

The Respectful Emperor: Justinian and Religious Authorities

Hartmut Leppin

J.W. Goethe Universität, Frankfurt

Personal piety was a main feature in Justinian's imperial representation. It is well known that in his fight for what he regarded as true belief he oppressed and offended various clerics and monks, most notoriously Pope Vigilius. Events such as this obscure another element of the emperor's *habitus*, which has not aroused sufficient attention in recent research: his respectful behavior towards monks and other people who could be deemed holy men. This is palpable mainly in the lives of contemporary saints (for example John of Ephesus' *Lives of the Eastern Saints* or Cyrillus of Scythopolis' *Life of Sabas*), but is also present in other sources and is even turned into a negative quality in the *Anecdota*.

The proposed paper will be based on a broad collection of the relevant evidence; some examples will be examined briefly to give a better impression of the communication between emperor and holy man. The second part of the paper will raise the question whether and to what degree Justinian altered his behavior towards holy men over the course of his reign. This will lead to reflections on the system of "acceptance" in late antique Rome, for which the self-presentation of the late antique emperor as a true Christian was essential [For the concept of "acceptancem," which seems to be chiefly discussed in German research, see for example St. Diefenbach, "Frömmigkeit und Kaiserakzeptanz im frühen Byzanz" *Saeculum* 47 (1996) 35-66; idem "Zwischen Liturgie und *civilitas*. Konstantinopel im 5. Jahrhundert und die Etablierung eines städtischen Kaisertums" in: R. Warland (Ed.), *Bildlichkeit und Bildort von Liturgie* (Wiesbaden 2002) 21-47; M. Meier "Die Demut des Kaisers. Aspekte der religiösen Selbstinszenierung bei Theodosius II. (408-450 n. Chr.)" in: A. Pečar and K. Trampedach (Ed.), *Die Bibel als Argument* (in print); H. Leppin "Ambrosius und das Königtum" in: Therese Fuhrer (Ed.), *Die christlich-philosophischen Diskurse der Spätantike. Texte, Personen, Institutionen* (in print); idem "(K)ein Zeitalter Justinians – Bemerkungen aus althistorischer Sicht zu Justinian in der jüngeren Forschung" *Historische Zeitschrift* (in print)].

In so doing, the paper should show the complexity of the interaction between religious and political authorities in Justinian's reign.