More than twenty years ago Rostovtzeff stated that the emperor Hadrian's reign, in spite of all that had been written about it, fully deserved a fresh monograph 1). The remark still holds good, notwithstanding the many studies, even extensive works, which have been devoted to this ruler since. Whenever Rostovtzeff's suggestion is followed Hadrian's religious policy will no doubt form an essential part of the new work. Recently discovered material (papyri and inscriptions) presents a number of problems which will have to be considered together with the literary evidence of the Vita Hadriani and Cassius Dio, to mention no more than the principal sources.

The emperor's personality and his outlook on contemporary religious trends cannot well be left out of consideration, no matter how precarious the examination or how doubtful the result. His personal views in matters of religion cannot be successfully approached unless his religious policy has first been conscientiously examined. The student will have to take his chance of falling a victim to political camouflage and devices on the part of the emperor himself; there is simply no alternative. Those who endeavour to reconstruct Hadrian's religion directly from his own statements, scant as they are, arrive at diametrically opposite results. Even so, they show that the road to such a reconstruction via the study of his religious policy, circuitous though it may be, is less liable to produce unfounded or arbitrary decisions. By way of introduction I submit the following examples of rash conclusions drawn from some of Hadrian's own statements on matters of religion.

1) M. Rostovtzeff, Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft im römischen Kaiserreich II, 1931, p. 84.
The famous verses made by the emperor on his death-bed 1):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Animula vagula blandula,} \\
\text{Hospes comesque corporis,} \\
\text{Quae nunc abibis in loca,} \\
\text{Pallidula rigida nudula,} \\
\text{Nec ut soles dabis iocos?}
\end{align*}
\]

have been the subject of various speculations. According to W. Weber 2) we have here “half mocking verses”. According to Th. Birth 3) “he kept his wit even when in pain” till growing agony made him try to take his own life. D’Orgeval, who in 1950 published the latest extensive monograph on the emperor, dates the poem “au moment de sa mort”, that is after suicide had been contemplated. To him the verses prove the emperor’s strength of mind which had not deserted him 4). This view of the emperor as a true Stoic probably inspired the novelist Marguerite Yourcenar in her Mémoires d’Hadrien. Her book concludes with a translation of the emperor’s soliloquy to his soul, but then her imagination makes her add: “Un instant encore, regardons ensemble les rives familières, les objets que sans doute nous ne reverrons plus... Tâchons d’entrer dans la mort les yeux ouverts”.

B. W. Henderson holds a quite different view. When the emperor made this poem he was not the “Lord of thirty legions” but “an ailing child looking wistfully after his darling toys, now for ever put aside, hardly fearful, yet doubtfully asking, of his journey into the unknown to-morrow” 5). The verses do not express fear of death, even so they are a lament, not a product of a sardonic mind; there is no trace of wit.—This view also finds an echo in fiction. Henderson’s opinion (1923) corresponds with that of the New Testament scholar A. Hausrath who in 1881, under the pen-name of G. Taylor, published a novel called Antinous, historischer Roman

1) Vita Hadr. 25,9.
3) Römische Charakterköpfe, 1918, p. 323.
4) B. d’Orgeval, L’empereur Hadrien (œuvre législative et administrative), 1950, p. 33.