

## **Laura Betzig**

In the year leading up to the Ides of March, Caesar was voted a statue "To the Unconquerable God" in a temple, and an oath to his genius, or generative power, was ordered. Then in the year after he won the empire at Actium, Augustus was issued the same order: at every banquet, public and private, libations to the imperial genius were poured. Under the republic, people had always made sacrifices to the genius of the heads of their families, or gens; under the empire, they made the same sacrifices to their highly polygynous heads of state. Edicts ordered sacrifices throughout the empire to the imperial genius; and apostates, many of them perpetual virgins, were scourged, mutilated, turned into human torches, thrown to wild animals or otherwise martyred. But after Constantine moved east with his slave harems and eunuchs, the barbarian overlords who succeeded him in the west supported smaller households; and the Roman Church was filled up with the reproductively suppressed. Eusociality had given way to cooperative breeding: Catholicism had taken the place of the Imperial Cult.