

## Constantinople: The Rise of a New Capital in the East

HANS-GEORG BECK\*

CONSTANTINOPLE and her splendor: a fascinating and almost misleading topic; so fascinating that not a few Byzantinists and art historians, praising the glory of the city, apparently forget some essential laws of history—for example, that even the rise of Constantinople must have taken time, that it did not burst forth with Constantine the Great, pacing the far-reaching new circuit of his foundation under divine guidance. And there are other scholars who ask if it is really true that this city, from its beginnings, was radiating, that from its beginnings it was the pivot of politics, the center of art and erudition, and the source of Christian life in the East.

The validity of the question is self-evident.<sup>1</sup> Rome was not built in a day; nor was Constantinople, though it is surprising how rapidly she developed into a big city of worldwide importance. For some of the local Byzantine historians this development approaches a wonder. But the wonder may be reduced to a less miraculous dimension by taking into consideration that Constantine's city was built on older foundations. Forgetting the fabulous city of the ancient King Byzas and the Megarean Byzantion, let us turn to the important events that took place in the reign of the Roman emperor Septimius Severus.<sup>2</sup> It is true that in 196 he destroyed the old Byzantion because she had fought on the wrong political side. But soon after this catastrophe, the emperor realized the outstanding value of the city's geographical location in the midst of a new political constellation.<sup>3</sup> Septimius Severus and his successors therefore began to rebuild the city and to give her quite a different, almost an imperial, dimension. With a new wall they doubled the area, and with new buildings sought to answer the needs of imperial representation. There was the Tetrastoon, a spacious stoa, later called Augusteion; the Kynegion, a circus for animal hunts; large baths--the so-called Baths of Zeuxippus; and a huge hippodrome to compete with the Circus Maximus in Rome.

All these buildings, characteristic of an opulent Hellenistic town, were already there when Constantine arrived. Around them he focused his own plans. From the beginning, the older imperial structures formed the center of Constantine's new foundation, and he envisioned an imperial palace, a senate house, and perhaps a big church to complete the architectural ensemble. Despite Constantine's reliance on his predecessors' accomplishments, one cannot diminish the merit of his own achievements. On the contrary, he succeeded in enlarging the area of the city by at least two-hundred percent, so that ultimately it was but little smaller than the area of Rome within the Aurelian walls. Nevertheless, Constantine had at best eight or ten years in which to execute his plans. And in this period, regardless of what the panegyrist may claim, Constantinople was not finished. Many buildings--churches, palaces, baths, and so on--were finished by his successors. The first Hagia Sophia, for instance, should be attributed to Constantius rather than to Constantine. The vast baths, the so-called Constanti(ni)anae, were begun after Constantine's death. Even the final consecration of the Church of the Apostles did not take place before 370. In short, the local authors of the *Patria Konstantinupoleos* took pains to attribute to Constantine far more buildings than he was actually able to initiate or complete.

Still, there is no doubt that the contractors and masons of Constantinople had much to do, and that they could pile up orders. Money was readily available because the whole treasury of Licinius had fallen into Constantine's hands.<sup>4</sup> But what about the artists? Although I would not exceed my limits and speak of Constantinian art, I suspect that artists had less to do than one would like to suppose. The verdict of St. Jerome is well known: "Constantinopolis dedicatur paene omnium urbium nuditate" ("Constantinople was dedicated by denuding almost all the other cities").<sup>5</sup> Jerome had a sharp tongue, but it is not easy to refute him on this point. He had, after all, spent several years in the city. Moreover, his "nuditate omnium urbium" was taken up by a witness of quite another turn of mind, Eusebius of Caesarea: "The sanctuaries of the other cities were denuded," he tells us, and the new city was full of brazen votive offerings that had been brought to Constantinople from the provinces. Eusebius thinks--or pretends to think--that all of these works of art had been displayed in Constantinople so that Christians could more easily insult the dethroned deities.<sup>6</sup> He mentions the Delphian tripod, two statues of Apollo, and several statues of the Muses. Furthermore, there is also the famous anonymous description of the eighty statues in the Baths of Zeuxippus.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps they were already in place before Constantine. But if it was the emperor who installed them, it is not likely that about the

year 330 he would have ordered eighty new statues of pagan heroes and deities. In other words, these statues, too, must have been fetched from somewhere outside Constantinople. I think that in the beginning, and perhaps until the reign of Theodosius I, the attraction of the new capital for an artist in many cases lay less in the availability of employment than in the opportunity to see and study the art of the past in a kind of grand museum. At least this was true insofar as sculptors were concerned. Architects and builders probably had more to do in Constantine's time, although it should be noted that a lot of them seem to have done sloppy work. Authors of the following generation, at any rate, are surprised by the rapid turn of the new buildings and the necessity to repair them so soon; <sup>8</sup> the decades of scaffoldings apparently were not yet over.

The population of Constantinople grew enormously. Construction of the necessary housing and facilities was aided by considerable financial aid from the government, at least until the second half of the century. Senators of Rome were invited to come, and there can be no doubt that some families followed the invitation--certainly not members of those old *gentes*, who were especially proud of the *mores maiorum*, but more likely those who, economically or politically, had gone bankrupt. They were enticed by the privileges granted by the emperor. Constantinople guaranteed them a new material start and, at the same time, a new prestige. Other people sought contact with the court and the bureaucracy, applying for positions in the administration. Adventurers came, fortune hunters, tradesmen and craftsmen, artists and doctors, beggars and schoolmasters. Most of them may have hoped to get a chance. But even when the chance did not appear, they stayed on, increasing the proletarian masses, which from the beginning must have amounted to a considerable part of the population.

Then the inevitable happened: the area became too small and the emperors started to extend the city limits. Already since 384, new walls including a new area were ventilated. In the meantime, houses were built on drained swamps and on pilework near the coast.<sup>9</sup> Under the emperor Theodosius II, new walls were finally built, not exclusively for protecting the barracks of the garrison, but also for protecting the defenseless suburbs.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, by the year 400, Constantinople probably could boast a population of two hundred thousand. Thus, we have to deal with a considerable urban development. The question is whether the development of Constantinople as a predominant political center was keeping pace with this urban development. In answer, it is obvious that the political importance of the city was dependent on the stabilization of the imperial court and the imperial administration within the city itself, that is, on the "domestication" of the *Domus Augusta*, which thus far had been a wandering *comitiva*, a retinue of the emperor in his role as commander of the wandering *exercitus Romanus*. And it is surprising how long it took until this process came to an end.

How many months or years Constantine himself spent in his new capital is difficult to determine. With some hesitation, I would say perhaps half of his remaining years, although probably even less. The actual residence of his son Constantius between 338 and 350 was not Constantinople, but Antioch. Then he left for Milan, returning after some time to Antioch. Constantinople, as far as we know, saw her emperor only occasionally and then only for brief periods. For the emperor Julian, Constantinople was hardly more than a transit station on his way from Paris through the Balkans to Antioch. Valens can be found everywhere, but seldom in Constantinople. It seems as if the city could not play a part in his life, and the city probably knew it. Theodosius I, from 380 to 387, shuttled between Thessalonike, Adrianopolis, Sirmium, Aquileia, Verona, and, once in a while, Constantinople. From 387 to 391 Theodosius remained in the West. Only from 391 to 394 may Constantinople be called his residence. He then returned to Rome and soon moved on to Milan, where he died in 395. It is only with the son of Theodosius, the emperor Arcadius, that the court begins to stay in Constantinople more or less permanently or, as Synesius put it, "that the emperor clings to this city."<sup>11</sup> But for nearly seventy years before, the future of the city trembled in the balance, and it sometimes seemed as if Antioch or Milan would win the race.

With regard to Constantinople as a religious and ecclesiastical center, the year 381 would seem to be of decisive importance. In this year, a synod of bishops met in Constantinople at what was later called the Second Ecumenical Council. The third canon of the synod runs as follows: "The bishop of Constantinople has the primacy of honor (*proteia times*) after the bishop of Rome, because this city is the New Rome." Some scholars maintain that this decision was quite an obvious one for Eastern Christianity. I cannot agree. That

Constantinople, an imperial city, was taken out of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the metropolis Heraclea--if she ever belonged to it--is not surprising. But Constantinople's newly won precedence over Antioch and even Alexandria, though only honorary, is quite another, more serious, thing. Antioch could merit precedence by virtue of the canonical Acts of the Apostles, which relate that St. Peter stayed within her walls. Antioch eventually regarded St. Peter as her first bishop, thus claiming the apostolicity of her see, one that chronologically preceded even the apostolicity of the see of Rome, apostolicity in these times being the decisive point.<sup>12</sup> Alexandria held that the evangelist Luke was the founder of her church, a tradition soon overlapped by another one, namely, that it was the evangelist Mark who had converted the city to Christianity. Based on these pretensions of apostolicity and backed by the old cities' enormous political and economic weight, which defied competition by any other Eastern town, the two sees hitherto had played a greater part in ecclesiastical affairs than had Constantinople. Indeed, Constantinople is mentioned only occasionally in contemporary ecclesiastical annals. The see of Constantinople does not turn up in the lists of the famous First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea; not one synod gathered there whose canons were worthy to be collected; nothing could be found that might have justified any primacy. In Alexandria, the theology of the divine Logos had been created, and Antioch could boast of her own sober theological line. A Constantinopolitan contribution to the theological development does not exist. Gregory of Nazianzus, bishop of Constantinople during the council of 381, as a theologian belongs to Asia Minor. The Arian party in Constantinople insulted him as an intruder who, in addition, spoke a provincial Greek.<sup>13</sup> The big names during the Arian quarrels are all to be found outside of Constantinople. And when Theodosius I restored Nicene orthodoxy, he did not refer to the faith of Constantinople, but rather to the faith of Rome and Alexandria.<sup>14</sup> Before Gregory of Nazianzus, only one outstanding name--Eusebius of Nicomedia--ranks among the bishops of Constantinople, and the city was already his third bishopric, and then for but a few years. As a whole, the ecclesiastical history of Constantinople in the fourth century is an imbroglio and a rather insignificant one at that.

In one sense, fourth-century religious life is better represented by monasticism than by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. But when we consider Constantinopolitan monasticism, the results remain to a certain degree equally dubious.<sup>15</sup> The fifteen monasteries founded by Constantine the Great in less than seven years are creations of the imagination as are the monasteries founded by his mother, Helen. The historical beginning of monasticism in the second half of the century is rather strange and controversial. Flight from the world--Constantinople was the world--apparently played a smaller part than the attractiveness of the capital. The delight in meddling with politics in Constantinople developed much more quickly than in the back country of Alexandria. Whereas the religious achievements of Alexandrian monks are conspicuous, the contributions of Constantinopolitan monks to this field are meager. There is nobody in Constantinople like Euagrius Ponticus, author of a sublime system of spiritual life, which he created in the desert and for the desert. Nor can we find in Constantinople those *Apophthegmata Patrum*, the "Sayings of the Fathers," that are the definitive expression of spiritual concentration, the very nourishment for hungry souls who could not be satisfied by dry, dogmatic formulas. One is tempted to see this monasticism in the light of an event at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, when eighteen abbots of Constantinople signed a petition in favor of a monophysite heretic. The fathers at the council, apparently surprised by the large number of Constantinopolitan abbots, examined the signatures and discovered that only three belonged to genuine abbots of genuine monasteries. Some of the others could not be identified at all--perhaps they were "dead souls"--and the rest turned out to be vagabonds, impostors, or simple guardians of small chapels.<sup>16</sup>

Concerning the religious life of "the people," general statements are extremely dangerous. To sum up some impressions is simply inadequate, so I will limit myself to one point only. Gregory of Nazianzus, ordered to convert Constantinople from Arianism to orthodoxy, was soon captivated by the city and its inhabitants. However, analyzing his lack of success in the first months, he found out that the real problem was not so much the Arian resistance, but the totally unreligious and secular attitudes of the population. Of course, all the preachers of the time intentionally exaggerated for the sake of rhetorical amplification. But Gregory was really fond of the city, and he wanted to show his congregation in the best light. Still, he had to admit that the overwhelming interests of the inhabitants were concentrated less on questions of Christian life or Christian faith than on an inopportune pride in their city--on showpieces, races, and on the display of sumptuousness.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, in the end, I would not say that Constantinople was without ecclesiastical importance. But the point of

reference was not the Church as such, or the bishopric. It made a deep impression that the Empire should be centered around a Christian city, Constantinople, rather than heathen Rome. But the practical impulses were focused less on a spiritual center than on the bureaucracy, the court, when it was in residence, and the emperor. One of the startling secondary phenomena of the new system, which I would like to call "political orthodoxy," was that again and again many provincial bishops, sneering at the decisions of the competent synods, even ecumenical ones, appealed to the emperor. They attempted to get a hearing, for which they had to travel to the capital and wait until the emperor saw fit to give them audience. In the meantime, they consulted the bishop of Constantinople, who could advise them on how to handle the greedy people in the imperial antechambers, how to offer the proper bribe. The Constantinopolitan bishop was profiting from this situation, while the emperor, often overburdened by the fussiness of the petitioners and by the intricacy of their cases, may have asked his bishop to pass sentence. And in many cases the bishop probably did not propose such a sentence without having gathered the visiting bishops to discuss the matter with them. The nucleus of what later became the Permanent Synod can thus be ascertained rather early. In other words, without any innate right, the bishop of Constantinople could reap where he had not sown.

This, I think, was the background of the canon on the primacy of honor voted to Constantinople in 381. After the council's decision, the Constantinopolitan bishop could no longer be outflanked, and was owed a certain amount of deference. There is no hint of apostolicity. The legend that St. Andrew was the first bishop of the city did not emerge before the sixth or seventh century. So the argument is a purely political one: Constantinople is the New Rome. The synod ceremoniously phrases a dry matter of fact. Perhaps the canon was introduced by the bishops of Asia Minor, in an effort to counterbalance the power of Alexandria. Since the bishop of Alexandria did not attend the council, Alexandrian opposition could be ignored. And if the canon was passed after the death of the bishop of Antioch, which took place during the council, any opposition from this side could only have been weak.

The bishops of Constantinople did not rest content with a primacy of honor. John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople from 389 to 404, began to exploit the canon far beyond its juridical scope. No one will doubt that Chrysostom was a great saint, but here we must point to some less saintly features of his character. Out of the primacy of honor, he began to create a primacy of jurisdiction--a genuine patriarchate--over large parts of Europe and Asia Minor. And he succeeded, at least for the moment, although the measures he took annoyed even his friends. Meanwhile, Alexandria recovered from a temporary weakness and landed a hard blow by accusing Chrysostom of misconduct in office. Involved in a lawsuit, Chrysostom had to leave his see. But his successors did not give in, nor did Alexandria. Fortunately for Alexandria, one of Chrysostom's successors, Nestorius, provided an opportunity for discrediting the very faith of the Constantinopolitan see. The Council of Ephesus in 431, where Nestorius was condemned, was the great success of Cyril of Alexandria and the gloomy defeat of Constantinople. Even Emperor Theodosius II, at his wit's end, thought that now he had to support Alexandria rather than his own capital. Fortunately again--but this time for Constantinople--Dioscorus, successor of Cyril, overstrained the new prestige of his see and turned half the Orient against him. Thus, the Council of Chalcedon in 451 finally voted once more for Constantinople. The famous twenty-eighth canon, ratified against the will of the pope's legates, changed the primacy of honor into a primacy of jurisdiction, and in this way legalized the encroachments of Chrysostom. The patriarchate of Constantinople was now an established fact.

To sum up: Constantinople became a genuine ecclesiastical center only in 451, that is, more than 120 years after the foundation of the city. From this vantage, the year 381 was merely a promising prelude. But the success of 451 was called into question again and again, by Rome as well as by Alexandria. For long decades, Alexandria continued to oppose Constantinople, whose bishop was helpless even when backed by the emperor, for the emperor himself was helpless in the face of Egyptian resistance. The Constantinopolitan primacy had a conspicuous congenital defect in the lack of a genuine ecclesiastical and spiritual basis, and this defect resulted in an unbalanced interdependency between Church and Empire, disadvantageous more often for the patriarch than for the emperor, although in the long run even the emperor had to pay a high price.

As far as learning and scholarship are concerned, it is unlikely that Constantinople was at an early stage a leader in this field. Founders of cities, especially of Late Antique cities, commonly are occupied by the

architectural image of their foundation, by hippodromes and galleries and municipal institutions. Constantine himself is a good example. Even though some *grammatikoi* probably settled down and opened a school in the early days of Constantine's rule, Constantine did little or nothing to encourage such enterprises. He founded no university, library, or scriptorium. And the Bible manuscripts he commissioned were not copied in Constantinople, but rather at Caesarea in Palestine, where the library of Origen provided the best texts. Moreover, these Bibles were not destined for an imperial library; they were to be given as presents to different churches.<sup>18</sup>

Themistius, in his praise of Constantius, complains in cautious words about Constantine's inactivity in the field of scholarship.<sup>19</sup> It was left to Constantius to remedy this lack of imperial patronage. He organized an imperial scriptorium with a chief and a staff of copyists for the purpose of copying the rather deteriorated manuscripts of the ancient authors. In codicological terms, they transferred the texts from the old papyri onto parchment. Whether the activity of the scriptorium was as expansive as Themistius tries to insinuate is, however, another question.<sup>20</sup> He uses the well-known device of amplification by specification. After referring to "a lot of ancient authors," he then presents a long list of their names. This does not and cannot mean that books by all of these authors really were on the scriptorium's schedule, and still less that each title was actually copied. One should not, therefore, deduce from the list of Themistius a huge mass of new manuscripts.

More important, the employment of copyists, however limited, presupposes that a sufficient number of manuscripts was available for copying--that there was, in other words, a basic library, the size of which remains unknown, at least for the fourth century. The stock of this library was enriched by Julian, and later emperors made new provisions. Valens, for example, appointed three Latin and four Greek *antiquarii*, as well as other people, for the daily work. Such a staff suggests that by Valens' time the collection must have been a considerable one. On the basis of this evidence, scholars have concluded that Constantinople had finally found her prominent place in literature and civilization. Although I would like to agree, I have some reservations, which a short digression may illuminate.

In 1468, Cardinal Bessarion bequeathed his famous library to the city of Venice. There, he hoped, the learned Greek refugees might exploit his manuscripts for their humanistic studies.<sup>21</sup> The Venetian senate promised to house this legacy in the best room of the Doges' palace. In 1469, Bessarion's library, which included nearly five hundred Greek manuscripts, arrived in Venice. But the senate lost interest in the bequest, disregarding the promise to make it accessible. Between 1472 and 1476 the codices were made available only four times. In 1485, the room where the books had been stored was needed for other purposes, so the cardinal's whole library was packed up in cases and kept under lock and key. Seven years later, after the pope threatened the Venetians with anathema, the cases were reopened. But, at the same time, the senate decreed that no codex could be borrowed without the consent of three-fourths of the senators, violators being subject to a fine of five hundred ducats. A building for the library was planned in 1515, begun in 1536, and finally finished in 1588. It is hard to comprehend that all of this took place in the period we call the Renaissance.<sup>22</sup>

But let us return to Constantinople. A library was there. But was it a public library or only a treasury of books, where now and then an emperor or a courtier could enter and feel bookish? Could any qualified person enter and read and make notes? We have no answer. Nonetheless, the scantiness of the literary production in Constantinople does not favor very optimistic suppositions.

The library in Constantinople burned down in 475.<sup>23</sup> On this occasion, Malchus, a contemporary historian, informs us that the library had contained 120,000 "biblia." No modern scholar is willing to accept such a number. It depends, however, on the definition of the word *biblion*. If taken to mean a codex, the number is incredible. But *biblion* understood as a literary unit, even as an autonomous chapter of work, is well attested and would not strain the limits of our credulity.<sup>24</sup>

The history of the library in the following years is rather obscure. Some sources imply that the emperor Zenon and the *praefectus urbi* Julian restored the library. But, in my opinion, the two or three epigrams that mention a house of the Muses, and so on, remain equivocal--they need not refer to the library known as the Museion--and later scholia are no real help.<sup>25</sup> It is hard to believe that the emperor Justinian should have been very

eager to collect ancient pagan manuscripts, considering his persecution of heathen teaching and heathen professors.<sup>26</sup>

The teaching profession in Constantinople is the next topic. There can be no doubt that by the fourth century schoolmasters had arrived in Constantinople, and that by about 350 private schools had become established institutions in the city. The teachers were paid by the pupils, or, rather, by their parents, if payment was made at all. At first, the government did not interfere. But, after a while, the competitive struggle among the schoolmasters became more and more violent, and they seem to have sought some kind of governmental approbation. A special class of teachers slowly emerged, teachers who left behind them the masses of the poor *grammatikoi* and had a special right to be called *magistri*. These *magistri* were entitled to teach publicly and were favored by the government, perhaps now and then even paid by it. Under Theodosius II, this system was brought to an end and stabilized. In his constitution of 425,<sup>27</sup> he confined private teaching to private houses; all public teaching by private professors was forbidden. The only place where public teaching, controlled and salaried by the government, was permitted was the "*auditorium Capitolii*." Thus, we are told, a university had been created. Whether the word "university," impressive though it may be, is accurate does not matter. More important is the question I have already asked about the library. Did this university work? Was it a center of learning and successful students? As matters stand, it is more or less impossible to distinguish between professors of this new university and other teachers in the city. So I will treat the two categories together, leaving out the *grammatici linguae latinae*. We can then deal with a series of professors whose names we know and who taught grammar, literature, rhetoric, some introduction to the Aristotelian *organon*, and so on. Half of these professors are names only. Some are mentioned by the "Suda" in the tenth century, along with the titles of some of their works. But most of these professors' texts are lost. What remains, for example, is an introduction to rhetoric by a certain Troilus, a *Peri lexicon* by Ammonius, which is a revision of an older text, and similar trifles. During a period of more than two hundred years, therefore, the only outstanding names in the scholarly life of Constantinople are Libanius and Themistius. Libanius left after a short time for Asia Minor; Themistius is more interesting. In a manner that accorded with the special climate of the capital--which Libanius could not stand--Themistius combined a political career with a kind of political teaching along the ideals of the ancient Greek *paideia*.<sup>28</sup> His numerous enemies felt that he betrayed the Hellenistic tradition to the new Roman trends. For this reason, Eunapius, in his *Vitae sophistarum*, refused to give Themistius a place in the *legenda aurea* of the true and authentic philosophers of the time. Themistius was not able to form an *ecole* out of his thoughts.

Of course, one can argue that the losses of Late Antique literature are considerable in all parts of the ancient world, and that such a loss is not necessarily due to a lack of quality. But Athens, Alexandria, Antioch, and Caesarea were certainly in no less danger than Constantinople, and perhaps even more so. Yet, the scholars of these cities and others in the East left behind them a body of works far more impressive in number than the poor heritage of Constantinople--whatever the "connoisseurs" of classical literature may think of it. Palladas, Colluthus, Nonnus, Joannes Philoponus, Procopius Gazaeus, Zosimus, Proclus--all the important names of these centuries are non-Constantinopolitan. To be sure, Constantinople may rightly boast of the great historian Procopius of Caesarea, and the city also produced some good epigrammatists. But neither Procopius nor the epigrammatists belonged to the caste of professors and teachers. They were, rather, lawyers and officers, most of whom had acquired their erudition outside of Constantinople. The main center of learning and scholarship from the fourth to the sixth centuries was not Constantinople. Such centers could be found in Athens, Alexandria, and some minor Eastern towns where not only conventional rhetoric, grammar, and philosophy were taught, but even a certain amount of mathematics and science--at least in Alexandria. And poetry still had a home. By comparison, Constantinople had little to contribute. The story of Libanius, one of the toughest defenders of classical learning, suggests why. He had opened a school in Constantinople, but after a few years grew disappointed and left for provincial Nicomedia. In his opinion, the atmosphere of the capital did not favor learning: one had to compromise too much, and there was too much ambition and professional envy.<sup>29</sup>

As for the students who graduated from Constantinople's schools, very few of them can be numbered among the outstanding scholars of the time. In these centuries, theological interests, associated as they were with Aristotelian logic and Neoplatonic philosophy, played a considerable role in education. Yet, among the dozens

of names that have an enduring place in the annals of patrology, there are not even six who could rightly be called alumni of Constantinople. The overwhelming majority came from Asia, from Syria, from Palestine, and from Egypt.

In the sixth century, Antioch was impoverished by Persian raids and then destroyed by earthquakes; the school of Athens was breathing its last, due to Justinian's hatred of this "Sleeping Beauty"; and the verve of Alexandria was endangered by the fanaticism of the patriarchs and of the monks they mobilized. Constantinople could profit by these circumstances, and she did. But she had to pay a high price: Constantinople had to forego the very energy and eloquence that for so long had characterized the school of Alexandria; she had to say farewell to the esoteric tunes of Athens; she had to be deferential to her emperor's asthmatic mentality. The old fertile soil of Alexandrian erudition had to be left fallow.

With some apprehension, I would risk the thesis that this final, and to a certain degree unnatural, formalization of the ancient literature and erudition was due not only to Christian influence in general, but as well to the special atmosphere during the reign of Justinian, the most Christian emperor, under whom a "paganizing" professor or scholar could no longer breathe. I do not mean the kind of professor or scholar who trusts in the Olympian or chthonic deities, but rather a man not completely satisfied by stylistic delicacies or an exquisite vocabulary, who would like to find his own identity and explain his aspirations in the context of ancient literature, in the attitudes of the classical authors. Such a man is not an *ens rationis*, not even in the early Byzantine centuries. He is, rather, like Synesius of Cyrene or, in later times, Pico della Mirandola, Erasmus of Rotterdam, and Thomas More. Being Christians, these men realized that grace presupposes nature, and nature involves myth, at least for a transcendental understanding. Myth is immortal. As Sallustius said in the fourth century: "This never happened, but it never ceases to exist." The pagan deities survived into the Christian era, if only as dirty demons and mischievous devils. The defenders of Christian doctrine could rest content with battling paganism, but in so doing they missed the transparency and the range of the myth. They did not see beyond simple personifications and mythological fairy tales because they were blind to paganism's immanent, though intermediate, values, where life and nature represented themselves in concentrated symbols inviting *theoria*--that is, an insight that involves identification.<sup>30</sup> It creates a special feeling of closeness, a counterbalance to a nominalistic world view and to a spiritualism that can no longer hear the flute of Pan and the song of the Muses.

I would not say that in sixth-century Constantinople there was no one who found the myth attractive--Agathias certainly did. But whereas in Alexandria a well-preserved and viable heritage of classical and mythical ideas could be combined with some new Christian intellectual trends, Constantinople was behind the times. By the time she became aware of her new role in the field of scholarship, she had no great scholars within her walls. The mediocre people Constantinople nurtured were not eager enough to resume the old, already endangered traditions. And if there was still some nostalgic residue, Justinian's tough religious politics put an end to it. Thus, the final monopoly of the city as a center of scholarship was not the result of its own achievement: it was due to the decay of the Eastern cities and was won at the cost of the final, but in itself unnecessary formalization.

It must seem as if I aimed exclusively at diminishing and slandering the importance of Constantinople. I would like to do her justice, but this can be done only by going beyond the topics just treated.

The foundation of Constantinople was for the East, and especially for the Greek East, the signal of a reevaluation of all the traditional values. Through this new city, the Roman Empire and Roman power drew menacingly closer to the East than ever before, especially because it emphasized the Eastern Empire's specific Roman and Latin character. The citizens of the old Greek towns, until then proud of their seeming autonomy, had to realize that the *polis*, in the traditional meaning of the word, was now gone. Constantinople herself was no *polis*. Themistius, justifying his politics of "*ralliement*," tried to suggest it was, but nobody believed him, least of all Libanius. The new city was not living on old traditions with local autonomy. The hundreds and thousands of immigrants were certainly a motley crew, irreverent before the pre-Constantinian heritage of their new home. The city had no old temples of significance, no traditional festivals around famous sanctuaries, no old aristocracy. She was a parvenu, but a parvenu with a huge amount of self-confidence and

selfishness, and with a future. On the whole, the city was not "*a la recherche du temps perdu*," like so many other cities in the East, and it was not dreaming of classical attitudes and of classical *paideia*. Constantinople was just trying to make its fortune. If intellectual training was sought, it was primarily a juridical training, Roman jurisprudence, because such a training was the best recommendation for a career in the imperial administration. Libanius tells us that many young people left their small, drowsy towns for such a career. But the champions of the old Greek way of life saw this profession as the very enemy of Greek *paideia*, and not without just cause.

Herein lies one of the most important reasons why Constantinople was so late in competing with the other centers of Greek learning. This competition simply did not have priority. First of all, Constantinople had to compromise with, and make a cultural adjustment to, Roman mentality in every respect, even so far as the architectonical and artistic appearance of the city was concerned. She had to find a middle road between Greek political engagement and the Roman imperial concept; between the arbitrariness of the local Eastern churches and the Roman view of a *religio licita*, controlled by a *pontifex maximus*; and, finally, between a "rhetorical" and a "legal" mentality. That Constantinople arrived at such a compromise is her greatest achievement--an achievement, however, that could not be accomplished without losses on both sides. But the new distance from the old Greek ideals was not greater than the distance from the old Roman views. Thus, a new center was created, impoverished and impoverishing at the same time. It was precisely this "pauperism" that guaranteed survival.

When the great breakdown and the big losses in the midst of the seventh century were a matter of fact, Constantinople still was there. She sent artistic and cultural vibrations to isolated provinces, when these themselves were unable to act on their own account. By her military power, Constantinople gave life to provincial towns, which even with better economic endowment and with more autonomy would not have managed to survive. Eventually, she even amassed a storehouse of learning-enough to preserve scholarship and literary standards beyond the Dark Ages. Every future renaissance could rely on it.

## NOTES

1. Cf. G. Dagron, Naissance d'une capitale. Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451, Paris, 1974. P. Lemerle, Le premier humanisme byzantin, Paris, 1971. These two books are basic and I am much indebted to the authors, although on some minor points I cannot agree completely.
2. J. Miller in Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft, III, 1897, cols. 1116-50, s.v. "Byzantion."
3. E. Gren, Kleinasien und der Ostbalkan in der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung der römischen Kaiserzeit, Uppsala and Leipzig, 1941.
4. Julian In laudem Constantii 6 (Bidez, p. 18). Nevertheless, the whole empire had to pay heavy taxes. See Sozomenus Hist. Eccl. 2, 3, 5, J. Bidez and G. C. Hansens, eds., Berlin, 1960 p. 52.
5. St. Jerome Chronicon ad annum 330 (Helm, Eusebius Werke, VII, p. 232).
6. Eusebius Vita Constantini 3. 54, F. Winkelmann, ed., Berlin, 1975, pp. 107-08. Cf. Socrates Hist. Eccl. I. 16, Migne, PG, LXVII, col. 117.
7. Anthologia Palatina 2, H. Beckby, ed., 1957-58, I, pp. 168-93.
8. Cf. Zosimus Historic nova 2. 32, F. Paschoud, ed., Paris, 1971, I, p. 105. Zosimus is biased, but cf. Themistius Orationes 3, Schenkl-Downey, eds., Leipzig, 1865, pp. 66-67, and Orationes 11, ibid., p. 227. As for the carelessness of the constructors, note that in 385 a fifteen-year liability for the architects and their heirs was decreed; see Cod. Theodosianus 15. 1, 24



9. Sidonius Apollinaris Carmina 2. 30 ff., in Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auct. Antiquissimi, VIII, pp. 174-75. Cf. Patna Konstantinupoleos, II, Preger, ed., Leipzig, 1907, pp. 184-85.
10. R. Janin, "Deuteron, Triton et Pempton," Echos d'Orient, XXXV, 1936, pp. 205-19.
11. Synesius De regno, Migne, PG, LXVI, col. 1073.
12. Cf. F. Dvornik, The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium and the Legend of the Apostle Andrew, Cambridge, Mass., 1958 pp. 39-105.
13. Gregory of Nazianzus Orationes 33. 8, Migne, PG, XXXVI, col. 224.
14. Codex Justinianus 1. 1, 1, P. Kruger, ed., Berlin, 1954.
15. G. Dagron, "Les moines de la vine: Le monachisme a Constantinople jusqu'au concile de Chalcedoine (451)," Travaux et Memoires, IV, 1970, pp. 229-76.
16. Acts Conciliorum Oecumenicorum 2. 1, E. Schwartz, ed., Berlin, 1933, pp. 310-11.
17. Gregory of Nazianzus Orationes 36. 12, Migne, PG, XXXVI, Col. 280.
18. C. Wendel, "Der Bibelauftrag Kaiser Konstantins," Zentralblatt fur Bibliothekswesen, LVI, 1939, pp. 165-75.
19. Themistius Orationes 4, Schenkl-Downey, ed., I, p. 86.
20. Ibid., pp. 82-89.
21. The deed of Bessarion's bequest is published in L. Gasparini Leporace and E. Mioni, Cento codici Bessarionei, Venice, 1968, pp. 101-03.
22. Cf. L. Mohler, Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist and Staatsmann, I, Paderborn, 1923, pp. 408-15.
23. Joannes Zonaras Epistome historiarum 14. 2, h. Buttner-Wobst, ed., Bonn, 1897, pp. 130-31.
24. B. Atsalos, La terminologie du livre-manuscrit a l'epoque byzantine, Thessalonike, 1971, I, pp. 69-74.
25. Anthologia Palatina 16, nos. 69-71, H. Beckby, ed., 1 V, p. 338.
26. Codex Justinianus t. 5, 18; 1. 11, 10.
27. Codex Theodos. XIV, 9, 3.
28. G. Dagron, "L'empire romain d'Orient au IV siecle et les traditions politiques de l'hellenisme: Le temoignage de Themistios," Travaux et Memoires, III, 1968, pp. 1-242.
29. Libanius Autobiography 34-42, A. F. Norman, ed., London, 1965, pp. 24-32.
30. Cf. F. Boll, Vita contemplativa, 2nd ed., Heidelberg, 1922. Simone Weil, Lettre d un religieux, Paris, 1951.

\*The Age of Spirituality: A Symposium. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980.

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