

The Piety of Commodus and Caracalla and the Εἰς Βασιλέα

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I. The Piety of Commodus and Caracalla

TWO ELEGANT ESSAYS of M. P. Charlesworth, "The Virtues of a Roman Emperor: Propaganda and the Creation of Belief" and "Pietas and Victoria: the Emperor and the Citizen," are well known.¹ Also a study by Th. Ulrich, *Pietas (pius) als politischer Begriff im römischen Staate bis zum Tode des Kaisers Commodus* (Breslau 1930), should be mentioned for those who wish to trace the development. Charlesworth, who recognized *pietas* as one of the four cardinal virtues of a Roman emperor from the days of Augustus, found it ("The Virtues," p.11) the most difficult to define but called it "the inward and spiritual link of the imperial system." He continues, "In the ruler it is a feeling of duty and love towards the Roman people, their traditions and their religion." This statement, which leaves out the other peoples of the empire, does not do full justice to the complexity of the concept of the emperor's piety (εὐσέβεια) at least in the East from the time of Commodus and the Severi. The development was not as straight as Charlesworth describes it, because the *pietas* of the emperor retained its old meaning but took on new meanings which caused the adjectives *pius felix* to become part of every emperor's name after Caracalla. The *eusebeia* which Commodus and Caracalla seemed to represent was expected to result in a policy of greater love and duty toward the provincials, their traditions and their religion.

Commodus and Caracalla were hardly great men, but they left behind them a good repute in many areas as well as bitter hatred in senatorial circles. The picture which Cassius Dio draws of each is so poisoned with hatred (justified or not) that it is difficult to see what they or their partisans were trying to do. It is worth stripping away the imputations of base motives and the ridicule to which they easily laid themselves open if we are interested in understanding their policy, so important for the East, whether mistaken or not. There

¹ *ProcBritAc* 23 (1937) 1-31 and *JRS* 33 (1943) 1-10, respectively.

were other origins of their policy in the emperor's rôle as mediator, and these too went back over Hadrian to the beginning of the principate.

After the reunification of the Roman world Augustus sought to reassure the inhabitants of the *orbis terrarum* by extending the benefits of his protection to all, first to Roman citizens everywhere, later to the 'allies' and dependents of the Roman republic. Throughout its many aspects the situation developed in response to what the Romans expected of a statesman and leader and to what the peoples of the empire expected of a protector and mediator. The pacification and resultant prosperity were regarded by many admirers as the work of a god. Augustus, who did not, when asked, accept divine honors for himself alone, allowed worship of Rome and Augustus, but after 12 B.C. he made emphatic use of the title *pontifex maximus* whenever he wrote officially to the Greek cities, and he chose as a Greek translation of this title the word ἀρχιερεύς. The *archiereus*, though the highest priestly official in the Roman world, was of course still a man. Respect for Augustus, however, among many Athenians led to the establishment of cult honors but at Delphi, Delos and probably Athens to the official erection also of monuments to Augustus as both god and *archiereus*.² He was, or was capable of becoming, the great mediator between gods and men, even in the old Greek world. He presented himself as the leading citizen of the Roman republic, having an official, oecumenical status as *imperator* and *pontifex maximus*, supported annually with the tribunician power. From 12 B.C. on, the three official bases of the imperial position were already clear, namely the military (and judicial) command of the *imperator*, the religious position of the *archiereus* (*pontifex maximus*), and the political initiative afforded directly by the tribunician power.

Many cases could be cited where the provincials found refuge in the emperor's protection, and many spontaneous expressions of loyalty to the emperor as an individual occurred among the non-Roman provincials. This is well known. Specific attention need be drawn merely to the miracles attributed to the new *basileus* Vespasian on his visit to Alexandria.³ The word βασιλεύς, no translation of *imperator*, invested the emperor with the aura not only of the commander but

² J. Bousquet, *BCH* 85 (1961) 88–90.

³ Tac. *Hist.* 4.81–83. For *P.Fuad* I 8 and the philosophical consecration of Vespasian at Alexandria see F. Grosso, *Acme* 7 (1954) 391–430.

of the *archiereus*. Dreams of what a messianic emperor could do for them lay behind the curious phenomenon of the false Neros who arose after Nero's death.

In a remarkable article⁴ Schwarte has explained the background and brought out the importance of the change which occurs in the Acts of the Arval Brothers⁵ for 22 January 86 when vows to Juppiter alone were made for the emperor Domitian, *ex cuius incolumitate omnium salus constat*. A year later⁶ the old vows were paid and new vows made to Juppiter for the emperor, *ex cuius incolumitate u[n]iversorum salus constat*. Schwarte argues correctly that *omnes* and *universi* mean here all men, not just all citizens. Then a change occurs in the vows which were made to the Capitoline Triad. On 3 January 91 the vows⁷ were made to Juppiter, Juno, Minerva and *Salus Augusta p(ublica) p(opuli) R(omani) Q(uiritium)*, wherein the epithet *Augusta* spelled out the connection between the *salus* of the Roman People and the safety of the emperor. In addition Schwarte cites the evidence from the correspondence between Pliny and Trajan, first the prayers mentioned in 10.52, *precati deos ut te generi humano, cuius tutela et securitas saluti tuae innisa est, incolumem florentemque praestarent*. These prayers were not limited to Romans, *eadem provincialibus certatim pietate iurantibus*. The *genus humanum* inhabited the *orbis terrarum* which the Romans claimed to rule. Trajan issued a gold coin with the legend SALVS GENERIS HVMANI.⁸ And Schwarte rightly stresses the significance of Trajan's express mention of the provincials in 10.36. As a result Pliny next year gave the provincials the prominence the emperor wished when in 10.100 he reported the prayers.

For the Greek world the reign of Hadrian was of basic importance in many ways. He founded the Panhellenion and introduced many improvements. As Olympios and Panhellenios he identified himself with Hellenism and especially with Athens, where he participated in the political, cultural and religious life and served as nomothete too. He provided above all for the Hellenes, but he did not neglect the other provincials either.

⁴ K.-H. Schwarte, "Salus Augusta Publica: Domitian und Trajan als Heilbringer des Staates," *Bonner Festgabe Johannes Straub* (= *Bonner Jahrbücher Beiheft* 39, 1977) 225-46.

⁵ *Acta fratrum Arvalium quae supersunt restituit et illustravit Guil. Henzen* (Berlin 1874, repr. 1967) p. cxiv lines 39f [hereafter, HENZEN].

⁶ Henzen, p. cxviii, II line 3.

⁷ Henzen, p. cxxx line 17.

⁸ BMC III 87, 410, cited by Schwarte, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.3) 234.

Antoninus Pius had been proconsul of Asia before becoming Caesar. He certainly maintained his benevolence toward Greeks and other provincials, but he did not travel, and there was nothing particularly Eastern in the associations of his name Pius.

According to *IG II² 2086* the Athenian epebes in 163/4 at the annual commemoration of the Battle of Plataea offered sacrifices for Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. The sacrifices were offered first for their victory as *imperatores* in the war against the Parthians and secondly for their *ὑγεία* as *archieis*.⁹ The two main elements of the kingship are here separated. The emperor as *imperator* produces *victoria*, the emperor as *pontifex maximus* effects the *salus generis humani*. After the end of the war the prayer no longer asked for victory, merely for the emperor's *ὑγεία* (*IG II² 2113*). We are reminded of the above cited prayer for the emperor *ex cuius incolumitate omnium salus constat* and of the religious position of the emperor as mediator, not only for Roman citizens but for all.

Among the most important experiences for Commodus, perhaps the two most important in the formation of his later policy, were (1) the shock of the revolt of Avidius Cassius and (2) the shock of his sister Lucilla's conspiracy in 182 to kill him. After the revolt of Avidius Cassius, which Marcus Aurelius took very seriously, the two emperors Marcus and Commodus made a long trip to the East, had themselves initiated into the Mysteries at Eleusis and established the Sacred Gerusia at Athens in support of the cult of Athena. There was a sudden realization that the East, still suffering from the aftermath of the Parthian War and perhaps neglected during the war on the Pannonian front, no longer felt the essential unity of the Empire. Suddenly the morale of the Roman East, the loyalty of the Greek provinces to the emperor, had become more important than finishing hostilities in the North. The chief problem was, therefore, not a purely political or even military problem but a spiritual one; that is to say, a politico-religious one. The emperor had to show that he was not only the chief priest in the city of Rome but the religious champion of all.

⁹ The passage is discussed in *Historia* 26 (1977) 90–93 along with the term *archieis*. Lucius Verus frequently received from others the title *pontifex maximus* in recognition of his position as co-emperor, but he never claimed it himself in the heading of an epistle. The only exception is the epistle to a Macedonian(?) city published by Ch. Avezou and Ch. Picard, *BCH* 37 (1913) 87–90, no.2, where the title *ἀρχιερεὺς μέγιστος* is a mere scribal error for the new victory epithet *Παρθικὸς Μέγιστος*.

After the death of Marcus Aurelius in March 180 Commodus ended hostilities in the North and returned to Rome, where he began to break away from the advisers with whom his father had surrounded him. He was not a man of great promise; he was also too young and easily influenced by disreputable favorites. He made enemies in aristocratic families, and a conspiracy to remove him gathered around his frustrated sister Lucilla, who had been an Augusta herself when she was the spouse of the emperor Lucius Verus. The plot would probably have succeeded if the assassin had not taken time to shout "The senate sends you this dagger." Afterwards Commodus saw many of his father's old friends as his own new enemies; he justified his own policy as *pietas* to the gods on the highest level, not just in the official sense. He adopted the element 'Pius' as part of his name. He thus claimed to be at the head of a *pietas* movement, which he doubtless attributed to his father and by suggestion even to his grandfather, who had received the name Pius for quite a different reason. A few years later in 187 Commodus issued a coin with the legend AVCTOR PIETATIS.¹⁰

Dio-Xiphilinus 73, 2 reports that Commodus gave Rome the name 'Ρώμην ἀθάνατον εὐτυχῆ κολωνίαν τῆς οἰκουμένης. The information, though without the essential words *orbis terrarum*, is reproduced by *Vita Commodi* 8, 6–9. It means that he wished to create a new unity of the empire around the city of Rome by declaring Roma Aeterna Felix a colony of the whole civilized world. It was to belong in a new sense to all mankind as a common city somewhat in the way Aelius Aristides in *Roman Oration* 61 had once described it: "What another city is to its own boundaries and territories, this city is to those of the entire civilized world, as if the latter were a country district and she had been appointed common town" (ἦδε ἡ πόλις τῆς πάσης οἰκουμένης ὡς περ αὐτῆς χώρας ἅττι κοινὸν ἀποδεδειγμένη). The Roman Heracles advertised his devotion to Juppiter Summus Exsuperantissimus. In a new religious sense the peregrine provincials were invited to look upon the Rome of Commodus as their capital, the common capital of the civilized world.

¹⁰ Th. Ulrich, *Pietas (pius) als politischer Begriff im römischen Staate bis zum Tode des Kaisers Commodus* (Breslau 1930) 79, sums up the development as follows: "Alles in allem ergibt sich also, dass Commodus als Auctor Pietatis eine religiöse Politik trieb, bei welcher in erster Linie weniger altrömische, als hauptsächlich griechische, orientalische, allgemein provinzielle Kulte eine Steigerung erfuhren."

Wilhelm Weber's interpretation of what moved Commodus, which at one time seemed less persuasive, now seems essentially correct. "In all this," Weber wrote in *CAH XI* p.388, "may be detected the religious movement of the time. Commodus is the embodiment of piety viewed from the angle of Eastern religiosity and philosophical speculation. His Juppiter Summus Exsuperantissimus transcended the idea of the god of a State and became the centre of a universal system of divinities that restored to a divided world an elemental unity."

Εὐσεβής as an element of the emperor's name began in a sense with Antoninus Pius, who did not himself use it in the heading of the extant Greek constitutions.¹¹ Nor did Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus as co-emperors use it of their adoptive father; they were *θεοῦ Ἀντωνίνου υἱοί*. But it does appear in the name of Commodus during the lifetime of Marcus; Commodus became *θεοῦ Εὐσεβοῦς υἱωνός*, where the element *Εὐσεβής* may have been substituted to distinguish the grandfather more clearly since the father too bore the name Antoninus. When Marcus Aurelius died, Commodus continued to call Antoninus Pius *Εὐσεβής* in his Greek constitutions and sometimes appears to have added *Εὐσεβής* to his deified father's name. Moreover, before 3 January 183 he adopted the element 'Pius' as part of his own name.¹² In 185 he assumed 'Felix' too after another alleged conspiracy failed. In his epistles to the Eumolpidae¹³ and to the Athenians¹⁴ he bears the cluster of epithets *Εὐσεβής Εὐτυχής Σεβαστός* in that order.¹⁵

Commodus met his death in the palace by assassination, in which his mistress conspired, but after the accession of Septimius Severus, although from the new emperor we hear no more about Juppiter Summus Exsuperantissimus, neither Commodus nor the *pietas* policy

¹¹ *Bull'Épigr* 1970, no.367, erected at Thessalonica upon the accession of Antoninus Pius, calls the emperor *Τ. Αἴλιον Ἀδριανὸν Ἀντωνίνον [Σε]βαστὸν Εὐσεβῆ* and does so apparently in imitation of a decree of the Panhellenion. This may reflect appreciation for the new emperor's insistence that Hadrian, whom the Panhellenes revered as their founder, be deified, but the influential corporation's choice would have given the name a special resonance. Others in the emperor's name used the epithet 'Pius' after 'Augustus' in the military diplomata and on coins.

¹² For the epithet 'Pius' without 'Felix' see *ILS* 393, 395, 396, 399, 5849 and 8913.

¹³ A. Raubitschek, "Commodus and Athens," *Commemorative Studies in Honor of Theodore Leslie Shear (Hesperia Suppl. 8, 1949)* 285.

¹⁴ Raubitschek, *ibid.* 287.

¹⁵ In Meritt-Traill, *Agora XV* 423, composed by the Athenians, the order is reversed with *Σεβαστοῦ Εὐσεβοῦς Εὐτυ]χοῦς*, but the cluster was an integral part of his nomenclature.

were abandoned. Julia Domna may have been very influential here. Severus not only adopted 'Pius' as part of his own name and his new father's and grandfather's name but boldly proclaimed himself the brother of Commodus, which from a purely military sense was quite unnecessary. After he received recognition from the Senate, he faced the problem of the two rival claimants for the throne. He addressed himself first to the threat from the East because the East was now the more important part of the empire in its many cities and greater economic development. He took Caracalla with him and exposed him to a training for imperial partnership and eventual succession.

It is significant not only that the emperor *Λούκιος Σεπτίμιος Σεουήρος Εὐσεβής Περτίναξ Σεβαστός*, as he calls himself in his epistles to the Aezanitae (IGRR IV 566), to Syros (IG XII.5.1 658) and to Nicopolis ad Istrum (IGBulg II 659), had adopted the epithet *Εὐσεβής* for himself, continued to give it to Antoninus Pius (henceforth *θεοῦ Ἀντωνίνου Εὐσεβοῦς*) and added it to the name of Marcus Aurelius, but that when Caracalla became co-emperor, his name too appeared in the heading with *Εὐσεβής* and with three ancestors *Εὐσεβεῖς* (IGBulg II 659).

Caracalla learned from his father many important lessons, notably how to deal with the troops, and he was certainly influenced by his mother's understanding of the Eastern religious climate.¹⁶ He had probably heard often of the crisis through which his father had passed between the conspiracy of Lucilla against Commodus in 182 and the overthrow of Perennis in 185 because Septimius Severus had been unjustly compromised by his connection with Lucilla's innocent husband. Later Caracalla's natural antipathy to his brother Geta could have been exacerbated by an inherited resentment against Lucilla, who had conspired against her own brother, the legitimate emperor. Her conspiracy and the *pietas* subsequently embraced by Commodus formed the recent historical background of Caracalla's thought and conduct in the final reckoning with Geta.

In the inscription at Dmeir¹⁷ on the trial before Caracalla the

¹⁶ It is well to remember that Philostratus (VA 1.3) undertook the considerable labor of a *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* at the invitation of Julia Domna and that Dio-Xiphilinus 78.18 comments on Caracalla's devotion to the memory of Apollonius of Tyana. See also the revealing close of the *Vita Apollonii*.

¹⁷ First published by P. Roussel and F. de Visscher, *Syria* 23 (1942–1943) 173–94. For later editions see SEG XVII (1960) 759 and *Mélanges helléniques offerts à Georges Daux* (Paris 1974) 289–94.

advocate of the Goharienes, Lollianus, begins his speech to the emperor with a statement: “The contest, as far as the peasants are concerned, is in defense of piety; to you nothing is more important than piety” (“Ο μὲν ἀγὼν ὑπὲρ εὐσεβείας τοῖς [μὲν γ]εωργοῖς, σοὶ δὲ πρεσβύτερον εὐσεβείας οὐδέν). Lollianus wished to put the case before the emperor in a way that would immediately have the emperor’s interest. It was of course not sarcasm and would not be mistaken for sarcasm. Caracalla had won for himself an undeniable right to the name of Antoninus Pius in the Eastern religious world of his time, and Lollianus could count on that sentiment.

In the writer’s opinion the justification for the reminder, *σοὶ δὲ πρεσβύτερον εὐσεβείας οὐδέν*, lay in the wording of the universal grant of citizenship, which is securely attributed to Caracalla by Ulpian (cited in *Digest* 1.5.17) and Cassius Dio 78.9.5 and connected by Justinian, *Novellae* 78.5 with the word *εὐσέβεια*.

The writer believes that a mutilated copy with the Greek text of the universal grant of citizenship appears in *P.Giss.* 40 I, just as the original editor, P. M. Meyer, claimed.¹⁸ The comment of Cassius Dio, “theoretically honoring (*λόγω μὲν τιμῶν*) but really to increase the revenues,” is a hateful misrepresentation, as if the new taxes could have amounted to more than the advantages which the hope of Roman citizenship provided for recruitment of soldiers and for other uses. The really rich were already Roman citizens in every province.

The text of the constitution, clearly an imperial edict, announces a religious rather than juristic reform and says something like this:¹⁹

--- I would thank the immortal gods that [when] such [a plot] as this [befell me suddenly], they preserved me. Therefore, in the thought that I should thus [with pious magnificence] be able to make the sufficient offering to their majesty [if] I brought along [into the sanctuaries] of [the] gods [all now and others too] as often as they later entered into the (ranks of) my people—I grant to all [in my rule throughout] the civilized world Roman citizenship, etc.

The heading like the rest is mutilated, but it must, I think, be restored [*Ἀυτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ Μᾶρκος Ἀυρήλι[ος Σεβαστὸς] Ἀντωνῖνο[ς]*]

¹⁸ Hartmut Wolff, *Die Constitutio Antoniniana und Papyrus Gissensis 40 I* (Diss. Cologne 1976), does not share this opinion but provides a careful description of the papyrus and a conscientious investigation of the evidence. Reviewed in *AJP* 99 (1978) 403–08.

¹⁹ The translations of restorations are enclosed in square brackets. The Greek text on which this translation is based will be found in *AJP* 99 (1978) 405.

E[ὕκεβή]ς ν λέγει. H. Wolff made the discovery that the last element in the emperor's nomenclature had to be read as *E[ὕκεβή]ς* or *E[ὕτυχή]ς*.²⁰ This is surprising because the main elements of the name usually appear as 'Antoninus Pius Augustus' in that order, less frequently as 'Antoninus Augustus Pius' as in *IRT* 420, whereas here 'Augustus' (*Σεβαστός*), indispensable, precedes 'Antoninus Pius'. One would not willingly reject his reading or suggest a restoration which assumed a scribal error, namely <Σ>ε[βαστός]ς instead of *E[ὕκεβή]ς* in last place. It is preferable to accept the new reading made by Wolff and to explain it, although the argument is not based on this new reading. The piety of the emperor, which brings the non-Roman population of the civilized world into a religious unity with the Romans, is just as great whether the emperor speaks as Pius Antoninus Augustus or as Augustus Antoninus Pius. In fact the Latin version may have read "Pius Antoninus Augustus," while the Greek version transposed the order, for reasons of propaganda or personal preference, into *Σεβαστὸς Ἀντωνῖνος Εὐσεβής*.²¹ But if *Εὐσεβής* is indeed the end of the emperor's name, it would explain perfectly the odd reference of Justinian, *Novellae* 78.5 to the author of the constitution which gave citizenship to all subjects as "Antoninus, the one named after his piety" (*Ἀντωνῖνος ὁ τῆς εὐσεβείας ἐπώνυμος*).

Caracalla modeled himself on Alexander the Great (Cass.Dio 78.7–9). Naturally he thought of Alexander as the conqueror of the Persians, but one need not forget that Plutarch, *Moralia* 329c praised Alexander for having made the civilized world the common fatherland of all and gave (328d) a religious meaning to the conquest.

Two other examples of the active *eusebeia* of Caracalla are worth citing. Philostratus at the end of his *Life of Apollonius* indicates that Apollonius received cult honors at Tyana and that Caracalla spent a considerable sum on the site of this cult. Secondly, when Caracalla was asked to support the request that Ephesus be granted a third neocory,

²⁰ In the epistle of Caracalla, *Forschungen in Ephesos* II no.26, his name does appear in the heading with *Εὐτυχής* in last place, but his father was absent and the letter was under the supervision of Caracalla's guardians. Later he did not ordinarily claim the name *Εὐτυχής* himself, although others gave it to him frequently or even normally.

²¹ Whoever changed the order in the cluster from the normal *Ἀντωνῖνος Εὐσεβής Σεβαστός* to *Σεβαστὸς Ἀντωνῖνος Εὐσεβής* was probably thinking of the θεός *Ἀντωνῖνος Εὐσεβής* who was Marcus Aurelius, the deceased homonym of the living emperor. If the inversion occurred first in Egypt, it was an accident; if it occurred first at Rome, it may have been a deliberate evocation of the author of the policy of sympathy and conciliation which Caracalla had inherited and a suggestion that pious Caracalla had survived unexpectedly.

he agreed but refused to have it connected with the imperial cult. In a courteous letter to the Commonalty of Asia (*AEpigr* 1966, 430), he insisted that the honor be assigned to the most effective goddess [Artemis (of the Ephesians)].

Even the short reign of Macrinus has left a striking example of the latter's piety toward the Didymaeon Apollo and the use of religion to cement loyalty.²² Elagabalus, on the other hand, misused his opportunities and discredited the policy.

The Christians were long regarded as a Jewish sect and were not covered by the emperor's piety in the same way as Hellenes, but eventually it protected even Christianity, particularly under Severus Alexander and Philip the Arab. The Christians, however, were unable to cooperate fully. In and after the reign of Decius, who, less compliant with orientals, found himself also in wide conflict with Christianity, the emperor's piety suffered a partial eclipse and ceased to have special significance for the East; but the emperor, in whose divine selection the public ordinarily believed, remained *pontifex maximus* and called himself Pius Felix even after the triumph of Christianity and after the division of the empire into two sections, one with a Christian capital which first rivaled and then surpassed Rome.

In summary, the policy of a piety which expressed itself in support for Eastern religious centers and special respect for the cults at these sites had antecedents in the philhellenism of Hadrian, but in this and other ways Antoninus Pius, who did not travel as emperor, reacted to the criticism leveled against Hadrian and tried to adjust the balance. The piety of Antoninus whom "the Romans call Pius" (so Pausanias 8.43.5) was of an old Roman type. Marcus Aurelius, who revered both Hadrian and Antoninus, walked in the footsteps of the latter until the shock of the revolt of Avidius Cassius made him see the policy of Hadrian in a new light. Among the first expressions of the new realization was the establishment of the Sacred Gerusia around 176 in support of the cult of Athena at Athens and the endowment of it by Marcus and Commodus with revenue-producing estates.²³ The Sacred

²² A. Rehm, *Milet I.7* (Berlin 1924) no.274.

²³ The Iobacchi inscription, which S. Follet, *Athènes au II^e et au III^e siècle* (Paris 1976) 141, dates correctly to "174/5 ou, aussi probablement, 175/6," does not conflict with my chronology for the establishment of the Gerusia because the inscription postdates the revolt of Avidius Cassius or at least reflects a plan under discussion if not an already operating institution. The documents concerning the Athenian Gerusia were collected and its history outlined to the reign of Maximinus by the author in *The Sacred Gerusia* (*Hesperia* Suppl.6,

Gerusia lasted, it seems, until Maximinus Thrax confiscated the endowments of the cities. Maximinus, a rude soldier, had no comprehension of what was involved, but he ruled only a short while. Others followed who did indeed appreciate the advantage of conciliating the local population of the East with a broad *eusebeia*, and the peasants of Aragua would address a petition to the two Philips in the following terms:²⁴ Πάντων ἐν τοῖς μακαριωτάτοις ὑμῶν καιροῖς, εὐσεβές[τατοι καὶ ἀλυ]πότατοι τῶν πώποτε βασιλέων, ἤρεμον καὶ γαληνὸν τὸν βίον δια[γόντων, πο]νηρίας καὶ διαχειμῶν πε[π]αυμένων, μόνοι ἡμεῖς ἀλλότρια τ[ῶ]ν ε[ὕ]τυχισταίων καιρῶν πάσχοντες τήνδε τήν ἱκετεῖ[αν ὑ]μῖν προσάγομεν. Philip still had a great reputation for what the Greeks called *eusebeia*, but the Illyrian emperors, who reacted in a return to old Roman piety, lacked comprehension and sympathy with the East.²⁵

Weight should be given to the religiosity of Commodus and Caracalla. They were alike in publicizing support for the people and local cults of the East, but since this was no longer the time of Hadrian, in stressing also the unity of the civilized world around the city of Rome. In the latter policy they imitated Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius. Commodus, however, unsuccessfully invited everyone to worship a Juppiter who was more than the chief god of the city; Caracalla effaced entirely the line which divided the citizens and the non-citizens primarily (it seems to me) in their relation to the gods of the State. Both recognized the local identification with a religious community and counted either on a secure symbiosis of local and State cults or on an interpretation of one within the frame of the other.

1941). The eleven imperial letters to or about the Sacred Gerusia in an inscription to which Meritt and Geagan had added new fragments were reedited by the author in *Marcus Aurelius* (*Hesperia* Suppl.13, 1970) 85–91 with a commentary based on accumulated new evidence and reflection. The writer takes this opportunity to point out that when (in Suppl. 13) he spoke of differences between Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius in their support of local policies, he never expected that some readers would take him to mean that these changes of direction were initiated entirely by the emperors. Of course Lucius Verus on his visit and later Marcus Aurelius on the Pannonian front heard from Athenian leaders and for the most part merely chose between or among possible courses, either expressly or by encouragement. Finally the known *eusebeia* of Commodus at Athens was not just for the cult of Athena, for which the Gerusia was founded, but also for the cult of the two goddesses at Eleusis, for whose greater glory Commodus undertook the office of panegyriarch (*Agora* XV 423).

²⁴ OGIS 519 = IGRR IV 598 = Abbott and Johnson no.141.

²⁵ A. D. Nock, "A *Diis Electa*: a Chapter in the Religious History of the Third Century," *HThR* 23 (1930) 251–74 = *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, ed. Z. Stewart (Cambridge [Mass.] 1972) 252–70.

II. Piety in the *Eic Βασιλέα*

The oration *Eic Βασιλέα*, which came down among the works of Aelius Aristides, was athetized by Bruno Keil²⁶ and E. Groag²⁷ because the style was not that of Aelius Aristides, because the new emperor was praised in a way that cast aspersions on his predecessor, and because it was implied that the preceding period had lacked a truly philhellenic emperor. It is not a question of vocabulary and acquaintance with the works of Xenophon. The unknown author has verbal echoes of Aelius Aristides and draws on Xenophon indeed but does not use classical passages in the way that Aelius Aristides did.²⁸ To the present writer the unknown author does not read at all like Aelius Aristides, but recently C. P. Jones (with expression of gratitude to T. D. Barnes and others)²⁹ has sought to vindicate the authorship of Aelius Aristides as genuine and to identify the emperor with Antoninus Pius. The question concerns us because of the prominence of *eusebeia* in §8, which Jones translates as follows: "But he came to power so purely and virtuously that neither while becoming emperor nor at the beginning of his reign did he require any murder. . . but the gods took such care that he should come to power purely and piously (*ὅπως ὀσίως καὶ εὐσεβῶς ἐπιστήσεται τοῖς πράγμασιν*) that they left to others acts of madness and insanity but reserved for him acts of justice, humanity and general piety" (*τῆς ἄλλης εὐσεβείας*). Jones, who thought he detected a reference in §7 to Hadrian's dispatch of the four consulars, regards the insistence on the emperor's 'piety' a clear reference to the emperor's name Pius. In our opinion Aelius Aristides would never have brought up the assassination of the four consulars in a ceremonial address in honor of Antoninus Pius. Of course we do not know before what audience the unknown author expected to deliver the oration, but among the Greeks Hadrian was revered. The emphasis on *eusebeia* would not fit Antoninus Pius, whose piety was of an old Roman tradition and who did not use the name *Εὐσεβής* in epistles to the Greek cities. It presupposes an interest in the cults which were important to the East and so postdates the new religious policy of Marcus Aurelius after the death of Avidius Cassius. The *eusebeia* of one who could be praised for becoming emperor without

²⁶ *GöttNachr* 1905, 381–425.

²⁷ *WS* 40 (1918) 20–45.

²⁸ See my article "Aristides, *In Romam* 65," *ParPass* 118 (1968) 50–52.

²⁹ *JRS* 62 (1972) 134–52.

assuming responsibility for the acts of madness and insanity attendant on his accession fits into the environment of the third rather than the second century and accords better with Groag's candidate, Philip the Arab.

In §15 the unknown author, connecting the emperor's policy and administration with *eusebeia* and justice first, then with moderation, self-control and judgement, explains that the emperor "began with *eusebeia* as was right," but he gives no evidence. In the peroration (§38) he cries: "O thou who hast surpassed all emperors, in wisdom the wise, in valor the valiant, in *eusebeia* those outstanding for this quality, in *eutychia* the εὐτυχέστατοι." This means that the living emperor was one who had shown some prudence and had done some fighting and that he was neither the first nor the second to call himself *Eὐσεβῆς Εὐτυχῆς*. The first had been Commodus, the second had been Macrinus or at least Caracalla. Since Severus Alexander and Gordian III, unlike the living emperor, had no son accompanying him, we are really limited to a choice between Philip the Arab and Macrinus. Domaszewski thought it was Gallienus, but he is too late, and no one today would accept the speaker's description of the peaceful and uncontested administration of the new emperor as that of Gallienus or the happy accession as that of Valerian's son. The comparative unsuitability of Macrinus has been explained by Groag. It suffices to say that his peace did not last long enough for his administration to be admired as wise by anyone, and that preceding reigns could not by any stretch of imagination be denounced for neglect of Greek culture (§20) and a lack of philhellenism. The same applies to Antoninus whom "the Romans call Pius." C. P. Jones does not accuse Hadrian of a lack of philhellenism, but he finds that he was not good to eminent orators of his own day whereas Maximinus, whom Groag recognized as lacking in Greek culture, had given *ornamenta consularia* to Apsines. On p.146 he says "nothing known about Maximinus suggests an enemy of Greek culture." To a Greek professor of rhetoric, however, and to educated people reared in the traditions established by the Antonines and the Severi, Maximinus, who gave his real attention to military affairs and old Roman traditions of military virtues and who confiscated the endowments of the cities, cannot have looked like a philhellene. To them Maximinus may have looked positively anti-Hellenic.

In summary, we find that Groag's twenty arguments for identifying

the living emperor with Philip the Arab³⁰ still hold. To these twenty arguments we would add two more, (1) that the prominence of *eusebeia* in the oration points to the period between the death of Avidius Cassius and the death of Philip the Arab when the theme of *eusebeia* had a special meaning for Easterners, and (2) that §38 must postdate at least the death of Caracalla.

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

August, 1978

³⁰ Groag's candidate, Philip the Arab, was accepted by W. Ensslin in the very influential *Cambridge Ancient History* XII (1939) 88f, then by J. Moraux, *Heidelberger Jahrbücher* 5 (1961) 136f, L. J. Swift, "The Anonymous Encomium of Philip the Arab," *GRBS* 7 (1966) 267–89, G. Alföldy, *GRBS* 15 (1974) 94f, and many others. Some of Groag's arguments have been strengthened. Philip the Arab is better known today as an administrator; see P. J. Parsons, "Philippus Arabs and Egypt," *JRS* 57 (1967) 134–41, and *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* XLII (London 1974) pp.110–32. On the other hand the candidate advanced by C. P. Jones, Antoninus whom "the Romans call Pius," has a highly reputable supporter also in T. D. Barnes, *CP* 73 (1978) 244. Those who recognize Philip the Arab as the emperor date the oration in A.D. 245, 246 or 247. The claim of tranquility and peace limits us to the first four years of Philip, and the first nine or ten months are less likely because some time must have elapsed before a good administration could be a reasonable claim.