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JULIAN AND THE MEN OF LETTERS

STEBELTON H. NULLE

AS WE APPROACH the sixteenth centenary of his short reign (December, 361 — June, 363), the Emperor Julian is less known to men of letters than in the Age of Dryden. "Who now reads Julian?" we inquire — echoing Burke's familiar query — or of him? Even in the academic grove, where he once more wanders, he is well-known only to a few.

But this is not the first time that Julian has been in eclipse among the literati and abandoned to the scholars. For a thousand years after his death he was half forgotten, yet reviled. Then, no sooner was he rediscovered in the early modern period than he became a figure of debate between traditionalists and the agents of a new orientation, and Julian was innocently dragged into a contest that shifted over the whole field of modern literature — or more vividly, in the words of Basil Gildersleeve, he was "now tossed in a blanket by sturdy ecclesiastics, now floating in a cloud of perfume from the censers of 'good old pagan gentlemen.'"¹ It is a curious story, not without interest.

How JULIAN SPENT the eighteen months of his reign in reforms and projects re-

versing or re-interpreting the work of Constantine the Great, his uncle; how he spent his days in high devotions that would have earned any Christian man a place among the saints; how he gave up his restless nights to dictation and literary labors, need not be retold. In a word, as Cicero said of Cato Uticensis, Julian lived as though he were in Plato's Republic, not among the dregs of Romulus.²

But, just as Henry VIII, the statesman, cannot escape from his connubial fame, Julian is still identified narrowly with his religious policy. No sooner had he assumed the imperial title than he revealed his apostasy, and the "cold war," as Toynbee calls it, broke out into the open between "Hellenes" and Christians.

To Julian thereafter, Christianity was "the Galilean superstition" — an irrational and impious fraud. Its practitioners were perverted folk, atheists as he said, who apostatized from the gods "to worship corpses and relics." They had the "Jesus disease" as D. H. Lawrence was to call it, incapacitating them as citizens and making them dangerous to the Empire.

Nevertheless, shortly after his accession, like Constantine he proclaimed tol-

eration for all. "It is by reason that we ought to persuade and instruct men," he wrote, "not by blows or insults, or bodily violence."³ Along with these exemplary sentiments, as part of his program of revival, he laid plans for a Platonizing state-controlled system of education, quite without precedent in Roman history, from which Christian teachers would be excluded.

But time ran out. After nine months in Antioch, the perennial Parthian war, abandoned by Constantius his predecessor, was reopened; in March, 363, he pressed massively but swiftly to the Euphrates; and in June, after repeated victories in the parched flats of Mesopotamia, he fell in action. . . . Venerable as the gravity of much of his writing — like his philosopher's beard in a clean-shaven age — often makes him seem, he was not yet thirty-two.

He might have aspired to the name philosopher-king, but Plato would probably have disowned him. Perhaps it is as a great soldier in the heroic tradition of Hellenism that we ought to think of him. But it is fascinating to speculate on the turn things might have taken had he, in either role, returned victorious with *Parthicus* added to his titles and a long reign still before him. Could he, in many years of developing and shaping, have made his religious synthesis acceptable? What would have happened at the Danube, only fifteen years later, if Julian, the born soldier, had been there? . . . But Julian did not return; at Adrianople the Goths he despised had their revenge; and the last words (save one) of Joseph de Maistre might have been his own: "Je finis avec l'Empire Romain; c'est s'en aller en bonne compagnie!"

For an indecisive generation Julian remained a figure of dispute among the contemporary literati, pagan and Christian. The fair-minded Ammianus, soldier and historian, who was with him at the last, mourned a hero; to Libanius, his "Grey Eminence," he was divine; and to Eunapius a saint. But soon such pagan voices were drowned out as,

from the reign of Theodosius, Christianity — enriched with Neoplatonic thought, its diverse elements ever more harmonized and convincing — swept all before it.

For the next millennium patristic propaganda held the field, and the minds of men were molded by its precepts and prejudices. To Augustine, Julian is already *Apostata*, the renegade whose "persecution" should be numbered among the worst ten: a man "whose marvelous gifts were poisoned by his lust for power";⁴ and to Jerome he is only "a mad dog, raving at Christianity."⁵ In Western Christendom it was through this tradition of the Latin Fathers — the medieval world of scholarship — that Julian was known; and fortunate it was for him that the works of certain fourth- and fifth-century Eastern Fathers — being in the language of heresy — were not also known. Of such were the spiteful invectives of Gregory of Nazianzus or the last words foisted on Julian by Sozomen and Theodoret:⁶ "Galilean, thou hast conquered!"

This, then, was the scholarly tradition inherited from the Middle Ages. Julian was the apostate. Of all the Roman emperors it was not the egregious Elagabalus or even Nero and the other bloody persecutors who had a pejorative epithet: it was Julian alone; so, to the layman of the High Middle Ages, who knew him perhaps from the fantastic flights of fancy in the *Golden Legend* of Giacomo da Voragine, where he is often mentioned, Julian was evil incarnate.⁷

By 1500 tradition had done its worst. Would modern scholars and men of letters speak with another voice? Would they see him more truly, in the round?

THE HUMANIST SCHOLARS of the early modern period were far better qualified than their predecessors. Not only did they have a friendly attitude toward the pagan past: they had such of Julian's own writings as had survived. Thus, in 1499 Aldus brought out the *editio princeps*, in the original Greek, of the de-

bris of his once countless letters. Diderot was astonished (1746) that any of Julian's works should have survived at all,⁸ not knowing that we owe the letters, at least, to the abiding admiration of Byzantine anthologists, who scorned the author but prized his style. In the course of the 16th century more Greek editions of the letters and of his other works appeared; and in 1583 the first "complete" edition in Greek, with a Latin translation and a biographical preface, was published at Paris. In the meantime, not only did Ammianus (1474, 1533) and Eunapius (1568, 1596) also appear in print, but the 15th and 16th centuries saw the first appearance of the bulk of the Greek Fathers in Latin, putting them within reach of readers whose Greek was smaller than their Latin. By the end of the 17th century, as the impressive bibliography in the fourth volume of Tillemont's scholarly *Histoire des Empereurs* (1697) testifies, there were few literary sources for the life of Julian still unknown.

The Renaissance was "a fundamentally Christian age," as Kristeller says, but its classical scholars were essentially neither religious nor anti-religious. They were *érudits*, not schoolmen, pursuing their work "without any explicit discourse on religious topics."⁹ Thus Denis Petau (Petavius), who helped edit the 1630 edition of Julian's *Opera Omnia*, was a learned Jesuit who long held a chair of theology at Paris; and later "the pious Tillemont," as Gibbon calls him, was one of "ces messieurs de Port-Royal"; but he dealt with Julian, as Petit-Dutaillis says, with "a fairness almost touching."

The literature of the early modern period, first-hand in its acquaintance with Julian, reveals the results of such scholarly devotion. Thanks to these humanists, he ceased to be a phantasm, paler than the Galilean, or a mere embodiment of evil in a hagiography; he was now a figure of substance, knowable faintly in the round. Not only so. Wherever the spirit of humanism was uppermost, we find for the first time an in-

terest in the man alone, for himself and for the enrichment of our knowledge of human personality, rather than for his relation to doctrine only.

From the first it was French scholars who were foremost in Julianic studies. This leadership they never lost. French men of letters were to keep them close company, and Julian had the extraordinary good luck that the impulse to the revolution in his fortunes came from one of the most celebrated among them — Montaigne. In an essay devoted entirely to him (1580), Montaigne boldly championed Julian's toleration and justice; he wrote in part:

He was indeed a very great and very uncommon man with a mind deeply imbued with the teachings of philosophy, by which he preferred to regulate all his actions. And indeed there is no kind of virtue of which he has not left behind some very notable examples.¹⁰

In the same essay — quite aware of the Emperor's disrepute, as well as of the risk in undertaking his defence — Montaigne also rejected the patristic myth of Julian's last words; and it speaks volumes for the indulgence — or the slackness — of the Tridentine papacy that Montaigne was let off by the censors the following year after the curious exchange recounted in his *Travel Journal*.¹¹

Montaigne's trumpet rallied no support for Julian across the Channel. No English voice was raised. Shakespeare, whose fascination for monarchs as human beings has been told lately by Rebecca West, knew Julian through Florio's version of the *Essays*; but he was silent.

Bacon and Milton too knew Julian well, but quite without fresh perception. Indeed, the *Advancement of Learning* (1605) out-Herods Augustine and makes Julian's rescript depriving Christians of access to Hellenic learning "a more pernicious engine and machination against the Christian Faith than were all the sanguinary prosecutions of his predecessors";¹² and *Areopagitica* (1644) agrees almost verbatim, describ-

ing Julian as "the subtlest enemy of our faith" and his "persecution more undermining, and secretly decaying the Church, than the open cruelty of Decius and Diocletian."¹³

Later in the same century, Julian got scant attention in the writings of the English literati—with a whimsical exception. One Samuel Johnson, a country parson come to London, felt he could serve the Whig cause as well as his own by publishing diatribes against the dissimulating Duke of York, later James II, thinly disguised as studies of the more famous apostate. Julian therefore became

that Mighty Man who durst not own his own Gods for ten years together; . . . that false Man, who worship'd the Eternal Sun by Moonlight, and yet in the very face of him went and worship'd the obscure Galilean; . . . that degenerate Heathen who, to gain the favour of the Galileans . . . did that which Socrates would not do to save his Life, but preferr'd Hemlock before it.¹⁴

Little was lost when the book was burned by the hangman, but it established one thing: by the late 17th century the story of Julian must have been well-known to members of Parliament and even to voters.

Perhaps this familiarity was not unconnected with the wide interest in his Lucianic satire, *The Caesars*, which appeared at Heidelberg, Paris and Liège in French translations from 1660 on.¹⁵ Abused though its author was by Protestant Englishmen, Julian's work won praise from the Catholic Dryden (1693);¹⁶ and Gibbon was to describe it as "one of the most agreeable and instructive products of ancient wit."

If Montaigne's estimate of Julian had no echo in 17th-century England, in France he had at least one successor in Descartes' opponent, the learned Gabriel Naudé, librarian to four cardinals in succession, including Mazarin and Richelieu. His religious skepticism and indifference, his feigned assent to Church tradition, as well as his praise of Julian for his many virtues and

perfections, mark his *Apologie*¹⁷ as a harbinger of the next age.

After Naudé the orthodoxies of the *Grand Siècle* held the field; and when Bossuet in his *L'Apocalypse* (1689) proves Julian to have been the "Beast" of prophecy, the emperor actually achieved hypostasis! Meantime, Hellenic studies were becoming so academic that Racine was remarkable among the literati for his command of Greek; still, the century closed on the Julianic scholarship of Ezechiel Spanheim, the cosmopolitan savant-diplomat, whose revision of the *Opera* by Petau appeared at Leipzig in 1696.

IF THE SCHOLARS of the first two modern centuries left relatively little of Julian yet to be known until modern times, the men of letters of the 18th century—or rather, of the Enlightenment—dramatized him and made him a celebrity. Indeed, until the time of Ruskin and Swinburne¹⁸ he became a household word throughout the literate world; and, although in life he had hardly been *salonfähig*, he was now received in the best drawing-rooms and boudoirs.

His first introduction he owed to Montesquieu. Although the leading political thinker of his day was careful to clear his magistrate's robes of overt complicity in Julian's offences, like an earlier Gascon, Montaigne, he went out of his way in the *Grandeur et Décadence des Romains* (1734) to laud his wisdom, simplicity and moderation.¹⁹ In *De l'Esprit des Lois* (1748), a work of more than European vogue and influence, Montesquieu declared roundly that since Julian "no prince has been more worthy of governing mankind."²⁰ In his *Pensées*—materials he dared not publish—he agreed with Montaigne that Julian was never really an apostate, inasmuch as he had never been a Christian; and to explain the establishment of Christianity, Montesquieu merely pointed to two things: the long reign of Constantine and the brevity of that of Julian. When the majority of his subjects wavered be-

tween the old and the new religions, his return from Persia would have been fatal to Christianity, Montesquieu averred.²¹

This audacity, asserting sociological over religious interpretations, mounted even higher as the forces of free inquiry, toleration and "enlightened" reform took the offensive, with the standards of the imperial apostate high in the van. Churchmen like the gentle Massillon had reason for alarm; in 1718 he cried:

There may have been ungodly persons in the past but the world regarded them with horror. Today, however, ungodliness almost lends an air of distinction and glory; it is a merit that gives access to the great; that adds lustre, as it were, to humbleness of name and birth.

Of all the ungodly men of letters, the most *effronté* was perhaps Voltaire. To him, Julian was the noblest Roman of them all, whose name appears time and again throughout the vast *Oeuvres Complètes* from 1736—often in the same connection, with little examination of evidence; always to comport with preconceived ideas.

Although Voltaire was a good Latinist, unlike Diderot he had little Greek; and, for detailed knowledge of Julian he drew largely upon a biography that appeared in Paris in 1735. Sketches of the life of Julian had appeared after 1660 prefixed to the French translations of his *Caesars*, but this five-hundred-page volume by the scholarly Oratorian, Jean-Philippe-René de la Blérierie was the earliest full-length study of the emperor.²² It is a reminder of the risks attendant upon publication under the Old Régime that the first edition was printed without the author's name. Such caution was well-advised, for "the pious abbé," as Gibbon—in an age of infidel abbés—describes him, avoided both roles taken by all but a very few of his predecessors, as he says, and was neither panegyrist nor detractor. Even today one may quote with respect a biographer who reveals his method simply: "J'en ai dit également le bien et le mal."

Whatever Voltaire's borrowings, his approach was quite his own. For him, Julian was always "the finest spirit of his age, and, after the Antonines, the most virtuous of all the emperors."²³ In the famous *Essai sur les Moeurs* (1756), however, he goes out of all bounds. "Christianity opened the heavens, but it destroyed the Empire," he proclaimed; and "if anyone could have restored the Empire, or at least could have retarded its fall, it was the Emperor Julian."²⁴

Nevertheless, Voltaire was embarrassed by the stubborn fact of his hero's boundless religiosity. It was "impossible that such a philosopher sincerely adored Hecate, Pluto, and Cybele," he argued, or "that he claimed to read the future in the liver of a bull." A "rigid Stoic" is what he really was, and his religion "that of the great Marcus Aurelius and the still greater Epictetus."²⁵ His famous hecatombs then, which Voltaire could not deny, became in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique* (1764) concessions to the prejudices of his age.²⁶ Reasons of state forced him reluctantly to "choose between the lunacy of the *christicoles* and that of the pagans."²⁷ True, Frederick the Great rules over different sects, and—equally exempt from prejudice—in a like case takes sides with none, Voltaire argues in another place; but Frederick "has to do with Germans, and Julian had to do with Greeks, capable of denying to the death that two and two make four." To avoid attacks from all sides then, and to form a party of his own, Julian chose the lesser of two evils; and in time, had he lived, "he would have freed religion from the grossest superstitions and would have accustomed the Romans to a Maker of gods and men to whom all duty should be rendered."²⁸

The truth is that the sage of Ferney, who could depict Julian as

Infidèle à la loi, fidèle à la raison,
Scandale de l'Église, et des rois le modèle,
Ne s'écarta jamais de la loi naturelle,²⁹

had no grasp at all of what Gilbert Murray called "the Spirit of the Fourth

Century" and of Julian's place in it. This absence of psychological insight, as Lytton Strachey comments, was the weakness of his age. It is astonishing that this *dévo*t, bemused by the other-worldly mood of late antiquity, this almost medieval man, with no notion of progress or social perfection, should have captured the imagination of the secular-minded age of "reason" and "natural law." What an odd figure the real Julian would have cut *chez* Mme. du Deffand or among the Immortal Forty!

Perhaps an answer to the puzzle of Julian's attraction for the *philosophes* is to be found in their longing for the philosopher-king, foreseen now in the Duc de Bourgogne for whom Fénelon composed the wishful *Télémaque* (1669), now in another heir-apparent, Frederick of Prussia — in the longing, that is, for a "reasonable" and tolerant prince: one capable, above all, of understanding the philosophers themselves and governing with their advice. Such an one would be no cranky James I of England, Voltaire told Frederick:

Un monarque éclairé n'est pas un roi
pédant;
Il combat en héros, il pense en vrai
savant.
Tel fut ce Julien, méconnu du vulgaire,
Philosophe et guerrier, terrible et
populaire.³⁰

As such a paragon did not exist, it was necessary to invent him. In a sense, then, Julian was part of the vast and varied utopian literature of 18th-century France.

Denis Diderot, himself a utopist of parts, made first mention of Julian in his *Pensées Philosophiques* (1746). Among other heterodoxies, this little book praised the "philosopher prince" for his tolerance, and insisted that, despite his paganism, he was no apostate; but, although printed and put about by stealth, it helped cost the fervid author three months in Vincennes.

More was to follow. Diderot, however, had learned to match wits with the

existing order, making no direct assault and relying on devious indirection. This became the passion of a lifetime, and the result, embodying the spirit of the age, was the great *Encyclopédie*. Here, in a lengthy article on Eclecticism (1755), the truly protean emperor is styled not only "the scourge of Christianity" but "the honor of Eclecticism." Indeed, far from being the religious syncretist — more Persian than Hellene — some might mistake him for, Julian was really the eclectic of the ancient world par excellence, a philosopher after Diderot's very own model:

who, trampling under foot prejudice, tradition, venerability, universal assent, authority — in a word, everything that overawes the crowd — dares to think for himself, to ascend to the clearest general principles, to examine them, to discuss them, to admit nothing save on the testimony of his own experience.³¹

Of all the imaginary Julians, this one is perhaps the most subjective and unreal. This impression is corroborated when Diderot goes on to assert that instead of denying Christians the study of eclecticism — here identified with Julian's version of Hellenism — the emperor would have done better to open the schools to them, for "they would have been infallibly attracted by the extreme conformity of the principles of the cult with the dogmas of Christianity."³²

After this farrago, the English men of letters of the same period — either pious critics of Julian, like Addison, Bishop Warburton, or John Wesley; or those like Horace Walpole and the heterodox third Earl of Shaftesbury, not unfriendly — appear straightforward, level-headed men. This was, of course, a correlative of their environment. Hanoverian England was governed by its gentlemen, who lived in quiet, secure exercise of privilege and power. Like Gallio, as Leslie Stephen said, they cared nothing for established creeds; but, however much they might agree with foreign freethinkers, they had nothing to gain by attacking a Church

already in their hands. Likewise, the English men of letters — drawn largely from the governing class and having no explicit grievances or propagandist impulses — were quite content to follow and express its prevailing attitudes and opinions.

Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, not only in its well-bred skepticism but in its Olympian composure and calm assumption of authority, was a perfect reflection of all this. The outlook of the age was also Gibbon's own; but, though he aspired to write as an amateur of fashion, he would — as he says — have no dealings with "superficiality of learning and boldness of philosophy." Unlike historians of the intuitive school of Voltaire, who scorned particularity as "une vermine qui tue les grands ouvrages," Gibbon would make no sacrifice of slow, painstaking scholarship.

As a result, his masterpiece combines the best historical learning, philosophy and style of the Enlightenment, and it is still the most familiar account of Julian in English literature. He shows his predilections, indeed, by devoting only one chapter to Constantine and three to Julian; but, nevertheless, in the "imperial sophist" he laments that

Alexander was transformed into Diogenes: the philosopher was degraded into a priest. The purity of his virtue was sullied by excessive vanity: his superstition disturbed the peace and endangered the safety of a mighty empire.³³

If Gibbon did not see Julian in the round, he gave the best-balanced version of which his age was capable when he wrote:

the Romans beheld an emperor who made no distinction between his duties and his pleasures; who laboured to relieve the distress and to revive the spirit of his subjects; and who endeavoured always to connect authority with merit, and happiness with virtue. Even faction, and religious faction, was constrained to acknowledge the superiority of his genius, in peace as well as in war; and to confess, with a sigh, that the apostate Julian was a lover of his country and that he deserved the empire of the world.³⁴

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION and its aftermath was a disenchantment. Despite the boundless hopes of the *philosophes*, the light had failed; despite the promise of the Revolution, the new order of the world was no nearer; and, despite Voltaire's own assurance in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique* that reason and tolerance had at last triumphed over "that insulting surname,"³⁵ Julian was still "the Apostate."

The 19th century brought with it fresh problems aplenty. The great writers were unhappy about the existing order and with the dominant class, its major beneficiary — the very middle class the *philosophes* had trusted. Their unhappiness was the more profound in that they no longer had a sovereign remedy in reason, and therefore were without a common program making for not-too-distant change.

In this milieu of deepening human experience and greater realization of the self, Julian was interpreted afresh. No longer was he the shining paradigm of 18th-century fancy, "a splendour among the shadows," who by sheer inadvertence had come to an untimely end; he now became a figure of defeat to whom the literati looked with sympathy at times approaching self-identification. Had he not shared their bookish prepossessions, and was he not a fellow-author? Had he not — "a stricken deer, that left the herd" — struggled alone against odds too great for him?

The Romantic absorption in the liberation of the individual personality contributed to this construction, turning Julian into a rebel and making his *Misopogon* — that self-revelation without parallel — the cry of a melancholy misfit, an "Outsider." The limit of this absurdity was surely reached when David Strauss, the Tübingen theologian, entitled his ironic pamphlet about Julian *The Romanticist on the Throne of the Caesars* (1847) and compared him with the dreamy reactionary, Frederick William IV of Prussia!

It is a pity that Thomas Carlyle, who had read Gibbon at Kirkcaldy, was not

inspired to do for Julian what he did for Cromwell and Mohammed. The materials now lay open to all in Duncomb's English version (1784) of selected works of Julian as well as in two French translations — Tourlet's in 1821 and Talbot's in 1863 — of the entire corpus.

But it was a Frenchman again who found compulsion in the emperor. Even in youth, Alfred de Vigny had been fascinated by the Julian he came upon in Gibbon and the Fathers; and, as unhappy experience with life intensified his pessimism, he came to see Julian as the symbol of the divinely chosen few, recurrent throughout history, who wrestled with the same moral chaos as afflicted Vigny in his own times. He became "the man in all history whose role, and character, and life might have been most pleasing to me."³⁶

The result was *Daphné*, a "moral biography" in dialogue form, begun about 1837 but never completed, and published only in 1912. Here Julian, unable to recover his Christian faith, engages Vigny-like in the quest for "l'esprit pur, partout présente et patent nulle part" — a kind of St.-Simonian ethic, a moral communion making for human happiness. But Libanius convinces him that the alternative to mystic faith is merely moral anarchy. Religious dogma, he tells him in a curious myth, is the crystal carved with hieroglyphs that safeguards the mummy — the eternal moral order. When the crystal is broken, the "public treasure" is in danger. Rather than jeopardize the suffering humanity he would serve, Julian gives up his life in Persia, leaving the new people, the Christian barbarians, to guard and transmit Daphne's treasure.

A generation later Henrik Ibsen was similarly drawn to Julian. Like Vigny too, he despaired of bourgeois civilization — of his "Age of Lead and Tin." The solution for the moral derangement of his time, Ibsen thought, was in a synthesis of the ethical idealism of

Christianity with pagan *joie de vivre* — a fusion he believed Julian had projected but had failed to bring off. This was to be the subject of a "world-historic drama," and Ibsen devoted six years to the preparation of what he regarded as his greatest work. Unfortunately, he relied chiefly on Albert de Broglie's opus on church and state in the fourth century³⁷ — answered for Julian afterward by Constant Martha in his *Études Morales* (1883); and it is no wonder that he was unable to find inspiration in this smug, unsympathetic source.

Emperor and Galilean appeared finally in 1873, midway between Ibsen's earliest work and his last. It was bad history, inanimate art and feeble theater; few there are, if any, who would not yawn over it. Julian, who certainly was no exponent of exuberant paganism, and who "never gave a thought to love," as Ammianus testifies,³⁸ was refractory material for Ibsen's purpose; and to saddle him with a beautiful, scheming and debauched wife was to lack feeling. From a confused youth at the outset, Julian becomes a fantasm; and at last, convulsed by disillusionment and doubt, a madman calling himself God. He failed through disloyalty to his own highest insights, but Ibsen was certain that the time was coming when Emperor and Galilean would be one. "I do believe," he wrote, "that the ideals of our age, in passing away, are tending toward that which in my drama I have tentatively called the Third Empire."

The tension between the spirit of Christianity and that of Hellenism in Western culture has never relaxed and still continues. However, a quarter of a century after the Norwegian dramatist, a Russian also prophesied the reconciliation of the two, and imagined Julian's design as an anticipation of his own. Dmitri Merezhkovski, a learned Hellenist and spokesman of Western culture in Russia at the turn of the century, made his novel *The Death of the Gods* (1895) revolve about

the struggle in Julian's nature for synthesis between the senses and the soul — between the risen Christ and 'Proteus rising from the sea.'

Unlike Ibsen, he follows the facts closely, although romance creeps in with Arsinoë, Julian's *femme fatale*. Julian himself remains a haunted abstraction who, like the author and others in pre-revolutionary intellectual circles, ends in renunciation and apocalypse — in "Third Testament Christianity," the gospel of perfection through equality of flesh and spirit.

Not all 19th-century references to Julian in literature saw in him "a Spirit that strove/ For truth, and like the Preacher found it not." Two great French anti-clericals, following Comte — who, like Jerome, calls him "mad"³⁹ — gave him short shrift. To Sainte-Beuve, with his natural distaste for enthusiasm, Julian was "that bizarre mixture of pagan fanaticism and philosophic self-conceit, joined with heroic qualities and lofty spirit";⁴⁰ and the Ernest Renan of the *Nouvelles Études* could not understand how such a man of parts could "get himself the foul name of apostate for such contemptible follies."⁴¹ But to Renan's disciple Anatole France, Julian was the bright exemplar — unique in the Roman world — of the "tolerant fanatic . . . who had learned respect for human life and for the worship of thought." Although France "trembled at the thought of an emperor who never sleeps" — a shrewd *aperçu*, really — with characteristic charity he concludes his essay in appreciation of Julian with the apt demand; "Was it nothing to have united beneath the purple the virtues of the philosopher, the pontiff and the soldier?"⁴²

NO MAN OF LETTERS of the 20th century has taken up Julian where the 19th left off. It is not that the last word has been said. Despite the efforts and insights of all their predecessors, this best-

documented of all ancient personalities (after Cicero),⁴³ still eludes us. Rather, it is because the contest we have followed, having turned so long about the inner world of religion and the traditional absolutes linked with Julian, has in our day shifted to the outward and the temporal — to interests always secondary to him. This leaves the average reader, if he would know Julian, to hopelessly outdated literary interpreters.

In the 20th century Julian has once more been taken over by the scholars, as in the Middle Ages — by an exclusive company whose monographs the general public does not read. But such specialists as Franz Cumont, Joseph Bidez and their successors — whose precise mechanical scholarship is as different from that of the last century as present-day archeology is from Heinrich Schliemann's inspired fumbings — prepare the way for future men of letters who will make Julian live again.

Each age has found in him what it looked for, what was typical of itself. Just as "all history is contemporary history," as the saying goes, all Julians may be said to be contemporary. If we knew nothing of a past epoch but its image of the emperor, we would know a good deal of its general outlook.

There will be more such images, but will the paradoxes of his many-sided nature ever find solution?

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¹ "The Emperor Julian" in *Essays and Studies* (Baltimore, 1890) p. 358.

² *Ad Att.* 2. 1. 8.

³ "To the Citizens of Bostra" in *Works*, Loeb Library, vol. 3, p. 135.

⁴ *De Civ. Dei* 5. 21; 18. 52.

⁵ *Epist.* 70, in Migne, P. L. vol. 22, col. 666.

⁶ Theodoret, *Eccles. Hist.* 30. 20; Sozomen, *Eccles. Hist.* 6. 2.

⁷ For details of the medieval view of Julian, see Arturo Graf, *Roma nella memoria e nelle immaginazioni del Medio Evo* (Torino, 1883) vol. 2, pp. 121-52.

⁸ *Pensées Philosophiques*, no. 44.

⁹ P. O. Kristeller, *The Classics and Renaissance Thought* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955) pp. 73, 75.

- ¹⁰ *Essays* 2. 19, "Of Liberty of Conscience." See also 1. 16 and 42, and 2. 19 and 21.
- ¹¹ Ed. D. M. Frame (Stanford, 1957) pp. 955-56 and 965.
- ¹² 1. 14.
- ¹³ *Works*, Columbia ed. (New York, 1931) vol. 4, pp. 306-307.
- ¹⁴ *Julian's Arts and Methods to Undermine and Extirpate Christianity* (London, 1689).
- ¹⁵ Such as the version of P. Moret, *Advocat en Parlement et Controlleur-Général des finances de Montaubon* (Paris, 1682).
- ¹⁶ *Essays* (ed. Oxford, 1900) vol. 2, pp. 66-67.
- ¹⁷ *Apologie pour tous les grands personnages qui ont été faussement soupçonnés de magie* (La Haye, 1653) ch. 8, pp. 129-31.
- ¹⁸ For Ruskin, see *Works*, ed. Cook and Wedderburn (London, 1904) vol. 14, p. 268; for Swinburne see "The Last Oracle" in *Poems and Ballads*, 2nd Ser. (London, 1876) on the theme *Vicisti, Galilae!*
- ¹⁹ *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur et de la décadence des Romains*, ch. 17.
- ²⁰ Bk. 24, ch. 10.
- ²¹ No. 98 (1550).
- ²² *Vie de l'Empereur Julien*, 2nd ed. (1746); Eng. tr. (1746) by Anna Williams, 1706-1783, the blind poetess-friend of Dr. Johnson.
- ²³ *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris, 1819) vol. 25, *Fragments sur l'histoire générale*, art. vii, pp. 181-82.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.* vol. 13, *Essai sur les Moeurs*, ch. 11, p. 345.
- ²⁵ Vol. 25, p. 179.
- ²⁶ Vol. 37, art. "Julien," pp. 73-74.
- ²⁷ Vol. 30, *Considérations sur Julien*, p. 135.
- ²⁸ Vol. 30, *Histoire de l'établissement du Christianisme*, ch. 21, "Questions sur l'empereur Julien," p. 542.
- ²⁹ Vol. 10, *La Loi Naturelle*, p. 92.
- ³⁰ Vol. 11, *Epître* xlvii, "Au Prince Royal de Prusse," p. 108.
- ³¹ Quoted in Arthur McC. Wilson, *Diderot: the Testing Years, 1713-1759* (New York, 1957) p. 237.
- ³² *L'Encyclopédie*, vol. 5, p. 280.
- ³³ *Decline and Fall*, ed. Bury (London, 1897) vol. 2, ch. 22, pp. 430-31.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.* ch. 24, p. 529.
- ³⁵ *Oeuvres*, vol. 37, p. 69.
- ³⁶ Quoted in Pierre Moreau, *Histoire de la Littérature Française*, ed. J. Calvet, vol. 8 (Paris, 1932) p. 289.
- ³⁷ *L'Eglise et l'Empire Romain au Quatrième Siècle*, 6 vols. (Paris, 1856-66).
- ³⁸ 25. 4. 2 (Loeb Library).
- ³⁹ *Discours sur l'ensemble du positivisme* (1848) p. 99.
- ⁴⁰ *Causeries du Lundi* (1853) "Gibbon."
- ⁴¹ *Nouvelles études d'histoire religieuse*, 2nd ed. (1884) in *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 13, p. 29.
- ⁴² *La vie littéraire* (1892) vol. 4, "L'Empereur Julien."
- ⁴³ Salomon Reinach, "Un portrait authentique de l'Empereur Julien," in *Rev. Archéol.* ser. 3, 38 (1901) 337.