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PIETAS AND VICTORIA: THE EMPEROR AND THE CITIZEN¹

By M. P. CHARLESWORTH

In dealing with so wide-ranging a subject, a remark of an American scholar, Mr. Hoey, on the intimate connection between the titles *pius*, *felix*, and *invictus* provides a convenient starting-point.

The first observation I would make is to call your attention to the consecutive (and almost causal) connection of these adjectives: because the Emperor is *pius* the gods will render him *felix* (for *felicitas* is their gift to their favourites) and his *felicitas* is best demonstrated in his being *invictus*. Nearly every nation of antiquity believed and hoped that its gods would bring it success: the Roman People, with seven centuries of expansion and increasing power to look back on, were convinced that their scrupulous attention to the due performance of the proper rites had won them this success, that their *pietas* had secured to them *victoria*; if the Emperor could be termed *pius felix invictus*, it was because he summed up and incarnated there the Roman People. For the gods desired the honour of worship from mortals: that is an age-old idea in paganism, well expressed by Euripides (*Hipp.* 7 f.):

ἔνεστι γὰρ δὴ κἄν θεῶν γένοιτο τόδε:
τιμώμενοι χαίρουσιν ἀνθρώπων ὑπὸ.

Indeed that the gods liked worship was a universal assumption, to question which would be dangerous (Diog. Laert. ii, 117); and the Roman gods, regarded as the invisible inhabitants of the Roman State, would richly reward their clients for the honour that their clients paid them. The more worshippers, grateful and sincere worshippers, that the gods have, the better they will be pleased and the more generous in their benefits. That is why Nero feels that his gratitude to the gods of Hellas, for their continual care, could best be expressed by granting what he called "freedom" to the Hellenes, who would then turn thankfully to their gods; that explains why Caracalla, in his famous edict of 212, reckons that he can best thank the gods for preserving his life by presenting them with an enormously increased body of grateful worshippers.² It was the same traditional instinct that led the Emperors Philip and Decius, on different occasions, to demand of their citizens a tangible proof of their piety in making a public sacrifice to the gods.

As the Romans believed that careful observance of the rites would secure the continuing prosperity of their State, the word *pietas* could by an easy and natural transition come to connote loyalty to the *res publica*, willing service to the Roman People and its appointed officers. But from 27 B.C. onwards Roman citizens had passed under a new form of rule, which however monarchical in essence carefully abstained from any title which might suggest monarchy. The Greeks, with their keen sense of reality, although they used the word *autokrator* for the new ruler as a formal title, soon preferred for everyday convenience to employ a term which indicated summarily what his position was, that is *basileus*. What was the Roman attitude to the new form of rule to be?

Now to the Emperor, as supreme head of the armed forces, the soldiers and armies naturally owed *pietas*, for they had taken an oath to him. So in a soldier *pietas* comes to imply devotion to the Emperor, and *pia fidelis* becomes a title of honour bestowed on a legion that had shown special loyalty.³ But during the course of the first century not only the army, but the whole body of Roman citizens, gradually came to be thought of as owing *pietas* to the Emperor, and so *pietas* begins to mean loyalty on the part of a citizen to his ruler: a familiar example is that of L. Vitellius, the courtier of Claudius, who earned the censure of Tacitus for his servility, but the award from his contemporaries of an inscription

¹ This paper, originally composed as a lecture for the Joint Hellenic and Roman Societies Meeting in Oxford, 1942, is here reproduced as it was spoken. I have not had time to alter it to a form more suitable for reading, but I have added references.

² Nero and Greece; *Syll.*³ no. 814:

for Caracalla see P. Giessen 40, and a recent restoration by F. Heichelheim in *JEA* xxvi, 1940, 10.

³ Examples are conveniently collected in T. Ulrich, *Pietas* . . . Breslau, 1930, 41 ff. We may compare such regimental titles as the 'Loyal North Lancashires'.

praising him for his ' *pietas immobilis erga principem* ' (Suet. *Vit.* 3). Moreover, as years passed, and as dead emperors were added as *divi* to the roll of the State gods, *pietas* towards the gods would tend readily to include the powerful present ruler who might one day himself be added to that roll.⁴

A question at once arises, however: on what grounds could the living emperor expect this *pietas*? For though *pietas* often results in obedience to orders or to authority, it should ideally be a willing, and not a compelled, obedience: it must be a response to a claim which a man feels is legitimate, such as mere force alone could not demand. Augustus could not rely on the advantages which a long-established monarchical system provides: there could be no suggestion either of a hereditary claim or of ruling by divine grace and authority. Nor was he a magistrate: indeed, as his successor Tiberius avowed, ' *maius aliquid et excelsius a principe postulatur* ' (Tac. *Ann.* iii, 53). As I see it, one of the most important and compelling claims an emperor could make on his subjects was that of Merit, the merit of his character and his achievements: merit was the main ground on which he might hope to justify his exalted position. Here he would be tapping a familiar source—the idea of election by merit: as late as the third century Ulpian (*Digest* i, 4, 1) could assert that the Emperor was in some sense a man chosen by the People, and Augustus had certainly represented himself as having a mandate from his fellow-citizens. They had chosen him to be their leader against Cleopatra, they had unanimously acclaimed him as Father of his country: when the highest priesthood became vacant they had flocked to Rome in such numbers as had never before been seen to support his candidature.⁵ He was the person most worthy of his people's trust, he was truly *dignus*.

Now that merit should be a ground for holding office was an idea familiar enough, as can be seen by anyone who looks at the Pompeian election posters, where the phrase *dignus [est]* or *dignus rei publicae* occurs so frequently that it can be abbreviated to *D.* or *D.R.P.*⁶ It may be something of a platitude nowadays, but even so there is much to be said in favour of an ideal which holds that a man is worthy of a position because of his record in the past rather than of his promises for the future.

But however worthy, by character and achievements, Augustus might be, the ancient world could not regard his successors as coming up to that level. With the possible exception of Tiberius it may be said that their *dignitas* (if I may use this word in the sense of being *dignus*) at the time of their accession consisted entirely in their descent from the deified Augustus. That is why the burlesque decree for the deification of Claudius begins ' *Cum divus Claudius et divum Augustum sanguine contingat . . .* ' though it then peters out into the suggestion that it is essential that some god should be found who can keep Romulus company in bolting hot turnips. That is why such stress is laid, in the early inscriptions of Nero's reign, on the fact that he has a clear line of descent back to *divus* Augustus. It is indeed perilously near to that hereditary claim which Augustus was so anxious to avoid (or at the worst conceal): to disguise any such appearance, whenever his adopted sons were offered honours, he prudently steered the question back to merit by replying ' *si merebuntur* '.⁷ That naturally established a precedent; the youthful Nero answered the grateful offers of the Senate with a modest ' *cum meruero* ' ; we are assured that Trajan, before his death, had compiled a list of suitable names for the imperial throne, ' *ex quibus optimum [idem] Senatus eligeret* ' ; the dying Marcus Aurelius commended his son to his friends and to the gods, ' *si dignus fuerit* ' ; so, too, Pertinax, when the Senate offered his son a title, countered with a ' *cum meruerit* '.⁸ Worthiness must be the ground on which an emperor is chosen to rule on earth, just as it is the ground upon which, when dead, he may be deified by the Senate; ' *ingenti quidem animo*, ' exclaims Pliny, ' *divus Titus securitati nostrae ultionique prospexerat ideoque numinibus aequatus est: sed quanto tu quandoque dignior caelo, qui tot res illis adiecisti, propter quas illum*

⁴ Ulrich, *ibid.* 39.

⁵ Augustus, *Res Gestae* 25, 10, and 35.

⁶ For example, see *CIL* iv, 171, 183, 221, 222, 234, 316, 317, 319, and 3848; *dignum rei publicae* 220, 232, and 6613.

⁷ *Apocolocyntosis* 9.

⁸ Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 56.

⁹ Suetonius, *Nero* 10; SHA, *Hadr.* 4^o: *M. Ant.* Phil. 29^o: *Pert.* 6^o.

deum fecerimus.' ¹⁰ Indeed Pliny's *Panegyric* could almost be described as variations on the theme of 'Merito'.

In what, then, should this *dignitas* consist? By what qualities will the Emperor best recommend himself to the willing loyalty of his subjects? The answer (as I see it) is that the Emperor must possess and display in action various virtues, and here again Augustus had set a standard of excellence. At the close of his *Res Gestae* he records with pride not only the *civica corona*, but also the golden *clipeus virtutis* which the Roman People and Senate had presented to him because of four eminent qualities—*virtus*, *clementia*, *iustitia*, *pietas*. We may note in passing that this golden *clipeus virtutis* was to be set up in the Curia Julia, the very place where two years previously Augustus had erected an altar and statue of the goddess Victoria. At another time and in another place I have attempted to describe the significance and the history of these four virtues: at the moment I wish but to add two comments, due to foreign scholars. For years philosophers had argued and debated what were the virtues and qualities most desirable in a ruler, and something like an agreed number and list had been created: in this famous passage of the *Res Gestae* it is as though we heard Augustus saying, in effect, 'Your wise men have argued long about the ideal ruler; seek no further, here is your ideal ruler come upon earth.' For that reason we can observe how, in the *Res Gestae* by the skilful use of such phrases as 'prius quam nascerer' or 'ante me principem' Augustus calls attention to the marvellous achievements of his reign and to the uniqueness of himself. The Golden Age, with all its great events, has dawned again. ¹¹

This presentation to Augustus, as early as 28–27 B.C., definitely set the tone for succeeding ages. His immediate followers all promised solemnly to take Augustus as their model, and apparently the Senate, hoping optimistically that they would be as good as their word, offered to each of them a *clipeus virtutis*. The success of this experiment was not conspicuous, but (in spite of failures) throughout the next three succeeding centuries these ideal imperial virtues continued to be upheld as a promise and a hope. Some items were changed, other items added, at different times some were emphasised more than others: we can discern something of the anxious longing of the Roman city-populace for an end to Civil War, when they greeted Vitellius, who was preparing to abdicate in order to restore concord, with enthusiastic clamours of 'Thou art Concord'. ¹² The interpretation set upon these virtues, too, differs according to the mentality and traditions of the interpreters: the rather commonplace Aelian simplifies the list in the extreme by declaring that the whole duty of a ruler consists in *philanthropia* and *prostatia* ¹³; the Greeks view them in the light of their own traditions of the ideal *basileus* (kingship as a duty), with the most fruitful results; but always these virtues, actual or potential, make up the *dignitas* of the ruler, his claim to the loyalty and affection of his fellow-citizens and subjects.

Suppose you had asked a Roman citizen—an average unphilosophic Roman citizen—what he considered the most essential and laudable virtue of an emperor, I make no doubt he would have replied VIRTUS, meaning thereby bravery as displayed in successful war: for him the emperor must be a conqueror, a victor, a *propagator imperii*. Most of those early emperors who received the honour of deification had certainly attained the glory of adding to the Empire—Julius Caesar, Augustus, Claudius, Vespasian—and to Septimius Severus *propagator imperii* becomes almost a title. ¹⁴ Leadership, victorious leadership, is the first and most obvious demand that the Roman people could make on their ruler: Tacitus contrasts mournfully the glory of Republican days and their triumphs with the drab reign of a man who was 'proferendi imperii incuriosus' (Tac. *Ann.* iv, 32). Everything was

¹⁰ Pliny, *Paneg.* 35⁴.

¹¹ This paragraph is based on my lecture 'The Virtues of a Roman Emperor', *Brit. Acad. Proc.* xxiii, 1937, and on H. Markowski, 'De quattuor virtutibus Augusti' . . ., *Eos*, 1936, 109, and W. Ensslin, 'Zu dem *Res Gestae* divi Augusti' . . ., *Rhein. Mus.* lxxxix, 1932, 362.

¹² Tac. *Hist.* iii, 69, and Suet. *Vit.* 15; cf. Vitellius' coins with the legend CONCORDIA.

¹³ Aelian, *de nat. anim.* v, 10. Aelian is a second-rate

writer and thinker, and the idea must have been current coin in his time.

¹⁴ For the idea see the Arch of Septimius, 'ob r.p. restitutam imperiumque p. R. propagatum insignibus virtutibus,' *ILS* 425: for the title see *CIL* xiv, 106, and *Ephem. Epig.* v, 898 and 902, and vii, 390, and consult L. Berlinger, *Beiträge zur inoffiziellen Titulatur der römischen Kaiser*, Breslau 1935, 67–70.

done to foster the belief that Victory will always accompany the Emperor, that it is (as it were) adjectival to him. The legend VICTORIA AVGVSTA on the coinage is a continual reminder, a theme with perpetual variations.¹⁵ Through the centuries the notion of the ever-victorious Emperor, accompanied and blessed by VICTORIA and FELICITAS persists.¹⁶

But supposing an emperor were not warlike, or suppose that, though a soldier, he could not exhibit his soldierly powers in extending the Empire, like Hadrian, who excused his abandonment of the provinces that Trajan had added by quoting a precept of old Cato—'don't keep what you can't hold'¹⁷—what then? Hadrian certainly possessed and exercised the other virtues: writers praise and recount instances of his *iustitia*, his *providentia*, and his *philanthropia*; but how could he demonstrate that he possessed *virtus* (in the sense of bravery)? Here the imperial propaganda stressed his fondness for hunting, for hunting was regarded by the Romans as the sport most closely allied to warfare, and as something particularly their own; hunting is a 'Romana militia', the 'Romanis sollemne viris opus'. So Diana appears on coins as Hadrian's patroness, and the foundation of the city of Ἀδριανοῦ Θηραὶ commemorated his exploits in Mysia. From this time on the notion of the Royal Huntsman—linking up with a theme popular in Hellenistic Art since Alexander, 'the Royal Hunt'—holds a prominent place in the official art of the Roman and Byzantine Empires.¹⁸ Some fifty years later we find coins depicting Commodus, on horseback, fearlessly attacking a lion; the legend is—as you might expect—VIRTVTI AVGVSTI. The emperor's daring before wild beasts symbolises his courage on the field of battle and promises victory over his enemies. So Dio Chrysostom,¹⁹ in his portrait of the ideal emperor, shows him as loving the chase; 'his body is hardened by it, his soul made more courageous, and all the arts of war are put into practice.' But, he adds hastily, I don't mean the *Persian* style of hunting. Indeed not, nothing so degraded—

Persicos odi, puer, apparatus.

But hunting does not appeal to everyone: the younger Pliny was a very conscientious man, and eager to follow where his emperor led, but when he describes hunting I feel he lacks the genuine Jorrocks note.²⁰ Nero was no lover of the open air: even Commodus, who did not lack personal courage, preferred to show his skill at wild-beast slaying in the amphitheatre. Yet these two emperors, though no models for Sunday schools, certainly left their mark on imperial ceremonial. Nero had a passion for display and an eye for effective stage-management that was worthy of Hollywood; and he had an instrument ready to hand, if we remember, what Mommsen proved, how near the *Pompa Circensis* was to the *Pompa Triumphalis*. He may have had no military ambitions, but he too longed to be greeted with cries of victory, and by his creation of the bands of the Augustiani²¹—trained to applaud and acclaim in set musical rhythms—he made sure that his performances and triumphs would be loudly celebrated and appreciated. It had been customary before for the populace to welcome its Princeps 'faustis omnibus' (Suet. *Div. Aug.* 57). These would doubtless be the ordinary shouts and cheers and good wishes of a crowd welcoming its ruler, but occasionally in the theatre a performance might begin with a sort of patriotic chant, such as the

laetare incolumis Roma salvo principe

which once greeted Tiberius (Phaedrus v, 7, 27), and which is paralleled two hundred years later by the chorus of 'Te salvo salvi et securi sumus' of the Arval Brethren to

¹⁵ See especially J. Gagé, 'La théologie de la victoire impériale,' *Rev. Hist.* clxxi, 1933, 1.

¹⁶ See, for example, J. Wytzes, *Der Streit um den Altar der Viktoria*, Amsterdam, 1936.

¹⁷ Cato, frag. 161 (Malcovati, *Orat. Rom. Fragm.* i, 191) = SHA, *Hadr.* 5³.

¹⁸ H. Mattingly, *Coins of the RE in the BM* iii, p. cxxxiv, and G. Downey, 'The Pilgrim's Progress of the Byzantine Emperor' (*Church History* ix, 1940), 207, and *Ethical Themes in the Antioch Mosaics* (*ibid.* x, 1941) 3, and A. Grabar, *L'Empereur dans l'Art Byzantin*, Paris, 1936, 57–62 (La Chasse).

¹⁹ Dio Chrysostom, περὶ βασιλείας iii, 125.

²⁰ Pliny, *Epp.* i, 6.

²¹ Suet. *Nero*, 25; Tac. *Ann.* xiv, 15. These *claqueurs* may have been modelled on the applause-gangs who were hired for literary recitations; see Pliny, *Epp.* ii, 14⁵, and F. Orlando, *Le Letture Pubbliche in Roma imperiale*, Faenza, 1907, 125. But they may also have owed something to Alexandria, as Paul Maas (citing Suet. *Nero*, 20) suggested in an article in *Byz. Zeitschr.* xxi, 1912, 28.

Caracalla (*ILS* 541), and we may observe that when Caligula had been presented with a *clipeus aureus* he ordered it to be carried on a fixed day yearly by colleges of priests to the Capitol, with a choir singing 'laudes virtutum eius carmine modulato' (Suet. *Calig.* 16). But Nero, longing for applause, and accustomed to the shouts and cries of theatre and circus, first succeeded in building up all this into an ordered system, with skilled performers and a proper conductor. To us these acclamations, as Dio reports them,²² sound preposterous enough—εἰς ὡς Πύθιος—μά σε, Καῖσαρ, οὐδείς σε νικᾷ—εἰς ἅπ' αἰῶνος, but they did more than merely tickle Nero's vanity: the pomp and splendour, the superb stagecraft of Tiridates' reception in Rome in 66, the brilliance of the military pageant, gratified the city-populace and made a deep and lasting impression both on the Greek and the Iranian East. The Great King's pride was countered by something equally arrogant, when his brother knelt before Nero, to be proclaimed and crowned King of Armenia by a monarch who declared 'I can give and I can take away kingdoms'.²³

If we ask what governed the form of these acclamations one answer would be that they were modelled on the shouts of applause that used to be hurled at victors in gladiatorial combats or athletic events. The delirious cries of 'ὡς εἰς περιοδονίκης, εἰς ἅπ' αἰῶνος' addressed to Nero, the rhythmical applause of 'νικᾷς, νικήσεις, ἅπ' αἰῶνος, Ἀμαζόνιε, νικᾷς', to Commodus,²⁴ recall the *tesseræ* with such wishes as *Eutimi, tu vincas* that greeted successful athletes, those shouts of εἰς ἅπ' αἰῶνος which Tertullian denounced as coming so ill from Christian lips to a mortal man.²⁵ Nero's Augustiani may not have endured for long, but in the next generation Senators were doing the shouting: at first, unwillingly, for Domitian, but later with spontaneous enthusiasm (according to Pliny) for Trajan. Another ninety years and Dio Cassius records ruefully (*lxxii*, 20², 22) how he and other Senators obediently shouted what they had been told to shout, including καὶ κύριος εἶ καὶ πρῶτος εἶ καὶ πάντων εὐτυχέστατος. And what a development these cries were to have! Αὔγουστοι κύριοι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, shouts the loyal assembly of Oxyrhynchus; 'succlamatum est,' reads a decree from Mylasa, εἰς αἰῶνα . . . ἀνικήτοις τοῖς κυρίοις, while coins of Tarsus carry the legend εἰς αἰῶνα τοῖς κυρίοις inscribed upon a shield that Victory holds.²⁶ Here Nero had started a line of development that was to lead to the stately and impressive ceremonies, such as the *laudes* of the Byzantine Empire, and through them to the liturgies of the Christian Church with its 'in saecula saeculorum'. You will have noticed that most of the examples come from the Greek East. Of Nero's fame and popularity in that region there can be no doubt: it is revealed by the strange legendary belief that Nero was not really dead, but hidden, and that one day he would return again to discomfort all his enemies.²⁷ For such legends, where they occur, do usually (I believe) reveal an intense longing on the part of the people who cherish them, and hope for the return: the Greeks stood to gain so much from the ruler whose life had ended so suddenly and so mysteriously. For to them Nero the Roman had been a friend and benefactor: a revealing phrase in the Acraephiae inscription shows what they thought of him—εἰς καὶ μόνος τῶν ἅπ' αἰῶνος αὐτοκράτωρ μέγιστος φιλέλλην γενόμενος. Other emperors, forceful and warlike, had appealed to Roman citizens or Western barbarians; Nero sympathised with the provincial Greeks. The warmth of Greek sentiment towards Nero is a fact, and a fact that must be carefully estimated and appreciated, if we are to understand the feelings of the Greek Orient aright. It is not for nothing that, about a dozen years later, Titus had been three times *agonothetes* in the Greek games at Naples, and thereby popularised the new dynasty in a city which had been a strong

²² Dio Cassius *lxxii* (*lxi*), 20⁵; *lxxii* (*lxxiii*), 20⁵.

²³ For the reception of Tiridates see Dio Cassius *lxxiii*, 1-6, and Suet. *Nero* 13. Cf. F. Cumont, in *Riv. Fil.* xi, 1933, 145.

²⁴ Dio Cassius *lxxii*, 20².

²⁵ Tertullian, *de spectaculis* 25. Cf. the acclamations of the Arval Brethren; *CIL* vi, 2086, l. 17, and 2104, l. 29; we find 'O te felicem' as late as Cassiodorus, *Orat. fragm.* 476.

²⁶ Those who know the admirable *Εἰς Θεός* of Erik Peterson (*Forsch. zur Relig. u. Lit. des Alt. u. N. Testaments* Heft 24, 1926) will recognise how much I have drawn upon him here, esp. pp. 168-174. For these acclamations see *P. Oxy.* i, 41; *OGIS* 515, ll. 55/6; Head, *Hist. Numm.*² 733 (Tarsus).

²⁷ Suet. *Nero* 57; and see C. Pascal, *Nerone* (Milan, 1923), 273-286 (*Il ritorno di Nerone e l'Anticristo*).

supporter of Nero.²⁸ It is not for nothing that Hadrian founded games and festivals in so many Eastern cities.

In these athletic contests, too, if I interpret rightly, there appears a strange cross-current of the idea of Merit. However much Romans might despise Greek *agones*—in boxing, in running, in music—the Greeks knew that only hard training and merit could win the prize: your athlete, as St. Paul understood, has to work hard and earnestly if he is to be successful—‘ἀπὸ πρώτης ἡλικίας εἰς τὰς ὁδοὺς τῆς ἀρετῆς τραπεῖς ἰδρῶσι καὶ πόνοις ἐκτήσατο τὴν εὐκλεῆ δόξαν.’²⁹ This leads to a question: is it not possible that by the first century, if not earlier, the word ἄξιος was used as a victory acclamation? That question I cannot answer directly; but *if* ἄξιος (or some phrase containing ἄξιος) were used in rewarding and crowning victorious merit, it would explain some interesting things. It would explain, for example, why Vettius Valens speaks of athletes as being τιμῶν εἰκόνων ἀνδριάντων καταξιούμενοι, why Ptolemy speaks of victorious athletes as τιμῶν καταξιούμενοι³⁰; and it would throw light on (for I cannot say explain) the curious behaviour of Diogenes the Cynic at the Isthmian Games. Diogenes, we are told,³¹ crowned himself with the πῖτυς and paraded about publicly wearing it: the judges protested, ‘You can’t wear that; you’re not a victor.’ To which Diogenes replied, in the true Cynic vein, that he had bruised, beaten, and overthrown many opponents—passions, desires, lusts, and even ἡδονή; after which catalogue he turned to the judges and asked confidently πότερον ὑμῖν ἄξιος δοκῶ τῆς πῖτυος; Furthermore *if* ἄξιος were so used it would put new meaning (for me) into two other passages. The first is in Dio Cassius (lxxiii, 17, 6), who relates how Corbulo, summoned in the year 67 by Nero in the most flattering terms, landed at Cenchræe only to receive the imperial order to commit suicide. With the one word ἄξιος he dispatched himself. We should remember that when Corbulo landed in Greece Nero was completing (if he had not already completed) his triumphal tour of the great games, in which he had emerged as *periodonikes*: if Corbulo meant by the word ἄξιος to condemn his own credulity I cannot help feeling that there was also a grimly sarcastic reference to the latest triumph of the all-conquering Emperor—a victory over his own generals! The other passage occurs in the Apocalypse: here, in the terrific vision of the seer, the elders fall down before the Lamb, and their great cry of ‘Worthy art thou’ is later taken up and repeated by countless voices exclaiming . . . ἄξιός ἐστιν τὸ ἄρνιον . . . τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ καὶ τῷ ἄρνιῳ ἡ εὐλογία καὶ ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. The Lamb alone is worthy to open the book closed with seven seals, and the reason why He is worthy is because He has conquered in the greatest contest, He has won a triumph over death itself; He is victor. Then after this follows the ascription of honour and glory and power . . . εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. The elders abasing themselves and casting down their crowns (as Oriental princes did before their overlords), the victor-cry of ἄξιος, the ascription of power to last through the ages—all these pieces of earthly and imperial ceremonial have passed through the mind of the Apocalyptist to be transformed into this superb vision.

If this is so (and like Alice I only said ‘If’), we may observe how in ecclesiastical ceremony ἄξιος endures as the greeting to the successful candidate in an election, and indeed in some cases as validating the election. About the middle of the third century a vast concourse had assembled in Rome to elect a new bishop: suddenly, Eusebius tells us, a dove hovered above the head of Fabianus, whereat the whole assembly unanimously cried out ‘ἄξιος’, and placed him upon the episcopal throne.³² The same shout of ἄξιος greeted the appearance of Ambrose in the cathedral at Milan, and led to his choice as

²⁸ The Acraephiae inscription, Dittenberger, *Syll.*³ 814, l. 40. For Titus as *agonothetes* of the *Sebasta* at Naples see *IG* xiv, 719, and cf. R. M. Geer in *Trans. Amer. Phil. Assoc.* lxvi, 1935, 208.

²⁹ The words are quoted from an inscription in honour of the pancratiast Callicrates (Lebas-Waddington, 1620) discussed by L. Robert in *Anatolian Studies presented to W. H. Buckler* (Manchester, 1939), 236. Cf. also Firmicus Maternus (ed. Kroll and

Skutsch) i, 192, ‘athletas qui ceteris virtutis merito praeferantur.’

³⁰ Vettius Valens (ed. Kroll) 46, 18; Ptolemy, *Tetrab.* (Bâle, 1553) 179, 9 (= iv, 4, 4; Boll-Boer, p. 180, 15; Robbins, p. 384, 13). I owe these references to F. Cumont, *L’Égypte des astrologues* (Brussels, 1937), 76, n. 3.

³¹ Dio Chrysostom, *Isthmiaca* (ix) 10–13.

³² Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* vi, 29⁴.

bishop.³³ Throughout the ages the Greek Orthodox Church has greeted and still greets the newly-elected bishop with the shout of ἄξιος.

I would suggest therefore that there was always, during the first three centuries of the Empire, an underlying notion that the chief claim of the emperor to rule ought to be his merit and his worthiness, and I have tried to show how that worthiness might be displayed in various forms of VIRTUS (*Arete*). But while VIRTUS was the first of the eminent qualities mentioned on the Golden Shield of Augustus, PIETAS was the final one, and perhaps the most important and inclusive. For the emperor is at once the object of *pietas* from his subjects, and an example to them of *pietas* towards the gods: in later days Commodus can actually term himself PIETATIS AVCTOR. What then were the gods to whom the Roman People must demonstrate its *pietas*? At first they were the traditional State gods, those for whose worship the State arranged: to these, after the Empire had been founded, were added from time to time the *divi*, the emperors who had attained the honour of consecration. We may observe here that these *divi* were chosen for service to the State, for merit: in fact, an emperor after death was subject to a quasi-trial by the Senate. If he was *dignus* he would receive the honour of *consecratio* and be enrolled in the ranks of the gods, entering as it were a celestial Senate.³⁴ If he was extremely unworthy he might not merely be passed over but even be subjected to a *Damnatio Memoriae*, a blotting-out of his name from the annals of eternal Rome.

But in addition to these State gods there were the many familiar traditional gods of the hearth and home, of the fields and hills—and all these were objects both of belief and worship, especially among the country and more conservative population. Belief in these "little gods" waned slowly, as is shown by the sharp polemic waged against them by the Fathers of the Church. The upper and educated classes might read their Varro or laugh over their Ovid, but scepticism, whether learned or light-hearted, had not filtered down to the peasant population. They *knew* what were the right and traditional things to do to appease these gods whose existence could not be doubted. But while they still believed in and worshipped these invisible gods, they were also increasingly aware of their Emperor, living, present, and powerful. τί θεός; asks a kind of catechism in a second-century papyrus, and the answer is τὸ κρατοῦν. τί βασιλεύς; and the answer is ἰσόθεος.³⁵ While the rural and family gods retained the affection and worship of the people, the mythological gods, Mars, Apollo, Mercury, and others slowly lost their importance in comparison with the powerful and visible being who lived in Rome itself and ruled from there. The emperors, steadily centralising, were absorbing so much, both gods and virtues. Those unofficial titles of Trajan, which were common form by the year 110—I mean OPTIMVS MAXIMVS—not only recognised him as supremely worthy and eminent, but also associated him closely with Jupiter himself by the mere force of the adjectives. In the Greek East temples of Roma and Augustus had at first been the official order, but the goddess Roma was too abstract and shadowy for the clear-sighted Greeks, and the living emperor was so real and powerful that it is not surprising to find *Dea Roma* fading away, while the emperor remains in possession of the field often equated with Ζεὺς Ἐλευθέριος or Ζεὺς Πανελλήνιος.³⁶ In the West we can observe the emperor quietly absorbing the minor deities: thus we find dedications to Apollo Augustus or Minerva Augusta in Italy, Mercurius Augustus in Gaul, and even Vesta Augusta in Spain.³⁷ They are tending to become 'the emperor's gods', as it were, the gods whom the emperor recommends: sometimes the epithet 'Augustus' means little more than 'imperial'.³⁸ The attraction of the emperor was, in fact, too strong for all save the most revered gods and cults to withstand.

³³ Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* iv, 30.

³⁴ See Pliny, *NH* ii, 19, 'hic est vetustissimus referendi bene merentibus gratiam mos ut tales numinibus adscribant,' and see my remarks on this passage in *Harv. Theol. Rev.* xxviii, 1935, 5 (esp. p. 42). Attention was first called to this passage in Pliny by A. D. Nock.

³⁵ See F. Bilabel in *Philologus* lxxx, 1925, 239.

³⁶ V. Chapot, *La province rom. proc. d'Asie* 434 ff.; A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship* 239 f.

³⁷ Sherwin-White *o.c.* 249 f. For Vesta Augusta see *CIL* ii, 1166, 3378.

³⁸ As Professor Nock has remarked, *Σύνναος Θεός* (*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* xli, 1930) 59.

Apart from the continuing worship of the 'little gods' and private cults, if we ask ourselves what State gods still retained a hold on (say) the mind of the soldier, we have two pieces of evidence, one unofficial, and the other official. The first comes from the turbulent months in 68 that succeeded Nero's fall, when the armies of the German frontier struck their own coins: what is impressive there is the predominance of two cult-figures, Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus and Vesta P. R. Quiritium.³⁹ It was the very core and essence of life that these soldiers were defending, the cults on which Rome's safety rested. They felt the same way as Horace, who when he wants to claim that his poetry will live as long as Rome endures can only say

. . . dum Capitolium
scandet cum tacita virgine pontifex.

Vesta and Jupiter still count for much.

The other piece of evidence is the now famous *Feriale Duranum*⁴⁰: here we have an official document, exhibiting a nice blend (for it is the middle of the third century) between what the government wishes and thinks necessary, and what the soldiers must have. Naturally therefore the imperial cult bulks large—the anniversaries of the reigning emperor and of the *divi*—but then, after certain holidays and carnivals, such as the Quinquatria, the Neptunalia, and the Saturnalia (when the armies could take holiday), we find there other days outstanding, 1st March for MARS VICTOR, 21st April for the NATALIS VRBIS, and 9th June for VESTA. That is what we might expect. There always lies a risk in overmuch simplification, but we might put the situation this way: in the religious sphere belief in the rustic and local gods lived on untroubled, while the worship of the deified emperors (with which the living emperor was often associated) afforded an outlet for the display of religious and national loyalty, but for the rest the gods of mythology were overpowered, or existed only in equations, and only those whose very being seemed to be linked and intertwined with the safety and life of the Roman State managed to retain an independent existence. Vesta the emperors tried hard to capture, but she survived, as did Mars and Jupiter. But so many others became Augustan—that is a matter of worshipping loyally what the pious emperor worshipped—that when Constantine made a change it was easy for people to turn from the emperor's gods to the emperor's God.

I began with a reference to PIVS FELIX INVICTVS. Even under Constantine very little alteration was needed in this title: *Felix* may be dropped, but *Felicitas vestra* can remain as a style of address to the ruler who restores and ensures a *felix saeculum*. *Invictus* perhaps smacked too much of Mithras and of pagan deities for the new fashion, and so is replaced by *victor* or *victoriosus* or *victor semper*. *Pius* the emperor (in theory) always was, and continued. The same words are used, and even though there is development and new accession of meaning and significance, the root-idea changes little. Augustus had restored Roman religion and brought back the *pax deorum*, because he recognised that on the benevolence of the gods the life of Rome depended. Constantine favoured a new religion because he was convinced that it worked, and that the power he had invoked would bring victory and success not only to himself (as he had proved) but to the whole Roman State: two things therefore were essential (in his mind) for this; one, that the Christian clergy should be free to carry on the prayers and worship whereby they secured the favour of Heaven, and the other, that the Christian people must be united and free from discord in their worship (for divided or partial allegiance must be displeasing to the divine power).⁴¹ Both these ideas are typically Roman. So, too, the notion that merit must be the basis for supreme power retains much of its old influence, even though the emperor can no longer pretend to be the chosen of the people. Augustus had been granted by his grateful citizens the laurel crown and the golden shield of Virtue. Three-and-a-half centuries later Eumenius addresses Constantine: 'Merito igitur tibi, Constantine, et nuper Senatus

³⁹ H. Mattingly, *Coins of the RE in the BM*, i, p. cxcix.

⁴⁰ Edited by R. O. Fink, A. S. Hoey, and W. F. Snyder, *The Feriale Duranum* (Yale Class. Stud. vii, 1940), esp. pp. 202 ff.

⁴¹ See especially N. H. Baynes, 'Constantine the Great and the Christian Church,' *Brit. Acad. Proc.* xv, 1929, esp. pp. 10 f. and 21 f.

signum dei et paulo ante Italia scutum et coronam, cuncta aurea, dedicarunt ut conscientiae debitum aliqua ex parte relevarent. debetur enim et saepe debetur et divinitati simulacrum et virtuti scutum et corona pietati' (*Paneg. Lat.* xii, 25, 4).

This merit and these virtues, trumpeted abroad by panegyrists and poets and proclaimed to all the world on the coinage, are still further emphasised by the acclamations. Nero, as it seems to me, took up such elements as the 'good-luck' shouts of the citizens, the *laudes virtutum* sung to Caligula, the victory-cries and applause of the Circus and games, and introduced order and system by his Augustiani, who proudly boasted themselves his soldiers and sharers in his triumphs; and Domitian would not find such *laudes* unwelcome. From the time of Trajan, the *optimus Princeps*, these acclamations—celebrating the emperor's victories, or the wisdom of his decisions, or his benefactions and merits—begin to be reported and published.⁴² Henceforward they grow in volume and length, slowly developing into what has been well called 'an imperial liturgy'.⁴³ Examples will be familiar, and even though some of the acclamations recorded in the *SHA* may be forgeries they are forgeries of something that really existed. What deserves notice is again the emphasis frequently laid upon merit, whether in the imperial liturgy itself or in the ecclesiastical ceremonies borrowed from it. The favoured candidate is greeted with the unanimous shout of ἄξιός.⁴⁴ The election of Eraclius to succeed St. Augustine is greeted by the people with cries of 'Dignus et justus est. Bene meritus, bene dignus'.⁴⁵ This worthiness and merit consist in the virtues the emperor displays—*pietas, iustitia, clementia, providentia, philanthropia, megalopsychia*, and the rest; placed on coins, figured in paintings or mosaics, they serve to remind people of what they have a right to expect, and give them a standard. To them the medieval and modern descriptions of 'The Perfect Prince' owe much.⁴⁶ And perhaps the religious virtues owe something to them; at any rate Gregory of Nazianzus, seeing a picture in the Church of Caesarea of 'the four life-giving virtues', was moved to urge on the spectators to a life of willing toil in piety (*Anth. Pal.* i, 93).

Still, though the emperor had succeeded in drawing towards himself much of the religious emotion and fervour that had once been directed towards the State gods, he could not abolish the affectionate reverence of the country people for their familiar gods and traditional objects of worship. Some of the finest and most genuinely religious poetry in Latin is linked with a love of the country, simple, fresh, and familiar, far from the splendour and noise of the great city.⁴⁷ That sentiment cannot easily be rooted out. As late as the second half of the sixth century St. Martin of Braga in Spain had to write and reprove the pagan practices of his rustic flock. It is a curious catalogue that he sets out: they were still making heaps of stone at the cross-roads for Mercury, they still observed the Kalends of January, they kept days of moths and mice; they would celebrate the Vulcanalia, womenfolk would still invoke Minerva when weaving, they would pour wine and fruit over a log in the hearth, worse still they would light and set wax-tapers by stones and trees and springs and cross-roads. 'What else is this,' asks the reproachful saint, 'but devil-worship?'⁴⁸

So much for the Latin West in the sixth century. What about the Greek East? Here again we can well believe that the country-people would not easily or willingly abjure their devotion and adherence to the traditional rites and ceremonies, to those 'gods and heroes' whom Themistocles thanked for Salamis and who had protected them through so many

⁴² H. Swoboda, *Griech. Volksbeschlüsse* 218.

⁴³ J. Gagé, *La théologie* . . . (cited in n. 15 above) and also Σταυρὸς νικητοῦς, *Rev. d'hist. et de phil. relig.* xiii, 1933, 370 ff.

⁴⁴ See the section on ἄξιός in E. Peterson's *Εἰς Θεός*.

⁴⁵ Eraclius: Migne, *PL* xxxiii, col. 967 f. Cf. St. Augustine, *Epp.* 110, and Georg. Alexand. *Vita Chrysostomi* ii, 20, "Revera dignus es hoc sacerdotio, o apostolorum tertie decime!" Cf. too Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Liber de Ceremoniis* (ed. A. Vogt iii, 1939) i, 47. Those who disapproved of an election could shout "Ἀνάξιός": Philostorgius ix, 10.

⁴⁶ Cf. the *quadrifaria virtus* (*iustitia, prudentia,*

fortitudo, temperantia) of Cassiodorus, *Varia* 177, the articles by G. Downey cited in n. 18 above, and L. K. Born, 'The Perfect Prince according to Latin Panegyrists,' *A.J. Phil.* lv, 1934, 20.

⁴⁷ I am thinking mainly of Tibullus and Vergil: see some good remarks by J. Carcopino in *La vie quotidienne à Rome* 1939, 148 ff., though to my mind they apply only to the educated classes.

⁴⁸ S. McKenna, *Paganism and Pagan Survivals in Spain* . . ., Washington, D.C. 1938, esp. pp. 88–107. Cf. the worship of Diana in the Ardennes found still persisting by St. Walfroy; Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.* viii, 15.

centuries. I would merely wish to call your attention, in concluding, to a strange instance which seems to me to bear out this contention. A passage in Procopius (*de aedif.* i, 2, 5-12) speaks of a bronze equestrian statue of the emperor Justinian that stood in the Augusteum at Constantinople : 'extending his right hand towards the East, and spreading out his fingers, he bids the barbarians in those regions to remain in their own country, and advance no further.' Now this statue was, we are told, 'arrayed as Achilles.' About the exact interpretation of this phrase scholars have argued,⁴⁹ but about the general intention of the statue there can be little doubt. It is the old idea of the victorious and triumphant ruler, a statue showing the *virtus* and *victoria* of the Emperor protecting his people against the enemies of his land. But why should Justinian, in the sixth century, have chosen Achilles? Why not, e.g. Alexander the Great? The answer may be, I fancy, that through all these centuries the Greeks had never forgotten their first and peerless hero, the first great champion of Hellenism against barbarism. The memory of Achilles must have lived on, deep-rooted and strong, no mere figure of epic, but a hero and a power. That is confirmed by two remarkable passages in Zosimus, who, honest pagan as he is, makes no secret of his conviction that disaster was befalling the Empire precisely because it had abandoned its old ways and its old gods. He relates how,⁵⁰ about the year 375, an old man Nestorius, in Attica, was warned in a dream to pay proper honour to Achilles; but he was scoffed at by all those whom he consulted, and at last on his own prompting he made an image of Achilles, in an *aedicula*, and set it by the statue of Athena in the Parthenon. So it was that while all the rest of Greece was shaken by an earthquake that occurred in that year Attica alone was preserved from its ravages! The second passage relates to the year 396.⁵¹ Alaric, the barbarian from the North, has advanced irresistibly through Thessaly and Boeotia: Athens lies before him, an easy prey, with not enough men to defend her walls and famine threatening from the Piraeus. Yet Alaric stayed his hand, for as he advanced he saw 'Athena Promachus making the circuit of the walls, armed and ready to engage the attackers, and in front of the walls was standing Achilles, the hero, just as Homer showed him to the Trojans, when in anger for the death of Patroclus he was warring with vengeance in his heart'. Whether Alaric saw that vision who can tell, but we cannot doubt that the country people of Attica and Greece were sure that he had.

οὐδὲν σοφίζομεσθα τοῖσι δαίμοσιν.
πατρίους παραδοχάς, ἅς θ' ὁμήλικας χρόνους
κεκτήμεθ', οὐδεὶς αὐτὰ καταβάλλει λόγος.
(Eur. *Bacchae*, 200 ff.)

Summing up we may say that, ideally, Merit was recognised by citizens as the principal and proper claim that a ruler possessed to rule over them. Although there were occasional attempts to assert a divine right or a hereditary right, they did not endure, whereas we find stress constantly being laid on the emperor's Merit and the emperor's Virtues, by titles, on coins, in speeches, by acclamations and *laudes*. 'Virtus tua meruit imperium,' said Pacatus to Theodosius (*Paneg. Lat.* ii, 7): of the emperor it should be ideally true what Namatian (*De reditu suo* i, 91) claimed of Rome—

quod regnas minus est quam quod regnare mereris.

The emperor, chosen for Merit, and setting an example as PIETATIS AVCTOR, should have behind him a united nation: each member might be free to adopt private cults (if he wished), but all would be united with the emperor in paying thanks to and placating those gods upon whom Rome's life and safety depended. There are dangers in this ideal, but it is not an ignoble ideal.

⁴⁹ P. E. Schramm, *Das Herrscherbild in der Kunst des frühen Mittelalters*, Leipzig, 1922-3, 154 ff.; A. Grabar, *o.c.* 46 f. and 94 f.; G. Downey, 'Justinian as Achilles,' *Trans. Amer. Phil. Assoc.* lxxi, 1940, 68-77.

⁵⁰ Zosimus, *Historia Nova* iv, 78.

⁵¹ Zosimus, *ibid.* v, 5, 5-7. A possible sign of the interest in Achilles (as hero *par excellence*) may be seen, as Dr. A. B. Cook suggests to me, in the long interview which the sage Apollonius claimed to have had with him in a vision, Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* iv, 11 and 16 ff. Note also the dream of Basilina: Zonaras xiii, 10, 2.