

The Art of Comparing in Byzantium

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Rhetoric was an important component of Byzantine higher education, which affected the literature, art, and even mentality of the Byzantines. A study of the theory of encomium and censure shows how rhetorical structures, especially comparisons and biographical sequences, ordered the presentation of narratives in art and literature, both secular and sacred. An awareness of the rhetorical framework within which certain images were presented can lead to a new reading of several well-known works of art, such as the ivory box with scenes of David in the Palazzo Venezia in Rome, and the frontispiece miniatures of the Psalter of Basil II.

Narratology, or the theory of narrative, has become an important part of the modern study of communication in medieval literature and, increasingly, in art as well. It is, however, not always appreciated that academics in the Middle Ages had their own theories of communication, namely rhetoric, and that these *medieval* theories may also be relevant to the structure of medieval works of art. In some respects, there are close similarities between medieval and modern narratology.¹ In this essay, I will focus on one of these areas of similarity by studying the rhetorical technique of *synkrisis*, or comparison, as it was practiced by medieval Byzantine writers and artists, especially in secular encomia and in the sacred panegyric of sermons and saints' lives. Both in literature and in the visual arts, *synkrisis* was a way of introducing paradigmatic meanings into syntagmatically composed narratives. The use of comparisons provided "vertical axes" of signification, which functioned as connotators pointing to a higher level, or higher levels, of content. When discussing the employment of comparisons by Byzantine artists, I shall use a theoretical structure and terminology that was used by the Byzantines themselves in their schools. It would be possible to present the same observations in a language more familiar to modern literary theorists; to do so, however, would carry the implication that modern theory had discovered aspects of Byzantine culture that the Byzantines had not known themselves. I believe, on the contrary, that the elite of the Byzantines, who had received a higher education, were completely conscious of both the theory and the practice

that will be presented in this paper. The Byzantine theory of encomium was taught and learned as part of the curriculum in rhetoric, which was an essential element of Byzantine higher education.² The study and practice of oratory had a far-reaching influence not only on the composition of overtly rhetorical pieces, but also on the sermons, biographies, hymns, and even the liturgy of the Byzantine Church;³ some would claim that, in a general sense, the whole mentality of the Byzantines was affected by their admiration for rhetoric.⁴

Encomium, Censure, and Comparison

Encomia were composed by the Byzantines according to set formulae, which had been codified by late-antique rhetoricians, and which were repeated over the centuries by Byzantine schoolmasters.⁵ The standard instructions for encomium had already been given in the third century by the rhetor Menander. For example, this is how Menander tells his students to structure a speech in praise of an emperor. First, one should speak of the difficulty and the magnitude of the subject — of the orator's incapacity to praise so great a person, etc. Then one should speak of the country that produced the emperor, and of the glory of his family. Next, one should pass on to describe his birth, and especially any noteworthy sign that may have attended the nativity of so great an individual, such as an omen or a dream. Subsequently, the physical characteristics of the subject should be praised. After this follows the description of his upbringing and his education. Then the orator de-

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¹ See the prediction by Roland Barthes, ". . . it is possible now to foresee that one will find in it [the rhetoric of the image] some of the figures formerly identified by the ancients and the Classics" ("Rhetoric of the Image," *Image, Music, Text*, New York, 1977, 49f.).

² Herbert Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, 1 (*Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft*, xii.5.1), Munich, 1978, 65-196.

³ Henry Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium*, Princeton, 1981,

passim.

⁴ See R. J. H. Jenkins, "The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Literature," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, xvii, 1963, 43-45.

⁵ See, esp., Méridier, *passim*; Paul J. Alexander, "Secular Biography at Byzantium," *Speculum*, xv, 1940, 194-209; R. J. H. Jenkins, "The Classical Background of the *Scriptores post Theophanem*," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, viii, 1954, 11-30; Robert Browning, "An Unpublished Funeral Oration on Anna Comnena," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, clxxxviii (New Series, 8), 1962, 1-12, esp. 3f. (repr. in Robert Browning, *Studies on Byzantine History, Literature, and Education*, London, 1977, vii); and Hunger (as in n. 2), 120-32.

scribes the emperor's virtues, and after them his deeds in peace and in war.⁶ In many encomia, the account of the career will lead up to the *acme*, or the most significant point in the individual's life.⁷ To the modern audience, this formulaic method of composition may produce results that seem stilted, stereotyped, or unoriginal. But the Byzantines were not usually looking for originality — they would rather reiterate a truth than produce a variety of lies. As Alexander Kazhdan has pointed out, this attitude is clearly revealed by a Byzantine scholar of the twelfth century named Eustathius, who contrasted the rhetoric of the Byzantines with the customs of the ancients. According to Eustathius, Solon once ordained that a maker of seals must never keep a mold, but must destroy it and never use it again. In the classical period, therefore, each work was supposed to be unique. But for the Byzantines, says Eustathius, standards are different. The divine deeds of their emperors must be constantly recalled, and the impression of their shining character must always be preserved.⁸

A very important component of Byzantine panegyrics was the device of comparison. This technique was employed both in encomium and in censure: for example, a good emperor could be compared to David, or to Solomon, or to Constantine, while a bad emperor could be compared to Saul, or to Pharaoh, or to Herod.⁹ "The greatest opportunity in encomia is through comparisons," says one prestigious textbook; "... comparisons must be employed everywhere."¹⁰ Another writer says that the frequent use of comparisons will enable the speaker to avoid boring his listeners.¹¹ In fact, in Byzantine rhetorical education, comparison was often a school exercise in its own right, separate from encomium or censure.¹² Many manuscripts preserve belabored comparisons produced by Byzantine professors and by their students. These classroom comparisons could either be of persons, or of concepts, or of things. For example, a fifth-century textbook, by Nicholas the Sophist, preserves a model comparison of the orators Aischines and Demosthenes. This comparison is to the detriment of the former, for Aischines is seen as the "paradigm of evil," while Demosthenes is described as the "image of virtue." The textbook also contains model comparisons of cowardice and idleness, of sailing and farming, and of summer and winter.¹³

The ancient professors distinguished between several different types of comparison. For example, a second-century text attributed to Hermogenes distinguished between the comparison of two persons of equal stature, the compar-

ison of two persons of unequal stature, but both praiseworthy, and finally the comparison of total opposites, that is, of a praiseworthy with a blameworthy person.¹⁴ Byzantine writers also liked multiple comparisons, as when the fourth-century Church Father Gregory of Nazianzus compared his father, mother, and sister with Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac. His mother, he said, was actually greater than Sarah.¹⁵

The techniques of comparison played an important role in many other genres of Byzantine literature apart from encomium and censure — in fact, it could be said that comparison was an essential part of the mental equipment of any educated Byzantine. This habit of comparison is very important for an understanding of Byzantine art, because it was especially applicable to visual media. It may, indeed, help to account for one of the most distinctive characteristics of Byzantine art, namely the frequent tendency of artists to present narrative compositions in compositionally balanced pairs that mirror each other either formally, or thematically, or both.

The Ivory Casket in the Palazzo Venezia

In order to see how these Byzantine theories of encomium, censure, and comparison could structure the presentation of narratives in Byzantine art, I will examine two works from the court that express the ambitions of two Byzantine emperors; then I will turn to the art of Byzantine churches, considering representations of the lives of the saints.

In the collection of the Palazzo Venezia in Rome is a sumptuous ivory casket that, as its inscriptions reveal, was originally made to honor a Byzantine empress.¹⁶ The sides of the box are decorated with a narrative of the life of David, carved into plaques of ivory. On the cover, a panel shows Christ in the center placing his hands on the heads of an emperor and an empress who stand on either side of him (Fig. 1). In the space below, a man and a woman bow their heads in attitudes of obeisance; they are probably the same individuals as the imperial couple above, as may be gathered from the inscription at the top, which reads: "O Christ bless the imperial couple; the couple, your servants, duly make obeisance to you." Around the rim of the casket's lid, there is a further inscription; it is difficult to read, because the second half of it has been incorrectly restored by a copyist who was trying to reproduce the original letters (Figs. 2-5). In its present state, this mutilated inscription praises the qualities of an empress in a florid style char-

⁶ L. Spengel, ed., *Rhetores Graeci*, III, Leipzig, 1856, 368-77.

⁷ Jenkins (as in n. 5), 21.

⁸ See W. Regel, *Fontes Rerum Byzantinarum*, I, Leipzig, 1982, 98; and Alexander Kazhdan and Simon Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, Cambridge, 1984, 185.

⁹ For *synkrisis* in imperial encomium, see nn. 18, 20, 28, and 31 below. For *synkrisis* in censure, see Guignet, 311; and Jenkins (as in n. 5), 18.

¹⁰ See Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata*, 7, ed. Hugo Rabe, *Rhetores Graeci*, VI, Leipzig, 1913, 17f.

¹¹ Nicholas the Sophist, *Progymnasmata*, ed. J. Felten, Leipzig, 1913, 53.

¹² Hunger (as in n. 2), 106-08.

¹³ *Progymnasmata*, x, nos. 2, 4, 5, ed. C. Walz, Stuttgart, 1832, 358-66.

¹⁴ *Progymnasmata*, 8 (as in n. 10), 19f.

¹⁵ *Funebris Oratio in Laudem Sororis suae Gorgoniae*, in *Pat. Grec.*, xxxv, col. 793. See Guignet, 296.

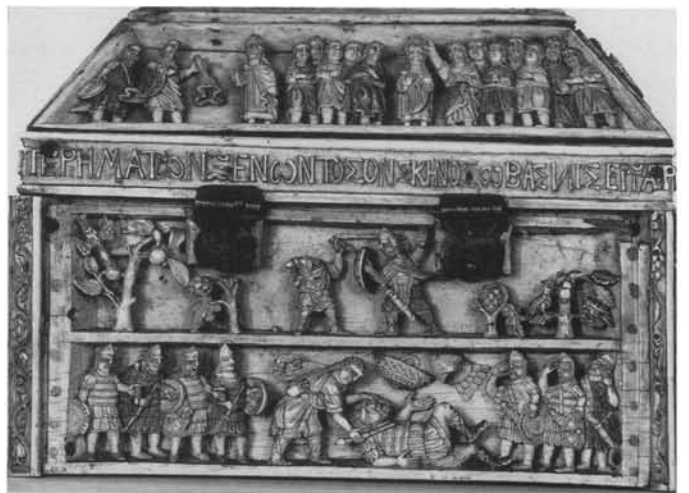
¹⁶ See Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.-XIII. Jahrhunderts*, I, Berlin, 1930, 63f., no. 123; and A. Guillou, "Deux ivoires, Constantinopolitains datés du IXe et Xe siècle," *Byzance et les slaves. Études de civilisation: Mélanges I. Dujčev*, Paris, 1979, 207-11.



1 Coronation of Basil I and Eudokia Ingerina(?), ivory casket, lid. Rome, Palazzo Venezia (photo: Hirmer Fotoarchiv)



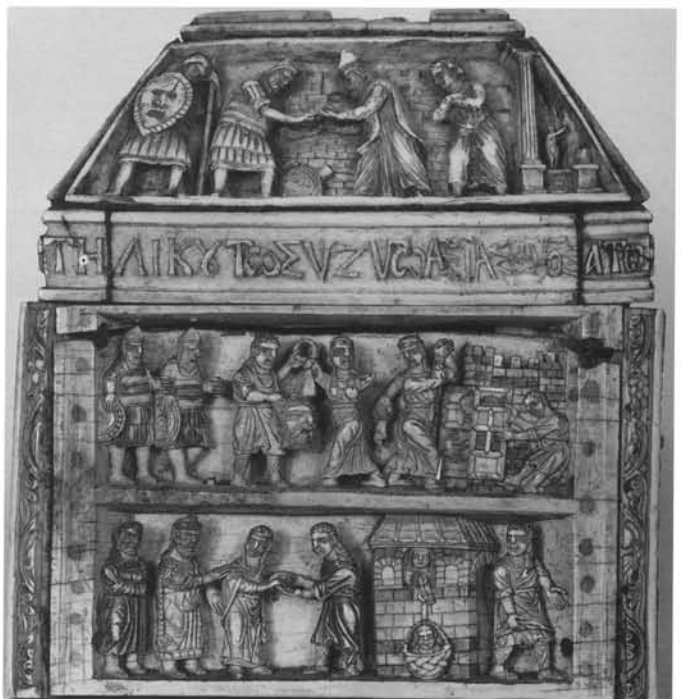
2-5 Scenes from the Lives of David and Saul, ivory casket. Rome, Palazzo Venezia (photos: Hirmer Fotoarchiv)



4



3



5

acteristic of Byzantine panegyrics: "Your soul is a treasure chest of gifts from lofty emperors, it is a vessel of imperial riches. Furthermore, your body, O Empress [here follows a series of letters that may read EIGA.R], is a treasure chest of foreign assets, for such a great husband . . .!" André Guillou has proposed that the empress, whose name is written in abbreviated form, should be identified with the Scandinavian Eudokia Ingerina, the concubine of Michael III, and subsequently the wife of Basil I, a lady said to have been of great beauty.¹⁷ Since the carving on the lid of the casket shows an imperial couple, they would, according to Guillou's reading, be Eudokia with her husband Basil I, after he was nominated emperor in 866. The inscriptions, however, are not the only portions of the casket that can be "read." There are also the ivories on the sides of casket, which illustrate the life of David. These carvings are not a straightforward telling of the Bible story as related in the Book of Kings. They are, in fact, a *retelling* of the biblical account according to the rules and techniques of encomium. If one pays close attention to this retelling, one can discover the hidden message of the *images* and the motivation behind their creation.

On the casket, the story of David begins with his birth, which is not described in the biblical text (Fig. 2). However, a description of the ruler's birth is a standard part of rhetorical encomium. In the upper left corner of the front panel, we see David's mother reclining, while to the right of her a midwife gives the baby his first bath. Next, on the right of the same panel, the child David is shown between his parents: his mother hands him to his father Jesse, who gives him a fond embrace. This scene also does not have a real counterpart in the Bible. However, if one remembers the prescribed sequence of encomium, then one can see this episode as a description of the child's upbringing, which follows upon the account of the birth. Next, and still following the rhetorical sequence, the deeds of David in peace and in war are depicted. In the lower register, on the left, is David as a pipe-playing shepherd with his flock; on the right he kills the lion. Then, moving to the right onto one of the narrow sides of the box (Fig. 3), we see David being anointed by Samuel in the presence of David's brothers, and below, David playing on the harp to Saul, who lies in bed while the evil spirit is upon him.

Moving to the other long side (Fig. 4), we find in the upper register David fighting Goliath, and, below, David cutting off the giant's head as the Israelite and the Philistine armies look on. Turning the casket around once more (Fig. 5), we find David holding Goliath's head and entering in triumph into the cities of Israel, while the gates are opened and the women dance before him. In the lower register, on the left, King Saul gives his daughter Michal to David in marriage. The remaining scenes on the casket are mostly devoted to David's persecution by Saul. At the bottom right

of the panel, we see how Michal helps David escape from the messengers whom Saul has sent to kill him: she lowers her husband down from a window of their house in a basket. The story continues on the lid of the casket, where Ahimelech, the priest at Nob, helps the fugitive David by giving him hallowed bread and the sword of Goliath (Fig. 5). This panel is a modern replacement, but it probably reproduces the original iconography. In the next panel, on the long side of the lid (Fig. 2), the massacre takes place of the men, women, and children of Nob, which was ordered by Saul because the priests of their city had helped David. Then we see how David spared Saul while the king was sleeping in the cave at En-gedi; he merely cut off the edge of Saul's cloak, when he could have killed him (Fig. 3). In the final panel, on the left (Fig. 4), David shows Saul the edge of his cloak to prove that he has no intention of harming Saul. At the right of the panel, the *acme*, or high point, of David's career is represented, when he is crowned king after Saul's suicide. It may be noted that in this last scene David has acquired a full beard, which serves to emphasize his similarity with the emperor who is being crowned on the top of the casket (Fig. 1).

It is clear that these carvings are not only an encomium of David, composed according to the rules of rhetoric, but also an elaborate comparison that refers to the emperor. In other words, the life of David is also a panegyric. We know that the Byzantines consciously made use of visual images of David to glorify their emperors, because this is explicitly stated in a late twelfth-century panegyric of the emperor Isaac Angelos by Michael Choniates. In this speech, the orator Michael talks of the usefulness of works of art for demonstrating the comparison between the emperor and David: "The emperor resembles David," he says, "in almost all characteristics that adorn not only the soul but also the body. It is not possible to set them side by side at the present time, except insofar as one can be pleased by an icon of David, and by means of the icon briefly demonstrate the identity of the original characteristics. . . . If then, the emperor may be shown to resemble the icon of David, it is plain that the emperor must be much like David himself in all respects."¹⁸ The Byzantine speaker, therefore, implies that a similarity between the emperor and images of David in art is also a demonstration of the similarity between their moral qualities.

Let us return to the identification of the imperial pair depicted on the casket. Are there similarities between the career of Basil I and the images of David that were selected for the casket? If we consider the deeds that follow the upbringing of David, we find an extraordinary emphasis on David's relationship with Saul, on Saul's madness, on his attempts to kill David, on his massacre of the people of Nob, and on David's exemplary patience in the face of these provocations. The carvings on the casket contrast,

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 208f., reading the inscription around the rim as follows:
Θησαυρὸς δώρων ὑψηλῶν αὐτοκρατόρων
Ἡ σὴ ψυχὴ καὶ σκεῦος θεῶν χρημάτων
Πλὴν καὶ θησαυρὸς προτερημάτων ζένων

Τὸ σὸν σῆμα, ὁ βασιλεὺς, ἔειπα.
Τηλικούτω συζύγω

¹⁸ *Panegyricus Isaacio Angelo*, 10, ed. T. Tafel, Tübingen, 1846, 24.

for example, with the miniatures of the Paris Psalter, where the scenes of Saul's madness are missing, as they are, indeed, from almost all Byzantine psalters of its type.¹⁹ However, it was a convention of imperial panegyrics to compare a supplanted emperor to Saul. For example, in the encomium of Isaac Angelus by Michael Chroniates, we hear that before Isaac became emperor he had to flee from the company of his cruel predecessor, Andronicus, just as David fled from Saul before he became king.²⁰ In the case of Basil I, his Saul would have been his predecessor, Michael III.

The relationships between Michael and Basil were extremely complicated, and eventually somewhat lurid in character. It is difficult to establish exactly what happened, because the truth was later obscured by the propaganda put out by Basil and his successors. The ivory casket may, in fact, be part of that propaganda. However, some facts are reasonably certain. Basil originally came from a poor background; his father was an Armenian peasant who had settled in Thrace. When he was a young man, Basil went to Constantinople to seek his fortune, and on account of his intelligence and his physical strength he found employment at the palace, initially in charge of the imperial stables.²¹ Once at the palace, he was promoted rapidly by Michael III. Eventually, some time in 865, or early in 866, Michael made Basil divorce his wife and marry in her place the beautiful Scandinavian, Eudokia Ingerina. The complicated part of the story is that Eudokia had been, and perhaps still was, Michael's mistress. Shortly after this arranged marriage, Michael made Basil co-emperor, in May, 866. Basil was crowned in the Great Church of St. Sophia in Constantinople. The reasons for this rather strange sequence of events are obscure. At the time of the coronation Eudokia was carrying a child, the future emperor Leo VI, who was born in September, 866. The paternity of the child is disputed, but it seems that the coronation of Basil may have been a device to give the baby imperial status. Finally in September, 867, Michael III was murdered, which left Basil I as the only ruler. It is virtually certain that Basil himself was responsible for this crime.²² Following the murder, Basil was acclaimed sole emperor,²³ and Eudokia was escorted to the imperial palace "with great honor" to join him. She later would bear Basil several children. The story

ended in 886 when Basil himself was killed, possibly with the connivance of his successor and supposed son, Leo VI.²⁴

Such are the facts as known. Now it is necessary to consider the propaganda. Basil I founded a dynasty of rulers, the so-called Macedonian dynasty. The official *Life of Basil*, the biography of the founder of the dynasty, was written by the emperor Constantine VII, who was supposedly Basil's grandson, but possibly was not. This biography makes heavy use of the techniques of rhetoric, especially of comparisons.²⁵ In the account in the text, which is in all likelihood a fabric of falsehoods, we find that, as Basil's career ascends, Michael's character deteriorates. Michael becomes more and more drunken and unstable, threatening the lives of those around him, and behaving in a generally cruel and erratic manner. In other words, he is Saul to Basil's David — a double comparison. According to Basil's biographer, Michael, like Saul, at first showed kindness to Basil, even providing him with a wife.²⁶ But then, again like Saul, the disturbed Michael tried to arrange that Basil be killed with a spear,²⁷ and also like Saul, he ordered that innocent victims should be tortured and massacred. The official *Life* explicitly compares the trials of Basil to those of his prototype, David. "Who could hear of or see these [actions of Michael's], and not ever be moved to anger and be on fire to avenge those who had perished without cause — even if he had acquired a heart of stone, or was totally anaesthetized [to events around him]? I do not think that even David, that most gentle of all men, would have put up with such drunken violence from such an outcast."²⁸ Basil's biographer then describes Michael's murder, which is not, of course, attributed to Basil himself, but to "the most esteemed of those in office and the most wise of the senators," for, "just as men who see vipers and scorpions destroy them before they can inflict a wound . . . so also those who expect danger from poisonous and murderous men hurry to slay them before they themselves can be wounded and destroyed."²⁹ Following the killing of Michael, the biographer tells how Basil was universally acclaimed as sole emperor.³⁰ So, through comparisons, the *Life of Basil* vilifies Michael and exonerates his murderer of the crime.

Other texts, contemporary with Basil's reign, also compare this emperor to David. For example, the patriarch Photius, in a panegyric poem, likens Basil to David for

¹⁹ The exception is the Psalter of Basil II (Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Cod. gr. 17), which will be considered below.

²⁰ *Panegyricus Isaacio Angelo*, 13, ed. T. Tafel (as in n. 18), 30. So also Niketas Choniates relates in his *Historia* that Andronicus "compared his fate to that of David and contended that he, too, had been forced to escape the traps of envy and often migrate to the enemy's country"; ed. Ioannes Aloysius van Dieten (*Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*, xi, 1), Berlin, 1975, 333, and translation by Harry J. Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates*, Detroit, 1984, 184.

²¹ Romilly Jenkins, *Byzantium, the Imperial Centuries, A.D. 610-1071*, London, 1966, 165.

²² See *ibid.*, 166, 195; Cyril Mango, "Eudokia Ingerina, the Normans, and the Macedonian Dynasty," *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta*, xiv/xv, Belgrade, 1973, 17-27, esp. 22-25 (repr. in Cyril Mango, *Byzantium*

and Its Image, London, 1984, no. xv); and Ewald Kislinger, "Eudokia Ingerina, Basileios I. und Michael III.," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, xxxiii, 1983, 119-36.

²³ *Vita Basilii*, 28; *Pat. Grec.*, cix, col. 272.

²⁴ See Mango (as in n. 22), 24-26; and Kislinger (as in n. 22), 133-35.

²⁵ On Constantine's literary models, see R. J. H. Jenkins, "Constantine VII's Portrait of Michael III," *Académie Royale de Belgique, Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres*, 5e série, xxxiv, 1948, 71-77.

²⁶ *Vita Basilii*, 16; *Pat. Grec.*, cix, col. 249.

²⁷ *Vita Basilii*, 24; *Pat. Grec.*, cix, col. 265.

²⁸ *Vita Basilii*, 26; *Pat. Grec.*, cix, col. 268.

²⁹ *Vita Basilii*, 27; *Pat. Grec.*, cix, col. 269.

³⁰ *Vita Basilii*, 28; *Pat. Grec.*, cix, col. 272.

his qualities of sympathy, gentleness, and brotherly love.³¹ If we return to the ivory casket, we can see that, like the biography of Basil, it uses the technique of comparison to explain and justify the relations between one emperor and his predecessor. These relations start well enough, with Saul arranging David's marriage, just as Michael did for Basil (Fig. 5). But then the decay of Saul's character is shown, which is contrasted with David's moral strength in the face of provocation. The sequence of scenes culminates with Saul ordering a massacre (Fig. 2); this is followed by David sparing Saul's life (Fig. 3), a scene that argues that the Byzantine David had no part in his royal precursor's death.

I have indicated how the carvings on the Palazzo Venezia casket match the propaganda associated with the succession to power of Basil I, especially the *Life of Basil*. The details of the fit are extraordinarily close, and they should be taken into account in any attempt to date the casket on the basis of its corrupt and mutilated inscription. But it should also be said that, in a general sense, the iconography of the carvings could have suited any ruler who was a usurper and who gained the throne through the murder of his predecessor; the list of Byzantine emperors holding these qualifications is long.

The Psalter of Basil II

The scenes of the life of David on the casket are selected and arranged according to the standard sequence of imperial encomium: birth, upbringing, deeds, and *acme*. Other works of art also compared the life of David to the lives of individual emperors, but in each case the choice of Davidic scenes might be modified to suit the character and circumstances of the particular ruler concerned. For example, at the beginning of the early eleventh-century Psalter of Basil II in Venice (Biblioteca Marciana, Cod. gr. 17), there are two painted pages: a large portrait of the emperor triumphing over his enemies on fol. IIIr, which is followed by an arrangement of six scenes from the life of David on fol. IVv (Figs. 6 and 7).³² The six scenes are all grouped onto the same page; they show, reading from top left to bottom right, Samuel anointing David, David killing the bear, David killing the lion, David aiming his sling at Goliath, David playing the lyre before Saul when Saul was troubled by the evil spirit (I Kings 16:23), and, finally, David kneel-

ing in penance before Nathan after his adultery with Bathsheba. In the last scene, the face of the older David, with its short round beard, bears a resemblance to the face of Basil on the preceding folio. An angel holds a spear threateningly above the head of David, while the emperor holds his spear above the heads of his foes.

This example of *synkrisis* evidently does not follow the same sequence as the carvings on the casket in the Palazzo Venezia. Neither the birth nor the upbringing of David are shown in the manuscript. Nor does this psalter follow the usual sequence of the Aristocratic Psalters, in which the penitence of David would have been before the battle with Goliath, which usually accompanies the supernumerary psalm. The Psalter of Basil II is unusual in that the triumphal 151st psalm is omitted, and this could explain why the scene of David and Goliath occupies its chronological position and does not come at the end of the series. But the selection and sequence of images that we see here can also be read as a delicate equation between David's life and that of the emperor. The first five scenes of David's biography correspond to the full-page portrait of Basil II in that they signify the emperor's selection by God and his triumph over his enemies. The anointing of David by Samuel matches the crowning of Basil by Christ and by an angel, which is seen at the top of the portrait miniature. The next four scenes in the narrative of David match the defeat of the emperor's opponents, who are depicted groveling in submission under the emperor's feet. According to a common convention of imperial art and panegyric, the emperor's foes could be compared to wild beasts;³³ thus, David's victories over the bear and the lion can be seen as parallel to Basil's triumph over his human adversaries. The scene of David's fight with the foreigner, or Philistine, Goliath refers to the emperor's conquest of external enemies,³⁴ while the playing before Saul evokes the emperor's ability to soothe and evade internal enemies.³⁵

The last of the six scenes, depicting the penitence of David, has an inscription reading: "Here David is censured by the prophet Nathan because of his adultery and his committing murder. But David, repenting, turns away the anger of God." The second sentence evokes another theme of imperial panegyrics, which states that the good emperor overcomes both his own sins and his physical enemies; vic-

³¹ *Pat. Grec.*, cii, col. 584. I am indebted to Professor Anna Kartsonis for this reference.

³² See Anthony Cutler, "The Psalter of Basil II," *Arte veneta*, xxx, 1976, 9-19 and xxxi, 1977, 9-15. Also see *idem*, *The Aristocratic Psalters in Byzantium* (*Bibliothèque des Cahiers Archéologiques*, xii), Paris, 1984, 115-19.

³³ For example, barbarians are compared to tigers in Corippus, *In Laudem Iustini Augusti Minoris*, Bk. iii, line 246, ed. Averil Cameron, London, 1976, 68. This passage is matched by the base of the Barberini Diptych in the Louvre; W. F. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters*, 3rd ed., Mainz, 1976, no. 48. A letter of Theodore Daphnopates, addressed to Romanos II, compares the emperor's barbarian foes to wild beasts; see Théodore Daphnopatès, *Correspondance*, ed.

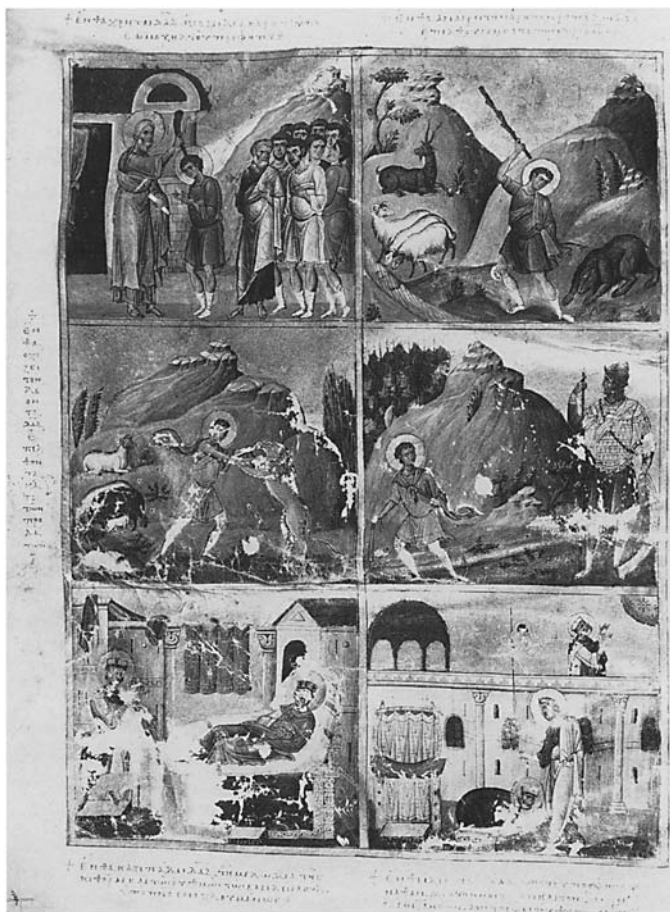
J. Darrouzès and L. G. Westerink, Paris, 1978, 149-53. An imperial lion hunt is shown juxtaposed with a captured town on a Middle Byzantine casket in the Cathedral at Troyes; see Goldschmidt and Weitzmann (as in n. 16), 63, pl. 69a and b. The theme of the imperial hunt receives ironical treatment from Niketas Choniates, in his description of the slaughter of wild beasts portrayed in a palace of Andronicus; see *Historia*, ed. I. A. van Dielen (as in n. 20), 333.

³⁴ The inscription beside the Goliath episode reads: "Here David kills the foreign Goliath with a sling shot"; see Cutler, 1984 (as in n. 32), 117.

³⁵ The inscription reads: "Here David soothes King Saul by the charming melody and rhythm of his lyre when the king is troubled by the [evil] spirit" (*ibid.*).



6 Basil II Overcomes His Enemies. Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Cod. gr. 17, fol. 11r (photo: Osvoldo Böhm)



7 The Life of David. Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Cod. gr. 17, fol. IVv (photo: Foto Toso)

tory over the former ensures victory over the latter.³⁶ This idea of self-control as a condition of imperial success is emphasized in Psellos' biography of Basil II. Psellos says that Basil in his youth led a "dissolute, voluptuous sort of life . . . he often concerned himself with the pleasures of love." However, after the attempted revolts of Sclerus and of Phocas, a complete change took place in the emperor's character. Following the failure of the revolution of Phocas, Basil "did not rejoice at the outcome so much as he felt grief at the terrible condition of his own affairs." As a result of his remorse, from that time onward Basil became more upright. He "abstained from all self-indulgence, . . . he totally abandoned all luxury, and he wholeheartedly attached himself to serious objects."³⁷

In short, the selection of scenes made for the *synkrisis* of Basil II and David in the psalter presents an image of the emperor that is very different from that conveyed by the ivory casket. There is no scene of penance on the box; the massacres of Saul are not shown in the psalter. The images on the ivories conclude with the king's coronation, but the images of the psalter conclude with a threat, a state of tension between the two spears that dangle over the heads of the emperor and of his enemies. But the paintings in the psalter are in harmony with the image of Basil II presented by Psellos in his biography, an image of personal remorse. In court rhetoric, all emperors resembled David, but each individual could find himself reflected in a different aspect of his model's life and character.

The Lives of the Saints

The composition of saints' lives, like secular panegyric, was also deeply influenced by the forms of rhetoric,³⁸ even though some writers were at pains to deny this.³⁹ "The eulogies of other men are contrived of [oratorical] amplifications," said Saint Basil in his encomium of the martyr Gordios, "but when it is a matter of the just, the deeds that they have in truth accomplished suffice to show the excellence of their virtue."⁴⁰ However, Saint Basil did not practice what he preached, for he, like many other writers,

³⁶ For the text, see *ibid.*, 118. On the *topos* in panegyric, see Paul Magdalino, "The Bath of Leo the Wise and the 'Macedonian Renaissance' Revisited: Topography, Iconography, Ceremonial, Ideology," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, xlii, 1988 (forthcoming). One may quote, esp., George of Pisidia on Heraclius: "May he receive double prizes of victory over [his] enemies: may he set up trophies both over his passions and over the barbarians" (*De Expeditione Persica*, iii, line 409f.; *Pat. Grec.*, xcii, col. 1256).

³⁷ *Chronographia*, Bk 1, paras. 4, 18, 22, ed. Émile Renauld, Paris, 1926, 4, 11, 13. Also see Martin Arbagi, "The Celibacy of Basil II," *Byzantine Studies*, ii, 1, 1975, 41-45.

³⁸ See Guignet, esp. 274; Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires*, Brussels, 1921; and Alexander (as in n. 5), esp. 203f.

³⁹ Guignet, 270f., 285.

⁴⁰ *Homilia XVIII, In Gordium Martyrem*; *Pat. Grec.*, xxxi, col. 492. See Méridier, 63.

certainly used rhetorical techniques to sing the praises of the saints.

As in secular encomia, comparisons played a very important role in saints' lives, both in literature and in art. Here it is useful to bear in mind a distinction made by the rhetor Menander, who said that in an encomium there are two different types of comparison. First, there is the *global* comparison, in which a person is compared generally to another. Secondly, there is the comparison of *particulars* according to each division of the encomium, so that, for example, the birth of the subject will be compared to the birth of another, his education to that of someone else, his virtues to those of yet a third person, his deeds to a fourth, and so on.⁴¹ For the latter procedure, the comparison of particulars, the encomium of Saint Basil written by Gregory of Nazianzus is a good example (Basil was the author who had claimed that rhetoric was not necessary in speaking of the just). Saint Basil, says Gregory, was consecrated to God from before his birth, just as Samuel was given to God before his nativity. His virtues were comparable to those of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. In his deeds, he resembled John the Baptist.⁴²

Often, the comparisons in the saints' lives may strike the modern reader as loose, and even somewhat contrived. The tenth-century encomium of Gregory of Nazianzus by Nicetas the Paphlagonian, for example, is bursting with shaky comparisons that range through practically the whole of the Bible. Like Noah, Saint Gregory withstood the flood of the Arian heresy, making the Church his ark. Like Abraham, he entertained the Trinity, but in his mind, not under a tree. Like Joseph, he was a lavish steward; Joseph was a steward of perishable food, while Gregory was a steward of the food that lasts unto eternal life. Like Moses, he was a climber; Moses climbed Mt. Sinai, while Gregory climbed the mountain of theology. Like Job, he was afflicted, but not in the body; the blows of the heretics struck Saint Gregory in his heart. After a great many more such parallels, Nicetas says, in summary, that "the divinity of [Gregory's] character [is] made all the more splendid by the most detailed comparisons."⁴³ Frequently hagiographers compared individual events in the lives of saints to episodes in the life of Christ, sometimes in surprising ways. Nicetas the Paphlagonian, for example, compared Gregory of Nazianzus protecting his flock from the storm of heresy to Christ protecting his disciples from the storm on the Sea of Galilee.⁴⁴ And Gregory of Nazianzus himself compared the triumphal entry of Saint Athanasius into Alexandria to the

entry of Christ into Jerusalem,⁴⁵ while the sixth-century biographer of Eutychius compared this patriarch ascending his throne to Christ ascending to Heaven.⁴⁶

These two forms of comparison in the literary encomia, namely the global comparison and the comparison of particulars, are also present in Byzantine works of art. One example of the global comparison appears in the church of St. George at Staro Nagoričino, Yugoslavia, whose splendid wall paintings were signed in the year 1316 or 1317 by the artists Euthychios and Michael.⁴⁷ The patron saint of the church, Saint George, is commemorated in a prominent series of frescoes, which runs around the nave.⁴⁸ They are set immediately underneath another series of frescoes that depict the Passion and death of Christ, so that the sufferings of Christ and those of his martyr are set in parallel.⁴⁹ The first scene from the trials of Saint George is displayed on the east wall of the nave, to the right of the choir. It shows the saint being interrogated by the emperor Diocletian, who is enthroned among his advisors. In the fresco immediately to the right, Saint George endures the first of his tortures, which is to be pierced by a lance. These two scenes are set under a single panel that shows Jesus instructing his disciples after the Last Supper. The two narratives, of Christ and of Saint George, continue in tandem, running from left to right on the south wall of the nave, underneath the windows (Fig. 8). In the upper register, the sequence is Christ's Agony in the Garden, Judas receiving money from the chief priests to betray Jesus, the Betrayal of Christ by the kiss of Judas, Christ brought before the priest Annas, and Christ brought before the high priest Caiaphas, who is shown tearing at his clothes. In the lower register, the scenes are Saint George bound to a wheel and then being delivered by an angel, Saint Alexandra confessing her faith before the emperor, Saint George being cast into a pit of quicklime, Saint George drinking a cup of poison, Saint George having nails hammered into the soles of his feet, and, finally, Saint George being flogged with an ox-hide whip. The two series continue onto the piers of the west side of the nave, and then onto the north wall of the nave.

On the north wall (Fig. 9), and again reading from left to right (that is, from west to east), the upper register presents the Mocking of Christ, the Road to Calvary, Christ ascending the ladder to the Cross, the Crucifixion itself, and, finally, hidden behind the pillar on the right, Joseph of Arimathea begging Pilate for the body of Christ, so that he can bury it.⁵⁰ In the lower register are Saint George bringing a farmer's ox to life, the saint overturning idols,

⁴¹ L. Spengel, ed. (as in n. 6), 376f. See Méridier, 234f., and Theodore C. Burgess, "Epideictic Literature," *Studies in Classical Philology*, University of Chicago, III, 1902, 89–248, esp. 125.

⁴² *Oratio XLIII*, In *Laudem Basilii Magni*, *Pat. Grec.*, xxxvi, col. 596f.

⁴³ In *Laudem Gregorii Nazianzeni*, 10–20, ed. and transl. James John Rizzo (*Subsidia Hagiographica*, LVIII), Brussels, 1976, 36–64.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 14, ed. J. J. Rizzo (as in n. 43), 46.

⁴⁵ In *Laudem Athanasii*, 29; *Pat. Grec.*, xxxv, col. 1116.

⁴⁶ *Vita Eutychii*, 25; *Pat. Grec.*, LXXXVI, col. 2304.

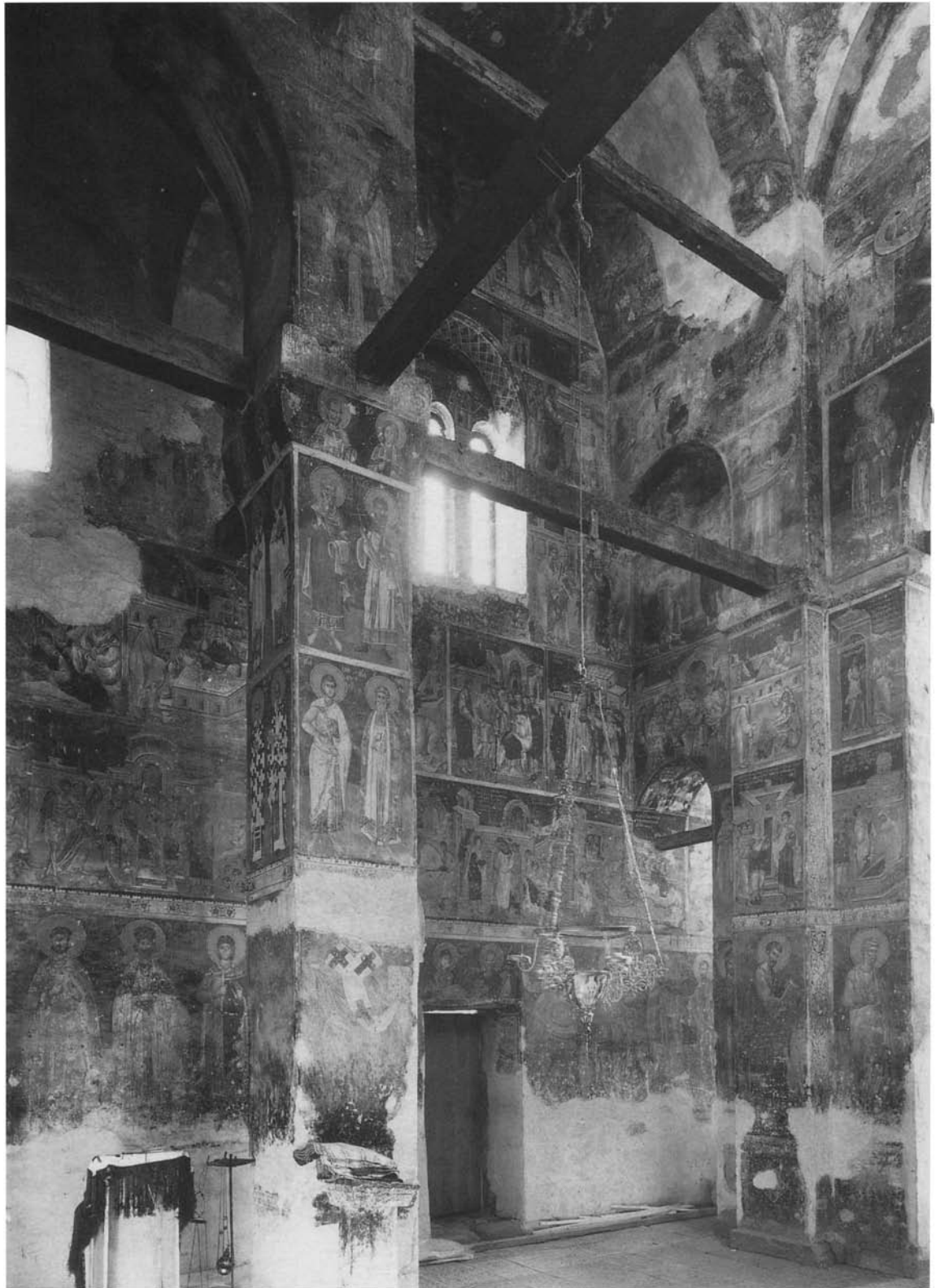
⁴⁷ Richard Hamann-MacLean and Horst Hallensleben, *Die Monumental-*

malerei in Serbien und Makedonien vom 11. bis zum frühen 14. Jahrhundert, Giessen, 1963, 34.

⁴⁸ The frescoes of Saint George are illustrated in Gabriel Millet, *La peinture du moyen âge en Yougoslavie*, III, Paris, 1962, pls. 73–75, 101–04. The individual scenes have been discussed by Temily Mark-Weiner, "Narrative Cycles of the Life of St. George in Byzantine Art," Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1977, 115–258.

⁴⁹ Millet (as in n. 48), pls. 73–75, 85–92.

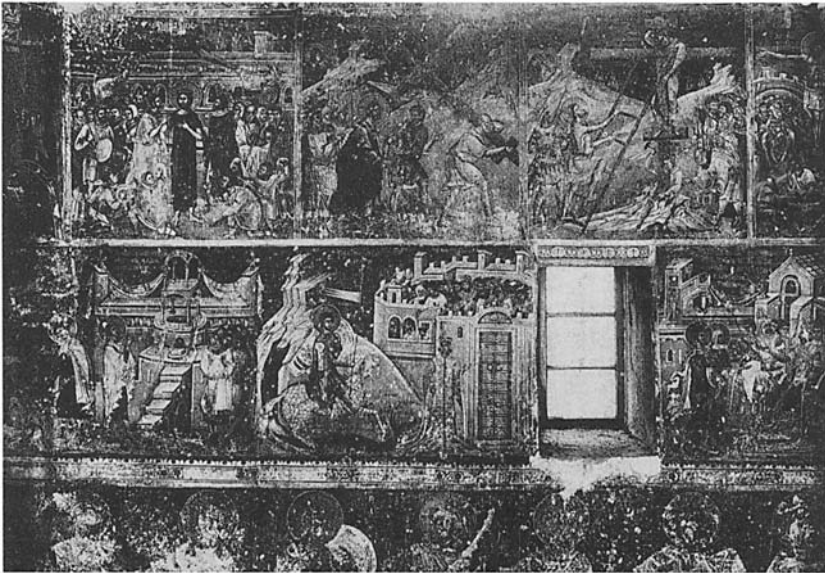
⁵⁰ The last two scenes of Christ's Passion, the Deposition from the Cross and the Burial, are presented on the north wall of the choir; *ibid.*, pl. 93.



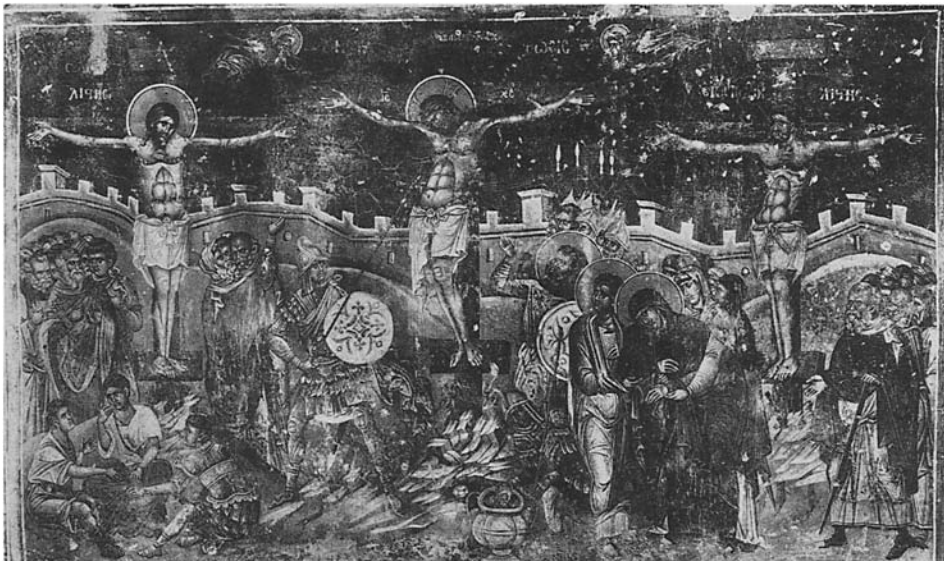
8 Church of St. George,
south wall of nave.
Staro Nagoričino
(photo: Bildarchiv Foto
Marburg)

the triumph over the dragon, the Emperor Diocletian condemning Saints George and Alexandra to death, and, lastly, behind the pillar, the beheading and burial of Saint George, succeeded by the beheading of his followers. There can be little doubt that these two narratives were intentionally juxtaposed by the artists, so that the sufferings of Saint George are meant to be viewed as an imitation of the sacrifice of

Christ. We may note that the designer arranged the episodes so that the climax of the Passion of Saint George, his final execution by beheading (Fig. 11), occurs directly beneath the Crucifixion of Christ (Fig. 10). But, apart from these two scenes of death, there is very little correlation between the individual episodes of the two lives as they are presented. The two *series* run parallel, but the individual



9 Church of St. George, north wall of nave. Staro Nagoričino (from Gabriel Millet, *La peinture du moyen âge en Yougoslavie*, III, Paris, 1962, pl. 75, 1)



10 Crucifixion of Christ, fresco. Staro Nagoričino, Church of St. George (from *ibid.*, pl. 92, 1)



11 Death and Burial of Saint George, fresco. Staro Nagoričino, Church of St. George (photo: Bildarchiv Foto Marburg)

scenes do not match each other either in their formal arrangement, or in the details of their content. This, then, is a global comparison. Saint George is compared to Christ in the general sense that his tortures and death are an imitation of the sufferings of Christ, but the particular details of the two Passions are not compared.

For the second type of comparison distinguished by Menander, the comparison of particulars, other early fourteenth-century frescoes are relevant, for example those in a *parekklesion*, or side chapel, attached to the church of St. Demetrius in Salonika. These frescoes have been perceptively studied by Thalia Gouma-Peterson.⁵¹ The chapel, which takes the form of a small basilica, is dedicated to Saint Euthemius, and, accordingly, seven major deeds of his life are depicted on the north wall. The scenes are set in parallel with miracles of Christ, which are painted on the north spandrels of the nave, between the arches dividing the nave from the north aisle. The two series of paintings are thus arranged so that one can view them together, like the two narratives of Christ and of Saint George at Staro Nagoričino. However, unlike the artists at Staro Nagoričino, the designer of the paintings in the St. Euthemius Chapel tried to create scene-by-scene comparisons between the deeds of Christ and of the saint. As in the written lives of saints, some of the comparisons are more convincing than others; in a few cases, the artist was able to draw striking formal similarities between the scenes, whereas in other cases the similarity can only be found in loose associations of content. On the north wall, for instance, Saint Euthemius is shown baptizing Aspebetos (the leader of some Saracens in Palestine), and subsequently converting his followers. These deeds of the saint are paired with Christ's meeting with the Samaritan woman and with the conversion of the inhabitants of Sychar. In this case, the parallels in content are underlined by formal similarities between the frescoes; Gouma-Peterson notes, for example, that the cross-shaped well of the Samaritan scene and the font of the baptism of Aspebetos are identical.⁵² However, not all of the comparisons are this close. One of the pairs associates Euthemius healing a lunatic with Christ healing the man born blind. Here it can only be said that both scenes show acts of deliverance, one from spiritual and the other from physical darkness.⁵³

In all of these works of art, it has been seen that the comparisons were made explicit; that is to say, the emperor or the saint was juxtaposed with the person to whom he was compared. In some cases, however, artists made the comparison implicit; they did not actually show the person to whom the subject was being compared, but they *evoked* the comparison by means of iconographic quotations. These two procedures, of explicit and implicit comparison,

had precise counterparts in the written biographies of the saints, and also in other forms of Byzantine encomium. Sometimes a writer would spell out a comparison explicitly, but at other times he would merely imply it through quotations. For example, a hagiographer wishing to compare a miracle worked by a saint to a particular miracle worked by Christ might weave a few words from the Gospel text into his description of the saint's deed. Some examples of the implicit method of making comparisons are provided by the life of Saint Nicholas.

A splendid icon of the late twelfth century, in the collection at Mt. Sinai, presents one of the earliest visual narratives of Saint Nicholas that has survived (Fig. 12). In the center of this panel is a large portrait of Saint Nicholas, and around him, like a frame, is a series of small scenes from his life.⁵⁴ This narrative, like the literary lives of Saint Nicholas, starts by following the usual sequence of the rhetorical encomium.⁵⁵ First we see the saint's birth at the upper left (Fig. 13); here both the written biographies and the artist drew attention to the signs that accompanied the nativity, just as Menander had recommended for the encomium of an emperor. In this case, the omen was that during his first bath the baby stood upright on his feet for a period of two hours. He can be seen performing this feat in the painting, much to the amazement of his midwife, who makes a gesture of astonishment with her hands. According to the written texts, the other miracle that attended the birth of the saint was that the baby observed the days of fasting by refusing to drink from his mother's breast more than once a day on Wednesdays and Fridays, but this phenomenon was not illustrated by Byzantine artists.⁵⁶ On the icon, the birth of Saint Nicholas is followed by his education, as in the standard encomium (Fig. 14). In this scene, the young Saint Nicholas is brought by his father to his teacher. Then the icon shows the career of the saint: his consecration first as a priest, then as a bishop, then his deeds, and finally his death.

In the texts, the stages of the life of Saint Nicholas were accompanied, in the approved manner, by comparisons. For example, the nativity of Saint Nicholas was often compared to the nativity of John the Baptist, because Nicholas' mother, Nonna, became sterile after his birth, like Elizabeth after the birth of Saint John. It was, then, appropriate that artists painting the birth of Nicholas should quote the birth of John the Baptist.⁵⁷ For example, it is possible to compare the Nativity of John as shown in the border of an approximately contemporary icon at Mount Sinai (Figs. 15 and 16).⁵⁸ In each painting there is an architectural backdrop of walls and rectangular windows (Figs. 13 and 16); the mother reclines on a bed, with her head and shoulders propped up on the left, while a woman stands at the foot of the bed

⁵¹ Thalia Gouma-Peterson, "Christ as Ministrant and the Priest as Ministrant of Christ in a Palaeologan Program of 1303," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, xxxii, 1978, 199-216.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 214, figs. 21, 27.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 214, figs. 24, 28.

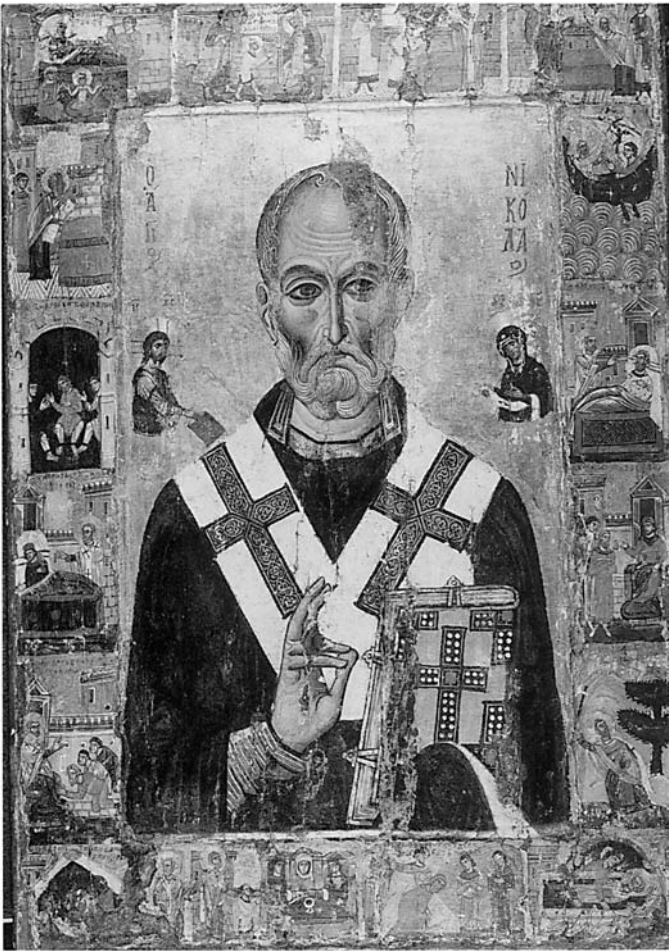
⁵⁴ Ševčenko, 29f., figs. 3.0-3.16.

⁵⁵ On the relationship to rhetoric, see Konrad Onasch, *Die Ikonenmalerei, Grundzüge einer systematischen Darstellung*, Leipzig, 1967, 152-154.

⁵⁶ Ševčenko, 67f.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 68, and esp. n. 8.

⁵⁸ G. and M. Sotiriou, *Icones du Mont Sinai*, Athens, 1956, I, pl. 168; and II, 154.



12 *Saint Nicholas and Scenes from His Life*, icon. Mt. Sinai, Monastery (courtesy Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mt. Sinai)

on the right. Whether it be Nicholas or John, the nativities are very similar. The same formulae can be found repeated in the birth scenes of other saints in Byzantine art, especially the Virgin Mary. To modern viewers, this similarity between the illustrations of different saints may look like a failure of artistic invention. But, as noted earlier, neither Byzantine writers nor artists had much interest in invention and originality for their own sakes. To the contrary, the habit of comparison conditioned both artists and viewers to accept standard iconographic patterns for various episodes in the lives of saints.⁵⁹ What to modern eyes may appear as monotony, to Byzantine eyes was a reiteration of comparable glories.

Another episode from the life of Saint Nicholas that involves comparison is his deed of the calming of a storm. According to the legends, he set out by ship to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. But after the ship had reached open sea, the Devil tried to sink it by raising a violent tempest. The terrified sailors turned to the saint for help,



13 *Birth of Saint Nicholas*, detail of Fig. 12 (courtesy Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mt. Sinai)



14 *Schooling of Saint Nicholas*, detail of Fig. 12 (courtesy Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mt. Sinai)

whereupon he prayed and was able to calm the sea.⁶⁰ There was an obvious parallel between this story and Christ's miracle, and the biographers of Nicholas did not fail to make it, either explicitly, or implicitly by incorporating into their narratives several words quoted from the Gospel descriptions of Christ stilling the waves.⁶¹ Artists likewise based their telling of the miracle worked by Saint Nicholas on the iconography of Christ calming the storm, so that they made the one scene a quotation from the other. Nancy P. Ševčenko has shown that, as the iconography of Christ's miracle slowly evolved, so did the depiction of Saint Nicholas's miracle, indicating that the artists kept the comparison up-to-date.⁶²

Images of Censure

Censure is the opposite of encomium. Nonetheless, the procedures employed in censure were essentially the same as those of encomium, except that the purpose, of course, was to blacken the subject, not to praise him. As in en-

⁵⁹ Also see the remarks of Ševčenko, 155.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁶¹ An explicit comparison is made in the *Vita S. Nicolai* of Symeon Metaphrastes (*Pat. Grec.*, cxvi, col. 352). For the implicit comparison (by

quotation), see, e.g., the *Vita Nicolai Sionitae*, 30 (ed. Gustav Anrich, *Hagios Nikolaos. Der heilige Nikolaus in der griechischen Kirche*, 1, Leipzig, 1913, 25–26), and the *Vita Lycio-Alexandrina*, 6 (*ibid.*, 304).

⁶² Ševčenko, 101, and n. 12.



15 *Saint John the Baptist and Scenes from His Life*, icon. Mt. Sinai, Monastery (courtesy Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mt. Sinai)

comium, comparisons played an important role.

One of the most famous images from Byzantine art is the depiction of iconoclasts on fol. 67r of the ninth-century Chludov Psalter, now in Moscow (Fig. 17).⁶³ This highly polemical miniature illustrates Psalm 68:21: "They gave me poison for food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." At the bottom of the page two iconoclasts have just dipped a sponge on the end of a long pole into a vase of whitewash, and are now using it to obliterate the face of Christ on an icon. Their long and bristling hair implies a comparison with devils, who were often shown with such a coiffure in Byzantine art. The painting above makes an explicit comparison between the iconoclasts and the crucifiers of Christ; note, especially, Stephaton, who also holds



16 *Birth of Saint John the Baptist*, detail of Fig. 15 (courtesy Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mt. Sinai)

the sponge (soaked in vinegar) up to Christ's face. As André Grabar was first to point out, the same comparison was made in literary polemics against the iconoclasts.⁶⁴ On the following page of the psalter are other comparisons (Fig. 18). At the bottom, a simoniac bishop, whom the legends identify as an iconoclast, is ordaining two men who offer him bulging bags of money. In his left hand, the wicked bishop holds a dish full of coins, instead of the attribute that an orthodox bishop should have, which would be a book.⁶⁵ Behind the iconoclast's back, his actions are echoed by a shadowy devil with long bristling hair, who is labeled "the money-loving demon." Above this scene, the artist painted the soldiers who were bribed by the elders and the chief priests to lie about the Resurrection of Christ. Like the simoniac bishop, one of the soldiers cradles a bowl full of ill-gotten coins.

A second example of the techniques of censure concerns a pair of juxtaposed frescoes of the mid-fourteenth century at the monastery of Dečani in Yugoslavia (Figs. 19 and 20). The paired paintings, the Nativity of Christ above, and the Raising of Lazarus below, are part of a cycle of scenes from the life of Christ on the four walls beneath the central dome of the church.⁶⁶ The many visual parallels between the two scenes are best described in the words of a popular sermon by Andrew of Crete, which was composed in the late seventh or eighth century, but which was well known to many later Byzantine churchgoers through its repetition in the liturgy.⁶⁷ In the sermon, which is principally devoted to the Entry into Jerusalem, Andrew of Crete attacks the Jews, and, true to the theory of censure, he uses a series of comparisons to prove their lack of understanding. Among these comparisons is a detailed pairing of the Nativity of Christ and the Raising of Lazarus. Both events, says Andrew of

⁶³ Moscow, State History Museum, Cod. 129D. Facsimile: M. V. Scepkina, *Miniatjuri i Hludovskoj Psalt'iri*, Moscow, 1977.

⁶⁴ André Grabar, *L'iconoclisme byzantin, le dossier archéologique*, Paris, 1957, 149.

⁶⁵ See Christopher Walter, "Pictures of the Clergy in the Theodore Psalter," *Revue des études byzantines*, xxxi, 1973, 229-42, esp. 241.

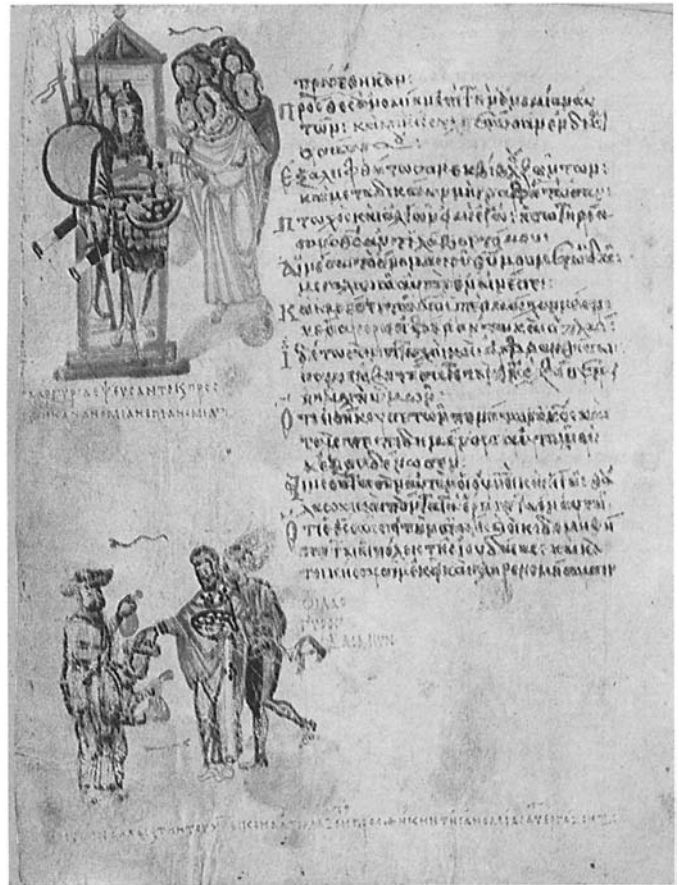
⁶⁶ See V. Petković and Đ. Bošković, *Manastir Dečani*, Belgrade, 1941,

pls. 172, 176; and Vojislav J. Đurić, *Byzantinische Fresken in Jugoslawien*, Munich, 1976, 79-82.

⁶⁷ In *Ramos Palmarum*, *Pat. Grec.*, xcvi, cols. 985-1017. Numerous manuscripts, dating from the 9th to the 16th centuries, reproduce this sermon as a reading for Palm Sunday; see A. Ehrhard, *Überlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen und homiletischen Literatur der griechischen Kirche*, Pt. I, Vol. I, Leipzig, 1937, 176, 188, 262, 272; Vol. II, 1938, 15, 77, 99, 128, 278; Vol. III, 1943, 266.



17 *Iconoclasts and Crucifiers of Christ*. Moscow, State History Museum, Cod. 129D, fol. 67r (from M. V. Ščepkina, *Miniatur'i Hudoovskoj Psalt'iri*, Moscow, 1977)



18 *Simoniac Bishop and Chief Priests Bribing the Guards of Christ's Tomb*. Moscow, State History Museum, Cod. 129D, fol. 67v (from *ibid.*)

Crete, demonstrated the blindness of the Jews:

Just look how related and how congruent are these events [that is, the Nativity and the Raising of Lazarus]. There we have Bethlehem, here we have Bethany. Then we had Maria and Salome [the midwives], now we have Maria and Martha [the sisters of Lazarus]. There we have Christ wrapped up in his swaddling clothes, here we have Lazarus received in his winding cloth. There is the crib; here is the tomb. You can see the resemblance of the settings and of the people. When Christ was born, Herod was confused and Jerusalem was confounded; and when Christ worked a miracle in Bethany and raised Lazarus, Jerusalem was thrown into disorder and the Pharisees stirred up the crowds. There the shepherds marvelled, here the priests mocked. There the Magi brought presents and fell before Him, here the people who fight God

were angry against Him.⁶⁸

Plainly, the artist who painted the frescoes was thinking along the same lines as the preacher. Compare, for example, the child and the corpse in their respective caves, and especially the distinctive striped decoration of their windings, which is identical in each scene. I do not wish to propose, however, that the artist at Dečani was directly inspired by the sermon by Andrew of Crete, for we can find many earlier works of Byzantine art that draw such comparisons between the birth of Christ and the resurrection of Lazarus.⁶⁹ What I would like to suggest is that both works of art — the sermon and the frescoes — reveal the same approach to narrative, that is to say, the tendency to compare.

This look at the lives of saints and of sinners as they were depicted in Byzantine art has shown that just as writ-

⁶⁸ In *Ramos Palmarum*, *Pat. Grec.*, xcvi, col. 989.

⁶⁹ For the comparison of caves, windings, crib, and sarcophagus, see, e.g., the juxtaposed portrayals of the Nativity and of the Raising of Lazarus on the left-hand leaf of an 11th-century diptych of the twelve feasts at

Mt. Sinai (Sotirou [as in n. 58], I, pls. 39, 41, and II, 52), or the same two scenes on the left-hand leaf of the early 14th-century mosaic icon of the twelve feasts in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Florence (David Talbot Rice, *The Art of Byzantium*, New York, 1959, pl. 36).



19 *The Raising of Lazarus and the Nativity of Christ*, frescoes. Dečani, Monastery Church (from V. Petković and Đ. Bošković, *Manastir Dečani*, Belgrade, 1941, pl. 176)



20 *The Nativity of Christ*, fresco. Dečani, Monastery Church (from *ibid.*, pl. 172)

ten biographies were often composed according to the theories of encomium and of censure, so also did visual lives reflect the same patterns of rhetorical thinking. In their perception of narratives, the Byzantines were deeply influenced by the habits of composition that they had acquired in the schoolroom. Hence, in conclusion, it seems appropriate to refer again to the painting of the education of Saint Nicholas in the icon at Mount Sinai (Fig. 14). In that scene

the young saint eagerly runs from his father to his teacher — the first day in school of a model pupil. Already Saint Nicholas is imitating his teacher, in the gesture of his raised right hand. If it is true that the child is father of the man, then it is here, in the Byzantine classroom where rhetoric was taught, that we should look for the theories of narrative that Byzantine painters and their educated patrons made concrete in their art.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ On the respective roles of artist and patron in the creation of visual rhetoric, see Maguire (as in n. 3), 5–8.

In addition to several articles on Byzantine and Western medieval subjects, Henry Maguire has written two books: Art and Eloquence in Byzantium, 1981, and Earth and Ocean: The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art, which has just appeared in the Monograph Series of the College Art Association. [School of Art and Design, 143 Art and Design Building, 408 E. Peabody Dr., University of Illinois, Champaign, IL 61820]

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