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Byzantine Style, Religion and Civilization: In Honour of Sir Steven Runciman

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The first, main title of this volume might seem to promise too little or too much?either a very superficial work of generalization, or a heterogeneous assortment of broadly grouped pieces too diverse and disparate to cohere. However, the second title makes sense of it all: this is a volume that honours Britiain?s most famous Byzantinist, who in his writings and his long life (1903?2000) put Byzantine style, religion, and civilization on the map for both the academic and the generally educated public. The title does not even reflect the full range of Sir Steven Runciman?s Byzantine interests: his first book was on a political subject, the reign of Romanos I Lekapenos, while most of his subsequent books took him well beyond the borders and the timespan of the Byzantine Empire. However, there is no doubt that style, religion, and civilization were keynotes in his conception of, and admiration for, Byzantium. He wrote *Byzantine Civilization and The Last Byzantine Renaissance*. Byzantine religion is the thread that connects many other books: *The Medieval Manichee*; *The Eastern Schism*; *The Byzantine Theocracy*; and *The Great Church in Captivity*. It is also woven into *A History of the Crusades*, *The Sicilian Vespers*, and *The Fall of Constantinople, 1453*. As for style, it appeared with civilization in the title of a book (*Byzantine Style and Civilization*) published in 1975, and though ?style? was replaced by ?art? in the 1981 reprint, it is perhaps the word that best captures the

essence of what Runciman took from, and gave to, the appreciation of Byzantium. He was a consummate stylist in his prose, in conversation, and in the aesthetics of everyday life. He did not put it in so many words, but it was surely a sense of style that caused him to empathize with the Byzantines and agree with them that all other peoples were barbarians, including, and above all, the excruciatingly earnest Crusaders.

So the title of the volume is ben trovato, and the twenty-two contributions could hardly fail to correspond to one or other of its themes. Most contributors, indeed, explicitly relate what they are writing to Sir Steven. They represent a good cross-section of British Byzantinists, from the newly appointed to the lately deceased. This is despite the absence of many, including the author of the present review, who did not take up the invitation to contribute, for whatever reasons?largely, one imagines, through Festschrift fatigue and through depletion of their stock of bite-size spin-offs from major projects. One happy result is that the volume, though substantial, is not cumbersome.

The volume begins, after the tables of contents, with a list of contributors (xiii-xvi) and a short statement of acknowledgements (p. xvii) by the editor who explains how the book originated in a small conference held to honour Sir Steven?s ninetieth birthday, and that, ?the contributors and their themes have evolved over the intervening years?, so that, ?it is now offered as a modest memorial to the wide range of interests of that most courteous and accomplished of historians?. Elizabeth Jeffreys especially acknowledges the support of Sir Steven?s niece and heiress, the Revd Dr Ann Shukman, and her help in compiling the bibliography of his works published from 1929 to 2005 (pp. xx?xxxviii). Ann Shukman is also warmly thanked by Anthony Bryer in his biographical memoir (pp. xxxix?lv) reprinted here from the *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 120 (1993): an affectionate, informative appraisal that perecptively puts Runciman the historian in context.

The twenty-two articles are grouped in three sections corresponding to the themes of the title: Style (1?7), Religion (8?13), and Civilization (14?22).

1. Leslie Brubaker, ?The *Christian Topography* (Vat.gr. 699) revisited: image, text and conflict in ninth-century Byzantium? (pp.3?24). The author strengthens the arguments for assigning the production of the manuscript in question to Constantinople rather than southern Italy, and addresses the question thus raised: why should a sixth-century work of Nestorian inspiration, which Photios dismissed for its silly science and vulgar style, have been copied, complete with its miniatures, in Orthodox Byzantium of the ninth century? She finds the answer in the series of miniatures depicting the Jewish tabernacle and its associated objects, which were often cited in arguments against the iconoclasts?and the Jews?to demonstrate that the Old Testament had sanctioned religious imagery. The illustrated *Topography* was thus like other ninth-century illuminated manuscripts which were used to convey religious polemic through images in the aftermath of the Triumph of Orthodoxy.

2. David Buckton, ?Byzantine enamels in the twentieth century? (pp. 24?37), reviews the question of enamels that are not what they were originally taken to be. He revisits the large number of fakes (which he helped to unmask twenty years ago) produced by ?moonlighters? from Fabergé and other workshops in St Petersburg between 1892 and 1909. He next considers the surviving plaque of the Poitiers Triptych, a clearly Middle Byzantine enamel that has been dated to the sixth century because of its supposed association with the relic of the True Cross sent by Justin II to Queen Radegund. Buckton suggets that the triptych housed a different Cross fragment that reached the Poitiers convent at a later date, probably in connection with the Fourth Crusade. Finally, he looks at one of the treasures of the Hungarian National Museum, the so-called Crown of Monomachos, and concludes that the doubts about the authenticity of this object raised by Nicolas Oikonomides in 1994 are still valid.

3. Archibald Dunn, ?The rise and fall of towns, loci of maritime traffic, and silk production: the problem of Thisvi-Kastorion? (pp. 38?71), is a model survey of a micro-region of central Greece and its economic history in the early middle ages. The author combines a thorough and sensitive analysis of written sources from all periods with local and comparative archaeological evidence to establish, with due caution, that: (1) ancient and modern Thisbe, near the Gulf of Corith, were identical with the Kastorion in the *Life of Hosios Loukas*, whose local topography can be fully reconstructed on this basis; (2) the transition from polis to

kastron was not a ?dark age? development and did not take place in a situation of rural economic decline; (3) as the name Kastorion (=murex) and dumps of murex shells indicate, the area supported a purple-dyeing and probably also a silk-weaving industry in the middle Byzantine period, when much traffic between Italy and the east passed through the local harbours.

4. Zaga Gavrilovi?, ?Women in Serbian politics, diplomacy and art at the beginning of Ottoman rule? (pp.72?90). The late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries were a bad time for Serbia, as for Byzantium, but they brought out the best in the women of the Serbian royal family, who worked for the survival of the Serbian principalities and commissioned fine devotional works of art, most of which still exist. The article studies the achievements of four of them: Milica-Jevgenija, widow of Prince Lazar who died at Kosovo; Jefimija, widow of the Despot Uglje?a Mrnjav?evi?; the twice-widowed Jela, daughter of Lazar and Milica, who looked after Serbian interests in the Adriatic cities of Zeta and their hinterland; and Mara, the daughter of Djuradj (George) Brankovi?, the last effective Serbian ruler of Serbia, who was able to mitigate the effects of the Ottoman conquest through the influence she gained in the harem of Murad II.

5. In ?Byzantium-Venice-Manchester: an early thirteenth-century carved marble basin and British Byzantinism at the turn of the twentieth century? (pp. 91?134), Lucy-Ann Hunt tells the story of, ?a hitherto neglected example of medieval secular art in a British collection?, a rectangular sculpted basin acquired in the former Manchester College of Art Collection, now the Faculty of Art and Design at Manchester Metropolitan University. After giving a full, illustrated art-historical description of the object, she assigns it, by comparison mainly with sculpted panels in San Marco and Torcello cathedral, to early-thirteenth-century Venice. She then describes the circumstances in which it was acquired, in 1900, by Councillor William Simpson, as part of the national and local effort to create collections of artworks, both replica and original, for the training of industrial designers. Considered at the time to be Byzantine, the basin thus took its place in an eclectic array of objects from all places and periods and made a modest, ?byzantinesque? contribution to the Arts and Crafts movement in harmony with Ruskin?s enthusiasm for the stones of Venice.

6. Jonathan Shepard, ?Manners maketh Romans? Young barbarians at the emperor?s court? (pp. 135?58), considers one important way in which Byzantine style was adopted by the empire?s barbarian neighbours. He looks at the cases of three princes who spent time in their youth at the court of Constantinople: Theoderic the Amal, who went on to become leader of the Pannonian Goths and then king of Italy; Symeon, the king of the newly-converted Bulgarians; and Stephen Du?an, the Serbian king who proclaimed himself ?emperor of the Serbs and Greeks? in 1345. None was destined for the throne but each brought his realm to a brilliant, if transient, peak of power, and although this was at the empire?s expense, each deferred to the values he had learned in the emperor?s court and was sensitive to the real or potential charge of having disregarded them. In conclusion, Shepard suggests that this trio ?represent the tip of an iceberg?.

7. David Winfield, ?Crusader art: Sir Steven was right? (pp. 159?73), offers a refreshing counterblast on the cultural front to the historiography of the late-twentieth century that set out to revise Runciman?s view of the crusades and to dismiss Byzantium?s contribution to the world of the Latin East. ?The argument of this short critique of Crusader art is to suggest that Sir Steven?s own review of the subject, written fifty years ago, remains substantially correct. The Crusader contribution to fortifications was not by innovations in Outremer but by carrying back to western Europe the knowledge of what they had learned from Byzantine and Arab fortifications. The Crusader contribution to ecclesiastical architecture was the short-lived transportation of Romanesque and Gothic to Outremer. The Crusader contribution to painting and mosaic lay in the patronage of local practitioners of these arts. There is no evidence that Frankish painting had any impact on Byzantine painting or mosaic. The only effect that the Crusaders could be said to have had is in the sack of Constantinople.?

8. Timothy Greenwood, ?The discovery of the relics of St Grigor and the development of Armenian tradition in ninth-century Byzantium? (pp. 177?91), presents a translation and commentary of an Armenian text relating the discovery of the relics of St Grigor Lusarowi? (Gregory the Illuminator) in ninth-century Constantinople. According to the text, the discovery was reported to the prince of princes A?ot by the eunuch Nikodemos, ambassador from the emperor Basil I in 878-9, who said that it had been made under

Michael III and Theodora (842-856) in a church dedicated to the Holy Trinity. Greenwood plausibly locates the church at the imperial oikos of ta Karianou, beside the Golden Horn, and suggests that the relic discovery and the cult of St Gregory, the ?apostle? of Armenia, were promoted by Photios as part of his effort to reconcile the Armenian church to Chalcedonian orthodoxy. The article is the second of a trilogy in which the author re-evaluates the evidence for Byzantine-Armenian relations in the reign of Basil I.

9. Paul Hetherington, ?The image of Edessa: some notes on its later fortunes? (pp. 192?205), focuses mainly on that part of the story of the famous acheiropoieton that interested Sir Steven, namely its translation to Constantinople on the initiative of Romanos I Lekapenos in 944, but also considers its subsequent fate in the ?saintes chapelles? of Byzantium and Paris. His discussion of the Mandylion itself and its container is well informed, but his speculations concerning the associated relic of Christ?s letter to Abgar of Edessa are flawed by unawareness of the sources for the letter?s transfer to Constantinople under Romanos III (Yahya of Antioch) and its looting from the imperial palace during a riot in 1185 (Choniates). His analysis of the 944 transfer also misses the implications of the extent to which Romanos I?s original project was hijacked by Constantine Porphyrogenitus; this was explored by Sysse Engberg in an article published in 2004 (*Byzance et les reliques du Christ*, ed. J. Durand and B. Flusin).

10. Andrew Louth, ?Photios as a theologian? (pp. 206?23), looks at a side of the great ninth-century churchman and scholar that has not received much evaluation, despite his ardent anti-iconoclasm and his role in the outbreak of the Filioque controversy. Photios? 329 responses to questions supposedly asked by Amphilochios, bishop of Kyzikos, were surely, as the author suggests, meant to recall the Amphilochia of St Basil. Louth comments on Photios? great learning, his use of Theodoret and ?the mysterious sixth-century monk Job?, his exegetical approach to doctrinal questions, his awareness of the difference between theologia and oikonomia, his good grasp of Christology, and the hints of Pythagoreanism in his Trinitarian theology. The final impression is of a typically Byzantine approach, ?disposing of a vast wealth of learning, interested in the issues raised, and also in tying up any loose ends, but not exactly fired by any great vision of how it all hung together?a kind of theological pottering about?.

11. Jennifer Nimmo Smith, ?Magic at the crossroads in the sixth century? (pp. 224?37), is a useful discussion of Christian definitions of magic at the end of antiquity. The article centres on Pseudo-Nonnos? commentary on Gregory of Nazianzos? first oration against Julian, in which mageia is distinguished from goeteia and pharmakeia as being the summoning of beneficent daimones. The very idea of ?good demons? was a relic of a much older, pre-Christian religion, and quite at odds with the Christian notions that Pseudo-Nonnos expresses elsewhere in his work. It was, however, not without importance for later Byzantium, since his definitions were taken up by such influential works as the chronicle of George the Monk and the Suda.

12. Shaun Tougher, ??The Angelic Life?: monasteries for eunuchs? (pp. 238?52). ?This essay set out to highlight and explore the phenomenon of the eunuch monastery in Byzantium. The attempt encountered problems, primarily the paucity of examples, but also the scant source material for these examples. But some analysis can be attempted??and the essay shows that the attempt was worth making. Eunuch monasteries did exist, and one, that of Attaleiates, is described in its foundation document. The connection between eunuchs and the ascetic life was undoubtedly long and strong, even though ?one does wonder if in fact there would have been any difference between eunuch and non-eunuch monasteries beyond the physical condition of their personnel?.

13. Frank R. Trombley, ?Armed pilgrimage and the reign of the anti-Christ: Steven Runciman and the origins of the First Crusade? (pp. 253?72). The author attempts, ?a brief précis on two critical questions: ?armed pilgrimage?, and the received ideas of the Christian communities about what Runciman calls the ?reign of the anti-Christ?. It observes the Latin and oriental Christians from a ?bottom up? rather than ?top down? angle??. The article concentrates on the conditions of the march and the ideas about the Muslims that the Latins brought with them and learned from the local Christians. The anti-Christ gets short shrift, as does the whole apocalyptic dimension of the First Crusade, although this was basic to the initial crusader perceptions of Islam. Trombley cites Raymond of Aguilers on the crusaders asking the local Syrians the best way to march from Antioch to Jerusalem, but does not cite the point of the answer they received: ?We read

in the Gospel of the Blessed Peter, which is kept among us, that if you are the people who is to take Jerusalem, you must take the road along the coast, although this seems impossible because of the difficulty?. The crusaders followed the coast.

14. David Frendo, ?Wine for immortality and immortality for wine: reflections on the Dionysiaka of Nonnos of Panopolis? (pp. 275?89). The reflections wander far and wide, rather like Nonnos?s poem. Their connecting thread appears to be the author?s conviction that this late-fifth-century epic is not a work of Christian allegory, and he approvingly cites Lee Sherry?s unpublished Columbia PhD thesis of 1991 to deny Nonnian authorship of the hexameter paraphrase of St John?s Gospel. The article is in three sections: ?Judgements, comparisons and misconceptions?, ?Authors and authorship?, and ?The plan of Zeus?. The last is a summary of the plot, with particular discussion of the proem, in which Nonnos invokes the inspiration not only of Apollo and the Muses but also of Proteus, whom he seeks to capture ?and thus achieve the Protean multiplicity (poikilia) that his task demands?.

15. In ?Greek fire revisited: recent and current research? (pp. 290?325) John Haldon, with contributions from Andrew Lacey and Colin Hewes, provides a very useful overview of modern attempts to identify and reproduce the operation of Byzantium?s ?secret weapon?. He reviews the basic controversy as to whether the siphon which propelled the flaming liquid in question against the enemy ship was a pumping device, or was itself the projectile, an earthenware pot filled with liquid and hurled by a catapult. He then recapitulates the arguments in favour of the pumping device: from the textual evidence, principally of the *De administrando imperio*, and from the experiment conducted for a television programme in 2002. The article includes a detailed discussion of the mechanism manufactured for the experiment, and of the liquid itself, well attested in the sources?light crude oil from surface seepages in the Northern Caucasus oilfield, to which Byzantium had access until the end of the twelfth century. The footnotes to the article are a mine of references to ancient and medieval military and hydraulic technology.

16. Catherine Holmes, ?Constantinople in the reign of Basil II? (pp. 326?39), is about Constantinople in the sense that the name of a capital city is shorthand for the politics of a state?s central government?or governance as Holmes like to call it. In the absence of a Byzantine narrative focused on politics at the centre during Basil?s reign, she finds structure in Ibn Shahram?s diplomatic report of his embassy from Baghdad to Constantinople in 981?2. This reveals a young Basil II, with the support of the epi tou kanikleiou Nikephoros Ouranos, ?trying to break free of the shackles imposed by Basil Lekapenos, the parakoimomenos?, the illegitimate son of Romanos I. The article then discusses the nature of the power behind the shackles and points to other indications of a Lekapenos presence that persisted at court long after the parakoimomenos? fall in 985. Holmes wisely resists the temptation, ?to infer that the politics of the first half of Basil?s reign were not only dominated by civil wars with the Skleroi and the Phokades, but also by a struggle with the Lekapenoi?. As she points out, Basil II too was descended from Romanos I; one might add that the parakoimomenos had loyally served Constantine VII after the latter had toppled his father. The emperor had to impose himself on his own family as well as other families, and the article concludes by considering Basil?s consistently cautious approach to his brother, Constantine VIII, and to marriage, both for himself (he abstained) and for Constantine?s daughters.

17. James Howard-Johnston, ?A short piece of narrative history: war and diplomacy in the Balkans, winter 921/2?spring 924? (pp. 340?60). The narrative covers the climax of the hostile relations between Byzantium and Symeon of Bulgaria. It is a story that has often been told before?Sir Steven looked at it from both the Byzantine and the Bulgarian point of view?but Howard-Johnston tells it with close attention to the sources (several of which had not been critically edited when Runciman wrote). By ingenious emendation of the main chronicle source, he dates the summit meeting between Symeon and Romanos I Lekapenos, which took place on a landing stage in the Golden Horn, to 19 November 923. While leaving the reader to decide for himself the solution to the other main puzzle posed by the episode, namely Symeon?s ambitions, he steers the narrative to the conclusion that what Symeon most wanted was to be recognized as Christian emperor of the Bulgarians.

18. Patricia Karlin Hayter, ?Restoration of Orthodoxy, the pardon of Theophilos, and the *Acta Davidis Symeonis et Georgii*

? (pp. 361?73), is one of three recent articles by the author dealing with the tangle of chronicle and hagiographical sources for the restoration of icons in 843. This one focuses on the posthumous pardon that, according to most, but not all, of the texts, the Empress Theodora obtained for her late husband as the price of condemning his iconoclasm. The author reiterates her conclusion that there was no regency council appointed by Theophilos, and develops her rehabilitation of the *Acta* of the three saints (which she, like Dorothy Abrahamse, regards as three *Vitae* run together), arguing that this text offers the best version of events. She concludes by examining its account, basically shared with Theophanes Continuatus, of the suicide attempted (or faked?) by the iconoclast patriarch John the Grammarian. ?Regardless of what actually happened, this was an excellent pretext for getting rid of the patriarch John?and was this aimed at a public which was, at the very least, tolerant of iconoclasm??

19. Peter Lock, ?Freestanding towers in the countryside of Rhodes? (pp. 374?93), catalogues fourteen securely-identified forts and nine other unlocated constructions dating from the Hospitaller occupation of the island. The article is illustrated with map, photographs of four towers (Glyfada, Kritikou, Phourni, and Pirgos), plus a plan of the tower at Kritikou, and sets the buildings in their historical context. ?To draw too firm a distinction between freestanding towers and the castles of the island would be misleading. Outside the city of Rhodes castle construction was generally late and seems to have been motivated by the Turkish seizure of Negroponte (Euboea) in 1470 ? Most of the freestanding towers, including the three beacon platforms, fit into a Hospitaller plan for the defence of the island and protection of the south-western approaches to Rhodes City; generally conceived after 1470 and implemented with an impressive provision and expenditure.?

20. A.H.S. Megaw, ?The Campanopetra reconsidered: the pilgrimge church of the Apostle Barnabas?? (pp. 394?404). The Campanopetra was a standing stone on the edge of the site of ancient Salamis, Byzantine Constantia, near modern Famagusta in Cyprus. Before the Turkish military occupation of northern Cyprus in 1974, French archaeologists excavated, to the east of the stone, the remains of a large, late-fifth-century pilgrimage basilica. In the subsequent publication, Georges Roux identified this as a shrine dedicated to the Holy Cross. Megaw questions this identification, arguing that the basilica was the one built by the Emperor Zeno in honour of the local saint, the Apostle Barnabas, to whom the church of Cyprus owed (as it still owes) its autocephalous status. The nearby church attached to the later monastery of St Barnabas was thus, according to his interpretation, the original centre of the cult, to which the relics returned two hundred years later, after the city?s destruction by the Arabs. It is unfortunate that the first sentence of this important article contains a howler which may well confuse the unsuspecting general reader: ?the great pilgrimage church built by the Emperor Zeno in the fifth century to strengthen Christian resistance to the Arab invasion of Cyprus?. Unfortunate, because both the author and the volume editor knew well that the Arabs invaded Cyprus two centuries later.

21. Lyn Rodley, ?The travels of Paul Lucas? (pp. 405?12), echoes Sir Steven Runciman?s interest in travel and travellers? accounts, of which he acquired an impressive collection. Rodley encountered Paul Lucas (1664?1737) in her work on Cappadocia, and retained a bond of sympathy for this man who, though compelled to collect antiquities and record inscriptions for his patrons, did not feel at ease with academics, as they did not have much time for him. His forte lay in recording details of contemporary life as an ?unwitting anthropologist?, and in passing himself off as a doctor in search of herbs, which opened many doors to him, including those of harems. He thus, ?may well add something to our understanding of the social history of the Ottoman?, and he may not be quite as neglected as Rodley implies. She states in her text that ?his books have been out of print since 1744?, yet in note 2 she refers to modern editions of 1998, 2002, and 2004!

22. Peter Sarris, ?Aristocrats and aliens in early Byzantine Constantinople? (pp. 413?27), begins and ends his article with pertinent references to Sir Steven, and, in between, examines one early phase of Constantinople?s role as an imperial melting pot of a service aristocracy with central ambitions and provincial roots. He asks, ?to what extent were members of this new senatorial elite of the new capital able to mediate between centre and locality?? He answers with reference to Egypt, ?the wealthiest and most densely populated region of the entire eastern Roman world?. After looking briefly at the rise and fall of a

?well placed nest of Egyptian politicians, poets and poetasters whose political allegiances and Christological sympathies were deemed suspect by the Justinianic regime?, Sarris examines the case of the Apion family, which was restored to favour by that regime and whose connections with their large estates in Egypt over several generations are exceptionally well documented by the Oxyrhynchus papyri. He concludes that, ?in spite of the limitations of technology and communications inherent in a large pre-industrial empire, members of the senatorial elite clearly had the potential to operate as a real and effective point of contact between the imperial court and the provincial world?if, that is, they were minded to do so?.

All of these articles are serious works of scholarship, and at least half will be cited for some time as the classic statements on their subjects. The only general quibble one could have is with the way that they are arranged: once it was decided to group them under the three main themes, it might have made sense to order each section chronologically according to topic, rather than alphabetically according to author?s name?which means, in the last section, that the concluding article on the sixth century follows a study of an eighteenth-century traveller.

All in all, however, this well chosen and handsomely presented volume does Sir Steven proud, down to the reproduction on the dust-jacket of a watercolour of Constantinople by Edward Lear.

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