

two opposed and distinctly separate groups of *honestiores* and *humiliores*. The division resulted from a very fundamental change in the living conditions of the majority of Roman society and was accompanied by a differentiation of the economic power of two above-mentioned groups. In the early Christian sources, it is correlated with the identification of copper as the money of the poor and gold as the ore of the rich. This observation interferes partly with G. Mickwitz's thesis who claimed that devaluation in ancient times had not led to the redistribution of social income⁵⁵. However, this does not seem to be totally correct when we take into consideration the meaning of the sources referring to the level of prices and wages. On the other hand, the quantity of data at our disposal is still insufficient.

Wages did not keep up with the price level and this fact led undoubtedly to impoverishment of citizens in the lowest social strata of the Roman Empire and, moreover, this situation favoured the proceeding polarization connected with the accumulation of material goods in narrow circles of the Empire and especially in the hands of large owners.

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⁵⁵ Ibid. See also S. Mrozek, *Dewaluacje, loc. cit.*; J. Jundziłł, *Pieniądz u Ojców Kościoła* (Money at the Church' Fathers), Warszawa 1984.