

Religion: public display & private worship

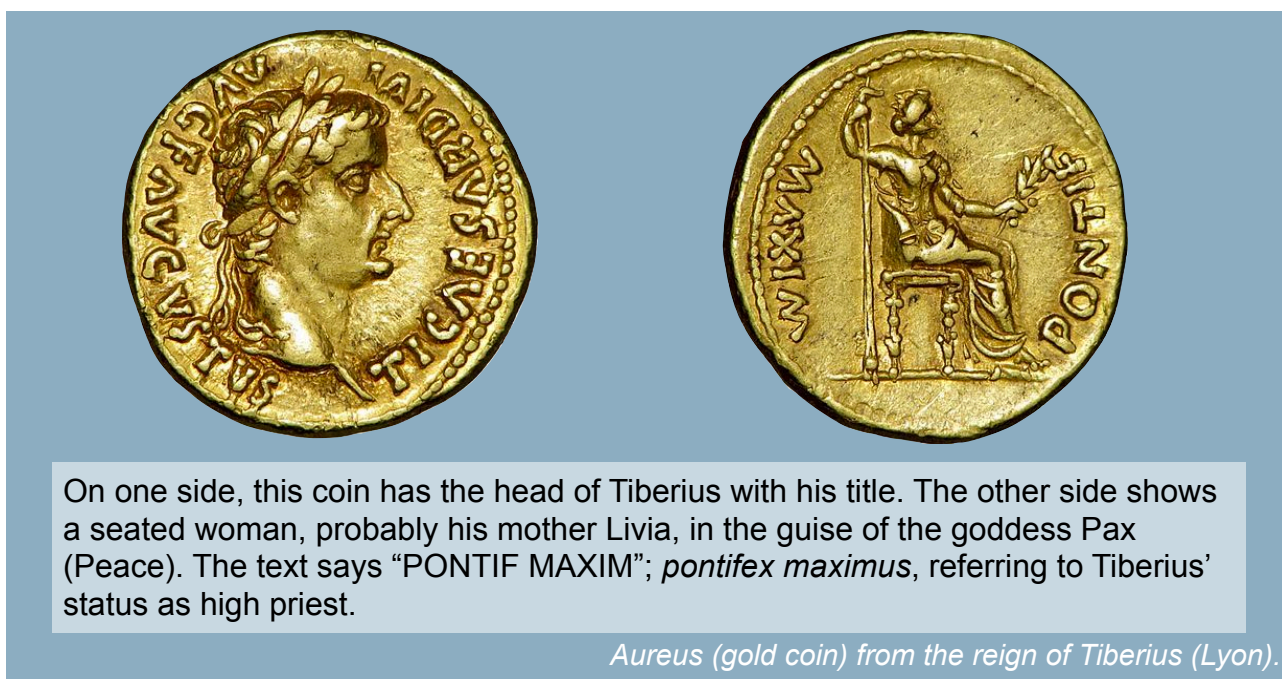
Religion and politics

In ancient Rome there was no concept of a separation of “church and state”; religion and politics were deeply intertwined and religious offices were usually taken by the same men who were standing for political offices. This was particularly clear under the empire, where the role of *pontifex maximus* (high priest), was taken by the emperor.

Source 1: imagery of the emperor Augustus



Source 2: aureus of emperor Tiberius



Source 3: religion and state today



Left: coronation of Queen Elizabeth II at Westminster Abbey. Right: pound coin.

In the United Kingdom, the monarch is head of State and the Supreme Governor of the Church of England. One of Queen Elizabeth's titles is *fidei defensor* (defender of the faith), which is what the "F.D." on coins stands for.

- A Roman Catholic is not allowed to become the King or Queen of Britain.
- Bishops from the Church of England automatically get to sit and vote in the House of Lords.
- In 2011, about one third of England's 20,000 state-funded schools were faith schools
- The UK's major national holidays around Christmas and Easter are in place because of Christian festivals.

Thinking about all the sources:

How closely entwined do you think religion and politics were in ancient Rome?

Why do you think the emperors styled themselves as religious officials in a lot of their coins and statues?

What problems could you think of for the governing of the state being closely intertwined with religious practice?

Do you think Britain is a secular country?

How does this compare to other countries around the world today?

Further reading:

Nick Clegg calls for separation of church and state, rejected by David Cameron (2014 news item): <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/david-cameron-rejects-nick-cleggs-call-for-separation-of-church-and-state-9284008.html>

Donald Trump passing legislation to allow churches to fund political parties (April 2017 news item): <http://www.newsweek.com/johnson-amendment-trump-religious-liberty-594630>