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'Salvation' (*soteria*) and 'Saviour' Gods in Ancient Greece Theodora Jim, Lancaster University

This paper looks at the role of 'saviour' gods and the concept of *soteria* in the religious life of individuals and communities. Gods and goddesses called Soter/Soteira ('Saviour') are ubiquitous in the Greek world; innumerable sacrifices and dedications were presented to the gods for *soteria* ('salvation', 'deliverance', 'safety'). But perhaps because it was such a commonplace practice in Greek religion, historians have simply taken this phenomenon for granted, leaving its significance unexplained.

What did *soteria* mean for the ancient Greeks, and how did they experience it? Sought in circumstances ranging from seafaring to childbirth, healing, farming, hunting, warfare and so on, *soteria* is one of the blessings most hoped for from the gods. I ask what connected *soteria* in these apparently distinct spheres, and whether it contains any eschatological connotations in the Greek world. Other questions are: what roles did 'saviour' gods play in the everyday life of the people? Given the multiple options available in Greek polytheism, how did individuals decide which 'saviour' to appeal to in the hour of need? I go beyond the epithets and cult practices to investigate people's concerns, beliefs and perceptions of the gods. A combination of epigraphic and archaeological evidence will be exploited to assess the ordinary people's religious experiences, hopes and fears, and relations with the divine.

