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## THE STRENGTH OF EMPIRE AND CAPITAL AS SEEN THROUGH BYZANTINE EYES\*

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ONE of the best syntheses in the field of Byzantine history, Charles Diehl's famous *Byzantium: Greatness and Decline*, is devoted partially to an analysis of Byzantine strength.<sup>1</sup> In this work the author attributed the powerful position of the Byzantine Empire in the Middle Ages to elements such as the Byzantine autocracy, the high quality of its military establishment, the skill of its diplomats, the efficiency of its administrators, the economic and manpower resources of the territories controlled by Byzantium and the importance of the capital as its economic and social center. Naturally Diehl derived his factual information from the Byzantine primary sources, but it is noteworthy that the pragmatic linking of facts with the problem of Byzantine greatness is due in all cases to Diehl's historical judgment and was not expressed in the primary sources. Byzantine literature was permeated with the thought of the greatness of empire and capital, yet the Byzantine sources had, as will be seen, a simple explanation of Byzantine strength which allowed them to dispense with the kind of historical analysis to be found, for example, in Diehl's book. The Byzantines attributed the greatness of their empire and capital to their supernatural defenders and therefore had little incentive to develop either a historical analysis of their greatness or a secular theory of their political development. On the absence of political theory the late Professor N. H. Baynes remarked: "The subjects of the empire were convinced that their policy was approved by God . . . And if you believe that, what profits it to discuss other politics? It would be but a waste of breath."<sup>2</sup> For the same reason the Byzantines never explained in secular terms the strength of

\* The substance of this paper was delivered orally at the meeting of the American Historical Association at Chicago in December 1959. In its present form it owes a great deal to the advice of Professor Ernst Kitzinger, to whom I wish to express my sincere gratitude.

<sup>1</sup> Charles Diehl, *Byzance, Grandeur et Décadence* (Paris, 1919). English translation: *Byzantium: Greatness and Decline* by N. Walford (New Brunswick, N. J., 1957).

<sup>2</sup> N. H. Baynes, "The Thought-World of East Rome," as reprinted in *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1955), p. 32.

mediaeval Byzantium. Yet Byzantine civilization, and especially its literature, is inspired by the conviction of Byzantine strength and can hardly be understood without a thorough grasp of its elements and presuppositions. It is the purpose of this paper to explain in detail the Byzantine view concerning the strength of capital and empire, as it existed before the crusades shattered Byzantine confidence in their historical destiny.

For the purpose of this discussion the Byzantine self-image may conveniently be divided into three components: a religio-political ideology or rhetoric; a theory of kingship based on a specific philosophy of history; and a justification of empire. Of these three components the most important in Byzantine eyes was the second. In the following discussion, however, the religio-political ideology will be placed first because here the classical roots can most clearly be demonstrated. It should be noted that in any given context these three components are apt to combine and intermingle. With regard to them, as in fact in most other respects, Byzantium was indebted to the Biblical tradition, to classical Greece and to ancient Rome. However, at Byzantium these three sources of inspiration did not prove of equal strength and authority. The Biblical fount was of course the strongest and its impact was felt whenever Greek or Roman materials were adopted at Byzantium. But it is also true that the Hellenic source was operative at Byzantium only as modified by the Romans. The Byzantine attitude towards Greece and Rome may be studied with the help of the Byzantine use of the words "Rome" and "Hellas" and "Greece." The Byzantines called their capital "Rome" or "Second Rome" or "New Rome." They referred to the inhabitants of the Byzantine Empire as *Romaioi* and to the Empire as *Romania*.<sup>3</sup> The term "Hellas" and some of its derivatives, on the other hand, had at an early time come to refer to paganism or more precisely to the Greek pagan tradition and normally retained its derogatory sense down to the twelfth century.<sup>4</sup> *Graecia* and *Graeci* were used occasionally in a neutral or favorable sense but normally they too had an uncomplimentary meaning. It is surely no accident that the

<sup>3</sup> Robert L. Wolff, "Romania: The Latin Empire of Constantinople," *SPECULUM*, xxiii (1948), 1-34, esp. 5 f.; F. Dölger's "Rom in der Gedankenwelt der Byzantiner," as reprinted in his *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt* (Ettal, 1953), pp. 70-115, esp. pp. 77-98. Dölger's essay is basic for the topic of Byzantine ideology. Constantine Porphyrogenitus in the *Vita Basilii* (Theophanes Continuatus V, ch. 1, p. 211, ed. Bonn) calls the Byzantine period "the entire duration of Roman rule at Byzantium." A specific view of history, that of *translatio imperii* (cf. Dölger, pp. 98-101), underlies this terminology. According to it, the history of Roman rule may be divided into two historical phases distinguished by the shift of the capital from Rome to Byzantium, but in spite of this transfer it is the same Roman Empire that ruled from Rome first and from Constantinople afterwards. (Unless noted otherwise, all Byzantine historians and chroniclers will henceforth be cited from the Bonn Corpus.)

<sup>4</sup> K. Lechner, *Hellenen und Barbaren im Weltbild der Byzantiner: Die alten Beziehungen als Ausdruck eines neuen Kulturbewusstseins*, Diss. Munich, 1954; cf. the review by P. Lamma, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, xlix (1956), 404-407, and the summary by Lechner in *Saeculum*, vi (1955), 292-306. On the pagan connotation of the Hellenic name and the emergence of the new term *Helladikoi* in the ninth century, see P. Charanis, "Hellas in the Greek sources of the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Centuries," *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr* (Princeton, 1955), p. 172 f., n. 111. Constantine Porphyrogenitus seems to be the only mid-Byzantine author with a favorable view of the Hellenic name; cf. Lechner, *Hellenen und Barbaren*, pp. 51-53.

opprobrious meaning of *Graecus* makes its appearance in Procopius at about the same time when the term *Romania* is first found in the more popular language of Malalas to designate the Byzantine Empire.<sup>5</sup> *Graecia* was meant and felt to be a denial of all the positive values evoked by the term *Romania*. This hesitant or even negative attitude of the Byzantines towards the Hellenic heritage was due, at least partly, to the memory of Rome's victories over the Hellenistic states and of the incorporation of the Greek cities into the Roman Empire, a memory which compromised the prestige of Greece in the eyes of Rome and Byzantium. In the Byzantine self-image, then, Hellenic traditions were admitted only to the extent that they could be de-paganized and harmonized with the Byzantine claim of being the ruling power of a universal empire.

### I. *The Religio-Political Ideology.*

The development of Constantinopolitan and imperial rhetoric is closely associated with the circumstances surrounding Constantinople's foundation. When Constantine the Great founded the Second Rome on the Bosphorus, he thought of it as a second capital which he tried to make as similar to the first Rome as possible. It is well known that before the end of the fourth century resemblance to Rome was replaced by equality with Rome and that from the sixth century on *Rhomē* was used to designate Constantinople. Like every ancient city, Constantinople quickly acquired an official rhetoric by virtue of which it would be able to compete with the older cities of the Empire. Yet while there exist monographs on the literary praises of Athens, Rome, and Antioch, a collection and evaluation of the *Laudes Constantinopoleos* is still lacking<sup>6</sup> and only a few random

<sup>5</sup> Procopius, *Anecdota*, 24 §7 (p. 147, 5, ed. Haury) mentions among Justinian's and Theodora's injustices toward the military that "they accused them of being Γραικοί, implying that it was quite impossible for any person born in Hellas to be brave." Roman contempt for the Greeks is of course much older than the contemptuous use of the name (cf., for example, Juvenal, III, 58 ff.). Ducange's remarks (*Glossarium Mediae et infimae Graecitatis* [Lyons, 1688], verbo Γραικοί) are still instructive. For the neutral use of Γραικοί as "speaking Greek" (as opposed to "speaking a Slavic language") see Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, ch. 49 (p. 228, 6, ed. Gy. Moravcsik and R. J. H. Jenkins [Budapest, 1949]). The term Γραικία seems to be used in a friendly sense in Theodorus Studita, *Epist.* 74 (ed. I. Cozza, *Nova Patrum Bibliotheca*, VIII, 60 f.).

<sup>6</sup> The bibliography on the literary glorification of cities will be found in A. D. Nock, "The Praises of Antioch," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, XL (1954), 76-82, esp. 76, n. 3. A. P. Rudakov, *Očerki Vizantijskei Kultury po Dannym Grecheskoi Agiografii* (Moscow, 1917), ch. iii, pp. 110-137, collected some items on Constantinople from hagiographic sources. See also R. L. Wolff, "The Three Romes . . ." *Daedalus* LXXXVIII (1959), 291-311, esp. p. 293 f. In the text following above I use in the first place an interesting text of the fourth century, Himerius' *Oratio* (VII) XLI, *In Urbem Constantinopolim*, ed. Aristides Colonna, *Scriptores Graeci et Latini consilio Academiae Lynceorum editi* (Roma, 1951), pp. 168-176. (Incidentally, this is the enigmatic "Aimonium Sophista" from whom a fragment is quoted by Leo Allatius in the Bonn edition of Georgius Acropolites, p. 205). Himerius' speech represents an attempt to adapt a Christian rhetoric, probably already developed for Constantine's city, to the pagan revival under Julian, but if one abstracts from this tendency, it may serve as an early inventory of the main topics of this rhetoric. The topics of Himerius' speech will be supplemented by some references to later authors dealing with the Praises of Constantinople, but the subject deserves full monographic treatment. I abstain from using the *Vita Ioannis Acatii* (*Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, ed. 3, Subsidia Hagiographica, no. 8a [Brussels, 1957], no. 829; henceforth abbreviated *BHG*<sup>3</sup>) because its date is unknown; it seems to be late.

examples can be given here. According to a fourth-century pagan example of literary "Praises of Constantinople," Constantinople is no ordinary city but almost a continent transformed into a city.<sup>7</sup> She is so large that she has made a large city out of the waters containing the continent. She extends over all beaches and all plains and has made land of the sea and forced it to become part of the city.<sup>8</sup> She is the beginning and end of Europe; she rules over as large a part of Asia as of Europe.<sup>9</sup> At Constantinople the Black Sea ceases to swell; at Constantinople the Aegean begins; the Bosphorus is her neighbor, the Bosphorus which, by being named after Zeus' mistress Io, foretold that he would nurse in his bosom a Zeus-born king.<sup>10</sup> The sea protects Constantinople,<sup>11</sup> a populous<sup>12</sup> city inhabited by a mixed race of natives and heroes who have made it truly an imitation of a kind of heaven,<sup>13</sup> a people from beginning to end purified by the gods.<sup>14</sup> The city is of great beauty, adorned with gold, by the arts, the senate house, baths, theaters, her greatest ornament is the emperor.<sup>15</sup> She is also the home of philosophy and literature.<sup>16</sup> A notion that is almost invariably found in the "Praises of Constantinople" is that of Constantinople the imperial city. Inherited from the first Rome on the Tiber, this epithet remains one of the designations of Constan-

<sup>7</sup> Himerius, *Oratio* (VII) XLI §4 (p. 170, 42, ed. Colonna).

<sup>8</sup> Himerius, *Oratio* (VII) XLI §6 (p. 171, 61, ed. Colonna). On Constantinople as the *megalopolis*, cf. Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, *Vita Basilii*, ch. 7 (Theophanes Continuatus, p. 221); *Vita Petri Episcopi Argivorum*, BHG<sup>3</sup> 1504, ed. I. Cozza-Luzi, *Nova Patrum Bibliotheca*, IX, Part 3 (Rome, 1888), p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Himerius, *Oratio* (VII) XLI §4 (p. 170, 45, ed. Colonna).

<sup>10</sup> Himerius, *Oratio* (VII) XLI §5 (p. 170, 48, ed. Colonna). Constantinople's location at the meeting place of two continents and the manifold advantages derived by the inhabitants from communications by sea remained a favorite topic, see Libanius Ep. 114 (ed. Foerster, x, 114); Procopius, *De aed.* I 5 (pp. 27–29, ed. Haury); cf. also Nock, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, XL (1954), 80, n. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Himerius, *Oratio* (VII) XLI §10 (p. 173, 110, ed. Colonna). Cf. Nicephorus Phocas' harangue to his troops when he was on the point of capturing the capital, Leo Diaconus III 5 (p. 43).

<sup>12</sup> Himerius, *Oratio* (VII) XLI §11 (p. 173, 13, ed. Colonna). On the large number of houses (and consequently of inhabitants) at Constantinople see Nock, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, XL (1954), 80.

<sup>13</sup> Himerius, *Oratio* (VII) XLI §11, (p. 173 f., 118 ff., ed. Colonna). The notion of Constantinople as the imitation of some kind of heaven seems an adaptation of the Christian topic of *Christomimesis*, see above n. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Himerius, *Oratio* (VII) XLI §13, (p. 174, 135, ed. Colonna).

<sup>15</sup> Himerius, *Oratio* (VII) XLI §8 (p. 172, 81, ed. Colonna). On the wealth and splendor of Constantinople, on its Senate and the beauty of its churches, see also the *Vita Petri Episcopi Argivorum* (above n. 8) p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Himerius, *Oratio* (VII) XLI §12, (p. 174, 125, ed. Colonna). Cf. on literature §2, p. 169, 12 Colonna. On Byzantine pride in its learned men, see the career of the famous philosopher Leo, as told by several authors, e.g., by Theophanes Continuatus IV 27–29 (pp. 185–192) and Scylitzes-Cedrenus, vol. II, p. 169: the Emperor Theophilus refuses to loan Leo's services to the Khalif at Bagdad "because he considered it absurd to give others one's own treasure and to hand over to foreigners the knowledge of reality [i.e., philosophy] for the sake of which the Roman [i.e., Byzantine] people is admired and respected by all" (Theophanes Continuatus IV 27, p. 190). On Leo, see recently Cyril Mango, "The Legend of Leo the Wise," *Recueil des Travaux de l'Institut d'Etudes Byzantines* [Belgrade], VI (1960) 59–93, esp. 91. Another example of learning as a topic in the Praises of Constantinople in the *Vita Petri Episcopi Argivorum* (above, n. 8), p. 2.

tinople throughout the centuries, but in the mid-Byzantine period it is often combined with another, "god-protected."<sup>17</sup>

The concept of Rome and the Empire's eternity, however, could not simply be transferred to Constantine's city, as it conflicted with Christian doctrine. Consequently, it was modified into an expression of hope that capital and empire would last to the end of the world.<sup>18</sup> In this connection it is also worthwhile to mention the belief, also inherited from Rome, in *pignora imperii*, of which Constantinople was thought to possess for example the Staff of Moses, the Throne of Solomon, the Constantinian Cross. They related the emperors to their Israelite prototypes or to their Byzantine predecessors and thus were thought to guarantee the existence of the Empire for a long time to come.<sup>19</sup> In addition there existed at Constantinople a well-developed discipline devoted to the interpretation of astrological phenomena, of dreams, of omina and of the inscriptions and sculptural decoration of columns and statues. Columns and statues especially were popularly believed to prophesy not only the fate of individual emperors but also the end of city and empire. The *Patria Constantinopoleos*, written during the last years of the tenth century, are full of references to mysterious and threatening texts and sculptures found on columns at Constantinople. On the *Forum Tauri* for example stood an equestrian statue brought to Constantinople from Antioch. On its square base were engraved "stories of the last fate of the city when the Russians would be about to destroy the city itself." As Charles Diehl remarked a generation ago: "What makes [such accounts] interesting is the Byzantine belief in the certain and inescapable end of empire and city, this pessimistic feeling which knew and accepted, without resistance and complaint, a limited fate for capital and monarchy. . . ." <sup>20</sup> Yet even these Byzantine views of the end of world, capital, and empire, which the texts are fond of describing in terrifying tones, are colored, as it were, by the warm glow of pride in the capital, the monarchy, and the empire. One of the basic prophecies describing the end of the world, the *explanatio somnii* attributed to the Tiburtine Sibyl and going back to the fourth century A.D., mentions, during the reign of the Antichrist and immediately following upon the invasion of Gog and Magog, an interesting episode: the

<sup>17</sup> See for example Justinian's Constitution *De Conceptione Digestorum* §10, ed. Th. Mommsen and P. Krueger, *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, I, 8 (Cod. Iust., *ibid.*, II, 69, I, 17 §10): "Romam autem intelligendum est non solum veterem, sed etiam regiam nostram, quae deo propitio cum melioribus condita est auguriis." It appears frequently in Theophanes, as p. 485, 12; p. 486, 1 (ed. de Boor, vol. I) and regularly in Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Vita Basilii* (Theophanes Continuatus, e.g., pp. 213, 221, 223, 227 etc.). In official documents this epithet appears frequently joined with another, "guarded by God," see for example the protocol of the first session of the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680 A.D.), ed. Labbé, tom. VII, 629 A. Same combination of epithets in Theophanes, p. 384, 25; 385, 1 (ed. de Boor).

<sup>18</sup> Otto Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee* . . . , 2nd ed. (Darmstadt, 1956), p. 122. On this point a characteristic passage is found in Nicephorus Presbyter, *Vita Andreae Sali* (BHG<sup>3</sup> 117) of the tenth (?) century (ch. 209, P.G., cxi, 853 B).

<sup>19</sup> Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee*, pp. 132-134. Interesting Russian data on *pignora imperii* in R. L. Wolff, "The Three Romes," *Daedalus*, LXXXVIII (1959), p. 301.

<sup>20</sup> *Patria Constantinopoleos*, II 47 (p. 176, 7, ed. Th. Preger). Cf. Ch. Diehl, "De quelques croyances byzantines sur la fin de Constantinople," *B.Z.*, xxx (1930), 192-196, esp. p. 195 f.

king of the Romans (i.e., the Byzantine emperor) will defeat Gog and Magog, will journey to Jerusalem, “will lay down his headgear and all his royal attire and hand over the Christian kingdom to God the Father and Jesus Christ his son.”<sup>21</sup> In the prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl this episode follows immediately upon the appearance of Antichrist and the defeat of the tribes of Gog and Magog by the emperor; it precedes the end of the Roman (Byzantine) Empire.<sup>22</sup> In the *Revelation* of Pseudo-Methodius, probably of the seventh century, the same episode occurs, only that here the crown is deposited by the last emperor on top of the Cross and is taken into heaven together with the latter.<sup>23</sup> The same feature is found in a version of the *Visiones Danielis*, probably of the ninth century.<sup>24</sup> This motif of the surrender of royal rule by the last emperor, in fact the figure of this last emperor itself, is not of Christian origin but is derived from pagan Roman oracles (where the last emperor surrenders his power to the senate) which in turn may go back to an oriental prototype.<sup>25</sup> Whether of Roman or of oriental origin, the effect of this import into Christian prophecy was that it assigned to the Roman or Byzantine emperor and empire a central role within the divine plan of history. One might say — although of course no Byzantine would have said it — that in this view of history the kingdom of Heaven was no more than an improved, purified, and infinitely successful version of the *Basileus'* earthly kingdom. This figure of the last emperor and of the surrender of his power to God thus provided for at least a modicum of continuity from the familiar world of the Byzantine Empire to the strangeness of the heavenly kingdom and thereby deprived the events of the last

<sup>21</sup> Ernst Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen* (Halle a.S., 1898), p. 186: “Cum autem audierit rex Romanorum [i.e., of the attack of Gog and Magog], convocato exercitu debellabit eos atque prosternet usque ad internicionem et postea veniet Jerusalem et ibi deposito capitis diademate et omni habitu regali relinquet regnum christianorum Deo patri et Iesu Christo filio eius.” On the date of the text, see Sackur, p. 162. The Greek text of the Tiburtine Sibyl has been discovered in two manuscripts; cf. S. G. Mercati, “È stato trovato il testo greco della Sibilla Tiburtina,” *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves*, ix (1949), 473–481. I plan to comment on these Greek texts in another context.

<sup>22</sup> Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte*, p. 186: “et cum cessaverit imperium Romanum, tunc revelabitur manifeste Antichristus . . .”

<sup>23</sup> *Revelatio Pseudo-Methodii* (BHG<sup>3</sup> 2036). Latin text ed. by E. Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen*, pp. 60–113, esp. p. 93. Greek text edited by V. Istrin, *Otkroenie Mefodia Pataraskago*, etc. (Moscow 1897); this monograph was also published by Moscow University in *Chteniia* of the Imperatorskoe Obshchestvo Istorii i Drevnostei Rossiiskikh, 1897 and 1898, and it is to this last publication that reference is made here, see 1897, Part iv, Sect. iii, pp. 45 f. On Istrin's publication, see the review by C. E. Gleye, *B.Z.*, ix (1900), 222–228, and on Pseudo-Methodius the article by M. Kmosko, “Das Rätsel des Pseudomethodius,” *Byzantion*, vi (1931), 273–296 (according to him, the original was written in Syriac under Muawiya, 661–680). The deposition of the *regalia* upon the Cross naturally presupposes that it is on earth (at Jerusalem). Ernst Kantorowicz, “The King's Advent and the Enigmatic Panels in the Doors of Santa Sabina,” *Art Bulletin*, xxvi (1944), 207–231, esp. 226, has examined the ancient tradition of the ascent of the Cross at the time of Jesus' resurrection and connected it with the apocryphal *Gospel of Peter*. Unless Pseudo-Methodius represents a different tradition, it must be supposed that at the time of the Last Emperor the Cross has already descended to earth in preparation for Jesus' Second Coming.

<sup>24</sup> *Visio Danielis β* (BHG<sup>3</sup> 1872), ed. A. Vasiliev, *Anecdota Graeca-Byzantina* (Moscow, 1893), pp. 38–43, esp. p. 43. Cf. also the *Vaticinium de futuris rebus Byzantinis* (*Vita sancti Andreae Sali*, cf. n. 18 above), *ibid.*, pp. 50–58, esp. p. 54 (BHG<sup>3</sup> 117 d).

<sup>25</sup> Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte*, p. 169 f.

days of some of their terror. The Roman notion of the eternity of capital and empire thus finds a late expression in this Byzantine idea of an orderly transfer of power from the last Byzantine emperor to God.

The religio-political rhetoric of Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire, then, which formed part of the Byzantine self-image, presents a curious mixture of elements. Partly it arose in clear competition with other cities of the Empire and emphasized Constantinople's superiority to the more ancient centers with regard to its location on the sea route from the Aegean to the Black Sea and on the land route from Europe to Asia, as well as the number of its dwellings. In other respects it adopted topics from the *Laudes Romae*, such as the epithets of *urbs regia* and *urbs aeterna*, both adjusted in various ways to the Christian religion. Nothing is as significant for the change from the early Byzantine to the mid-Byzantine period in this respect as a comparison of the official usage in the sixth and seventh centuries: Justinian I speaks of the [*urbs*] *regia*, the protocol of the sixth ecumenical council of the "imperial city guarded by God."<sup>26</sup> At pagan Rome the gods' concern for city and empire had been no more than one among many topics constituting together the Praises of Rome. At Christian Byzantium the Christian environment produced, at the latest in the mid-Byzantine period, a change of emphasis or better: the emergence of an emphasis where there had been none before.<sup>27</sup> At Christian Byzantium one feature came to overshadow all other items in the traditional repertory of religio-political rhetoric: Constantinople and the Empire are under the protection of God, Christ, and the saints. Of course the notion that a particular city had its divine protector or protectors was in no way novel and had been a standard item in the repertory of the praises of cities for centuries. The novelty consists in the fact that, beginning in the mid-Byzantine period, this one theme of the repertory grew in importance and frequency at the expense of the others. This idea had already received a classic formulation in the sixth century, when the African poet Corippus made the Byzantine Emperor Justin II reply to a haughty speech by an Avar envoy: "The Roman [i.e., Byzantine] state belongs to God."<sup>28</sup> In the seventh century, during the critical years of the Persian Wars, the poet George of Pisidia and his contemporaries represent God, Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the other saints as fighting on the Byzantine side, in fact sometimes taking an active part in combat, as the Homeric gods had done.<sup>29</sup> At the end of the tenth century the historian Leo the Deacon tells how the

<sup>26</sup> Note 17 above.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. W. Gernentz, *Laudes Romae* (Diss. Rostock, 1918). With the emergence of the emphasis on divine protection compare A. Grabar's remarks in *L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin* (Paris, 1936) on the disappearance of many themes from the repertory of Byzantine imperial art in the fourth to sixth centuries and the emergence of Christian symbols beginning with the late sixth century.

<sup>28</sup> Corippus, *In Laudem Iustini*, III 333 (ed. I. Patsch, MGH, Auct. Ant., III [Berlin, 1879], 145): "res Romana Dei est, terrenis non eget armis."

<sup>29</sup> *Georgius Pisida, Exped. Pers.* II 100 (p. 101, ed. Agostino Pertusi, *Studia Patristica et Byzantina*, VII, 1959): God the general of the Byzantine armies; III 385 (p. 133, ed. Pertusi): God the general of the heavenly and earthly armies; III 401 (p. 133, ed. Pertusi): Heraclius the *hyppostrategos* under God's supreme command; *Bell. Avar.* 451 ff. (p. 196, ed. Pertusi): the Virgin Mary, in the thick of battle, fights invisibly, hits, inflicts wounds, deflects the sword of a Persian, overturns the enemy's ships. (Lines 457 ff. show that the poet considers the Virgin's military activities unusual. The same view is taken in *Chron. Pasch.*, p. 397). Theodorus Syncellus, the probable author of a homily preached

Emperor John Tzimisces, after his victorious return from Bulgaria, was received by the inhabitants of the capital urging him to enter the city in triumph upon a chariot inlaid with gold and drawn by white horses, but the emperor refused and placed instead upon the chariot's throne of beaten gold an image of the Virgin captured in Bulgaria.<sup>30</sup>

Byzantium's ambivalent attitude towards the Hellenic heritage, the modifications made to the belief in the eternity of city and empire, and the new emphasis on supernatural protection had been the logical consequence of the Empire's Christianization. The same process introduced into Byzantine ideology the entire repertory of Old Testament typology and prophecy. Byzantine emperors, for example, are regularly compared with Old Testament figures such as Moses, Elijah, David, etc.<sup>31</sup> In more general terms the emperor is frequently referred to as "the Lord's Anointed."<sup>32</sup> The fulfillment at seventh-century Byzantium of Old Testament narratives and prophecies is the pervading theme of a homily preached on 7 August 627 at St Sophia by Theodore Syncellus to commemorate the city's delivery from the Perso-Avar siege in the preceding year.<sup>33</sup> The speaker demonstrates that the Biblical account of the attack by the kings of Syria and Israel upon Jerusalem and Judah (735 B.C.) was a foreshadowing and a type of the Perso-Avar siege of Constantinople in A.D. 626. In the course of this demonstration Constantinople is expressly identified with Jerusalem.<sup>34</sup> The preacher takes this identification so seriously that he gives the three Byzantine envoys sent in

one year after the Perso-Avar siege of Constantinople in 626 (*BHG*<sup>3</sup> 1061; on the authorship see F. Barišić, "Le siège de Constantinople par les Avars et les Slaves en 626," *Byzantion*, xxiv [1954], 373 f.) is more reserved than George of Pisidia. According to Theodore, the Virgin acts "through the hands of Christian soldiers" (L. Sternbach, *Rozprawy Akademii Umiejetnosci*, Wydział Filolog., ser. II, tom XIV [Cracow, 1900, p. 306, 1]. Note that after mentioning the magister Bonus' military preparations for the defense of the capital, Theodore Syncellus remarks (p. 303, 35, Sternbach): "for God rejoices even in these [military preparations] because he does not wish those that take refuge with him and pin their faith on him for their salvation to be inactive and idle." It sounds like an apology for military preparations; cf. Corippus' "terrenis non eget armis" (n. 28 above). On the emergence of the Virgin Mary as protectress of Constantinople see A. Florov, "La dédicace de Constantinople dans la tradition byzantine," *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, cxxvii (1944), 61-127.

<sup>30</sup> Leo Diaconus, *Hist.*, ix 12, p. 158. Cf. Scylitzes-Cedrenus, *Hist. Comp.*, vol. II, p. 413, who adds that the emperor considered the Virgin the protectress of the city (πολιούχος). More than a century later John Cinnamus was to tell a similar story of the Emperor John Comnenus (*Hist.* I 5, p. 13). See Frolov, *loc. cit.* (n. 29 above), p. 105.

<sup>31</sup> Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee*, p. 130.

<sup>32</sup> Thus Theophilus, upon his accession (828), called Leo V in order to show up the enormity of the crime committed by Leo's murderers, cf. Theophanes Continuatus III 1, p. 86; Scylitzes-Cedrenus, vol. II, p. 100. On the messianic role of the king as the basis for a royalist political theory in the Western Middle Ages, see G. H. Williams, *The Norman Anonymus of 1100 A.D.*, Harvard Theological Studies, xviii (1951), esp. pp. 155-174, and R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven, n.d.), pp. 92-94.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. n. 29 above.

<sup>34</sup> Theodorus Syncellus, p. 298, 25 ed. Sternbach (addressed to Prophet Isaiah: cf. Isaiah 7). On other Byzantine identifications of Constantinople with Jerusalem see Frolov, *loc. cit.* (n. 29 above), 86.

A.D. 626 to the Avar Chagan the names of King Hezekiah's ambassadors sent to Sennacherib of Assyria.<sup>35</sup> He is, however, not satisfied with this first level of typology but by means of complex chronological computations he discovers similarities between Constantinople's ordeal of A.D. 626, Jerusalem's fatal siege by Nebuchadnezzar (586 B.C.) and Titus' destruction of the Second Temple (A.D. 70).<sup>36</sup> Finally he adds a laborious proof that Ezekiel's prophecy of King Gog's and his northern people's attack on Jerusalem never found (nor could ever find) its fulfillment in historic Jerusalem and is rather to be considered a prophecy of the Perso-Avar siege of Constantinople in A.D. 626.<sup>37</sup> This cumulation of Old Testament links, considerably more elaborate than can be indicated here, undoubtedly is unusual and even betrays an element of intellectual playfulness, but it also reveals in a touching way the comfort and strength which a Byzantine preacher and his audience, not long after the dramatic events of 626, could derive from the equation of the New Rome with the ancient Jerusalem, more generally from the Old Testament as a source for Byzantine ideology and rhetoric.

This religio-political ideology, because it was an ideology and not a philosophical or religious system, could easily be manipulated for political ends. Thus in the tenth century the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus advised his son and heir Romanos, in a confidential handbook of Byzantine diplomacy, the *De Administrando Imperio*, on how to deal with the greedy northern peoples (Khazars, Turks, Russians) and especially with their perennial demands for imperial vestments, for the liquid ("Greek") fire, or — most serious of all — for the hand of a purple-born princess. The father supplied his son with what he called 'plausible speeches and prudent and clever excuses.'<sup>38</sup> Romanos was to reply to barbarian requests for imperial vestments and diadems that God had sent them through an angel to Constantine the Great, charged him to deposit them in St Sophia and to curse anyone who should misuse or alienate them. The advice with regard to the Greek fire and the purple-born princess is cast in the same vein. Constantine Porphyrogenitus certainly was aware that these replies were specious, for in the case of the liquid fire he mentions in the same work that the Byzantines learned of this weapon from a refugee, Callinicus of Heliopolis, under Constantine IV Pogonatus (668–685).<sup>39</sup> Yet the general tendency of these replies is in keeping with Byzantine ideology: *res Romana Dei est*. Constantine's advice to his son was simply a new variation on an old theme, and this theme was in no way discredited because one or the other of the variations did not ring true.

<sup>35</sup> Theodorus Syncellus, p. 306, 20 (ed. Sternbach); cf. IV Reg. 18, 17 ff. He omits the name of the fourth envoy (probably Theodore himself, cf. Sternbach, p. 333; Barišić, "Le Siège de Constantinople," *Byzantion*, xxiv [1954], 374, n. 2, 383), because King Hezekiah of Judah sent three envoys only to King Sennacherib's commanders.

<sup>36</sup> Theodorus Syncellus, pp. 309 f. (ed. Sternbach).

<sup>37</sup> Theodore-Syncellus, pp. 314 ff. (ed. Sternbach).

<sup>38</sup> Gy. Moravcsik and R. J. H. Jenkins, edd., *Constantine Porphyrogenitus: De Administrando Imperio*, Magyar-Gorog Tanulmányok, 29 (Budapest, 1949), ch. 13, pp. 64–76, esp. p. 66.

<sup>39</sup> Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Adm. Imp.*, ch. 48 (p. 226, ed. Moravcsik-Jenkins).

II. *Theory of Kingship and Philosophy of History.*

In the preceding discussion of Byzantine ideology the Byzantine emperor played only a modest part. This is not accidental, for the ideology had been developed within a literary genre concerned with the praises of ancient cities, notably of Rome, and the ancient city as such had found it notoriously difficult to find a place for the rulers of kingdoms or empires. It will be remembered, however, that under the influence of the Old Testament the emperor as "the Lord's anointed [king]" emerged into Byzantine rhetoric, and this Old Testament view of the Byzantine monarchy remained basic throughout the Byzantine period. It was, however, combined at the time of Constantine the Great with a theory of Byzantine kingship which, as will be seen presently, was based on a profound philosophy of history. The Byzantine ideas concerning their emperor, the Byzantine *Kaisergedanke*,<sup>40</sup> have been treated in a series of excellent works and need only a summary here. In the Byzantine view the emperor was the only legitimate ruler over the entire Christian world in his capacity as God's image and representative on earth. As God's viceroy he was charged with the maintenance of peace in the Christian world, with the Christian mission to the "barbarians," and with the preservation of law. This sublime view of the Byzantine emperor's position constituted an element of enormous strength inasmuch as it assigned the emperor an easily understood place in the divine plan of history.<sup>41</sup> The emperor was selected by God and, as was seen above, at the end of time the last Byzantine emperor would bring about the transition from the earthly to the heavenly kingdom.

This Byzantine *Kaisergedanke* was based in the last resort on an interesting philosophy of history. In a remarkable book Professor Gerhard Ladner has emphasized the connection of the Byzantine *Kaisergedanke* with the concept of renewal.<sup>42</sup> He has demonstrated how, since the age of Constantine, Byzantine "political theology" based the renewal of man upon the role of the emperor as the imitator of Christ. Ladner's results will be utilized on the following pages for an explanation of the Byzantine views of the strength of empire and capital. It will be shown that it was not only the concept of the emperor as imitator of Christ but its connection with a peculiar notion of "newness" and consequently with a

<sup>40</sup> This term was used by F. Dölger, "Bulgarisches Zartum und byzantinisches Kaisertum," reprinted in *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt*, pp. 141 f. (I know of no adequate English equivalent; "imperial idea" would stress the empire rather than the emperor). In the above article as well as in "Europas Gestaltung im Spiegel der fränkischbyzantinischen Auseinandersetzung des 9. Jahrhunderts," reprinted in *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt*, pp. 291 f., Dölger has summarized the Byzantine *Kaisergedanke* in masterful fashion. Among the basic studies of the subject are: Erik Peterson, *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem* (Leipzig, 1935); André Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin* (Paris, 1936); Otto Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee*, (above, n. 18).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Dölger, "Bulgarisches Zartum" (above, n. 40) p. 143: "Despite its splendor, [this conception] was so simple that it was bound to be understood by the last peasant in the most out-of-the-way nook of the empire and that even the lowliest soldier would be willing to shed his blood for its sake."

<sup>42</sup> Gerhart B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), esp. pp. 107-132.

particular philosophy of history that accounts for Byzantine self-confidence. The Byzantine idea of newness is a key concept of Byzantine political thought, for it was part (at least since the late fourth and fifth centuries) of the official designation for the capital, the "New Rome."<sup>43</sup> Not long ago it was observed that the notion of "newness" pervades one of the masterpieces of Byzantine prose, the biography of Basil I by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, and that Basil is here represented as the great "refounder and renovator of the Roman State."<sup>44</sup> It is worthwhile to attempt to define more closely the meaning of the "newness" brought about by Basil I.<sup>45</sup> One seventh of Basil's biography is concerned with the emperor's building activities. Here the language of "newness" occurs frequently, but curiously enough is not found where a modern reader would expect it: with regard to *brand-new* buildings. Basil's two most important new constructions were the New Church (*Nea*) and the New Building (*Kainourgion*), both within the imperial palace. Now it is obvious that the notion of "newness" appears in the name of both structures, yet Constantine Porphyrogenitus carefully explains that the New Church was dedicated by Basil to Jesus Christ, the Archangel Gabriel, the Prophet Elijah, the Virgin Mary, and St Nicholas, and that the name "New Imperial Church" represented not the official designation but the popular usage, perhaps of Constantine's own day.<sup>46</sup> The New Building, on the other hand, appears under no other denomination in the *Vita Basilii*.<sup>47</sup> With this important exception, however, the language of newness is conspicuously absent from Constantine's description of Basil's new constructions.<sup>48</sup> The situation is different where Constantine discusses Basil's repairs of earlier buildings. The entire section on Basil's building activities is introduced by the following statement:

At all times the Christ-loving Emperor Basil . . . showed concern for many of the holy and

<sup>43</sup> On Constantinople the New Rome, see the basic study by Dölger, cited n. 3 above, esp. pp. 83–98.

<sup>44</sup> R. J. H. Jenkins, "The Classical Background of the Scriptores post Theophanem," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, VIII (1954), 11–30, esp. p. 23.

<sup>45</sup> Dölger, in the article cited in note 3 above, has called attention to the meaning: "young" and "youthful" often given since the sixth century to the designation of "New Rome" in contrast to the Old Rome on the Tiber. In the present study the emphasis will be on another connotation of the word. In the translations of Greek texts following above it should be borne in mind, however, that the Greek word *neos* and its derivatives mean both "new" and "young."

<sup>46</sup> Constantine Porphyrogenitus mentions the *Nea* three times in the *Vita Basilii*. The fullest and most detailed account is found in chs. 83–86 (pp. 325–328) in the narrative of Basil's building activities. The other two instances are incidental. In ch. 68 (p. 308, 19) it is said that Basil kept the sailors busy by employing them in the construction of the church of Jesus Christ, the archangels (i.e., Gabriel and Michael) and the Prophet Elijah. Finally, in ch. 76 (p. 319) the author mentions the gifts offered by Basil's aged protectress Danelis to the church of Jesus Christ, the Archangel Michael and the Prophet Elijah "which we are accustomed to call the new imperial church." Cf. R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin*, I, 3: *Les églises et les monastères* (Paris, 1953), p. 374–378.

<sup>47</sup> Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Vita Basilii*, ch. 89, (pp. 331–335). Cf. A. Vogt, *Basile I<sup>er</sup>* (Paris, 1908), p. 408.

<sup>48</sup> The vocabulary used for the building process: *ἀνοικοδομή* (*Nea*, p. 308, 20); *ἐγείρειν* (*Nea*, p. 308, 20; 319, 14; = to build at least since Hellenistic times); *οικοδομῆν* (*Nea*, p. 319, 12; 325, 9); *δομῆν* (*Nea*, p. 325, 17); *ἀναδέμεσθαι* (*Kainourgion*, p. 331, 22); *ἀνεγείρειν* (*Kainourgion*, p. 332, 4).

divine churches. They had been damaged or completely destroyed by earlier earthquakes or were threatened with impending collapse because of cracks. By the generous supply and grant of the necessary materials he rebuilt some of them from the ruins and gave them beauty as well as safety. Others he strengthened by appropriate additions and repairs so that they would not collapse, but was responsible for their return to another bloom and youth.<sup>49</sup>

This same language of rejuvenation permeates the entire account of Basil's architectural activities. The western part of St Sophia was in danger of collapse, but Basil "himself, with the experience of craftsmen, strengthened and rejuvenated it and made it safe and durable."<sup>50</sup> At the church of the Holy Apostles, damaged by earthquakes, "he scraped off the [signs of old] age caused by time, removed its wrinkles and made it once again beautiful and young."<sup>51</sup> The church of the Mother of God at Pēgē "which was in ruins and had lost its ancient beauty [Basil] rejuvenated and made more splendid than before."<sup>52</sup> Similar formulae recur throughout the *Vita Basilii*.<sup>53</sup> For Constantine Porphyrogenitus, then, Basil's architectural activities, especially his repairs of earlier buildings, amounted to a renewal and rejuvenation of the city and a struggle against time's ravages, a judgment that finds expression especially in the statement with which he introduced the section on Basil's buildings. This view of imperial building activities was not invented by Constantine Porphyrogenitus but was traditional. For example, one of George of Pisidia's minor poems celebrates a "renewal" of a bath at Constantinople much in the same terms Constantine used three centuries later: Time had captured the bath, just as the barbarians (the Avars and Persians) had captured the cities of the Empire. Heraclius, the conqueror of Scythians and Persians, "rejuvenated" the cities as well as the bath.<sup>54</sup>

It is interesting to note that George of Pisidia's poem compares the "rejuvenation" of the bath with that of the cities of the Empire, i.e., with a political restoration. The same concept of political renewal permeates the *Vita Basilii*. The biographer mentions prominently, for example, that Basil legislated against the practice of Byzantine officials of supplementing their often meager salaries by demanding "tips" for the performance of public services. He speaks of Basil's edicts against this abuse in the following terms:

Striving to eliminate everywhere injustice, this most powerful [ruler, Basil] set up everywhere and dispatched edicts to every region. In them, all gifts which up to that time had

<sup>49</sup> Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Vita Basilii*, ch. 78 (p. 321, 17 — 322, 5).

<sup>50</sup> Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Vita Basilii*, ch. 79 (p. 322, 9).

<sup>51</sup> Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Vita Basilii*, ch. 80 (p. 323, 4).

<sup>52</sup> Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Vita Basilii*, ch. 80 (p. 323, 5). On this church cf. Janin, *Les églises et les monastères*, pp. 332–337.

<sup>53</sup> Church of Apostle Philip, ch. 80 (p. 323, 15; cf. Janin, *Les églises et les monastères*, pp. 508 f.). Church of Apostle Andrew (ch. 81, p. 324, 2; cf. Janin, pp. 32–35). Church of St Ann in Deuteron and church of Demetrius (ch. 81, p. 324, 4; cf. Janin, pp. 39–41, 94). Church of Martyr Aemilianus (ch. 81, p. 324, 6; cf. Janin, pp. 16 f.). Church of Martyr Nazarius (ch. 82, p. 324, 9; cf. Janin, pp. 372 f.). Church of Martyr Plato (ch. 82, p. 324, 16; cf. Janin, pp. 418 f.).

<sup>54</sup> Georgius Pisida, no. XLVIII (ed. L. Sternbach, *Wiener Studien*, xiv [1892], 56). R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine: Développement urbain et répertoire topographique*, Archives de l'Orient Chrétien, iv (Paris 1930), does not discuss this poem in his section on baths at Constantinople (pp. 209–217).

seemed to be justified by wicked custom [established] by Time were cancelled and eradicated. Equality entire and Justice seemed to return to life as if from some foreign exile and to live among men.<sup>55</sup>

The rhetorical figures are not identical in George of Pisidia's poem and in Constantine Porphyrogenitus' prose, but they have this in common that in both works an emperor is celebrated as a political restorer and time as the great enemy. The last passage from the *Vita Basilii* is closely connected in thought with two others strategically located at the beginning and end of the discussion of Basil's political achievements. In the former it is said that Basil was concerned "to bring some good to his subjects and to have affairs take a visible and great change for the better."<sup>56</sup> With that purpose, Basil took the greatest care in his administrative appointments and selected officials who not only were above corruption but also would protect the poor against the rich.<sup>57</sup> Basil's appointees were eager that "men whom he [Basil] knew to have swooned and fainted because of those that had preceded him [Michael III] should recover and be restored to their ancient prosperity."<sup>58</sup> In a second passage, at the conclusion of Basil's domestic reforms, Constantine remarks that his grandfather manifested the four cardinal virtues and that "everything progressed towards the better. And once again life seemed to have returned to its ancient good order and condition."<sup>59</sup>

There emerges, then, from a study of the *Vita Basilii* a fairly consistent view of Basil's achievement. In his buildings as well as in his military and domestic activities, the emperor waged incessant war against time. Time threatens with senility both the body architectural of the capital and the body politic of the Empire. Time drives the virtues into exile beyond the frontiers of the Empire, weakens buildings and causes the inhabitants of the Empire to faint or to swoon. In his fight against this enemy, the emperor rejuvenates buildings and political institutions. He recalls the virtues from exile, especially by cultivating them himself and by selecting virtuous officials and he strengthens the edifices as well as his subjects. This "change for the better" he brings about by restoring the ancient status which had been corroded by time but which is now happily reproduced by Basil. Constantine Porphyrogenitus' view of the imperial mission, then, is essentially conservative. A good emperor such as Basil functions as the restorer of a splendid past, and the strength of capital and empire lies precisely in their potential for repeated imperial restorations. In conclusion it may be said that the newness of the architectural and political body of capital and empire, which in the *Vita Basilii* figures so prominently among the achievements of the emperor, implies restoration rather than innovation.

<sup>55</sup> Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Vita Basilii*, ch. 30 (p. 259, 5). This edict is missing from Dölger's *Regesten*.

<sup>56</sup> Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Vita Basilii*, cf. 30 (p. 257, 18). On the change for the better, see also ch. 72 (p. 315, 10) and ch. 29 (p. 256, 9). In the last passage the change is attributed to God.

<sup>57</sup> Here, as well as in other passages (e.g., ch. 99, pp. 346-348) Constantine Porphyrogenitus attributes to Basil the concerns of the tenth century, i.e., the hostility to large landholders expressed in the social and economic legislation of Romanos I Lekapenos and his successors.

<sup>58</sup> Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Vita Basilii*, ch. 30 (p. 258, 7).

<sup>59</sup> Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Vita Basilii*, ch. 30 (p. 258, 7, cf. also p. 256, 9; 257, 19).

What are the roots of this conservative confidence in the past, this fear of time, so characteristic of the Byzantines' view of their empire's greatness? It goes back ultimately to the view of Constantine the Great and of his circle, notably of Eusebius of Caesarea. This emperor's announcements contain indeed the philosophy of history found six centuries later in the *Vita Basilii*. It has not been sufficiently stressed that for Constantine the Great the Christian religion, which he was the first Roman emperor to favor after centuries of persecution, was not a new religion but as old as the world. Immediately upon the defeat of Licinius the emperor declared in a letter to provincials, which is especially interesting for his religious and political views and in which he addresses the Christian God: "Our [religion] is neither new nor novel but Thou hast ordained it with the worship proper to Thee ever since we have believed that the ordering of the universe had been firmly made. But the human race fell and was misled by errors of all kinds, yet Thou through Thy Son, lest Evil should further weigh us down, hast held up a pure light and reminded all men of Thyself."<sup>60</sup> In another letter of the same year 324 Constantine made it clear that the Incarnation was only one very important instance of mankind's recall by God and that he interpreted his own activities as another example of this same process:

He [God] sought my service and deemed it worthy for his will. I started out from the sea near Britain . . . , with the help of a higher power I repelled and scattered the terrors which beset the universe. In this way He recalled the human race, which through my service was taught the worship of the most august law, and at the same time the blessed faith was strengthened under the guidance of a greater power.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, in Constantine's view of history, mankind continued to err even after the Incarnation and had been recalled a second time by Constantine. The establishment of the true religion thus was not a sudden change but was a continuing process which in the days of Constantine had behind it a millennial history. Religiously Constantine's reign therefore brought a "universal renewal,"<sup>62</sup> just as by his military victory over Maxentius a decade earlier the emperor had "freed and restored the Senate and People of Rome to their ancient fame and splendor," as he

<sup>60</sup> Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, II, ch. lvii (p. 64, 15 ff., ed. Heikel). On this letter see H. Dörries, *Das Selbstzeugnis Kaiser Konstantins*, *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philolog.-Hist. Kl., Dritte Folge, XXXIV* (1954), 51-54, 250. On the authenticity of the letter, see p. 50, n. 2, but neither the authenticity of individual documents cited in *Vita Constantini* nor the vexed question of the Eusebian authorship of the entire work are of critical importance in the context of this paper, as at Byzantium they were never doubted.

<sup>61</sup> Letter to the Orientals, in Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, II, ch. xxviii (p. 53, 7, ed. Heikel). Cf. Dörries, *Selbstzeugnis*, pp. 43-50, 250. Constantine had expressed a similar idea ten years earlier in a letter to the synod of Arles: "aeterna et religiosa incomprehensibilis pietas dei nostri nequaquam permittit humanam condicionem diutius in tenebris oberrare neque patitur exosas quorundam voluntates usque in tantum praevalere, ut non suis praeclarissimis luminibus denuo pandens iter salutare eas det ad regulam iustitiae converti" (ed. von Soden, *Urkunden zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Donatismus* [Bonn, 1913], No. 18, p. 23). Cf. Dörries, *Selbstzeugnis*, pp. 28-33.

<sup>62</sup> Constantine's letter to the Church of Nicomedia of A.D. 325 (ed. H. G. Opitz, *Urkunden zur Geschichte des arianischen Streites* [Berlin and Leipzig, 1934], no. 27, p. 59, 13). Cf. Dörries, *Selbstzeugnis*, pp. 70-74.

said in the inscription on his statue in Rome.<sup>63</sup> In religious and political terms Constantine interpreted his historical role not as an innovation but as the restoration of past glories.

Similar views are found in the works of Constantine's contemporary, Eusebius of Caesarea, where they form part of a philosophy of history derived through Eusebius' teacher Origen from Hellenistic philosophy. In his *Ecclesiastical History* Eusebius sets out to record the development of a Christian commonwealth antedating the age of Constantine.<sup>64</sup> According to Eusebius, it was no accident that the coming of Christ occurred simultaneously with the disappearance of many small states of the Hellenistic age and the establishment of a universal monarchy of Augustus. Without the Roman Empire the Christian mission would have been impossible and warfare between states and cities would have continued everywhere.<sup>65</sup> With the help of the *Logos*, the Emperor Constantine, God's friend, wears the image of the highest kingship; he imitates God, he steers and stands at the helm of all earthly things. The Saviour prepares the universe for his Father; his friend Constantine makes men ready for the saving *Logos'* kingship. The *Logos* wages war upon the demons; his friend Constantine upon the visible enemies of truth. The *Logos* enables his followers to understand his Father's kingdom; his friend Constantine "like some interpreter of the divine *Logos* recalls the entire human race to the knowledge of God."<sup>66</sup> In Eusebius' view the end of the persecutions and the many conversions of the Constantinian age to Christianity, "a second renewal much superior to the preceding," were brought about by Jesus Christ.<sup>67</sup> These consecutive renewals were rendered necessary by men misusing their freedom and denying God, i.e., by the Fall. Eusebius envisages the restoration of man not as a single historical event but as a historical process occurring in stages: the Fall, Jewish monotheism, the establishment of Augustus' monarchy as an image of the divine monarchy and the coming of Christ, the establishment of the Christian Empire by Constantine.<sup>68</sup> Eusebius does not state explicitly, as

<sup>63</sup> As cited in Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, I, ch. XI (p. 26, 25, ed. Heikel). Cf. Dörries, *Selbstzeugnis* p. 215.

<sup>64</sup> Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V proem. (p. 400, ed. E. Schwartz, ed. maior) describes his *Ecclesiastical History* as "the narrative concerning the body [of Christians living] according to God." I owe this point to the suggestive article by A. Pertusi, "L'atteggiamento spirituale della più antica storiografia bizantina," *Aevum*, xxx (1956), 134-166, esp. p. 145, n. 2.

<sup>65</sup> On Eusebius' theory of history and kingship the following works were especially helpful: Erik Peterson, *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem*, etc. (Leipzig, 1935), esp. pp. 71-82 (where the Origenist inspiration of these views is demonstrated); F. Edward Cranz, "Kingdom and Polity in Eusebius of Caesarea," *Harvard Theological Review*, xlv (1952), 47-66; Gerhart B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, esp. pp. 119-125. On the pagan antecedents of Eusebius' and Origen's views of kingship, see N. H. Baynes, "Eusebius and the Christian Empire," *Mélanges Bidez*, II = *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales*, 1934, pp. 13 ff., reprinted in his *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays*, pp. 168-172.

<sup>66</sup> Eusebius, *Tricennialia*, chs. i (end) and ii (p. 199, 1-23 Heikel). Cf. Cranz, *Harvard Theological Review*, xlv (1952), 53 f.

<sup>67</sup> Eusebius, *Tricennialia*, ch. xvii 5 (p. 255, 6, Heikel). See Ladner, *Idea of Reform*, pp. 119 f. and the passages concerning the Constantinian renewal there quoted from Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Cranz, p. 52 f.

Constantine did in his letter to the provincials, that the Christian religion was co-eternal with the creation of the world, but this view seems to be implied in his philosophy of history. Neither Constantine nor Eusebius had occasion to be concerned with future stages of this historical process, yet throughout Byzantine history all imperial activities were understood as attempts to restore an earlier and better status along the lines of Constantine's and Eusebius' thought.<sup>69</sup>

Constantine's and Eusebius' ideas about history and kingship thus had decisive influence on Byzantine thinking. Their view of Constantine "restoring" his subjects to the state in which they had been created and from which they had been alienated by the Fall is responsible for the essential conservatism of Byzantine views of kingship. Forever after, positive achievements of Byzantine emperors such as Basil I were presented not as innovations but as restorations of man's first state. The connection with the doctrine of the Fall shows that the roots of the Byzantine view of *renovatio* derived from Christian doctrine based on the Old Testament account of the Fall. Byzantine emperors restoring their subjects to men's condition before the Fall — here was an aspect of Byzantine theory of kingship which in the eyes of the Byzantines both guaranteed and explained Byzantine greatness. Undoubtedly this greatness might as well have been reconciled with a philosophy of history which placed the achievement of true perfection in the future. Yet the Byzantine view of the Christian religion as created by God together with the world had this advantage over all future-minded philosophies of history that it presented the goal of history as anticipated by Adam at the time of his creation and before his fall. The Byzantine philosophy of history, thus, was immune against the doubt, which could be raised against any rectilinear philosophy, that the goal of history was unattainable: it had in fact been man's possession on the first day of history. No reason to doubt, therefore, that what had been possessed by man in the past could be restored to him in the present or in the future by a Christian emperor. The Byzantine view of history placed the attainability of the goal of history beyond doubt and thus established the Byzantines' conviction of the strength of their empire and capital on unassailable ground.

### III. *Byzantine Justification of Empire.*

The theoreticians of Roman imperialism had not found it an easy task to justify in moral terms Rome's sway over her conquered provinces. Such Roman justifications have been examined in a remarkable article by E. von Ivanka down to the period of the Late Roman Empire.<sup>70</sup> Poets and prose writers in the Roman Empire had proclaimed that Roman government of the Mediterranean world was the deserved reward for her civilizing role: her political wisdom,<sup>71</sup> the military protection afforded by her armed forces and the respect for law shown by her

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Cranz, p. 47: "Byzantine imperial theory rests on assumptions similar to those of Eusebius," and Ladner, *Idea of Reform*, p. 120 f.: "This Eusebian conception of imperial *Christomimesis* . . . was to remain the basis of "political theology" in the Christian East."

<sup>70</sup> E. von Ivanka, "Zur Selbstdeutung des römischen Imperiums," *Saeculum*, VIII (1957), 17-31.

<sup>71</sup> Vergil, *Aeneid*, VI, 851.

administrators,<sup>72</sup> her concern for civilizing her subjects.<sup>73</sup> In the Hellenic half of the Roman Empire these “piecemeal” justifications culminated, at the latest in the second century A.D., in the overall theory that Rome ruled because she was morally perfect.<sup>74</sup> In the Eastern part of the Empire this preoccupation with the moral justification of empire seems to lessen in intensity or even to disappear after the fifth century. This was only natural in view of the development of Byzantine religio-political rhetoric and theory of kingship. If Byzantine rhetoric emphasized above all the supernatural protection of Constantinople and if the Byzantine philosophy of history saw in each emperor the image and agent of God charged with the mission of bringing fallen mankind back to God, who could then deny that a city and empire thus protected by superhuman forces and charged with a mission which knew no ethnic boundaries was bound to extend over all mankind? This point was so obvious that, if I am not mistaken, it was made rather rarely. Theodore Syncellus said in 627: “Constantinople is the eye of the Christian faith and an attack on it endangers the preaching of Christ’s mystery to the ends of the world.”<sup>75</sup> This view also underlay the Byzantine notion of a hierarchy of states. According to it, the Byzantine ruler ranked above even the most powerful kings of the mediaeval world in the “family of kings.” This concept was of secular and political origin and derived ultimately from the notion of a family of courtiers in Ptolemaic Egypt.<sup>76</sup> In the mid-Byzantine period, however, this concept was “spiritualized” after the pattern of the monastic and secular clergies, where the bond of religious instruction by the abbot or the granting of the sacrament by the ecclesiastical superior, respectively, established degrees of rank.<sup>77</sup> Following these patterns, the Byzantine emperor was conceived of as the spiritual superior of all other rulers, no matter how powerful, because his mission was ecumenical.<sup>78</sup>

The Byzantines, then, found the bases of Byzantine greatness in a religio-political ideology inherited from late Antiquity and adapted in the mid-Byzantine period to the Christian environment by a strong emphasis on divine protection; in a theory of kingship which considered emperor and empire the images of the *Logos* of God and the kingdom of God, respectively, and assigned to the Byzantine emperor the task of periodically restoring man to the faith in which God had created him; and finally in a sense of Byzantine mission consisting in the preaching of the Gospel “to the ends of the world.” This was a grandiose conception of

<sup>72</sup> Tacitus, *Historiae*, iv, 73 f.

<sup>73</sup> Claudianus, *De cons. Stilichonis*, iv 150–159.

<sup>74</sup> Von Ivanka, *Saeculum*, viii (1957), esp. pp. 25–27.

<sup>75</sup> Theodorus Syncellus, p. 304, 17 (ed. Sternbach; see n. 29 above).

<sup>76</sup> On this concept see Georg Ostrogorsky, “Die byzantinische Staatenhierarchie,” *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, viii (1936), 41–61; F. Dölger, “Die Familie der Könige im Mittelalter,” reprinted in this author’s *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt* (Ettal, 1953), pp. 34–69 (p. 62–66 on Ptolemaic antecedents).

<sup>77</sup> Dölger, *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt*, pp. 67 f.; cf. pp. 55–59.

<sup>78</sup> Ostrogorsky, *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, vii (1936), 42: “. . . das Grunddogma der byzantinischen Staatslehre . . . von der oikumenischen Mission des byzantinischen Herrschers als des einzigen rechtmässigen Kaisers auf Erden. . . .”

Byzantine greatness which must have been infinitely reassuring in periods of imperial greatness and even during shorter periods of decline. In terms of this concept, it was always possible to account for setbacks on the battlefield or for temporary victories of an unorthodox theological doctrine by considering them examples of another fainting spell<sup>79</sup> or “falling asleep”<sup>79a</sup> soon to be followed by the reign of another restorer who would reawaken the state.

In evaluating the Byzantine self-image it is important, however, to note two principal shortcomings, one of them realized primarily by the modern historian and hardly by the Byzantines down to the Latin conquest, the other felt at Byzantium in the later periods of history. The first deficiency was the failure of Byzantine intellectuals to analyze the sources of Byzantine greatness in secular terms.<sup>80</sup> Secondly, the Byzantine self-image prior to the Fourth Crusade was of such a nature as not to offer psychological protection to the inhabitants of the Empire against a protracted period of internal disintegration and decline from the status of universal empire to that of a medium-sized or even small state. This situation prevailed at Byzantium since the end of the Macedonian dynasty. It is significant that the first expression of dissatisfaction with the prevailing self-image, so far as I am aware, dates from a few years after the Byzantine defeat at the hands of the Seljuqs at Manzikert (1071), itself the consequence of internal disintegration and the cause of further decline. When in 1079/80 Michael of Attaleia composed his history of the years 1034–1079, he appended to his narrative of the battle of Manzikert and of the ensuing troubles some general reflections on the reasons for Byzantium’s defeats, indeed a frightening indictment of Byzantium’s military and civil establishment.<sup>81</sup> He began with a contrast of Byzantium and ancient Rome. The Romans took the greatest care to ascertain and obey the will of the gods, Byzantine emperors and military commanders of the eleventh century, so Michael of Attaleia thought, were concerned only with enriching themselves. Their defeats were therefore well-deserved punishments for Byzantium’s godless conduct. So far Michael’s thinking followed the established pattern, but he continued:

Therefore I attribute the catastrophic outcome of events among the Romans [i.e., Byzantines] to divine Nemesis itself and to the judgment of an incorruptible sentence, for the following reason: the [other] nations are said to revere justice and to guard inviolate their ancestral customs and proclaim incessantly that all their prosperity is derived from the Creator. These [respect for justice and tradition, recognition of God’s benefactions]

<sup>79</sup> N. 58 supra.

<sup>79a</sup> Χριστός καθέυδει is in the early ninth century Theodore of Studios’ characteristic explanation for the predominance of Iconoclasm, Epist. II 31 (*P.G.* xcix, 1204 A); II 208 (*P.G.*, xcix, 1629D).

<sup>80</sup> P. 339 above.

<sup>81</sup> Michael Attalioes, *Historia*, pp. 193–197. The passage is referred to in C. Neumann, *Die Weltstellung des byzantinischen Reiches vor den Kreuzzügen* (Heidelberg, 1894), pp. 120 f. It is replete with references to classical terminology. Compared with ancient Roman triumphs the return of Byzantine commanders is a clear example of divine infatuation (θεοβλάβεια, pp. 193 f.). The taking of the auspices and the Vestal Virgins are mentioned (p. 195). Byzantine emperors disregard the lessons of history which shows that misfortunes are due to divine anger or ignoble intentions (p. 194). The misdeeds of the Byzantine armies towards civilians are such that the latter feel relieved by Byzantine defeats (p. 196).

are achievements common to all men and are required of every religion; for the true and flawless faith of us Christians is nothing as much as a censure and condemnation, ever since we happened to lose those virtues, as is stated in the divine law of the commandments: "He who knows the will of his master and does not do it will be stricken."<sup>82</sup>

The virtues of justice, traditionalism, and godliness are common achievements of mankind; they are possessed by other nations, are no longer a monopoly of the Byzantines; the Christian religion serves not to justify Byzantium but to condemn its depraved inhabitants! One thinks one hears one of the prophets of the Old Testament explaining to the Hebrews that their God is a universal and moral god, no more concerned with the people of Israel than with the gentiles, recognizing righteousness and condemning injustice wherever found. The passage clearly shows the shattering impact of Manzikert and its sequel upon a Byzantine intellectual: Michael sees the Empire tottering and falling a prey to its Seljuq enemies and so he considers for a fleeting moment jettisoning and revising the traditional self-image. Yet it is as if he were afraid of his own courage. In the following paragraph he apologizes for his boldness. He offered his remarks, he continues, not in a spirit of insult or irreverence, but in order to convert Byzantine leaders, generals, and subjects back to the path of godliness, so that Byzantium may once more enjoy divine support.<sup>83</sup> It remains a fact that, faced by military defeat and social decay, this Byzantine historian had come to realize the insufficiency of the traditional explanations of Byzantine greatness.

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<sup>82</sup> Michael Attaliotes, *Historia*, p. 197. The last words of the passage are cited from memory, cf. Luke xii. 47. On Michael Attaliotes see the interesting comments by Pertusi, "L'Atteggiamento spirituale" (n. 64 above), 164–166, esp. p. 165 f., n. 4, and on the text the same author's "Per la critica del testo della 'Storia' di Michele Attaliote," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft*, VII (1958), 59–73.

<sup>83</sup> Michael Attaliotes, *Historia*, p. 197.