

*RES GESTAE DIVI AUGUSTI*  
“THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE DIVINE AUGUSTUS”  
[trans. P. A. Brunt and J. M. Moore]

Today we devote our attention to a document composed by Augustus in the last year of his life – the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, “The Achievements of the Divine Augustus.” Born in 63 BCE as Gaius Octavius Thurinus (see the genealogical table at the end of this document), adopted by Julius Caesar in 44, Octavius (next called Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus) first allied with and then defeated Mark Antony (and his Egyptian wife Cleopatra) in 31 BCE at the Battle of Actium. With this final act of the civil war that began when Caesar challenged Pompey in 49 BCE by crossing the Rubicon River, Octavian consolidated his holdings and conquered the entire Mediterranean world at the age of 32.

For the next 45 years Octavian [soon to be named "Augustus" (literally, "the venerable one," or "the one worthy of honor")] ruled the Roman world. He crafted legislation dealing with morality and marriage; rebuilt the city; unified the Mediterranean politically, socially, religiously and economically; and brought about an unprecedented period of cessation from warfare, known as the *pax Romana* or "Roman peace" (see the map at the end of this document for the extent of Rome's domains during the Augustan age). He promoted a program of social welfare and reform, political harmony and military might, much of which is embodied in some of the sculpture which conveyed his ideology (see, for example, the Prima Porta statue and the Ara Pacis friezes)

In the last year of his life Augustus had inscribed an autobiographical account of his years as *princeps* ("first citizen," the closest title the Romans would use for "emperor" except for the Republican term of military commander or *imperator*) and *primus inter pares* ("first among equals"); copies were set up throughout the Roman world, and we know that one was erected at the entrance to his mausoleum.. The only surviving version comes from *Ancyranum* (modern-day Ankara in Turkey), included here.

As you read this very personal and yet publicized account, consider the following questions:

- what are the values that matter to Augustus, and what values does he scorn?
- how does he present himself to the reader?
- what does he consider his most important accomplishments?
- how should an historian assess this document?

I have inserted dates in brackets when possible, and have included the Latin text for chapters 1 and 34, because together they contain some of the the most charged and critical passages in the document. We will look at them together in class.

A copy is set out below of "The achievements of the Divine Augustus, by which he brought the world under the empire of the Roman people, and of the expenses which he bore for the state and people of Rome"; the original is engraved on two bronze pillars set up at Rome.

*[1] Annos undeviginti natus exercitum privato consilio et privata impensa comparavi, per quem rem publicam a dominatione factionis oppressam in libertatem vindicavi. [Ob quae] senatus decretis honorificis in ordinem suum me adlegit, C. Pansa et A. Hirtio consulibus, consularem locum sententiae dicendae tribuens, et imperium mihi dedit. Res publica ne quid detrimenti caperet, me propraetore simul cum consulibus providere iussit. Populus autem eodem anno me consulem, cum cos. uterque bello cecidisset, et triumvirum rei publicae constituendae creavit.*

1. At the age of nineteen [44 BCE] on my own responsibility and at my own expense I raised an army, with which I successfully championed the liberty of the republic when it was oppressed by the tyranny of a faction. (2) On that account the senate passed decrees in my honor enrolling me in its order in the consulship of Gaius Pansa and Aulus Hirtius [43 BCE], assigning me the right to give my opinion among the consulars and giving me imperium. (3) It ordered me as a propraetor to provide in concert with the consuls that the republic should come to no harm. (4) In the same year, when both consuls had fallen in battle, the people appointed me consul and triumvir for the organization of the republic.

2. I drove into exile the murderers of my father, avenging their crime through tribunals established by law [43 BCE]; and afterwards, when they made war on the republic, I twice defeated them in battle [42 BCE].

3. I undertook many civil and foreign wars by land and sea throughout the world, and as victor I spared the lives of all citizens who asked for mercy. (2) When foreign peoples could safely be pardoned I preferred to preserve rather than to exterminate them. (3) The Roman citizens who took the soldier's oath of obedience to me numbered about 500,000. I settled rather more than 300,000 of these in colonies or sent them back to their home towns after their period of service; to all these I assigned lands or gave money as rewards for their military service. (4) I captured six hundred ships, not counting ships smaller than triremes.

4. I celebrated two ovations and three curule triumphs and I was twenty-one times saluted as emperor. The senate decreed still more triumphs to me, all of which I declined. I laid the bay leaves with which my fasces were wreathed in the Capitol after fulfilling all the vows which I had made in each war. (2) On fifty-five occasions the senate decreed that thanksgivings should be offered to the immortal gods on account of the successes on land and sea gained by me or by my legates acting under my auspices. The days on which thanksgivings were offered in accordance with decrees of the senate numbered eight hundred and ninety. (3) In my triumphs nine kings or children of kings were led before my chariot. (4) At the time of writing I have been consul thirteen times and am in the thirty-seventh year of tribunician power [CE 14].

5. The dictatorship was offered to me by both senate and people in my absence and when I was at Rome in the consulship of Marcus Marcellus and Lucius Arruntius [22 BCE], but I refused it. (2) I did not decline in the great dearth of corn to undertake the charge of the corn-supply, which I so administered that within a few days I delivered the whole city from apprehension and

immediate danger at my own cost and by my own efforts. (3) At that time the consulship was also offered to me, to be held each year for the rest of my life, and I refused it.

6. In the consulship of Marcus Vinicius and Quintus Lucretius [19 BCE] and afterwards in that of Publius and Gnaeus Lentulus [18 BCE], and thirdly in that of Paullus Fabius Maximus and Quintus Tubero [11 BCE], the senate and people of Rome agreed that I should be appointed supervisor of laws and morals without a colleague and with supreme power, but I would not accept any office inconsistent with the custom of our ancestors. (2) The measures that the senate then desired me to take I carried out in virtue of my tribunician power. On five occasions, of my own initiative, I asked for and received from the senate a colleague in that power.

7. I was triumvir for the organization of the republic for ten consecutive years. (2) Up to the day of writing I have been princeps senatus for forty years. (3) I am pontifex maximus, augur, quindecimvir sacrisfaciundis, septemvir epulonum, frater arvalis, sodalis Titius, fetialis.

8. In my fifth consulship [29 BCE] I increased the number of patricians on the instructions of the people and the senate. (2) I revised the roll of the senate three times. In my sixth consulship with Marcus Agrippa as colleague [28 BCE], I carried out a census of the people, and I performed a lustrum after a lapse of forty-two years; at that lustrum 4,063,000 Roman citizens were registered. (3) Then a second time I performed a lustrum with consular imperium and without a colleague, in the consulship of Gaius Censorinus and Gaius Asinius [8 BCE]; at that lustrum 4,233,000 citizens were registered. (4) Thirdly I performed a lustrum with consular imperium, with Tiberius Caesar, my son, as colleague, in the consulship of Sextus Pompeius and Sextus Appuleius [CE 14]; at that lustrum 4,957,000 citizens were registered. (5) By new laws passed on my proposal I brought back into use many exemplary practices of our ancestors which were disappearing in our time, and in many ways I myself transmitted exemplary practices to posterity for their imitation.

9. The senate decreed that vows should be undertaken every fifth year by the consuls and priests for my health. In fulfillment of these vows games have frequently been celebrated in my lifetime, sometimes by the four most distinguished colleges of priests, sometimes by the consuls. (2) Moreover, all the citizens, individually and on behalf of their towns, have unanimously and continuously offered prayers at all the pulvinaria for my health.

10. My name was inserted in the hymn of the Salii by a decree of the senate, and it was enacted by law that my person should be inviolable for ever and that I should hold the tribunician power for the duration of my life. (2) I declined to be made pontifex maximus in the place of my colleague who was still alive, when the people offered me this priesthood which my father had held. Some years later, after the death of the man who had taken the opportunity of civil disturbance to seize it for himself, I received this priesthood, in the consulship of Publius Sulpicius and Gaius Valgius [12 BCE], and such a concourse poured in from the whole of Italy to my election as has never been recorded at Rome before that time.

11. The senate consecrated the altar of Fortuna Redux before the temples of Honour and Virtue at the Porta Capena in honour of my return, and it ordered that the pontifices and Vestal Virgins should make an annual sacrifice there on the anniversary of my return to the city from Syria in

the consulship of Quintus Lucretius and Marcus Vinicius [12 October 19 BCE], and it named the day the Augustalia from my cognomen.

12. In accordance with the will of the senate some of the praetors and tribunes of the plebs with the consul Quintus Lucretius and the leading men were sent to Campania to meet me, an honor that up to the present day has been decreed to no one besides myself. (2) On my return from Spain and Gaul in the consulship of Tiberius Nero and Publius Quintilius [13 BCE] after successfully arranging affairs in those provinces, the senate resolved that an altar of the Augustan Peace should be consecrated next to the Campus Martius in honor of my return, and ordered that the magistrates and priests and Vestal virgins should perform an annual sacrifice there.

13. It was the will of our ancestors that the gateway of Janus Quirinus should be shut when victories had secured peace by land and sea throughout the whole empire of the Roman people; from the foundation of the city down to my birth, tradition records that it was shut only twice, but while I was the leading citizen the senate resolved that it should be shut on three occasions.

14. My sons, Gaius and Lucius Caesar, of whom Fortune bereaved me in their youth, were for my honor designated as consuls by the senate and people of Rome when they were fourteen, with the provision that they should enter on that magistracy after the lapse of five years. And the senate decreed that from the day when they were led into the forum they should take part in the councils of state. (2) Furthermore each of them was presented with silver shields and spears by the whole body of equites Romani and hailed as princeps iuventutis.

15. To each member of the Roman plebs I paid under my father's will 300 sesterces [44 BCE], and in my own name I gave them 400 each from the booty of war in my fifth consulship [29 BCE], and once again in my tenth consulship [24 BCE] I paid out 400 sesterces as a largesse to each man from my own patrimony, and in my eleventh consulship [23 BCE] I bought grain with my own money and distributed twelve rations apiece, and in the twelfth year of my tribunician power [11 BCE] I gave every man 400 sesterces for the third time. These largesses of mine never reached fewer than 250,000 persons. (2) In the eighteenth year of my tribunician power [5 BCE] and my twelfth consulship I gave 240 sesterces apiece to 320,000 members of the urban plebs. (3) In my fifth consulship [29 BCE] I gave 1,000 sesterces out of booty to every one of the colonists drawn from my soldiers; about 120,000 men in the colonies received this largesse at the time of my triumph. (4) In my thirteenth consulship [2 BCE] I gave 60 denarii apiece to the plebs who were then in receipt of public grain ; they comprised a few more than 200,000 persons.

16. I paid cash to the towns for the lands that I assigned to soldiers in my fourth consulship, and later in the consulship of Marcus Crassus and Gnaeus Lentulus. The sum amounted to about 600,000,000 sesterces paid for lands in Italy, and about 260,000,000 disbursed for provincial lands. Of all those who founded military colonies in Italy or the provinces I was the first and only one to have done this in the recollection of my contemporaries. (2) Later, in the consulships of Tiberius Nero and Gnaeus Piso [7 BCE], of Gaius Antistius and Decimus Laelius [6 BCE], of Gaius Calvisius and Lucius Pasienus [4 BCE], of Lucius Lentulus and Marcus Messalla [3 BCE], and of Lucius Caninius and Quintus Fabricius [2 BCE], I paid monetary rewards to soldiers whom I settled in their home towns after completion of their service, and on this account I expended about 400,000,000 sesterces.

17. Four times I assisted the treasury with my own money, so that I transferred to the administrators of the treasury 150,000,000 sesterces. (2) In the consulship of Marcus Lepidus and Lucius Arruntius [CE 6], when the military treasury was founded by my advice for the purpose of paying rewards to soldiers who had served for twenty years or more, I transferred to it from my own patrimony 170,000,000 sesterces.

18. From the consulship of Gnaeus and Publius Lentulus [18 BCE] onwards, whenever the taxes did not suffice, I made distributions of grain and money from my own granary and patrimony, sometimes to 100,000 persons, sometimes to many more.

19. I built the Senate House, and the Chalcidicum adjacent to it, the temple of Apollo on the Palatine with its porticoes, the temple of the divine Julius, the Lupercal, the portico at the Flaminian circus, which I permitted to bear the name of the portico of Octavius after the man who erected the previous portico on the same site, a pulvinar at the Circus Maximus, (2) the temples on the Capitol of Jupiter Feretrius and Jupiter the Thunderer, the temple of Quirinus, the temples of Minerva and Queen Juno and Jupiter Libertas on the Aventine, the temple of the Lares at the top of the Sacred Way, the temple of the Di Penates in the Velia, the temple of Youth, and the temple of the Great Mother on the Palatine.

20. I restored the Capitol and the theatre of Pompey, both works at great expense without inscribing my own name on either. (2) I restored the channels of the aqueducts, which in several places were falling into disrepair through age, and I brought water from a new spring into the aqueduct called Marcia, doubling the supply. (3) I completed the Forum Julium and the basilica between the temples of Castor and Saturn, works begun and almost finished by my father, and when that same basilica was destroyed by fire [CE 12], I began to rebuild it on an enlarged site, to be dedicated in the name of my sons, and in case I do not complete it in my life time, I have given orders that it should be completed by my heirs. (4) In my sixth consulship [28 BCE] I restored eighty-two temples of the gods in the city on the authority of the senate, neglecting none that required restoration at that time. (5) In my seventh consulship [27 BCE] I restored the Via Flaminia from the city as far as Rimini, together with all bridges except the Mulvian and the Minucian.

21. I built the temple of Mars the Avenger and the Forum Augustum on private ground from the proceeds of booty. I built the theatre adjacent to the temple of Apollo on ground in large part bought from private owners, and provided that it should be called after Marcus Marcellus, my son-in-law. (2) From the proceeds of booty I dedicated gifts in the Capitol and in the temples of the divine Julius, of Apollo, of Vesta and of Mars the Avenger; this cost me about 100,000,000 sesterces. (3) In my fifth consulship [28 BCE] I remitted 55,000 lb. of aurum coronarium contributed by the municipia and colonies of Italy to my triumphs, and later, whenever I was acclaimed imperator, I refused the aurum coronarium which the municipia and colonies continued to vote with the same good will as before.

22. I gave three gladiatorial games in my own name and five in that of my sons or grandsons; at these games some 10,000 men took part in combat. Twice in my own name and a third time in that of my grandson I presented to the people displays by athletes summoned from all parts. (2) I produced shows in my own name four times and in place of other magistrates twenty-three times. On behalf of the college of quindecimviri, as its president, with Marcus Agrippa as

colleague, I produced the Secular Games in the consulship of Gaius Furnius and Gaius Silanus [17 BCE]. In my thirteenth consulship [2 BCE] I was the first to produce the games of Mars, which thereafter in each succeeding year have been produced by the consuls in accordance with a decree of the senate and by statute. (3) I gave beast-hunts of African beasts in my own name or in that of my sons and grandsons in the circus or forum or amphitheater on twenty-six occasions, on which about 3,500 beasts were destroyed.

23. I produced a naval battle as a show for the people at the place across the Tiber now occupied by the grove of the Caesars, where a site 1,800 feet long and 1,200 broad was excavated. There thirty beaked triremes or biremes and still more smaller vessels were joined in battle. About 3,000 men, besides the rowers, fought in these fleets.

24. After my victory, I replaced in the temples of all the cities of the province of Asia the ornaments which my late adversary, after despoiling the temples, had taken into his private possession. (2) Some eighty silver statues of me, on foot, on horse and in chariots) had been set up in Rome; I myself removed them, and with the money that they realized I set golden offerings in the temple of Apollo, in my own name and in the names of those who had honored me with the statues.

25. I made the sea peaceful and freed it of pirates. In that war I captured about 30,000 slaves who had escaped from their masters and taken up arms against the republic, and I handed them over to their masters for punishment. (2) The whole of Italy of its own free will swore allegiance to me and demanded me as the leader in the war in which I was victorious at Actium. The Gallic and Spanish provinces, Africa, Sicily and Sardinia swore the same oath of allegiance. (3) More than seven hundred senators served under my standards at that time, including eighty-three who previously or subsequently (down to the time of writing) were appointed consuls, and about one hundred and seventy who were appointed priests..

26. I extended the territory of all those provinces of the Roman people on whose borders lay peoples not subject to our government. (2) I brought peace to the Gallic and Spanish provinces as well as to Germany, throughout the area bordering on the Ocean from Cadiz to the mouth of the Elbe. (3) I secured the pacification of the Alps from the district nearest the Adriatic to the Tuscan sea, yet without waging an unjust war on any people. (4) My fleet sailed through the ocean eastwards from the mouth of the Rhine to the territory of the Cimbri, a country which no Roman had visited before either by land or sea, and the Cimbri, Charydes, Semnones and other German peoples of that region sent ambassadors and sought my friendship and that of the Roman people. (5) At my command and under my auspices two armies were led almost at the same time into Ethiopia and Arabia Felix; vast enemy forces of both peoples were cut down in battle and many towns captured. Ethiopia was penetrated as far as the town of Nabata, which adjoins Meroe; in Arabia the army advanced into the territory of the Sabaeans to the town of Mariba.

27. I added Egypt to the empire of the Roman people. (2) Greater Armenia I might have made a province after its king, Artaxes had been killed, but I preferred, following the model set by our ancestors, to hand over that kingdom to Tigranes, son of King Artavasdes and grandson of King Tigranes; Tiberius Nero, who was then my stepson, carried this out. When the same people later

rebelled and went to war, I subdued them through the agency of my son Gaius and handed them over to be ruled by King Ariobarzanes, son of Artabazus, King of the Medes, and after his death to his son Artavasdes. When he was killed, I sent Tigranes, a scion of the royal Armenian house, to that kingdom. (3) I recovered all the provinces beyond the Adriatic sea towards the east, together with Cyrene, the greater part of them being then occupied by kings. I had previously recovered Sicily and Sardinia which had been seized in the slave war.

28. I founded colonies of soldiers in Africa, Sicily, Macedonia, both Spanish provinces, Achaea, Asia, Syria, Gallia Narbonensis and Pisidia. (2) Italy too has twenty-eight colonies founded by my authority, which were densely populated in my lifetime.

29. By victories over enemies I recovered in Spain and in Gaul, and from the Dalmatians several standards lost by other commanders. (2) I compelled the Parthians to restore to me the spoils and standards of three Roman armies and to ask as suppliants for the friendship of the Roman people. Those standards I deposited in the innermost shrine of the temple of Mars the Avenger.

30. The Pannonian peoples, whom the army of the Roman people never approached before I was the leading citizen, were conquered through the agency of Tiberius Nero, who was then my stepson and legate; I brought them into the empire of the Roman people, and extended the frontier of Illyricum to the banks of the Danube. (2) When an army of Dacians crossed the Danube, it was defeated and routed under my auspices, and later my army crossed the Danube and compelled the Dacian peoples to submit to the commands of the Roman people.

31. Embassies from kings in India were frequently sent to me never before had they been seen with any Roman commander. (2) The Bastarnae, Scythians and the kings of the Sarmatians on either side of the river Don, and the kings of the Albanians and the Iberians and the Medes sent embassies to seek our friendship.

32. The following kings sought refuge with me as suppliants: Tiridates, King of Parthia, and later Phraates son of King Phraates; Artavasdes, King of the Medes; Artaxares, King of the Adiabeni; Dumnobellaunus and Tincommius, Kings of the Britons; Maelo, King of the Sugambri; ... rus, King of the Marcomanni and Suebi. (2) Phraates, son of Orodes, King of Parthia, sent all his sons and grandsons to me in Italy, not that he had been overcome in war, but because he sought our friendship by pledging his children. (3) While I was the leading citizen very many other peoples have experienced the good faith of the Roman people which had never previously exchanged embassies or had friendly relations with the Roman people.

33. The Parthian and Median peoples sent to me ambassadors of their nobility who sought and received kings from me, for the Parthians Vonones, son of King Phraates, grandson of King Orodes, and for the Medes, Ariobarzanes, son of King Artavasdes, grandson of King Ariobarzanes.

[34] *In consulatu sexto et septimo, postquam bella civilia exstinxeram, per consensum universorum potitus rerum omnium, rem publicam ex mea potestate in senatus populique Romani arbitrium transtuli. Quo pro merito meo senatus consulto Augustus appellatus sum et laureis postes aedium mearum vestiti publice coronaque civica super ianuam meam fixa est et clupeus aureus in curia Iulia positus, quem mihi senatum populumque Romanum dare virtutis clementiaeque et iustitiae et pietatis causa testatum est per eius clupei inscriptionem. Post id tempus auctoritate omnibus praestiti, potestatis autem nihilo amplius habui quam ceteri qui mihi quoque in magistratu conlegae fuerunt.*

34. In my sixth and seventh consulships [28-27 BCE], after I had extinguished civil wars, and at a time when with universal consent I was in complete control of affairs, I transferred the republic from my power to the dominion of the senate and people of Rome. (2) For this service of mine I was named Augustus by decree of the senate, and the door-posts of my house were publicly wreathed with bay leaves and a civic crown was fixed over my door and a golden shield was set in the Curia Julia, which, as attested by the inscription thereon, was given me by the senate and people of Rome on account of my courage, clemency, justice and piety. (3) After this time I excelled all in influence [auctoritas], although I possessed no more official power [potestas] than others who were my colleagues in the several magistracies.

35. In my thirteenth consulship [2 BCE] the senate, the equestrian order and the whole people of Rome gave me the title of Father of my Country, and resolved that this should be inscribed in the porch of my house and in the Curia Julia and in the Forum Augustum below the chariot which had been set there in my honor by decree of the senate. (2) At the time of writing I am in my seventy-sixth year.

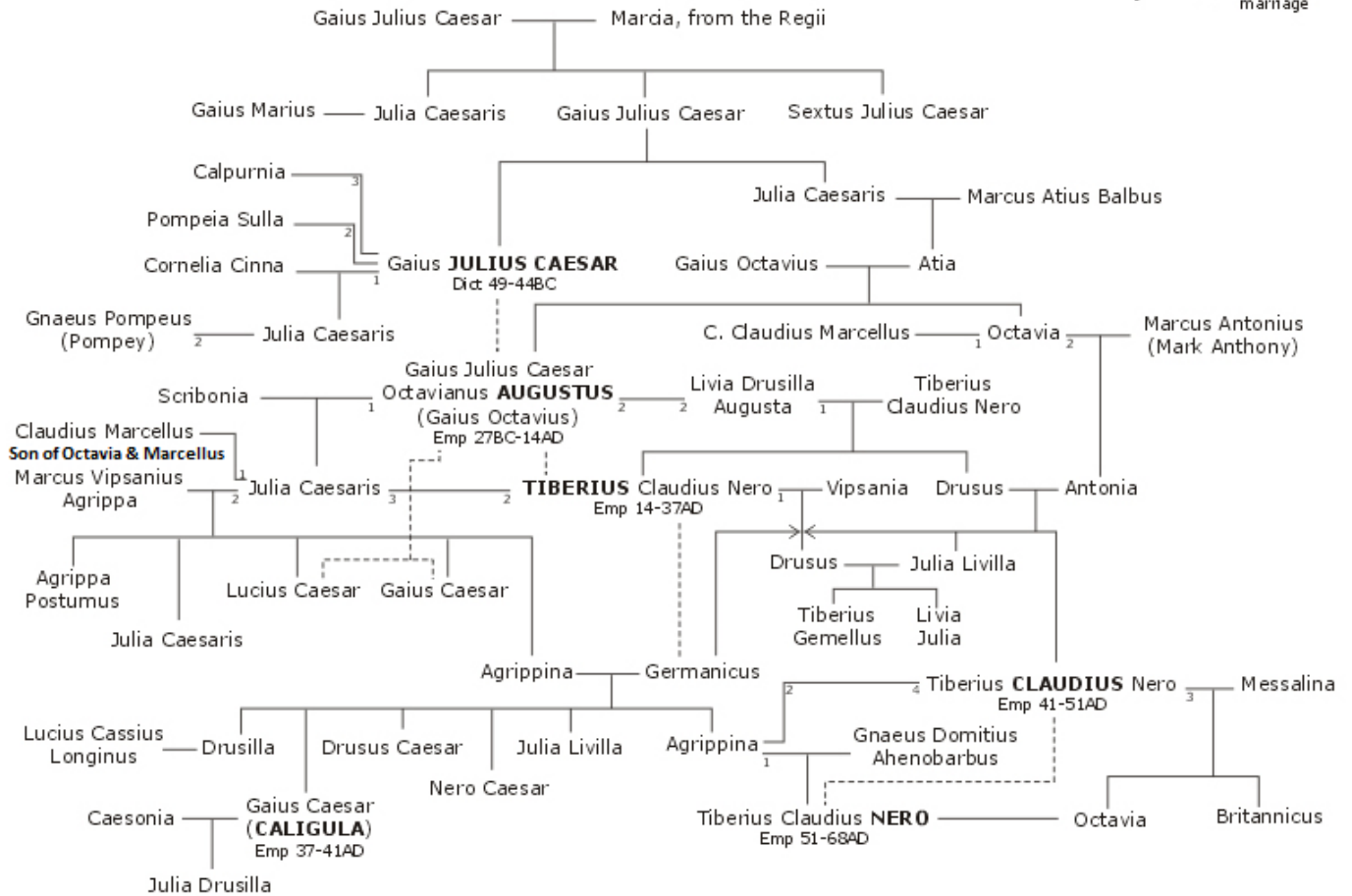
## Appendix

1. The amount of money that he gave to the treasury or to the Roman plebs or to discharged soldiers was 2,400,000,000 sesterces.
2. His new buildings were: the temples of Mars, of Jupiter the Thunderer and Feretrius, of Apollo, of the divine Julius, of Quirinus, of Minerva, of Queen Juno, of Jupiter Libertas, of the Lares, of the Di Penates, of Youth, of the Great Mother, the Lupercal, the shrine at the Circus, the Senate House with the Chalcidicum, the Forum Augustum, the Basilica Julia, the theatre of Marcellus, the Octavian portico, the grove of the Caesars beyond the Tiber.
3. He restored the Capitol and sacred buildings to the number of eighty-two, the theatre of Pompey, the aqueducts and the Via Flaminia.
4. The expenditure that he devoted to dramatic shows, to gladiatorial exhibitions and athletes and hunts and the sea battle, and the money granted to colonies, municipia, towns destroyed by earthquake and fire or to individual friends and senators whose property qualification he made up, was beyond counting.



## Julio-Claudian Family Tree

| son/daughter      Emp. emperor  
 | adopted son      Dict. dictator  
 — marriage      1,2... number of marriage



**ROMAN EMPIRE  
UNDER THE REIGN OF  
AUGUSTUS CAESAR  
25 B.C.**

