

CHASING THE SUN:
USING COINAGE TO DOCUMENT THE SPREAD
OF SOLAR WORSHIP IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE
IN THE 3RD CENTURY CE.

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INTRODUCTION

"Ambition sighed: she found it vain to trust
 The faithless column and the crumbling bust:
 Huge moles, whose shadow stretched from shore to shore,
 Their ruins perished, and their place no more;
 Convinced, she now contracts her vast design,
 And all her triumphs shrink into a coin.
 A narrow orb each crowded conquest keeps;
 Beneath her palm here sad Judea weeps;
 Now scantier limits the proud arch confine,
 And scarce are seen the prostrate Nile or Rhine;
 A small Euphrates through the piece is rolled,
 And little eagles wave their wings in gold.
 The medal, faithful to its charge of fame,
 Through climes and ages bears each form and name:
 In one short view subjected to our eye
 Gods, emperors, heroes, sages, beauties, lie."
 Alexander Pope¹

Coinage is one of the most important and prolific artefacts available for the study of the ancient Romans. In the 18th century Alexander Pope perhaps best summed up the potency and relevance of coinage, particularly for studies of ancient civilisations. Their coinage was "charged" with carrying the fame of the emperors and their deeds, and stood the test of time more successfully than many temples, statues or reliefs. Pope also touched on another point that makes coinage invaluable: its ability to represent people and events on an incredibly small scale; Rome and her glory contracted so that it could fit in the palm of the hand and be carried over mountains and across seas. With a glance and a flick of a coin, viewers saw "gods, emperors, heroes, sages, beauties", small but clear, and understood that these images were a reflection of the Empire in which they lived. Whether these images were realistic reflections of the state of affairs in the Empire, or idealistic expectations of how life should or could be, they still tell us much about those who minted and used the coins.

This study examines the importance of coins in a particularly turbulent period of Roman history, the 3rd century CE, and the deity who dominated coinage of this period, the Roman sun god

¹ *Epistle V: To Mr. Addison- Occasioned by his Dialogues on Medals.*

Sol. To understand Sol's popularity during this period and his presence on coinage, I investigate two key aspects of the god within the framework of the turbulence of the 3rd century CE: the history of solar worship in Rome before the 3rd century, and coinage and its importance as a means of communicating imperial power and ideas. The apparently sudden rise of Sol's popularity in the 3rd century has occasioned a fair amount of scholarship, but there has been a tendency to focus on the literary evidence for his worship, of which there is little. This study uses physical remains, in particular coinage, along with literary evidence, to discover more about Sol in the light of more recent scholarship.² Coins are essential evidence for the study of the 3rd century CE because construction and dedication of monuments declined and little remains of what was built. However, coinage of this period survives in large quantities and continues to be found across Europe, particularly in Britain. The research undertaken in this thesis was inspired by an unpublished collection of Roman coins housed in the Canterbury Museum, a significant number of which date to the 3rd century CE and display images of Sol or solar iconography. Though the collection is small, I have used particular coins in it to highlight important points wherever possible. Unfortunately, the collection does not contain the full range of Sol image types, and so I have used coins and monuments from other collections to illustrate these issues. Coins were essential for the effective administration of the Empire, in particular for paying the troops, and continued to be produced when little else was. The images on coins, though miniature, are expressive and often of high quality. Indeed, for a number of 3rd century emperors the only portraits surviving today are those found on coins.

The structure of this thesis reflects an attempt to address the various aspects of Sol's appearance on coins and the scholarship surrounding it, in order to provide the fullest understanding of the many manifestations of the god and his cult during the 3rd century CE. In Chapter 1, I examine the primary and secondary evidence relating to Sol and the 3rd century. The aim of this chapter is to evaluate and discuss recent theories about solar worship in Rome, and to highlight that these theories' prioritization of literary evidence over material remains has led to a skewed perspective on Sol. I use archaeological remains in conjunction with the literary evidence to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the god and his place in the religious environment of Rome. The secondary evidence is explored first, and I examine early scholarship on Sol and his origins to clarify the common misconception that there were two Sols in Roman religion, the native Sol Indiges and the eastern Sol Invictus. The theory of the two Sols was established in the early 20th century by scholars Georg Wissowa and Franz Cumont, and it influenced studies on Sol and Roman

² For example, Hijmans (2009).

religion for several decades. Recently, however, scholars have disputed this theory and focused on material remains to show that the Romans had venerated Sol from a very early date, and that Sol Indiges of the earlier period was the same as Sol Invictus worshipped widely in the 3rd century CE.³ In the second part of this chapter I deal with the primary evidence attesting Sol and his cult. I discuss his presence in ancient literature and demonstrate that he is a common character in myths and legends, but uncommon in ancient historical writings. Sol was a well-known deity by the 3rd century through myths and stories, but to learn more about his actual worship in Rome it is necessary to turn to the archaeological evidence, the most abundant of which is coinage. In the Canterbury Collection the evident trends show peaks in Sol's appearance on the coins of certain emperors, and this is in agreement with the trends in coin catalogues such as the *Roman Imperial Coinage (RIC)*, and major coin hoards. By studying the Canterbury Collection alongside the *RIC*, we gain more primary evidence to draw conclusions from and, therefore, a better understanding of Sol and his cult during the 3rd century. By examining temples and monuments erected in honour of Sol, it is clear that he was associated with imperial power from the reign of Augustus onwards. It is through coinage, however, that we gain the best understanding of the god, particularly during the 3rd century, due to the large amount of coins that have survived from this period.

In Chapter 2 I clarify Sol's history and position in Rome by locating and contextualizing his worship in the political and religious landscape of the 3rd century CE. This was a time when Rome's borders were under attack and she faced numerous internal threats and rebellions, including three breakaway 'empires' in Palmyra, Gaul and Britain. Emperors were primarily from a military background and ruled for only short periods of time before being assassinated and replaced. Whilst it would be an over-generalisation to say that the whole Roman Empire was in a state of crisis, it is clear that border regions were threatened, and even those living in Rome itself almost never saw the emperor. Building programmes had all but ceased, and public events such as games were rarely held. It is in this situation that Sol's popularity increased and he became a dominant presence on coinage. Leading up to the 3rd century, worship of Sol and his appearance on coinage had been sporadic. Temples to the sun god were known from the Republic, but it was not until Augustus in the 1st century CE that solar worship was really celebrated, with his devotion to Apollo and the establishment of solar monuments such as the obelisks, the horologium, and the temple to Apollo on the Palatine. Nero also favoured solar deities, though whether this was in imitation of Augustus or due to genuine devotion is unknown. Not until the Severans was solar worship as popular as under Augustus and Nero, though it by no means disappeared from Rome during the intervening

³ For example, Hijmans (2009) Chapter 1.

period. As sun worship began its ascendance, so did Sol. Sol's association with other gods such as Apollo, Mithras and Jupiter Dolichenus has led to some confusion and attempts to either identify these gods as one or to separate them entirely. A number of deities in Rome had solar associations, and we must understand that the functions and attributes of the gods could overlap and intermingle. As a powerful and visible divine being, the sun was sometimes associated with other deities, and thus Sol was often present in their myths and visual representations. Finally, the aim of this chapter is to set the scene for a discussion of solar iconography in the 3rd century, and to establish that, contrary to some previous theories, solar worship was well-established in Rome by the 3rd century and Sol was a recognisable god who symbolised sovereignty and eternity. Sol's adoption as a patron deity by various 3rd century emperors was unusual in that Sol had never been as expressly or widely worshipped, but it is understandable when viewed in light of his links to Augustus and the stability of the *Pax Romana* in the Roman imagination.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the numismatic issues more fully and place the patterns seen in the Canterbury Collection into a wider context. The importance of coinage in the 3rd century is a main focus of this chapter and one that has elicited much scholarship recently. I engage with this scholarship and argue that because of the decrease in the number of large-scale building projects, the absence of emperors from Rome, and the wars and rebellions throughout the Empire, coinage became an easily manufactured, cost-effective way of communicating imperial power and policies to the Roman people. I will show that literary as well as archaeological sources indicate that, from an early date, coins were recognised and utilised as carriers of visual messages, especially in the 3rd century CE. I discuss and clarify the idea of coins as 'monuments in miniature' further in this chapter alongside issues such as the comprehensibility and relevance of coin images. The pictures on coins of this period effectively became memorials to a specific emperor and his *virtus*, as coins were minted for emperors who ruled for very brief periods of time and remained in circulation long after the emperor had died. In the second half of this chapter I explore solar iconography on specific coins and its possible origins and significance for a Roman audience. Representations of Sol were easily recognised and formulaic once established, and this helps to give us a sense of how the Romans viewed this god. The radiate crown worn by emperors was also an important solar symbol on coinage, linking the emperor with the sun god and with previous emperors who worshipped the sun, such as Augustus. I argue that one of the functions of the radiate crown was to link the wearer with the sun and ideas of power and authority, just as wearing the crescent linked the wearer to the moon. The aim of this chapter is to examine coinage in the 3rd century and Sol's iconography on this coinage. I assert that Sol was an important deity during this period, both as a patron deity of certain

emperors, but also as a symbol of eternity and invincibility, concepts that were vital during such a tumultuous time.

The present study does not present a full catalogue of artefacts and monuments relevant to Sol, nor is it intended to be a complete history of the god and his cult. It does, however, explain and clarify his presence on coins of the 3rd century CE by focusing on the archaeological, rather than the literary evidence. This focus on material remains challenges many of the theories set forth by early scholars of Roman religion about Sol and so-called foreign deities thought by some to have “invaded” Rome during the 2nd and 3rd centuries. For the Romans, who respected the gods of the peoples they conquered and rarely prevented them from worshipping their traditional gods, religion was ever-changing and tied in to every aspect of life. Whilst some foreign deities, such as Mithras, Isis, and Jupiter Dolichenus, were adopted by Romans at a personal level, few were accepted into the Roman pantheon at state level. Those that were, such as Elagabal, were exceptional. By focussing on the archaeological evidence, and in particular coinage, and by seeking to gain a fuller understanding of Sol and his role in the religion of the day, we begin to understand a period in Roman history that saw great changes to the Empire, including the decline of Rome as its centre. It is an era whose effects are still felt today.

CHAPTER 1

THE LEGEND AND LEGACY OF SOL; THE SUN IN ART AND LITERATURE.

“... ‘By this shining orb with radiant beams which sees and hears me as I speak, I swear to you that you are the child of the Sun which you behold, the sun which guides the world. If my words are false, may he deny himself to my sight, may the light of this day be the last I ever see.’”

Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I.747-779⁴

“... Life-giving Sun, who with your shining car bring forth the day and hide it away, who are born anew and yet the same, may you never be able to behold anything greater than the city of Rome!”

Horace, *Carmen Saeculare*⁵

In these two passages we are introduced to the interesting duality of Sol and the way in which he was thought of and portrayed by the Romans: he was a “shining orb with radiant beams”, and yet was also anthropomorphised into one who could father children and steer his “shining car” to “bring forth day and hide it away”. He was one of the few visible gods; every day his chariot would draw the sun into the sky, and draw it down at night, its effects felt by all mortals. It is no wonder that worship of the sun was so common in the ancient world, when its rays could support life, but also destroy it. This duality in both nature and effect has led modern scholars to take a keen interest in Sol and solar worship, and to make large and sweeping assertions based on his representation in ancient literary sources.

In this chapter I will examine the primary evidence and later scholarship for Sol and his worship in Rome, up to and including the 3rd century CE. The main scholarship on Sol comes from the 20th century with Franz Cumont, Georg Wissowa, Joseph Fontenrose, and Gaston Halsberghe, contributing valuable works on the god and the cult.⁶ In these works, the authors distinguish two types of solar deity worshipped by Romans: Sol Indiges and Sol Invictus. Wissowa identified Sol Indiges as an Italicised Helios, worshipped from as early as the 2nd century BCE, who was then displaced by a god of eastern origins, Sol Invictus.⁷ Wissowa’s theory influenced much modern scholarship on Sol and was accepted by Halsberghe in his exhaustive work, *The Cult of Sol Invictus*, which argued that the “autochthonous” Sol Indiges was replaced by the Syrian Sol Invictus, whom he

⁴ Translation by Mary M. Innes (1955).

⁵ Translation by Niall Rudd (2004).

⁶ Cumont, *Les Religions Orientales dans la Paganisme Romain* (1929); Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (1902); Fontenrose (1939-1943); Halsberghe (1972 and 1984). See also M. Clauss (*Sol Invictus Mithras*, 1990), H.P. L’Orange (*Sol Invictus Imperator*, 1935), and H. Usener (*Sol Invictus*, 1905).

⁷ Wissowa (1912) pp. 315-317.

identified as Elagabal, the Emesene sun-god introduced by the emperor Elagabalus in 218 CE.⁸ More recently, this view was challenged by Ragnar Hedlund (2008) and Steven Hijmans (2009), who questioned the predominance of Sol in the 3rd century CE. Both of these scholars utilized material remains rather than literary evidence, as these gave an insight to the deity and his worship in Rome from a different perspective. To rely solely on material remains, however, is also problematic due to the necessity of interpreting evidence that is essentially mute, and the modern bias that naturally comes with these explanations. Where Halsberghe relied almost solely on the literary evidence for his analysis of Sol, Hijmans did the opposite and focussed on the material remains instead. Literature reveals Sol's role in myths, but very little about his physical presence in Rome and the way in which he was worshipped. Material remains aid understanding of the manifestations of the god and how widespread his worship was, but are limited by the fact that many monuments and artefacts have not survived or are now incomprehensible. Neither of these approaches can give a full picture of Sol and his worship in Rome, and it is for this reason that I adopt a more holistic approach, focussing on the ancient archaeological evidence, but not excluding the literary sources.

Coins form an important portion of the material remains of the Roman Empire, particularly for the 3rd century CE and the study of Sol. For this reason coins from the collection in the Canterbury Museum and from major coin catalogues such as *The Roman Imperial Coinage (RIC)* are discussed in detail. In this chapter I briefly introduce these coins, with a more thorough examination of the iconography and types found in Chapter 3. I also investigate other material remains that depict Sol, such as statuary and reliefs, extending the iconography found on the coins. On the whole, ancient literary texts do not discuss Sol in detail, and nowhere is there a comprehensive discussion of the god, his cult, rituals, or followers. It is also unfortunate that imperial policy on coin production does not feature more prominently in Roman historical writing.⁹ In the past scholarly conclusions were made on the basis of brief references that mention Sol, without much regard for the material remains. By referencing both the literary and archaeological sources, we gain a fuller understanding of Sol and his worship.

1.1 Secondary Scholarship: The “Problem” of Two Sols

Sol's sudden rise in popularity during the 3rd century CE has inspired many investigations of this god, and he is commonly mentioned in scholarly commentaries on Roman religion and cults.¹⁰

⁸ Halsberghe (1972) pp. 26-27, 45.

⁹ Duncan-Jones (2005) p. 462.

¹⁰ For example, Beard, North and Price (2000) pp. 259-263; Rives (2007) p. 205; Turcan (2000 a) p. 245; Lipka (2009) pp. 121-125.

The tendency of earlier scholars such as Wissowa (1912) and Halsberghe (1972) was either to dismiss the god as a foreign import who had little importance in early Rome, or to promote him to a supreme deity whose worship foreshadowed Christianity.¹¹ These views are no longer widely accepted, but even so influenced studies of Roman religion for many years.¹² Wissowa and Cumont argued that Rome had been home to two different sun gods in its history, Sol Indiges and Sol Invictus, the former replaced by the latter in the 3rd century CE. For Wissowa and those who followed him, it became a matter of East versus West; the Syrian Sol superseding the Roman Sol/Helios.¹³ This process was thought to be possible because the Republican Sol was a minor deity whose worship was unworthy of the “superior” Romans, and because mystery cults with Eastern antecedents did rise in popularity in the imperial period.¹⁴ The assumption in early scholarship was that, faced with the leadership crises and civil wars of the 3rd century, some Romans worshipped the old gods with more piety and devotion, but many turned to the new gods who were coming into the Empire with soldiers and immigrants.¹⁵ Halsberghe argued that when the emperor Elagabalus introduced his black baetyl as the sacred image of his god, Elagabal, and Aurelian established his great temple to Sol Invictus in Rome, they were the same god: an eastern deity whose monotheistic-like worship foreshadowed what would come with Rome’s acceptance of Christianity.¹⁶ He believed that the Sol evident in literature and visual representations from an earlier period was replaced by this new solar deity.¹⁷

To explain worship of Sol in Rome, Georg Wissowa argued that Romans did not traditionally believe in the sun, moon or stars as deities, and suggested that Sol was a Greek importation rather than an indigenous Roman god; thus Helios became Sol when he came to Rome.¹⁸ But evidence for the worship of Sol Indiges in Rome is known from an early date, and it has become clear that the Romans did worship the sun, moon and stars as deities.¹⁹ Sol had his roots in the earliest Republican traditions, and may even have been introduced in the regal period by the Sabine king Titus Tatius, although he was not a major deity in the early Roman pantheon.²⁰ Franz Cumont altered the way many thought of the worship of eastern gods, arguing that such deities were so readily accepted by

¹¹ Wissowa (1912) p. 317; Halsberghe (1972) p. 130.

¹² Hijmans (2009) p. 6.

¹³ Wissowa (1912) P. 365; Halsberghe (1972) pp.35, 54.

¹⁴ Hijmans (2009) p. 7; Beard, North and Price (2000) pp. 246-247.

¹⁵ Leppin (2007) p. 96.

¹⁶ Halsberghe (1972) p. 130; Turcan (2000 a) pp. 176-177.

¹⁷ Halsberghe (1972), p. 37.

¹⁸ Wissowa (1912), p. 315; Halsberghe (1972) p. 27; Hijmans (2009) p. 3.

¹⁹ Cumont (1960) P. 69; Beck (2007) pp. 178-179.

²⁰ Varro, *De lingua latina libri* 5.74; Brill’s New Pauly, *Sol* (2008) p.607; Hijmans (2009) p. 6; Wardman (1982) p. 120.

Romans because “Oriental” culture and religions were “more advanced” than the cults that Rome had to offer.²¹ The rise in popularity of Sol Invictus and his supposed eastern origins, therefore, fit well into Cumont’s theory of eastern “superiority”; but the question of when Sol Invictus entered Rome and superseded Sol Indiges remained unanswered. Cumont argued that the term *invictus*, though Latin, was clearly an ‘Oriental’ term translated from the Greek ἀνίκητος, and was not used in the West until the Roman Empire.²² This theory of Sol’s eastern origins influenced later scholarship on the sun god and religion in Rome for most of the 20th century. For example, Halsberghe accepted the concept of two Sols in Rome, and prioritized the ancient literature that mentioned Sol Indiges and Sol Invictus.²³ Similarly, Liebeschuetz stated as fact that Sol was of non-Roman origins, as did Alan Wardman.²⁴ Even recently, Michael Lipka asserted that Sol Indiges was an “age-old Roman deity” who was waning by the time of Augustus.²⁵ The apparent decline in solar monuments – especially coins – in the first two centuries CE was used as evidence to support these statements. As I will discuss further in Chapters 2 and 3, however, Sol never completely disappeared from monuments or coins. Moreover, even when he was not directly represented, the imagery of Sol and Apollo had become so interchangeable by the Augustan period that both gods could be understood as manifestations of the sun and referred to in the same monument. Halsberghe further claimed that Rome’s weakened state in the 2nd century CE allowed eastern religions to infiltrate Roman culture, so that when the Severans came to power and attempted to introduce their own god, Sol Invictus Elagabal, they did it easily in a climate prepared and ready for change.²⁶ When Elagabalus was assassinated and suffered *damnatio memoriae*, it was his memory and not his god that was erased and, according to Halsberghe, Aurelian simply ‘romanized’ the Syrian deity and re-instituted the cult.²⁷ Unfortunately, while Halsberghe used literary and epigraphic evidence extensively, he made little reference to the physical evidence and did not examine it closely. It appears that Halsberghe’s theories fit within the framework of the previous scholarship and that he used evidence that supported those theories while disregarding the evidence that did not. For example, he did not examine the iconography of Sol, which – as I show in Chapter 3 – continued to be represented in a typically Graeco-Roman way on a variety of monuments throughout the imperial period. If we accept Halsberghe’s view that Sol and Elagabal were one and the same, it seems highly unlikely that this most eastern of deities, whose high priest was heavily criticized for his foreign practices and rites, should appear to be very typically Graeco-Roman in his representations. It is

²¹ Cumont (1929) p. 2; Hijmans (2009) pp. 16-17.

²² Hijmans (2009) p. 18.

²³ Halsberghe (1972).

²⁴ Liebeschuetz (1979) p. 233; Wardman (1982) p. 115.

²⁵ Lipka (2009) p. 79.

²⁶ Halsberghe (1972) pp. 42-43.

²⁷ Halsberghe (1972) p. 139.

more likely that Sol continued as a common Roman deity alongside the Emesene Elagabal, and that it was Sol who Aurelian chose as his patron, not the eastern deity.

Scholarship of the 20th and 21st centuries has successfully challenged the theory of two Sols in Roman religious history.²⁸ In his 2008 thesis, Ragnar Hedlund argued that Sol's popularity on coins in the 3rd century CE was not due to his sudden introduction to Rome from the East, but to his adoption by several emperors as their protector and as a symbol of hope and the eternity of the Empire.²⁹ But if Sol was not of eastern origin, what were his origins? Some scholars have suggested that there were still two Sols in Rome, but that Sol Invictus was a new *Roman* god not an eastern one.³⁰ But Hijmans points out that there is very little evidence for this idea and that which is available from coins, inscriptions, statuary and reliefs indicates that Sol was continuously worshipped in Rome.³¹ Hijmans re-examined the physical evidence for the cult of Sol and, although his intention was not to present an in-depth study of Sol's iconography and its meanings, his identification of the 'types' of images used to represent Sol and his evaluation of previous scholarship is useful and well-argued.³² To support his theory of one Roman Sol worshipped throughout the imperial period, Hijmans highlighted the recognisable nature of the god's iconography, as it is clear that Sol was represented visually as a Graeco-Roman god.³³ Sol is always either nude or wearing a *chiton* or *chlamys*, he often carries a globe or whip, he is usually radiate, and is most often shown in a quadriga or merely standing. There is nothing in these attributes or stances to suggest specifically eastern origins. A comparison of Sol with an eastern god who also rose to prominence in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, Mithras, highlights a very clear difference in the way in which the two are represented. Despite considerable adaption in a Roman context, Mithras always wears the Phrygian cap, trousers and long-sleeved tunic, not at all like Sol's nudity and ray crown (cf. Figs. 2 and 3).³⁴ Thus Sol's representation and iconography are more comparable to those of Helios or Apollo, rather than Mithras and other eastern solar deities. Sol's appearance is traditionally Graeco-Roman, with little resemblance to other well-known "oriental" deities, and from the earliest coins depicting Sol to the latest, this iconography changes very little.³⁵ Hijmans emphasises that Sol (the sun) was not so much

²⁸ W.H. Waddington and E. Babelon (2008) 'Sol' in BNP vol. 13, p. 609.

²⁹ Hedlund (2008) pp. 190-191.

³⁰ For this theory see M. Wallraff, *Christus Verus Sol: Sonnenverehrung und Christentum in der Spätantike* (2001); and P. Matern, *Helios und Sol. Kulte und Ikonographie des griechischen und römischen Sonnengottes* (2002).

³¹ Hijmans (2009) p. 24.

³² See Hijmans (2009) Chapter 1 (pp. 1-30), for an examination of previous scholarship on Sol; see Chapter 3 and 4 (pp. 71-466) for an identification of solar iconography and a catalogue of Sol monuments.

³³ Hijmans (2009) p. 93; Hedlund (2008) p. 191.

³⁴ Elsner (2007) p. 245.

³⁵ Hijmans (2009) p. 72.

a deity worshipped by certain people in certain places, but a divine force whose existence was a matter of fact rather than opinion or belief.³⁶ In studying Sol, Hijmans suggests that we abandon older theories and approach the history of the worship of Sol by analysing the archaeological remains and iconography of the god.³⁷ Here, then, is where the study of coins of the 3rd century CE is valuable, as Sol appears frequently. Whilst this study focusses on coinage of the 3rd century that depicts Sol, it also takes into account other monuments dedicated to the god, and also the ancient histories and myths that mention him. In this way, we gain more knowledge about the god than if we study merely one aspect of the evidence available.

1.2 Primary Evidence:

Sol is mentioned a number of times in ancient literary sources, in both a poetical and historical context. From Catullus, Horace and Ovid, among others, we learn that Sol drove a chariot across the sky that signified the sun's journey from sunrise to sunset. To speak of Sol's chariot rising and sinking into waters to cool his fiery team was a clear reference to dawn and dusk, needing no explanation for the Roman reader.³⁸ As I will explore further in Chapter 3, this poetical image is supported by the various representations of Sol in a *quadriga*, especially on coinage and, it is reported, atop Augustus' temple to Apollo on the Palatine.³⁹ In fact, Sol in a four-horsed chariot was one of the most common representations of the god. Linked to this image is the idea that while Sol in his chariot brought life, he could also take it away by driving too close to the earth with his fiery orb. Thus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* we learn that life is brought forth with the help of the "kindly radiance of the sun in heaven"; however, when Sol allows his son Phaethon to steer his team, the boy cannot control the horses and accidentally scorches the stars and sets fire to the earth.⁴⁰ Only Sol had the power to steer his chariot on its correct course and maintain the balance of the heavens.

As the charioteer of the sun, Sol was in a unique position to witness the affairs of men and gods as he drove his team across the sky, according to Ovid. When Persephone is snatched by Hades to be his bride, Demeter appeals to the sun, as "far and wide he sees the things that are done by day".⁴¹ And it is the sun who first sees the love affair of Mars and Venus because "he sees everything before anyone else".⁴² In this way Sol also fulfilled the role of guarantor of oaths since he was all seeing and could, therefore, know whether an agreement had been broken; there was no hiding

³⁶ Hijmans (2009) p. 621.

³⁷ Hijmans (2009) p. 28, 621.

³⁸ Catullus 64.267 ff.; Tibullus 2.5.60, 3.7.123; Horace, *Carmen Saeculare*; Virgil, *Aeneid* XI.907-914.

³⁹ Propertius, *Elegies* 2.31.32.

⁴⁰ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I.406-443, II.1-329; see also Tibullus 2.3.55.

⁴¹ Ovid, *Fasti* 4.580 ff.

⁴² *Metamorphoses* IV. 143-184; see also *Aeneid* IV.602-629.

from the sun. Sol is also mentioned as a father and brother in poetry, literature and art, as he is often found with his sister, Diana or Luna, who was associated with the moon.⁴³ It is she who takes his place in the sky with her own chariot when he has “set”, and her symbol of a crescent is frequently paired with representations of Sol. Sol is also the father of Phaethon, as we have seen, and is identified as the father of Circe, the witch who put Odysseus’ men under her spell by turning them into wild animals.⁴⁴ In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Latinus is reported to be a descendant of the Sun, and to have worn a coronet of golden rays as an emblem of this relationship.⁴⁵ This is the Sol of myth, however, and to understand the way in which he was worshipped and perceived in reality we must turn to the ancient historical writers.

Sol is not often mentioned in historical texts, and there is very little written about his rites and rituals, how he was worshipped, and by whom. Devotion to the sun was evident in the Republican period but grew in importance in the Empire under various rulers who cited him as patron and protector.⁴⁶ Varro explains that the worship of the sun had been established by the Sabine king Titus Tatius, and that the Romans gave Sol and Luna a place amongst their gods.⁴⁷ A Republican calendar indicates that there was a festival for Sol on August 9th, *Soli indigiti in colle Quirinali* (indigenous Sol on the Quirinal hill).⁴⁸ Literary evidence of solar worship during the Republic, however, is scant and does not increase our understanding of Sol very much. Whilst Apollo in his solar guise was popular under Augustus, it was not until the 3rd century CE that Sol is mentioned prominently in literary sources again.

Documenting the beginning of the 3rd century, there is a wealth of information about Elagabal, one of the gods commonly associated with Sol, and his introduction into Rome by the emperor Elagabalus, also known as Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (r. 218- 222 CE).⁴⁹ According to Cassius Dio, the reign of Elagabalus was one of debauchery and stereotypically “eastern” excess, characterized by his devotion to the god Elagabal, and the power of his mother and grandmother, who effectively ruled through him.⁵⁰ All of the scandalous ceremonies and rites that the Romans associated with eastern religions were allegedly visible in this cult, and thus it is difficult for us to

⁴³ Catullus 64.299; Tibullus 2.4.17; Horace, *Carmen Saeculare*.

⁴⁴ Homer, *The Odyssey* 10.150-160; *Aeneid* VII.1-25; Tibullus 3.7.60 ff.

⁴⁵ *Aeneid* XII.164.

⁴⁶ Fears (1987) p. 408.

⁴⁷ Varro, *De Lingua Latina* V.74; *De re rustica* I.I.5. Again, we also have Tacitus’ comment that Sol had an ancient temple in the Circus Maximus (*Annals* XV.74.1); Quinn Schofield (1969) p. 645.

⁴⁸ Halsberghe (1972) p. 28; Ferguson (1970) p. 45.

⁴⁹ Southern (2001), p. 58.

⁵⁰ *Dio’s Roman History* 80.11.1-2; Herodian II.5.4-9.

distinguish fact from Roman prejudice towards a foreign god made preeminent and even placed above Jupiter Optimus Maximus.⁵¹ The Emesene god was a solar deity, represented by a *baetyl* (conical sacred rock) and worshipped with ecstatic rites that involved dancing and singing. Sacrifices took place at sunrise, which was appropriate for a solar deity who made his first appearance at dawn.⁵² According to Herodian, Elagabalus built a great temple to Elagabal on the Palatine and put statues of other Roman gods into it in order to subjugate the traditional Roman deities to Elagabal.⁵³ Thus the ancient historians convey a single, largely negative view of Elagabal and the way in which he was perceived by Romans, but provide little evidence that this Elagabal was the same as the Sol Invictus worshipped by the Romans in both the Republic and later Empire, as Wissowa, Cumont and Halsberghe had asserted. The notion that Sol Indiges was replaced by Elagabal, who was later Romanized to Sol Invictus by Aurelian, is not supported by ancient texts. I agree with Steven Hijmans' assertion that Elagabal and Sol Invictus were different gods, the former of eastern origins, and the latter worshipped in Rome from the early Republic.⁵⁴ They should not be equated with one another. It is further clear from the iconographic evidence and the nature of Syrian solar worship that Sol was worshipped from the Republican period and was not imported from the east, as Elagabal clearly was.

Sol appears again in the ancient literary sources that describe the life of the emperor Aurelian (r. 270-275 CE), who encouraged the worship of Sol Invictus and promoted the idea that he himself was vice-regent of the sun god, his representative on earth.⁵⁵ In 274 CE Aurelian built a magnificent temple to the Sun in Rome in which he put the spoils from his campaigns in Palmyra.⁵⁶ This temple was said to be one of the most beautiful buildings in the city, a fitting home for the favoured deity of the emperor.⁵⁷ It was located on the edge of the Campus Martius in an area with strong Augustan associations: opposite the Ara Pacis and the Horologium, which also had strong solar connections as a sundial with an obelisk as gnomon (see Fig. 1).⁵⁸ Little survives of the temple today, but a plan by Palladio suggests that it was a circular temple within a rectangular enclosure.⁵⁹ As part of his promotion of Sol, Aurelian instituted games in honour of the god to be held every four

⁵¹ *Dio's Roman History* 80.11.1-2; Icks (2009) p. 111; Bardill (2012) p. 59.

⁵² *Dio's Roman History* 79.31.1; *Scriptores Historia Augusta, Vita Antoninus Heliogabalus* 1-2.4; Herodian II.5.8-9. See also Beard, North and Price (2000) p. 256.

⁵³ II.5.8-9; *SHA Vita Antoninus Heliogabalus*. 2.4-5.2.

⁵⁴ Hijmans (2009) p. 1.

⁵⁵ Boatwright, Gargola, Lenski and Talbert (2012) p. 434-435.

⁵⁶ *SHA Vita Aureliani* 28.5; Zosimus, *Historia Nova* I.61; Boëthius and Ward-Perkins (1970) p. 498.

⁵⁷ Halsberghe (1972), p. 143; Watson (1999) p. 192.

⁵⁸ Ward-Perkins (1981) pp. 415-416.

⁵⁹ Ward-Perkins (1981) p. 418.

years, and established a college of *Pontifices* to serve the god in his new temple.⁶⁰ In this way he transformed a minor god in the pantheon into a prominent deity in state religion. Constantine continued this devotion to Sol when he became emperor in 312 CE, a fact that is evident from the coinage of his reign.⁶¹ Constantius, Constantine's father, was apparently a devotee of the sun god and, soon after his accession, a legion was named the 'Sun's people' (*solenses*).⁶² Although Eusebius tells us that Constantine saw the sign of the cross over the sun and a sign reading 'By this conquer', most scholarship on this event understandably focusses on the cross rather than the sun, and we find very little about Sol in the ancient historians of Constantine.⁶³ However, the importance of solar theology during the reign of Constantine has been determined by examining the physical remains, especially coins, which frequently bore images or inscriptions mentioning the sun god (for example, Fig. 4). Constantine also had Sol depicted on his arch in a tondo on the east side, as well as Luna in a tondo on the west (in imitation of the Hadrianic tondi on the long sides), representing the rising sun and setting moon.⁶⁴

One of the difficulties arising from ancient texts about Sol is the distinction between Sun and sun. That is, identifying whether the author referred to the deity Sol, or to the astral body. One might even question whether these were two separate entities in the ancient mind; could they have been perceived as two aspects of one divine force? This is the view that Hijmans takes, stating that the ancient Roman did not differentiate between the physical sun and the sun god, and that the sun was one of the seven planets, as well as a youthful male charioteer.⁶⁵ This interpretation is supported by the ancient literary sources, which seem to use the words 'Sol' and 'sol' interchangeably and make it clear that the sun was considered to be a divine heavenly body with a fixed and predictable motion. Catullus speaks of the "golden-visaged sun" who chases away night with his tramping steeds⁶⁶, and in Ovid's *Fasti*, Jupiter promises to give pledges of Empire to Numa when the "sun shall have lifted his full orb above the earth", calling the rising sun Phoebus, a name used in literature for both Sol and Apollo.⁶⁷ In his extensive analysis of the images of Sol in art, Hijmans points out that for the Romans the stars and planets were divine, rational beings whose

⁶⁰ Historia Augusta, *Vita Aureliani* 35.3; Halsberghe (1972), pp. 144-145; Watson (1999) p. 192.

⁶¹ For example, Figure 4. Also see Jones (2000) p. 69.

⁶² Fox (1987) pp. 593, 615.

⁶³ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* I.28.2.

⁶⁴ Elsner (2000) p. 165; Jones (2000) p. 52. Also see Marlowe (2006) and Jones (2000) p. 69, for a discussion of the way in which Constantine used the placement of monuments, including his arch and the colossus of Sol, to add layers of meaning to the area.

⁶⁵ Hijmans (2009), p. 508.

⁶⁶ Catullus, 63.39.

⁶⁷ Ovid, *Fasti* 3.346 ff. We will explore the associations between Sol and Apollo further below, pp. 18-19.

courses and effects were meaningful and significant for humanity.⁶⁸ Hijmans' views depend heavily on Roger Beck's analysis of the cult of Mithras, in which he argues that any solar cult presupposes the divinity of the sun, not to mention the other celestial bodies.⁶⁹ The divinity of the sun was not considered to be a matter of faith, but a matter of fact.⁷⁰ Therefore, for the Romans, Sol and sol were one and the same; when they looked up at the daytime sky, they saw both a fiery orb and a divine force. As we have seen, this Sol/sol was represented in art and myth as a youthful male, often in a chariot and accompanied by his night-time counterpart, Luna/moon. Of course, Sol was not the only god in the Roman pantheon who had solar functions and associations. There were a number of gods with solar qualities or links to the sun, and also a number of gods with whom Sol was commonly associated, particularly Luna. As far as it is possible to tell, the worship of Luna ran parallel to the worship of Sol. Tacitus mentions an ancient temple of the Moon established by Servius Tullius, which was destroyed by the fire that ravaged Rome during the reign of Nero.⁷¹ Early indications of the worship of Luna are also present on coins; she is either represented by a crescent or as a young woman driving a biga. This is evident on a coin dated to 217-215 BCE, which has a crescent and two stars on the reverse, with a bust of Sol on the obverse (Fig. 9).⁷² A number of coins also depict Sol in his quadriga on the reverse, with a crescent beside his head (for example, Fig. 11), and busts of Sol on the obverse and Luna in her biga on the reverse (Fig. 12).⁷³

Another difficulty with Sol in ancient literature is his apparent similarity to or assimilation with Apollo. The literary sources are often unclear as to the identity of solar deities that they mention, and often refer to 'Phoebus', meaning the bright or radiant one. This is a name given to both Sol and Apollo at different times. Using poetry to distinguish one god from another is problematic due to the limits of metre and the use of metrical substitutions, making it extremely difficult to distinguish Apollo and Sol in Latin poetry. Joseph Fontenrose, however, argued that Apollo and Sol were clearly distinguishable in Latin poetry of the 1st century BCE because Apollo is never described as having solar attributes such as a radiate crown or a quadriga pulling the sun, nor is Sol endowed with Apolline functions such as healing, prophecy and music.⁷⁴ For example, Lucretius refers specifically to Apollo and his function as musician and god of prophecy, then relates the story of Sol and his son, Phaethon, in which the father is referred to only as "the sun" or Sol.⁷⁵ If

⁶⁸ Hijmans (2009), p. 168.

⁶⁹ Beck (2007) pp. 178-179.

⁷⁰ Beck (2007) p. 180; Hijmans (2009) pp. 168-169.

⁷¹ Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome* XV.41.1.

⁷² Cf. Hijmans (2009), coin L1-6.

⁷³ Cf. Hijmans (2009), coin L1-9.

⁷⁴ Fontenrose (1939), p.439.

⁷⁵ Lucretius, I.739, 2.505, 5.112, 5.383 ff.

Apollo was meant, surely Lucretius would have named the father as Apollo, as he had done previously, instead of merely calling him the sun. On the other hand, Lucretius was constrained by the metre of the poem and may have used 'Sol' because it has one syllable and 'Apollo' because it has three. The fact that these names were interchangeable highlights the great difficulty with using poems as a source and renders many of Fontenrose's arguments implausible. According to Fontenrose, Catullus also seems to distinguish between Apollo and Sol when relating the story of the wedding of Thetis and Peleus, stating that Phoebus and Luna alone did not attend the wedding feast and thereby scorned Peleus and his nuptials.⁷⁶ 'Phoebus' here must refer to Sol and not Apollo since, in Homer's *Iliad*, we read that Apollo attended the wedding feast and even played his lyre at it.⁷⁷ Catullus undoubtedly knew his Homer and, according to Fontenrose, would not have dared to contradict him.⁷⁸ This explanation is unconvincing because Fontenrose gives no explanation as to why Catullus would not have contradicted Homer. These attempts to draw distinct lines between Sol and Apollo are misleading and I would argue that the Romans did not view their gods in this way, with distinct and exclusive traits that did not mix or overlap. Such distinctions are perhaps a modern attempt to understand the ancient gods by imagining them with particular fixed roles and attributes, but we must ask ourselves whether the Romans really viewed their deities in this way. In Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, Avienus asks "...why is it that we worship the sun now as Apollo, now as Liber, now by various other names? ...reveal to me the reason that so many different names converge on a single godhead."⁷⁹ The answer, given by Vettius, is that the sun governs all things in heaven and on earth, and therefore all the gods are manifestations of the powers of the Sun, Apollo presiding over the powers of prophecy and healing.⁸⁰ This example may be a reflection of the nature of Sol in the 3rd and 4th centuries CE, but it shows that Apollo and Sol could be understood as two aspects of a single divinity. The supposed link between Apollo and the sun is reinforced by the fact that in ancient literature both gods are referred to as 'Phoebus'.⁸¹ Obviously many gods were thought to have shining or glowing bodies, but no others were commonly referred to as 'Phoebus', suggesting that Apollo had a solar connection.⁸² There is also the remarkable coincidence of Apollo having a twin sister in Diana, associated with the moon, and Sol having a twin in Luna. Instead of trying to separate and distinguish between Apollo and Sol, it is more plausible to see them as gods with overlapping and interchangeable identities. That is not to say that Apollo and Sol did not have unique traits and attributes, especially in art and iconography, but it is clear from literary references

⁷⁶ Catullus, 64.299.

⁷⁷ Homer, *The Iliad*, 24.62.

⁷⁸ Fontenrose (1939), p. 440-441.

⁷⁹ Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, I.17.1.

⁸⁰ Macrobius I.17.2-5.

⁸¹ For example, Catullus 64.299; Horace 3.21, 4.6; Lucretius 5.112, 6.154; Ovid, *Fasti* 3.346 ff.

⁸² Fontenrose (1939), p. 450.

that the roles and identities of Roman deities were not fixed and inflexible, but could be overlapped or enlarged at will.⁸³ Sol and Luna can be seen as the astral equivalent of Apollo and Diana; their identities separated or combined as needed.

As we have seen, the difficulties with interpreting and understanding literary sources, as well as the infrequent mention of Sol in historical writings, make it hard to learn much about solar worship in Rome and why Sol increased in popularity in the 3rd century CE. It is necessary, therefore, to turn to the archaeological evidence to gain a fuller understanding of Sol. To construct a complete catalogue of all physical remains pertaining to Sol is outside the scope of this thesis. Instead, I will discuss the types of physical remains available for this study and the ways in which they portray Sol in an attempt to understand his popularity in the 3rd century CE. By far the most prolific physical evidence available for Sol is on coins, where many different images and inscriptions pertaining to the sun god are found, as will be discussed further in Chapter 3. I rely on Hijmans' catalogue of monuments to Sol, which includes various representations of Sol, and which is far more comprehensive than what can be achieved in this research.⁸⁴ By reviewing the physical evidence for the worship of Sol, it is possible to gain a clearer understanding of the god's presence in Rome. Visual images were as powerful for the ancient Romans as they are for us today, if not more so. For a civilization without television or other visual media images held significant power and meaning.⁸⁵ For the vast number of illiterate Romans, it was images and verbal reports that conveyed messages, and if we wish to fully understand this culture, it is to the images and art that we must turn.

Sol is represented in various media, either by himself, accompanied by another deity (often Luna), or represented by an object such as a radiate crown. Following Hijmans' catalogue, Sol is represented in free-standing sculpture in three ways: standing or striding, in a quadriga, or as a bust. Statues of Sol were usually made of marble, sandstone, terracotta or bronze (for example, Fig. 5). He is usually depicted nude except for a *chlamys* over one shoulder, and often wore a radiate crown. He is youthful and is normally holding something, such as a whip, globe, spear or staff. Some of the best-known statues of Sol are those that are now lost, or only attested to in literature. For example, Propertius tells us that there was a statue of Sol in his quadriga on top of the temple of Apollo Palatine, but we have no extant physical remains.⁸⁶ The same is true of the most famous statue

⁸³ Hijmans (2009), pp. 565-566.

⁸⁴ Hijmans (2009), Chapter 4, pp. 103- 466.

⁸⁵ Hölscher (2004) pp. 1-2; Zanker (1988) p. 3.

⁸⁶ Propertius *Elegies* 2.31.32; Hijmans (2009), p. 108.

identified as Sol or Helios, the Colossus of Nero.⁸⁷ It was said to be over 30 metres high and was set up in front of Nero's *Domus Aurea*.⁸⁸ Scholars debate whether Nero commissioned it as himself in the guise of Sol, or whether it was simply a statue of himself that Vespasian later changed into a statue of Sol after his predecessor's *damnatio memoriae*.⁸⁹ Whatever the case, it is clear from the sources that by the time of Vespasian, the statue represented Sol/Helios and was probably used as a model for images of Sol that followed.⁹⁰ A medallion of Gordian III depicting the emperor in the Colosseum, along with the Meta Sudans and the Colossus, indicates that the statue was still standing in the mid. 3rd century CE and that it was a well-known Roman landmark (Fig. 6). Sol was also represented in statuary in the company of other gods such as Luna, or other planetary deities.⁹¹ It is sometimes difficult to differentiate between statues of Sol and statues of a radiate Apollo, as the radiate crown cannot be used as a sole identifier of Sol as he was not the only god to emit divine light.⁹² Thus, according to Hijmans, while there are few statues that can be definitively identified as Sol, we can still form a general idea of the attributes needed to make a positive identification when examining images.⁹³

Sol is also represented in reliefs, which Hijmans divides into architectural, votive, funerary, unknown function, and reliefs on which the identity of Sol is doubtful.⁹⁴ When depicted in the corners of pediments or on the doorposts of buildings, Sol is usually accompanied by Luna. In such contexts the two can be used as part of a narrative or as artistic representations of day and night. One of the most common places to find depictions of Sol in reliefs is in the recognisable bull-slaying scenes found in mithraea. In these Sol and Mithras are shown as two separate entities, with Mithras occupying the central space and slaughtering a bull, and Sol shown as a bust or driving a quadriga in the upper left corner, and Luna opposite him in the upper right corner (see Fig. 2).⁹⁵ Mithras is sometimes depicted with his head turned back towards Sol, as if making eye-contact with him. Sol is also present in other mithraic art, such as in a banquet scene with Mithras, and also as a charioteer, with Mithras stepping into the chariot behind him.⁹⁶ In Mithraic art Sol is represented in his typical Graeco-Roman guise, nude with a *chlamys* over the shoulder, curly hair and rays coming from his

⁸⁷ Hijmans (2009), p. 109.

⁸⁸ Bardill (2012) p. 51.

⁸⁹ For example, Howell (1968); Neverov (1986); Fears (1976).

⁹⁰ Pliny, *Natural Histories* 34.45-46; Suetonius, *Div. Vesp.* 18; Neverov (1986) pp. 189-191; Howell (1968) pp. 292-294; Charles-Picard (1966) pp. 99, 104.

⁹¹ For example, *LIMC* 316, 338.

⁹² Hijmans (2009), p. 117.

⁹³ Hijmans (2009) p. 121.

⁹⁴ Hijmans (2009), p. 135.

⁹⁵ For example, *LIMC* 368, 373, 376, 377.

⁹⁶ Hijmans (2009), P. 153, C2c. 2, 8, 10.

head, adding something of the familiar to this ostensibly foreign cult iconography. Sol is represented similarly in reliefs on sarcophagi, usually in a corner, either standing or in a quadriga, and often with Luna opposite him in the other corner. The only time that Sol plays a major role is on sarcophagi that tell the myth of Phaethon, where Sol is often depicted seated on a throne or standing to receive his doomed son.⁹⁷ Sol's iconography on reliefs is fairly consistent and he is usually identifiable by his appearance or by the context. On some monuments he is the sun god, Sol; on others he is simply a representation of the sun, one of the heavenly bodies. Here, again, the duality of Sol is evident: he could represent the sun, the deity, or both, in a single image. Interpretation depended on the viewer and the context in which Sol's image was placed.

From this brief review of statuary and reliefs that depict Sol, it is evident that he was represented in art standing or striding, in a quadriga, or as a bust. He could be accompanied by Luna in all of these types, but it was not necessary for her to be there. Sol is represented in these basic types in other media, including mosaics, gems and seals, wall paintings, decorated plates and lamps, jewellery and, of course, coins.⁹⁸ The largest numbers of surviving images of Sol are on coinage from both the Republic and the Empire. Coins were one of the most accessible, mobile and manageable forms of visual media in the Roman world, easily transported and necessary for the transactions of daily life. From the senators to the slaves, coins passed through the hands of almost every Roman, which made the images depicted on coins meaningful and far-reaching. Even if one could not read, or lived in some far-off province, the images on coins were a reminder and connection to Rome and her ruler. For example, in Mark 12:15, the link between the images on coins and the emperor is made clear when Jesus is asked by certain Pharisees whether it is lawful to give taxes to Caesar:

“Should we pay or shouldn't we?” But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. “Why are you trying to trap me?” he asked. “Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.”

16. They brought the coin, and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?” “Caesar's,” they replied. 17. Then Jesus said to them, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.”⁹⁹

Past studies of Sol tended to focus on imperial coins as evidence for the cult of Sol Invictus. However, coinage supplies clear evidence for an early established cult of the sun, and the Sol shown on these coins is iconographically identical to the Sol on coins from the 3rd century CE. An anonymous coin dated to 217-215 BCE, from Rome depicts a radiate bust of Sol on the obverse, with

⁹⁷ Hijmans (2009), pp. 253-254, section C3a.

⁹⁸ See Bakker (1994) pp. 70-71, 104, for evidence of the worship of Sol in private homes in Ostia, including a floor mosaic in the Horrea di Hortensius, and a graffito in a back room of the Caseggiato del Sole.

⁹⁹ *The Holy Bible New International Version* (2008).

a crescent and stars on the reverse (Fig. 9). As a bust or driving a quadriga, Sol is present on coins from 132 BCE through to 38 BCE and the beginning of the Imperial period.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, a coin minted by Marcus Antonius in 42 BCE depicting on the reverse a distyle temple within which is a bust of Sol with a radiate nimbus, may be a representation of an actual temple or sanctuary of Sol, of which there were a number in Rome by this time (Fig. 10). Rome had at least four sanctuaries or temples for Sol, not including those for non-Roman solar deities, and at least two of these were founded in the Republic or earlier.¹⁰¹

During the imperial period the image on the obverse was usually a portrait of the emperor, while the image on the reverse, according to Andrew Burnett, illustrated (explicitly or implicitly) why the emperor was an object of such focus.¹⁰² It is clear from the images and legends portrayed on coins that they were meant to be noticed, and emperors used this expectation to convey the message of their own *auctoritas* and the divine support and protection that they enjoyed, as I will discuss further in Chapter 3. For example, a coin from the reign of Aurelian bears the image of the radiate emperor on the obverse, and Sol standing holding a globe, with a captive at his feet on the reverse, and the reverse legend ORIENS AVG (Fig. 7). This may be interpreted as Aurelian, with the support of his divine patron Sol, reasserting his power in the East through his military victories. Between 271 and 274 CE, Aurelian did indeed recover Asia Minor, Egypt and Palmyra, which had revolted from the Roman Empire, and these are no doubt the events to which the coin is referring.¹⁰³ The increase in the number of images of Sol on coins in the 3rd century CE has often led to the conclusion that this Sol was a new deity who suddenly shot to prominence and was the precursor to the official acceptance of Christianity and its worship of one God alone.¹⁰⁴ However, coins and other media with images of Sol indicate that the iconography and appearance of this god was consistent from the time of Augustus, and that Sol was continuously worshipped from the mid Republic to the 4th century CE.¹⁰⁵ Sol's dominance on coinage continued until the reign of Constantine, when he began to be replaced by designs which emphasised the glory of the army, the security of the state and, eventually, Christian symbols.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Coins L1-1-14, Hijmans (2009), pp. 411-415.

¹⁰¹ Hijmans (2009) p. 483.

¹⁰² Burnett (1987) p. 69.

¹⁰³ Grant (1985) pp. 185-186.

¹⁰⁴ Hedlund (2008) pp. 190-191; Halsberghe (1972) p. 130.

¹⁰⁵ Hijmans (2009), p. 462.

¹⁰⁶ Burnett (1987) pp. 144-145.

Conclusion:

By examining the primary and secondary evidence for Sol and his worship in the Roman Empire, it becomes clear that there was only one Sol in Rome, though he had various manifestations. One of the many puzzles surrounding this god are his origins, and much scholarship has focussed on this. Early studies argued that the Sol popular in the 3rd century was a newly introduced god of eastern origins, and that the Sol worshipped throughout the Republican period was a minor Roman deity who disappeared with the advent of the “new” Sol. The apparent waxing and waning of Sol’s popularity and the religious climate which prevailed in the 3rd century CE, when the coins suggest he rose to prominence, have led to the conclusion that the Sol of Aurelian and Constantine (*Invictus*) was different to the Sol of the Republic and early Empire (*Indiges*). Recent studies have questioned and challenged the theory of two Sols in light of the physical remains that depict the god as firmly Graeco-Roman. The iconography of the so-called Sol *Indiges* is identical to that of Sol *Invictus*, and there is no visual or literary evidence that they were two separate gods. *Indiges* and *Invictus* were two epithets of the same god, and were used at times when these qualities were most valued and sought after. Coins are an important source of information about Sol in all periods, but particularly the 3rd century CE, when the frequency of Sol coin types increased dramatically. Emperors such as Aurelian and Constantine chose Sol as a divine protector, and this is reflected on the coins minted during their reigns. The prominence of solar deities, including Elagabal, gives the impression that it was a “solar century”, a time when the sun was worshipped more prominently than ever before. This theory will be explored in Chapter 2 through an examination of the turbulent events of the 3rd century and the religious environment in which Sol was so prominent.

CHAPTER 2

ORPHANED FROM LIGHT; SOL IN THE 3RD CENTURY CE.¹⁰⁷

“... Then thank-offerings were decreed to the gods for miraculously uncovering the conspiracy: and particularly to the Sun- who has an ancient temple in the Circus Maximus (where the crime was planned).”

Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome* XV.74.1¹⁰⁸

“I have sung hymns to the sun
I have joined the ranks of the sun apes

And am one of them”

Book of the Dead 100¹⁰⁹

The idea of a “3rd century crisis” is one that has dominated scholarship of this period for many years, and still raises intriguing questions for scholars today. At first glance, this was truly a time of great upheaval in which a succession of emperors or usurpers claimed the throne, only to have it taken from them violently. The army wielded more power than it had done, possibly in its entire history, and Rome slowly declined as the centre of this ever-changing Empire. Interestingly for the present study the 3rd century saw the decline in the number of large-scale monuments and building programs, but an increase in the production of coins and the ‘types’ of images represented on coins.¹¹⁰ This period also saw the growth in popularity of Sol, particularly on coins. By examining the events of the 3rd century, this chapter seeks to explain the increased presence of Sol and why various emperors chose him as patron deity. Coinage as a visual medium will be explored in more detail in chapter 3, but this is a relevant point to consider in this chapter as the importance of coins as carriers of imperial messages increased during this period. These coins were most likely aimed as much at future generations as at the contemporary population, as they continued to circulate long after the emperor had ceased to rule. While mints could produce coins quickly, it took time for these coins to circulate beyond their initial recipients.¹¹¹ For this reason few imperial types were specific to a particular event and most were designed to be comprehensible in the future.¹¹² Coins thereby served more-or-less as monuments that, though they were not grand and awe-inspiring, conveyed a

¹⁰⁷ Though I have included some discussion of the Severan emperors, the period with which I am particularly concerned is the mid to late 3rd century CE, from the death of Severus Alexander in 235 CE through to the beginning of the Tetrarchy, 284-305 CE. Unless otherwise stated, this is the period referred to by the general ‘3rd century CE’.

¹⁰⁸ Translation by Michael Grant (1996).

¹⁰⁹ Assmann (1995) p. 24.

¹¹⁰ Hedlund (2008) p. 27; De Blois (2002) p. 215.

¹¹¹ Cheung (1998) pp. 55-56.

¹¹² Cheung (1998) p. 56.

more subtle message of rule and authority that remained topical beyond their period of production. Because religion and state were intertwined in Roman culture, political and military upheavals affected the religious landscape of Rome in the 3rd century, and this was reflected on the monuments dedicated by the emperors. Different emperors favoured different gods and, because many emperors came from outside of Rome, they often worshipped tutelary deities of their native lands that seemed “new” to Rome. Sol’s acceptance as an official deity under Aurelian highlights both Aurelian’s dedication to the god and Sol’s importance during the 3rd century.

Section 2.1: Historical Background of the 3rd Century CE

Almost all of the emperors in the 3rd century, from Caracalla to Diocletian, faced threats to their rule, both internally and externally, which stretched their resources and forced them into a state of near-constant warfare. Yet there seems to have been no idea of overthrowing imperial rule entirely and returning to a republic or the like.¹¹³ On the other hand, the Empire had become a large and multi-faceted entity that was difficult to rule single-handedly in peaceful times, let alone during times of war. The period of upheaval began around 235 CE, at the death of Severus Alexander, and reached its peak in about 260, the year in which Valerian was taken captive by the Persians, an unprecedented humiliation in Roman history.¹¹⁴ Erica Manders divided the threats faced by Rome into three useful categories, which I will follow in order to give a brief overview of the situation during this period, and its effect on the coinage minted.¹¹⁵

Firstly, external threats that pressured the emperor and his armed forces were a major cause of upheaval during this period. The army was not prepared or equipped to face the onslaught of foreign invaders that threatened Roman borders. When Maximinus I (r. 235-238 CE) was proclaimed emperor by his Pannonian force, he immediately focussed his attention on the German frontier and defeated the tribes there and along the Danube, in an attempt to secure this border. After the assassination of Maximinus, no emperor could expect to have a reign free from border skirmishes or all-out battles. The Franks, Alamanni, Goths, Persians and many others threatened the boundaries of the large Empire and forced Roman troops to be constantly on guard.¹¹⁶ The lowest point was certainly in 260 when the emperor Valerian (r. 253-260 CE), marching against the eastern provinces and the Sassanid king, Shapur, was taken prisoner by the same king and, we are told, lived

¹¹³ Hedlund (2008) p. 9.

¹¹⁴ Drinkwater (2005) p. 28; Hedlund (2008) p. 50.

¹¹⁵ Manders (2012) pp. 13-19.

¹¹⁶ Drinkwater (2005) p. 28; Hedlund (2008) p. 51; Mennen (2011) pp. 28-29.

out the rest of his life as the personal foot-slave of Shapur.¹¹⁷ This humiliation was not forgotten and resulted in a number of internal revolts. In the Balkans Ingenuus and Regalianus had already rebelled; in the East Macrianus was proclaimed emperor by his troops; and in Germania Inferior Postumus usurped the throne and executed Gallienus' son, Saloninus.¹¹⁸ According to the *Scriptores Historia Augustae*, all of this occurred while Gallienus built castles out of apples, sprinkled his hair with gold-dust and went out into the city wearing a radiate crown.¹¹⁹ The army, though stretched to its limit, became essential for the emperor not only to defend his borders but also to maintain his power. In a sense, the military became a society of its own, made up of men from various provinces and separate from Rome and the traditional power base of the Senate.¹²⁰ According to Lukas de Blois, the senatorial order was one of the great losers of the 3rd century, as senators were ousted from the armies and provincial government and replaced by military men from the equestrian order.¹²¹ Whereas previously the emperor had to court both the Senate and the army if he wanted a secure reign, in the 3rd century many emperors did not even visit Rome and remained out on campaign. Those who did remain in Rome were criticised because they were not out fighting with their men, as exemplified by Gallienus and his supposed inaction when his father was captured and his son murdered.¹²² It was vital that the emperor appeared to be "one of the men" living in a simple and soldierly way alongside them.¹²³ As evidence of this attitude, Hedlund has shown that the portraits on coins of the so-called 'soldier-emperors' were designed to show them in battle dress as a fellow soldier rather than a ruler.¹²⁴ Coins depicting the emperor wearing a *paludamentum* (military cloak) draped over one shoulder became increasingly common up to the 270s, after which there was more of what Hedlund refers to as 'campaign-portraits': the cuirassed emperor with spear, shield and sometimes helmet.¹²⁵ These accoutrements, whilst symbolising the emperors' virtues and military prowess, were also real articles of clothing and weaponry worn by the emperor to represent his skill and presence on the battlefield. This increase in the number of military portraits on the coinage suggests that imperial authority had become more closely linked with military prowess, and that it was essential for the emperor to show that he was skilled enough on the battlefield to defend his Empire. The martial qualities of the emperor are also reflected on the

¹¹⁷ Orosius 7.22.3-4; Hedlund (2008) p. 50; Mennen (2011) p. 30.

¹¹⁸ Hedlund (2008) p. 50.

¹¹⁹ *SHA Gallieni* 16. I acknowledge, of course, the *SHA*'s unreliability in many areas, but include this anecdote of Gallienus as an example of the legacy he seems to have left.

¹²⁰ Hedlund (2008), p. 97.

¹²¹ De Blois (2002) p. 206.

¹²² *SHA Gallieni* 16.

¹²³ Manders (2012) p.70. An example of this is the *Scriptores Historia Augusta Hadrianus* 10.4-8, which describes Hadrian's soldierly spirit and simple lifestyle in positive terms.

¹²⁴ Hedlund (2008) p. 94. 'Soldier-emperors' were those emperors of the 3rd century with military backgrounds, who were proclaimed by their troops.

¹²⁵ Hedlund (2008) pp. 52-56.

reverses of numerous 3rd-century coins, which depicted military themes or virtues to a much larger degree than in previous generations. *Virtus* (valour, courage, excellence, manliness) was a virtue central to imperial authority, and in this period of instability and war it was more important than ever that emperors were able to communicate to the people their possession of this quality.¹²⁶ This can be seen in the coinage of the emperor Gallienus (r. 253-268 CE), especially after 260 when it became essential for him to emphasize his military skill due to the humiliation caused by his father's capture, and the revolts and rebellions that were weakening the Empire. Numerous coins issued after this date depict the emperor carrying a spear and being crowned by Victory, or with depictions of Mars. Legends reading *virtus* and *Victoria* are also common (for example, Fig. 8).¹²⁷ During this time of upheaval, coins provided a simple and effective means of ensuring that the emperor's authority as commander and as fellow soldier was represented to the legions, whose loyalty or lack thereof directly influenced the rule of the Empire.

The second threat facing the Roman Empire in the 3rd century CE was internal instability, evidenced by the Gallic counter-empire established during the rule of Gallienus, problems with Rome's 'vassal state', Palmyra, and financial difficulties.¹²⁸ These issues, combined with continual warfare on various fronts, further weakened Rome's position and especially the position of her emperors, of whom much was expected. By late 260, after the capture of Valerian, Gallienus' situation must have seemed dire as he faced uprisings and unrest among legions in the West, the loss of Egypt, and consequential shortages to Rome's food supply. This situation forced the emperor to rely on Odenathus of Palmyra in the East so that he could focus on stabilizing the situation in the West.¹²⁹ Possibly the most imminent threat was Postumus, a governor of Germania Inferior who usurped the throne, killed Gallienus' son Saloninus, and set up his own 'Gallic Empire' which expanded to include Gaul, Britain and Spain. While Postumus seemed unwilling to extend his authority over the Alps, this remained a potential threat because his new empire possessed its own senate, consuls, and Praetorian Guard.¹³⁰ Gallienus did try to reclaim the breakaway provinces and had a promising start, but he was ultimately wounded and forced to leave before he could consolidate his victories. Ironically, Postumus succumbed to a similar fate, being assassinated by his own troops. His Gallic Empire continued until 274, when it fell to Aurelian and was gathered back into the 'imperial' fold. That this rebel state could have been established under the nose of

¹²⁶ Hedlund (2008) p. 57.

¹²⁷ For example, *RIC*, Vol. V.I, Gallienus #3,18, 76-91, 123-134, and many more. In Chapter 2 of Hedlund's thesis he discusses other virtues that had military connotations and may have been used by the 'soldier-emperors' to promote their prowess on the battlefield: Hedlund (2008) pp. 57-86. See also Noreña (2001) pp. 152-153.

¹²⁸ Manders (2012) pp. 14 and 16.

¹²⁹ Drinkwater (2005) p. 45.

¹³⁰ Grant (1985) p. 173.

Gallienus is evidence of how thinly stretched his resources were and of the dissatisfaction of various groups within the Empire, as Gaul, Spain and Britain recognized Postumus' claim to the throne without any bloodshed. Gallienus was unable to defend the East and reclaim the West at the same time, so whilst Postumus showed no sign of expanding his empire, Gallienus allowed this situation to continue until he had the time and resources to deal with it effectively.

Up until 267, Gallienus had relied upon Odenathus of Palmyra to stabilise the East, but this arrangement came to an end when he and his elder son were murdered, and his widow Zenobia took over rule of the state as regent for her son Vaballathus.¹³¹ At first, Zenobia seemed content to remain under Roman power and she continued to hold the East. In about 270, however, Zenobia's forces took over Egypt, and her ambitions to become independent of Rome were made clear.¹³² No doubt Zenobia recognized and took advantage of the situation in which Rome found herself. Perhaps in an attempt to buy time, she declared the emperor Aurelian as the colleague of her son, but by 272 her power had grown too great, and Aurelian was forced to act. After a number of battles Aurelian defeated the Palmyrene forces and Zenobia was taken captive, effectively ending Palmyrene opposition.¹³³ With the Gallic Empire in the West still intact and the East almost lost, Aurelian had far fewer men and resources to call upon to defeat her rebellion. It is a reflection of his military ability that he was able to defeat Palmyra, retake Egypt, defeat the Gallic Empire, and quell numerous other uprisings, in these conditions.¹³⁴

The economic situation did not make these tasks any easier for Aurelian or for other 3rd-century emperors. Monetary devaluation plagued the Roman state, with the metal value of the currency collapsing completely in the 260s, leading to inflation.¹³⁵ These problems seem to have been caused, initially, by Septimius Severus and Caracalla increasing soldiers' pay, and the frequent warfare in this century, which exhausted state funds.¹³⁶ Subsequent emperors tried to solve the currency problem by debasing the coinage, with a low point coming between 260 and 274, when the silver content of the antoninianus was 2.7%, compared with 47.7% in 238.¹³⁷ Both Aurelian and Diocletian attempted to reform the currency and were successful, to a degree, but the monetary system could not be fully stabilized and the problems persisted into the 4th century.¹³⁸ Exacerbating

¹³¹ Mennen (2011) p. 33.

¹³² Drinkwater (2005) p. 51.

¹³³ Drinkwater (2005) p. 52; Hedlund (2008) p. 61.

¹³⁴ Drinkwater (2005) p. 52-53; Manders (2012) p. 16.

¹³⁵ Hedlund (2008) pp. 6-7; De Blois (2002) pp. 204, 215.

¹³⁶ Manders (2012) p. 16; Drinkwater (2005) p. 59.

¹³⁷ Manders (2012) pp. 16-17; Hedlund (2008) p. 6.

¹³⁸ Manders (2012) p. 17.

the situation were banditry and epidemics, and thus it becomes clear why the 3rd century has been labelled as a time of 'crisis'.¹³⁹ Yet despite these internal threats and weaknesses, the Empire survived and candidates continued to be put forward to rule it.

The third threat during this period was dynastic instability, which affected not only the Empire, but the emperor personally.¹⁴⁰ The Severans were the only successful 3rd-century dynasty, and even then 'successful' is perhaps not the proper word to characterize their situation. Caracalla murdered his brother, Geta; Elagabalus had to wrest the throne from Macrinus with the unlikely claim that he was Caracalla's illegitimate son; and Severus Alexander, largely controlled by his mother, humiliated his soldiers by trying to buy off German invaders and was murdered by his men not long after.¹⁴¹ Others attempted to establish dynasties, for example Valerian with his son Gallienus and grandson Saloninus, but were ultimately unsuccessful, undoubtedly because of the power and authority that the army had gained during this period. Emperors relied on the loyalty of the armed forces for the maintenance of their rule, but different legions had different loyalties, particularly to their own generals, and if they did not like the conduct of the emperor, they knew they could simply proclaim a new one.¹⁴²

All of these threats in the 3rd century – external, internal and dynastic – seem to have stabilised only with the accession of Diocletian and the establishment of the Tetrarchy. Diocletian, like his predecessors, faced internal and external challenges to the Empire and his rule; however, he recognised that the Empire had become too large and variable for one man to govern from Rome, and so appointed a fellow Illyrian, Maximian, as co-Augustus in 286.¹⁴³ This partnership, whilst not curbing all threats and invasions, allowed the two Augusti to deal with the most imminent threats more effectively. In 293, realising that they needed more support, Diocletian established the Tetrarchy, which divided the Empire among four men: himself and Maximian as Augusti, and Maximianus and Constantius as Caesars. Although the Tetrarchy collapsed soon after Diocletian's abdication in 305, it had been effective in dealing with problems, and a measure of order and stability returned to the Empire. The establishment and organisation of the Tetrarchy also heralded a change in the position of the city of Rome itself and her importance to imperial authority and

¹³⁹ Manders (2012) pp. 17-18: plague affected the empire at various times and had severe consequences on manpower, including taking the lives of two emperors, Hostilian and Claudius Gothicus. Under Severus, banditry became widespread and it is from this time that we have the story of the famous robber, Bulla Felix (Cassius Dio 77.10.1-2). See also De Blois (2002) pp. 212, 214.

¹⁴⁰ Manders (2012) p. 19.

¹⁴¹ Grant (1985) p. 117f.

¹⁴² Manders (2012) p. 20, 63.

¹⁴³ Boatwright, Gargola, Lenski and Talbert (2012) p. 437.

administration. Up to this point, Rome had been the seat of power for most emperors and central to their authority. But in the 3rd century, largely due to the amount of time emperors had to spend away from the capital on campaign, provincial centres became more important.¹⁴⁴ This trend became official practice under the Tetrarchs, who openly established capitals away from Rome and closer to their spheres of influence: Diocletian ruled from Nicomedia, Maximianus from Sirmium and Thessalonike, Maximian from Mediolanum, and Constantius from Augusta Treverorum.¹⁴⁵ All four Tetrarchs were moving almost constantly and rarely visited Rome. This process of ‘decentralisation’ was consolidated by Constantine when he established his capital in Constantinople in 330.¹⁴⁶ This city was to be a new Rome, with all the social and bureaucratic functions that Rome had once had. At this time Rome itself, though it still contained all of the historical monuments and traditions, lost its military, political and religious power. What had begun in the early 3rd century as a necessity to remain on the frontiers with the army, had, throughout the course of the century, turned into a deliberate policy.

Section 2.2: Religion in the 3rd Century CE

The political and military situation in the 3rd century, then, was complex and dynamic, and its effects still resonated in the 4th century. It also had a profound impact on the religious environment in the Roman Empire, and it is helpful to look briefly at this environment so as to place Sol and the coins that bear his image in their historical and political context. The coinage of the 3rd century shows a marked increase in images and symbols of a religious nature, with specific deities appearing more often and a wider range of deities playing a more prominent part than in previous centuries.¹⁴⁷ This is no surprise when we consider that religious ceremonies and traditions permeated every aspect of Roman society, and in the turbulence of the 3rd century it is small wonder that the emperors would turn to the gods for aid. Particular emperors favoured particular gods, often because they were dynastic deities, or because they were viewed as special protectors.¹⁴⁸ But these personal preferences did not usually result in a rearranged pantheon in Rome – the promotions of Elagabal by Elagabalus and Sol by Aurelian, were exceptional. Hedlund argues that the emphasis placed on Sol in the 3rd century by modern scholars has been somewhat exaggerated, and it is true that more traditional deities such as Jupiter and Hercules were also favoured by various emperors.¹⁴⁹ With the exception of Elagabalus, the Severans respected tradition in religious matters, as evidenced

¹⁴⁴ Hedlund (2008) p. 233.

¹⁴⁵ Boatwright, Gargola, Lenski and Talbert (2012) pp. 438-439; Bardill (2012) p. 83.

¹⁴⁶ Boatwright, Gargola, Lenski and Talbert (2012) P. 464; Hedlund (2008) p. 169; Mennen (2011) p. 28.

¹⁴⁷ Manders (2012) p. 95.

¹⁴⁸ Fowden (2005) p. 555.

¹⁴⁹ Hedlund (2008) p. 175.

by the temples that flourished under their rule: Capitoline Jupiter at Rome, Apollo at Didyma, Mars in Gaul, Athena at Troy, Hercules at Gades, and Dea Caelestis at Carthage.¹⁵⁰ However, in the chaos that followed Severus Alexander's death and the struggles of the ensuing years there was a marked decline in the construction, repair and votive dedications of the traditional cults.¹⁵¹ Due to the harsh economic climate, the aristocracy found it increasingly difficult to maintain temples and priesthoods.¹⁵² The Tetrarchs aligned themselves more with Jupiter, Hercules, Mars and Apollo, but they were not averse to honouring other deities if the occasion called for it. For example, at Daphne-by-Antioch Diocletian is said to have built temples for Zeus and Apollo, but also for Nemesis and Hecate, who were widely worshipped.¹⁵³ Constantine's renewed allegiance to Sol/Apollo was perhaps a deliberate attempt to break with the Tetrarchic system, which he had overthrown prior to his conversion to Christianity.¹⁵⁴ The 3rd century certainly saw non-Roman deities promoted, but the traditional gods still had a prominent place.

The army also played a role in the spread of new cults and gods in the 3rd century, as the legions were constantly coming into contact with other peoples and their gods. Having divine support was as important to soldiers as it was to emperors, and the army was responsible for the dissemination of a number of gods and cults in the Empire, but these deities of the army were rarely accepted into the official Roman pantheon, and Sol may be the only exception to this rule.¹⁵⁵ However, if we accept that Sol was not an 'Oriental' deity but an ancient Roman one, this apparent exception makes perfect sense and fits in with the fact that the foreign cults popular in the army did not gain official recognition. Coins were ideally suited for communicating between the emperor and the army, as troops were paid in coin. The increase in religious coin types shows that for these warring emperors, always on the move, coins were a necessary and useful medium for communicating their religious policies and personal religious preferences, as will be discussed in Chapter 3. It also shows that religion and piety were still important factors, particularly in these turbulent times and particularly for the emperors, who needed to assure their subjects that they were divinely protected and would gain victory through divine providence and their own *virtus*.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ *Tit. Ulp.* xxii.6; Fowden (2005) p. 556; Rowan (2009) p. 291.

¹⁵¹ Fowden (2005) p. 556; de Blois (2002) p. 215.

¹⁵² Bardill (2012) p. 59.

¹⁵³ John Malalas, *Chron.* XII.38; Fowden (2005) p. 558.

¹⁵⁴ Fowden (2005) p. 560.

¹⁵⁵ Hoey (1939) p. 256, 465.

¹⁵⁶ Hedlund (2008) p. 67.

Section 2.3: Explaining Sol's Popularity in the 3rd Century CE

To understand the part that Sol played in the 3rd-century Roman religious landscape, we must also examine the history of solar worship in Rome and how Sol fit into this. As discussed in the previous chapter, solar worship dated back to an early period in Rome, but never reached the prominence and power that the sun had in other religions, for example in Egyptian theology. As the Romans came increasingly into contact with the Egyptians, more Egyptian monuments with solar functions became part of the Roman cityscape. Numerous manifestations of the sun were evident in the Empire by the 3rd century CE, such as Sol and Luna pairs in the cults of Mithras and Jupiter Dolichenus, as well as traditional associations with Apollo. The sun was a powerful symbol of authority and kingship, and solar gods often represented these ideas in art and monuments dedicated by rulers and emperors. For example, Augustus recognised the connection between the sun and rulers, choosing Apollo as his patron deity and dedicating monuments to Apollo in his solar guise.¹⁵⁷ As discussed in Chapter 1, Sol and Apollo were both manifestations of the sun, and monuments dedicated to one could be understood as dedicated to both.¹⁵⁸ Nero favoured Apollo – perhaps due to genuine religious feeling, or because he too recognised the potency of solar symbolism and wished to link himself with the reign of Augustus. The polemic of ancient sources against Nero makes it difficult to establish what, if any, religious devotion he had; however, the monuments that he erected show that the sun was an important deity in his religious programmes.¹⁵⁹

Solar worship was evident in the Italian peninsula from an early period and, as the early Romans were largely farmers who spent most of their time and energy cultivating the earth, the sun and its movements were extremely important and played a large part in religious life.¹⁶⁰ It would have been obvious to these farmers that the sun's rays were essential for the growth and health of their crops, and so fertility and health may have been one of Sol's early aspects. Paintings on rocks and in caves of the sun chariot and solar disc certainly indicate the importance of the sun at an early date, and traces of an anthropomorphic representation of Sol are also visible from an early period.¹⁶¹ Sol was, however, much more than an agricultural god, and as the Romans came into contact with cultures that had sophisticated solar theology, Sol began to be viewed as an expression of power and authority. The Republican temple of Sol in the Circus Maximus attests to the growing

¹⁵⁷ Zanker (1988) pp. 49, 50.

¹⁵⁸ Chapter 1, pp. 18-19.

¹⁵⁹ For more on Nero see below, section 2.4.

¹⁶⁰ Halsberghe (1972) p. 33; see also A. Von Domaszewski, *Abhandlungen zur Römischen Religion* (1909), p. 173, and F. Altheim, *Italien und Rom* (1941) II, pp. 24-25.

¹⁶¹ Halsberghe (1972) p. 27.

importance of the god. This temple was located in the stands of the Circus on the Aventine Hill side, and was adorned with a prominent statue of Sol on the roof (refer to Fig. 1).¹⁶² The cult of Sol was connected with circuses from a very early date; indeed, legend has it that the first circus games were held by Circe in honour of her father, Sol.¹⁶³ The exact date when the temple was first built is unknown, but a connection between the sun and circuses is visible on Etruscan mirrors dated to the late 4th or 3rd century BCE, and it is certain that there was a temple in the Circus Maximus by the Augustan period.¹⁶⁴ This may be the temple depicted on the denarius of Marcus Antonius, mentioned previously (Fig. 10), and may indicate that work was being done on the temple as part of the reconstruction of the Circus begun by Julius Caesar.¹⁶⁵ The importance of the temple and the association of the sun with circuses is further highlighted by the theory that the finishing line was located in front of the reconstructed temple, and by the fact that Augustus decided to set up an obelisk from Egypt in the Circus.¹⁶⁶ Obelisks were great symbols of Egyptian sun worship, and would not have been out of place in an area dedicated to the sun. Moreover, given that one of the most common ways of representing Sol was in his quadriga, as the triumphant charioteer, his presence in the Circus Maximus becomes unexceptional. Solar worship was clearly represented in Roman religion from an early date, and the sun's connection with ideas of kingship and authority explains why Sol became more popular in the imperial period, when authority was claimed by one man to rule over a vast Empire and its people. Whilst the Romans did not give the sun pre-eminence over their pantheon, Sol was a god whose presence was felt each day and who became a popular figure in myth and art.

For the Egyptians the sun was the foremost deity, but many of their gods also had solar connections or functions. Amun or Amun Re was a solar god whose cult was prominent in the Middle Kingdom; Aten was the solar disc who was worshipped as a dynastic deity by Akhenaten and his family; Khepri, Re and Atum were incarnations of the rising sun, the sun at its zenith, and the setting sun; and Hathor and Sekhmet were just two of the daughters of the sun, being incarnations of the eye of the sun.¹⁶⁷ The power of the sun was central to Egyptian theology, particularly its creative and vital force which could give life, and take it away.¹⁶⁸ Even Horus, the protector of

¹⁶² Richardson (1992), refer to *Sol et Luna, Aedes*, pp. 364-365; Hijmans (2009), p. 484; Crowther (2010) p. 125-126.

¹⁶³ Tertullian, *De Spectaculis* 8; Bell (2007) p. 167.

¹⁶⁴ Humphrey (1986) p. 91; Bell (2007) p. 167.

¹⁶⁵ Humphrey (1986) p. 92.

¹⁶⁶ Humphrey (1986) p. 94.

¹⁶⁷ Gros de Beler (1999) pp. 12-86.

¹⁶⁸ Gros de Beler (1999) p. 22.

Egyptian royalty, was considered to be a celestial and solar god.¹⁶⁹ The centre of solar religion in Egypt was Heliopolis, and while a detailed examination of its solar theology is outside the scope of this thesis, there were different aspects to it including secret mysteries known only to a select few, standardised hymns used in non-royal tombs, and the creation of an almost monotheistic cult in the Amarna religion of Akhenaten.¹⁷⁰ Perhaps the most visually impressive and common Egyptian import to Rome were several colossal obelisks. Obelisks were objects of Egyptian cult and were specifically connected to the sun, a fact that did not go unnoticed by Augustus and other emperors who had the monuments brought to Rome.¹⁷¹ Along with pyramids, obelisks were the oldest and most characteristic of Egyptian monuments and were impressive symbols of the ruler's power.¹⁷² The obelisk that now stands in the Piazza Del Popolo was originally quarried by Sethi I, in the 19th dynasty, and was later appropriated by Ramses II who raised it in Heliopolis.¹⁷³ This representation of a sunbeam was then taken to Rome by Augustus after his conquest of Egypt and raised on the *spina* of the Circus Maximus.¹⁷⁴ As previously discussed, the Circus Maximus had long been associated with the sun, demonstrating that the emperor knew the cultic function of the obelisk and deliberately chose an appropriate arena for it to be displayed. The course of the chariots around the *spina* was compared with the course of the heavenly bodies around the sun, and the obelisk, as a symbol of a sunbeam, was the perfect centrepiece to this race.¹⁷⁵ The inscription that Augustus added to the obelisk makes its solar function in Rome clear:

‘When Imperator for the 12th, consul for the 11th, and tribune of the people for the 14th time, Imperator Augustus, son of Divine Caesar, dedicated this obelisk to the sun, when Egypt had been brought under the sway of the Roman people.’¹⁷⁶

Augustus erected another obelisk in Rome, a monument of Psammetic II of the 26th dynasty, also from Heliopolis.¹⁷⁷ It was brought to Rome along with the obelisk of the Circus Maximus and was erected in the Campus Martius where it served as a gnomon for Augustus' Horologium (a sun-dial and calendar).¹⁷⁸ Many other obelisks were erected in Rome throughout the Imperial period and are still visible landmarks in the city today. It is unlikely that contact with heliocentric Egyptian religion

¹⁶⁹ Gros de Beler (1999) p. 44.

¹⁷⁰ Assmann (1995) pp. 13, 16.

¹⁷¹ Iversen (1968) p. 11.

¹⁷² Iversen (1968) p. 11; Roulet (1972) p. 13.

¹⁷³ Iversen (1968) p. 65; Futrell (2006) p. 74.

¹⁷⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVII.4(7); Iversen (1968) p. 65.

¹⁷⁵ Roulet (1972) p. 43; Futrell (2006) pp. 76-77.

¹⁷⁶ ‘IMP. CAESAR. DIVI. F. AVGVSTVS. PONTIFEX. MAXIMVS. IMP. XII. COS. XI. TRIB. POT. XIV. AEGVPTO. IN. POTESTATEM. POPVLI. ROMANI. REDACTA. SOLI. DONVM. DEDIT.’ In Iversen (1968) p. 65; Quinn Schofield (1969) p. 648.

¹⁷⁷ Iversen (1968) p. 142.

¹⁷⁸ Iversen (1968) pp. 142-143; Bardill (2012) p. 46. See Isler (1991) for a discussion of Egyptian uses of the gnomon.

influenced Roman worship of Sol specifically, but it was another illustration of the sun god as a symbol of power and kingship, a concept Romans also encountered in eastern solar deities such as Utu and Ba'al. Obelisks as symbols of a ruler's power were an attractive prospect for new emperors and, as we shall see, Sol was used as a symbol of the stability and eternal nature of Rome and her rulers.

Sol and Luna appeared in the art of a number of other cults, including those of Mithras and Jupiter Dolichenus. As previously discussed, in Mithraic art Sol and Luna are commonly found in the upper right and left corners of the *tauroctony* scene, sometimes appearing as busts and sometimes as full figures, with Sol in his quadriga and Luna in her biga.¹⁷⁹ In these scenes Mithras is portrayed killing the bull, and at times he appears to be looking back at Sol, while Sol looks towards him. Some scholars have interpreted this exchanged glance as a sign of the participation of Sol in the *tauroctony*, presiding over the sacrifice.¹⁸⁰ Roger Beck described the *tauroctony* scene as representing a map of the heavens, in which the nine elements represent nine constellations, from Taurus in the West to Scorpius in the East.¹⁸¹ Here the figure of Sol represents the heavenly body, as does Luna. Sol is also present in banquet scenes with Mithras, and in a scene that depicts Mithras climbing into Sol's quadriga behind him.¹⁸² It has been suggested that this scene indicates a sort of rivalry between Sol and Mithras, with Mithras trying to mount the quadriga to supplant Sol.¹⁸³ Beck, however, sees Sol and Mithras as two distinct characters representing the same thing – the sun.¹⁸⁴ They are the same, yet different, with Sol as the solar charioteer, eternally engaged in cyclical motion, and Mithras as a more dynamic figure, struggling with and killing the bull.¹⁸⁵ Hijmans also argues that the inclusion of Sol and Luna in their traditional Graeco-Roman guise adds a Roman element to the otherwise foreign iconography, uniting these two opposing elements in the placement of Sol and Luna and the apparent participation of Sol with Mithras in the *tauroctony* scene.¹⁸⁶

Sol and Luna were also present in the cult images of Jupiter Dolichenus, an armoured god originating in Doliche in the kingdom of Commagene, and popular with the Roman legions.¹⁸⁷ The

¹⁷⁹ For good examples of this see Hijmans (2009) ch. 4, C2c., p. 152 ff.; also *LIMC* Helios/Sol 368, 373, 376, 377.

¹⁸⁰ Turcan (2000 a) p. 224.

¹⁸¹ Beck (2007) pp. 194-195.

¹⁸² Hijmans (2009) C2c.-1/ *LIMC* Helios/Sol 252.

¹⁸³ Turcan (2000 a) p. 224.

¹⁸⁴ Beck (2007) p. 198.

¹⁸⁵ Hijmans (2009) p. 176.

¹⁸⁶ Hijmans (2009) p. 178.

¹⁸⁷ Turcan (2000 a) p. 159.

classic image of Jupiter Dolichenus is of a bearded man in Roman armour, standing atop a bull and holding a thunderbolt in one hand and an axe in the other.¹⁸⁸ He is sometimes accompanied by a female consort, Juno Dolichena. Like Jupiter Capitolinus, Jupiter Dolichenus was considered to be primarily a celestial god of the sky and weather and also of iron and minerals from the earth, hence his axe.¹⁸⁹ Sol and Luna appear on distinctive bronze votive triangles that have been recovered from Dolichenic shrines.¹⁹⁰ As in Mithraic iconography, they usually appear as busts and are not central to the image or iconography of the triangles, but may symbolise *aeternitas* in this context.¹⁹¹ Sol and Luna together are commonly thought of as representing eternity on Roman coins and other monuments as well. It may be that they, as on the Mithraic monuments, add an element of 'Romanness' to this eastern cult object, as Sol and Luna are clearly in their Graeco-Roman guise amongst obviously eastern deities.¹⁹² Sol and Luna are not central to this cult, yet their presence in the art suggests that they had a part to play, whether in some myth or narrative that is lost to us, or as symbols and representations of ideas such as *aeternitas*.

The god most often confused with Sol was Apollo and, as discussed in Chapter 1, there has been much debate as to whether they are the same god, or two separate deities.¹⁹³ In his Greek guise Apollo was not originally a solar deity, but rather a god of music, healing and prophecy. However, the epithet 'Phoebus' may have linked him to the sun and allowed him to appropriate some of the attributes of the Greek Helios. In Rome, Apollo rose to prominence under Augustus who stressed the god's solar aspects and believed his victory at Actium was due to the god's intervention.¹⁹⁴ Apollo was an important element of Augustus' religious policies and yet, as we have seen, the obelisks in the Circus Maximus and Horologium were dedicated specifically to the sun and not to Apollo. Sol as sun god was present in various manifestations, and Apollo could be seen as having solar qualities whilst not being a purely solar god.¹⁹⁵ They could be separated as two distinct deities, but could also be combined and understood as one, if that was convenient or necessary.¹⁹⁶ This, according to Roslynne Bell, is how we should understand the obelisks of Augustus, dedicated to Sol and making no mention of Apollo.¹⁹⁷ That is, Romans would have seen these as solar monuments

¹⁸⁸ For examples of this, see Hørig and Schwertheim, *CCID* (1987) Images 201, 207, 217/30, 222, 239, etc.

¹⁸⁹ Turcan (2000 a) pp. 159-160.

¹⁹⁰ Hijmans (2009) p. 189. For examples of the bronze votive triangles see, *LIMC* Helios/Sol 331, 396; Hørig and Schwertheim, *CCID* (1987) Images 5-6, 142, 201-202, 294, 295, 328, etc.; Hijmans, ch. 4, section C2d, p. 186.

¹⁹¹ Hijmans (2009) p. 189; Turcan (2000 a) p. 161.

¹⁹² Hijmans (2009) p. 189.

¹⁹³ See Fontenrose (1939), as discussed in chapter 1 of this paper; Champlin (2003) p. 114.

¹⁹⁴ Ferguson (1970) p. 45; Bell (2007) p. 165.

¹⁹⁵ Bell (2007) p. 168.

¹⁹⁶ Lipka (2009) p. 79.

¹⁹⁷ Bell (2007) p. 169.

and understood them as being dedicated to both deities, as two aspects of the same divine force. As mentioned in Chapter 1, gods had distinct attributes and areas of influence, but these were decided by tradition rather than doctrine and were not unchanging or immovable.¹⁹⁸ In visual representations this idea is clear. Sol and Apollo could appear as two distinct deities on the same piece, as they do on the breastplate of the Prima Porta Augustus of c. 17 BCE, which depicts Sol in his quadriga as well as Apollo with a lyre.¹⁹⁹ They could, on the other hand, also be understood as two manifestations of the sun, for example with the obelisks of Augustus mentioned above and perhaps illustrated by the statue of Sol reputed to have sat atop the temple of Apollo on the Palatine.²⁰⁰ Apollo and Sol were important gods during the imperial period, adopted as patron by various emperors. By examining the monuments and visual representations dedicated to them, it is clear that they could be understood as two aspects of the same divine force, the sun.

Section 2.4: Emperors who Favoured Solar Deities

Historically, Sol's association with different emperors in his different manifestations highlights his importance and role as a symbol of power. From a very early stage, Augustus associated himself with Apollo and portrayed himself as the protégé of Apollo, as opposed to Marcus Antonius and his divine protector, Dionysus.²⁰¹ Dreams and omens associated the young Octavian with the sun and stars and, according to tradition, on his entry into Rome the people noticed a halo around the sun, heralding a new "Golden Age" presided over by Augustus.²⁰² By conquering Egypt, Octavian was able to appropriate Sol and the power of the sun, which was important for emphasizing his victory over Cleopatra and Antony. It was only after Actium that Augustus began to worship of the sun more openly, when he praised Apollo for the victory. Apollo in his solar guise was the perfect choice for a young man seeking to consolidate his victories and become sole ruler over a growing Empire.²⁰³

Visually, Augustus' affinity for Sol is evident in the monuments he erected, particularly the obelisks and the temple to Apollo he had built next to his own house on the Palatine.²⁰⁴ There are even indications that a ramp connected the house directly with the temple.²⁰⁵ Apollo also appears on eight different coin types under Augustus, and this trend is continued by later emperors, who

¹⁹⁸ Hijmans (2009) p. 565.

¹⁹⁹ *LIMC* Helios/Sol 167.

²⁰⁰ Ferguson (1970) p. 46.

²⁰¹ Zanker (1988) p. 44.

²⁰² Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars* II.94-95; Zanker (1988) pp. 47-48.

²⁰³ Liebeschuetz (1979) p. 85.

²⁰⁴ Bardill (2012) p. 44.

²⁰⁵ Zanker (1988) p. 51.

chose to portray Apollo on their coinage in some way.²⁰⁶ In Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*, composed for the *ludi saeculares* celebrated by Augustus in 17 BCE, the importance of the sun and moon in Augustan religious policy is also evident.²⁰⁷ The poem's central characters are Phoebus and Diana, who are called "Bright lights of heaven". The Sun is said to "Herald the day, then hide it, to be born again", and the Moon is called "crescent-horned queen of the constellations".²⁰⁸ It is clear in this poem that Apollo and Sol are identified with each other and closely linked, as are Diana and Luna.²⁰⁹ Sol and Luna together signified *aeternitas*, giving the poem a theme of stability and longevity, important concepts for Augustus establishing the Empire.²¹⁰ On his own, Apollo was a god of culture, music and prophecy, and was therefore useful in Augustus' religious policies aimed at establishing a moral and religiously devout society.²¹¹ But by identifying himself with Sol and emphasising his solar attributes, Augustus connected Apollo with the ruler of the heavenly bodies and as the guarantor of the well-being of the Empire.²¹² Apollo remained an important deity throughout the imperial period, if for no other reason than he was the patron god of Augustus.²¹³

Perhaps the other emperor most famous (or infamous) for solar affinities before the 3rd century was Nero, who ruled from 54-68 CE. Both ancient literature and visual representations show that Nero tried to align himself with Apollo and in particular his solar qualities.²¹⁴ Whether this was genuine religious feeling or was simply an attempt to associate himself with his successful predecessor is more difficult to tell. Unlike Augustus, Nero began to portray himself with the attributes and symbols of Apollo/Sol. While Claudius tried not to associate himself with divinity and forbade the Alexandrians from erecting a temple for himself, Nero was happy to have himself depicted and worshipped as divine.²¹⁵ According to Tacitus the Senate debated construction of a temple to 'Divine Nero' (*Annals* XV. 74); on the Palatine he appeared in the guise of Apollo (Suetonius, *Nero* 25); and in the Theatre of Pompey and his Golden House as Helios (Pliny, *N.H.*

²⁰⁶ According to an analysis of coin types in the *RIC*, Vol. I-VII (see Chart 1), Apollo types appear on coins of Domitian, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Commodus, Pescennius Niger, Septimius Severus, Caracalla, Maximinus, Gordian III, Philip I, Trajan Decius, Hostilian, Trebonianus Gallus, Volusian, Aemilian, Valerian, Gallienus, Claudius II, Quintillus, Aurelian, Postumus.

²⁰⁷ Hijmans (2009) p. 551.

²⁰⁸ Translation by A.S. Kline (2005) on

<http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/HoraceEpodesAndCarmenSaeculare.htm>

²⁰⁹ Cf. Fontenrose (1939).

²¹⁰ Hijmans (2009) p. 563.

²¹¹ Lipka (2009) p. 75.

²¹² Lipka (2009) p. 76.

²¹³ Ogilvie (1969) p. 572, also notes that worship of Apollo and Diana grew from small cults in open-air sanctuaries to monumental temples as their functions grew in importance.

²¹⁴ Bardill (2012) p. 49.

²¹⁵ Letter of the Emperor Claudius to the Alexandrians, translated by P. London, from *Select Papyri II* (1912); Neverov (1986) p. 189.

XXXIV.45, Cassius Dio LXIII.6).²¹⁶ As discussed in Chapter 1, the Colossus of Nero in the guise of Helios or Sol was located in the *Domus Aurea*, a palace that reportedly lived up to its name, with golden decorations and cupolas which were imitations of the heavens.²¹⁷ On cameos and coins Nero was depicted wearing the radiate crown, which linked him to Augustus and his patron, solar Apollo; and on a cameo from the Cathedral Treasury, Cammin, Nero is depicted with the symbols of Jupiter, Romulus and Helios/Sol.²¹⁸ Nero was the first emperor to have himself depicted in this way, going much farther than Augustus had ever done by having himself portrayed as a god, rather than just protected by a god.²¹⁹ He was referred to as the “New Helios”, which brought with it all the connotations which Helios, Sol and solar worship had.²²⁰ It has been suggested that Nero became a worshipper of Mithras after an encounter with King Tiridates of Armenia in 66 CE. At the time this was a rather obscure cult in Commagene and Cilicia, which had not risen to any prominence in Rome yet and would have been a strange choice for the emperor.²²¹ Mithras was, however, closely associated with Helios and Sol, perhaps indicating Nero’s desire to align himself with the power of the sun. Nero was not averse to using deities and divine symbolism to promote his own image and his policies. Whereas previous emperors had avoided the *hubris* of depicting themselves as overtly divine, Nero had no qualms, paying for it with his life and his legacy. Many of his works were sentenced to *damnatio memoriae* after his death. By adopting Apollo and Helios as part of his image, he hoped to recall memories of the “Golden Age” of Augustus but he went too far and could not find the required balance between *auctoritas* and *pietas*.²²²

Sol continued as a presence in art and on coinage after Nero, through the 2nd and early 3rd centuries CE.²²³ While emperors of the 2nd century did not associate themselves with Sol as closely as Augustus and Nero had, the god’s presence was still visible in Rome on coinage and in the colossus that continued to stand well into the 3rd century, when Sol became associated with military victories,

²¹⁶ Neverov (1986) p. 189.

²¹⁷ Neverov (1986) p. 190; Charles-Picard (1966) p. 104.

²¹⁸ Neverov (1986) pp. 189-193. In his catalogue, Hijmans states that he has found no ancient cameos on which the image type Sol occurs (p. 386), and he would not consider the examples found in Neverov pertinent, as he argues that the ray crown is not a symbol of Sol.

²¹⁹ Neverov (1986) p. 190.

²²⁰ From an inscription from Acraephia in central Greece, in which the town thanks Nero and calls him “the New Helios lighting the Hellenes”; in Champlin (2003) p. 117.

²²¹ Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History* 30.6.17; Charles-Picard (1966) pp. 103-104.

²²² According to the *RIC*, Domitian and Commodus both issued 12 coin types depicting Apollo, suggesting that they too were trying to recall the memory of Augustus and the *Pax Romana* (see Chart 1).

²²³ See Chart 1 for Sol’s presence on coins of Vespasian, Trajan, Hadrian and Commodus.

particularly in the East.²²⁴ At the beginning of the 3rd century CE Septimius Severus showed some interest in Sol, but primarily favoured Jupiter and fostered a special relationship with this god. But when Aurelian came to power, it may be said that so did Sol. Aurelian, though fighting numerous battles on many fronts, ordered the construction of walls around Rome when he visited in 271/2 CE to deal with the revolt of the mint-workers.²²⁵ The great temple of Sol was begun in 274 CE when the emperor returned to the city to celebrate his triumph over Palmyra and Postumus' Gallic Empire.²²⁶ As discussed in Chapter 1, the temple was famed for the richness of its offerings and dedications, and elevated Sol to an official state deity.²²⁷ Aurelian's devotion to Sol was neither sudden nor surprising, since his family, the *Aurelii*, had charge of the cult of the sun from an early period, and his home province in the area of the Danube river had long been accustomed to worshipping the sun.²²⁸ His campaigns in the East, and his interaction with eastern solar cults, supported Aurelian's desire to reinvigorate sun worship in Rome, as he ascribed his victory against the Palmyrenes to the intervention of the sun god, and restored the temple of a local Syrian sun god after his legionaries plundered and destroyed it.²²⁹ After 273 and Aurelian's final suppression of Palmyra, there was a notable shift in emphasis in mints around the empire, and Sol began to supplant Jupiter as the emperor's divine sponsor.²³⁰ Whilst he did not attempt to destroy the worship of other gods, or promote Sol as the supreme god, it is clear that Sol was his special protector and patron and his monuments and coinage attest to this. In religious matters, Aurelian seems to have been deeply conservative, emphasizing his belief that the cult of Sol fit neatly into the traditional framework of Roman religion.²³¹ Sol appears more frequently on the coinage of Aurelian than he had on the coinage of any of his predecessors, often with his foot resting on the neck or back of captives.²³² The implications were clear: Sol had risen to defeat his enemies, and the emperor shared in this victory. With the establishment of the Tetrarchy some stability returned to the Empire, which allowed for the construction of large-scale monuments. However, even then, Rome did not regain her former glory, as the tetrarchs chose new capitals from which to rule.

²²⁴ A coin type of Trajan, minted between 114-117 CE, with a bust of Sol on the reverse, commemorates his Parthian campaign with the legend, PARTHICO P.M.TR.P.COS.VI.P.P.S.P.Q.R. (*RIC* Vol. II, Trajan 326-329). Cf. Rowan (2009) p. 306.

²²⁵ *SHA Aur.* 21.5 f.; Ward-Perkins (1981) p. 415; Grant (1985) p. 184

²²⁶ Zosimus' *Historia Nova* I.61; Grant (1985) pp. 184, 187; Turcan (2000 b) p. 45

²²⁷ Halsberghe (1972) p. 143; Watson (1999) p. 192.

²²⁸ *SHA Aur.* 4.2, 5.5; Sextus Pompeius Festus, *De verborum significatu quae supersunt* 18; Turcan (2000 b) p. 45; White (2005) p. 132.

²²⁹ Halsberghe (1972) pp. 132-133; *SHA Aur.* 25.4, 31.7-9; Watson (1999) p. 188.

²³⁰ Watson (1999) p. 189.

²³¹ Watson (1999) p. 197.

²³² Bardill (2012) p. 61.

At Aurelian's death in 275, Sol's presence on coinage waned, except for a brief resurgence under Probus (r. 276-282 CE), who minted a large number of Sol coin types (Chart 1).²³³ The Tetrarchs chose Jupiter and Hercules as their protectors, but Sol was consistently represented on coinage until the reign of Constantine. Whether because of religious devotion, or simply to differentiate himself from the Tetrarchs, the coinage of Constantine displays a large number of Sol types during his early years, and the god remained popular on coins even after Christianity was adopted as the official religion of the Empire.²³⁴ Not since Aurelian had there been a comparably extensive use of Sol.²³⁵ In Rome, Constantine's triumphal arch made clear reference to the emperor's relationship with Sol, with a bust of the god radiating light from his head on the west side of the east passage, and in the historical frieze on the west side of the arch.²³⁶ Sol and Luna are represented in two roundels on the east and west sides of the arch, Sol rising from the ocean in his *quadriga* and Luna descending in her *biga*.²³⁷ During the dedication of Constantine's new capital, Constantinople, a radiate statue of the emperor was placed on top of a column in the new forum, and revered by all as embodying the fortune of the city.²³⁸ There was a clear belief that Constantine was a radiant ruler with a solar deity as protector.²³⁹ After Constantine, Sol's depiction on coinage declined significantly (though he would make a brief resurgence under Julian).²⁴⁰ The longevity of solar worship in Rome and the consistency with which Sol was chosen as patron deity indicates the close association he had with imperial power. Since Augustus' conquest of Egypt and his promotion of Actian Apollo, the sun had come to be associated with the emperor, and though Nero's attempts to align himself with the sun ultimately failed, the links between Sol and imperial power remained and reached their height during the 3rd century CE.

Conclusion:

Sol's popularity during the 3rd century CE was linked with the turbulent events that were a feature of this period. Wars, rebellions, plagues, and dynastic instability all served to weaken the Empire and undermine imperial power. Sol was able to reinforce imperial stability as a god who had long been associated with power and kingship. By the 3rd century there were numerous manifestations of Sol in Rome, evidenced by his early associations with Helios and Apollo, and the introduction of foreign solar deities such as Mithras and Jupiter Dolichenus, in whose cult images Sol

²³³ Halsberghe (1972) p. 164

²³⁴ Van Dam (2008) p. 178

²³⁵ Bardill (2012) p. 86.

²³⁶ Bardill (2012) p. 98.

²³⁷ Bardill (2012) p. 99.

²³⁸ Bardill (2012) p. 28

²³⁹ Bardill (2012) p. 88.

²⁴⁰ Zosimus, *Historia Nova* III.9

and Luna played a part. Augustus was the first emperor to appreciate fully the power and symbolism of the sun, perhaps because of his conquest of Egypt and that culture's devotion to Re and the sun. Nero, too, attempted to associate himself with the sun, but ultimately failed. Despite this, images of Sol were still present in Rome and coins continued to be minted bearing his image. During the 3rd century, solar worship once again rose to prominence, beginning under the Severans with their devotion to the Emesene sun god, Elagabal. Emperors began to associate themselves with Sol more frequently, no more so than Aurelian, whose family were ancient priests of the sun. Sol's symbolic associations with power and eternity were extremely important to emperors of the 3rd century who consistently had to defend not only the Empire, but also their own right to rule it. With Sol as patron emperors could not only lay claim to the power that he symbolised, but also to a connection with Augustus and his patron god, Apollo. In many ways the 3rd century was a 'solar century' in that solar gods seem to have been worshipped more conspicuously than in any century before or after. Alongside Jupiter, Mars and Hercules, Sol was one of the more important deities for emperors, and was depicted frequently on coins, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

A SHINING BENEFACTION; SOL AND 3RD CENTURY IMPERIAL COINAGE

“... he had his own portrait so depicted on the gold coinage that he appeared to look upwards in the manner of one reaching out to God in prayer. Impressions of this type were circulated throughout the entire Roman world.”

Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 4.15²⁴¹

“For just as neither the banker nor the greengrocer may legally refuse the coinage of Caesar, but if you present it, whether he will or no, he must turn over to you what you are purchasing with it, so it is also with the soul...

A soul will never refuse a clear sense-impression of good, any more than a man will refuse the coinage of Caesar.”

Arrian, *Discourses of Epictetus* 3.3.3²⁴²

The “coinage of Caesar”, or the coinage of the emperor, was a medium for images and imperial messages that became a recognizable symbol of Rome and the *princeps*. Most of those who inhabited the Roman provinces never saw the emperor in person, but they knew that the image on the obverse of coins was their ruler or someone closely connected to him.²⁴³ As Eusebius makes clear in the passage above, the images portrayed on coins were not randomly chosen or merely decorative. From an early period rulers, or at least high-ranking officials, recognized the part that coins could play in disseminating ideas about the emperor, Rome, religion, and imperial policy, and they made good use of this capacity.²⁴⁴ This was abundantly evident in the 3rd century CE, when emperors most needed to reinforce support for themselves from the army and the general populace.

Coinage was introduced into Rome at a comparatively late date, about 300 BCE, with the primary mint for Republican Rome located on the Capitol, somewhere near the temple of Juno Moneta.²⁴⁵ The value of Roman coinage was overhauled in 212 BCE due to the huge costs of the Hannibalic war. At this time the denarius was introduced, which was to remain the principal silver

²⁴¹ Translated by A. Cameron and S.G. Hall (1999).

²⁴² Translated by W.A. Oldfather (1952).

²⁴³ Noreña (2001) pp. 152-153; Noreña (2011 a) p. 248; Cheung (1998) pp. 53-54.

²⁴⁴ See Duncan-Jones (2005) p. 460, for a brief summary of the debate over whether coin images were meaningful or routine.

²⁴⁵ Burnett (1987) p. 1; Meadows and Williams (2001) pp. 27-28; Claridge (2010) p. 264.

coin for some four centuries.²⁴⁶ As individuals gained more power and wealth coin designs became more explicit, and often depicted images pertinent to the men who had them minted. Wealthy families began to advertise their power through patron deities on coins; for example members of the Julii referred to their descent from Venus on two issues of coins dated to 129 and 103 BCE (for example, Fig. 13).²⁴⁷ *Congiaria* (hand-outs for the plebs) and *donativa* (hand-outs for the soldiers) usually consisted of corn, oil and wine; however, by the time of the introduction of the denarius, coinage became the most common and convenient method of paying the legions and distributing money to the people.²⁴⁸ Coins could also be used for *donaria* (gifts to the gods) or for votive offerings in temples, and to cover the construction of public buildings and private houses.²⁴⁹ As well as these practical functions, coins also had symbolic uses and were important for promoting imperial ideology and representing the *auctoritas* of the emperor.²⁵⁰ Not a great deal is known about the organization of mints and who, in the end, was responsible for the choice of images depicted on coins; however, it is clear that coins were under state control and as such should be considered official documents.²⁵¹ There was a minting bureaucracy at Rome, with a *procurator monetae* and dozens of minting staff, but whether coin types were decided by the emperor himself or by an official, the designs were most likely made to flatter the *princeps* and promote his policies and beliefs.²⁵² Coinage has become an important medium for the study of the 3rd century, with the range and number of coin types providing valuable insight into the role that coinage came to play in spreading imperial ideas.²⁵³ More than any other image type, representations of gods and personifications dominated the coinage of the 3rd century, and images of Sol were the most common in this category.²⁵⁴

The first three sections in this chapter will address three important numismatic concerns: 1) the importance of coinage in the 3rd century CE because of the lack of monuments and building programmes during this period, the constant turnover of emperors, and the fact that border wars kept emperors on the move and away from Rome; 2) the premise that coins acted as monuments to imperial power; and 3) the assumption that the both the obverse and reverse of the coin were part

²⁴⁶ Meadows and Williams (2001) p. 37.

²⁴⁷ Meadows and Williams (2001) pp. 37-38; Wallace-Hadrill (1986) p. 74.

²⁴⁸ Burnett (1998) pp. 34-35; Noreña (2011 b) p. 85.

²⁴⁹ Rowan (2010) p. 7.

²⁵⁰ Noreña (2011 a) p. 249.

²⁵¹ Noreña (2011 a) p. 249; Cheung (1998) p. 53.

²⁵² Levick (2002) p. 44; Duncan-Jones (2005) p. 463; Cheung (1998) p. 53: "...for only a suicidal mint official would have produced a personification of Paranoia Caesaris."

²⁵³ Hedlund (2008) pp. 27-28.

²⁵⁴ This statement is made from an analysis of coins in the *RIC*. It is acknowledged that this analysis is incomplete because of the age of the *RIC* and the fact that new coins have been found since its publication; however, due to the large number of the sample in the *RIC*, this does not make a considerable difference.

of the same message and the images should be 'read' together. One of the fascinating aspects of the study of Roman coins is the skilful way in which they carried condensed, complex messages through symbols and abbreviations that were squeezed into a very small space. It is, therefore, important to examine every detail on coins and what it might mean in the context of other images on the coin and the historical circumstances when it was minted. The discussion of the radiate crown and its possible significance in this chapter will be approached with particular attention to these details. In light of the debates surrounding its origin and meaning in art, I argue that the crown suggests light or rays and, therefore, a connection with a solar deity. The radiate crown also became the marker for coins with a double value and whilst this was no doubt its primary function on coinage, its origins and possible uses by emperors suggest intriguing links to the sun and Augustus. The radiate crown was often worn by emperors on the obverse of coins, whilst coins that depicted the empress on the obverse sometimes had a crescent above or below her head. This use of rays and crescent suggests a clear link between Sol and Luna (Apollo and Diana), whose symbols were widely used and recognized by this period, as seen in the discussion of Apollo's solar aspects in Chapter 1.²⁵⁵ The resemblance between the crown worn by the emperor and the crown that was a common feature of Sol's iconography cannot be ignored.

Section 3.1.1: The Necessity of Minting Coins

For the inhabitants of Rome during the 3rd century CE, the political situation was very different in comparison with previous generations. Roman civilians rarely, if ever, saw their emperor and though they still had the Senate, this had become a fairly impotent body forced to sit and watch as one after another claimant to the throne stepped forward and vied for power. Senators attempted to promote and support claimants from their own order, for example appointing Balbinus and Pupienus in defiance of the emperor Maximinus in 238 CE, but the situation was too fraught, and ultimately the power to make or break emperors lay more with the army than the Senate.²⁵⁶ As the 3rd century progressed, this situation intensified and the importance of Rome waned in comparison to that of provincial centres. Emperors were forced to spend the majority of their reigns on campaign, with no time or money for constructing monuments and holding celebrations in Rome, and military necessity caused new cities to become centres of imperial activity.²⁵⁷ As Herodian explains, power was centred very much in the person of the emperor, wherever he was, and this was usually in border regions from northern Italy to Sirmium, the Danube, Thrace, Byzantium, Bithynia,

²⁵⁵ Pp. 18-19.

²⁵⁶ Manders (2012) p. 63; Grant (1985) p. 138.

²⁵⁷ Millar (2001) pp. 43-44.

and through Asia Minor to Antioch.²⁵⁸ With so many claimants to the throne and usurpers, the need to legitimize power was vital for any new emperor if he wished to maintain it.²⁵⁹ This is evident from the coinage, which indicates that even those emperors who were in power for a year or less, such as Gordian I and Gordian II, Balbinus, Pupienus, and Aemilian, had coins minted bearing their image and achievements of their reign that they wished to emphasize.²⁶⁰ A sestertius of Gordian I (Fig. 14), whose coinage is rare in general, depicts the thin features of the emperor with the obverse legend IMP(ERIUM) CAES(AR) M(ARCUS) ANT(ONIUS) GORDIANVS AFR(ICA). The reverse shows Fides standing and holding a standard and a sceptre, with the legend FIDES MILITVM SC. There is nothing unusual about depicting the emperor or Fides in this way, yet the fact that Gordian I and Gordian II only ruled for three weeks indicates how quickly coins were minted for emperors.²⁶¹ Aemilian, ruling for some three months in 253 CE, produced three successive issues of coins, mostly from the mint at Rome, including an antoninianus with a radiate and cuirassed bust of the emperor on the obverse, and Diana with a bow and arrow on the reverse (Fig. 15). These coin types were a form of self-glorification, designed to present the emperor in a certain light, and to act as memorials to their achievements and person.²⁶² So we see on the obverse of coins of the 3rd century CE the re-emergence of a veristic portrait type for the emperor, along with new and varied bust types that emphasised the roles he played – as general, consul, and founder of a dynasty – rather than his individual character.²⁶³ The cuirassed bust (with or without draping) was known in the 1st century, but became more common in the 3rd century, when it could be read as a symbol that the emperor was one who led the armies in battle as part of his imperial duties.²⁶⁴ An antoninianus of Probus (Fig. 16) is a good example of this, with the obverse showing a bust of the emperor, cuirassed and wearing the radiate crown. There are few embellishments aside from the armour and crown, and we can see a slight beard on his face and neck, and deep lines on his forehead suggesting worry or solemnity. In this image Probus is clearly portrayed as the ‘soldier-emperor’ serving alongside his troops. Because of the turbulent situation during the 3rd century, it was necessary for emperors to portray their right to rule and the qualities that made them effective rulers wherever they could. This clearly included coinage, which was a key medium of communication throughout this century.

²⁵⁸ Herodian I.6.5: “Furthermore, Rome is where the emperor is.”; Millar (2001) p. 44.

²⁵⁹ Manders (2012) pp. 25, 28.

²⁶⁰ See Duncan-Jones (2005) p. 461, on the importance of the imperial image and the speed with which images of new emperors were spread throughout the Empire.

²⁶¹ Carson (1990) p. 77.

²⁶² Cheung (1998) p. 57; Noreña (2011 a) p. 256.

²⁶³ King (2002) p. 131.

²⁶⁴ King (2002) p. 131, 133.

Section 3.1.2: A Defense of 'Monuments in Miniature'

As previously discussed, the 3rd century was a time of upheaval in the Roman Empire, with near continuous periods of warfare and a host of claimants for the throne, each often affirmed by loyal legions in various parts of the Empire. Whilst large-scale monuments and images were important for the emperor to show off his piety and generosity, the turbulence and uncertainty of the times made these difficult to erect, and it is in this setting that the condensed language of coin images was particularly useful.²⁶⁵ In this period the cost of warfare left little room for impressive and expensive statues and celebrations, and the Empire became so decentralised so that some provincial cities came to be more prominent than Rome itself. At the same time, the expression of imperial *auctoritas* was more important than ever. It is in this environment that coinage became a most useful medium, being small, easily manufactured and transported, and sure to pass through the hands of a large number of people. Thus coins acted as a memorial to emperors and their reigns, and continued to circulate long after the emperor in question had died.²⁶⁶ Unless he suffered *damnatio memoriae*, the image and virtues of the emperor remained visible throughout the Empire.

Monuments erected in Rome were naturally designed to impress residents of the city and visitors, and it is clear from what survives that buildings and statues were often grand, opulent and created by skilled craftsmen. In this respect, coinage could not compete with statuary, arches and temples, and there is a clear difference between the functions of coinage and the functions of buildings and sculpture. The function of coinage was more subtle and pervasive. Coins were, by the 3rd century, a necessity of life used in everyday transactions and payment, particularly in payment to the army. Coinage was commonplace, and yet the images depicted were continually changing as each new emperor minted new coins, displaying his portrait and titles. While we cannot be certain how many Romans noted the designs on coins or how closely they looked at them, the fact that mint officials and emperors took the time to design new coin types is indicative of a degree of importance attached to them. Ada Cheung argues that the images on coins can be understood as serving the same purpose as grand temples, statuary and triumphal arches – on a smaller and more easily managed scale – in that they were intended as much for posterity as for contemporaries and would remain comprehensible for an indefinite period.²⁶⁷ This was particularly true in the 3rd century, when emperors ruled for such short periods of time and there was a decline in the construction of grand structures. It is entirely plausible that this decline led to a greater reliance on the imagery of coinage to communicate and memorialise. So, whilst coins may not have inspired the same degree of awe

²⁶⁵ Duncan-Jones (2005) p. 461.

²⁶⁶ Cheung (1998) pp. 56-57.

²⁶⁷ Cheung (1998) p. 57; Hedlund (2008) p. 232.

and admiration as many Roman monuments did, they were nonetheless reminders of imperial power and Roman authority that remained in circulation for years after an emperor had ceased to rule. In this respect, coins were a different kind of monument, not designed so much to impress, but rather to circulate and infiltrate the Empire with reminders of the emperor and the qualities he possessed.

Section 3.1.3: 'Reading' the Obverse and Reverse Together

Much like coins today, the images on the obverse and reverse may seem unconnected, yet they are both expressions of the same identity and message.²⁶⁸ The obverse and reverse of coins usually had a reciprocal relationship, so the image of the emperor on the obverse was connected in the mind of the Roman viewer with the image on the reverse, which was often a deity or personification.²⁶⁹ Whilst the reverse is generally considered to have been the less important of the two sides, primarily because the obverse usually depicted the emperor, the images on both were part of the same message being displayed by the coin.²⁷⁰ The obverse drew attention to the emperor through the portrait and the legend, whilst the reverse images expressed ideas and messages about the emperor and Empire.²⁷¹ Coins comprise the largest body of surviving evidence for the 'soldier-emperors' and the images on both sides were significant parts of a language of images available to these emperors to legitimize their rule.²⁷² Coins became a dialogue between the emperor and his people, expressing the intentions and expectations of both parties.²⁷³ With the senate losing influence during this century, it was to the people that the emperor aimed his imagery, particularly the army. Regardless of whether the design was chosen by the emperor himself or a mint official, when a coin depicted a veristic portrait of an emperor wearing a cuirass, a helmet and carrying a spear it was intended to be an official statement expressing the emperor's *virtus* and *romanitas* through martial accoutrements and a style of portraiture which was popular in the Republic.²⁷⁴ Another antoninianus of Probus (Fig. 17) shows the cuirassed emperor wearing a helmet and radiate crown, and carrying a spear and shield. The legend reads VIRTVS PROBI AVG and, together with the image, this coin portrays Probus as the concerned emperor, fighting alongside his men and possessing the *virtus* of a 'good' ruler. Coins such as these may have reflected and responded to the

²⁶⁸ King (2002) p. 127

²⁶⁹ Manders. pp. 96-97; Wallace-Hadrill (1986) p. 76; Noreña (2011 a) p. 251.

²⁷⁰ Carson (1990) p. 280; Wallace-Hadrill (1986) p. 69; Noreña (2011 a) p. 251: "...but the full message of the coin depended on the image and text on both faces, and it is therefore vital to 'read' the entire coin as a single, composite whole."

²⁷¹ Burnett (1987) p. 69; Levick (2002) pp. 46, 58.

²⁷² Hedlund (2008) p. 231; Hannestad (1988) p. 11; Zanker (1988) p. 3.

²⁷³ Hannestad (1988) p. 12.

²⁷⁴ King (2002) p. 130.

hopes of those people whose lands were harried by invading forces by reassuring them that the emperor was strong and capable of defending them, through war if necessary. At the same time, the coins also represented the intentions of the emperor concerning his self-glorification and legacy, as well as reassurance for the general public and the army.²⁷⁵

Because of the military and political turbulence of the 3rd century and the need to maintain the loyalty of the legions, martial images are a dominant theme on coin reverses as well, not particularly images of soldiers or defeated enemies, though these are present, but rather of deities and personifications that signify victory, security, eternity and the invincibility of the emperor and Empire.²⁷⁶ An antoninianus of Gallienus (Fig. 18) shows Victory on the reverse, holding a palm branch and diadem with the legend VICTORIA AVG. By having Victory portrayed on the reverse of his coins, Gallienus was aligning himself with the goddess in the eyes of the viewer. The same can be said of Figures 19 and 20, which show Fortuna on the reverse of a coin of Gallienus, and Fides on the reverse of a coin of Postumus. Perhaps for Gallienus, victory and good fortune were needed after Valerian's capture by the Persians. Postumus may have wanted to encourage people to have faith in him and his break-away empire. These coins served to link the image of the emperor with the virtues portrayed, inviting the viewer to associate the obverse image of the emperor with the reverse image of the virtue.²⁷⁷ Through representations of *Virtus*, *Victoria*, *Pax* and *Aeternitas* we see the centrality of the emperor to the success of Rome. The message seems clear: it is only through the *virtus* of the emperor that victory and peace can be obtained, ensuring the eternity of the Roman world.²⁷⁸

Despite the fact that the army chose the majority of emperors of the 3rd century, coin imagery suggests that divine approval was still important once the emperor had been proclaimed.²⁷⁹ This divine support was visually expressed in a number of ways. The god was depicted on coins – either alone or with the emperor – in the role of protector or patron; the emperor was portrayed as *sacerdos* of a god; the emperor appeared in the guise of the god, dressed as or carrying attributes of a specific deity; or the ruling emperor was associated with past deified emperors through recognisable attributes and deities.²⁸⁰ This feature of coins was not new in the 3rd century. A series of coins issued around the time of Actium shows the obverse and reverse images as interchangeable, with one pair displaying Octavian's head on the obverse and a standing Venus on

²⁷⁵ Levick (2002) p. 46.

²⁷⁶ Hedlund (2008) p. 91.

²⁷⁷ Noreña (2001) p. 152, 153.

²⁷⁸ Hedlund (2008) p. 231.

²⁷⁹ Hedlund (2008) p. 234.

²⁸⁰ Manders (2012) p. 41ff; De Blois (2006) pp. 274-275; Fears (1977) pp. 259-260.

the reverse, while the other pair reverses this placement (Fig. 21). Thus it is clear that the obverse and reverse images were intended to be read together, in order to associate Octavian with the patron deity of the Julii.²⁸¹ Anecdotes from the Gospel of Mark (above, page 22) and Eusebius (above, page 43), as well as a passage in Herodian I.9.7, that specifically refer to the portrait of the emperor on coinage indicate that the obverse image provided a clear link between the coin and the emperor portrayed; however, an account from Suetonius of Nero's coins clearly shows that the reverse image was considered important as well.²⁸² As we saw in Chapter 1, coins with a portrait of Nero on the obverse and either the emperor dressed as Apollo, or simply Apollo, playing the lyre on the reverse, show how the imagery of both sides work together to draw attention to Nero's devotion to the god (Fig. 22).²⁸³

Section 3.2: Deities on Coins

The deities most often chosen as a reverse type on 3rd century coinage were Jupiter, Hercules, Mars, Sol, and Apollo.²⁸⁴ As discussed previously in Chapter 1, Sol and Apollo were closely linked from an early period and could be understood as different aspects of the same divine force. As the Empire expanded new peoples and their gods were incorporated, and some Romans began to worship new gods alongside the traditional deities. It was not, for the most part, a systematic policy to introduce new gods and cults, but rather a natural transfer as Rome and her armies came into contact with new people groups.²⁸⁵ This is evident with gods such as Mithras and Jupiter Dolichenus, whose temples began to appear throughout Europe, Italy and in Rome, indicating that Romans were taking an interest in them. Furthermore, there is little evidence that the traditional public cults suffered with the growth in popularity of new gods; as we have seen on the coinage, the traditional gods retained their positions, at least with the emperor and imperial court.²⁸⁶ The few attempts by emperors such as Elagabalus to place overtly foreign deities in prominent positions were, for the most part, unsuccessful, and it was not until Constantine's acceptance of Christianity as an official religion that the decline of the traditional gods in religious life and art began.

²⁸¹ Wallace-Hadrill (1986) p. 71; Metcalf (2006) pp. 35-44, also has an interesting example of an *aureus* of Octavian on which: "...the words themselves invite the user to turn over the coin, and the message may be read beginning on either side."

²⁸² Mark 12:15-17; Herodian I.9.7; Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* 4.73; Suetonius' *Nero* 25.

²⁸³ I am grateful to Dr. Clare Rowan for her suggestion that it is unclear whether the coins (such as Fig. 22) actually depict Nero in the guise of Apollo (as commonly accepted), or simply Apollo, and that Suetonius' description may be his interpretation of the coin type. When examining the coin reverses alone, it is unclear whether the figure is Nero.

²⁸⁴ According to the *RIC*.

²⁸⁵ Beard, North and Price (1998) p. 254; Wardman (1982) pp. 114-115.

²⁸⁶ Beard, North and Price (1998) p. 204.

Coins provide valuable evidence for foreign gods adopted or introduced into Rome. A number of deities with non-Roman origins are depicted on the coins of various emperors, and an interesting pattern emerges, particularly when comparing the occurrence of these deities with that of Sol on coins. Data tracking the appearance of foreign gods introduced to Rome such as Aesculapius, Apollo, Bacchus, Cybele/Attis and Isis/Serapis on coinage from Augustus to Tetricus II has been collected and displayed in Chart 1.²⁸⁷ This evidence shows that Apollo remained a fairly common subject on coins from c. 27 BCE to 274 CE, probably because of his close association with Augustus and Augustan legacy. Aesculapius, Bacchus, Cybele/Attis and Isis/Serapis appear irregularly, with a peak in the 2nd century and then a steady decline until the mid-3rd century. By comparison, Sol appears occasionally in the 1st and 2nd centuries, but much more frequently in the 3rd century, just when the occurrence of the other deities decreases. Sol's popularity in the 3rd century is clearly attested by the coinage, and indicates that he should not be grouped with those 'foreign' gods that became prevalent in the Roman Empire in the late 1st and 2nd centuries.

The idea that the designs on different denominations were targeting different audiences is also intriguing to consider in this context. Olivier Hekster has compared what he believes the emperor was trying to do through coin designs and other imperial monuments with what modern product marketing attempts to do: that is, create a positive reputation for a brand that will remain, independent of any one person.²⁸⁸ Naturally such advertisements have "preferred meanings" that the creators want the viewers to understand, leading to attempts to target different people groups with messages pertinent to these groups.²⁸⁹ The different denominations of coinage – gold, silver, and bronze – were obviously circulating amongst different strata of Roman society, and differences in the images represented suggest a conscious policy to portray messages targeting particular social groups.²⁹⁰ Noreña agrees with this idea of the flexibility and use that was made of symbolism on different denominations. He uses the example of imperial *congiaria*, which were celebrated on sestertii with elaborate distribution scenes. On aurei and denarii, however, a personification of generosity (*liberalitas*) was represented, indicating that the literal message was reserved for the coins of base metal, while an abstract message was employed for coins of precious metal.²⁹¹ In Chart 2 I apply this idea to Sol coin types of the 3rd century CE in the *RIC*. It is clear that the largest number of Sol types occurred on silver coins, mainly antoninianii, with gold coming second and bronze a distant third. If, as Hekster and Noreña argue, the images on different denominations targeted

²⁸⁷ From an examination of *RIC*, Volumes I-V.

²⁸⁸ Hekster (2003) pp. 24-25.

²⁸⁹ Hekster (2003) p. 25.

²⁹⁰ Hekster (2003) p. 21.

²⁹¹ Noreña (2011 a) p. 261; Noreña (2011 b) pp. 88, 90.

different audiences, the predominance of Sol on antoninianii and aurei would indicate that Sol coins were intended for the wealthier social strata, since they would have been the people handling silver and gold coins the most. It is also likely that the army was an important audience for solar iconography because its members were paid in denarii, and later antoninianii, and were often instrumental for the circulation of cults and religious developments.²⁹² An awareness of how different messages were communicated to different levels of society adds another dimension to the study of coin types and, in this work, for the types of Sol in particular.

The data collected in Chart 3 supports the conclusion that the emperors of the 3rd century relied on traditional gods with recognisable and comprehensible symbolism and iconography in order to bolster support for their often tenuous hold on power. Sol seems to have suited this purpose, along with deities such as Jupiter, Hercules and Mars, and was used accordingly. Given the need for the appearance of strength and stability during these years, and the negative response to the introduction of gods such as Elagabal, it is understandable that these emperors chose to promote traditional Roman gods. An examination of a hoard containing coins from this period is also useful for this discussion. The Normanby hoard was discovered in Normanby, Lincolnshire in 1985 by a “metal detectorist”. It contained 47,912 3rd-century radiates, the earliest from the reign of Septimius Severus (r. 193-211 CE), and the latest from the reign of Carausius (r. 286-293 CE).²⁹³ The hoard is believed to have been interred in c. 290 CE, and the field in which it was buried was located about 2.4 kilometres north of an Iron Age and Roman settlement at Owmbly, that was possibly a military site or fort. When the field and surrounding area were examined, the remains of a substantial stone building, scattered Roman pottery, building stones and tiles were found. The jar of coins appears to have been buried just outside the northern wall of this building, which may have been a farm on the edge of the settlement at Owmbly. This hoard remains one of the largest ever found in Britain and whilst the study of hoards is difficult, an analysis of the types present gives an idea of what coins were circulating at a specific time and in specific areas. Chart 4 displays a general breakdown of the most common deities represented on the coins in this hoard and the frequency of their appearance. Personifications and virtues were also present in large quantities, but Hercules, Mars, Jupiter, Apollo and Sol were the deities that appeared most consistently, though their numbers varied under different emperors. Sol appears on the coins of the majority of emperors, though he is most common on the coins of Gallienus and Victorinus. Jupiter is the next god most

²⁹² Burnett (1987) pp. 49, 90-91. Tacitus relates the solar worship of a legion in his *Histories* 111.24: “Everywhere there were cries of enthusiasm, and as the sun rose, the Third greeted it with cheers in accordance with Syrian custom.”

²⁹³ Bland and Burnett (1988) pp. 114-215.

commonly represented, followed by Mars. The overall low numbers of coins from Aurelian and later is noticeable, but not unexpected, with other hoards of a similar period also showing a low number of the reformed 'aureliani'.²⁹⁴ Sol's frequency on coin types is evident, however, and confirms his place alongside Jupiter and Mars as the deities most often associated with the emperors of the 3rd century CE. Sol appears to have been a god who could cross cultural boundaries, and could visually connect the emperor with the sun god for both Romans and non-Romans. The sun was recognised as a deity by many cultures (as discussed in Chapter 2) and by associating with Sol, emperors may have been trying to bring a sense of unity to an empire in turmoil. Establishing Sol's comprehensibility to non-Romans would require more research than is possible for the current thesis, particularly into which mints were producing the coins and worship of Sol in the provinces before the 3rd century CE, but it is an interesting point to consider.

Section 3.3: The Radiate Crown

The radiate crown and its symbolic counterpart, the lunar crescent, call to mind Sol and Luna, the gods most often associated with them. The importance of the radiate crown and its possible interpretations has been explored by a number of scholars, most notably Steven Hijmans and Marianne Bergmann. At first glance, this symbol seems to be a solar attribute, with its spiked rays protruding from a band around the head of the emperor, similar to the crown that Sol wears in many of his images. However, there are slight differences between the crown depicted on emperors and the crown depicted on Sol that have led to the conclusion that the crown on the emperor is not a solar symbol at all, but rather an attribute linking the wearer back to Augustus. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the radiate crown was also used as a value marker to distinguish coins with a double value. As an indicator of value, the radiate crown was an important aspect of coinage and was perhaps its primary purpose as a symbol; however, its origins and associations are also important to consider. In this section I will examine the use of the radiate crown on coinage in order to emphasize and clarify its solar connotations as well as its links to Augustus. I will argue that the two meanings – as a solar symbol, or an Augustan symbol – are not mutually exclusive.

The radiate crown was a common attribute on coinage worn by the emperor on the obverse, or Sol on the reverse. The radiate crown differs from the solar nimbus in that the rays are attached to a band around the head (Fig. 15), rather than simply rays emerging from the head (Fig. 3). Sol could be represented with a nimbus, but the emperor never was. The appearance of emperors wearing radiate crowns on coins began after the death of Augustus, when his successors used a

²⁹⁴ Bland and Burnett (1988) p. 114.

radiate portrait of him on coins.²⁹⁵ Nero was the first emperor to have himself depicted radiate on the obverse of coins.²⁹⁶ Subsequent emperors also had themselves depicted radiate on coins, and this habit continued beyond the reign of Constantine. At its most basic level, the radiate crown denoted that a coin was a “double” denomination, such as the double aureus, marked by a radiate-crowned portrait, and the antoninianus introduced by Caracalla, which was the equivalent of a double-denarius.²⁹⁷ However, as with most images in Roman art, the radiate crown had more than one meaning and function, particularly when regarded as a solar symbol, whether originating from Hellenistic kings and deities or from Actian wreaths.²⁹⁸

The radiate crown was a recognizable attribute of Sol/Helios and also a symbol of royalty for Hellenistic kings, who portrayed themselves wearing these crowns on their coins.²⁹⁹ Solar imagery was important during the reign of Alexander the Great, who sacrificed to Helios after his victory against the Indian monarch Porus, believing that the god had given him the East to conquer.³⁰⁰ A metaphorical reference to Alexander’s association with the sun is found in Plutarch, who stated that the lands not reached by Alexander remained “sunless”.³⁰¹ There survive at least two sculptures believed to be of Alexander with holes drilled around the head where solar rays would have been inserted.³⁰² This association between the sun and Alexander had a clear influence on his Hellenistic successors, as seen on their coinage (for example, Figs. 23 and 24). The sun was clearly linked to divinity and royalty, and a good king was often likened to the sun or said to have been chosen by the sun.³⁰³ Hellenistic rulers, such as Ptolemy III Euergetes, were depicted on coins with a radiate bust, and many adopted the title *Epiphanēs*, meaning ‘to shine’ or ‘manifest’.³⁰⁴ But there is a significant difference between the Hellenistic radiate crown and the Roman radiate crown, as Bergmann and Hijmans have both emphasized, which illustrates how the Romans adapted the use of the crown for their own purposes. The Hellenistic crown had a real diadem and symbolic rays, or rays that represented light rather than physical substance, giving the impression of divine light emanating

²⁹⁵ Bardill (2012) p. 47.

²⁹⁶ Hijmans (2003) p. 440.

²⁹⁷ Carson (1980) p. 72.

²⁹⁸ Bardill (2012) p. 54.

²⁹⁹ Hedlund (2008) p. 219; Bergmann (1998) pp. 40-66.

³⁰⁰ Watson (1999) p. 188; Diodorus Siculus 17.89.3; Quintus Curtius Rufus, *Historiae Alexandri Magni* 9.1.1. Philostratos also mentions a Temple of the Sun in which images of Alexander and Porus were kept (*Ta es ton Tyanea Apollonion* 2.24).

³⁰¹ Plutarch, *Moralia* 330D.

³⁰² Stewart (1993) pp. 334, figs. 132, 137, 138; Pollitt (1986) p. 29. Cf. Hijmans (2009) pp. 86-88, arguing that these statues should be considered portraits of a radiate Sol, rather than Alexander radiate, given that by Roman times Alexander’s iconographic elements (such as the anastole, tilt of the head, and upward gaze) were artistic devices indicating an heroic concept rather than Alexander specifically.

³⁰³ Bardill (2012) p. 41.

³⁰⁴ Bardill (2012) p. 36.

from the head of the monarch.³⁰⁵ The Roman radiate crown, on the other hand, was a metal band with rays attached and tied at the base of the neck by *lemnisci* (ribbons), suggesting that the band and rays were one real and tangible object.³⁰⁶ The radiate crown is also visible on a number of cameos (including le Grand Camée de France), gems and sculptures, particularly those depicting the deified Augustus, or emperors such as Trajan and Septimius Severus.³⁰⁷ The similarities between this crown worn by Roman emperors and the crown worn by Sol have led many to speculate that the radiate crown indicated that the emperor had taken on divine attributes, or had somehow been assimilated with Sol/Helios.³⁰⁸ Bergmann, however, notes that there are two versions of the radiate crown, one reserved for the use of Sol, and the other for the use of the emperor.³⁰⁹ Sol is never depicted with a nimbus without rays, or with a radiate crown with *lemnisci*, while the emperor's crown is always depicted with ribbons that secure the filet around the head, indicating that the crown worn by the emperor was a real object, rather than an indicator of divine light, as was the case with the crown worn by Sol (cf. Figs. 25 and 26).³¹⁰ The emperor's radiate crown, therefore, did not indicate that the emperor had *become* Sol, but rather that he had become *like* Sol, associating himself with a solar deity or at least calling to mind the god and his attributes.

There are a few notable exceptions to the conventions outlined above that are worth considering, given that they deviate from the symbolic and iconographical norms. The first is an aureus of Geta, struck around 200-202 CE, which depicts a young, bare-headed Geta on the obverse, and a bust of Geta or Caracalla on the reverse, with an outstretched right hand (Fig. 27). What distinguishes the reverse figure is that it is clearly a depiction of a young Caracalla (or Geta), but he is wearing the radiate crown without *lemnisci* attached to it. The radiate crown without *lemnisci* was, on most other coinage, an attribute of Sol and other deities to denote divine light or radiance. The hand gesture, the crown, and the suggestive legend, SEVERI INVICTI AVG PII FIL (son of Severus Invictus Augustus Pius), indicate that in this instance Caracalla (or Geta) was intended to be compared directly to Sol, having taken on his attribute and gesture.³¹¹

The second exception is an antoninianus (or aurelianus) of the emperor Aurelian, minted at Serdica and issued in about 274 CE (Fig. 28). This coin is exceptional because it depicts the emperor

³⁰⁵ Hijmans (2003) p. 440; Bergmann (1998) pp. 112-118.

³⁰⁶ Hijmans (2003) p. 440.

³⁰⁷ See Bergmann (1998) Tables 21, 22, 24, 37, 47, 52, for depictions of emperors wearing the radiate crown on objects other than coins.

³⁰⁸ Hijmans (2009) p. 517; cf. Alföldi (1935) pp. 139-143, who argues that the symbolic rays denote divinity.

³⁰⁹ Bergmann (1998) p. 3.

³¹⁰ Hijmans (2009) p. 509; Bardill (2012) p. 30.

³¹¹ Williams (1999) p. 308.

on the reverse, standing and sacrificing at an altar, with a bare-headed bust of Sol on the obverse and the legend SOL DOMINVS IMPERI ROMANI (Sol master of Roman power). This depiction of a bust of Sol without a radiate crown or any of his usual attributes is rare, but the legend and the appearance of the figure, beardless and with hair in the anastole style, support the identification that it is Sol depicted and not the emperor.³¹² Aurelian's devotion to Sol is well documented, so that his appearance on the obverse of this coin should not surprise us. The drastic departure from his regular iconography, however, does require some explanation. Luigi Pedroni has argued that this coin may have been issued to mark a specific occasion when the sun lost its rays, symbolised by the crown, such as during a solar eclipse.³¹³ Pedroni points out that an annular solar eclipse that occurred on November 8th, 272 CE would have been visible from Rome, Greece, Syria and parts of Arabia, and may have taken place around the time of Aurelian's battle in the east against Zenobia, queen of Palmyra.³¹⁴ For witnesses, an eclipse would have been a portentous event and, if it occurred around the time of Aurelian's battle against Zenobia, when the emperor and his troops were reportedly aided by a "certain divine form" that was later revealed as the sun god, it may help to explain the issue of this coin with a bare-headed Sol.³¹⁵ Aurelian certainly did not need an excuse to worship Sol, as his family were reported to have been priests of the sun from an early date, but this divine intervention by a solar deity at a key point in battle may also have been a conscious allusion to Augustus and his victory at Actium.³¹⁶ In the regular coinage of Aurelian Sol is represented with his usual attributes, so that this depiction of the god must have been issued for a specific purpose, perhaps to commemorate the eclipse and his victory over Zenobia, and also to allude to Augustus and his victory at Actium.

Hijmans has argued that the radiate crown worn by emperors was not a solar symbol at all and was never intended to be connected with the crown worn by Sol; rather, it was an Augustan attribute, an honorific symbol commemorating the Actian victory, used by later emperors to associate themselves with Augustus.³¹⁷ He further argues that not all emperors worshipped Sol to the same degree and would not have risked angering the Senate by having their own portrait depicted with divine attributes such as rays. Hijmans uses the example of some mosaics and reliefs that depict spiked crowns, and compares them with the wreaths awarded for the Actian games

³¹² Pedroni (2011) p. 118.

³¹³ Pedroni (2011) p. 119.

³¹⁴ Pedroni (2011) p. 119.

³¹⁵ *SHA. Aurel.* 25.1-3; Zosimus, *Historia Nova* I.61. Comets were also seen as heralding some great change or event on earth (Tacitus, *Annals* 14.21; Suetonius, *Julius Caesar* 88), as well as lightening (Suetonius, *Domitian* 16).

³¹⁶ Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 51.1.

³¹⁷ Hijmans (2009) Chapter 6, pp. 509-548. For example, p. 545. Bardill (2012) p. 42.

established in honour of Augustus' victory at Actium. These wreaths were spikey, with one type made of reeds with stems projecting straight out, and the other type made of differing materials with straight, metal spikes.³¹⁸ These may have resembled the radiate crown that we see on coins. The Actian games were dedicated to Apollo, so these radiate honorary crowns were appropriate at games dedicated to a god with solar associations, especially given Augustus' affinity with Apollo in his solar guise. On the basis of a number of mosaics that appear to depict a crown with spikes emerging from the band, Hijmans speculates that Augustus was awarded a similar honorary crown after his victory at Actium, making the crown on coinage an actual historical object worn by Augustus rather than a symbol indicating divinity.³¹⁹ This hypothesis explains why emperors who do not seem to have had a strong devotion to Sol are portrayed wearing the radiate crown: they wished to be visually associated with Augustus and his victory at Actium. The fact is that the only evidence we have for the actual existence of the radiate crown worn by Roman emperors is its representation in art, particularly on coinage, gems and statuary.³²⁰ There is no reason, however, why the crown could not have been a real object worn by emperors given the detail with which it is depicted, especially with such seemingly mundane features as the *lemnisci*. Hijmans' argument does not preclude the idea that the imperial radiate crown was, at least originally, linked to the sun and Sol/Helios or Apollo.³²¹ If it was an historical object awarded to Augustus at the Actian games, then a link to Apollo in his solar guise is plausible. If later emperors chose to portray themselves wearing a radiate crown as a link with Augustus, they may also have wished to associate themselves with his visual and religious programme, the legacy of which was still visible in Rome. The very nature of the crown itself, with the rays apparently emerging from the head, indicated a solar link that, whether it recalled Augustus or solar deities, could not be ignored.

Another indication that the radiate crown had solar connotations was the fact that some empresses were occasionally depicted on coinage with a crescent, linking Sol and the emperor and Luna and the empress. A number of Republican coins feature a bust of radiate Sol on the obverse, and a crescent and/or Luna in a biga on the reverse, creating an unmistakeable connection between these divine siblings (for example, Figs. 11 and 12).³²² Comparable are coins of the imperial period depicting the emperor as radiate and the empress with a crescent on her head or underneath her

³¹⁸ Hijmans (2003) p. 441.

³¹⁹ Hijmans (2003) p. 441.

³²⁰ See Bergmann (1998) for a detailed catalogue of radiate art works.

³²¹ Bardill (2012) p. 49.

³²² E.g. Hijmans (2009), chapter 4, pp. 411-457: coins L1.-1, -5, -6, -9, -11.

(for example, Fig. 29).³²³ Hijmans argues that when Sol and Luna were depicted together they did not signify Roman deities or cosmic bodies, but rather the concept of eternity, through their perpetual rising and setting.³²⁴ Again, these interpretations are not mutually exclusive and there is no reason why Sol and Luna together could not represent both their role as deities and as symbols of eternity. Rays alone cannot affirm a figure as Sol or solar, and the radiate crown on portraits of the emperor on coinage did not necessarily denote divinity or divine light.³²⁵ More information is needed about context and other attributes in order to confirm the identification of a figure as Sol, but given the radiate crown's supposed origins and the apparent link between Luna/ the moon and the empress, it seems reasonable to assume that the radiate crown on emperors did have solar origins, even if the wearer of the crown was not a devotee of Sol. Given Sol's appearance on coins at an early stage and the frequency of his presence on coins in the 3rd century, it appears that by this period emperors had begun to use his image and his attributes in much the same way that they did those of Jupiter, Mars, and Hercules. Sol and the radiate crown had become part of a language of images available to emperors bearing messages of authority, power, divine support and links to Augustus and the *Pax Romana*.

Section 3.4: The Iconography of Sol on Coinage

The imagery represented on coinage of the 3rd century CE is the primary focus of this section. The iconography used to represent Sol visually was established at an early date and was comprehensible and easily recognisable, distinguishing Sol from other solar deities whilst communicating his nature and sphere of influence. Variations and hybrids did, of course, occur, perhaps due to the interests of specific emperors or events. The most common attributes of Sol were his crown, quadriga, whip, globe, and cloak. A number of gestures or actions also appeared, such as raising the right hand, trampling enemies, and handing a globe to the emperor. The emperors of the 3rd century who favoured Sol did so because he represented something that they believed was powerful, universal, eternal or, at the very least, useful to their visual programme. As previously discussed, as a personification of the sun and a symbol of eternity, Sol was valued by emperors of the 3rd century CE because their hold on power was often tenuous and support from a deity, especially one favoured by previous "good" emperors, was deemed necessary to maintain that

³²³ Bardill (2012) pp. 54-55. *RIC* IV.1, p. 162 no. 522, p. 218 no. 36, p. 220 no. 52, p. 221 no. 59, p. 231 no. 125, p. 315 no. 7. Cf. a *denarius* from Emesa depicting a bust of Julia Domna on the obverse, and a crescent surrounded by stars on the reverse, in Carson (1980) p. 75 no. 681; an *antoninianus* from Rome depicting a bust of Julia Domna on a crescent on the obverse, with Luna in a biga on the reverse, in Carson (1980) p. 82 no. 722.

³²⁴ Hijmans (2009) p. 547; Zanker (1988) p. 192.

³²⁵ Hijmans (2009) p. 543.

power. The association between emperor and god could be spread effectively on coinage, where both the emperor and deity were depicted on the same medium.

As we have seen in Chapter 1, the three basic image types for Sol on coins were as a bust, in a quadriga, and standing or striding. The bust image type has the fewest attributes because the primary focus was on the head of the deity; however, this focus of attention means that the attributes that are depicted are some of the most important and recognisable of the god's symbols. Sol as a bust is always depicted radiate (aside from the coin of Aurelian discussed above), and the importance of the radiate crown has been explored. The rays shown emanating from Sol's head are clearly a reference to his solar nature, symbolizing both natural and divine light, as he is both a personification of the sun and a deity. Often the busts of Sol appear with some sort of drapery on the shoulders, most often his *chlamys*, and he is always depicted as young and beardless, with thick, loose locks and (usually) an *anastole*.³²⁶ Two fine 3rd-century examples of the bust image type (Figs. 25 and 30) dating from the reigns of Septimius Severus (denarius) and Postumus (antoninianus) display busts of Sol on the reverse. The draped bust of Sol faces right, with rays emerging from his hair, and both coins have the reverse legend PACATOR ORBIS (bringer of world peace). If we read the obverse and reverse together, they indicate that the emperor and the god were guarantors of peace for the Roman world, and though this was rarely the case in the 3rd century, it was an aspirational ideal for contemporaries and a legacy for posterity.

Sol in a quadriga is the other image type that appeared on coins from an early date and continued to be a popular way of representing the god. This scene was usually depicted from the side or frontally, with two horses shown on either side of Sol in the quadriga (Figs. 31 and 32). Tertullian relates that Luna drove a *biga*, Jupiter a *seiugis* and Sol a *quadriga*, and certainly Sol is rarely depicted in any other sort of chariot.³²⁷ The quadriga scene usually allows for a representation of Sol in full, with the radiate crown and *chlamys*, either hanging down his back or flying out behind him, and often carrying a whip in his left hand with his right hand outstretched. In myth Sol is mentioned together with his chariot and "eager tramping steeds", and these coins are visual representations of his role as cosmic charioteer, riding across the sky scattering darkness and bringing light.³²⁸ The whip used to spur the horses is another element of this role of charioteer. Whilst other gods are represented in chariots, Sol and Luna are the only gods who have the whip as

³²⁶ Hijmans (2009) p. 73; Stewart (1993) pp. 42-43.

³²⁷ Tertullian, *De Spectaculis* 9.3.

³²⁸ For example, Catullus 63.39; Tibullus 2.5.60; Propertius, *Elegies* 2.15.32; Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 5.383ff.

a standard attribute.³²⁹ Another visual identifier of Sol as charioteer was the cloak or *chlamys* that he almost invariably wore.³³⁰ As discussed previously, this symbolism connecting Sol with chariots and racing makes him the ideal deity to be connected with the circus and it is unsurprising that we find a temple of Sol in the Circus Maximus.³³¹ The never-ending cycle gave solar symbolism an element of eternity and invincibility, since Sol seemed to descend into darkness at the end of each day, but always rose triumphantly the next morning. The antoninianus of Probus (Fig. 32) supports this interpretation through the image and legend on the reverse, with its depiction of Sol in his quadriga and the inscription on the reverse that reads SOLI INVICTO, unconquerable Sol/sun.

The third image type, and the most common in the 3rd century, was Sol standing or striding. This is the only image type found on the coins of the Canterbury Collection, with examples of Sol standing and holding a globe being the most numerous. Similar to the god in a quadriga, Sol standing gives us a full view of the god, and he is usually depicted radiate, nude or wearing a cloak, with right arm outstretched, and a globe or whip in his left hand. Sol standing or striding was first introduced on coinage under the Severans, prior to whom this pose did not appear on coinage, as far as we know.³³² A denarius of Septimius Severus (Fig. 33) shows one of the earliest examples of Sol in this pose, which would become his most well-known in the 3rd century. The earliest depiction was on an aureus of the same year.³³³ The god is radiate and stands facing left, with a cloak over his left shoulder, his right hand raised and his left hand resting a whip on his left shoulder. I have already discussed the significance of the cloak and the whip, but Sol was also often depicted holding a globe, usually in his left hand and with his right hand raised (Fig. 34). The globe was an important and recognizable symbol in art, originally used by the Greeks as a teaching device for lessons in astronomy and astrology.³³⁴ The globes depicted on Roman coins appear to be representations of the cosmos, rather than representations of earth, as they are often marked by diagonal bands representing the zodiac and celestial equator.³³⁵ Any deity depicted holding the globe was considered to be a prime mover in the cosmos, and thus it is no surprise that we see the globe most often in the hands of Jupiter, Dea Roma, and Sol (Figs. 3 and 35). For the Romans, the globe also became a symbol of the power of the emperors, bestowed by the gods.³³⁶ Scenes on coins that depicted Jupiter or Sol handing a globe to the emperor are understood as the god giving power to

³²⁹ Hijmans (2009) p. 75.

³³⁰ Hijmans (2009) p. 74.

³³¹ Richardson (1992) pp.364-365; Crowther (2010) p. 125.

³³² Williams (1999) p. 308.

³³³ See Williams (1999) pp. 307-310 for a detailed account of this coin.

³³⁴ Hijmans (2009) p. 75.

³³⁵ Brendel (1977) p. 53.

³³⁶ Molnar (1998) p. 2; Hijmans (2009) p. 75.

the emperor. This is exemplified by an antoninianus of Probus (Fig. 36) that shows Jupiter holding his thunderbolt and handing a globe to the emperor. Joint rule could be symbolized by emperors holding the globe together. A solidus of Valentinian I (Fig. 37) shows this clearly on the reverse, with Valentinian and Valens seated and holding a globe between them, with Victory standing behind. In late antiquity, the globe was Christianized by the placement of a cross on top of it, making this Roman icon, which was an important political symbol, appropriate in a Christian context (Fig. 38).³³⁷ Sol's possession of the globe on many coins of the 3rd century was clearly a reference to his role as a ruler of the cosmos, who controlled the workings of the universe. This was a power that he held for himself but was also able to share with emperors, as is shown by depictions of him handing the globe to emperors (for example, Fig. 40).

The standing or striding Sol also often performed a number of actions that could not be represented by a bust or Sol in a quadriga. On almost all images of the standing god Sol has his right hand raised, the palm facing outwards, and the elbows lightly bent. The gesture is noteworthy because it was rare before this image type was introduced, but became one of the standard attributes on coins from the Severans onwards. It seems to be the gesture of one commanding attention, bestowing power or blessing someone.³³⁸ It is similar to the salutation of the emperor in some equestrian statues (for example, Fig. 39). Sol was also depicted trampling captives, which gave the scene a martial quality and suggested that Sol, and by extension the emperor, was or would be the triumphant victor (see Fig. 34). On some rare coins, Sol is depicted crowning the emperor, which gives the impression that power was bestowed upon the emperor by the god personally; that he was a divinely sanctioned ruler, rather than a mere usurper.³³⁹

The introduction of the standing or striding Sol type established a new way of showing the god. His stance and attributes became more like those of Jupiter and, whilst not replacing the king of the gods, it is clear that Sol became comparable to him in prestige and power. Sol's increased importance is evident when we consider that often in the 3rd century, it was Sol who handed the globe to the emperor, a role which had, up to this time, been reserved for Jupiter (Cf. Figs. 36 and 40). In this way Sol was seen as bestowing his cosmic power to the emperor, making him ruler of the cosmos.³⁴⁰ Sol was also shown handing the globe to other gods, such as Mars and Hercules, and thus

³³⁷ Brendel (1977) p. 53.

³³⁸ Hijmans (2009) p. 74.

³³⁹ For example, *RIC* V.II. Probus, 404-405; V.II. Carinus, 225.

³⁴⁰ Watson (1999) p. 190.

bestowing power on other deities.³⁴¹ Even his stance when standing and holding a globe or whip is reminiscent of Jupiter standing holding a spear and thunderbolt (Fig. 41, cf. Fig. 42). In such representations Sol seems to be less aligned with Apollo and more with Jupiter in the 3rd century, reinforcing his importance during this period. An image type on *aurei* of Elagabalus even shows Sol striding and holding up a thunderbolt, an attribute which is not common to him, but rather to Jupiter.³⁴² This process seems to have begun under the Severans, who first portrayed Sol as standing or striding on coins, and it is noteworthy that the first known depiction of a standing Sol was on an *aureus*, suggesting that the imagery was being aimed at a higher social stratum than it had been in previous generations. The Severans attempted to emphasize a close relationship with Jupiter on coins in other ways.³⁴³ An *aureus* of 194 CE shows Septimius Severus and Jupiter clasping hands with a globe supported between them.³⁴⁴ Fears interprets this scene as Jupiter welcoming Severus into a partnership of rule, not as an equal but rather as part of a close and unique relationship.³⁴⁵ Sol and Jupiter were favoured by the Severans because they needed to legitimize and strengthen their rule: Severus was the first emperor since Vespasian to come to the throne by force of arms and he needed to promote the legitimacy and highlight the eternity of his dynasty.³⁴⁶ Sol was an old Roman deity who signified eternity and invincibility, and Jupiter was king of the gods and the heavens. Together they were a powerful combination and their presence on the coinage of the 3rd century, with attributes and actions that are very similar, indicates their importance during this period.

Conclusion:

The coins of the 3rd century were not merely currency, but were also ‘monuments’ of an imperial authority that was under threat due to the pressures facing the Roman Empire at this time. This turbulent situation led to military and religious types dominating the imagery of coins, in hopes that promoting the emperor’s *virtus* and divine support would secure the loyalty of the troops and appease the inevitable fears of the civilian population. Unlike emperors of previous generations, for whom coinage was just one of many tools for promoting their own power, the emperors of the 3rd century had little time whilst on campaign to dedicate temples and hold triumphs. Coins, though less spectacular, were a more practical solution and important mints sprang up around the provinces to accommodate this new mobile military imperial court. The solar iconography of Roman coinage is a subject that can shed much light on the religious and political situation in the Roman Empire, during

³⁴¹ For example, *RIC* V.I. Aurelian, 318; V.I. Aurelian, 357.

³⁴² *RIC* IV.II, 198.

³⁴³ Fears (1977) p. 260.

³⁴⁴ *RIC* IV.I. Septimius Severus, 35.

³⁴⁵ Fears (1977) p. 259.

³⁴⁶ Fears (1977) p. 262; Rowan (2009) p. 309.

a period when at least fifty-four men claimed to be emperor within the space of seventy-two years.³⁴⁷ Coinage was used by the Romans from around 300 BCE, though they had come into contact with the coinage of other cultures long before. By the imperial period coins had become an important tool for spreading messages and policies. This was especially true in the 3rd century CE, when coins acted as symbols of imperial power and authority, instead of larger scale monuments, that many emperors did not have the time or means to construct. Coins never replaced grand monuments in actuality, but they could spread further, with minimum effort or upheaval, as the infrastructure for creating them was already in place. Despite Rome's decreasing importance during this century, the frequent turnover of emperors, and the fact that these emperors were almost always away fighting border wars, coins continued to be produced and the types on coins continued to change and adapt, depending on the emperor in power. These factors show the importance of coins during the 3rd century CE, and its continued relevance as a means of communication in the Roman Empire. Though we cannot be certain how many Romans actually noticed the images on coins, the fact that imagery and symbolism was such an important form of communication for Romans, particularly in a religious context, would seem to indicate that no chance to visually convey ideas or messages would be passed by. Given the dynamic and yet recognisable nature of Sol's iconography on coinage and in other media, it is reasonable to assume that most Romans, whether patrician or plebeian, understood the images and what Sol signified. These images emphasised his role as cosmic charioteer and invincible bringer of light, eternal and predictable, and cast him as a powerful and comforting symbol during a time when so much was uncertain and the face of the Empire was changing forever.

³⁴⁷ Figure taken from Maximinus I (235-238 CE) until Constantine I (307-337 CE).

CONCLUSION

“For I am a follower of King Helios.

And of this fact I possess within me, known to myself alone, proofs more certain that I can give.
But this at least I am permitted to say without sacrilege, that from my childhood an extraordinary longing for the rays of the god penetrated deep into my soul; and from my earliest years my mind was so completely swayed by the light that illumines the heavens that not only did I desire to gaze intently at the sun, but whenever I walked abroad in the night season, when the firmament was clear and cloudless, I abandoned all else without exception and gave myself up to the beauties of the heavens...”

*Hymn to King Helios*³⁴⁸

The *Hymn to King Helios*, written by the Emperor Julian (r. 360-363 CE), was a legacy of the solar worship that became so prominent in the 3rd century CE. As we have seen, Julian followed a long line of emperors who favoured solar deities. Although he wrote in a time when Christianity was the accepted religion of the Empire, the worship of the sun clearly still resonated with many Romans, including Julian. Even within Christian art and ritual, vestiges of solar worship were still visible in the halos of light depicted around the heads of Christ and the saints, and in important holidays such as Christmas, which had originally been a day to celebrate the birth of the sun on which circus games were held.³⁴⁹ Worship of the sun is evident in most ancient civilisations, and the Romans were no different, worshipping Sol as the cosmic charioteer along with his sister Luna. The last vestiges of the cult of Sol seem to have disappeared in the Middle Ages, though sun worship still continues today as a feature of many religions around the world.

Worship of the sun had been established amongst the Romans from an early date, and temples to Sol that date to the Republic are mentioned by various authors. Through monuments and coinage it is evident that Sol's presence in Rome was well-established by the 3rd century CE, with attributes and iconography that remained largely unchanged. His appearance as a bust or in a quadriga, often accompanied by Luna or a crescent to represent her, continued to be a common mode of representation in statuary, reliefs and on coinage throughout the 3rd century and into the 4th. There is simply no evidence, in the literature or the material remains, to indicate that there was an early sun god, Sol Indiges, who was replaced by an eastern sun god, Sol Invictus. It is also highly unlikely that, at a time when emperors needed as much support as they could muster, they would choose to honour a god so closely connected to Elagabalus and his much maligned reign. Instead, as I have shown, Sol was an ancient Roman god, with well-established myths and links to previous

³⁴⁸ *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, IV.1, translated by W.C. Wright (1913)

³⁴⁹ Halsberghe (1972) p. 144

emperors such as Augustus. The increase in his popularity during the 3rd century CE, evidenced by his presence on coinage and the accounts of emperors who favoured him, such as Aurelian, is therefore not as unusual as previously thought, and is understandable given the threats to the Empire and the turbulence within it.

The instability of the 3rd century CE was no doubt a factor in the lack of sources or material remains from this period. Few building programmes were initiated and of those that were, very few survive today. The scarcity of literary sources for this time also makes it difficult to identify exactly what happened and why. On the other hand large quantities of coins survive from the 3rd century, and we have seen that no matter what obstacles they faced, even the emperors with the shortest reigns had coins minted in their names. Coinage, then, is an invaluable tool for understanding something about Rome and her emperors during this time. As we have seen, the images on coins could be used to represent imperial policies, important events, patron deities, and concepts such as the power and right to rule of the emperor. Portraits of the emperor in military garb, depictions of gods such as Victory, Jupiter and Sol crowning the emperor, and personifications of security, eternity, and fortune predominate on coinage of the 3rd century, communicating messages about the emperor's *virtus*, right to rule, and the positive effects of his rule. Images and symbols as tools of communication had been used and understood from an early date, perhaps no more so than during the reign of Augustus. However, in the 3rd century coinage was prevalent as a medium for this symbolic language, and it can be read as a means of conveying official messages about imperial policy. For this reason, study of the 3rd century coins in the Canterbury Collection, in conjunction with other major coin collections, is important and can increase our understanding of Roman religion.

By identifying Sol's iconography and attributes, both on coinage and in other visual media, we can trace artistic representations of the god over many years. Like Jupiter with his thunderbolt and eagle, Minerva with her shield and aegis, and Hercules with his club and lion skin, the attributes of Sol were clear and easily identifiable. The radiate crown, globe, whip, quadriga and *chlamys* were recognised attributes of the god, and were frequently represented in images which showed Sol as a bust, riding in a quadriga, and standing or striding. Combined with epithets such as *aeternitas*, *comes*, *invictus*, and *restitutor*, the imagery of Sol communicated easily understood messages about the power and invincibility of the god and the emperor who he supported. In this study of the coinage of the 3rd century I have shown that allusions to Sol's invincibility and his supposed patronage of particular emperors were deemed beneficial and useful for the visual messages on

display. By the imperial period and the 3rd century in particular, coins were one of the primary media for expressing imperial power and authority, and also imperial attitudes to certain deities and cults. Whilst it is unlikely that the emperors themselves chose every design on coins of their reign, it is equally unlikely that mint officials created designs that were unflattering to the emperor or antithetical to his policies. Coins often expressed ideas or messages that coincided with well-known imperial attitudes, and it is logical to assume that even if the emperor did not issue every coin type himself, the subject matter had to meet his approval. It is clear, therefore, that coin types were created with the emperor, or at least imperial ideals, in mind. Relying as they did on well-established images and symbols, the coin types were created to be comprehensible not only to contemporaries, but also to those in the future, and in this way they may be understood as visual testimonials to an emperor and his reign. We have clearly seen this continued comprehensibility on coins that show Sol, as his attributes and symbols are the same throughout the imperial period, and even when a new position was introduced, the standing Sol, his iconography remained unchanged.

Sol is mentioned briefly in ancient sources, associating him with particular emperors who acknowledged him as patron, but it is with this examination of the archaeological evidence that we begin to see the nature of the god and his influence beyond the 3rd century. We have seen the importance of coins during this century, so that coin imagery is a useful and relevant source of information depicting imperial attitudes and religious beliefs. The examination of the evidence for the worship of Sol herein indicates that veneration of the sun was an ancient practice in Italy and, though his cult was no doubt augmented by the introduction of gods such as Apollo and Mithras, Sol's iconography and attributes remained remarkably consistent throughout his history. His dominance in one of the most influential cultures of the world, during a time of such instability and turbulence, left an indelible legacy which is visible even today. As such, Sol Invictus remains true to his name.

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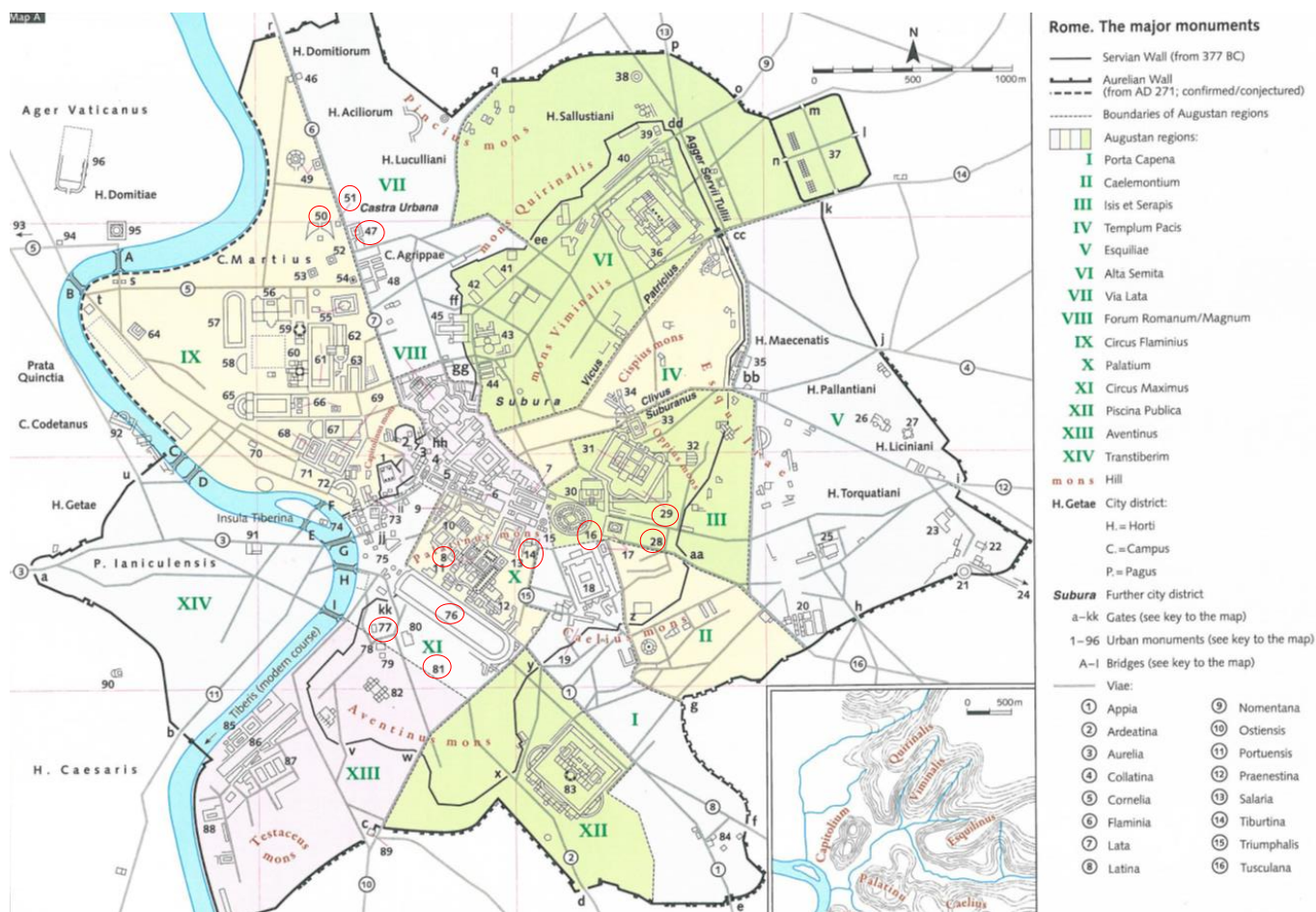
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FIGURE 1:



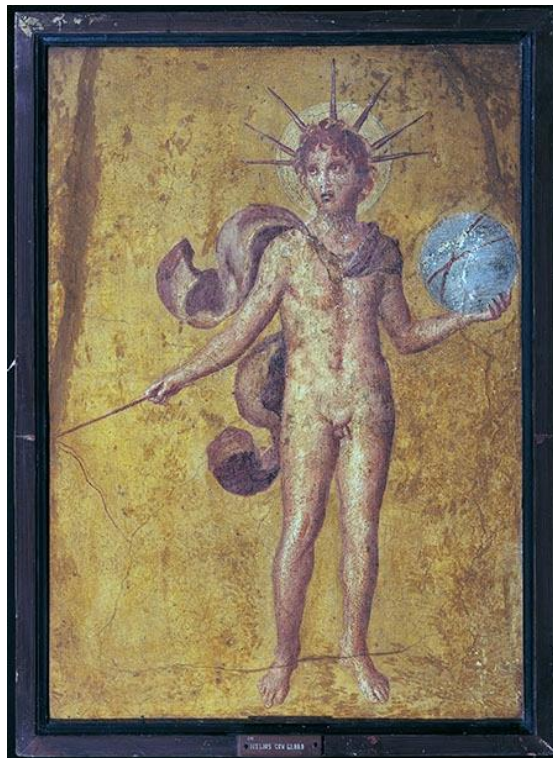
The city of Rome (Brill's New Pauly Historical Atlas of the Ancient World)

Important Monuments Key:

- 8. Temple of Apollo Palatine
- 14. Temple of Elagabalus
- 16. Amphitheatrum Flavium (Colosseum)
- 28. Mithraeum under S. Clemente
- 29. Domus Aurea
- 47. Temple of Sol
- 50. Horologium Augusti
- 51. Ara Pacis Augusti
- 76. Circus Maximus
- 77. Templum Lunae ?
- 81. Mithraeum under S. Prisca

FIGURE 2:

Double-sided Mithraic relief of the 2nd or 3rd century CE.
 Discovered at Fiano Romano in 1926, now in the Louvre

FIGURE 3:

Wall painting of Sol Invictus from Pompeii VI 7,20 (Casa dell'Argenteria).
 Now in the Naples National Archaeological Museum.

FIGURE 4:

Canterbury Collection Num1994.465

Aes of Constantine I (307-337 CE)

Obverse: IMP CONSTANTINVS AVG, Laureate cuirassed bust, facing right. Reverse: SOLI INVICTO COMITI, Sol facing left, right arm outstretched, globe in left hand.

FIGURE 5:

Believed to be a portrait of Alexander as Helios (Pollitt, p. 29, 305).

2nd century CE, based on a Hellenistic prototype.

Rome, Capitoline Museum.

FIGURE 6:



Gnecchi II no. 22

Bronze medallion of Gordian III (238-244 CE), showing Colossus, Colosseum and Meta Sudans.

FIGURE 7:



Canterbury Collection Num1994.340

Antoninianus of Aurelian (270-275 CE)

Obverse: IMP C AVRELIANVS AVG, Radiate cuirassed bust, facing right. Reverse: ORIENS AVG, Sol with globe in left hand, right hand outstretched, with captive at his feet.

FIGURE 8:



[http://wildwinds.com/coins/ric/gallienus/RIC_0452\[j\].jpg](http://wildwinds.com/coins/ric/gallienus/RIC_0452[j].jpg)

Antoninianus of Gallienus (253-268 CE)

Obverse: IMP GALLIENVS AVG, Radiate draped bust, facing right. Reverse: VICTORIA GERMAN, Victory left, presenting wreath to Gallienus opposite, holding spear and globe.

FIGURE 9:



http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/rsc/anonymous/Syd_0096.1.jpg

Anonymous Coin, Rome (217-215 BCE)

Obverse: Facing bust of Sol, draped and radiate. Reverse: ROMA, Upturned crescent, two stars and an orb.

FIGURE 10:



http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/sear5/s1467.html#RSC_0012

Denarius of Marc Antony (42 BCE)

Obverse: M ANTONI IMP, bare-headed bust, facing right. Reverse: III VIR R P C, Facing head of Sol radiate, in a temple with two columns.

FIGURE 11:



<http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/sear5/s0186.html#manlia1>

Denarius of A. Manlius (118-107 BCE)

Obverse: Helmeted head of Roma, facing right. Reverse: Sol in facing quadriga rising from waves of the sea, star on either side, X and crescent above.

FIGURE 12:



<http://wildwinds.com/coins/sear5/s0180.html#aquillia1>

Denarius of Man. Aquillius (109-108 BCE)

Obverse: Radiate head of Sol, facing right; X below chin. Reverse: Luna in biga facing right, crescent and three stars above, one star below.

FIGURE 13:



<http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/sear5/s0198.html#julia4a>

Denarius of L. Julius Caesar (103 BCE)

Obverse: CAESAR, Head of Mars in crested helmet, facing left. Reverse: L IVLI L F, Venus Genetrix in biga drawn by cupids, lyre below.

FIGURE 14:



Canterbury Collection Num1994.223

Sestertius of Gordian I/II (238 CE)

Obverse: IMP CAES M ANT GORDIANVS AFR, Laureate draped bust, facing right. Reverse: FIDES MILITVM SC, Fides standing facing left, holding standard in right hand and sceptre in left.

FIGURE 15:



http://wildwinds.com/coins/ric/aemilian/RIC_0002.jpg

Antoninianus of Aemilian (253 CE)

Obverse: IMP AEMILIANVS PIVS FEL AVG, Radiate draped and cuirassed bust, facing right. Reverse: DIANAE VICTRI, Diana standing facing left, holding bow and arrow.

FIGURE 16:



Canterbury Collection Num1994.361

Antoninianus of Probus (276-282 CE)

Obverse: IMP C PROBVS P F AVG, Radiate cuirassed bust, facing right.

FIGURE 17:



Canterbury Collection Num1994.359

Antoninianus of Probus (276-282 CE)

Obverse: VIRTVS PROBI AVG, Radiate helmeted, cuirassed bust, with spear and shield, facing left.

FIGURE 18:

Canterbury Collection Num1994.265

Antoninianus of Gallienus (253-268 CE)

Obverse: GALLIENVS AVG, Radiate bust, facing left. Reverse: VICTORIA AVG, Victory facing left, holding palm branch and diadem.

FIGURE 19:

Canterbury Collection Num1994.274

Antoninianus of Gallienus (253-268 CE)

Obverse: IMP GALLIENVS AVG, Radiate bust, facing right. Reverse: FORT REDVX, Fortuna seated facing left, holding palm branch and sceptre.

FIGURE 20:

Canterbury Collection Num1994.303

Antoninianus of Postumus (259-268 CE)

Obverse: IMP POSTVMVS AVG, Radiate draped bust, facing right. Reverse: FIDES AEQUIT, Fides seated, facing left, holding standard and patera (?).

FIGURE 21:



http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/sear5/s1547.html#RIC_0250a

Denarius of Octavian (32-31 BCE)

Obverse: Bare-headed bust, facing right. Reverse: CAESAR DIVI F, Venus standing facing right, half-draped, leaning against column, holding helmet and sceptre, shield leaning against column.

FIGURE 22:



<http://numismatics.org/collection/1950.88.1>

As of Nero (54-68 CE)

Obverse: NERO CLAVDIVS CAESAR AVG GERMANICVS, Radiate bust, facing right. Reverse: PONTIF MAX TR POT IMP P P, Nero (?) as Apollo Citharoedus, laureate, advancing right, playing lyre.

FIGURE 23:



http://wildwinds.com/coins/greece/egypt/ptolemy_III/Svoronos_1117.jpg

Octadrachm of Ptolemy III (246-221 BCE)

Obverse: Radiate bust, facing right, wearing aegis with trident resting on shoulder. Reverse: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΠΤΟΜΕΜΑΙΟΥ, Radiate cornucopiae bound with royal diadem.

FIGURE 24:



http://wildwinds.com/coins/greece/seleucia/antiochos_VI/Newell_248.jpg

Drachm of Antiochos VI (148-138 BCE)

Obverse: Radiate head, facing right. Reverse: Apollo seated on omphalos, examining arrow in right hand, left hand rests on grounded bow.

FIGURE 25:



http://wildwinds.com/coins/sear5/s6214.html#RIC_0282,Aureus

Aureus of Septimius Severus (206-207 CE)

Obverse: SEVERVS PIVS AVG, Laureate bust, facing right. Reverse: PACATOR ORBIS, Radiate and draped bust of Sol, facing right.

FIGURE 26:



Canterbury Collection Num1994.362

Antoninianus of Probus (276-282 CE)

Obverse: VIRTVS PROBI AVG, Radiate bust, holding spear and shield, facing left.

FIGURE 27:



http://wildwinds.com/coins/ric/geta/RIC_0021.jpg

Aureus of Geta (209-211 CE)

Obverse: P SEPT GETA CAES PONT, bare-headed draped and cuirassed bust, facing right. Reverse: SEVERI INVICTI AVG PII FIL, Radiate draped and cuirassed bust (of Caracalla?), facing left, with aegis, raising right hand.

FIGURE 28:



Pedroni (2011) p. 117

Antoninianus of Aurelian (274 CE)

Obverse: SOL DOMINVS IMPERI ROMANI, Bare-headed bust, facing right. Reverse: AVRELIANVS AVG CONS, Emperor togate, facing left, offering libation on a small altar.

FIGURE 29:



http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/sear5/s6537.html#RIC_0125a

Denarius of Caracalla (201 CE)

Obverse: ANTONINVS PIVS AVG, Laureate and draped bust of Caracalla, facing right. Reverse: CONCORDIAE AETERNAE, Jugate busts of Septimius, radiate & draped, & Domna, diademed & draped on a crescent, facing right.

FIGURE 30:



http://wildwinds.com/coins/ric/postumus/RIC_0317.jpg

Antoninianus of Postumus (296 CE)

Obverse: IMP C POSTVMVS P F AVG, Radiate draped and cuirassed bust, facing right. Reverse: PACATOR ORBIS, Radiate and draped bust of Sol, facing right.

FIGURE 31:



http://wildwinds.com/coins/ric/caracalla/RIC_0294ADD.jpg

Antoninianus of Caracalla (198-217 CE)

Obverse: ANTONINVS PIVS AVG GERM, Radiate draped and cuirassed bust, facing right. Reverse: PM TR P XX COS IIII PP, Sol radiate, mounting quadriga and holding whip.

FIGURE 32:



http://wildwinds.com/coins/ric/probus/RIC_0776.jpg

Antoninianus of Probus (276-282 CE)

Obverse: IMP C M AVR PROBVVS P F AVG, Radiate mantled bust, facing left, holding eagle-tipped sceptre. Reverse: SOLI INVICTO, Sol in front facing quadriga.

FIGURE 33:



http://wildwinds.com/coins/ric/septimius_severus/RIC_0492.jpg

Denarius of Septimius Severus (197 CE)

Obverse: L SEPT SEV PER AVG IMP VIII, Laureate bust, facing right. Reverse: P M TR P V COS II P P, Sol standing facing left, raising right hand, holding whip in left.

FIGURE 34:



Canterbury Collection Num1994.341

Antoninianus of Aurelian (270-275 CE)

Obverse: IMP AVRELIANVS AVG, Radiate cuirassed bust, facing right. Reverse: ORIENS AVG, Sol with globe in left hand, right hand outstretched, placing foot on one of two captives at feet.

FIGURE 35:



http://wildwinds.com/coins/ric/diocletian/RIC_0028-Cohen147.jpg

Antoninianus of Diocletian (290-291 CE)

Obverse: IMP DIOCLETIANVS AVG, Radiate cuirassed bust, facing right. Reverse: IOVI AVGG, Jupiter standing facing left, holding Victory on globe & sceptre, eagle at foot left.

FIGURE 36:



Canterbury Collection Num1994.355

Antoninianus of Probus (276-282 CE)

Obverse: IMP C M AVR PROBUS AVG, Radiate bust, facing right. Reverse: CLEMENTIA TEMP, Probus standing right, receiving globe from Jupiter holding thunderbolt.

FIGURE 37:



http://wildwinds.com/coins/ric/valentinian_i/_trier_RIC_017a4.jpg

Solidus of Valentinian I (367-375 CE)

Obverse: D N VALENTINIANVS P F AVG, Diademed, draped & cuirassed bust, facing right. Reverse: VICTORIA AVGG, Valentinian & Valens enthroned facing, holding globe between them, behind & between them Victory is standing with outspread wings, small palm between.

FIGURE 38:



http://wildwinds.com/coins/sear/s4288.html#Sear_4294A

Solidus of Theodosius II (402-450 CE)

Obverse: D N THEODOSIVS P F AVG, Helmeted bust facing. Reverse: IMP XXXII COX XVII P P, Roma seated left holding globus cruciger.

FIGURE 39:



Marcus Aurelius on horseback, 164-166 CE.

This copy stands in the Campidoglio, Rome, whilst the original is in the Capitoline Museum.

FIGURE 40:



http://wildwinds.com/coins/ric/aurelian/RIC_0353.jpg

Antoninianus of Aurelian (270-275 CE)

Obverse: IMP C AVRELIANVS AVG, Radiate cuirassed bust, facing right. Reverse: SOLI CONSERVATORI, Emperor standing right holding spear, receiving globe from Sol standing opposite, holding whip, two captives in ex.

FIGURE 41:



Canterbury Collection Num1994.390

As of Maximianus (286-310 CE)

Obverse: IMP MAXIMIANVS PF AVG, Radiate draped bust, facing right. Reverse: IOVI CONSERVAT AVG, Jupiter standing facing left, holding thunderbolt in right hand, and sceptre in left.

FIGURE 42:

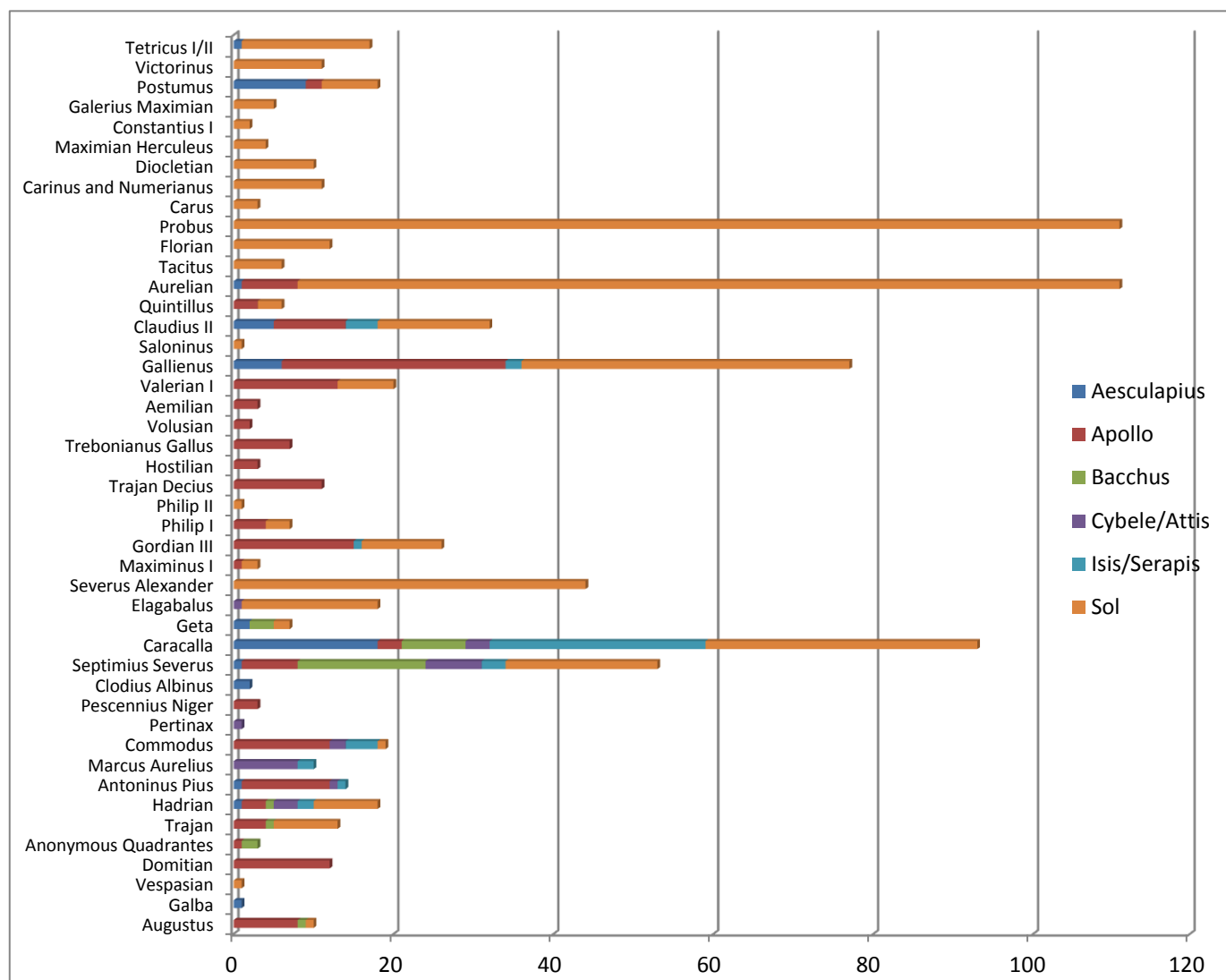


Canterbury Collection Num1994.429

As of Licinius (308-324 CE)

Obverse: IMP LICINIVS PF AVG, Laureate cuirassed bust, facing right. Reverse: SOLI INVICTO COMITI, Sol standing facing left with *chlamys*, holding globe in left hand, right hand outstretched.

CHART 1: SOL AND “FOREIGN” GODS IN THE *RIC*



Y axis= Emperors

X axis= The number of coin types that represent the various deities.

CHART 2: DENOMINATIONS OF SOL COIN TYPES (*R/Q*)

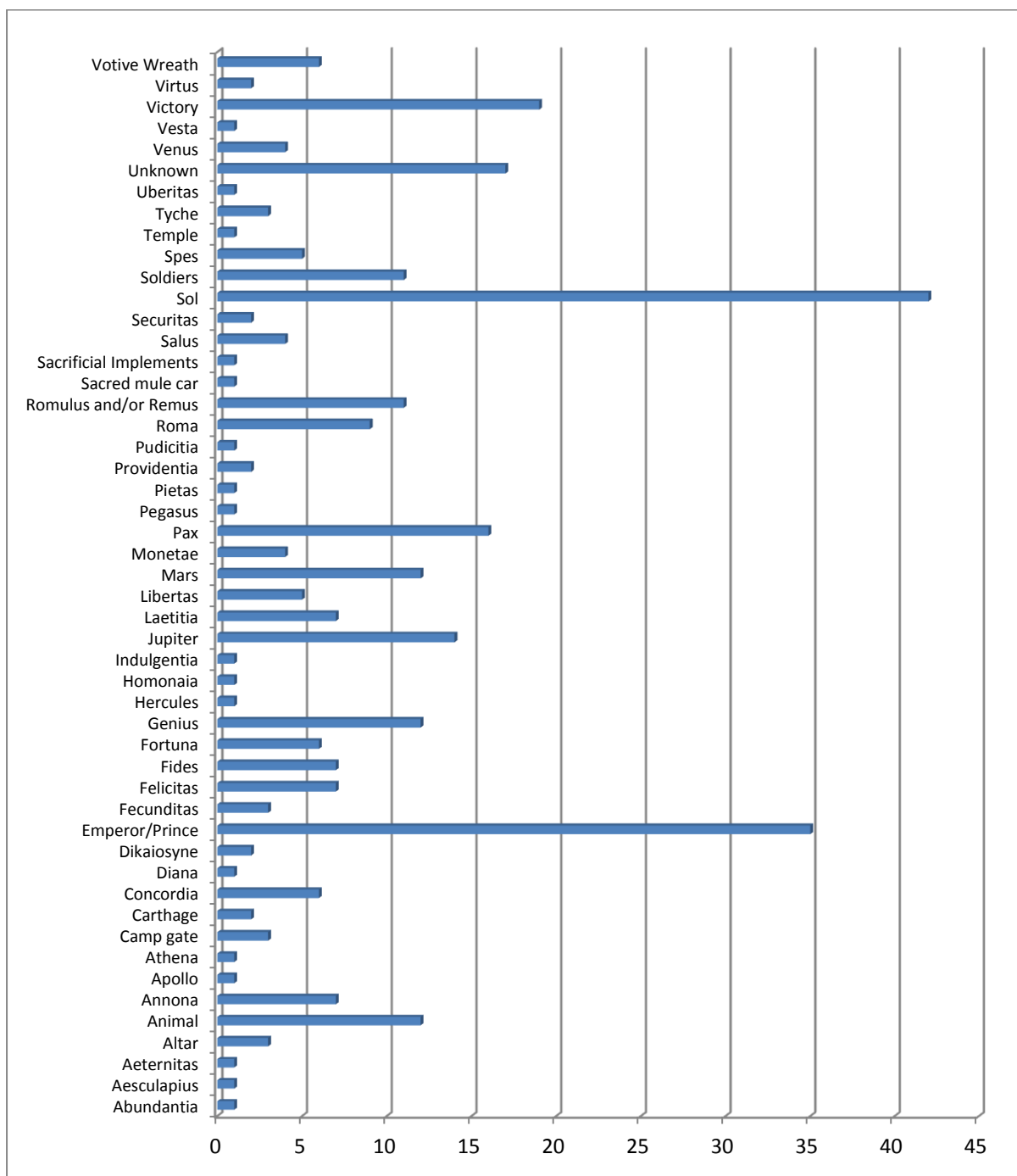
AU=Gold

AR=Silver

AE=Bronze

Emperors:	Sol Coin Types:			
	<i>AU Coins:</i>	<i>AR Coins:</i>	<i>AE Coins:</i>	<i>AU + AR Coins</i>
Augustus		1		
Vespasian		1		
Trajan	1	4		4
Hadrian	7		1	
Commodus (Crispina)	1			
Septimius Severus (Julia Domna)	1	7	3	1
Caracalla	9	14	14	4
Geta	1	1		
Elagabalus (Julia Soaemias, Julia Mamaea)	3	6	8	
Severus Alexander (Julia Mamaea)	6	16	30	
Maximinus I (Paulina)		1	1	
Gordian III (Sabinia)	3	6	2	
Philip I		3		
Philip II		1		
Valerian I	1	6		
Gallienus (Salonina)	8	33	2	
Saloninus		1		
Claudius II		14		
Quintillus		3		
Aurelian (Severina)	12	80	7	
Tacitus		6		
Florian	4	7	1	
Probus	13	96	4	
Carus		2		
Carinus and Numerianus	5	6		
Diocletian	3	6	1	
Maximian Herculeus		4		
Constantius I		2		
Galerius Maximian		5		
Postumus	2	4	1	
Victorinus	6	4		
Tetricus I/II		14		

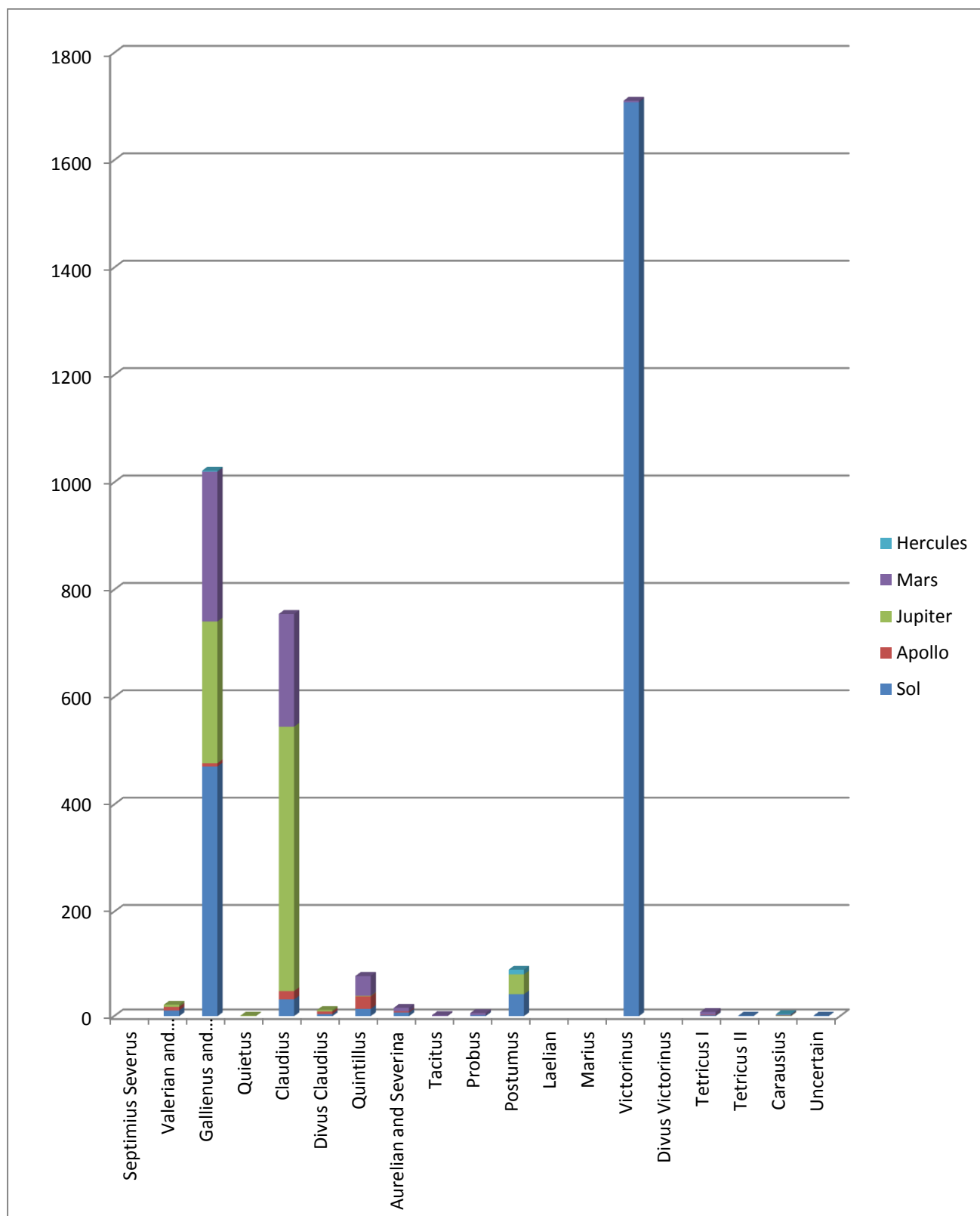
CHART 3: FIGURES ON 3RD CENTURY COINS IN THE CANTERBURY COLLECTION



Y axis= Figures on coin reverses.

X axis= Number of coins.

CHART 4: DEITIES ON COINS FROM THE NORMANBY HOARD



Y axis= Number of coins.

X axis= Minting authority.

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