

# Applied Theology

Post by “Susan Hill” of November 3, 2020 at 9:05 AM

Don, thank you for the link! Here are a couple of relevant excerpts:

The functions of the *prophētēs* were, on the one hand, the ritual performance of the sacrifices to Apollo and, on the other hand, representative duties as well as announcing and interpreting the answers of the oracle. The *prophētēs* Philidas, who left behind only an inscription of four lines as testimony of his office, did not see any inconsistency in being both an Epicurean philosopher and a prophet, or in publicly commemorating this aspect after the end of his term as prophet. Those who selected him as their candidate evidently had no reservations about this situation, either, for there can be no doubt that they knew about his Epicurean background.

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To return to Epicurean *hiereis*, modern scholars have been particularly impressed by Aurelius Belius Philippus, *hiereus theou megistou hagiou Belou* and *diadokhos* of the Epicureans at Apamea ad Orontem (Rey-Coquais 1973:66–68 no. 3; cf. now Smith 1996:120). The relevant inscription is preserved only in a very fragmentary state and is dated to the second or third century AD. In spite of its poor condition, it is possible to gather from the text that Aurelius Belius Philippus had done something at the god Belus’ behest. Therefore, the Epicurean publicly recognized the god as the inspirer of his own acts. Since Aurelius Belius Philippus was *diadokhos* of the Epicureans at Apamea, there must have been an institutionalized Epicurean school, which is not otherwise attested. The sanctuary of Zeus Belus at Apamea was an important oracle sanctuary,[53] which was consulted, for example, by Septimius Severus (Cassius Dio *Roman History* 70.8.5–6). Little is known about this sanctuary, and nothing about the Epicurean *diadokhos*, except what the inscription tells us; yet Aurelius Belius Philippus, whose name contains Latin, Semitic-theophoric, and Greek elements,[54] has captured scholars’ interest for two reasons: first because, although being an Epicurean philosopher and therefore an exponent of Hellenic culture, he had strong relations to the cult of Belus,[55] and second, because of the supposed inconsistency between his Epicureanism and his priesthood.[56] However, rather than perceiving Aurelius Belius Philippus as a person enmeshed in inner paradoxes, we should perhaps question whether the supposed inconsistency might not prove to be an error of perspective on our part. For the issue whether an *orthodox* Epicurean should be a priest of Belus is relevant if, and only if, the postulate is valid that Epicurus’ *doxai* were determinant for his followers in their public life.

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Very mysterious. I wonder what was going on here!