

***cupido incessit: Religion at the Borders of Empire (Tac. Hist. 2.2–3, Ann. 1.61–62)***

[Paper Abstract](#)

I. Hope, Fear, and Love H. 2.2.1

his ac talibus inter **spem metumque** iactatum **spes vicit**. fuerunt qui **accensum desiderio** Berenices reginae vertisse iter crederent; neque abhorrebat a Berenice iuuenilis animus, sed gerendis rebus nullum ex eo impedimentum. **laetam voluptatibus adulescentiam** egit, suo quam patris imperio **moderator**.<sup>1</sup>

These and similar arguments kept him hovering uneasily **between hope and fear**. Finally, **hope triumphed**. Some people believed that his **passion** for Queen Berenice **fired him** to turn back. It is quite true that the young man was far from insensible to Berenice's charms, but his practical efficiency never suffered from this. (Titus led **a life of pleasure in his youth**, and proved **more disciplined** during his own reign than during his father's.)

II. Desire for Aphrodite H. 2.2.2

atque illum **cupido incessit** adeundi visendique templum Paphiae Veneris, inclitum per indigenas advenasque. haud fuerit longum initia religionis, templi ritum, formam deae (neque enim alibi sic habetur) paucis disserere.

Thereupon, **a desire seized him** to go and visit the Temple of Venus at Paphos, which is famous among natives and visitors alike. It may perhaps be of some interest to discuss briefly the origin of this cult, the temple ritual, and the form of the goddess, for she is not represented in this way anywhere else.

III. Digression on Aphrodite at Paphos H. 2.3

conditorem templi regem Aeriam vetus memoria, quidam ipsius deae nomen id perhibent. fama recentior tradit a Cinyra sacratum templum deamque ipsam conceptam mari huc adpulsam; sed scientiam artemque haruspicum accitam et Cilicem Tamiram intulisse, atque ita pactum ut familiae utriusque posterii caerimoniis praesiderent. mox, ne honore nullo regum genus peregrinam stirpem antecelleret, ipsa quam intulerant scientia hospites cessere: tantum Cinyrades sacerdos consulitur. hostiae, ut quisque vovit, sed mares deliguntur: certissima fides haedorum fibris. sanguinem arae obfundere vetitum: precibus et igne puro altaria adolentur, nec ullis imbribus quamquam in aperto madescent. simulacrum deae non effigie humana, continuus orbis latiore initio tenuem in ambitum metae modo exurgens, set ratio in obscuro.

An ancient tradition declares that the temple was founded by King Aerias, while some authorities say that this is the name of the goddess herself. A more recent version tells us that the temple was consecrated by Cinyras and that it was here that the goddess landed after her birth from the sea. However, it seems that the knowledge and skill of divination was introduced from abroad (Tamiras the Cilician was the one who imported it), and an

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<sup>1</sup> For Tacitus' *Historiae*, I use Heinrich Heubner's 1978 Teubner text, and Rhiannon Ash's 2009 revisions of Kenneth Wellesley's Penguin translation, with slight alterations.

arrangement was made that the descendants of both families should preside over the rites. Later, to avoid a situation where the royal line failed to outrank the foreigners by any mark of esteem, the immigrants relinquished control of the very lore they had introduced, and now the only priest consulted is a descendant of Cinyras. The worshipper selects whatever sort of victim he has vowed to sacrifice, but the choice is restricted to male animals. The livers of kids are held to offer the surest prediction. Spilling blood upon the altar is forbidden; only prayers and pure fire are offered upon it. Although the altars are out in the open they are never dampened by rain. The goddess is not portrayed in the likeness of a human, but resembles a conical turning-post, rising without interruption from a rather broad base up to a top of slender circumference. The reason for this is obscure.

IV. Titus at the Temple (H. 2.4)

Titus spectata opulencia donisque regum quaeque alia laetum antiquitatibus Graecorum genus incertae vetustati adfingit, de navigatione primum consuluit. postquam pandi viam et mare prosperum accepit, **de se per ambages interrogat** caesis compluribus hostiis. Sostratus (sacerdotis id nomen erat) ubi laeta et congruentia exta **magnisque consultis adnuere deam videt**, pauca in praesens et solita respondens, petito secreto futura aperit. Titus aucto animo ad patrem pervectus suspensis provinciarum et exercituum mentibus ingens rerum fiducia accessit.

Titus inspected the rich treasures, the gifts from kings and other objects to which the Greeks, passionate about antiquities, attribute an origin lost in the mists of the past. Then he consulted the priest in the first place about his voyage. On being assured of a clear passage and calm sea, **he enquired in veiled language of his own future**, offering a number of victims. Sostratus – for so the priest was named – observed that in every case the entrails showed favorable indications and that the **goddess was clearly giving her blessing to a great enterprise**. So for the time being he made a short and conventional reply. But after asking for a private interview, he disclosed the future to Titus. Heartened by these assurances, he sailed on to rejoin his father. Amidst the mood of uncertainty prevailing throughout the provinces and armies, his arrival inspired a surge of confidence.

V. Titus' Rebuke (Dio 65.15.3-5)<sup>2</sup> – LCL

Βερενίκη δὲ ἰσχυρῶς τε ἤνθει καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἐς τὴν Ῥώμην μετὰ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ Ἀγρίππα (4)ἦλθε· καὶ ὁ μὲν στρατηγικῶν τιμῶν ἠξιώθη, ἡ δὲ ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ ὄκησε καὶ τῷ Τίτῳ συνεγίγνετο. προσεδόκα δὲ γαμηθῆσεσθαι αὐτῷ, καὶ πάντα ἤδη ὡς καὶ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ οὔσα ἐποίει, **ὥστ' ἐκεῖνον δυσχεραίνοντας τοὺς Ῥωμαίους ἐπὶ τούτοις (5)αἰσθόμενον ἀποπέμψασθαι αὐτήν.**

Berenice was at the very height of her power and consequently came to Rome along with her brother Agrippa. The latter was given the rank of praetor, while she dwelt in the palace, cohabiting with Titus. She expected to marry him and was already behaving in every respect as if she were his wife; **but when he perceived that the Romans were displeased with the situation, he sent her away.**

<sup>2</sup> For Cassius Dio, I use the Greek text and English translation in Earnest Cary's 1925 Loeb.

VI. Titus and Berenice (Suet *Titus* 7.1, 2)

praeter saeuitiam suspecta in eo etiam luxuria erat, quod ad mediam noctem comisationes cum profusissimo quoque familiarium extenderet; nec minus libido propter exoletorum et spadonum greges propterque **insignem reginae Berenices amorem**, cui etiam nuptias pollicitus ferebatur ... Berenicen statim ab urbe dimisit **inuitus inuitam**.

He was believed to be profligate as well as cruel, because of the riotous parties which he kept going with his more extravagant friends far into the night; and immoral, too, because he owned a troupe of invertes and eunuchs, and nursed a **notorious passion for Queen Berenice**, to whom he had allegedly promised marriage. ... He sent Queen Berenice away from Rome, which was **painful for both of them**.<sup>3</sup>

VII. Germanicus' Desire and Teutoberg (A. 1.61)

igitur **cupido Caesarem invadit solvendi suprema** militibus ducique, **permoto ad miserationem omni qui aderat exercitu** ob propinquos, amicos, denique ob casus bellorum et sortem hominum. praemisso Caecina ut occulta saltuum scrutaretur pontesque et aggeres umido paludum et fallacibus campis inponeret, incedunt **maestos locos visuque ac memoria deformis**. prima Vari castra lato ambitu et dimensis principiis trium legionum manus ostentabant; dein semiruto vallo, humili fossa accisae iam reliquiae consedis intellegebantur: medio campi albentia ossa, ut fugerant, ut restiterant, disiecta vel aggerata. adiacebant fragmina telorum equorumque artus, simul truncis arborum antefixa ora. lucis propinquis **barbarae arae**, apud quas tribunos ac primorum ordinum centuriones **mactaverant**. et cladis eius superstites, pugnam aut vincula elapsi, referebant hic cecidisse legatos, illic **raptas aquilas**; primum ubi vulnus Varo adactum, ubi infelici dextera et suo ictu mortem invenerit; **quo tribunali contionatus Arminius**, quot patibula captivis, quae scrobes, **utque signis et aquilis per superbiam inluserit**.<sup>4</sup>

A desire assailed Germanicus: to pay final respects to soldiers and general. The universal feeling in the army was compassion, for kinsfolk, for friends, for wars' fortunes and human destiny. Caecina was sent ahead to investigate the woods' secrets and raise causeways in the marshy wetness and treacherous terrain. Then they entered the gloomy place, hideous in appearance and memory. Varus' first camp, with a wide perimeter road and demarcated headquarters, showed the handiwork of three legions. From a low-heaped rampart and shallow ditch one could see the base of the survivors' thinned ranks. At the battlefield's centre, bones lay whitening, scattered or heaped where men had fled or resisted. Alongside were fragments of weapons and the limbs of horses and, affixed to tree trunks, skulls. In nearby groves were the barbarian altars where they sacrificed officers and chief centurians. Survivors of that disaster (they had slipped away from battle or captivity) gave the report. *Here the legates fell; there the eagles were seized*. They told where Varus was first wounded, where, with his unlucky right hand, he found self-inflicted death. And what platform Arminius spoke from, how many stocks

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<sup>3</sup> For Suetonius' *Titus*, I use Robert Castor's 2016 Oxford Classical Text, and Robert Graves' 1957 Penguin translation.

<sup>4</sup> For Tacitus' *Annales*, I use Heinrich Heubner's 1983 Teubner edition, and Cynthia Damon's 2012 Penguin translation.

there were for captives, and pits, and how, **in his arrogance, Arminius mocked the standards and eagles.**

VIII. Burial and Emotion (A. 1.62.1)

igitur Romanus qui aderat exercitus sextum post cladis annum trium legionum ossa, nullo noscente alienas reliquias an suorum humo tegeret, omnis ut coniunctos, ut consanguineos, aucta in hostem ira, maesti simul et infensi condebant. primum extruendo tumulo caespitem Caesar posuit, gratissimo munere in defunctos et praesentibus **doloris socius.**

The entire army, present six years after the disaster, began to inter the bones of three legions. No one knew whether he was burying the remains of stranger or friend. But everyone, as if these were relatives and blood kin, and **with his anger at the enemy augmented, was both sorrowful and hostile.** The first of the turves for building the mound was placed by Germanicus, a pleasing tribute to the dead by one **allied in grief** with those present.

IX. Tiberius' Rebuke (A. 1.62.2)

quod Tiberio haud probatum, seu cuncta Germanici in deterius trahenti, sive exercitum imagine caesorum insepultorumque tardatum ad proelia et formidolosiores hostium credebat; neque imperatorem auguratu et vetustissimis caerimoniis praeditum adtrectare feralia debuisse.

Tiberius did not approve, either interpreting everything of Germanicus' for the worse, or else he believed that the sight of unburied casualties made an army slower for battle and more cowardly toward enemies. *A commander responsible for augury and our most ancient rites should not have handled dead remains.*

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