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FREDERICK AUGUSTUS TODD
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Augustus the Patrician

EDWARD TOGO SALMON

It is a rare distinction to be invited to deliver the Todd Memorial Lecture. The prestige of the series is recognized on all the continents, and any student of classical antiquity is bound to feel proud to be associated with the illustrious scholars responsible for its renown. But for me there is a very particular reason for feeling appreciative as well as honoured. I first met the name of the scholar whom we are remembering tonight over fifty years ago, on the very first day that I entered Sydney High School. In those days the school stood in the heart of the district known as Ultimo, and on the second floor of its solid if somewhat grimy building there was a large hall where student assemblies, concerts, and similar funtions were held. Affixed to the walls of that hall were wooden boards, on which were inscribed, in letters of gold, the names of the boys who, over the years, had particularly distinguished themselves at their studies. Prominent among them was the name of F. A. Todd. The man himself I did not meet until some years later, when I came up to this institution, here to discover how abundantly justified was

my boyish awe at his scholastic achievements. He had just been promoted to the chair of Latin in succession to T. A. Butler, and the depth of his learning and breadth of his interests, his meticulous accuracy and academic authority won the immediate respect of all whose good fortune it was to sit at his feet. And to respect there was quickly added affection, for to the austerity of the scholar Todd conjoined the generosity of the friend. His concerned interest in those he taught was shown in many ways, but I shall mention only one. After leaving Sydney I went to Cambridge, and, on the day before my final examinations there were to begin, a cable arrived from Todd, to cheer me on and wish me luck. You will understand, Mr. Deputy Chancellor, why tonight I feel very much moved and deeply grateful to the committee that has granted me the privilege of paying what tribute I can to his memory.

The impressive range of Todd's interests meant that there was no difficulty in finding a topic suitable for the present occasion. On the contrary, it presented a veritable embarrassment of riches. A paper on the Hellenistic romances or on the graffiti of Pompeii would have been very appropriate; or something on Cicero, in view of the zest with which Todd expounded the *Verrines* or the *De Oratore* and in view of the Ciceronian elegance of the Latin he himself was wont to compose. But, above all, there was the Golden Age, a source of continuous and abiding pleasure to him, as all those who attended his classes on Horace and Vergil will undoubtedly recall. For that reason some aspect of the emperor after whom Frederick Augustus Todd was named seemed indicated; and the aspect I have chosen is one that I am sure he himself would have found congenial: Augustus the patrician.

Tacitus, Suetonius and Cassius Dio, between them,

describe how Julius Caesar used a special law, the *Lex Cassia* of 45 BC, to create new patricians, including in their number his own great-nephew Octavian, later to become Augustus.[1] His example proved infectious, and Augustus was not long in copying it. Indeed Augustus set to work while still Octavian. He himself could serve as model. Some of his new patricians were created as early as 33,[2] although later, as Augustus, he was careful not to draw attention to this fact, probably because his action in 33 was high-handed and irregular. He did, however, record how he swelled the ranks of the patricians four years later: 'When consul for the fifth time' (that is, in 29 BC) 'I increased the number of patricians, on instructions from the People and the Senate' (*patriciorum numerum auxi consul quintum iussu populi et senatus*: *Res Gest.* 8.1). In 29 he could claim some sort of constitutional authority for his behaviour: he had had a law passed, the *Lex Saenia*, empowering him to create patricians, just as his great-uncle had done with the *Lex Cassia*.[3]

Augustus thus reveals, in part at any rate, what he did; but he nowhere tells why he did it. He remains, as always, enigmatic, something like the sphinx engraved upon his signet ring.[4]

One reason for him to add new members to Rome's oldest aristocracy comes to mind automatically. He wished to bestow honour and distinction upon those of his supporters who had been most active and useful on his behalf. And, in the days before Actium and in the case of men from obscure Italian families that could stand a little glamourizing, this was very probably his principal motive. But most of Augustus' new patricians seem to have been created after Actium, and comparatively few of them were Italians intent upon launching their families into the troubled waters of Roman politics for the first time.[5] Most of his new patricians were members of families from Rome

itself, families that were anything but strangers to Roman public life. Nor can they all be proved to have been exceptionally active in promoting the fortunes of Augustus in his early days. Hence it looks as if the wish to requite his more zealous partisans was not Augustus' only reason for enlarging the patriciate. For that matter, his rewards to followers of proved fidelity were usually of a more substantial nature than mere exaltation of rank. He saw to it that they acquired great riches and occupied powerful positions in the Roman state; and, although it is true that at Rome good birth always obtained favour and enjoyed privilege, patrician status was not in itself an inevitable or necessary prerequisite for wealth and power.

It seems likely that Augustus was chiefly influenced by his determination to preserve whatever he found of value in the Roman state. In his earlier days, it must be admitted, he had shown but scant respect for traditional Roman ways: he had been the revolutionary young ruffian of Perusia.[6] But after Actium, when his position was firm and unassailable, he could afford to cultivate political respectability; and the reliefs of the *Ara Pacis Augustae* eloquently advertize his eagerness to be known as the upholder of things Roman, the promoter of Roman traditions, the saviour of venerable Roman practices. After 31 he became the conservative stalwart, the champion of the *mos maiorum*, the one who would preserve and if necessary revive the great institutions of Rome. He himself in his autobiography, if such the *Res Gestae* may be called, insists on his support of, and observance of, Roman usages: 'I refused any office inconsistent with the custom of our ancestors' (*nullum magistratum contra morem maiorum delatum recepi*: 6.1); or again, 'I rescued many customs of our ancestors that in our generation were lapsing into desuetude' (*multa exempla maiorum exolescentia iam ex nostro saeculo reduxi*: 8.5). He repaired old

Roman temples and erected new ones. He revived Roman cults and rituals. He exalted Romans above non-Romans. He frowned on an over-tolerant admission of ex-slaves into the Roman citizen body. He encouraged a high birth-rate for Romans. He pushed forward the bounds of Rome's imperial sway. And he began the transformation of Rome itself into a splendid, monumental capital, worthy of the extended dominion he had bestowed upon it. In sum, after Actium his policy was unvaryingly and quintessentially Roman. He, the young revolutionary from Italian Velitrae,[7] became, in Velleius' words, the *conditor conservatorque Romani nominis,*[8] the great traditionalist, the hidebound conservative, more Roman than the Romans themselves.

One of the old Roman institutions which he particularly esteemed was the patriciate. This is shown by his regard for his own patrician status, dubious though its aspect must have seemed to many of his contemporaries. Julius Caesar's right to create new patricians, authorized by the *Lex Cassia* though it was, must have struck them as an unprecedented usurpation. Be that as it may, Augustus never questioned his own right to the status, not even when it would have suited his political purpose to do so. He realized, for instance, quite early in his career how politically useful it would have been for him to become a plebeian tribune, and at one time he actually toyed with the idea of taking that office.[9] But, as a patrician, he was debarred from it, and he simply could not bring himself to divest himself of that status in order to become tribune. Of course, he managed to solve this particular dilemma by an astute manoeuvre. He simply took all of the plebeian tribune's rights and prerogatives without ever entering upon the plebeian tribune's office. And thus the emperor's Tribunician Power was born, a remarkable device for making him unlike all other men, 'the expression of his supreme authority,' as Tacitus was to call it.[10] But brilliant

constitutional improvisation though the Tribunician Power was, it did make something of a mockery of Augustus' claim never to have accepted a position inconsistent with ancestral usage. Who, under the Republic, ever heard of a man wielding the tribune's powers while not himself an actual tribune? Evidently Augustus was willing to risk the charge of unconstitutional behaviour so as to be able to retain the aura surrounding a Roman patrician of which, as a municipal bourgeois from countryside Italy, he stood in awe. His own enrolment in patrician ranks appealed greatly to his vanity.

Augustus always attached great value to outward trappings of distinction. Note, for example, his attitude to the appellation *pater patriae*. This purely honorific title came his way in 2 BC,[11] and it did not bring with it any concrete or measurable addition to the powers that he already possessed. But it did subtly suggest that Augustus stood in the same relation to the whole Roman nation as a *pater familias* did to his own household. Augustus accordingly depicted his being styled *pater patriae* as the crowning achievement, the supreme glory of his career: it occupies the last chapter and forms the splendid climax and grand finale of the *Res Gestae*.

More than mere snobbery was involved. At Rome high birth and high rank counted for much, and he who could claim to be a patrician, just like him who could parade the title *pater patriae*, would enjoy substantial, practical advantages: he would look like an authentic Roman aristocrat, with incalculable enhancement of his personal prestige (*auctoritas*).

To reinforce Augustus' personal predilection for patricians, there was his conviction that the patriciate was worth saving since it was the nucleus from which the Roman nation had sprung. The patricians were an integral part of the Roman state. They stood at the very heart of

the Roman community and were inextricably interwoven with its whole history and greatness. As Cassius Dio was later to remark, 'the patricians are regarded as indispensable for the perpetuation of traditional institutions.'[12] The patricians had always been there, so to speak. Some patrician families reckoned themselves older than Rome itself. The Julii Caesares, for instance, claimed descent from the goddess Venus.[13] The Sulpicii Galbae, less modest, paraded an origin from Jupiter himself.[14] The impudence with which such claims were advanced was no doubt matched by the scepticism with which they were received. Nevertheless it is clear enough that, in a status-conscious society like that of the Romans, the patricians ranked inordinately high. They were the group that had controlled the Republic during its first two hundred years, when for long they alone had been eligible for political or priestly office and had managed the state apparatus to suit their own desires. Their supremacy, it is true, had come increasingly under challenge, and in 342 BC a law was passed stipulationg that from then on one of the two consuls was always to be a plebeian and that both of them might be;[15] and when this was followed soon afterwards by recognition of the right of the plebeians to share in many of the priesthoods and to legislate in the name of all Roman citizens, patricians and plebeians alike, one might have expected patrician pre-eminence to come to an end. This, however, did not turn out to be the case. By some means or other, the patricians managed to enjoy prerogatives unspecified by any law and to retain great political power. Tradition, the unwritten *mos maiorum*, the conservative force of custom ensured that at Rome favour was always shown to distinguished birth and to men of means. In theory any Roman citizen should have been able to stand for the consulship; in practice only the well born and the well-to-do could win it. Of recent years

valuable studies (some of them from the pens of scholars who have been heard as Todd lecturers)[16] have quite properly emphasized how at Rome social status led to political privilege, reluctant though the Romans were to publicize the fact by their legislation. The powers wielded by certain elements in Roman society may have been extra-legal, but they were none the less real. And among the groups thus favoured were the patricians, Rome's ultimate aristocracy. Right down to 172 BC the patricians somehow managed to keep one of the two consulships firmly in their grasp. Election of two plebeian consuls, theoretically possible ever since 342 BC never actually occurred until 172.[17] And even after 172, in fact right down to Julius Caesar's day one hundred and twenty-five years later, it was far more usual for the Roman state to have one patrician and one plebeian as its consuls than to have two plebeians.

In the office of censor, too, throughout the Roman Republic, patricians were equally prominent; indeed, if anything, they were even more to the fore in the censorship than in the consulship.

Only during the years between the Gracchi and the Social War had the patricians suffered really marked eclipse: the forty-three years between 134 and 91 BC were the only period of the Roman Republic when they did not win consulships, and censorships, on a scale out of all proportion to their numbers.[18] Old Etonians have shown a similar tenacity in hanging on to posts in British cabinets. The conclusion is inescapable: patricians enjoyed something more than mere social superiority.

By the late first century BC, however, their end seemed near. By then the remarkable, long-lived institution of the patriciate was quite clearly moribund. For throughout the centuries of the Republic it had never been kept up to strength. Plebeians had occasionally been adopted by

patricians, but not very often, and many patrician families had gradually died out without being replaced by the admission of new ones. Of the fifty patrician *gentes*, or clans, existing in he fifth century BC fewer than half, a mere twenty-two, were still surviving in 367; and by 179 they had dwindled still further, to a mere seventeen. By the end of the Republic the seventeen had become only fourteen; and, between them, these fourteen *gentes* contained only some thirty families, whereas the twenty-two *gentes* still extant in 367 had embraced over eighty.[19]

The hereditary patriciate was manifestly doomed unless new families were added to it. Julius Caesar had done something to revive it, but not very much.[20] Augustus therefore decided to improve on his great-uncle's example; and, had he not acted, the grand old caste must soon have passed into oblivion. For the decline of the patrician families of the Republic continued into the days of the Empire. By the time of the emperor Tiberius (AD 14 – 37) only seven of the fourteen patrician *gentes* of the last century BC still survived, and practically all of these seven had disappeared by the time that the Julio-Claudian dynasty came to its end in 68.[21] It was, quite literally, the newly made patrician families that kept the patriciate alive. They might display subservience more than pedigree, but they were patricians, in name anyway.

But in preserving the patriciate Augustus also transformed it: and thereby he ran the risk of incurring the hostility of the proud patricians themselves. For, like aristocrats everywhere, they resented additions to their exclusive ranks. Some of them, it may be suspected, would have preferred extinction to contamination. But Augustus was not to be deterred. He knew that he could not entirely escape ill-will anyway since some of the patricians must have regarded his own insertion into their midst as a pollution. Evidently he calculated that the credit he would

win as a new Romulus, preserving what the old Romulus had created,[22] would more than compensate for any resulting hostility from the old patricians; and there was even the chance that the magnetism of his own success would reconcile the recalcitrants. For, in saving the patriciate, he would save much else besides. Had he not enlarged the patrician caste, other Roman practices and traditions would also have had to be abandoned. In particular, he would not have been able to carry through that programme of religious revival which seemed to him so essential for the rehabilitation of Roman society. Without patricians the traditional Roman religion was scarcely viable, and the decline in their numbers was making it difficult, and would soon make it impossible, to find persons properly qualified to perform various acts of cult and ritual.

The *rex sacrorum*, for example, had to be a patrician. Then there were the *Salii*, the two colleges of priests essential for the proper worship of Mars, the god especially dear to Roman hearts: twenty-four reasonably young patrician males were needed to keep the roster of the *Salii* up to strength. Nor does the tale end there. There were also the *flamines*, priests individually dedicated to the worship of some one specific divinity. Not all of them were patricians, but the four important ones, the three so-called *flamines maiores* and the one superintending the cult of the deified Julius Caesar, did necessarily have to be of that rank, and there was some trouble in finding them. The office of *flamen dialis*, for instance, remained vacant from 87 to 11 BC precisely because candidates with the exact qualifications were hard to find.[23] Moreover, at the very moment when patrician families were becoming rarer, the number of *flamines* threatened to get larger. The newly established cult of the deified Julius Caesar had already made one extra patrician *flamen* necessary, and it was not

unreasonable for Augustus to foresee, if not positively to hope, that there would soon be another *divus* to care for.

It was not only the state religion that demanded patricians. They were required in other areas of state business as well. The *interrex*, for example, had to be a patrician, and he was an official of whom Augustus was bound to be uncommonly conscious. For Augustus could not have forgotten the year 43, the year when both of the consuls had lost their lives in the fighting around Mutina, *cum cecidit fato consul uterque pari*, as Ovid puts it.[24] Augustus made up his mind to take their place, and he was even prepared, if need be, to seize the now vacant consulship by force of arms. But he preferred to be able to say that he had obtained the office by legitimate process, and therefore he wanted to go through the formality of being elected into it at Rome. Now, as the consuls for 43 were both dead, this election should have been conducted by an *interrex*. At that moment, however, no patrician could be found at Rome to serve as *interrex*, so that Augustus, or Octavian as he then was, was forced to resort to a very irregular procedure for the staging of his so-called election.[25] He was, of course, made consul: his army would have seen to that in any case; but this consulship, illegal to begin with, had now become doubly so, and Augustus was not likely to forget that a shortage of patricians was chiefly to blame.

Another office reserved to patricians, or so it appears, was that of *princeps senatus*. This would present no problem so long as Augustus himself was alive, he having become *princeps senatus* in 28.[26] But there was still the future to think of. The Roman emperor might become an object of worship, but that would not stop him from being mortal; and some day a successor, a patrician successor, for the *princeps senatus* would have to be found.

Some of Augustus' revivals, even if they did not make

new patricians positively imperative, did at least render them desirable. For instance, he brought the *Troia* game back to life and expanded it. This was an exercise in which companies of aristocratic boys carried out a series of complicated manoeuvres on horseback. In implying that the youthful performers were all patricians Cassius Dio is mistaken:[27] even so, it was obviously desirable that a certain proportion of them should be. The same is no less true of the Arval brotherhood and the college of *fetiales*, both of which likewise seem to have been resurrected by Augustus.

Exaggeration, of course, must avoided. After making allowance for all requirements, both those that were inescapably necessary and those that were merely desirable, the total of patricians needed for state purposes, while urgent and serious, was not overwhelming. Furthermore, it was also spasmodic. Only occasionally would it be necessary to appoint a *rex sacrorum*, a *flamen*, an *interrex*, or a *princeps senatus*; and even if the two colleges of *Salii* kept up a steady demand for patricians, there were the dying old patrician families from republican times to help meet it.

According to Cassius Dio,[28] Julius Caesar's new patricians were 'many.' A similar statement is nowhere made about Augustus. Yet Augustus seems to have created far more of them than his great-uncle. Despite Dio's 'many' it cannot be positively demonstrated that Julius Caesar ever made anybody a patrician except Mark Antony and Octavian:[29] a statement elsewhere in Dio[30] that he did the same for Cicero convinces nobody. Yet Augustus can be shown, by allusions in literature, by inscriptions, and by the careers of certain important personages, to have created at least sixteen new patrician families, and the total may well be even higher than that. Agrippa, for instance, is not one of the demonstrable sixteen. Yet it is

inconceivable that Agrippa, Augustus' most useful supporter and closest associate, the husband of his daughter and the father of his grandchildren, was not made patrician, seeing that the honour befell others who were neither related to the emperor nor exceptionally distinguished in themselves.

On the whole the evidence suggests that Augustus created more than enough patricians for the priesthoods and other official positions positively needing them; and presumably he had some motive in doing so.

Patronage will be one explanation. Every member of the senatorial order must have been eager to be promoted to the rank, for it not only enabled a man to cut a grand figure, but also brought with it the prospect of rapid preferment. The first step in the *cursus honorum*, or official career, of a Roman senator under the Empire was to serve on one of the four boards that collectively made up the so-called vigintivirate. But it made a difference on which board one served. The three mint-masters (*tresviri monetales*) were the ones with the brightest prospects: they consistently reached the highest posts later; and patricians were invariably mint-masters during their period of service with the vigintivirate. After the vigintivirate the young patrician was ready for the quaestorship, and this he regularly obtained by being appointed to it by the emperor: unlike non-patricians he was not under the necessity of having to canvass fiercely in the Senate and to fight a real election for the office. The quaestorship was followed by either the plebeian tribunate or the aedileship, and as patricians were ineligible for the former they were logically excused from the latter. Thus they proceeded from the quaestorship to the praetorship in a single bound; and as it was the praetorship that opened the way to the very highest appointments in the Empire, a patrician was fully qualified for them some three years ahead of his

non-patricin contemporaries and while still a comparatively young man. Thus patrician status, with its promise of greater certainty and greater celerity in attaining the highest posts, was something worth having. Undoubtedly the above pattern took some time to establish itself and become standardized, but it was already clearly discernible under Augustus. He, in fact, was its creator; for it was he who (in 13 BC) made a period of service on the vigintivirate obligatory for all would-be senators and who (in 18 BC) excused the patricians among them from the aedileship.[31]

The privileged position of the patricians was made to order for the exploitative talents of Augustus. He did not content himself with elevating Italian newcomers who deserved particularly well of him, men like Statilius Taurus from Lucania, or Lucius Arruntius from Atina, or, probably, Vipsanius Agrippa from who knows where.[32] The overwhelming majority of his new patricians were not obscure Italians at all. Of the sixteen families that he is known to have brought into the patriciate,[33] a round dozen were celebrated in the annals of the Republic, families such as the Aelii Tuberones, the Appuleii Saturnini, the Junii Silani and, still more illustrious, the Calpurnii Pisones, the Domitii Ahenorbarbi, the Claudii Marcelli and the Sempronii Gracchi. Evidently Augustus was seeking to conciliate and mollify the old republican element in the Senate, compensating them for the indignity of having Italian upstarts thrust upon them. And, as everybody knows, he was successful: he did succeed in placating and soothing the ruffled feelings of the senatorial class.

In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that his creation of new patricians helped him to carry out his cherished plan of unifying Italy. This may seem strange and paradoxical, for the patriciate might well appear an instrument better suited for stratification than for integration. But the grant of patrician status bribed aristocratic Romans into acquiescence with Augustus' policy of promoting Italian *novi homines* into the consulship; and the prospect of patrician status kept Italians happy with Augustus' policy of fostering Roman ways and customs. Needless to say, he was very selective, reserving the grant of patrician status to comparatively few. But aspirations could be kept alive: every senator could hope that the honour might some day come his way. Augustus' practice helped to weld and fuse Romans and Italians into one nation with a community of outlook and singleness of purpose to an extent that had never been achieved before.

Where Augustus led, later emperors followed. When his successors created patricians, it was for motives very like his. Tiberius, it is true, did not raise anyone to the patriciate, so far as we know, and neither did Caligula. But Claudius took the office of censor in AD 43, and used it to enlarge the patriciate, among other other purposes. As with Augustus, one of his motives was to make acceptable to existing senators a policy which many of them found distasteful. Claudius was aiming to bring more natives from the provinces, especially the western provinces, into the Roman Senate; he was even prepared to adlect natives from unurbanized tribal districts,[34] and to class-conscious Roman senators such persons would appear little better than barbarians. Claudius therefore promoted some senators from Italy, and so far as we know only senators from Italy (including Rome), into the patriciate, thus enabling them to retain their feelings of superiority over the newcomers he was proposing to foist upon them.[35]

Vespasian, the next emperor to create patricians, seems to have behaved in an essentially similar way. Assuming the censorhsip in 73, he began to bring still more natives from the provinces, even some from the eastern provinces, into the Senate; and to calm the outraged feelings that this aroused in existing senators, he made some of the latter,

including some originating from the western provinces, patricians.[36] This was a momentous step. To make Roman patricians out of native provincials must have contributed greatly to the unification of the Roman Empire, since it would help to prevent a feeling of alienation from spreading among the provincial bourgeoisie.

The patriciate was thus a useful instrument for imperial policy. It is not to be dismissed as an obsolete relic or as an object of antiquarian curiosity. Under Augustus it helped to unite Italy, under his successors it served to knit the Empire together, and throughout it emphasized the hierarchy; and the emperors of Rome, like the dictators of more recent days, were very well aware that gradations of privilege are the best guarantee for an autocrat's ability to control his inferiors. From of old the Romans were past masters in the art of *divide et impera*.[37]

It was an advantage that the system could be kept going indefinitely by means of periodical inductions of more newly created aristocrats. This was just as well, for the new patricians of the Empire resembled the old patricians of the Republic in showing a distressing tendency to die out. To the ills to which flesh is naturally heir were added the deadly effects of imperial jealousy. The murderous inclinations of malevolent emperors like Nero often made patricians their target; a patrician after all was *capax imperii*, nobody more so, as we shall see. As a result, some patrician families, the Junii Silani for example, were quite literally exterminated. Others, however, displayed a tenacious longevity. Calpurnii Pisones were still prominent in Roman public life late in the second century AD,[38] and an Aquillius, descended from a family made patrician by Augustus, was consul, also in the second half of that century.[39]

In any case, the new patrician families, the short-lived ones and the durable ones alike, contributed many high

officials to the service of the Roman Empire. Of Augustus' new patricians, P. Silius Nerva had three sons and three grandsons reach the consulship, and C. Asinius Pollio a son and likewise three grandsons. The descendants of T. Statilius Taurus also included consuls among their number.[40] These three families, as it happened, died out fairly quickly, but others could be, and were, created in their place; and as patrician status was naturally reserved for those who best conformed with the imperial system, the new patriciate would inevitably continue to contribute to the pool of administrative manpower available for imperial purposes.

But if the new patricians had merely decorated the social scene and supplied the Roman Empire with a few of its priests and top administrators, they would be little more than a subject of scholarly interest. In fact, they were something more. For the patricians enjoyed a prerogative of the type that has already been mentioned, the unwritten kind. It was not defined by any letter of the law, but it played a significant role in the development of the history of the Emprie. The record of the imperial succession indicates that, for a very long time, only patricians were considered suitable candidates for the office of emperor. This was one of the *arcana imperii* with which Cassius Dio was well acquainted ('emperors belong altogether to the patrician class' is the way he puts it);[41] but it has passed unremarked by most modern writers on the Roman Empire.

During the first seventy-five years of the Empire, it was regarded as unthinkable that anyone should be emperor who could not claim descent, either by birth or by adoption, from the old republican nobility and indeed from a patrician family in that nobility. This unwritten rule helps to explain Agrippa's self-effacement[42] and the relative ease with which Tiberius got rid of even so

powerful a figure as Sejanus; and it will also account for Verginius Rufus' refusal to seize the purple in AD 68 when it looked like his for the taking. It also explains why Scribonianus under Claudius, and Piso under Nero should have thought of themselves as credible pretenders, possible substitutes for the reigning princes: both of these rebels were patricians and descendants of the republican nobility. Likewise the reason for Galba's refusal to imitate Verginius Rufus' reluctance in 68 becomes apparent: Galba, too, was a patrician scion of the republican nobility, so that he had no need to hesitate about seizing the purple. And it is to be noted that the successor he selected for himself, M. Piso Licinianus, belonged to the same class.

Disillusion with Galba led to his murder and to the murder of his intended successor, and there does not seem to have been any other patrician with a suitable republican background left to take his place. The Roman world accordingly had to make up its mind to an emperor who was not from the old republican nobility, as indeed Tacitus expressly informs us.[43] That, however, was not to say that the Roman world now had to discard its age-old preference for high birth. It did not need to accept the proposition that the emperor might now be taken from any level of society at all. If there was no patrician from the old republican nobility available, there was at least the possibility of a patrician from the new imperial aristocracy; and this was the rule that came to prevail. Galba was succeeded by Otho, and Otho in his turn by Vitellius; and both Otho and Vitellius were patricians, the former from a family of Etruscan Ferentum, the latter from a family of Nuceria, in all likelihood the Campanian town of that name. Claudius had been the emperor responsible for making both these families patrician.[44]

The new convention that only patricians, that is the new patricians of the Empire, could aspire to the purple had to

be ignored, it is true, when *urgentibus imperii fatis* circumstances proved too much for it; and such circumstances arose later in the year 69. That was the dreadful year of the four emperors, and by the first of July Galba and Otho were both dead and the Emprie was languishing under the misrule of Vitellius. The need of a saviour for the Roman world was distressingly evident. It was Italy, the sober, hard-working Italy of imperial literature, that supplied peace and a *princeps* on this occasion, just as it had done on the previous occasion, one hundred years earlier. But it meant the elevation of a non-patrician. Effectively, by mid-year of 69, the choice lay between Vespasian, commander of the army in Judaea, and Licinius Mucianus, governor of the province of Syria. Neither was a patrician, but Vespasian did at least come from a family that had emerged from obscurity in Augustus' reign and that belonged to the heart of Italy, to a district that had been one of the very first to be romanized;[45] unlike Verginius Rufus, Vespasian was not a native of a region that until recently had been reckoned a part of Gaul. Where Mucianus came from nobody knows;[46] presumably it was a place sufficiently outlandish to make him content to play the role of Agrippa to Vespasian's Augustus. His self-abnegation was certainly not due to any love for Vespasian, since the two men had not even been on good terms until the middle of the year 69. It may be suspected, in fact, that Mucianus came from the provinces [47] and realized that, as such, he would not be acceptable as a candidate for empire. Vespasian himself, for that matter, was none too over-confident. He seems to have been nervous that his own non-patrician status might prove fatal to his chances: that will explain why he hesitated so long before permitting a claim to be made on his behalf. Probably it also explains why many Romans to the very end remained loyal to Vitellius, even after that patrician

glutton had himself already expressed a strong desire to abdicate.[48] Even after Vespasian had secured military supremacy, he still thought it prudent to stay away from Rome for months on end, to give the Senate time to pronounce him a patrician and to give the People time to get used to thinking of him in his new patrician guise.[49] And, once in Rome, the newly made patrician sought by various devices to enhance the dignity of his family and make it seem more authentically aristocratic: the *Lex de Imperio* that Vespasian evidently felt necessary to justify his seizure of power (but that no previous emperor seems to have needed), the repeated consulships that Vespasian held (usually with his son for a colleague), the office of censor that Vespasian revived and occupied – all of these things amounted to an attempt on his part to raise the prestige of himself and his family.

The second half of 69 was then entirely exceptional, and this accounts for the accession of a non-patrician as emperor on that occasion. At other times, almost to the very end of the second century, the unwritten rule that only patricians could compete for the purple was regularly observed. The Flavian emperors after Vespasian of course conform to it. Titus and Domitian had inherited patrician status from their father, and it is noteworthy that each of them succeeded without any difficulty. Domitian, it is true, did find himself with a rebellion on his hands half way through his reign; but it is noteworthy that the pretender was himself a patrician, Lucius Saturninus, from a family that may have been elevated to that status ahead of the Flavian.[50]

After Domitian's murder in September of 96, the situation was ominously similar to that after the death of Nero, but another year of four emperors was avoided when the Senate found an elderly patrician upon whom to confer the imperial power. Nerva came from an Italian

family that had emerged from obscurity in triumviral days and had been made patrician by Augustus. It is difficult to see what other qualifications he possessed for the exalted role that was now thrust upon him. He had, it seems, helped Nero to suppress the conspiracy of Piso, but otherwise he had had no scintillating career in the service of the Empire. So far as is known, he had held no military or high admininstrative post apart from the consulship, which in any case by his day was little more than a ceremonial sinecure. Like many other senators, Nerva had been content to serve in the urban magistracies and then remain in Rome, passing his life in ways more or less traditional for members of his class. But, unlike most of his fellows, he was a patrician and by that very fact a fit candidate for empire.[51]

Cassius Dio asserts that in 97 Nerva passed over relatives of his own in order to select Trajan as his successor,[52] and modern scholars argue that this inaugurated the system of succession by adoption which gave the Roman world excellent emperors and good government for the next three quarters of a century and more, in fact right down to the day when Marcus Aurelius substituted hereditary for adoptive succession, ensuring the accession of his own son, the worthless Commodus, to the throne of the Caesars in 180. The thesis that succession by adoption was the deliberate and conscious policy of the so-called Antonine emperors is far from convincing.[53] Admittedly Nerva did proclaim the adoption of Trajan, but there is evidence to suggest that the choice may have been forced upon him;[54] and, even if it was not, one must still ask why Trajan should have been the one to be selected. The usual explanation is that he was an experienced soldier and, perhaps more important, that he was at that moment in command of the army of Upper Germany, the nearest to Rome of the really formidable provincial forces. But

Trajan was not the only eminent person available. There was also Licinius Sura, for example. Sura, however, was not a patrician and, presumably because of this, was content to push the fortunes of Trajan, who was: Trajan had inherited the status from his father, one of those whom Vespasian had made patrician.[55]

Patrician status, or the lack of it, also helps to shed light on the mystery surrounding the accession of Hadrian in 117. On that occasion the adoptive principle pretty certainly had not been invoked, unless one is to believe the unconvincing tale told by Trajan's widow to the effect that Trajan had adopted Hadrian on his death-bed. Trajan's failure, right down to the time of his death, to indicate Hadrian as his successor calls for explanation. Hadrian was Trajan's nearest male relative, was of the right age, and furthermore had had a great deal of military and administrative experience, so that the nomination of him would have been in the natural order of things. Yet Trajan had not chosen him. Trajan, of course, must have known of, and disapproved of, Hadrian's opposition to territorial expansion. That was enough to give Trajan pause; and, so long as he himself did not make Hadrian patrician, he could always aver that Hadrian because of his non-patrician status was not of the stuff of which emperors ought to be made. Incidentally, Hadrian's non-patrician status is not in any doubt: he had actually held the office of plebeian tribune and in his vigintivirate days had not been one of the mint-masters.[56] Perhaps Trajan was hoping that some alternative to Hadrian would ultimately be forthcoming. If that was his hope, it was frustrated by his own comparatively early death in 117; whereupon Hadrian inevitably became emperor. It was hardly an uneventful succession. Hadrian, of course, could claim that his 'adoption' by Trajan automatically made him a patrician.[57] But he needed more reassurance than that. Accordingly

four of the most illustrious ex-consuls in the Roman Empire were executed. Perhaps it had been from them that Trajan had been hoping to find his alternative to Hadrian. At the very least it seems likely that the four men had been opposed to the elevation of one whom they knew to be planning the surrender of the conquests that they themselves had helped Trajan to win. The charge against them was the inevitable one of 'conspiracy,' although how four men widely spearated from one another could have hatched a conspiracy in such short order it is not easy to see.[58]

Hadrian was hardly likely to forget how his own lack of lofty lineage had prejudiced his chances for the succession, and he bore it very much in mind later when his own turn came to name a successor. Undoubtedly patrician birth was not then for him the only consideration: he was determined to find a successor who could be trusted to continue his own antiexpansionist programme. Hadrian's natual choice could have been expected to be Pedanius Fuscus, his only adult male relative and, as it happened, a patrician to boot. But Hadrian evidently suspected that young man of harbouring the same imperialist instincts as his aged grandfather Julius Servianus. Julius Servianus had been one of Trajan's principal collaborators in territorial expansion and years before had quarrelled violently with Hadrian, who was his brother-in-law, presumably on that very issue.[59] To clear the way for securely anti-imperialist successors Hadrian hounded Pedanius Fuscus and Julius Servianus to their deaths in 136.[60] He then proceeded to adopt a patrician notorious for his good looks and luxurious habits, who could not by even the wildest stretch of the imagination be regarded as a military man.[61] L. Ceionius Commodus, before his adoption under the name of L. Aelius Caesar, seems never to have seen a legion in his life. The same can also be said of Antoninus Pius,

whom Hadrian chose next, after Ceionius Commodus' sudden death. Neither adoption was popular at the time, and it is to be noted that Hadrian felt it safe to ignore non-patricians whose services to the Empire had been far greater; Catilius Severus, for instance, who had been Antoninus' colleague in the consulship in 120. Widely different though the predilections of Hadrian made their fortunes, Julius Servianus, Pedanius Fuscus, Ceionius Commodus, and Antoninus Pius were all alike in one respect: they were all patricians. Hadrian had learned the lesson well. His search was for a pacifist, but it had to be a patrician pacifist.

The dispositions he made when he selected Antoninus Pius emphasize this even more strongly. Antoninus himself was a patrician: modern scholars are agreed on that, and they suggest that his family may have acquired the status under the Flavians.[62] But, at the time of his adoption by Hadrian, Antoninus appears to have had no surviving son of his own.[63] Hadrian therefore obliged him to remedy the deficiency by adopting not just one, but two youths. One of the two was Antoninus' nephew by marriage who is known to history as Marcus Aurelius, and the other was Ceionius Commodus' son, who is known to history as Lucius Verus. The parallel with AD 4, when Augustus adopted Tiberius and obliged Tiberius in his turn to adopt his own nephew Germanicus and his own stepson Agrippa Postumus, has been frequently remarked and is in truth blatant and palpable enough. Evidently Hadrian was intent upon founding a dynasty and wanted to make sure that it would adhere to his non-expansionist policies. But what induced him to select precisely these two youths as the eventual successors Of Antoninus? The dutiful character of the sixteen-year-old Marcus Aurelius is sufficient explanation in his case: Marcus Aurelius could safely be trusted to do his best to carry out Hadrian's wishes. But what could

Hadrian have known about the outlook of the seven-year-old Lucius Verus, who incidentally seems to have been the greater favourite of the two with him?[64] Perhaps Hadrian was trusting Antoninus and Marcus between them to train Lucius Verus along the right lines. Be that as it may, it is to be noted that Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus were both patricians, and this must have been a decisive factor in their selection.

Hadrian was succeeded, in due course and in turn, by Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus, and Marcus Aurelius' son Commodus, patricians all; and the question of the succession did not arise again until Commodus was assassinated on the last day of the year 192. His death, like that of Nero about a century and a quarter earlier, not only brought a dynasty to an end together with the official abolition of the memory of its last unworthy member, but also ushered in a year of murderous rivalries and military chaos.

As usual, *inter arma silent leges*: and amid the violence of 193 aristocratic birth received but scant consideration. It was military might that decided, and none of the contenders for the purple was patrician. Helvius Pertinax and Didius Julianus were the first to make their pretensions good, and they did so with the backing of the Praetorian Guard. But in this kind of horseplay the pampered praetorians were no match for the legions, and their nominees got very short shrift: the legions had other ideas. The three biggest legionary armies in the Roman Empire at that time had each its own pretender. The army of Pannonia proclaimed Septimius Severus, that of Syria Pescennius Niger, and that of Britain Clodius Albinus.

The Senate could do little more than look on helplessly,[65] but the little that it did is revealing. As none of the pretenders was patrician,[66] it would not recognize any one of them unless and until he came to

Rome and compelled it to do so by *force majeure*; and Pescennius Niger and Clodius Albinus never got to Rome.

From this bloody rivalry, as we all know, it was Septimius Severus who emerged as the ultimate victor, after the elimination of Niger, followed a few years later by a particularly bloody encounter with the troops of Albinus near Lugdunum in Gaul. Septimius was an African with little, if any, Italian blood in his veins,[67] and it is significant that, to legitimize his seizure of power, he pretended to be a Roman patrician. As soon as he could, he put forward the cool claim that Marcus Aurelius had adopted him some fifteen years earlier, and this, of course, made him, Septimius, the son of a *divus* and the brother of a *damnatus*, both of them patricians; and Septimius pushed this fraudulent claim to preposterous lengths. He revoked the official ban on the memory of his 'brother,' the unspeakable Commodus, and had him officially deified instead; and he insisted that the name of his own son and intended successor, the monster known to history as Caracalla, should be Antoninus, after his adoptive 'grandfather,' Antoninus Pius. In fact Antoninus was the name by which Caracalla was henceforth officially known, right down to the day of his death, and even beyond.[68]

With the dynasty of the Severi the Roman Empire was well embarked upon the third century of its existence and was fast approaching the perilous time of troubles that was to transform Augustus' reorganization of the Roman state. After the assassination of Severus Alexander in 235, seizure of power by military adventurers became the order of the day. None of these soldier upstarts lasted long and few of them could boast of distinguished birth. Their one qualification was their sword; and it made very little difference if they were not patricians, or even senators. They asserted their claim by armed might, oblivious to all other considerations.

The violence of these so-called Barrack Emperors proved fatal to the hereditary patriciate of Rome that Augustus had snatched from the brink of extinction over two and a half centuries earlier: the last emperor positively known to have created new patricians was precisely Severus Alexander.[69] Yet even in those terrible days of military anarchy when the proud old institution was rapidly nearing its end, the desirability of patrician birth for a Roman emperor was not entirely forgotten. In 238 when the Senate found itself, once again and quite unexpectedly, faced with the necessity of selecting an emperor, it did not look further than the ranks of the patricians; and for good measure it named not one, but two of them, Balbinus and Pupienus, the former from a family that Hadrian had elevated and the latter from one that owed its distinction to Septimius Severus.[70]

Thus, during the greatest days of the Roman Empire, patrician rank was clearly a matter of some consequence. It helped to create emperors, and it encouraged men to become pretenders; and the uprising of patricians like Scribonianus and Saturninus, it will be remembered, led Claudius and Domitian into courses of action that affected the whole of subsequent history. Augustus had revived something that counted for much in Roman eyes.

Even the chaos of the half century between 235 and 285, fatal though it was to the hereditary patriciate, did not erase its memory. When the emperor Constantine, early in the fourth century, wished to honour those of his supporters whom he chiefly esteemed, the title that he chose for them was Patrician. This did not mean that, like Augustus before him, he was seeking to bring a dying institution back to life. He was conferring a personal distinction upon his nominees: he was not making them members of a continuing, hereditary aristocracy.[71] His Patricians look much more like the life-peers of the United

Kingdom of today than like the old hereditary peerage of England. But their title at least was taken directly from the aristocractic caste of Rome's earliest history; and every student of the fourth and fifth centuries AD will be familiar with the splendid services which non-hereditary Patricians, many of them very un-Roman in their origin, men like the great Aetius, for instance, rendered to the Roman Empire, postponing its disintegration and keeping alive its continuing magnetism.

If today one visits the Palatine Hill in Rome and enters the little museum that is housed there in what was once the Convent of the Visitation, a broken marble basin of the fifth century after Christ is one of the first objects to catch the eye. It was found on the Palatine and it is inscribed with the name of the man to whom it belonged: a certain Flavius Arbazagius, described on it as *comes et patricius*.[72] The flamboyant name proves that he was no Roman of the ancient stock: it points rather to an origin from the east, from Armenia perhaps.[73] Yet he had made his mark to such good purpose in the Roman state that he had been named one of its Patricians. A patrician of the late Roman Empire, and a Patrician from the eastern provinces at that, at the very spot where Rome had had its earliest small beginnings over twelve centuries earlier, is a phenomenon well able to arouse romantic and nostalgic sentiments. But the *comes et patricius* Flavius Arbazagius does more than catch the passing fancy. He graphically emphasizes the two aspects of the Roman Empire that more than all others impress the modern student: its cosmopolitanism and its durability. And if, in our contemplation of the Roman patriciate, we are able thus to be fascinated by a sense of continuity and tradition, this is due to the political agility of the statesman who ensured the strong and wide survival of this most Roman of institutions: Augustus the patrician.

NOTES

1. Tac. *Ann.* 11.25; Suet. *Jul. Caes.* 41; Dio 43.47.8.
2. Dio 49.43.6: possibly Dio has made an error.
3. Dio 52.42.5.
4. Suet. *Aug.* 50.
5. For Augustus' new patricians see H. C. Heiter, *De Patriciis Gentibus Quae Imperii Romani Saeculis I, II, III Fuerint* (Diss. Berlin, 1909), pp. 41-55.
6. Vell. 2.74.4; Sen. *De Clem.*, 1.11; Suet. *Aug.* 15; App. *Bell. Civ.* 5.48, 49; Dio 48.14.4.
7. For Augustus' Veliternan origin see Suet. *Aug.* 1, 94; Dio 45.1.1.
8. Vell. 2.60.1.
9. See Dio 45.6.2; 53.17.10.
10. Tac. *Ann.* 3.56.
11. *Res. Gest.* 6.24; Ovid, *Fasti* 2.127f.; Dio 55.10.10, cf. 56.9.3.
12. Dio 52.42.5.
13. Through Iulus, son of Aeneas and consequently grandson of Venus.
14. Suet. *Galba* 2.
15. Plebeians had been eligible for the consulship ever since 367 BC, but it was only since 342 that both of the consuls might be plebeian: Livy 6.35.5; 7.42.2.
16. See, for instance, R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1939), *passim* and E. Badian, *Foreign Clientelae* (Oxford, 1958), *passim*.
17. *Fasti Consulares* ad an. 172: *ambo primi de plebe*.
18. E. T. Salmon in *Revue des études latines* 47 bis, 1969, pp. 321-4.
19. For the numbers of the patricians at different periods see A. Momigliano in *Oxford Classical Dictionary*[2] s.v. Patricians, p. 790.
20. See below, notes 28, 29, 30.
21. Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 574, 577, 579.
22. For Romulus as the original creator of the patricians see Plut. *Rom.* 13; *Quaest. Roman.* 58: Festus p. 454L. For Augustus as the new Romulus see Suet. *Aug.* 7, 95; Dio 46.46.3; 47.19.3; 53.16.5.
23. A. D. Nock in *CAH* 10, p. 479.
24. Ovid, *Tristia* 4.10.6.
25. Dio 46.45.
26. *Res Gest.* 1.7.

27. Dio 43.23.6; 48.20.2.
28. Dio 43.47.3.
29. Heiter pp. 40 f.
30. Dio 46.22.3.
31. For the favouritism enjoyed by patricians in office-holding see Heiter p. 6.
32. On the obscurity of Agrippa's origin see Vell. 2.96.
33. See note 5 above.
34. *ILS* 212 and Tac. *Ann.* 11.24.
35. Heiter pp. 55-8.
36. W. Eck, *Senatoren von Vespasian bis Hadrian* (Munich, 1970), pp. 108 f.
37. The expression *divide et impera* is, however, a Renaissance rather than a Roman one.
38. *PIR*^{2} 2, p. 71, no. 295.
39. Heiter p. 44.
40. Syme, *The Roman Revolution*, p. 498.
41. Dio 53.17.10; nor was it unknown to Dio's contemporary, Herodian (see 8.8.1).
42. Agrippa was ashamed of his humble origin: Sen. *Controv.* 2.4.13.
43. Tac. *Hist.* 2.48.
44. Heiter p. 57.
45. He came from the Sabine country: Suet. *Vesp.* 1.
46. Syme, *Tacitus*, p. 598.
47. Perhaps from Spain: Syme, *Tacitus*, p. 791.
48. Tac. *Hist.* 3.68.
49. See Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht* 2.789.
50. Heiter p. 53.
51. On the mediocrity of Nerva's career before he became emperor see Syme, *Tacitus*, pp. 1 f.
52. Dio 68.4.
53. R. M. Geer in *TAPA* 67 (1936), pp. 47-54.
54. This may be the implication of Aur. Vict. *Epit.* 13.7 and even of Pliny, *Paneg.* 7.3.
55. Eck p. 109.
56. S.H.A. *Had.* 2, 3.
57. The 'adoption' is described in S.H.A. *Had.* 4.
58. Palma was at Tarracina, Celsus at Baiae, Nigrinus at Faventia, and Lusius on his way home from Mauretania: S.H.A. *Had.* 7.
59. On the relations between Hadrian and Servianus see Syme, *Tacitus*, p. 600.

60. S.H.A. *Had.* 15, 23.
61. S.H.A. *Had.* 23; *Ael.* 5.
62. *PIR*^{2} 1, p. 310, no. 1513; W. Hüttl, *Antoninus Pius* (Prague, 1936), p. 3; Syme, *Tacitus*, p. 595, n. 3; Eck, pp. 108 f.
63. But doubts about his lack of a son have been raised: Hüttl, p. 3.
64. On Hadrian's predilection for the boy Lucius Verus see S.H.A. *Ael* 7.2..
65. It is, of course, true that the Senate approved of Pertinax; but the fact remains that it was the Praetorians who took the initiative in making him emperor.
66. It is significant, however, that those of them that got the chance to do so (Pertinax, Didius Julianus, Septimius Severus) promptly had themselves made patrician.
67. On the possibility that Septimius Severus had some Italians among his forebears see A. R. Birley, *Septimius Severus, The African Emperor* (London, 1971), pp. 26-43.
68. In fact Antoninus became a name for Roman emperors long to conjure with: see Syme, *Emperors and Biography* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 78-88.
69. Heiter p. 4.
70. On the patrician status of both Pupienus and Balbinus see Syme, *Emperors and Biography*, pp. 172 f.
71. On the patriciate under Constantine see B. Kübler in *RE* 18 (1949), s.v. 'patres, patricii,' cols. 2231 f.; R. MacMullen, *Constantine* (New York, 1969), pp. 155, 193; A. Momigliano, *loc. cit.* (note 19); J. H. Smith, *Constantine the Great* (London, 1971), p. 273.
72. *CIL* 6.31978.
73. See O. Seeck in *RE* 2 (1895), s.v. 'Arbazacius,' col. 407.