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ASCLEPIUS AND JESUS: THE FORM, CHARACTER AND
STATUS OF THE ASCLEPIUS CULT IN THE
SECOND-CENTURY CE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON EARLY
CHRISTIANITY

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**Asclepius and Jesus: The form, character and status of the
Asclepius cult in the second-century CE and its influence on
early Christianity**

Rüttimann, René Josef, Th.D.

Harvard University, 1987

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ASCLEPIUS AND JESUS:
THE FORM, CHARACTER AND STATUS OF THE ASCLEPIUS CULT IN
THE SECOND CENTURY CE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON EARLY
CHRISTIANITY

A THESIS PRESENTED
BY

RENÉ JOSEF RÜTTIMANN

TO
THE FACULTY OF HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR of THEOLOGY
in the subject of
NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES AND CHRISTIAN ORIGINS

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
Cambridge, Massachusetts

May, 1986

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Abstract of Dissertation
by
René Rüttimann, Harvard University 1986.

Asclepius and Jesus

The Form, Character and Status of The Asclepius Cult in The Second Century CE and Its Influence on Early Christianity.

This research explores the role and status of the Asclepius cult in the second century CE, especially with regard to its healing activity. Literary and archaeological evidence is used to show that the Asclepius cult was at its peak of popularity and constituted the most popular healing religion during this time. Its influence was strongly felt throughout the Graeco-Roman world. The status of Asclepius as a savior and his cult's healing practice are discussed in order to evaluate the impact of this cult on that of the new healer, Jesus, and on the development of the Christian healing tradition. Evidence from the Asclepieia, both artifacts and inscriptions, show that the followers of Jesus were confronted with this other savior. The literary evidence confirms this by clearly stating the similarities and differences between the two cults.

The followers of Asclepius and Jesus worshipped rather similar deities, professed similar theological understandings and used miraculous healings as proof of divinity. Both cults reported miracles in a rather uniform manner, by means of lengthy, narrative-style healing accounts. These autobiographical reports were considered to be divinely inspired, holy words of god, and both groups used them in their missionary propaganda.

As the Asclepius cult waned and Christianity gained adherents, former functions of the cult were taken over by the new religion. As one of the last Hellenistic deities to be vanquished by Christianity, the cult of Asclepius left a strong mark on the development of Christianity through its impact on Christianity's developing self-understanding as a healing religion and on the conception of Jesus as a healer and a universal savior god.

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Dedicated in Gratitude
to the Memory of My Mother

Emilie Rüttimann-Knecht

(1920-1964)

Acknowledgments

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My deepest appreciation, however, goes to my family-- my wife, Renate and my son, Roy. Although my studies have taken away too much of my time which rightfully belonged to them, they continued to encourage and support me. Roy, may this work by your Daddy also be an encouragement for you to aim high in your life.



Asclepius Statue

Artistic rendering of the statue in the Museum in Florence, Italy.
A Roman copy from around 150 CE.
(See p. 57, n. 73)

I. INTRODUCTION.

This research, which is rooted in the concept that Early Christianity has its **Sitz im Leben** in the religious, social, economic and political realm of the Graeco-Roman world, will explore the relevance of this concept in terms of the healing activity of the early Christian community.

During the second half of the 1st and the 2nd century CE the followers of Jesus carried the message of their savior into the Hellenistic world, a world dominated by the healer god Asclepius. His popularity was great, his devotees found everywhere in the Graeco-Roman world, and he was worshipped in many big sanctuaries. Any other religion seeking followers had to respond to the society's interest in and need for healing evidenced by the Asclepius cult's popularity. Thus, the cult's influence served as the stimulus of the healing dimension, as we see from Christianity's emergence during the later Roman Empire as not only the dominant religion but also as a healing religion. Due to this interaction with the Asclepius cult, Jesus came to be called **Christus medicator** by Tertullian and **medicus magnus** and **omnipotens medicus** by Augustine.¹ This gradual transformation of Christianity into a formidable religion, powerful enough to displace many functions formerly served by the popular Asclepius cult, is the subject of this dissertation; particular emphasis will be placed on the developments that occurred during the second century CE.

¹Tertullian Adv. Marc. 3.17; Augustine Serm. 175.

A. THE ASCLEPIUS CULT.

A detailed study of the Asclepius cult and its impact on the devotees of the Hellenistic world, as well as on the followers of Jesus, has been long overdue. Of the many writers who studied the early Christian evidence and who mentioned the Asclepius cult, most mentioned the healing deity rather briefly.² Due to this minimal attention, or perhaps out of prejudice, most of these attempts do not place the Asclepius cult in its proper perspective,³ except for a few studies.⁴

Asclepius has to be considered the most important healing deity among the many healers and healer gods known in the Graeco-Roman world. These healing

²L. Früchtel, "Aristides Rhetor," *RAC* 1 (1950) 655-56; Rudolf Herzog, "Asclepios," *RAC* 1 (1950) 797-98.

³E.g., Howard Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World* (New Haven and London: Yale, 1983). Although he sets out to research the Asclepius cult in a chronological sequence and promises to pay attention to the changing cultural and social context in which the material originated, he limits his research to a great extent to the information which Aelius Aristides provides. See above pp. 22, n. 34; 24, n. 41.

Some authors, like J. Doergens ("Apollonius von Tyana in Parallels zu Christus dem Herrn," *Theologie und Glaube* 25 [1933] 296), even deny any connection between the Asclepius cult and Jesus, and in this they do not go beyond the position held by Eusebius and other early Christian apologists.

⁴Adolf v. Harnack, "Medizinisches aus der ältesten Kirchengeschichte," *Altchristliche Literatur* 8 (1892) 37-147. He was the first to place the relationship between Asclepius and Jesus in its proper perspective; H. K. Rengstorff, *Die Anfänge der Auseinandersetzung zwischen Christenglaube und Asklepios-Frömmigkeit* (Münster: Aschendorf, 1953); Franz J. Dölger, "Der Heiland," *Antike und Christentum* 6 (1950) 241-72; Rudolf Herzog, "Die Wunderheilungen von Epidauros," *Philologus* (Supplement Band 22, Heft 3, Leipzig: Dietrich, 1931); Cambell Bonner, "Some Phases of Religious Feelings in Later Paganism," *HR* 30 (1937) 119-40. See also footnote 19 in this chapter.

deities include Apollo who also was known as Apollo/ Iatros,⁵ Dionysus,⁶ Poseidon,⁷ Aphrodite,⁸ Serapis⁹ and also Isis¹⁰ (Isis appeared sometimes alone, and sometimes together with Serapis as healer of physical sicknesses. These two gods were not only sought after by the followers of the old religions but also by Christians who looked to them for cure of their illnesses and rescue);¹¹ Cybele,¹²

⁵Aristophanes *AV* 584; Diodorus of Sicily 1.25.7. Apollo was considered to be a healer god since his beginning (Martin Nilsson, *Geschichte der Griechischen Religion* [2 vols., vol. 2: *Die hellenistische und römische Zeit*. Munich: Beck, [1961] 1. 538); Wernicke "Apollon," *RE* (1896) 2. 54. Apollo was considered as *iατρός* especially in the Greek colonies; Strabo *Geogr.* 7.6; Pliny *Hist. nat.* 4.92.2. See also Otto Weinreich "Eine delphische Mirakel-Inschrift und die antiken Härwunder," *Sitz.- Ber. Akad. Heidelberg* (1924-25).

Also many coins from this area support this status e.g., *Numismatische Zeitschrift Berlin*, 5. 108 (V. Sallet). *Bull. hell.* 2. 1878, 509 pl XXIV 2 (Lambros).

⁶Athenaeus *Deipnos* 2.36: "Dionysus is everywhere called physician (*iατρός*)"; Plutarch *Moralia* 647A: "Dionysus was considered a pretty good physician (*iατρός*)"; Pausanias *Periegesis* (Pct.) 10.33.11: "The people of Amphicleia say that this god [Dionysus] is their prophet and their helper in disease. The diseases of the Amphicleans themselves and of their neighbours are cured by means of dreams. The oracles of the god are given by the priest. . . ." (for a commentary on this passage see Nilsson, *Geschichte*, 1. 569).

⁷Clement of Alexandria *Protr.* 2.30.

⁸Plutarch *Moralia* 143D; *Præc. Coniug.* 38.

⁹Strabo *Geogr.* 17.1.17: "Canobus in a city. . . contains the temple of Serapis, which is honored with great reverence and effects such cures that even the most reputable men believe in it and sleep in it. . ."; Arrian 7.26.3; 8.26. Alexander the Great unsuccessfully sought healing by Isis shortly before his death. Ernst Lucius, *Die Anfänge des Heiligenkults in der christlichen Kirche* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1904) 254.

¹⁰Diodorus of Sicily *Hist.* 1.25.2-7: "As for Isis, the Egyptians say that she was the discoverer of many health-giving drugs and was greatly versed in the science of healing. . . she finds her greatest delight in the healing of mankind and gives aid in their sleep."

¹¹Serapis: Strabo 17.1.17; Richard Raabe, *Petrus der Iberer* (Leipzig: Hinrich, 1895) 71. Isis: Sophronius, *Laudes in Cyrum et Joan.* 25 (PG 87. 3412); Cyril of Alexandria *Hom. 18* (PG 77. 1101).

¹²Pindar *Pyth.* 3.173; Diogenes Athen frg. 1.5; Diog. *Trag.* 1.5; Schwenn "Kybele," *RE* 11 (1922) 2254.

the emperors,¹³ the many different local healing heroes,¹⁴ the wise man¹⁵ and even a statesman could be considered healers.¹⁶ Before the Hellenistic era, Asclepius was associated with some of these deities, but by the time of the Roman domain, he had developed into the dominant healing deity.¹⁷ The Asclepius cult had in this time close to 500 known sanctuaries or Asclepieia, many of which served as the cultural and social centers of cities and regions where they were located.¹⁸

The development of Asclepius has been well researched and documented. Ruins and sufficient material from archaeological sites of Asclepieia give us a clear picture of these places of worship. Included in these discoveries were many votive

¹³ Albert Heinrichs, "Vespasian's Visit to Alexandria," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphic* 2 (1968) 51-80; *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, "Vita Hadria," 25. On two different occasions a woman and a man from Pannoinia were each healed from blindness after they touched Hadrian.

¹⁴ Nilsson, *Geschichte*, 1 188, 538-42. In his treatment of local heroes, he pointed out that many of them very frequently became healers also out of necessity. However, many of these local heroes were later absorbed into the cults of Apollo and Asclepius. Tacitus *Dial.* 8.

See also Otto Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder. Untersuchung zum Wunderglauben der Griechen und Römer* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1909) 138-46; Dieter Georgi, "Socioeconomic Reasons for the 'Divine Man as a Propagandistic Pattern'" in Elisabeth Schlüssler-Frenzenza, *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and Early Christianity* (Notre Dame: University, 1976) 27-42.

¹⁵ E.g., Josephus *Ant.* 8.2.5. He considered Solomon a healer whose methods were practiced up to Josephus' time.

¹⁶ Plutarch *Mor.* 10.245.

¹⁷ Walter Jayne, *The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations* (New York: University Books, 1962) 240-41. Asclepius "became the chief healing deity of the Greeks, the most respected exemplar of divine healing of the pagan world, and one of the most prominent deities of the pantheon... whose ethical standards have been accepted throughout the Christian era." See above pp. 13-14.

¹⁸ E. Thrämer, "Health and Gods of Healings (Greek)," *ERE* 6 (1961) 550: "The 181 localities connected with the cult of Asclepius are only a selection from among the 410 which the writer had at his disposal, and which form a still more effective testimony to the enormous expansion of the cult." Since this article was originally published in 1926, later archaeological findings brought new sites of Asclepius worship to light; Alice Walton, *The Cult of Asclepius* (Ithaca: Ginn & Company, 1894) 83-121. She lists many places which provide evidence of the cult; R. Pietschmann, "Asklepios," *RE* 2 (1896) 1662-77. This article lists most of the known sites. For the purpose of our study it is important to know that: "Beim erneutzen Aufschwung in der Kaiserzeit wanderte der Kult bis an die Grenzen des Weltreiches" (2677).

offerings, inscriptions donated by cured devotees, artistic representations of the healing activity, and coinage. This wealth of information underscores the cult's popularity, which was also known from many ancient literary sources. There are several publications which deal with the Asclepius cult in general.¹⁹

B. THE RELIGIOUS WORLD AND THE EXPECTATION OF HEALINGS.

In the time when Christianity began to spread its beliefs, the religious atmosphere was considered to be a *heilungssüchtige Welt*.²⁰ Medicine was practiced throughout the Mediterranean world, which was plagued by blindness, lameness and paralysis. Healing was done by members of the medical profession, in the market place and especially among religious groups. Healing must have been a very familiar fact for all the early Christians.²¹ A religion was expected to provide healing for the sick: "In the ancient world it was almost universally

¹⁹ Emma and Ludwig Edelstein, *Asclepius* (2 vols., Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1945). This most valuable collection of material and its interpretation is an indispensable tool for the study of this religion. They stated that the work of Harnack (Medizinisches) had not been taken up (vol. 2. 133-34), a fact which again shows the urgency of this study. A good criticism of the work by Emma and Ludwig Edelsteins is found by Gregory Vlastos ("Religion and Medicine in the Cult of Asclepius: A Review Article," *Review of Religion* 13 [1948] 269-90); Karl Kerényi, *Der gütliche Arzt* (Darmstadt: Gentner, 1956).

The fact that Alice Walton's book (*The Cult*, 1894) was reprinted in 1965 and 1982 (New York: Johnson Reprint Company Limited, 1982) reflects that there has been no comprehensive treatment since this book until the work of the Edelsteins. This is remarkable since much of the archaeological evidence we possess was excavated after this book was first published.

²⁰ Harnack, *Medizinisches*, 132: "In diese heilungssüchtige Welt trat die christliche Predigt ein. Dass sie Heilung versprach und brachte, dass sie in dieser Eigenschaft alle anderen Religionen und Culte überstrahlte, das hat ihren Sieg bereits begründet . . . sie gestaltete sich selbst als die 'Religion der Heilung', als die Medicin der Seele und des Leibes' bewusst und bestimmt aus, sie sah auch in der thatkräftigen Sorge für die leiblichen Kranken eine ihrer wichtigsten Pflichten"; S. Angus, *The Religious Quest of the Graeco-Roman World* (London: Murray, 1929) 308. 432. He considers that the ancient "Wundersucht" was dear to both Pagans and Christians; Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 282-286.

²¹ Shirley Jackson Case, "The Art of Healing in Early Christian Times," *JR* 3 (1923) 245; Angus, *Religious Quest*, 414-38: "Religion as a Therapeutic in Pagan and Christian Circles."

believed that the function of a religion was to heal disease.²² It is from within this religious understanding that Christianity emerged; for when the followers of Jesus entered this religious setting, they were confronted with the people's attitude and the religious expectations to provide healing, and were forced to prove that their god was also a healer. Thus it comes as no surprise to find that from the start Christianity catered to this need by promoting a healing component in the religion.²³ Christianity was a full-fledged participant in this rivalry in which "one of the chief credentials of the new religion [Christianity] was the performance of miracles."²⁴

²²Case, "Healing," 253.

²³Case, "Healing," 254-55. He illustrates this by pointing to the first day of Jesus' public work as portrayed in the Gospel of Mark (1:21-34). Here Jesus is portrayed as "the ideal divine healer of his age" because his first acts after baptism are reported to be many healing miracles.

Case also points to Paul's position in 1 Cor 12:1-31. I have expanded his argument concerning 1 Corinthiana 12, where Paul speaks about the spiritual gifts possessed by various church members. He mentions specifically the gift of healing (*χαρισμάτα ιαμάτων*) and the gift of working miracles (*ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων*). (Albrecht Oepke, "ἐνεργήματα," *TDNT*, 3 [1965] 196-214. The term here is the common use of a healing miracle in the Hellenistic world). In the same chapter Paul reminds the Corinthians that while the ranking of officials among the followers is apostle, prophet, and then teacher, the function in order of importance is first miracles (*δύναμις*), gifts of healing with the emphasis that they come from the same spirit (*χαρισμάτα ιαμάτων ἐν τῷ ἐνι τνεύματι*) etc. in vs. 28. Norman R. Pedersen (*Rediscovering Paul* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985] 121-25) underlines the fact that Paul does not continue the enumeration after the first three offices. Therefore, he sees Paul as not establishing an order of authority or importance in the rest of the list. This may be true; however, it still shows the importance which the healing power and miracle performances played in Paul's time. Whether or not Paul reacts in vss 9 and 10 to what the Corinthians themselves enumerate and are interested in, he gives a list of priorities as he sees them for the common good of the community of believers. It is important to note that these powers are not connected with one specific office among the followers (vss 5-11, 17-22). This passage also forces us to see some or all of the gifts mentioned here when Paul speaks about the "signs" of an apostle (e.g., 2:4-5); As in vs 6 we have here the more general term *ἐνεργήματα* and not *χαρισμάτα* (George Bertram, "ἐνεργέω," *TDNT* 3 [1965] 652): "In the Old and New Testament *ἐνεργέω*, and in the New Testament the verb *ἐνεργεῖν* are used almost exclusively for the work of divine or demonic powers, so that we almost have a technical use of the 'powers' which work within the groups of followers of Jesus, and even in regard to the activities of his opponents."

²⁴Case, "Healing," 253; Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 261: "Primitive Christian miracle stories are the symbolic actions of a religious minority in ancient society which has set out to conquer the whole world. Mission is their *Sitz im Leben*, the winning of new members their purpose."

Since the Hellenistic scene is the actual life-setting of the early Christians²⁵ and not merely a background for an independent Christian development, a sociological and ideological-historical approach is necessary in order to illuminate events of this time. Many recent studies which have taken such an approach have brought new depth to the study of early Christianity.²⁶

One significant factor I wish to add to the socio-economic understanding is an emphasis on looking at these questions in the light of faith issues. The 'actors' in our historical view of the past are the devotees who put their faith and trust in the two gods compared here. The real *Sitz im Leben* of the issue about who was the true savior and healer was discussed and fought for by the leaders of these groups, but the main 'actors' were the great majority of believers and bystanders. The healing tradition of Asclepius came to a rather abrupt end due to the decline in the support of important segments of society, because of the economy in the later years of the Roman empire, but even more importantly, because the people abandoned their faith in the old and switched to another healer deity. Thus, the issue of the devotees' faith has to be kept in mind at all times when studying the ruins and broken votive inscriptions which are now exhibited and studied far removed from their original environment— the lives of the devotees.

²⁵ This has been shown by Harold Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle in the Second Century* (Cambridge: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1983) 183. In his conclusion he wrote: "A comparison of these sources with pagan miracle texts shows that on becoming a member of an early Christian community one did not leave behind the common Greco-Roman canons of the ordinary."

²⁶ The introductions to these studies discuss at great length the benefits and safeguards of this methodology. They are also considered in this dissertation. One such study is Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 285-86. For apologetic reasons he still makes a distinction between Christian and non-Christian miracles and does not see them as coming from the spirit of the same time. In the same way he does not consider the Asclepius devotees to have had the same faith in their god as the Christians had. Other studies include John G.ager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975); Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven and London: Yale, 1983); Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*.

C. LIMITATIONS.

The value of regional studies is that they bring an important analytical control into the history of religious enterprises. By focusing on a clearly defined geographical unit, one can establish evidence for the social reality of a specific area. However, limitations to geographical areas and time periods must take into account the overall history of a religion's development. This is especially true in studying the Asclepius cult, which embraced the lengthy time period and wide geographical area of Hellenistic and Roman Imperial times.

This study is geographically limited to Greece and Asia Minor because Epidaurus is the home of the Asclepius cult, and Asia Minor is the place where the cult reached its greatest popularity and where Christianity is known to have been introduced early. The time span of this study is the 2nd century CE. I have chosen these limits for reasons relating to the growth and decline of the Asclepius cult itself and the development of Christianity. On the one hand, the Asclepius cult gained great prominence at the end of the 1st century CE, reached its peak of popularity in the second century and then declined rather rapidly. This period of popularity produced much archaeological and literary information. On the other hand, the development of Christianity in the 2nd century appears to be less well researched concerning its miracle and healing aspects.²⁷ This period lies between the 1st century, which is basically the realm of the Christian canon of scriptures, and the later developments of the established healing tradition of Christianity.²⁸ Furthermore, the chosen time frame for this study provides clear evidence that the

²⁷Remus, Conflict, 184. He has dealt with the miracle tradition of the second century. If I have any criticism at all, it is that he hardly goes beyond the literary evidence and thus he stays on the level of the Christian apologists.

He excluded extensive research on the question of healings in order to keep his research manageable, but sees great promise in such a study (184).

²⁸Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 47-48. He provides a short bibliography of this period, which has been better researched.

followers of Asclepius and of Jesus were engaged in open conflict. Christian literary evidence names the opponents and reflects the level of opposition and intensity with which the dispute was fought. Therefore this time period is a crucial link between the beginning of the healing dimension of the followers of Jesus in the 1st century CE and the later Christian healing tradition.

Aspects of healings not included in this study are the school of medicine practiced;²⁹ the Jewish tradition of healing; the concept of magi and demon possession. These limitations were necessary to keep the study within reasonable bounds and to emphasize the miraculous healings and the role of the healing deity in the societal life in this period.

D. OVERVIEW.

Chapter II provides historical background for the Asclepius cult and illustrates the physical layout of Asclepius sanctuary complexes at the Asclepieion in Epidauros (the mother sanctuary) and in Pergamum. The physical evidence—ruins, statues and other works of art, coins etc. — is considered. Chapter III deals with relevant information from literary sources. These two chapters provide the basis for the evaluation of the Asclepius cult, giving insight into the cult's praxis and its self-understanding. This information, together with the literary evidence about the opposition between the Asclepius cult and the followers of Jesus, is the basis of chapter IV. Here, the praxis of healing and the rivalry between the devotees of Asclepius and Jesus will be analyzed and conclusions drawn about the importance of this study for understanding early Christianity. Most of the emphasis, however, is placed on the god Asclepius and his cult. This focus has been chosen because, on the one hand, this question is less researched and, on the

²⁹The recent dissertation of George E. Trinkler ("Medicine and Miracle; A Comparison of Two Healing Types in the Late Hellenistic World" [Ph. D. diss., Graduate Theological Union, 1983]) deals exclusively with this question.

other hand, a comprehensive understanding of Asclepius provides a significant base for further studies beyond the scope of this research. The second century CE is a natural time period in which to study the interaction between the devotees of Asclepius and Jesus, the old and the new savior, the old and new healing deity.

II. ARCHITECTURE AND ART OF THE ASCLEPIUS SANCTUARIES.

This opening chapter of the research about the Asclepius cult focuses on the physical appearances of the Asclepieia during the second century CE. A short historical overview of the divinization of Asclepius is given, as well as the development of the Asclepieion in Epidaurus and the affiliated sanctuaries, in order to provide the necessary background. In dealing extensively with the Asclepieia in Epidaurus and Pergamum no attempt is made to provide or copy excavation reports. The research focuses on the general physical appearance of the sanctuaries during this time-- the shape and size of the Asclepieion, new buildings added, streets constructed, coins, artistic works and our knowledge of benefactors. This information provides evidence of the popularity of the Asclepius cult during this time. In chapter IV, this information, together with the literary evidence, will be used to establish criteria for evaluating the general popularity of the Asclepius cult and its popularity in specific places during the second century CE. A more detailed description of the kind of support the Asclepius cult received will also be included.

A. HISTORY OF THE ASCLEPIUS CULT.

A short history of the development of the Asclepius cult is given here in order to highlight its development before the second century CE. Understanding the historical background is imperative in order to demonstrate that the Asclepius cult was already well established in many cities for several centuries before the followers of Jesus entered towns like Corinth, Pergamum and Ephesus. The chronological development also makes clear that the period discussed here was the

zenith of the Asclepius cult's popularity. Therefore, the opposition Asclepius provided to the new, emerging religion of Christianity receives its historically correct focus. The *Sitz im Leben* for the Asclepius cult also aids in understanding the development of the Christian healing tradition. A historical understanding highlights the Asclepius cult's place within the wider Hellenistic society in the second century CE and the needs it fulfilled for the people. This in turn, then, is the background for the functions which the followers of Jesus had to fulfill and satisfy when they opposed the Asclepius tradition. The fact that Christianity won out over the Asclepius cult makes it clear that Christianity had to provide substitutes for many of those functions the Asclepius cult had provided, especially after the Asclepius cult lost its attractiveness and became prohibited by law.¹

1. Historical Overview.

Asclepius has a history similar to other Greek gods. As the son of Apollo, Asclepius was first considered to be a hero and mortal. Several versions of the mythological history of Asclepius do exist.² Among the various birthplaces mentioned are Epidaurus, where he was born, and Laronis. Epidaurus was later

¹E.g., the modern visitor of an old hospital, "Fate Bene Fratelli" in Rome on the island of the Tiber (also called "Isola S. Bartolomeo"), is unaware that this hospital stands not only physically on the place where the Asclepius cult had its sanctuary, but also ideologically and mystically. Practically as soon as the Asclepius devotees abandoned the place, the Christians moved in and built churches, monasteries and a hospital (Richard Krautheimer, *Rome. Profile of a City, 312-1308* (New Jersey: Princeton, 1980) 234.273-74). See pp. 62-64; Appendix II. A-G.

²E.g., Pindar *Pythia* 3.7: "Asclepius, that gentle craftsman who drove pain from the limb— that hero who gave aid in all manner of maladies."; Homer *Hymni* 16.1-5: "I begin to sing of Asclepius, son of Apollo and healer of sickness. . . a great joy of men, a soother of cruel pangs. And so hail to you, Lord: in my song I make my prayer to you"; Diodorus *Bibl. hist.* 4.71; 5,74; For a detailed history of ancient views see Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 2.1-64.

confirmed as the official birthplace of Asclepius by the oracle of Delphi.³ In the 5th century BCE Asclepius entered Epidauros, a place where his father, Apollo Maleatas, who was also known for his healing power, had a sanctuary. There in Epidauros a cult began to develop around Asclepius and a certain 'family' began to be recognized around him: Asclepius' wife, Epione and the children, Hygieia, Iaso, Aceso, Aegle, Panacea, Machaon and Podalirius, as well as other connected heroes like Telesphorus and Akesis. Hygieia overshadowed all the other siblings because she was a very important figure to Asclepius but, in general, his children were forgotten when Asclepius became established more prominently and was made a god.⁴ Originally Asclepius was seen as the human physician who cared for the healthy who were also considered to be in need of a physician, whereas Hygieia cared for the sick. As Asclepius isolated himself from the others he began to be celebrated as the god of both the healthy and the sick. The aspect of his deity concerned with caring for the sick was partially gained through his connection with Hygieia. Thus, Asclepius became the ideal physician, caring for healthy and sick people alike.

In this capacity as the provider of health, healer of diseases and patron of medicine, Asclepius came to be worshipped all over the Hellenistic world. In many places the cult started in groves, beside springs, and on the slopes of mountains. Asclepius became the dominant deity of medicine, and he was sometimes confused with the identity of other gods such as Serapis and Imouthes, also known as Imhotep in Egypt. During the time of the Roman emperors, the Asclepius cult

³Pausanias Per. 2.26.7. This action took place around the year 300 BCE. Cicero De nat. deo. 3.57. He reports three known birthplaces of Asclepius.

⁴Walter A. Jayne, *The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations* (New Haven: Yale, 1925) 240-303. He sees five stages in the development of Asclepius: 1) Asclepius as mortal physician in Thessaly; 2) as hero after his death; 3) as healer in Epidauros; 4) as a demigod and hero in Athens; 5) as the great healing god.

gained even more importance. Several emperors became patrons of the cult and worshipped Asclepius. In the second century CE the Asclepius cult reached its peak. The Asclepia in Epidaurus, Rome and Pergamum were at their zenith. Centers of worship and healing expanded into cultural centers with athletic games, plays, theaters and festivals. Many other gods were worshipped often in close proximity to the Asclepia, including the divine emperors. Some sanctuaries somewhat resemble the Greek pantheon because of the many deities which were celebrated within the official holy districts.

2. The Development of Affiliated Sanctuaries.

From the cult place in Epidaurus, the Asclepius cult began to spread throughout the Hellenistic world. As mentioned earlier, during this expansion the Asclepius cult overpowered and took the place of many local healing deities. Asclepius became celebrated as the god of healing, incubation and oracles. In addition, Asclepius was also the protector of the physician and of folk medicine and its remedies, 'medical' remedies which are frequently mentioned on healing inscriptions.

There appear to be several reasons why the Asclepius cult spread from Epidaurus to other cities. Almost all of these moves and requests were highlighted and made urgent through oracles, visions, appearances of the god and through the offer of goods and gifts. One way the Asclepius cult expanded was through individuals, for example, travelling Asclepius devotees. Often merchants and tradespeople felt called by inner voices to set up a small place of worship in places they visited. These beginnings then expanded into small shrines and sometimes into a kind of boarding house where the devotees were able to thank their god for a safe journey, as well as to gather together. This pattern of development is very

similar to that of other cults. A clear example of this is the Isis inscription from Delos which records the early history of the cult there.⁵

Asclepius was also considered a god who protected his followers on sea voyages. This fact helped significantly in the establishment of new shrines. Since all sea voyages were dangerous, devotees normally desired to give a sacrifice before they left on a trip. The travellers also wanted to make thank offerings for safe journeys as soon as they arrived. Thus, many of the early temples were situated on harbors or in coastal towns.⁶ Asclepius' ability to safeguard ship-travellers, in addition to his healing power, made the cult popular with sailors. Since a sailor's profession was a dangerous one, and ships had no doctors on board and were likely to be carrying few medical supplies, Asclepius was the ideal deity for protection on the sea. Because of this, sailors who were devotees of Asclepius became very influential in starting new centers of worship.

Other individuals who spread the cult were Roman soldiers, who carried the message of Asclepius to their places of duty, and citizens from Epidauros who moved to other places and took their belief in the healing god with them.⁷

Former medical patients from various places were also instrumental in introducing the cult to new areas. In grateful recognition of the help provided to them by the god, they frequently established sanctuaries in their home towns.⁸

⁵Helmut Engelmann, *The Delian Arctology of Sarapis* (EPRO; Leiden: Brill, 1975).

⁶E.g., Lebadia on Crete, Piraeus, Cenchreae, Corinth (Pausanias *Ptx.* 2.1.5) and Delos. The cult on Delos was established in the fourth century BCE. In 279 BCE extensive repairs were made on the temple. Certainly Lebadia and Delos served as stopovers on long trips. For Smyrna see A. Aristides *Or.* 50.102.

Even ships were called Asclepius (A. Aristides *Or.* 48.54).

⁷The *Heilquellen* of Schwalbach, Ems and Baden near Vienna appear to be connected to Asclepius since the snake symbol found there must have been introduced by Romans (Ludwig Hopf, *Heilgötter und Heilstätten des Altertums* [Tübingen: Pietzcker, 1904] 43).

⁸E.g., see above pp. 52, n. 59; 55, n. 70; Pergamum: The sanctuary was started by Archias after he was healed in Epidauros. He brought the sacred snake along (Pausanias *Ptx.* 2.26, 8-9).

Halieis is an example of this development. Inscriptions on the big stelae from Epidauros from the fourth century CE report that Thersandrus of Halieis slept in the abaton, where it was revealed to him that he should carry back one of the sacred snakes. Thersandrus took a snake along and after he arrived in his home city of Halieis, he rested in his bed. At that point the snake crawled from the wagon and healed him. This miracle prompted the city to build a sanctuary for Asclepius after the city council debated the issue. The decision to build was later confirmed by an oracle from Delphi.⁹

The Asclepius cult also spread as a result of official requests from other cities. A good example of this occurrence is the case of the city of Rome.¹⁰ This kind of expansion was frequently occasioned by a pestilence or ravaging disease in the city which requested help. In their despair, the cities sent official delegations to Epidauros where they requested the establishment of a new cult place in their cities.

Through these and other ways the Asclepius cult extended its influence to many cities of the Graeco-Roman world. With each new place of worship the importance of the cult increased. Some of the most influential sanctuaries and their patterns of development are briefly discussed here, in order to show their dependence on Epidauros and to provide a historical perspective on this development. Additional information about some local cult centers is given in the next chapter. The historical end of the Asclepius cult and of individual Asclepieia is discussed below.¹¹

⁹IG 4.2. 121-22 number 33.

¹⁰See above pp. 19-20; 57-58; Valerius Maximus Memorab. 1.8.2

¹¹For the end of the cult in general see chapter IV. A and G; For the Asclepieia in Epidauros, Rome, Pergamum and Athens see above pp. 27-28; 54-57; 63-64; 92-93; 199-200.

In the early stage of the development toward affiliated sanctuaries, the cult moved into cities around Epidauros, the Peloponnese, and cities politically connected with Epidauros (e.g., Aegina).¹² In the fifth century BCE the cult of Asclepius moved to Athens and Cos. In 420 BCE Telemachus brought the cult to Athens in a chariot. The sanctuary was built on the south side of the Acropolis.¹³ Shortly afterwards the cult also established itself in Eleusis and at Pireaus the harbour of Athens.

In the fourth century BCE the Asclepius cult was established in Pergamum. Archias, who was healed at Epidauros, brought the sacred snake with him and introduced the cult.¹⁴ In this city the cult developed into an important center. In the second century BCE many buildings were added to the Asclepieion. During this time of growth, the place suffered several setbacks. First it was plundered by Prusias II in 155 BCE;¹⁵ then the cult and the city took an anti-Roman stand in 88 BCE when they refused to protect the Roman soldiers who fled into the Asclepieion from Mithridates IV.¹⁶ However, the Asclepieion quickly recovered from these reverses and during the first century CE gained much importance in Asia Minor. During the second century CE the Asclepieion established itself as the leading sanctuary not only in Asia Minor, but its popularity was equal to if not greater than that of Epidauros and the reputation of the Asclepieion in Cos.

¹²Aristophanes Vespae 122-23.

¹³IG. 2.2. 4960a (4th century BCE); Xenophon Memorab. 3.13,3; Pausanias Per. 1.21,4-5; 22.1.

¹⁴Pausanias Per. 2. 26; See above pp. 27-28.

¹⁵Polybius Hist. 32.15,1.

¹⁶Appian Hist. Rom. 12.23. He writes that 80,000 soldiers were killed by the Pergameans, some even while clinging to the statue of Asclepius.

Around 350 BCE the cult came to Cos, where an altar was erected to Asclepius in the grove of Apollo. The Asclepion was built later and dedicated in 260 BCE.¹⁷ The sanctuary in Cos began to challenge the cult and its practice in Epidauros, developing into a more medically oriented healing center with a famous school for physicians attached to it. The skills and honors given to these physicians somehow overshadowed the understanding of Asclepius as a miraculous healing deity who in other places was only known as working mainly through incubation and miracles.¹⁸ During the invasion of Mithridates, the sanctuary at Cos reacted differently from that of Pergamum, protecting the Romans who sought refuge in the Asclepion.¹⁹ The Cos sanctuary's favorable stand toward the Romans and its famous medicines and school increased its prominence among the Romans. During the time of the emperors Cos received many favors from them. Caesar upheld the rights of the cult, as did Tiberius and Claudius.²⁰ During the second century CE, the previously clear distinction between Cos, with its school of physicians, and Epidauros, which stressed only the miraculous, came to an end. However, the influence from Cos left its mark on the cult. Pergamum, for example, was able to merge the two emphases. Aristides and the inscriptions provide evidence that incubation and miracle activity existed side by side with medical assistance provided

¹⁷Strabo 19.2.19; Tacitus Annals 12.61,1-2.

¹⁸This emphasis on medical procedures is frequently discussed. For the purpose of this study, the treatment by Herzog and the references mentioned are important. He compares this development with evidence from the cult in Epidauros, and does not treat it from a history of medicine standpoint: R. Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 29.141.147-48.152.158.

The excavation from Cos produced many medical instruments and terracottas which depict the diseased parts of the body (Th. Meyer-Steineg "Chirurgische Instrumente des Altertums" Jenaer medizin-historische Beiträge No. 1 and 2 (1912).

¹⁹See p. 16, n.17.

²⁰Caesar: Valerius Maximus Memorabilia 1.1.19; Tiberius: Tacitus Annals 4.14,1-2; Claudius: Tacitus Annals 12.16,1-2. The personal physician of the Emperor, C. Sertorius Xenophon from Cos, brought glory especially to the Asclepius tradition in this city (R. Herzog, "Nikas and Xenophon von Kos," Historische Zeitschrift 125 (1938) 242).

by physicians. The same is true for Ephesus, which featured a competition between three medical disciplines (including surgery) among its town physicians at the games of Asclepius during the second century CE.²¹

The cult was also established during this time in Corinth, at a place where Apollo was worshipped before.²² The many votive-offerings of the healed anatomical parts of the body which were found provide a clear and vivid picture of the healing activity which flourished there.²³

In the third century BCE, the Asclepius cult also reached Egypt. The influence of Alexander the Great, a devotee of Asclepius, is considered to be the stimulus for this movement.²⁴ The sanctuaries in Memphis and Thebes became quite famous. In these places Asclepius became identified also as Imouthes or Imhotep.²⁵

In 292 BCE Rome requested and was granted the sacred snake and opened an affiliated sanctuary.²⁶ Although there already existed a shrine for Asclepius, the city of Rome, threatened by pestilence,²⁷ made its request, which was supported

²¹See p. 166, n.40; Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 147.152.

²²Ferdinand J. de Waele, "The Sanctuary of Asclepios and Hygieia at Corinth," American Journal of Archaeology 37 (1933) 220-21.449.

²³Carl Roebuck, The Asclepieion and Lerna (Princeton: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, vol., 14, 1951); Mabel L. Lang Cure and Cult in Ancient Corinth: A Guide to the Asclepieion (Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1977) Plate 14-29; A.E. Hill, "The Temple of Asclepius: An Alternate Source of Paul's Body Theology?" JBL 99 (1980) 437-39.

²⁴Edelstein, Asclepius, 2.251.

²⁵Clement of Alexandria Strom, 1.21.134. He mentions that the Egyptians celebrated Hermes of Thebes and Asclepius of Memphis as gods who formerly were human; See p. 65; Jayne, Healing Gods, 33.

²⁶See pp. 16 and 57-58; Julian Galil, 206 B. He claimed that the cult came first to Tarentum and later to Rome.

²⁷Livy Periocha 2; Ovid Metam. 15.626-29; Fast 1. 289-11. He writes about the disease and the many deaths it caused. He also mentions that the physicians were at a loss and thus Rome sought divine help.

by the Sibylline Oracle. The cult was transferred to Rome through the medium of the snake, an event which is interpreted and understood in different ways by various writers.²⁸ The spot where the snake landed, on the island in the Tiber, is where the sanctuary became established.²⁹ This event was one of the important triumphs of the Asclepieion of Epidavros, because their cult was sought out to be among the first of foreign gods to be admitted to Rome. The selection of a provincial deity at such an early date in this emerging city of the west was significant for the later development of the cult, because it set the pattern for the attitude of Roman citizens and officials in later centuries. The early acceptance of Asclepius in Rome later opened the door for the emperors also to embrace one of the 'local' religions which had its own history in their town. In addition, the cult brought Asclepius into contact with Roman military personnel, who then carried the god's message to the corners of the Empire.³⁰

This selected history of the mushrooming of new sanctuaries for Asclepius all over the Hellenistic world illustrates the cult's growing popularity. By the time the followers of Jesus emerged from Palestine, at least 500 sanctuaries were active throughout the Hellenistic world, as well as countless small shrines and small

²⁸ Among the reports about the official opening of the Asclepius cult are the short report by Livy (*Ab urbe condita* 29.11,1) and a rather lengthy description by Ovid (*Metamorph.* 15.637-40) who writes that the delegation from Rome had the blessing from an oracle at Delphi. The oracle told the delegation to search closer to their home and that they had no need for Apollo, but for his son. Also Arnobius (*Adv. nat.* 7. 44-48) gave a lengthy history in which he expressed his opposition to the cult by dwelling on the fact that the Romans still believed in a god who was in reality only an animal which crawled in the dirt on its stomach.

The transfer of Asclepius' power to Rome was not without a sequence of miraculous happenings: e.g., the miracle of door openings. This is an often overlooked but very significant act which is documented by Otto Weinreich (*Gebet und Wunder* [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1929] 200-204: "Türöffnung im Wunder-, Prodigen- und Zauberglauben der Antike, des Judentums und Christentums," 254-56).

²⁹ See pp. 19 and 57-58.

³⁰ See below pp. 16-7; E.g., into Switzerland (Otto Stähelin, *Die Schweiz in römischer Zeit* [Basel: Schwabe, 1927].

statues in private houses.³¹ Many cities celebrated traditional games for Asclepius. The healing cult was well established in cities like Epidauros, Rome, Corinth and Pergamum, where their Asclepieia wielded great influence well beyond the city limits. Thus, many of the towns visited by the earliest followers of Jesus confronted visitors with the Asclepius cult which had been established there for centuries. The cult had a proven record of healing which was visible all over the cities in inscriptions and reliefs. In addition, on many coins which were used even by the Christians, Asclepius was depicted as a divine healer.

B. THE ASCLEPIEION IN EPIDAUROS.

The city of Epidauros lies on the east coast of the Peloponnese, on the Saronic gulf. The sanctuary of Asclepieios is located in a hilly area at the foot of Mt. Kharani a few kilometers north of the town. Above the Asclepieion is the much older sanctuary of Apollo Maieatas on the summit Kynortion. The Hieron belongs to the city of Epidauros, whose inhabitants founded the sanctuary of Asclepius and worshipped Apollo on Mt. Kynortion. The city elected the Priest of Asclepius annually and oversaw the cult activities. The Asclepius cult began in the 6th century BCE and peaked in the 4th and 3th centuries BCE with major sacrifices, festivals and games as part of their activities. The major events were the Asclepieia, a festival with athletic and drama competitions held every four years, nine days after the Isthmian games.³² During this time with the increased popularity, the cult changed from a local cult to an important cult center. In the 4th century BCE Asclepius was still celebrated together with Apollo, as is shown in the inscriptions

³¹ For the numbers of sanctuaries see p. 4-5. For some examples of statues which the devotees bought at the Asclepieia see *AvP* 3. 83-86: "Tempelkötten von Pergamon;" *AvP* 11.1. 161-62 (plate 58); See Appendix III. C.

³² *IG* 4.2. 40-41; 47.

and coins from the Asclepieion which depict both deities.³³ The 4th century BCE was also a time of great building activity which gave the sanctuary its shape. The site was mostly excavated by P. Kavvadias, who carried out his work in 1881-1928.³⁴

The Sacred Way from the city of Epidaurus enters the Asclepieion at the large propylaia and leads to the temple of Asclepius. On first entering the sanctuary, the devotee saw a row of inscriptions.³⁵ The temple, which is dated around 375-370 BCE, was 34.5 meters long and 12.2 meters wide. In the front of the temple was a ramp leading up to the height of three steps. The outside colonnade was in the Doric peripteral hexastyle (six by eleven columns). The floor inside was covered with black and white marble slabs. A stele reporting many details about the construction of the temple and many other buildings was excavated in 1885. This significant find was a building report which was customarily put up on construction sites but usually made out of wood. The report informed the public and the contractors about the work contracted out and the costs. This information, which was also posted for legal purposes, provides insight into how the buildings were erected, references for the layout of the buildings, the individual stages of

³³E.g., *IG* 4.2.1. 121-22; See pp. 37 and 46.

³⁴For a bibliography of written works on the excavation see: Charles Diehl, *Excursion in Greece to Recently Explored Sites of Classical Interest* (New York: Westermann, 1893) 331. He lists the early sources of excavation reports; R. A. Tomlinson, *Epidaurus* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983) 8-9. He has rightly pointed out that there is no comprehensive and systematic excavation report. Many buildings excavated by Kavvadias are only summarized, which is really regrettable since this is a major source of information on the religious history of Greece; R. A. Tomlinson, *Greek Sanctuaries* (London: P. Elek, 1976) 96-103.

Kee, (*Miracles*, 84) was out of line when he wrote: "Systematic excavations and analysis of the site were carried out in the nineteenth century, and the results have remarkably confirmed, but also significantly supplemented, Pausanias' report." It is true that Pausanias has been confirmed; however research on the Asclepius cult should go beyond Pausanias in an archaeological site as large as the Asclepieion in Epidaurus. See above p. 23, n. 41.

³⁵The individual stone bases with rectangular cuttings on the top are still in situ today. The row of stones were the bases for inscriptions which were placed into the openings, most likely carrying successful healing reports or possible ritual information.

construction and the number of people involved in the construction.³⁶ The building of the temple took four years and almost nine months. The architect was Theodosos. The famous sculptor Timotheos crafted the model of the Asclepius statue which other artists then used to produce the statues. Pausanias describes Asclepius as being represented sitting on a throne and holding his staff with one hand and a snake above his head with the other. He also mentions a dog lying next to Asclepius.³⁷ The temple was extensively ornamented with precious metals and ivory and, together with the altar in front, formed the nucleus of the holy area around which the other buildings were constructed.

The circular Thymele was the next important building built. A building inscription relates that it took thirty years to build.³⁸ This round structure with Doric colonnades and a ceiling richly decorated with large rosettes in each metope was the most beautiful building in the Asclepieion. The circular cella with Corinthian colonnade had a black and white marble floor with lozenge-shaped slabs and a white centerstone.³⁹ The most written-about aspect of the Thymele/Tholos is the Labyrinth which was covered by the decorative floor. The Labyrinth consists of four circular walls providing a corridor of about 0.6 meters between the walls for one person to walk through. The two inner walls have doors (about 1.6 meters

³⁶IG 4.2.1. 102; Ann Burford, The Greek Temple Builders at Epidaurus (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1969) 207-21. This socio-historical investigation is an excellent and detailed study of the building activity in Epidaurus connecting the information from the inscription with archaeological findings and other information. It provides valuable insight into the craftsmanship in those days and information such as the costs and number of workers involved.

³⁷Pausanias Per. 2.27.2; Burford, Temple Builders, 59-61. Lange, Cure and Cult, 7 (plate 6 shows a coin with a seated Asclepius).

³⁸IG 4.2. 103. Burford, Temple Builders, 62-68. The stone is badly damaged. This inscription marks the introduction of the stoichedon style of writing in Epidaurus.

³⁹Pausanias Per. 2.27.3. He certainly does not overstate the fact when he writes that the Tholos, a round building, is worth seeing. Pieces of the floor, the ceiling and the columns are exhibited in the museum in Epidaurus. Some pieces which were used as building material are visible in the Christian church in nearby Ligourion.

high) and the center circular wall is open to one side and thus provides access to the center, which has a round stone on the floor. Beside the two doors are two small stone walls which are positioned so that a person trying to walk from the outside to the center is forced to change direction after each door, and each circular-corridor must be traversed to reach the center.⁴⁰ In the centerpiece, there is a hole in the stone, but no water system has been found which could transport water to or from the Labyrinth. The use of this mysterious labyrinth has been the object of much speculation, often close to the ridiculous.⁴¹ To me, however, one solution seems to be the most likely. The Labyrinth was part of an older structure which was

⁴⁰ W. Dörpfeld, "Thymele and Skene," *Hermes* 37 (1902) 484. 251.

⁴¹ The storage place for the sacred snakes (T.H. Holwreda, "The Tholos in Epidaurus," *Rheinsches Museum für Philologie* 59 (1904) 532; R. Canton, *The Temples and Rituals of Asclepios* (London: Clay, 1900) 12-3: "An aperture in the floor may have been provided allowing the passage of the serpents from the Labyrinth to the sacrificing place above"); The home of a single, big, fat and very long snake which filled the holy place (J. N. Svoronos, "Die Polykleistische Tholos" in Epidaurus," *Journal International d'archéologie Numismatique* 4 (1901) 34, plate 27). Against this view see Pausanias (Per. 2.28.1: "But the big snakes that grow to more than thirty cubits such as are found in India and Libya, are said by the Epidaurians not to be the serpents. . ."); A snake house (Kerenyi, *Asklepios*, 102-05); Blood was poured into the hole in the middle (F. Robert, *Thymélé* (Paris: De Boccard, [1939] 355); Mice were kept there (Kerenyi, *Der göttliche Arzt*, 48); The Labyrinth was produced in order to create a special sound effect in the upper cella (H. Thiersch, "Antike Bauten für Musik," *Zeitschrift der Geschichte der Architektur* 2 (1909) 34).

Even today these views are held: e.g., Howard Kee (*Miracles*, 85) still believes the Labyrinth functioned as a meeting place. "Rather, the circles and openings were a way of making the waters of the sacred springs available to a number of people simultaneously for washing and refreshment." Mr. Kee most likely has never investigated this place and is not familiar with the past research. He does not realize how narrow the passages are. In addition the circular structure hinders devotees from gathering rather than encouraging them to gather (see below p. 22, n. 34; Appendix I. A).

incorporated into the new building program.⁴² This interpretation also proved a real purpose for the Tholos— a beautiful building honoring a former secret spot for the people of Epidaurus.⁴³

Another building in close proximity to the temple was the Abaton. It was built next to an older bath house and also enclosed a well. The portico building was about 36 meters long and 8 meters deep. On the west side the building has two floors necessitated by the sloping terrain so that the upper floor continued on the same level as a long room. Some benches which lined the walls of this building have been found. It was in this building that devotees spent a night after offering

⁴²Evidence for this is the geographical location and the history of the Asclepius cult. The present plateau of the sanctuary area is leveled out and supported by a wall on the west side. This difference of the level from the tunnel entrance to the race track of the sanctuary is also evident by stairs connecting the two levels of the Abaton. The front of the temple which is the natural niveau of the sanctuary plateau is visible. Therefore, the place where the Labyrinth originally stood is on a raised area above the plateau of the area of the lower abaton, but not on the level of the front of the temple. See Appendix I. A. This little hill must have been the site of an older sacred place where most likely chthonic sacrifices were offered. When this area became a sacred place for Asclepius and the big building program was started, this structure was incorporated into the Tholos (without its roof); See also Bruno Keil, "Die Rechnungen über den Epidaurischen Tholosbau," *MDAIA*, 20 (1895) 90-91.

This thesis explains why the Labyrinth has no entrance at all. The two outer circular foundations for the colonnades of the tholos have no doors. This leaves only the possibility to descend through the center of the floor as reported by Pausanias (*Per.* 9.39.5-14). This passage describes the initiation and descent to the oracle of Trophonius. It describes the act of going down into the basement with a light, narrow ladder, and how the initiate was required to thrust feet and body into a hole holding barley cakes. After this, the devotee returned again upwards through the same opening with the help of a ladder. The nice symmetry with its spiralling chequered black and white pavement of the floor seems not to have allowed an opening for a descent. The centerpiece which is exhibited in the Museum in Epidaurus has no handles at all. Furthermore, it is too heavy to lift without a mechanical device and the stone gives no evidence at all that its sides were constructed in the way a sewer cover is, in order to make it removable.

The place in the center of the Labyrinth is also not big enough for several people to gather for an initiation ceremony. The Labyrinth makes no sense at all when the devotees enter at the center. However, it made perfect sense in an older independent structure where one entered from the outside and found one's way through the maze to the center.

⁴³The Tholos has no real purpose which we know of. My thesis, however, would give this building a historical base for being the most beautiful and elaborate building in the Asclepieion— it was erected on top of a sacred place of an earlier chthonic rite. The spot could possibly commemorate the birthplace (J. N. Svoronos, "Polykletische Tholos," 29).

The fact that no debris of waste material from the ceiling was found in the Labyrinth supports this thesis. From the building inscription we know that the floor was put in at the end; therefore the Labyrinth could have been filled with waste. However, the absence of building debris indicates that the builders honored this older spot. See Appendix I. A.

the customary sacrifices and going through the usual formalities. There, the devotees hoped that the god would appear to them and reveal the remedy and treatment for healing the disease or perform a miraculous healing. These buildings together with the theater, the stadium, the Odeion, the *katagogēion* (a 160 bed hostel) and the Gymnasium, were the main buildings of the Asclepius cult and were constructed according to a master plan during the 4th and early 3rd centuries BCE. Together with the older buildings and the stadium they provided an adequate sanctuary for the glorification of Asclepius. The buildings were also sufficient for all aspects of the public and private services of the healing cult.

From the 2nd century BCE, not much is known about activities in the Asclepieion. The fact that the Romans' requested that a temple be built in their city had no visible immediate impact on Epidaurus. In the 1st century BCE, when Sulla plundered the treasures, the Asclepieion seemed to have functioned continuously until it received renewed interest in the early years of the period of the Roman emperors. A significant upswing in popularity took place in the late 1st which also brought some new buildings and activities.⁴⁴ The 2nd century CE brought a renewed phase of building activity which changed the shape of the sanctuary in Epidaurus. During this second great building period Pausarias reports that the senator Antoninus sponsored a bath in honor of Asclepius, a building outside the Asclepieion for devotees who were dying and for women who gave birth. Up to this point these groups of devotees had no real place to go. Antoninus also rebuilt the Portico of Kotys which was originally built of unburned bricks. During this second building phase many major buildings were repaired and additional houses were erected.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ During this time also the festivals of the *Apolloneia* and *Asclepieia* were established and their first president in the games was the priest of the emperor Caesar, Gaius Cornelius Nicetas.

⁴⁵ E.g., the Sacred Fountain, Roman baths.

After this period of renewed popularity which revitalized and beautified the Asclepieion, the Asclepius cult lost its attractiveness. In 355 CE, shortly before the emperor Julian gave the Asclepius cult its last major official support, Manaseas, the last known hierophant of the savior, dedicated a new altar to his god. The altar is dedicated to Asclepios of Aigai.⁴⁶ This is the same site at Aigai where Julian ordered the Christians to rebuild the former Asclepius temple by tearing down their own church.⁴⁷ The temple, however, was never rebuilt, and soon the Asclepieion at Epidavros experienced the same fate. The still sporadic services for Asclepius were extinguished when earthquakes in 522 and 551 destroyed the buildings.

C. THE ASCLEPIEION IN PERGAMUM.

The history of Pergamum and its life during the Hellenistic and Roman periods is well known. The archaeological findings of the city, including those from the Asclepeion sanctuary, have been well documented and publicized in the book series Altertümer von Pergamon.⁴⁸ Archias, son of Aristaeonius is

⁴⁶IG 4.2. 438. This is the only time such a title has been used in Epidavros. Kurt Latte, "IG 4.2.1: Inscriptiones Epidauri, ed. Hiller de Gaetringen," *Gnomon* 7 (1931) 134.

⁴⁷See pp. 55, n. 69; 206-07.

⁴⁸The series Altertümer von Pergamon (AvP) from the "Deutsches Archäologisches Institut" is published in 11 different volumes, each covering a specific topic. The publication is still in progress. Important for the Asclepieion are: concerning statues: AvP 7.1 (1908) by Franz Winter (1908); inscriptions: AvP 8.1 and AvP 8.2 (1895) by M. Fränkel and especially AvP 8.3 by Christian Habicht, *Die Inschriften des Asclepieion* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969); the Asclepieion: AvP 11.1 by Oskar Ziegenhau and Gioia De Luca (*Das Asklepieion* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1968), AvP 11.2 (1975), 11.3 (1981); 11.4 (1984). Many of these volumes have also photographs of specific details and overviews. A list of earlier publications about the excavation was compiled by Erwin Ohlmeutz, *Pergamon*, ix-x.

Coin: Hans von Fritze, "Die Münzen von Pergamon," *Abhandlungen der königlichen Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Philosophisch-Historische Classe, Berlin; Anhang Abh. 1, 1910) 1-108 (plates 1-9); Hans von Fritze, "Asklepiosstatuen in Pergamum," *Nomisma* 2 (1903) 19-35 (plate 5); O. Bernhard, "Aesculapius und die Asklepiaden auf römischen Münzen," *Schweizerische Numismatische Rundschau* 24 (1926) 129-41 (plates 1-2).

traditionally considered the founder of the sanctuary.⁴⁹ Geographically, the Asclepieion is located about 1 km outside of the city.⁵⁰ A "Sacred Way" connects the city with the sanctuary. The earlier Hellenistic Asclepieion is built on a rather flat 50 meter long and 40 meter broad stone terrace. During the time of the Roman emperors the Asclepieion was enlarged, according to a master plan, to the size of about 112 by 165 meters. In the time of Hadrian, many monumental buildings were built at the Asclepieion. This new and enlarged sanctuary area included a large, open rectangular temple plaza. This courtyard was enclosed on all four sides by buildings-- on the east side by the library, the propylon, the round temple of Asclepius and on the north-west and south by long stoas. The stoas were of the Doric order and the north stoa carried a long inscription mentioning Asclepius and Hadrian.⁵¹ The large size of this temple area is demonstrated by the size of the covered walkway of almost 350 meters which these three stoas provided. Adjacent to the north stoa is the Roman theater, to the west stoa an older 104-meter-long Hellenistic stoa.⁵² A gymnasium and bath were also built next to the Asclepieion during this time.

⁴⁹See below pp. 17-19. The name is also known from an inscription from Epidaurus (IG 4.1.2.60) where it is reported that an Asclepius priest from Pergamum, Arcuias, was honored there because one of his ancestors brought the cult to Pergamum. The name is also known from a temple history from the time of Hadrian (AvP 8.2. 613).

⁵⁰Polybius 32.27.1-5. He reports the destruction of Prusias II in 155 BCE, which included the Asclepieion outside of the city wall.

⁵¹AvP 8.3.103-6. Inscription number 64.

This provides an additional proof that the extended enclosure of the temple area with stoas on three sides was completed during the time of Hadrian. Aristides, who came to Pergamum shortly afterwards, was familiar with the enclosed Roman temple area and he mentioned the stoas (A. Aristides Or. 50.15.106).

⁵²Theater: AvP 11.2. 61-83; A. Aristides Or. 48.30. He described a dream in the "Sacred Theater" in which he stood before a great multitude, all wearing white garments, and publicly addressed Asclepius with a hymn (see above pp. 40, n. 19; 106, n. 48; 109, n. 65).

Stoa: AvP 11.2. 32; A. Aristides Or. 50.15.

Restrooms: In the southwest corner are two luxurious two-part latrines in marble for female (for 17 people) and male devotees (for 40 people). See above p. 88, n. 86.

The excavations of the Asclepieion were basically concluded in 1967. From the wealth of literary sources, inscriptions, coins, sculptures and archaeological data a clear picture of the Asclepieion emerged, revealing basically three building stages. First, the place was a private sanctuary in the 4th century BCE, which then developed and expanded into a Hellenistic Asclepieion. In its third stage the Asclepieion became a large, elaborate sanctuary complex because of Roman expansion.⁵³ All these reports lead to the conclusion that after a period in which the sanctuary had a rather local and unimportant role following the Roman invasion, the Asclepieion received intensive financial support in the latter part of the 1st century CE, beginning with the time of Tiberius. This rise in popularity represented a great change for the local cult. The city of Pergamum and the Asclepieion began to attract influential people not only from Asia Minor but from all over the eastern Mediterranean who came to worship the healer god. This is clearly evident from the physical shape of the Asclepieion and its growth into an extensive building complex including a large marble covered temple area (100 by 130 meters) surrounded on all four sides by elaborate, richly decorated marble buildings.

The temple from the Hellenistic period which was incorporated into the Roman building complex is located on the northwest side, close to the sacred well. It had dimensions of 6.5 by 13 meters, with an approach in front of seven stairs and four Ionic columns. An interesting feature of the temple is a hole inside the temple cella, 1 meter in diameter and 3 meters deep, which is chiseled into the natural rock. The hole does not contain a man-made water system, but appears to

⁵³ *AvP* 11.1. This volume treats the excavation and the development up to the "mittleren Kaiserzeit" (i); *AvP* 11.1. Plate 68. This map gives a clear layout of the Asclepieion and its chronological development. See Appendix II. A and B.

have held the sacred water.⁵⁴ The cult statue of Asclepius shows the god standing, with a naked upper body, a staff with a coiled snake under his right shoulder and his left hand propped against his hip. The statue is known from coins from Pergamum since the 2nd century BCE.⁵⁵

To the south of the temple is the sacred well, one of the oldest structures of the sacred precinct. It was constructed for bathing and not as a public fountain. It is a square of 3 meters and 1 meter deep, chiseled out of the natural rock and enclosed on three sides with marble, covered and decorated.⁵⁶ Aristides wrote extensively about the fountain and how he used it, providing many additional details.⁵⁷ Located just east of the fountain is a small mud pit. This is the spot where the priests and the devotees took their *πηλός* for ritual performances, washings and healings.⁵⁸ In this area, many fragments of votive offerings have been found, a fact which further underlines the importance of the fountain area.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ For the temple: *AvP* 11.2. 9-16, plates 92-94 and 86-91 for the ornamentation; Waterhole: *AvP* 11.2. 4-5 (plates, 92, 93). In accordance with the information from Aristides, it appears that this hole carried water because: "Der Felsschacht konute durchaus wasserführend gewesen sein" (5). Are the water channels chiseled out in the natural stone foundation of the temple plateaux of the sanctuary of Asclepius in Corinth the same feature? See below pp. 26-29 (*Tholos* in Epidauros) and the draining system of the Asclepius temple in Corinth (see drawings by Roebuck, *The Asclepion*, 68, plate A).

⁵⁵ Fritze, "Münzen," 40-41 (plates 3, coins 4.6.12-13; 5.15.17.21; 8.7.12.18 (the standing statue is depicted on coins 9 and 12) 14; See below page 19. Prusias II captured the Asclepius statue but it appears that the statue was soon returned (Olemitz, *Pergamon*, 39,126). A. Aristides, *Or.* 47.11; 50.50. *AvP* 7.1. 188-95). Fritze, "Asklepios," (plate 3). See Appendix III. D.

⁵⁶ *AvP* 11.2.16-17 (plates 5-6, coins 84.85.95).

⁵⁷ A. Aristides *Or.* 39. He describes the beauty (1), the importance (2-3: "We must not drink in silence, but adorn it somewhat with speeches, and address both the savior god whose work and creation this also is," [6]: "... the fairest part of the region of the temple," [14]: "This well is the discovery and possession of the great magician."); the popularity (13: "Those waters are good and sweet for the user and the observer of others, watching in summer when they stand close around the lip of the well, like a swarm of bees, ~~is~~ flies around milk"); the healings which took place there (15-17). See above p. 105, n. 46.

⁵⁸ *AvP* 11.2-16 (plate 95); See above p. 215, n. 5.

⁵⁹ *AvP* 11.1. 167-69, 171-74 (plates 61-2).

Taken together, the archaeological data and Aelius Aristides' vivid descriptions have the power to astonish and awe even the researcher viewing the pictures in the library. This excitement is necessary in order to visualize the countless devotees who exercised their devotion to Asclepius at this place with baths even in sub-zero winter days as Aristides describes it. This excitement of historical closeness and actuality is necessary in order to understand the impact the healing god Asclepius had on the individual devotee and the general population. This makes it also possible to comprehend the rivalry between the Asclepius devotees and the followers of Jesus which is discussed below.

The east side of the rectangular temple area is enclosed by several buildings. In the north east corner, adjacent to the north stoa, is the library which was given by Flavius Melitene.⁶⁰ Inside the library was a colossal statue of the emperor Hadrian.⁶¹ South of the library is the Propylon. The visitor coming up the Sacred Way from the city passed the Via Tecta, the baths and the last 130 meters of the Sacred Way which was flanked by stoas on both sides.⁶² This is, as Deubner correctly noticed, the place where the dealers had their "Verkaufsbuden" and sold statues and other paraphernalia.⁶³ At this point, the Sacred Way led through a gate to a large open square, 32 by 32 meters. From this courtyard the entrance led through a porch of four Corinthian columns into the Propylon, then down broad stairs into the center courtyard of the Asclepieion.⁶⁴ To the left of the main entrance

⁶⁰See p. 77.

⁶¹Now in the Museum at Bergama; Osman Bayalli, Asklepion (Istanbul: Anil Mat Baazi, 1954) 16.

⁶²AvP 11.4. 1.154-55 (plates 70-71); AvP 8.3. 8.

⁶³See Appendix III. B; Deubner, Asklepieion, 25 (plate 15).

⁶⁴AvP 11.3. 5-29 (plates 46-60). For the Hellenistic propylaea see: AvP 11.2. 44; Deubner, Asklepieion, 28-29.

are two large round buildings which connect to the south stoa and together with the other stoas completely enclose the temple area. The round building adjacent to the Propylaea is a temple. The large round temple dedicated to Zeus-Asklepios had a circular naos of 24 meters, a domed roof and an elaborate staircase leading from the temple area.⁶⁵ Opposite the entrance was a large niche 7 meters wide and six other smaller niches arranged in symmetrical order around the rotunda. It is most likely that a larger than life size statue of Zeus-Asklepius stood in the center niche.⁶⁶ To the south is another monumental round building (44 meters in diameter) with two floors and domed roof. Each floor had its own entryway to the two rooms. The upper room was a round naos 26 meters in diameter and was covered by a cupola decorated with mosaics. The lower room was a large vaulted substructure with a round open center room with access to the center of the temple area through a 80-meter-long cryptoparticus. An elaborate water system was excavated under the floor of the lower room. Since the building was not a temple, the exact function of the rooms is not clear. It could very likely have functioned for medical and cultic use, and perhaps it substituted for the older incubation rooms.⁶⁷

The Roman Asclepieion can also be reconstructed from the extensive writings of the Asclepius devotee Aelius Aristides. They not only provide evidence for the existence of the buildings, but also frequently provide insight into the actual cult activities which took place in these individual buildings.⁶⁸ Aristides also

⁶⁵A. Aristides *Or.* 47.45.78; 50.46.

⁶⁶*A.v.P.* 11.3. 30-75 (plates 61-77). The temple is dedicated by L. Cuspius Pactumeius Rufinus. Most likely this happened during the time of Hadrian. He was also a friend of Aelius Aristides and Galen; A. Aristides *Or.* 42.4.

⁶⁷*I.v.P.* 11.3. 76-100 (plates 78-85). For the possible function of the building see pages 76-77. Deubner, *Asklepieion*, 60-62 (plates 53-4).

⁶⁸Ohlemutz (*Pergamon*, 135-148) and Behr (*Sacred Tales*, 1-115) made successful attempts to use the information from the "Pausanias from Pergamon" to explain the Asclepieion. See also Hugo Hepding, "ΡΟΥΦΙΝΙΩΝ ΑΛΣΟΣ," *Philologus* 88 (1933) 99-100.

illustrates the reverence and devotion which the followers of Asclepius paid to these buildings and cult places. With his references to the priests, helpers, other cult personnel, servants and his friends, he also reminds us that there were extensive living quarters for these people, as well as for guests who sought healing there.⁶⁹

The archaeological excavations also brought to light many coins picturing Asclepius and sculptures of him mostly in a standing position.⁷⁰ From the time of Sulla in 86 BCE (suicide of Fimbria) until the end of the first century CE, Asclepius is rarely depicted on coins. However, in the 2nd century CE many coins have been found which show Asclepius with his symbol, the snake, together with various emperors.⁷¹ It almost appears that the snake was the symbol of the city of Pergamum.⁷²

From the evidence of the Asclepieion in Pergamum, it can be concluded that the sanctuary reached its greatest popularity during the second century CE. During

⁶⁹On the south east side the beginning of living quarters and a street have been excavated: AvP 11.3 (plate 24); AvP 11.4. 55 (kitchen utilities found).

⁷⁰AvP 7.1. Sculptures numbers 189-95.213. See above p. 34 (statue in temple). From the Gymnasium: Peter Jacobsthal, "Die Arbeit zu Pergamum 1906-1907," (MDALA 38 (1908) 421-25 (plate 24); 225. A small terracotta votive figure of 8.5 cm height was also found there; Olemitz, Heilstätten, 129.

Reliefs: AvP 11.4. 57.

⁷¹Fritze, "Münzen," 47: "Asklepios wird deshalb und die Spitze gestellt [on coins], weil sein Kult in dem Masse alle anderen Götterdienste während der Kaiserzeit verdunkelt, dass er greadzu als Stadtpatron angesehen werden kann, wie mit Sicherheit aus den zahlreichen Homoniamünzen hervorgeht."

AvP 8.16. 19. From the Sacred Way area AvP 11.4 60-77 (this list includes a short bibliography; plates 30-31). A very important coin is N 19 (plate 30), a special commemorative coin to the Emperor Commodus (61.64). The coin is 44 mm in diameter.

Coin depicting the emperors; Fritze, "Asklepiosstatuen," 19-35 (plate 3); Deubner, Asclepieion, 8-9.19 (plates 2-3); Fritze, "Münzen," 71-82, 104-7 for example from the time of Hadrian (plates 5, coins 8.22; 6.3.23), Marcus Aurelius (plates 6, coins 9.15-17; 7.1.6; 9.11-12) and Severus (plates 4, coins 14.16.18; 5.5; 6.7; 7.10-11; 8.15; 9.8.10.24).

⁷²Fritze, "Münzen," 32.41-43 (e.g., plates 1, coins 32.38; 9, coins 10-11). Some coins show the snake with the key in the temple (e.g., plate 1, coins 42-43), on a pedestal (plates 3, coins 5.7; 9, coin 12) or coiled around the staff (e.g., plate 9, coin 8). Significant in regard to the snake is also the fact that Aelius Aristides does not mention the snake at all in connection with the healing activity in Pergamum, which seems to indicate that the snake had symbolic meaning only in relation to Asclepius.

this time, the Asclepieion received a new physical shape and became a monumental complex with a large, open center plaza surrounded by marble buildings expensively decorated with masonry stone works and mosaics. The extensive size of the Asclepieion also indicates the financial support that the Asclepius cult received and the fact that the sanctuary was visited by large numbers of devotees. During this time, the sanctuary was internationally famous,⁷³ attracting the elite-philosophers, rhetors and physicians among many others.⁷⁴ The visit of Caracalla who sought healing in the Asclepieion was a very important event.⁷⁵ However, it also signaled the end of a great era since his visit was the last by an emperor for whom a dedication has been found.⁷⁶ In the second century, Asclepius was

⁷³ In the year 94 CE when Statius (9.16) wrote to Rome he mentioned Asclepius simply as the god from Pergamum. It was understood even in Rome that this god was Asclepius. Also on many occasions Aristides praises the fame of this Asclepieion (e.g., *Or.* 28.13-18; 47.13).

⁷⁴ *AvP* 11.2. 109-10.138. These pages list artifacts of glass from many places in the Roman empire (e.g., Pompey, North Africa) which were found there.

⁷⁵ Pergamum was also famous for its medical practices. Galen, who himself gained great fame as a physician, studied medicine in Pergamum from 145-149 CE with his teacher Satyros. Galen called himself proudly ὁ πεποντής τῆς μάρτυρος θεοῦ (Karl G. Kühn, *Medicorum Graecorum opera quae extant* IV. 41.19.19 [26 vols., Leipzig: Cnoblochii, 1833]). He received his profession through a vision of Asclepius (16.222) and he was guided throughout his life by his god (11. 314-15; 16. 222). Like Aelius Aristides he agreed that a sick devotee of Asclepius had to listen primarily to his god and not to the physician (17b 137). See also Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, 145-46.

⁷⁶ Dio Cassius *Hist.* 77.1506; Herodian 4.8.83. Caracalla gave the city its third neokoroi on this occasion. Many coins of Caracalla and Asclepius have been found: e.g., *AvP* 7.7-8.17; 8.1-2; 8.4.9 (show Caracalla sacrificing before Asclepius). A big statue of Caracalla was also erected. The head of the statue shows the Emperor with the cap of a priest. See Th. Wiegand, "Berich über die Ausgrabungen von Pergamon," *ABAW* 5 (1932) 52-56; See also Barbara Burrell "Neokoroi' Greek Cities of the Roman East," (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard 1980) 207-18.

On coins from Pergamum, Caracalla appears as a general and as Pontifex (Fritze, "Münzen," 51.72 [plate 7, coins 5.7.14], as a general on a horse; 73 [plate 8, coins 7.8 with toga], sacrificing to Asclepius (Fritze, "Münzen," 73 [plate 7, coins 13-14.17] and praying before Asclepius (Fritze, "Münzen," 73 [plate 7, coins 14-15]. This act is symbolized with the raised right hand).

⁷⁶ Fritze, "Münzen," 73-74: "Mit Caracalla, dem enthusiastischen Verehrer des Asklepios, hören Darstellungen des opfernden Kaisers fast ganz auf. Nur zwei Grossbronzen des Decius sind aus der Folgezeit noch beizufügen."

celebrated as savior and healer. He was the central deity among the ἄλλοι θεοί which were also honored either in the city of Pergamum or in the Asclepieion.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ AvP 8.3 (number 64); AvP 11.4. 85.126.

CHAPTER III. INSCRIPTIONS AND LITERATURE.

In the Graeco-Roman world it was common to dedicate various kinds of thank-offerings to the gods after an encounter with the divinities which brought good fortune, especially in the case of healings brought about through divine intervention.¹

This offering of thanks through inscriptions also played an important role in the Asclepius cult. For centuries inscriptions describing successful healings stood as witnesses of cult devotions, serving as an encouragement to other followers of Asclepius,² and as proof against criticism and doubts about Asclepius' healing power. When Pausanias came to Epidauros around 165 CE, he mentioned the stelae which were almost five hundred years old and contained seventy personal stories and testimonies about the miraculous healing activity of the divine Asclepius.³

¹Plato *Laws* 909E-910A: "It is no easy task to found temples and gods, and to do this rightly needs much deliberation; yet it is customary for all women especially, and for sick folk everywhere, and those in peril and distress (whatever the nature of the distress), and conversely for those who have had a slice of good fortune, to dedicate whatever happens to be at hand at the moment, and to vow sacrifices and promise founding of shrines to gods and demi-gods and children of gods; and through terrors caused by waking visions or by dreams, and in like manners as they recall many visions and try to provide remedies for each of them, they are wont to found altars and shrines, and to fill with them every house and every village, and open places too, and every spot which was the scene of such experiences."

²IG 4.22.13. Inscription stela 1, numbers 3 and 4.

³Pausanias *Per.* 2.27.3: "Within the enclosure stood slabs; in my time six remained, but of old there were more. On them are inscribed the names of both the men and women who have been healed by Asclepius, the disease also from which each suffered, and the means of cure. The dialect is Doric."

These miracles are recorded in IG IV,22,123.⁴ Although many noted scholars have dealt with the inscriptions, it is surprising to find that most have based their work on a poorly reconstructed text. W. Peck,⁵ in his reconstruction of five accounts of healing from Stele C, demonstrates clearly how the commonly used reestablished Greek text is not always correct. In the five chosen samples, Peck convincingly shows that many of these reconstructions are either grammatically incorrect or that the number of the reconstructed Greek letters do not fit in the open spaces of the missing text (the inscriptions are in stoichedon order). Herzog's work is typical of this inadequately researched scholarship. Although he wrote a whole book about the inscriptions,⁶ one is surprised to learn that he worked only from squeezes⁷ and believed concerning stele "C" that, "Eine Nachprüfung an dem im Museum von Epidauros in die Wand eingelassenen Stein ist, wie ich mich 1928 überzeugt habe, sehr mühevoll und unsicher."⁸

⁴In later publications the text is also reprinted, e.g., Rudolf Herzog, Die Wunderheilungen von Epidauros (Leipzig: Philologus, Supplementband 22, no. 3; Leipzig: Dietrich, 1931), Emma and Ludwig Edelstein, Asclepius (2 Vol.; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1945).

⁵Werner Peck, "Fünf Wundergeschichten aus dem Asklepiion von Epidauros," ASAW.PH. Vol. 56, no. 3; Berlin: Akademie (1964) 1-9: "Die auf der grossen Stele IG IV, 2 123 aufgezeichneten Wunderheilungen liegen trotz vielfacher Bemühungen von Blinkenberg, Drachmann, Herzog, Hiller v. Gaertringen, Salac, Wilhelm immer noch nicht in befriediger, geschweige gesicherten Fassung vor, ja sie müssen vielfach geradezu als interpoliert gelten" (p.3).

⁶Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 1-164.

⁷Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 3.

⁸Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 3-4. Troublesome work, however, should not hinder the establishment of the text from the original, especially since work on the squeezes is not without its own problems. Peck ("Fünf Wundergeschichten," 3), who investigated both the squeezes from Berlin which Herzog used and the stone inscription in the museum in Epidauros established cases of precedence in regard to the use of squeezes. He clearly established the fact that the squeezes show misleading traces of letters resulting from the stone structure itself and not from the chisel of a craftsman. Thus, the squeezes can be much more misleading than the actual contact with the stone.

In this dissertation, I shall use the text of Edelstein, Asclepius, Vol. 1⁹ and its numbering system (e.g., T 12), except when specific emphasis requires otherwise.

The early inscriptions, including those from Epidauros discussed above, as well as the later ones, were produced primarily as thank-offerings to the healing deity and functioned as encouragement for those who sought healing. That these recorded healings had propaganda value seems to be an obvious fact. Therefore it comes as no surprise that the inscriptions were produced under the supervision of cult officials. Many of these records of healings received further official approval and became part of collections of previously-recorded stories written on wooden tablets,¹⁰ individual stone inscriptions, or from dedications written on various kinds of small votive offerings. It is also possible that stories which originally had only an oral history (especially those told by the priests) and possibly even those used in the theaters made their way into these written collections. Again, the earliest collection of Epidauros inscriptions provides clear evidence for this in the titles,¹¹ the high quality of

⁹The critique of Edelstein by Gregory Vlastos ("Religion and Medicine in the Cult of Asclepius: A Review Article," *The Review of Religion* 13 [1948-49] 270-90) is also considered.

¹⁰Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, 52-4. It seems to be legitimate to make a parallel to the building inscriptions which were written on wooden tablets at construction sites. These tablets were used for information and legal questions such as what work is contracted to whom, and for what amount of money.

Sometimes these accounts were later written on stelae. For information regarding these details at Epidauros see Alison Burford, *The Greek Temple Builders at Epidauros* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969) 11; Lebadia: Adolf Wilhelm, "Bauinschrift aus Lebadeia," *MDALA* 22 (1897) 179-82.

¹¹"Ἴαματα τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος καὶ τοῦ Ἀσκλεπιοῦ" is the official title written on the first stela. Pausanias *Per.* 2.36 quotes the collection simply as "τοῦ Ἀσκλεπιοῦ τὰ ἴαματα." Furthermore, the open space before each account and the individual subtitles for each account also reflect the work of an official editor and collector.

That we are dealing here with an official title is further supported by the fact that the stelae not only contain healings, but also oracles (stela 2: 34,46,63), miracles of punishment (stelae 1:7; 2:22,36), a restoration of a broken cup (stela 1:10), visions (stela 2:24).

workmanship, the uniform style,¹² and the prominent positioning of the stelae.¹³ There is also evidence in other places like Lebena¹⁴ and Lindos¹⁵ that officially approved collections of miracle accounts were set up with the guidance and approval of the political and religious authorities at the religious sanctuaries.

The inscriptions were originally put up as thank-offerings, however, they also served those who sought healing and especially those who were in need of encouragement because they had not been healed by the god. The writings also addressed skeptics of the miraculous healings and perhaps also provided recreational readings of interest for the devotees.¹⁶ Pliny also mentions a practical use of these inscriptions which was to hand down successful remedies for later sufferers of the same disease so that the same cure could be employed.¹⁷

The fact that not all devotees were healed did not hinder the successful spreading of the stories. On the contrary, the failures encouraged additional visits and more devotion, thus contributing strongly to the popularity of the cult. Some accounts

¹²The stoichaic order, the uniform style and the low number of mistakes all point to an organized collection and quality workmanship. In R. Nerbas ("Sprache und Stil der Iamata von Epidaurus" *Philologus*, Suppl. 27, no. 4; Leipzig: Dietrich, [1935] 7) it is noted that the uniformity of all the inscriptions is seen in the fact that throughout the six stelae ὁ θεὸς always refers to Asclepius.

¹³The place where these inscriptions were found is within the abaton. Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 59 and LG, 4.2 Tab. 2 (the structure is marked with a triangular sign).

¹⁴That this was also an official collection is noted in the introduction which lists the three inscriptions which follow (Translation by Herzog, "Wunderheilungen," 51-2; W Leb 1.2.3).

¹⁵The temple chronicle from Lindos in 99 C.E. had been made after a democratic decision by the ruling body and incorporates older material. See Christian Blinkenberg, Die lindische Tempelchronik (Kleine Texte 131; Bonn: Marcus & Weber, 1915) 1-59.

¹⁶Diogenes Laertius 5.59. He seems to sum up the general attitude of the critics: "When someone expressed astonishment at the votive offerings in Samothrace, his comment was, 'There would have been far more, if those who were not saved had set up offerings.' But others attribute this remark to Digoras of Melos." Also Cicero De natura Deorum 3.89.

The design of the Asclepion in Epidaurus with its benches and walkways suggests that many votive offerings were put up for leisurely reading.

¹⁷Pliny Hist. nat. 24.2.4.

even became folk tales, as Pausanias attests.¹⁸ It is further significant to emphasize that dates of the miracles were generally missing, so the records appeared to the viewer as "up to date" accounts of Asclepius' healing power long after the healed person had died!

Large crowds of people would gather at the sanctuaries, not primarily for healing purposes, but for regular worship of the deity and to participate in festivals, athletic games and other activities. In Epidauros this is evidenced by the size of the katagogeion, the 10,000-seat theater¹⁹ and the race track.²⁰ These facilities were used more frequently than during the festivals which were held only every fourth year. The large buildings and other constructions further support the notion that the Asclepieion must have been visited by many people, not only during the quadrennial festivals, but throughout the year by many health-seeking devotees and visitors, since Epidauros is not located on an important main road but in an isolated area off the main road.

¹⁸ Pausanias Per. 2.27.4. Concerning an inscription written on the 4th. C.E. stele in Epidauros, he writes: "The Arians tell a tale that agrees with the inscription on this slab, that when Hippolytus was killed, owing to the curses of Theseus, Asclepius raised him from the dead. On coming to life again he refused to forgive his father; rejecting his prayers, he went to the Arians in Italy. There he became king and devoted a precinct to Artemis, where down to my time the price for the victor. . . ."

Also concerning the deserted city of Halice, he wrote (2.36.1) "There is mention made of citizens of Halice on the Epidaurian slabs on which are inscribed the cures of Asclepius." (The actual report is on stele 1:18 and recorded by Edelstein, Asclepius, T 423, 18).

¹⁹ Armin von Gerkan and Wolfgang Müller, Das Theater von Epidauros (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1961). This work reports on the only significant archaeological work done at the theater, which was done shortly before it was renovated and partially reconstructed to its present condition for public use. The report shows that no datable evidence was found in the present remains (77), but the authors conclude from various pieces of evidence that a third century BCE date for its construction seems most likely (80). The authors believe that in the early second century BCE the seating was expanded from 6200 to 12,300 seats (reflecting an increase in popularity) and that a remodelling to a Roman theater style never took place (81). See also Pausanias VA 2.37.5.

Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 154. He quotes a possible play from the theater. Also Aristides' orations give us evidence of speeches delivered most likely in the theater.

The great number of people who visited the sanctuary for its 'general' activities should also be seen in relation to the few devotees who had space in the abaton to spend a night there (see also chapter II.B.).

²⁰ Roberto Patrucco, Lo Stadio di Epidauro (Accademia Toscana di Scienze e Lettere "La Celesphoria," No. 44; Florence: Olscheli, 1976).

In summary, it can be said that the written and oral healing accounts were important tools for promoting the Asclepius cult. This is especially true at the beginning of the common era when these older accounts became important testimonies to the continuing power of Asclepius as a healing deity. In these written accounts from the cult activities which also include oracles, miracles of punishment, etc., we need to define the nature of healing activities very broadly. Healings included recoveries from various conditions or diseases which, due to unique circumstances, were attributed to the direct intervention of the deity.

Furthermore, two aspects of variation and change in the recording of healing events must be studied so as not to blur the picture of possible evolutionary developments and to recognize the distinctive characteristics which vary with time and location.

First, the time element is important. On the one hand, in order to obtain a clear record of the evolutionary development in the way healings were reported, they need to be grouped according to time periods. For example, the 700 inscriptions found to date at Epidaurus span a period of about 700 years (late 4th century BCE to 355 CE).²¹ The recognition of this time element is crucial in the analysis of the variations in individual accounts, since these reflect changes in the cult itself and in the style of healing records. If there are variations, it is imperative to note their specific date and the frequency with which they occur and to recognize any outside influences which might have triggered these variations. On the other hand, remarkable consistencies in specific features of healing inscriptions become meaningful and significant only if the whole time period is considered (e.g., no exorcisms have been reported at all in Epidaurus). Furthermore, the frequency or lack of inscriptions within a certain period of time tells us a great deal about the popularity and support of the

²¹Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 154.

cult during that time. Additional factors which are important in dating inscriptions and determining specific time periods are the quality of the craftsmanship, the style of the lettering and the messages of recorded stories themselves, the elaborateness of the dedication in regard to statues, ornaments etc., the materials used and their origin.

The second important element is the location. Several Asclepius sanctuaries emphasized different healing procedures and developed different characteristics in their rituals and healing traditions which also markedly influenced the style and content of the inscriptions. Therefore, the inscriptions must be grouped not only according to date but also relative to their locations.

Thus place and time, as well as other specifics such as material, quality of work, lettering, the dedicant and the locations of the inscriptions within the sanctuary all need careful investigation in order to establish valid criteria for understanding the nature of the Asclepius cult in a specific epoch and for a particular sanctuary. Only this kind of analysis will bring forth the specific features of an individual sanctuary which were often determined by its local setting. In forming these specific sub-groups, however, one should not lose sight of the overarching principles which are characteristic of the Asclepius cult.

The following sub-chapters provide information concerning the Asclepius cult in different cities. No attempt is made, however, to include all data from the second century CE. The information given here is chosen in order to give insight into the praxis, the status and popularity of the healing cult, as well as the cult's primary emphasis on healing procedures. Only these data let us understand what role the Asclepius cult played in various local societies. Through such an understanding we can see the reasons for the differences as well as the similarities between the followers of Asclepius and of Jesus in their appeal to people, and especially to the sick. Understanding the geographical location of the Asclepius cult and its Christian opponents is very important because this study will show that basically those towns

(areas) with a strong Asclepius cult also elicited a strong opposition to it from the followers of Jesus. Therefore, the understanding that in various geographical areas Christianity developed differently, as is proposed by H. Koester,²² leads to another realization: not only did the fortunes of Christianity differ geographically—so did the fortunes of the opponents of Christianity. The competitors which Christians faced and fought become more specific and apparent through this approach.²³ In the case of the Asclepius cult and the Christian opposition this means that the Christian apologist first reacted and wrote against the particular local Asclepius cult with which he was confronted. The local Asclepieion was his immediate competition and only secondarily did he react toward the general popularity of the savior and healing god.

Within this framework, the Asclepius cult in Epidaurus is included here, because it is the place where the cult had its beginning, the central location with which the affiliated Asclepieia were connected.²⁴ Rome is important because of the Christian apologists and the fact that Christianity developed with strength there. Oxyrhynchus is considered in this study because a papyrus containing a story of an Asclepius devotee was found there, although this town provides no evidence of an Asclepieion. Pergamum is significant because the Asclepius cult was a prominent religion in Asia Minor during the second century CE and it is also the site of a strong interchange between the developing Christianity and the extremely popular Asclepius cult there. The city of Ephesus is considered in connection with the opposition mentioned by Ignatius of Antioch (III.7).

²² He proposed this understanding of the Christian development in his book with James M. Robinson (*Trajectories through Early Christianity* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971] 273-277) and applied it in his book: *Introduction*, 286-347.

²³ E.g., The Asclepius cult was popular in the northeast in the Cilician city of Aigai where later the cult of the auargyroi Cosmas and Damian and Zenobius developed (Herzog, "Asclepius," 800; see also chapter IV). In Egypt, Clement of Alexandria denounced Imuthes/ Imhotep, a deity which is synonymous with Asclepius (*Strom.* 1.21).

²⁴ Julian *Gal.* 200B: From Epidaurus, Asclepius: "stretched out of the whole earth his saving hand."

A. EPIDAUROS.

Most inscriptions from Epidauros have been published and analyzed by Herzog.²⁵ For the purpose of this dissertation it is necessary to isolate the 2nd century CE inscriptions from the over 700-year time period (from the 4th century BCE until the middle of the 5th century CE) from which inscriptions of this sanctuary are known. This is so that we may look at the 2nd century CE as a unit in itself and compare information from this time segment with parallels and differences in the written evidence of the whole history of the sanctuary.²⁶

From the time of the 1st century BCE until the end of the first century CE, not much is known about the sanctuary in Epidauros. Only a few benefactors are known. However, the sanctuary remained functioning during this time,²⁷ even during very difficult years of destruction.²⁸ With the Emperor Hadrian, who highly favored this sanctuary, the "city of god"²⁹ increased again in popularity. The big stelae containing the official inscriptions were still standing at this time.³⁰ Because of their age, they provided very important documents not only for propaganda use, but also in their

²⁵See below pp. 36-38.

²⁶The conclusion concerning form and content of all the *iamata* found in Epidauros which were reached by Herzog (*Wunderheilungen*, 46-160) and Nerbass ("Sprache und Stil," 70) are considered here. Nerbass did this supplementary work as a student of Herzog.

²⁷Strabo, writing at the end of the first century BCE: "Epidauros, too, is an important city, and particularly because of the fame of Asclepius, who is believed to cure diseases of every kind and always has his temple full of the sick, and also of the votive tablets on which the treatments are recorded, just as at Cos and Tricce" (8.6.15).

²⁸Sulla in 86 BCE (Diodorus *Bibliotheca Historica* 38.7) and pirates from Cilician before 67 BCE (Plutarch *Pompeius* 24.6) plundered the sanctuary.

²⁹A. Aristides, *Or.* 42.1; 52.1. Epidauros is called the sacred city of god.

³⁰See below p. 36, n.3; A. Aristides (*Or.* 52.1) calls Epidauros the city of god.

influence on the style and content of later inscriptions. They represent a style which was approved by the priests and show a unity in regard to their content, structure and grammar.³¹ Generally an individual account from Epidauros about an encounter with Asclepius has three parts:³²

- 1) Introduction
(title, reason for coming, arrival)
- 2) Main Part
(incubation, sign from god, dreamvision)
- 3) Conclusion
(healing, consecration, [thanks])

This outline of the structure for most accounts from this Asclepieion shows a remarkable unity, as the same structure is also found in the big stelae from the fourth century CE in reporting the deeds of Asclepius. The style is simple and direct.³³ The accounts disclose the hands of the 'redactors' (priests)³⁴ and therefore reflect the healing procedures favoured by the officials in Epidauros.³⁵ This 'control' is also clearly seen in the content of the reports which describes how they believed the god accomplished his healing in that place. This is clearly visible, on the one hand, in the silence regarding: a) doctors; b) the act of exorcism; c) the resurrection of the dead and d) medical (surgical) procedures and, on the other hand, in the emphasis on the

³¹See pp. 36-37; 46.

³²Nehrbass, "Sprache und Stil," 70. See above p. 60.

³³Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 58-9; Nehrbass, "Sprache und Stil," 70. See above pp. 46; 60.

³⁴Herzog, Asklepius, 2. 147.

³⁵See below pp. 37-39. The purpose of the inscriptions is mainly to give advice, support and hope for further health-seeking devotees with similar diseases.

incubation and the epiphanies in dreams.³⁶ All this strongly supports the fact that the written thank offerings were posted under the control of cult officials.³⁷

1. The Inscriptions from the Second Century CE.

The seven big stelae with their inscriptions set the standard for the almost 700 inscriptions which have been found thus far in Epidaurus.³⁸ All these inscriptions appear to be consistent with the large official stelae with regard to the style and content of reporting Asclepius' deeds.³⁹ According to Herzog, there is also a great similarity between the inscriptions from the time of the emperors and the older inscriptions.⁴⁰ Since Herzog has already treated in great detail the evidence from this Asclepieion, and in an effort not to duplicate his work, I shall use basically two inscriptions (a longer and a shorter healing report) as evidence for this period. They are representative of the healing activity during the second century, a time of flourishing activity in the Asclepieion when it received strong support from the emperors.

The stele of Apellas from the time of about 160 CE gives us insight into the healing praxis.⁴¹ The first lines of the inscription read: "Under the priesthood of P[oplus] Ael[ius] Antiochus, I M[arcus] Julius Apellas, an Idrian from Mylasa was sent" by Asclepius to the sanctuary. He was sent because he was often sick and suffered also from dyspepsia (line 1 and 2). When he arrived at the sanctuary, Asclepius ordered the following for him: therapy (to keep his head covered) [5]; to

³⁶Herzog, Wunderheilungen: a) p. 58; b) p. 157; c) pp. 142-3; d) pp. 57;144.

³⁷Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 57; 144.

³⁸Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 154.

³⁹Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 36. 59. 154; Nerbass, "Sprache und Stil," 77.

⁴⁰Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 54.

⁴¹IG 4.2 126; Syll 3.1170; T 432; Alexandra Doumas, Epidaurus (Aglaia Archontidou-Argyri; Athens: Delta, 1978).

wash and bathe [8,9-10,13]; to exercise [8-9]; to walk around in the upper portico [10-11]; to sprinkle himself with sand and walk barefoot [11]), to go on a diet (to eat cheese and bread, celery with lettuce [7-8] lemon peels [9] and to drink milk mixed with honey [15-17]) and to perform rituals (to sacrifice [15-16]). After J. Apellas did all these things, he was still not healed. Therefore he requested again that Asclepius heal him, and more quickly. At this point he had a dream (*οὐρανός*; 17 see also line 21) in which he was walking out of the abaton and was being anointed with mustard and salt all over his body (18-19). Then he felt that he was guided out of the incubation room to the priest by a small boy carrying a pleasant-smelling smoke censer (19). The priest then declared to him that he was cured (*θεραπεύω*) and that it was necessary for him to pay the thank-offerings (20). After the dream J. Apellas performed the various rituals ordered by Asclepius during the incubation, and he was cured. The actual cure occurred on the ninth day after his arrival (22), while he was taking the prescribed bath (22). The priest who appeared to him in the dream also touched his right hand and the nipple of his right breast. When J. Apellas was offering a sacrifice the next day, the flame leapt up and burnt his right hand. However, the wounds which the flame inflicted healed quickly (23-25). The inscription further relates that J. Apellas stayed longer in the Asclepion and received even more instruction from the god (26). He was ordered to use dill and olive oil against headaches, but he did not have any headache at that time. However, soon after he began to study (most likely at the library there), he felt pain in his head and successfully used the remedy of oil and dill against the pain (26-29). J. Apellas was also told to gargle with a cold gargle for his uvula and tonsils, since he also requested (*παρακαλέω*) that Asclepius cure him of this sickness (30-32). At the end of the inscription the healed J. Apellas reports that Asclepius ordered him (*κελεύω*) to write down the miracles which happened to him. He fulfilled this order and closed his written votive-offering to Asclepius with the words: "Farewell, I have received health, I depart well."

The stele dedicated by Tib[erius] Cl[audius] Severus of Sinope from the early third century CE reports his healing by Asclepius.⁴² The inscription begins with a short title of the well known formula "Αγαθῇ τύχῃ," and in the usual way, by giving the name of the sponsor of the dedication and the god to whom this is dedicated—Apollo Maleatas and the Savior Asclepius (line 1-4). T. Severus did sponsor this inscription on account of a dream (ὄνειρον; 5-7). He reports that the god healed him while he was in the sleeping room (τό κομητήριον; 5-7) because he sought relief. He was suffering from scrofulous swellings in the glands of the neck and an ulcer of the ear (7). T. Severus then underscores the fact that he experienced the god [Asclepius] as having appeared to him in the way he 'normally' appears [in the Asclepion]⁴³ in the time of Aurelius Pythodorus' priesthood (13-15). The thank-offering ends with the statement that this healing took place in the 101st year.⁴⁴

These two inscriptions give a good indication of how a healing took place in Epidaurus during the second century CE, and about activities in the Asclepion. First,⁴⁵ the person with an illness felt "called" by Asclepius to visit his temple. In the written records, this is usually clearly mentioned at the beginning, after the names of the devotee and the priest. In this early part of the dedication the nature of the sickness is also mentioned— J. Apellas' dyspepsia, headache and problems with the uvula and tonsils, T. Severus' scrofulous swellings in the glands of the neck⁴⁶ and

⁴²IG 4.2.1. 127; T 424; See Appendix I.B.

⁴³Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, 45. He reconstructs the missing text with οἶος ἐστιν ἐν τῷ ναῷ Ἰ. ἐστι. This, however, does not seem likely from the standpoint of the available space of the stone and from the fact that this reconstruction would make this the longest line in the inscription. However, from the context, Herzog's reconstruction appears to fit clearly the expressed thought of the lines 11: This is the way in which Asclepius regularly appeared in the Asclepion which was presently administered by the priest Marcus Aurelius Pythodorus.

⁴⁴The 101st year of the Hadrianic era, which is the year 224 CE.

⁴⁵See below p. 45.

⁴⁶The frequently used term καρκίνος for ulcer, cancer is also used by Plutarch (9.26) and by Cicero (Vatin. 39) to ridicule this visible growth by the rhetor Vatinius.

ulcer on the ear. The list of diseases reflects that within the Asclepieion there was enough understanding of sickness to enable the priests to locate and name the sources of discomfort to the health-seeking devotees. After this the incubation and healing is reported.

Before the visitors entered the sanctuary they passed an inscription explaining the rules and regulations, a practice common to the Asclepieia.⁴⁷ Therefore, it appears most likely that upon arrival, the devotees had an interview with the priest or other cult officials and arranged their accommodation with one of the Hieromnemones, or a secular person. The hierarchy of the cult personnel at the sanctuary consisted of several levels, but all were under the rule of the council of the Epidaurus sanctuary. At the highest level were the priests and the hierophant, the priest who was annually appointed to be head official. These served as general administrators of the temple and shared in the financial administration of the Asclepieion. A lower level consisted of the Dadouchoi (the torch bearers), the Pyrophoroi (those who carried the fire for the sacred altar), the Kleidochoi (those who had the keys to lock the sanctuary) and the Hieromnemones, who seemed to have had purely secular duties (e.g., in charge of payments). Canton believes that the Kanephoroi, who carried the baskets, and the Arrephoroi, who carried the mysteries or holy things, were female priests.⁴⁸ These officials assisted the visitors and supported the health-seeking devotees. They also ensured that the strict rules about the purity of the people inside the holy district were enforced,⁴⁹ as we can see from the inscription on the propylaia, "Only pure souls may

⁴⁷ Epidaurus: Sokolowski *LSCG* 22; *IG* 4.2.1. 128, T 296; Pergamum: see chapter III. D.c; Piraeus: Aristophanes *Plut.* 660-7. Pausanias (*Per.* 9.39.5-40.2) provides information about the rituals in the cult of Troponius in Lebadeia, a cult which is very close to that of Asclepius.

⁴⁸ Canton, *Temples and Rituals*, 27. He gives, however, no proof of his claim.

⁴⁹ Pausanias *Per.* 2.27.1: "The sacred grove of Asclepius is surrounded on all sides by boundary marks."

enter here," and from the prohibition of dying and giving birth within the temple district.⁵⁰ Therefore, the health-seeking devotees were instructed on these purity laws in order to enter the holy place. Further instructions were needed on how to remain pure so that the god would visit the devotee during the incubation with healing and not with punishment or wrath.⁵¹ In addition, the health-seeker was informed about performing certain rites, possibly receiving instructions for diet changes, on how and what to sacrifice, the way to bathe and wash in the sacred fountain⁵² and most likely about financial matters regarding sacrifices given after a successful healing. In general, the thank-offerings at the Asclepieion varied from expensive gifts, animals and cakes (*πόντα*), to the smallest of tokens.⁵³

After these preparations, the health-seeking devotee arranged to sleep in the abaton, where the incubation usually took place. According to J. Apellas, his vision came to him in the abaton (ἀβατόν; 18-19) on the night of the eighth day after his arrival. In C. Severus' report the incubation took place also in the abaton (5-7), but no time reference was given. The importance of the abaton and its central function within the cult is evident from its physical location within the Asclepieion. Located only a

⁵⁰Pausanias *Pel.* 2.27.1

⁵¹On the six big stelae which were still standing in Pausanias' time, examples of punishments by Asclepius to those who were not pure are given: e.g., Stele I number 3 and in number 4: Ambrosia of Athens, being blind in one eye, laughed at some of the cures as incredible and impossible, that the lame and the blind should be healed by merely seeing a dream; Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, 123-30.

⁵²See above p. 105, n. 46 on how Aelius Aristides describes the way a devotee needs to approach the sacred fountain at Pergamum.

⁵³The donations are usually called *μισθός* or *ταρπα* (e.g., IG 4.2. 560.571 from the time of the emperors) which express the notion that they are considered a physician's fee.

The big stelae from the 4th century BCE set the trend that even simple gifts or no gifts at all could satisfy the divinity. E.g., T423. 5 A voiceless boy had a full year's time to fulfill the usual rites; 6: Pandorus dedicated his bandage; 8: Euphanes, a boy, had to give "ten dice" for his cure. IG 2.2. 4962 from the fourth century BCE speaks about an initial offering (*ἀποθύεσται*) of three cakes, one to the deities, another to the dogs and the last to the huntsmen. See chapter III.B.1.

Literary offerings are also known to have been given to Asclepius as thank-offerings by the poet Isylles (IG 4.2.1. 128). See below pp. 47-48; chapter III.D. 2.a.d about "Sacrifices of Literary works."

few feet north of the temple and the altar, it is also the closest building to the tholos. Inside the abaton on the northeast end of the upper floor is a deep well, and on the wall were fixed two large stone tablets bearing the title "Cures by Apollo and Asclepios."⁵⁴ There has been much speculation about the inside appearance of the abaton (we know that the south side had an open colonnade) as well as about the rituals which took place before and possibly during the night.⁵⁵ Until further extensive studies of the rituals mentioned in the inscriptions and in other literature reveal further details about them, we should only conclude that the health-seekers entered the abaton under the guidance of the priests in the hope that the god would appear to them.⁵⁶ Many who entered somehow experienced the impression that Asclepius approached them, which the health-seeking devotees then considered to have been an encounter with the god. This could have taken place in various ways-- e.g., visions, revelations about rituals to perform or remedies to use-- of which the inscriptions provide a variety of accounts.

In the third part of the inscriptions the healed devotees recount their actions after the night spent in the abaton, their healing and their gratitude to god. Healings took place either during the night of the incubation or after the god-given orders had been fulfilled. The account of T. Severus indicates that he was healed during his time in the abaton, while J. Apellas' healing occurred while he took a bath (*λούσα*; 22), a ritual he was ordered to perform during his incubation. This is an interesting parallel to a Christian account recorded in the New Testament.⁵⁷

⁵⁴Canton, Temples and Ritual, 36-38.

⁵⁵E.g., Canton, Temples and Ritual, 9. He writes about the inside furniture, curtains, an altar and other things and also describes a typical night in the abaton. Later on he has a drawing about a healing in progress with a lame person standing in front of an altar and a snake licking his leg with its tongue. (29-30; Plate 25) This is speculative until it can be proven with literary or archeological evidence.

⁵⁶In a play reported by Aristophanes (in *Plutus*), he describes the experience in the abaton. See above pp. 85, n. 78; 113, n.81.

⁵⁷See above pp. 214-16.

An intrinsic part of the inscriptions is also important to note, namely the fact that god ordered the person to furnish a written account of the miraculous event. In the dedication by J. Apellas, this is mentioned at the end (line 31-32), whereas T. Severus mentions this divine order at the beginning of his thank-offering (6). In his writings, Aelius Aristides states how important such an act of setting up a dedication is for a devotee of Asclepius, and notes the importance of selecting the right words.⁵⁸

Since Pausanias wrote toward the latter part of the second century CE, his writings give us additional insight into the cult in Epidauros and how Asclepius was perceived.⁵⁹ He confirms the importance of the six big stelae from earlier times and that they were still read, to the point that some reports of healings even became folktales, as in the case of the healing of Hippolytus.⁶⁰ Pausanias also confirms that both male and female patients came to Epidauros for healing and devotion.

Thus we can see that the Asclepieion in Epidauros was strongly embedded in a long tradition of its activities during the second century CE. Even during this time of strong support by the emperors and a building program which changed the shape of the extended sanctuary area, there were no significant detectable changes in healing procedures or rituals. The inscriptions of the second century CE were strongly informed by the older inscriptions and reflect the same concept. No new medical knowledge on healing techniques was introduced (as in Cos) and the inscriptions give no evidence of medical personnel.⁶¹ Minor treatments like blood-letting, enema and

⁵⁸ See above pp. 96-97; chapter III.D.2.a.3.d.

⁵⁹ Pausanias *PE*, 2, 26-28. He wrote in the time around 174-180 CE.

⁶⁰ See below pp. 40, n.18.

⁶¹ Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, 152; 154: "Richtiges ärzliches Personal erscheint also in Epidauros weder in den Lamata noch in irgendeiner der 700 Inschriften des Hieron, was verglichen mit Kos gewiss kein Zufall ist."

However, the account of J. Apellas reflects a certain departure from the purely miraculous accounts so common in this Asclepion. In this aspect, Epidauros appears to have moved somehow toward the healings practiced in the Asclepion of Pergamum.

venesect seem to have been performed by the attendants in the bath or by the priests. However, there is no evidence of medicine or medicaments beyond such remedies as were recommended to J. Apellas (milk and honey, wine, vinegar etc.). There is also no raising of the dead reported at all in *Epidauros*, an omission which must certainly have been based on the understanding that neither human nor god (Asclepius) is allowed to challenge the will of Zeus.⁶² A similar rationale also influenced the prohibition against allowing dying people within the holy area. In addition, there are no artistic expressions of healings found in Epidauros (for example, healing scenes on votive reliefs of votive-offerings representing the healed parts of the body, as were so frequently found in Corinth).⁶³

What the devotees experienced during the incubation and dreams is expressed in Epidauros with a simple *εδόκει*. This clearly reflects a deliberate guidance and restriction on the part of the Asclepieion, because this word left the individual report open and totally free to be interpreted by both the sponsor and the reader. Therefore, the incubation dreams were nonbinding for the cult itself because the term *εδόκει* is not specific enough. Furthermore, the health-seeking devotees experienced their encounter with the gods not through a priest (who therefore did not need to have any medical function), but through their own understanding of the experience. On account of this, the healing becomes the proof of the procedure which the healed considers to have experienced and not the other way around-- the action which needs to be taken

⁶²Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 25-27; 30-32; 46-50.

⁶³Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, 55. For the Asclepieion in Corinth see Mabel Lang, *Cure and Cult in Corinth* (Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1977).

will somehow (almost automatically) bring the healing by Asclepius.⁶⁴ This also becomes clear in the autobiography of Aelius Aristides; his healings and his healing methods frequently depended on his own understanding of how a healing should occur. He often instructed his physicians to apply methods which he considered to be helpful, but which he understood as having come to him from Asclepius.⁶⁵ Therefore, the healings and dreams often echo the medical belief or imagination of the health-seeking devotee.

The cult in Epidaurus attracted people of all social classes. Emperors, leaders, wealthy citizens and poor people, all were attracted by Asclepius. For example the emperor Hadrian dedicated a bust of Epictetus to be erected in the temple,⁶⁶ and Marcus Aurelius considered Asclepius to be a great healer.⁶⁷ The Roman senator Antoninus constructed buildings for use by disabled devotees.⁶⁸ The thank-offerings indicate Asclepius' popularity across class lines, ranging from sponsoring a building and the 2000 gold staters which Naupaklotos had to pay, to literary works and knucklebones.

⁶⁴This can be seen, for example, in one of the inscriptions from the big stelae of the 4th century BCE (T 423.13). A man of Torone with leeches. It seemed to him that the god cut open his chest with a knife and took out the leeches and gave them into the hands of the man. Then the god stitched up his chest again. The first known opening of the stomach by a living person happened under Praxagoros. It was the emperor Julius Caesar who allowed the Roman doctors to open the stomach of pregnant women after they had died. So, the ideas which circulated among the devotees were advanced well beyond the medical ability of the Graeco-Roman society.

⁶⁵See chapter III.D.2.b.

⁶⁶IG 4.21. 683.

⁶⁷Marcus Antoninus In Somni Ipsius 5.8.

⁶⁸See below p. 26.

2. The End of the Asclepieion in Epidaurus.

The last known inscription from the Asclepieion is from the year 355 CE. The Asclepieion lamented the destruction of the temple dedicated to Asclepius of Aegae.⁶⁹ This event also reflects the general decline of the cult in Epidaurus after its peak during the second century. In 395 CE Alaric and his Goths invaded the sanctuary. After this, a double fortification wall was built around the sanctuary precinct, which indicates that the cult was still active and vital enough to cover the cost of such a big expense. In 426 CE under Theodosius 2, worship was forbidden and the Asclepius cult in Epidaurus slowly died out. On the left side of the Sacred Way leading to the Asclepieion, just before the Propylaia, the Christians built a huge basilica church with double aisles and a large atrium.

In summary, the sanctuary in Epidaurus flourished in the second century CE. New buildings were added, and the cult of Asclepius in Epidaurus attracted many health-seeking devotees, even from far away. It provided a place for the sick to receive healing or instructions from Asclepius. The influence of the Asclepius cult in Epidaurus was not only felt by those who sought healing in the Asclepieion and its affiliated sanctuaries, but was much more far-reaching. Pausanias gives us evidence for this healing activity even beyond the sacred areas. In his last story of his exhaustive travel report on Greece, he closes with a healing story of Asclepius.⁷⁰ He

⁶⁹Eusebius *Vita Const.* 3.56: "As of the God of the Cilicians [Asclepius], great was, indeed, the deception of men seemingly wise, with thousands excited over him as if over a savior and physician who now revealed himself to those sleeping [in the temple] and again healed diseases of those ailing in body. . . . he was a downright destroyer, drawing them away from the true Savior and leading into godless impostaers. . . . the Emperor [Constantine], therefore, acting correct, holding the true Savior a jealous god, commanded that this temple, too, be razed to its foundation. At one nod it was stretched out on the ground. . . . and misfortunes could find for his own defence no remedy any more than when he is fabled to have been struck with the thunderbolt. . . . the temple was destroyed to the roots so that not even a trace remained here of the former madness."

⁷⁰Pausanias *Pcr.* 10.38,13. Perhaps we should not interpret this as a personal statement of Pausanias, but it is significant, at least, to note that the last deity mentioned in his 10 books is Asclepius and his great healing power. See also *Pcr.* 2.26,10, where he defends the divinity of Asclepius.

discusses the city of Naupactus and its sanctuary of Asclepius, founded by Phalysius. The healing is almost like an "outpatient healing," which indicates that the healing power of Asclepius reached even small towns like Naupactus.⁷¹

For the devotees who visited the sanctuary, the staff of the Asclepieion provided care, attention, understanding and guidance. The inscriptions of successful healings also gave the people hope and provided information about specific diseases (remedies, therapies, diets etc.) to relieve pain and suffering. With its location, its gardens and its buildings, the Asclepieion provided not only the sick people but also the many thousands of visitors who filled the theater and racetrack with entertainment, recreation, fellowship and places for physical activities in its gymnasium, bath and the park of the sanctuary with its many benches and the surrounding area. After J. Apellas arrived, it was seven days before he entered the incubation room, and after he was healed he stayed even longer. The inscription says that he studied during this time, an activity he most likely did in the library.

It is important to recognize that the Asclepius cult did not provide a "one-sided healing process" but tended to the 'visitors' needs and pleasures on several levels. Most likely many of the sick devotees did not leave cured, but they undoubtedly were spiritually influenced or accepted some kind of treatment in order to handle their problem. The Asclepieion was not a hospital to which the sick people went to be treated by trained physicians; it was a temple to which devotees resorted in order to place themselves under the protection of the deity. Therefore, there was always the hope that yet another time spent in the abaton might bring the sought-after healing.

⁷¹Pausanias Per. 10.38,13: "For he [Phalysius] had a complaint of the eyes, and when he was almost blind the god at Epidaurus sent to him the poetess Anyte, who brought her a sealed tablet. The woman thought that the god's appearance was a dream, but proved at once to be a waking vision. For she found in her own hands a sealed tablet: so sailing to Naupactus she bade Phalysius take away the seal and read what was written. He did not think it possible to read the writing with his eyes in such a condition, but hoping to get some benefit from Asclepius he took away the seal. When he had looked at the ~~way~~ box he recovered his sight, and gave to Anyte what was written on the tablet, two thousand staters of gold."

Naupactus is located west of Delphi, at the coast of the Gulf of Corinth.

This is especially important to realize when comparing the Asclepius cult to the new religion of Jesus. The opposition which the early followers of Jesus faced from Asclepius was not only on the intellectual-theological level, as scholarship frequently portrays it, nor is it merely a matter of competition between miracle workers, which is also often emphasized. The Christians found themselves confronting a belief and trust which provided for the god's devotees a wider concept of humanness, a theology and a sense of belonging to a group which cared for their needs, especially during the trying times of sickness.

B. ROME.

As mentioned earlier, the cult of Asclepius came to Rome in 292 BCE at the request of the city. The cult developed on the island in the Tiber, which was given the shape of a ship through construction. Asclepius was depicted with his snake on the front left side.⁷² A statue of Asclepius, showing the bearded god with and his staff and the snake coiled around it, was also found there.⁷³ In the second century CE, the cult on the Tiber island was still very active and enjoyed great popularity. From this time we know about the flourishing cult from inscriptions of this Asclepion and from Roman writers of this time.⁷⁴ Aelius Aristides also provides information about the

⁷²See appendix II. A-G.

Concerning the Roman Asclepion see Maurice Besnier *L'île Tibérine dans l'antiquité* (Paris: Fontemoing, 1902). For the shape of the ship see p. 1. 34-9. Drawings (plates 27-30) are providing different historical sketches of the temples, the obelisk and other buildings (320-25). The history of the snake escaping from the ship is commemorated on many coins, e.g., Antoninus (p. 176). A coin from Commodus also shows the ship and the Epidaurian snake escaping from the ship to the island. See below pp. 16 and 19-20.

About the temple in the Thermae of Diocletian see H. Jordan, *Commentationes Philologiae in Horem Th. Mommseni*, 1877, 356.

⁷³Besnier, *Tibérine*, 193; Fig. 23 The statue of Asclepius is now in the Naples Museum. See p. v.

⁷⁴Besnier, *Tibérine*, 203-238.

cult from his visit to Rome in 144 CE. Aristides went on this journey before he became a devoted follower of Asclepius, because he wanted to prove his rhetorical skills. Later, he wrote an oration about the city he visited under the emperor Antoninus Pius, in which he says that "The grace of Asclepius . . . has experienced the most extensive increase among mankind."⁷⁵

A stone containing a collection of four inscriptions from the second century CE gives insight into the healing activity of the second century.⁷⁶

"In those days he [sc., the god] revealed (ἐξημέτεον) to Gaius, a blind man, that he should go to the holy base [sc., of the statue] and there should prostrate himself; then go from the right to the left and place his five fingers on the base and raise his hand and lay it on his own eyes. And he could see again clearly while the people stood by and rejoiced that glorious deeds (ζώσας ἀπέται) live again under our Emperor Antoninus.

To Lucius who suffered from pleurisy and had been despaired of by all men and the god revealed (ἐξημέτεον ὁ Θεὸς) that he should go and from the threefold altar lift ashes and mix them thoroughly with wine and lay them on his side. And he was saved (εσώθη) and publicly offered thanks to the god, and the people rejoiced with him.

To Julian who was spitting up blood and had been despaired of by all men the god revealed (ἐξημέτεον ὁ Θεὸς) that he should go and from the threefold altar take the seeds of a pine cone and eat them with honey for three days. And he was saved (εσώθη) and went and publicly offered thanks before the people.

To Valerius Aper, a blind soldier, the god revealed (ἐξημέτεον ὁ Θεὸς) that he should go and take the blood of a white cock along with honey and compound and eye salve and for three days should apply it (επιχρέωσαι) to his eyes. And he could see again and went publicly offered thanks to the god."

These accounts are representative because their unity and similarity show that they represent an official collection produced under the supervision of a priest.⁷⁷

⁷⁵A. Aristides *Or.* 26. 105-6.

⁷⁶G. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1920) 332-3, number 1173. He picks up the argument from Gagnat and considers the titles of the emperor in the inscriptions (line 5) to be not earlier than from around 138 CE, possibly from the time of Caracalla (footnote 6); Besnier, *Tibére*, 214-15. He quotes the Greek text and provides a French translation. He considers the date to be from the time of Antoninus Pius or Caracalla; Edelstein (T 438) considers the date to be the second century CE and provides the Greek text and the above given translation.

⁷⁷See below pp. 38-39 and 45-46. The same is true for another second century CE collection of individual accounts from the Athenian Asclepion.

Another inscription dedicated by Neochors from the early first century CE is worth mentioning because it indicates clearly that Asclepius was considered to be a soiētē⁷⁸ a Great God⁷⁹ and Benefactor.⁸⁰ This is what the Roman Christian writers such as Justin, Tatian, Tertullian and later Arnobius and Augustine wrote against.⁸¹

The collection of these four healings show similarities in their structure and titles, are of equal length, and share common historical data. All this clearly indicates that they represent an official statement for the cult activity in Rome.⁸² The following structure shows the parallels of the four accounts: a) the names are given from the Asclepius devotee who experienced a healing. The first and the sixth lines of the whole inscription provide the historical background with the words "In those days [first healing of Gaius]... glorious deeds lived again under our Emperor Antoninus." b) The diseases are mentioned. c) The term ἔχρημάπον ὁ θεός indicates that they experienced the will and healing power of Asclepius during their incubation.⁸³ d) The god-given instructions are written down. e) In each account the actual healing is mentioned with a clearly formulaic expression. In the account of Gaius and Valerius Aper they were cured of blindness and could see again (ἔχρημάπον ὁ θεός, line 4; καὶ

⁷⁸ For the use of *σωτήρ* among the Romans see A. Oxe "ΣΩΤΗΡ bei den Römern, Drei Skizzen zu Horaz." *Wiener Studien* 48 (1930) 40. Based on a bilingual Greek and Roman inscription from Rome from the year 84 BCE (CIL 4.374) he writes: "Danach bedeutet 'σωτήρ' lateinisch 'is qui alicui saluti fuit,' der jemandem Heil gebracht hat."

⁷⁹ Bruno Müller, **ΜΕΓΑΣ ΘΕΟΣ** (Dissertation Inauguralis, Göttingen: Halis, 1913) 321. The inscription is quoted under number 144, as coming from the time of Augustus.

⁸⁰ Besnier, *L'île Tibérine*, 213. He provides the Greek text of the inscription:
"Α]σκεληπιώθ θε[ά] | μεγίστωφ [σ]ωτῆ[ρι] | εύ[ε]ργέτη φόντο[ν] | σπληνός | σωθείς | ἀπὸ σῶν χιρῶν, | οὐδὲ τόδε δίγιγμα ἀρ | [γ]ύρεον. εὐχαριστή[ή] | ρ]ιων θεῷ Ν[εοχ]ά[ρης | Σ]εβαστο[ῦ] απελεύ | θ]ερος "Ιουλιαν[ός]."

⁸¹ See chapter III. E.

⁸² The first account has 6 lines, but if the information about the time of these cures is subtracted (lines 1 and 6) then all accounts have equally four lines on the inscription on the stone.

⁸³ The term ὁ θεός is missing in the first account, but from the context and from the parallel construction of all the miracles it can be assumed.

ἀνέβλεψεν, line 17) and in the report about Lucius and Julian, the expression ἐσάθη is used to denote the healing (line 5,13). c) The last point in the accounts is the involvement of the public, the sacrifice of the healed, and the rejoicing.

In these accounts, the formulas are quite simple, hackneyed and unimaginative. This could possibly reflect the reality that the Asclepieion in this time was visited mostly by a lower class of people, such as soldiers (V. Aper was a soldier) and slaves.⁸⁴ Interesting at this point is that Aristides, who belonged to the higher level of society, does not mention the Asclepieion on the Tiber at all in his oration about the city of Rome.⁸⁵ The *iamata* also reflect the simple style which Pausanias recognized in the inscriptions from Epidaurus:

ἐγεγρομένα⁸⁶

- 1) καὶ σάνδρον καὶ γυναικῶν ἔστιν ὄνόματα ἀκεσθέντων ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀσκληπιοῦ,
- 2) προσέτι δὲ καὶ νόσημα ὅ τι ἔκυρτος ἐνόσησε
- 3) καὶ ὥκως ἴαθη.

The embellishments used in the four Roman accounts beyond the discussed basic style are also noteworthy. The Asclepius devotees Lucius and Julian had been given up by the doctors. This is a common feature to underscore the miraculous

⁸⁴ Suetonius *Claud.* 25: "When certain men were exposing their sick and worn out slaves on the island of Aesculapius because of the trouble of treating them, Claudius decreed that all such slaves were free, and that if they recovered, they should not return to the control of their master."; Dio Cass. *Roman hist.* 61.29.

Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*. 31. He believes that in the early first century CE mainly the people of lower social classes were attracted to Asclepius, but that during the first century the higher levels also became gradually attracted.

⁸⁵ See below pp. 57-58. This could suggest that Aristides, belonging to the higher level of society, did not visit the place at all, but he knew about the importance of the Asclepius cult in the city; or perhaps it was just that at this time he was not yet a very devoted Asclepius follower.

⁸⁶ Pausanias *Per.* 2.27,3: "On them [stelae] are inscribed the names of both the men and women who have been healed by Asclepius, the disease also from which each suffered, and the name of the cure." See below p. 45.

power of the healer; however, this feature was never used when a miracle was reported about the healing of the blind, as this collection also shows. Blindness was not considered to be a disease which could be healed by physicians.⁸⁷ The mentioning of the "three days" in the last two accounts points toward the importance of the number "3" in magic and healing activities. Also significant are the instructions which the devotees received during their incubation. The first account of Gaius is symptomatic of all accounts-- the hand of the blind man which touched the holy artifacts became or received the divine power, which then in turn brought about the healing by touching the diseased part of the body. For parallels of these accounts with healing reports in the New Testament.⁸⁸

The power of god is understood to work in a similar way in the other healings from Rome. Lucius had to use "holy" ashes and place it on his side. He was also instructed to eat pine seeds from the altar. The underlying concept that the power of god lies in his hand or rests in his holy places is very clear, along with the understanding that the healing power of Asclepius had to be brought into contact with the diseased part. This could take place through various mediums (e.g., ashes, seeds).⁸⁹ All healing accounts end with the expressed joy and thankfulness of the healed devotee. In this celebration the public is included so as to be witnesses to the great deeds performed by Asclepius.

⁸⁷In the healing reports ~~in~~ Jesus in the New Testament this is also true. The helplessness of the physicians is used in Mark 5:26 and Luke 8:43.

⁸⁸Especially John 9:6-7; See also chapter IV and V.

⁸⁹For more details about the way the divine healing power was understood to work see the chapters "9EOY XEIP" and "Heilende Statuen und Bilder" in Weinreich, Wunderheilungen, 1-75; 137-70.

Lucian Deor. concil. 12; Valerius Maximus 2.4.5. This praxis of touching the relics and ashes of the Saints also became a very frequent praxis reported in the Christian aetiology. See also chapter IV, B; Lucius, Anfänge, 402-3, 407-8. In the miracles of Cyrus and John (Sopronios, PG 87.3. 3505 C) Nemeson touches the object containing the relics and then touches with his hands the eyes of the blind Photineos and so he healed him.

The term ἄρεταί used in the account of Gaius (line 5) needs special mention. Generally, in the Asclepius cult up to this time the reports of healings were understood as ἐπιφάνειαι.⁹⁰ Here, however, we see the beginning in the Asclepius cult's use of the term ἄρεταλόρος.⁹¹

The Asclepius cult and its activities are also known from Roman writings of the late first and second century CE, which provide information mostly about the history of the cult, especially the miraculous-mysterious way in which the cult reached the island on the fiber through a snake.⁹² Even during the period when the Asclepius cult was losing its stronghold in Rome, the Christian writers acknowledge the fact that Diocletian supported a new temple to Asclepius in the city. At the end of the fifth century the island was still known as the island of the serpent of Epidaurus.⁹³

The status which the Asclepius cult still had in Rome in the late third-early fourth century CE is evident in Arnobius. As a follower of Jesus, he argued against Asclepius as a physician who gives health⁹⁴ and presides over the duties and arts of

⁹⁰E.g., Blinkenberg, Die lindische Tempelchronik, 18-9; Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 49.49.

⁹¹See also chapter III.D and IV. E; Reitzenstein, Hellenistische Wundererzählungen (Stuttgart: Teubner (1963), 8-99. He describes the history of the term in the religious aetiology and points out that the term ἄρεταλόρος became an official title in the Egyptian healing cults of Isis and Sarapis for those who were selected by the gods to interpret dreams and visions (8-9).

Important in this regard is also Strabo Geogr. (17. 1.17) where he describes the Serapeion in Canopus: "It contains the temple of Sarapis, which is honoured with great reverence and effects such cures that even the most reputable men believe in it and sleep in it-themselves on their own behalf or others for them. Some writers go on and record the cures (θεραπείαι), and others the virtues (ἰαματαὶ τὰν λόγιαν), of the oracles there (οὐνταριαὶ)." He uses the term θεραπείαι for direct healings which took place immediately like the healings in Epidaurus, ιαματαὶ τὰν λόγιαν for reports of miraculous actions and οὐνταριαὶ for dreams and instructions which were received during the incubation.

⁹²E.g., Valerius Maximus Facta et Dicta Memorab. 1.8.2; See below pp. 14-19. For a critical view see Cicero De Div. 2.59.69.

⁹³Sidonius Apollinaris Epist. 1.7.12.

⁹⁴Arnobius Adv. nat. 2.65. Arnobius wrote his work Adversus Gentes in the time of 297-303.

medicine.⁹⁵ He still knows that the vintage festivals of Asclepius are being celebrated.⁹⁶ In his attempt to counter the claim of the cult followers that Asclepius is "the god of health from Epidaurus," Arnobius attempts to use their "own authority" to show that Asclepius was "by no means divine." To accomplish his defence, Arnobius either collected the terms he used from the opposition or he used a litany from the opposition. The list reads:

Asculapius iste quem ~~predicavit~~,
deus praestans,
sanctus deus,
salutis dator,
valetudinum pessimum propulsator,
prohibitor et extinxor.⁹⁷

When the Asclepius cult was slowly overpowered by Christianity, the healing power of the sacred spot and the healing magic of the island still lingered on. Christianity moved into its place. As early as the early Middle Ages churches were built on the island, as well as a hospital.⁹⁸ To this day there is a hospital on the island; one might say that the former location of the cult on the island of the Tiber continues to serve in the divine-healing tradition destined long ago by the healing deity Asclepius.

In summarizing the healing activity of the Asclepius cult in Rome during the second century CE, it becomes clear that the thank-offerings discussed above reflect the miraculous element of the cult praxis.⁹⁹ In this time of great popularity, the

⁹⁵ Arnobius *Adv. nat.* 1.41: "Asclepius, the discoverer [dator] of medicine, as the guardian and protector of health, of strength and of safety.": 3.25: "Asclepius presides over the duties and arts of medicine.": 7.22: "medicus Aesculapius."

⁹⁶ Arnobius *Adv. nat.* 7.32.

⁹⁷ Arnobius *Adv. nat.* 7.44: "That Asclepius, whom you extol, an excellent, a venerable god, the giver of health, the averter, preventer, destroyer of sickness." Then he goes on to say that Asclepius is represented by an animal which creeps around on its stomach on dirt.

⁹⁸ Besnier, *Tibéline*, 239-44; St. Jerome *In Isaiam* 18. 65, 4. See below p. 12, n.1.

⁹⁹ Besnier, *Tibéline*, 235. Fig. 23 illustrates terracotta votive-offerings of hand, feet, eyes, etc., which were found on the island.

miraculous was the cult's emphasis and the way the general public understood its activity. Importance was also placed on the incubation and on an act of faith required of the devotee in order to bring about the healing. This is further supported by the many votive offerings found in the Asclepieion.¹⁰⁰ All this supports the claim by Aristides (mentioned below) that, during his time, of all the Greek cults the cult of Asclepius was the one with the most attractive deity. From Rome the cult also spread to other Italian cities such as Antium, Ostia and Tibur. It comes, then, as no surprise that the followers of Jesus in Rome, even in the time of Augustine,¹⁰¹ so bitterly opposed and denounced the healer, savior and god, Asclepius.

¹⁰⁰Otto Weinreich, MDAI A 68 (1898); Besnier, Tiburine, 236; Hopf. Heilstätten, 41.

¹⁰¹Augustine De civ. Dei 3.12-17; 4.21-27; 8.5-26.

C. OXYRHYNCHUS.

The provincial city of Oxyrhynchus, about 200 km south of Cairo, became an important city during the Hellenistic period. The land occupied by this city has proved to be the richest source of papyri discovered in Egypt thus far.

Oxyrhynchus is listed here, together with other cities having important sanctuaries of Asclepius, not because there existed an Asclepieion or even a temple there, but because an often overlooked document about Asclepius was found there, PQoxyr. 1381.¹ Although we know that Asclepius was known in Egypt,² there is no evidence that Asclepius had a sanctuary in this city. It is likely that this papyrus came to Oxyrhynchus as a literary document collected there.

The inscription containing praise of Imhotep/Asclepius is the verso of another writing, PQoxyr. 1138, containing in an analogous composition an invocation (*ἐπικλησις*) to the goddess Isis. Imhotep, the Egyptian god, is identified by the Greeks with Asclepius, the god of medicine. Both names represent the same deity who was first a historical person before becoming a god.

The author's primary concern is to give a paraphrased translation of an ancient Egyptian papyrus roll describing the worship of Imhotep (also called Asclepius and son of Hephaestus). The surviving document is written in eleven columns, each containing twenty-two or twenty-three lines. The beginning and the end are missing, but the surviving text is well preserved. Since the papyrus has been reproduced, translated and well introduced and indexed by Grenfell and Hunt,

¹Due to software limitations the footnotes start again with number one.
Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, The Oxyrhynchus Papyri (41 vols.; London: Oxford, 1915) Vol. 10, 221-234; Papyrus 1381. The quotations are from the translation on pages 230-31.

²E.g., Memphis: Epiphani De 12 Gemmis 32. The so called Temple of Asclepius is mentioned; R. Pietschmann "Asclepieion" RE 2 (1896) 1636. Grenfell and Hunt, PQoxyr. 221. 224. It is probable that the home of the writer was Memphis, near the Asclepieion.
Clement of Alexandria Strom. 1. 21, 134; Edelstein, Asclepius. 1.224-25.

I wish to focus here only on the portions important for this research: the length of the story, the content, key words and parallels to other discussed materials.³

The text, with 247 lines before it breaks off, reports about an Asclepius devotee who writes concerning his god's mighty deeds (δύναμις). He wrote this document because he desired to serve Asclepius, who confers benefits even to those who have been abandoned by the physicians. The writer and his mother came as "supplicants before the god entreating him to grant recovery from the disease."⁴ Asclepius responded favorably to her "as he does to all in dreams and cured her by simple remedies." After the healing, the writer and his mother honored Asclepius, "their preserver (τῷ σώσαντι)," with due thanks by offering a sacrifice. The author goes on to report that he approached the "helper of the human race (τὸν θεὸν τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης)" once again, for his own sickness, and Asclepius healed him as well. He describes his healing with many interesting details.⁵ After this second healing-miracle, the writer again offered a thank-sacrifice, but he was still not sure if he had returned enough favors to Asclepius. In this state of uncertainty, the author remembered that he was "neglecting the divine books"

³See below p. 65, n. 2.

⁴This account is especially significant in comparison with the autobiography of Aelius Aristides; See chapter III.B.2.

⁵"It was night, when every living creature was asleep except those in pain, but divinity showed itself more effectively; a violent fever burned me, and I was convulsed with loss of breath and coughing, owing to the pain proceeding from my side. Heavy in the head with my troubles I was lapsing half-conscious into sleep, and my mother, as a mother would for her child, being extremely grieved at my agonies was sitting without enjoying even a short period of slumber, when suddenly she perceived—it was no dream or sleep, for her eyes were open immovably, though not seeing clearly, for a divine and terrifying vision came to her, easily preventing her from observing the god himself or his servant, which ever it was. In any case there was some one whose height was more than human, clothed in shining raiment and carrying in his left hand a book, who after merely regarding me two or three times from head to foot disappeared. When she had recovered herself, she tried, still trembling, to wake me, and finding that the fever had left me and that much sweat was pouring off me, did reverence to the manifestation of the god, and then wiped me and made me more collected. When I spoke with her, she wished to declare the virtue of the god, but I anticipated her, told her all myself; for everything that she saw in the vision appeared to me in dreams. After these pains in my side had ceased and the god had given me yet another assuaging cure, I proclaimed his benefits."

because he did not edit them. The author then began the task, describing Asclepius as the greatest of all gods and "distinguished by the thanks of all men," and explaining why he considers it so important to write down the miracles. For the author, a votive offering or sacrifice and most other gifts lasted only for the immediate moment and then perished, but a written record was a gift to the god that would last. He then goes on to call on all to assemble; those "who by serving the god had been cured of diseases," those who "practice the healing art" and "labour as zealous followers of virtues," those "who have been blessed by great abundance of benefits" and those who "have been saved from the danger of the sea." The author further considered Asclepius to be everywhere, because "every place has been penetrated by the saving power of the god (ἢ τὸν θεὸν δύναμις σωτήρως)." The document then continues with the history of the god, but at this point the text breaks off.

This papyrus provides insight into the life of an Asclepius devotee because the author's report goes beyond the regular short accounts written on votive-offerings. He confirms the frequently mentioned events around the incubation: a) the failure of human doctors; b) the cure's occurrence during the incubation; c) the importance of the sacrifices and the thank offerings. In addition to these points, some specific details are given: a) another person (mother) is present with the sick person during the incubation; b) the sick person (actor) rushes to the Asclepion as soon as he experiences the disease; c) the mother and the son shared a double vision;⁶ d) during the vision the mother does not see god clearly, because god cannot be seen directly. e) Asclepius appears as "someone whose height was more than human, clothed in shining raiment and carrying in his left hand a book"; f) the

⁶"For everything that she saw in the vision (ἢ δύνις) appeared to me in a dream (τὸ ὄνειρόπατον)."

healing action by god is described as "[God] merely regarding me [author] two or three times from head to foot" before he disappears.

Besides providing details of the cult activities this papyrus also gives an overall insight into the theology of the Asclepius cult as it is seen from a devotee's standpoint. The author clearly considers Asclepius to be his savior as well as his healer. Out of this understanding, he trusted his god fully and had confidence that he would be healed even when the human healing art had failed. The author considers his god to be the saving power of all people and believes that god's manifested power has been revealed in every place on this earth. With this the author confirms the popularity of the Asclepius cult in the second century CE.⁷ The devotee of Asclepius is also called to live a virtuous life, an exceptional insight which appears in this papyrus. This is important in light of the opposition between the followers of Asclepius and of Jesus.⁸ Another interesting detail is the mention that among the devotees of Asclepius were those who performed miracles.

Although the author expresses his faith in Asclepius, he still feared that he had not returned enough favor to Asclepius through sacrifices and gifts. Out of this fear the author then devoted his time to Asclepius, fulfilling his "inspired task" by editing and translating into Greek a divine book containing a "convincing account of the creation of the world" and the "mighty deeds (δύναμις) of the gods." In this task, the author of this papyrus shares the attitude expressed by Aelius Aristides,⁹ that the written reports were god-given orders, and the results were divine, holy books (ἱθεῖν βιβλιος) which describe the "mighty deeds of the

⁷ Grenfell and Hunt, *POxy.* 1381; Line 225.

⁸ This aspect mentioned in lines 210-12 is important because it also shows the cult's concern for the pursuit of virtue in the life of its devotees. Furthermore, it provides a background concerning why the apologists generally accused the cult deity and its members of what they considered to be shortcomings, but not of immoral behavior! See also chapters IV.D and V.

⁹ See above pp. 96-98; 108-12.

gods."¹⁰ They also consider these writings to be superior to the regular votive-offerings and sacrifices. Furthermore, Aristides would certainly have agreed with the following sentence by the author of Papyrus 1381:

Hence, master, I conjecture that the book has been completed in accordance with thy favour, not with my aim; for such a record in writing suits thy divinity. And as the discoverer of this art, Asclepius, greatest of gods and my teacher,¹¹ thou art distinguished by the thanks of all men. For every gift of votive offering or sacrifice lasts only for the immediate moment, and presently perishes, while a written record is an undying meed of gratitude, from time to time renewing its youth in the memory.

D. PERGAMUM.

The popularity of the Asclepieion in Pergamum during the late first and the early second centuries CE has been shown in the building activities which took place then, giving the sanctuary a new shape. This popular support is also evident in the increased number of dedications and inscriptions found from this period. The number of dedications increased markedly from Trajan and Hadrian's time until about the time of Caracalla, whereas in the Acropolis they decreased during the same time period. Also in this period the festivals of the Asclepieion were

¹⁰"I now propose to recount the miraculous manifestations (*ἐπιφάνεια*), the greatness of his power (*δύναμις*), the gifts (*δώρημα*) [experienced healings] of his benefits" (lines 218-22). See also pp. 108-12.

¹¹Asclepius is here considered to be the inventor of this kind of recording the deeds of a god. Stobaeus *Ecloga ph.* 1.41. He considered Asclepius not only to be the inventor of medicine, but also of speaking poetically. See above pp. 203-5 and chapter V.

celebrated whose agones are only known from inscriptions of the second century CE.¹²

Pergamum's importance dated from the early period of Rome's rule, and lasted a long time; it had a sanctuary which in its early stage was considered to be local, as were most sanctuaries in surrounding cities. However, Pergamum's popularity increasingly drew people from great distances. The inscriptions from this period clearly show that the Asclepieion, with its own theater and library, became an important cultural, political and intellectual center in the province of Asia, and that in this peak of popularity Pergamum's importance was at least equal to if not greater than that of the other two centers of the *πόλεις*— Ephesus and Smyrna¹³.

Thus, this period of roughly the second century CE, from which many inscriptions were found and in which many literary works were produced in Pergamum in connection with Asclepius and other healing activities (e.g., Aristides, Galen, Philostratus), turns out to be a time of prosperity for the Asclepius cult. Pergamum emerged in the middle of the second century CE as the center of the Asclepius cult, at least in Asia Minor if not in the whole Graeco-Roman world.¹⁴ It was also during this time that a new religion, Christianity, began to establish itself in the same city.¹⁵

¹²AvP 8.3. 8, n. 21.

¹³In Revelation 1.11 the three cities are mentioned in that geographical order from north to south.

¹⁴Bruno Keil *Aelius Aristides* (2 vols., Berlin: Weidmann, 1898) vol. 1, 334. Aelius Aristides considered the Asclepieia in Pergamum to be τίνι κοινήν τῶν ἀνθρώπων (line 4-5).

¹⁵From the time of approximately 90 CE we know of a letter to the Christian church in Pergamum, Rev 2:12-17.

1. Inscriptions.

The inscriptions from the Asclepia are published in the series Altertümer von Pergamon.¹⁶ These votive offerings show a certain uniformity which suggests that the cult officials had a restrictive function, as they did in other places.¹⁷ The inscriptions exercised restraint by not reporting the actual healing process, nor directly mentioning incubation nor the incubation room. Healings from Pergamum are also known from sources besides inscriptions from the Asclepieion: e.g., about the treatment and cure of Polemos from Laodicea, of Teukros of Kyzikos' epilepsy and of Aelius Aristides which he received there from Asclepios.¹⁸

An inscription found at the entrance of the sanctuary provides insights into the activity of incubation, but the exact location of the room where this exercise took place is not clear.¹⁹ From these rules we can also learn that the Asclepieion was open to all people and no entrance fee was charged. However, the devotee who wanted to enter the incubation room was required to promise a fee in advance and to perform the necessary sacrifices. This was the Asclepieion's income. Interestingly, the rules mention that a devotee had to pledge sacrifices and a fee to Asclepius each time a health-seeker wanted to enter the incubation room. This seems to hint at official recognition of the reality that a night spent in incubation did

¹⁶Max Fränkel, Altertümer von Pergamon, vol. 8.1, 1890 and vol. 8.2, 1895 (quoted as AvP 8.1); Christian Habicht, Die Inschriften des Asklepieions, vol. 8:3 (quoted as AvP 8.3); Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969).

The numbering system used in this last edition from Habicht to refer to individual inscriptions (e.g., nr. 12) is also used in this dissertation to refer to inscriptions in this book.

¹⁷See below pp. 38-39; 45, n. 35.

¹⁸Pausanias VA 25: "Again when he [Polemos] came to Pergamum suffering from disease of the joints, he slept in the temple and when Asclepius appeared to him. . . ." (535); Rufus Oreibas 4.86.

¹⁹AvP 8.2. Inscription number 264 from the Acropolis mentions a large incubation room (*τὸ μέγα ἐγκομητήριον*). See above pp. 85-86.

not guarantee a successful healing. Therefore, most of the inscriptions discussed below are the thank-offerings of those who had a successful 'encounter' with Asclepius and were wealthy enough to express their gratitude to their god in a more expensive way, in stone.

a. Votive and Honorific Inscriptions from the Asclepieia.

Of the over 170 pieces found in the sanctuary area, most are honorific and votive inscriptions in Greek from the time of the Roman emperors.²⁰

1) For Members of the Imperial Family.

Hadrian, who visited Pergamum in 123 CE. and possibly in 129 CE., is the emperor with the greatest prominence in Pergamum. Statues dedicated to him are the first in a series of emperor statues extending up to the time of Caracalla. Many altars and statues in the city celebrate Hadrian as "savior and founder of the city"²¹ and as [θε]ὸν ἐπιφανέστατος, [νέ]ος Ἀσκληπιός.²² In the Asclepieion itself several statue bases bear his name Ἀδριανός (nr. 5,6), his common name in Pergamum.²³ One statue was sponsored during Hadrian's lifetime by a woman named Flavia Melitine (nr. 38). She also sponsored the library in which the statue stood, and there statues of his successors were also placed (nr. 7;9;10;11).

Eighteen other inscriptions bear the names of the other emperors and their families— Antoninus Pius (nr. 8,9), Marcus Aurelius (nr. 10) and Lucius Verus (nr.11), Caracalla (nr. 12-14). In another inscription, Caracalla and his mother,

²⁰AvP 8.3. viii.

²¹Anna S. Benjamin, "The Altars of Hadrian in Athens and Hadrian's Panhellenic Program." *Hesperia*, 33 (1963) 111 (Inscriptions number 189-216).

²²AvP 8.1-2, 365; AvP 8.3. 123.

²³AvP 8.3. 29.

Julia Domna, (nr. 15,16) are honored. Caracalla himself sought healing in the temple and gave the city on this occasion its third Neokorate (nr. 12-16).

Inscriptions of later emperors have not been found to date, which indicates that Caracalla's visit was the last event celebrated at the sanctuary with an emperor present as celebrant. This, together with archaeological evidence, suggests that Caracalla's visit marked the end of the emperor's strong support for the Asclepius cult in Pergamum.²⁴

The flourishing state of the Asclepius cult during this period is also reflected in the votive inscriptions dedicated to the various gods of the sanctuary. Their number increased, beginning in Trajan's time, and especially during the reign of Hadrian.²⁵ The honorific inscriptions also show a similar increase starting with Hadrian's time.²⁶ During this time these types of inscriptions decreased on the Acropolis and thus underline the importance of the Asclepieion.²⁷

2) For Members of Senatorial Families and Honored Citizens.

Among the honored is Sextus Julius Maior Antoninus Pythodorus (nr.23), the great supporter of the city of Pergamum and its Asclepieia. Julius is also known as a benefactor of the Epidauros temple²⁸ and himself dedicated an inscription for Titus Julius Perseus, an influential Roman citizen (nr. 27) who was well known because of his position as chief inspector of customs (conductor) and

²⁴See below pp. 35.

²⁵Since most votive inscriptions are not directly datable, an exact account cannot be given. Habicht (AvP 8.3) lists for the years 98-102 CE the following inscriptions: nr. 125; the time of Trajan (98-117) or Hadrian (117-38) nr.132; the reign of Hadrian nr. 64, 141,79 and of Antonius nr. 68,140.

²⁶From the time of Hadrian are inscriptions number 20,21,22,33,37,38.

²⁷AvP 8.3. 118.

²⁸Pausanias Per. 2.27,6-7; PIR 2.1, 398; IG 4.12,454,514,684.

his popularity as a great benefactor.²⁹ In their role of benefactors to more than one Asclepieia in different cities these two rather wealthy men illustrate that the local Asclepius cults had a liberal policy toward accepting gifts from their sponsors. Others who are also honored are Vibianus Tertullus, a secretary to Marcus Aurelius around 173-75 (nr. 28); a procurator (nr. 29) and an army officer (nr. 30).

3) For Sophists.

Three statue bases of sophists have been found. Ti[berius] Cl[audius] Nicomedes³⁰ (nr. 31) is honored by the city and the people of Pergamum. Inscription number 34 is dedicated to L. Flacius Hermocrates from Phocis³¹ for the speeches he gave on behalf of the city before the Emperor.³² This stone also has on its outside an inscription chiseled in at a later date which contains an oracle of the 'great god Asclepius' about Hermocrates. Marcius Acilius Diotius³³ from

²⁹ He was procurator under Hadrian in Africa and Illyricum (Habicht, *Inschriften*, 64). A small Asclepius temple in Utica is known to have borne the inscription "Aesculapio T. Julius Perseus, cons[ul]or IIII p[ublicorum] A[fricæ]" (CIL 8,997). The bath which is close by was also sponsored by him (Apuleius *Florida* 16). Apuleius speaks of him as very learned and records one of his speeches in which Julius tells of a physician by the name of Asclepiades who resurrected a dead person at a funeral procession (*Florida* 19).

³⁰ Philostratus VS 2.11.

³¹ He is also known from Philostratus VS 2.25: "Hermocrates of Phocis." His healing at the Asclepieia in Pergamum was paid for by the Emperor Severus.

³² After he victoriously defended the city of Pergamum, he was asked by Severus what gift he would like to receive from him. Hermocrates' request was: "I have been ordered by Asclepius at Pergamum to eat partridge stuffed with frankincense, and this seasoning is now so scarce in our country that we have to use barley meal and laurel leaves for incense to the gods. I therefore ask for fifty talents' worth of frankincense, that I may treat the gods properly and get proper treatment myself." (Philostratus VS 2.25).

³³ Philostratus VS 2.27.

Cappadocia was also honored by the people and the city with a statue and an inscription³⁴ (nr. 35) around 200 CE.

Other sophists honored are Tiberius Claudius Paulinus from Antioch of Pisidia (nr. 32) in the latter part of the second century, and Demosthenes, for whom Pius Antonius Polemo dedicated a statue before his death in 144 CE, after he had a dream telling him to set up this dedication to his teacher and mentor (nr. 33).³⁵ Another inscription (nr. 145), which is a 'Song for Asclepius,' is most likely dedicated by Aelius Aristides,³⁶ and therefore represents another dedication by a sophist. This long inscription thanks Asclepius for healings, for protection from the stormy sea and bad weather, and for the inscriber getting to know the emperor personally.

4) For Priests and Cult Personnel at the Sanctuary.

Several women and men, as well as the city and the council of the sanctuary (ἱερὰ βουλὴ, e.g., nr. 54,55) sponsored dedications for the officials of the Asclepieia who served the visitors— the priests (ἱερεῖς),³⁷ the wardens of the temple (νεωκόροι) and the therapeutic helpers (θεραπευταί, nrs. 45-55). Several inscriptions show that the priesthood at that time was in the hands of some wealthy

³⁴The inscription has in superscript the words ΤΗ ΒΟΥΑΗΙ added in a single line at the bottom of the inscriptions. This in connection with the regular "Ἡ βουλὴ καὶ ὁ δῆμος at the beginning of the text underlines strongly the democratic process and public support for this inscription.

³⁵Philostratus VS 1.25. He reports that Polemos, a sophist, delivered an oration at the inauguration of Hadrian's Olympieion in Athens in 130 CE (113) and was in the Asclepieia in Pergamon on account of his arthritis: "Again, when he came to Pergamon suffering from a disease of the joints, he slept in the temple, and when Asclepius appeared to him and told him to abstain from drinking anything cold, 'My good Sir,' said Polemo, 'but what if you were doctoring a cow?'" Willy Stegemann, "Polemos" RE 8, 1320-57.

³⁶Rudolf Herzog, "Ein Asklepios - Hymnus des Aristeides von Smyrna," SBB (1934) 753-69.

³⁷AvP 8.3. 93. There are no high priests as such in this cult.

families (e.g., nr. 47), and was inherited and handed down through generations.³⁸ The strict orders and rules set out by a decree from the city of Pergamum which governed the priesthood of the sanctuary and its hereditary system also made it possible for female members of the chosen families to become priestesses and thus rule over the Asclepieion and oversee the temple slaves.³⁹ Inscription number 24 mentions Nymphs. They are also known from Aristides⁴⁰ and from sculptures⁴¹ as another 'official' group assisting in the healing process.

From this information we see that there were at least three groups besides the priests at the Asclepieia. Furthermore, the Asclepius priestess Epictesis (nr. 85) not only provides evidence of female priests, but is also significant because of her double function-- serving Asclepius and participating in the emperor cult.

5) For Other Persons Mentioned.

³⁸Nr. 45 Flavius Aristomachos was the 22nd. priest from the same family; T 491; A. Aristides *Or.* 30.13-15.

³⁹AvP 8.2 Inscription 251; Deubner, *Pergamon*, 10-11. He provides a translation: "Für immer soll das Priestertum des Asklepios und der anderen im Asklepieion angesiedelten Götter dem Asklepiades und den Nachkommen des Asklepiades vorbehalten bleiben, und Stephanophor soll von ihnen immer derjenige sein, der das Priestertum innehat, und er soll als Ehrenanteil aller im Heiligtum geopferter Tiere jeweils den rechten Schenkel, die Hämpe und alle mitgegebenen Beigaben erhalten, und er soll die Früchte des Heiligtums ernten... Von der Stadt soll Asklepiades aller ihr gehörigen Steuern entbunden sein und auch in Zukunft immer derjenige, der Stephanophor ist; bei allen Wettspielen soll man den Priester zum Vorsitz auffordern. Der Priester soll auch für die Ordnung innerhalb des Heiligtums sorgen, wie es ihm gut und fromm zu sein scheint, denn er hat die verantwortliche Oberaufsicht über die Tempelsklaven." See pp. 29, n. 52; 88, n.86.

⁴⁰A. Aristides *Or.* 39.3 as keepers of the well; 50.4; 51 or 51.4 as assisting in the healing process. In an inscription from C. Julius Commodus Orfianus from around 171 CE from the town of Solva, they are called "Nymphis medicis sacrum" (CIL 3. 10595).

They already had a sanctuary in the second century BCE (G. Klaffenbach, "Die Astynomeneinschrift von Pergamon" *SBB* (1954) number 6 (line 202).

⁴¹AvP 7.2. 295. A fragment of a Nymph statue (dated in the late "Kaiserzeit"). Also two female figures were found by the Sacred Way (Gioia de Luca, "Via Tecata und die Hallenstrasse, die Funde" AvP 2.4, plate 558 and pages 127-8) which E. Boehringer (AA [1904] 462-4, plate 39 a-b) considers to be Nymphs from the late second century CE.

Several inscriptions were for prominent citizens of Pergamum (nr.36-43), usually dedicated by the city because of their services. Some examples are: Demetrius Milates, a priest in the Emperor cult in the late second century CE (nr. 36), and Flavia Melitine, who is honored around 123 CE for her donation of the library (nr. 38). Documents of freed slaves were also found. A votive inscription by Faustina (nr. 68), an inscription honoring the procurator Saturnius (nr. 44), and an amulet by a freed slave by the name of Alexander (nr. 99), a treasurer (*ἀρχόπολος*), were all found in the area where the games took place.⁴² The well-preserved dedication to Asclepius Soter (nr. 78) from C. Flavonius Anicinus Sanctus of Antioch (the patron of this area) gives us evidence that people came from other places to Pergamum in order to honor their gods. Flavonius was also an honorary citizen of Attaleia and Ephesus. An amulet from the commissary of the corn store (*frumentarii*) of the VI. Legio Ferrata (nr.106), which was found in the area where the games took place, further illustrates the popularity of the Asclepion of Pergamum among outsiders.⁴³

6) Votive Offerings for Healings.

Several offering plaques were found with the familiar likenesses of parts of the body. Whether the parts of the human body depicted represent the healed part of the body (e.g., eyes for receiving sight) or if they represent the way in which Asclepius received their pleas and answered them (e.g., eyes representing a divine vision and ears, hearing the god's voice) is often unclear. The basic research on

⁴²"Alexander, the treasurer to the powerful (*ἀρχόπολος*) god who answers prayers".

⁴³This information is very helpful in establishing the approximate date for this inscription in the early second century CE. There are two reasons for this. First, the office of this person is not known before the time of Domitian (O. Fierbiger, "Fumentarii," *RE* 7 (1937) 122-5; W. G. Sinnigen, "The Origins of Frumentarii," *Mem. Am. Ac.* 27 (1962) 211-24. Second, at the beginning of the 2nd century the 6th Legion Ferrata was still in Syria.

this question has been done by Weinreich.⁴⁴ He documents the Egyptian practice of using expensive materials to make eyes and ears for their gods in order that the deities hear their plea and see the worshipper (p.46-47). He has also established clear parallels to the use of these symbols in the same manner in later Graeco-Roman times. This understanding of the symbols is frequently expressed with the words θεῷ ἐπηκόω. This widespread practice of speaking with the gods by whispering into an ear at a holy place or at a statue is documented by many ancient writers.⁴⁵ This activity also prompted Justin to quote Ps 115:5 "They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see"⁴⁶ in refutation of Homer's view that the gods can do all things easily.⁴⁷ In general, human expressions on divine statues are not uncommon in the Graeco-Roman religions.⁴⁸ The statues show human emotions like sweating⁴⁹ and laughing;⁵⁰ they move their bodies (close

⁴⁴Otto Weinreich, "ΘΕΟΙ ΕΠΗΚΟΟΙ," MDAI.A 27 (1912).

⁴⁵Seneca Ep. 41.1: "We do not need to uplift our hands toward heavens, or to beg the keeper of the temple to let us approach his idol's ear, as if in this way our prayers were more likely to be heard.;" Pausanias Per. 7.22.3: "Coming at eventide, the inquirer of the god, having burnt incense upon the hearth, filled the lamps with oil and lighted them, puts on the altar on the right of the image a local coin, called a "copper" and asks in the ear of the god the particular question he wished to put to him.;" Clement of Alexandria Strom. 5.7,42. "And there are those who fashion ears and eyes of costly material, and consecrate them, dedicate them in the temples of the gods— by this plainly indicating that God sees and hears all things."

⁴⁶Justin Resur. 5.

⁴⁷Homer Odyssey 2.304.

⁴⁸Plutarch de.Pyth. 394-409D. Several examples are given; T. Lembert, Das Wunder bei den römischen Historikern (Augsburg: Wissenschaftliche Beigabe zum Jahresbericht des kgl. Realgymnasiums, 1904) 12. See also the statue of Theagenes from Thasos who brought a plague to the city (Pausanias Per. 6.11.9; Weinreich, Wunderheilungen, 142-44).

⁴⁹Plutarch Timol. 12; Coriolan 38; Alex. 14; Lucian De dea Syr. 10; POXV 1242, line 50-55.

⁵⁰Suetonius Calig. 57.

their eyes,⁵¹ turn away in order not to see evil,⁵² they show movements,⁵³ look into the eyes of the worshippers⁵⁴ and they also speak.⁵⁵ On account of this general conception Justin cynically said that for the statues all things are possible to do.⁵⁶ At the end of his article Weinreich also gives examples where these symbols were used in votive offerings and had a clear references to the parts of the body which were healed by the god (p. 58-68).

In conclusion it must be said that in order to make clear how these symbols were used, additional symbolic or literary evidence is necessary. In the case of the Asclepius cult, however, the evidence does seem to indicate that most representations are votive offerings illustrating the part of the body which Asclepius healed. This can be asserted because of the healing activity which took place around the sanctuaries, and because ear and eye symbols often occurred in close proximity to other body parts such as breasts and legs, which did not commonly appear in the above-mentioned Egyptian patterns. Furthermore, the devotees of the Asclepius cult communicated with their god mainly during incubation, and we have no evidence for the specific use of the speaking-into-an-ear model or of the notion that Asclepius sees his worshippers through eye models which are exhibited in the Asclepieia. What is known from the Asclepius cult is

⁵¹Strabo *Per.* 6.14.

⁵²Cassius *Dio.* 54.7; 46.33; 39.20; Athenaeus *Deipnos.* 12 (521F).

⁵³Livy 60,59,7; Tacitus *Hist.* 1.68; Suetonius *Vesp.* 5; A. Aristides *Or.* 50.50.

⁵⁴Lucian *De dea Syr.* 32

⁵⁵Livy 5.22.5-6; Plutarch *Coriolan* 37; *Cam.* 6.

⁵⁶Justin *Resur.* 5.

that the god appeared to the health seeker in the form of a statue,⁵⁷ a manifestation also common to other deities.⁵⁸

Therefore, two plaques ornamented with ears-- number 91 from Fabia Secunda and number 115b-- honor the god because he answered their plea and gave them back their hearing. Eyes were depicted in the dedication by Tapari (sic., nr. 111b). A specifically confirmed healing of an eye sickness (οφθαλμούς θεραπευθεῖσα) was given by Eueteria in a stone inscription (nr. 86) to her soter.

Some evidence of medical treatments has also been found. The record of gifts dedicated to the sanctuary in inscription number 72 mentions, among other gifts, three dedications which are known to have been frequently used in medical praxis; a bleeding cup (*κύαντος*),⁵⁹ a medical instrument box (*νάρθηξ*)⁶⁰ and a linen bandage (*όθόνιον*). The dedication of a golden ring (*δακτύλια*) listed among the gifts is also very important, especially since rings played a significant role in magical rites⁶¹. The fact that these 'medical instruments' were dedicated according to a divine order (line 4) and as an expression of gratitude for a healing, means that these instruments were most likely used in the healing process.

⁵⁷ IG 4.956; A. Aristides Or. 47.17.

⁵⁸ Serapis: A. Aristides, Or. 49.47; Athena: A. Aristides, Or. 48.47; Minerva: Suetonius Domitian 15; Apollonius of Tyana: Apuleius Vita Heniliani 24.

In the later Christian tradition the same appearances took place, for example, by Cosmas and Damian, who were seen by a sick woman (Miracle, 13).

⁵⁹ Athenaios Deipnos, 10.424 A-C. He describes and illustrates in broad terms the word *κύανθος* and mentions also the medical uses of it. For a description of bleeding cups and the different models see John Milne, Surgical Instruments in Greek and Roman Times (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907) 101-05. His commentary on page 170 together with plate 4 illustrate a box of surgical instruments from the Asclepion in Athens (chiseled in a stone pedestal as a votive offering). This box contains cutting instruments and two cups for drawing blood and illustrates the medical procedure used to heal in the Asclepion; E.D. Phillips, Greek Medicine (London: Thunes & Hudson, 1973) plates 9 and 19.

⁶⁰ W. Hartke, "Narthex," RE, 16 (1935) 1770-72.

⁶¹ Also found in the Asclepia in Athens, IG 2.2. 1533,1. For the magical use see Weinreich, Geber, 182-3. Inscription T 513 from Pergamum prohibits the wearing of a ring in the incubation room.

An actual healing which includes medical instruments is reported by Julius Meidias (nr. 139). He was cured by the praxis of drawing blood (*λεβοτομεῖν*) from a muscle (most likely the elbow area) and thus gives evidence of this praxis ⁶² which is also known from Aelius Aristides (e.g., 49.34).

Since these votive offerings were dedicated to the healing god, we can rightly assume that all these procedures and instruments were used in the treatment and that, therefore, a certain number of procedures taught and practiced in general school medicine must have been also practiced within the cult in Pergamum.

b) Style and Characteristics of the Votive Inscriptions.

The Pergamum Asclepieion inscriptions show specific features both of their time and their location. Most inscriptions exhibit the careful and exact lettering characteristic of the time of the emperors (e.g., nr. 36). The dating of inscriptions is further aided by looking at the titles which the city of Pergamum used depending on its changing legal status. Before the Emperor Augustus, the city called itself only *ο δῆμος*, whereas afterwards the title *η βουλὴ καὶ ο δῆμος* was used, which then led to the use of *ιερὰ βουλὴ* (nr. 42,54,55,56) beginning shortly after the time of Tiberius.⁶³ This, along with other evidence, shows that the sanctuary increased its constituency and required a ruling body.

With regard to the dedications within the sanctuary, it is important to recognize that many other gods besides Asclepius were honored within the temple precincts, and that specific relationships existed between these deities. In addition to the honoring of Asclepius alone, he is also celebrated with Apollo (nr.115,115b,116), Artemis (nr. 117-119), Hygieia (nr. 65-72,121-23), and with

⁶²Galen *Method. med.* 11. He wrote three treatises on this subject in this chapter.

⁶³Habicht, *Inschriften*, 157-8.

many others. Other deities which were also honored alone without being mentioned in connection with Asclepius are Aphrodite (nr. 129), Demeter (nr. 130) and those known only from the writings of Aristides⁶⁴ and from the *Lex Sacra* inscription (nr. 161) which stood outside the temple area. This coexistence of various deities is also visible, for example, in the round temple of Zeus-Asclepios-Soter, symbolizing the cosmos, with Asclepius as the center statue surrounded by other deities.⁶⁵ Among the inscriptions which testify to this polytheistic view are: (nr. 64) from the time of Hadrian "To the other gods and Asclepios Soter and Caesar Hadrian"; (nr. 133) "To the Gods all together"; (nr. 134) "To all the chthonic gods".⁶⁶

The mentioning of a member of the mystery cult of Demeter (nr. 160; a cult which had a cult place on the Acropolis) provides evidence that even this cult was accepted within the general context of the Asclepieia. In addition to Demeter, the emperors were also among those deities celebrated in the sanctuary, as the above-mentioned inscriptions show.

In the inscriptions Asclepius is most frequently called *σεντρό*, followed by *θεός* or *ο θεός*. These divine names are also used for the above-mentioned other

⁶⁴Charites/Graces (8.8; 28.22; 30.16; 37.22), Pan and Achelous (50.39).

⁶⁵A. Aristides *Or.* 50.28. See also H. Hepding, *Philologus*, 88 (1933) 92. Behr, *Aelius Aristides*, 42.4: "Great and many are the powers of Asclepius, or rather he possesses all powers, beyond the scope of human life. And not purposelessly did those here establish the Tempel of Zeus Asclepius. . . it is he [Asclepius] who guides and directs the Universe, savior of the Whole and guardian of what is immortal, or if you should prefer an expression of tragedy 'the overseer of the helm.'" See chapter IV.A.

⁶⁶See *AvP* 8.2. 251 and *AvP* 8.3 (nr. 64) for the inscription on the north stoa of the Asclepieion: "To the other Gods which are in the sanctuary of Asclepius" (οι ἄλλοι θεοί οι ἐν τῷ Ἀσκληπιείῳ ιδύμενοι); See also Franciszek Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées de l'Asie Mineure* (Paris: Boccard, 1955) 13.

Konrad Ziegler, "Pantheios," *RE* 18.3 (1948) 708-9. In his subchapter about Pergamum he mentions that the city has many examples of this clustering of gods from the third century BCE until the time of the Emperors. Also five altars were dedicated to "All the Gods"; three times is the name "Pantheia" honored, and once is the use of the phrase "To all the male Gods and female Gods" attested.

gods which are honored in inscriptions excavated in the sanctuary area. Seldom is the term κύριος used in the inscriptions. In the early second century it is used in inscriptions number 99 and 106 for Asclepios. Another title used is "Benefactor of all people" (nr. 149), and inscription number 113c is reconstructed by Habicht as "Asclepius, benefactor of all mortal people".⁶⁷

The inscriptions do not give much evidence or detailed information concerning the incubation and therapies practiced at the Asclepieia. In this regard, it is also significant that no inscriptions have been found so far which honor a physician, despite the fact that we know of their existence at least among the devotees and possibly as performers of known medical procedures.⁶⁸ An exception is found in one inscription (nr. 102) where Menoitas calls himself a physician, an actor as well as another profession which can no longer be deciphered.

Clear reference to healing activity is also very rare. Only once is an actual therapy procedure mentioned— blood-letting (nr. 139).⁶⁹ Twice a sickness is mentioned— eye sickness (nr. 86) and infertility (nr. 100). Two small metal votive plaques refer possibly to the healing of the eyes (nr. 111b) and ears (nr. 89,91,115b).⁷⁰

Many dedications refer to an incubation with the words:

- κατ' ὄντας	nr. 33,17,127
- κατ' ὄντερον	nr. 75,76,77,91,116

⁶⁷ Habicht, *AvP* 8.3. 129: "[κ]ύριον πάντα". Consequently, Habicht sees this then as parallel to the same expressions in the "homerischen Asklepiushymnos oder in den orphischen Hymnen" (67.2) where Asclepius is also celebrated as the benefactor of all mortal people.

⁶⁸ Aristides knows, among others, of Satyros the physician (*Or.* 49.8) and Theodotos who practiced at the Asclepieia (*Or.* 47.13.55). See also notes to inscription number 72.

⁶⁹ A. Aristides *Or.* 48.28. He received the same treatment.

⁷⁰ See above pp. 85-87.

- κατ' ἐνυπνίου ὅψιν

nr. 132

Since some inscriptions are dedicated to other deities, we cannot conclude that these are all exclusive references to dream visions from Asclepius during incubations.⁷¹ The same is true for the expression "according to divine instructions":

- κατὰ συνταγὴν nr. 69,120,123

- κατ' ἐπιταγὴν nr. 72.139

Many votive inscriptions give thanks for a specific kind of healing and a sign from Asclepius with words like θεραπευθεῖς (nr. 87,126); σωθεῖς (nr. 63,69,71,95b) and ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας εὐχαριστήριον (nr. 81) or the expressed gratitude could possibly refer to a healing- χαριστήριον (nr. 65,69,74, 96,138); ἔχον χάριν (nr. 102); εὐχαριστήριον (nr. 81,88,113). However, these expressions do not give us enough specific details about healing activity in the Asclepieion of Pergamum. The fact that many inscriptions mention that they have been dedicated according to a vow is not specific enough.⁷² Despite this uncertainty, however, the frequency of this occurrence and the fact that the inscription at the entrance required the devotee to take a 'vow' before entering the incubation area, could be seen as an indicator that these expressions were used in relation to healings.⁷³ There is also no reference made in the inscriptions to the plague, which broke out during this

⁷¹ For example, inscription number 69 is for Asclepius and Hygieia; nr. 72 for Asclepius, Hygieia, Coronis and Epione; nr. 115 is for Apollo Soter.

⁷² εὐξάμενος nr. 78; εὐχή nr. 82,83,86,87,89,90,92,95b,97,99,106,108,109,110, 111a,b,c, 112,115b, 135,136, 137.

⁷³ Nr. 161 line 33-4.

time, although we have witnesses to the plague from the Acropolis in inscriptions.⁷⁴

The fact that we have only limited evidence of incubation activity practiced at the sanctuary is significant in light of the medical school tradition which is known in Pergamum itself.⁷⁵ This confirms the insight which A. Aristides provides that physicians played a certain role in the healing practice of the Asclepieion.⁷⁶

c. Inscriptions about Cultic Rituals.

A large inscription standing at the entrance of the Asclepieion by the Sacred Way informed the devotees of the rules and regulations of the sanctuary. A section of these rules is part of the larger lost inscription and probably copies an older "Urtext." Wörrie considers the date of the latest-found piece to be from the first part of the second century CE.⁷⁷

The inscription itself informs the visitors of the Asclepieia about its rules and regulations for staying ritually pure. It mentions the sacrifices which have to be offered during the day before the incubation to the different gods connected to the Asclepius cult (e.g., Zeus, Apollo, Artemis), and to Asclepius himself. The evening sacrifices are also mentioned and the rules which need to be followed before a devotee was allowed to enter the incubation room (e.g., to abstain from

⁷⁴ IvP 8.1.324; CIG 3538.

⁷⁵ Especially the school of medicine practiced at Pergamum. Galen also worked and wrote in this area (Walzer, Galen, 6-11).

⁷⁶ See below pp. 38-39; 45, n.35; 71 and chapter III.D.2.b.

⁷⁷ Michael Wörrie, "Die Lex Sacra von der Hallenstrasse (Inv. 1965.20)" in Habicht, AvP 8.3, 167-190. This stone, found in 1965, is part of a larger, not completely restored regulation about the cult. This new-found section, as well as another fragment found earlier (called inscription B), appear to be a copy of an older "Urtext" (p.170). They originally stood somewhere near the entrance of the Asclepieion.

goat meat, cheese and sexual intercourse [ἀφροδίσια]). Information is also given concerning donations, which are agreed upon before the successful healing could take place.

Some specific details provide additional insight into the cult practice:

- a) If the devotee desired to sleep in the incubation rooms and was not wealthy enough, the cult personnel required a guarantor to come up with the promised 'gift'. This reflects strict rules in this matter, since after the devotees spent a night in the incubation room they were again reminded about the previously agreed-upon 'fee' for the sanctuary. b) The rules speak about multiple sacrifices and gifts for the god in case a devotee wanted to stay additional nights in the incubation room. This clearly indicates that there was an understanding among priests and devotees that a night spent in the incubation room did not automatically bring about a healing. c) The devotees who slept in the incubation room were told to leave their laurel wreath on the 'beds.' This shows that the devotees did not lay on the ground but rather on beds.⁷⁸ Together with the room size, this provides an approximate measurement to calculate how many people on a given night could spend a night together in the incubation room. The limited access may also explain why, besides the obligatory sacrifices and rituals, devotees had to stay for several days before they were able to enter the special room.⁷⁹ d) Exact information is also given about the different shapes and forms of the cakes which were dedicated to each god. e) The prohibition on wearing rings (because they were also used for magic), belts and shoes underlines the fact that the devotee brings nothing to the god in the final stage and does not add anything to the miraculous healing.

⁷⁸ Aristophanes Plutus 663.

⁷⁹ See below p. 50: J. Apellas waited 9 days; Philostatus VA 1.9; Ant. Pal 6.330.

In another inscription dealing with rituals published by Deubner, he reconstructed and translated the badly mutilated stone.⁸⁰ This inscription is even more specific about the details which need to be considered by devotees before they enter the incubation room.

These two inscriptions as well as other information give evidence that the Asclepieion in Pergamum was considered to be a holy district like any other large sanctuary area in the Graeco-Roman world. Therefore, every person who entered this place was required to observe the rules and regulations. They tell us clearly that a devotee was guided and prepared by the priest and cult personnel in order to be admitted into the incubation room. The devotees did all this in order to please the gods and receive their favor— a successful healing.

d. Summary and the End of the Asclepieion.

The wealth of archaeological evidence from the Asclepieia in Pergamum provides an abundance of information concerning the cult. The accelerated building activities during the second century created a united complex of buildings and temples surrounded by stoas.⁸¹ The precinct also included a theater, sacred wells, a library, a bird sanctuary, an amphitheater by the sacred way, a gymnasium⁸² and baths.

⁸⁰Deubner, *Das Asklepieion*, 11: "Der Kranke soll hineingehen... 10 Tage verfliessen... er soll sich waschen und eintreten... er soll seine Alltagskleider ablegen und sich einen weissen Chiton hüllen; (es folgen weitere Reinigungen)... er soll sich mit gereinigten Binden umwinden... er soll zum Götter hineintreten... es soll derjenige, der Heilung sucht, sich in den grossen Schlafsaal begeben... weisse, mit heiligen Ölzweigen geschmückte Opferlämmer... er soll weder einen Ring noch einen Gürtel tragen... und barfuss gehen... ." (Greek text: *Avg* 8.2.264).

⁸¹ According to Aristides (*Or.* 23.14), the Asclepieia and its surroundings were part of the city, which had been "consecrated to the Savior [Asclepius] for the common good fortune of all mankind."

⁸²Aristides calls it the "The Sacred Gymnasium" (*Or.* 48.77).

The great fame of the Asclepieia brought many visitors; so many, in fact, that Pausanias could say that all Asia came to the temple to worship their helper, soter, and healing god Asclepius, the "true and proper doctor."⁸³ This popularity was not limited to the times of special festivals of the Asclepieia and the musical or athletic *agones*.

The devotees called themselves *therapeutai*; many came from the leading class of Roman society and some represented other cities and sanctuaries.⁸⁴ The participation of women in the cult activities is evidenced by references to the priestess Epictetis, by the hereditary system of the ruling priest, (*stephanophor*), known from an inscription,⁸⁵ and by the physical shape of the Asclepieion itself.⁸⁶

As to healings, despite the many new findings, we still have to agree with Wiegand⁸⁷ that the ruling body of the sanctuary was very restrictive and cautious concerning information about sickness, incubation and successful healings. The existence of a large incubation room in the Asclepieia has been known for some time⁸⁸ but its exact location is still not clear. The evidence also points to the fact

⁸³ Philostratus *VA*. 4.34; A. Aristides, *Or.* 23.16; 42.4: "τὸν ἀλητινὸν προσήκοντας ιατρόν."

⁸⁴ E.g., nr. 74, Troja; nr. 88, Cos; nr. 96, Corinth; nr. 127, Rhodos.

⁸⁵ See below pp. 75-76; *AvP* 8.2 (nr. 264).

⁸⁶ On the south west side of the sanctuary were the latrines, originally accessible from the Asclepieion (Deubner, Asklepieion, 51-2). There were two rooms, one for female members and a bigger room for male members. This further indicates female participation in the cult activities. See below pp. 29, n. 52; 72.

⁸⁷ *AvP* VIII. 1, 1932, B 1-24.

⁸⁸ *AvP*, 8.2 nr. 264. The inscription from the Acropolis mentions a big room (*tὸ μὲν ἔγα* *ἐγκομητήριον*) as well as a small room. Aristides also speaks of its existence. The newly found inscription from the sacred way (nr. 161) speaks not about the place itself, but about the cultic rituals which had to be performed before one entered the incubation room.

An actual *abaton* building set aside for this specific activity as in Epidaurus has not been located.

that a certain amount of common medicine was practiced within the cult setting and the line between the medical and the miraculous cures cannot be so sharply drawn. Often the cures were reported to be largely self-administered therapies in which the many doctors who were supporters and devotees of the cult played an active part. This healing practice makes Pergamum distinctly different from the cult practice in Epidauros.⁸⁹

The Pergamum information from the Asclepieion also provides valuable insights into the emperor cult and a possible relationship to the newly emerging religion, Christianity, which developed in the same area.

1) The Emperor Cult.

The emperors' influence on the physical shape of the Asclepieia is reflected in the statues and inscriptions honoring them. In the period between Hadrian and Caracalla, several statues of the Imperial family and some inscriptions concerning them were erected which call Hadrian god, savior and founder of the city,⁹⁰ as well as the "new Asclepius."⁹¹ Aristides mentions that Hadrian had a cult place in the Asclepieia, called Ἀδριανεῖον. Also the frieze on the north stoa of the sanctuary has a dedication "to the other gods and Asclepius Soter and Caesar Hadrian" (nr. 64). The use of divine names for Asclepius and for the divine emperors makes no distinction between these two gods.

The emperor cult was also very popular in the city itself. This is best illustrated by the fact that Hadrian built the temple honoring Trajan on the highest

⁸⁹ Nilsson, *Geschichte*, 522,341; The report of J. Apellas from Epidauros, which stands out from the other reports from that Asclepieion, however, shows that also in Epidauros a certain change took place. See also chapter III.D.2 and pp.118-19.

⁹⁰ Anna S. Benjamin, *Hesperia* 81, 1963, 189-216.

⁹¹ *AvP* 8.3. 122-23.

spot on the Acropolis (the temple required an extensive support-wall to be built). In this position, the emperor cult overshadowed the older sanctuaries and temples, e.g. those of Zeus, Demeter and Athena. Furthermore, the temple for Caracalla had a very prominent place on the street leading to the theater and many statues of emperors were erected in the agora.⁹²

The popularity of the emperor cult is also evident in the festivals and the games. In the middle of the first century CE the Asclepieia became the place of a Panygeris with agones in honor of the emperor ($\Sigma \epsilon \beta \alpha \sigma \tau o i \Sigma \omega \tau \eta \rho e \varsigma$). They were sponsored by the priest of the emperor cult, Demetrius Milantes.⁹³ He chose this place because he considered both deities, Asclepius and the emperor, to be saving gods (nr. 36, line 6-9). This is significant since these festivals in honor of the emperor were instituted before the games honoring Asclepius.⁹⁴ The names of the games later changed from 'Ασκλήπιεια to Περγαμον 'Αγούστεια and then, later, to honor Commodus, to: 'Ολύμπια 'Ασκλήπιεια Κομμόδεια.⁹⁵ With the cult of the Emperor, the city of Pergamum entered a new era of popularity and increased its status among the other cities in the area.⁹⁶

Besides the priests of the emperor cult which have been noted, there must be special mention of Epictesis, a priestess of both the Asclepius and the Emperor

⁹²For the statue of Trajan from Pergamum see C. Blümel Römische Bildnisse (Katalog der antiken Skulpturen im Berliner Museum, No. 35, plate 33).

⁹³This is similar to Epidaurus (IG 4.1.2. 652), where the priest of Augustus, Cn. Cornelius Nicatos, sponsored an agon in Epidaurus and which became the first games of this Asclepieion.

⁹⁴Louis Robert, "Pantomimen im griechischen Orient," Hermes, 65 (1930) 67, no. 5; Habicht, Inschriften, nr. 39.

⁹⁵Robert, "Pantomimen," Hermes 107-8.

⁹⁶Pergamum had, as first city in the area, a provincial temple for Roma and Augustus which gave it the legal status of a Neokoros. In 113/4 CE it received its second temple. See inscription nr. 157.

cults. As such she gives us further evidence of the close connection between the two cults.⁹⁷

Therefore, we can conclude that the peak of the Asclepius cult's popularity in the second century was paralleled by a flourishing emperor cult in the period from Hadrian to Caracalla. These coexisted within the Asclepieion, and many similar rituals and activities appear to have been utilized in the worship of both deities.

2) Christianity.

We have evidence of a group of Christians emerging in Pergamum in the late first century CE, and of later martyrs who died for their savior. This new religion entered the city where the already traditional Asclepius cult began its greatest period of popularity and support.⁹⁸ The evidence from the Asclepieia in Pergamum which I have presented points toward friction between these two groups about who the real savior of the universe was.⁹⁹ An additional point of strong difference between the followers of Asclepius and Jesus is evident in the close

⁹⁷ See above pp. 99-101; 122-26.

⁹⁸ Revelation 2.12-17; A. von Harnack, *Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Leipzig: Hinrich, 2 vols. 1924) vol., 2.783. Among the early Christian martyrs he lists those from Pergamum: Attalus from Pergamum in Lyon and the martyrs Karpos, Popylos and Agathonice look in Pergamum itself (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.1.17, 37-52).

Furthermore, the reports from Galen, which belong to the earliest witnesses about Christianity, refer to the strong faith of the martyrs. This could reflect the situation Galen saw in Pergamum, his hometown (R. Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians*. [Oxford Classical and Philosophical Monographs; London: Oxford University, 1949] 6). Galen appears not to have had any influence on the development of the Asclepieion. Otfried Deubner (*Das Askepieion von Pergamon* [Berlin: Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1938] 7) notes that Galen was healed at the Asclepius sanctuary. See above pp. 123, 119.

⁹⁹ Eric Peterson *Elc θεός* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926) 91, 196-208; Bruno Müller, *ΜΕΓΑΣ ΘΕΟΣ* (Dissertation Inauguralis, Hallen 21.3, 1903); Justin, *Apology*, 1.21. See also chapter IV.E; A. Aristides *Or.* 50.29: "First I had to be saved."

connection between the two savior cults of Asclepius and the emperor. Such a devotion to the ruler was strongly opposed by the followers of Jesus.¹⁰⁰

3) The End of the Asclepieia.

The decline and end of the Asclepieia parallel the political problems in the city of Pergamum at the end of the second and beginning of the third century CE. The frequency of honor and votive inscriptions declined rapidly from this time until the middle of the third century, after which point no inscriptions from Asclepius devotees have been found. The last coins which carry the picture of the savior Asclepius are from the time of the emperor Valerian (253 - 260 CE).¹⁰¹ Around the end of the third century CE, an earthquake destroyed the Asclepieion. Soon afterwards there were dead people buried in the sanctuary area.¹⁰² The chant, "Great is Asclepius," which an anonymous devotee once chiseled into a marble base (nr. 114), fell silent. Asclepius had been replaced by a new deity.

The sanctuary, like many other divine places, became a Christian place of worship. Shortly after the final use of the place as an Asclepieion, Christianity moved in. Further research of the found data is necessary, however, in order to further illuminate the different stages of the continuous Christian use.¹⁰³ Evidence

¹⁰⁰The situation in the neighboring city of Ephesus is evidence of this. E.g., see Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 2.248-57; Justin *Apol* 1.21.

Dominique Cuss, *Imperial Cult and Honorary Terms in the New Testament* (Paradosis 23, Fribourg: University Press, 1974) 53-63: "The Title 'εύφορος' in Imperial and Christian Usage"; 63-71: "Σωτήρ" - its Hellenistic and Christian meaning.); Robert Morgensthaler, *Statistik des Neutestamentlichen Wortschatzes* (Zürich: Gotthelf, 1958). The New Testament uses 'theos' 1314 times, 'lord' 718 times (23 times in the book of revelation), and 'savior' 24 times (none in Revelation).

¹⁰¹Deubner, *Asklepieion*, 20.

¹⁰²Deubner, *Asklepieion*, 63.

¹⁰³AvP 8.3.20; AyP 11.3. 101-02: "Nachantike Einbauten," 11.4, 31 and 42-47; "Byzantinische und spätere Keramik," 154-56; Deubner, *Asklepieion* 20-21.

for the Christian use of the former sanctuary can be seen in the ambon sign on a stone fragment from the sixth century,¹⁰⁴ and the fragments of a Christian altar in the circular temple of Zeus-Asclepius. In addition, a baptisterium has been found, indicating that the place was used for Christian baptism (initiation). Fragments from the 11th century give further proof that the Christians erected new buildings for their own use in the place of the pagan sanctuary at this time.¹⁰⁵ Pottery findings which include lamps ornamented with the Christian cross, dating from the Byzantine period until the 14th century, also point toward continued use by the Christians.¹⁰⁶

Around the year 1400, when Pergamum was already ruled by the Ottomans, the Asclepieion appears to have lost its attractiveness as a sacred place, and was totally abandoned. It then became a quarry for 'metal-hunters,' who looked mostly for lead, and builders, who carried away building blocks.

This development was certainly not foreseen by the city of Pergamum and its Asclepius devotees when, under Decius (249 - 251), they participated in the killing of Carpos, Popylos and Agathonice in the theater there because they were followers of Jesus.¹⁰⁷ Ironically, it was exactly this new healing religion which prevented the Asclepius healing cult from regaining its strength after the physical destruction of the Asclepieion of Pergamum by earthquake at the end of the third century.

¹⁰⁴Deubner, Asklepieion, 20, plate 10-11 (Maltese cross).

¹⁰⁵Deubner, Asklepieion, 20. See also AvP 11.3. 101-2.

¹⁰⁶Some evidence of this is given in the coins found in the Asclepieion. E.g., AvP 11.4. 61.68-77 (plates 30-31). Most of the coins found at the end of the Sacred Way are from the Byzantine period.

¹⁰⁷See above p. 91, n. 98.

2. AELIUS ARISTIDES.

The surviving *Orations* of Aelius Aristides give us insight into the life and mind of a second century sophist and orator, one who believed in the popular Greek gods of his time-- especially in his healing patron Asclepius, to whom he felt the strongest connection because of the healing miracles he experienced. Several aspects of Aristides' works have been the subject of research.¹ The last section of the surviving orations (*Or. 47-52*) generally called *The Sacred Tales*,² received the

¹Due to software limitations the footnotes start again with number one.

Among them are the studies concerning his description of the political life (e.g., J. H. Oliver, "The Ruling Power. A Study of the Roman Empire in the Second Century After Christ Through the Roman Oration of Aelius Aristides," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 43.4 [Philadelphia, 1953] 871-1003); concerning his historical informations (e.g., Eugen Beecke, *Die historischen Angaben in Aelius Aristides Panathenaikos auf ihre Quellen Untersucht* [Strassburg: Trübner Verlag, 1908]. Bruno Keil, "Eine Kaiserrede Aristides R.35," *Nachrichten der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaft zu Göttingen. Philosophisch-historische Klasse*, No. 4 (1905)); his work as an orator (e.g., U. Willamowitz-Möllendorf, "Der Rhetor Aristides," *Sitzungsbericht der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Phil.-Hist. Klasse* 28. [1925]); his individual hymns (e.g., Wilfried Urschels, *Der Dionysos hymnos des Aelius Aristides*, [Bonn: Rheinsche Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 1962]); his personal life and state of mind in view of psychoanalytical concepts (e.g., G. Michenaud and J. Dierckens, *Les rêves dans les Discours sacrés d' Aelius Aristides* [Essai d'Analyse Psychologique, Bruxelles: Université de Mons, 1972]).

Among the specific interests in this body of historic material the psychological studies are the least helpful for my study not only because of the subject matter, but also because positions which were taken in these studies are greatly biased toward the specific ideological school to which the investigator belongs. Therefore these presuppositions seem to predetermine the outcome of the studies.

²The *Sacred Tales* are generally numbered either as *Or. 47-52* (number 52 is also where the work breaks off) or as *Sacred Tales 1 - 6* (where number 1 equals number 47 etc.). In this dissertation the orations are numbered from 47 to 52 because: 1) the Greek text is continuous and 2) a new numbering system only makes it more difficult to find the text in Greek MSS editions.

In this dissertation, the numbers used for the chapters and verses of Aristides' orations are those used by Bruno Keil (*Aelius Aristidis Smyrnæi* [2 vols.; Berlin: Weidmann, 1898]) and adopted by Charles Behr in his Greek edition (*P. Aelii Aristidis opera quæ extant omnia*, vol. 1 part 1, [Leiden: Brill, 1976]. This is the first part published of the forthcoming complete works) and in his English translation (*P. Aelius Aristides. The Complete Works*, vol. 2. *Or. 17-53* [Leiden: Brill, 1981]). This numbering system has also been used by P.W. Van der Horst (*Aelius Aristides and The New Testament*, [Leiden: Brill, 1980]).

The last complete edition by G. Dindorf (*Aristides* [3 vols., Leipzig: Weidmann, 1829; reprint, Hildesheim: Olms, 1954]) which includes the scholia is still used, for example, by Remus (Conflict, 97-103). The text, however, needs revision and the numbering system is not very precise and detailed enough and is therefore not used here.

greatest attention by scholars because they recount his personal life and its religious dimensions and thus provide a unique insight into the religious life of his time.³

Born in 117 CE. in Hadriani in northern Mysia, Aristides was the son of a wealthy landowner.⁴ He received the finest education possible as a young boy and decided early to become an orator. During his extensive training as an orator Aristides travelled to Egypt, where he took ill and sought the help of the healing god, Serapis. He received no relief from his sickness and was forced to return to Asia Minor. While on his way, he was caught in a severe storm at sea and again called upon Serapis to save him from the storm and to cure his illness. His sickness must have lingered on, though, because on April 25, 142 CE Aristides participated in the festival for Zeus Serapis in Smyrna, delivering an oration to the healing deity.⁵ In this speech he mentioned no cure by Serapis, nor did he express any thanks to his god, from which we may conclude that he did not receive any healing.⁶ The speech closes with the hope for recovery from the sickness and for better days in the future.⁷

³E.g., Charles Behr, *Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales*. (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1968). A. J. Festugière, "Sur les 'Discours Sacrés' d'Aelius Aristide," *Revues des Études Grecques* 82, (1969) 117-53.

The translation used here, unless otherwise noted, is the work of Charles Behr, *P. Aelius Aristides. The Complete Works*, vol., 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1981). This volume contains orations 17-53.

⁴Behr, *Aristides* vii. For a short biography of Aristides from antiquity see Philostratus *VA* 2. 9; Behr, *Sacred Tales*, 1-3. Map to p. 6 shows the estates which were owned by Aristides' father.

⁵Or. 45.

⁶The reported reactions which Aristides shows later on after healings by Asclepius are missing in this narrative about Serapis in Egypt, indicating that Aristides did not consider himself healed by Serapis.

⁷Or. 45.34: "And now do you [Serapis] not abandon me, but make my recovery complete and graciously accept this hymn composed as it is in such circumstances, a thank offering... that it may be happier and better than the present."

In 145 CE Aristides felt he was called especially by Asclepius when he was summoned to the temple.⁸ This most likely was not Aristides' first contact with Asclepius, since he never mentioned that this was the first time, but from that moment on Asclepius was more helpful to him than any other deity had been before.⁹ Furthermore, we can assume that because of the illness he had suffered since his youth he must have had contact with various healing deities including Asclepius. This Aristides confirms in his statements that everyone under the sun had experienced the benefits of Asclepius,¹⁰ and that he had addressed Asclepius daily since the beginning of his life.¹¹ Therefore, Asclepius' calling was an intensification of an earlier relationship, a move away from Serapis to a different healing deity.

At this point Aristides went to Pergamum and became a devoted follower. Here he also began to report his experience with Asclepius in the The Sacred Tales. Later on, he wrote some occasional remarks on the same subject in other orations.

The Sacred Tales were produced by Aristides according to a god-given order. He mentions several times that Asclepius gave him the order to record his experiences. Even the title for this section of his writings, *lepoi λόγοι*, is inspired by the god (48.9). Aristides kept records on parchment from the time of his first

⁸Behr, Sacred Tales, 41; Or. 48.7 (καλέω). 47-40.70; 50.14; see also Or. 50.83, 103.

Later on (Or. 28.132) Aristides describes this calling as if it were his desire to seek out Asclepius "... we took refuge in the temple of Asclepius, in the belief that it was fate for us to be saved (σωζω), it was better to be saved through his agency, and if that was not possible, it was time to die."

⁹Or. 47.1: "... and we [Aristides] can affirm that no Greek to this day has enjoyed more advantages."

¹⁰Philostratus VS 9; Or. 47.1: "No one indeed under the sun is uninitiated" (ἥς ἀτέλεστος μὲν οὐδεὶς δῆπον τῶν ὑφ' ἡλίου).

¹¹Or. 47.2: "We have not omitted our daily addresses of ours and we have not given up our custom, but we even maintain it for this very reason because it has been our custom from the start (εἰς ἀρχῆς)."

encounter with Asclepius, especially of the dreams (48.2).¹² From these records he later composed the Sacred Tales, a daily diary (47.4) of the author's relationship with Asclepius.¹³ Occasionally from this autobiographical work, Aristides chose sections for speeches he composed in later years.¹⁴

In the Sacred Tales, written as an autobiographical summary¹⁵ of his devotion to Asclepius (48.4), Aristides chose from the thousands of lines he had written earlier (48.3) by a selective process in which he remembered the past with varying degrees of certainty.¹⁶ Although on several occasions he notes his inability to be more specific, we should not question Aristides' memory—especially since parallel accounts in earlier and later works do not show significant variation in the details (e.g., 40.21 compared with 50.42). Some surviving orations (e.g., 18.22, 30, 34, 37, 40) still preserved the original details of the events.¹⁷ Furthermore,

¹²Or. 48.2 "Still I can say this much, that straight from the beginning the god ordered me to write down my dreams. And this was the first of his commands. I made a copy of my dreams, dictating them, whenever I was unable to write myself."; Or. 50.25.

Also songs and speeches which Aristides composed were kept in this extensive and costly collection (Or. 50.39).

¹³Evidence of the meticulous care with which Aristides noted the chronology of events is seen in the surviving annotations showing Aristides' age in years and months at the time of writing, the occasion and place of the speech, and the name of the ruling consul (e.g., Or. 37, 29).

¹⁴When he was asked by Emperor Hadrian to deliver a speech before him, Aristides went through his collection and chose three older speeches (Or. 47.37-8) to which he added a prologue. He delivered the older material again with great success (Or. 48.37-8).

¹⁵An attempt to put the information into a chronological order has been made by Behr, Aristides, 121-20.

¹⁶He himself indicates several levels of accuracy in which he remembers the specific accounts: 1) details are given even to the exact day (e.g., Or. 47.4-57) or 2) details and occasions are willingly left out (e.g., Or. 48.3) or 3) specifics are not remembered by the author (e.g., Or. 48, 11) or 4) to narrate the specifics is not in the power of man (e.g., Or. 48.8).

¹⁷Behr, Aristides, 116.

Aristides claims that his god not only inspired the writings and its specifics, but also the order of the events, and his retelling is according to a god-given order (48.4-5).¹⁸

Although Aristides describes in his *Sacred Tales* his intimate relationship with and devotion to the healing god Asclepius, the dominant deity during this phase of his life; he still retained a real belief in many other deities, such as Serapis, Isis, Zeus, Apollo, Athena, Dionysus and Herakles, in addition to numerous local gods.¹⁹ This attitude, reflecting an eclectic polytheism typical of Aristides' time,²⁰ is also evident in his oratory addressed to many different gods and by the many different deities worshiped within the Asclepeion.

Despite their unique character, the *Sacred Tales* have much in common with other biographical documents from Graeco-Roman times in that their narrative structure reflects features of aretalogical writings.²¹ Therefore these tales may be compared and understood within the identifiable literary and ideological trends of this period.

¹⁸ Behr, *Sacred Tales*, 121-8. He gives a chronological outline of the *Sacred Tales* followed by a chronology of the *Orations* (pp. 129-30).

¹⁹ Besides the various places of worship and sacrifice dedicated to different deities which Aristides visits and mentions in this work, his polytheistic view is also visible in the orders he received from Asclepius, the savior himself, to compose speeches for other deities (*Or. 49.29*); *Or. 50.38*: "to compose not only for him [Asclepius], but also indicated others, as Pan, Hecate, Achelous, and whatever else might be."

²⁰ *Or. 49.29*: "And there is scattered in our books a speech in praise of Athena and Dionysus and of others, according to the circumstances."

²¹ In the beginning of his work, Aristides defines his process not as describing all the good deeds and achievements of Asclepius but as selecting from "all the achievements of the savior which I have enjoyed to this very day" (*Or. 47.1*: *τὰ τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἀγανίσματα*).

In his footnote to the translation Behr interprets this expression as a term from the school of oratory (Behr, *Aristides*, 278, n. 3) whereas Festugière, *Discours*, 168, n.5 sees in this expression a phrase comparable to "ἀπετάι".

John C. Stephens, *The Religious Experience of Aelius Aristides: An Interdisciplinary Approach* (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1982) 117-9 and 149-50. In his comparison of terms used by Aristides and other ancient authors, especially Lucian's *Metamorphosis* (book 2), he establishes common aretalogical features (p. 124-35). Building on these parallels he even views this work of Aristides as an Aretalogy—p. 112 has the subtitle: "The *Sacred Tales* as Religious Aretalogy."

a) Insights Aristides Provides into the Cult in Pergamum.

When Aristides became a strong devotee of the Asclepius cult, he joined an already existing circle of wealthy worshippers in the town of Pergamum.²² From his interaction with these people and his own descriptions in the Sacred Tales, we gain insight into the cult practices in the following areas:

1) The Various Deities Worshipped at the Sanctuary.

For Aristides, Zeus was the paramount god, the world creator, the all-powerful—the god, therefore, who controls the destiny of the world.²³ This concept comes close to monotheism, particularly as propagated by the Platonists and the Stoics of his time.²⁴ Zeus delegates his power to the rest of the Greek gods in the Pantheon, including Asclepius.²⁵ Despite his intimate relationship with and devotion to the healing god, Aristides always acknowledges the powers of the other deities as well, e.g., Apollo, whom he served before Asclepius (50.31-7),²⁶ Athena, who saved him from the plague, and Serapis, the healing God and savior (45.18,25).²⁷

²²See above pp. 121-26.

²³Or. 43: "Regarding Zeus."

²⁴Behr, Sacred Tales, 151; Otto Weinreich, "Typisches und Individuelles in der Religiosität des Aelios Aristeidēs," Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Alterum, (1914) 605.

²⁵Or. 42.4 Asclepius ■ the son of Apollo who himself is the son of Zeus; 43.25 "Asclepius heals, assisting Zeus."

²⁶Apollo, the father of Asclepius and the deity most frequently mentioned by Aristides after Asclepius and Zeus, is also called a savior, a healing god and the god of oracles (he also had a temple in the Asclepieion).

²⁷Serapis always held a prominent place in Aristides' life. As a healing god Serapis acted on his own behalf (not by the power of Zeus) and represented the underworld and the non-Asclepian concept of moral retribution (Or. 49.48,49; 45.21-3).

Aristides uses the term "savior" very cautiously, not only for Asclepius himself²⁸ but also for the many other gods he honored with this divine title.²⁹

Aristides must be characterized as what I would call an "eclectic polytheist." He chose to relate to the specific god who might meet his present needs, or who seemed to him to be helpful on specific occasions. Although Asclepius appears in twenty-nine orations, more than any other god, Aristides did not reject the rigid hierarchy of the Hellenistic deities.³⁰ During the latter part of his life, Aristides had an overriding devotion to Asclepius as healer and guardian of his destiny as well as patron of his career as an orator. By consulting Asclepius and following his command, Aristides fought sickness, enhanced his career and even, he believed, saved himself from a predestined death when another's death was substituted in place of his own.³¹ Once when Aristides was sick, the fever did not completely leave him until the most valued of his foster children died. The child's death happened to occur on the same day that Aristides was healed; and so Aristides believed that this innocent child's death was a substitution for his own death— that an exchange of lives had taken place (48.44). Given a new life at this point, he regarded his own life from that moment on as a gift from the god (*δωρέαν ἔσχον παρὰ τῶν θεῶν*, 47.17).³²

²⁸ Behr, *Sacred Tales*, 148.

²⁹ Zeus (*Or.* 43.1; 49.39. Zeus as the savior from an earthquake, *Or.* 46.1); Apollo (50.32); Serapis (45.25).

³⁰ Behr, *Sacred Tales*, 157. This point is also illustrated in one of the latest *Orations*, number 42.

³¹ *Or.* 48.44; 51.24-5. Because the god ordered the death of one of his foster sister's children, an exchange of lives took place between Aristides and the child— the child died on behalf of Aristides.

³² It is important to see the parallel in the *POxy.* 1381, Col 10, line 222 where *δωρήμα* is also used by the author to describe the previous mentioned miracles he received from Asclepius. See below pp. 66-69.

Thus, Asclepius was Aristides' personal savior, his healer god, his refuge from trouble (*καταφύγιον*, 47.17), the one around whom his whole life was shaped. This he expressed, saying, "Asclepius is much better to worship than all other gods" (47.23).

2) Initiation into The Cult and His Devotion.

After Aristides returned home from Rome as an invalid with no hope of a career as an orator, his doctors were at a loss as to how to help him (48.5,69). Therefore, they sent him to the warm springs near Smyrna (48.7), in December of 144 CE. At the springs a great event took place. For the first time Asclepius appeared to Aristides and gave him orders to walk barefoot outdoors. Aristides complied, and this act of faith resulted in a healing miracle. Aristides exclaimed, "Great is Asclepius!" (48.7).³³ From this point on, Aristides' faith in this healing god began to grow, although he still remained a true polytheist³⁴. For the next two years he lived as an incumbent at the Pergamum Asclepion, a period Aristides himself calls "cathedra",³⁵ a time of devotion and inactivity.

Since this first encounter with Asclepius became such a turning point in Aristides' life and career it was a kind of conversion experience, which we can refer

³³See above pp. 109-10.

³⁴For example when Zosimus, his foster father, died, Aristides called upon Serapis for help and consolation (*Or.* 49.47-9). Aristides discusses the dominion of Serapis over the earth and the underworld in *Or.* 45: "Regarding Sarapis" and in 49.48.

³⁵*Or.* 48.70; 49.44. The term *καθέδρα* is exclusively used by him for this time period. Behr, *Aristides*, 432, n. 115. He suggests that this period was possibly chosen wistfully in order to suggest a parallel to the customary time of separation before one received the honor of a sophistic chair.

to as an initiation (*τελετή*).³⁶ Aristides' new-found relationship to Asclepius developed into a total dependence upon his new deity. Aristides continually describes his faith relationship to Asclepius, and no effort is too great for him to fulfill the orders given by the god. This faith brought him a specific lifestyle and thought pattern— a theological concept. According to this theology, every action Aristides performed had to be in uniformity with the will of the god. This dependency is clearly visible, for example, in his change of name, and in the reported sea-voyage experiences.

When Aristides became a devotee of Asclepius, he received a new name, Theodorus (50.53), which was then added to his old name (50.70). This change of name was revealed to him in a dream (50.54). At another point (50.16) he mentions Sedatius, whose name was originally Theophilus, illustrating that his name change was not an isolated case but a rather common practice in the Asclepius cult.

Like many other writers of his time Aristides also reported several life-threatening sea-voyage experiences. Before his conversion on his trip to Rome when he felt very sick and helpless (48.60),³⁷ he decided to sell his pack animals (48.64) and to return by ship. During the voyage several miraculous events took place (48.67). His ship was caught in several storms (48.65,66,68.50.32-7). After another storm the ship reached Delos, and immediately Aristides swore not to sail for

³⁶In *Qr.* 48.28 Aristides experienced a joyful harmony in his life after performing several religious rituals (he dug a trench and made a sacrifice in it, tossed coins into the river, dedicated a ring and offered a full sacrifice) to avert death. These actions he describes as "almost as if in an initiation (*ώσπερ ἐν τελετῇ*). In *Qr.* 50.6 he reports that Asclepius commanded him to go to a river and to purify himself there with libations and purgations at home through vomiting. After three days of this, a voice told him that the time was over and that he should return. Aristides says about this time, "It was not only like an initiation into a mystery... ." Here he connects a command by the god and a successful completion of it as an initiation and therefore we can see his first encounter with Asclepius as an initiation too.

See also Pausanias *Per* 9.39.5-8 and Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas* (2 vols., Chicago: University of Chicago, 1978) vol. 1. 262.

³⁷Behr, *Sacred Tales*, 25. The helplessness of the doctors on this occasion is mentioned three times.

two days and refused the request of the crew to board the ship. The next day, a violent storm broke out and although the ship stayed in the harbor, it barely survived in the violent storm. The following day the crew came to Aristides and called him "Benefactor and Savior" because he had saved them from the storm through the will of the god.³⁸ On another trip to Chius which Asclepius ordered him to take (48.11), Aristides' ship was caught in a violent storm. While the seamen and the passengers were screaming in anguish, Aristides was content to say only "O Asclepius!" because he knew their fate (48.11,13) and that it was his god "who will save them from the sea" (48.13). When they arrived in the harbor, Aristides fulfilled his obligation toward the wrath of the god by staging a 'fake' shipwreck in the harbor with a small skiff (48.13). After this 'spell' was lifted, they sailed to Chius with "signs and prophecies" from the god (48.17).³⁹

3) Cult Rituals and Ceremonies.

Our knowledge of the rituals and the temple services is incomplete and somewhat varied from one cultic center to another and from one era to another. Therefore, Aristides' account provides valuable insight into the practices in the Pergamum Asclepieion.

a) Cult Personnel.

In Aristides' descriptions of his contact with the Asclepieion in Pergamum, he mentions several functionaries who served in the Asclepieia.

³⁸Or. 50.37: "... the God, in his providence, gave a sign for everything which was going to take place, on the one hand, that danger would befall on the sea and salvation from these, and on the other hand, that he himself would be the healer of my body's troubles, as well as the first of his sons [Asclepius], who knows how to stop all things of which men are sick."

³⁹No specific details about these signals were given here, but on another trip (Or. 48.26-27) Aristides mentioned that the god revealed to him the weather, the constellation of the stars, gave specific instructions concerning sacrifices and other rituals which were needed for a safe voyage (Or. 48.26-27).

First of all, there were the priests (*οἱ λεπεοι*)⁴⁰ whose duties were, among others, to light the sacred lamps (47.11). The temple wardens (*ἱεράρχοι*, 47.11) assisted the priests. They also brought the ointment to the worshipper and knew its secret mixture (49.22), distributed the medicines of the gods (47.58) and sold artifacts, sacrifices and votive offerings (47.45). The warden also functioned as intermediary between Asclepius and those who sought healing (47.76) by confirming god's will for them by a sign (49.14). This the warden often did by receiving the same dream from god as the worshippers had; the miraculous coincidence revealed by telling the same dream to each other reinforced the revelation's validity (48.30). In 48.35 the same dream is revealed three times to different persons— to Aristides and two temple wardens. This expressed and affirmed in even stronger terms the will of god. Regarding the function of the temple warden, Aristides also mentions that he lived for long periods in the house of a temple warden named Asclepiacus (48.35,46), and that wardens sometimes accompanied him in his travels (48.49).

Other groups mentioned in the writings include the temple servants (*ἱερέπεται*, 47.11), the door keeper (*θυρωρός*, 47.32), the sacred heralds (*κήρυκοι τὸν λεπόν*, 50.48) and possibly a chorus of singers (47.30;50.38), as well as other officials whose functions were not always clear.

Prominent citizens of Pergamum and other devotees undoubtedly also held functional and honorary offices at the temple and its various guilds, as Aristides himself illustrates. During his legal battle against becoming a tax collector for the area (50.73,96),⁴¹ the assembly in Smyrna offered Aristides the high priesthood of the provincial assembly in Asia (50.100,104). After Aristides again declined this

⁴⁰Or. 50.64. At that time, the priesthood was a hereditary lifetime office. Behr, Sacred Tales, 30.

⁴¹Aristides refused this honor because of the way he was nominated, the electoral process in the Smyrnaean Council and the responsibility which possibly included a requirement that he substitute any deficits in the municipal taxes from his own funds.

offer, they voted him into the priesthood of Asclepius for the temple, which was then under construction at the outer harbor (50.102). Again Aristides did not take on this honorary function, but chose to prove that his denial was the will of Asclepius. This was manifested in dreams and clear signs (50.101) which the god gave him in his defense. He did not even need to use reasons of ill health in order to refuse. The assembly accepted these evidences as god-given 'judgments' and was satisfied. The people and the ruling body did not want to work against the will of god (50.102).⁴²

b) Temple Services.

The regular daily temple service consisted in the lighting of the sacred lamps (47.11,32; 48.80; 51.28), which must have taken place around sunset.⁴³ For this occasion the temple cella was opened by a temple warden (*vermekopos*, 47.11).⁴⁴

Concerning the rituals, Aristides confirms many of the known activities of the cult,⁴⁵ such as purifications by washings (e.g., 51.27), the use of water from the sacred well,⁴⁶ the way the water and the well had to be approached by a health-seeking devotee (47.42), the existence of white garments (48.31) as a symbol of joy

⁴² Aristides was again successful in avoiding anything which carried responsibility, e.g., public speaking, having paid students (Or. 50.87,95) and holding public office.

⁴³ Behr, *Sacred Tales*, 32. He holds the view that this lighting took place twice a day but gives no evidence to support it, whereas Philostratus (VA 7.15) seems to indicate that there was just one ceremony a day.

⁴⁴ Or. 47.11; 51.28. These passages give evidence that the temple was open for this ceremony, and that the temple was locked after the lighting of the sacred lamps (Aristides was walking around the temple). However, if we assume, as Behr does, that there were two daily lighting activities (see footnote above), then the temple could have remained open during these two celebrations.

⁴⁵ Edelstein, *Asclepius*, T 512,13.

⁴⁶ Or. 49: "Regarding the Well in the Temple of Asclepius." Here he describes in detail that the sacred wells were discovered by the god himself (14), that they have healing power (14-16) for the sick and act like medicine, contain 'lighter' water which remains unspoiled (9) as opposed to other springs (7), instructions on how to approach a well (3) and drink from it (4). The fact that the wells always stay full Aristides saw as a symbol of the god's desire to save mankind. Therefore, the wells were meant to imitate their master who fills the wants of those who need him.

(Or. 20.19), the singing of paecans (50.50),⁴⁷ and the delivery of speeches and other literary honors given to Asclepius in the sacred theater.⁴⁸ While writing about dreams, he also described the process of taking a vow (47.32), the wearing of crowns (50.48), the practice of having a crown from the god lying on one side while reclining for ceremonial purposes (47.44,45), the constant routines of bathing and not bathing, dieting, fasting and vomiting. Many of these rituals Aristides performed daily.⁴⁹

Regarding public celebrations and processions, Aristides mentions the olive branches for cultic use (51,61), the lighted torches⁵⁰ and the crowning with golden crowns (50.48). In Aristides' writing there is little mention of games (47.16), festivals,⁵¹ national sacrifices (51.47) or vigils (47.6). These activities did not concern him as a central point in his relationship with the gods,⁵² although he was invited at least once to speak at Ephesus (48.81) and he sacrificed to Zeus publicly in a national event (51.47).

c) Regular Sacrifices and Votive Offerings.

Besides the many general references to his sacrifices, Aristides provides specific details about different kinds of offerings to the gods. Asclepius was

⁴⁷Or. 49.4. Aristides boasts that his own poetic works and verses were even read and sung by children as far away as Egypt.

⁴⁸E.g., Or. 47: "An Address Regarding Asclepius."

⁴⁹Or. 42.2: "We [Asclepius] have not omitted these daily addresses of ours and we have not given up our custom, but we even maintain it for this very reason because it has been our custom from the start."

⁵⁰Or. 47.22,32; 23.15-6.

⁵¹The festival seems to have taken place in the fall (see debate by Behr, *Sacred Tales*, 32 n. 47).

⁵²Eg., Or. 50.16. When there was a "magnificent spectacle in the city," Aristides and a few friends were left alone in the temple whereas all others went to see it.

honored with various kinds of bloodless sacrifices, such as large-sized crowns,⁵³ a gold ring as a substitute for sacrificing a finger (48.27), eggs,⁵⁴ artifacts (47.31), votive offerings with inscriptions (47.31) and possibly those which depict the healed parts of the body.⁵⁵ He also sponsored the establishment of small altars (49.41). Among the gifts Aristides dedicated to his god is a silver tripod.⁵⁶ This specific dedication is important because it shows the different steps which were necessary in order to present a major dedication to the cult. First the dedicant commissioned the piece to be crafted by an artist. Then the donor considered the god to whom this specific offering would be dedicated. After this, the best place for the object to be erected and the dedication ceremony to be held was decided by the temple priests and the temple warden along with the dedicant.⁵⁷ This passage also reveals that Aristides considered the inscription on the tripod as well as all other dedicated words as divinely inspired (50.45-6).

⁵³ *Or.* 47.44: "I sent a large sized crown to the god, the sort which men particularly bring to Asclepius." The crowns were sold by the temple warden.

⁵⁴ Although eggs are not mentioned in the *Sacred Tales* as being directly sacrificed to Asclepius, they were offered to Zeus (*Or.* 51.61) and Isis (49.44-45). Eggs should be considered here because several points connect the cult of Asclepius with this form of offering: 1) the relationship of eggs to the "ceremonial" snake (Pausanias *YΔ* 2.27.2); 2) the fact that Isis appears together with Asclepius in a dream of Aristides after he performed sacrifices (*Or.* 49.46); 3) Asclepius ordered Aristides to eat an egg (47.45) in a divine order.

⁵⁵ *Or.* 42.7: "But some, I mean both men and women, even attribute to the providence of the God the existence of the limbs of their body, when their natural limbs had been destroyed; others list other things . . . For us it is not only a part of the body, but it is the whole body which he has formed and put together and given as a gift . . ." See Appendix II.G for examples from Rome.

⁵⁶ *Or.* 50.45-46. The tripod had a golden statue on each foot representing Asclepius, Hygieia and Telesphorus and was also dedicated as a memorial for musical performances.

⁵⁷ Habicht, *AvP* 8.3. 189, n. 113. The tripod was placed under the right hand of the statue in the temple of Zeus Asclepius (A. Aristides *Or.* 50.46).

Aristides also offered blood sacrifices (51.20)-- to Asclepius, one was a ham hock⁵⁸ prepared in Aristides' customary way and killed in the temple, most likely on the altar (47.43). To Zeus, the savior, he chose to sacrifice an ox (49.39) rather than a cow (49.3). He also makes a distinction among the blood sacrifices between offerings which were eaten when the sacred bowls were set up (48.27) and those which were not permitted to be tasted according to divine orders (49.37,39).

When Aristides invited his fellow devotees (the foremost members of the Asclepieion) to eat from and celebrate a full sacrifice to Asclepius which he frequently sponsored (50.100), it was quite a lavish and expensive occasion. Besides these big sacrifices, there were also smaller sacrifice ceremonies held at individual statues which were erected in the Asclepieia (49.13).

d) Sacrifices of Literary Works.

Aristides also mentions another kind of offering and gift to the gods which is very important for this dissertation-- oral and written accounts of the acts of the god.⁵⁹ This form of 'boasting' (*αὐγήματα*) of the healed about their healer god (42.8) is mentioned frequently by Aristides.⁶⁰ He sees the oral expression in two ways: a) 'a simple retelling of the miracle (42.7), and b) a chance to deliver speeches, which in Aristides' case was the result of a command from the god to be an orator. When Aristides was sick and was about to become acquainted with Asclepius, he had given up his desire to become a rhetorician for health reasons (50.14). But after he was healed and found his new god, Asclepius ordered him to continue his career as a

⁵⁸Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (transl. by John Raftan, Cambridge: Harvard, 1985) 269. Pigs are known to have been sacrificed to Asclepius only in Pergamum.

⁵⁹In the later-written works (Or. 47.7) regarding Asclepius he mentions that the various deeds (*ἐν τοῖς ἴμασι*) of the god are praised by "some in oral accounts, some in the declaration of the votive offerings."

⁶⁰Or. 50.48. He quotes others as saying about him: "for he is invisible in oratory."

rhetorician (50.14-30), to compose speeches (47.38), to deliver speeches (51.38-41), and to begin to participate in oratory contests.⁶¹ Thus for Aristides all rhetorical activities, his speeches as well as his literary works, are votive offerings to the god,⁶² dedications to the provider of this talent and gift (42.3). Furthermore, in these speeches collected in written form (47.38;50.30), Aristides claims to have special help from god through communication with him in dreams (50.25); therefore Aristides spoke "by his grace" (50.26).

Asclepius also commanded him to be expressive and to exercise his god-given gift in lyric poetry and to maintain a chorus of boys to sing them (50.38,43). Of the divinely-inspired paens which have survived, the majority are dedicated to Apollo and Asclepius (50.41).⁶³ These poetic works, which were created mainly for public adoration of the deities (50.50),⁶⁴ often included 'theologically' significant chants⁶⁵ and phrases which had been revealed to Aristides in visions. The following are examples describing Asclepius:

- "The savior" (e.g., 39.6).⁶⁶

⁶¹ Specifically Asclepius commanded him to dedicate his first speech as a first fruit to him (Or. 50.15).

⁶² Or. 42.2: "Of course, I am concerned to express my gratitude and show my respect by means of sacrifices and incense, whether this takes place in keeping with Hesiod's advice or even with greater enthusiasm than my means allow. But the expression of gratitude through oratory appears particularly proper for me."

⁶³ Several titles are quoted and short sections preserved in the *Sacred Tales* (e.g., 49.12,31). Aristides also sang his lyric verses himself (e.g., 48.53) or had them sung to him by the boys' choir. The singing of these verses brought great comfort to Aristides in sickness, sometimes even curing him (50.38). Also the writing and reading of a poem helped Aristides to overcome illnesses (47.73).

⁶⁴ Habicht, *AvP* 8.3. 144-5. Inscription number 144 from Pergamum is a hymn to Asclepius from Aristides (dated shortly after 176 CE).

⁶⁵ Or. 47.71. Asclepius told him "certain phrases, which it is proper to say in such circumstances since they are efficacious. . . . But he said that when these were recited it would suffice. One of them was: Keep him!"

⁶⁶ Habicht, *AvP* 8.3. nr. 114; See also chapter III.E.5 and 7.

- "Great and many are the powers of Asclepius, or rather he possesses all powers, beyond the scope of human life" (42.4).⁶⁷
- "It is he [Asclepius] who guides and directs the universe, Savior of the Whole and guardian of what is immortal" (42.2).
- "The overseer of the helm (ἔφορος οἰάκων) who preserves both eternal being and that which comes into being (42.4).⁶⁸
- "Lord Asclepius" ('Ασκληπίε δέσποινα; 42.50; 50.50.51.69).
- "Asclepius is better than all to worship" (47.23).
- "Great is Asclepius! The order is accomplished" (48.7).⁶⁹
- "Oh Asclepius" (48.12).
- "Great is Asclepius" (μέγας δὲ Ἀσκλεπίος, 48.12)⁷⁰.
- "The arbiter of fate" (48.31).
- "You have been cured" (τεθεράπευσαι, 49.5).
- "Asclepius will cure and heal your disease" (49.12).
- "Hail Paean, Heracles, Asclepius" (50.42).
- "The One" (εἷς, λέγων δῆ τὸν Θεόν, 50.50).

Besides the above mentioned works of oratory, Aristides included among the dedications lyrical poetry and all his writings which also included inscriptions. He

⁶⁷Or. 42.4: "'Ασκλέπιον δυνάμεις μεγάλαι τε καὶ κολλαί, μᾶλλον δ' ἄποσται, οὐχ ὄσσα δὲ τῶν ἀνθρώπων βίος χωρεῖ.' This is also the teaching which Aristides claimed to have written in the Sacred Tales (42.4).

⁶⁸Aristides claims here to have used an expression from a tragedy. See also 30.28 and Jamblichus De Mysteriis 7.2.

⁶⁹This chant was ordered to be spoken after the completion of a divine order (below p. 101).

⁷⁰In Or. 48.21 it is the crowd who is "shouting that celebrated phrase 'Great is Asclepius.'" Similar types of acclamations are used by those observing miraculous events which were reported in early Christian literature; e.g., Acts 19:34 (see also chapter VI).

frequently made offerings in the form of inscriptions⁷¹ which he considered to be divinely inspired words⁷² (e.g., on his birthday 47.31). In the Sacred Tales he also gave us the basic standard wording which was chiseled into the stone of cult statues (49.13; 50.28) in the temple area:

"Such and such, saved from death,
gives thank offerings to all the gods."

In summarizing Aristides' effort to write down all the deeds of the gods as he was commanded to do (over 300.000 lines: 47.3), a picture emerges of these writings as **holy writings** (*ἱερὸν λόγον*, 48.9).⁷³ Asclepius commanded him to write, inspired his thoughts and words,⁷⁴ and gave orders regarding the sequence of the

⁷¹ Today we refer to these literary works with the simple term 'inscriptions' because they survived in this isolated form. However, for Aristides and the other sponsors they were dedications and thank offerings given to the temple (god) out of gratitude "for the sake of a good omen" (*Or.* 47.31).

⁷² *Or.* 50.45: "... a divinely inspired inscription came to me, which ran as follows: 'Not unknown to the Greeks, Aristides dedicated this. The glorious charioteer of everlasting words.' And I dreamed that I had this inscribed and that I was going to make the dedication, as it were, to Zeus."

⁷³ Aristides also uses the same term in *Or.* 28.11; for a certain "kind of secret tale I heard at night not long ago from one of the gods [Asclepius]."

He separates these divine revelations from remarks, tales and stories he generally hears (e.g., *Or.* 46.14,17,32). See below pp. 69, n.11; 203-5 and chapter V.

⁷⁴ *Or.* 50.26: "Therefore as the state of our oratory, to speak by his [Asclepius] grace...."

reported events.⁷⁵ Therefore Aristides considered this oral and written work as "everlasting."⁷⁶

b. Healing Activities.

1) Incubation - Dreams.

After his 'initiation' (28.28) into the cult and his two years as an incumbent at the Pergamum temple, Aristides still spent as much time as possible in the Asclepiae (50.104),⁷⁷ engaging in social activities, participating in rituals and sacrifices, and performing the rite of incubation⁷⁸.

Although the full ritual of incubation is still somewhat obscure, it is clear from the reports of Aristides that it involved the act of spending a night in the

⁷⁵Or. 50.50: "Let it be said and written, and if not may you be fully concerned, Lord Asclepius, to prompt me to describe it without causing any disagreeableness." 48.24 "But as to what follows it is your task, O Lord, to make clear and to reveal, by saying what and by turning where, we would do what is gratifying to you and would best continue our tale."

⁷⁶Or. 50.46-7: "I also dedicated to Olympia Zeus the inscription and other dedications, so that the oracle was in every way fulfilled. (47) After the inscription, I became much more eager, and it seems in every way to be fitting to keep on with Oratory, as our name would live even among future men, since the God happened to have called our speeches "everlasting" (ἀερίαν τοὺς λογούς); 51.63.

For the later use of Aristides' work (e.g., by Philostratus) see Behr, *Sacred Tales*, 142-47. Appendix C, "The Tradition of the Aristides Vitae."

⁷⁷It is most unlikely, that worshippers lodged in the Asclepiae itself except during nights of incubation (Or. 50.89-90). Aristides lived during his two cathedra years in the house of Asclepiacus (48.35,46,78). The passage in 51.28 tells us that he also stayed at an inn in Pergamum.

⁷⁸Aristides uses the term κατάκλισις in 48.71,80; 49.7,42 and 42.8 (Pley, "Incubus," RE 9.1256-62. He translates it as "das Liegen und Schlafen zum Zwecke der Weissagungen"). In Christian literature the word ἐγκοίνησις is used for prostration in prayer, Justin *Dial.* 90.50.

The more frequent term ἐγκοίμησις is not used in his works for incubation—he uses it in 47.43 as the verb for killing a sacrifice in the temple.

Asclepieia,⁷⁹ most likely sleeping in the incubation room,⁸⁰ the abaton. In the play "Plutus" by Aristophanes (4th century BCE), which takes place in the sanctuary of Asclepius, Cario tells about his experience in the incubation room. He speaks about the sacrifices, the appearance of snakes, the rôle of the priests and what he saw and heard while he participated in this incubation process.⁸¹ The devotees took part either out of their free will or they received a sign from the god that gave them a divine order to do it. In this exercise the worshippers (here Aristides) hoped that during the time spent there [it could also take place during the day, 47.55] they would receive some kind of sign from the god. These answers from Asclepius could take the form of: a) a miraculous healing (47.13-14); b) some comfort and relief of pain caused by the sickness (47.59-60; 51.10); c) a dream often containing a direct order to perform such specific functions, as for example, to sacrifice, to take a bath (47.6-10; 48.78; 51.51), to follow specific diets (47.26), to abstain from all food (49.34-7) or to eat in a selective way (e.g., to consume only one sort of meat); d) medical treatments (47.28); e) a 'recipe' for a successful cure 47.65-68); f) an oracle (48.71). Revelations concerning other matters besides health were also revealed in order to express the will of Asclepius. Among these instructions Aristides was told: a) not to travel in a boat in order to avoid shipwreck (48.13), b) to give a speech (or not to), and to receive divine inspiration for it (50.56); and c)

⁷⁹ Aristides also had visions telling him to lie down in specific places in order to receive further revelations from Asclepius (e.g., 48.71. He had to recline between the door and the gate of the temple).

⁸⁰ Helm, *Sacred Tales*, 27. He indicates that there was no abaton in the Pergamum sanctuary at all, which contradicts the new archaeological evidence in AyP 2.1, 178. He gives evidence of the existence of incubation rooms by referring to an "Inkubations Altbau" already in building phase 4 (in the 3rd. cent. CE) which then was later extended (see below pp. 32-33) and continues to function as an abaton.

⁸¹ Aristophanes *Plutus* 659-781.

revelations concerning legal affairs (50.94) and general matters.⁸² It was also possible for the god's will to be given to the temple attendants (47.58; 48.31) or friends (47.27-8) who in turn revealed them to Aristides. Furthermore, priests, friends and others (47.3) were also directed by the god to guide the worshipper to specific actions. Aristides, for example, experienced this divine will through a nurse who told him the divine diet (47.45) and a boy who showed him the place where he had to bathe (48.18). He also learned the will of the god through receiving a vision which was a collateral dream, simultaneously experienced by him and another devotee (47.16; 48.30).⁸³ As mentioned earlier, Aristides reported that he and two temple wardens had the same dream concerning a cure (48.35). Therefore, the healing activities of Asclepius could also be revealed through different people, who then assisted in the successful healing procedures.⁸⁴

After these signs from the god, Aristides was either cured by the god's will during incubation or was assisted by temple officials, servants and friends to perform the necessary god-given actions in order for the healing to begin.⁸⁵ On some occasions Aristides was not willing to perform the correct procedures, which he considered to be paradoxical (*παράδοξον*, 48.65), and therefore he was not cured (e.g., 47.8) until he acted exactly according to the god's revealed orders (48.72).

⁸² Stephens, *Religious Experience*, 165-66. He lists the frequency of dream images in 130 dreams he found in the Sacred Tales.

⁸³ Compare with Acts 9: 5-19 where Paul and Ananias also had a collateral dream. See also chapter V.

⁸⁴ *Or.* 50.16: "We were asking one another, as we were accustomed, whether the god had prescribed anything new. For in a way certain of our diseases were also familiar."

⁸⁵ *Or.* 48.47,48; 49.14. Here the cure is to be confirmed by the god through a sign to the temple warden; 50.16,86.

After the healing, Aristides purified himself with a bath and performed the regular temple rituals, including sacrifices as thank offerings and honors to the god,⁸⁶ the healer who performed these extraordinary signs and miracles.⁸⁷

In response to these frequent interactions, Aristides summarized the healing power of Asclepius in the following sentence (50.51):

The Lord Asclepius, was greater than life itself, and every disease is less than this, every grace is less than this. This made me able and willing to live."

2. Medical Aspects.

In the *Sacred Tales* Aristides continually points out the difference between the physicians' way of healing (school medicine) and the divine art. Although these different approaches are at times expressed very clearly, quite often they overlap and thus make it difficult to establish absolute criteria for each type. This is also true for the general healing activities which were practiced in the Hellenistic world, as Tinker shows in his dissertation.⁸⁸

According to the account of Aristides, the physicians were not geographically separated from the Asclepius sanctuary. They functioned in and around the Asclepieia and were even among the close circle of friends and worshippers at the

⁸⁶Some of 'god's actions' which Aristides retells in the *Sacred Tales* were not revealed in the temple area itself and some were not even inspired by Asclepius himself— e.g., *Qr.* 49.12 by Apollo; 49.55 by Isis.

⁸⁷The miracles are called θεραπείαι and the verb θεραπεύω is used for healings (*Qr.* 48.50; πρῶτον δὲ τῶν θεραπειῶν τοῦτο 55.59.74.82; 51.38.48 and in 21.6; 25.7; 26.5; 36.119 concerning the Nile; 39.14 regarding the well in the temple of Asclepius: "... this well is the discovery and possession of the great magician [τοῦ θεραποτοκοῦ] who does everything for the safety of mankind.") The terms σημεῖα (48.72.73; 49.39; 50.101; 51.65; *Qr.* 40.2 for Hercules' birth), and ἀρετή, δύναμις and τέρας are also used.

⁸⁸Tinker, "Medicine and Miracle." After his first two chapters (Medicine as a Pure Type, and Miracle as a Pure Type) he titles the third chapter: "Mixed Types and the Blurring of Distinctions: Co-Existence and Polemic."

sanctuary (48.20).⁸⁹ Sometimes Aristides consulted with them regarding his and other peoples' sicknesses (48.34, 69; 49.8, 18; 51.19), and received advice and treatments from them (such as dietary instructions, medical applications and medications for treatments, and surgery),⁹⁰ but he personally gained little relief from the physicians' recommendations.⁹¹

In general, the medical doctors played the role of proposing treatments which were in opposition to the god-given instructions for healing. They were also often depicted as being at a loss for any answer at all with regard to the sickness (47.62; 48.5, 73) and as giving up on the patient (47.73; 48.34, 39; 52.2). Putting the physicians in this light emphasizes even more the successful actions and great deeds of the healing god, Asclepius (49.8-13). Aristides expresses this clearly when he says "there was no choice between listening to the doctors or to the god" (47.63), which means that for him the physicians were not allowed to participate in the healing process (47.68).⁹² Aristides even goes a step further and describes how some of the physicians stopped criticizing the divine healing procedure and agreed with the divine medical orders (47.67). Thus, they became witnesses who would confess that the divine medicine was much superior to their knowledge.⁹³ The physicians' medicine

⁸⁹ *Or.* 8.34; 50.38; 51.57 Aristides lived for some time with his friend Theodotius, a physician; 47.75. Zosimus, his stepfather "was also skilled in medicine"; 28.123: "...we possessed the friendship of the finest doctors. . . ."

⁹⁰ *Or.* 47.73; 48.63; 49.8; 50.9; 51.9.

⁹¹ This failure is highlighted in order to provide a stronger contrast to the relief he gets from divine actions (*Or.* 47.57: "everything was without pain,"; 48.69; 49.9; 63). Here the proverbial expression δύοι Ἀμαλθείας κέρας is used for the medicine of the doctors which originates from the ancient story of Amaltheia, the goat which suckled Zeus. In *Or.* 49.11 and 19.27, the doctors order the opposite treatment.

⁹² In *Or.* 47.63. Asclepius calls the physicians gardeners (οἱ κηπούροις) since they don't know where to cut a tumorous growth.

⁹³ *Or.* 7.57. A physician who gives his best advice to Aristides yields to God after the divine dream (cure) is told to him; 47.67; 48.34.

therefore played a mostly negative role by representing the opposition to the divine power.⁹⁴

The frequent absence of clear distinction between "school medicine" and the divine healing power is best illustrated in one of Aristides' visions, which recounts a debate between two doctors and Aristides concerning Hippocrates' view of bathing-- the best time to take it, and where specifically it should be taken (51.49-52). After the vision Aristides runs a distance of ten stades along the river at midday and then follows this by taking a cold bath exactly as it was discussed in the dream (53-55), and also according to the way it was ordered by Hippocrates (50). In light of the fact that Aristides constantly makes the distinction between divine and human (learned medicine) healing procedures, this action which Aristides performed is in accordance with school medicine. Despite the non-divine nature of this cure, Aristides went from being unable to move to overcoming paralysis, thus being healed.⁹⁵ This illustrates the combination of general medical practices with divine instructions through a vision and action.

In the divine art the healings and cures are usually given through dreams (incubation)⁹⁶ to Aristides himself or through another mediator. Asclepius either healed Aristides during the dream itself (e.g., 50.64) or he revealed specific actions for Aristides to perform in order to receive relief. The purpose of these often strange instructions (*καράδοξος*, 47.65; 51.48) was sometimes not even clear to Aristides himself (47.55). To modern day readers, however, these commands often seem to

⁹⁴Or. 28.123: "Even when we were physically stricken, we did not come to ignoble supplication of the doctors. But although, to speak by the grace of the gods, we possessed the friendship of the finest doctors, we took refuge in the temple of Asclepius, in the belief that [I] was fated for us to be saved, it was better to be saved through his agency, and that if it was possible, [I] was time to die."

⁹⁵Or. 51.49.55: "After this, everything was easy until the middle of the winter."

⁹⁶Other references to cures by dreams are Marcus, *Ad te ipsum* 1.17.8; Tertullian, *De Anima* 46; Petronius *Satyricon* 17.

depend on the dreamers' medical knowledge⁹⁷ and the influence of friends and cult officials.⁹⁸ Behr has organized these cures which depend on general medical knowledge into two groups:⁹⁹ 1) the irrational categories such as a) bathing in the rivers; b) bathing in springs and wells; c) bathing in the ocean; d) abstinence from warm baths; e) strenuous winter exercise; f) strenuous summer exercise; g) magic; and 2) the rational categories which are the procedures generally practiced by physicians in antiquity: a) diagnosis by Asclepius; b) indoor bathing; c) phlebotomy (blood-letting); d) enema; e) vomiting; f) internal drugs; g) external drugs; h) fasting; i) prohibited foods; j) suggested foods; k) advice concerning climate; l) passive exercise. If these divine instructions were not followed exactly, the cure did not take place (47.7-8); but if they were followed later, then the healing took place usually instantaneously.¹⁰⁰

Generally speaking, in Aristides' writings there exist three types of medical procedures, as we have mentioned them above— a) the school medical view, which is normally described in opposition to b) the divine healing activity. These two pure

⁹⁷E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*. (Berkeley: University of California, 1959) 115. He mentions the aspect of the dreamer's medical knowledge but then puts too much emphasis on the influence of the subconscious on the sick person and the illnesses.

⁹⁸Aristides, in his interactions and conversations with his close circle of devotees of Asclepius (Or. 3.16: "they were bound together by a stronger sense of fellowship than a school or a ship's company") and cult officials, gives us evidence of this interchange of medical 'insights'. The role the cult personnel played during the incubation, as Aristides describes it, also supported this exchange.

⁹⁹Behr, *Sacred Tales*, 38-39. He also lists each occasion within the *Sacred Tales*.

¹⁰⁰Dodds, *Irrational*, 129, n. 73: "instantaneous cures appear also in Christian incubation and are characteristic of savage medicine generally."; A. Aristides Or. 47.56: "I woke and I found that it was that very hour. . . ."

If there were actions required by the god in order to receive healing, the instantaneous healing took place while the specified actions were performed. E.g., 49.29: "But when the god indicated that I should use it, and at the same time the hour when it should be done, I not only drank it with pleasure, but after I drank it, I was immediately more comfortable and easier."

On some occasions the god required the patient to wait in order for the healing process to take place (47.63). For a tumor (47.61) it was the god's will to let it grow out because the physicians didn't know how to cut it out (47.63) and so Aristides had to lie in bed for four months (47.34 and 64). After this time the "growth quickly disappeared."

types are less common and noticeable in relation to the third, c) more frequently seen mixed type. This is especially visible in the case of surgery. At one point Aristides firmly states that he does not allow surgery¹⁰¹ or cauterization by drugs on a tumor growth (47.62,63,67), but later the opposite is reported and he boasts that he had more surgery than any other worshipper of this god (48.47).

Divine surgery (47.13; 50.64) and blood-lettings¹⁰² were performed on Aristides on several occasions, as well as 'non-divine' surgery and other treatments performed by physicians.¹⁰³ On the other hand, we know that the physicians frequently recommended treatments which Aristides then rejected (e.g., 47. 62,67). In general, it is true that the medicine with which Aristides and others were treated was not much different from the general ancient medicine and treatments described

¹⁰¹ Behr's assessment that "we may dismiss the surgical cure as not germane to Aristides" (*Sacred Tales*, 37), seems to be unjustified since we have the following evidences: the use of a knife σμύλη (47.13 a knife for cutting and carving); the terms τέμνω which are used for medical procedures (47.62,63; 49.47) and χειρουργέω (50.63). They allow the possibility that such treatments were practiced in the Asclepieia either by the priests (e.g., 47.13), cult officials or physicians.

It appears most likely that such surgical procedures were projected into dreams, as is illustrated in the cleansing of a wound inflicted on Aristides by a bull. This wound was treated in a dream by Theodosius, a physician friend of Aristides (47.13-4 also 47.56). This projection is also supported by the fact that at one point Aristides persuaded the physician against his will to perform an enema, which then brought about his immediate recovery (47.73). Here again the divine will was blended with the medical treatment of physicians.

Due to the involvement of the priests in the healing process, this dissertation does not advocate the older view that the Asclepieia were like sanitoriums (e.g., Farnell, *Hero Cult.* 273-4; Herzog, *Wunderheilungen* 154-5) but rather suggests that there existed a certain amount of general "Volksmedizin" which was talked about in the circles of those who sought healing by both the physicians and the cult personnel. See also Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, 75,139,160 and particularly 149, where he makes distinctions between the different Asclepieia and the specific characteristics of the healings and the procedures which were emphasized.

¹⁰² *Or.* 47.28 from the ankles; 47.40: "the priest seemed to drain (έκμυλάω) my lips"; 47.56 phlebotomy ordered; 48.47 blood drawn from the elbow; 48.48 blood drawn from the forehead; 49.34 phlebotomies; 49.47 Serapis "took some sort of lancet (σπιλητή), and made an incision around my face."

¹⁰³ Enemas, *Or.* 47.73; surgery, 47.63,67 and 48.63: "And finally the doctors made an incision . . . and when the cupping instruments (οἱ σκόπαι, cupping glass) were applied. . . ."; medical bandages, 51.9; drugs, 47.63; 48.64 and 49.10-11 (drugs from Satyrus, a physician, which made Aristides even more sick).

by the professional physicians.¹⁰⁴ With regard to Aristides' actions, some were more miraculous because of the physical conditions in which he endured them (e.g., 47.73). For example, the god ordered treatments for Aristides which featured the sheer lunacy of subjecting his debilitated body to dangerous activities such as walking fifty miles or racing ten miles in the boiling sun at midday, or bathing and walking without shoes in the middle of the winter when he was deathly ill.¹⁰⁵

Aristides saw all these things as "truly beyond miracles" and thus he saw "more clearly the power and the providence of God" (48.59). Whereas he rejoiced in the honors he received because of his sickness, we with our hindsight see in these medical activities the breadth of the dreamer's knowledge and his subconscious mind and attitudes toward life, as well as the fact that Aristides and the others mentioned who sought healing during their dreams made Asclepius the god in whom they trusted for everything.¹⁰⁶

The reports of Aristides also give us insight into how long a healed condition generally lasted. The normal short report on inscriptions told us only that the former sick person "departed cured" (*ὑπῆρξε δακτύλθε*) but gave no details about how long the person stayed healed. Aristides' Sacred Tales, which cover about twenty years of his life, show that within this time period his life consisted of a constant battle with sickness (48.56-9). Only on a few occasions did he speak of a period in which he was without any kind of health problems (47.57,64; 51,48,55). Therefore, in Aristides' experience with Asclepius, the healings were basically treatments of

¹⁰⁴ *Ox.* 49.10. Aristides himself saw no difference when applying them. Aristides characterized Asclepius' healing as being beyond medical art. His physicians even employed Aristides' dream revelations given to him by Asclepius in order to alleviate his pains and sicknesses.

¹⁰⁵ *Ox.* 48.55: "I know that such things have been prescribed for many people. But first of all, in itself, this activity of the god is rather wonderful, since he often and frequently revealed his power and providence, and secondly, if someone would consider our general condition."

¹⁰⁶ Edelstein, Asclepius, 2,167.

'individual sicknesses,'¹⁰⁷ rather than a great miraculous healing which restored the devotee to good health lasting for the rest of the devotee's life.

c. Aristides as a Propagandist.

The participation of Aristides in the Asclepius cult discussed above and the healings he experienced show clearly that Aristides was completely devoted to his god. His autobiography also provides other interesting information about antiquity,¹⁰⁸ mainly about the forms his devotion took. The primary emphasis is on the fact that the Asclepius cult provided him with a theological understanding of his savior and healer, giving him a new sense of life and practical guidance for living in harmony with Asclepius' will. He also found a community which cared for him and in which he felt understood.¹⁰⁹ This sense of community and his faith in Asclepius made Aristides a strong propagandist of his faith— the Asclepius cult.¹¹⁰

Aristides was also a propagandist of the emperor cult, since the cults of Asclepius and of the emperor had a mutual relationship.¹¹¹ However, despite the fact that he was a Roman citizen, throughout his life he regarded himself in thought and education first a Greek, and secondly a Roman citizen. His wealth and his

¹⁰⁷E.g., *Or. 51.55*: "He [Asclepius] cured what happened in the winter with various kinds and sorts of regimens."

¹⁰⁸For example he mentioned Demosthenes' oration "On the Crown." Aristides knows of the original and a different version of it and expressed the hope that the famous Glabrio would revise the text (*Or. 50.97*). In this noting of the fourth century BCE orator's work and the possible revision of his work during his lifetime, Aristides gives us some insight into the traditions of text, since he himself was very familiar with Pindar, Plato and Demosthenes. He also provides insights into his beliefs in astrology (50.58) and in the importance of oracles (49.12; 50.75); his desire to rescue the platonic heritage from the school of Gaius in Pergamum (2: "To Plato: in Defence of Oratory"; 48.52; 32.25) and thus claiming the true Plato to be his predecessor as an orator.

¹⁰⁹See below p. 116, n. 98.

¹¹⁰See above p. 122.

¹¹¹See below pp. 92, n. 100; 99-101.

rhetorical ability also brought him into personal contact with the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. When Marcus Aurelius visited Smyrna in 176 CE, Aristides spoke before the imperial entourage.¹¹² He used this acquaintance later in his life in legal battles. He asked Marcus Aurelius for letters of recommendation. Aristides knew very well the value of such letters (26.23) and used them in connection with visions (50.86,89,106) and oracles (50.76,97) as signs of the divine will. In his speeches (50.92,102) and with the letters he successfully proved that his position was in fact the will of the divine, and thus he successfully defended himself (50.94,99). These letters of recommendation for Aristides were also read by the general public, and so they functioned almost like circular letters.¹¹³

Aristides also revealed details about the emperor cult. On one occasion Aristides refused to kiss the emperor because, as a devotee of Asclepius, he had been instructed by his god not to kiss the emperor in this fashion. To his astonishment the emperor exclaimed, "Asclepius is better than all to worship." (47.23). Several times Aristides mentioned a royal ointment (*χρίμ*) in the Hadrianeion (47.29, 49.21-3). Aristides also participated in processions for the emperor when he was in Syria (47.33), and in his divine dreams he gave a speech to Marcus Aurelius considering himself to be "trained in divine visions" (47.36-48).¹¹⁴

In summary, it can be said that for Aristides there were no apparent difficulties in being an Asclepius devotee and participating in the emperor cult.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Philostratus, *VA* 2.9; A. Aristides *Or.* 26.107 is a speech given before Antoninus Pius.

¹¹³ *Or.* 50.67: "As to how the letter won immediate approval, since it was read by the governor himself to everybody, and everyone sought to get it. . . ."

¹¹⁴ Since a statue of Hadrian stood in the library of the temple (Behr, *Sacred Tales*, 29; Habicht, *AvP*, 8.3, 29; number 6), this passage seems to suggest that the episode had its origin in a 'vision' while Aristides meditated and worshipped before the statue.

¹¹⁵ *Or.* 49.48. A Roman senator is also specifically mentioned as a devotee of Asclepius.

He was on friendly terms with the divine emperors (*τοῖς θεῖοῖς βασιλεῦσιν*) and wished their rule to continue.¹¹⁶

The faith in Asclepius and favorable attitude toward the emperors and their cult clearly distinguished Aristides from the followers of Jesus who were in Pergamum at the same time. In the next chapter I will investigate the battle of words which took place between the followers of Asclepius and those of Jesus. The wealth of information which we have about Aristides' theological understanding of his savior and the knowledge we have about the early followers of Jesus is worth investigating. Whether Aristides knew about the new savior Jesus cannot be discovered directly from his writings or from other sources. However, some conclusions can be reached by observing all the information gathered so far about Aristides, Pergamum and Asia Minor.

One way to establish valid criteria is to look at other known persons in similar situations from the time of Aristides, for example Galen and Celsus. Galen, who practiced medicine in Pergamum,¹¹⁷ and Celsus, who had his hometown in the area (Smyma), both honored Asclepius.¹¹⁸ They both knew of Jesus and denounced him

¹¹⁶Or. 42.13.35: "Regarding the Emperor." In paragraph 22 the emperor is called "Father" and "Shepherd of the people." This close coexistence between the Asclepius cult and the Emperor cult is also supported by archaeological evidence of the emperor cult within the Asclepieia; 30.28.

¹¹⁷See below pp. 81, n. 62; 85, n. 75; 91, n. 98.

¹¹⁸Galen 17.2 as quoted by Deubner (*Das Asklepieion*, 8): "So sehen wir auch bei uns in Pergamon die Leute, welche von Gott geheilt werden wollen, ihm gehorchen, wenn er ihnen auch oft vorschreibt, zwei Wochen lang überhaupt nichts zu trinken, worin sie keinem Arzt folgen würden. Denn er hat ein grosses Gewicht, und der Kranke tut alles, was befohlen wird, wenn er nur überzeugt ist, dass einen nennenswerten Nutzen daraus folgt."

and his followers very strongly. Celsus wrote a book denouncing Jesus¹¹⁹ and Galen, the famous physician, confessed that he became a follower of Asclepius after the God healed him from an abscess.¹²⁰ Like Aristides, they belonged to a higher social level and were among the best-educated people of their time, knowledgeable about other religions and deities.¹²¹ Comparing Galen and Celsus with Aristides, then, it appears that we can rightly assume that Aristides knew about what he must have considered another new healing cult, namely that of Jesus.¹²² In support of this we know that the followers of Jesus were present in this area during the time of Aristides. Furthermore, Aristides' extensive travelling also suggests that he must have heard or come in contact with the new message of Jesus. Some interpreters see in a section of a speech called "To Plato: In Defense of the Four" an attack on

¹¹⁹Celsus: His opinions about Jesus survived in Origen's work *Contra Celsum*. His strong denunciation of Jesus is expressed, for example, in *Cels.* 1.26: "a very few years ago he [Jesus] taught his doctrine"; 1.28: "Jesus came from a poor country woman"; 1.28: "because he [Jesus] was poor he hired himself out as a workman in Egypt, and there he tried his hands at certain magical powers; he returned full of conceit because of these powers, and on account of them gave himself the title of God" (1.38); 1.27: "Christianity is successful only among the uneducated because of its vulgarity and utter illiteracy"; 2.31. Jesus is "a man who was arrested most disgracefully and crucified"; 3.19: "Jesus [is] nothing more worthy of attention than the goats and dogs of the Egyptians"; 3.24. He had a most miserable death; 3.38. The honors which the Christians give to Jesus "is no different from that paid to Hadrian's favourite [Antoninus]."

¹²⁰Galen *De Libris Propriis* 2. He declares that "the ancestral god Asclepius of whom I declared myself to be a servant since he saved me when I had the deadly condition of my abscess."

¹²¹C.A. Behr, *Aristides*, vol. 1 (London & Cambridge: Harvard, 1973) x-xi: "At the temple, Aristides joined a society of upper-class Greeks and Romans, who formed a small, cultivated circle of neurasthenics similar to those found in European sanatoria in modern times. Among them were Salvius Julianus, the famous jurist, Sedatius Theophilus, a praetorian, Tullius Maximus, a consular, Claudius Pardalas, a wealthy literary critic, Cuspius Rufinus, a consul and great benefactor of the temple and of Pergamum, his native city, various descendants of Julius Quadratus, the foremost family in the city, many of them powerful figures in the Roman Empire, and at a later time, Antoninus, son of the senator Antoninus Pythodorus, the munificent benefactor of Epidaurus."

Glen W. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), vol. 1. 27: "Lucian [of Samosata] and Aelius Aristides brilliantly mirror the world in which Sophists flourished."

¹²²In light of the criticism of Celsus and his disdain for the lower class of people, this 'title' with which Aristides might have thought of Jesus, appeared to be too high an assessment.

Christianity.¹²³ But this appears to be very unlikely.¹²⁴ The key to the question of Aristides' knowledge of Jesus must be searched for in his whole body of writing, in his attitude to religion in general, which must also include the time before he became a devotee of Asclepius. Aristides' writings reflect very strongly his positive attitude toward the traditional values of his society, his heritage and his strong belief in the Greek gods who reigned in the pantheon. These points are well argued and documented by Remus.¹²⁵ The stylistic, grammatical, ethical and historical parallels between Aristides and the New Testament which Van der Horst collected are significant from a religio-historical perspective.¹²⁶ They illustrate a common Sitz im Leben of these religious movements. However, we cannot assume at all that there existed a literary dependency between the holy writings about Asclepius and about Jesus.¹²⁷ From parallels to other evidence from his time and from evidence in Aristides' writings, certain conclusions can be drawn.¹²⁸ First, the attitude of Aristides was in strong contrast to the newness of the message about Jesus, a god who (as his devotees claimed) was not rooted in and had not developed from the ancient Greek tradition. Secondly, the exclusiveness of the Christian message, the required denial of the past life of the devotee and its strong monotheistic view, conflicted with Aristides' beliefs. Aristides' polytheistic view certainly would have

¹²³Or. 46; G. Dindorf, Aristides, (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1829), vol. 2. 402-3. Behr, Sacred Tales, 94. The four (opponents) are also mentioned in Georgias 503C; 515 D-F; 519A.

¹²⁴Aristides does not name his enemies and their identity is uncertain. Therefore, the target could have been any group who offended the Greek tradition and society—for example, a group which neglected the common well-being of the state, or a group which operated in secrecy.

If Aristides had wanted to attack the belief in Jesus, he would have had many other occasions in his writing to do so, but we have no evidence of this.

¹²⁵Remus, Conflict, 100-103.

¹²⁶Horst, Aristides, 9-85.

¹²⁷Horst, Aristides, 4.

¹²⁸See above p. 127, n. 133.

allowed him to worship another healing deity in addition to his devotion to Asclepius, especially since he actively sought the healing powers of others, like Serapis and Hygieia. His acceptance of the emperor cult, a rather new religion but with Greek roots, also supports this assumption. Third, the social level which the followers of Jesus represented was not the stratum of society within which Aristides felt comfortable.¹²⁹ From all this it can be concluded that Aristides was most likely cognizant of the new healer Jesus; but since the new message did not offer anything he did not already get from his god, and because the level of society to which the followers of Jesus appealed was outside his cultural and social class,¹³⁰ we can assume that Aristides found Jesus superfluous and unattractive.

The destruction of Smyrna by an earthquake in 177 CE coincided with the end of Aristides' active career. After this 'retirement' he still wrote letters and appealed to the emperor Marcus Aurelius on behalf of the city for its speedy reconstruction. He also delivered speeches to the citizens and the governor promoting the reconstruction, but he was no longer as active as he once had been. Aristides did not leave his beloved Laneion estate after the destruction. He died a recluse at the age of sixty-three.¹³¹

The insight which Aristides gave through his writings, especially the *Sacred Tales*, provide us with a rather clear picture of a devotee of Asclepius. They provide insight into his theological understanding of his savior and about the consequences this has for a devotee's life. For Aristides, Asclepius was "established in heaven" (50.56), and he believed that his whole life was in the hands of the divine Asclepius

¹²⁹See below pp. 116-17 and 123, n. 119 for a critique by Celsus on the low social class of Jesus, his mother and his followers

From this we should not conclude, however, that Asclepius only appealed to the upper class of the society. See above pp. 135-38; 189.

¹³⁰Aristides came from a priestly family honoring the Olympian Zeus (Behr, *Sacred Tale*, 4).

¹³¹Behr, *Aristides*, 114; Philostratus *VS* 2.9.

(51.21; 50.76), to whom Aristides was very grateful for everything in his life, even for sickness and death (51.21). Aristides considered himself to be saved (σωζω) by his healing god. He considered all the healings to be the δύναμις of Asclepius, and he called him therefore θεαματοκούς.¹³² He also considered his career as an orator to be a gift from the god, and the fulfillment of a divine command. In light of Aristides' total commitment, from the understanding we have of the cult activity from other sources, and his prominence as a rhetor, I propose to rehabilitate the reputation of Aristides.¹³³ He is not a case for studying a 'mental patient' in antiquity!¹³⁴ His writings reflect the religious atmosphere of his time and the way the people understood and experienced a healing deity. In order to do justice to his writings we must recognize his theological understanding of Asclepius and consider, as he did, all his oral speeches and writings to be *lepoi λόγοι* of his savior and god, Asclepius.

¹³²See below pp. 61-2; 68-9; 98, n. 21; A. Aristides *Or.* 39:14: "miracle worker."

¹³³In the article about A. Aristides by P. E. Easterling and B. M. Knox (*The Cambridge History of Classical Literature* [Cambridge & New York: Cambridge, 1985] 658-62) a good start is made. Although Aristides' dreams are still called "bizarre" and he is considered to be a "hypochondriac" (658), the article points out that he was a major figure of his age. He spoke before the emperors (Marcus Aurelius asked particularly to hear him) and he was the spokesperson for the city of Smyrna after the earthquake. The ancients held Aristides' work in highest esteem and he was a model for Greek orators of the late antiquity and the Byzantine age— he was "a brilliant continuator of the classical tradition of Greek oratory" (659). Only in the last couple of centuries has he become something of an embarrassment for the learned.

The understanding of the Asclepius cult itself, and the cultic life in general within the Graeco-Roman time in connection with the status which Aristides had among his peers, should rehabilitate him as an important figure of his time. His autobiography therefore provides insight into the 'regular' life and mind of a religious devotee of his time.

¹³⁴See below p. 94, n. 1.

E. LITERARY DEBATE BETWEEN THE DEVOTEES OF ASCLEPIUS AND JESUS.

Records of the heated debate with their accusations, denials, and argument between the defenders of the divinity of Jesus and followers of Asclepius provide insight into basic points of opposition and disagreement. Some of these points of conflict have already become clear in the above discussed evidence of the Asclepius cult— for example, in the use of divine names and attributes.

The battle between the Asclepius devotees and Jesus' followers that the early Christian apologists witnessed was mostly a verbal conflict among missionaries and devotees, both attempting to proclaim their own god as the true savior.¹ This battle took place mainly in the 2nd and early 3rd centuries. Literary sources which report these debates and the fierceness with which they were fought were recorded even into the fourth century, by Eusebius of Caesarea. He witnessed the final stages of this confrontation, and acknowledged that thousands, even as late as his time, regarded Asclepius as the sole possessor of saving and healing powers, which was evident to those who spent the night in his temple and were sometimes restored to health. As to the destruction of the temple in Aegae, Eusebius described the events almost as if they were the final eschatological battle. He claimed that the Emperor Constantine wanted "to advance the worship of him [Jesus], who is at once a jealous God and a true Savior (ἀληθῆς σωτῆρος),"² and on account of this, gave the orders to

¹Due to software limitations the footnotes start again with number one.

The general concept of missionary activity among the religious cults is discussed in Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and early Christianity* (South Bend, Indiana: Notre Dame University, 1976), especially in the articles by E. Schüssler Fiorenza, "Miracles, Mission and Apologetics: An Introduction," and Dieter Georgi, "Socioeconomic Reasons for the 'Divine Man' as Propagandistic Pattern."

²Eusebius *Vit. Const.* 3.56.

raze the temple to the ground. Eusebius considered this destruction to be the victory of the true savior over the one who "had promised to others deliverance from misfortune and distress, [and] could find no means for his own security, any more than when, as it is told in myth, he was scorched by the lightning's stroke."³ Eusebius provides a clear indication that the battle between the old and new religions was about who the real savior was, Jesus or Asclepius.

In order to understand the conflict between the two groups, it is necessary to recognize the earlier opposition among the Greeks concerning the divinity of Asclepius, since these foci of discussion were later used by both sides. Already in the seventh century BCE Asclepius was praised as divine and as a healer of diseases.⁴ In the fifth century Pindar also praised Asclepius as heroic healer of all diseases, and he added that even he who healed with the knife and medication "was seduced by a splendid fee of gold displayed upon his palm to bring back from death one who is already its lawful prey... stricken with sudden doom by the gleaming thunderbolt."⁵ Diodorus Siculus later added the popular myth that Hades brought accusation against Asclepius because the number of dead was decreasing because many were healed by Asclepius. On account of this complaint, Zeus slew Asclepius with his thunderbolt.⁶ Plato added yet another dimension by denying the common belief of Pindar that Asclepius could not have been the son of Apollo because he could not have been greedy for gain and at the same time have been the son of a

³Eusebius Vit. Cons. 3.56.

⁴Homeric Hymns 16.

⁵Pindar Pythian Odes 3.47-59; 189-91; Euripides Alcestis line 3-4,122-34.

⁶Diodorus Sic. 4.71.

god.⁷ The death of Asclepius was also frequently debated among the Greek and Roman writers at the beginning of our era.⁸

These arguments of the ancient writers concerning the divinity of Asclepius—whether a son of god could die by the thunderbolt and whether he needed to receive payments to support himself—were eagerly picked up by the Christian apologists. These points became the basis of their defense of Jesus against the still flourishing cult of Asclepius. In the following subchapters, I shall discuss these two historic issues first in order to underline their basic value for the later debate. In addition to these two basic points of conflict (E. 1 and 2), there are four additional questions concerning the nature of a god which were used as arguments by the followers of both Asclepius and of Jesus (E. 3-6). In the following subchapter (E. 7) the historical use of the term *ἰατρός* is investigated, which adds yet another dimension to the points of conflict between the two groups. These different aspects have a cumulative effect and in their totality illustrate the depth of the opposition.

It cannot be stressed enough that all these points were fiercely debated between the defenders of the divinity of Asclepius and of Jesus. For them these were crucial questions in the defense of their god and their beliefs. At stake was their personal lifestyle and faith and the survival of their god and healer.

⁷Plato *Resp.* 3.16: "This fitting" said I; "and yet in disregard of our principles the tragedians and Pindar affirm that Asclepius, though he was the son of Apollo, was bribed by gold to heal a man already at the point of death, and that for this cause he was struck by lightning. But we, in accordance with the aforesaid principles, refuse to believe both statements, but if he was the son of a God he was not avaricious, we will insist, if he was greedy of gain, he was not the son of a God."

⁸E.g., Pliny *Nat. hist.* 29.1: "Then medicine became more famous even through sin, for legend said that Asclepius was struck by lightning for bringing Tyndareus back to life."; Cicero *De nat. deorum* 2.24.61; 3.18.45; *De legibus* 2.8.19; Minucius Felix *Oct.* 23.7; Celsus *De medic.* Prooemium 2; Apuleius *De deo Socratis* 15.153; Pausanias *Per.* 2.26.10.

1. A God and His Death.

In the early 2nd century CE a Christian reference concerning Asclepius' death was found by Aristides of Athens. He picked up the ancient argument against Asclepius⁹ in order to demonstrate that Asclepius was only human, because he was not able to defend himself against Zeus and so had to die.¹⁰

Justin, in his *Apology*, tried to make the birth, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ less strange and suspicious to his opponents and converts by comparing Jesus with other deities— the sons of Jupiter and the divine Emperors. Among the sons of Jupiter he listed Asclepius and his death and described ascension into heaven.¹¹ At this point Justin picks up again the ancient argument concerning Asclepius' death by the thunderbolt, which generally had been seen from two aspects— either as an honor from god, which brought deification (parallel to Achilles in Homer), or as a punishment. The punishment alternative which was adopted by the Christians was then also turned into a question of mortality.¹² For Justin, Jesus is not inferior to Asclepius¹³ or any other god. In the same way Justin also

⁹Philodemus *De pietate* 17. He mentioned that the killing of Asclepius by Zeus had been written down by Hesiod, Pindar, Pherecydes the Athenian, Panyassis, Andron, Acusilatus and Euripides, who wrote that the author of the *Naupactia* and *Telestes* in his *Asclepius* mentioned Asclepius as being killed by Zeus.

¹⁰Aristides the Philosopher *Apol.* 1.10: (Greek version) "They also bring forward Asclepius as a god who is a doctor and prepares drugs and compounds plasters for the sake of the living. For he was badly off. And afterwards he was struck, they say, with a thunderbolt by Zeus on account of Tyndareos, son of Lacedaimon; and so was killed. Now, if Asclepius in spite of his divinity could not help himself when struck by lightning, how will he come to the rescue of others?"

¹¹Justin *Apol.* 1.21: "And when we say that the word, who is the first born of God, was produced without sexual union, and that he, Jesus Christ, our teacher, was crucified and died, and rose again; and ascended into heaven, we propound nothing different from what you believe regarding those whom you esteem sons of Jupiter. . . . Asclepius, who though he was a great physician (θεραπευτής), was struck by a thunderbolt, and so ascended into heaven."

¹²See chapters III.E.3 and 4.

¹³Justin *Apol.* 1.22.

compares the deeds and miracles of Jesus with those of Asclepius.¹⁴ Concerning this argumentation, it is very significant to stress the fact that this early apologist did not deny the healing power of Asclepius, but rather accepts this as fact in order to show that his god is at least equal in healing power to Asclepius.

The same argument is also used by Athenagoras. He quoted some verses of Hesiod about the thunderbolt death of Asclepius to show his mortality, and then connected it with the accusation that Asclepius was greedy.¹⁵ Theophilus of Antioch argued in the same way as Athenagoras. He used the thunderbolt death of Asclepius in his list of ways that formerly human people were later celebrated by the gentiles as gods.¹⁶ Furthermore, Clement of Alexandria quoted two verses from Euripides to support his argument about the greedy physician Asclepius who was killed by an act of god.¹⁷

Tertullian most likely reacted to Lucian,¹⁸ when he declared that the gentiles made Heracles a god on account of his fire death and Asclepius on account of his thunderbolt death.¹⁹ This 'consecration' through fire is later seen in the *Acta*

¹⁴Justin *Apol.* 1.22 : "And in that we say that he made whole the lame, the paralytic and those born blind, we seem to say what is very similar to the deeds said to have been done by Asclepius." *Apol.* 25.54: "And when, again, they [gentiles] learn that it had been foretold that he [Jesus] should heal every sickness, and raise the dead, they produced Asclepius."

¹⁵Athenagoras *Supplicatio pro Christianis* 29.

¹⁶Theophilus *Ad autoclycum* 1.9.

¹⁷Clement of Alexandria *Protr.* 2.30.1-2. He quotes Euripides *Alkestis* 3.4.

¹⁸Lucian *Dial.* 13.1; *Pere. mort.* 4. He puts Heracles and Asclepius (the "pharmacist, herbchopper and quack") in an argument about higher status before Zeus in Olympus and mentions the thunderbolt death of Asclepius."

¹⁹Tertullian, *Adv. nat.* 2.14.9.

Philip²⁰ and in Artemidorus of Daldia, who used the same argument again.²¹ With Origen's defense against Celsus we see that the debate about the death of a god became a broader issue.

The Christian apologists' attempts to use the stories of Asclepius in order to make Jesus more understandable to the people outside their circle by showing the historic parallels between their Jesus and other gods, were also used by their opponents against Jesus.²² For example, Celsus argued that Hercules, Asclepius and Dionysus, who did good deeds, were all like Jesus. They were first human and then became divine. Origen then argued against this placing of Jesus on the same level with the other gods. He pointed out that Jesus was seen after his death, and then he mentioned again the thunderbolt death of Asclepius.²³ The argument about honoring a god who had a human form, to which Tatian had already reacted,²⁴ is again picked up by Amobius and developed further.²⁵

Lactantius, in the early years of the third century, still considered Asclepius to be the founder of medicine, the one who taught the healing of wounds of the physical body. He believed that Asclepius gained immortality on account of his invention of medicine. Lactantius went on to ridicule this belief by saying that if this is the case,

²⁰ *Acta Philipi*, 8. In speaking about consecration by fire, Asclepius is mentioned as having earned his divine status through the thunderbolt on account of his wrongdoing and not through divine will.

²¹ Artemidorus, *Oneim*, 2.9.

²² To this opposition in general see Stephen Benko, "Pagan Criticism of Christianity during the two first Centuries A.D." *ANRW* 23. 2 (1980) 1055-1118.

²³ Origen *Cels.* 3.22.

²⁴ Tatian *Oc.* 21.1.

²⁵ Amobius *Adv. gentes*, 1.41 "And yet you who laugh because we worship one who died an ignominious death. Have you not after his punishment and his death by lightning named Asclepius the discoverer of medicine as the guardian and protector of health and strength and safety?"; 4.24 He adds the concept of prophecy and the virtues of Jesus.

we should also deify the inventor of the arts of the fuller and the shoemaker.²⁶

Lactantius then refuted the claims of the Asclepius believers, that "his [Asclepius'] religion requires us to believe that he is the one and only god" and used the old argument against Asclepius, that he was a man and not a god, and on account of this, he died the thunderbolt death.²⁷ Eusebius, in his polemic against the use of allegorical interpretation, also picks up the thunderbolt argument and quotes Pindar again;²⁸ this argument was also used by Arnobius.²⁹

This brief survey shows that the statements and questions of the Greek and Roman writers regarding Asclepius' death and its implications³⁰ were used again by the early defenders of the deity of Jesus in order to defend his divine status. First they used it uncritically against Asclepius and often in connection with accusations about Asclepius' supposed greed. But when the Christians were attacked by their opponents, who pointed out that Jesus was also a human being who became a god, they were eager to elaborate further on the death of their god Jesus. Thus they added the additional points of comparison between the two healer gods in order to show

²⁶Lactantius Divin. instit. 1.18.21.

²⁷Lactantius Divin. instit. 1.19.3: "The excellent poet [Virgil] exclaims, that all those who refined life by the invention of arts are in the lower regions, and that even the discoverer himself of such a medicine and art was thrust down by lightning to the Stygian waves, that he may understand how great is the power of the Almighty Father, who can extinguish even gods by his lightnings."

²⁸Eusebius Praep. evang. 3.13.19; Vita Const. 3.56.

²⁹Ambrosius De Virg. 3.176.6.

³⁰E.g., Hyginus Fabulae 224. He mentioned Asclepius as having changed from a mortal to an immortal status; Cicero De nat. deorum 18.45. Asclepius is born of a mortal mother.

Jesus' superiority.³¹ Some of those major points will be discussed in the following chapters.

2. A God and How He Supports Himself.

The above-mentioned objection by Plato against Asclepius, that a god does not need to support himself,³² is also used by the Christian apologists. Aristides declares that Asclepius was a physician who had to support himself, and therefore he had to prepare drugs and plasters in order to provide the necessities for his life.³³ He further connects this ungodly necessity to provide for himself with Asclepius' inability to defend himself against the thunderbolt. In Plato's argument Asclepius was greedy for gain (*αισχροκέρδος*), whereas in Aristides' writings he was in need of an income (*ἐπενδεῖς*).³⁴ This Aristides did in an attempt to make Asclepius appear more human. Athenagoras also quotes Pindar in emphasizing the point that the gods are above desire and do not strive for gold.³⁵ Clement of Alexandria's comments on this point are also significant: he speaks of Asclepius as a healer who loved money

³¹E.g., Arnobius *Adv gentes*. 1.42. The virtues of Jesus: 1. 43,45,46,47,60. In defense that Jesus was only human he adds the miracles of Jesus to the Asclepius-Jesus comparison; The ability to forecast his death and resurrection in combination with the power of prophecy reflects Jesus' combining of the power of a prophet and miracle doer (Anita B. Kolenkow "Relationships between Miracle and Prophecy in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity," *ANRW* 23. 2 [1980] 1494).

³²See below pp. 129-30.

³³Aristides *Apology*. 1.10. See below p. 131, n.10.

³⁴Aristides *Apol*. 1.1: "Jesus is not in need of anything;" 1.10: "And after they brought forward another god Asclepius. And they say that he is a physician and prepares drugs and plaster that he may supply the necessities of his livelihood. Is then this god in want? And at length he was struck with lightning so he died. If Asclepius were a god, and when he was struck with lightning was unable to help himself, how should he be able to give to others? But that a divine nature should be in want or be destroyed by lightning is impossible." (Syriac version); See below p. 131, n. 100.

³⁵Athenagoras *Suppl. Christ*. 29. He used the thunderbolt motive as a proof for Asclepius' mortality and the greed for money as proof of his nondivine status.

(ἰατρὸς φιλάργυρος) and supports his claim with the quote of Pindar.³⁶ He also quotes Asclepius as saying "In what profits not, labor not in vain," in order to underline the difference between the profit-seeking Asclepius and Jesus and the apostle Paul.³⁷ This notion that Asclepius 'collected' money later became a standard criterion to distinguish the free help of the apostles of Jesus from the other healers who were taking 'fees'. Tertullian also refers to Pindar's text by speaking about the covetousness and avarice of Asclepius and about his selling of his medical skills.³⁸ Arnobius speaks about the greed and avarice of Asclepius, and Eusebius mentions the desire for gain which caused Zeus to kill Asclepius.³⁹

The argument that a god has no need to support himself and that he stands above regular human needs and desires was frequently used by Christians to demonstrate the non-divine status of Asclepius— a god is not in need of a 'trade'. The differences between these two healer gods has also influenced the perception of the two religions. On the one side is the Asclepius cult, where offerings of sacrifices and money donations were part of the cultic ritual,⁴⁰ and those who did not fulfill

³⁶Clement of Alexandria Protr. 11.30.

³⁷Clement of Alexandria Strom. 5.1.

³⁸Tertullian Adv. nat. 2.14,12.

³⁹Arnobius Adv. Gentes 4.24; Eusebius Praep. evang. 3.13.19.

⁴⁰See also chapter III.D.1.c. The inscriptions from Pergamum also give evidence for this duty to pay the god for his services— e.g., numbers 5; 25; 69; 79, in Herzog, Wunderheilungen, and in chapter 9 "Weihegaben" (130-8).

The mildness of Asclepius toward a devotee who was not able to pay at all or only a small contribution is also highlighted. From Cos it is known that a woman excused herself, saying that she was only able to offer a cock, rather than a cow or a pig as ἵητρα νομίμων, which Asclepius kindly accepted (Herondos Mim. 4.15-20); Epidauros inscription 8 (Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 13) tells that the divine healer accepted a small token from a boy and healed him.

The Greek word ἵητρα in itself carries the notion of paying a due to the physician— "ἵητρα," LSI (1968) 1.816.

In general, the Asclepius cult did not require payments in advance. Inscription 5 from Epidauros (Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 11) is an exception when it speaks about a κοπεθύσατο of a boy who sought healing. This is also visible from archaeological findings, for example in the big marble coin boxes from the Asclepieia in Cos (Nilsson, Geschichte, 5.2.2, 748; plate 2) and a similarly shaped marble coin box in Corinth.

their obligations were even punished.⁴¹ On the other side, the Christians stressed that their god worked for free. This difference between the two groups provides the historic background for the frequent mention by the Christians of their rejection of money in the early Christian writings.⁴² On this specific point further detailed studies are required, which would bring to light more historical facts that support even more strongly the dichotomy between the 'others' who receive money and the followers of Jesus who reject all payment—especially since other influences also played important roles.⁴³ The Christian emphasis on the denial of money and on free help, already visible in their earliest literature, developed into a continuing tradition within the Christian church, e.g., the Saints Cosmos and Damian who are also called

⁴¹ E.g., Inscription 22 from Epidaurus (Herzog, Wunderheilungen) 27.

⁴² New Testament: Rengstorff (Anfänge, 19) argues that this is clearly visible in the Johannine picture of Jesus—his hiding after he performed miracles (John 5:13; 6:15; 9:12) and the often-stressed fact that in the final instance not he, but his father performs the miracle (e.g., John 5:36; 9:3; 10:25,35). Rengstorff sees further evidence of this opposition to the Asclepius cult in the Book of Revelations in the twice-repeated fact "To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without payment" (Rev 21:6; 22:17). Further connections between the Johannine tradition in general and the Asclepius cult in Asia Minor will be discussed below (chapter V).

The Lucian redaction in Luke 16:14 as well as one of the themes of the book regarding the rich and poor and the references in Acts 3:6; 8:30; 20:33,35 reflect further the notion that the early church is not connected to money. See also 1 Tim 3:3; 6:10; 2 Tim 3:2; Heb 13:5. Apocryphal Acts; See chapter III.E.7.d. Early Christian writings: Didache 3.5; 15.1: A bishop should be ἀφιλαργύρος; 2. Clem. 6.4; Polycarp, Phil. 5.2: A deacon should be ἀφιλαργύρος; 11.2; 4.1: "But in the beginning of all evils is the love of money."

⁴³ R. Hook attributes the Christian refusal to accept payments to an influence other than the competition with the Asclepius cult. In discussing Paul as a tent maker, he shows that Paul distinguished himself from the Sophists, who charged large fees (μισθοί), and from the begging Cynics by supporting himself with a trade (The Social Context of Paul's Ministry [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980] 52-59: "Philosophers and their means of Support"). Therefore, a tradition that follows Paul's lead provided another model for the followers of Jesus to emphasize the 'free help' they offer. Contrasted to this is the tradition of Simon, who wanted to pay money (Acts 8:18-21) in order to receive the power to perform miracles. Throughout early Christianity Simon is connected with the receiving of money, in stark opposition to the true apostles of Jesus who do not deal with money at all (e.g. Acts of Peter 8; Origen Cels. 1.9. See also Adolf Deissmann, Licht vom Osten (Tübingen, Mohr, 1923) 67. See above p. 211, n. 138.

αὐτῷ ποτε.⁴⁴ This claim, however, was not unchallenged by the Asclepius devotees.⁴⁵

3. A God and the Raising of the Dead.

As mentioned before, the death of Asclepius by a thunderbolt had a profound impact on his divine status, as did the frequently mentioned cause of his death-- his bringing about the resurrection of a dead person. Pindar and Diodorus spoke of this raising of the dead, and Euripides mentioned Asclepius as a "healer of the dead."⁴⁶ Asclepius' death instigated by Apollo, which was already used polemically by Greek and Roman writers, also became part of the debate between the followers of Asclepius and Jesus.

On the Christian side, an apologist as early as Quadratus seems to react to the question concerning the raising of the dead when he explicitly mentions among those who were healed by Jesus "those who rose from the dead."⁴⁷ When Justin compares the deeds of Jesus with those of Asclepius, he calls Asclepius a heathen

⁴⁴Gerd Schreiber, "Medizin und Charisma. Die heiligen Ärzte Kosmos Damian," *MIHZ* 9 (1958) 257-66; Ernst Lucius, *Die Anfänge des Heiligenkultes in der christlichen Kirche* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1904) 256-60. This practice, however, was changed later when the Christians had to maintain their shrines and churches for the saints (Mary Hamilton, *Incubation or the Cure of Disease in Pagan Temples and Christian Churches* (London: Henderson, 1906) 136.149.206).

⁴⁵Julian Iamb. 419B: "Asclepius, again, does not heal mankind in the hope of repayment, but everywhere fulfills his own function of beneficence to mankind."

⁴⁶Euripides *Alcestis* 122-30.

⁴⁷Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 4.3. Eusebius then goes on to quote the copy of Quadratus' writings (see p. 151) which says that some of them survived even until his [Quadratus'] time.

From the standpoint of time, it would have been possible that the two youths whom Jesus raised from the dead (Matt 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56; Luke 7:11-17) could have lived until the time of Quadratus (Papias *fig. 11: 2*).

copy of Jesus and mentions the raising of the dead.⁴⁸ Justin goes on to state that Jesus raised the dead in order to persuade the people in his time.⁴⁹ Origen also expresses this fundamental difference, that Jesus' death "was caused by men's conspiracy, and had no resemblance to Asclepius' death by [Apollo through] a thunderbolt."⁵⁰ Among the non-Christian writers, the question concerning Asclepius' death was also still active, for example, in Lucian of Samosata, the Sophist, who mentions that Asclepius did what was prohibited to him and thus was raised into a higher sphere through fire⁵¹ or in the time of the emperor Julian.⁵² Clement also speaks about the punishment which Asclepius received.⁵³

All these above-mentioned defenders of the divinity of Jesus paint the same picture of the difference between Jesus and Asclepius. They all point to the question about who has the power to raise the dead and the consequent punishment by the 'supreme god.' Furthermore, the frequent mention of Asclepius' love of money, as discussed above, for example, by Athenagoras, is in fact the same argument which Pindar used concerning Asclepius' greed. Therefore, these polemical statements also need to be viewed in connection with this question regarding the raising of a dead person.

⁴⁸Justin Dial. 69.3: "And when he [the devil] brings forward Asclepius as the raiser of the dead and healer of all diseases, may I not say in this matter likewise he was imitating the prophecy about Christ."

⁴⁹Justin Dial. 69: "And having raised the dead, and causing them to live, by His deeds He compelled the men who lived at that time to recognize him."

⁵⁰Origen Cel. 3.23.

⁵¹Lucian Dial. 15(13); Petr. morr. 4. According to his works (The Dance 45), the resurrection of Tyndareus brought Zeus' anger; Pliny Nat. hist. 29.2.

⁵²See above p. 199.

⁵³Clement of Alexandria Profl. 2.

From the theological debate discussed here so far and the fact that we see an ongoing debate between the followers of Asclepius and Jesus, the argument of Rengstorff⁵⁴ appears to have some merit. He sees a special parallel in structure and content between the death of Asclepius as it is frequently reported in the Hellenistic tradition and the death of Jesus as it is shown in the Gospel of John. He argues that Jesus' raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44), which is unique in John, induces the ruling council to act against Jesus and brings about Jesus' death.⁵⁵ This appears to be a clear attempt to show the two healers in the same situation. This parallel between the Asclepius tradition and the Gospel of John is also apparent in several other instances in the Gospel of John.⁵⁶ Rengstorff's theory has support in the recognizable editorial marks of an earlier story. These points make clear that a pre-Johannine story was used by the editor, and that he wanted to make a specific point by placing the story at this specific point in Jesus' life and giving it its present form.⁵⁷ This is further emphasized by the fact that the story is also found in another context, in the Marcan

⁵⁴ Rengstorff, Anfänge, 18.

⁵⁵ John 11:45-57,53: "So from that day on they took counsel how to put him to death."

⁵⁶ Rengstorff, Anfänge, 16-8. In his article, he argues in several places that the Gospel of John, in its depiction of Jesus, consciously and in a polemical spirit tried to touch on several aspects of the cultic life and worship of the Asclepius cult. This desire to establish parallels between them is seen, for example, in the use of terminology (16); the requirements of washings in connection with miracles (18); the use of dirt ($\tau\eta\lambda\circ\zeta$) which is used in the gospel five times and is also used frequently in the Asclepius tradition (17-8). See also chapter V.

⁵⁷ Since so much has been written about this episode, only a few examples are given here. Because of the vocabulary and style, typical Johannine phrases can be detected in vss. 4b, 40 concerning the glory of God; vss. 8,26-37,45 the characterization of the "Jews" as those who refuse to believe; vss. 15,25-26,42 the motive of life; vs. 2 the narrator intrudes into the story to give further information about an event used later in 12:3-8; vss. 1,2,5,6,20-27 the relationship of Mary and Martha to Lazarus; vs. 6: the information in 6b contradicts 6a; vs. 6a this lengthens the story to make sure that Lazarus will have died (vss. 6-16 these verses fill in for the created delay and have no real integral purpose in the raising of Lazarus); vss. 43-44 the omission of Lazarus' name in the words leading to the resurrection strongly points to a pre-Lazarus form of the story; vs. 44 the miracle is demonstrated by Lazarus' coming forth from the tomb bound and wrapped in cloth, which is a miracle within a miracle.

Rudolf Bultmann, History of the Synoptic Tradition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968) 66; Bauer, Johannesevangelium, 148-56.

form found in the Clementine fragment documented by Morton Smith.⁵⁸ This record is considered to be older than the Lazarus story in John.⁵⁹ Since the redactor of John reacts to Asclepius' raising of a dead person and Asclepius' consequent death, the redactor made the account of Jesus parallel to that of Asclepius. He placed the raising of Lazarus at the end of the life story of Jesus in order to show that this event also triggers Jesus' passion and death (John 11:1-57).

The ongoing debate between the two cults stresses two other aspects of the Lazarus story: first, the fact that Lazarus was dead for four days (John 11:17,39) and second, that his raising was clearly in harmony with the will of God (John 11:41,47). These two points touch clearly on the ongoing theological debate between the followers of Asclepius and Jesus about which healer is able to raise the dead, and whether Asclepius' death was a punishment by Apollo or a deification. Additional points with regard to the wider context of the Lazarus story in the Gospel of John further support Rengstorff's view. The Gospel of John reports that right after the raising of Lazarus, 'the Jews,'⁶⁰ the chief priests and Pharisees took counsel against Jesus, and Jesus no longer went about dealing openly; thus the condemnation of his healing eventually led to his death (John 11:45-54). Also, generally in Hellenistic stories the actual raising of the dead occurs when the healer unexpectedly encounters the bier during the funeral procession, so that the account

⁵⁸ Morton Smith, *The Secret Gospel. The Discovery and Interpretation of the Secret Gospel according to Mark* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) and idem, *Clement of Alexandria and A Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1973) 16-17 and idem, "Merkel on the Longer Text of Mark - A Response," *ZThK* 72 (1975) 133-50. The last mentioned article includes a concise summary of Smith's conclusions-- the text of John 11 and longer narrative in Mark are different versions of the same story. The Johannine version has been expanded by the long insertion of typically Johannine theological, apologetic and polemic material. The author of the longer text did not use John and represents an independent, older form of the story of raising a dead man; Morton Smith, "Clement of Alexandria and Secret Mark: The Score at the End of the First Decade," *HTR* 75 (1982) 449-61.

⁵⁹ Smith, "Merkel on the Longer Text of Mark." 147-48.

⁶⁰ See below p. 140, n. 58.

by John is somewhat out of the ordinary.⁶¹ Furthermore, the account of the raising of the dead in John also differs from the accounts in the synoptic gospels, where only two more accounts were recorded (Jairus' daughter in Matt 5:23-41; Luke 5:41-54 and the son of a widow at Nain in Luke 7:14). This low number is in contrast to the later accounts in the apostolic tradition.⁶² Interestingly, within the gospels it is the Lukan tradition which recounts two raisings of the dead. Concerning the general context of the life of Jesus, the raisings were positioned within significant developments. All three Gospels place the account of Jairus' daughter before the sending out of the twelve, whereas the raising of the young man precedes the questioning of John the Baptist (Luke 7:18-35) and the anointing of Jesus (Luke 7:36-50). Therefore, they were used to complete the picture of the total ministry of Jesus (Luke 7:22, "the blind receive sight, the lame walk. . . the dead are raised"). The difference in this specific point between the synoptic gospels and John could originate in the different geographical location of the Johannine tradition, which is in Asia Minor.⁶³ The strong popularity of the Asclepius cult in this area in the late 1st and 2nd centuries CE had its influence in the later formation of the Johannine tradition and writings. Furthermore, the frequency of the raising of the dead, as reported in the apocryphal acts, had a polemical character, in addition to its missionary propaganda value. They again underline the opposition to Asclepius' death because the healers who work for Jesus are not punished by the gods with their

⁶¹ Winreich, Wunderheilungen, 171-74 and Excuse 1: "Totenaufweckungen; Wunder by der Begegnung unterwegs."

⁶² See above p. 201, n. 104.

⁶³ Irenaus Adv. haer. 3.1; Clement of Alexandria Alex. quis div. salv. 42.2; Tertullian Praescr. 36.3; Eusebius Hist. eccl. 5.8.4; Comm. in Matt. 16.6.

death, even though they perform the same act against the god which brought about Asclepius' death.⁶⁴

The controversy about the raising of the dead appears later in the apocryphal acts written by Philip. Philip counters the gentiles' view that Heracles, through his death in flames, and Asclepius, through the fire of Zeus, became gods. In his defense he cites the tradition of Clement of Alexandria, who claimed that the death of the physician Asclepius is only a deification in the eyes of the gentiles, but in reality his death was not an act of deification, but rather a punishment for his raising of the dead.⁶⁵

Furthermore, in regard to healing miracles and the raising of the dead, it needs to be recognized that there is a trajectory toward more miraculous accounts. For example, in one incident reported by Pliny and Origen, the person healed was still alive, whereas in the later account by Apuleius transformed the same story into an absolute miracle of the raising of a dead person.⁶⁶ This change and the different stages of this development are also visible, for example, in the biblical story of the raising of Jairus' daughter (Matt 9:18-26; Mark 5: 21-34; Luke 8. 40-56) where the girl is either dead or alive (sleeping); the father thinks it was a healing miracle and not a raising of his dead daughter.⁶⁷

⁶⁴Origen *Cels.* 3.22-3. See also chapter III.E.3.

⁶⁵*Acts of Philip* 8.

⁶⁶Pliny *Nat. hist.* 7.124; Origen *Cels.* 2.6; Apuleius *Flora* 19: "confestim spiritum recravit."

⁶⁷Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*. 215.

4. A God and His Post-Mortem Appearances.

The question concerning the appearance of God after his death also played a large part in the ongoing battle between the two groups. In defending his god, Justin treats at great length the formerly human body of Jesus and its new form after the resurrection.⁶⁸ Aristides the philosopher speaks about the resurrected Jesus as "having no form," and thus provides another early example of speculations concerning the shape in which Jesus (or a god in general) appeared to his followers after his resurrection.⁶⁹ In his defense against Celsus, Origen provides more specific insights into this debate, since he also mentions the opposing view of Celsus, who accused the Christians of not accepting the Greek belief that humans like Asclepius can become divine.⁷⁰ He also questioned the Jewish-Christian belief about the descent of God, arguing that "no God or son of God has come down or will come down [to earth]," except demons.⁷¹ Celsus also did not agree with the Christian concept of the resurrection.⁷² Origen countered that if no god would ever have come down, we have to conclude that no god exists on earth whatsoever, who is able to predict the future to mankind or to be a healer, not even Asclepius.⁷³ Celsus even went a step further and claimed that Jesus was seen after his death only by his own followers, and that they had seen only his shadow.⁷⁴ He believes that he "can clearly show a countless multitude of Greeks and barbarians who acknowledge that

⁶⁸Justin Resur. 2.5.9-10.

⁶⁹Aristides the Philosopher Apol. 1.1 (Syriac Version).

⁷⁰Origen Cels. 3.22.

⁷¹Origen Cels. 5.2.

⁷²Benko, "Pagan," 1103-34.

⁷³Origen Cels. 5.2. He further states that if this is the case, then Asclepius and Apollo are demons.

⁷⁴Origen Cels. 3.22.

they have frequently seen, and still see, no mere phantom (φάσμα), but Asclepius himself, healing and doing good, and foretelling the future.⁷⁵ Origen counters this accusation that Asclepius still appears⁷⁶ with the record of what he considers to be 'eye-witnesses' of the miracles of Jesus as they were written down by those 'eye-witnesses'⁷⁷ and with the multitude of still living people who experienced healing through their faith.⁷⁸

Celsus was not the first to bring up these accusations about the appearance of Jesus after his death. This question was part of the ongoing confrontation, and we see in Origen's answer-- that Jesus' appearance was not a φάσμα ("he really did appear")-- a defense of the accounts in the "Gospels".⁷⁹ Specific references to this in the gospels are texts like Luke 24:39: "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have," and the emphasis in John (20:27) on Thomas using his hands or in Ignatius.⁸⁰ These are reflections of an ongoing controversy.⁸¹ Furthermore, Origen is eager here to show Jesus as being an active healer even in his time. It is significant to point out that

⁷⁵Origen *Cels.* 3.24.

⁷⁶Already the early inscriptions from Epidaurus witness this; e.g., number 25 from the big stelae from the fourth century BCE.

⁷⁷Origen *Cels.* 3.24. ■ 3.24 Origen calls these writings "Holy Scripture" (τῶν προφετικῶν) and in 3.23 (κατὰ τὸ ἀρεσκόν τοῖς θείοις μαθήμασιν).

⁷⁸Origen *Cels.* 3.24: ". . . he [Celsus] asserts, of Greeks and barbarians acknowledge the existence of Asclepius; while we, if we deem it a matter of importance, can clearly show a countless multitude of Greeks and barbarians who acknowledge the existence of Jesus. And some give evidence of their having received through his faith a marvellous power by the cures which they perform, invoking no other name over those who need their help than that of the God of all things, and of Jesus along with a mention of his history. For by this means we have seen many persons freed from grievous calamities, and from distraction of mind, and madness, and countless other ills, which could be cured neither by men nor devils."

⁷⁹Origen *Cels.* 3.23: "Jesus' appearances were recorded by eyewitnesses. . . ."

⁸⁰Ignatius *Smyrn.* 3.2: "Take, handle me and see that I am not a phantom without a body."

⁸¹Dölger, "Heiland," 252.

Origen puts the healer Jesus in clear opposition to the already active healer Asclepius, who practiced his miracles at the sanctuaries in Epidaurus, Cos and Pergamum, which Origen mentions a few lines earlier.⁸² The appearance of the healer god to those who seek him also became a focal point concerning the appearances of other healers and the disciples of Jesus. Lucian also makes an interesting point about the connection between the crucifixion and appearances after death. He lists crucifixion as one means of dying which causes the souls of the dead to manifest themselves to the living.⁸³ Many records exist of the disciples of Jesus and the miracle worker in the tradition of Asclepius regarding their appearances and miracles after their deaths.⁸⁴

5. A God and His Divine Name.

The title *οὐρανός* was used in the worship of many deities during the time of the 2nd century CE, including Asclepius and Jesus.⁸⁵ However, Asclepius is honored with this title in inscriptions and literature more frequently than any other Graeco-Roman deity among the many *οὐρανοί* during this time.⁸⁶ The differences between the opposing camps of Asclepius and Jesus are therefore also reflected in their use of the divine titles.

⁸²Origen *Cels.* 3.3.

⁸³Lucian *Philops.* 17.

That death through crucifixion was considered something special is also visible in the writings of Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 5.13.5) and Origen (*Cels.* 2.47).

⁸⁴Rosa Söder, *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und die romanische Literatur der Antike* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1932) 72-3.

⁸⁵Walter Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon* (800-01): "οὐρανός;" Werner Foerster, "οὐρανός," *TDNT* 7 (1971) 1004-12. See also chapter III.E.7.

⁸⁶Nilsson, *Geschichte*, 2. 342-43.

Justin, who knew of the Savior (soter) Asclepius, showed in his use of 'soter Jesus',⁸⁷ 'our soter',⁸⁸ and the absolute use of 'the soter'⁸⁹ that this title was very common around 150 CE for both deities. The use of Jesus as 'the soter' among the Christians in the middle of the second century is confirmed by Dölger.⁹⁰ The same specific use of the term for the god Asclepius had been established in his cult for some time.⁹¹ Aristides illustrates clearly that in his time, soter was a very common term for his favorite deity.⁹² Dölger points out that although Aristides uses the term soter also for other gods and alternates with other divine names for Asclepius in order to add color to his rhetorical style, for Aristides, the name soter became synonymous with Asclepius.⁹³ Some inscriptions for Asclepius underline this fact by having this title "savior/soter" written in superscript on the first line.⁹⁴ Dölger concludes that at about the same time this term was distinctively used by both groups— Asclepius is called ὁ σωτήρ, by his devotees and Jesus carries the name ὁ

⁸⁷Justin Dial. 2.4.

⁸⁸Justin Apol. 1.33.5; 66.2.

⁸⁹Justin Dial. 8.2.

⁹⁰Franz Josef Dölger, "Das Fisch Symbol in frühchristlicher Zeit," (IXΘΥΣ, 1; Münster: Aschendorf, 1928) 408-9. He renewed his claim in the later article "Der Heiland," Antike und Christentum (Münster: Aschendorf) 6.257.

⁹¹Already in the classical period Asclepius is called ὁ σωτήρ and ὁ σωτήρ Ἀσκληπιός.

⁹²E.g., A. Aristides Or. 39.6.

⁹³E.g., A. Aristides Or. 19.6. He changes between ὁ θεός and ὁ σωτήρ; 39: "The Savior," 50.50: "Lord Asclepius" (δέσποτας Ἀσκληπιός) and "the One" (εἷς); 47.66; 48.40: "Savior Asclepius;" 42.4: "it is he who guides and directs the Universe, savior of the Whole and guardian of what is immortal;" 39.6. The well in the Asclepieion rises "from the temple and the feet of the Savior;" 50.9. The Savior heals from the plague; 50.38: ὁ σωτήρ Ἀσκληπιός; Dölger, Heiland 260.

⁹⁴W. Amelung, Die Skulpturen des Vatikanischen Museums (No. 1, Berlin: Reimar, 1903) plate 84 NR. 684.

σωτήρ used by the Christians.⁹⁵ The way Aristides uses the term⁹⁶ reflects the general concept of this divine name— "the savior (soter)" was the common expression in the sanctuaries for speaking of Asclepius.⁹⁷

This equal use of the same title elucidates the opposition between the two groups and makes the position of Celsus even clearer. When Celsus compared the soter Asclepius and Jesus, he pointed towards the sanctuaries in Tricca,⁹⁸ Epidaurus, Cos and then added Pergamum to his list,⁹⁹ the city with a flourishing Asclepius Soter sanctuary. Pergamum provides a great deal of evidence that the term soter was used in the emperor cult.¹⁰⁰

In terms of Christian evidence, it is significant to note that already Quadratus of Athens in his apology used the terms δούλος ήμαν and δούλος,¹⁰¹ which shows that most likely the term was already in general use and more frequently used than the

⁹⁵Dölger, Heiland, 263; E.g., in the letter of Ptolemy to Flora Jesus is called by the absolute term eleven times.

⁹⁶E.g., A. Aristides *Or.* 47.1 He tells about the deeds of God; 50.4 He composed many songs for the Savior; 50.9 The Savior Asclepius and Lady Athena saved him from the plague; 50.103.

⁹⁷E.g., A. Aristides *Or.* 39.6. The water in the sanctuary "flows from the temple and the feet of the Savior."

⁹⁸The Asclepius cult possibly originated at Tricca in Thessaly (Strabo 437), the home of Machaon (Il. 4.202).

⁹⁹Origen *Cels.* 3.3.

¹⁰⁰Dölger, Heiland, 411-5. He agrees with Harnack that the Christian use of "savior" was also influenced by the emperor cult, but he does not see such a direct connection as Harnack, who proposes that the Christians took the term exclusively from the emperor cult.

¹⁰¹Eusebius, *Hist. ecc.* 4.3.2: "But the works of our Saviour were always present, for they were true, those who were cured, those who rose from the dead, who not merely appeared as cured and risen, but were constantly present, not only while the Saviour was living, but even for some time after he had gone, so that some of them survived even till our own time."

literary evidence from this time indicates.¹⁰² Clement, who uses the term freely, claims that the gentiles invented a certain σωτήρ which fits this exclusive use of the term as the Christians understood it.¹⁰³ He also quotes Tatian as having used the term savior (soter) in an absolute meaning around 170 CE.¹⁰⁴ Two more specific uses of savior (soter) are relevant in this comparison with the early Christian practice. Linssen lists inscriptions which celebrate the emperors as the saviors (soter) of the world and uses the term σωτήρ τῆς οἰκουμένης.¹⁰⁵ In this, together with another inscription from Athens for Hadrian (IG 3.475), he sees a parallel to the Johannine tradition.¹⁰⁶ The Paeans number 133 and 135 from Epidaurus report that it was a duty to repeat three times, chanting, the exclamation κύριε χαῖρε μέγας σωτήρ, οἰκουμένης σωτήρ.¹⁰⁷ This evidence is from about the same time as Aelius Aristides' visit to Epidaurus,¹⁰⁸ when Caracalla was celebrated with two statues bearing the inscriptions σωτήρ τῆς οἰκουμένης.¹⁰⁹ It is important to note that the Gospel of John has one of its redactional stages in the area of Asia Minor. In the late 1st and early

¹⁰² See the use of the term in: Ignatius Phil. 9.2; Julius Cassianus (Clement of Alexandria Strom. 3.13); Melito of Sardes (Eusebius Hist. eccl. 4.26,13; In the fifth book, Hegesippus, who belonged to the generation after the Apostles has James answer to the question concerning the 'gate of Jesus' that it was τὸν σωτῆρα (Eusebius Hist. eccl. 2.23,3-8). Dölger, Heiland, 258-59.

¹⁰³ Clement of Alexandria Profl. 2.22.

¹⁰⁴ Clement of Alexandria Strom. 3.12,20. Otto Stähelin (Clemens of Alexandria [Berlin: Akademie, 1960] 232) mentioned that Tatian wrote 2 book (Περὶ τοῦ κατὰ τὸν σωτῆρα καταρτισμοῦ) and therefore use the term soter in an absolute sense for the Christians.

¹⁰⁵ Trajan: IG Mar. Aeg. 1.978; IG. 1.3.462; IG. 5.1. 380; Caracalla: IG 4.1. 611 and number 612 from Epidaurus.

¹⁰⁶ Heinrich Linssen, "ΘΕΟΣ ΣΩΤΗΡ - Entwicklung und Verbreitung einer liturgischen Formelgruppe," Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft 8 (Münster: Aschendorf, 1928) 70-1.

¹⁰⁷ Rudolf Herzog, "Asclepius," RCA 1 (1950) 797.

¹⁰⁸ See below p. 98, n. 18.

¹⁰⁹ IG 4.1.2, 611-13.

2nd centuries CE, Ephesus provided a "new home" for the Gospel of John,¹¹⁰ a tradition which used the term *σωτήρ τοῦ κόσμου* twice (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14).¹¹¹ Bousage reflected the polemical distinction the author tried to make, namely, that the only savior (soter) of the world was his god, not Asclepius, Serapis,¹¹² or the other gods,¹¹³ nor the emperor.¹¹⁴ The use in John 4 further substantiates the point that this is a formula clearly distinguishing Jesus as the sole savior of the world, because it is introduced as a *λαλία* (MSS X D b lr. have *μαρτυρία* which underlines even more the polemical character). Aristides, too, calls his speech to Asclepius a "Λαλία εἰς Ἀσκληπίον" (Oration 42). Rengstorf sees in this a direct parallel between the Asclepius cult and the Johannine tradition;¹¹⁵ however, it appears more likely that this phrase was used with the same understanding among the different cults and was part of their missionary message in order to distinguish their god from other gods and to show their superiority.

Weinreich later picks up this note from Linssen and points out that this title "Savior of the Whole World" is used only for Asclepius and Apollo among the great

¹¹⁰Koester, *Introduction*, vol. 2. 195,198. See below pp. 140-43.

¹¹¹The fact that the term *soter* which is so commonly used among the Greco Roman saviors is absent from the *Revelation of John* suggests that the writer tried to avoid the term which the 'Gentiles' used. Furthermore, the *Revelation of John* was written against a specific movement—the Emperor cult—and addresses the problems which arose from this opposition. It did not take a position against the healing cults. See also chapter V.

¹¹²A. Aristides *Or.* 45.20.

¹¹³Dölger, *Der Heiland*. 260.

¹¹⁴The Emperor Hadrian (117-138 CE) is several times in inscriptions called the "Savior of the World" (Wilhelm Weber, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Kaisers Hadrianus* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1907) 225-6, 229) mostly from Asia Minor, the area of Lycia. The term was also used later by the Emperor Julian (*Or.* 4).

¹¹⁵Rengstorf, *Auseinandersetzung*, 15.

Greek gods.¹¹⁶ Inscription **IG** 4.1.133 and 135 concerning Asclepius were significant since they have a trigemination sign Γ (symbolizing a triple repetition) after οἰκουμένης σωτήρ. Since this sign which signals a triple repetition is not used very frequently in antiquity for ritual triplication, these two samples are not only important in relation to a similar hymnic trigemination used in the Christian literature, but they also give evidence that around 135 CE Asclepius is called the savior of the whole world,¹¹⁷ which is again in opposition to the Christians' claim that Jesus is the only savior of the world.

The article by Dölger provides a short history of the use of the Latin terms for Asclepius and Jesus until the time of the Emperor Constantine, who used the term "Christus salvator,"¹¹⁸ and the Emperor Julian, who called Asclepius again the "Savior of All."¹¹⁹

6. A God and His Miracles.

In regard to the miracles it is important to note that the first apology we have from Quadratus in the section which survived is entirely concerned with the healing activity of Jesus.¹²⁰ In his apologetic writings Justin spoke about Asclepius as a healer (θεραπευτής),¹²¹ which is significant, since shortly afterwards he compared

¹¹⁶ Otto Weinreich, "Σωτήρ τῆς οἰκουμένης," *Jahrbuch für Literaturwissenschaft* (Münster: Aschendorf, 1930) 142.

¹¹⁷ Weinreich, "Σωτήρ τῆς οἰκουμένης," 142.

¹¹⁸ The report of Eusebius (*Vita const.* 3.56) concerning the temple of Asclepius in Aegae (363 CE) is clearly portrayed as an argument about who the true savior is. See below p. 27 and chapter IV.7.

¹¹⁹ Dölger, *Heiland* 264-72.

¹²⁰ Eusebius *Hist eccl.* 4.3.2; see below p. 148, n. 101.

¹²¹ Justin *Apol.* 1.21.

the miracles of Jesus with those of Asclepius.¹²² This shows that Justin accepted Asclepius as a healer and tried to set Jesus parallel to him and his miraculous healing activities. At about the same time Aelius Aristides called Asclepius "our true and present healer"¹²³ which, along with the inscriptions from Asia Minor and elsewhere and literary evidence in general,¹²⁴ clearly expressed the way in which a great part of the population viewed Asclepius.

The apologist Aristides also mentions that Asclepius had to work as a healer in order to support himself, and Athenagoras of Athens says that Asclepius became a god because of his healing art.¹²⁵ Further, Tertullian and Clement spoke about Asclepius as a doctor who was fond of money (*ἰατρὸς φιλάργυρος*).¹²⁶ This argument about the love of money is a polemic directed against the death of Asclepius and the contemporary fees for healings at the Asclepieia.¹²⁷ Clement even goes one step further when he opens his work, *The Instructor*, with a statement declaring the logos to be a physician,¹²⁸ whereas for him the logos is Christ. Irenaeus, along with Lactantius and Origen, also argued with the help of the Old Testament prophecy

¹²²Justin *Apol.* 1.22: "And in that we say that he made whole the lame, the paralytic and those born blind, we seem to say what is very similar to the deeds said to have been done by Asclepius."; *Apol.* 1.25: "And when, again, they [Gentiles] learned that it had been foretold that he [Jesus] should heal every sickness, and raise the dead, they produced Asclepius."

¹²³A. Aristides, *Or.* 47.57 (τὸν ἀληθὸν καὶ προσήκοντα ἡμῖν ιατρὸν).

¹²⁴E.g., Cicero *De legibus* 2.8.19.

¹²⁵Aristides *Apol.* 10.5; Athenagoras *Suppl. Christ.* 30.2.

¹²⁶Tertullian *De corona* 8; Clement of Alexandria *Protr.* 2.30.

¹²⁷See chapter III.E.2.

¹²⁸Clement *Paed.* 1.1: "τὰ δὲ πάθη δὲ παραμυθητικὸς ἔσται." He differentiates between the λόγος προπρετικός, ὑποθετικός, παραμυθικός and διδακτικός but Christ is still the logos. On this see also Harnack, *Alttest.* 133 n. 6.

as proof, for the validity of Jesus' miracles which were performed within the church.¹²⁹

Celsus argued that Asclepius healed whole cities and that he still is healing and performing good deeds, as well as announcing the future.¹³⁰ Origen also acknowledged these healings of Asclepius and his ability to foretell the future, but did not see the necessity of these healings to be of divine origin.¹³¹ He defended himself against Celsus with the argument that the proof of the divine origin of healing miracles was to be found in the virtues of the life of the healer. Therefore, he mentioned that besides the good deeds of Asclepius, Dionysus and Hercules, they also did innumerable things contrary to right reason.¹³² In regard to the virtues and rites of the two healers, Edelstein is correct in pointing out that the apologists and Church Fathers had a difficult task in their desire to prove the superiority of Jesus, if moral reasoning alone was to be relied upon as evidence.¹³³ All this shows that the healing powers of Asclepius were still acknowledged among the Christians.

Amobius confirms that Asclepius is considered to be the founder of medicine,¹³⁴ but for him the difference between Jesus and Asclepius lay in how the healings were accomplished— Jesus healed without the addition of any material aid,

¹²⁹ Irenaeus *Haer.* 2.32.4-5; Lactantius *Div. inst.* 5.3; Origen *Cels.* 8.9. H. Wey (*Die Funktion der bösen Geister bei den erzbischöflichen Apologeten des zweiten Jahrhunderts nach Christus* [Winterthur: Kellier, 1957] 149) argued that even earlier apologists may have used these arguments against the Gnostics.

¹³⁰ Origen *Cels.* 3.24.

¹³¹ Origen *Cels.* 3.25.

¹³² Origen *Cels.* 22-23.

¹³³ Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 2. 135-36; Mark 14:15; Suidas Lexicon s.v. "Ἄσκληπιος" (Ada Adler, *Lexicographi Graeci* [vol. 1. part 2; Stuttgart: Teubner, 1967] 603): "the man [Asclepius] was gentle and indeed pleasing to God."

¹³⁴ Amobius *Adv. gent.* 1.41; 1.38: Asclepius became divine because he discovered the use of herbs; 3.23.

whereas other healers, including Asclepius, used medical remedies.¹³⁵ For Arnobius the only relevant question about the differences between the two healers is whether any substance or medical application was used to perform the healings. Therefore, Arnobius concluded that the healing method of Asclepius is a human approach, one which uses remedies, whereas Jesus' method is a divine one.¹³⁶ In his next chapter, Arnobius asks how many thousands of healed persons he needs to cite as proof, compared to the few who were healed by Asclepius, and he refers to the many who were not healed by "Asclepius himself, the health giver as they call him."¹³⁷ This too reflects that the controversy was still current at this time. In addition, Arnobius mentions another point of difference. In a polemic against the more educated 'medical profession' often associated with Asclepius, he compares them with the simple disciples who possessed the same healing power that Jesus had and worked with this power manifested through the simple word.

The 'battle' between the healing gods went on until the Asclepius cult lost its attractiveness and was opposed, and then, finally, prohibited. By that time Jesus was clearly established as "Medicus Salvator Christus".¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Arnobius Adv. gent. 1.48-50,58.

¹³⁶ Arnobius Adv. gent. 1.48.

¹³⁷ Arnobius Adv. gent. 1.49.

¹³⁸ Erodius Epistula ad Valentimum abbatem 1.17 (4th. cent. CE).

7. THE USE of *ΙΑΤΡΟΣ* FOR JESUS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE.

A brief historical review of the use of the term *Ιατρός* for Jesus provides additional evidence of the opposition between the followers of Asclepius and Jesus.

The term was widely used for Asclepius and therefore provides further proof of the Hellenistic healing traditions' influence on the Christian message. In order to focus on how Jesus came to be called a physician, and to provide a background for the later use of *Ιατρός* for Jesus, the New Testament background is first sketched out. Then Ignatius' use of the term *Ιατρός* will be interpreted in a new way as well as the term's use by the other Church Fathers and in the Apocryphal Acts.

a) The New Testament Background for the Christian Healing Tradition.

In the Greek Old Testament, there already exists a discrepancy between the healing art of the physicians and that of the divine, the *κύριος* from whom all healings ultimately come.¹ The physicians are seen as being able to restore health,² even as an extended arm of the divine healer. Although God is clearly seen as healer of physical illnesses, on no occasion is the term *Ιατρός* attributed to God.³

¹Due to software limitations the footnotes will start with number one again. E.g., 2. Chron 16:12: "And in the thirty and ninth years of his reign, Asa was diseased in his feet; his disease was exceedingly great: yet in his disease he sought not Jehovah, but the physicians (καὶ ἐν τῇ μαλακίᾳ αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἐζήτησεν κύριον, ἀλλὰ τοὺς Ιατρούς. Greek version)." Job 13:4; Isa 26:14; Sir 10:10; Ps 87:11; Prov 14:30.

²E.g., Jer 8:22.

³E.g., Sir 38:2: "...for healing comes from the Most High." See above pp. 158, n. 12; 170, n. 59.

The key to understanding the early Christian view of sickness and healing lies in the Judeo-Christian concept of monotheism and the creation of the world by one God. Since all the elements are created by this God, the created world is demythologized⁴ and declared good (Gen 1). Human beings are included in this "perfect" creation in which disease came to be regarded as something abnormal, not from God but from a "force" working contrary to God's creation. Therefore, the New Testament gives several explanations for the anomaly of sickness: a) demons; b) punishment for sins; c) an act of God himself; or d) natural causes.⁵

New archaeological evidence forces us to re-examine the evidence about healing cults during the 1st century CE in Palestine.⁶ The evidence of healing cults even in the vicinity of Jerusalem itself leaves us with a scenario of a Hellenized Jerusalem-- a city with a pagan cult of healing right outside its walls, to which Jews as well as Gentiles could go for cures by miraculous waters. This picture fits the

⁴Gerhard von Rad, Das erste Buch Mose (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964) 51-52.

⁵P. U. Unschuld, "Die konzeptuelle Überformung der individuellen und kollektiven Erfahrung vom Kranksein," in H. Schnipperges et al., Krankheit. Heilkunst Heilung (Munich: Alber, 1978) 505. He recognized only the first three causes and did not consider the last point a separate category.

Examples for case number one are: Matt 12:22; Lk 13:10-17; two: Lk 13:2; Jn 9:2; Acts 12:21-23; 13:8-11; 5:1-11; 1 Cor 11:27-30. The notion that sin brings sickness is clear, but it is not necessarily seen as a direct punishment for one's own sins or faults (Jn 9:22). That the future apocalyptic consummation will be free from sickness and death is a further evidence that they are related to sin (Rev 21:4); three: Jn 9:2-3; four Among possible injuries are those caused by other people, as the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 (Borgen, "Miracles," 100-101).

⁶E.g., the view of Joachim Jeremias (Die Wiederentdeckung von Bethesda, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949). In his foreword to the revised English edition (J. Jeremias, The Rediscovery of Bethesda: John 5:2 [New Testament Archaeology Monograph, nr. 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966] 25-6.28) he makes no reference to the new evidence although he agrees that the archaeological site produced votive gifts which he considered to have "been healed in reference by heathen."

information in John 5, an early testimony of the contact between the Asclepius-Serapis cult and the beginnings of Christianity.⁷

The Gospels themselves refer to practicing physicians within Jewish society at the time of Jesus. In the NT as a whole, the word *ἰατρός* is used several times, but never directly for Jesus. The term is used, on the one hand, in Jesus' statement that "it is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are ill" (Matt 9:12; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31). This expresses the notion of Jesus as a healer who came into the world to heal the sick.⁸ According to Luke 4:23, Jesus himself expected the people around him to see him as a healer and physician, as is expressed in the rhetorical question: "Physician heal yourself; what we have heard you did in Capernaum, do here also in your own country (*ἰατρέ, θεραπεον σταυρόν*)."⁹ Although this was spoken in mockery, this passage is significant in view of its later use in the

⁷The little-recognized but important dissertation by A. Duprez (*Jesus et les dieux guérisseurs, a propos de Jean V.* [Paris: J. Gabalda, 1970]) provides historical information concerning the pool of Bethesda story mentioned in John 5:

— the two "pools" were originally constructed around 200 BC as reservoirs supplying the temple. This was followed by at least three more stages of different activities.

— excavations east of the pools revealed other installations (at least five caves, stairs, bathplaces and chiseled stones for taking foot baths) which Duprez sees only useful as medical baths. Also coins dated from about 104 - 78 BC and 68 CE were found in it. This suggests that the baths were functional in the time of Jesus.

— After 70 CE these installations were destroyed and replaced by a sanctuary of the healer God Asclepius-Serapis in the period of Aelia Capitolina (Jeremias, *Rediscovery*, 25). In the 10th century a Christian church was built to commemorate the birth of Mary and the healing miracle of John 5 and later, around 1099, the church of St. Anne was built.

— In his second chapter Duprez searches for the meaning of the pre-70 sanctuary and he comes to the conclusion that in the time of early Christianity a syncretistic healer cult existed at the gates of Jerusalem (close to a military installation).

As a result he sees John 5 as an originally older miracle story which was later "localized and Christianized." This was especially meaningful in Ephesus (place of the final redaction of the Gospel of John) where Christianity stood in competition with the pagan healer cults in Asia Minor. There is an attempt to demonstrate that Jesus has the superior healing power.

The view of Duprez is rejected by J. Jeremias (book review in *Biblica* 54 [1973] 152-55). In his response he gives evidence from another sanctuary on the opposite side of Jerusalem, a fact which is supported by H. D. Betz (book review in *JBL* 91 [1971] 117-78) and A. E. Harvey (book review in *JTS* 22 [1971] 574-76).

Concerning healing cults in Palestine see also B. Vernon McCasland, "The Asclepius Cult in Palestine," *JBL* 58 (1939) 221-27.

⁸Mk 2:17; Matt 9:12; L 4:23. Harnack, *Medizinisches*, 125. This concept is also dominant in the later use of the early Church Fathers.

apostolic tradition.⁹ In the Gospel tradition, thus, Jesus appeared as a greater healer than the other physicians of his time (Mark 5:24-34; Luke 8:43). The statements in the canonical Gospels about the helplessness of the physicians,¹⁰ the use of medicine,¹¹ and conjuration (e.g., Matt 12:27) also support the notion that Jesus' activity was seen by the writers of the Gospels as that of a healer— a physician. These statements, which are not substantial enough to tell us more about the Jewish physicians of that time and their methods of healings, do not exclude the use of prayer and medicine in healing practices among the first Christians, as was also true of earlier Jewish communities.¹²

The Gospel writers also acknowledged the existence of other miracle workers and reacted to them, sometimes by opposing and sometimes by tolerating them. In Mark 9:38 (Luke 9:45-50), John, the disciple of Jesus, asks his master about an exorcist who expels demons in the name of Jesus. Although the disciples rebuke the exorcist, Jesus neither repudiates his action nor denies him the use of his own name for his miracle activities. This passage illustrates an earlier level of the miracle tradition in which only the "true disciple" was the sole possessor of the power of

⁹Hempel, "Ich bin der Herr, dein Arzt (Ex 15:26)," *ThLZ* 82 (1957) 824.

¹⁰E.g., Mk 5:26; Lk 8:43. Regarding the woman who had been treated by many physicians and used up all her fortune without gaining relief.

These statements about the inability of the physicians to help were also commonly used to enhance the acts of healing which followed.

¹¹Lk 10:34. For oil and wine as salves for healing, see H. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* (Munich: Beck, 1956) 428; Oepke, "ἰαομαι," 204. Oepke also sees this as an example of medical action.

¹²E.g., Sir 38:1-15: "Honor the physician with the honor due to him, according to your need of him, for the Lord created him; for healing comes from the Most High. . . . The Lord created medicines from the earth. . . . My son, when you are sick do not be negligent, but pray to the Lord, and he will heal you. . . . There is a time when success lies in the hands of physicians, for they too will pray to the Lord that he should grant them success in diagnosis and in healing, for the sake of preserving life;" See also Hempel, "Ich bin der Herr," 810-26.

Jesus.¹³ Matt 7:15 is a pericope with a different attitude toward different miracle workers. Vs. 15 warns against false prophets; vss. 16-23 tell how to recognize them, and a later expansion in vs. 21-23 gives specific information regarding them.¹⁴ These miracle workers were followers of Christ who prophesied, expelled demons, and performed many miracles in the name of Jesus. Although this passage speaks of future encounters, it expresses the current disagreement within the Matthean church (vs. 22). Therefore, from this passage several attributes of these "opponents" can be deduced. Vs. 15 tells us that they wandered from one church to another. The use of λύκοι ἄρπατες in vs. 15 could suggest that they were using their prophetic gifts for material gain.¹⁵ They also worked in the name of Jesus (τῷ σῷ ὀνόματι), which is significant because it indicates that the name of Jesus had magical power in itself and even worked for impostaers and magicians.¹⁶ But these "others" were not to be searched for in far-away circles; rather they represent members within the church whose charismatic activities were an extension of their commissioning (Matt 10:7-8). Although we have here a strong warning against non-Christian miracle workers (see also Matt 12:27), this passage does not recommend the excommunication of these charismatic prophets nor does it condemn such activities.¹⁷

¹³Dieter Georgi, Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 1964) 213-14.

¹⁴Michael Krämer, "Hütet euch vor den falschen Propheten: Eine Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Matt 7:15-23; Lk 6:43-46; Mk 12:33-37," Biblica 57 (1976) 349-77; Erich Klostermann, Das Matthäusevangelium (Tübingen: Mohr, 1927) 68-71.

¹⁵As put forth by David Hill, "False Prophets and Charismatics: Structure and Interpretation in Matthew 7,15-23," Biblica 57 (1976) 331; See also chapter III.D.2 and IV.D.

¹⁶On the use of the name and its power see H. Heimüller, Im Namen Jesu (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1903).

¹⁷Matthew uses equally strong warnings in other places: 7:24-27; 12:27; 18:3-35; 22:13; 24:50-51; 25:30. According to Matt 7:22 the judgment will be carried out in the future.

The Acts of the Apostles are also representatives of the time of this study. Luke's work lies clearly within the trajectory moving toward the Apocryphal Acts with its travel narratives punctuated by miracles and exhortations. In this the author follows the popular tradition.¹⁸ The missionary activity of the apostles is supported and proven divine by the supernatural power of their god. These manifestations include healing miracles which were performed by: a) healing words (9:34); b) laying on of hands (5:12; 28:8); c) a combination of words and touching (3:6-7); d) by the apostles' presence or aura (5:15, his shadow; 19:11, his handkerchief). The apostles heal many people (e.g., 28:9) and even raise the dead.¹⁹ There are no longer reports of failures by the apostles, rather, the opposite is stressed, that they possess an abundance of divine power—even their paraphernalia work miracles.

The Pauline letters, the earliest evidence we possess from the followers of Jesus, show that healing procedures were already important in the life of these groups. In addition to the above discussed material (chap. I), we have in Gal 3:5 the first reference to miracles.²⁰ Paul reminds the Galatian members of the works of miracles (*δύναμις*) which God performs among them through the spirit. In Gal 4:13-4, Paul mentions that it was because of a bodily ailment (*ἀσθετικός*) that he preached the Gospel to the Galatians, and that his condition served as a test of their faith and they "did not scorn (*οὐκ ἐξουθενέω*) or (*ἐκπτύω*) despise" him.²¹ In relation to 2 Cor 12:7-10, it appears that Paul's illness was interpreted by the people as some kind of

¹⁸Paterson, *Divine Man*, 250-1.

¹⁹Acts 9:36-43; 20:7-12; John A. Hardon, S. J., "The Miracle Narratives in the Acts of the Apostles," *CBO* 16 (1954) 304-5. See above pp. 196-9.

²⁰See above pp. 153 and 216.

²¹Heinrich Schlier, "ἐκπτύω," *TEN* 2 (1964) 448-49: "to spit out." It is used here in a literary sense of the ancient gesture of spitting out as a defense against sickness and demonic threats. It also comes close to the ancient practice of using spittle as a "remedy" for cure. This use later entered the Christian tradition, also in connection with baptism.

demonic possession.²² This first mention of sickness in the New Testament illustrates that it was generally viewed as having some connection with demonic powers, although the Galatian followers of Jesus did not apply this concept to their apostle.

In 2 Cor 12:7-9 an interesting detail is mentioned, especially in regard to the later apostolic tradition. Paul writes that he had a *σκόλος* which he wanted to be healed, of but from which he found no relief. This is in strong contrast to the later abundant reports of the free use of healing power among the apostles discussed below. Furthermore, in this incident prayer plays the central role within healing activity, whereas in the later post-Pauline tradition prayer becomes only one factor among many in the healing process.²³

The letter to James provides further insight into early healing practices. Within a church order list (5:12-20), specific instructions are given regarding sick members of the community (vss. 13-15), indicating that the practices mentioned are not new, but remainders of the previous practice.²⁴ In vs. 14 a sick person is reminded to call the elders of the church, who then pray and anoint the sick "in the name of the Lord." Here the notion of prayer, the forgiveness of sins, and the formulaic phrase "in the name of the Lord," indicate that the underlying concept is that of a miraculous healing in which divine power forces out the demon of the

²² Betz, *Galatians*, 225. Friedrich Fennel, *Die Krankheit im neuen Testament* (Leipzig: Hinrich, 1930) 32-40. He lists all the major sicknesses which are commonly applied to Paul.

²³ Fennel, *Krankheit*, 88-9.

²⁴ Martin Dibelius, *James* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 254.

disease. Therefore the applying of the oil²⁵ is not primarily a medical remedy, since the whole procedure is an exorcism.²⁶ This in itself, however, does not exclude the use of a remedy (here oil) at all,²⁷ especially in light of the later Christian use of oil, not only for anointing and baptismal purposes, but also for medical use.²⁸ It is noteworthy that here the call is for the elders of the church and not, as 1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30 would suggest, for a regular member who has this specific spiritual gift. This shows a certain "institutionalization" of the gift—the person who had the specific gift of healing also held a specific status within the church: elder. Verse 15 provides some more details about the custom. It is a sick person who calls for help (and not, as in the later and present practice of this rite, a dying person),²⁹ and the healing comes not through the participation of the sick or on account of the ointment, but it occurs through the Lord (*kόπιος* and not Jesus) in whose name the prayer is spoken.

²⁵Oil, the purest lighting material, has long been a sacred symbol possessing healing properties and able to ameliorate sufferings from wounds and pain (RGG 5, 1220-34).

The Greeks also used it for religious activities. See Clotilde Mayer, *Das Öl im Kultus der Griechen* (Würzburg: Stürtz, 1917). She has several subchapters which are significant for our passage here: p. 52 "Salbung, bevor man Orakelstätten mit Incubationsriten betritt"; p. 54: "Salbung, bevor man die Beschwörungsformel spricht."

In the Old Testament, oil was also used for various purposes, including sacrifices (Exod 29:2, 23), for the completion of the vow of a Nazarite (Num 16:8), and as medication (Isa 1:6). The use in Mark 6:13 is also parallel to the practice here.

²⁶Dibelius, James, 255.

²⁷The fact that oil is not picked up again in vs. 15 supports this point.

²⁸The *Apostolic Constitutions* (8.29) contains a prayer for the consecration of oil (see also *Didache* 10 and 11), most likely intended for anointing which at that time accompanied baptism.

The Enchology of Bishop Serapion of Thmuis (early fourth Century) contains two prayers concerning oil. One refers to oil intended for anointing at baptism, the other to phials of oil which the faithful carried home for medical purposes of a private nature; George Wobbermin, *Althistorische liturgische Stücke aus der Kirche Aegyptens nebst einem dogmatischen Brief des Bischofs Serapion von Thmuis* (Leipzig: Hinrich, 1899) 7-12; Dom Leclerq, "Extreme-Onction," *Diction. d'Archéol. chrét. et de Liturgie*, 5 (1948) 1131-2.

²⁹The practice of extreme unction was only introduced and became established in the 8th century. This is the time when the doctrine was elaborated, based on James' text and explained as a sacrament for the dying (W. Ruge, "Oelum," RE 17 [1937] 2462; Leonard Fendt, "Oelung, Letzte," RGG 4 [1930] 641-2; Theodor Hopfner, "Mageia," RE 14 [1930] 306-07).

For the healing, the current customary terms *σώζω* and *τυριπω* are used which, along with the possible forgiveness of sins, points even more to a miraculous healing by the power of God.

Summarizing the evidence from the canonical writings, it is important to recognize the ambiguity of the Gospels regarding Jesus as a healer of physical disease and regarding the specific role of those of his followers who possess his miraculous healing ability. This ambiguity reflects the open stage of development which still existed among the believers in the early communities of Jesus' followers. The Pauline letters, the earliest layer of Christian literature, from the time of the years 50-55, provide evidence that: a) the power to perform miracles proved that the spirit of God was active within the whole community, it existed especially as a sign of a true follower of Jesus, and among these miracles, the power to heal played a prominent role; b) the power to heal was always conditioned by the will of God acting in his followers; c) prayer played a significant part in "activating" a miracle. Paul's view already contained an ambiguity in regard to the later development of specific church offices and their claim to an exclusive right to perform healings. On the one hand, the power to heal is one of several gifts among the followers of Jesus; on the other, it is a specific sign of an authentic apostle. Furthermore, in 2 Cor 12:11-12, Paul criticizes the use of this miraculous power by his opponents and so de-emphasizes it as a sign of apostolic authority.³⁰

All this shows that the healing dimension of the message of Jesus was in the process of being molded by his followers in their dealing with sickness among themselves and in their contact with other healing religions. The significance of this activity is clearly attested to in the great percentage of healings among the reported

³⁰Georgi, *Die Gegner*, 301-2.

miracles of Jesus³¹ and in those reported of the apostles.³² Thus one of the chief credentials of the new religion was the performance of healing miracles.

b) The Use of *Ιατρός* for Jesus by Ignatius of Antioch.

The first direct use of the term *Ιατρός* for Jesus is found in Ignatius. In the major commentaries on his writings, however, the usage does not receive the necessary attention, despite its significance.³³ In order to analyze this occurrence, it is important to recognize the points of conflict between the Asclepius devotees and the believers in Jesus as outlined below. This rivalry between the two groups as to who the true and only savior is and which group possessed divine healing power was an ongoing struggle at the time when the letters of Ignatius were written. This general background, together with our knowledge of the popularity of the Asclepius and other healing cults in Asia Minor and in Ephesus itself, provides a new perspective and background to this passage in Ignatius's letter.

³¹ Adolf von Harnack ("Medizinisches aus der Kirchengeschichte," *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Altchristlichen Literatur* [8 vols.; Leipzig: Hinrich, 1892, vol., 4, 1-147] was one of the first who underscored this picture in the Gospels of Jesus as a healer: "Das Evangelium ist als die Botschaft vom Heiland und von der Heilung in die Welt gekommen. Er wendet sich an die kranke Menschheit und verspricht ihr Gesundheit. Als Arzt des Leibes und der Seele schildern ihn die ersten Evangelien. . . ." (125).

In his work, Harnack also recognized the importance of the Asclepius cult in relation to Jesus. See also Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 2.134-8.

³² Even Rudolf and Martin Hengel ("Die Heilungen Jesu," in Alfred Suhl, ed., *Der Wunderbegriff im neuen Testament* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980] 36), who deny any parallels between the Christian healing activity and the Hellenistic world, have to admit that around 100 CE Christian charismatics performed miracles in the name of Jesus.

³³ Theodor Zahn, *Ignatius et Polycarpe* (Leipzig: Hinrich, 1876) 11. He quotes only parallel passages; P. Th. Camelot, O.P. *Lettres. Martyre de Polycarpe* (Sources Chrétiennes; Paris: Latour-Manbourg, 1969), 65; William S. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

Henning Paulsen *Studien zur Theologie des Ignatius von Antioch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978) 47-8; 173.

Ignatius wrote to the Ephesians in the beginning of the 2nd century, warning against heretics:³⁴

1. For there are some who make a practice of carrying about the Name with wicked guile, and do certain other things unworthy of God; these you must shun as wild beasts, for they are ravening dogs, who bite secretly, and you must be upon your guard against them, for they are scarcely to be cured.

2. There is one Physician, who is both flesh and spirit, [son] born and yet not born, who is God in man, true life in death, both of Mary and of God, first possible and then impossible, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ignatius calls his opponents "ravening dogs" (*κύνες λυσσῶντες*) who must be shunned like wild beasts because they bite secretly and they are scarcely to be cured (*δύτας δυσθεραπεύντους*), and in the next sentence he says that there is "one Physician" (*εἷς ιατρός ἐστιν*). Ignatius then adds some important specifications, namely that his healer is born both in flesh and spirit, he is God in human form, he died and rose again, he has God as his father and a human as his mother, he is Jesus Christ his Lord.³⁵ Most commentators argue that this is a reference to the philosophical school of the Cynics because they are often called "dogs."³⁶

However, it seems more likely that Ignatius opposed the god Asclepius, his theology and cult practices, with which he came into contact while traveling through Asia Minor. The Asclepius cult, which came to Ephesus around 350 BCE,³⁷ was well established and active in Ephesus and in Asia Minor when the followers of

³⁴Ignatius Eph. 7,1-2.

³⁵Ignatius Eph. 7,1-2.

³⁶E.g., Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 60. He considers that a pagan healing god "may lie in the background"; Josef A. Fischer, *Die Apostolischen Väter* (Darmstadt: Buchgesellschaft, 1981) 147-48. He does not comment on the reference to the dogs at all.

³⁷Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 2. 249.

Jesus arrived there.³⁸ During the late 1st and 2nd centuries CE, the Asclepieia in the nearby city of Pergamum eclipsed in popularity all other deities and sanctuaries in Asia Minor.³⁹ This popularity of Asclepius in Ephesus is evident, for example, in an innovation which took place—the two day games in honor of Asclepius were enlarged to include a competition for the city doctors in the composition of a thesis on surgery and on the making of instruments.⁴⁰

An exegesis of the characteristics which Ignatius listed of his opponent and of his God all point toward the savior and god Asclepius as the opponent: a) The way in which the "one physician" is described fits more appropriately the 'theological' disagreement between the defenders of Asclepius and Jesus as we have discussed

³⁸ There are several coins from Ephesus depicting Asclepius: e.g., Deubner, *Pergamon*, 78. He illustrates a coin from Ephesus (Abb. 2) which has on the obverse M. Aurelius and Gallien making an alliance and on the reverse Artemis on the left and Asclepius on the right. This coin from the second century illustrates two facts. First, it shows that Asclepius was the one deity used by the city of Pergamum whenever they made an alliance with another city. Second, the appearance of Asclepius on so many coins underlines again that Asclepius became the dominant deity and overshadowed other city gods. See below pp. 34-3.

In a prayer from Philadelphia, Zeus is called savior and protector Ditt. *Syll. Inscr. Graec.* 3.3 985,60-2; Dio Chrysostom. *Orationes* 12,74; Cornut. *Theol. Graeca* 9 (9.14-20). He mentioned that the name "savior" is the first of many names for Zeus.

³⁹ Nilsson, *Geschichte*, 5.2.342-43. He describes the decline and change in the Artemis worship at this time and an increase in the Emperor worship. He further mentions that all cults in Asia Minor became overshadowed by the Asclepius cult (324); Nilsson, *Geschichte* 2. 341.

Concerning the religious life in Asia Minor he wrote: "Alle [Kulte] wurden sie aber vom Kulte des Asklepius überstrahlt, der im 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr. den Gipfel seines Ruhmes erreichte und Welberühmt wurde" (241).

From the seven cities in the district of Ephesus which are mentioned in *Revelation* 1 and 2, at least three are known to be cities of the Asclepius cult with Pergamum as its center.

Walton, *Asclepius*, 109-15. She mentions the most important evidence for the Asclepius cult in the surrounding regions of Aeolis, Bithynia, Dorian Islands, Iona, Karia, Lesbos, Mysia and Phrygia Troas.

⁴⁰ J. Keil, "Arzneischriften aus Ephesos," *Jahrschrift des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts in Wien* 8 (1905) 128-34 (plate a); Edelstein, *Asclepius* 2.212; "Inscripta Ephesia," *Österreichisches Jahrbuch* 8 (1905) 128. The inscription from the 2nd.-3rd centuries CE mentions the winners of the fiftieth contest: "... under the priest of Asclepius... priest of the Imperial cult and president [of the association] of physicians... acting as judges in the games of the great Asclepieia... The fiftieth contest" (translated by Edelstein, *Asclepius*, T 573. He also mentions that besides this competition among the physicians others competed in the games as boxers, racers, singers, tragedians and comedians, 2.212). It appears that the prize for operations was most likely awarded for the most successful and miraculous healing since the last games.

above (born of flesh, etc.) than a philosophical school.⁴¹ b) In regard to the mentioned "dogs," Asclepius is generally depicted not only with a snake, but also sometimes with a dog.⁴² In the Asclepius cult, dogs were well known as having healing power and actively participating in healings.⁴³ c) The notion that these opponents are moving from "place to place," as Schoedel sees it, is not evident in this passage.⁴⁴ The reference to "one" god which also appears in chapter 15,1 as "one teacher" is part of the familiar formula that "god is one," which has many witnesses from the Asclepius cult in Pergamum, close to Ephesus.⁴⁵ d) The 'father' of Asclepius, Apollo the healer and savior, was a very popular deity in this area and

⁴¹ See above pp. 169-70; chapter III.E.4.

⁴² E.g., see Giovia de Lucia, *IvP* 10.2, 138-9 (plate 63b) for a statue of Asclepius with a dog from the neighboring city of Pergamum.

The dogs are mentioned in connection with the Asclepius cult by Aelian *Nat. An.* 7.13; Pausanias *Per.* 2. 26,4; dogs protected the abandoned newborn Asclepius; Plutarch *De Sol. Anim.* 13.11; *CIA* 1. 14 and 2. 3. 1651; Farnell, *Herm.* 261; Johannes Baunack, *Inschriften aus dem Asklepieion zu Pergamum* (Studien auf dem Gebiet der griechischen und der arischen Sprache; vol.1; Leipzig: S. Hirzel 1886) 35.59.80.126. See also A. C. Merriam, "Dogs of Asclepius," *Amer. Antiquary* 7 (1885) 285-89; Fritze, "Münzen," (plate 7, coin 17).

⁴³ *IG* 4.2.1 121.20: "While wide-awake he [Asclepius] healed his [the man] eyes cured by one of the dogs in the temple and he [the man] went away healed"; 122.26: A dog cured a boy from Aegina. On reliefs the healing dogs are also shown, e.g., Paul Walters, "Darstellungen des Asklepios," *MDALA* 17 (1892) 1-15 (plate 2); Julius Ziehen, "Studien zu den Asclepias reliefs," *MDALA* 17 (1892) 244-45 (plate 8); Theodor Baunack, "Inschriften aus dem koetischen Asklepieion," *Philologus* 49 (1890) 596-97.

Plutarch *De soll. anim.* 13.11; *Bau.* 59,126; 80,35; Aelian *Nat. an.* 7.13; *CIA* 2.3. 1651.

⁴⁴ Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 60. The false teachers who are itinerant missionaries to whom Schoedel is referring are introduced later in *Eph* 9,1 with the words: "I have learned, however, that"

⁴⁵ Ephesus: Dieter Knibbe "Ephesos-Nicht nur die Stadt der Artemis. Die 'Anderen' Ephesischen Götter," *Studien zur Religion und Kultur Kleinasiens* (Festschrift für Friedrich Karl Dörner, Leiden: Brill, 1978) 493. He refers to an inscription from the early Hellenistic time where a 'Ασκληπιούς iepov is mentioned, and one from the time of the emperor Trajan. Since these two inscriptions were found close to the later built Christian church, Knibbe considers this area to be the place where the Asclepieion was located. Hermann Winkel *Die Inschriften von Ephesos* (Bonn: Habelt, 1979-84) 8; Fritze, "Münzen," 99-123 (plate 9, coins 14,16 [Ephesus and Pergamum coalition] and 22 [Asclepius with Artemis of Ephesus]).

many coins have been found which celebrated his healing power.⁴⁶ e) The Asclepius cult in the area was nurtured and strongly supported by the emperors and the citizens of Ephesus. The new Roman state agora with a temple to the divine Dea Roma and Julius Caesar also showed this support and the great popularity of the Emperor cult, as did the statues of Augustus and other emperors which were erected in the older market agora.⁴⁷ The Emperor cult had an acknowledged healing tradition of its own which was further enhanced by the cult's close connection to Asclepius.⁴⁸ f) The use of the term δρό-θεραπέων clearly indicates a specific healing term with strong connection to the healing cult of Asclepius. g) The use of the term κύριος rather than σωτήρ appears to be a conscious effort to make a distinction between the two gods.⁴⁹ h) The opponents of Ignatius are said to "bite secretly." In light of the knowledge that, on the one hand, dogs were known to participate in healings, and on

⁴⁶ Wernike "Apollon," RE 2 (1895) 51: "ταρπός, starker Kult besonders in den griechischen Colonien im Skythenland." E.g., in Apollonia: Arch.-epigr. Mitt. 10 (1886) 163 and 199; Strabo Geogr. 7.6.1; Pliny Nat. hist. 4.92.2. For coins see J. Friedländer, Arch. Ztg. 31 (1837) 103: "Apollon Sauroktonos." Overbeck K.M. "Apollon," Münztafel 2.51; 4.41; 42.2; In Larizia by Ephesus: Strabo Geogr. 13.2; In Magnesia: V. Sallet Numism. Zeitschrift 5, 108. Lambros Bull. hell. 2 (1878) 509, plate XXIV.2; In Ephesus: the temple of Apollo is at the harbor (Kreophylos bei Athen. VIII 361 E F.H.G.N. 371).

Apollo is also called by the Ephesians "Απόλλων Ερβάστος Ερεσίαν" which is witnessed to by a coin (Barclay V. Head "Apollo Hikesios," Ioum. Hell. Stud. 10 (1898) 43. Nilsson, Geschichte 2. 342-3. 368.

Also in Rome he is called "Medicinalis," (Th. Mommen, Arch Ztg. 27 (1869) 90) and "Medicus" von den Vestalinnen angerufen." (Graec. sait 1.17,15); Vellius, Num. Graec. 291.

⁴⁷ In 29 BCE Augustus allowed the city to build the temple to Dea Roma. Jürgen Roloff, Die Offenbarung des Johannes (Zürcher Bibelkommentare, NT 18; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1984) 48. He calls Ephesus eine "der wichtigsten Hochburgen des Kaiserkults im Osten des Reiches."

⁴⁸ The emperor cult had a healing tradition of its own. An important new study has been produced by Albert Henrichs, "Vespasian's Visit to Alexandria," Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 3 (1968) 51-80. Especially important is chapter 2: "Vespasian the Thaumaturge" 65-72. Henrichs clearly shows the Egyptian background of this concept and the development leading to Vespasian's visit to Egypt and its consequences; For Vespasian see- Tacitus Ant. 8.2.5; Hist. 4.81,1-3; Suetonius Vesp. 7.2; Dio Cassius 66.8.1. See chapter III.D.1.d.2 and 2.c.

See also Steven J. Scherer, "Signs and Wonders in the Imperial Cult: A New Look at a Roman Religious Institution in Light of Rev. 13:13-15," IBL 104 (1984) 599-610.

⁴⁹ See chapter III.E.5.

the other hand, that Asclepius healed mostly in dreams, the use of θεραπεύω could directly indicate the incubation practiced in the Asclepius cult.⁵⁰

Given the popularity of the Asclepius cult in the area and the existence of healing activities in Ephesus itself, as well as Ignatius's travel through the countryside,⁵¹ it was more likely that Ignatius knew about the Asclepius cult and its sanctuaries in the area of Asia Minor and the city of Ephesus than that he knew of and referred to a philosophical school of the Cynics in Ephesus which had no specific known reputation or prominence.

Additional evidence that Ignatius warned against the Asclepius cult comes from other passages of his letters. The specific use of the term "one teacher" and "one faith" points further to the exclusiveness of Jesus, as opposed to any other similar deity.⁵² In chapter 7, which is not crucial,⁵³ Ignatius refers to the body of

⁵⁰ See below pp. 157-58.

⁵¹ See below pp. 5-6; 20; 165-66, where it is noted that Asclepius and his cult objects (e.g., votive offerings, statues, money) were visible throughout the towns and area.

⁵² Eph. 11.1: "There is one teacher (εἷς σὺν διδάσκαλον)"; 20.2: "one faith." The term εἷς is used very frequently by Ignatius in relation to Jesus: Magn. 7. 1-2; 18.2; Smyrn. 1.2; Philad. 4.1.

In Eph. 20 the "new man Jesus" is shown as having resurrected (vs. 1), being born of human flesh, "Son of Man and the Son of God" (vs. 2). These points were also part of the main debate between the Asclepius and Jesus followers as discussed above and therefore may also be a sign of opposition to Asclepius. See above p. 170.

⁵³ Schoedel, Ignatius, 61.

Jesus,⁵⁴ his conception,⁵⁵ his ability to suffer,⁵⁶ and the use of the title "our Lord."⁵⁷ Furthermore, in several places he mentions sickness and healing, which all have a polemical character.⁵⁸

All these points clearly reflect the known rivalry between the Asclepius devotees and the followers of Jesus, which leads me to conclude that Ignatius is here opposing Asclepius and warning the Ephesians to stay away from the popular cult of Asclepius.

Therefore, in using the term *ἰατρός*, Ignatius made a literal connection between the piety of the followers of Jesus and of Asclepius,⁵⁹ in which the word *ἰατρός* had specific connotations to miraculous healing by the savior Asclepius.⁶⁰ Furthermore, this also appears to be a deliberate parallel to the common formulas for gods such as

⁵⁴E.g., Justin *Apol.* 1.23; Amobius *Adv. gentes* 1.60.

⁵⁵E.g., Justin *Apol.* 1.21.22: "And if we affirm that He was born of a virgin, accept this in common with what you accepted of Perseus. And . . . we seem to say what is very similar to the deeds said to have been done by Asclepius." (1.25); See above p. 216, n. 7.

Ignatius mentions Jesus as being "both flesh and spirit, born and yet not born" (*Polyc.* 2.2), which were also points of opposition between the followers of Jesus and Asclepius (e.g., the arguments between Celsus and Origen [*Cels.* 3.22]).

⁵⁶E.g., Justin *Apol.* 1.21.22: "He [Jesus] was crucified, but this also He is on par with those reputed sons of Jupiter [this includes Asclepius] of yours, who suffered as we have now enumerated. For their sufferings at death are recorded to have been not all alike but diverse; so that not even by the peculiarity of his sufferings does he seem to be inferior to them. . . for the superior is revealed by his actions."

⁵⁷See chapter IV. C and D.

⁵⁸The 'medical' language used by Ignatius appears to have a defensive, polemical character: e.g., Eph. 20.2 The Lord's supper is called "medicine of immortality."; Ite. 6.2; Pol. 1.3-2.1.

⁵⁹Oepke, "ἰαομαι," TDNT 214: "It is possible that Greeks were reminded of *ἰασθαι* by the mere sound of the name Jesus." The daughter of Asclepius was called Ήρόντα (Herondas *Mim.* 4,6).

⁶⁰In the *Epistle to Diognetus* 9.6 this is expressed. Here the divine Jesus, the *σωτήρ* who is able to save, is explained as being a physician (*ἰατρός*). Vielhauer (*Uthchristliche Literatur*, 5) considers this letter to be a 2nd century apology.

Εἰς θεός. Jesus as healer and miracle worker is emphasized in opposition to the other great healer god popular in Asia Minor.

c) Usage by the Early Church Fathers.

The term *ἰατρός* for Jesus was also used by other Church Fathers.⁶¹ In the Letter of Diognetus 9.6 (written in the second century) Jesus is called *ἰατρός* in a list of eleven divine attributes.⁶² Clement of Alexandria⁶³ and, later, Origen⁶⁴ also used the term *ἰατρός* for Jesus. Origen used the metaphor of Jesus as *ἰατρός* when he answered and rebutted the opposition from Celsus. Celsus's question did not necessarily require such an answer,⁶⁵ which suggests that when Origen answered by referring to Jesus as the physician, he not only reacted to the specific point of Celsus, but also to the larger question concerning which deity was the sole healer and savior of this world. The use of this term by both Clement and Origen as well as

⁶¹ Josef Ott, "Die Bezeichnung Christi als *ἰατρός* in der urchristlichen Literatur," *Der Katholik* 5 (1910) 454.

⁶² Diognetus 9.6: "and [God] having now released the Savior who is able to save even those things which it was [formerly] impossible to save, by these facts He desired to lead us to the truth in his kindness, to esteem Him our Nourisher, Father, Teacher, Counsellor, Healer (*ἰατρός*), our Wisdom, Light, Honor, Glory, Power, and Life. . . ."

⁶³ Clement, Quis div. Saly. 29: "Who else can it be but the Savior Himself? or who more than he has pitied us, who by the rulers of darkness were all but put to death with many wounds, fear, lust, passion, pains, deceits, pleasures? Of these wounds the only physician (*ἰατρός*) is Jesus, who cuts out the passions thoroughly by the roots. . . ."

⁶⁴ Origen Cels. 2.67: "And our Lord and Savior came as a good physician (*ἰατρός*) among men laden with sins, rather than to the righteous."; 3.62 "[Celsus] But why was he not sent to those without sin? What evil is it not to have sinned? We answer to this that, if by those without sin he means those who no longer sin, Jesus our Savior was sent to them also, but not as a physician (*ἰατρός*); Homil. 8.1.

⁶⁵ Origen Cels. 3.62: "When he [Celsus] says this, it is as if he criticized certain people for saying that a physician (*ἰατρός*) was sent by a very philanthropic king for the sake of the sick folk in his city. The divine Logos was sent as a physician to sinners (*ἐπέμψθε οὐν θεός λόγος, καθόμεν *ἰατρός**), but to those already pure and no longer sinning as a teacher of divine mysteries. . . Jesus our saviour was sent to them [those without sin] also, but not as a physician (*ἰατρός*)."

Ignatius is even more remarkable, since they do not seem to be dependent on each other. This again points to the general question concerning the healing activities of the Hellenistic religions to which the Christian had to respond.

d) Usage in the Apocryphal Acts.

The Apocryphal Acts, especially those which originated or are considered to have been written in Asia Minor⁶⁶ in the approximate time period of the 2nd century,⁶⁷ are significant for our investigation, since they further illuminate the use of the term *ἰατρός*.

In the *Acts of John* the term *ἰατρός* is used three times. Since John's work reportedly took place in Asia Minor,⁶⁸ this is most likely also the origin of the

⁶⁶ Among the five oldest Acts we need also to consider here, besides the below mentioned *Acts of John*: 1) the *Acts of Peter* (Philipp Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur* [Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1975] 696. He locates this work in Asia Minor or Rome; Eckhard Plümacher, "Apokryphe Apostelakten" RE-Supplementband 15 [1978] 23-24. He sees them as most likely written in Asia Minor); 2) the *Acts of Paul* (Vielhauer, "Geschichte," 699: "... von einem kleinasiatischen Presbyter verfasst."); 3) the *Acts of Andrew* (Plümacher, "Apokryphe Apostelakten," 34: "Die Tatsache, dass die AA. wahrscheinlich in den AP. benötigt sind, deutet eher auf Kleinasien als ihr Herkunftsgebiet, was zu beweisen freilich ebensowenig möglich ist, wie eine Entstehung in Achia." Vielhauer, *Geschichte*, 705. He considers the *Acts of Andrew* impossible to locate).

⁶⁷ Besides the *Acts of John* (mentioned below) it is necessary to include: 1) the *Acts of Peter* (Vielhauer, *Geschichte*, 696. He dates them between 180 and 190 CE; Hennecke and Schnemelcher, *Apokrypha* II, 275. He considers the decade between 180-90 to be the time of its writing.); 2) the *Acts of Paul* (Vielhauer, *Geschichte*, 699. Written shortly before 200; Plümacher, "Apokryphe Apostelakten," 28-175. Written between 175 and 200 CE); 3) the *Acts of Andrew* (Plümacher, "Antike Apostelakten," 34. Around 190-200 CE).

Plümacher, "Antike Apostelakten," 12: "Diese gegen Ende des 2. Jhd. und im 3 Jhd. entstanden, mit ausnahme der A. Tn. nur fragmentarisch erhaltenen Schriften [AJ., APt., AP.] sind als vollgültige Vertreter ihrer literarischen Gattung anzusehen, d.h. also von bestimmten religiösen Anliegen geprägte und für diese werbende volkstümliche Unterhaltungs Literatur. . . ." These acts contain all the five elements which Söder considers to be the basic underlying themes ("Das Motiv der Wanderung, das arctalogische, das teratologische, das tendenziöse und das erotische Motiv" Plümacher, "Apokryphe Apostelakten," 23).

⁶⁸ The report is structured as two main travel narratives (the first from Jerusalem to Ephesus and the second from Ephesus to Laodicea and back) and the two extended stays in Ephesus. The cities mentioned are Miletus, Ephesus (in this city most of John's activities took place: first visit, chapters 19-55; second visit, chapters 62-115), Smyrna and Laodicea.

It also appears likely that the rest of the cities mentioned in Rev 1:11- Pergamum, Sardis, Philadelphia—had been mentioned in the lost travel narrative after chapter 55 (Plümacher, "Apokryphe," 18).

Gospel.⁶⁹ The time of its composition is considered to be the 2nd century CE.⁷⁰ In one narrative scene from Ephesus, John is crying about the death of Lycomedes. He prays to Jesus "the physician (λαρπός) who heals freely" in the hope that he may perform a miracle in this town so that many bystanders will be saved by witnessing the miracle.⁷¹ The term is also used in chapter 69 in a general comparison of the work with a physician. Toward the end of the book, John speaks to his friends concerning the many miracles and healings which he performed⁷² and then goes on to praise Jesus, the physician, who heals without pay and is the only savior.⁷³

Besides this specific usage, healing miracles also play a significant part throughout the book. The general concept of a healing tradition and the competition between different traditions in the city of Ephesus is evident both in the frequency of reported healings in this literary work, and in the fact that the healing activities became Schauwunder. Miracles are pushed to the foreground and are primarily a missionary tool in the competition for converts;⁷⁴ e.g., the healing of over fifty older women is postponed until the miracle takes place in the theater in front of all the people (chapter 30-37). Furthermore, in the reported actions of the apostle in

⁶⁹Irenaeus Adv. Haer. 3.1.1; Clement of Alexandria Alex. quis div. daly. 42,2 (Ephesus as area where John worked); Tertullian Praescr. 36.3; Origen Comm. in Math. 16,6; Vielhauer, Geschichte, 706-7.

⁷⁰Walter von Loewenich, Das Johannesverständnis im 2. Jhd. (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1932) 104.

⁷¹Acts of John 22-4.

⁷²Acts of John 106.

⁷³Acts of John 108. See also chapter III.E.2.

⁷⁴E.g., in chapter 22 the whole city comes together for a miracle; destruction of the Artemis temple (37-45); John raised more people from the dead than Jesus himself (the Servant, chapt. 23; Callimachus, chapt. 75; Drusiana, chapt. 79; Fortinatus, chapt. 84).

Vielhauer, Geschichte, 707: "Das arztologische Element tritt recht massive auf. Johannes gilt von vornherein als der grosse Thaumaturg, das Wunder als bestes Mittel, den Glauben zu wecken. Daher spielen die Schauwunder die grösste Rolle."

Ephesus the arctological element is strong.⁷⁵ John became a thaumaturge, using miracles as the best medium to convert all the citizens of that city.⁷⁶

In the Acts of Thomas, a work from the time of the early 3rd century originating in Syria,⁷⁷ the word "*ἰατρός*" appears several times. Once it refers to Thomas himself, saying that he works for his god as a "physician of the souls."⁷⁸ The term is used for Jesus five times: a) once in a theological sense in connection with salvation,⁷⁹ b) twice in relation to the healing of the physical body,⁸⁰ c) twice with both a theological sense and with regard to physical healing.⁸¹

In the later Acts of Philip, a work from around the end of the 4th or early 5th century originating in the region of Asia Minor,⁸² the expression *ἰατρός* is used twice. According to the story from the town of Azatus in which Philip performed

⁷⁵E.g., after the healing of Lycomades and Cleopatra they ordered a portrait to be painted of John which was put up on the wall in their house as a small shrine (with garlands, lamps and altar)—John did not denounce this action (26-29); John performed miracles for his own benefit (the obedient bugs, 60); The Apostle's power is so great that three times he is able to delegate to others the raising of a dead person (24, 47 and 81-2); even Jesus appears in the form of the youthful John (87).

⁷⁶E.g., chapters 22 and 30. The usual descriptions at the end of a story about the miracle's impact on the people in lacking (Bultmann, History, 225-6).

⁷⁷Plümacher, "Apokryphe," 42: "erste Hälfte des 3. Jhdts. . . im ost syrischen-mesopotamischen Bereich." Vielhauer, Urchristliche, 713: "Early third century."

⁷⁸Acts of Thomas 95: "And she [Mygdonia] said in answer: "At the doctors." But her [husband] said "Is that stranger [Thomas] a doctor?" And she said: "Yes, a physician (*ἰατρός*) of souls."

⁷⁹Acts of Thomas 10: ". . . the physician (*ἰατρός*) of the souls laid low in sickness and savior of all creations. . . who dost reveal hidden mysteries and make manifest words that are secret. . . [the] perfect Saviour; Christ, son of the living God."

⁸⁰Acts of Thomas 37: "But believe rather in our Lord Jesus Christ. . . that he may become for you. . . a rest for your souls, and also a physician [*ἰατρός*] of your bodies." 156. Judas speaks in a prayer about Jesus as a "physician [*ἰατρός*] who heals without payment" and the "physician of their bodies and souls," thus picking up on this common polemic.

⁸¹Acts of Thomas 143. "Believe in the physician (*ἰατρός*) of all, both visible and invisible, and in the "savior" of the souls that need help. This is the free man, (scion) of kings. This is the physician (*ἰατρός*) of his 'creatures'."

⁸²D. K.G. Strecker, "Philippusakten," RGG 5 (1961) 339.

many miracles, he stayed in the lodge of Nicocleides, whose daughter's sickness was not being healed by even the best physicians (40). Nicocleides went to Philip, the "strong physician," in order that he might heal his daughter(40). Philip reacted with the words: "Jesus is my physician, the one who heals the hidden and known things."⁸³ He healed her in the name of Jesus.⁸⁴ Later when Philip was in Hierapolis in Asia Minor, Nicanora was healed by her belief in Jesus (114). She then told her unbelieving husband that if he would like to know "who the physician is," he should believe.⁸⁵ Then in the state of belief he would be able to know her physician and recognize his name.⁸⁶

The passages of the Apocryphal Acts discussed here, as well as many others,⁸⁷ show that Jesus was considered to be a healer (*ἰατρός*) of both the physical and the spiritual body. It is clear that these authors had a common concept and framework for their use of the term. Beyond Jesus himself, his disciples were also considered to possess this healing power. Thus, as miracle workers they performed miracles and were received by the people as bringing healing and comfort

⁸³"Ἴησοῦς ἔστιν ὁ ἔμος ἰατρός, ὁ τῶν κρυπτῶν καὶ φανερῶν θεραπευτής," (41). Bonnet, *Acta Apostolorum Auctoyphe* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1959) 19.

⁸⁴Here a clear shift took place from the earlier healings by the Lord to the healing done by Jesus. See above pp. 190-91.

⁸⁵"τίς ἔστιν ὁ ἰατρός σου καὶ τὸ ὄνομα ἀυτοῦ," (119), Bonnet, *Acta Apostolorum* 48.

⁸⁶"δυνηθῆς γνῶναι τὸν ἰατρὸν μου καὶ χωρῆσαι τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ," 119; Bonnet, *Acta Apostolorum*, 49.

⁸⁷E.g., *Acts of Thomas* 156.

everywhere they went. They represented Jesus and his power to perform miracles, heal the sick individually and en masse, and resurrect the dead.⁸⁸

Like the Gospel writers, the authors of the Apocryphal Acts and, clearly, Ignatius and the Apologists were responding to specific opposition and competition in the religious life of their time.⁸⁹ Jesus is shown as a healer, the only true *λεπός* in comparison to Asclepius, the most popular and celebrated healer god during this time.

8. Summary.

The opposition between these two divine healer traditions of Asclepius and Jesus is reflected in the early Christian writings.⁹⁰ From their own argumentation as

⁸⁸ Paul J. Achtemeier "Jesus and the Disciples as Miracle Workers in the Apocryphal New Testament," in Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Religious Propaganda*, 149-86.

The Acts of Philip, for example, illustrate the later development in Asia Minor. The Apostle receives great honor and proskynese (42; 93; 96; 97; 99; 138) which reflects the custom of the hand kiss mentioned in chapter 96. This is reported, as Peterson mentions ("Die Häretiker der Philippus-Akten," *ZNW* 31 [1932] 110), with the view that: "... die Proskynese in den Philippus-Akten nicht mehr dem Asketen, sondern dem Mystiker gilt, der sich zu Christus verhält wie der Sonnenstrahl zur Sonne. Man übt Proskynese weil man in ihm Christus sieht [προσκύνω τὸν ἐν οὐρανῷ, 42.]

During this time of great influence of the miracle worker the *Strafwunder* also became very frequent, an act which is only slightly visible already in Acts 5:1-11; 13:11. Furthermore, the healings of the masses developed (beginnings are already in Acts 5:15; 16) and became an intricate part of the healer's demonstration of his god-given power (Söder, *Die Apokryphen Apostelgeschichten*, 74).

Besides the many healings and miracles reported there are reports of healings of the masses in *Acts of John* 37; *Acts of Peter* 31; *Acts of Thomas* 59 (compare with Iamblichus *Vit. Pyth.* 135; Porphyrus *Vita Pyth.* 30; Philostratus *Vita Apoll.* 3.39; 6.43; Lucian *Peregr.* 28, *Alex.* 24); the raising of the dead in *Acts of John* 24. 52-[75].27; *Acts of Peter* 27.28; *Acts of Thomas* 33; *Acts of Philip* 1 (the first action reported); healings accomplished through the power of other persons in *Acts of John* 24. 47. 82-3; *Acts of Peter* 26; *Acts of Thomas* 54; (compare with Diogenes *Laert.* 8.67; Philostratus *Vita Apoll.* 4.45; Lucian *Alex.* 24); punitive miracles in *Acts of Paul* 2; *Acts of Thomas* 6.8-9 and *Acts of Peter* 32 (this form of punitive miracles has a long tradition in missionary apocalypses, e.g., Homer *Il.* 6.130ff; Ovid *Metamorph.* 3.710-12).

⁸⁹ E.g., Paul Achtemeier, "Jesus and the Disciples as Miracle Workers in the Apocryphal New Testament," in Schüssler, ed., *Religious Propaganda*, 149-77; Dieter Georgi, "Forms of Religious Propaganda," in H. J. Schulz, ed., *Jesus in his Time* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971) 24-31.

⁹⁰ Clement 59.4: "help the sick"; Polycarp *Phil.* 6.1 "Let the presbyter... care for all the sick"; Renius, *Miracle*, 105: "In the cult that grew up around each, Asclepius and Jesus manifested themselves in their worshippers, to heal them, and reveal the future to them."

well as from views attributed to the opposing side, a clear picture emerges of the main points of the conflict. The arguments were on two levels. First, there was a question about the divinity of the two healers—who the real savior and god of the world was. This question was debated within the traditional Graeco-Roman tradition concerning the existence of gods and heroes. Within this context the early Christian apologists tried to prove that their god was the only real one. They did this by emphasizing parallels between Jesus and the past and present gods and heroes of Mt. Olympus, using the same terminologies, symbols and rites as the earlier tradition.⁹¹ By giving these common proofs a distinctive meaning, however, the Christian writers attempted to elevate their deity to the status of the only true savior. For example, they argued that their savior was different because: a) his advent was also predicted in their prophetic Scriptures, their "holy writings" became *μαρτυρία* and "divine teachings" used in defending their positions;⁹² b) he had no beginning;⁹³ c) he died through a conspiracy;⁹⁴ d) he came as a good physician;⁹⁵ e) his 'divine teaching' was supported with miracles and prophecies;⁹⁶ f) he healed without a

⁹¹J. Geffcken, *Zwei griechische Apologeten* (Leipzig & Berlin: Teubner, 1907) 240-6. He analyzed the polemic which existed between the 'pagan' and Christian apologists and concluded that they often employed the same arguments—on the one side as a support for their own defense and on the other side as an argument against the opponents' view.

Another parallel between the two opposing groups is also the distinction made between divine miracles and the works of magicians. Magicians are outcasts condemned by both sides and are generally rejected; however, on some occasions the two use the argument against each other, that the other does the work of a magician (Remus, *Miracle*, 52,71-2).

⁹²E.g., Lactantius *Div. inst.* 5.3,7-22. He claimed that Jesus and his miracles are superior to miracles of Apollonius of Tyana, because Jesus's life was predicted in their prophetic writing; John 5:39; Rom 3:21 and A. Aristides *Or.* 24,46; Origen *Cels.* 3.22: "The divine teaching"; Justin *Dial.* 69. The opposition imitated their scripture.

⁹³See also chapters II.A and III.E.

⁹⁴Origen *Cels.* 3.25.

⁹⁵Origen *Cels.* 2.67; 3.22.24.

⁹⁶Lactantius *Div. inst.* 5.3.7-22. Kolonkow, "Miracles," 1503; Achtemeier, "Miracle Workers," 158-59.

medium;⁹⁷ g) he healed both good and bad people;⁹⁸ h) he is also a king;⁹⁹ i) he had the power to forecast his own death.¹⁰⁰

Secondly, the question was raised about which divine healer was still actively healing and performing miracles at that time. This was not so much a theoretical question as it was a question of practical application in the daily lives of people who required healing from bodily illnesses; it also had ramifications for missionary success.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷Tertullian *Adv. nat.* 1.48-49.

⁹⁸Amobius *Adv. gentes* 49.

⁹⁹Eusebius *Eccl. hist.* 10.11-12: "And like some excellent physician, who, to save those who are sick... He who is the Giver of life, the Enlightener, our great Physician (*iατρός*) and King and Lord, The Christ of God."

¹⁰⁰Origen *Cels.* 2.47; 2.54-55.

¹⁰¹Within this context Celsus and Origen did argue about the numbers of healed persons, see below p. 153.

CHAPTER IV. COMPARISON BETWEEN THE ASCLEPIUS AND JESUS CULTS.

A. THE STATUS OF THE ASCLEPIUS CULT IN THE 2nd CENTURY CE.

There is strong archaeological evidence from the Asclepieia in Epidauros and Pergamum that during the 2nd century CE the two sanctuaries enjoyed great popularity and received great support from large segments of the population. Many new buildings were erected, and the sanctuaries became bigger and better equipped to greet and accommodate the great number of visitors who came to worship Asclepius. The archaeological evidence also shows that these two sanctuaries were expensively decorated and ornamented with stone moldings, paintings and mosaics.¹ These two places, as well as many other Asclepieia, provide strong evidence that the cult's popularity reached its zenith during the middle of the 2nd century CE.

Evidence for the popularity of the Asclepius cult is seen in the great number of inscriptions and dedications to Asclepius from this period. Many inscriptions report miraculous healings and numerous statues often having the inscriptions on their bases, also reflect the popularity of the cult among the more affluent segments of the population.

¹E.g., even the latrines in Pergamum were constructed in white marble and four beautiful Corinthian columns; Deubner, *Pergamon*, 52 (plates 43 and 44): "Die marmornen Kapitelle seiner Säulen gehören zu den besten kaiserzeitlichen Bildhauerarbeiten, die im Asklepieion gefunden worden sind."

For paintings see for example the description of Pausanias about the Tholos (Per. 2.27,3).

Many coins carry the image of Asclepius, especially in Pergamum and Asia Minor.² The statues, reliefs and coins generally represent Asclepius with a beard, a naked upper body (representing divine nudity) and a staff with a snake coiled around it.³ One characteristic which distinguishes Asclepius from other great gods is that he wore a chiton, and in most cases, shoes.⁴ On reliefs Asclepius is often represented in an act of healing, with his hand stretched over the patient.⁵ In artistic representation, a certain continuation between the older and newer healing deity does exist.⁶

If there is one archaeological find which symbolizes Asclepius' cosmic triumph, it is the round temple of Zeus-Asclepius-Soter in Pergamum. Its round

²E.g., Deubner, Das Asclepion, 8-9, plate 2 (a coin from Ephesus depicting Artemis and Asclepius), 3 (a coin from Pergamum); H. von Fritz, Asclepios, plates 3, 5, 8. See below p. 166, n. 38.

³Heiderich, Asclepius, 3-158. He discusses and groups the statues. The images in the temple of Epidaurus, the Gymnasium of Pergamum and other places represent Asclepius in a sitting position.

⁴This almost became his trademark, e.g. Athenaeus Deipnos, 7.33 (289C): "Clad in the garb of Asclepius."; Tertullian De Pallio 4.10.

⁵Lang, Cure and Cult, 9 (plate 9).

⁶Some of the early depictions of Jesus are not limited in their similarity to Asclepius alone. Other deities of the Hellenistic world were usually represented in a similar fashion, e.g., elevated position, bigger than life size, nudity (Henner von Hesberg, "Archäologische Denkmäler zu den römischen Göttergestalten," ANRW 17.2 [1981] 1132-33 (plates 38a and b). He illustrates two identical statues of Asclepius and Jupiter which were found in the imperial villa in Antium. Only additional attributes added to the basic figure made it possible to distinguish these two deities). The dependency of some representations of Jesus (e.g., Eusebius Eccl. hist. 8.18) need to be studied much more. Oscar Thulin ("Die Christusstatuette im Museum Nazz. Romano" MDAI R 44 [1929] 201-59) made a helpful attempt by showing the dependency of a statue of Jesus on Asclepius. The total denial of any relationship (see Harnack, Medizinisches, 141-42) is not justified. Also S. Hank, Die Entstehung des Christustypus, (1880), 8; Erich Dinkler, Christus und Asklepios: zum Christustypus der polychromen Platten im Museum Nazionale Romano (Heidelberg: Winter, 1980).

structure, whose vast cupola symbolized the universe, symbolically encircled Asclepius as the universal deity, the healer and savior of the whole inhabited world.⁷

B. THE HEALING TRADITION IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

The healing tradition among the followers of Jesus in the 2nd century CE must be viewed within a broad context. Although the Christian healing tradition was still in a stage of development and fluctuation, the 2nd century CE was the time when healing activities became increasingly an essential element in spreading the message of Jesus, thus beginning structured "health care" within the church. During this development, care for the sick was incorporated into the structure of the Christian message, and healing or failure to bring health to the sick became embedded in theological teachings. In subsequent centuries, the healing activity of the Christian church became a very structured part of the church activity and of the self-understanding of the Christian church. On account of this, the healing dimension of the early Christian church is first sketched out in this chapter to emphasize its trajectory and development into the Middle Ages.⁸

The fact that the healing dimension of the Christian church increased and gained in importance in the early centuries of its existence is visible in the trajectory from the gospels and such other works as the apocryphal acts, and from the time of

⁷The building has its predecessors in the Pantheon and in the Domus Aurea of Nero. This construction symbolizes the heavenly sky which surrounds the central deity (Dio Cassius 53.27,1; Suetonius 31,1). A continuation of this concept (physically and spiritually) is certainly found in the dome-structured Christian churches; AvP 8.3. 11-14.

⁸This later development has been studied and researched more extensively than the earlier centuries discussed in this dissertation. Among the important works are: Ludwig Deubner, *De Incubatione capita quatuor* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1900); E. Lucius, *Anfänge*; H. Delehaye, *Les Légendes Hagiographiques* (Bruxelles: Soc. de Bollandistes, 1927 and in his article "Les recueils antiques de miracles des Saints," *Analecta Bollandia* 43 (1925) 5-84. 305-25; H. Günter Die Christliche Legende des Abendlandes (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1910).

the persecution of its martyrs⁹ and leaders. They often became healers, e.g., the Apostle Andrew,¹⁰ or Gregory the Wonder Worker, as did the later saints of the church.¹¹ Even in the later tradition of the martyrs, the rivalry between the followers of Asclepius and Jesus was still alive. For example, in the Acts of Eupulus¹² it is reported that Eupulus was tortured for a long time and then questioned again about his beliefs. The executioner ordered him: "You poor fellow, adore the gods. Worship Mars, Apollo, Asclepius" but Eupulus refused and was executed.¹³ Another piece of evidence of Asclepius' legacy is reported in the Acts of Pilate. Here, the conflict between the followers of Asclepius and of Jesus is still

⁹E.g., after the mass exodus of Christians from the church during the Decian persecution, a plague came to Carthage and Alexandria which struck the *lapsi* and those who remained faithful (Cyprian, *Ad. Dem.* 17; Pontius, *Vita Cyprian.* 9). With the prospect of death without expiation of their sins and facing the plague without the healing power of the Christian church, the lapsed Christians tried to rush back *en masse* into the church for healing of the sickness. For the 'failure' of Apollo's saving power against the plague and famine see *Acta Acacii* 2.2; Martin Bernard, *The Healing Ministry in the Church* (Richmond: Knox, 1960) 36-39.

¹⁰Martyrion of Andrew 9: "γάρ Ἀνδρέας ὁ ἀπόστολος τού καὶ πατήρ καὶ διδάσκαλος καὶ λαρ্঱ος καθέστηκεν;" R.A. Lipsius, *Acta Apostolorum Apostrypha* (Leipzig: Mendelson, 1891) 2.1 52; Lucius, *Anfänge*, 255-70.

¹¹E.g., Theodore of Sykeon, *Vie de Theodore de Sykéon*, 145-6: "And if any required medical treatment for certain illnesses, or surgery of a purging draught or hot springs, this God-inspired man would prescribe the appropriate remedy to each like an experienced doctor trained in art. He might recommend one to have recourse to surgery and would always state clearly which doctor he should employ. In other cases he would dissuade those who wished to have an operation or to undergo some other medical treatment, and would recommend rather that they should visit hot springs. . . ." Edelstein, *Acta*, 2.169 note 31.

Even their bones became a medium for healings: Acts of Thomas 170. The bones of the dead apostle hanging from the neck of a such person are even considered to have healing power. Anitra B. Kolenkow, "Miracle," *ANRW* 23.2 1496-7: Chapter 9, "Martyrdom and Miracle in heaven, Martyr bones."; 1503.

For parallels to the Greek hero cult see Friedrich Pfister, *Der Reliquienkult im Altertum* (1912, Berlin & New York: De Gruyter, 1974); Hamilton, *Incubation*, 175: "The people required substitutes for the old gods. . . their place was taken by the Saints and the Madonna. . . ."

Of special interest are Kosmas and Damian. In their church close to Aetocorinth many anatomical thank-offerings of silver are on display as they were exhibited in the nearby Asclepieion (Lang, *Cure and Cult*, 31).

¹²G. De St. Croix, "Aspects of the Great Persecution," *HIR* 47 (1963) 92. He considers the sentencing to have taken place under Diocletian's first edict. The writing down of this martyrdom, however, took place at a later time.

¹³Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) 317.

present in Pilate's defense of the accusers of Jesus that "this [what Jesus does] is not casting out the demons by an unclean spirit, but by the god Asclepius."¹⁴

In the emergence of its own healing tradition, the early Christian church seems to have undergone a path of development similar to that of the Asclepius cult. The Asclepius cult developed two main trends which can be illustrated on the one hand in the sanctuary at Epidaurus, which did not have a "school of medicine/physicians" who were trained in medicine, or as Pliny called it "clinical medicine,"¹⁵ but healed exclusively by the miraculous power of the deity. On the other hand, in the Asclepion in Cos, "learned medicine" became the main focal point of healing activity.¹⁶ This is also the way the Christian healing activity developed. After its rather miracle and faith-centered beginning,¹⁷ the followers of Jesus turned more and more toward a method of healing dominated by "school medicine," or as Pliny called it, "clinical medicine."¹⁸ They started to create a medical healing profession of Christian doctors and selected church members. In the Christian development, however, this change was not a phenomenon which took place as a parallel development at the same time (as in the Asclepius cult). It was rather a process of succession-- the emphasis was first on the miraculous, and then,

¹⁴ Acts of Pilate or The Gospel of Nicodemus 1.1. Quoted from the Greek form 1 as translated in the ANF.

¹⁵ Pliny Nat. hist. 29.2.

¹⁶ Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 149; 153. Both in Epidaurus and in Pergamum no evidence of medical equipment (beyond knives, cupping cups, etc.) has been excavated thus far. In other sites like Cos, Cnidus, Rhodes and Cyrene, medical equipment, such as surgical instruments, levers, beams to lower and raise patients, etc., has been found; See Diehl, Excursions, 340.

The more medical trend within the Asclepius cult was in general less of an opposition to the emerging Christianity, since their god functioned more like a "patron" god. Their activity was primarily in specific Asclepieia (e.g., Cos) and through physicians among the rich segment of the society; Trinkler, Medicine and Miracle, 5-35; Jackson, "Art of Healing," 245-48; Behr, Aelius Aristides, 36-37.

¹⁷ 1 Thess 5:14; 1 Clement 59:4; James 5:14 "Is any one of you sick-- he should call the elders to pray and be anointed in the name of the Lord."

¹⁸ Pliny Nat. hist. 29.2.

from the late second and third centuries onward, on the medical-oriented activity. This is partially understandable by the early opposition to the message of Jesus. The initial "competition" from other healing gods and cults came from a "non-medical" trend, where miracles were strongly emphasized. The followers of Jesus reacted to this by stressing miraculous healings. With this "weapon" they competed in the Hellenistic world of miracle performers in order to establish themselves.¹⁹ This missionary aspect in competing with miraculous healings against other healing cults, however, was not the only healing activity of the church. The local groups of Jesus' followers also needed to provide health care for the sick and old members among them. This they did by developing a hierarchical mechanism to tend to the specific needs of their sick and the needs of the church in general.²⁰ The necessity to create a hierarchical structure grew out of the followers of Jesus' understanding that the power to heal was a spiritual gift from God which was not given to all members of the church. In his treatment of the Apostolic Constitutions from the second century, Harnack gives evidence of this change among the Christians when he points to the fact that each local group had to elect three widows—two to pray and to receive revelations and one to assist the sick women of the group.²¹ The help which the local groups gave each other was especially visible during the time of the early

¹⁹The followers of Jesus bring in all the potential that the Graeco-Roman and Jewish world had to offer in order to prove the divinity of Jesus (Kolenkow, "Miracle," 1503).

Adolf Harnack, History and Dogma (transl. by Neil Buchanan; 7 vols. Gloucester: P. Smith, 1976) vol. 1, 147: "...the extent to which the Gospel in earliest Christendom was preached as medicine and Jesus as a physician, and how the Christian message was really comprehended by the Gentiles as a medical religion...."

²⁰Its beginning can already be seen by Polycarp Phil. 6.1 "Let the presbyter... care for all the sick"; Justine Apol. 67. On Sundays the members bring goods to be distributed by the Bishop to the widows, sick and orphans.

²¹Adolf Harnack, Die Quellen der sogenannten Apostolischen Kirchenordnung (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1886) 22-3: "Wirwen sollen drei eingesetzt werden, zwei um im Gebet zu verharren für Alle, die in Anfechtung sind und für den Empfang von Offenbarungen, wo nur immer solche notwendig; eine aber, um den von Krankheiten heimgesuchten Frauen beizustehen, die dienstfrei sei... nicht gewinnstüchtig..."; 45-57. This passage has parallels to 1 Tim 5:16; Harnack, Medizinisches, 143-47.

persecutions.²² This stage of equality, however, did not last very long because it appears that overseeing the care of the sick became institutionalized and given mainly into the hands of the official leaders (male) of the church.²³ This development, changing from a rather open membership with equal rights,²⁴ to a closed membership with exclusive leadership, is a phenomenon not unknown within Hellenistic cults.²⁵

One aspect of this movement toward greater institutionalization is documented by Harnack in his list of the earliest known Christian doctors.²⁶ Augustine also provided evidence for this in the church in North Africa. He mentioned that, during his lifetime, healings became part of the regular church services. The healed persons were given *libelli* (on recommendations by church officials), who then in turn brought these "official" *libelli* to the bishop for recognition. After these documents

²² Tertullian *Apol* 39. He lets many gentiles say about the Christians: "See, how they love one another. . . ."

²³ This development concerning the Christian church is very similar to what Meeks (*The First Urban Christians*, 24-5) considers a phenomenon not common among the Hellenistic cults. During the founding years of new cults and groups, the female members played an active part in its life and leadership. However, when the cults became better established and more visible and even sought general and official recognition, the official role the female members played became suppressed. See also J. Gager (*Kingdom and Community*, 133-34) for the development within the Minerva cult. See also Maurice Goguel (*The Primitive Church* [trans. by C. Snape; London: G. Allen & Unwin LTD, 1964] 554) or the same view by a Catholic writer, Hopf, *Heilstätten*, 67.

In the Christian church the bishops became the overseers of this church activity (*Apost. Const.* 3.4); Pseudo Clement *Ep. ad Jacob*. 2. The bishop is called to rule the church like a physician.

²⁴ E.g., the inscription from Philadelphia concerning a private cult for Dionysos from the late second or early first century BCE. For the text, translation and interpretation is by S. C. Barton and G. H. R. Horsley, "A Hellenistic Cult Group and the New Testament," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 24 (Münster: Aschendorf, 1982) 7-41. In this source no discrimination was applied to bar membership to the cult on the grounds of sex and civic status. Men and women, both slaves and free people, belonged to this cult, in which Agdistis acted as "the very holy guardian and mistress of this *oikos*. May she create good thoughts in men and women, free people and slaves, in order that they may obey the things written here.;" Apollonius of Tyana *Ep.* 67.

²⁵ For literary and epigraphical testimony to the exclusion of various categories of people, see Theodor Wächter, *Reinheitsvorschriften im griechischen Kult* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1910) 118-34.

²⁶ Harnack, *Medizinisches*, 34-50.

were read during the worship hour, they became part of an official collection of the church. Thus these *libelli* represent a collection of miracles of the type commonly known from the Asclepius cult and other healing deities.²⁷

The care of the sick not only became more institutionalized and was given over to selected people in the church, but also medical practices and salvation became intertwined—the healing of the body became dependent on the healing of the soul (salvation) by the only Savior, Jesus.²⁸ In this process medical language was very often used.²⁹ The work of a bishop was even compared with the work of a

²⁷ Augustine *Civ. Dei* 22.8.20; *Serm.* 323-34 and 286, 8. Adolf Harnack, *Sitzungsbericht der Berliner Akademie*, 1910, 110. The argument in this article was enlarged and partially corrected by H. Delehaye, "Les premiers *Libelli Miraculorum*," *Analecia Bollandiana* 1910, vol. 29, 427; See also Nock, *Conversion*, 89 and Lucius, *Anfänge*, 289, n. 7. 296.

²⁸ Clement of Alexandria *Paed.* 1.8: "For many of the passions are cured by punishment, and by the inculcation of the sterner precepts, as also by instruction in certain principles. For reproof is, as it were, the surgery of the passion of the soul; and the passions are, as it were, an abscess of the truth, which must be cut open by an incision of the lancet of reproof. Reproach is like the application of medicines, dissolving the callosities of the passions, and purging the impurities of the levity of life; and in addition, reducing the excesses of pride, restoring the patient to the healthy and true state of humanity"; Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, 64; Harnack, *Medizinisches*, 134-41.

²⁹2. Clement 9; Tertullian *De poenit. 10*: "...yes, for evil does bring to misery; but where repentance is to be made, the misery ceases, because it is turned into something salutary. Miserable is to be cut, and cauterized, and rocked with the pungency of some (medical) powder: still, the things which heal by unpleasant means do, by the benefit of the cure, excuse their own offensiveness for the sake [by the grace] of the advantage to supervene."; Origen *Cels.* 1.9: "And he [Jesus] employs denunciation as medicine..."; I *Iesu Nave* 7.6; Diogenes 9.6: "...we should believe in his [Jesus'] goodness, and regard him as a nurse, father, teacher, counsellor, physician..."; Cyprian *De Lapsis / Treaties* 3.14: "As many as I love," saith the Lord, "I rebuke and chaste." And thus also it behoves the Lord's priest not to mislead by devising concessions, but to provide with salutary remedies. He is an unskilled physician who handles the swelling edges of wounds with the tender hand, and by retaining the poise shut up deep recesses the body, increases it. The wound must be opened, and cut, and healed by the stronger remedy of cutting out the corrupting part. The sick man may cry out... but he will afterwards give thanks when he has felt that he is cured."

Frequently, Asclepius is not mentioned by name, but the opposition to him is implied in the selection of the words; e.g., when Origen defends Jesus with a parable, he speaks of a king who sent a physician to be a healer in a city. The king is called φιλανθρωπότερος, which is clearly a decisive expression for Asclepius (*Cels.* 3. 62; Harnack, "Medizinisches," 129).

Medical language has also been used for the statesman as Plutarch attests (*Mor.* 8.19).

surgeon.³⁰ The Christian God became the ultimate healer through whom all healings occurred, even in the works of non-Christian healing activity.³¹ Furthermore, the care of the sick became an act of Christian duty which brought rewards of salvation.³² In this process not only healing from sickness but also medical questions started to become theological issues.³³ The inclusion of healing in

³⁰ Apostolic Constitutions L II 41: "Heile auch du (Bischof) wie ein mitleidender Arzt alle Sünder, indem du heilsame zur Rettung dienliche Mittel anwendest. Beschränke dich nicht auf Schneiden und Brennen und auf die Anwendung austrocknender Streupulver, sondern gebrauche auch Verbandzeug und Charpie, gib milde und zuheilende Arzneien und spende Trostworte als mildernde Umschläge. Wenn aber die Wunde tief und hohl ist, so pflege sie mit Pflastern, damit sie sich wieder fülle und dem Gesunden gleich wieder ausheile. Wenn sie aber eitert, dann reinige sie mit Streupulver, d.h. mit einer Strafrede; wenn sie aber durch wildes Fleisch vergrößert, so mache sie mit einer scharfen Salbe gleich d.h. durch Androhung des Gerichts; wenn sie aber um sich frisst, so brenne sie mit Eisen und scheide das eiterige Geschwür aus, nämlich durch Auferlegen von Fasten. Hast du dies getan und gefunden, dass vom Fuss bis zum Kopf kein milderndes Pflaster aufzulegen ist, weder Öl noch Bändage, sondern das Geschwür um sich greift und jedem Heilsuchenden zuvorkommt - wie der Krebs jedliches Glied in Faulniss versetzt, dann schneide mit viele Umsicht und nach gepflogener Berathung mit anderen erfahrenen Ärzten das faule Glied ab, damit nicht der ganze Leib der Kirche verdorben werde. Nicht voreilig sei also zum Schneiden breit und nicht so rasch stürze dich auf die vielgezähnte Säge, sondern brauche zuerst das Messer und entferne die Abscesse, damit durch Entfernung der innen liegenden Ursache der Krankheit der Körper vor Schmerzen geschützt bleibe. Trifft du aber einen Unbussfertigen und (innerlich) Abgestorbenen, dann schneide ihn mit Trauer und Schmerz als einen Unheilbaren ab." (Harnack, Medizinisches, 138).

³¹ E.g., Origen Cels. 1.9: "A religious man will not suppose that even a physician concerned with bodies, who restores many people to health, comes to live among cities and nations without divine providence; for no benefit comes to mankind without God's action. If a man has healed the bodies of many or improved their condition does not cure people without divine providence, how much more must that be true of him [Jesus], who cured . . ."; 1.26: ". . . not even those who heal many sick bodies can obtain their object of restoring health to the body without God's help; Clement of Alexandria Protr. 60.1; Dio Chrysostom Orat. 32.14.

³² E.g., Lactantius Div. inst. 6.12: "Also to undertake the care and support for the sick, who need someone to assist them, is part of the greatest kindness, and of great beneficence; and he who shall do this will both gain a living sacrifice to God and that which he has given to another for a time, he will himself receive from God for eternity."

This was also true for the care of the poor. Almsgiving is among the great means for obtaining remission of sins. It is next in rank after baptism and martyrdom (Origen Let. hom. 2.4).

³³ In the focus on physical healing, the notion about the correct, god-pleasing lifestyle became included. This in turn required knowledge and recognition of the divine Christian teaching. This is seen, for example, in 2 Clement Ad Cor. 9; Origen Cels. 3.13; 3.53 Harnack, (Medizinisches, 138) translates: "Wir heilen mit der Arznei unserer Glaubenslehre jedes vernünftige Wesen." 7.60; Comm. John 1.22; Iesu Nove 7; Cyprian De op. 1; S. Angus, Mystery-Religions and Christianity. A Study in the Religious Background of Early Christianity (London: Murray, 1925) 206-34.

The debate from this time about abortion illustrates this incorporation of a health-sickness concept into the theological questions of faith: Didache 2.2; Barnabas 19.5; Tertullian Apol. 9; Clement of Alexandria Paed. 2.10.96.

theological considerations led to questions of correct lifestyles. This concept then provided the basis for the development of a "theology of healing," whose consequences were important for Christianity's gaining predominance over the Asclepius cult and other healing activities. Arnobius expressed this clearly when he underlined this powerful tool of propaganda, namely, that Jesus is also the helper of sinners, whereas Asclepius helped only the *boni* and not the *malii*.³⁴ Jesus' healing became strictly dependent on the individual's lifestyle (the person's sinful stage), which had to be in accordance with established rules of the Christian church. The forgiveness of sins and the willingness to embark on a sin-free life became prerequisites for divine healing. This theological concept also helped the church to deal with sick people whom they could not heal. Through the teaching of the sinfulness of human beings, failure to heal a health-seeking believer could always have been blamed on either a) the sinful state of humanity, b) the sins of the sick person or c) on the will of God who has a wise plan in the sickness, suffering and death of an individual.³⁵ The relationship between healing and sin was theologically understood to work also in the other direction: a person who sinned was not only hindering the healing process, but sin could result in a healthy person becoming sick.³⁶ The fact that the healing activity of the early followers of Jesus became more structured and embedded in a theological concept was due to the growing number of followers and the necessity to deal with the failure to heal, and with death itself.

With the establishment of the church under Constantine, caring for the sick became an officially established function of the church. In the 4th and 5th centuries

³⁴ Arnobius *Adv. gentes* 1.37-46; 3.24.

³⁵ Herzog, *Heilungswunder*, 64; He lists samples of this notion, which occurs very frequently in Christians "Incubationsheilstaten."

³⁶ This is especially visible in the early Christian period in the time of persecutions: e.g., Cyprian (*De lapsi* 24) reported that a *lapsi* became mute after he denounced his faith and a woman bit her tongue off, which later led to her death. Arnobius (*Adv. gentes* 7.47) even blames Asclepius for bringing sickness to the human race.

CE, the church created its own system of hospitals and staff who took care of the sick,³⁷ primarily for its own people and the poor.³⁸ The fact that the poor were included is another aspect of the Christian theology which affected their health care.³⁹ In this development Christianity replaced the earlier domain of the Asclepius cults, as well as the general health care which the state provided.⁴⁰ From this new stage, Christianity continued its health care into the Middle Ages at which time the

³⁷Harnack, Medizinisches, 146.

³⁸The wealthier segments of the society had their own physicians. For the general attitude toward poor people and help offered to them see Hendrick Bolkenstein, Wohltätigkeit und Armenpflege im Vorchristlichen Altertum (Utrecht: Oosthoek, 1939); A. R. Hands, Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968). Especially significant for this research are chapter 5 "The poor" (62-76) and chapter 9 "Health and Hygiene" (131-45). In this last chapter the author gives evidence that the rich could afford their own personal doctors. The poor, however, were served by 'public' doctors according to a Greek city model which the Romans adapted. Hands also shows, by citing several Roman laws, how the Roman rulers established laws and special privileges for those physicians who served the general community (135,137,140). Therefore, there existed a system of 'social medicine': "... the title of *archiatroi* who were found both in the western and eastern parts of the Roman Empire by the second century AD suggesting that a system of public medicine became still more widespread in Roman times [than among the Greeks]" (139). Edelstein, Asclepius, 2.178.

However, more important to the health of the lower class than the availability of public doctors were the public institutions such as the large baths, the gymnasiums, public latrines and the aqueducts supplying clean water for the whole city. These rather expensive city services acted together with free libraries and parks as a means of recreation, and also served as preventive measures against disease by providing exercise, cleanliness and leisure.

³⁹The Christian concept that the followers of Jesus saw in each other brothers and sisters in the Lord brought with it the duty to care for one another (1. Clement 55,2; 59,4; Tertullian De poenit. 10: "A common spirit deriving from our common Master and Father must unite each man to his neighbour in a common destiny; for in one and in the other is the church, and the church is Christ." This was also fostered in the understanding that the poor are identified with Jesus (Acta S. Apoll. 44). Since the poor do identify with Jesus, his followers reflect his faith by doing good works for the poor every day through almsgiving and works of mercy to people, which in turn brought an understanding that charity is a supernatural virtue. It also determined the communion of the saints, which establishes a solidarity between the living and the dead, the militant and the triumphant. Thus, the followers of Jesus included all the poor in their solidarity which brought a kind of social welfare (see below p. 123, n. 129). Minucius Oct. 9.2: "It could be said that they even loved "before they knew each other.;" Lucian De morte Peregrini 11-13; Igino Giordani, The Social Message of the Early Church Fathers (Paterson, New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild, 1944) 298-320; Hopf, Die Heilgötter und Heilstätten des Altertums (Tübingen: Pietzcker, 1904) 67.

Cyprian De orat. domin. 4.8; 8.16: "For if by almsgiving to the poor we are lending to God and when it is given to the least it is given to Christ."

⁴⁰Hopf, Die Heilgötter, 12-34 (The Greek system); 36-51 (The Roman system); 57-68 ("Eigentliche Krankenhäuser"); G. H. R. Horsley, New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity (Alexandria: Macquarie, 1982) 10-25: "Doctors in the Graeco-Roman World."

religious orders became part of the selected group authorized by the church to care for the sick.⁴¹

This healing tradition later represented by the Christian tradition has remarkable parallels to the Neopythagorean–Neoplatonic philosophers of the early centuries of the Christian era.⁴² Apollonius of Tyana is an important representative of this movement because of his connection with Asclepius and the healing miracles he performed.⁴³ Even the Christians acknowledged that the gentile philosophers were in a certain way forerunners to the Christian monastic movement.⁴⁴ Among the parallels between the philosophers and the miracle-working monastics are: a) both groups are guided by inner voices to follow god, a desire which no earthly temptation is able to change;⁴⁵ b) the followers often give away all their possessions;⁴⁶ c) they leave their families (frequently also their homeland) in order

⁴¹Lucius, Die Anfänge, 337-419; 508: "So wenig wie den Wundertätern der Bibel stehen aber die Mönche den Wundertätern unter den Heidnischen Weisen und Philosophen nach. Sie verüchten vielmehr dieselben Wunder welche die griechisch Überlieferung seit Jahrhunderten den fremden Weisen, seit namentlich dem dritten Jahrhundert auch einigen unter den ältesten und den hervorragenden zeitgenössischen einheimischen Weisen beizulegen gewohnt war"; Hopf, Heilgötter, 67-68; Hamilton, Incubation, 109-71.

⁴²Angus, Mystery Religions, 220-21. Lucius, Anfänge, 337-420.

⁴³His life and the literary documents concerning him have been well researched and analyzed by: Hans Dieter Betz, Lukian von Samosata und das Neue Testament (Berlin: Academie, 1961); Jean-Louis Bernard, Apollonius de Tyane et Jésus (Paris: R. Laffont, 1977); Horst, Aelius Aristides, 9-85.

Many other parallels existed between the philosophers and the monks (e.g., natural miracles).

⁴⁴Chrysostomus De statu in hominibus, 17.2; Weinreich, Heilnungsweinende, 8. Weinreich compared the 16 year long devotion of Paulinus of Neola which he showed toward Saint Felix with the devotion of Aelius Aristides toward Asclepius. On account of the similarity between their lives and their devotions (coincidentally, both also produced literary works for their patrons), he concluded that they have many similarities and parallels. See also Lucius, Anfänge, 302.

Sophronius wrote down the wonders worked by Saint Cyrus and John after he was healed from an eye ailment (Migne, Patrol. Gr. 87.3 3438).

Otto Deubner, Die incubatione, 10-12; 70-74; 80-85. He sees in the "Sprachgebrauch" an obvious parallel between the stories of the Christian saints from the sixth century and the ancient healing reports. See also Strabo 8.6.15 (for Asclepius); 17.1.17 (for Serapis).

⁴⁵E.g., Eunapius Vita Sophist. 461. 500 (born 347; 472/3. He was a monk in Egypt).

⁴⁶E.g., Philostratus VA 1.13.

to live an ascetic life; d) generally their lives preclude marriage e) their diets exclude wine and meat;⁴⁷ f) they isolate themselves from the time and circumstances of the present and desire to reach a higher moral and ethical standard, even a perfectionistic state of being.⁴⁸ On account of this separation from others and their lifestyle, the general population considered both groups as perfect people, as a variety of "saint," often even as divine manifestations.⁴⁹ The gods of these two groups showed their favor for their 'select' people by revealing to them higher wisdom and by divine appearances.⁵⁰ There is also a significant parallel between the Christian healing places structured around the saints and the practice of incubation. The Christian health-seeker in these new healing places, like those in the Asclepius cult, entered an "abaton" (church, shrine etc.) to receive information about cures and remedies.⁵¹

In summary, the healing activity among the followers of Jesus developed from a beginning in which healing miracles and divine power played a significant role in the life of the believers and in their missionary propaganda. From this early stage their health care slowly changed toward more medically oriented and institutionalized health care.

⁴⁷ Philostratus VA 2.35; 4.42; 6.11; Iamblichus De Pytha vita 3.24; Eunapius VS 502; Marinus Vita Proculy 17.19.24.

⁴⁸ Philostratus VA 1.14; Iamblichus De Pytha vita 5.16; Eunapius VS 465.471.

⁴⁹ Philostratus VA 3.50; 4.31; Porphyrius De vita Pythag. 35; Iamblichus De Pythag. vita 2.6.8.19.27; Marinus 3.4; 26; Damasius De vita Isidori by Photinus, Bibliotheca, cod. 252 (Migne 103, p. 1252); Eunapius VS 458; 461; 470; 475.

Eduard Zeller, Die Philosophie (2 vols.; Leipzig: Fuss, 1881) vol. 2. 776.

⁵⁰ Philostratus VA 1.1; Eunapius VS 467; 500; 504; Marinus 6.28.33.

⁵¹ Hamilton, Incubation, 149-154; 175: "Briefly, the patient passes a night in the church, and during sleep he has a vision of some heavenly personage."

C. THE OPPOSITION BETWEEN THE TWO HEALING CULTS.

The opposition between the followers of the new creed (Christianity) and the defenders of the old religion (Asclepius) was a hard-fought battle, especially during the 2nd century CE. Both groups recognized in their opposition the strongest enemy they had encountered, both in terms of theological questions and healing activities. In their specific defense against and opposition to Asclepius, the Christian apologists go beyond the general polemic which they expressed against other Greek gods like Zeus and Apollo. They become more specific and detailed, apprehensive, even bitter in opposing their strongest enemy.⁵² This centrality of the opposition to the Asclepius cult is seen in the writings of, for example, Lactantius, who considers the god to be the arch-demon,⁵³ and in Tertullian, who sees in him a beast dangerous to the world.⁵⁴ The strong rivalry is also seen in the ongoing opposition Asclepius provided up to the 5th century, even after the physical destruction of the cult's sanctuaries and Asclepius' prohibition and defeat by the Christians. When Christianity turned its opposition to rebuke the Serapis, Isis and Mitras cults, the Asclepius cult was still a force to be reckoned with.⁵⁵

This opposition had a great impact on the theological development of the followers of Jesus. They had to acquire a healing dimension for a religious mission in order to claim superiority over the Asclepius cult.⁵⁶ In the writings of the biblical

⁵² E.g., Asclepius was even blamed for bringing plagues and diseases (Arnobius Adv. gent. 7.47).

⁵³ Lactantius Div. inst. 2.16.11.

⁵⁴ Tertullian Ad. nat. 2.14.

⁵⁵ See above pp. 205-10.

⁵⁶ See below pp. 5-6. Achtemeier, "Miracle Workers," 171: "Indeed, they [miracles] seem to be indispensable to making the Christian message believable." The work by Dieter Georgi (Die Geister) has clearly demonstrated the impact of the opposition on the theological development of early Christianity.

Acts and of the apocryphal acts, this impact became stronger and more clearly visible. The Apostles are depicted as miracle workers. They were identical to the typical Hellenistic "Man of God" whose performance of miracles proved the power which the god had given to them;⁵⁷ the "Man of God" figure was also known in the Asclepius cult.⁵⁸

That this wonderful power to perform miracles was very strong among the followers of Asclepius and Jesus in the 2nd century CE has been shown in this study. The confrontation between these two groups involved the question about which one of the many divine healers (*ἰατροί*) among the gods is the true and only healer (*ἰατρός*)—the savior of the whole world. The focus was on the savior of the universe, the healer, the god who is present with his followers, the one who tends spiritual as well as physical needs. This opposition between the devotees of Jesus and Asclepius during the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE is illustrated and expressed by the antagonists and proponents of the two saviors, who each considered their god to be very active in their time:

Origen (written around 248)

If we deem it a matter of importance, we can clearly show a countless multitude of Greeks and Barbarians who acknowledge the existence of Jesus.⁵⁹

Celsus (written around 177-80)

... a great multitude both of Greeks and Barbarians acknowledge that they have seen and still see, no mere phantom, but Asclepius himself, healing and doing good, and foretelling the future.⁶⁰

⁵⁷Gail A Paterson, "The 'Divine Man' in Hellenistic Popular Religions," (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1983) 261.

⁵⁸See below p. 67: "Assemble all who practice the healing art."

⁵⁹Henry Chadwick, Origen: Contra Celsum (Cambridge: University Press, 1953) xxviii. The date he suggests is the period between 177-80 CE.

⁶⁰Chadwick, Contra Celsum, xiv-xv; Origen Cels. 3.24: Celsus elaborated further on this activity and presence of the gods in his days (4.35), when he spoke about the true manifestation, and the healings experienced (8.45).

Maximus (written before 185)

I saw Asclepius himself, it was not in
a dream.⁶¹

Justin (written around 160)

The mighty deeds even
now done through his name.⁶²

A. Aristides (written 142-68)

And we recognized the true and
proper [present] doctor for us.⁶³

I looked up and I saw Asclepius of
Pergamum established in heaven.⁶⁴

D. THE SIMILARITY BETWEEN THE THEOLOGIES OF THE TWO HEALER GODS.

In order to do justice to the Asclepius cult and to understand its Sitz im Leben we must look at all the information discussed previously about the cult from the perspective of a devotee. The savior Asclepius provided hope, faith and healing to his followers.⁶⁵ This is the theology of Asclepius, whom the emperor Julian called "the great Lover of men," the divine physician who heals because he loves.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Maximus of Tyre 9.7: "εἶδον καὶ τὸν Ἀσκληπιόν, ἀλλ᾽ οὐχὶ ὄντα." H. Hobein, *Maximi Tyrii* (Philosophumena; Leipzig: Teubner, 1910) 110. Similar language is also used for Isis (Diodorus Sic. 1.25.3-5); W. Kroll "Maximus von Tyros," *RE* 14 (1930) 2555-62. Maximus lived around 125-185 CE.

⁶² Justin *Dial. Tryph.* 35

⁶³ A. Aristides *Or.* 50.56. See below pp. 95-96.

⁶⁴ A. Aristides *Or.* 47.57.

⁶⁵ A. Aristides *Or.* 50.37; See below pp. 59-60; 103 n.38; 100-1; 121-27.

⁶⁶ Julian *Ep.* 40; See below pp. 27; 199, n. 94 and 206-7.

Asclepius' titles include "savior,"⁶⁷ "lord" and "benefactor of all mortals,"⁶⁸ in the words of a 2nd century CE inscription:⁶⁹

These are the words of thy loving servant, O Asklepios,
child of Leto's Son: how shall I come into thy golden house,
O blessed one, O God of my longing, unless thy heart is
favourable to me and thou art willing to heal me and establish
me again in thy shrine, that I may behold my God who is
brighter than the earth in spring-time.

Thou alone, O divine and blessed one, art mighty; thee,
that lovest compassion, the Supreme Gods have granted
as a mighty boon to mortals, as a refuge from their sorrows.

Asclepius was seen by his followers as a god who cared for each devotee and wanted them to believe and trust in him. This point is too frequently overlooked.⁷⁰ The fierce opposition between the devotees of Asclepius and Jesus was particularly a result of the fact that they each had a similar theological concept of their god.⁷¹ This

⁶⁷ A. Aristides *Ox.* 50.29: "First I had to be saved"; *AvP* 8.3. 144-45. Inscription number 144 dedicated to Asclepius by Aristides toward the end of his life is a good witness of devotion and belief in Asclepius. Aristides thanks his god for the healings he received, the protection during sea voyages and shipwrecks and from the hot and cold weather, for the personal relations he had with other people, his 'professional' achievements, etc.

⁶⁸ This is expressed for example in the *Orphic Hymns* 67.1-4: "Asclepius, Lord Paian, healer of all, you charm away the suffering of men in pain. Come, mighty and soothing, bring health, and put an end to sickness and the harsh fate of death" (A. Athanassakis, *The Orphic Hymns* [Texts and Translations 12; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977] 89) and in the *Homeric Hymn to Asclepius*: "Asclepius, healer of sickness... a great source of joy to mankind: he can charm away awful pains." (Charles Boer, *The Homeric Hymns* [Chicago: Surallow, 1970] 66).

⁶⁹ *C.I.A.* 3.171; Translation from Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults*, 277.

⁷⁰ G. Murray, *Four Stages of Greek Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925) 136: "In the honorific inscriptions and in the writings of the learned, philanthropy is by far the most prominent characteristic of the god upon earth."

One simple sign of this oversight is the frequent comparison of the Asclepieia with the sanitoriums and spas of nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Europe and America. This is wrong, because the Asclepius devotees came first of all to honor and worship their god and secondarily to request healing.

⁷¹ Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults*, 276: "Asclepius is above all others φιλάνθρωπος, the Savior, bearing more frequently than any other deity the title 'Savior,' prophetic of a higher religion: he is the lover of the people, φιλόλατος, in Laconia, the considerate god who feels for human weakness—Συγγένων at Epidaurus. In fact, Julian's phrase concerning the φιλανθράστευμα of Asclepius, who heals not for reward but to gratify his own loving heart, not inaptly expresses the popular conviction and marks off this man-god from the other Hellenistic divinities. The tender regard for children...".

is exactly what Ignatius meant when he wrote: "There is one physician... Jesus Christ our Lord," and Clement hailed the logos as "the only Paeanian physician of human infirmities, and the holy charmer of the sick soul, the all-sufficient physician of humanity."⁷²

Thus, one important reason for the total rejection of Asclepius by the Christians lies in the many similarities between the two gods,⁷³ especially the fact that both appeared as the savior of the whole world and as healing deities. Jesus appeared in the earliest Christian documents as a physician and healer.⁷⁴ In the missionary activity of the Christians the power to heal and to raise the dead was an important proof of the new religion. This brought it into direct conflict with the old religions, especially the Asclepius cult.⁷⁵ This is visible in Justin's writings where he says that Jesus performs miracles which are similar to—even identical to—those of Asclepius. This claim was also made by Clement, Diogenes, Arnobius and others.⁷⁶ There were also no great differences in blessings received by the devotees of each

⁷²Ignatius Eph. 7.2. See chapter III.E.7.b; Clement of Alexandria Paed. 1.2.6.

⁷³Edelstein, Asclepius, 2.135: "...there was a disturbing resemblance in their way of life and in their characters. Christ did not perform heroic or wordly exploits; he fought no battles; he concerned himself solely with assisting those who were in need of succor. So did Asclepius. Christ, like Asclepius, was sent into the world as a helper of men... Christ in his love of men invited his patients to come to him, or else he wandered about to meet them. This too, could be said about Asclepius."

⁷⁴Hamack, History, 1. 147: "...the extent to which the Gospel in the earliest Christendom was preached as medicine and Jesus as a Physician, and how the Christian message was really comprehended by the Gentiles as a medical religion...".

⁷⁵E.g., Origen Cels. 3.75. Celsus wrote: "The man who teaches the doctrine of Christianity is like a man who promises to restore bodies to health, but turns his patients away from attending to expert physicians because his lack of training would be shown up by them... [the Christians say] run away from the physician."

⁷⁶Justin Apol. 26.6; Diogenes 9.6; Clement of Alexandria Paeda, 12: "That is why the Word is called Savior, because he left men remedies of reason to effect understanding and salvation, and because, awaiting the favorable opportunity, He corrects evil, diagnoses the cause of passion, extracts the roots of unreasonable lust, advises what we should avoid, and applies all the remedies of salvation to those who are sick." Arnobius Adv. nat. 1.48.49 (Christ healed the good and the bad without a medium or intermediary material).

religion from their gods.⁷⁷ The similarity of the depiction of Asclepius and Jesus is nicely illustrated by the use of Hippocrates' word. The exact same words are used by Lucian to illustrate the healing work of Asclepius and by Eusebius to explain the healing activity of Jesus!⁷⁸

Other similarities between the two healing gods are: a) they were sent by the "supreme" gods who are, incidentally, both male gods; b) they were sons of a god and of a mortal woman;⁷⁹ c) they were pre-existent;⁸⁰ d) they acted and worked on behalf of their fathers who sent them out of their φλανθρωπία;⁸¹ e) they resurrected people;⁸² f) in their mission on behalf of the human race, they were also considered to be blameless and were mainly working to assist the needy, a work continued for them through their chosen followers after their death;⁸³ g) their deaths are related to their healing activity;⁸⁴ h) both are established in heaven after their death;⁸⁵ i) both

⁷⁷Arnobius Adv. nat. 1.49.

⁷⁸Hippocrates De Flatibus 1; Lucian Bis Accusatus 1; Eusebius Ecc. hist. 10.4.11: "And like some excellent physician, who to save those who are sick, though for another's misfortunes reaps suffering for himself"

⁷⁹Ep. ad Titum 3.4; Gal 4:4.

⁸⁰Julian Ox. 4.144: "[Apollo] begat Asclepios in the world, though even before the beginning of the world he had him by his side."

⁸¹E.g., IG 4.2. 1; Fritze, "Münzen," 41; Ep. ad Titum 3.4; John 3:16.

⁸²Edelstein, Asclepius, 2.45.

⁸³Edelstein, Asclepius, 2.73-4. The Christians had a hard stand to defend the superiority of Jesus vis à vis Asclepius on the account of moral considerations.

⁸⁴See chapter III.E. Asclepius died because of his success as a physician. E.g., Apollodorus, Bibl. 3.10.4 (See commentary by J.G. Frazer (LCL) 19, note 3). In the Gospel reports about Jesus, the opposition to Jesus which led to his death was related to his miracle-working activity, which included healings. E.g., Matt 12:22-27; Mark 5:17.

⁸⁵A. Aristides Ox. 50.56. Aristides is considered to live in heaven. See below pp. 121-27; 194.

commissioned disciples to continue their work;⁸⁶ k) both gods provided their disciples with the same power as their teachers possessed and exercised it. These representatives used their power to perform healings to further their cause, to guide the sick as well as the healed (they also proposed a lifestyle which was in harmony with their healer's view);⁸⁷ h) they appeared to their beloved followers after their death and instructed them;⁸⁸ i) in both traditions the founders became much more important after their death.

Theological considerations also illustrate the similarities between the two cults. Both deities were considered saviors of the whole world, "helper[s] of the human race"⁸⁹ and gods "who have chosen to benefit humanity in every way, giving each man what is his due."⁹⁰ They freely give gifts to the human race and "look after men."⁹¹ From this understanding of their soter, both groups of followers developed a theological understanding of their personal lifestyle which they desired to live in accordance with the will of god.⁹² In their theology, both groups also had the

⁸⁶ Pausanias VA 3.37-8. In both groups, some of the close followers deserted their masters during the trial period.

⁸⁷ Philostratus VA 1.9.

⁸⁸ Philostratus VA 1.7. The reappearance of Asclepius is an old tradition in the Asclepius cult. The big stelae in Epidaurus from the late 4th century BCE already report miracles on stone A and B 42. Of these, 30 report appearances of Asclepius.

From A. Aristides' account (Or. 49. 45-49; 50.97; we know that Asclepius frequently appeared to him, as did Isis and Serapis.

This tradition continued among the miracle workers who also appeared again to their followers. Through this they continued to guide their followers.

⁸⁹ POxyr 1381 (lines 83-4).

⁹⁰ A. Aristides Or. 42.5; Julian Iamb. 419B.

⁹¹ A. Aristides Or. 42.5; 42.7: "But some, I mean both men and women, even attribute to the providence of the god [Asclepius] the existence of the limbs of their body, when their natural limbs had been destroyed; others list other things, some in oral accounts, some in dedications of their votive offerings. For us it is not only a part of the body, but it is the whole body which he has formed and put together and given as a gift"; Aristophanes Aves 1334.

⁹² POxyr 1381 (line 210-12). The devotees of Asclepius were called upon to live a virtuous life. See also Barton and Horsley, "A Hellenistic Cult," 41.

understanding that god was able to withhold his blessings and even to punish for such reasons as incorrect way of life, neglecting to fulfill the duty of sacrifices, or an act of disbelief. In both groups there existed a social understanding that the members had to assist each other in times of need.⁹³

The theology of the Asclepius cult is still visible in the writings of the Emperor Julian. He wrote: "Asclepius, having made his visitation to earth from the sky . . . is present everywhere on land and sea. He visits no one of us separately, and yet he raises up souls that are sinful and bodies that are sick."⁹⁴ The Asclepius devotees also understood theologically that they had to exercise patience because god acted (healed) according to his own will.⁹⁵

There exists also a strong similarity or, rather, a continuation in the physical places where the healing gods are worshipped. It is fair to say that most Christian churches in Greece and Asia Minor are built on the sites of former temples, shrines or other holy places, frequently those of Asclepius, since the ruins of the Asclepius sanctuaries generally became the quarry for the new shrines of Jesus.⁹⁶ The Asclepieion of Athens is a good example of this. Here, a Christian church was built at the slope of the Acropolis, in a relatively constricted and inaccessible location just under the south cliffs of the Acropolis west of the temple and theater of Dionysus and east of the Odeion of Herodes Atticus. The cave and the "holy" water were also incorporated into the church and play a role in the Christian worship still practiced

⁹³ A. Aristides Or. 48.27 (Edelstein, Asclepius, 2.178). The sliding scale of fees at the Asclepieia, the possible delay of payment (in Pergamum up to a year) and the fact that others were able to substitute the "payments" for others are indications of this.

⁹⁴ Julian Con. Christ. 200 A-B; 235 B-C about his own experience; Oration 4.153B: "Asclepius is the savior of the whole world."; See below pp. 109-10.

⁹⁵ Herzog, Wunderheilungen, 54. Inscription WLeb 7.

⁹⁶ E.g., Eunapius VP 461: "... for Constantine was emperor and was pulling down the most celebrated temples and buildings, Christian churches . . ." For the Christian use of the Asclepieia see below pp. 12, n. 1 (Rome); 27 (Aigai); 92-93 (Pergamum).

there at the present time. This fact strongly underlines the reality that the Christian church took over certain aspects for which these Asclepius ruins stood, and continued to use these places in their effort to replace the old cult.

In addition to strong opposition between the two groups, there also existed a certain amount of respect between them.⁹⁷ This is seen, for example, in the statement of Clement regarding the Asclepius cult in Epidaurus; when he discusses the Christian concept of love and faithfulness, he gives a positive assessment of the Epidaurian cult: "And this was what he, whoever he was, indicated who wrote on the entrance to the temple at Epidaurus the inscription--'Pure he must be who goes within the incense-perfumed fane.' And purity is 'to think holy thoughts.' 'Except ye become as these little children, ye shall not enter,' it is said, 'into the kingdom of heaven.' For there the temple of God is seen established on three foundations--faith, hope, and love."⁹⁸ Another example is from Arnobius. Although he expresses strong opposition against Asclepius, on one occasion he gives Asclepius the recognition that he was a healer-god, destined to work for a short time-- for only one age.⁹⁹

The close similarity between the two cult figures brought strong opposition between the two groups. Christian followers of Jesus not only rejected the Asclepius cult and denied its deeds, but were also prohibited from participating in any form of the opposing cult's activities.¹⁰⁰ This total denial by the Christian church was necessary since many members of the new religion still participated in the Asclepius cult. Such a denial of participation in the opposing cult was not necessary for the

⁹⁷Origen Cels. 3.24: "Celsus asks us to believe it; he would not criticize believers in Jesus if we were to believe in these [his] testimonies."

⁹⁸Clement of Alexandria Strom. 5.1.13.

⁹⁹Arnobius Adv. gentes 7.47.

¹⁰⁰Edelstein, Asclepius, 1.32-38.

Asclepius followers. On the one hand, their understanding of their god Asclepius could have tolerated another healing deity like Apollo, Hygieia, and Serapis, who were already celebrated at the Asclepieia, e.g., in Pergamum. On the other hand, Aristides shows clearly that Jesus as a new healer god was not attractive to the followers of Asclepius.¹⁰¹

E. THE WRITTEN HEALING RECORDS.

The followers of Asclepius and Jesus also had similar written accounts of the deeds of their gods. They were even so close that they accused each other of having copied their writings.¹⁰² The reporting of Christian miracles showed a recognizable similarity to the reporting of healings of the Asclepius cult. Clearly, many of the votive inscriptions could be used to serve Jesus (or, for that matter any other healing deity) or vice versa—healing miracles of Jesus could be used as propaganda for Asclepius by just exchanging the names.¹⁰³

During the 2nd century CE, when the miraculous healing activities were in the foreground, a development involving the reporting of miraculous healings took place in both cults. The great competition among the different healers provoked a movement towards longer and more miraculous healing reports.¹⁰⁴ It was necessary to make up for the lack of mythos about the deity by substituting holy words, which revealed in another way the divine power;¹⁰⁵ it was also necessary for the purpose

¹⁰¹ See chapter III. 2.c.

¹⁰² Origen *Cels.* 3.22; Justin *Dial.* 69.

¹⁰³ Angus, *Mystery-Religions*, 308.

¹⁰⁴ See chapter IV.E.

¹⁰⁵ Otto Weinreich, *Neue Urkunden zur Sarapis-Religion* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1919) 10-11. He illustrates this Hellenistic phenomena on the Serapis literature. Angus, *Mystery-Religions*, 302-3.

of missionary propaganda. Among the various elements which led to the popularity of these literary works was the desire to be more popular and entertaining by promoting the novel (=romance) of Greek literature.¹⁰⁶ From the Christian standpoint, this way of reporting made their message more credible.¹⁰⁷ For them these reports were a written testimony to their God's power, reporting that his followers were winning contests— the miraculous divine power of Jesus was victorious over those powers representing different deities— e.g., Peter against Simon in the Roman Forum.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the reporting of the miracle activity by the followers of Jesus was an attempt to become more "fashionable."¹⁰⁹ This made them more able to compete in the religious world of Hellenism because these

¹⁰⁶ Achtemeier, "Miracle Workers," 162.164: "If this is true, therefore, as seems to be the case, that the authors of the apocryphal acts have adopted literary conventions of the Hellenistic world in the composition and structure of narratives, and if, as seems equally to be the case, those elements make the act more "entertaining," and thus more likely to be read, then it would also seem to be the case that the authors had some kind of apologetic and/or missionary intention underlying their work. They appear to have wanted to gain readers for their works and were willing to cast those works in a form currently popular. To that extent, they adapted their understanding of the Christian message to the literary tastes of the second and third centuries."

¹⁰⁷ Nock, *Conversion*, 89. In regard to *Poxyr*, he writes: "it is of utmost importance that these miracles were written down in book form."

¹⁰⁸ Justin *Dial. c. Try.* 69; *Acta of Peter* 2.32 (NTA 2. 292-316). Simon, who was earlier expelled by Peter from Palestine, gained great influence in Rome. Peter, after having been summoned to combat Simon, challenged him after some preliminary sparring, to a contest of miracles which was sponsored by a Roman official. Peter won the "flying" contest and Simon died due to complications from his fall from heaven. A former follower of Simon then handed the victory over to Peter by saying that he too wanted to become a follower of Jesus.

This concept is not foreign to the New Testament also: e.g., Acts 8:9-11; 9:35,42; 13:12; Rom 15:18-20; 1 Cor 2:4.

Origen *Cels.* 4.80. Miracles are a very important tool to convert people before they progress intellectually; 3.21. Masses need miracles and the elite is better served by teaching; 3.28.

¹⁰⁹ A. Henrichs, "Vespasian's Visit," 65: "The literary genre is well-known from Hellenistic times onwards, accounts of miracles became more and more fashionable."

miracles were powerful and convincing tools in missionary propaganda.¹¹⁰ The documents also connected the Christian tradition with the history of reported miracles practiced by the Asclepius cult. One important element in this new reporting is that it provides information about the cult and the devotees' understanding of the cult. The short reports in inscriptions have lost for us their *Sitz im Leben* in the cult activity. However, these longer autobiographical reports make clear the devotees' theological understanding of these healings as spiritual transformations which point toward the transcendent.

The Asclepius cult itself claimed that Asclepius invented this method of reporting the deeds of god. For the Asclepius devotees the written thank-offerings were more important and longer lasting than other means of expressing gratitude.¹¹¹ Out of this understanding, the reports of the power of god (*δύναμις*) which is manifested on earth through the performance of miracles (*δυνάμεις, ἀρεταί, σημεῖα*) either by the god himself or by his chosen people became more detailed and took on a narrative style well beyond the short and stylized accounts customary in inscriptions.¹¹² This question of the origin of this reporting requires much more

¹¹⁰ E.g., *Acts of Peter* 16. Jesus appears in a dream and reveals to Peter: "Already the great mass of the brethren have turned back to me through you [Peter] and the signs which you have done in my name. But you shall have a trial of faith on the coming Sabbath and many more of the Gentiles and of the Jews shall be converted. . . For I will show myself to go when you ask for signs and miracles, and you shall convert many; but you will have Simon opposing you. . . ."

This competition appears to me to be at least a partial answer to the question which Achtemeier ("Miracles," 175-76) raised about the absence of new miracles being told of the mature Jesus beyond those known from the Gospels. The competition among healers took place before audiences and was about performing miracles before the eyes of the judges (people) and not about stories of the past. Besides this, other healing cults and especially the Asclepius cult could easily have outnumbered and outdone with older miracles than those the followers of Jesus could tell about their Jesus. Weinreich, *Sarapis-Religion*, 11-12; Paterson, "Divine Man," 266-67. He concludes that this way of reporting grew out of the need to "supplement" the miracles already found in the tradition to cater to the popular appetite for wonders. These miracles were extremely important in those days because they were such "powerful agents in conversion. They resembled the *aretaí* of the gods, and through this resemblance gave the miracle-workers the appearance of divine authority."

¹¹¹ *POxy* 1381 (Line 87-8): "He [Asclepius] is the discoverer of this art." See below pp. 66-9; 122, n. 76 and chapters III.D.2.a.d. and IV.E.

¹¹² See below pp. 69, n. 11; 201, n. 102.

extensive research in order to illuminate its beginnings and use in the 2nd century by the Asclepius and Jesus devotees.¹¹³ From the limited research here, however, it is important to underscore the fact that the lengthier reporting of the deeds of the god is documented in the Asclepius cult in the 2nd century CE.¹¹⁴

A development connected with the decline of the Asclepius cult has also shown its effect on the Christian literature. The earlier emphasis on miraculous healings was pushed into the background with the decline of the Asclepius cult. This shift clearly parallels the development in the Asclepius cult. While the cult of Asclepius was at its peak during the end of the first and the beginning of the 2nd century CE and provided miraculous healings to health-seeking men and women, it was a threat to the followers of Jesus. The Christians met this challenge by stressing the miraculous healing element of their god. Therefore, the documents from this time report many healing miracles which emphasize the unlimited power of the Christian

¹¹³ Just as the Asclepius cult claimed to be the origin of this way of reporting, so has the same claim often been made on the Christian side. Such a study, as I call for here, has already been mentioned by H. Koester (*Encyclopedie*, 270): "The 'Gospel' which had seemed to be a genuinely Christian genre of literature, has emerged more and more as a complex form to which non-Christian genres have made substantial contributions. Yet these relationships need further explanations;" Weinreich, *Serapis Religion*, 11. He considers the Serapis cult to be the originator; Behr, *Sacred Tales*, 21. He thinks of A. Aristides as the originator of this way of reporting. See also chapter III.D.2.a.3.d.

The understanding of the Asclepius cult's devotees about their written works mentioned in this research (e.g., A. Aristides; *PQXXI* 1381; The Apocryphal Acts) will make an important contribution to this question. Other texts which need to be considered are, for example: Lucian *Peregrinus* 12; *Dea Syria* 2.4.11.15.26; Dio Chrysostom *Disc.* 1.49; 36.33; Philostratus *VA*. 5.43.

¹¹⁴ E.g., Asclepius cult: Aelius Aristides; J. Apellus, *PQXIV* 1381. Christianity: The apocryphal acts of the second and early third centuries CE.

healers and their god.¹¹⁵ However, with the decline in popularity of the Asclepius cult, the emphasis on miraculous healing elements also declined. This is evident in Christian literature, especially in the later apocryphal acts, where the healing miracles are no longer dominant.¹¹⁶

Another significant development took place in the two groups' understanding of their own writings as "holy writing," inspired λέπος λόγος of their god. Based on this understanding, they each used their own literature within their "cult" activities, for missionary propaganda and for apologetic purposes. The devotees built their faith and theology on the mighty deeds reported in these words of god.

E. THE CONTINUATION OF THE OPPOSITION.

The popularity of the Asclepius cult came to an end in the late 3rd century CE. At that time, the cult had already lost the great attractiveness that it possessed in the 2nd century. Though some centers were still functioning, its importance had

¹¹⁵During this time of 'Primitive Christianity', the Christians smoothed out characteristic features in an adaptation of popular tendencies of the Hellenistic world. They intensified the miraculous and made it even more striking and went well beyond the historical and factual events. It was a strong emphasis to enhance and highlight events; the historical figure of Jesus "has been intensified out of all proportion" (Theissen, *Miracles*, 281-86, 282).

In the gospels, for example, this is visible in the Gospel of Mark, where the stress falls more particularly upon Jesus' deeds than upon his words. Among the many deeds, the healing miracles received the most attention—Jesus' first public act was a healing in the Synagogue at Capernaum. Then he went immediately to cure Peter's mother-in-law and on the same day in the evening all the sick people of the village were healed by him. In this way is the first day reported in the gospel of Mark 1:21-34.

In the apocryphal acts, the *Acts of Peter* gives evidence of this. Here too, the first action reported is a healing miracle.

¹¹⁶Achtemeier reached the same conclusion. The early apocryphal acts did report more healing miracles, whereas the later apocryphal acts show fewer healing miracles reported; See also *Acts of Peter* 23. When Peter opposed Simon the Magician in Rome he reminded him that he marveled at him and Paul "...when you saw the healings which were done by our hands." Peter does not mention miracles in general, but healings.

diminished. The cult lost later also its legal status with the official abolition of all the pagan cults in 391 CE.¹¹⁷

Before the cult's final decline, the Emperor Julian (361-63) was the last important defender of Asclepius. The change in the political leadership was welcomed and gratifying to all nonchristian religions, especially to the followers of Asclepius, because Julian showed a preference for their god. Complaints like that of Porphyry (232-304)— that his city was beset by diseases since Christ was honored and no public services were held for Asclepius— were heard, and the devotees' hopes of support for their cult were answered.¹¹⁸ This rejuvenation, however, was short-lived, as the partially fictitious story of the Asclepieion in Aegea illustrates.¹¹⁹ In his writing against the Christians, Julian mentioned again the whole earlier 'theological' debate between the two groups,¹²⁰ and made clear that he as the Emperor saw in Asclepius his personal healer and giver of medicine and the savior of the whole

¹¹⁷ Insight into this tragic event for the Asclepius followers is provided in the literary works of Libanius. He laments the decline of Greek studies. Also Eunapius, who wrote during and after the official abolishment of paganism in 391 (e.g., *Eunapius* 461; 472), provides insight into the destruction of the temples by Constantine (472-3) and the emergence of Christian monks and martyrs, whom he called "dead men." 465; 503.

¹¹⁸ Theodoretus *Graecanum Affectionum Curatio* 12.96-7.

¹¹⁹ Eusebius *Vita Const.* 3.56; Zonaras *Epit. hist.* 13.12,C-D. When the Emperor Julian passed through Tarsus, the priest of the Asclepieion asked him to restore the temple. Julian commanded that the local Christian bishop assume the expenses and that the Asclepieion be rebuilt at once. The workmen, however, were only able to take down one column and move it as far as the doorway. Because the workers were not able to fulfill the task, the column lay there until the emperor died. Then the bishop personally lifted up the column and put it back into its 'rightful' place and so restored the Christian church again. Julian *Con. Christ.* 200B.

¹²⁰ Julian *Gai* 200.A-B "I mean to say that Zeus engendered Asclepius from himself among the intelligible gods, and through the life of generative Helios he revealed him to the earth. Asclepius, having made his visitation to earth from the sky, appeared at Epidaurus singly, in the shape of a man; but afterwards he multiplied himself, and by his visitations stretched out over the whole earth his saving right hand. He came to Pergamum, to Ionia, to Tarentum afterwards; and he later came to Rome. And he travelled to Cos and thence to Aegae." *Hymn to King Helios* 144B; Antony Meredith, "Porphyry and Julian Against the Christians," *ANRW* 23.2 (1980) 1119-49.

world.¹²¹ He referred to Asclepius in a way which must have recalled among the Christians their own belief in Jesus.¹²² From Julian's perspective, Asclepius was still active wherever "he raises up souls that are sinful and bodies that are sick."¹²³ Also Julian's friend, the rhetor Libanius,¹²⁴ and another contemporary rhetor, Acacius,¹²⁵ were great participants and admirers of the old Asclepius healing cult. Later on Jerome still encounters faithful believers of Asclepius who spent their nights in the temple area.¹²⁶ The philosopher, Plutarch, also spent nights in the temple in 423 CE when he became sick¹²⁷ and so did Domninus¹²⁸ and Proclus. Proclus,

¹²¹ Julian Gal. 235.B: "Asclepius heals our bodies. . . ."; 235.C-D: "Consider therefore whether we are not superior to you in every single one of these things, I mean in the arts and in wisdom and intelligence. . . . the art of healing derived from Asclepius. . . . At any rate, when I have been sick, Asclepius has often cured me by prescribing remedies; and of this Zeus is witness."; To Iamblichus 419.B: "Asclepius, again, does not heal mankind in the hope of repayment, but everywhere fulfills his own function of beneficence to mankind."; Letter 31: "A decree concerning Physicians."; Letter 34. See below pp. 27 and 199.

¹²² Julian Hymn to King Helios 144 B-C: "And since he [Helios] fills the whole of our life with fair order, he begat Asclepius in the world, though even before the beginning of the world he had him by his side. . . . Helios with Asclepius fulfills the fair order of the whole life." 153-B: "Shall I now go on to tell you how Helios took thought for the health and safety of all men by begetting Asclepius to be the savior of the whole world." Gal. 200 A.

¹²³ Julian Gal. 200-B.

¹²⁴ Libanius (born in 314 in Antioch-- his last known letter is dated 392 CE) also sought healings by Asclepius Epistula 141-2; ed. by Richard Foerster & E. Richtsteig (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903, reprinted, 1963). He used a lot of medicine and bandages, Ep. 913; 930; 1434b; Ep. 1383 He calls Asclepius "ὁ φιλανθρωπότατος θεός"; Ep. 1300; Ep. 1303. In the year 364 he gave Asclepius (ὁ φιλόδφορος θεός) the credit for gaining strength again in his lame foot.

Once when Libanius was not able to receive healing, he sent his brother to go to the god for him and visit the incubation room in order to receive the miracle (Ep. 618; 620; 700). He considered the destruction of the Asclepius temples as a destruction of an ancient heritage (Ep. 607); Libanius Or. 30. 21-4; 30.38-9: "And now the people whom their illnesses, that require the hand of Asclepius, attract to Cilicia are sent empty away because of the outrages the place had suffered [destruction of the temple]. They cannot help returning with curses for the author of it."

¹²⁵ G. R. Sievers, Das Leben des Libanius (Berlin: Weidmann, 1868) 276-78; 103-24: "Die Reaktion unter Julian."

¹²⁶ Jerome In Esaiam 65.

¹²⁷ Lucius, Anfänge, 254.

¹²⁸ Suidas Lexicographi Graeci (ed. Ada Alder; Stuttgart: Teubner, 1967) vol. 127: "Δομνῖνος."

besides having written a hymn to Asclepius, underlined his strong devotion to his god by seeking a place to live in close proximity to the Asclepieion in Athens, so that he could visit it freely and receive healing from Asclepius.¹²⁹ This occurred during the time when the sanctuary was still active despite the fact that the sanctuary of Athena Parthenos had already become a Christian church by this time.

The length of time during which Asclepius and Jesus were compared to each other is seen in the works of Alcuin. In the eighth century he still called Asclepius the false Christ.¹³⁰ Furthermore, Norden mentions that when humanistic thinking in the time of the Renaissance prohibited the use of non-classical words, they used to substitute the name of Asclepius (and of Apollo) for the name of Jesus.¹³¹

Asclepius (as well as Serapis) provided the strongest opposition to the Christians up to the 5th century CE. The literary evidence clearly indicates that the opposition between the two was a hard-fought competition in which both sides used almost identical historical and theological arguments.

G. THE ASCLEPIUS CULT SUPERSEDED BY CHRISTIANITY.

The focus of this study is on the religious healing tradition, the interaction between the devotees of Asclepius and Jesus, and the strong influence of Asclepius on the message of Jesus. However, when we consider that the Christian institution gained supremacy over the Asclepius cult, we have to see this as a result of not only the success of the Christian healing tradition, but rather as a result of several circumstances.

¹²⁹Marinus *Vita Procli* 29; 31. Asclepius healed him from arthritis; 29 He heals the daughter of his friend; 30.32. Asclepius also helped Proclus in his last sickness, by helping him to die (he died 485 CE).

¹³⁰Alcuinus *Epistulae* 245 (he lived approximately 730-80 CE).

¹³¹Eduard Norden, *Die Antike Kunstwissenschaft vom IV. Jahrhundert vor Christus bis zur Zeit der Renaissance* (2 vols.; Berlin: Teubner, 1923) vol. 2, 776 note 1.

On the one hand are the developments of the Asclepius cult itself and general socio-political influences at this time. Toward the end of the 2nd century CE, the cult lost its general attractiveness and the important support it received from the emperors and other influential people. The decline of the Asclepius cult was strongly influenced by Roman political and economical developments. The time in which the Romans gave peace to the area ended with the Antonine period. The late 2nd and 3rd centuries CE were a time:¹³²

When the emperors were anxiously guarding the frontiers, when the results of a vicious fiscal system had worked themselves out, when industry was paralysed, when earthquakes devastated rich and populous regions, when freemen were decreasing, when Goth and Hun and Vandal were swooping down on the prey in the empire, and when the Eternal City itself fell before the Germanic invaders"

The economic recession and the Roman state's preoccupation with its own survival brought its support for the Asclepius cult and other public projects to a halt, bringing an end to many sanctuaries. Needed funds for the upkeep and support of these elaborate sanctuaries dried up. Several Asclepieia were destroyed by earthquakes and the lack of support and official help prevented the devotees from rebuilding. In this regard the Christians were better off. Their movement had no large building complexes to take care of nor were they accustomed to rely on large outside gifts and institutional support. Thus they were far less adversely affected in this time of economic hardship in the Roman empire. Connected to this development was the fact that the cults in general depended on this money for the lavish festivals, games, public feasts and gifts that they provided for the people. This attractiveness

¹³²Angus, *Mystery-Religions*, 306. See also for example: Kurt Aland, "Das Verständnis von Kirche und Staat in der Frühzeit," *ANRW* 23.2 (1980) 60-246; Kereszes, "The Imperial Roman Government and the Christian Church I. From Nero to the Sevri," *ANRW* 23.2 (1980) 247-315; C. Andersen, "'Siegreiche Kirche' im Aufstieg des Christentums. Untersuchungen zu Eusebius von Caesarea und Dionysios von Alexandria," *ANRW* (1980) 387-723.

was lost when the cults could no longer support this kind of service.¹³³ The Christians, however, gained from this development because they had never received this kind of official financial support, and despite this they cared for the needy. Furthermore, in a time when public sacrifices declined, Christians gained from this process because they offered to replace the big public sacrifices with a more spiritual sacrifice.¹³⁴

Another reason for the decline of the Asclepius worship has to do with the general decline of Rome's power and the confusion of these changing times. Such changes, when the venerable system collapses, always bring a certain rejection and uncertainty about the past as well as a search for new insights. During this period of change, the Christian message was widely accepted.¹³⁵ In supporting this new religion, the martyrs also played a significant role with their testimonies.¹³⁶ In addition, the decline of the emperor cult had a negative effect on the Asclepius cult.¹³⁷

On the other hand, Christian health care developed and became structured with the growth of the movement. The care grew out of Christian belief that Jesus

¹³³ Nilsson, Griechische Religionen, vol. 2. 325.342-45.365.368; Angus, Mystery-Religions, 225.6.279-80.302.

¹³⁴ Martin P. Nilsson, "Pagan Divine Service in Late Antiquity," HIR 38 (1945) 63-69.

¹³⁵ Johannes Geffcken, "Der Ausgang des griechisch-römischen Heidentums," NJKA 41 (1918) 99-107. Important to recognize are also the "heftigen philosophischen Kämpfe" of the 2nd century which he mentions (101); Angus, Mystery-Religions, 306: "It is significant that Christianity spread most rapidly in the half-century (closing 3rd century CE) of the greatest confusion for pagan society."; 226; Harnack, Mission and Expansion, 1.85. He stresses that the Christian doctrine gradually became an important missionary attraction in the mid-third century; Gager, Kingdom, 140. He emphasizes the importance of the "sense of community" which the Christian provided.

¹³⁶ Origen Cels. 3.23: "Does Celsus want to make out that their stories [about Asclepius] are true, while these of Jesus are inventions, although they were recorded by people who were eyewitnesses... and proved their sincerity by the persecution which they willingly suffered for his doctrine?"

¹³⁷ E.g., Justin Apol. 1.21: "... and what of the emperors who die among yourselves, whom you deem worthy of deification...?"

commanded them to care for the poor and the sick. This included the lower classes of the society, for whom physicians became too expensive.¹³⁸ In this caring, theological concerns became part of their action and provided even more strength. The correct lifestyle according to the creator's will, prayer and medical practice made the Christian care for the sick more faith-oriented.

The fact that the Asclepius cult satisfied one of the greatest human needs by providing health and healing and that Asclepius was an important savior figure in the Graeco-Roman world had an impact on Christianity. The god of healing and the "lover of humanity" became one of the last to submit to Christianity. Yet even in its defeat, the Asclepius cult made a large contribution to the salvationistic terminology and healing aspect of Christianity. The followers of Jesus adopted many concepts which were characteristic of the Asclepius cult. Even after the old god lost his appeal they continued to substitute functions Asclepius had provided, and to appeal to the same hopes and needs which had drawn followers to worship Asclepius for so many years.

¹³⁸ E.g. Origen *Cels.* 7.60. Origen accused the Asclepius cult, that they represent "the physicians who have cared only for those supposed to be better classes, while they have despised the multitude of men." 7.59. He also compared the Asclepius followers with the "supposed better classes" and the followers of Jesus with "the simple folk and the majority of men." Furthermore, he mentioned the physician [Asclepius] "who has cared for the health of only a few" with the physician [Jesus] who has cared for the health of the majority. 3.13. See below p. 138, n. 43.

Pliny *Nat. hist.* 29.2: "There was no limit to the profit from medical practice." 29.5. The income of some of the famous Roman physicians is recorded.

V. Results and Consequences.

This study of the form, character and status of the Asclepius cult has shown that the cult was well-established throughout the Graeco-Roman world in the 2nd century CE, when the Asclepius cult was at the peak of popularity. Besides being worshipped in small sanctuaries, the deity was worshipped in large Asclepieia consisting of elaborate building complexes. The achievements of Asclepius as savior of the whole inhabited world and as healer were testified to in most cities by statues, reliefs, inscriptions and small votive offerings. The Asclepieia also functioned as cultural centers with their libraries, theaters and recreation areas and sponsored games and festivals.

The followers of Asclepius, who came from all social classes, associated with each other freely, bonded by their common devotion to and faith in their god and sharing a common theology and self-understanding. Their god, Asclepius, performed a vital function that met one of the most pressing needs in this time— the healing of the physically and spiritually ill and the embodiment of a patron of health. Asclepius related specifically to the believer as an individual and thus produced

results in the believer's personal life. The great numbers of people who attended his sanctuaries prayed, sacrificed, consulted the priests and enjoyed the social and recreational activities. They also participated in the rite of incubation, wherein the savior-god revealed himself to them, giving advice, comfort and new hope for their lives.

Thus, when the early followers of Jesus went to different cities with their message, they were confronted with the well-established and flourishing Asclepius cult. This led to rivalry between the two cults. During the time of the Asclepius cult's peak of popularity, opposition was manifested mainly by Christians. However, once the Asclepius cult's popularity leveled off, then, in its subsequent fight for survival, its members took a more defensive stand against the followers of Jesus, and the earlier rivalry heated up even more on both sides.

Due to the popularity of Asclepius as a healer and savior during the time when the followers of Jesus spread their message into the Hellenistic world, and in light of the opposition which existed between the old and the new healer cult (as this study shows), there were many points of contact between the two religions. Consequently, the popularity of the Asclepius cult and the opposition it provided to Christianity had an impact on the development of the healing tradition among the followers of Jesus. My research points toward several specific points which show this dependency and interaction:

— The accounts of the healing miracles of Jesus and his followers show many parallels to the miracles in the Asclepius tradition. Thus, the Asclepius cult must be taken more seriously in studying the development of early Christianity. It is

no longer acceptable to relegate Asclepius to footnotes and background material.¹

This is especially true regarding the healing miracles of Jesus and his followers as they are reported in the early Christian writings. (The same could be said for some of the saints of the early Christian church which also show very clearly many points of contact and rivalry between the two groups).

Using the results of my research, which mainly explores the overarching relationship between the two cults in the 2nd century CE, further studies on specific texts could better illuminate the connections between belief in Asclepius and in Jesus. Such research, which should also include the Christian and non-Christian literature from the 1st century CE, could, for example, focus on the parallels between the healing traditions of Jesus in the Gospels in general² and the specific healing

¹E.g., Jerome Murphy O'Connor in *St. Paul's Corinth. Text and Archaeology* (Good News Studies 6; Wilmington, Delaware: Glazier, [1983] 161-63) describes briefly the three dining rooms at the Asclepion in Corinth. However, he does not treat at all such questions as what these meals meant for the Asclepius devotee, the theological understanding of such activities or the devotee's understanding of their god. In neglecting to deal with such things, he ignores the historical reality of communal meals in Corinth and of the Asclepius cult as Paul must have known and most likely experienced it.

²The reports of Jesus in their isolated form, without embellishments and editorial remarks, read frequently like 'standard' votive inscriptions from Asclepius devotees, told in the third person singular. For example John 9:6-7: "[Jesus] ἔπιπεν χαμα καὶ ἐποίησεν πηλὸν ἐκ τοῦ πτοσματος καὶ ἐπέχρισεν [ἐπέθηκεν, B pc; ix: P66 75 X A C D L W Θ...] αὐτοῦ τὸν πηλὸν ἐπ τοὺς ὄφθαλμούς, καὶ είπεν αὐτῷ· Ὕπαγε νίψαι. . . ἀπῆλθεν οὖν καὶ ἐνίψατο καὶ ἤθιεν βλέπων." "He [Jesus] spat on the ground and made clay out of the spittle and applied the clay to the man's eyes and said to him: Go, wash yourself and he went and washed himself and came back seeing" (my translation). See below pp. 61, n. 87; 197, n. 78.

accounts discussed above; e.g., the inscription from J. Apellas³ and the collection of successful healings from the Asclepieion in Rome.⁴ Furthermore, the Gospel of John's overall concept of Jesus very closely resembles the "Asclepius tradition" and the Hellenistic healing tradition, and goes well beyond the individual points of contact mention in this dissertation.⁵ This is also true of the Gospel of Matthew in

³The inscription of J. Apellas reports that his healing took place while he was bathing (see below p. 55). This is similar to the account in John 9:1-12, where a blind man is ordered by Jesus: "Go, wash (*νιψάται*) in the pool of Siloam." So the blind man went and washed himself and came back seeing (vss. 7,11). Interestingly, in the parallel passage in Mark 8:22-26 there is no washing mentioned at all. Another parallel in the biblical accounts to the practice of the Asclepius cult is the use of a remedy.

Finally, the verb *λούω* is used in both J. Apellas' account and in John 13:10. See also footnote 5 below and Rengstorff, *Die Anfänge*, 22-23.

⁴The term *ἐπιτίθεσθαι* in John 9: 6, which is used only once in the New Testament, is a word which is also used in the account of V. Aper (see also chapter III.B). Another parallel is in the use of *ἐπιτίθημι* in line 4 and 8 of the inscription and in John 9:6. For this passage see also chapter III.B and Walter Bauer (*Das Johannesevangelium*, 137), who points to additional parallels in this passage.

⁵E.g.— The biblical terms of *νύη γίνεσθαι* (vss. 5:[4], 6, 9, 14), *πήλος* (vss. 9:4, 9, 11, 14, 15; Mark 8:22-26; Aelius Aristides also uses *πήλος* in his cure [e.g., A. Aristides *Or.* 48.74-7]) and *νίκτω-λούειν* in John 9 are technical (traditional) healing terms and remedies frequently used in the Asclepius cult. The debate as to what was the form in which Jesus and Asclepius appeared to their disciples after their death is reflected also in John 20:27.

— A. Aristides' understanding of the holy springs as symbols of the continued desire of his god to save men and women (A. Aristides *Or.* 49; see also chapter III.D.2) is very similar in the use of the understanding of Jesus in John 4 as the living water (see also e.g., Justin *Trypt.* 69; Rev 22:1).

— Remedies are used in similar ways in both traditions.

— The prologue of John and Aristides' *Or.* 42.9 ("It cannot be said when he [Zeus] was born, but he existed from the beginning and will always exist . . .") reflect similar understandings. See below pp. 137; 157; 215, n.6.

particular,⁶ as well as the other reports about Jesus' life. Now that an interaction has been established and documented, detailed studies about developments in Asia Minor may bring to light other instances of interdependency between the two groups. The same is true of several accounts in the book of Acts,⁷ as well as the Pauline

⁶The two reported Roman cases of blindness (see chapter III.B) have similarities with the account in Matt 9:22 (Jesus touches the eyes of the blind) and Mark 8:22-26 (Jesus uses spittle and then lays his hands on the eyes to heal a blind man) and Mark 10:52 where ὅλως is used (Matt 20:34). Concerning the healing powers of the hands, see also Johannes Behm, *Die Handauflegung*, 1-160.

— An important parallel is also found to Matt 11:28: "Come unto me all ye that are labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" in Epictetus *Dissertat.* 4.8, 28-9: "Come together, all you who are suffering from gout, headaches, and fever, the halt, and the blind and see how sound I am, and free from every disorder?" That is a vain and vulgar thing to say, unless, like Asclepius, you are able at once to show by what treatment those others will also become well again, and for this end are producing your own good health as an example."

This similarity between the two healers and the faith and trust the people had in them is pointed out by Campbell Bonner, "Some Phases of Religious Feeling in Later Paganism," *HTR* 30 (1937) 123-25. Edelstein (Asclepius 2.112) rightly points out that Asclepius "summoned his patients," and sought them out, truly looking after his people (T 317) by working and healing day and night. Recognizing this is important not only in understanding the people who sought and trusted Asclepius as their savior, but also in countering false presumptions that only Jesus reached out to the sick, whereas Asclepius was passive except in those who sacrificed and slept in the temple. See below pp. 137, n. 42; 140-43; 149-50; chapter IV.

⁷E.g.:— The Sea voyage: The report of A. Aristides in *Or.* 103 can be compared with Paul's account in Acts 27:1 - 28:15. E.g., Paul and Aristides know exactly when it is god's will to set sail (*Or.* 50.32-34; Acts 27:9-26).

— After the sea voyage and a miracle, Paul was considered a god (Acts 28:7). This is parallel in *Or.* 50.35 (see below p. 103) where Aristides' friends and the ship's crew calls him "Benefactor and Savior."

— Dreams: Double dreams in the Asclepius tradition (see below pp. 104,113) as compared with Paul and Ananias (Acts 9:1-22; 22:3-16; 26:9-18).

— New Names: The giving of new names after the "initiation" which is revealed during a dream (A. Aristides *Or.* 50.53-4,70; 50.16; 51.24); Paul/Saul (Acts 9:1-22; 22:3-16; 26:9-18). See also below p. 102 and Galen (Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, 145-46).

— Aristides and Paul asked their god three times for help and both received identical answers (A. Aristides *Or.* 47.71: "ἐπαρκέσει"; 2 Cor 12:8-9: "ἀρκεῖ σοι"). See also Betz, "Eine Christus-Ariadologie," 298-305; See below p. 86, n. 79.

letters.⁸ In addition, the understanding of several specific passages in the book of Revelation as well as the general milieu of the whole book⁹ could greatly benefit from comparisons with the Asclepius cult, especially since its relationship with the emperor cult has been established. Several texts of the early Christian tradition would also lend themselves for further studies.¹⁰ The understanding of all these points of contact and interaction between the followers of Asclepius and Jesus would be greatly enhanced by a geographically-limited study of different local situations.

⁸E.g.,—Boasting. A. Aristides' attitude toward boasting (e.g., *Or.* 42.8; see below p. 108, n. 60) compared with 2 Cor 12.

— The theme of the body language; 1 Cor 12:12-31 mentions four body parts (hands, feet, eyes, genitals) which figure very prominently among the many terracotta ex-votos found during the excavation of the Asclepion in Corinth.

General: Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten*, 261-2. He compares the Account of J. Apellas with Paul's second letter to the Corinthians.

⁹We will receive new insight on the document in general and specifically on "The Letter to the Church in Pergamum," (Rev 2:12-17); see also Rengstorff, *Die Anfänge*, 26-28). Other examples from the whole book include:

- the mentioning and special meaning of white robes (Rev 3:4-6; 3:18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:19, 13) compared with what Actius Aristides saw in a dream (*Or.* 48.30: "There was a multitude of men in the Sacred Theater, who wore white garments and were assembled before the god."); See below p. 29, n. 52.
- the receiving of new names (Rev 2:17; 3:12 compared with, for example, *IG* 4.1. 121.3 ["Your name shall be Incredulous."]).
- the wearing of golden crowns (see below p. 106; A. Aristides *Or.* 50,48).
- the symbol of the free water from the fountain (Rev 21:6; see below pp. 30, n. 57; 105, n. 46).
- the interpretation of the "Throne of Satan" (Rev 2:13).
- the healing of all nations (Rev 22:2).
- the singing of songs (Rev 14:3; see below p. 106, n. 46).
- the meaning of "dogs" (Rev. 22:15; see chapter III.E.7.b for a possible explanation).

All these similarities point toward parallel understandings and similar concepts among both cults and within the milieu of the Hellenistic world in general.

¹⁰E.g., 2 Clement 9.7; *Acts of Pilate* 1.1 (Montague R James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1948] 96): "Pilatus saith unto them: This is not to cast out devils by an unclean spirit, but by the God Asclepius." See below pp. 136, n.42; 197, n. 78.

— The Asclepius cult had its own theology. This theology, with its understanding of Asclepius as the savior of the whole inhabited world, influenced the devotees' daily life. Evidence of this theology is found in the cult's practice of providing for the physical, spiritual and mental well-being of its devotees, as well as in the cult's literary remains. The devotees understood themselves as a defined group who had faith in their savior.

Only in light of this understanding of the Asclepius cult's theology and the devotees' faith in their god can we see the real basis for the competition between the followers of Asclepius and Jesus: it was an issue of belief and trust in god—faith in the savior Asclepius¹¹ versus faith in the new savior and healer.

This comprehensive understanding of the cultic life also rescues Aelius Aristides, forcing us to reconsider his writings as a report of the experiences of a faithful cult devotee, rather than as the ravings of a madman.¹²

— The opposition between the followers of Asclepius and Jesus as reflected in the written records must be seen first as a local issue. It was primarily a battle for the minds and the faith of the local citizenry. Therefore, one must pursue a geographical understanding of both the Asclepius cult and the development of the belief in Jesus. Only on the secondary level was it an opposition between the general beliefs in Asclepius and Jesus in the time period discussed here.

¹¹E.g., A. Aristides *Or.* 48.73; 50.29. 50-51; 51.21.

¹²See below p. 127.

— Among both groups, the writings about their god's power were considered to be holy writings, inspired by their saviors.

Both groups had similar reasons to write down the mighty healing acts of Asclepius and Jesus.¹³ Among them was the fact that neither group employed a myth in the tradition of their god, and therefore the production of literary evidence was an effort to compensate for the absence of myth. In addition, both cults used the autobiographical narration of healings as an effective tool in their missionary propaganda. In this usage, the stories became longer and more elaborate and became an effective substitute for actual miracles themselves. My research on this point suggests an urgent need for further studies of this subject in the apocryphal acts.

— The rise and decline of the Asclepius cult depended on political as well as socio-economic factors; thus the rise of the Christian healing tradition, as well as Christianity itself, also resulted in part from the interplay of such factors within the context of the period.

The Asclepius cult was one of the last cults of a Hellenistic deity to die out, resisting the spread of Christianity down to the 5th century CE. Although eventually defeated and supplanted by the new healing religion, the popular god, Asclepius, and

¹³E.g., see below pp. 69, n. 11; 84; 108-12; 203-5.

his cult left their mark on the message of Jesus. The story of Jesus as a healer clearly has its *Sitz im Leben* in the religious, socio-economical and political atmosphere of the Graeco-Roman world. This *Zeitgeist* played an even more important role in the formation of the message of Jesus than has been appreciated up till now, as this study of the Asclepius cult clearly shows.

"Great is Asclepius! The order is completed."

(A. Aristides, Orationes, 48.7)

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations follow the instructions for contributors to the Harvard Theological Review.

AA	Archäologischer Anzeiger
ABAW	Abhandlungen der Berliner Akademie der Wissenschaft
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt, ed. by Temporini and Haase; Berlin: De Gruyter
ASAW. PH	Abhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Philosophisch-historische Klasse
CIL	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
IG	Inscriptiones Graecae
JAC	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum
MDAI. A	Mitteilungen des deutschen Archäologischen Institutes, Athenisch Abteilung
MDAI. R	Mitteilungen des deutschen Archäologischen Institutes, Römische Abteilung
NJKA	Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum, Geschichte und deutsche Literatur
POxyr	The Oxyrhynchus Papyri, ed. by Grenfell and Hunt
SHAW. PH	Sitzungsbericht der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse

Unless otherwise indicated, the following standard editions were used for translations of ancient documents in this study:

Ante-Nicene Fathers
 Loeb Classical Library
 Revised Standard Version of the Bible and the Novum Testamentum
 Graece (Nestle-Aland, 26. Edition) for my own translations

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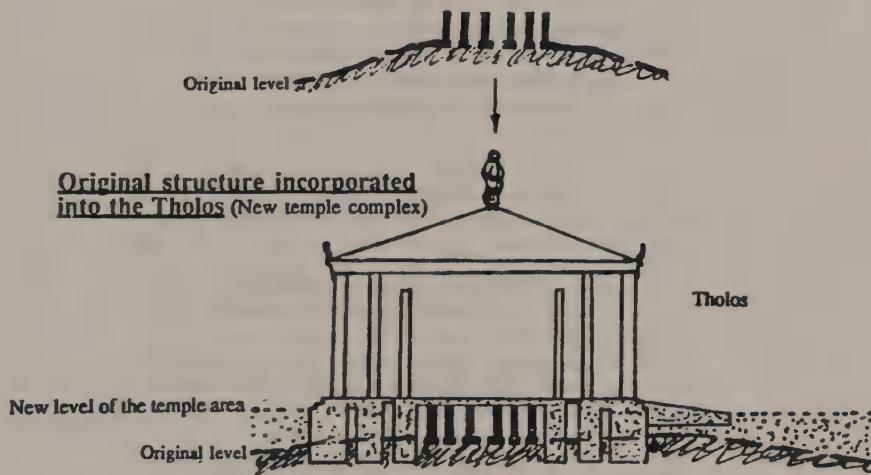
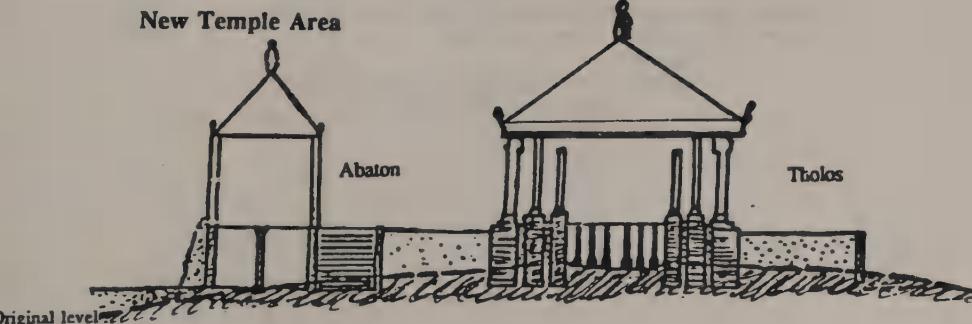
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I**Epidauros:**

I. A. Tholos Reconstruction

I. B. The Healing Account of J. Apellas
(IG, IV.2, 1 no. 126)

Original StructureOriginal structure incorporated into the Tholos (New temple complex)New Temple Area

ἐπὶ Ἱερέως ἦ οὐ Αἴα. Ἀντιόχου

Μ. Ιούλιος Ἀπελλάς Ἰαρίεις Μυλασεύς μετεπέμψοντο
 ὑπὸ τοῦ βεοῦ πολλάκις εἰς κόσούς ἐπιπίπτων καὶ ἀπετί-
 αῖς χρώμενος. κατὰ δὴ τὸν πλαῦν ἐν Αἰγαίῃ ἐκέλευσέν
 εἰς μὲν πολλὰ ὄργισεβαί. ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐγενόμην ἐν τῷ Ἱερῷ. ἐ-
 κέλευσέν ἐπὶ δύο ἡμέρας συγκαλύτασβαι τὸν κεολλάν.
 ἐν αἷς ὄντοι ἐφένοντο, τυρόν καὶ ἀρτον προλαβεῖν, σέλε-
 να μετὰ βρίδακος, αὐτὸν δι' αὐτοῦ λούσαν, δρόμῳ γυμνάζε-
 σαι, κιτρίῳ προλαβάνειν τὰ ἄκρα, εἰς ύδωρ ἀποβέσαι, πρὸς
 10 ταῖς ἀκούσις ἐν βάνειῷ προστρίβεσσαι τῷ τοίχῳ, περιπάτῳ χρή-
 σαι ψηρῷ, αἴραις, λοφοῖ πιαύσασβαι, ἀντιδόντος περι-
 πατεῖν, πρὶν ἐνθάναι ἐν τῷ βαλανεῖῳ εἰς τὸ βερμὸν ύδωρ
 οἰνον περικέσασβαι, μόνον λούσασβαι καὶ Ἀττικὴν δούναι
 τῷ βαλανεῖ, κοπῆ βύσαι ἀσκαντιῷ, Ήπιόνι, Ἐλευσενίας,
 15 γάλα μετὰ μέλιτος προλαγεῖν· μὴ δὲ ἡμέρα πιόντος μού ἐλ-
 λα μόνον, εἴπεν· 'μένι ἐρζαλε εἰς τὸ γάλα, ἵνα δύνηται διακό-
 πτεῖν.' ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐδέήνθην τοῦ βεοῦ θάττον με ἀπολύσαν, ζήνην (ν)ά-
 πτυ καὶ λαζί κερεμένος ὥστε ἐσίεναι κατὰ τὰς ἀκοὺς ἐκ τοῦ
 ἀβάτου, παιδάριον δὲ ἡγεῖσαν βυματήριον ἔχον ἀτίζον
 20 καὶ τὸν Ἱερέα λέγειν 'τεβεράτευσαι, χρή δὲ ἀποδιδόναι τὰ ἄντρα.'
 καὶ ἐποίησα, ἔσθιον, καὶ κρεμένος μὲν τοῖς λασὶ καὶ τῷ μάτυ-
 ᾗ ὑγρῷ θαγῆσα, λούμενος δὲ οὐκ θαγῆσα. ταῦτα ἐν ἐννέᾳ ἡμέ-
 ραι λο' οὐ μενον
 25 εἰς τὸν ἀσκαντιῷ μού φασί ἀναραμό-
 σα ἐπέθελευτε τὴν χεῖρα, ως καὶ φαγταίνας ἐξανδραῖς· μετ' ο-
 λίτον δὲ ὑγρῆς ἡ χεῖρ ἐγένετο. ἐπιμείναντί μοι ἀνθεον με-
 τ' ἐλαύον χρήσασβαι πρὸ τὴν κεφαλλαγὴν εἴπεν. οὐ μὲν ἡλ-
 γούν τὴν κεφαλήν. συνέβη σύν οιλαογήσαντί μοι συντα-
 ριώθηναι· χρησάμενος τῷ ἐλαύῳ ἀπηλάγην τὴν κεφαλλαγήν
 30 οὐ. ἀναγαραρίζεσσαν τυχρῷ πρὸς τὴν σταυράν — καὶ γὰρ περὶ
 τούτου παρεκάλεσα τὸν βεον — τὸ αὐτό καὶ πρὸς παρίσβατα. ἐκέ-
 λευσεν δὲ καὶ ἀναγράται ταῦτα. χάριν εἰδὼς καὶ ὑγρῆς γε-
 τος. νόμενος ἀπιπλάτιστος.

APPENDIX II

Rome:

II. A. The Asclepion in the middle of the Tiber according to a map from the year 1630.

(Romana antiqua triumphatrix ab antiquis monumentis et rerum gestarum memoris eruta hic a Jacobo Laum Romano. Romae: Giovanni Giacomo de Rossi, 1630)

II. B. Layout of the Asclepion
(Plate 30, Bresnier, L'île Tiberine)

II. C. The Asclepion in the 16th century
(Plate 8, Bresnier, L'île Tiberine)

II. D. The Asclepion in the 18th century
(Plate 4, Bresnier, L'île Tiberine)

II. E. The Asclepion in the 19th century
(Plate 1, Bresnier, L'île Tiberine)

II. F. Details of the Asclepion from the 19th century
(Plate 5 and 6, Bresnier, L'île Tiberine)

II. G. Votive offerings from the Asclepion
(Plate 25, Bresnier, L'île Tiberine)



Roma Cum Privilegiis

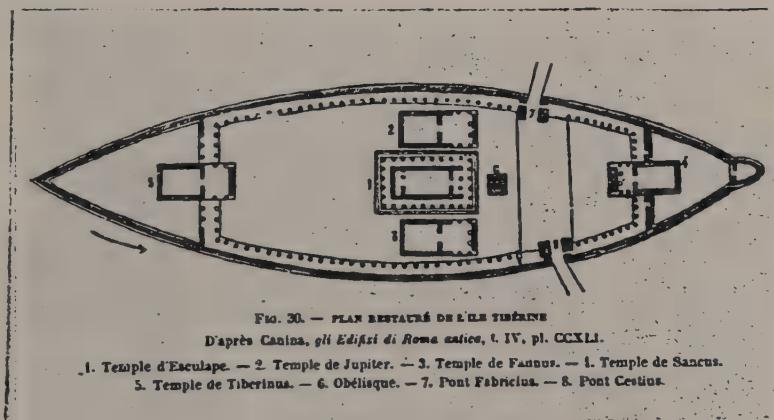


FIG. 30. — PLAN RESTAURÉ DE L'ÎLE TIBÉRINE

D'après Canina, *gli Edifici di Roma antica*, t. IV, pl. CCXLI.

1. Temple d'Esculape. — 2. Temple de Jupiter. — 3. Temple de Faunus. — 4. Temple de Sancus.
5. Temple de Tiberinus. — 6. Obélisque. — 7. Pont Fabricius. — 8. Pont Cestius.

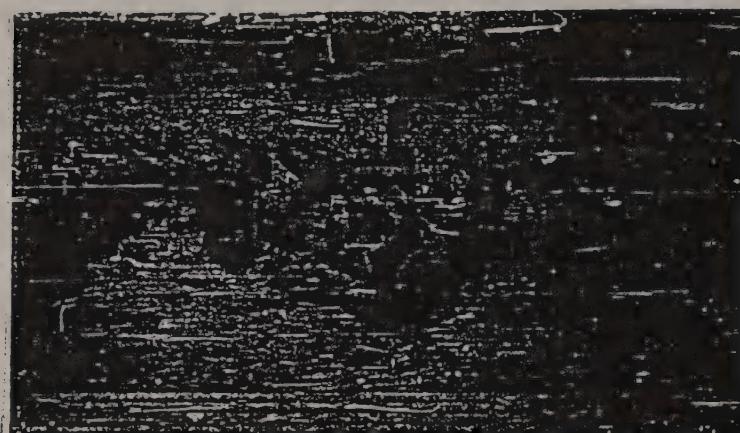


FIG. 8. — L'ÎLE THÉRINE AU XVI^e SIECLE.
D'après du Pérec (1575).



FIG. 4. — L'ÎLE TIBÉRINE AU XVIII^{ME} SIECLE
D'après: Piranesi (propriété de la Regia Calcografia di Roma).



A. Fontemoing, Edit., Paris

Phototypie Bertrand

VUE DE L'ILE TIBERINE
J'après une photographie prise en 1899



FIG. 5. — FRAGMENT DE LA DÉCORATION SCULPTÉE DE L'ÎLE TIBÉRINE
(*Annali dell' Instituto archeologico*, 1877, pl. K, 1).



FIG. 6. — FRAGMENT DE LA DÉCORATION SCULPTÉE DE L'ÎLE TIBÉRINE
D'après une photographie prise par M. René Pateaillard en 1872.

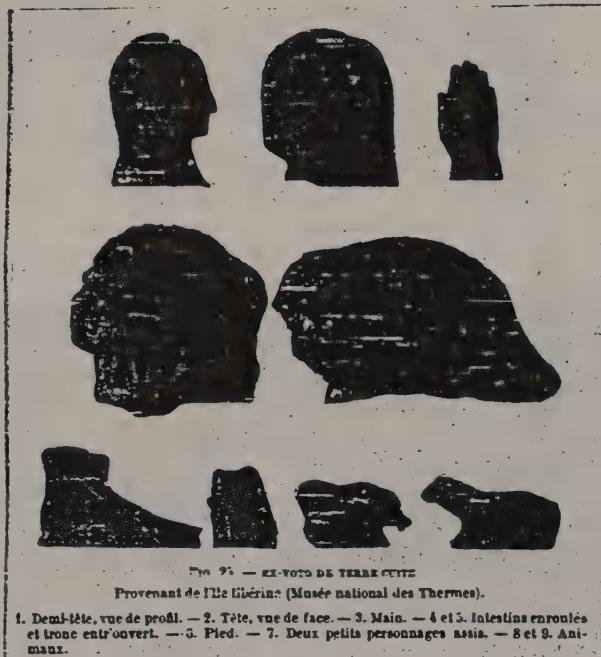


FIG. 21. — EX-VOTO DE TERRE COTTE.

Provenant de l'île Libérine (Musée national des Thermes).

1. Demi-tête, vue de profil. — 2. Tête, vue de face. — 3. Main. — 4 et 5. Intestins enroulés et tronc entrouvert. — 6. Pied. — 7. Deux petits personnages assis. — 8 et 9. Animaux.

APPENDIX III

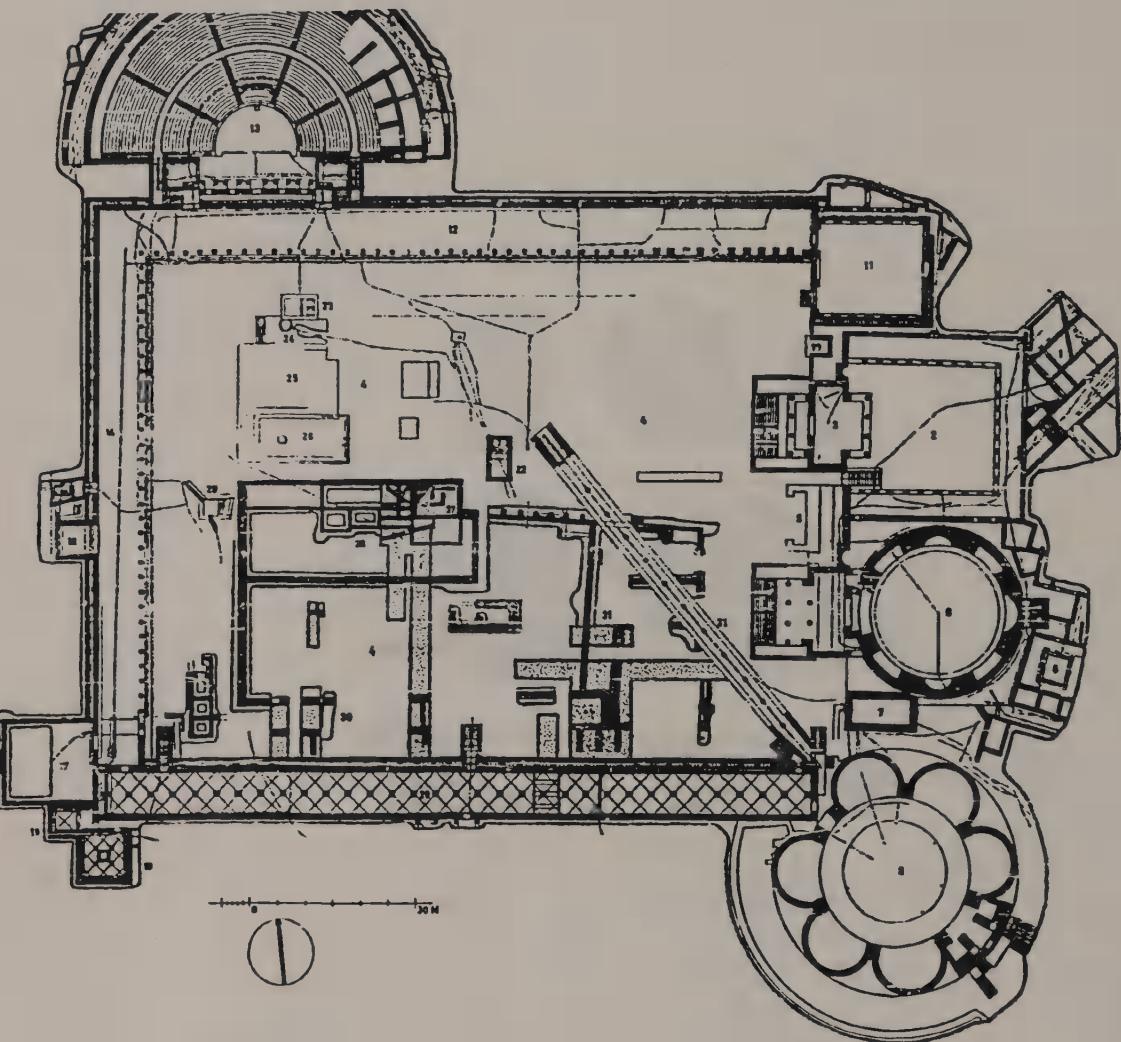
Pergamum:

III. A. Map of the Asclepieion
(ΔvP. 8.3 p. 1)

III. B. Model of the Asclepieion
(artistic rendering)

III. C. Small votive offering-- statue of Asclepius
(artistic rendering)

III. D. Reconstruction of the statue from the temple
(artistic rendering according to coins from Pergamum; see p. 30)

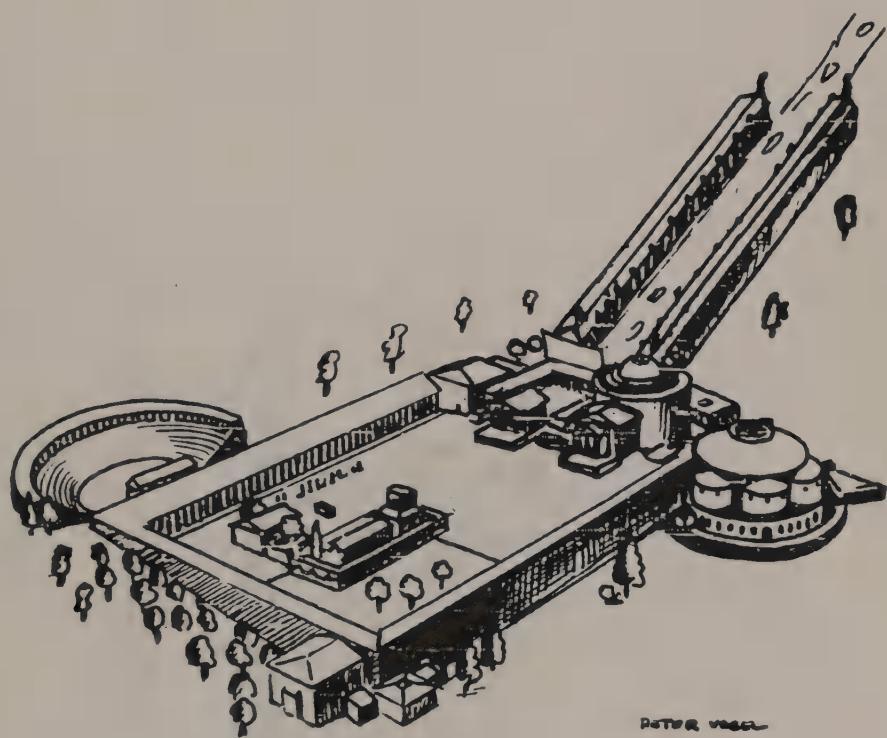


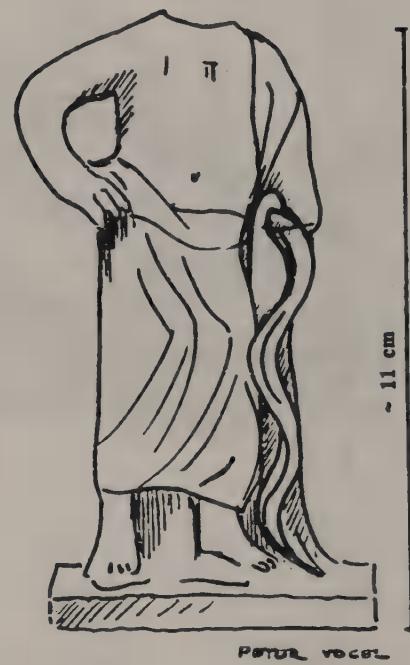
- 1 Heilige Straße mit Eingangstor
- 2 Vorhof
- 3 Propylon
- 4 Festplatz
- 5 Kulmische
- 6 Asklepios-Tempel (Zeus-Asklepios)
- 7 Zisterne
- 8 Peristylhaus
- 9 Kurgebäude (Unterer Rundbau)
- 10 Kulmische

- 11 Kaisersaal (Bibliothek)
- 12 Nordhalle
- 13 Theater
- 14 Westhalle
- 15 Westlicher Ausgang
- 16 Westraum
- 17 Südwesthalle
- 18 Kleine Latrine
- 19 Große Latrine
- 20 Südhaile — Kellergeschöß

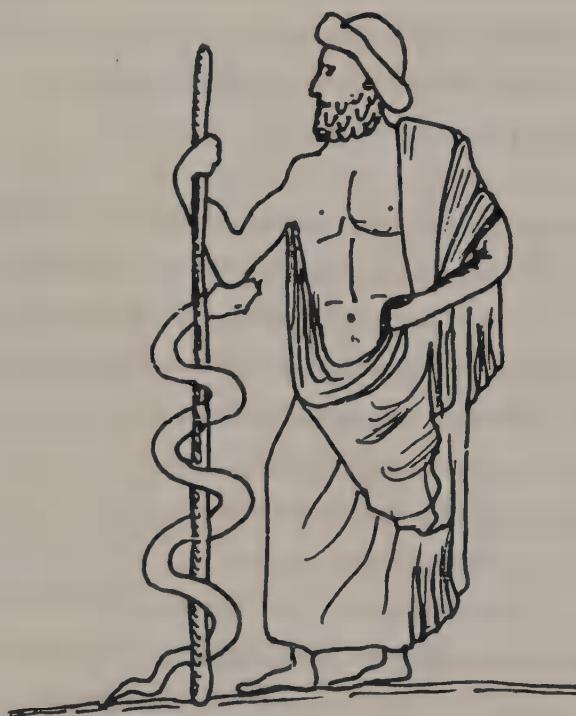
- 21 Unterirdischer Gang
- 22 Hellenistischer Schäpferunnen
- 23 Römischer Bedarfsraum
- 24 Felsbarre — Kultmal
- 25 Felsbarre — Hellenistischer Tempel (?)
- 26 Felsbarre — Hellenistischer Tempel
- 27 und 28 Inkubationskomplex
- 29 Feilbrounen
- 30 Hellenistische Südhalle — Kellergeschöß
- 31 Hellenistische Osthalle

Asklepion. Gesamtplan des Festplatzes





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Summary of Dissertation
by
René Rüttimann, Harvard University 1986.

Asclepius and Jesus

The Form, Character and Status of The Asclepius Cult in The Second Century CE and Its Influence on Early Christianity.

This research is rooted in the concept that early Christianity had its Sitz im Leben in the social, economic, political and religious world of the Graeco-Roman world. Within this context, this work explores the role played by the Asclepius cult and the healing religions in general during the 2nd century CE in Greece and Asia Minor. That exploration then serves as a base from which to evaluate the possible connections between the healing activities of the early Christian communities which developed in that area and the healing cult status and practices of the Asclepius cult.

During the 2nd century CE, the god Asclepius was at the zenith of his popularity. He was worshipped throughout the Graeco-Roman world; many of his sanctuaries (called Asclepieion) were great centers. They often consisted of a large complex of buildings with a temple, an abaton (where incubation took place) and other facilities such as wells, a library, a theater or a race-track.

Asclepius enjoyed the support of all segments of society, including the wealthy classes and the emperors. His devotees considered Asclepius to be their healer god as well as their savior. They had a personal relation to him. This understanding (theology) of his followers not only informed their devotion to Asclepius but also influenced their lifestyle. They considered themselves to be saved and daily guided by their god. The autobiographical writings of Aelius Aristides provide insight into the life and theology of an Asclepius devotee. The actions and beliefs which he describes clearly fit the religious atmosphere of his time and life in an Asclepieion. With this, the correct understanding of the Sitz im Leben of Aristides's Sacred Tales, he must be rehabilitated and recognized as a very informative source for the religious life of his time. Aristides's writing underscores what the archaeological evidence already shows, namely that Asclepius provided for the physical as well as the spiritual well-being of his followers. With such a revered status and the capacity to satisfy the pressing needs of society, the cult of Asclepius presented challenging competition to which any new religion would have been forced to respond.

When the followers of Jesus began to spread their message, they were thus confronted with the healing message of Asclepius. In many of the towns they visited (e.g., Athens, Corinth, Pergamum, Rome) the Asclepius cult had been established for centuries and had a documented record of divine miracles for its own certification. Throughout the cities, inscriptions and reliefs praised Asclepius as a personal lord and savior because of his many healing miracles.

This challenge is the origin and the driving force behind the emphasis placed on the healing dimension of Jesus by his followers; they had to

respond to the society's need for healing and to the omnipresent cult of Asclepius. The archaeological data clearly show the importance of the cult's influence: inscriptions celebrate Asclepius as the savior of all humans as well as the supreme god and healer. Coins depict him as god (frequently in conjunction with the emperor) and reliefs show Asclepius in the process of helping and healing. The opposition between the devotees of Asclepius and Jesus found in the literary sources confirms this influence even further. In these documents, we can clearly see polemical elements. The Christians adopt the traditional polemic against Asclepius that highlights his murder by Apollo, his supposed greed, his previous mortal state, etc., and they use it to defend the superiority of their savior. From their argumentation and opposition toward each other, as well as from quotes each attributed to the opposing side, a clear picture emerges of the main points of confrontation, e.g., who was the real savior and god of the world, and which divine healer was still actively healing and performing miracles. These questions were debated within traditional Graeco-Roman lines concerning the existence of god. The Christian apologists, however, employed the terminologies, symbols and rites of their opponents and attempted to show the superiority of Jesus by giving these shared elements distinctive meanings. The literary evidence also points toward the use of reports of successful healings by both groups in missionary propaganda. In the desire to enhance their own credibility, the two groups also began to shape their healing reports into longer narratives, recounting the circumstances and drama of the divine intervention. These stories, as well as those describing the miracles of their gods, came to be considered the words of god, divinely inspired writings.

During the 2nd century CE there existed clear parallels between the two groups' theological understanding. Both religions considered its god to be the savior of all men and women and the ruler of the universe. The two gods show further similarities, including these which follow: 1) both were sent by the supreme god; 2) both were pre-existent; 3) both were male, and sons of god and a mortal woman; 4) both acted on behalf of their fathers; 5) both were considered to be blameless and helpers of humanity; 6) both resurrected the dead; 7) both had similar deaths; 8) both were established in heaven after their death; 9) they commissioned disciples to continue their work; 10) they provided their disciples with the same power to perform healings; 11) they appeared to their followers after their death; 12) both became more important after their death. The followers of Asclepius and of Jesus also show close parallels in their theological understanding, their lifestyle as well as their healing activities.

This similarity and competition is reflected in the warning of Ignatius: "There is one physician (τατπος), Jesus Christ our Lord" (Ep. 7.2), a text which has to be interpreted as being directed against the Asclepius cult. The opposition to the Asclepius cult by the followers of Jesus was also increased by the fact that the emperor cult and the Asclepius cult mutually supported each other.

With the beginning of the 3rd century CE, the popularity of the Asclepius cult began to decline. This decline had socio-political reasons (the general decline of the military and economic power of Rome), economic reasons (the big supporters which included the emperor and the state could no longer afford to sponsor the growing costs of the big cultic centers and their elaborate festivals), religious reasons (the change in the religious climate itself

and the search for new answers during a time of unrest) and supernatural reasons (earthquakes). It was in this period of uncertainty and turmoil that Christianity made strong gains in popularity. With the decline of the Asclepius cult and the increase in status of the followers of Jesus, the Christian Church began to assume functions previously performed by the Asclepius cult. The former Asclepieia became quenries for Christian churches and the traditional spots of healing coninued to be active in new buildings (Christian churches). In its defeat the Asclepius cult was one of the last Hellenistic religions to be defeated by Christianity. This did not happen without Asclepius, the god of healing and the lover of human beings, who satisfied one of the greatest needs of the people in antiquity with his healing power, thus leaving his mark on the followers of Jesus in their adoption of many concepts previously characteristic of the Asclepius cult. Jesus was also increased by the fact that the emperor cult and the Asclepius cult mutually supported each other.

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