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A BYZANTINE PLAN FOR THE FOURTH CRUSADE

By CHARLES M. BRAND

I. INTRODUCTION

ON 6 January 1204 Nicephorus Chrysoberges purportedly delivered an oration to the Emperor Alexius IV; the text was published in 1892, but appears not to have been utilized by students of the Fourth Crusade. Because of its rhetorical nature, the speech offers no new facts regarding the crusaders' capture of Constantinople in 1203, but it does present the views of a faction within the court and the city. Chrysoberges' speech is also the only surviving Byzantine literary text produced during the crusade's course; a translation and analysis would therefore seem useful to scholars.¹

To comprehend the orator, relations between the Byzantines and the crusading army in 1203 must be briefly examined. Acting in support of the deposed Isaac II's son Prince Alexius, the French and Venetian crusaders attacked Constantinople in July 1203, causing the Emperor Alexius III to take flight. Isaac II was hastily brought out of prison and restored to the throne; Prince Alexius was welcomed to the city and presently crowned co-emperor. Forced to ratify his son's agreement with the crusaders, Isaac consented to pay them two hundred thousand silver marks, accept papal supremacy over the Byzantine church, and send troops to Palestine. Isaac himself was blind and prematurely aged; by the end of the year he seems to have lost his reason and ceased to have more than an honorary share in the government. His son Alexius IV, young and reckless, cared chiefly for dicing and carousing with his former comrades, the crusaders. Isaac and Alexius enjoyed little support: in the capital they depended on the crusaders, while in Thrace Alexius III soon levied forces to oppose them.²

The two emperors were at first eager to fulfill their various obligations to the "Latins," in order to rid the empire of them. Isaac gave them all the money in the treasury and seized the property of aristocrats and rich citizens, but little more than half the debt was paid. He and his son thereupon turned to the

¹ The text of the oration, of which a translation is given below, is in Nicephorus Chrysoberges, *Nicephori Chrysobergae Ad Angelos orationes tres*, ed. Maximilian Treu, CXXVII. Programm des Königl. Friedrichs-Gymnasiums zu Breslau, 1892 (Breslau, 1892), pp. 24-35. None of the standard works on the crusades or the Fourth Crusade refer to this oration, although Edgar H. McNeal and Robert L. Wolff, "The Fourth Crusade," in R. L. Wolff and Harry W. Hazard, ed., *The Later Crusades, 1189-1311* (Kenneth M. Setton, ed., *A History of the Crusades*, II) (Philadelphia, 1962), 181 n. 62, cite Chrysoberges' first oration to Alexius III à propos Mountzouphlos' role in John Comnenus' revolt, 1201.

² The principal sources for this and subsequent paragraphs are well known: Nicetas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. Immanuel Bekker, *Corpus scriptorum historiae byzantinae* (Bonn, 1835), pp. 727-747; Geoffroi de Villehardouin, *La conquête de Constantinople*, ed. Edmond Faral, 2 vols., *Les classiques de l'histoire de France au Moyen Age*, Nos. 18-19 (Paris, 1938-1939), I, 184-II, 22; Robert de Clari, *La conquête de Constantinople*, ed. Philippe Lauer, *Les classiques français du Moyen Age*, No. 40 (Paris, 1924), pp. 52-61. See the article by McNeal and Wolff, cited above, the most recent account, and the fully annotated Chapter 12 of my book, *Byzantium Confronts the West, 1180-1204* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968).

churches and melted down many of their adornments to fill the crusaders' pockets. On 25 August Alexius and the patriarch also sent their formal submissions to the pope, but made no attempt to enforce union on the eastern church. While, from mid-August to 11 November, Alexius IV was on an expedition to drive Alexius III from Thrace, serious popular disturbances broke out in Constantinople. The crusaders were in camp at Estanor, north of the Golden Horn, but on 19 August the mob turned on the Pisan colony in Constantinople to massacre and pillage its wealthy inhabitants. The Pisans fled to the crusaders, and a few days later a band of Pisans and Franks attacked, under pretext of destroying a mosque, and started a fire which swept across the city. Despite this outbreak, Isaac seemingly made peace, but he suspended payment on the debt. When Alexius IV returned, he offered a few more installments, then requested a moratorium. The crusade's leaders, Doge Dandolo and Boniface of Montferrat, were enraged by this double-dealing.

While Isaac's authority and mental powers waned, Alexius fell under the influence of a faction of the aristocracy, survivors of the fallen regime, who remained secretly hostile to the Latins. About the beginning of December individual Latin sight-seers were attacked and murdered in Constantinople. As no response was forthcoming from the crusade leaders, parties of Byzantines raided the crusader camp and fought western foragers whenever they encountered them. Alexius Dukas, called Mourtzouphlos, the leader of the anti-Latin faction in court, conducted many of these forays. In mid-December envoys from the crusaders demanded satisfaction from Alexius IV; he refused further payments and commanded the expedition to depart. With this public defiance, the conflict began in earnest. On 27 December the Latins crossed the harbor and attacked Byzantine merchant vessels in the port, sinking many. Enraged, the Byzantines prepared a fleet of fire-ships and during the night of 1 January 1204 launched them against the Venetian and Pisan vessels anchored at Estanor. Only the excellent seamanship of the Italians preserved their fleet with the loss of but a single ship. For their own ends, Mourtzouphlos and the group opposed to the Latins (aristocrats and impoverished inhabitants of Constantinople) had caused the renewal of the struggle.

Against this background of rising tensions, Nicephorus Chrysoberges composed his eulogy of Alexius IV. Sprung from a family of bureaucrats, Chrysoberges attained the position of Master of the Orators during the latter part of Alexius III's reign. As one of the four professors in the patriarchal school, he taught secular literature and delivered appropriate ceremonial orations. Thus, he addressed Alexius III in September 1201 and again early in 1202, and the Patriarch John X Kamateros on 5 November 1202. The change of regime did not unseat him, and he lauded the youthful Alexius IV as willingly as he had his predecessor. Chrysoberges later became metropolitan of Sardis, in succession to his uncle Theodore Galenos, and is attested in this capacity in 1213.³

³ The best survey of Nicephorus Chrysoberges' career is Robert Browning, "The Patriarchal School at Constantinople in the Twelfth Century," *Byzantion*, xxxii (1962), 184-186 (see *ibid.*, 167-180, for an excellent introduction to the Patriarchal School); Treu, *Ad Angelos*, pp. 36-42, offers a very

Treu, who published his principal speeches, dismisses Chrysoberges as "... numbered in that foul herd of Byzantine orators, of whom to know one is to know all."⁴ His elaborate circumlocutions, strained imagery, and erudite vocabulary are singularly unattractive to the modern reader, but to Chrysoberges' contemporaries they were marks of excellence. The delivery of an oration to the emperor was an important event in a rhetorician's career, one which challenged him to elevate his genius to the cloudiest peaks of verbiage. Such eulogies, products of a millennial tradition, followed established patterns. The emperor must be praised, lavishly and at length, and truth was merely the starting point for the orator's flights of fancy. But the speaker could select his own themes, and herein lay his opportunity to inculcate his ideas into the emperor's ear. Imperial characteristics and policies favored by the speaker could be accorded excessive emphasis, past successes exaggerated, and apposite deeds of the ancients recalled. Since the orator could not risk imperial displeasure, his suggestions had to be conveyed in a swirl of words and images. Such is the nature of this speech of Nicephorus Chrysoberges to Alexius IV.⁵

diffuse note; other publications of Chrysoberges' works include: F. Widmann, ed., "Die Progymnasmatata des Nikephoros Chrysoberges," *Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher*, xii (1935-36), 12-25, which supersedes J. R. Asmus, "Die Ethopöie des Nikephoros Chrysoberges über Julians Rhetorendikt," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, xv (1906), 125-136; Silvio Giuseppe Mercati, ed., "Poesie giambiche di Niceforo Chrysoberges, Metropoli di Sardi," *Miscellanea G. Galbiati*, II (Fontes Ambrosiani, XXV/XXVII [Milan, 1951]), 253-268. For Chrysoberges' signature to the *Συνοδικὸν γράμμα* of 1213, see the text of that document in *Vizantijskij Vremennik*, IV (1897), 166. Brief notes on Chrysoberges are in Karl Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinische Litteratur von Justinian bis zum Ende des oströmischen Reiches (527-1453)*, 2nd ed., Handbuch der klassischen Altertums-Wissenschaft, Band IX, Abt. 1 (Munich, 1897), p. 470; Gyula Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, 2nd ed., Berliner byzantinistische Arbeiten, Bd. 10 (Berlin, 1958), I, 450. Ivan Duichev, "Prouchvaniâ vŭrkhu bŭlgarskoto srednovekovie," *Sbornik na bŭlgarskata akademiâ na naukite*, xli (1945-1949), 91-110, discusses Chrysoberges' second oration to Alexius III. Browning's list of Chrysoberges' works ("Patriarchal School," pp. 184-185) represents an improvement over Treu's, especially in the reading of "5 November" for the "Indiction 5" of Treu, but Browning has listed the third oration in Treu's edition (translated below) as being addressed to Alexius III in 1203 and cites incorrectly the page numbers of Treu's edition ("14-25" instead of "24-35," probably a printer's error). On Chrysoberges' family, see Treu, *Ad Angelos*, pp. 37-39; Nikos A. Bees, "Ἀέων-Μανουὴλ Μακρός, Ἐπίσκοπος Βελλῆς. Καλοσπίτης, Μητροπολίτης Δαρδανίου. Χρυσοβέργης, Μητροπολίτης Κορίνθου," *Ἐπετηρίς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν*, II (1925), 143-145; and Mercati, "Poesie giambiche," pp. 253-255, especially on Chrysoberges' connection with Theodore Galenos, Metropolitan of Sardis.

⁴ Treu, *Ad Angelos*, p. 41; Mercati, "Poesie giambiche," p. 261, has a higher opinion, deeming Chrysoberges "a man of talent and culture."

⁵ Many orations to emperors (especially of the late 12th century) are in W. Regel, ed., *Fontes rerum byzantinorum*, I (Petrograd, 1892-1917); see also the orations by Nicetas Choniates published in *Recueil des historiens des Croisades, Historiens grecs*, II (Paris, 1881), 459-460, 496-502, 615-619, 737-741, and in K. N. Sathas, ed., *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη*, I (Venice, 1872). Outstanding examples of an orator urging particular policies in the guise of eulogy are the speeches of Michael Choniates in Spyridon P. Lampros, ed., *Μιχαὴλ Ἀκομινάτου τοῦ Χωριάτου τὰ σωζόμενα: τὰ πλεῖστα ἐκδιδόμενα νῦν τὸ πρῶτον κατὰ τοὺς ἐν Φλωρεντίᾳ Ὁξωνίῳ, Παρισίοις καὶ Βιέννῃ κώδικας*, I (Athens, 1879), especially those to Nicephorus Prosouchos, Demetrius Drimys, Isaac II, and Michael Stryphnos. Among recent works on Byzantine rhetoric in this period are Peter Wirth, *Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen Rhetorik des zwölften Jahrhunderts mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Schriften des Erzbischofs Eustathios von*

II. TRANSLATION

/24/ * The same author's speech to the Emperor Lord Alexius Angelus, son of the glorious Emperor Lord Isaac Angelus; read, as is custom for the orators, in the palace of Blachernai at the Feast of the Holy Theophany [i.e., Epiphany] in the month of January, indiction 7, year 6712 [6 January 1204]: —

* Excellent things, even thus, have been told by historians: but today by exposition I will make clear to the emperor a story. A certain polished statue had been artistically shaped to beauty: the shape was that of Orpheus the composer, but the carving was in cypress-wood. That then was the cypress statue of Orpheus. When Alexander, once great among kings, approached it in his course, it was heated to portentous life and forthwith ran much sweat and was a marvel for the spectators.⁶ But wisely considering, the onlookers said that King Alexander's great deeds were the cause of the wonder: for it signified that these deeds would afford much sweat to poets and chroniclers, and when occasion demanded they set to to celebrate them.

Emperor, doer of great deeds, bearer of a name derived for a boast from Alexander, competitor with Alexander in prosperity: today I am your counterfeit orator and really a lifeless image of ancient rhetoric. But when you only appeared an abundant perspiration poured over me and anguish straightway overcame the first openings of my mouth. For truly there is much sweat and labor for all chroniclers and all oratorical lips that wish to sing your praises. Where is the moral Xenophon? He would describe your ascent [Anabasis] and restoration /25/ to the imperial throne. He would extol the venerableness in youth and the manliness in the boy and review your sudden changes and your passages [abroad] with good fortune and elaborate for you the roads. Where is the historian Thucydides? In dignified modes he would divide your sea-fights and cavalry battles.

Now there is this one thing best of all, that from a good emperor has sprung you as emperor, from a beneficent, a beneficent; but more than this, even the most excellent ruling among good things, through which he [Isaac II] was restored to the empire by God, continual mercy and faith, according to the word of Solomon in Proverbs,⁷ never ceasing have been measured out to him. How often with pity's golden rain, as told of the Rhodians' isle,⁸ has He watered this

Thessalonike, dissertation, Munich (Munich, 1960), and two articles by Franz Grabler: "Das Zitat als Stilkunstmittel bei Niketas Choniates," *Actes du XI. Internationalen Byzantinistenkongresses: München 1958* (Munich, 1960), 190–193, and "Niketas Choniates als Redner," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen byzantinischen Gesellschaft*, XI/XII (1962/63), 57–78.

The following translation is from Treu's edition, pp. 24–35, and these page numbers appear within the text. A literal rendering having been my purpose, the English is extremely clumsy. I am deeply indebted to two members of Bryn Mawr's Greek Department, Prof. Lang (who examined a short passage for me) and Prof. Lattimore (who worked on the concluding paragraphs, the most difficult part of the text, for me). On p. 32, line 21, I have read *διασχίζων* for Treu's *διεχίζων*; and Prof. Lattimore has pronounced p. 34, lines 19–20, "*καὶ τῇ παθεῖν κινδυνεύου σου τὸ ἐκδικον*," ungrammatical and evidently corrupt, so this phrase has been omitted.

⁶ Plutarch *Alexander* 14, and Arrian *Anabasis Alexandri*, I, 11. (Wording closer to Plutarch.)

⁷ Proverbs iii 3.

⁸ Pindar *Olymp.* 7, 63; Strabo, xiv, 10.

greatest peninsula [Byzantium]; therefore you hold the empire, O mighty one, not as the gift of time or chance, but as an acquisition of orderly succession and a thoroughly just tribute of nature. You yourself have received everything befitting kings by two ways: partly from natural cleverness, partly from kingly education, such that you enter in palaces as a great eaglet fluttering with the great eagle your father and tearing apart the chicks of another breed.

Again, because youth and grey old age are established together in this state: for with us manhood has not altogether altered the boy, nor, measured by very long years, has it marked pleasant down upon your cheeks; but flight to foreign cities and the long collection of military experience there has stuffed your head with venerable age allowed by intelligence and has wonderfully cooled it.

We receive you, emperor, worthy to be revered for two such attributes, which, marvelously united in you, afford much matter for historical orators. For you are seated among rulers not on account of soft living or from daintiness as is most often the case for a newcomer to the throne, but having traveled many roads, having encountered long soul-burnings, having fired your hands like iron for war and having been hardened to a double edge, you arrived from there tempered and strong with a cargo of prudence, /26/ having gathered a great amount from many human cities, as is customary in the merchant's course. Well then: How many dainty feet from youth have rubbed on so many rugged and uneven roads. But the manner was not inconsistent. For just as we know that those skilled in leaping first run some way back, so as to spring from there with more violent jumps and vigorously overleap everything stretched below, in the same manner you yourself, master, having first withdrawn back to the European regions as if out of the hippodrome, thus returning from there having been more vehemently stirred and rendered nimble, you mounted aloft up to the empire's throne, so that not only that Caesar, the many-victoried one in the history books, reporting the speed of the victory at Pontus and in a letter abridging the sharpness in three common words: I came, saw, conquered,⁹ but you also, emperor, summarizing that rapid victory of yours by a brief borrowing and similar expression, might say: I came, saw, conquered: partly escaping fortunately abroad, partly more fortunately coming home, partly again since victory has run with you.

Clearly that is no ignoble mark of your prosperity: for when the Italians cast off your servile bonds and agreed to support you, the voyage was smooth and the track of merchant ships easy for them; for how often have their cargo ships and naval triremes undertaken voyages hither for them; but because they were not burdened with gentleness like you, emperor, quickly stricken in the stern, they shamefully turned back. How often has he who presides with much arrogance over Aquileia [i.e., the Doge of Venice] blackened his oared boats and ships with caulking pitch and, having crossed the Ionian Sea and weathered Cape Malea, dashed his oars in naval fashion on our own seas. But because he was not then serving the Lord Christ for your sake, with all speed he was repulsed and crushed

⁹ Plutarch *Caesar* 50.

on the deeps and the shallows. But since you, the mighty one, approved in lordly fashion all the Latin ships, and /27/ they undertook to furnish services to you, running in calm, they cut the unmoved tide. And that which has been related about halcyons: that these are creatures who conduct their mode of life on wings and bring forth their young at sea, but, until they give birth, the loud-roaring sea remains at peace and they dwell on serene and playful waters — even thus it was possible for the by-standers directly to observe in your naval approach. One might correctly call those the halcyon-breeding days, in which you were brought back by sea facing toward their [the days'] gleaming and splendor [the East]. Bathing her hull in the waters, the well-benched trireme bore you on, while the other many-benched ships followed and attended like serving girls to a mistress. The sea then smiled and was smooth and really threw back watery arms and, one might say, speedily “parted with delight.”¹⁰ On every hand from the depths, as the poet says,¹¹ leapt up dolphins and sea creatures; they could not but quickly recognize you the king. And at the stern the winds, imitating soft trumpets, gently guided the bow forward with light breezes.

Making known your greatness by these things, O emperor, you are able to draw forth the foreign-tongued Italians: for you will instruct them, with wisdom, that land and sea knew to yield to them only when they determined to fight alongside you, the God-chosen emperor, and to arm themselves out of obedience to the laws, and you will counsel them to be bold only when they serve so great an emperor of the Romans. For Caesar himself — as I will reveal the story¹² to my history-loving emperor —, when victoriously he crossed to Brundisium [from Apollonia, 48 B.C.], trusting to a ferry-boat of the common people he set out across the sea. But when the flow of the tide turned and the wave-crest of the sea grew wild, leaping up he encouraged the steersman, who was turning back, with a short word: “Take courage, fair sir,” he said: “you carry Caesar and Caesar’s fortune afloat.” By this speech he again raised great eagerness afforded to the pilot from awe. Except in so far as you will here more strongly suppress his pride from your speech, having declared that their success was not on their account, but that it was especially for your sake, since God promised authority to you. /28/ Then they followed, and their fleet was assembled, wherewith they carried the emperor who was being restored and floating with him the fortune of so great an emperor.

For such designs as these you, the mighty one, will transform the passion swelling in them into subjection — for once for all God, having approved the judgment to glorify you again, whereby you previously brought their pride to serve you with a fleet, [He] assembled from every side obedient servants of all nations for you, so let them not blow their cheeks out against us, like Olympic victors, but as your servants of empire do you restrain their eye from these things. Just because they conveyed you, emperor, who have come hither by God’s will, let them not grow wanton, but because they, restoring the lord emperor, have fulfilled

¹⁰ Homer *Iliad* xiii 29.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 27–28.

¹² Plutarch *Caesar* 38.

servants' roles, let them be bent to servile laws. For just as birds once showed the road to Alexander the Great journeying in Libya's sand,¹³ and cleaving the sea of air with wings like oars they served as opportune guides for his procession, summoning the wanderer with cries, correcting anyone confused by excessive turns, flying ahead of anyone going onward, waiting on a loiterer, in all respects, as if guided by speech and reason, serving his journey. But they were still nothing else than very thoughtful birds, and so, having served the emperor, they were ready to fly to somewhere unknown. Why elaborate too much on my outdoor stories? Let Solomon from our own court stand beside me and observe for you the sun: "It travels," he says,¹⁴ "to the south, circling it comes round to the north." We know that you have run hither and thither in such opposed courses; fleeing from here to that southern part of Europe, you returned from there with splendid radiance to this, our north. Thus having exchanged the western Adriatic for our Thracian Propontus you have risen as if from retreat. For they verily declare that you have even been washed in ocean's streams, so that you shine brightly there where you bathed your splendor, just as they have observed the day-star when they see it sinking westward /29/ into the sea. Thus an orator might speak, narrating the tale for amusement from old legends. But I myself, keeping silence about the miraculous ocean, labor to describe your passage rather as if from some kindred place, the modern Jordan. You came, you appeared divine-seeming from the waters, as the Lord made flesh was revealed from Jordan's streams. Paying attention to the west, you, the morning star, have set; you have risen announcing your enthronement. And if from there you gather many vapors (by vapors I mean the foreign regiments), we all see in this the sun's proper activity. For just as the sun first mounting the horizon and being ready graciously to smile draws up from the water into the air steamy and smoky vapors, it then sends them back with its far-shooting beams and thins what has been scattered. As the light-bringing luminary ascends, the mist is thinned, and as it shines with beams at steeper angles, the rays are cut off, and as it smiled down from higher up, the upraised overshadowing fog was dissipated. This we trust, master, and expect from you, our luminary. For shooting at the right moment your far-striking rays, you will thin out the vaporous foreign-bred hordes and reduce them to insignificance; and as you pay more regard to the empire, so they will diminish into non-existence. Indeed we have observed you, emperor, as bent to cheerfulness and roused to manliness, such two-fold and opposed excellences, as if you embraced the imperial state of the Romans with two hands; you extend cheerfulness as if it were your right hand, meanwhile not showing the manly rage in your bosom; with such a right hand you wish first to repay the avengers. Even thus the lion, kingly among beasts, when he extends his right paw, draws back the left by unbreakable natural reaction. If they [the crusaders] were provided for by your right hand, they would be acknowledged to be most excellent by you and would be enrolled among your servants. Otherwise they made trial of your opposed left hand and you inflicted your kingly valor more heavily upon them. A proof is the

¹³ Plutarch *Alexander* 27.

¹⁴ Ecclesiastes i 6.

foreign-tongued Latin race: if they were content to be greeted with the right hand, they were united with your servants in your favor: /30/ but the senseless ones got a bit of your high spirit. Should you be challenged, I know well that their dark blood will quickly pour about your spear¹⁵ and against foolish servants and murmurers you will use other entirely loyal servants.

I perceive, emperor, that you have hands fitted by nature for the deeds entrusted to them, and that you show them quick and fierce. For, as we have learned, their task is twofold, I mean withholding and offering gifts: thus you hold back the wind-toughened spear¹⁶ without brandishing it and you offer munificent gifts to those at hand, the first a martial tactic, the second a kingly and nobler beneficence. You hold back therefrom the two-edged sword, zealously you give from thence and with benevolence, and while you might take hold of the man-covering shield,¹⁷ as the poet says, with both hands you yet offer gifts to those wishing them. Not so much does your shaken spear make a long shadow, as you yourself, emperor, in a different way, through kindness, cast a shadow, making shade for those in need of your magnificence. Not so much does your double-edged sword cut in pieces the foe in encounters, though in hunting expeditions it drives through shaggy-haired bears and tusked boars, as the pen, tracing purple ink on your deeds of gift, easily ends their unashamed poverty. Indeed, to speak of the exercises you take, these hunting trips of yours, emperor, delight the spectators' eyes no more than they afford sweetness to tongue and voice for us rhetoricians. A spirited Arabic horse panting for battle, imitating war, is evident in you easily trotting along with your hunting gear. Compared to your riding skill, King Alexander's is reduced to silence.¹⁸ For he, still being a youth and not having ascended to more manliness, having bridled Bucephalus, who had not accepted the command of any of the senior grooms, brought a tear of joy to the beholders; but especially in these guilty foreigners you yourself by horsemanship alone excited tears by tight-reining. Then one said thus to another, "Behold, how young a sprig of heroic virtue has arisen in the orchard of the Roman empire."

/31/ Thus having been laden with long-range and hand-to-hand weapons — I mean arrows and missiles and beast-slaying javelins for close-at-hand —, the former you used with skill against fleeing beasts, the latter against resisting animals. The shy, wind-footed deer thus running as an opponent receives an arrow; the boar armed with white tusks finds black iron thrust in him by that close-fighting skill of yours. These hunting exploits appear like preliminary contests for barbarian wars; for at the occasion's demand having transformed the huntsman to warrior, you shall throw at some [barbarians] from a distance and subdue others close at hand. As to your other sorts of exercises, such as using the straight spear—I do not mean the kind armed with a point and fit for war, which divides into many clefts the numerous threads hanging from the cloth, but the blunt

¹⁵ Homer *Iliad* i 303–304.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, xi 256.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, ii 389; xi 32.

¹⁸ Plutarch *Alexander* 6.

kind of polished wood for drills—and fighting bloodless battle, everyone has been astonished at you on two counts, your manly exertion, I mean, and your eagerness for exercises. For you do not wish to live in the shade, nor even to linger in the palace, nor to make staying at home the origin of plumpness, but plumpness the pretext of a cure. Although for rulers imperial custom has prepared table-setters up to a multitude of names, you rather consider gymnastic exercises as cooks¹⁹ and you provided huntsman's sweat by way of the best table-setters. These, having consumed moisture by the natural heat produced by exercise, have placed before you healthful dishes and such as are suitable. Such gymnastic exercises of yours are practices for martial drill: thus in your heavy hands the spear is inspired and veritably rages.

There is also something else among the exercises of emperors, I mean the thing fashioned from wood into roundness: not so long as spear-shafts, but lengthened in due proportion, and bent in a circle at the tip it is finished with a webbed cord [i.e., like a tennis racket]. Then when the ball has been tossed out, the mounted emperor riding swiftly snatches up the ball on the racket lest it merely touch the ground.²⁰ This exercise of yours, emperor, has allowed me to prophesy your good fortune in many ways: /32/ for at a blow of the sword you will strike off the foreigners' heads like balls; some, to speak especially of the peace-loving and un-bloodthirsty portion, torn asunder by rivalry, you would I think bring together with your scepter into one through international friendship and by oneness uniting them into a shapely ball you would lift them up on the firm staff of your empire and raise them as if from the ground to on high.

Bless what has been said, wisest bishop [Patriarch John Kamateros], since I turn now to you: for your speech has been divided, first through oratory toward eloquence, then most excellently through the episcopate to prayer; thus you have been sharpened into a double-edged cutting tool. For we know you once contended in verbal battles in the imperial courts, and we know you are now able to cooperate in imperial victories by words devoted to God. The ancestral tongue was your stylus, the orators' pen serving the laws. To begin with you used to hear from David.²¹ Your tongue is the scribe's pen, since your reasoning is evidently like fast writing and pertains to swift transcribers. Now another prophet speaks to you:²² Your voice is an ax striking rock, by prayer smiting the roughened and very tough souls of nations, and cleaving them into little pieces, and indeed you will cut apart these capricious assemblies by the weapon of prayer no less than you will unite them by another weapon, theology, at the right moment. For by your tongue you, the wise man, reconcile these opposed weapons, theology and prayer: one uniting them if they wish it, the other alternatively driving those opposed to rout. I do not say this about the emperor and I have clearly reserved it for you. For he will either toss their stricken-off heads like a ball in sport, or he might gather the many-headed harmoniously rounded into

¹⁹ “ . . . σὺ τοὺς γυμναστηρίους πόνοὺς ἔχεις μᾶλλον δόλοισι. . . . ” Probably corrupt.

²⁰ See Louis Bréhier, *Le monde byzantin*, L'évolution de l'humanité, xxxii, iii (Paris, 1950), 66–67, 72.

²¹ Psalms xlv 2.

²² Jeremiah xxiii 29.

one sphere by friendship: in the same way, in order that by unifying action the imperial priesthood should be reunited, you the greatest bishop either will prick them by prayer or attract them by theology, and you will revive their spirit. Thus the dividing quarrel and uniting friendship have visited your lips. And at the right moment you will use these two against those who are making a double mistake: I mean in regard to God and to the emperor.

/33/ So much then for this. But since in the history books there are many noble men to whom our emperor is comparable, it seems to me good to observe Solomon presently among our people. He ruled in Jerusalem as a son, they say, not many years old, but though still a youth, he became a man in mature wisdom. The emperor in the same fashion is seated in the palace as a young man ennobled by intelligence. The former, as a descendant distinguished for nobility from the gentle fruit of David, was placed on his father's throne; even so this native and high-born offspring of the imperial race is enthroned in power. The former adjudged two women and did justice to the one who had suffered wrongs.²³ You should hearken to what is to be told, emperor. For quickly running and amplifying with speed I shall expound it.

Two women both together conceived two children.²⁴ Each mother brought forth a single child. The one forgetful of her offspring then slept and pressed it to death, the other was bereft of her live child, having put secretly upon her the dead child of the murderess, the child's mother. And the exchange, the corpse of her own departed one and the breathing possession of another, was entirely unjust. Wherefore the other claimed her child, but the first woman would not accept her claim. And the one recognized her child's form in the other's hands by many evident peculiarities. But the other demurring at this and perhaps by persuasive defenses annexed what did not belong to her. And then the affair was brought to judgment. Wisely Solomon gave them law and speedily brought that disputed quarrel to agreement: for by the evident sign of suffering he declared the afflicted and wailing one to be the genuine mother of the lamented child, but the one willing to share between both the living child he believed to falsify by insensibility the name of mother, and having been angered by the greedy one, he restored her own child to the defrauded mother.

Judge now this case yourself, God-crowned emperor, for these two mothers, your own New Rome, I mean, and the foreign-tongued elder one. For they seem to quarrel today about power as /34/ about a child: but meanwhile the young one, calling, submits this to me as advocate. For she says both conceived and gave rise to power and majesty. The one in the elder circuit of time, when the Augusti and Caesars ruled there; but the other anew later, when the greatest Constantine, having truly and well ploughed around it in a furrow, caused her in turn to be the conceiver of such splendor. She says things are so with this one [Constantinople], but that the other, falling then into weakening sleep, failed in her delivery and has had stillborn issue until now: this one, awake, honors the living ruler of the West [Alexius IV]; skipping, as the poet would say, in lively and spirited leaps.

²³ III Reg. 3: 16–28.

²⁴ In margin, in a second hand, "Story of the two women's children."

Lately, however, [she says] that exhausted one [old Rome] has been trying to renew her youth and steal what is still moist and living, and substitute what is dry and dead, trying to get hold of our emperor with treacherous secret hand: may you, O master, carve out justice with your sword. For the true mother [Constantinople] mourns and lastly in this peroration extends to you an appeal for mercy. For you will be enraged against the greedy hand . . . while you recover [and] organize your own land. Let us receive you on every hand as Solomon, on account of your venerableness in youth, your skill in councils, your legislation with wisdom. If you yourself will intervene and spiritually reconcile these contending mothers, using the patriarch's very wise mouth and speaking through him, by making them listen and checking their cases, you will rebut them. And finally, [you] having imposed on both as bond of union the Paraclete [Comforter, the Holy Spirit], forthwith the mothers freely embrace one another, and their praises would announce the good news to you. Behold, here is one greater even than Solomon, not only punishing greedy rapacity, or rather reconciling disagreements, but having listened to the mothers about these two disputed babies, the united children of this speech [i.e., offspring of Rome and Constantinople] then skip before the court and, cutting off Solomon's and my speech, struggle to announce to you through their own voice their deliverance, which they have had previously decided by words of wisdom, one being proven first-born by the speech, the other following as competitor.

/35/ May you hear these things, most judicious emperor, which glorify your feast of victory, and, O master, may you be a controller of the spear, outstanding in munificence, terminating our dissensions, reconciling, gaining victories and holding the annual victor's tribute of oratory, guarded by God in long life:—

III. DISCUSSION

While the themes of Chrysoberges' speech are conventional, the situation required delicate handling. The excessive verbiage and involved diction, the quotations from Homer and the Bible, with both of which educated Byzantines were familiar, cannot conceal the orator's strain: he had to say things he did not believe. In preparation for this composition, he apparently read Plutarch's lives of Alexander and Caesar; the comparisons and anecdotes drawn from them seem ridiculous when applied to Alexius IV, but such overstatement was part of a panegyric. The sudden transitions, for instance from a personal quality of the ruler to his policies, are intended to surprise the listener, to recall his lagging attention. Some of the orator's most extreme ideas are thus introduced on a sudden, half-withdrawn, then brought back to the foreground. Unity and orderly presentation are not to be expected.

The introductory part of the speech is devoted to Alexius' character and deserts. He doubly merits the imperial throne, for his descent from a legitimate emperor, and for his excellent character. His travels in western Europe, from 1201 to 1203, have given him mature wisdom and a tempered mind; this harsh experience is better for a prince than the soft life of the court. Not only is Alexius born to the purple (rightfully tearing it from the previous holder, Alexius III), but the ease of his return, the calm weather enjoyed by the accompanying fleet, prove

that God has accorded him His favor. Chrysoberges' allusion to former difficulties experienced by invading Venetian fleets probably refers to their repulse in 1172 by Manuel I. In the latter part of the speech, the author takes up other themes, but on occasion adverts to Alexius' prowess in hunting, Byzantine polo, and martial exercises.²⁵

Amidst the torrent of panegyric, two themes are significantly absent. First, praise for the Emperor Isaac, the senior ruler, is all but missing. His name is mentioned in the lemma (descriptive title), the divine mercy shown in his restoration is recalled, and he is termed a "great eagle,"²⁶ but Alexius is everywhere treated as if he were the sole ruler, responsible for the empire's well-being. Was another orator set to address Isaac? Or had he, when Chrysoberges wrote, been deprived of authority? According to the Novgorod Chronicle Isaac was driven from power by his son in mid-November 1203, but Nicetas presents him as co-emperor, rationally addressing an irate mob at the beginning of December. We do not know when Isaac lost his sanity, but late December or January 1204 may not be too late a date. He died, apparently of old age and despair, early in February at the time of his son's overthrow. The paucity of Chrysoberges' references to Isaac and the decisive role attributed to Alexius suggest that Isaac had yielded to his son.²⁷

Chrysoberges likewise does not accord the deposed Alexius III the scorn which might have been expected. He and his family are called "chicks of another breed,"²⁸ but nothing more is said of them. There is no mention of the conflict in June-July 1203 between Alexius III and the crusaders. If he had so desired, the orator could have found plentiful reasons for denunciation of the former ruler: Nicetas Choniates, writing at the court of Alexius III's son-in-law, did not restrain his pen. Chrysoberges avoids the obvious theme of Alexius III as a tyrant and Alexius IV as a liberator, a vein which had been profitably worked by orators in the first reign of Isaac II (1185–1195), after he overthrew Andronicus (1183–1185). Michael Choniates had served Andronicus as metropolitan of Athens and praised his policies, then lauded Isaac for his bold deed. Chrysoberges stood in much the same relation to Alexius III as Michael to Andronicus, but the revolution of 1203 was less complete than that of 1185. While Alexius III had fled, many of his supporters still remained at court, unpunished for their former crime against Isaac. The historian Nicetas tells us that after Alexius IV's return from Thrace, this group gained an ascendancy over the impressionable young ruler.²⁹

²⁵ Chrysoberges, *Ad Angelos*, pp. 25–27, 30–33. On Prince Alexius' stay in western Europe, see J. Folda, "The Fourth Crusade, 1201–1203 (Some Reconsiderations)," *Byzantinoslavica*, XXVI (1965), 277–290. On the Venetians in 1172, see Ferdinand Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène (1118–1143) et Manuel I Comnène (1143–1180)* (Paris, 1912), pp. 589–591. The allegation of Chrysoberges, p. 28, that Prince Alexius first won the support of Venice, then of the crusaders, cannot be accepted without independent confirmation.

²⁶ Chrysoberges, *Ad Angelos*, p. 25; lemma, p. 24; God's mercy, p. 25.

²⁷ *Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis starshego i mladshego izvodov*, ed. A. N. Nasonov (Moscow and Leningrad, 1950), p. 47; Nicetas, *Hist.*, pp. 741–742.

²⁸ Chrysoberges, *Ad Angelos*, p. 25.

²⁹ Nicetas, *Hist.*, pp. 735–736. On Isaac II as a liberator from tyranny, see Michael Choniates, *Tà σωζόμενα*, I, 208–211, 230–235, and other orators of the period.

These former courtiers of Alexius III were hostile to the crusading army, being particularly opposed to further payments on the enormous sum promised by Prince Alexius. In the second part of his oration, Chrysoberges apparently speaks for this group, offering the emperor a number of possible ways to deal with the Frankish problem: here lies the chief interest of the speech for the historian.

That Alexius should take a vigorous, martial stand against the crusaders was eagerly desired by Chrysoberges. The emperor is reminded that in the past the Venetians had assailed Byzantium and been beaten; the success of the present expedition was due entirely to Alexius' own participation, which made it God's chosen way to restore the rightful heir. Alexius' recreations are repeatedly lauded as preparation for war: his arrow strikes the deer as it would a flying foe, his spear pierces the boar as if in close combat, his drill with blunt lance is the very image of battle. The might of his arm and the fine athletic condition of his body inspire the orator, who stresses their value for war with the barbarians. The sweep of the polo-racket foreshadows a sword-blow cutting off the foreigners' heads; with the sword Alexius should punish the old Rome which sucks the blood of the new. The repetition of these themes indicates the violence of Chrysoberges' hatred of the Latins.³⁰

But the orator, realizing the unacceptable and impossible nature of military repression of the Latins, then turns to a plan for reconciliation between the two peoples. Although he can scarcely endure the fact, he had to praise the emperor for his generosity. Alexius, he says, has held back his armed hand and offered instead the hand of benevolence, signing warrants for gifts to satisfy the crusaders' shameless beggary. The best-intentioned of the Latins are to be merged with the emperor's Byzantine followers, united in a single ball, so ending quarrels between nations.³¹

Civil unity was to be supplemented by religious union. Near the end of his speech Chrysoberges turns to Patriarch John Kamateros and addresses him. Kamateros is to have an important role in the reconciliation, using his prayers to fragment the barbarians' regiments and prick their souls, and then by the power of his theological arguments bring about union. But it is for the emperor to make the final decision, judging like Solomon between old and new Rome on their respective claims to religious authority. In an elaborate peroration Chrysoberges invites the emperor to speak through the patriarch's mouth, to impose the Holy Spirit as the common denominator on Latin and Byzantine, and thus to restore harmony. His concluding words point to the triumph of the older Rome in the quest for supremacy; he thus indirectly alludes to the submission of Alexius and the patriarch to the pope.³²

Apparently the orator himself favored a policy of combined firmness and benevolence. Intransigent crusaders must be given a show of the emperor's armed hand and sent on their way; having brought with him these early-morning vapors (the Latins), the sun (the emperor) must now dissipate them. Those that are

³⁰ Chrysoberges, *Ad Angelos*, pp. 26–28, 31–34.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 32.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 32–34.

well-affected to Byzantium must be enrolled among the emperor's followers, accepting their natural servile place. Religiously, the obdurate were to be cast out and the rest won over, while the native Byzantines were to be convinced of papal supremacy by the Holy Spirit's inspiration of the emperor and patriarch. Thus Latins and Byzantines were to be molded into a single ball, a people united beneath the emperor's sceptre. Chrysoberges believed that hitherto Alexius had been too generous and benevolent to the crusaders, and that it was time for a show of strength.³³

From the content of the speech we can tentatively date its composition. The union with the Latins, expressed in Alexius' and the patriarch's letters of submission, 25 August 1203, had already been achieved. The lack of allusion to Isaac II suggests that he had yielded authority to his son, indicating composition after Alexius IV's return from Thrace on 11 November. On the other hand, the crusaders are still considered loyal supporters, although a few have been disciplined: "... the senseless ones got a bit of your high spirit."³⁴ This may refer to the clashes which occurred in mid-August, over the burning of the mosque and large parts of the city. In any case, the proposed plan of reconciliation of Latins and Byzantines shows that the definitive break of mid-December has not yet taken place, and perhaps the skirmishes which commenced around 1 December have not yet occurred. Chrysoberges apparently wrote his oration in late November.

But was the speech actually delivered? The lemma declares it to have been "read, as is custom for the orators, in the palace of Blachernai" on 6 January 1204.³⁵ Although this statement is specific, the presentation of such a speech at that moment is inconceivable. In December unofficial melees had led to an open declaration of war; on 1 January had occurred the attack by fireships upon the Venetian fleet. In such circumstances a more warlike speech was called for. This oration, then, was never presented, but survived among Chrysoberges' rhetorical works.

As spokesman for the former courtiers of Alexius III, Nicephorus Chrysoberges faced a difficult task: he had to praise an unworthy youth who had gained power by the help of the empire's proven enemies. At the same time, the orator wished to guide the steps of the ruler toward his own faction's policy. Preferably, Alexius IV should crush the blood-sucking leeches, but the situation required that the Latins be accommodated: the best-disposed should be welcomed but brought firmly to heel, the rest sent on their way. Papal supremacy had to be accepted, but the patriarch by his theological skill should win acceptance of Byzantine doctrine, and a single people be formed under the emperor's sway. So Chrysoberges declared, but in his heart he desired the destruction of the foreigners.

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³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30, 32, 34.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30; for the submission of Alexius to the pope, see Innocent III, *Opera*, MPL, ccxv, 236-237.

³⁵ Chrysoberges, *Ad Angelos*, p. 24.