Leaders' Control Over Societies Using Religious Beliefs

Through art, cultures express identity, beliefs, and attend to the physical and spiritual well-being of their societies. Most societies focus on religion as support for health and well-being. Religion is formed by its social context in ways in which have an effect on its social role. It is also a popular topic most artists portrayed their art through. Both Justinian's mosaic and Augustus as imperator (general) give off ideas of how leaders controlled religious beliefs as a political tool. The idea that they used is to control religion, is also to control society.

Justinian gained power through his uncle emperor Justin 1 in 527. During their rule, an emperor would have social, political, and religious power. If both church and state perform their duties well, a general harmony should result was a recurring thought of his. Everyone, including Justinian himself, saw him as Christ's vice-regent of earth, defender of the faith, and he considered it his divine duty to restore the Roman Empire to its ancient boundaries. In his mosaic it reflects that feeling that he believed he was close to Christ, he wanted to look like him, wanted to be worshipped like him as well. If people saw him as a deity, it wouldn't have been difficult to get people to follow his ideals, he would've had control over his people through their religious beliefs.

Justinian is well known for creating the Code of Justinian—the Corpus Juris Civilis—part of the authoritative statement of Roman law that was gradually accepted throughout Western Europe. The Code contained much that was unapologetically Christian. 'It is right that those who do not worship God correctly should be deprived of worldly advantage too,' said Justinian, so his laws made life difficult for heretics and unbelievers. It is seen now that he was biased against anyone who was non-believers or practiced any religion other than Christianity. With all that in mind, he still served as emperor of Byzantine for almost forty years, in that time span, saving the empire, and leaving it stronger and in a better state.

In "Justinian's mosaic, Figure 4-17 (p. 131)" He dresses similar to what everyone knew Jesus to look like, and is surrounded by his court, and warriors. He is wearing a purple robe with gold in some spots signifying importance. He also has a crown and what looks like a circle of light or halo around his head. He is the only one wearing brown sandals, while everyone else is wearing the same black sandals. The man to his left looks more important than the rest of the disciples, he is covered in gold and has a white scarf with a cross on it meaning he is at least important religiously. The other men on the left are holding different items, the one closest to the border of the piece is holding a pot of some sort, the next one is holding a jeweled book. The two men to the right of Justinian don't stand out much, they are almost exact copies of each other. The group closest to the side of the picture are warriors, they carry spears and shields, and other weapons. Justinian is of great influence to the rest of the men around him. He is in the middle of the mosaic, which means everyone around him is following him or believes he is of higher importance, they know he is royalty and treat him as such. While everyone around him is in the same white robes, he stands out in imperial purple. Everyone in the mosaic has the same expression of what could be determined, they all seem to glorify him.

Augustus or Octavian also became emperor through a relative dying. When his great uncle, Julius Caesar was murdered, Augustus became heir to the throne, and he became Egypt's first

Roman emperor. Augustus wasn't necessarily religious, and at this time Christianity wasn't Rome's prime religion, it hasn't even begun to form yet. As emperor, he was a very powerful man, but that wasn't enough for him. At the time of his reign, Rome was polytheistic and had many Gods, Augustus wanted to be one himself, or as close as he could get to one. He used religion to strictly gain power over his people. His strategy to convince his people of his new title as a part god, he used their superstition against them. When Halley's comet passed over Rome during his reign, he claimed it was his great uncle Julius Caesar ascending to Heaven. Since Julius was considered a God, because they were related, Augustus was part God. In the Portrait of Augustus, his statue has a certain presence of importance that can be related to godly power, he even has an angel clinging to his drapes near his foot, meaning the angel is looking up to Augustus as a deity or someone who can protect it. Even with all of his control, compared to Justinian, Augustus apparently didn't mind other religious practices, and cults, or at least tolerated them to an extent. " with some local autonomy. In Israel, the Jews were allowed to keep up their faith and culture." "Jack Zavada, Who was Caesar Augustus?, (2019)". Augustus was also an important ruler to Rome, because of the decades of peace and prosperity he helped to create. He was emperor for over forty years as well, his achievements were extensive, he created an organization and stability to the Roman world.

The "Portrait of Augustus as imperator (general)", figure 3-25 (p.98) is a statue carved out of marble. It's marble because of the pearly white texture, and marble is popular when making statues, it doesn't shatter when carving distinct details. It is only a single-person statue, of a man who is looking off to the right. He has a blank expression, he knows he is important. He is also holding his arm up pointing to the right as well. Down at his left foot and up his right leg are stilts made with uncarved marble to help keep the statue stable. Hi s chest plate is covered in small carved illustrations possibly showing a battle he was in, or multiple, or it could also be his achievements that he has accomplished in his life. He is leaning forward, the statue looks like it is in the middle of walking due to the pose. He is holding a staff that is not marble, and could actually be an actual staff that this man used at some point in his life. The ruffles in his sleeves and the folds in the drapes give a great illusion of being real fabric. The wrinkles in his skin near his kneecaps and elbows are also extremely life-like. Also down at his right leg is an angel, holding on to the fabric near his leg. The angel could be part of a religious statement about the man, he might be religiously important, a deity. Or the angel could be a guardian helping this man ascend to heaven. The angel could also be looking to him for protection since he is considered a god. This statue of Augustus gives off an atmosphere of having power, a high ranking status, as the actual Augustus most likely did as well.

In each of these artworks, both of the emperors wanted to be depicted as god figures. So it is fitting that in artwork made around them portrays the same divine energy as in real life. In Justinian's mosaic, Justinian mirrored what Jesus was thought to look like at that time. Possibly the closer he resembled to Jesus, the more people would want to follow him as well. Augustus didn't follow the same strategy of imitating a religious figure, his statue "Augustus as imperator (general)" gives off its own unique stance of importance without copying another person.

As it is seen today both Emperors wanted their people to believe that they were gods or as close to god-like as they could get, and wanted to be worshiped like gods as well. Whether it was because they actually believed it, or they just realized they could sustain their power is possibly why they wanted to be gods. They used their societies' religious beliefs to gain authority and maintain their power through each of their rule of the empire. "In these two examples, the use of Religious thought and roles can be seen as a way to for certain individuals

to gain power as well as social standing.” “Ethan Watrall, 2013”. Without how these emperors and possible other royal figures used religious ideation, would most societies have survived or even started? If they didn’t rule the way they did, would there have been a different outcome?