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Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire

EDITED BY
Stephen Mitchell and
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CAMBRIDGE

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521194167

First published 2010

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
One god : pagan monotheism in the Roman Empire / edited by Stephen Mitchell, Peter van Nuffelen.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-521-19416-7 (hardback)
1. Monotheism – History. 2. Paganism – History. 3. Rome – Religion. I. Mitchell, Stephen, 1948– II. Van Nuffelen, Peter. III. Title.
BL221.054 2010
211′.34 – dc22 2010000129

ISBN 978-0-521-19416-7 Hardback

Contents

CHAPTER 7

Megatheism: the search for the almighty god and the competition of cults

Angelos Chaniotis

A FEW THOUGHTS ON MONOGAMY AND MONOTHEISM[1]

If I avoid using the term monotheism in my paper in connection with religious trends in the Roman East, it is because I take the word to mean what it says – the exclusive worship of a single god – exactly as monogamy means the state of being married to a single person at a time. Admittedly, monogamy has never prevented humans from having sex with other partners as well, hoping that the one and only would not find out about it – a soft monogamy as it were. It is only with a similar tolerance towards human weakness that we might accept as monotheism the situation in which an individual accepts the existence of a single god, but nevertheless worships many others, either because he thinks it would do no harm, or 'just in case'. But I wonder whether it really helps us understand the religions of the Roman Empire if we modify the term monotheism beyond recognition through the addition of attributes, such as soft, pagan, inclusive, hierarchical, affective or whatever.

By saying this I do not deny the sporadic existence of genuine monotheistic ideas in intellectual circles. I also do not deny the existence of monotheistic tendencies. But I do find the term pagan monotheism misleading in as much as it reduces the quest for the divine in the imperial period to a question of quantity, whereas the textual evidence for this period shows that we are primarily dealing with a question of quality. What are the properties of the divine? What is the most effective way of communicating with the divine? What is the proper form of worship? Is there a hierarchy among the gods? These were the questions asked by both philosophers and

[1] This paper stems from two research projects I have directed in Heidelberg, both funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft: the project 'Ritual and communication in the civic communities of ancient Greece' (part of the collaborative research programme 'The dynamic of rituals', 2002–7); and the project 'The language of religious communication in the Roman East' (part of the priority programme 'Roman imperial religion and provincial religion', 2005–7). I completed this article in April 2007; I have added bibliography which appeared later only in a few exceptional cases.

worshippers. By highlighting the rather artificial opposition mono- versus poly-theism, we might neglect other oppositions that dominated the religious discourse of the imperial period: e.g. individual versus collective, ritualised versus internalised or spiritual, public versus private, traditional versus philosophical and so on. It is for these reasons that I have provocatively introduced the neologism 'megatheism', and not only in order to fulfil the dream of many a scholar to create a new word.

I use the term megatheism not as an alternative to monotheism or henotheism,[2] but as a designation of an expression of piety which was based on a personal experience of the presence of god, represented one particular god as somehow superior to others, and was expressed through oral performances (praise, acclamations, hymns) accompanying, but not replacing, ritual actions. That the existence of such a god was a concern in the imperial period is directly attested by an oracle quoted in the *Theosophia Tubingensis*, a response to someone who asked Apollo if there is another god with a superior power (εἰ ἔστιν ἕτερος θεὸς μείζονα παρ' αὐτὸν ἔχων ἐξουσίαν).[3]

My interest in 'megatheism' stems from my interest in the highly competitive context of the quest for the divine in the imperial period. There is no need to stress here that the imperial period was a period of competition in various forms: competition among the members of the civic elite, competition among the cities for privileges, titles and rank, competition among festivals for participants and audiences, competition among cults and cult centres. That these competitions could become violent confrontations is known from the many conflicts among the cities for the rank of metropolis and the privilege of *neokoreia*.[4] The field of religion was equally competitive and not at all peaceful. Pliny's letters concerning the Christians of Pontus and Bithynia and Lucian's narrative of the competition between Alexander of Abonou Teichos and the Christians[5] were until recently rather isolated

[2] 'Henotheism' is appropriate as a designation of a very specific religious concept, the idea of the unity of god (e.g. *Orphicorum fragmenta* 239 Kern: εἷς Ζεύς, εἷς Ἀΐδης, εἷς Ἥλιος, εἷς Διόνυσος, εἷς θεὸς ἐν πάντεσσι; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 31.11.8–10: πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ ἁπλῶς τοὺς θεοὺς πάντας εἰς μίαν τινὰ ἰσχὺν καὶ δύναμιν συνάγουσιν); cf. de Hoz (1997) and Belayche, in this volume. For a cautious assessment of this idea see Versnel (1990), 232–6. However, in that study, from which I have profited more than the footnotes reveal, Versnel uses the term 'henotheism' to describe the elevation of one above all others (cf. 'affective monotheism'); cf. Versnel (2000), esp. 85–8, and e.g. Belayche (2005c). It is for this phenomenon that I prefer the term 'megatheism'.

[3] *Theosophia Tubingensis* 39 (*Theosophorum Graecorum fragmenta* p. 26 Erbse). On this curiosity see Nock (1933), 99–116.

[4] See e.g. Roueché (1989b), 206–28; Dräger (1993), 107–200; Nollé (1993), 297–317; Collas-Heddeland (1995); Heller (2006), 179–341.

[5] Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96–7; Lucian, *Alexander* 25 and 38; cf. Victor (1997), 149–50.

pieces of evidence for religious confrontation in Asia Minor, but a new inscription from Kollyda in Lydia gives a fascinating if enigmatic narrative of an attack against a sanctuary of Mes Motylleites during the celebration of his festival (AD 197/8). A crowd gathered, armed with swords, sticks and stones, and attacked the sanctuary and the sacred slaves and destroyed the images of the gods. Unfortunately, neither the identity of the attackers nor their motivation is known.[6]

Ephesos provides a good example of how the local cult of Artemis was promoted in conscious competition with other cult centres.[7] As early as AD 22/3, when the inviolability of sanctuaries was under scrutiny by the Roman authorities, the Ephesians supported their claim to *asylia* by pointing out that Apollo and Artemis were born in their city; this claim explicitly excluded the birth of these gods on Delos.[8] One hundred and forty years later a prominent member of the local elite, C. Laverius Amoinos, took the lead in efforts to strengthen the cult by proposing to the assembly that the entire month Artemision should be dedicated to Artemis (*c.* AD 162–4).[9] His proposal repeatedly stressed the privileged relationship between Artemis and Ephesos: 'Artemis, the patron goddess of our city (ἡ προεστῶσα τῆς πόλεως), is honoured not only in her native city, a city which she has made more glorious than any other city with her divinity, but also among the Greeks and the barbarians, to the effect that in many places sanctuaries and sacred precincts have been dedicated to her, and temples, altars and statues have been established, on account of the clear manifestations of her power. And the greatest proof of the respect rendered to her is the fact that she has her eponymous month, which we call Artemision, while the Macedonians and the other Greek *ethne* and their cities call it Artemisios. . . . Because of all that, the demos regarded it appropriate that the entire month, which bears this divine name, should be sacred and dedicated to the goddess and has approved with this decree the establishment of the worship required

[6] Herrmann and Malay (2007), 110–13 no. 84: Μηνὸς Μοτυλλείτου ἰορτῆς γενομένης, ἐρχομένου αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς ἰορτῆς, συνῆλθεν ὄχλος ἐπὶ τὴν βασιλικὴν ἔχοντες ξίφη καὶ ξύλα καὶ λίθους, συντρίψαντες τοὺς ἱεροδούλους καὶ τὰ ἀφιδρύσματα τῶν θεῶν καὶ μηδενὶ χρῶμα τηρηθῆναι, μήτε τοῖς θεοῖς μήτε τοῖς ἱεροδούλοις . . . ('when a festival of Mes Motylleites was celebrated and he was returning from the festival, a crowd gathered attacking the basilica with swords and sticks and stones, crushing the sacred slaves and the images of the gods, so that neither the dignity (?) of the gods nor that of the sacred slaves was preserved . . . ').

[7] On measures for the promotion of the Ephesian cult see e.g. Knibbe (2002), 49–62; Berns (2006), 273–308. Cf. Engelmann (2001), 33–44.

[8] Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.61.1: *primi omnium Ephesii adiere, memorantes non, ut vulgus crederet, Dianam atque Apollinem Delo genitos: esse apud se Cenchreum amnem, lucum Ortygiam, ubi Latonam partu gravidam et oleae, quae tum etiam maneat, adnisam edidisse ea numina*.

[9] *I.Ephesos* 24 = *LSAM* 31; Horsley (1992), 154–5; Chaniotis (2003), 184–6.

for this month . . . Thus, when the goddess is honoured in an even better fashion, our city will remain more glorious and prosperous for ever.' Only a few years earlier, the Ephesian goddess was declared in a public document to be, in direct comparison with the other Olympians, 'forever the greatest among all the gods'.[10]

It is in the context of competition that we should study the various forms of interaction among religious concepts, including the impact of monotheistic tendencies in philosophy and of mystery cults on traditional worship.[11] In this paper, I will attempt to sketch how the epigraphic evidence, primarily from the Roman East, reveals the interdependence of religious concepts, whose common denominator was a strong interest in a privileged relationship with an almighty god. Although one may observe a convergence in linguistic expression, I shall argue that this convergence is not always the result of a homogeneity of ideas but of emulation and competition among the followers of different conceptions of the divine.

DISSEMINATION OF RELIGIOUS IDEAS AND RELIGIOUS INTERTEXTUALITY

Sometime in the second century AD, a certain Sextus dedicated at Vasio Vocontiorum (Vaison-la-Romaine) an altar to Baal, the master of Fortune. He explained his motivation in the Greek version of the bilingual dedicatory inscription: 'because he remembered the oracles at Apameia' (τῶν ἐν Ἀπαμείᾳ μνησάμενος λογίων).[12] Did Sextus expect the readers of his inscription to know what these oracles were? In this case, we will probably never find out; but in other cases we may be certain that the words of the gods travelled a long distance. The dissemination of the Sibylline oracles is the best example.[13] Making known the oracles of Glykon, the New Asklepios, was part of the marketing strategy of Alexander of Abonou Teichos for the propagation of the new cult.[14] An oracular *lex sacra* from Lindos, stressing the priority of purity of mind over purity of body, provides an

[10] *SEG* 43 (1993), 756 (*c.* AD 128–61): ἥ τε πάτριος Ἐ[φεσίω]ν θεὸς Ἄρτεμις καὶ θεῶν πάντων πώποτε μεγίστη.

[11] On the complex subject of syncretism, interaction and competitions see more recently North (1992); Bonnet and Motte (1997); Engster (2003); Belayche (2003), 9–20; North (2003); Belayche (2006a) and in this volume. Cf. Osborne (2003).

[12] *IG* XIV, 2482; *IGR* I, 14; Decourt (2004), 111–12 no. 87, with summary of the interpretations of this text: *Belus Fortunae rector mentisque magister ara gaudebit quam dedit et voluit.* Εἰθυντῆρι Τύχης Βήλῳ Σέξτος θέτο βωμὸν τῶν ἐν Ἀπαμείᾳ μνησάμενος λογίων.

[13] Potter (1990), 95–140. On the role of sanctuaries in the collection and dissemination of oracles see Busine (2005), 53–4 and below, n. 16.

[14] Lucian, *Alexander* 24. Cf. Victor (1997), 23; Chaniotis (2002c), 74.

instructive case of religious intertextuality based on the dissemination of oracles. The first verse is taken from an older metrical oracle from Epidauros: 'You shall be pure inside the temple that smells of incense'; the second is part of an oracle of Sarapis preserved in a manuscript in Vienna: 'Come here with clean hands and with a pure mind and with a true tongue. Clean not through washing, but pure in mind.'[15]

Through their dissemination, oracular texts could easily become channels for the diffusion of religious concepts, the more so since in the imperial period oracles reflected contemporary theological and religious trends.[16] The theosophical oracle of Apollo Klarios, the best-known text of this kind, is of crucial significance for this subject: 'Born of itself, untaught, without a mother, unshakeable, not contained in a name, known by many names, dwelling in fire, this is god. We, his angels, are a small part of god. To you who ask this question about god, what his essential nature is, he has pronounced that aether is god who sees all. To him you should pray at dawn, gazing on him and looking towards the sunrise.'[17]

This oracle is known both from the inscription at Oinoanda and from literary sources.[18] Stephen Mitchell has plausibly associated it with the cult of Theos Hypsistos and the *theosebeis*,[19] and although it is far from certain that every single dedication to Theos Hypsistos is connected with this concept of the divine (see below), the wide distribution of the relevant testimonia supports the assumption that this oracle was widely known. What was its impact? Some of its readers, familiar with Orphic theogony and theology, must have recognised a familiar concept. The supreme Orphic god was born of himself (αὐτογενής in the Testament of Orpheus), he was associated with fire (ἀκαμάτου πυρὸς ὁρμή), seated on a fiery throne (θρόνῳ πυρόεντι); he was regarded as a god who cannot be seen but sees

[15] The Lindian text: *LSCG Suppl.* 108. Discussion: Chaniotis (1997), 163; Petrovic and Petrovic (2006), 157 no. 8. On the text from Epidauros (Clement of Alexandia, *Strom.* 5.1.13.3; Porphyry, *Abst.* 2.19.5) and its possible date see Chaniotis (1997), 152 (fourth century BC); Bremmer (2002b), 106–8 favours a later date; but see the comments in *SEG* 52 (2002), 343. The oracle in the Vienna manuscript: Totti (1985), 147 no. 61.

[16] Busine (2005), 154–224; cf. Robert (1968); Belayche (2007a).

[17] *SEG* 27 (1977), 933: αὐτοφυής, ἀδίδακτος, ἀμήτωρ, ἀστυφέλικτος, | οὔνομα μὴ χωρῶν, πολυώνυμος, ἐν πυρὶ ναίων, | τοῦτο θεός· μεικρὰ δὲ θεοῦ μερὶς ἄνγελοι ἡμεῖς. | τοῦτο πευθομένοισι θεοῦ πέρι ὅστις ὑπάρχει, | αἰθέρα πανδερκῆ θεὸν ἔννεπεν, εἰς ὃν ὁρῶντας | εὔχεσθ' ἠώους πρὸς ἀντολίην ἐσορῶντας. Robert (1971); Hall (1978); Potter (1990), 351–5; Livrea (1998), 90–6 (comparison with other theosophical works); Mitchell (1999), 83–91, 98, 102, 143 no. 233; Merkelbach and Stauber (2002), 16–19; Petzl (2003), 99–100; Busine (2005), 35–40, 203–8, 423; Jones (2005), 294–5.

[18] *Theosophia Tubingensis* 13.105–8 (*Theosophorum Graecorum fragmenta* pp. 8–9 Erbse); Lactantius, *Div. inst.* 1.7.1.

[19] Mitchell (1998), 62–3 and (1999).

all, being served by much-labouring angels (πολύμοχθοι ἄγγελοι); and he was a polyonymous god.[20] But for many worshippers of traditional religion it must have been as shocking to learn from Apollo that the traditional gods were only messengers and a small part of a motherless polyonymous god as it was for Julian two centuries later to learn, again from Apollo, that his oracle was no more.[21]

Two new finds may be related to the theosophical oracle from Klaros or other oracles. The first text is a dedication to Theos Hypsistos from Amastris: 'upon the command of the god with the long hair, this altar [has been erected] in honour of the Highest God, who has power over everything, who cannot be seen, who sees to it that the dreadful bane can be driven away from the mortals'.[22] The nature of this supreme god is described in similar terms as in the theosophical oracle: the Highest God has power over everything, he cannot be seen, but observes everything. The oracle of Apollo ('the god with the long hair'), which gave instructions for the erection of this altar, may have been no other than the theosophical oracle of Klaros; but the βροτολοιγέα δείματα which Theos Hypsistos averts may be an allusion to the plague during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (cf. below), and in this case the oracle may have been one of the oracles of Apollo Klarios connected with this event. Despite these uncertainties, the similarity of this dedication to other religious texts (see n. 20) is striking.

We are confronted with similar uncertainties as regards the second text, an inscription from Pisidia, according to which a dedication was made to the gods and goddesses in accordance with the interpretation of an oracle of Apollo Klarios.[23] A Latin version of the text is known from ten inscriptions found in Dalmatia (Corinium), Italy (Cosa, Gabii and Marruvium), Sardinia (Nora), Numidia (Cuicul), Mauretania (Volubilis

[20] This similarity has already been observed by Robert (1971), 603. See the following Orphic fragments (now in *Poetae epici Graeci* 11.1 Bernabé): frg. 243 line 22 (hymn for Zeus): σῶμα δέ οἱ . . . ἀστυφέλικτον; frg. 377 F lines 8–10: αὐτογενής . . . οὐδέ τις αὐτὸν εἰσοράαι θνητῶν, αὐτὸς δέ γε πάντας ὁρᾶται; frg. 31 F line 5 Bernabé: ἀκαμάτου πυρὸς ὁρμή; *Orphicorum fragmenta* 248.9–10 Kern: σῶι δὲ θρόνωι πυρόεντι παρεστᾶσιν πολύμοχθοι ἄγγελοι. See Herrero de Jáuregui (2009). Cf. the use of similar attributes in the Orphic hymns: 10.10: αὐτοπάτωρ (Physis), 8.3 and 12.9: αὐτοφυής (Helios, Herakles), 12.13: ἀστυφέλικτος (Herakles). For πανδερκής see below, n. 98.

[21] Busine (2005), 427 with bibliography.

[22] Marek (2000), 135–7 (*SEG* 50 (2000), 1225, imperial period): θεῷ ὑψίστῳ ὀμφῇ ἀκερσεκόμου βωμὸν θεοῦ ὑψίστοιο, ὃς κατὰ πάντων ἔστι καὶ οὐ βλέπεται, εἰσοράᾳ δὲ δείμαθ' ὅπως ἀπαλάλκηται βροτολοιγέα θνητῶν. Marek has observed the similarity between the properties attributed to this deity and those described in contemporary texts and has suggested identifying this deity with Helios Theos Hypsistos.

[23] Mitchell (2003a), 151–5 no. 13 (*SEG* 53 (2003), 1587): [θ]εοῖς καὶ θεαῖς ἀπὸ ἐξηγήσεως χρησμοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος Κλαρίου.

and Banasa), Spain (La Coruña) and Britain (Vercovicium).[24] According to Eric Birley, who knew only the Latin inscriptions, the wide diffusion of the dedications required the intervention of a central authority; he suggested associating these dedications with an oracle given during Caracalla's illness in AD 213.[25] Observing that most of the Latin texts were inscribed on plaques, presumably designed to fit into walls and, therefore, to have an apotropaic function, Christopher Jones has suggested that the interpretation concerned an oracle of Apollo Klarios recommending measures in order to face the plague that began in AD 165;[26] from the uniformity of the copies he inferred that they were set up on instructions from Rome and disseminated through the Roman army. The oracle at Klaros is known to have given recommendations concerning a plague (probably this plague), and altars in Rome, set up *ex oraculo* to 'the gods that avert evil', 'Athena the averter', Zeus Hypatos and Zeus Patrios, may indeed be related with this event.[27] However, the copy from Cosa, depopulated in the second half of the second century, may be later, and plaques were often used to cover the front of altars. Furthermore, the occasions envisaged by Birley (illness of Caracalla) and Jones (plague under Marcus Aurelius) explain the existence of an oracle, but not why an interpretation (ἐξήγησις) recommending dedications to the gods and the goddesses was necessary. We should, therefore, not exclude the possibility, recently suggested by Stephen Mitchell, that the oracle which required an interpretation was no other than the theosophical oracle of Apollo Klarios. The exegesis may have recommended the worship of the traditional Olympian gods, although they ranked below the Highest God, thus reconciling traditional religion with the rising popularity of monotheistic tendencies. It should be added that the exegesis of another theological oracle of Apollo Klarios is attributed to a certain Cornelius Labeo, author of a treatise *On the Oracle of the Clarian Apollo*.[28] Although clarity on this matter is (still) not possible, it is not inconceivable that the priests at Klaros took a lead in sending this message to the Latin-speaking parts of the Empire,[29] exactly as Alexander of Abonou Teichos made sure that the oracles of his new god became known.

[24] The Latin version reads: *diis deabusque secundum interpretationem oraculi Clarii Apollinis*. For the references see Jones (2005), 293; Busine (2005), 184–5.

[25] Birley (1974). [26] Jones (2005); cf. Jones (2006).

[27] Jones (2005) 297–301, and (2006), 369 (*IGUR* 94–7).

[28] Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.18.18–20; see Mastandrea (1979); MacMullen (1981), 87. Jones (2005), 295 has pointed out that the last lines of the theosophical inscription from Oinoanda may be an exegesis of the theosophical oracle; for a different explanation see Potter (1990), 353–5.

[29] See Jones (2005) 301; Busine (2005), 189.

Even if not directly related to each other, these texts reflect the religious quest of the imperial period. Whom should we worship and how? Sometimes the quest was fundamental, sometimes it was triggered by a very specific critical situation. The answers were not only provided by intellectuals in philosophical schools or by the members of exclusive circles of theologians and initiates. They were also given by the cult personnel, which administered the traditional sanctuaries and was fully aware of contemporary trends.[30] When a treasurer at Didyma submitted an enquiry concerning the relocation of an altar of Tyche (*c.* AD 200), the oracle he received went beyond simply answering his question: 'you should honour and revere all the immortals' (πάντας χρὴ τειμᾶν μάκαρας πάντας τε σέβεσθαι).[31] At least indirectly, this text was in a dialogue with other theological texts circulating in the Empire. The numerous inscriptions of religious content – dedications, praises of the gods and records of acclamations, funerary imprecations, vows, oracles, cult regulations, confessions – are responses to the same questions: whom should we worship and how? Although they originate in different religious communities, they often share the same vocabulary, which often makes the attribution of a text to a particular community impossible.[32]

The different religious communities were not isolated but engaged in a dialogue. The shared vocabulary should not always and uncritically be taken as evidence for either homogeneous concepts or syncretisms. Already Erik Peterson, in his seminal study of the acclamatory phrase εἷς θεός ('one god'), had observed a diversity in the use of this formula.[33] Not every attestation of the formula *heis theos* refers to a *single* god; sometimes it designates a deity as *unique* within a polytheistic system.

[30] See Busine (2005), 202–8 on the convergence between the theological oracles of Apollo and contemporary trends.

[31] *SGO* I, 84–5 no. 01/19/06; Busine (2005), 450 no. 32 (with further bibliography). Cf. Bernand (1969), 573–6 no. 165 = Totti (1985), 123 no. 47 (Talmis, second/third century AD): σέβου τὸ θεῖον, θύε πᾶσι τοῖς θεοῖς (but followed by the recommendation to honour in particular Isis and Sarapis).

[32] Many recent studies point to the ambiguities in the use of a shared religious vocabulary, already observed by Peterson (1926), Nock (1933) and others. See e.g. Di Segni (1994); Marek (2000), 133–4, 135–7, 141–6; Bowersock (2002) (on *hypsistos* and *theosebes*); Chaniotis (2002a), 224–6 and (2002b), 112–19 (on the convergence of the religious vocabulary of pagans, Jews and Christians in late antiquity); Markschies (2002), 209–14 (*heis theos*); Trebilco (2002) (the formula ἔσται αὐτῷ πρὸς τὸν θεόν); Petzl (2003) (on the convergence of religious ideas in Asia Minor); Foschia (2005); Chaniotis and Chiai (2007), 117–24. See also my remarks in the 'Epigraphic bulletin for Greek religion', *Kernos* 13 (2000), 128; 14 (2001), 147–8; 15 (2002), 334; 16 (2003), 250; 17 (2004), 190; 18 (2005), 425; 20 (2007), 243–4; 21 (2008), 224–5.

[33] Peterson (1926), 268–70. See also below, n. 62.

The same observation has been made recently by Nicole Belayche with regard to Theos Hypsistos.[34] The wide diffusion of dedications to Theos Hypsistos should not be taken as evidence for the existence of a single Theos Hypsistos stemming from a single and homogeneous religious concept.[35] The homogeneity of language sometimes conceals a diversity of concepts; the shared vocabulary may not be the result of a harmonious dialogue, but of competition or confrontation.

The cult of Thea Hypsiste provides an instructive example. This cult was already known through a dedication from Kula (Kollyda) in Lydia, included by Stephen Mitchell in his extremely useful collection of testimonia for the cult of Theos and Zeus Hypsistos.[36] That Thea Hypsiste was somehow related to Hypsistos is certain, but was she his female hypostasis, a consort, a competitor, or perhaps just a traditional goddess addressed with a new name under the influence of the worship of Theos Hypsistos? Is her cult evidence for the transfer of ideas, for syncretism, or for competition? A new epigraphic find brings us one step further in the quest for an answer. A second dedication to Thea Hypsiste was published a few years ago, again from Kollyda (imperial period). Luckily here Thea Hypsiste is accompanied by another epithet that clearly designates her as the patron (προκαθημένη) of a small community, whose name is only partly preserved ('to Thea Hypsiste, the patron of the Kla[–]tai'). We are dealing with a local goddess addressed with a trendy acclamatory epithet. In this case, the use of the female form of the epithet Hypsistos cannot be regarded as deriving from a homogeneous conception of the 'Highest God';[37] and of course, there is no certainty that the two inscriptions from Kollyda refer to the same goddess.

This example shows how cautious we should be when interpreting short fascinating texts, often isolated and found in unclear contexts. The convergence of language does not always reflect a convergence of ideas. The cult foundation of Alexander of Abonou Teichos exemplifies how a new cult adopted pre-existing cultic elements and religious concepts, but by

[34] Belayche (2005a); cf. Belayche (2005c), 268.

[35] This has been suggested by Mitchell (1998) and (1999), who has collected the relevant testimonia. For different views see Ustinova (1999); Stein (2001); Bowersock (2002); Wallraff (2003) 534–5; Ameling (2004), 13–20. Cf. already Lane (1976), 94–5.

[36] *TAM* v, 1.359; Mitchell (1999), 138 no. 167, updated by Mitchell, in this volume.

[37] *SEG* 49 (1999), 1588 (imperial period): Θ[ε]ᾷ Ὑ{σ}ψίστῃ Κλα[. . . . .]τῶν προκαθημέ[νῃ]. Belayche (2005a), 36–41 provides evidence for the use of *hypsistos* as an acclamatory epithet for several different deities; cf. Belayche (2005c), 261, 264–5, 268. For a different interpretation see Mitchell, in this volume. Already de Hoz (1991) identified *hypsistos* as an acclamatory name. For acclamatory epithets see below, nn. 72 and 80.

combining them in a unique way and introducing slight variations created a cult with a distinctive profile.[38]

SOME GODS ARE MORE DIVINE THAN OTHERS

A long funerary epigram for an anonymous woman in Kerkyra, set up and probably composed by her husband, Euhodos (second/third century AD), contains an exegesis about the nature of gods: 'Many daemons have their seat in Olympos, but their god is the great father, who has ordered the world and has commanded the Moon to follow the night and the Titan [*sc.* the Sun] to follow the grace of the day'.[39] This is followed by references to dualistic eschatological ideas. The woman asserts that her immortal, heavenly, soul (ψυχὴ οὐράνιος) dwells in the skies, while her body is covered by earth. The latter idea, connected with Orphic concepts, is often found in epitaphs.[40]

Euhodos' wife addresses the reader with the certainty of an eyewitness. She knows the origin and destiny of her soul. She does not reveal how she had acquired this knowledge – from the *hieroi logoi* of a mystery cult, from oracles, or from visions; but she implicitly distinguishes between true and false belief. She informs the person who stands in front of her grave that the monument is deceiving: the grave is not her dwelling; the truth is that she has gone to the stars. That she felt the need to communicate her knowledge about the gods to others presupposes the ignorance, the uncertainty or the different view of others; her knowledge competes with the false beliefs, the rival conceptions, or the weak faith of others.

The didactic nature of this epigram is evident. It not only gives advice concerning life and afterlife, it also explains the nature of divinities. The author distinguishes between the many gods (*daimones*) and a more powerful god, who is designated as their great father. The existence of a hierarchy among the gods is as old as Greek literature. That some gods were more powerful than others is implied e.g. by the expression τηλικοῦτος θεός ('so

[38] Sfameni Gasparro (1996) and (1999), 275–305; Chaniotis (2002c).

[39] *IG* XI^2.1, 1024: δαίμονες ἀθάνατοι πολλοὶ κατ' Ὀλύμπιον ἕδρην, | ἀλλὰ θεὸς τούτων ἐστὶ πατὴρ ὁ μέγας, ὃς κόσμον διέταξε, Σελήνην νυκτὶ κελεύσας | πείθεσθαι, Τειτᾶνα ἡμεριναῖς χάρισι. For a hierarchy of gods, cf. e.g. Drew-Bear, Thomas and Yildizturan (1999), 335 no. 541 (Phrygia): θεῶν ἄναξ . . . ἄριστε δαιμόνων, Ὀλύμπιε.

[40] For a relatively early example see *SEG* 28 (1978), 528 (Pherai, third century BC); Avagianou (2002): 'I, Lykophron, the son of Philiskos, seem sprung from the root of great Zeus, but in truth am from the immortal fire; and I live among the heavenly stars, raised up by my father; but the body born of my mother occupies mother-earth.' Recent discussions of this motif: Chaniotis (2000), 164 with n. 16; Le Bris (2001), 81–96; Peres (2003), 81–6, 110–13. Tybout (2003) rightly stresses the often contradictory ideas expressed in epitaphs. Cf. Bremmer (2002a), 7 n. 62.

powerful a god') used in connection with emperors.[41] The author of the Kerkyraian epigram describes important capacities of this central divine figure: he is a father figure, the creator of the regular course of night and day. The latter capacity associates this god with the most elementary of human experience: the observation of the rising and setting of the sun. This evokes the continual presence of god in the world of the mortal; the very coming of the day testifies the presence of the god. It is very unlikely that the author of this text did not know that the same capacity, control of the heavenly bodies, was attributed to Isis in the contemporary so-called 'aretalogies'.[42] Euhodos' concept of the almighty divine father, probably the conception of the divine accepted by the group to which he belonged, seems to be confronted with the rival conception of the divine of the worshippers of Isis. His text is another piece of evidence for the implicit 'religious intertextuality' of the imperial period.

Finally, the passer-by who stood in front of the grave and read the text aloud lent Euhodos' wife his voice and allowed her to speak from the grave – a well-known strategy of epigrammatic texts and graffiti.[43] The reader's voice transformed this text into a permanent eulogy of the great god, into an oral performance that could be repeated as long as people read the text.

This text was composed by an intellectual, as the metrical form and the content suggest – with possible allusions to an Orphic theogony. But analogous features can be found in textual evidence originating in a more humble milieu. Let us consider another text, this time not an epitaph but a dedication from a sanctuary of Mes somewhere in Lydia.[44] The text is a record of words said in a sanctuary in the presence of an audience, as we may infer from comparative iconographic and textual evidence, which I cannot present here.[45] The text begins with an acclamation ('Great is the Mother of Mes Axiottenos!'), followed by two other sets of acclamations

[41] E.g. *Syll.*[3] 798 lines 5 and 9 (Caligula); *F.Delphes* III.4.304 lines 12–13 (Hadrian); *SEG* 53 (2003), 659A lines 20–1 (Claudius). For a hierarchy among gods see also nn. 3, 39, 54–5, 67 and 70.

[42] Totti (1985), 2 no. 1 lines 12–14 (= *I.Kyme* 41), 6 no. 2 lines 27–34 (= *IG* XII.5, 739), 13 no. 4 lines 16–17 (= *SEG* 9, 192). On these texts see Versnel (1990), 39–95.

[43] E.g. Rutherford (2000), 149–50; Chaniotis (forthcoming).

[44] Malay (2003), 13–18 (*SEG* 53 (2003), 1344; north of Ayazviran, AD 57): Μεγάλη Μήτηρ Μηνὸς Ἀξιοττηνοῦ. Μηνὶ Οὐρανίῳ, Μηνὶ Ἀρτεμι/δώρου Ἄξιοττα κατέχοντι Γλύκων Ἀπολλωνίου καὶ Μύρτιον Γλύκωνος εὐλογίαν ὑπὲρ τῆς ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίας καὶ τῶν ἰδίων τέκνων. Σὺ γάρ με, κύριε, αἰχμαλωτιζόμενον ἠλέησες. Μέγα σοι τὸ ὅσιον, μέγα σοι τὸ δίκαιον, μεγάλη νείκη, μεγάλαι σαὶ νεμέσεις, μέγα σοι τὸ δωδεκάθεον τὸ παρὰ σοὶ κατεκτισμένον. Ἠχμαλωτίσθην ὑπὸ ἀδελφοῦ τέκνου τοῦ Δημαινέτου. Ὅτι τὰ ἐμὰ προέλειψα καί σοι βοίθεαν ἔδωκα ὡς τέκνῳ. Σὺ δὲ ἐξέκλεισές με καὶ ᾐχμαλώτισάς με οὐχ ὡς πάτρως, ἀλλὰ ὡς κακοῦργον. Μέγας οὖν ἐστι Μεὶς Ἄξιοττα κατέχων. Τὸ εἰκανόν μοι ἐποίησας. Εὐλογῶ ὑμεῖν. Ἔτους ρμβ′, μη(νὸς) Πανήμου β′. Discussion: Chaniotis (2009), 116–22.

[45] Chaniotis (2009), 118, 120, 123, 125, 140–2.

('Great is your holiness! Great is your justice! Great is your victory! Great your punishing power! Great is the Dodekatheon that has been established in your vicinity!'; and: 'Now, great is Mes, the ruler over Axiotta!'). Acclamations could occur spontaneously when humans experienced the power of god(s), but in most cases acclamations were part of ritual actions.[46] The technical terms are βοᾶν and its compounds (ἀναβοᾶν, ἐκβοᾶν, ἐπιβοᾶν), κράζειν/ἀνακράζειν, εὐλογεῖν/εὐλογία and εὐφημεῖν/εὐφημία ('use of good words').[47] The most likely context for the eulogia of Glykon is that of the erection of the stele itself.

The phrase 'for you, Lord, showed mercy when I was captured' is an expression of gratitude for divine assistance which the worshipper has experienced personally. In this regard, this text from Lydia is a 'thanksgiving offering' (εὐχαριστήριον, χαριστήριον). Its dedication involved some form of ritual action (e.g. a libation or a sacrifice) as well as an exaltation in the presence of an audience. This is directly attested, for instance, for the sanctuary of Asklepios on the Insula Tiberina in Rome. As we may infer from the healing miracles recorded in an inscription, after his rescue, the worshipper was expected to come to the sanctuary and express his gratitude to the god in public.[48] Presumably, the phrase 'for you, Lord, showed mercy when I was a captive' reflects what Glykon said aloud when he came to the sanctuary of Mes to set up his inscription.

[46] On religious acclamations, in general, see Peterson (1926), 141–240; Versnel (1990) 193–6, 243–4; Belayche (2005a and 2006a); on spontaneous acclamations, usually in connection with miracles, see Peterson (1926), 193–5, 213–22; on acclamations as ritual actions see Chaniotis (2008a) 81–4 and (2008b). See also the references in notes 47–8, 58–61, 63–5, 72–6, 80, 95–6.

[47] *Boan*, *krazein*, and their compounds: Peterson (1926), 191–3. *Eulogein/eulogia*: Robert (1964), 28–30; Pleket (1981), 183–9; Mitchell (1993), 36; de Hoz (1999), 119. *Euphemia* is usually understood as 'ritual silence', and at least some of the literary evidence supports this interpretation; but see Gödde (2003), 27–30; Stehle (2004) and (2005), 103 ('euphemia, which means "speech of good omen", prescribes the only kind of utterance that the gods should hear within the ritual space of opened divine-human communication'). The etymology of the word suggests the use of words of praise and not silence. For the imperial period, there is enough unequivocal literary and epigraphic evidence that *euphemein/euphemia* designated acclamations: e.g. *I.Ephesos* 1391 line 5: δεξιούμενοι μὲν εὐφ[ημίαις]; Josephus, *AJ* 16.14: ὑπατῶντος τε τοῦ δήμου παντὸς ἐν ἑορτώδει στολῇ καὶ δεχομένου τὸν ἄνδρα σὺν εὐφημίαις; Plutarch, *Brut.* 24.7: δεξαμένου δὲ τοῦ δήμου προθύμως αὐτὸν σὺν εὐφημίαις; Menander Rhetor 2.381.10–14: πάντες φιλοφρονούμενοι ταῖς εὐφημίαις, σωτῆρα καὶ τεῖχος, ἀστέρα φανότατον ὀνομάζοντες, οἱ δὲ παῖδες τροφέα μὲν ἑαυτῶν, σωτῆρα δὲ πατέρων; 2.417.27–30: καὶ εὐαγεῖς χοροὺς ἱστάτωσαν αἱ πόλεις, ᾄδέτωσαν, εὐφημείτωσαν.

[48] *Syll.*[3] 1173 = *IGUR* 148 lines 9–10: καὶ δημοσίᾳ ηὐχαρίστησεν τῷ θεῷ καὶ ὁ δῆμος συνεχάρη αὐτῷ . . . ; lines 13–14: καὶ ἐλθὼν δημοσίᾳ ηὐχαρίστησεν ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ δήμου; line 18: καὶ ἐλήλυθεν καὶ ηὐχαρίστησεν δημοσίᾳ τῷ θεῷ; cf. lines 4–5: τοῦ δήμου παρεστῶτος καὶ συνχαιρομένου. Cf. Aelius Aristides, *Hieroi logoi* 2.7: 'there was also much shouting from those present and those coming up, shouting that celebrated phrase, "Great is Asklepios"'. Cf. Chaniotis (2006), 229–30.

After the motive for the dedication is explained, a second group of acclamations follows in which the worshipper characterises the various qualities of Mes: his holiness, his justice, his victory, his punishing power. The reference to the Twelve Gods ('Great is the Dodekatheon that has been established in your vicinity!') confirms that the acclamations took place in Mes's sanctuary, where the Iranian Moon-God was worshipped together with an Anatolian group of the Twelve Gods. The expression τὸ δωδεκάθεον τὸ παρά σοι κατεκτισμένον implies that images of the Twelve Gods (statues or reliefs) were set up in the sanctuary.[49] It was in the presence of images or symbols of the gods that Glykon performed his acclamations.

The next phrase ('for the son of my brother Demainetos made me his captive') contains Glykon's accusations against his nephew, whose name is not given. In the course of a family quarrel Glykon was obviously locked up by his nephew, until divine punishment (illness, accidents etc.) forced the nephew to set him free. After his liberation, Glykon came to the sanctuary, certainly accompanied by his nephew, who was present when Glykon not only praised the god, but also brought forth his accusations in a very emotional manner: 'For I had neglected my own affairs and helped you, as if you were my own son. But you locked me in and kept me captive, as if I were a criminal and not your paternal uncle!' Glykon uttered these phrases turning to his nephew and addressing him directly. We may suspect that Glykon's dedication and praise were accompanied by the nephew's propitiation of the god and request for forgiveness. The dedication ends with a final acclamation ('Now, great is Mes, the ruler over Axiotta!') and an address that reciprocated the worshipper's thanks to the deity: 'You have given me satisfaction. I praise you.'

Although we are dealing with a text of an entirely different nature from that of the epigram of Euhodos, we may observe a convergence in certain features. Glykon's piety is based on a very personal experience of the presence of god,[50] although – unlike in the case of Euhodos – Glykon made his piety dependent on the efficacy of god: 'You have given me satisfaction. I praise you.' A convergence exists in the fact that both Euhodos and Glykon communicated their experience of the divine to others; in the case

[49] Cf. Strubbe (1997), 46–7 no. 51: τὸν Ἀξιοττην[ὸν κε?] τὸ ἐκεῖ δωδεκάθην καθημ[– –].

[50] The importance of the personal experience of divine power for faith is demonstrated by an epigraphic find from Aizanoi, Lehmler and Wörrle (2006), 76–8 (second/third century AD). A certain Menophilos founded a cult of Great Zeus after a terrifying experience of the god's might: [κ]ατεπλήχθη δε[ινῶς καὶ] ἐκτίσθη Ζεὺς Μέγας Μηνοφίλου. See also Versnel (1981b), 35: 'the exalted and omnipotent god owed much of his inaccessible majesty to the fact that he lent an ear to lowly mortals'. More examples in notes 61, 67–8 and 85.

of Euhodos the reading of the stone resembles an oral performance, in the case of Glykon it re-enacts the ritual of exaltation. Finally, the acclamations in Glykon's text describe the god's most important properties: holiness, justice, victory (or success) and punishing power.

I have the impression that Glykon's text reflects a coherent theology, which was in part influenced by and in part opposed to competing religious conceptions of the divine. The reference to the Mother of Mes at the very beginning of the text, in the first acclamation, is more than a eulogy: it alludes to a theogony. The Mother of Mes is mentioned in other inscriptions from Lydia.[51] Of course, it is impossible to determine whether the 'motherless' (ἀμήτωρ) god of the Klarian theosophical oracle was meant to be a response to the worshippers of Mes or any other divinity, in whose cult and myths a mother figure was prominent;[52] or if, conversely, the worshippers of Mes opposed their god to the 'motherless' Highest God. However, the ostentatious reference to the Mother of Mes seems to fit the particular profile of this cult. Similarly, the epithet Ouranios in Mes's eulogy is an ostentatious allusion to the god's dwelling in heaven – again a property often shared by gods with a dominant position.[53] Mes's epithet (Axiottenos) alludes to the locality with which the cult is connected and records the name of the cult founder, a certain Artemidoros, who may have been as important a religious figure as Alexandros of Abonou Teichos. Finally, Glykon's text suggests the priority of Mes over other gods, designated here as the Dodekatheon.

What was the relation between Heavenly Mes and the Twelve Gods? An answer may be provided by two confession inscriptions which suggest that Mes was conceived as a god presiding over a council of gods. The first inscription, published recently,[54] explicitly refers to the senate

[51] Malay (2004), with further references; cf. Lane (1976), 81–3; Petzl (1994), 66–7; Belayche (2005c), 259–60. Μεγάλη Μήτηρ Μηνὸς Τεκοῦσα: *SEG* 39 (1989), 1278 (north of Kollyda, AD 160/1); Μηνὸς Τεκοῦσα: *SEG* 39 (1989), 1275; Lane (1975), 174 no. A8 (area of Manisa, AD 161/2). It is not certain whether the 'Mother of (the) God' mentioned in two other inscriptions is identical with the Mother of Mes. Μητρὶ Θεοῦ: *TAM* v.2, 1306 (Hyrkanis, third century AD); τὴν Μητέρα τοῦ Θεοῦ: Malay (2004) (unknown provenance).

[52] Μήτηρ Ἀπόλλωνος: Robert and Robert (1948), 24 n. 4; Μήτηρ Ἀναΐτιδος: *TAM* v.1, 450 and 575.

[53] For examples in the theosophical oracles of Apollo see Busine (2005), 207. For this idea among the Stoics see Diogenes Laertius 7.138: οὐρανὸς δέ ἐστιν ἡ ἐσχάτη περιφέρεια ἐν ᾗ πᾶν ἵδρυται τὸ θεῖον. For other deities see e.g. *SEG* 31 (1981), 361 (Zeus Ouranios, Sparta, second century AD); *SEG* 38 (1988), 1087 (Theios Angelos Ouranios, Stratonikeia, imperial period); *I.Sultan Dağı* 509: τὸν οὐρ[άν]ιον θεόν; Graf (1985), 70–3 (Θεὰ Κόρη ἐπήκοος ἀνείκητος οὐρανία, probably from Asia Minor, imperial period). For Mes/Men Ouranios see also *SEG* 39 (1989), 1278 and 42 (1992), 1280.

[54] Herrmann and Malay (2007), 113–16 no. 85 (Kollyda, AD 205/6): . . . Ἀμμιανὸς καὶ Ἑρμογένης Τρύφωνος πάρισιν ἐρωτῶντες τοὺς θεοὺς Μῆνα Μοτυλλίτην καὶ Δία Σαβάζιον καὶ Ἄρτεμιν

(συνᾶτος) and council of the gods (σύνκλητος τῶν θεῶν). A council of gods (σύνκλητος) is also mentioned in one of the longest and most intriguing confession inscriptions. This text presents Mes explaining why he had punished Theodoros, a lascivious sacred slave, with blindness and then forgave him upon the intervention of Zeus and an enquiry of the council of gods.[55] The fact that two texts explicitly call this council a *synkletos* or 'senate' suggests that Mes's position was assimilated to that of the emperor, that of the other gods to that of the senate – or whatever the Anatolian population may have imagined the Roman senate to be. Mes's priority over other gods seems to have been an essential feature of his worship in the sanctuaries where the aforementioned texts were found.

The priority of a local god over other gods is a prominent feature of a group of graffiti from the gymnasium at Delphi which record acclamations for Apollo and for victorious athletes during the Pythian festival in the late second and early third centuries AD.[56] I present a few examples: 'Good Fortune! One god! Great god! The greatest name of the god! Great Apollo Pythios! Great is the Fortune of the Delphians! This is the place of – – from Plataia, a boy long distance runner, winner at the Pythia.'[57] Another one: 'Good Fortune! Place of Marcus Aurelius Iuncus Aemilianus Onesimos, long distance runner, winner at the Pythia. God! Great is the Fortune of the Delphians! Great is Apollo Pythios! Good luck, Daidalos [a nick-name of the runner]'.[58] And another one: 'Good Fortune! One god! Great is Apollo Pythios! Great is the Fortune of the Delphians! Great is Artemis! Great is Hekate! Place of Sextius Primus.'[59] The rest of the texts attest

Ἀναεῖτιν καὶ μεγάλην συνᾶτος καὶ σύνκλητον τῶν θεῶν . . . ('Ammianos and Hermogenes, sons of Tryphon, appear [at the sanctuary] asking the gods Men Motyllites and Zeus Sabazios and Artemis Anaitis and the great senate and council of the gods').

[55] Petzl (1994), 7–11 no. 5 lines 22–6: ἔσχα παράκλητον τὸν Δείαν . . . – Ἠρωτημαίνος ὑπὸ τῆς συνκλήτου· εἴλεος εἶμαι ἀναστανομένης τῆς στήλλην μου, ᾗ ἡμέρᾳ ὥρισα. Ἀνύξαις τὴν φυλακήν, ἐξαφίω τὸν κατάδικον διὰ ἐνιαυτοῦ κὲ μηνῶν ι΄ περιπατούντων ('I asked for Zeus' assistance' . . . – 'Asked by the council (I respond that) I am kindly disposed, if [or when] he sets up my stele, on the day I have ordered. You may open the prison. I set the convict free after one year and ten months'). For an analysis of this text with the earlier bibliography see Chaniotis (2004a), 27–9.

[56] Queyrel (2001), see *SEG* 51 (2001), 613–31; Chaniotis (2008a), 82 and (2008b), 202–3, 207–8, 215. Cf. the acclamation 'great is Artemis of Ephesos' in the theatre of Ephesos: Acts 19:28 and 19:34.

[57] *SEG* 51, 614: Ἀγα[θῇ Τύ]χῃ· [εἷς θ]εός· μέγ[ας] θεός· μ[έγιστ]ον ὄν[ομα τ]οῦ θε[οῦ· Πύθιος μέγ]ας Ἀπ[όλλων· μεγά[λ]η Τύχ[η Δελφῶν· τ]όπος [– – ο]υ Πλα[ταιέως? παιδὸς] δι[α]υλ[οδρόμου Πυθιονίκου – –]. On the expression μέγα/μέγιστον ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ see Peterson (1926), 206, 208–10, 281–2; Robert (1955), 86–8.

[58] *SEG* 51 (2001), 615: Ἀ[γαθῇ Τύ]χῃ· [τόπος Μά]ρ. Αὐρ. [Ἰούνκ[ου? Αἰμιλι?]ανοῦ Ὀνησίμ[ου δολιχ?]α[δρό]μου Πυθ[ιονείκ]ου· θ[εό]ς?· μεγάλη Τ[ύχη Δελφ]ῶν· μέγας ὁ Πύθ[ιος Ἀ]πόλλων· [ε]ὐτύχ[ει] Δαίδαλ[ε].

[59] *SEG* 51 (2001), 622: Ἀ[γ]αθ[ῇ Τύχῃ· εἷ]ς θεός· [μέγας Πύθιος] Ἀπ[ό]λ[λ]ων· [μεγάλη Τύ]χ[η Δελ]φῶν· [μεγάλη Ἀρ]τεμις· [μεγάλη] Ἑκάτη· τόπος Σεξ(τίου) Πρίμου.

the same acclamations as well as the formulae 'The Pythian god is great!' (Πύθιος θεὸς μέγας) and 'One god in heaven!' (εἷς θ[εὸς ἐν τῷ οὐρα]νῷ). An acclamation is devoted to Artemis Prothyraia, who was worshipped in Delphi, another one to 'Great Sacred Palaimon', who was worshipped at Isthmia; it is an allusion to the Isthmian games, possibly inscribed at the initiative of an athlete who had won both the Pythia and the Isthmia.[60]

These graffiti record acclamations that must have taken place during the celebration of the Pythian festival. They are addressed to athletes, to the Delphians and their city, and above all to the local god, not Apollo in general, but the *Pythian* Apollo, the god in Delphi. Not a single acclamation invokes Apollo without his epithet Pythios, and one invokes him simply as the Pythian god. The Delphic acclamations use a formulaic vocabulary known from the praise of a superior god. Characterised by a spirit of local patriotism, they stress the privileged relationship of Delphi with Apollo. The acclamations leave no doubt that Apollo Pythios was regarded as having a superior position; consequently his cult place had a privileged position among cult places. That a spirit of competition emerges in acclamations that take place during the celebration of an agonistic festival, while thousands of people experience competition, should not surprise us. In the same period, in Ephesos, Apollo's sister was called 'for ever the greatest among all the gods' (see n. 10).

In Delphi, the superior position of Apollo is evident in the acclamation in which he is named together with Artemis and Hekate (see n. 59): 'One god! Great is Apollo Pythios! Great is the Fortune of the Delphians! Great is Artemis! Great is Hekate!' All three divinities are designated as great, but only Apollo has a local epithet, only Apollo is honoured with the acclamation *heis theos*. This text is evidence not of monotheism but of competition. Similarly, when Aelius Aristides exclaimed εἷς in the sanctuary

[60] *SEG* 51 (2001), 617: Ἀ[γαθῇ Τύ]χῃ· εἷς θ[εὸς ἐν τῷ οὐρα]νῷ· μέγα[ς Πύθιος Ἀ]πόλλων· μ[εγάλη Τύχη Δ]ελφῶν· τ[όπος – – τοῦ] Θεοδούλο[υ . . . . παιδ]ὸς διαυ[λοδρόμου Π]υθιονί[κου ὑπὸ προστάτην – –] ('Good Fortune! One god in heaven! Great is Apollo Pythios! Great is the Fortune of the Delphians! Place of – – of Theodoulos, a boy long distance runner, winner at the Pythia, under the supervisor – –'); *SEG* 51 (2001), 618: [Ἀγαθῇ Τύχῃ· εἷς] θεός· μέ[γας Πύθιο]ς Ἀπόλλω[ν Δελφῶ]ν· [τόπος Σ]ωσικλῆ[ος παιδὸς διαυ]λοδρό[μου] Πυ[θιονίκου ὑπὸ π]ροστάτ[ην – –]μην M.N. [– –] Λακεδε[μ]όνιον· [μ]εγάλ[η Τ]ύχη τῆς π[ό]λε[ως]· εὐ[τ]υχῶ[ς] ('Good Fortune! One god! Great is Apollo Pythios of the Delphians! Place of Sosikles, a boy long distance runner, winner at the Pythia under the supervision of – – of Lakedaimon. Great is the Fortune of the city! Good luck!'); *SEG* 51 (2001), 623: [Μεγ]άλη Ἀρτεμ[ις Προ]θυραία. Μέγας ἅγιος Παλέμων ('Great is Artemis Prothyraia! Great is sacred Palaimon!'); *SEG* 51 (2001), 626: [Ἀγαθῇ Τ]ύχῃ· [εἷ]ς [θεὸς ἐν ο]ὐρανῷ· [μέγ]ας Π[ύθιο]ς Ἀπόλ[λων]· μεγά[λ]η Τύχη [Δελ]φῶν· τόπος Θε[οδό]του Θεσπιαίως [παιδὸς?] διαυλοδρόμου . . . . .τος κατὰ ΑΝ . . . ('Good Fortune! One god in heaven! Great is Apollo Pythios! Great is the Fortune of the Delphians! Place of Theodotos of Thespiai, a boy long distance runner – –').

of Asklepios in Pergamon, he was praising a god with whom he had established a personal relationship.[61] It has often been stressed that when the attribute *heis* is not used in a Christian context it underlines the uniqueness of one particular god.[62] Hardly any other evidence shows so clearly the competitive use of *heis* as these new Delphic graffiti or the honorary decree for the benefactor Epameinondas in Akraiphia in Boiotia. In a long narrative of his benefactions, Epameinondas is compared with other citizens and benefactors, whom he had surpassed in every respect. It is in this context of competition that we find the following allusion to acclamations in his honour:[63] 'He surpassed in magnanimity and virtue all men of the past, by devoting himself to the love of fame and virtue through continual expenditure, so that he is regarded as the one patriot and benefactor (εἷς φιλόπατρις καὶ εὐεργέτης)'.[64] The Akraiphians meant that Epameinondas was 'a unique patriot and benefactor', not the 'only patriot and benefactor'. The use of εἷς is not exclusive – as in Christian prayers and acclamations – but competitive.[65]

Let us return to the Delphic acclamations. Those which do not name a particular god (εἷς θεός, εἷς θεὸς ἐν τῶι οὐρανῶι, μέγιστον ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ) could be used by the worshippers of any god. In fact, they were used by the worshippers of exclusive monotheistic religions – the Jews and the Christians – and by pagans, who reserved a superior position in heaven for another Olympian or for another local god. In the case of Delphi, the agonistic context suggests that this convergence in formulaic acclamations was the result of competition; it presupposes knowledge of the ritual practices of other cult communities and assimilation not of concepts, but of linguistic expressions.

[61] *Hieroi logoi* 4.50: κἀγὼ περιχαρὴς τῇ τιμῇ γενόμενος καὶ ὅσον τῶν ἄλλων προὐκρίθην, ἐξεβόησα, 'εἷς', λέγων δὴ τὸν θεόν. Versnel (1990), 50 n. 32, observes that this acclamation is often connected with the soteriological qualities of a god. For its earliest attestation in *P.Gur.* 1 (third century BC), as a 'password' (εἷς Διόνυσος) in a Dionysiac initiation, see Versnel (1990), 205. On the Gurob papyrus see now Graf and Johnston (2007), 150–5.

[62] Peterson (1926), 268–70; Robert (1958), 128 n. 101; Herrmann and Polatkan (1969), 52–3; Lane (1976), 79–80; Versnel (1990), 35, 50, 235, (2000), 146–52; Markschies (2002); Belayche (2005c), 264–5, (2006a), 19–20, (2007b) and in this volume.

[63] For secular acclamations see Roueché (1984). Recent finds: *SEG* 38 (1988), 1172; 50 (2000), 1160; 51 (2001), 1813.

[64] *IG* VII, 2712 lines 52–5: [ὑπερβάλλετο] δὲ τῇ μεγαλοψυχίᾳ καὶ ἀρετῇ πάντας τοὺς [προτέρους τρέψας] ἑαυτὸν πρὸς τὸ φιλόδοξον [καὶ] φιλάγαθον ταῖς ἐπ[αλ]λή[λ]οις δαπάναις, εἷς φιλόπατρις καὶ εὐεργέτης νομιζόμενος. Discussion: Chaniotis (2008a).

[65] For this acclamation in Christian inscriptions see Peterson (1926), 1–140. Cf. e.g. *SEG* 49 (1999), 2054 (Caesarea Maritima, fourth century AD): εἷς θεὸς μόνος; Roueché (1989a), 126 no. 83 i (Aphrodisias, *c.* AD 480): εἷς τὸν κόσμον ὅλον εἷς ὁ θεός.

In the same period as that in which the worshippers at Delphi were stressing through acclamations the superior position of Apollo and Apollinic oracles were promoting the idea of a superior god,[66] a dedication in Iuliopolis was addressed to another god, using adjectives in the superlative.[67] The dedicant of an altar, Kattios Tergos, describes an anonymous god (a local Zeus?) as 'the best and greatest god, the one who listens to prayers, his saviour, and that of his children and all his oxen.' The dedication is followed by an epigram: 'To you, most revered among the Blessed, Tergos set up this well-constructed offering of honour, writing in poetry [literally 'with the letters of the Muses'] your deeds of grace, great, best, willing to listen, ruler of the world. May you care for him, for his children and for his livestock.' Both in the prose text and in the epigram, Tergos attempted to establish a personal relationship to the god, his personal saviour, a god who listened to his prayers. Similarly, the Athenian Diophantos sought Asklepios' assistance, emphasising both the god's unique power (μόνος εἶ σύ, μάκαρ θεῖε, σθένων) and his personal devotion (ὅππως σ' ἐσίδω, τὸν ἐμὸν θεόν).[68]

The most striking stylistic feature in Tergos' dedication is a preference for superlatives (ἄριστος, μέγιστος, κύδιστος). This feature is not an innovation of the imperial period; it can already be observed, for instance, in the hymn for Demetrios the Besieger in the early third century BC,[69] or in a decree at Mylasa in the first century BC, in which Zeus Osogo is designated as 'the greatest of the gods, rescuer and benefactor of the city' (τοῦ μεγίστου τῶν [θεῶν Διὸς Ὀσογ]ω, σωτῆρος καὶ εὐεργέτου τῆς πόλεως).[70] But it became very common in the imperial period, when divinities were often designated with attributes such as ἁγιώτατος, ἄριστος, δικαιότατος, ἐπιφανέστατος, κράτιστος, κύδιστος, μέγιστος, πανύψιστος, ὕψιστος, etc.[71] The designation of a deity with an epithet in the superlative is a form of exaggerated, affective and ostentatious praise, which probably originated

[66] Busine (2005), 202–8.

[67] *SEG* 50 (2000), 1222 (second/third century AD): Ἀγαθῇ Τύχῃ· Θεῷ ἀρίστῳ μεγίστῳ ἐπηκόῳ σωτῆρι ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῶν τέκνων αὐτοῦ καὶ πάντων τῶν [βο]ῶν Κάττιος Τέργος εὐχήν. Σοὶ μακάρων κύδιστε γέρας τόδε Τέργος ἔθηκεν | εὔτυκτον Μ[ου]σῶν γράμμασι γραψάμενος | σὰς χάριτας, μεγ' ἄριστε, φιλήκοε, κοίρανε κόσμου | σοὶ δ' αὐ|τός τε μέλοι τέκνα τε κα[ὶ κτέ]|ανα.

[68] *IG* II², 4514 (Athens, mid second century AD); cf. Versnel (1990), 195 n. 335.

[69] Douris, *FGrH* 76 F 13; Democharес, *FGrH* 75 F 2: μέγιστος, φίλτατος, κράτιστος. Discussion: Ehrenberg (1965), 503–19; Mikalson (1998), 94–7; Chaniotis (2010). Cf. the epigram referred to below, n. 73.

[70] *I.Mylasa* 306. Cf. the hymn for Apollo in Susa (*SEG* 7, 14 = *I.Estremo Oriente* 221 = *SGO* III, 12/03/1, first century AD): ὕπατος [θεῶν].

[71] For examples see notes 10, 37, 82, 85, 94, 115, 118–19. Cf. *IG* II², 4514: σθεναρώτατε.

in acclamations.[72] Such 'acclamatory hyperbole' characterises non-religious texts as well. As early as the mid second century BC, for instance, the Graeco-Baktrian king Euthydemos was designated in an epigram, which possibly reflects acclamations, as 'the greatest of all kings' (τὸμ πάντων μέγιστον Εὐθύδημον βασιλέων).[73] In the imperial period, we observe 'acclamatory hyperbole' in an Ephesian graffito which gives assurance that Rome's power will never be destroyed,[74] in the designation of Caracalla as a lord 'who will live in eternity',[75] in the claim that Perge was 'the only inviolable city',[76] and in attributes of emperors.

It is quite probable that such a 'superlativism', which can also be observed in contemporary honorary inscriptions and epitaphs,[77] was enforced by the influence of Latin style and phraseology. This is evident e.g. in the case of Ζεὺς Κράτιστος Μέγιστος Φροντιστής, the Greek translation of *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Tutor*,[78] or σεβασμιωτάτη Ἀφροδείτη, the translation of *Venus augustissima*.[79] As acclamations were experienced not only by those who performed them, but also by the audiences which attended festivals and processions, a koine of 'acclamatory epithets' could easily be developed and an epiklesis transferred from one divinity to another.[80]

[72] Chaniotis (2008a), 81–4 and (2008b), 210–13. Versnel (1990), 248 has collected examples of parody of such rhetorical extravagances.

[73] Rougemont (2004); *SEG* 54 (2004), 1569.

[74] *I.Ephesos* 599 with the new reading of Taeuber (2003), 94 n. 9: Ῥώμη πανβασίλια, τὸ σὸν κράτος οὔποτ' ὀλῆται.

[75] *SEG* 48 (1998), 1961–2, 1964–5 (Alexandria, *c.* AD 201): γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης δεσπότην καὶ φιλοσάραπιν **ἀεὶ ζῶντα**.

[76] *I.Perge* 331 (AD 275/6): αὖξε Πέργη, ἡ **μόνη** ἄσυλος. The same hyperbole can be observed e.g. in the Susan hymn for Apollo referred to in n. 70 (*SEG* 7, 14 = *I.Estremo Oriente* 221 = *SGO* III, 12/03/1, first century AD): ἐπεὶ σέβας μ[οῦνο]ς ἔσκε[ς] ἁπάντων.

[77] See e.g. Chaniotis (2004b), 378 no. 1 (*SEG* 54 (2004), 1020, honorary inscription from Aphrodisias, *c.* 50 BC): τῶν πρώτων καὶ **ἐνδοξοτάτων** πολειτῶν, προγόνων ὑπάρχων τῶν **μεγίστων** καὶ συνεκτικότων τὸν δῆμον καὶ ἐν ἀρετῆι καὶ φιλοδοξίαις καὶ ἐπανγελίαις **πλείσταις** καὶ τοῖς **καλλίστοις** ἔργοις πρὸς τὴν πατρίδα βε<βι>ωκότων . . . πρὸς θεοὺς **εὐσεβέστατα** διακείμενος καὶ πρὸς τὴν [π]ατρίδα, **φιλοδοξότατα** κοσμήσας αὐτὴν ἐπανγελίαις **καλλίσ[τ]αις** καὶ ἀναθήμασιν, εἰς πολλὰς δὲ πρεσβήας καὶ **ἀνανκαιοτάτας** [πρ]οχειρισθεὶς καὶ εἰς ἀγώνας κατὰ τὸ **κάλλιστον** ἐτέλεσεν [π]άντα, . . . παρά τε ταῖς ἐξουσίαις καὶ τοῖς ἡγουμένοις **πλείστην** γνῶσιν καὶ σύστασιν σχὼν εὐεργέτησεν καὶ διὰ τούτων **μέγιστα** τὴν πόλιν; cf. *MAMA* VIII, 471: τελέσαντα τὰς λειτουργίας **πολυτελέστατ[α]** καὶ **λαμπρότατα** καὶ τὰς **μεγίστας** ἀρχὰς πάσας ἄρξαντα κατὰ τὸ **κάλιστον**, τελέσαντα δὲ καὶ πρεσβείας ἄλλας τε **πλείστας** καὶ εἰς Ῥώμην; *MAMA* VIII, 477: ἐτείμησαν . . . ταῖς **καλλίσταις** καὶ **μεγίσταις** τειμαῖς . . . ἄνδρα γένους πρώτου καὶ **ἐνδοξοτάτου** . . . πάσας παρασχόμενον τῇ πατρίδι φιλοδόξους καὶ **λαμπροτάτας** λιτουργίας καὶ τὴν ἰδίαν πρὸς αὐτὴν **εὐνουστάτην** διάθεσιν ἀθανάτοις ἑαυτὸν προεντυπωσάμενος τοῦ βίου ὑπομνήσεσιν.

[78] *I.Iznik* 1141–2 (Nikaia, second century AD).

[79] *SEG* 51 (2001), 2074. Similarly, the attribute γλυκύτατος in epitaphs is the Greek rendering of *dulcissimus*.

[80] I designate as 'acclamatory epithets' a group of epithets which were not exclusively used in the worship of a particular god but could praise any divinity and its power in rather general terms:

In the light of these observations, it is legitimate to doubt that the expression 'the One and Only God' (εἷς καὶ μόνος θεός), used by the priest of this god and of Hosion kai Dikaion,[81] is to be taken literally. This expression did not mean that the anonymous god (Theos Hypsistos?) was the only god in a genuinely monotheistic theology, with the Holy and the Just serving as his angels. It was simply intended to attribute this god a superior position. Exactly as in the acclamations from Perge the Pamphylian city was called 'the only inviolable city' (ἡ μόνη ἄσυλος), in the sense that it was the only city which truly deserved this honour in the context of a competition among cities, the author of this dedication intended to say that the god whom he served as priest was the only deity which truly deserved the designation *theos*. It is an 'acclamatory hyperbole'.

Another stylistic feature in Tergos' language of worship is his preference for variation. When he designated his anonymous god as 'the one who listens to prayers', he avoided using the very common epithet ἐπήκοος, using instead the rare variant φιλήκοος. Analogous variations in standard epithets are not unusual. For example, πανύψιστος is a reinforced variant of the standard ὕψιστος.[82] Epithets such as προηγέτης and προκαθηγέτης are variants of the more common ἀρχηγέτης, καθηγεμών and προκαθηγεμών.[83] Such deviations from standard formulae served two purposes: they emphasised the personal devotion of a worshipper, who distinguished himself from other dedicants through the personal, idiosyncratic language he used in communicating with a deity; and they were a means of differentiation between deities.

Finally, Tergos attributed to his saviour god a prominent position among the gods by describing him as the most revered among them, the ruler of

e.g. ἀγαθός, ἅγιος, ἁγιώτατος, ἀθάνατος, ἀνείκητος, ἀρωγός, βασιλεύς, βοηθός, δεσπότης/δέσποινα, ἐνάρετος, ἐπήκοος, ἐπιδήμιος, ἐπιφανής, ἐπιφανέστατος, εὐάγγελος, εὐεργέτης, εὐμενής, καλοκαγάθιος, κύριος, μέγας, μέγιστος, οὐράνιος, παντοκράτωρ, προστάτης, σωτήρ, σώτειρα, ὕπατος, ὕψιστος, φιλάνθρωπος etc. Such epithets were very popular from the Hellenistic period onwards. For examples see the indices in *SEG*.

[81] *TAM* v.1, 246 (Kula, AD 256/7): τοῦ ἑνὸς καὶ μόνου θεοῦ [ἱ]ερεὺς καὶ τοῦ Ὁσίου καὶ Δικαίου . . . ('the priest of the One and Only God and of the Holy and the Just'); cf. Versnel (1990), 235 n. 145; Belayche (2006a), 19–21 and her discussion in this volume, p. 153 with p. 154 Fig. 1. Mitchell (1999), 63 associates this text with the worship of Theos Hypsistos. I assume that we have an example for the affective use of μόνος. Cf. the passages cited in nn. 68 and 76, and the praise of Isis from Maroneia (Totti (1985), 61 no. 19 line 20): μόνους γὰρ ὁ βίος ὑμᾶς [Isis and Sarapis] θεοὺς οἶδεν; cf. the affective use of μόνος/μοῦνος in the Orphic hymns: 16.7 (Hera) and 68.1 (Hygieia): πάντων γὰρ κρατέεις μούνη πάντεσσί τ' ἀνάσσεις; 29.11 (Persephone): μόνη θνητοῖσι ποθεινή. Cf. Versnel (2000), 151; Belayche, in this volume.

[82] See below, n. 119: Ζηνὶ πανυψίστῳ.

[83] Προηγέτης: *TAM* II, 188 (Artemis and Apollo); προκαθηγέτης: *IG* v.2, 93 (Pan); *TAM* II, 189. For ἀρχηγέτης: *LSAM* 33 (Artemis); καθηγεμών: *LSAM* 15 (Dionysos); προκαθηγεμών: *I.Ephesos* 26 (Artemis); *LSAM* 28 (Dionysos). On the significance of these epithets see below, n. 91.

the world. He praised his god with an impressive list of epithets: ἄριστος, μέγιστος, ἐπήκοος, σωτήρ, κύδιστος, μέγας, φιλήκοος and κοίρανος. Interestingly, a god invoked with so many epithets lacks a name. He was conceived as πολυώνυμος, exactly as Artemis in a hymn in Samos, Isis in several aretalogies, Dionysos in the Orphic hymns and God in the Klarian oracle.[84] To leave the addressee of the dedication unnamed, in a text otherwise written with great care and a deliberate use of hyperbole and variation, was a conscious choice. One has the impression that Tergos avoided using a name, as if the properties and powers of his divine saviour were 'not contained in a name' (οὔνομα μὴ χωρῶν) – to quote, again, the oracle of Klaros – as if the many different epithets were more adequate to describe his properties.

If Tergos was influenced by the oracle of Apollo, why did he not use for his god the attribute *hypsistos*, as the author of the aforementioned dedication from Amastris (p. 117 with n. 22)? Why did he avoid the only attribute that would have made an unequivocal identification possible? Was Tergos a worshipper of Theos Hypsistos or was he praising a local god using the language of those who exalted Theos Hypsistos? Is convergence of language evidence of homogeneous concepts, of influence, or of competition?

MEGAS THEOS: THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ALMIGHTY GOD

The few selected texts which I have discussed here share a common language without necessarily sharing a common conception of the divine or a common faith. While many of them praise a particular, superior, god, none of them praises a single god whose existence excludes that of other gods. Their rhetorical and stylistic strategies aimed at stressing the properties of the almighty god whom they praised – Zeus, Mes, Apollo, Theos Hypsistos, the anonymous saviour of Tergos. They reveal a concept of the divine with several recurring elements: the power, righteousness and efficacy of these gods; their demand for continual public praise; their willingness to offer assistance; and their presence. The faith of the authors, like that of

[84] Artemis: *IG* XII.6, 604 (third century AD); Isis: *I.Kios* 21 (first century BC); Bernand (1969), 632–3 no. 175 I = Totti (1985), 77 no. 21 lines 23–6 (Medinet-Madi, first century BC): ὅτι μούνη εἶ σὺ ἅπασαι αἱ ὑπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν ὀνομαζόμεναι θεαὶ ἄλλαι . . . σώτειρ᾽ ἀθάνατη, πολυώνυμε Ἴσι μεγίστη; Orphic hymns 2.1 (Prothyraia), 10.13 (Physis), 11.10 (Pan), 16.9 (Hera), 27.4. (Meter Theon), 36.1 (Artemis), 40.1 (Demeter), 41.1 (Meter Antaia), 42.2 (Mise), 45.2, 50.2, 52.1 (Dionysos), 56.1 (Adonis), 59.2 (Moirai); Klarian oracle: see n. 17. Cf. the hymn for Apollo in Susa (*SEG* 7, 14 = *I.Estremo Oriente* 221 = *SGO* III, 12/03/1, first century AD): τοὶ γὰρ ἔθν[εα] καὶ πόλεις πολ[υ]ώνυμο[ν ὅμ]μα ὡσίωσαν. On *polyonymia* in the religions of the Roman Empire, see MacMullen (1981), 90 with n. 57; in Greek religion, see Versnel (2000); Aubriot (2005), 482–6.

Aelius Aristides in the *Hieroi logoi*, was based on a personal experience of divine power, on divine assistance provided in time of need.[85]

'You have given me satisfaction. I praise you.' With these words Glykon completed his praise of Mes (p. 122 with n. 44) – a nice expression of the principle of *do ut des* in ancient religion.[86] The personal relationship between a mortal and an almighty god, as the one implied in the epigram of Tergos (p. 129 with n. 67), was established through complex strategies of persuasion. A grave stele of a fifteen-year-old boy may exemplify this.[87] It is inscribed with an appeal to divine justice and revenge: 'Lord the Almighty, you have made me, but an evil man has destroyed me. Revenge my death fast!' In order to attract the god's personal interest in this affair the author made the god a victim of the offender: the murderer is presented as someone who has destroyed the god's personal creation (σὺ μὲ ἔκτισες). Thus his punishment became the god's personal concern. A second element of his persuasion strategy consists in stressing the god's power (Κύριε Παντοκράτωρ; cf. n. 115). The god is invited in a subtle way to prove his endless power not only by punishing the murderer, but also by inflicting the punishment fast (ἐν τάχι). This is a strategy known from magical texts. In order to provoke the anger of the gods and demons, the magician often applied a method described as *diabole*, i.e. he accused his opponent of offences against the divinity.[88] Magical texts regularly urge the divine powers to fulfil the magician's wish fast (ἤδη ἤδη, ταχὺ ταχύ).[89]

This personal experience of the divine bridged the gap between mortals and gods. One of the most obvious objectives of religious texts in the imperial period was to insinuate the tangible, continuous and effective

[85] Cf. e.g. *I.Sultan Dağı* 44 (Philomelion): [Λητ]οῖδη Σώζοντι καὶ Ἡελίῳ βασιλῆι [εὔξ]ατο βωμὸν ἀνὴρ υἱὸς Ἐπατόριγος [ἱερ]ὸν ἀθανάτοισι Μενέστρατος, ὃν δι[ασωθεὶς] θῆκε δικαιοτάτοις ἠδ' ὁσίοισι θ[εοῖς] ('To the immortals, the son of Leto, the Saviour, and the Sun, the king, Menestratos, son of Epatorix, promised a sacred altar; now that he has been saved he erected it, to the most just and holy gods'); *SEG* 51 (2001), 1801 (Nakoleia, imperial period): [Ἡε]λίῳ Τειτᾶνι κὲ Ο[– –]ΑΕΙΔΑΙ Ὁσ[ίῳ] Δικέῳ κὲ θείῳ πα[ντ]οδυνάστῃ ἔνθ[α] Πολυξενία, ὡς η[ὔξ]αντο κὲ ἐκέλευσ[α]ς, ἦκον κὲ Νείκην χ[ρυ]σοστέφανον [– –]σαν εὐξάμενοί σε, μάκαρ, περὶ ἑαυτῶν κὲ τεκέεσσιν, οἷς ἱκέτα<ι>ς ἐπάκουε κὲ εἶλ[ε]ος, οὐράνιον φῶς ('Helios Titan and –– the Holy, Just and Divine, ruler of all, here came Polyxenia, as they had vowed and as you ordered, and (erected a statue) of Nike with a golden crown, praying to you, Blessed, for themselves and for their children; listen to the prayers of these suppliants and show them mercy, heavenly light'). See also above, n. 50. On aspects of faith in the inscriptions of Asia Minor see Belayche (2007b), 78–90.

[86] On reciprocity in Greek religion see Parker (1998), 105–25.

[87] *SEG* 50 (2000), 1233 (Neoklaudiopolis, AD 237): Κύριε Παντοκράτωρ· σύ με ἔκτισες, κακὸς δέ με ἄνθρωπος ἀπώλεσεν· ἐγδίκησόν με ἐν τάχι.

[88] For this strategy see Graf (1996), 163–6. Good examples are *PGM* IV, 2471–9 and Jordan (2004), 693–710.

[89] E.g. *PGM* I, 262; II, 83 and 98; IV, 1924, 2037 and 2098; VII, 330; XIV, 11; *SEG* 46 (1996), 1726 I; 53 (2003), 1763 line 154; *IJO* I, Ach no. 70 (τὴν ταχίστην).

presence of the gods in the world of the mortals. This was achieved through a variety of media: through narratives of epiphanies and miracles; through references to the appearance of gods in dreams, which was perceived as a close physical presence;[90] through epithets deriving from place names and thus evoking a close relationship between a divinity and a community; through epithets which expressed the protection offered by a patron god and presented him as the leader of a community (ἀρχηγέτης, καθηγέτης, καθηγεμών), its supervisor (προεστώς),[91] and its continual protector (προστατοῦσα).[92] Such epithets (μεδέων, πολιεύς/πολιάς etc.) are already attested in the classical period, but most of them appeared for the first time in the Hellenistic period and were used in the imperial period in an impressive range of variations, as if every new variation was meant to reinforce the presence of a deity in a place. The epithet ἔνδημος ('present in the community') is a nice example; it linguistically deprived a deity of the possibility to leave.[93]

Μέγας, the most common and oldest among the 'acclamatory epithets', is closely connected with this need of the mortals to experience the presence of a god.[94] What made a god μέγας were power (δύναμις), efficacy (ἀρετή), presence (ἐπιφάνεια), infallible justice (νέμεσις, δίκαιον), visible holiness (ὅσιον), willingness to listen to the just prayers of humans (ἐπήκοος). One of the best examples is the narrative of a miracle at Panamara, when the sanctuary of Zeus and Hekate was attacked by the troops of Labienus

[90] E.g. in a confession inscription (Ortaköy, second/third century AD) the sinner reports that he saw in his dreams the god standing by him: Petzl (1994), 122–5 no. 106: [κ]αὶ ὀνείροις μοι παρεστάθη καὶ [εἶ]πεν. See also below, p. 136 with n. 105.

[91] Epithets stressing the presence of a divinity in a locality are e.g. ἀρχηγέτης/ἀρχηγέτις τῆς πόλεως, ἔνδημος, καθηγέτης, καθηγεμών, μεδέων, προηγέτης, προκαθηγεμών, προκαθηγέτης, πάτριος, πατρῷος, πατρῷος κτίστης, προπάτωρ, πολιάρχης, πολιεύς/πολιάς, προεστώς/προεστῶσα τῆς πόλεως, προκαθήμενος/προκαθημένη τῆς πόλεως, προκαθεζομένη θεός; see Nollé (1993), 105–6; Chaniotis (2003), 185 n. 35; Hübner (2003), 187–8. I assume that the epithets, which characterise the gods as kings and rulers of a place, do not only show their superior position, as rightly observed by Belayche (2005c), but also fulfil a similar function, connecting a divinity with a place.

[92] *IOSPE* I², 352 line 23–4 (Olbia, late second century BC): ἡ διὰ παντὸς Χερσανασιτᾶν προστατοῦσα [Πα]ρθένος.

[93] Ἔνδημος: *MAMA* X, 158 (Hosion kai Dikaion, Appia, imperial period). Cf. ἐπιδήμιος: Marek (1993), 193 no. 19 (Zeus, Kaisareia) and Callimachus, *Hymn to Artemis* 224–5: χαῖρε, Χιτώνη | Μιλήτῳ ἐπίδημε.

[94] For a still useful collection of testimonia see Müller (1913); Peterson (1926), 196–208; cf. Lane (1976), 79. For examples of μέγας and μέγιστος see nn. 39, 44, 50–1, 54, 57–60, 67, 69, 96–7, 105, 107, 115, 118 and 130 in this chapter. Cf. e.g. *I.Ephesos* 27 lines 224 and 324 (Artemis, μεγίστη θεός); *I.Stratonikeia* 513, 523 and 527 (Hekate, μεγίστη θεά), 1101 (Zeus and Hekate, μέγιστοι θεοί); Habicht (1969), 128 no. 113b (Pergamon: μεγ' ἄριστε θεῶν, [Ἀσ]κληπιέ); *SEG* 50 (2000), 1222 (. . . μεγ' ἄριστε, φιλήκοε; see above, n. 67).

(40 BC).[95] Zeus's fire burned the weapons of the enemy, and a sudden storm, with thunder and lightning, terrified the assailants to such an extent that 'many were those who were deserting, asking for forgiveness and crying out with loud voice "Great is Zeus Panamaros!" ' (ἔτι δὲ ἀναβοών[των] μεγάλῃ τῇ φωνῇ Μέγαν εἶναι Δία Πανάμαρον). Similarly, Aelius Aristides shouted 'Asklepios is great!' and Glykon 'Great Mes!' because they had witnessed the god's power.[96]

Acclamations and 'acclamatory epithets' became in the imperial period an important medium for the conceptualisation of divine presence and efficacy. The aforementioned acclamations for Mes, for instance, list essential properties of the god: he is powerful, holy and just; he gives victory and success; he punishes the unjust; he dwells in heaven; he is unique.[97] A common expectation expressed by praises was that the god watched everything as παντεπόπτης and punished the unjust.[98] The divine power knew no limits, as we read in a confession inscription: 'I thank Meter Leto, for she makes the impossible things possible.'[99]

It was a traditional function of divine epithets to describe the properties of gods. New in the imperial period is, however, the increase in the number of epithets and in their rhetorical qualities. The traditional epithets, which stressed the protective powers of gods – such as ἀσφάλειος, ἀποτρόπαιος and σωτήρ – seemed no longer sufficient to describe the benevolent and continuous presence of an almighty deity; they had to be supplemented

[95] *I.Stratonikeia* 10. Discussions: Roussel (1931); Chaniotis (1998), 408–10; cf. Girone (2003). Already Peterson (1926), 193–5, 213–22 established the connection between miracles and spontaneous acclamations.

[96] Aelius Aristides, *Hieroi logoi* 2.7: μέγας ὁ Ἀσκληπιός. An inscription in the Asklepieion in Pergamon records this acclamation: Habicht (1969), 129 no. 114; cf. Schröder (1986), 43 n. 16. Glykon: see above, n. 44. Cf. an aretalogy of Sarapis (*P.Oxy.* XI, 1382 = Totti (1985), 32–3 no. 13): οἱ παρόντες εἴπατε 'εἷς Ζεὺς Σάραπις'. Cf. *Acta Pauli et Theclae* 38: αἱ δὲ γυναῖκες πᾶσαι ἔκραξαν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ.

[97] See above, n. 44. Cf. *I.Ephesos* 3100 (cf. *SEG* 41 (1991), 982): Μέγα τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ, μέγα τὸ ὅσιον, μέγα τὸ ἀγαθόν; *TAM* V.1, 75 (Saittai): Εἷς θεὸς ἐν οὐρανοῖς. Μέγας Μὴς Οὐράνιος. Μεγάλη δύναμις τοῦ ἀθανάτου θεοῦ ('One god in heaven! Great is Heavenly Mes! Great is the power of the immortal god!'); cf. Lane (1976), 79.

[98] Παντεπόπτης: Robert (1971), 615; Marek (2000), 136–7; *SEG* 37 (1987), 1036 (Helios, Bithynia, second/third century AD); cf. πανδερκής: Robert (1971), 615 (Aither); *I.Kios* 21 (Isis); *Theosophia Tubingensis* 22 (*Theosophorum Graecorum fragmenta* p. 15 Erbse): Ζηνὸς πανδερκέος ἄφθιτον ὄμμα; *Poetae epici Graeci* II.1 frg. 102 F line 2 Bernabé (Apollo); Orphic hymns 4.8 (Ouranos), 8.1 (Helios), 9.7 (Selene), 34.8 (Apollo), 61.2 (Nemesis), 62.1 (Dike); cf. πανόπτης: *Poetae epici Graeci* II.1 frg. 141 F Bernabé: Ζεὺς ὁ πανόπτης; παντόπτης (Apollo): *SEG* 7, 14 = *I.Estremo Oriente* 221 = *SGO* III, 12/03/1 (first century AD).

[99] Petzl (1994), 140–1 no. 122 (Ortaköy, second/third century AD): εὐχαριστῶ Μητρὶ Λητώ, ὅτι ἐξ ἀδυνάτων δυνατὰ πυεῖ.

by new attributes such as ἀγαθοποιός, καλοκαγάθιος and ἁγιώτατος.[100] Such a deity demanded from the worshippers more than the traditional expression of devotion through sacrifices; it demanded spiritual worship through hymns, acclamations and eulogies, which had a lasting effect because they were regularly performed, written down in inscriptions, and read (or read out aloud).[101] The existence of a god would be irrelevant if those who had witnessed his power kept this experience to themselves. A new confession inscription reports how a man was not allowed by his sons to confess a sin and testify to the power of god (ἐκράτησαν ἐξομολογούμενον τὰς δυνάμις τῶν θεῶν); consequently, he did not acquire forgiveness and died, probably killed by an animal.[102] Such confession inscriptions would not have existed if the gods had not demanded a written record of their punishing power;[103] and dedications would not exist if the worshippers neglected to set up thanksgiving texts.[104] Worshippers often believed that the god had appeared in a dream, demanding public praise of his power.[105] This took place in sanctuaries and consisted in ritual gestures, such as raising the right hand and falling on the knees in front of a statue, and in the performance of hymns, eulogies and acclamations.[106] All this gave the worship a more spiritual character and contributed to the conceptualisation of the almighty god.

An interesting feature of the epithets used to describe the properties of a superior god is the fact that they implicitly responded to criticism,

[100] *SEG* 6, 550: Ζεὺς Καλοκαγάθιος (Saghir, Pisidia, imperial period). For ἀγαθοποιός see Johnston (1992), 307 (the Thracian Rider God). For ἁγιώτατος see n. 111. Further material is quoted in nn. 108–17.

[101] For the emphasis on spiritual worship see Bradbury (1995); Chaniotis (2002c), 76–7; see already Nock (1933), 117. For the gradual decline of sacrifice see Stroumsa (2005). For acclamations and eulogies see above, nn. 46–7. See e.g. the oracle of Apollo Didymaios, in which the god expresses his preference for hymns over sacrifices (*I.Didyma* 217; Busine (2005), 448–9 no. 24); a dedication in Lydia (AD 235/6) reports that Mes allowed a woman to substitute the sacrifice of a bull with the dedication of a stele: *TAM* v.1, 453 = Petzl (1994), 78–9 no. 61.

[102] Herrmann and Malay (2007), 113–16 no. 85 (Kollyda, AD 205): . . . Ἐπὶ ἐκολάσθη[σ]αν οὗτοι, ὅτι τὸν πατέρα ἐκράτησαν ἐξομολογούμενον τὰς δυνάμις τῶν θεῶν. Καὶ ἐλημοσύνην μὴ λαβόντος τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῶν, ἀλλὰ ἀποτελεσθέντος αὐτοῦ 'μή τίς ποτε παρευτελίσι τοὺς θεούς' διὰ τὰς π[ρ]ώτας προγραφὰς αὐτοῦ ἔγρα[ψ]αν καὶ ἀνέθηκαν εὐλογοῦντε[ς] τοῖς θεοῖς ('. . . For they have been punished because they seized their father, while he was acknowledging the powers of the gods. And their father did not obtain pity. But after his death, they wrote (?) on account of his first written declaration "nobody at any time should disparage the gods", and dedicated [the stele] praising the gods').

[103] E.g. Petzl (1994), 68–9 no. 57: ἐκέλευσεν στηλλογραφηθῆναι νέμεσιν. See Chaniotis (2009), 141.

[104] *SEG* 50 (2000), 1222 (second/third century AD): γραψάμενος σὰς χάριτας.

[105] E.g. *I.Ephesos* 3100: Μέγα τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ, μέγα τὸ ὅσιον, μέγα τὸ ἀγαθόν. Κατ' ὄναρ: cf. Peterson (1926), 205–6; Robert (1955), 88 and 299; Mitchell (1999), 63.

[106] For a detailed analysis see Chaniotis (2009), 118–22, 139–40, 144; see now also Belayche (2006b).

uncertainties, or lack of faith. We cannot tell whether a confession inscription defended Mes's divine justice from critics when it described him as an infallible judge in heaven.[107] But to praise Apollo Grannus as the god 'who listens to prayers always and everywhere'[108] hints at the shortcomings of other gods in this respect. An anonymous god in Aspendos was called 'the one who does not lie' (ἀψευδής),[109] exactly as Perge was designated as the city which never lies in an acclamation directly connected with competition among the Pamphylian cities for privileges.[110] The claim that the same anonymous god at Aspendos was 'not made by mortal hands' (ἀχειροποίητος) implicitly made a distinction between true and false faith. Acclamatory epithets designating a deity as 'most sacred' (ἁγιώτατος),[111] 'immortal' (ἀθάνατος) and indestructible (ἄφθιτος),[112] 'truly just' (δικαιότατος),[113] 'unforgiving in his anger' (ἄλυτος),[114] 'almighty' (παντοδυνάστης, παντοκράτωρ),[115] 'with visible power' (ἐπιφανέστατος),[116]

[107] Herrmann and Malay (2007), 75–6 no. 51 (Hamidiye, AD 102): Μέγας Μεὶς Οὐράνιος Ἀρτεμιδώρου Ἄξιοττα κατέχων καὶ ἡ δύναμις αὐτοῦ, κρ[ι]τὴς ἀλάθητος ἐν οὐρανῷ ('Great is Heavenly Mes, founded by Artemidoros, the ruler over Axiotta, and his power, an infallible judge in heaven').

[108] *SEG* 35 (1985), 589 (Ulpia Traiana): αἰεὶ καὶ πανταχοῦ ἐπηκόῳ. Cf. *MAMA* I, 8 (Laodikeia Combusta, second/third century AD): πανεπηκόῳ θεῷ.

[109] *SEG* 38 (1988), 1335 (first/second century AD): Θεῷ ἀψευδ[εῖ καὶ] ἀχειροποιήτῳ εὐχήν. See Ameling (2004), 458–61 no. 258, with further bibliography. To the examples collected by Ameling, add the attribute ἄψευστος used for Bes as an oracular god in Abydos (*SEG* 47 (1997), 2098). See also Mitchell, p. 176 below.

[110] *I.Perge* 331: αὖξε Πέργη, ἡ μηδ[è]ν ψευδομένη. Cf. above, n. 76.

[111] E.g. *Milet* VI.2, 699 (Apollon Didymeus, second/third century AD); *I.Side* TEp 3a (Athena, second century AD). For Artemis Ephesia see Engelman (2001). Cf. Robert (1971), 594.

[112] Ἀθάνατος: Fraser (1962), 25–7: πατρὶ θεῶι Σαμοθρᾳκι ἀθανάτωι ὑψίσ[τωι] (Kyrene, imperial period); Marek (1993), 194 no. 24: [Θεῷ] Ὑψίστῳ . . . Θεῷ ἀθανάτῳ (Kaisareia); *I.Sultan Dağı* 44 (Apollo and Helios, Philomelion); Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* 3.15.3 (oracle of Apollo). Cf. Mitchell (1999), 63. For the use of this attribute by Jews and Christians see Ameling (2004), 397–8. Ἄφθιτος: *I.Kios* 21 (Anoubis); *SEG* 45 (1995), 1612 (Zeus); Orphic hymns 10.5 (Physis), 15.1 (Zeus), 83.1 (Okeanos); *Orphicorum fragmenta* 248.5 Kern (Zeus).

[113] *SEG* I, 463 (Apollo and Helios).

[114] Petzl (1994), 5–6 no. 4 (Theos Tarsios).

[115] Παντοδυνάστης: *SEG* 51 (2001), 1801 (Helios?, Nakoleia, imperial period); cf. Orphic hymns 12.4 (Herakles), 45.2 (Dionysos). Παντοκράτωρ: see above, n. 87; cf. *I.Cret.* II.28.2 + *SEG* 33 (1983), 736 (Hermes Eriounios, Tallaion Antron, Crete, second century AD); *I.Iznik* 1121 and 1512 (Zeus, Nikaia, second/third century AD); *IG* IX.2, 1201 (Methone in Thessaly, imperial period): Βασιλέα θεὸν μέγιστον παντοκράτορα κτίστην ὅλων καὶ θεοὺς πάντας καὶ θεοὺς ἥρωας καὶ αὐτὴν τὴν Δέσποινα βασιλίδα; Kayser (1994), 198–9 no. 59 (Alexandria, second century AD): Isis Παντοκράτειρα; Orphic hymns 10.4 (Physis), 18.17 (Plouton), 29.10 (Persephone); *Theosophia Tubingensis* 27 (*Theosophorum Graecorum fragmenta* p. 19 Erbse). Cf. the epithet πανκράτωρ in *SEG* 7, 12–13 (Susa, first century BC). For the same conception in magic see e.g. *SEG* 45 (1995), 1897: Ἰάω, πάντων δεσπότης. For Jewish examples see Ameling (2004), 487–8.

[116] E.g. *SEG* 50 (2000), 1244 (Helios Apollon, Bahadinlar, Phrygia, AD 255), 1256 and 1270 (Apollo Lairbenos, Motela, second/third century AD); *I.Ephesos* 27 line 344 (Artemis, AD 104); *I.Side* 377 (Ares, second/third century AD); *I.Stratonikeia* 197, 224, 291, 527, 1101 (Zeus Panamaros and Hekate, second century AD).

and 'supreme rescuer' (πανυπείροχος σωτήρ),[117] fulfilled the same function: they expressed the superior status of a deity. The emphatic use of such an epithet for a particular god implied that he had properties which divinities lacked. As we have already seen, a common strategy in the effort to underline the priority and uniqueness of a god was to use long lists of epithets and superlatives;[118] through their rhythmical repetition during acclamations, such epithets became an effective medium for the propagation of the cult of a deity. The creation of new words such as πανυπέροχος and πανύψιστος is to be seen in the context of competition.[119]

THE PERSONAL WORSHIP OF AN ALMIGHTY GOD AND MONOTHEISTIC TRENDS

How is this emphatic form of devotion towards gods who were regarded by their worshippers as particularly powerful or even more powerful than others related to monotheistic tendencies? I would be inconsistent with my own programme of stressing the heterogeneity of religious mentality in the imperial period if I were to give one single answer to these questions. Our sources rather suggest a dynamic relationship between various factors: philosophy, exclusive monotheistic religions, the initiatives of cult founders and holy men, the teachings and performances of mystery cults, the survivals and revivals of local cultic traditions, and probably magical practices.

Some of the texts discussed above reflect the religious trends epitomised in the theosophical oracle of Klaros. The first line of this oracle lists attributes of god, all of them beginning with the letter *alpha*, as if its author

[117] *SEG* 37 (1987), 840 (Deva, Chester, third century AD): πανυπειρόχας ἀνθρώπων σωτῆρας ἐν ἀθανάτοισιν (Asklepios and Hygieia). For πανυπείροχοι θεοί cf. *IG* II², 4514 (Athens, second century AD).

[118] See e.g. the texts quoted above, nn. 67 and 97. Cf. e.g. *I.Kios* 21: μάκαιρα θεὰ μήτηρ πολυώνυμος Ἶσις; *IGUR* 105 (second century AD): Ἀσκληπιῷ θε[ῷ] μεγίστῳ, [σ]ωτῆ[ρι], εὐερ[γ]έτῃ; *IGUR* 194 (early third century AD): Διὶ Ἡλίῳ Μεγάλῳ Σαράπιδι, σωτῆρι, πλουτοδότῃ, ἐπηκόῳ, εὐεργέτῃ, ἀνεικήτῳ Μίθρᾳ; *MAMA* X, 158 (Appia, imperial period): Μητρὶ μακαρίᾳ ὁσίᾳ δικαίᾳ; *CIG* 4502 (Palmyra, second century AD): Διὶ ὑψίστῳ μεγίστῳ καὶ ἐπηκόῳ. The long lists of divine epithets and attributes in the Orphic hymns, in the aretalogies of Isis (below, n. 121) and in magical texts are a related phenomenon.

[119] Drew-Bear, Thomas and Yildizturan (1999), 236 no. 364: Ζηνὶ πανυψίστῳ (Kurudere, Phrygia, *c.* AD 170). Cf. the attributes πανυπέρτατος in the Orphic hymns 4.8 (Ouranos), 8.17 (Helios), 10.4 (Physis), 12.6 (Herakles), 19.2 (Zeus), 61.6 (Nemesis), 66.5 (Hephaistos), and βασιλέστατος in *Theosophia Tubingensis* 27 (*Theosophorum Graecorum fragmenta* p. 19 Erbse). However, the double superlative μεγίστατος in Peterson (1926), 281–2 (acclamation in Cyprus: εἷς θεὸς, τὸ μεγίστατον, τὸ ἐνδοξότατον ὄνομα· βοήθη πᾶσι, δεόμεθε. Ἥλιος) does not exist; the reading has been corrected by Robert (1955), 87–8.

was using a lexicon of epithets and did not manage to reach the second letter of the alphabet: αὐτοφυής, ἀδίδακτος, ἀμήτωρ, ἀστυφέλικτος.[120] Such a listing of epithets is a stylistic feature of many contemporary groups of religious texts: the Orphic hymns, the 'aretalogies' of the Egyptian gods, magical texts, and dedications.[121] It originates in the belief that a single word or name is not adequate to comprise the entire concept of the divine. According to the Klarian oracle, god lives in fire; similarly, in contemporary texts the almighty god is often associated with heavenly bodies or is given a dwelling in heaven;[122] from his heavenly throne the god sees all. The Klarian god required a daily personal worship with ritual gestures (turning to the east in the theosophical oracle) and oral performances (εὔχεσθαι). Again, this corresponds to a general trend in this period; both cult regulations and oracles propagated a spiritual worship consisting in the singing of hymns (see n. 101); the confession inscriptions of Lydia and Phrygia stereotypically end with the phrase καὶ ἀπὸ νῦν εὐλογῶ ('and from now on, I praise'), possibly a speech act with which the conflict between sinner and god came to an end.[123]

Finally, the heavenly dwelling of the god made messengers necessary for his communication with the mortals (μεικρὰ δὲ θεοῦ μερὶς ἄνγελοι ἡμεῖς). In this respect, there is again a convergence between the Klarian oracle and religious texts which either imply or explicitly refer to divine mediators between the mortals and a superior god. The inscriptions of Asia Minor often refer to gods who served as messengers (ἄγγελοι) of a superior god.[124] A confession inscription presents Zeus in the role of such an intermediary between a man and Mes, serving as the 'advocate' (παράκλητος) of a sinner (see n. 55). But this concept was by no means limited to Asia Minor. The Orphic theology also knew of angels of a superior god, his πολύμοχθοι ἄγγελοι (see n. 20). In his hymn on Eros at Thespiai, Hadrian asked Eros/Antinoos to serve as an intermediary between earth and heaven

[120] For a Greek–Latin lexicon of epithets see Krämer (2004), 43–62. Cf. the list of epithets of Zeus in Miletos (*SEG* 45 (1995), 1612, second century AD). Only epithets beginning with the letter alpha are preserved. The same interest in epithets beginning with the letter alpha can be observed in oracles quoted in the *Theosophia Tubingensis* 42 (*Theosophorum Graecorum fragmenta* p. 27 Erbse): ἄναξ πάντων, αὐτόσπορος, αὐτογένεθλος; 21 (p. 15 Erbse): αὐτοφανής, ἀλόχευτος, ἀσώματος, ἄϋλος; 48 (p. 31 Erbse): αὐτογένεθλον ἀείναον . . . ἀγνὸν . . . ἀγλαόν. See also Gregory of Nazianzus, *Carmina*, *PG* 37, 1571: αὐτοπάτωρ, ἀλόχευτος, ἀμήτωρ.

[121] For the 'aretalogies' of the Egyptian gods see e.g. Totti (1985), 5–10 no. 2 (= *IG* XII.5, 739), 15–6 no. 6 lines 9–11, 62–75 no. 20 (= *P.Oxy.* XI, 1380), 76–82 nos. 21–4.

[122] Ἐν οὐρανοῖς: see notes 53 and 97.

[123] Petzl (1994), nos. 20, 33, 34, 37, 44, 62, 64, 69; Herrmann and Malay (2007), 81–2 no. 55. Cf. Chaniotis (2009), 139.

[124] Robert (1964), 28–30; Pleket (1981), 183–9; Mitchell (1993), 36. Angels in 'confession inscriptions': Petzl (1994), 3–5 no. 3, 47–8 no. 38; Petzl (1998), 13; de Hoz (1999), 122; Belayche (2005a), 43.

(line 6: ἄγγελον τόνδε).[125] The same concept underlies a dedication to Janus in Latium, in which Janus is asked to mediate between a man and Jupiter.[126]

This convergence should not be misunderstood as evidence for a homogeneity of religious concepts. The worship of Mes, originally an Iranian moon god, is perhaps the best example of how the convergence of concepts could go along with the construction of the distinct profile of a *megas theos*.[127] Despite his similarities with Theos Hypsistos or, for instance, with the supreme Orphic god, Mes cannot be confused with either of them. He is not 'motherless' (*ametor*); on the contrary, several texts emphatically praise his mother (n. 51). Not unlike Theos Hypsistos he resides in heaven (as Ouranios), not representing the rising sun of the Klarian oracle but another heavenly body, the moon. He is served by angels; he is addressed with epithets that designate him as a ruler; and he has a superior position presiding over a council of gods (see nn. 54–5). This superior god is not a monotheistic god; he is a *megas theos*. The construction of such an image, with these striking similarities and differentiations from that of Theos Hypsistos or other deities, probably goes back to the initiative of a religious figure, a cult founder,[128] a holy man, a prophet – such as Alexander of Abonou Teichos in the case of Glykon New Asklepios.

The acclamatory phrase 'One god in heaven!' (εἷς θεὸς ἐν οὐρανῷ) epitomises both convergence in religious vocabulary and conscious differentiations in conceptions of the almighty god. In Delphi, this acclamation was used for Apollo Pythios, in Lydia for Mes Ouranios,[129] in Aizanoi in Phrygia for an anonymous god, who may be Theos Hypsistos,[130] in countless texts all over the Empire for the Christian God.[131] This affective phrase, far from being evidence for monotheism or for an assimilation of cults, is evidence for the use of the same religious attributes for different gods and for the competition between their devotees.

[125] *IG* VII, 1828 (AD 134?). Discussion: Goukowsky (2002), 227–9.

[126] *AE* 1996, no. 370 (Signia, second/third century AD): [*et fa*]*ciles aditus da Iovis ad s*[*peciem*] ('and grant an easy approach to the presence of Jupiter').

[127] For the cult of Mes see Lane (1976); de Hoz (2002); Le Dinahet (2002); Labarre and Taşlıalan (2002), 257–312; Hübner (2003).

[128] For founders of sanctuaries of Mes see Hübner (2003), 188–90.

[129] *TAM* V.1, 75 = Lane (1976), 79: Εἷς θεὸς ἐν οὐρανοῖς. Μέγας Μὴς Οὐράνιος. Cf. Ramsay (1883), 322 no. 52 (Cappadocia): Μέγας Ζεὺς ἐν οὐραν[ῷ].

[130] *SEG* 42 (1992), 1192 (Aizanoi): Εἷς θεὸς ἐν οὐρανῷ. Μέγα τὸ Ὅσιον, μέγα τὸ Δίκεον. For another example (in Egypt) see Belayche (2006a), 21 and (2007b), 96–7.

[131] Peterson (1926), 78 and 85.