

God's Design in the Greek Scriptures: Revelation

The Fellowship With The Split Personality — Pergamum

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An excellent discussion of "Balaam" can be found in "The New Unger's Bible Dictionary," Merrill Unger.
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Cult of the Emperor Augustus had an ulterior motive for this religious refurbishing: to use religion as a political prop. Julius Caesar was deified and a temple built to him in the Forum where his funeral pyre had been. Augustus did not seek full deity for himself in Rome, but he called himself *divi filius*, son of the deified one. In each of the 265 precincts of Rome he established a shrine to the Genius of Augustus, the divine spirit that watched over his fortunes.

In the empire the cult of Roma and Augustus sprang up voluntarily and rapidly. The worship of the goddess Roma, the personification of the Roman state, voluntarily began in Greece and Asia Minor early in the 2nd cent. b.c. as the Romans took over territory previously held by the Hellenistic monarchies. Subsequently individual Romans (e.g., Julius Caesar and Mark Antony) had been deified and joined to the imperial cult. In 29 b.c. Pergamum and Nicomedia in Asia Minor built temples dedicated to Roma and Augustus. Other cities followed suit until shrines to Augustus stood in all the Eastern provinces. Not to be outdone by his gentile neighbors, Herod the Great erected temples to Augustus at his new port of Caesarea and at Sebaste, his rebuilt Samaria (both named in honor of Augustus). In the West an altar of Roma and Augustus was built near modern Lyons (12 b.c.) and at modern Cologne a few years later. The imperial cult symbolized the unity of the empire and the loyalty of its subjects.

After Augustus the Senate deified posthumously the emperors that it had liked and added them to the imperial cult. Generally emperors of the first Christian centuries did not demand worship while they were alive. Exceptions were Gaius Caligula (37–41), who ordered that all inhabitants of the empire acknowledge his divinity, and Domitian (81–96), who required that his household officials address him as "Lord and God" but did not make official use of the title for the populace.

Of course Judaism and Christianity were the two faiths of the empire that were most likely to incur displeasure for failure to worship the emperor or Roma. Judaism had a favored status that generally made it immune from requirements to participate in the imperial cult. Brief scuffles with Gaius and Domitian do not reflect a termination of that privileged position. Although Christianity initially enjoyed freedom from Roman proscription because it grew up in the cradle of Judaism, it lost that protection when it came of age. Thus Christians could be charged with atheism because of their refusal to accept the imperial cult. Roman officials also persecuted Christians for fear that they would engage in some insurrectionary action to set up the kingdom of Christ.

Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Revised (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988; 2002), 4:113.