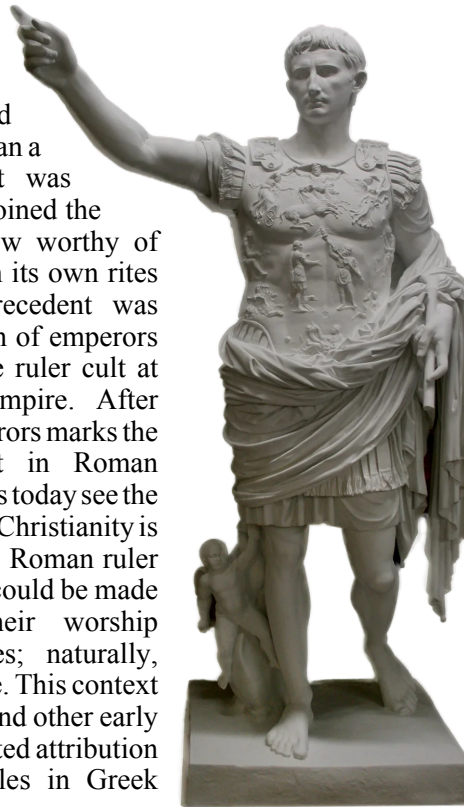
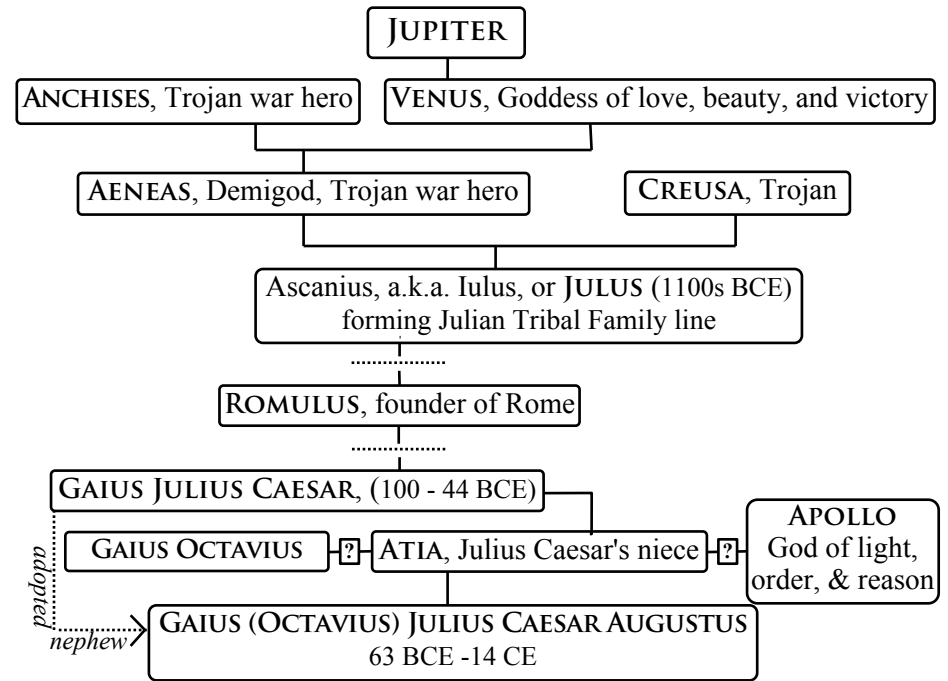


As the son of a man-made-god, moreover, he was guaranteed his own deification, which the senate legally decreed on September 17, 14 AD, less than a month after he had died. It was proclaimed that Augustus had joined the company of gods and was now worthy of worship in his own temple with its own rites and priests. Thus another precedent was established: the legal deification of emperors became a central feature of the ruler cult at Rome and throughout the empire. After Christianity, the cult of the emperors marks the most significant development in Roman imperial religion. In fact, scholars today see the two as interrelated: the spread of Christianity is intimately tied to the rise of the Roman ruler cult. To be blunt, at Rome men could be made into gods by law and their worship disseminated to the provinces; naturally, people in the provinces took note. This context highlights the audacity of Paul and other early Christian writers in their calculated attribution to Jesus of the equivalent titles in Greek reserved for the imperial cult. [8]



CESAR AUGUSTUS: GENEALOGY, HISTORY, CONCEPTION, AND DEIFICATION



HISTORY

Homer's Iliad & Odyssey set the background for Greco Roman history and the relationship between humans and the Greek and Roman gods. The Iliad acts as a means of Greco-Roman "scriptures" and history of its gods and civilization set within the Trojan war, and introduces the hero Aeneas.

Publius Virgilius Maro, a.k.a Virgil, was an ancient Roman poet during Octavian's early years. He was acclaimed in his own lifetime as a classic author. Among his books and epic poems he penned the epic *Aeneid*, the stories of Aeneas, the Trojan, who fled the fall of Troy and traveled to Italy, where he became the ancestor of the Romans. It was written between 29 and 19 BCE. The hero, Aeneas, was well known to the Greco Roman legend and myth because of his character in the Iliad.

Proposed by and written for Augustus, "the *Aeneid* presents the hero Aeneas as a strong and powerful leader. Its favorable representation of Aeneas parallels Augustus in that it portrays his reign in a progressive and admirable light, and allows Augustus to be positively associated with the portrayal of Aeneas."^[1]

1. Fitzgerald, Robert, translator and postscript. "Virgil's The Aeneid". New York: Vintage Books (1990). 412–414.
2. Grebe, Sabine. "Augustus' Divine Authority and Virgil's *Aeneid*." *Vergilius (1959–)* 50 (2004): 35–62.
3. Scully, Stephen. "Refining Fire in *Aeneid* 8." *Vergilius (1959–)* 46 (2000): 91–113.
4. Fitzgerald 1983, 2.1036–1040.
5. Fitzgerald 1983, 6.1058–1067.
6. The First Christmas ©2011 Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan □2011 HarperCollinsPublishers, page 98
7. <https://www.pantheonpoets.com/poems/jupiters-prophecy/>. Marcus Agrippa, © 2024 Pantheon Poets.
8. "Caesar, Princeps, Augustus, God." Matthew M. McGowan, <https://kirkcenter.org/essays/caesar-princeps-augustus-god/>, Nov 9, 2014

History (continued)

In *Aeneid*, Aeneas is portrayed as the singular hope for the rebirth of the Trojan people. Charged with the preservation of his people by divine authority, Aeneas is symbolic of Augustus' own accomplishments in establishing order after the long period of chaos of the Roman civil wars. [Caesar] Augustus as the light, savior, and the last hope of the Roman people is a parallel to Aeneas as the savior of the Trojans. This parallel functions as propaganda in support of Augustus,^[2,3] as it depicts the Trojan people, future Romans themselves, as uniting behind a single leader who will lead them out of ruin:

*New refugees in a great crowd: men and women
Gathered for exile, young-pitiful people
Coming from every quarter, minds made up,
With their belongings, for whatever lands
I'd lead them to by sea.^[4]*

Later in Book 6, Aeneas travels to the underworld where he sees his father Anchises, who tells him of his own destiny as well as that of the Roman people. Anchises describes how Aeneas' descendant Romulus will found the great city of Rome, which will eventually be ruled by Caesar Augustus:

*Turn your two eyes
This way and see this people, your own Romans.
Here is Caesar, and all the line of Iulus,
All who shall one day pass under the dome
Of the great sky: this is the man, this one,
Of whom so often you have heard the promise,
Caesar Augustus, son of the deified,
Who shall bring once again an Age of Gold
To Latium, to the land where Saturn reigned
In early times.^[5]*

Virgil's *Aeneid* became the foundation of a national epic. It celebrated the scrupulous piety of its hero while attributing those characteristics to Octavian. It tied Rome to the legends of Troy, glorified traditional Roman virtues, and legitimized the Julio-Claudian dynasty as descendants of its history's founders, its heroes, and the gods of Rome and Troy.^[6]

Virgil's purpose is to look back from the culmination of that history to its legendary beginnings and proclaim that Augustus's rule is set to bring a new golden age of peace and empire; and in the process to assert Augustus's divine pedigree as the descendant of Aeneas, and hence of the Gods themselves, through Aeneas and his mother, Venus.^[7]

A tale from *Aeneid*, made popular in 20s BCE, was "The Flight from Troy." It is the story of Aeneas' escape from the burning city, holding his aged father on his shoulder (carrying the household gods) and holding his son's (Julus) hand as they flee Troy. Ancient "Flight from Troy" images in reliefs and painting have been discovered throughout Roman archaeological sites.



The *Aeneid* also includes prophecies from the god Jupiter:

- a. *From this line shall be born the Trojan Caesar*
- b. *who shall extend his empire to the ocean*
- c. *extend his glory to the stars*
- d. *[Augustus] in the days to come*
 - i. *anxious no more*
 - ii. *welcome to heaven*
 - iii. *laden with Eastern spoils*
 - iv. *shall be invoked with vows*
 - v. *wars shall cease*
 - vi. *savage ages soften into peace on earth*

CONCEPTION AND DEIFICATION

Octavian's birth was attributed to Apollo (God of Light, Order and Reason). Suetonius, a Roman historian, tells a tale of Apollo, in the form of a snake, divinely impregnating Octavian's mother, Atia, during which Atia's husband dreamt that the sun rose from Atia's womb.

Octavian was named in Julius Caesar's will as his adopted son and heir; as a result, he inherited Caesar's name, estate, and the loyalty of his legions.

In 42 BC the Roman Senate recognized Julius Caesar as a divinity and referred to him as Divus Iulius ("the divine Julius"). Caesar's adopted son, Octavian, styled himself Divi filius ("son of the deified one, son of god"). He used the title to advance his political position.