

the directives of a *princeps* with no apprehension for the present, while Augustus in the vigorous years of his life maintained his power, that of his family, and peace.

POWERS AND TITLES OF THE EMPEROR

Cassius Dio, *Roman History* LIII. xvii. 1–xviii. 3, xxi. 3–7; Adapted from LCL

In this way the power of both people and senate passed entirely into the hands of Augustus, and from this time² there was, strictly speaking, a monarchy; for monarchy would be the truest name for it, even if two or three men later held the power jointly.³ Now, the Romans so detested the title "monarch" that they called their emperors neither dictators nor kings nor anything of this sort. Yet, since the final authority for the government devolves upon them, they needs must be kings. The offices established by the laws, it is true, are maintained even now, except that of censor; but the entire direction and administration is absolutely in accordance with the wishes of the one in power at the time. And yet, in order to preserve the appearance of having this authority not through their power but by virtue of the laws, the emperors have taken to themselves all the offices (including the titles) which under the Republic possessed great power with the consent of the people—with the exception of the dictatorship. Thus, they very often become consuls, and they are always styled proconsuls⁴ whenever they are outside the *pomerium*.⁵ The title *imperator* is held by them for life, not only by those who have won victories in battle but also by all the rest, to indicate their absolute power,⁶ instead of the title "king" or "dictator." These latter titles they have never assumed since they fell out of use in the constitution, but the actuality of those offices is secured to them by the appellation *imperator*.⁷

2. January, 27 B.C. Dio's account of the prerogatives of Augustus as emperor, written early in the third century A.D., contains a number of anachronisms retrojected from his own day when emperors exercised more autocratic powers. For instances see the following footnotes to this selection.

3. Dio refers to the joint rule of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, and that of Severus, Caracalla, and Geta.

4. It was not until Trajan's principate that the title proconsul became part of the official nomenclature of the emperors.

5. For the *pomerium* of the city of Rome see § 6.

6. Actually the title *imperator*, while peculiar to Augustus' nomenclature, was disdained by Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius. Though in common use unofficially, it did not become the standard title of the emperor until Vespasian's time.

7. In addition to the title of *imperator*, the official nomenclature of the emperors contains the number of times they were acclaimed *imperator* for military victories won under their auspices. Cf. Cassius Dio, *Roman History* XLIII. xlv. 4: "Those who are *imperatores* in the special sense employ this

By virtue of the titles named, they secure the right to make levies, collect funds, declare war, make peace, and rule foreigners and citizens alike everywhere and always—even to the extent of being able to put to death both *equites* and senators inside the *pomerium*⁸—and all the other powers once granted to the consuls and other officials possessing independent authority; and by virtue of holding the censorship [cf. note 74] they investigate our lives and morals as well as take the census, enrolling some in the equestrian and senatorial orders and removing others from these orders according to their will. By virtue of being consecrated in all the priesthoods and, in addition, from their right to bestow most of them upon others, as well as from the fact that, even if two or three persons rule jointly, one of them is *pontifex maximus*, they hold in their own hands supreme authority over all matters both profane and sacred. The tribunician power, as it is called, which once the most influential men used to hold, gives them the right to nullify the effects of the measures taken by any other official, in case they do not approve, and makes their persons inviolable; and if they appear to be wronged in even the slightest degree, not merely by deed but even by word, they may destroy the guilty party as one accursed, without a trial.⁹ The emperors, it should be explained, do not think it lawful to be tribunes, inasmuch as they all belong to the patrician class, but they assume the power of the tribunes in its entirety, as it was at its height; and the number of the years of their rule is counted from the assumption of this power, the theory being that they receive it annually along with those who actually hold the office of tribune. These, then, are the institutions they have taken over from the Republic, each essentially in its traditional form and with the same title, so as to give the impression of possessing no power that has not been granted them. . . .¹⁰

Thus by virtue of these Republican titles they have clothed themselves with all the powers of the government, so that they actually possess all the prerogatives of kings without the usual title. For the appellation “Caesar” or “Augustus” confers upon them no actual power but merely shows in the one case that they are the successors of their

title once, as they do their other titles, and place it first. But those of them who also achieve in war some deed worthy of it acquire also the title handed down by ancient custom, and accordingly an individual is termed *imperator* a second or a third time, or as many more times as the occasion may arise.”

8. Such arbitrary power was not acquired by the emperors until two centuries after Augustus.

9. Another of Dio's anachronisms (cf. note 2).

10. For the statute granting imperial powers to Vespasian, see vol. 2, § 4.

family line, and in the other the splendor of their rank. The name “Father”¹¹ perhaps gives them a certain authority over us all—the authority which fathers once had over their children; yet it did not signify this at first, but betokened honor and served as an admonition both to them to love their subjects as they would their children, and to their subjects to revere them as they would their fathers. . . .

Augustus did not enact all laws on his sole responsibility, but some of them he brought before the popular assembly in advance, in order that, if any features caused displeasure, he might learn it in time and correct them; for he encouraged everybody whatsoever to give him advice, in case anyone could think of any improvement in them, and he accorded them great freedom of speech; and he actually changed some provisions. Most important of all, he took as advisers for periods of six months the consuls (or the other consul, when he himself also held the office), one of each of the other kinds of officials, and fifteen men chosen by lot from the remainder of the senatorial body,¹² so that it was his custom to communicate proposed legislation after a fashion through these to all the other senators. For although he brought some matters before the whole senate, he generally followed this course, considering it better to take under preliminary advisement in a leisurely fashion most matters, and especially the most important ones, in consultation with a few; and sometimes he even sat with these men in trials. The senate as a body, it is true, continued to sit in judgment as before, and in certain cases transacted business with embassies and envoys from both peoples and kings; and the people and the plebs, moreover, continued to come together for the elections; but nothing was actually done that did not please Caesar. At any rate, in the case of those who were to hold office, he himself selected and nominated some;¹³ and though he left the election of others in the hands of the people and the plebs, in accordance with the ancient practice, yet he took care that no persons should hold office who were unfit or elected as the result of factious combinations or bribery.

11. For the appellation “father of his country,” see the selection from Suetonius below and § 195, paragraph 35.

12. This standing committee of the Senate, established by Augustus in 27 B.C. and reorganized on a new basis in A.D. 13, served as a privy council and ultimately developed into the equivalent of an imperial cabinet. For the Republican antecedents of such advisory councils see, for example, pp. 286, 374–75.

13. For the power of the emperors to nominate and commend candidates for office—recommendations that were tantamount to election—see also volume 2, §§ 4, 13. For Julius Caesar's practice in this regard see pp. 307–8.

Cassius Dio, *Roman History* LIII. xvi; Adapted from LCL.

Such were the arrangements made, generally speaking, at that time; for in reality Caesar himself was destined to have absolute power in all matters for life, because he was not only in control of money matters (nominally, to be sure, he had separated the public funds from his own, but as a matter of fact he spent the former also as he saw fit) but also in control of the army. At all events, when his ten-year period¹⁴ came to an end, there was voted him another five years, then five more, after that ten, and again another ten, and then ten for the fifth time, so that by the succession of ten-year periods he continued to be sole ruler for life. And it is for this reason that the subsequent monarchs, though no longer appointed for a specified period but for their whole life once for all,¹⁵ nevertheless always held a celebration every ten years, as if then renewing their sovereignty once more; and this is done even at the present day.

Now, Caesar had received many privileges previously, when the question of declining the sovereignty and that of apportioning the provinces were under discussion. For the right to fasten laurels to the front of the imperial residence and to hang the civic crown above the doors was then voted him to symbolize the fact that he was always victorious over enemies and savior of the citizens. The imperial palace is called Palatium, not because it was ever decreed that this should be its name but because Caesar dwelt on the Palatine and had his military headquarters there. . . . Hence, even if the emperor resides somewhere else, his dwelling retains the name of Palatium.

And when he had actually completed the reorganization, the name Augustus was at length bestowed upon him by the senate and by the people. . . . He took the title of Augustus, signifying that he was more than human; for all most precious and sacred objects are termed *augusta*. For which reason they called him also in Greek *sebastos* . . . meaning an august person.

14. That is, of his proconsular power. From 23 B.C. on Augustus possessed *imperium maius* ("superior power"), that is, proconsular power over all the provinces of the Empire, including the authority to supersede the acts of governors of senatorial provinces.

15. The permanent grant of proconsular power began with the Emperor Tiberius.