guardian spirit which assisted the *paterfamilias* and the adult males within a family to protect and continue the life of the *gens*, which was venerated and worshipped by the

Figure 3: Dual Genius from the Lararium of the House of the Vetti

Source: Source: Alfredo & Pio Foglio, *Pompeii* (Naples: Electra Napoli 2009),103.

family.[167] The first century C.E. poet Tibullus urges that worship of the household *Genius* was particularly apt on an individual's birthday.[168] The manner of worship would involve individual veneration of the *genius*' image where ". . .the brow of the [*G]enius* was to be moistened with wine, just as his hair was to run down with unguents." The household

[166] Tibullus and Sextus Propertius, *Selections from Tibullus and Sextus Propertius*, trans. George Gilbert Ramsay (Oxford: Clarenden Press 1895), 147 (note 49).
[167] W. Warde Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 75.
[168] Tibullus, 147 (note 49).

Genius could also be celebrated through". . .sport and dance." [169] In terms of the physical imagery of the *Genius* and topography of its worship, the archeological record provides a number of interesting hints. In his *Corpus of the Lararia* of Pompeii, George K. Boyce has catalogued extensively Pompeian *lararia* and has documented the gods and *numena* portrayed, including those related to the *Genius* of particular households. The *Genii*, when portrayed (e.g. Figure 3), are typically cast as robed-youth engaged in pouring a libation upon an altar from a cornucopia.[170] Variations include multiple *Genii*, a *Genius* without a cornucopia or without an altar, and with various *Lares* or assistants. [171]

The *Genius*, like the *Lares* and *di penates*, appear frequently together and were therefore worshipped in the same locations, that is, where the *lararia* were located. As mentioned before, the creation of sacred space in the Roman home would often be tempered by practical considerations, and thus the distribution of the *Genius*, as with the *Lares* and *di penates*, would not be uniformly found throughout a domestic space. That being said, a statuette of a bronze *Genius*, thought once to be gilt, was found in the *Violo delle Nozze d'Argento* bounding Region V of the city of Pompeii to the North, along with a number of other statuary, including a bronze of *Isis-Fortuna* and a female nude, possibly that of *Diana*.[172] While these objects, separated from a *lararium*, could be accounted for by looting on the eve of the city's destruction, the poor artistic execution of these objects, particularly the *Genius*, seems somewhat to negate such a hypothesis. Likely, clearly valuable objects would be sought out where time was of the essence, such as was the case during the eruption. These objects, not fitting this description, may for

[169] Tibullus, 12.
[170] Boyce, 21; Plate 15,16, 18, 22
[171] Boyce, 24; 30; 34; 35; 65; 89-90.
[172] Boyce, 108-109.

that reason have actually been household gods which were in the process of being evacuated or gods set out with some attempt to consecrate a section of the street.

Finally, it is necessary to consider the demarcation of sacred from secular space within the household as a deliberate, ritualistic act that constituted an essential part of a family's domestic cult activities. Paul Veyne has said that all interior spaces within a well-appointed home, or *domus*, belonged to the sphere of private life.[173] However, the construction and layout of the living spaces varied ". . . with some parts closed to the outside world, others not."[174] In the same way, while the bulk of the living space in a home was devoted to the secular purposes of the family, others parts were not and were dedicated to strictly sacred enterprises. Dividing the *domus* between sacred and secular spaces was an act of consecration and like other ritual acts could be orthopraxic in its design to secure the blessings of the household gods. However, the segregation of sacred space also had the effect of creating an "as if" subjunctive world which had a transcending effect, placing the family when they were engaged in worship in the company of the gods. This is apparent when one considers the architectural devices and images portrayed in *lararia*.

Consider the *House of the Pareti rosse*, a *domus* that stood in southwest corner of the city in Region VIII in Pompeii (Figure 4). Like many in Pompeii, this home possessed at *atrium*, an open room where a visitor would be directed after passing

[173] Paul Veyne, "Private and Public Spaces: the Components of the Domus" in *A History of Private Life*, ed. Paul Veyne and translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Belknap Press 1987), 353.
[174] Veyne, 353.

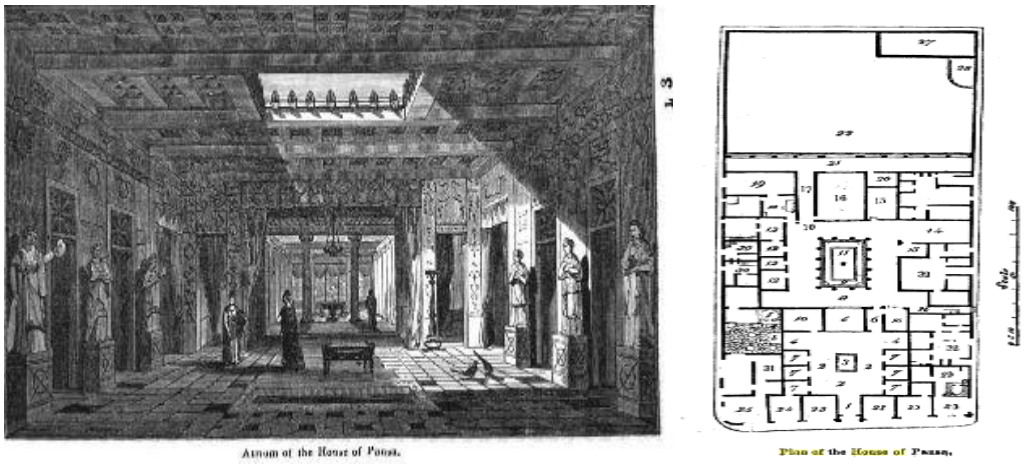

Figure 4a: Atrium of a Domus. Note the (a) compluvium (above); (b)the impluvium (below); and the (c) peristyle in the background (center).

Figure 4b: Plan of the same Domus

Source: George Clarke, *Pompeii* (London: Charles Knight, 1832), 59, 107.,

through the *fauces*, or entry hall. The *atrium* (Figure 4a) was typically equipped with an *impluvium* , or shallow pool which collected and drained rainwater to an underground cistern which penetrated the roof through an opening, or *compluvium* (Figure 4a-b). This opening was a major source of sunlight for the *villa*, which, largely lacking windows, had no other source of light other than the opening to the *peristyle*, or outdoor colonnaded courtyard, and indoor braziers and lanterns. The *atrium* of a *villa* was an important structural component of the grander style home, not only because it was a major source of light but because around the *atrium*, which typically helped form the central axis of the home, were organized the main reception rooms where clients and guests of the *paterfamilias* would be received.[175]As a public room, the *atrium* was the first important room of the home observed by a person visiting the home. As such, the *atrium* was frequently appointed in such a way as convey standing, or *dignitas*, to the owner which in turn helped define the identity of the *familia* within the greater community.

[175] Andrew Wallace Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1994), 83.

1. VIII, v—vi, 37, *Casa delle Pareti Rosse*: Atrium (with the statuettes as they were found). (571) Photograph Sommer.

Figure 5*: Lararium* of the Casa della Pareti rosse

Source: George K. Boyce, "Corpus of the Lararia of Pompeii," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 14 (1937). Plate 31.

In the *Casa delle Pareti rosse,* the *lararium* of the *domus* was found on the east wall of the atrium (Figure 5).[176] It possessed an *aedicular* form and contained both a painting and statuettes which included representations of *Aesculapius*, *Apollo*, *Mercury*, *Hercules*, and two *Lares*.[177] The yellow painting in the background center was the ". . . *Genius* in his usual attire and attitude stand[ing] beside an altar furnished with fruit; on each side is a *Lar* in green tunic and red outer garment or pallium and holding a *rhytion*, or drinking horn, and *situla*, an urn for drawing water. On the dark red ground of the base are painted two yellow serpents confronted at an altar which is painted in the center of the front side; on the altar are two eggs and a pine cone."[178] All of this was framed by two

[176] Boyce, 77; Plate 31.
[177] Boyce, 77; Plate 31.
[178] Boyce, 77.

columns ". . . covered in stucco and painted to resemble yellow marble."[179] A round volute altar (not shown) was placed before the *lararium* for the purpose of making sacrifices.

Those who encountered this *lararium*, whether a guest or client, the *paterfamilias* or members of his household, would be confronted with architectural and artistic forms which would allow a viewer to transcend the public space in which the *lararium* was located. The *atrium,* bathed in sun-light, would have stood apart from the darkened surrounding interior rooms of the *domus,* amplifyng the importance of the ritual shrine contained within it. Resembling a magnificent temple, the *lararium* would engage the mind with its symbolism: pine cones representing fertility; eggs representing both fertility and rebirth; and dual serpents representing the *Genius* of the paterfamilias and his wife.[180] The array of statuettes provided representations of an array of gods, from the healing god *Aesculapias,* to *Apollo* and *Mercury,* and the household *Lares*. A member of the household, placing a sacrificial offering in front of these images, would effectively be face-to-face with these gods, and mentally and emotionally such a person would transcend the real world environment, being as if he or she were in the *cella* of a temple devoted to these gods, in their very presence providing them appropriate sacrifice in exchange for their blessing and protection. This transcendence of the actual "as is" world to the subjunctive "as if" world was a very tangible outcome of private cultic ritual, as it was on the level of the public civic cult. The subjunctive world created amounted to a sanctuary where the everyday cares, disappointments, and tragic circumstances of life

[179] Boyce, 77.
[180] August Mau, *Pompeii: Its Life and Art*, trans. Francis W. Kelsey (Washington, D.C.: McGrath Publishing co. 1909 (reprint 1973), 272.

were eroded. Ritual acts of consecration, prayer, and sacrifice, whether undertaken in the private *lararium* or in the temple of *Jupiter Optimus Maximus*, enabled the supplicant to supplant the actual world, replacing it instead with an ideal world where the deities and *numenal* forces benevolently held sway over all before them.

The desire to sanctify an area of a *domus* or *villa* was not a decision that was confined to the interior of the home. Shrines have also been found in Pompeii which created sacred space on the exterior walls that fronted urban streets. Mirroring the architectural styles of found in the interior of homes, these shrines could be as minimal as a small niche with an altar to a sacred space the size of a small chapel.[181] Generally these

Figure 6. Street shrine with niche and altar

Source: August Mau, *Pompeii: Its Life and Art*, trans. Francis W. Kelsey (Washington, D.C.: McGrath Publishing co. 1909 (reprint 1973), 236.

[181] Mau, 233-235.

shrines were dedicated to the *Lares Compitales*, or the guardian deities of the street crossings.[182] Frequently there also were representations of the *Genius* of the household to which the shrine was attached, as in the case of interior shrines, the *Genii* being represented by serpents, one representing the *paterfamilias* while the other, if present, representing his wife.[183] A typical but interesting example of a street shrine is one that was erected in Regio IX of Pompeii on the left side of *Viccolo della Regina* (Figure 6). Consisting of a large niche and an altar, a person passing along could merely pay respect to the god or gods to whom the altar was dedicated or, if they chose, he or she could fully engage in ritual through sacrifice. Noteworthy on the altar of the shrine are scrolled "handles" which would enable a person engaged in ritual prayer to grasp the altar. Such grasping or taking hold of an altar was thought to be necessary to propitiate the gods during prayer.[184] Regardless of the actions of those who visited the shrine, the consecration of the walled space by the home owner ritually placed the property containing the shrine under the protection of the god to whom the shrine was devoted. Thus, the ritual act of street consecration had the same subjunctive effect outside the home as it did within the home, creating an "as if" world where immunity was created from the natural disasters and pitfalls of urban living, the household being safeguarded through ritual acts which created a world of godly blessing and protection.

In summary, the ritual that took place in Roman households represented one of the most fundamental spheres of private cultic expression, encompassing not only supplication of the gods for the benefit of the individual but also for the benefit of the

[182] Mau, 233.
[183] Mau, 234.
[184] Macrobius, III.2.7-2.9 (11).

household. Such ritual practice insured not only the prosperity and continuity of the *familia* but also contributed to the development of private cult outside the boundaries of the household. Individuals implemented particular choices when negotiating worship of the gods. These choices, like other aspects of domestic cult activity, altered the fabric of what it meant to engage in private cult within the context of the inherited ritual of the *gens* but also from those forms inherent within the *pagus* and the *patria*, affecting not only what it meant to engage in private cultic practices in a city like Pompeii but also in the larger context of the Roman Republic and Empire. Equally significant, the placement of the *lararia* demonstrates how individual Roman families topographically divided their home into sacred and secular space. In so doing, private domestic cult was able to engage in creating a subjunctive world, replicating on a smaller scale what the pontiffs, augurs and haruspices accomplished in the temples of the State. In both cases, there was created in both the *lararium* and the temple a sanctuary where the everyday cares, disappointments, and tragic circumstances of life were eroded and in some respects supplanted by the ideal world of the deities and *numenal* forces, where the world was re-created, if only for a brief time, from what it was to what it ought to be.

In the chapter which follows, the ritual tools used by the family in their daily life will be applied to the disposition of the dead. Beginning with ritual prayer, the private cultic acts of ritual related to the preparation of the body, the cleansing of the home in which the deceased passed and the consecration of the burial space are investigated along with ritual funerary banqueting. It will be shown that like the private cult of the household, Roman funerary cult worked with a range of ritual tools to accomplish diverse

aims including purification, consecration, and creation of a subjunctive environment where there was a return to the status quo ante prior to the coming of death.

CHAPTER 6: PRIVATE CULT AND THE PROCESS OF DEATH AND BURIAL

As daily life in the Roman Republic and Early Empire was so thoroughly pervaded by ritual, so also was the process of death and burial. Mortality rates in Rome, particularly among infants and children were high.[185] At the same time, the average life span was low, with many individuals reaching the end of their life by the age of thirty.[186] As a result, there was a significant body of cultic ritual that was specifically related to the final hours of a person's days on earth and their eventual burial. While certainly the civic cult was involved with ritual acts related to death and burial, more often as not, these ritual acts would involve significant members of the Roman State. Thus, for example, upon the death of Germanicus, the nephew and adopted son of the Emperor Tiberias, there were accorded honors in Rome upon his death amounting to ritual deification, the dedication of games, and public sacrifices.[187] For most others, however, private cultic ritual filled the needs when a person became terminally ill or had died and was in need of final rites.

As with other forms of private ritual, the tools used by the individual, family or small group varied depending upon what was seeking to be accomplished. Prayer was a common ritual practice engaged in on behalf of those who were on the verge of death or who had already died. As noted by Pliny the Elder, prayer, at least on the civic level,

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[185] Jo-Ann Shelton, *As the Roman's Did*, 2d. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998), 90.
[186] Shelton, 90.
[187] James H. Oliver and Robert E.A. Palmer, "Text of the Tabula Hebana," *The American Journal of Philology* 75, No. 3 (1954), 225-249.

tended to follow formulas and was read from a book, with careful attention to detail to ensure that the request made to the gods was granted:

> It apparently does no good to offer a sacrifice or to consult the gods with due ceremony unless you also speak words of prayer. In addition, some words are appropriate for seeking favorable omens, others for warding off evil, and still others for securing help. We notice, for example, that our highest magistrates make appeals to the gods with specific and set prayers. And in order that no word be omitted or spoken out of turn, one attendant reads the prayer from a book, another is assigned to check it closely, a third is appointed to enforce silence. In addition, a flutist plays to block out any extraneous sounds.[188]

While civic cult ritual prayer was not given by a pontiff by a state magistrate, the process was carefully safeguarded by pontifical authority. This ensured no misspoken words or stray noise that would disrupt the petition uttered to the gods. Private cultic prayer no doubt had similarities, as exemplified by the words of Cato the Elder, who in his agricultural writings, instructs his readers to invoke the gods before sacrifice by first, offering incense and wine; offering sacrificial crackers and wine; then proceeding into prayer, addressing each god by name and title and saying, ". . . in offering to you these sacrificial crackers I humbly pray that you are benevolent and well disposed toward me and my children and my home and my family."[189] Cato's simple prayer formula involves essentially two parts; first, the invocation of the god, followed by the request for the welfare of the loved one. Thus, for example, on the tombstone of Lucius Sempronius Firmus set up by his wife in Rome, it is written:

> So I pray you, ye most sacred Manes, let my loved one be well received, and be graciously favorable to him, and let me behold him in the [long]

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[188] Pliny the Elder, "Natural History 28.23.10,11" in Joanne Shelton, ed. , *As the Romans Did* 2d(Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998), 371-372.
[189] Cato the Elder, "On Agriculture" in Joanne Shelton. ed., *As the Romans Did* 2d(Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998), 373-374.

> hours of the night, and let him even persuade Fate that I may the sweeter and sooner follow him.[190]

Aside from prayer, other ritual acts revolved around the disposition of the dead. The death of an individual was considered to bring upon a family a state of misfortune (*funesta*).[191] "The first and most obvious step to get rid of the undesirable state was to transfer the departed from the world of the living to that which was now his [or her] proper abode, the realm of the 'good people' (*manes*)."[192] This process, described by H. J. Rose, involved a significant ritual process:

> The corpse, laid on a bier of some kind, was washed, anointed, and, if that of a person of any official position, dressed in a costume befitting his [or her] rank. . . . The body was now taken to the burial-place, which might be somewhere on the land the living person had tilled, or in a suitable spot set apart for burials and cremations; very often tombs were at the side of roads, and all manner of constructions for the reception of corpses or ashes were made from time to time, varying, according to the date, the standing of the deceased, and the amount of expense that was thought proper, from the simplest pit in the soil or rock to the most elaborate monument.[193]

Whether or not the body of the deceased was inhumed or cremated, the important task was to assure that the body was buried, meaning that ". . . no bone of him [or her] was above ground."[194] The usual, though not universal method of disposition of the dead was through cremation.[195] In Pompeii and Greater Compania, the prevalence of niche type tombs suggests strongly that the cremation was the usual method relied upon in these areas, at least until 79 C.E., at which point a shift was detected, at least in Southern

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[190] "Inscription CIL, VI 18817," in Frederick C. Grant, ed., *Ancient Roman Religion* (New York: The Liberal Arts Press 1957), 228.
[191] Rose, 46.
[192] Roe, 46.
[193] Rose, 46-47.
[194] Rose, 47.
[195] Rose, 47

Campania, toward inhumation.[196] Regardless of the method utilized for disposition, until such time as the body was interred into the earth, the family was still under a state of *funesta* and the period of mourning was required to continue.[197]

When the body was removed from the home and transferred to the place of final disposition, private cultic rites were utilized to purify the home as well as consecrate the place of burial of either the body or the ashes of the deceased. This purification directly engaged the creation of a subjunctive world. The family of the deceased, undertaking ritual acts of purification, sought to restore that which was broken: the domestic harmony which had been fractured by the death of a member of the household. Such ritual included the sacrifice of a pig to sanctify the ground where the deceased would be buried, a sacrifice to the *Lares* in the home, and the ". . . *nouendiale sacrifium*, the offering of the ninth day, i.e., by our count, eight days from the burial."[198] Whether families actually carried out all or just some of the processes necessary for final disposition is the subject of debate. Allison L.C. Emerson, in her evaluation of a preserved legal inscription found in the Southern Campanian town of Puteoli, the *Lex Libitina*, indicates that ". . . funerary practices were already highly professionalized by the Augustan or Julio-Claudian period."[199] Based on the legal restrictions that applied to funeral industry professionals contained in the *Lex Libitina* regarding the time for disposition of the body, the mandated number of pallbearers, and other restrictions, the clear implication is that many funerals were in fact undertaken by professionals. Notwithstanding this, there is no indication that ritual activity was in any way diminished. Rather, ritual may have been enhanced. As the

[196] Allison L.C. Emerson, *Memoria et Monumenta: Local Identities and Tombs of Roman Compania*, PhD diss, University of Cincinnati, 2003),83
[197] Rose, 47.
[198] Rose, 47-48.
[199] Emerson, 282.

professional oversight involved in civic prayers led to greater efficiency and success in performing that ritual, so too might have the skill of funerary professionals added to the success of the rituals that would lead to purification of the home.

One final aspect of funerary ritual as yet undescribed involved funerary banquets. Banqueting ritual took place post-funeral and would be undertaken by the family of the deceased.[200] In those instances where the deceased was to be cremated, a funerary pyre was created at the gravesite where the body was burned and along with a sacrificial offering.[201] These ritual acts of cremation and sacrifice would involve an actual meal prepared and consumed by the family on the site as well as the crematory ritual:

> Offerings of fruit (most often figs, grapes, apples, and dates) and nuts (particularly chestnuts) were placed whole upon the pyre to be burned with the deceased, along with grains, cuts of meat (pork, sheep/goat, and chicken) and non-alimentary offerings such as ceramics, perfumed oils, and in all cases, a single coin, often interpreted as the 'obol for Charon.'[202]

Evidence of portable altars, resin from spent incense, the remains of flowers, and libation tubes at some sites in Campania suggest that funerary banqueting ritual also included drink offerings to the dead and other sacrifice outside of that which was made through the medium of the funeral pyre.[203]

In conclusion, like the ritual acts undertaken in a domestic setting, Roman private cult also expressed itself through funerary ritual which utilized various ritual tools to achieve a host of purposes. While possibly assisted by funerary professionals, families seeking final disposition of their loved ones engaged in or had performed by others private cultic acts to purify and transition the home from a state characterized by ill luck,

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[200] Emerson, 85-86.
[201] Emerson, 86.
[202] Emerson, 86.
[203] Emerson, 195.

to end the enforced morning period, and to consecrate the ground where the deceased would be interred.

With the next chapter, the study takes its inquiry outside the realm of private cult as carried out by the individual or family in a private or domestic setting. Rather, investigation is undertaken of private cult activity where the ritual acts undertaken are subsidiary to and contained within a general framework provided through public civic cult and its public officials. Individuals engaged in the performance of ritual acts within this framework achieved ends of orthopraxy but also created the potential for the development of cultic identity, among other aims sought to be achieved.

CHAPTER 7: PRIVATE CULT AND LARGER ASSOCIATIONS: PUBLIC FESTIVALS AND PROCESSIONS.

Public Festivals

Private cult was not the sole property of the individual or even his family. Private cult could also encompass the activities of small groups like festivals and processions. Festivals were part of the civic cult apparatus, focusing upon the veneration of the civic cult deities. As mentioned previously, the civic cult involved those rites and practices, sanctioned by and accommodated by the Roman State for the purpose of supplicating the gods undertaken or authorized by the college of pontiffs, augers and haruspices. Private cult, on the other hand, involved those rites and practices undertaken to supplicate the divine but authorized by the individual, the family, or the small group. Festivals and processions were celebrations authorized by *pontiffs* and *flamen* but were performed and celebrated by individuals. In this way, these activities constituted a hybridization of public and private cult and are troublesome to any attempt designate Roman cult into a rigid dichotomy. At their core, festivals and processions were an opportunity for individuals, through their own ritual activity, to contribute to the collective communal worship of the gods.

Festivals didn't just spontaneously happen but were rather were scheduled on appropriate dates throughout the Roman year. The Roman year, inherited from Numa Pompillius and continuing on through the modifications made by Julius Caesar, was one of twelve months.[204] Beginning in March and ending in February, each month was divided in turn by the lunar cycle, first with the *Kalends*, beginning the first day of the month and spanning the period of the new

[204] W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals*, 4-5.

moon, the *Nones*, or the eighth day prior to the Ides and beginning the period of the half moon, and the *Ides*, or the day beginning the period of the full moon. [205] Days in the month on the Roman calendar could be auspicious or inauspicious. For example, following the dictatorship of Marcus Furius Camillus in the fourth century B.C.E., Livy relates that the Roman civic *pontiffs* prevented misfortune to the Roman State by banning public activity on days displeasing to the gods.[206] The *pontiffs* therefore designated the fifteenth day of August, a day in which Rome suffered military loss, as one in which ". . .no public or private business should be transacted."[207] Likewise, such transactions were prohibited on other days that had proven calamitous in Rome's history.[208] In this vein, the days of any month, whether auspicious or inauspicious, were differentiated based upon their ritual significance on various posted calendars, with individuals being granted on auspicious days permissive license and prohibitive restriction on those days deemed inauspicious.[209]

Civil or judicial business could be conducted without fear of divine displeasure of the gods on the *fas* or *fastus* days.[210] Legal business could also be transacted on the days of *comitialis.* Combined, the *fastus* and the *comitialus* days totaled 239 days of the 365 in the year.[211] Days of prohibition related to worship of the dead, purification, agricultural rites, or days that relate to calamity were the days of *nefastus*, and included February 1-14; April 5-22; June 5-14; and July 1-

[205] W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals*, 7-8.
[206] Livy, VI.I (214).
[207] Livy, VI.I (214).
[208] Livy, VI.I (214).
[209] W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals*, 8.
[210] W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals*, 8.
[211] W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals*, 9.

9.[212] Interspersed among both the days of license and probation were the festival days, with each day dedicated to particular ritual necessary to propitiate the gods to whom the days were sacred.

Festivals provided significant opportunity for individuals to undertake cultic rites and could be part of the civic cult or be autonomous from it. Regardless of affiliation, private ritual acts carried out by individuals could have a significant role in the overall plan of supplicating the gods. One example of a festival where private cult ritual had a significant place was the *Robigala* Festival, one that was coincidentally mentioned by Varro. The festival, falling on a day of *nefastus*, took place annually on April 25, between a day of *comitalus* on April 24 and day of *fastus* on April 26. The festival was dedicated to *Robigo*, the god/goddess who was believed to have the power to ward off mildew in cereals, the mildew manifesting itself as a red rust in the grain.[213] *Robigo* had a sacred grove located " . . . at the fifth milestone of the Via Claudia", a Roman road which led from Rhaetia (southern Germany) across the Alps.[214] Ovid records an encounter there with a "white robed crowd" led by a *flamen* which blocked the road he was traveling.[215] The *flamen*, according to Ovid, accompanied by the white robed procession, was traveling to the grove. Once there, the *flamen*, surrounded by the throng, kindled a hearth and threw the entrails of a dog and a sheep in a fire, and then recited a prayer to *Robigus* designed to impede the

[212] W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals*, 9.
[213] W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals*, 88-89.
[214] W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals*, 89.
[215] Ovid, *Fasti*, trans. by Sir James George Frazer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,1959), 257

destruction of the cereal crops by mildew.[216] Directly invoking the god, the *flamen* pronounced the following prayer:

> Rough rust, may you spare the blades of grain and may their still smooth blades rustle above the ground. Allow the crops to grow, nourished by the weather of a favorable sky, until they are ready for the scythes. Your power is not slight: the grain which bears your mark the farmer mournfully regards as a loss. Neither winds nor rains do the grain so much harm, nor does it turn so pale when blighted by marble frost, as when the Sun has warmed up the damp stalks. Then, dreaded goddess, your wrath gets its chance. Be sparing, I pray, and keep your scruffy hands off the harvest. Don't harm the crops; the power to harm is enough. Don't get in your clutches the delicate grain, but hard steel, and first destroy what can destroy others. Better you should eat away swords and harmful spears: no need for them; the world is at peace. Let the hoe gleam now, the hard mattock and the curved ploughshare, the countryside's ordinance. Let neglect spoil weapons, and if someone tries to draw his sword from its scabbard, let him feel it stick after the long lull. But don't you savage the grain, and let the farmer always be able to pay his vow to you in your absence.[217]

While the sacrifice and prayer were acts manifestly carried out by the *flamen*, the context of the ritual was framed by the individuals in the community, who, donning white garments, accompanied the *flamen* to the sacred grove associated with the god. Surrounding the *flamen* during his prayer, each individual participated in the ritual encounter with *Robigala* and received the benefit of the god's blessings.

Another set of festivals, again mentioned by Varro, was the rural wine festivals, the *Vinalia Priora,* which took place on April 23, and the *Vina Rustica,* which took place on August 19. Both of these wine festivals were dedicated to the goddess Venus and the god Jupiter.[218] Like the *Robigala,* the *Vinalia Priora* and

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[216] Ovid, 257.
[217] Ovid, *Fasti*, trans. Betty Rose Nagle (Bloomington:Indiana University Press 1995),129-130.
[218] W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals,* 85-87.

the *Vina Rustica* were also rural affairs where ". . .the wine-skins were first opened, and libations from them made to Jupiter."[219] Fowler, citing Pliny the Younger, suggests the festival was to ". . .secure the vintage that was to follow against malignant influences."[220] This comports with Ovid, who describes a festival of the new wine designed to secure the blessing of the gods Venus and Jupiter, the latter god's blessing secured by a promise of wine from Latin vines.[221] While the day of the festival belonged to Jupiter, it nonetheless had significance also for Venus in that it memorializes the occasion that Venus was ". . .transferred to Rome in obedience to an oracle of the long-lived Sibyl, and chose to be worshipped in the city of her own offspring."[222] The rites involved not the elite of Rome but "the common wenches" of the rural countryside who were instructed to

> [o]ffer incense and pray for beauty and popular favor; pray to be charming and witty; give to the Queen her own myrtle and the mint she loves, and bands of rushes his in clustered roses. Now is the time to throng her temple next the Colline gate.[223]

As with the *Robagalia*, these festivals involved ritual activity outside of the civic cult where the main participants in prayer and sacrifice were private individuals. The private cultic acts carried out by the rural common people were orthopraxic, where the people sought the blessings of *Jupiter* and *Venus* not only upon each person individually but also upon the collective to enhance the harvest and prevent the new wine from going bad.

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[219] W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals*, 87.
[220] W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals*, 87.
[221] Ovid, trans. by Sir James George Frazer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959),253-255.
[222] Ovid, 253.
[223] Ovid, 253.

Finally, one of the more famous of public festivals was the *Lupercalia* festival. According to W. Warde Fowler (who in turn relies upon Plutarch), the festival took place on the last month of the Roman year on February 15 and was a festival of purification rather than one of merriment, a fact which might be attributed to the festival's proximity to the start of the crop sowing season on February 7.[224] As Fowler states, the *Lupercalia* fell close upon the new year ". . when the powers of vegetation awake and put on strength" to which the Romans ". . . approached. . .as it were with hesitation, preparing for it carefully by steady devotion to work and duty, the whole community endeavoring to place itself in a proper position toward the *numina* of the land's fertility, and the dead reposing in the land's embrace."[225]

The *Lupercalia* festival in part memorialized Rome's founding by Romulus, who along with his brother Remus, was the subject of the wrath of Tarchetius, king of the old Latin kingdom of Alba.[226] According to Plutarch, Tarchetius had been the recipient of a vision of a "male figure that rose out of a hearth, and stayed there for many days."[227] Relating this matter to an oracle, Tarchetius was informed that ". . . a virgin would give herself to the apparition, and that a son would be born of her, highly renowned, eminent in valour, good fortune, and strength of body."[228] Seeking to avail himself of such an heir, the

[224] Fowler, *The Roman Festivals*, 311.
[225] Fowler, *The Roman Festivals*, 299.
[226] Plutarch, *Romulus,* trans. John Dryden (New York: Modern Library 1864), 25.
[227] Plutarch, *Romulus* ,25
[228] Plutarch, *Romulus* ,25

king ordered his virgin daughter to fulfill the prophecy—out of decency, she declined, but instead sent her handmaid who became pregnant with twins.[229]

Upon learning of this deception some months later, an enraged Tarchetius imprisoned both the daughter and the handmaid and later sought the destruction of the handmaid's twins upon birth.[230] Even this command was not followed, for the king's agent, rather than killing the babies, merely exposed them by a riverside.[231] The tale continued with the salvation of the children, first by a she-wolf, who suckled them, and by birds who fed them with morsels of food dropped in the children's mouths until finally they were saved by a wandering cow-herd who, chancing upon them, took them in and raised them to maturity.[232] The Romans believed the location of the exposure of the twins and their subsequent salvation by the she-wolf was ". . .at a cave called *Lupercal*, at the foot of the steep south-western corner of the Palatine Hill."[233] As such, the Lupercalia always began at this site, initiated by *pontiffs* who sacrificed both goats and a dog.[234] At this point,

> two young noblemen's sons [are] brought, some [of the pontiffs] are to stain their foreheads with the bloody knife, others presently to wipe it off with wool dipped in milk; then the boys must laugh after their foreheads are wiped; that done, having cut the goat's skins into thongs, they run about naked, only with something about their middle, lashing all they meet [with the thongs]; and the young wives do not avoid their strokes, fancying they will help conception and childbirth.

The route taken by the two elite scions has traditionally been believed to be a circuit following the original boundaries (*pomerium*) of the old city located near

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[229] Plutarch, *Romulus* ,25
[230] Plutarch, *Romulus* ,25
[231] Plutarch, *Romulus* ,25
[232] Plutarch, *Romulus* ,25
[233] Plutarch, *Romulus* ,39.
[234] Plutarch, *Romulus* ,39.

the Palatine Hill.[235] This has been successfully refuted by more recent scholarship which suggests instead that a route was taken back and forth along the *via sacra,* which leads not to the Palatine Hill *per se* but from the Capitoline Hill to the Lupercal cave in an area proximate to the Palatine, Caelian, and Esquiline Hills.[236] This topographical distinction is important since the area of the *via sacra* is at the main avenue of the Roman forum, therefore being more traffic prone, and bringing greater likelihood that fertility would spread with more women coming into contact with the goat-hide wielded by the youths.[237] But aside from promoting fertility, it has also been suggested that the flailing ritual also was for purification, specifically to free those flailed of the influence of the dead, who, in the case of the *Lupercalia,* were symbolized by wolves, a traditional symbol of evil, the underworld, demons and ghosts.[238]

The *Lupercalia* festival is noteworthy for several reasons. First, unlike most public sacrifices of the civic cult, the *Lupercalian* sacrifice of the goats and the dog is not directed to a particularly identified god, a fact confirmed by the diversity of ancient opinion expressed about the god's identity, from ". . .*Faunus, Pan, Inuus, Liber* and *Juno*, variously."[239] This lack of a particular identity has led to the suggestion that the sacrificial rites were directed, not at a god, but at the

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[235] See, e.g. Fowler, *The Roman Festivals*, 318.
[236] Agnes Kersopp Michels, "The Topography and Interpretation of the Lupercalia" in *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 84 (1953) ,45. Quoting Augustine, this location is certain, as he states in his *Civitate Dei* in relation to running of the Lupercalia, "*Nam et Lupercorum per sacram viam ascensum atque descensum*."
[237] Michels, 40-41.
[238] Michels, 49-50.
[239] Michels, 57.

dead generally.[240] If correct, the *Lupercalian* ritual would be better classified as other festivals dedicated to the worship of the dead like the *Lemuria*, which occurred on May 13, and the *Feralia*, which took place on February 21.[241] Second, the ritual acts of placing the sacrificial knife on the foreheads of the youths, staining them with blood, and wiping the blood away, have been construed as an exercise in creating a subjunctive world.[242] This "as if" world of the imagination could have been created through ritual identification between the sacrificial victim and the youths, the ritual acts bringing about their renewal as W. Warde Fowler suggests.[243] Likewise, a subjunctive world could have been created through the ritual's symbolization of healing from "lycanthropy," or the wounds of the dead, where the wounded youths had been turned into "werewolves" only to be saved by the ritual act, as Agnes Kirsopp Michels suggests.[244] Third, the efficacy of the *Lupercalian* ritual requires not just the action of the *pontiff* but the mediation of the youths, their bodies being the vehicle bringing about the possibility of transformation from a degenerate or wounded state of being to one of renewal or healing. That these youths were separate from the *pontiffs* and other cultic officials is clear from the distinction made by Plutarch who identified them as "noblemen's sons." Scholars like W. Warde Fowler would suggest the youths were in fact members of particular guilds charged to carrying out the rites. [245] Agnes Kersopp Michels, through her philological study of Plutarch's text, agrees

[240] Michels, 57-58.
[241] Michels, 57.
[242] Michels, 53-55.
[243] W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals*, 314-217
[244] W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals*, 314-217; Michels, 53-55.
[245] Fowler, *The Roman Festivals*, 319-320.

these individuals were private individuals not affiliated with the civic cult, but has suggested they possessed some affinity with families traditionally identified with such purification rights.[246]

Taking all these factors together, the ritual acts of the *Lupercalia* again demonstrate how private cultic activity could be used to benefit larger groups beyond the individual or the family and how ritual could achieve multiple ends. The ritual employed sacrifice and the other ritual acts presided over by a *pontiff* but directed toward private individuals who played a significant part in the overall action of the ritual. This involved not only receiving the bloody knife, the milk-soaked wool, and the goatskin, but also included traversing a designated sacred path to lash those persons encountered to bring about fertility. In this way, the *Lupercalian* ritual sought not just orthopraxy but also purification, fertility and the creation of a subjunctive world benefitting not only the individuals involved but also the community at large.

Processions

Roman processions, frequently attached to festivals, could also be the occasion for the expression of private cult. As Robin Lane Fox states, the days of festivals were the central cultic day for ritual acts involving the civic gods.[247] During such festivals, ". . . people processed, sang hymns and sacrificed in the gods' honor. Sometimes they processed from a fixed point in the city to a particular shrine or altar: cities and towns had their 'sacred ways' and particular

[246] Michel, 54-55.
[247] Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians,* 66.

monuments along the route."[248] Supplicants would offer libations and sacrifices ". . .made on small altars beside their own residence[s]" along the procession route.[249] Moreover, ". . . [q]uite often, the statue of the god joined the tour, sometimes parading in new robes, sometimes being escorted for a yearly washing."[250] Rounding out the entertainment and spectacle, bands played, dancers performed, young girls debuted and on occasion, prostitutes worked the scene.[251]

Perhaps one of the more celebrated instances of a procession which involved private cultic activity involved the exploits of Caius Fabius Dorsuo, a Roman noble, whose ritual undertakings during the fourth century B.C.E. at the height of the Gallic invasion was written about by both Titus Livy as well as Valerius Maximus. As particularly described by Livy, Rome was being confronted by the Gauls in 390 B.C.E.. This northern tribe sought to encroach upon Roman territory and the Romans found themselves unable to prevent incursion despite attempts by the Roman military to stem the Gallic advance. The emboldened Gauls, advancing to the city of Rome itself, sacked the city and set it aflame. All who remained alive capable of bearing arms, along with women, children, and able-bodied senators, withdrew to the stronghold of the Capitol, intending to ". . .make a last stand for themselves, for their gods and the Roman name."[252] Despite the fact that the Gauls had laid waste and burned their city proper, Caius Fabius Dorsuo, whose family the duty of sacrifice to *Jupiter Optimus Maximus* belonged, left the Capital defenses where the survivors of the Gallic onslaught were

[248] Fox, 66.
[249] Fox, 67.
[250] Fox, 67.
[251] Fox, 67.
[252] Livy, *The Early History of Rome*. Trans. Aubrey De Selincourt. Hamondworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1961, V.38 (369).

making their last stand. Walking in procession through enemy pickets and carrying sacred vessels to perform a sacrifice to Rome's highest god, Fabius Dorsuo miraculously returned unharmed.[253] As Livy relates it, Roman piety and devotion displayed by the act won the day and resulted in the Gauls eventually being chased from the city and eventually destroyed.[254] The words attributed by Livy to M. Furius Camillus, the tribune responsible for the eventual defeat of the Gauls, summed up the victory, saying

> [e]vil times came--and then we remembered our religion: we sought the protection of our gods on the Capitol, by the seat of Jupiter Greatest and Best: having lost all we possessed, we buried our holy things, or took them to other towns, where no enemy would see them; though abandoned by gods and men, we never ceased to worship. Therefore it is that heaven gave us back our city and restored to us victory.[255]

It is important to note the ritual procession and sacred rites undertaken, though ritually performed solely by Caius Fabius Dorsuo, were nonetheless portrayed as an act on behalf of the Roman people who received the blessing of Jupiter for their faithfulness in the face of such dire circumstances. This same fact was later noted by Valerius Maximus in his *Memorable Sayings and Doings*. Maximus, relating the story told by Livy concerning Caius Fabius Dorsuo, made particular note that the ritual acts of private persons, along with those formally undertaken by the state, had led to the persistent indulgence of the gods who were ". . .ever watchful to augment and protect and imperial power by which even minor items of religious significance are seen to be weighed with such scrupulous care."[256]

The ritual acts of individuals in festivals and processions were also reminiscent of the improvisation that was present in domestic ritual. This improvisation had the effect of

[253] Livy, V.46 (375).
[254] Livy, V.59 (380).
[255] Livy, V.51 (382).
[256] Valerius Maximus, I.1 (21).

creating a discourse, where the individual's performance within the festival or procession was informed by the public rite and the public rite was reinterpreted by the individual performance. The net result was a synthesis between aspects of the general form and the individual performance, creating an altogether new and different form. Lucius Apuleius in his *Metamorphosis* describes such improvisation by individual participants within a procession honoring the goddess *Isis*.[257] The common people described by Apuleius were all ". . . attired in regal manner, according to [their] proper habit. One was girded about the middle like a man at arms. . . there was another which wore a leg harness and bore a target, a helmet, and a spear, like unto a gladiator, as one might believe."[258] Describing the women of the procession, Apuleius notes, "[t]he women attired in white vestments, and rejoicing in that they bore garlands and flowers upon their heads, bespread the way with herbs, which they bore in their aprons, where this regal and devout procession should pass. Others carried shining mirrors behind them which were turned toward the goddess as she came, to show to her those which came after as they would meet her."[259] The most diverse element of the procession followed, and included

> [a] great number, as well of men as of women, with lamps, candles, torches and other lights, doing honour thereby to her that was born of the celestial stars. After that sounded the musical harmony of instruments, pipes, and flutes in most pleasant measure. Then came a fair company of youth, appareled in white vestments and festal array, singing both metre and verse with a comely grace which some studious poet had made by favor of the Muses, the words whereof did set forth the first ceremonies of this great worship.[260]

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[257] Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, trans. W. Adlington (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), XI, 549-559.
[258] Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, XI (553).
[259] Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, XI (555).
[260] Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, XI (555).

Finally, at the tail end of the procession followed the gods, *Anubis* accompanying *Isis,* surrounded by the professional pontiffs.[261]

Thus, while the public form of the ritual dedicated to *Isis* contributed the frame of the ritual veneration that was to be undertaken, the individual performance, whether through song, dance, or sheer spectacle, provided the articulation of the field within the frame. Each element, public and private, contributed to the net offering that was made to *Isis*. Moreover, as the individual engaged in such ritual had latitude to determine how his or her individualized veneration was to take place, this articulation of the ritualistic field would likely be unique each time the procession was made, the general form being modified slowly through the innovation of those who participated in the procession, whose followers in time would again modify the general form field they had inherited, and so on.

In the public festivals of the *Robagalia*, the *Vinalia*, and the *Lupercalia*, a matrix of public and the private cult existed where characterization along the lines of the purely public or purely private is highly problematic. These aspects of Roman cult support Andreas Bendlin's claim that strict adherence to a dichotomous view of public and private cult is altogether unsupportable by the evidence. Rather than a rigid dichotomy, the ritual acts undertaken in all three cases illustrate a hybridization of private and public cult, where cult ritual is carried out by both public and private individuals and the benefit of the ritual likewise flows to both the individual and the Roman State. Moreover, private cult

[261] Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, XI (559).

actors in both festivals and processions can be seen to take a robust and active role in carrying out the ritual acts, far from the passive role claimed by the civic cult theorists.

Festivals and processions likewise illustrate a broad spectrum of possibilities for ritual action beyond mere orthopraxy. The *Robagala* festival, with its ritual acts of procession, prayer, and sacrifice, not only brought down *Robigus*' blessing upon the grain crop but also sought purification from disease. The *Vinala Priora* and the *Vina Rustica* involved sacrifice with the end toward purifying the harvest and the new vintage wine from disease. The *Lupercalia*, with its sacrifice, its pontifical ritual involving noble youth, and the subsequent travel and ritual flailing taken up by the youth, all on a sacred by-way, involved purification and an attempt to increase fertility as well as symbolic transcendence to a subjunctive world. Finally, the processions, which were a part of festivals, added to the matrix the creation of discourse, where ritual acts, general prescribed by the culture, were individually modified and subject to innovation that led to an overall modification of the ritualistic cultural norm.

With the exploration of private cult in the context of the individual, the family, and the public/private cult interplay of festivals and processions, a last remaining significant area of private cult activity requires investigation. Private cult and associated ritual acts involved with the Roman *collegia* will demonstrate a strong role for the individual in ritual that takes place outside of the civic cult. Furthermore, as has been demonstrated with domestic cult and the cult of festivals

and processions, *collegia* engaged in ritual with a wide spectrum of purpose, not being confined to a single goal of orthopraxy.

CHAPTER 8: PRIVATE CULT AND LARGER ASSOCIATIONS: VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

Private cult manifested itself most visibly through individual action, through the actions of the family and at times through festivals and processions. Private cult might also manifest itself through extra-familial voluntary associations.[262] Both in the Roman Republic and into the Roman Empire, there were two essential forms of voluntary association: the *sodalitas* and the *collegia.* The first set of institutions, created by the Senate or emperor, were part of the civic cult apparatus and were vested with quasi-governmental functions. The second type of voluntary association was the opposite, being private, having no governmental charter or purpose, but nonetheless being subject to governmental regulations. These regulations banned *collegia* organized for political purposes, foreign *collegia*, or *collegia* which engaged in acts that offended public morality.[263] Unlike the *sodalitas* which were exclusively the province of the social elites, *collegia* could just as readily be composed of freemen, slaves, *peregrine* or aliens, or resident aliens.[264]

John S. Kloppenborg has suggested that the purpose of *collegia,* so named in the Latin West and going by the moniker of *thiasoi*, *koina*, *oregones*, and *eranoi* in the Greek East, were in part to ". . . replace the older structures of the family, the *deme*, the tribe

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[262] Bodel, 250.
[263] Wendy Cotter, "The Collegia and Roman Law" in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson (London: Routledge, 1996), 75-88.
[264] John S. Kloppenborg, "Collegia and Thiasoi: Issues in Function, Taxonomy and Membership," *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson (London: Routledge 1996), 16.

and the *polis*" whose influence over the individual was compromised by the relative mobility and dislocation that took place as Rome's territorial claims became more widespread.[265] As an extra-familial entity, *collegia* in many circumstances extended the domestic cult to which an individual might have been a participant but for the fact of physical dislocation. Whether the causation was political, economic, or military, such dislocation had the effect of removing the individual from regular contact with the individual's family and their ritual practices.

C*ollegia* were to be found in abundance throughout Roman territories, represented a wide spectrum of economic classes, and were dedicated to advancing diverse causes. Senators to soldiers, slaves to tradesmen found camaraderie with others advancing everything from a fine meal, promoting ritual observance, giving proper burial to the dead or providing mutual benevolence among members. These private associations, whatever their stripe, were always subject to State regulation which changed depending on the sentiments of Roman officials.[266] The first major restriction came by Senatorial decree in 186 B.C.E in relation to the actions of the *Bacchantes*, a *collegia* dedicated to the worship of *Bacchus* or *Dionysos,* which were deemed to threaten the Roman Republic.[267] Further restriction occurred again in 64 B.C.E., the Senate acted again to dissolve *collegia* which engaged in activities that were deemed to conflict with the public interest.[268] Finally, in 58 B.C.E., Clodius, an elected Tribune and patron of a *collegia*, instigated factional and revolutionary activities against the citizens of Rome.[269]

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[265] Kloppenborg, 17.
[266] Dill, 254.
[267] See Matthias Riedl, "The Containment of Dionysos: Religion and Politics in the Bacchanalia Affair of 186 BCE", *International Political Anthropology* 5, No. 2 (2012), 113-114.
[268] Cotter, 76.
[269] Dill, 254; Cotter,76.

Reacting to this, Julius Caesar, then Consul, felt compelled to prohibit all private associations except those were "the most ancient" following the urban insurrection led by Clodius and the patrons of his *collegia*.[270] Caesar's nephew, Octavian, upon ascending to the emperor's throne, required guilds to receive approval for their assembly from the emperor via the Senate and imposed an obligation of public service, thereby assuring that the ". . . voluntary/private societies were conservative in character and publically loyal to Augustus' administration.[271] Later emperors, from Tiberius to Hadrian, more or less followed suit, enacting a variety of regulations which generally permitted most associations but forbade associations from instigating commotion and illegal union ("*ad turbas et illicitos coetus*") and prevented private association law from being contrary to the public law.[272] Thus, the degree to which *collegia* were subject to restriction or outright prohibition from the Roman State had much to do with whether the activities undertaken could be construed as morally or politically *illicit.*

For the largest part, *collegia* provided their membership opportunities to engage and shape Roman society through the promotion of commonly held values and to engage in social and professional activities.[273] In terms of governance, Roman *collegia* were very often modeled along the same lines as the city or *polis*."[274] Each had a council, magistrates who held office for a year at a time, and benefactors, who were honored with handsome decorations patterned after the honorary edicts issued by the city council."[275]

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[270] Cotter, 76.
[271] Cotter, 78.
[272] Cotter, 83; Pliny the Younger to Trajan, Epistle 10:93 in *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*, trans. Betty Radice (London: Penguin Books 1969), 292.
[273] Kloppenborg, 16.
[274] Paul Veyne, "Pleasures and Excesses" in *A History of Private Life*, ed. Paul Veyne and translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Belknap Press 1987), 190.
[275] Veyne, 190.

Those not in overt leadership roles still exercised authority through membership in general assemblies.[276] The members of *collegia* were typically ordinary people who, due to their economic class, would not have an opportunity to participate in municipal governance.[277] As Samuel Dills relates,

> Individually weak and despised, they might by union, gain a sense of collective identity and strength . . . When the brotherhood, any of them of servile grade, met in full conclave, in the temple of their patron deity, to pass a formal decree of thanks to a benefactor and regale themselves with modest repast, or when they passed through the streets and forums with banners flying, and all the emblems of their guild, the meanest member felt himself lifted for a moment above the dim, hopeless obscurity of plebian life.[278]

Finally, Roman *collegia* engaged in many activities of great diversity. For example, most *collegia* looked after the dead of their membership and some were specifically organized particularly as burial societies.[279] Furthermore, communal eating and drinking were also a common feature of private associations and in some circumstances *collegia* were simply organized for the purpose of organizing dining companions or companions in drink.[280] However, the most unifying aspect of *collegia* was that nearly all such private associations engaged in ritual cult activities.

As a general matter, the members of collegia engaged in ritual acts robustly, integrating such ritual into the activities of private associations.[281] Some *collegia*, namely synagogues, churches, and the *collegia* of mystery cults, were solely organized to allow

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[276] Simeon L. Guterman, *Religious Toleration and Persecution in Ancient Rome* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press 1951), 132.
[277] Kloppenborg, 18
[278] Samuel Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958), 256.
[279] Kloppenborg, 18-22.
[280] Veyne, 190.
[281] S.G. Wilson, "Voluntary Associations: An Overview" in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson (London: Routledge, 1996), 7.

their membership to collectively engage in private cultic ritual.[282] These particular types of voluntary associations are most instructive in demonstrating how Roman private cult was not only undertaken in an organized, collective fashion but also that ritual was the primary mechanism for carrying out the purposes of the *collegia*.

Among the *collegia* dedicated exclusively to ritual worship and veneration, perhaps one of the most exemplary were those *collegia* dedicated to the worship of *Mithras*. Although not a god of the Roman pantheon, *Mithras* was nevertheless widely adopted throughout the Roman Empire, first, by Roman legionaries, and more generally by certain male elements of the Roman public.[283] Being of eastern extract, Roman contact with the worship of *Mithras* possibly could have manifest itself as early as the first century C.E. with the acquisition of what is now Armenia by the emperor Nero.[284] Shortly thereafter, organized worship of the god soon was underway, with *Mithraic* cells being formed ". . .in the ports of Sicily (Syracuse, Catana, Palermo) and Campania (Naples, Pozzuoli), in the islands of Ponza, Ischia and Capri, at Antium and Ostia on the Tyrrhenian Sea, and Aquileia on the Adriatic."[285] *Mithraic* worship has also been identified off the Italian peninsula as far as Cisalpine Gaul, the Iberian Peninsula, Gallic Aquitania and Britannia.[286] *Mithraic* cells were generally small, composed of approximately twenty five to forty persons, and were maintained on such a scale.[287] "If the demand was greater, the solution was not to acquire a larger room, but to found a new

[282] Wilson., 7.
[283] Robert Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire*, trans. Antonia Nevill (Oxford: Blackwell 1992), 195.
[284] Turcan, 203.
[285] Turcan, 207.
[286] Turcan, 207-209.
[287] Roger Beck, "The Mithras Cult," *Studies in Religion* 21, No. 1 (1992), 5.

'cave' by acquiring a new room in another part of town."[288] These twenty five to forty persons, labeled *syndexioi*, or "right-hand-joiners", were always male and were economically and socially diverse, having membership among the senatorial and equestrian classes but also including imperial freemen and slaves and non-citizen freemen and slaves.[289] The general body (*cursus*) of a *mithraium* was divided between those who had not reached the median grade of initiation (*hypēretountes*) and those who had achieved this status (*metechontes*), presided over by a chief official (*pater*).[290] Unlike other Roman cults, *Mithraism* included no public ceremonies in its ritual, but centered around the privately conveyed narrative of a chaste god *Mithras*, who, clad in his Persian trousers and Phrygian cap". . .immolat[es] . . .a steer who was considered as the creator and rejuvenator of the earth. . . ."[291] This later act of rejuvenation is accomplished by *Mithras* when he sheds the bull's blood.[292] In terms of the ritual of *Mithraism*, it was divided into two essential spheres: one for novices and one for the regular membership.

With regard to novices (*mysta*), the remains of a *mithraium* fresco in Capua provides some evidence for the practices of the cult generally. The fresco reveals the *mysta*, blindfolded and naked and under the tutelage of a *mystagogue* or instructor, and a *pontiff*, the latter clad in a white tunic bordered with red.[293] This *mysta* is subject to a number of actions including kneeling before a sword (fig. 7), being stretched out on the stomach and lowered between two persons, and other such scenarios.[294] In order to

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[288] Beck, *The Mithras Cult*, 8.
[289] Beck,*The Mithras Cult*, 8; Beck, *Mysteries of Mithras*, 178.
[290] Beck,*Mysteries of Mithras*, 180-181.
[291] Turcan, 203; Franz Cumont, *Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism* (New York: Dover Books v1956), 157.
[292] Turcan, 223-226.
[293] Turcan, 238; Roger Beck, "The Mysteries of Mithras" in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson (London: Routledge 1996), 182.

Figure 7. Initiation Ceremony from Mithraium Maria Capua Vetere, Italy

Source: Corpus Inscriptionem et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae 188 as compiled in "Catalogue of Monuments and Images of Mithras" http://www.tertullian.org/rpearse/mithras/display.php?page=cimrm188

progress within the group, a *mysta* was required to ascend in all to ". . .seven steps or grades. One became successfully 'Raven', 'Bridegroom', or 'Newly-wed' (*Nymphus*), 'Soldier', 'Lion', 'Persian', 'Heliodromos' or 'Messenger of the Sun', and finally, 'Father'."[295] The grade of Lion, as mentioned previously, was a pivotal grade which separated the *cursus* between the two classes of *hypēretountes* and *metechontes.*[296]

As to the regular membership, the record of ritual practice is more complete. Among the more notable ritual activities were the communal meals which took place

[294] Turcan, 238.
[295] Turcan, 235.
[296] Turcan, 235.

within the *mithraium*, a grotto or underground crypt, which had as its meeting place ". . .a dining room with a pair of facing benches (fig. 8) in which the initiates reclined to eat in the Roman manner."[297] The physical content of the meal has been subject to conjecture. However, the archeological remains of these meals uncovered from a number of excavated *mithraium* reveal that the meals must have included pork, poultry and goat, and occasional mixed game such as foxes and wolves."[298] The symbolic content of the meal has been interpreted as a communal replication within the *mithraium* that which was

Figure 8. Dining area with Central Fresco of Mithras from Mithraium Maria Capua Vetere, Italy

Source: Ancient Capua at http://www.ancientcapua.com/campania-felix/mithraeum/

[297] Beck, *Mysteries of Mithras*, 182.
[298] Turcan, 234.

". . . enacted on the divine plane by the cult's gods" where ". . .[t]he myth of *Mithras* the god's great act, the slaying of a bull, is followed by a feat shared by *Mithras* and the sun god, *Sol*, on the hide of the slaughtered animal."[299]

Aside from the communal meal, a second notable activity of the regular membership was ". . . participation in celestial soul-travel."[300] Such ritual involved an education regarding how souls travel, this being accomplished through the design, artwork, and furnishings of the *mithraium*.[301] Roger Beck, citing Porphyry, has described the *mithraium* and its instructional role as a "universal cave" which served as a ". . . functional model of the universe where the *Mithraists* '. . . induct the initiate by leading him in mystic fashion through the descent of souls and their exit back out again.'"[302] As Beck states,

> The 'descent and exit of souls' of which Porphyry speaks is literally a round-trip journey from heaven to earth and back again. The soul descends from the remotest celestial spheres, that of the fixed stars, through the seven spheres of the planets (including those of the sun and moon), to its incarnation in this mortal life on earth; retracing its route, it ascends at death to immortality in the heavens. . . Porphyry's point is that [the journey] was taught and, more importantly, enacted, in the *mithraium*; that is why the *mithraium* is designed and furnished as it is, and that is what initiation into its mysteries is all about.[303]

This view of the *mithraium* as a functional model is borne out by the archeological record. The "*Mithraium of the Seven Spheres*" in Ostia displays an abundance of functional features which might guide a celestial journey. For instance, within the central apse of the *mithraium*, mosaic-tiled side benches are punctuated by images representing the zodiac and the planets. Both of the benches which face each other on the left and right

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[299] Beck, *The Mithras Cult*, 4.
[300] Beck, *Mysteries of Mithras* 182.
[301] Beck, *Mysteries of Mithras*, 183.
[302] Beck, *The Mithras Cult*, 5.
[303] Beck, *The Mithras Cult*, 5.

of the chamber contain niches and the corners of the benches are finished with small altars. Roger Beck has suggested that even the principle icon found in *mithraium* representing *Mithras* killing a bull (see fig. 4, center) was designed as a "complex astrological code."[304]

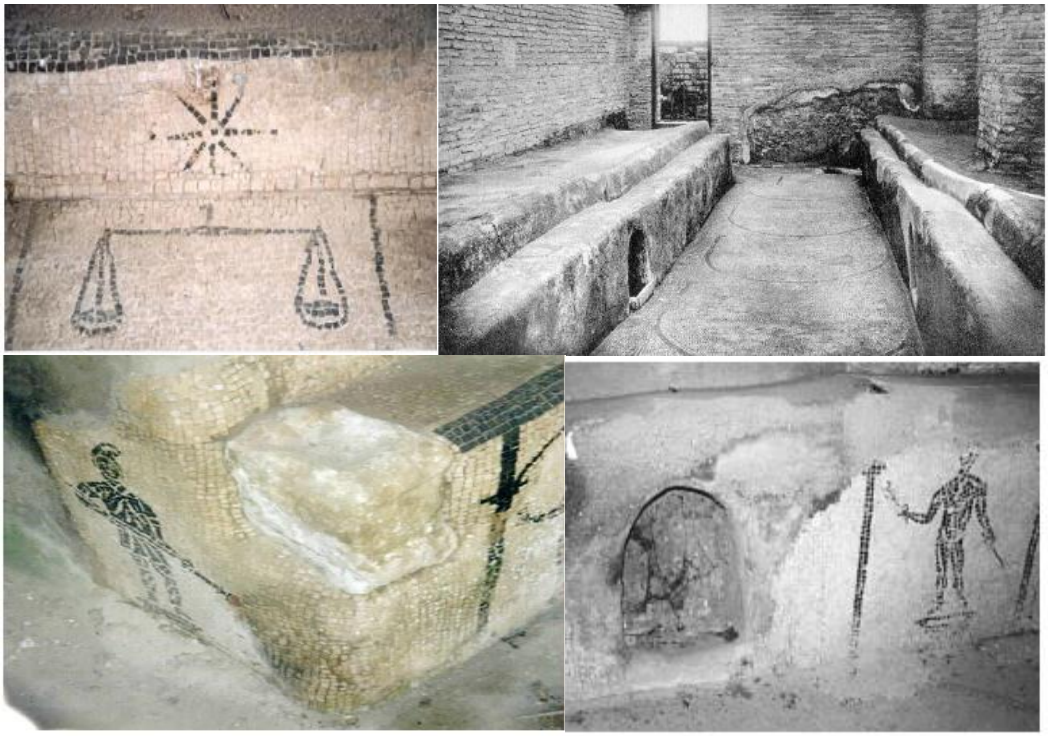

Figure 9. Mithraium of the Seven Spheres. Upper Left and Right showing astrological mosaic and configuration. Lower Left and Right show corner altar and bench niche.

Source: http://www.ostia-antica.org/regio2/8/8-6.htm

In summary, the *mithraium* provides a prime example of how private cult could be integrated into the fabric of a voluntary association external to the family. Each *mithraic* cell, through its particularized architecture, symbols, and ritual, articulated private cult practices in such a way as to help its membership develop an identity within the *mithraic* cult. Moreover, through an individual's participation in ritual, one was provided direct religious knowledge of the mysteries of *Mithras*. Finally, the physical

[304] Beck, *The Mithras Cult*, 6

structure of the *mithraium*, as an instrument of private cult, enabled the creation of a subjunctive universe, where it was possible, through appropriate ritual, to teach about and recreate the journey of the soul's descent from the celestial spheres to earth and back again.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION: THE REINTERPRETATION OF PRIVATE RELIGIOUS CULT

The proceeding chapters have established a number of related claims. First, individual participation in private cult practice was a robust and widespread phenomenon in both the Roman Republic but also the Early Empire. Secondarily, private cult, while not an evolutionary stage on the way to the civic cult, was nonetheless integrally connected with public cult through the similar use of ritual and individual participation in the civil cult. Finally, the Romans, through the private ritualistic practices of the individual, the family, and the voluntary association, sought not only orthopraxy through their ritual but also a spectrum of other purposes, from purification and healing, to the creation of a subjunctive reality that transcended the day-to day existence, to obtaining religious knowledge and the creation of ritual identity.

Addressing the first claim, the evidence developed in Chapter One demonstrates fully that private cult practice, rather than being a bracketed phenomenon that was confined to the household, was instead widespread, self-authorizing and fully integrated into the ritual practices that took place in the Roman State. Both Livy and Cicero provide important legal and historical evidence for this claim. Whether by the mandates imposed by Numa Pompillius or those imposed by the Twelve Tables and the Sacred Law, Roman society has since shortly after its founding recognized that public and private cult occupy two equally valid spheres. While no doubt scholars have long recognized the existence of private cultic practices as opposed to those engaged in through the civic cult, neither the

developmentalists nor the civic cult theorists have given private cult appropriate regard or recognized its autonomous nature from that of the civic cult. The evidence of this paper shows that private cultic practice was an enduring phenomena, that rather than being merely an evolutionary stage, it transcended the historic longevity of the Republic and continued into the Early Empire, and could be both autonomous and fully integrated into the rituals of the civic cult.

That private cult was a widespread phenomenon was also advanced in Chapter One which provided evidence of individualized private cult practices in a variety of settings and illustrated such cult as being fully integrated into individual life processes. While largely stemming from private orthopraxy, individuals were shown to engage in ritual acts such as invocation and prayer to the gods to bring about their blessing upon activities as diverse as undertaking a literary endeavor, securing a property line, bringing healing or purification, or securing the assistance of a deity to rectify a wrong done to an individual. Chapter Two extended the reach of private cult to the family. The *Lares*, di *penates* and the *Genius* were all the objects of veneration by the *paterfamilias* and his dependents who engaged in ritual devotion and sacrifice to secure protection from these gods and to assure that the gods' blessing would continue to accrue to the household. In the course of this investigation, the possibilities of articulation were highlighted through the creation of *lararia*, the gods chosen for the family to worship, and the manner in which these gods were worshipped. Louise Revell, whose work theorizes about individual routine and identity in the context of the greater Roman culture, has stated

> [T]he moment of performance is also the moment of reproduction, of both the conditions which govern the action and the agent's understanding of themselves and their world. These routines of actions of daily life are founded in encounters and interactions with others, and can be viewed as a

> form of communication, both in the immediate situation and across time-space. Thus repetitive routines contain the elements which will reaffirm the structures of society and a person's own identity, grounded in social norms.[305]

Applying Revell's claim to the domestic ritual sphere, one finds that the articulation undertaken in the archeological sites noted such as the *House of Julius Polybius* and the *House of Cenaculo*, both in Pompeii, demonstrates what Revell deems a reaffirmation of the structures of society as well as the household identity, all within the *milieu* of generalized private worship in Roman Campania. The choices of the *paterfamilias* in terms of the architectural form of household *lararium*, its color schemes, and organization, were all instances of personal negotiation of the social norms of worship of the *Lares* and *di penates*. This negotiation of social norms, partly informed by the *paterfamilias*' ancestral inheritance, helped to establish a discourse which defined the family of Julius Polybius as well as affirmed worship of the *Lares* and *di penates* as a social structure within Roman society.

Likewise, the garden shrine of the *House of Cenaculo* in Pompeii demonstrates similar articulation and negotiation of social norms. Aside from the number and location of the household shrines, the construction of the garden shrine with strong architectural form, the gods chosen, and the materials from which the gods were manufactured all represent personal choices made by the *paterfamilias* to carry out necessary worship in the household. This variation within the general cultural parameters also included the demarcation of sacred from secular space within the household and the manner in which the three household shrines were utilized by the family. As with the choices made in the *House of Julius Polybius*, the household choices evident in the *House of Cenaculo* made

[305] Revel, 12.

a unique and personal contribution to Roman private cult by altering the fabric of what constituted household worship and cultic activity.

In addition to the representations made for robust, widespread, and integrally connected private cult in Rome, it was also claimed in this study that private cult ritual and practice enabled subjunctive world building. Citing the example of the *House of Julius Polybius*, the *House of Cenaculo,* and the *House of Pareti Rossi*, this study has shown that these villas were divided between secular and sacred space, the sacred space consecrated and set apart from the secular space by the presence of the *lararium* and the assembled household gods. Sacred groves, fields, and grottoes, as well as the ground used to bury the dead were likewise consecrated, thereby setting them aside from ordinary use. Likewise, the homes of the dead were ritually purified to subjunctively return the harmony of the family to the *status quo ante*. Private ritual practice confronted the world "as is" through prayer, vow, veneration and sacrifice. This "as is" world, one where crops failed, plague struck, and children died in infancy, was one divested from the care and attentions of the gods. Through ritual practice, the fractured "as is" world was converted into an "as if" world, where humans were transported to the realm of the gods who dispense their blessings upon individuals, upon the families of households and farmsteads, and upon the members of *collegia*. That the private supplicants maintained such an attitude, that the fractured world of humanity could be amended to allow for a transcendence to the realm of the gods through ritual is best expressed through a lament of the poet Marcus Valerius Martial in the first century C.E.. After selling his farm, he

relates to the new owner the character of his farmstead which was blessed by the presence of the gods.[306] As Martial relates:

> I entrust to your care. . . .the altars of Jupiter, thunder god, and shaggy Silvanus which my unlettered farm manager built with his own hands. The blood of many a lamb and many a kid has stained these altars. I also entrust to your care the virgin goddess of the sacred sanctuary and Mars, who ushers in my year and shares the sanctuary of his chaste stepsister, and also the laurel grove of tender Flora in which she takes refuge when pursued by Priapus.

Thus Martial's private farmstead was not merely an agricultural secular space but one inhabited and blessed by the gods.

This study, in its re-evaluation of the role of Roman private cult practices, has sought in its three overarching claims to challenge the civic cult theoretical edifice which has passed for orthodoxy for the past half century. Far from being the bracketed, non-integrated ritual sphere described by the civic cults theorists, private cult and its ritual practice has been shown in this study to take on a role of equal importance to that of the public cult and on an equally substantial footing. Private cult has been shown to be neither a residual evolutionary link nor merely as isolated, unimportant affair of families. Rather, private cultic activity has been shown to be self-authorized and have its own autonomous existence where it could be fully integrated in the overall ritual practices undertaken within the Roman State, and where its longevity has continued alongside the civic cult from through the years of the Republic and into the Early Empire. Finally, private cult, like its public cousin, took particular circumstances and scenarios of the "as is" world and built an orderly construct of them within the context of an "as if"

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[306] Martial," Epigrams 10.92" in *As the Romans Did*, 2d. ed. Joann Shelton (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 369.

subjunctive world. Individuals, families and members of associations engaged in ritual repetitiously and innovated creatively to make things right with the gods who surrounded them and had an integral role in life's processes.

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