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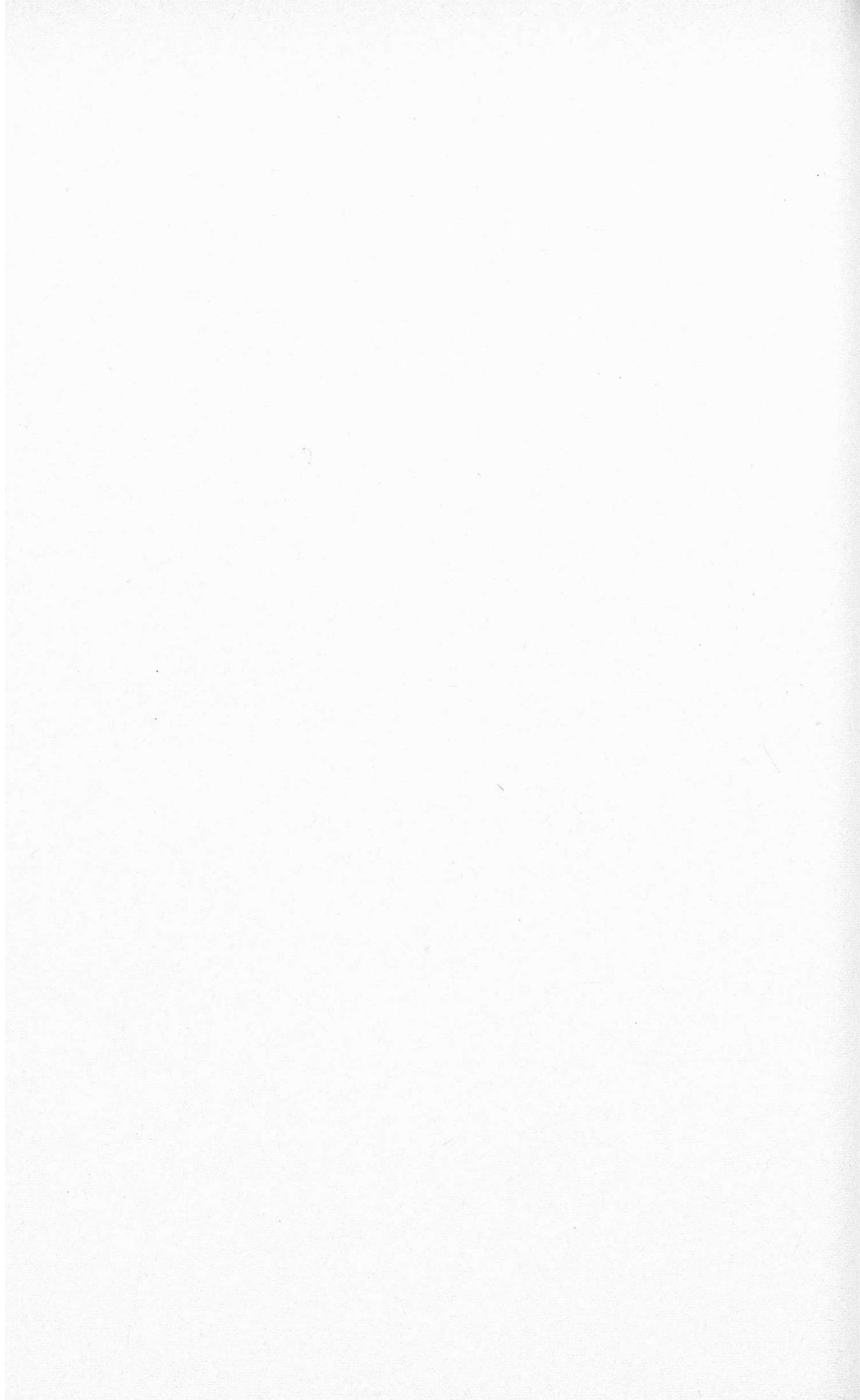
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G. W. BOWERSOCK

Greek Intellectuals and the Imperial Cult  
in the Second Century A. D.



## GREEK INTELLECTUALS AND THE IMPERIAL CULT IN THE SECOND CENTURY A. D.

There are many approaches to the study of the imperial cult. Some are less risky than others. One may catalogue temples, enumerate types of sacred games, prepare lists of priests, describe sacred paraphernalia, or assemble calendars of annual celebrations. Valuable as such scholarly enterprises are, they inevitably avoid and often obscure the truly sticky question. What did the cult mean to the worshipper and to the worshipped? This is a question of religious outlook or experience; and it puts one in mind of A. D. Nock's wonderfully offhand remark, "There were no doubt moments of intense emotion"<sup>1</sup>. He did not say who had those moments; it is unlikely he thought that everyone who participated in the cult had them, and if not everyone then it is easy to concede that there was intense emotion from time to time somewhere. After all, it takes very little in the way of ceremonial to evoke intense emotion in some people. But it is probably unfair and uncritical to state, as some scholars have, that such emotional believers belonged exclusively to the lower classes. Kenneth Scott, for example, wrote: "True religious belief in the divinity of the king or emperor is to be sought among the more ignorant lower classes"<sup>2</sup>. This view is, to some extent, the result of combining prejudice with a lack of evidence. As we shall see, there was certainly no shortage of credulity in the educated upper class. If the imperial cult evoked occasional

<sup>1</sup> A. D. Nock, *Deification and Julian*, *JRS* 47 (1957), 121 = STEWART II, 843 (Cross-references to Z. Stewart's two-volume collection (1972) of papers by A. D. Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, are given here in the form STEWART plus volume number and page reference.

<sup>2</sup> K. Scott, *Humor at the Expense of the Imperial Cult*, *CPh* 27 (1932), 328.



moments of intense emotion, it is not impossible that those moments sometimes occurred in the upper levels of society. Likewise, if many aristocrats found their religious emotion more often in other forms of worship (as they appear to have done), so too probably did those of lower degree.

The important fact is that the imperial cult provides no evidence at all for such religious emotion. Nock saw this clearly and often emphasized it <sup>1</sup>. No *ex voto* offerings survive to attest the piety of those who worshipped the emperors. As far as can be told, in the age from Augustus to Constantine, no person in the Roman empire addressed a prayer to a monarch, alive or dead. Yet there was veneration. So too, as Nock insisted, was there veneration of the standards of the Roman legions <sup>2</sup>. No one prayed to them, and one could scarcely expect anyone to do so. It is difficult for modern man, nourished on centuries of theological dispute and more recently on psychological interpretations of human behavior, easily to comprehend a cult, whether of men or military standards, which lacks what now seems an indispensable ingredient of religion—prayer. The christianization of the Roman Empire made this comprehension difficult even for the pagans of late antiquity. It is no accident that the one text which records prayers to a Roman emperor concerns the apostate Julian; in other words, it belongs to a period well after the Empire became Christian. Libanius asserted in an oration that prayers had been addressed to the dead Julian and had been heard <sup>3</sup>. As Nock has pointed out, this is a pagan response to the role of Christian saints <sup>4</sup>. In the struggle of the later fourth

<sup>1</sup> E.g. in the *CAH* X (1934), 481.

<sup>2</sup> A. D. NOCK, *The Roman Army and the Roman Religious Year*, *HTbR* 45 (1952), 239-240 = STEWART II 780.

<sup>3</sup> *Lib. Or.* XVIII 304.

<sup>4</sup> A. D. NOCK, *Deification and Julian*, *JRS* 47 (1957), 115ff. = STEWART II 833 ff.

century between pagans and the Christian establishment, Julian was invested with the powers of a saint.

Now, however, we are concerned with the time well before Constantine and, in particular, with an age for which ample evidence exists, namely the second century A. D. This is an age long before the mortal combat between pagans and Christians was joined; it is an age in which Christianity posed a threat to Rome, but not a great one. Paganism was the norm. Most of the people in the Empire can safely be assumed to have had some contact with the imperial cult, which manifested itself throughout the provinces from East to West. The administration of the cult was, as has long been recognized, entrusted to the affluent and educated upper class in the various parts of the inhabited world. What, we may ask, was the attitude of this pagan élite toward the worship of the emperors in the midst of a society that was almost universally pagan? Let us examine the evidence of the Greek East.

It will not astonish anyone closely acquainted with the high Roman Empire to discover that men of education and rank were capable of occultism and credulity. One has only to inspect the roster of patients awaiting dream-cures at the shrine of Asclepius in Pergamum or to note the names of certain followers of the false prophet, Alexander of Abonuteichos. Alexander's serpent god, Glycon, and his oracles were heeded by such eminent persons as the consular general Sedatius Severianus and the emperor Marcus Aurelius himself<sup>1</sup>. Cassius Dio wrote a history after receiving counsel in his sleep<sup>2</sup>. Let no one think, as scholars frequently have, that the *Oneirocritica* of Artemidorus emanate from and are directed to a milieu of low social degree. The author's

<sup>1</sup> Luc. *Alex.* 27 and 48. Cf. G. W. BOWERSOCK, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (1969), 71.

<sup>2</sup> Dio Cass. LXXII 23. Cf. G. W. BOWERSOCK, *op. cit.*, 73.

sometimes florid Greek and the amazing thoroughness of his dream-register bespeak a much more sophisticated reading public than one might at first suspect. Accordingly, when it is admitted that the Antonine upper class devoted itself conspicuously to occultism, its support of the imperial cult can be seen as less an aspect of religious life than of social and political life. This, of course, is to state the case in modern terms. For an Antonine senator religion was naturally social and political. The best people found it desirable to frequent the Asclepieum at Pergamum or to celebrate the Bacchanalia; but few before Commodus could have been persuaded to dabble in the worship of Antiochene Zeus or Mithras<sup>1</sup>. The special ingredient which the occult religions gave to a senator was emotional intensity precisely, or—in other terms—a deity that heard prayers, supernaturally provided advice, and received *ex voto*. No imperial *divus* did any of these things.

If we look at participation in the imperial cult in the provinces on the part of the local élite, it is clear that social and political roles are chiefly at issue. The provincial priest-hoods are an obvious steppingstone for persons of wealth and ambition on the way to securing greater honors for their families<sup>2</sup>. A typical pattern shows the son of a high priest as a Roman knight, and his son as a senator, perhaps consul. The cult of the emperors was intimately connected with the main provincial synod, known as the *κοινόν* or *concilium*. Hence eminence in provincial affairs often entailed eminence in the administration of the cult. In the Discourses of Epictetus there is a delightful exchange between the sage and a man contemplating holding the priesthood of Augustus at

<sup>1</sup> See J. BEAUJEU, *La religion de la classe sénatoriale à l'époque des Antonins*, in *Hommages à J. Bayet* (Coll. Latomus, 1964), 54-75.

<sup>2</sup> See the classic paper of A. STEIN, *Zur sozialen Stellung der provinziellen Oberpriester*, *Epitymbion Swoboda* (1927), 300 ff.

Nicopolis<sup>1</sup>. Epictetus' advice was explicit: "Drop the business: you will spend a lot of money for nothing."—"But", said the man, "they will write my name on contracts".—"And will you be present to say to those who read them out 'That is my name they have written'? And even if you can be present every time now, what about when you are dead?"—"My name will live after me."—"Write it on a stone and it will live after you. Who will remember you outside Nicopolis?"—"But I shall wear a crown of gold."—"If you want a crown at all, take one of roses and wear it; you will look more elegant in that." This whole exchange contains not a word about the *divus*, about any emotion connected with worship, about any divine intercession, about anything we should want to call religious sentiment. Nor is there the slightest suggestion of impiety in Epictetus's dissuasion of the priestly candidate. The only thing at stake is the man's reputation and career; and it is acknowledged that the priesthood will cost him dear.

There are other, similar indications that the provincial priesthoods were viewed as civic duties suitable for the wealthy and ambitious but in no sense a display of piety. Aelius Aristides stoutly resisted an attempt to draft him into the priesthood of Asia<sup>2</sup>, but never on that account was any impiety or heresy imputed to the great sophist. On the contrary, his intimacy with persons of importance increased; and he eventually secured respect and favour from Marcus Aurelius and Commodus. Likewise, when Hadrian chided Favorinus of Arles for thinking of rejecting a local priesthood, there was never any suggestion that impiety might

<sup>1</sup> Quoted and interpreted by F. MILLAR, *Epictetus and the Imperial Court*, *JRS* 55 (1965), 147: "The man's priesthood in the passage illustrates perfectly the political functions of Emperor-worship, in providing for the wealthy classes honorific positions which both gave them prestige and identified them with the régime."

<sup>2</sup> Aristid. *Or.* L 101 Keil; cf. G. W. BOWERSOCK, *op. cit.* (p. 181, n. 1), 37.



be involved <sup>1</sup>. The civic character of the priestly office was acknowledged in the various legal exemptions available to professional persons in the second century, for exemptions from the high priesthood had been authorized by the Roman government.

It will be noticed that these items about provincial priest-hoods not only show a total absence of any reference to piety but also of any reference to loyalty or treason. Obviously no one thought a man disloyal to the central government for refusing to serve as high priest of the emperor. Just as obviously, however, a provincial who wished to ascend within the Roman civil service—to become a knight or a senator—was well advised to take on the priestly office and to that extent his priesthood established his adhesion to the régime. If a man's career lay elsewhere, as with Aristides or Favorinus, he scarcely needed so expensive an avenue of promotion.

Yet the irrelevance of loyalty to the holding of high priest-hoods should not be taken to imply that loyalty was irrelevant to the cult. Those who turned down priest-hoods will undoubtedly have gone through the motions of worshipping the emperors on the appropriate days. There is no better illustration of the use of the cult in halting potential subversion to the state than Pliny's famous letter to Trajan about the Christians <sup>2</sup>. It will be recalled that Pliny dismissed any alleged Christian who was willing to curse Christ and to sacrifice to statues of the pagan gods, with which the image of Trajan was conjoined. Pliny makes clear that the spread of Christianity in Bithynia had alarmed him, for temples had become deserted and rites suspended. Although his reference to temples and rites need not refer only to the imperial cult, it is clear that this is included in the reference ;

<sup>1</sup> Philostr. *VS*, p. 490.

<sup>2</sup> Plin. *Epist.* X 96.

and Pliny explicitly states that precisely for the purpose of testing Christians he had caused the image of Trajan to be placed with the statues of the other gods. Willingness to sacrifice to the living emperor appeared to Pliny proof that a man was not subversive.

From all this are we to infer that Pliny himself believed Trajan to be a god? Hardly. Pliny came from Italy where the living emperor was not officially worshipped, and he was an intelligent person. He knew how to *use* the cult in Bithynia to handle an administrative problem. It is worth noting that in his letter to Trajan Pliny scrupulously distinguishes between the statues of the gods (*deorum simulacra*) and Trajan's *imago*; Trajan is not one of the gods as such. It will also be noticed that Pliny carefully speaks of the *simulacra* of the gods and the *imago* of a recognizable man. In his letter Pliny gives not the slightest hint that he feels himself writing to a god. Nor, for that matter, when Trajan replies, does the emperor show the slightest awareness of divinity on his part<sup>1</sup>. Trajan alludes to Pliny's proof that a suspect was not really a Christian by the interesting paraphrase, *supplicando dis nostris*. There is no allusion to *imago mea*.

It is, in fact, hard to believe that any but the most psychotic emperors (of whom there were several) considered themselves in any sense divine. Everyone knows the wry jest of that earnest financier, Vespasian, on his death-bed: *vae, puto deus fio*<sup>2</sup>. What is more (and this is often forgotten) Suetonius cheerfully recorded this utterance without any trace of embarrassment or venom. In the same way Seneca felt free to use the new cult of Claudius as the basis of an elaborate and poisonous jest for the delectation of

<sup>1</sup> Plin. *Epist.* X 97. The distinction between *simulacrum* and *imago* corresponds exactly to the distinction between ἄγαλμα and εἰκών, as demonstrated by Louis ROBERT, *REA* 62 (1960), 316-19 = *Opera Minora Selecta* II, 832-5.

<sup>2</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 23, 4.

some part of the Neronian élite <sup>1</sup>. Marcus Aurelius, in all his sombre *Meditations*, nowhere suggests that he is himself divine or, for that matter, will be after his death. On the contrary, observe this celebrated and typical passage from Book VIII: "Lucilla saw Verus die, and then Lucilla died. Secunda saw Maximus die, and then Secunda died ... Antonius saw Faustina die, and then Antoninus died. Such is everything. Celer saw Hadrian die, and then Celer died ... All ephemeral, dead long ago ... Augustus' court, wife, daughter, descendants, ancestors, sisters, Agrippa, kinsmen, intimates, friends, Areius, Maecenas, physicians and sacrificing priests—the whole court is dead <sup>2</sup>." There is no hope here in either being or becoming *divus*. Indeed in Book VI Marcus admonishes himself: "Take care not to be Caesarized—*ἄρα μὴ ἀποκαίσαρωθῇς*. Stay simple, good, pure, serious, free from affectation, a friend of justice, a worshipper of the gods, kind, affectionate, strenuous in all proper acts <sup>3</sup>." Caesarism for Marcus may be inferred from the opposites of those virtues he commends to himself. The notion of himself as a real god or of his predecessors as gods simply seems not to have entered his thinking. If he had had a sense of humour, like Vespasian, he might at least have made a joke about emperor worship. Two centuries later another literary monarch did just that. This was the arch pagan Julian, who used the cult for laughs with just as much unselfconsciousness as Seneca <sup>4</sup>. Of course, as we have already seen, not everybody in the late fourth century took the worship of an emperor as lightly as Julian did; but then he tried to be an old-fashioned pagan intellectual.

<sup>1</sup> I take the *Apocolocyntosis* of Seneca to be the extant *Ludus*. Cf. K. Scott, *op. cit.* (p. 179, n. 2).

<sup>2</sup> M. Ant. VIII 25 and 31.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, VI 30.

<sup>4</sup> K. Scott, *op. cit.* 327. The reference is to Julian's *Caesares*.

It is not easy to ascertain the views of thoughtful pagans on such a matter as the cult, which (it seems) many took for granted as a routine part of the Roman administrative machinery. We are fortunately in a position to examine in some detail the outlook of a number of the more prolific writers and orators of the Greek East in the second century A.D. These men constituted an integral part of the Roman Empire and at the same time brought to it a Hellenic inheritance of which they were fiercely proud. It will be instructive to observe in what ways they managed to accommodate themselves to the cult of Roman emperors, especially in a part of the world where the living could be worshipped along with the dead.

The fundamental fact here is that the Greek writers to whom I refer very rarely discuss the imperial cult at all. They appear both to accept it and to ignore it; they speak much too freely about related matters for men who are studiously trying to avoid an awkward or dangerous subject. They do make reference to the worship of men (not always emperors), to deities with whom the emperors were identified, to priesthoods, once in a great while to temples of the imperial cult. This is all done unselfconsciously, unapologetically. What then are we to infer about the convictions of these writers?

It will be convenient to start with Plutarch of Chaeronea. There has been considerable scholarly research on his opinion of the imperial cult, but most of it seems to be wide of the mark. Errors have often arisen from profound study of the author without a correspondingly profound knowledge of the age in which he lived. Still the basic work on Plutarch and the cult is the 1929 article of Kenneth Scott, *Plutarch and the Ruler Cult*<sup>1</sup>. As the title shows, this piece

<sup>1</sup> K. SCOTT, *TAPhA* 60 (1929), 117 ff. F. TAEGER, *Charisma: Studien zur Geschichte des antiken Herrscherkultes* II (1960), 506-641 (Die Haltung der zweiten Sophistik) contributes little to this discussion.



never makes the crucial distinction between ruler cult that is not emperor worship and ruler cult that is. Accordingly certain sharp observations of Plutarch on the cult of persons like classical Greek tyrants and Ptolemaic kings are used to turn him into an arch-foe of the imperial cult. Father Dvornik has recently followed K. Scott in laying particular stress on texts that mention no Roman emperor<sup>1</sup>. Plutarch would have been very surprised. Arthur Nock recognized this fallacy<sup>2</sup>, lately so has C. P. Jones in his new book on Plutarch and Rome<sup>3</sup>.

In his biography of Aristides the Just Plutarch paused in chapter six to reflect upon what he called the royal and divine appellation "The Just". Here are Plutarch's comments: "This no kings or tyrants ever coveted; rather, they rejoiced to be surnamed Besieger, Thunderbolt, Conqueror, Eagle, or Hawk—cultivating the reputation which is based on violence and power, as it seems, instead of on virtue. And yet divinity (τὸ θεῖον) to which such men are eager to adapt and conform themselves, evidently has three distinctive characteristics—immortality (ἀφθαρσία) power (δύναμις) and virtue (ἀρετή); the most awesome and divine of these is virtue.... What men most eagerly desire is immortality, of which our nature is not capable, and power, the chief disposal of which is in the hands of fortune; virtue, the only divine excellence within our reach, they put at the bottom of the list." In the first place, it is quite clear from Plutarch's illustrations that he was thinking of Hellenistic monarchic nomenclature: all are kings. There is no indication whatsoever in this passage that Plutarch was thinking of the imperial cult of his own day. Furthermore, it would be incredible, in view of the sage's close relations

<sup>1</sup> F. DVORNIK, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy* II (1966), 542.

<sup>2</sup> In the *CAH* X (1934), 489, n. 2.

<sup>3</sup> C. P. JONES, *Plutarch and Rome* (1971), 124.

with emperors and Roman aristocrats, if he were thought here to be obliquely attacking the contemporary cult. K. Scott asserted that he was heaping scorn on it<sup>1</sup>. That is altogether inconceivable. As A. D. Nock wrote in his superb chapter on religion in the *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. X, "It is to be noted that Plutarch makes outspoken criticisms of the self-deification of Hellenistic kings without any feeling that what he says might be taken as reflecting on Roman practice"<sup>2</sup>. The point of Plutarch's remarks in the *Aristides* is the assumption of grandiloquent appellations in conjunction with aspirations to divinity. Roman emperors did not assume such appellations. As far as Plutarch was concerned, they did not normally aspire to divinity, although he will have been aware that some received it.

The *Aristides* passage is valuable for its definition of that divinity which the men he reproached aspired to: namely, immortality, power, and virtue. Plutarch stated in plain Greek that the first of these, immortality, was unattainable by man. It follows from this that Plutarch believed no man, however important or good, was a god; his opinion was not much different from Pliny's. Both lived with the cult all around them and simply did not worry about it. Their *modus vivendi* undoubtedly depended upon the notion, which Plutarch clearly enunciated, of the possibility of some measure of divine excellence in men through virtue. This was scarcely a new or irregular notion in antiquity, and it underlines the great freedom with which adjectives like θεῖος or *divinus* were employed for extravagant praise. Man is capable of virtue, and virtue is divine;

<sup>1</sup> K. SCOTT, *op. cit.* (p. 187, n. 1). D. BABUT, *Plutarque et le Stoïcisme* (1969), 464-5, reiterates Scott's opinion and relies on it (p. 464, n. 3). Babut does not distinguish the worship of one or another ruler from the worship of the Roman emperors. The expression "le culte des souverains" encourages the muddling of these categories.

<sup>2</sup> A. D. NOCK, *ibid.* (p. 188, n. 2).

hence there is something divine in a virtuous man. So Plutarch.

Marcus Aurelius looked at things in a similar way. For him man consisted of three parts (the ancients so often found a triad irresistible),—body, breath, and mind (or what he calls the ruling part)<sup>1</sup>. This last ingredient partakes of the divine. “Zeus”, said Marcus, “has given to every man for his protection and guidance a portion of himself. This is every man’s understanding and reason”<sup>2</sup>. Plutarch would not have quarrelled with this. The common point is man’s sharing in the divine while not ceasing to be only a man. Both Plutarch and Marcus took the imperial cult utterly for granted; it does not worry them. This is because emperor worship seemed to them little more than an extravagant compliment to a man whose virtue or understanding had some share in the divine. It should be noted that this is not the same as saying that these intellectuals accepted the cult as a metaphor. There is no reason to think that anybody in antiquity had the idea of an official state metaphor.

There is another excursus on ruler worship in Plutarch’s biography of Romulus<sup>3</sup>. It is completely consistent with the passage we have already examined. It is not concerned with Roman emperors; it affirms the impossibility of a man-god, but acknowledges divinity through virtue. Plutarch concedes the possibility of posthumous divinisation for a person of exceptional virtue; but, he stresses, it is virtue, not legislation (οὐ νόμῳ πόλεως) that engenders such an elevation. This is simply a widely held and somewhat platitudinous conviction, invoked in an account of ancient history. K. Scott saw in the reference to legislation a hit

<sup>1</sup> M. Ant. II 2 (cf. XII 3). See on this J. BEAUJEU, *La religion romaine à l’apogée de l’empire*: I, *La politique religieuse des Antonins* (1955), 336.

<sup>2</sup> M. Ant. V 27.

<sup>3</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 28.

at the consecration of emperors (and occasionally of their women) by decree of the senate<sup>1</sup>. This is *prima facie* improbable; but worse, it is a misreading of the text. Plutarch is simply saying that virtue is the cause of divinity for mortals. He is *not* saying that there is anything wrong with organizing worship of one who *through virtue* has become divine. It is a question of priorities: virtue first, then legislation. Plutarch repudiates the reverse order. So presumably would most intelligent people of his day. When Antoninus Pius pleaded with the senate for the consecration of Hadrian, we may be sure that his argument was based on Hadrian's virtue, of which the senate was for good reason in some doubt.

Plutarch does on occasion refer to Roman emperors, but nowhere to denounce them for the cult. K. Scott, in support of his views (which others, notably Robert Flacelière, have taken over)<sup>2</sup>, emphasized a passage which is highly critical of Nero. This occurs in the essay on *How to distinguish a flatterer from a friend*<sup>3</sup>. Plutarch is attacking that emperor for his excesses of various kinds, especially acting on the stage and singing. This is hardly an attack on the institutional cult. Scott and others seem, in any case, to have forgotten that Nero was not a *divus*. He suffered *damnatio memoriae* throughout the empire. Plutarch shows himself a true member of the establishment in denouncing him.

Dio of Prusa, known as Dio Chrysostom, was a contemporary of Plutarch. He was steeped in Hellenic culture and became a philosophic counsellor of the emperor Trajan. It will be helpful next to examine certain of his views. Like Plutarch, he nowhere discusses the imperial cult as such;

<sup>1</sup> K. SCOTT, *op. cit.*, 131. On the *divi*, cf. J. BEAUJEU, *op. cit.*, 415 ff.

<sup>2</sup> R. FLACELIÈRE, Sur quelques passages des *Vies* de Plutarque, *REG* 61 (1948), 97.

<sup>3</sup> Plut. *Quom. adul. ab amic. internosc.* 56 E-F.



but it would be reasonable to assume that he too has no worries about it as an institution. Like Plutarch, moreover, he has occasion to reflect on the relation of the ruler to the divine. These reflections provide further guidance in comprehending the disposition of cultivated easterners in respect to the divinity of the emperor. Dio deals directly with this subject in the first of his four discourses on the nature of kingship.

The first discourse is addressed to Trajan as emperor. It falls into three, clearly distinguished parts. Dio begins with a description of the ideal monarch according to familiar Stoic tenets; the good ruler will honour the gods and care for men. Dio then turns to an account of the greatest and first king and ruler (περὶ τοῦ μεγίστου καὶ πρώτου βασιλέως καὶ ἄρχοντος) that is—Zeus. This is the god whom kings should strive to imitate: the greatest rulers among both Greeks and barbarians, says Dio, were pupils and imitators of Zeus. So, therefore, should Trajan take Zeus as his model. The discourse concludes with a rather long story which Dio claims to have heard from a woman in Elis in the Peloponnese. He calls the story a sacred and salubrious tale (ἱερὸν καὶ ὑγιῆ λόγον), and it is all about Heracles, a favorite of the Cynics and one of the well known savior deities. Dio's story concerns Heracles' purifying the world of tyrants and his fostering of good rulers,—hence its inclusion in the discourse. It is clear that the story is deemed beneficial for Trajan since the lady of Elis is reported to have said to Dio, "You will meet an important person, who rules over many places and peoples: do not hesitate to tell him this tale". Dio concludes by noting that Heracles is still active in putting down bad rulers and raising up good. "He is", says Dio to Trajan, "the helper and guardian of your rule, as long as you reign".

It will be seen at once that nowhere in this discourse does Dio ever even suggest that Trajan is or will be a god.

He does, however, lay stress on a divine model, namely Zeus, and a divine protector, namely Heracles. There is no intimation of an assimilation of the emperor to these deities. Model and protector,—that is all they are. Yet it is of the greatest significance that Dio singles out these two deities in his speech, for they show clearly that Dio is conforming to the religious ideology of the Roman government in his day. Without in any way touching upon the cult Dio follows a position which can be labelled with certainty as that of the ruling establishment. In his study of Roman religion in the second century A. D., J. Beaujeu has admirably analyzed the emergence under Trajan of a theology of the principate which was based precisely upon the gods Zeus and Heracles<sup>1</sup>. The evidence is numismatic, epigraphic, artistic, and literary (apart from Dio, who naturally reinforces it). Trajan's rule is envisaged as the grant of Zeus, as can be seen, for example, on a coin of 114 with Zeus and Trajan on the obverse and the legend on the reverse *conservatori patris patriae*<sup>2</sup>. The epithet *optimus*, offered to Trajan in 98 and later accepted by him, tells the same story. Likewise Pliny in his *Panegyric* to Trajan: "It is thus, I fancy, that the great Father of the universe rules all with a nod of the head, if he ever looks down on earth and deigns to consider mortal destinies among his divine affairs. Now he is rid of this part of his duties, free to devote himself to heaven's concerns, since he has given you to us to fill his role with regard to the entire race<sup>3</sup>." In the eastern empire some worshippers went so far as to assimilate Trajan with Zeus in their inscriptions<sup>4</sup>.

As for Heracles, it is now certain that Trajan introduced new and unparalleled honours for this deity in the imperial

<sup>1</sup> J. BEAUJEU, *op. cit.*, 71-87.

<sup>2</sup> Cited and discussed by J. BEAUJEU, *op. cit.*, 76.

<sup>3</sup> Plin. *Paneg.* 80, 4-5, in the Loeb translation of Mrs. Radice.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. J. BEAUJEU, *op. cit.*, 72-3.

pantheon. Beginning in 100, the figure of Heracles with the legend Hercules Gaditanus appears on the Roman coinage, and this issue is correlated with a new provincial type emanating from Tyre and exhibiting Heracles Melqart of Tyre. The connection is obvious, for Gades, whence Hercules Gaditanus, was the colony of Tyre. And as P. Strack—with less evidence available to him—had once surmised in his important work on the Trajanic coinage, Trajan, coming from Italica in Spain (not far from Gades), must have provided the impetus for the promotion of this saviour god<sup>1</sup>. The official ideology finds its reflection, just as we should expect, again in the *Panegyric* of Pliny: in your earlier career under Domitian, says Pliny, “You must have filled him with the same admiration (not unmixed with fear) as Jupiter’s great son inspired in his king when he remained forever unwearied and undaunted after the cruel labours demanded by the latter’s harsh commands”<sup>2</sup>. The reference is, of course, to the labours of Heracles.

The views of Dio of Prusa in respect to the emperor’s relation to the gods are thus entirely in accord with the ideology of the central government. We should expect Plutarch to have shared Dio’s views on the good monarch, and various texts indicate that he did, notably the treatise concerning uneducated rulers (conventionally called *To an uneducated princeps*). “One might say”, wrote Plutarch, “that rulers serve god for the care and preservation of men in order that of the glorious gifts which god gives to men, they may distribute some and safeguard others”<sup>3</sup>. Plutarch did not elaborate the new Jovian and Herculan theology,

<sup>1</sup> For discussion and documentation, see J. BEAUJEU, *op. cit.*, 81-3. Cf. P. STRACK, *Untersuchungen zur römischen Reichsprägung des zweiten Jahrhunderts I: Trajan* (1931), 95 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Plin. *Paneg.* 14, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Plut. *Ad princ. inerud.* 780 D.

but then he was not, like Dio, the counsellor and (one may perhaps say) mouthpiece of an emperor. The important point is that both men judge the ruler's relation to the gods in the same way; both are untroubled by the existence of the imperial cult. Their silence on the subject is neither sinister nor embarrassed.

A few decades after Plutarch and Dio of Prusa there flourished one of the most remarkable writers of antiquity, the hypochondriac devotee of Asclepius, Aelius Aristides. A very large quantity of his works survives and provides an opportunity never exploited to examine the sentiments of a cultivated easterner about the emperors in the mid-century. In his book on political philosophy in this age Father Dvornik makes the following observations: Aristides "does not disclose what he himself thought of the ruler cult. It is probable that in this respect he shared Plutarch's ideas"<sup>1</sup>. The facts are that Aristides discloses quite as much as Plutarch does and (as we have already noted) that Father Dvornik has completely misinterpreted what Plutarch says. The irony of his comment on Aristides is that Aristides almost certainly did share Plutarch's ideas, but those ideas are the opposite of what Father Dvornik thought they were.

I turn first to Aristides' *Panegyric in Cyzicus concerning the temple*, delivered in A. D. 166 or 167 on the occasion of the dedication of a great temple at Cyzicus in the province of Asia<sup>2</sup>. It is clear from Aristides that this was a temple of the imperial cult of magnificent proportions, about which we hear in other sources. The temple was nothing less than one of the Seven Wonders of the World, classified as such

<sup>1</sup> F. DVORNIK, *op. cit.* (p. 188, n. 1), 552.

<sup>2</sup> Aristid. *Or.* XXVII Keil. It is worth pointing out that in the vast index of sources at the end of L. CERFAUX-J. TONDRIAU, *Le culte des souverains* (1957), the name of Aelius Aristides does not appear.



in the prose and poetry of late antiquity <sup>1</sup>. It bore an inscription θεῷ Ἀδριανῷ, to the god Hadrian <sup>2</sup>. There has long been a problem as to the date of the dedication commemorated by Aristides, since one testimony asserts that the completion of this temple like that of the great Olympieum at Athens was due to the munificence of Hadrian himself <sup>3</sup>. Either we have to do in 166 or 167 with a rededication of some kind or with the delayed completion of a building that received its start under Hadrian. Cassius Dio reveals that a large and splendid temple at Cyzicus was destroyed by an earthquake, probably under Antoninus Pius <sup>4</sup>; an inscription of possibly Antonine date indicates that a temple at Cyzicus was built at the expense of the Koinon of Asia <sup>5</sup>. It may be, therefore, that it was the great temple to Hadrian which suffered in the earthquake and was rebuilt by the province of Asia. There are obviously other ways of disposing of this evidence, but I agree with D. Magie (against Charles Behr) that this is the most reasonable interpretation. One detail is certain: the Koinon of Asia met in Cyzicus at regular intervals to celebrate its festival.

Despite the difficulties in regard to the circumstances of Aristides' speech at Cyzicus, it is clear that we see here the great man actively engaged in the dedication of a temple to a deified emperor. One aspect of the speech is particularly striking: nowhere does the orator discuss or mention the divinity of an emperor, alive or deceased. He actually alludes to the dedicatory inscription <sup>6</sup>, but he does not quote

<sup>1</sup> Jo. Mal. XI, p. 279 (Bonn); *Anth. Pal.* IX 656.

<sup>2</sup> Jo. Mal., *loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> D. MAGIE gives a good account of the problem in his *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* II (1950), 1472-3. For a different view, cf. C. A. BEHR, *Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales* (1968), 101, n. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Dio Cass. LXX 4.

<sup>5</sup> *IGRom* IV 140.

<sup>6</sup> Aristid. *Or.* XXVII 22 Keil.

it and he does not indicate that Hadrian is called θεός. What he says is simply, "You have inscribed the name of the best emperor of those down to his time" (manifestly leaving an opportunity for the flattery to come of the reigning emperors, Marcus and Verus). Aristides describes the temple itself as a thank-offering to the gods (χαριστήριον... τοῖς θεοῖς). The θεοί in his Greek are sharply distinguished from the miscellaneous βασιλεῖς even though the dedication he cites proclaims one βασιλεύς as θεός. Aristides concludes his speech with an elaborate laudation of the harmonious collaboration of the emperors Marcus and Verus<sup>1</sup>. This eulogy refers to gifts from the gods; it calls the monarchs friends of the gods; it even compares the two men to the saviour gods Asclepius and Serapis. But nowhere does it imply that they are themselves divine. In other words, although the occasion is directly connected with the imperial cult and Aristides is openly and gladly joining in it, he says nothing of the divinity of monarchs. His behaviour is identical to that of Plutarch and Dio in this respect. Under the circumstances, it would be perverse to argue that Aristides was avoiding the subject. He took it for granted.

It will be recalled that Pliny carefully distinguished the gods from the emperor at the very time he was eager to revive the imperial cult. It will be recalled that Dio of Prusa advised Trajan to have as a model a deity with which he was assimilated by some worshippers. Plutarch implied that some part of an emperor could be divine and that with sufficient virtue he might posthumously become some kind of deity. Aristides was no different. He separated gods from living men (including emperors), and accepted the imperial cult with equanimity. This attitude emerges con-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. with this passage Aristid. *Or.* XXIII 78 Keil. See also B. P. REARDON, *Courants littéraires grecs des II<sup>e</sup> et III<sup>e</sup> siècles après J.-C.* (1971), 140-1.

sistently as the attitude of the pagan élite. No one could have expected a second-century intellectual to deliver a eulogy of an emperor as a very present god. But a happy people were indebted to the gods for a good emperor, and—as Aristides shows—the institution of a cult for him expressed the people's gratitude.

The Cyzicus speech of Aristides raises explicitly a question that can also be applied to the other intellectuals so far discussed. If the possibility of genuine deification of the deceased emperor is admitted, why should a writer like Aristides continue to distinguish so carefully between imperial θεοί who are dead and traditional pagan θεοί? The answer, in my view, lies in a point made much earlier in this paper. Even the imperial gods which a Plutarch or an Aristides were prepared to acknowledge (that is, certain dead emperors) were different from those in the pagan pantheon in that they did not hear prayers or effect supernatural miracles. Hence there was no problem in Aristides' steadfast devotion to Asclepius as his chief god or in Plutarch's deep allegiance to the shrine of Apollo at Delphi. There was no competition between these gods and the imperial ones. Their divinity was substantively different, so that when Aristides writes about the two groups in the same context that difference is made quite clear. The emotional religious life of Plutarch and Aristides lay no more in their participation in the cult of emperors than it did in the case of assorted careerist senators who were active in the cult. Such were the senators who met Aristides at the Asclepieum in Pergamum.

This is now the point at which to make a highly pertinent linguistic observation on the distinction between imperial θεοί and traditional θεοί. At Rome and in Latin generally a deified emperor or member of his household was known as *divus*, not *deus*. This distinction was firmly entrenched under the Empire and, in the opinion of Stefan Weinstock,

was invented by Julius Caesar<sup>1</sup>. Domitian's claim to be *deus* was a genuine outrage. There was, however, no equivalent pair of words in Greek, with the result that θεός was regularly employed both for *deus* and *divus* alike. Occasionally θεῖος appears for *divus*, but it is normally the equivalent of *divinus*; θεός conventionally renders *divus* on inscriptions. The consistent separation in Greek literature of imperial gods from traditional must be taken to reflect the universal assumption of educated men that a *divus* was different from a *deus*. We can see that Aristides so scrupulously confined the word θεός to the sense of *deus* that the emperors nowhere appear in his works as θεοί but are in fact distinguished from them. Not all writers were so careful about their diction. Lucian, for example, once used the expression θεός Μάρκος clearly as an equivalent of *divus Marcus*<sup>2</sup>. It is evident that cultivated Greeks at least were fully conscious of the difference between *divus* and *deus*, even if they were obliged to render both by the same word.

While the Cyzicus speech is perhaps the most fruitful text of Aristides in the present discussion, there is another which is worth looking at to augment the foregoing argument. This is the letter which the old man composed in A. D. 178 after an earthquake had laid Smyrna in ruins<sup>3</sup>. Aristides appealed directly to Marcus and Commodus as joint rulers for help in that terrible hour. His appeal is a moving piece, and it was successful. The emperors are addressed as human rulers throughout; they are always distinguished from the gods. Smyrna, said Aristides, enjoyed its unparalleled prosperity καὶ πρὸς θεῶν καὶ πρὸς ὑμῶν, at the hands of the gods and of you—the emperors, he

<sup>1</sup> St. WEINSTOCK, *Divus Julius* (1971), 391-2. Note Serv. *Aen.* V 45: *quamquam sit discretio, ut deos perpetuos dicamus, divos ex hominibus factos, quasi qui diem obierint: unde divos etiam imperatores vocamus.*

<sup>2</sup> Luc. *Alex.* 48.

<sup>3</sup> Aristid. *Or.* XIX Keil.



explains, in conjunction with the senate. A little later Aristides develops a most interesting comparison between making prayers to gods and petitions to emperors. He says: "For these things we *pray* to gods, but we *ask* of you who are the most godlike rulers; it is good to make such a request of both gods and men (καὶ μὴν τοῖς μὲν θεοῖς εὐχόμεθα ὑπὲρ τούτων, ὑμῶν δὲ τῶν θειοτάτων ἀρχόντων δεόμεθα· καλὸν δὲ πού καὶ πρὸς θεῶν καὶ πρὸς ἀνθρώπων δεῖσθαι τὰ τοιαῦτα <sup>1</sup>)."

This passage could scarcely be clearer in regard to three crucial points: prayer was not a conceivable form of petition to these emperors, they are explicitly categorized as ἄνθρωποι, they are acknowledged to possess divine qualities. The letter continues with an account of Asclepius' advice to Aristides to leave Smyrna before the earthquake occurred. After the orator had received word of the disaster, there was nothing for him to do but to call upon "the gods and you" (θεοὺς δὲ καὶ ὑμᾶς καλεῖν). Once again, a manifest separation of spheres. Plutarch or Dio of Prusa would gladly have concurred in all of this.

In considering Aristides we may examine some lines in one of his least interesting and certainly most overrated works, the speech to Rome <sup>2</sup>. This is a work full of rhetorical exaggeration and current clichés. In the thirty-second chapter we read of the massive respect which the emperor receives from his subjects. "No one is so proud", says Aristides, "that he can fail to be moved upon hearing even the mention of the ruler's name, but, rising, he praises and worships him and breathes two prayers in a single breath, one to the gods on the ruler's behalf, one for his own affairs to the ruler himself (οὐδεὶς δὲ ἐφ' ἑαυτῷ τηλικοῦτον φρονεῖ ὅστις τοῦνομα ἀκούσας μόνον οἷός τ' ἐστὶν ἀτρεμεῖν, ἀλλ' ἀναστὰς ὑμνεῖ καὶ

<sup>1</sup> Aristid. Or. V Keil.

<sup>2</sup> Aristid. Or. XXVI Keil. Cf. J. H. OLIVER, *The Ruling Power: A Study of the Roman Empire in the Second Century after Christ through the Roman Oration of Aelius Aristides* (1953).

σέβει καὶ συνεύχεται διπλῆν εὐχὴν, τὴν μὲν ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ τοῖς θεοῖς, τὴν δὲ αὐτῷ ἐκείνῳ περὶ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ)”. The passage is grotesquely exaggerated. The majority of persons did not produce a hymn upon hearing the emperor’s name. Nor is the moved subject likely to have uttered a double εὐχὴ. Still, granting the excessive rhetoric, we may scrutinize Aristides’ words. One prayer was directed to the gods, the other to the emperor. As always, the emperor is distinct from the gods. Further, the εὐχὴ to the gods is ὑπὲρ the emperor himself; the preposition is perfectly in order for a prayer to the gods. The εὐχὴ to the emperor is περὶ the subject’s own affairs. The change in preposition is significant, for περὶ implies negotiation or diplomatic petition and with this preposition the noun εὐχὴ takes on a much more neutral sense, which is by no means alien to it in appropriate contexts. What has moved Aristides in this passage was the rhetorical idea of the double prayer in expressing the sense of divinity evoked by the Roman emperor; but his point of view is made clear by the contrast between gods and emperor and by the shift from ὑπὲρ to περὶ. This text does not deserve the solemn elucidations it has occasionally received in total isolation from all of Aristides’ other writings <sup>1</sup>.

In the satiric works of Aristides’ eastern contemporary, Lucian, one looks nearly in vain for some trace of the humorist’s views of the imperial cult. M. Caster, in his ample book on Lucian and the religion of his times, devoted three pages to the imperial cult <sup>2</sup>. His point was simply that Lucian did not talk about it. One would not be surprised at this in view of the pattern we have already traced. There is but one minor allusion to the cult, and

<sup>1</sup> A. D. NOCK is excellent on this passage: *op. cit.* (p. 180, n. 2), 238-40 = STEWART II, 779-80.

<sup>2</sup> M. CASTER, *Lucien et la pensée religieuse de son temps* (1937), 358-60.

that occurs in Lucian's celebrated apology for taking an imperial salaried post after he had condemned employment of such a kind in an earlier essay. Everyone gets paid for what he does, Lucian maintains. Even the emperor gets paid: "I do not mean taxes or tribute", says Lucian, "such as come in annually from the subject peoples; rather, the emperor's greatest recompense is laudations and the good repute he enjoys everywhere and the worship he receives for his benefactions; the statues and temples and sacred precincts, such as there are among his subjects, are his pay, and they are given for his thoughtfulness and foresight"<sup>1</sup>. Apart from making clear what we already know—the intimate connection between the imperial cult and benefactions, this passage in Lucian serves to illustrate still further the notion of the intellectual élite that the divinity of an emperor comes to him in proportion to his merits. Lucian's formulation of the notion is deliberately offhand and wittily irreverent, but we have already seen that there was no bar to good humour at the expense of the imperial cult. Lucian's considered opinions were probably not all that different from the others we have so far surveyed. This passage is, regrettably but typically, all we have to go on.

I have reserved for the end a most remarkable text on the imperial cult. It is the advice which the historian Cassius Dio makes Maecenas give to Augustus on the eve of the principate. Maecenas' comments are a part of a long and incompletely preserved speech in reply to one assigned by Dio to Agrippa. Maecenas urges Augustus to become a monarch, Agrippa dissuades: both their speeches are undoubtedly fictional, but they tempt scholars to explore their significance for Dio's own time (the early third century). The speech is, in my opinion, a product of the reign of Severus Alexander, one of the relatively healthy periods in an ailing

<sup>1</sup> Luc. *Apol.* 13. Not cited in M. CASTER, *loc. cit.*

century<sup>1</sup>. It would be rash, however, to assume, as many have, that Maecenas' speech represents a direct attack by Dio upon a policy of the time. I find it very unlikely that a historian like Dio would embed in a vast Roman history a propaganda piece with immediate relevance to an adolescent emperor he had not met and to his policies. All that can be reasonably said is that we have here a collection of opinions which were canvassed or held by one or more intelligent persons of Dio's time, perhaps by Dio himself. When Maecenas is made to discuss emperor worship, many strains already familiar from the Greek writers of the second century recur.

This is what Maecenas says: "So far as you yourself are concerned, permit no exceptional or prodigal distinction to be given you, through word or deed, either by the senate or by anyone else. For whereas the honour which you confer upon others lends glory to them, yet nothing can be given to you that is greater than what you already possess.... You must therefore depend upon your good deeds to provide for you any additional splendour. And you should never permit gold or silver images of yourself to be made, for they are not only costly but also invite destruction and last only a brief time; but rather by your benefactions fashion other images in the hearts of your people, images which will never tarnish or perish. Neither should you ever permit the raising of a temple to you; for the expenditure of vast sums of money on such objects is sheer waste.... From temples comes no enhancement of one's glory. For it is virtue that makes many men like the gods (ἰσοθέους) and no one was ever elected a god. Hence, if you are upright as a man and honourable as a ruler, the whole earth will be your hallowed

<sup>1</sup> F. Millar's proposed date of composition (*A Study of Cassius Dio* (1964), 104) is, I believe, too early: *Gnomon* 37 (1965), 471-3. As A. Birley divined (*Septimius Severus* (1971), 9, n. 1), on page 471 of that review for "Mauretania" read "Mesopotamia".



precinct, all cities your temples, and all men your statues, since within their thoughts you will ever be enshrined and glorified.... If you desire to become truly immortal, do as I say <sup>1</sup>."

To a certain degree Dio is here swept away by his own Thucydidean rhetoric. Anyone closely acquainted with Pericles' Funeral Oration in Thucydides' History will not fail to detect its influence upon Dio: "images in the hearts of your people, the whole earth will be your hallowed precinct, etc." <sup>2</sup>. The basic sentiment in this segment of Maecenas' speech is simply that virtue brings its reward, including a close approximation to divinity; it makes men like the gods and leads to true immortality. No vote can replace genuine merit. This comes exceedingly close to the passage in Plutarch we have examined earlier with its phrase οὐ νόμῳ πόλεως <sup>3</sup>. Maecenas is made to sound almost like a representative Greek intellectual of the high empire.

He carries the argument further, however, than anyone in all the extant writings of the second century when he asserts that there should be no formal worship of the emperor at all; there should be no gold or silver images, and no temples. The point is made with reference to the worship of living emperors, and it is entirely consistent with the views of second-century Greeks; but—as far as we can tell, and the evidence is abundant—none of them ever made this point. Nor does it ever seem to have occurred to them to do so. Yet they would have agreed with it. Unlike the Christians, they were simply not troubled by the issue; and the freedom with which they discussed related matters precludes a sinister and calculated policy of silence.

<sup>1</sup> Dio Cass. LII 35-6.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Th. II 43.

<sup>3</sup> *Rom.* 28.

We must ask, then, what came between those second-century thinkers and the Maecenas of Dio in the reign of Severus Alexander. Both Lucian and Aristides, the latest of our witnesses, died in the vicinity of 180<sup>1</sup>. What came after them to impel a thoughtful man to abandon the easy acceptance of the cult and to have pushed the old arguments to conclusions hitherto unexpressed? The answer seems to me clear: the gross and unspeakable abuse of the imperial cult by two prodigiously immoral religious fanatics, Commodus and Elagabalus. The sensational aberrations of these two monarchs had severe repercussions in the Empire. Trajan would have been horrified to see the extravagant earnestness with which Commodus enlarged the role of the Hercules who came from Gades and Tyre. Cassius Dio himself affirmed that with the reign of Commodus the Romans passed from a kingdom of gold to a kingdom of iron and rust<sup>2</sup>. And no one in the second century, least of all a devout family man of Hellenic tastes like Plutarch, would ever have imagined that a Roman emperor would bear a Semitic name meaning "god of the mountain" and would worship a black stone. Commodus as the unconquered Heracles, Elagabalus as the unconquered sun: these men, so lacking in every proper virtue that brought its share of divinity, claimed their worship with frightening enthusiasm. The divine claims of Domitian, which had once seemed excessive to Romans but left no disastrous inheritance at his death, were nothing compared with the antics of Commodus and Elagabalus. When Severus Alexander reached the throne at the age of twelve or thirteen, a Greek intellectual could no longer take cult for granted. We should not, after all, be surprised to find that such a

<sup>1</sup> The latest reference in Lucian is that cited above, p. 199, n. 2; the latest work of Aristides appears to be *Or.* XXI Keil, if it is addressed to Commodus.

<sup>2</sup> Dio Cass. LXXII 36, 4.

man's reflections on virtue and worship had been pushed to the limit. The absence of the imperial cult became a seductive dream.

We have come a long way in this attempt to understand what the worship of emperors could have meant to the well placed and educated élite of the eastern Empire in an age when paganism was still supreme. To view a peculiarly pagan phenomenon from the position of a pagan is no easy task, especially since it so rarely occurred to him to talk about it. Yet a fairly consistent pattern can be traced both of action and doctrine. For a protracted period the cult functioned relatively smoothly without embarrassing or compromising anyone. The complacency of the intellectual élite in the matter of divine emperors was ultimately shattered by aberration within the royal house itself. The time had come to make explicit the delicate and unspoken presumptions of a Dio Chrysostom or an Aristides : no thinking man ever believed in the divinity of a living emperor, but he could tolerate its trappings by reference to divine models and protectors ; and although he could conceive of the deification of a deceased emperor, he could never consider an imperial θεός one of "the gods".

## DISCUSSION

*M. Beaujeu* : Une remarque sur un point de détail : il me paraît difficile d'admettre que Plutarque, lorsqu'il critiquait, dans la *Vie de Romulus*, roi romain, la divinisation des souverains, en Grèce, par décision de la cité, n'ait pas été conscient du fait que sa critique englobait l'apothéose des empereurs romains, même s'il n'a pas délibérément cherché à l'attaquer.

*M. Bowersock* : My interpretation of the Plutarch text depends upon my understanding of Plutarch's historical role in the Greco-Roman world. An implication about the imperial cult commends itself to many modern scholars. But that is no reason for assuming that Plutarch or his contemporaries responded in the same way. Plutarch nowhere attacks the cult of Roman emperors ; his historical career makes it unlikely that he would have done so. I cannot therefore *infer* that he did. He spoke without embarrassment, as A. D. Nock saw so well.

*M. Millar* : May I add a point concerning the historical background of Plutarch's attitude to ruler-cult? You have suggested that the early second century was a time when a Greek intellectual could accept with ease and indifference the fact of the cult of emperors. But all our major sources from this period, Tacitus, Pliny, Suetonius, Dio of Prusa and Plutarch himself, show traces at least of a reaction to the reign of Domitian. Dio indeed refers explicitly and in hostile terms to Domitian's claim to be *dominus et deus* (XLV 1). I wonder if Plutarch could have made even general remarks about divinisation without thinking also of the events of his own lifetime?

*M. Bowersock* : Of course all major sources of the early second century show a reaction to the reign of Domitian. Several

writers, notably Tacitus and Pliny, had a good deal to account for: loud protest and repentance were inevitable. The situation for Greeks like Plutarch and Dio was scarcely comparable. They could condemn the excesses of Domitian with a good conscience, and they did. That emperor's divine pretensions were no part of the imperial cult as Plutarch and Dio knew it, and he was not deified. It is possible, therefore, that Plutarch, in discussing Hellenistic excesses, may have had Domitian in mind; but this inference is perhaps unnecessary, since when he wanted to criticize Domitian he did so explicitly (e.g. *De curios.* 522 E), as he did in the case of Nero.

*M. den Boer*: In the title of his valuable contribution Mr. Bowersock does not mention of sophists but of intellectuals as such. I wonder whether physicians sometimes also belonged to this group. For the most famous among them (such as Galen) this will be obvious, perhaps also for some of the physicians at court. If that is true, Vespasian's healing of the sick in Alexandria (Tac. *Hist.* IV 81)<sup>1</sup> is not without importance for our subject. He asked their opinion about the question whether the sick could be healed *spe humana*. In their reply it is striking that they do not rule out the possibility that the emperor had been chosen for this divine service. Apparently failure was not expected to influence the position of the emperor in an unfavourable way. The doctor is never to be blamed: *denique patrati remedii gloriam penes Caesarem, inriti ludibrium penes miseros fore*. Here we see, I think, a reaction of the common people to the almighty guild of doctors: they could not do wrong. This attitude is *a fortiori* important for the new emperor who has no tradition at all in his ancestry to make him a worthy successor of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Therefore, the assurance of the physicians is welcome and the emperor heals the sick, "believing

<sup>1</sup> On finds a searching analysis of this passage—and relevant modern literature—in A. HENRICHs, Vespasian's Visit to Alexandria, ZPE 3 (1968), 51-80, especially 65-72.



that his good fortune was capable of anything and that nothing was any longer incredible": *cuncta fortunae suae petere ratus* are words of an enormous consequence. People believed it, and among them the intellectual P. Cornelius Tacitus who speaks without any mistrust of *multa miracula, caelestis favor et quaedam in Vespasianum inclinatio numinum*. This could be the basis for the cult of the ruler-healer, especially practiced by the common people for whom more than a certain partiality of the gods in favour of Trajan was obvious. After the miracle, the emperor stands there, with a smiling countenance and amid intense excitement of the part of the bystanders: *erecta quae adstabat multitudo*. Here at last we have the common man whom we missed in most of our contributions, here we observe the beginning of personal religion towards the divine ruler, or already more than that: a *religio animi*.

I think that mediaeval history offers striking parallels which bear testimony to the fact that this popular belief continued to exist. It has been studied and explained admirably by M. Bloch in his masterly book *Les rois thaumaturges. Etude sur le caractère surnaturel attribué à la puissance royale* (1924, repr. 1961).

*M. Bowersock*: Certainly some doctors, of whom Galen is the best representative, were intellectuals; but there is no reason to believe that the physicians who gave Vespasian the desired response at Alexandria were men of that kind. They were presumably public doctors such as Mr. Cohn-Haft has studied. The significance of the Alexandria incident is not easy to assess, as it was a part of Flavian hagiography. But I should not think Tacitus' language here (e.g. *caelestis favor*) means any more than his famous *deum ira*. And if this is the beginning of personal religion of common people towards the ruler-healer, it is nevertheless very difficult to find the continuation. In any case, the Alexandria incident is not an aspect of the imperial cult as an institution.

*M. den Boer* : But Tacitus, although remarkably sceptical in the beginning, at last believed in the supernatural powers of Vespasian (*Hist.* I 10, 7 : *occulta fati et ostentis ac responsis destinatum Vespasiano liberisque eius imperium post fortunam credidimus*).—The *ostenta*, in my opinion, include the miracle of healing.

*M. Bickerman* : Allow me to return to two points which I have already made but which may be of some use for interpretation of the texts you have now examined. First : *religio animi*. Of course, it also existed among the Greeks and the Romans, but when this attitude appears, it is noted as particular, as supererogatory. For instance, one of the authors you deal with, Dio Chrysostom, in his *Olympic discourse* (XII 60) says that men, like little children away from their parents, are eager to be with gods and to converse with them, since they rightly love gods for their beneficence and because of kinship with them. But Dio says it to justify the anthropomorphic representation of gods. As the Greeks and the Romans did not have a priestly caste or even a priestly class, as priesthood of a city god was a purely secular function, there is no reason to be surprised that Epictetus speaking to a man who wanted become priest of the imperial cult, spoke of golden crown, etc. and uttered no word about piety, etc. On the other hand, let us remember that the Greeks speaking of imperial worship had in mind their own cults of living emperors and not the *divi* of Rome. This Greek worship was always directed not to the sovereign *qua* sovereign, but to a benefactor of the city, as Dr. Habicht has stressed in his excellent book, and the benefactor in question did not need to be a ruler. Greek attacks against the ruler worship were accordingly conditional ; they were directed against the cult rendered to persons who had not deserved this supreme form of praise. You can canonize Jeanne d'Arc but you may not declare sainte Eva Peron. Thus, to say it again, the cult of sovereigns did not exist in Greece. A city deified a benefactor. That the benefactor was more often than not a ruler was due to political conditions, but this fact

did not change the nature of Greek custom to deify eminent benefactors.

*M. Bowersock*: I am in virtually complete agreement with Mr. Bickerman's observations. I should take exception only to his remark that Greeks speaking of imperial worship do not have in mind the *divi* of Rome, but rather their own cults of living emperors. This distinction seems a little artificial to me. However that may be, my point is that most of the time Greeks do not speak of imperial worship at all.

*M. Habicht*: Mr. Bowersock hat die Position der einzelnen Autoren zum Kult der Kaiser sehr deutlich gemacht, die sie als Individuen in ihrer Zeit und ihrer Umwelt zu dem Phänomen einnehmen. Alle stehen aber zugleich in einer langen Tradition, die von Platon, den Kynikern, den Stoikern usw. herkommt. Vielleicht wäre es nützlich, jeweils ganz kurz anzugeben (oder sich die Frage zu stellen), wieviel an ihren Äusserungen traditionelles Gut ist, wieviel individuelle Zutat unter den Bedingungen und Erfahrungen ihrer eigenen Zeit. Dies nur als Anmerkung, nicht eigentlich als Frage. Meine spezielle Frage betrifft den Fall des Peregrinus Proteus und Lukians Satire über ihn. Ist es denkbar, dass bei der Selbstverbrennung des Peregrinus in Olympia und seinem an sie geknüpften Anspruch einer Metamorphose die römische Kaiserapothese in irgendeiner Weise mitspielt? Und ist es denkbar, dass der Ritus der Kaiserkonsekration für Lukian eine Rolle spielte bei der Wahl dieses Sujets? Nach Mr. Bowersocks Ausführungen nehme ich an, dass er diese Frage verneinen wird.

*M. Bowersock*: Certainly the views of Dio or Plutarch belong to important traditions of philosophical thought. These traditions are clearly delineated in M. Beaujeu's book on Antonine religion. Aristides, an enemy of philosophy, is somewhat different; and inasmuch as rhetoric is less a matter of doctrinal



speculation, Aristides' comments (or lack of them) are more directly revealing. In the question of Lucian's *Peregrinus* Herr Habicht has correctly divined my response : *Peregrinus* Proteus was quite interesting enough as a master charlatan (just as Alexander was).

*M. Beaujeu* : M. Habicht vient de souligner, à juste titre, l'intérêt qu'il y aurait à étudier, en fonction de leur appartenance philosophique, l'attitude des intellectuels païens à l'égard de la divinisation des souverains ; il est remarquable en effet qu'un Plutarque, adepte convaincu du platonisme, soit hostile à l'apothéose, alors que Balbus, dans le *De natura deorum*, n'y voit pas d'objection, parce que pour un stoïcien, la conception de la divinité est très différente. Il faudrait aller plus loin : la question de l'immortalité devrait être entièrement reprise, en relation étroite avec celle des différentes conceptions de la personnalité, du moi, dans l'Antiquité ; quels étaient les composants de ce moi (corps, âme, démon individuel, etc.) et comment se définissait son identité ? Qu'est-ce qui survivait du moi après la mort terrestre ? Depuis les Mânes, ombres inconsistantes, à peine individualisées, jusqu'à l'être divinisé, en qui se conserve et s'exalte la plénitude de la personne vivante, en passant par l'ἀπόσπασμα des Stoïciens, qui retourne se fondre dans la substance éternelle de l'éther divin, et par l'âme individuelle, mais dépersonnalisée des platoniciens et des pythagoriciens, combien de degrés et de différences, qui devraient faire l'objet d'une analyse comparative, à la lumière des travaux de Rohde, Cumont et Nilsson !