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# Surpassing Solomon: Church-building and Political Discourse in Late Antique Constantinople

## Introduction

When Emperor Justinian first set foot in the newly constructed Hagia Sophia, he supposedly uttered the words: “Praise be to God, who found me worthy to carry out such a work: I have outdone you, Solomon.”<sup>1</sup> This famous declaration has resonated with both ancient historians and archaeologists, who usually understand it as a reflection of a Roman emperor’s grandiose ambition to follow in the footsteps of the Jewish King Solomon. It derives from the *Διήγησις περὶ τῆς ἁγίας Σοφίας* (*Diēgēsis peri tēs Hagias Sophias*), a legendary account of the construction of the Hagia Sophia, usually dated to the ninth century and transmitted as part of the *Patria Konstantinoupoleos* compiled in the tenth century.<sup>2</sup> Beyond the passage quoted above, there is further evidence for the connection between Solomon, the Hagia Sophia, and Justinian in the *Patria Konstantinoupoleos*. The chapter *περὶ στηλῶν*, for instance, reports that Justinian had a statue of Solomon erected in the Basilica Cistern facing the Hagia Sophia; supposedly since the new church surpassed the Temple of Jerusalem both in size and beauty.<sup>3</sup> Gilbert Dagron has moreover stressed that the *Diegesis* interweaves allusions to the Old Testament throughout the narrative of the construction of the Hagia Sophia.<sup>4</sup> Thus, before entering the church for the first time and uttering

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1 Δόξα τῷ θεῷ τῷ καταξιώσαντί με τοιοῦτον ἔργον ἀποτελέσαι· ἐνίκησά σε, Σολομών; from: *Diegesis* 27, ed. Preger 1901, 105; on this episode, see Dagron 2003, 109–110.

2 Edition of the *Patria* in Preger 1901/1907; edition of the *Diegesis*, Preger 1901, 74–108; cf. Preger, 1901a. On the date of the *Diegesis*, see Preger 1901a, 458–460; Dagron 1984, 265–269; on its legendary character, see Dagron 1984, 269–275. On the *Patria Konstantinoupoleos* in general, see Dagron 1984, Kazhdan 1991, and the most recent translation by Berger 2013; for the image of Justinian as propagated in this legendary account, see Prinzing 1986, 86–89.

3 Ἡ δὲ καθεζομένη ἐπὶ δίφρου ἐκέϊσε μεγάλη στήλη ἐστὶν || τοῦ Σαλομῶντος, ἣν ἀνέστησεν ὁ μέγας Ἰουστινιανὸς κρατοῦτα τὴν σιαγόνα αὐτοῦ καὶ ὀρώντα τὴν ἁγίαν Σοφίαν ὅτι ἐνίκηθη εἰς μήκος καὶ κάλλος ὑπὲρ τὸν παρ’ αὐτοῦ κτισθέντα ναὸν ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ (Preger 1907, 171). See Dagron 1984, 268. On the statue of Solomon, see also the chronicle of Michael Glycas (twelfth cent.), *Annalium* 4,268–269; cf. Magdalino 1987, 58 n. 42.

4 See Dagron 1984, 293–298.

those legendary words, Justinian had a thousand oxen and countless other animals sacrificed in the forum, a practice that recalls Jewish sacrificial ritual rather than Christian liturgy.<sup>5</sup>

Both the content and symbolism of the *Diegesis* reflect, to a large extent, conditions in the ninth century;<sup>6</sup> however, the frequency and prominence of the connections between Solomon and Justinian in the *Patria Konstantinopoleos* are striking and cannot be explained entirely by the historical context of the text. In order to trace how the link between the Byzantine emperor and the Jewish king rose to such prominence, it must be taken into account that Solomon had already played a vital role in Constantinople long before the *Diegesis*. The dedicatory inscription of the Church of St Polyeuctus, sponsored by the noblewoman Anicia Juliana in the early sixth century, may be regarded as the earliest evidence that explicitly links Solomon to the imperial capital. Slightly later in the sixth century we have two hymns on Justinian and his building activities. Later yet, Solomon appears in Gorippus' verse panegyric on Justin II.<sup>7</sup> In this chapter, I revisit the evidence for the reception of King Solomon and the Jewish Temple in sixth-century Constantinople to demonstrate the role that a specific idea of Jerusalem played in the political discourse of the imperial capital. The analysis traces how the reference to Solomon was established as a powerful and persistent topos in the context of imperial church-building – a topos that still figured prominently centuries later in the *Patria Konstantinopoleos*.

## Juliana

Over the course of the 520s, Constantinople witnessed the completion of the Church of St Polyeuctus, which can be described as magnificent and innovative both in terms of its architecture and its decoration. Remains of this church, including fragments of

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5 *Diegesis* 27, ed. Preger 1901, 104–105.

6 See Dagron 1984, 265–314, esp. 269, 309. The connection between the Hagia Sophia and the Temple of Solomon also appears in a Jewish chronicle composed in eleventh-century Italy, which mentions a certain Rabbi Shefatiya who was summoned to Constantinople for a discussion with the emperor Basil I (867–886). The discussion reported in the chronicle ultimately revolves around the question of whether greater expense was made for the Temple of Solomon or for Justinian's Hagia Sophia. The chronicle is edited in Neubauer 1985, 111–132; for a translation of the Basil passage, see Salzmann 1924, 70–74; on the relationship between the chronicle and the *Diegesis*, see Dagron 1984, 307–309; cf. also Scheja 1962 (1963), 48.

7 On the high number of references to Solomon in the sixth century, cf. Cameron 1976, 204–205; Dagron 1984, 303–306; Prinzing 1986, 89–91; Koder 1994, 135–138, and Ousterhout 2010, esp. 247. The earliest evidence for the explicit connection between the Jewish Temple and Christian churches is the speech of Eusebius of Caesarea for the dedication of the church of Tyre: *HE* 10,4, esp. 10,4,3; on the reception of the Jewish Temple in the context of Christian building activity, see Ousterhout 2010 and Deliyannis 2015.

the dedicatory inscription, were recovered in excavations in the Saraçhane neighborhood of Istanbul.<sup>8</sup> The surviving foundations and fragments of the architectural decoration furnish ample material for debate over how the original building should be reconstructed.<sup>9</sup> The *patricia* Anicia Juliana who sponsored the church was an illustrious figure: on her mother's side, she was the great-granddaughter of Theodosius II and Eudocia; on her father's side, she was a descendant of the famous family of the Anicii.<sup>10</sup> Her father, Flavius Anicius Olybrius, briefly ruled over the western half of the Roman Empire in 472. In 480, Juliana married Flavius Areobindus Daga-laifus, who was offered the crown in 512 during the Trisagion Riot against Emperor Anastasius.<sup>11</sup> Their son, Flavius Anicius Olybrius had to go into exile after the Nika Riot against Justinian.<sup>12</sup> Anicia Juliana herself was a staunch defender of the Council of Chalcedon; her correspondence with the Pope, preserved in the *Collectio Avellana*, reveals her to be one of the driving forces behind resolving the Acacian Schism.<sup>13</sup> Juliana's wealth was legendary: she founded several churches and figures prominently in the dedicatory miniature of the famous Vienna Dioscurides.<sup>14</sup> Besides the Church of St Euphemia and the Theotokos Church in the Honoratae Quarter,<sup>15</sup> her most important project was undoubtedly the Church of St Polyeuctus. Originally, the

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**8** On the basis of the remains of the dedicatory inscription, which survives independently as *Anth. pal.* 1,10, the excavated structures could securely be identified as the Church of St Polyeuctus; see Mango/Ševčenko 1961.

**9** The fundamental publication on the Church of St Polyeuctus is the excavation report by Harrison 1986; see also Harrison 1984 and Harrison 1990. Bardill 2006 questions Harrison's reconstruction of the roof of the church as a dome, arguing instead for a gabled roof. New light on the architectural reconstruction has been shed by Venla-Eeva Kakko (MA thesis, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, *non vidi*). For a recent assessment of the reconstruction, see Effenberger 2019; Fabian Stroth (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg) is currently preparing a new reconstruction of the church.

**10** PLRE II 468; a genealogy of Juliana's maternal family is provided by Harrison 1986, 419, fig. C. For Juliana's family and their presence in Constantinople, see Begass 2018, 351–380; cf. Caprizzi 1996, 13–35, and ead. 1968.

**11** PLRE II 143–144; on the Trisagion Riot, see Marcellinus Comes, a. 512, and Malalas (ed. Dindorf), 407; cf. Meier 2007; on Areobindus, see Begass 2018, 362–378.

**12** PLRE II 795; Malalas (ed. Dindorf), 478 reports that Justinian recalled him from exile in 533 and restored his property.

**13** *Coll. Avell.* 164, 179, 198; on their correspondence, see Caprizzi 1996, 78–91, and Pizzone 2003, 125–127.

**14** On the Vienna Dioscurides (ed. O. Mazal 1998/1999) and its relationship to Anicia Juliana, see especially Brubaker 2002 and Kiilerich 2001.

**15** On the Church of St Euphemia, see Konstantin Klein's chapter in this volume; Caprizzi 1996, 102–104; Effenberger 2019, 172–173. The choice of Euphemia as patron saint may also be interpreted as a statement on church politics: a native of Chalcedon, in whose martyrdom the Council had been held in 451, Euphemia had become the figurehead of the Dyophysite position; see Caprizzi 1996, 118–119. The dedicatory inscriptions in the Church of St Euphemia have also been preserved in the Palatine Anthology (1,12–17); see Connor 1999, 502–504. On the church at Honoratae, see Effenberger 2019, 171–172. For Juliana's sponsorship of churches, see also Dirschmeyer 2015, 164–181.

church had been dedicated by Juliana's great-grandmother Eudocia,<sup>16</sup> rising on a prominent site between the forum of Theodosius and the Church of the Holy Apostles near the northern branch of the Mese.<sup>17</sup> Juliana's reconstruction was completed before her death in 527/528.<sup>18</sup>

The impact of the St Polyeuctus Church becomes specifically evident in the monumental dedicatory inscription,<sup>19</sup> which uses King Solomon as a reference to bolster Juliana's position in Constantinople's political landscape. To fully grasp Juliana's message, however, it is necessary to analyze the inscription as an integral part of the church architecture. Judging from scholia in the Palatine Anthology and the design of surviving architectural elements, the following arrangement can be reconstructed:<sup>20</sup> via a propylon to the south, visitors could enter the atrium of the church, where lines 42–76 of the inscription were exhibited on five plaques (πίνακες).<sup>21</sup> The church itself stood to the east of the atrium and could be approached by a flight of stairs. After crossing a narthex, visitors reached the quadratic interior of the church, its sides stretching just over 50 m with an apse projecting to the east. The transition between the side aisles and an expanded central nave was subdivided into semicir-

**16** On potential reasons for Eudocia dedicating her church to the rather obscure martyr Polyeuctus, see Konstantin Klein's chapter in this volume; cf. Pizzone 2003; Klein 2019, 111–114; Effenberger 2019, 169–171.

**17** On the topography, see Mango/Ševčenko 1961, 244; cf. Harrison 1986, 9–10, 405–406 and Harrison 1990, 34. On the neighborhood, which was in the hands of several aristocratic families, see Magdalino 2001.

**18** For the date of Juliana's Church of St Polyeuctus, see Mango/Ševčenko 1961, 245; Harrison 1984; Bardill 2004, 62–64, 111–116 on dating of the brick stamps and Bardill 2006, 340. On the basis of the brick stamps, Begass 2018, 368–370, 378–379 proposes that the reconstruction of the church was begun after Areobindus had been awarded the consulate in 506; after the Trisagion Riot in 512, which had led to further estrangement between the emperor Anastasius and Juliana's family, the construction was paused for several years and only resumed after Anastasius' death and the accession of Justin I.

**19** *Anth. pal.* 1,10, ed. H. Stadtmüller, *Anthologia Graeca* 1, Leipzig 1894, 4–7; see the Greek text and translation of the inscription in Harrison 1986, 5–7.

**20** A scholion, connected by an asterisk to verse 41, appears next to verses 30–32: “This is written in a circle in the *naos* [of the church]” (Ταῦτα μὲν ἐν τῷ ναῷ ἔνδοθεν κύκλῳ περιγράφονται). A scholion at the end of verse 41 locates the second part of the poem “in the entrance of the same church” (ἐν τῇ εἰσόδῳ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ναοῦ), “outside the narthex” (ἔξωθεν τοῦ νάρθηκος). Another comment appears next to verses 59–61, giving more detail about where the second half of the inscription was placed: “There are four plaques on which this is written, with five or six verses on each” (τέσσαρες εἰσὶ πίνακες ἐν ᾗ [sic] ταῦτα περιγράφονται ἀνά στίχους πέντε ἢ καὶ ἕξ). A final scholion accompanies lines 63–66: “This is the last plaque, to the right of the entrance, on which this is written” (ἔσχατός ἐστι πίναξ ὁ πρὸς τοῖς δεξιούσις μέρεσι τῆς εἰσόδου ἐν ᾗ ἐπιγράφεται ταῦτα). The scholia are reproduced in Harrison 1986, 7, and Mango/Ševčenko 1961, 245–246.

**21** No remains of the plaques were found during excavations. In research, it is debated how the verses were distributed over the plaques and how the latter were set up in the atrium; cf. Mango/Ševčenko 1961, 246; Connor 1999, 495; Whitby 2006, 161; Speck 1991; for a recent reconstruction of the plaques and the western façade in general, see Effenberger 2019, 161–166.

cular exedrae, which – in all probability – supported a gallery.<sup>22</sup> Lines 1–41 of the inscription ran around the central nave on the architrave of the aforementioned exedrae at a height of about 6 m, as is undoubtedly shown by the surviving remains.<sup>23</sup> The individual letters, which are worked in marble in high relief, are surrounded by simple moldings and were originally set against a blue background. An elaborate decorative scheme of grape vines and leaves adorned the surfaces above the inscription.<sup>24</sup>

In my analysis I follow the path taken by a visitor to the church and – in contrast to the way the text is arranged in the Palatine Anthology – start by discussing the verses set on the *pinakes* in the atrium (42–76) before I proceed into the actual space of the church itself (1–41). Verses 42–76 can be divided into two sections: an encomium in honor of the founder (42–50) and an ekphrasis of the church (51–76).<sup>25</sup> After the rhetorical question that introduces the text, (“What choir is sufficient to sing the work of Juliana?”), we are given a truly illustrious gallery of predecessors: “Juliana, who, after Constantine, embellisher of his Rome, after the holy golden light of Theodosius, and after the royal descent from so many forebears, accomplished in a few years a work worthy of her family, and more than worthy?”<sup>26</sup> Immediately, in the first verses, Juliana is represented as the culmination of a lineage stretching back to Constantine, the founder of the Christian Empire. While “royal descent” refers to imperial genealogy, the climax Constantine-Theodosius-Juliana does not so much represent a real lineage as it creates an overarching relationship that supersedes kinship. Constantine’s building activity and Theodosius’ religious integrity are re-created in Juliana’s work – the Church of St Polyeuctus – and simultaneously elevated to a new level. The following verses venture beyond the gallery of exemplary Christian emperors and bring a further person into play, which brings us back to the origin of this chapter: “She [Juliana] alone has conquered time and surpassed the wisdom of celebrated Solomon, raising a temple to receive God, the

<sup>22</sup> For the partitioning of the interior space of the church, I find the reconstruction in Bardill 2006 more plausible. On Harrison’s reconstruction, see Harrison 1990, 127–134 with several (hypothetical) illustrations of the ground plan and profile of the church; see also Harrison 1986, 406–411.

<sup>23</sup> The precise findspot of the remains (Harrison 1986, 407) allows us to infer that the text of the inscription began in the southeast corner of the nave and continued clockwise until it reached the northeast corner.

<sup>24</sup> On the execution of the inscription, see Harrison 1986, 414, and Harrison 1990, 81. Peacocks are a main decorative feature of the church, five of which adorn each exedra; their bodies, necks, and heads projected into the room in high relief; see Harrison 1986, 416, and Harrison 1990, 84. On the architectural decoration, which might merge classical stylistic elements with Persian/Sassanid motifs, see Russo 2004, Canepa 2006 and Effenberger 2019.

<sup>25</sup> For detailed interpretations of the content and language of the epigram, see Connor 1999, Whitby 2003, and Whitby 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Ποῖος Ἰουλιανῆς χορὸς ἄρκιός ἐστιν ἀέθλιος, / ἢ μετὰ Κωνσταντίνου, ἐῆς κοσμήτορα Ῥώμης, / καὶ μετὰ Θεοδοσίου παγχρύσειον ἱερὸν ὄμμα / καὶ μετὰ τοσσατίων προγόνων βασιληίδα ῥίζαν, / ἄξιον ἧς γενεῆς καὶ ὑπέρτερον ἦνυσεν ἔργον / εἰν ὀλίγοις ἐτέεσσι; (*Anth. pal.* 1,10,42–47). The English translation here and subsequently is taken from Harrison 1986, 5–7.

richly wrought and graceful splendor of which the ages cannot celebrate.”<sup>27</sup> As the sponsor of the church, Juliana is not only rooted in the Christian imperial tradition, but is also connected to King Solomon by the attribute of wisdom. However, the quality of the connection to Solomon contrasts with those in the preceding verses. Juliana presents herself and her achievements in line with historical exempla like Constantine and Theodosius. While she carries on their legacy, in the case of Solomon the aspect of surpassing is clearly paramount. In a rhetorical syncrisis, Juliana emerges as superior to the Old Testament king.<sup>28</sup>

The “richly wrought and graceful splendor” of the Church of St Polyeuctus in verse 50 marks a transition to the second section, the ekphrasis. The spacious structure of the church, the layout of its interior, and its decorative elements are evoked in epic vocabulary. The climax of the ekphrasis describes a depiction of the baptism of Constantine “over the arch of the court” (ὕπὲρ ἄντυγος αὐλῆς). Judging from this, Constantine, whom the epigram stylizes as Juliana’s model and predecessor, also figured prominently in the iconographical program of the church.<sup>29</sup> The concluding verses 74–76 recapitulate Juliana’s achievements on behalf of her ancestors, herself, her children, and her descendants.

Transitioning from the *pinakes* to the interior of the church, the poem’s encomiastic nature reaches its full potential. In the style of a *basilikos logos*,<sup>30</sup> Juliana’s illustrious dynastic ancestry is emphasized: after Eudocia, who had already built a church for the martyr Polyeuctus on the same site, it was Juliana, the “bright light of blessed parents, sharing their royal blood in the fourth generation” (ζαθέων ἀμάρυγμα τοκῆων, τέτρατον ἐκ κείνων βασιλήϊον αἷμα λαχοῦσα), who gave the church its ultimate glory worthy of the martyr, “increasing the glory of her many-sceptred ancestors” (κῦδος ἀεξήσασα πολυσκήπτρων γενετήρων). The poet highlights Juliana’s orthodoxy (ὀρθὴν πίστιν) as the basis for her accomplishments. After lavishly praising her achievements as a builder, her εὐσέβεια and her ἀρετή, the saints are called upon to protect her and her family and to carry her fame “as long as the Sun drives his fiery chariot” (εἰσόκεν ἥελιος πυριλαμπέα δίφρον ἐλαύνει).

The recurrent theme of the dedicatory epigram, indicated by ubiquitous imperial terminology, is undoubtedly Juliana’s royal ancestry and her ability to worthily represent her forebears with her present accomplishments. In formal terms, Homeric vo-

27 Χρόνον δ’ ἐβήσατο μούνη, / καὶ σοφίην παρέλασεν ἀειδομένου Σολομῶνος, / νηὸν ἀναστήσασα θεηδόχον, οὗ μέγας αἰὼν / οὐ δύναται μέλπει χαρίτων πολυδαίδαλον αἴγλην (*Anth. pal.* 1,10,47–50).

28 On the various rhetorical means with which a connection to the past can be created, see Rapp 2010, 176–180.

29 The depiction of Constantine was most probably applied on the outer wall of the church facing the atrium, see Effenberger 2019, 163–166. Scholars have plausibly argued that the depiction of Constantine in the St Polyeuctus Church was the earliest pictorial evidence to represent Constantine’s legendary baptism by the Roman Pope Silvester; see Fowden 1994 and Milner 1994, 79; already suggested by Mango/Ševčenko 1961, 245 with n. 14

30 Cf. Whitby 2006, 166.

cabulary is combined with a rhetorically ambitious language inspired by classical and Hellenistic poetry, highlighting terms with Christian connotation.<sup>31</sup> Still, when compared to the poem's classical or classicizing legacy, the Christian terminology remains on the sideline; in the ekphrasis, for example, which clearly follows the long-standing tradition of describing secular monuments, Christian symbolism is completely omitted.<sup>32</sup>

In order to fully grasp the dedicatory inscription, we must ask who its intended audience was. Whereas only a small minority of churchgoers might have actually walked through the nave deciphering the splendid letters of the first forty-one lines affixed well above eye level, the epigram's message was simultaneously communicated in the finery of the architectural decorations.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the inscription might have become part of a ceremonial performance: recitation of the verses as part of the liturgy is just one of many ways in which the text could have been made accessible to a broader mass of churchgoers.<sup>34</sup> With its archaizing and unusual vocabulary, however, the text seems to primarily speak to a clearly defined and exclusive audience – whether through reading or other channels of communication.<sup>35</sup> Only those who had an outstanding classical education would have been able to appreciate the entire semantic range.<sup>36</sup> This form of communication corresponds to Juliana's self-awareness as member of a social elite, a dynastically legitimated aristocracy in full possession of the highest degree of classical education. The inscription should thus be understood as an elitist statement and mark of distinction, both for the woman who commissioned it and for those who were able understand it.

In the poem, Solomon serves a clear function: by referring to the Jewish king, Juliana can extend the gallery of her illustrious predecessors past the Christian em-

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31 Or as Connor 1999, 489 summarizes: "A richly textured interplay of classicising and pagan imagery is assimilated to Christian meaning." On the language of the epigram, see also Whitby 2006, 175–180.

32 With the exception of the isolated word *θηροδόχον* (verse 49) as an attribute to *νηόν*, no indication is given of the liturgical function or spiritual relevance of the building. Such Christian symbolism can be detected in earlier sources and becomes standard of the course of the sixth century. Cf. Eusebius' ekphrasis of the church of Tyre (see Smith 1989, Wilkinson 1982), Paul the Silentiary's ekphrasis of the Hagia Sophia (see especially Macrides/Magdalino 1988), and also hymns, such as the anonymous kontakion on the re-consecration of the Hagia Sophia in the year 562 (discussed below) or the inauguration hymn for the Hagia Sophia in Edessa (see Palmer 1988).

33 On the decorations, see above n. 24; cf. James 2007a on ways in which texts could be perceived other than through reading, also with respect to the epigram in the Church of St Polyeuctus (James 2007a, 188–192).

34 Focusing on other churches, Papalexandrou 2001 has studied the performative aspect of inscriptions (in buildings) that could be read or recited during ceremonies as a commemorative act.

35 The fact that the inscription survived in the Palatine Anthology proves that the text was either read from stone or circulated in other form to eventually find its way into the Anthology.

36 Connor 1999, 499–500. on the audience and potential reception of the inscription. See also James 2007b, 191: "The high style of Anicia Juliana's epigram suggests that its intended reading audience was the classically educated, highly literate upper class."

persors back to the Old Testament; yet, by surpassing Solomon's wisdom, she unmistakably distinguishes herself from him. In addition to wisdom, Solomon and Juliana share yet another feature: their building activity. The *νηὸς θεηδόχος* (verse 49) built by Juliana unmistakably evokes the *νηὸς* of Solomon, the Temple of Jerusalem. Martin Harrison, the excavator of the church, argued that Juliana's church had been constructed in imitation of the Temple of Solomon. According to him, the specific decorations of the Church of St Polyeuctus echoed the biblical description of Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 7:13–51; 2 Chron. 3–4).<sup>37</sup> Harrison also referred to the measurements of the church to support this idea, arguing that the quadratic ground plan covered exactly 100 × 100 royal cubits – the dimensions attested for the Jewish Temple in the Old Testament.<sup>38</sup> Harrison's argument, however, obscures the fact that, in the Old Testament, 100 × 100 royal cubits do not refer to the temple built by Solomon, but rather to the visionary temple of Ezekiel (Ez. 40:5–42:20).<sup>39</sup> Ezekiel's vision, which he received during the Babylonian Exile after the destruction of Jerusalem, reflects not only on God's wrath, as manifested in the destruction of the temple, but also conceives of a new, pure temple, the dimensions of which are dictated by God himself to be realized in the future by upright rulers.<sup>40</sup>

With the eschatologically charged temple of Ezekiel,<sup>41</sup> Juliana might have intended to evoke a heavenly Jerusalem in Constantinople and stylize herself as the upright ruler of the vision.<sup>42</sup> As tempting as this possibility sounds, doubts emerge upon closer inspection: besides the questionable hypothesis that the footprint of the building had actually been intended to measure 100 x 100 royal cubits,<sup>43</sup> several features of the church militate against this theory. Juliana's representation, as revealed in the Church of St Polyeuctus as a whole and the epigram in particular, does not seem to

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**37** Palms/palmettes, cherubim, blossoms, pomegranates, and arrangements of trellises and lilies also figure in Juliana's church, see Harrison 1984; Harrison 1986, 410–411 and Harrison 1990, 137–144. Building on Harrison's theory, Shahid 2004 believes that references to the Jewish Temple can be identified already in the Church of St Polyeuctus built by Eudocia.

**38** Harrison 1986, 410, and Harrison 1990, 137: none of the standard units of Byzantine measurement could reasonably be applied to the building. The square foundation that determines the plan of the church measures 51.45 m by 51.90 m, which, accepting Harrison's assumption that a normal cubit measured approximately 0.445 m and a royal cubit 0.518 m, would give dimensions precisely of 100 x 100 royal cubits (allowing for minor measuring discrepancies); cf. Ousterhout 2010, 243–246.

**39** 1 Kings 6:2 and 2 Chron. 3:3 give the dimension of the Temple of Solomon as 60 x 20 ordinary cubits. For the royal cubit, see Ez. 40:5 and Ez. 41:13–15 for the precise measurements; see Milner 1994, 74–75; Bardill 2006, 342–343.

**40** On the vision of Ezekiel, see Pohlmann 1996/2001.

**41** On the eschatological associations, see Bardill 2006, 342.

**42** See Milner 1994.

**43** It cannot be proven with certainty that the royal cubit is the unit of measurement on which the dimensions of the church are based. The precise metrological value of a royal cubit is difficult to determine: the relationship between meters and a Byzantine cubit varies from publication to publication. While Harrison 1986, 410, and Harrison 1990, 137 presumes 0.445 meters for a normal cubit, Schilbach 1970, 20 accepts 0.468 meters.



incorporate sophisticated theological elements let alone eschatological allusions. On the contrary, what emerges from the text is Juliana's ambition to create a monument that endures through the ages and proves worthy of herself and her ancestors for all time.<sup>44</sup> Christian references appear primarily in the emphasis on Juliana's orthodoxy; beyond that, the noblewoman articulates her self-representation by referring to aristocratic tradition and using classical or classicizing forms of expression. Rather than insisting on an eschatological interpretation, I understand the reference to Solomon and his Temple in Juliana's epigram as a cipher for a magnificent, royal, dynastically legitimated building program – the distinctive features of which are adapted to contemporary circumstances in the Church of St Polyeuctus.

In the context of the 520s, the Church of St Polyeuctus can be read as a clear political statement, as a commentary on monarchic succession and the condition of the political elite in the imperial capital.<sup>45</sup> With her dynastic genealogy, her traditional aristocratic lineage, and her classical education, Juliana enjoyed an abundance of distinctions that the men on the imperial throne lacked.<sup>46</sup> Justin I, who came to power in 518, had risen from humble, non-aristocratic origins on the Balkans; his nephew Justinian, who succeeded him in 527, shared the same background.<sup>47</sup> In the Church of St Polyeuctus, Juliana went beyond competition within the aristocracy and dared to challenge the reigning emperor, suggesting that her family might be better suited for the throne. In line with Christian emperors of the past, Solomon provides Juliana with a truly royal aura.

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**44** Connor 1999, 499 proposes that the Church of St Polyeuctus was conceived as the final resting place for Juliana, so as to immortalize her memory and simultaneously anticipate her eternal life with God. The decorative elements that Connor interprets as funerary motifs (in particular, the peacocks and vines branches) are understood by Bardill 2006, 345 as allusions to the Paradise that awaited Juliana; Effenberger 2019, 180–181 proposes that an annex building west of the main church, usually labelled as baptistery, was in fact Juliana's funerary chapel.

**45** Begass 2018 (see n. 18 above) plausibly argues that Juliana's reconstruction of the St Polyeuctus Church had already begun in the first decade of the sixth century during the reign of the Emperor Anastasius. This, of course, would affect the political message that the building was meant to convey. However, it is highly likely that the epigram, on which I primarily base my argument, was composed and put up not under Anastasius but in a later stage of the construction work, that is, after Justin's accession in 518.

**46** Canepa 2006, 7 interprets the Church of St Polyeuctus as a "polemical statement" against the current rulers; for further attempts to place Juliana's church in the contemporary political context, see Harrison 1984; Harrison 1986, 418–420; Harrison 1990, 137–144; Fowden 1994; Milner 1994; Shahid 2004; Bardill 2006 and Begass 2018, 368–380.

**47** On the accession of Justin, see e.g. Leppin 2011, 43–73. On Justinian's path to power, see Croke 2007.

## Justinian

If we read the Church of St Polyeuctus as a polemical commentary on the political conditions in the imperial capital, as Juliana's attempt to publicly highlight her family's dynastic claims, it remains to be asked how Justin or Justinian might have reacted to such an act of provocation. While the sources give us no direct information about potential confrontations between Justin I and Juliana, matters seem different with Justinian, who was elevated to the rank of Augustus on April 1, 527, a few months before his uncle's death. Gregory of Tours relates that Justinian sought Juliana out to ask her for a donation to the public treasury. In order to avoid supporting the emperor, Juliana cunningly liquidated all her property to pay to gild the roof of the Church of St Polyeuctus. Humiliated at the sight of the work, Justinian was forced to retreat empty-handed, since he did not dare to rob a church of its property.<sup>48</sup> Despite the predominantly legendary nature of this anecdote, written in faraway Gaul six decades after the Church of St Polyeuctus had been built, it reflects the tense relations between Juliana and Justinian.

The assumption that several families competed for visibility and monarchic prestige in Constantinople by means of church building is corroborated by the evidence of the Church of SS Sergius and Bacchus: Having been dedicated by Justinian at the edge of the Palace of Hormisdas shortly after his coronation in 527, it featured a dedicatory inscription circling the interior on the architrave – just like in the Church of St Polyeuctus.<sup>49</sup> The content of Justinian's inscription differs considerably from the Polyeuctus epigram, but the particular, unusual way in which it was presented, encircling the church space, certainly reflects the church dedicated by Juliana.<sup>50</sup>

Justinian had proved himself a prolific church builder from early on in his reign: besides the Church of SS Peter and Paul<sup>51</sup> and the aforementioned Church of SS Sergius and Bacchus, he began constructing the highly symbolic Nea Church in Jerusalem.<sup>52</sup> In 532, another unique 'opportunity' presented itself: As the people of Con-

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<sup>48</sup> Greg. Tur. *De glor. mart.* (PL 71) 793–795; the passage in Gregory of Tours has also been used as evidence for the reconstruction of the Church of St Polyeuctus; cf. Bardill 2006, 348–349; Harrison 1986, 8–9 with Latin text and translation; Mango/Ševčenko 1961, 245.

<sup>49</sup> On the Church of SS Sergius and Bacchus and its date, see Mango 1972, Krautheimer 1974, Mango 1975, Bardill 2000, Shahid 2003, Croke 2006, and Bardill 2017.

<sup>50</sup> For a comparison of the two inscriptions in formal terms and in terms of content, as well as the churches as a whole, see Connor 1999, 511–512, Bardill 2000, 4, Shahid 2003, 476–480, and Croke 2006, 50–51; cf. Ousterhout 2010, 243–247. The Church of SS Sergius and Bacchus does not bear any direct reference to Solomon or Jerusalem.

<sup>51</sup> No archaeological remains of the Church of SS Peter and Paul have survived, but the dedicatory inscription has been transmitted in *Anth. pal.* 1.8. Justinian asked the pope to send relics to Constantinople to adorn the church (*Coll. Avell.* 187); see Croke 2006, 27–28 with n. 12); see also Proc. *aed.* 1,4,1–8.

<sup>52</sup> On Justinian's Nea in Jerusalem, its theological implications and its relationship to the Jewish Temple, see Kai Trampedach's chapter in this volume.

stantinople rose against Justinian in the Nika Riot, the city descended into chaos for several days in a row; many buildings, including the Theodosian Hagia Sophia were burnt down, leaving a massive open space in the very center of the city. After he had succeeded in putting down the revolt by force, Justinian rebuilt the Hagia Sophia in only a few years, erecting a monument of such costliness and magnificence that it eclipsed all other churches in the capital, including the Church of St Polyeuctus.<sup>53</sup>

The reference to Solomon, after having been introduced into the monarchic discourse of Constantinople through the Polyeuctus epigram, was picked up in connection to Justinian's Hagia Sophia. Several sources indicate that the Old Testament king and his Temple played a crucial role in how the newly built Hagia Sophia was perceived by contemporaries. The first evidence can be found in Romanos the Melodist's hymn "On Earthquakes and Fires" remembering the chaos of the Nika Revolt and Justinian's reconstruction of the great church.<sup>54</sup> Although it is impossible to reconstruct beyond doubt when the hymn was originally performed, it must have been closely connected to the completion of the Hagia Sophia and might even have served as an inauguration hymn.<sup>55</sup> As opposed to the dedicatory epigram of the Church of St Polyeuctus cut in stone, the hymn – at least in its original context – must be understood as a primarily oral medium: it was sung during service in front of the whole congregation.<sup>56</sup> Whereas the Polyeuctus epigram can be interpreted as an elitist statement intended primarily for an exclusive audience, the hymn addressed the broad mass of churchgoers. Johannes Koder characterizes such hymns as the "most modern mass-medium of the sixth century"; in vocabulary and meter, they reflect the spoken Greek of the early Byzantine period and accordingly were accessible to a wide audience.<sup>57</sup>

The hymn "On Earthquakes and Fires", which consists of a proem and twenty-five stanzas (*oikoi*), can be divided essentially into two halves. The first half – taking a generalizing, catechetical tone – explores the subject of human sinfulness and the

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53 On the Nika Riot, see Cameron 1976, esp. 278–281; Greatrex 1997; Meier 2003b; Leppin 2011, 142–148, and Pfeilschifter 2013, 178–210.

54 The hymn is preserved under the title *κοντάκιον κατανυκτικὸν ψαλλόμενον εἰς ἕκαστον σεισμόν καὶ ἐμπρησμόν*; edition and translation in Grosdidier de Matons 1981, 470–499 no. 54 with commentary *ibid.* 455–469; German translation by Koder 2005, 274–284 no. 23. On Romanos Melodos himself, see Koder 2005, 25–33, and Grosdidier de Matons 1974, 353–424. For detailed analysis of the form and content of the hymn, see Catafygiotu-Topping 1978; Grosdidier de Matons 1981, 455–469; Barkhuizen 1995; Silvano 2004, and Nickau 2002.

55 On the original performance, see Maas 1906, 2–7; Grosdidier de Matons 1981, 457–459; Mitsakis 1971, vol. 1, 389–390; Catafygiotu-Topping 1978, 23; Barkhuizen 1995, 1; Silvano 2004, 53–54, 60; Koder 2008(2010), 278; Leppin 2011, 194. Attempts to determine the original context range from the laying of the cornerstone of the new church shortly after the suppression of the revolt to the inauguration ceremony of the finished church at Christmas 537.

56 On the genre and its presentation, see Koder 2005, 17–24.

57 Quotation from Koder 2005, 22 ("das modernste Massenmedium des sechsten Jahrhunderts"); on Romanos' audience and on the language of the hymns, see Hunger 1984; Follieri 1991, 9; Koder 1999; Silvano 2004, 61; and Koder 2008(2010).

misfortunes that a philanthropic God inflicts on his people in order to lead them to repentance. In the second half (*oikoi* 13–25), those ideas are transferred to the reality of the Christian community in Constantinople culminating in several encomiastic stanzas (*oikoi* 21–24) that dwell on Justinian’s achievements for the city and its people.<sup>58</sup>

The hymn’s penitential nature is already revealed in the proem: God, who is given the epithets κύριος and σωτήρ, is begged for εὐσπλαγχνία (mercy) which he should grant those who turn to him full of θλίψις (dismay/fear) and μετάνοια (regret/repentance) in order to receive eternal life.<sup>59</sup> The following stanzas conjure an image of God as a δεσπότης ἀγαθός who is benevolent toward mankind in principle, but turns to harsh methods on account of man’s foolishness. The notion of theodicy is then applied to episodes from the Old and New Testament. Moses and the Israelites exemplify the dichotomy of God’s love of mankind (φιλανθρωπία) and the wrath (ὀργή) that their sinfulness provokes; divine mercy (εὐσπλαγχνία) eventually comes to the fore at Moses’ behest. The Canaanite woman from the Gospel of Matthew (15:21–28) also faces God’s wrath before penitently asking for eternal life. Building on this, *oikos* 6 emphasizes the importance of prayer and establishes the image of God as a father (ὡσπερ γὰρ πατήρ) who urges his negligent community to cultivate virtue (σωφροσύνη). *Oikoi* 8 and 9 introduce the metaphor of mankind as a plant that “received the source of all sin against God from the root of the first-created [= Adam];”<sup>60</sup> stanza 10 recalls further episodes from the New Testament in order to illustrate how those who trust in Christ (τοῖς πεποιθόσιν ἐπ’ αὐτῷ) are granted salvation (σωτηρία). Finally, stanzas 11 and 12 serve to recapitulate the themes explored up to that point and transfer them to the reality of the audience.<sup>61</sup>

In *oikos* 13, Romanos starts explicitly addressing the metropolitan public: events from Constantinople’s recent past are depicted as divine acts to heal the community (ἐν ἔργοις τὴν θεραπείαν τὴν ἡμῶν). On account of human sins (ἐκ τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν), God first sent earthquakes and then – since this warning proved ineffective – let drought follow as a second plague. Yet, even the drought only exacerbated the moral state of mankind, and so the third divine blow took aim at “the very table of grace” (αὐτὴν τὴν τράπεζαν τῆς χάριτος). “He [God] made up His mind to burn down the holy things of the church, just as formerly He surrendered the sacred

58 On the structure of the hymn, see Catafygiotu-Topping 1978, 24–25; Grosdidier de Matons 1981, 460; Barkhuizen 1995, 2–3; Nickau 2002, 605–608.

59 Ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον thereafter recurs as a refrain.

60 Ναρκοῦν λαμβάνει τὴν ἀρχὴν τὸ γένος τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐκ τῆς τοῦ πρωτοπλάστου / ρίζης τοῦ ἀμαρτάνειν ἐξ ἐναντίας τῷ Θεῷ. (Grosdidier de Matons 1981, 54.9). The English translation here and subsequently is taken from Carpenter 1973, 239–248 (slightly modified).

61 This is made explicit in the first verse of *oikos* 12: “Let us see easily and clearly ...” (ῥαδίως ἴδωμεν σαφῶς); the hymn also subsequently addresses the community collectively in the first-person plural.

ark to those of another race.”<sup>62</sup> The next two *oikoi* (15 and 16) give a dramatic depiction of the devastating fire that destroyed large parts of the capital, and eventually refer to the collective trauma that dominated the capital even years after the event: “All men know what happened at the time; probably the memory of events took our minds and thoughts as prisoners of war and made our tongues rather hesitant to tell about them.”<sup>63</sup> While it remains debated as to which historical events the first and second plague (earthquake and draught) are connected,<sup>64</sup> there is no doubt about the third plague: Romanos is referring to the Nika Riot of 532 and the destruction of the Hagia Sophia and the Hagia Eirene. In *oikos* 17, the hopelessness that prevailed in Constantinople after the disaster is contrasted with God’s mercy (παρέχει τὸν οἰκτιρμὸν πᾶσιν ὁ δεσπότης). Only on those who failed to become virtuous “did He unleash His wrath at the point of sword” (ἐπάγει ὀργὴν ἐν στόματι μαχαίρας). In the “point of sword” we find a clear reference to the massacre in the Hippodrome with which Justinian quelled the riotous masses.<sup>65</sup>

In *oikos* 18, the theme of prayer is reintroduced: facing the terrifying events, the pious turn to God begging him for mercy (ἐλεημοσύνη). Romanos places the emperor together with his consort, the empress Theodora, among those beseeching God and quotes his prayer as follows: “Grant to me, Savior, as to Thy David to conquer Goliath, for my hope is in Thee. As Merciful, save Thy faithful people, and grant to them eternal life.”<sup>66</sup> This prayer is striking for various reasons: formally, it represents a parallel to the prayer of Moses, who in *oikos* 4 likewise begs God for the salvation of his people. Romanos, however, goes further, explicitly having Justinian refer to King David of the Old Testament as an example of pious victory.<sup>67</sup> By directly quoting his prayer, Romanos lifts Justinian above the masses and places him in the tradition of Old Testament leaders as spokesman for his people and intermediary before God. Just as Moses prayed for the Israelites, just as David saved his people with his victory over Goliath, Justinian saves the people of Constantinople. His prayer indeed made an impact: hearing voices of “those who cried out and those who ruled” (τῶν κρᾶζόντων καὶ τῶν βασιλευόντων) – Romanos says in *oikos* 19 – God granted the mourning and devastated city of Constantinople his “humane pity” (τοὺς φιλανθρώπους

62 Καυθῆναι συγχωρήσας τὰ ἅγια τὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, / ὡς καὶ πρῶν ἄλλοφύλοις ἐκδέδωκε κιβωτὸν τὴν θεϊάν· (Grosdidier de Matons 1981, 54.14). On the Ark of the Covenant, see 1 Sam. 4:1–5:12; it is noteworthy that the Hagia Sophia is paralleled with the Old Testament Ark of the Covenant.

63 Ἄπαντες ἴσασι εἰκὸς τὰ τότε γεγονότα, ὧν εἰκότως ἡ μνήμη / τὸν νοῦν αἰχμαλωτίζει καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν ὑμῶν / καὶ ὀκηροτέραν καὶ τὴν γλῶτταν τὴν ἡμῶν / ποιεῖ πρὸς τὴν διήγησιν (Grosdidier de Matons 1981, 54.15).

64 See Grosdidier de Matons 1981, 462–464.

65 See Barkhuizen 1995, 14.

66 Δός μοι, βοῶν, σωτήρ, ὡς καὶ τῷ Δαυίδ σου / τοῦ νικήσαι Γολιάθ· σοὶ γὰρ ἐλπίζω· / σώσον τὸν πιστὸν λαόν σου ὡς ἐλεήμων, / οἷσπερ καὶ δώσης ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον (Grosdidier de Matons 1981, 54.18). On the David and Goliath episode, see 1 Sam 17.

67 On the chain Moses – David – Justinian, cf. Catafygiotu-Topping 1978, 30–31; Barkhuizen 1995, 13–14; Silvano 2002, 57 with n. 109, and Nickau 2002, 611.

οικτιρμούς). *Oikos* 19 moreover serves to recall the city's suffering, climaxing in the destruction of the θρόνος τῆς ἐκκλησίας, the throne of the Church, to which *oikos* 20 is dedicated. In antitheses, the state of destruction is contrasted with erstwhile magnificence: Σοφία and Εἰρήνη, personifying the destroyed churches, have been thrown to the ground; brilliance and beauty have given way to decay and fear.

The recollection of disaster sets the scene for the encomium<sup>68</sup> on Justinian starting in *oikos* 21, which again begins by looking back to the Old Testament. The opening lines evoke the image of the Temple of Jerusalem (τὸν ναὸν τὸν μέγιστον), “that the all-wise Solomon over a very long time raised up, adorned, and embellished with infinite wealth.”<sup>69</sup> This positive depiction, however, is short-lived and abruptly reversed in the second half of the stanza: the sanctuary was not only destroyed, but remained in ruins and rises no more (μένει ἐκπεσὼν καὶ οὐκ ἀνέστη). In keeping with the story of the Gospels, Romanos then contrasts the fallen temple with the achievements of the New Covenant: “The people of Israel were deprived of his temple; but we, instead of that, now have the holy Resurrection and Zion, which Constantine and the faithful Helena gave the world two hundred and fifty years after the fall [of the temple].”<sup>70</sup> Here, the familiar image of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher as antithesis to the destroyed Temple of Jerusalem<sup>71</sup> is merely another step toward Romanos' main argument. In the following verses, he shifts from Jerusalem to Constantinople: while 250 years passed between the destruction of the Jewish Temple and the construction of Constantine's churches in Jerusalem, “just one day after the disaster, work was begun on having the church restored. It was brilliantly decorated and brought to completion.”<sup>72</sup> At the end of stanza 22, Romanos does not fail to mention those responsible for these building projects: “The rulers prided themselves on the expenditure; the Master dispenses eternal life.”<sup>73</sup>

<sup>68</sup> On the encomium of Justinian, cf. Barkhuizen 1995, 16–18.

<sup>69</sup> ὃν Σολομῶν ἐκεῖνος ὁ πάνσοφος χρόνῳ μακροτάτῳ / ἀνεγείρας καὶ κοσμήσας ἐποίκιλε πλούτῳ ἀπεράντῳ (Grosdidier de Matons 1981, 54.21).

<sup>70</sup> Λαὸς μὲν ὁ τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ ναοῦ ἀποστερεῖται· ἡμεῖς δὲ ἀντ' ἐκείνου / Ἀνάστασιν ἁγίαν καὶ τὴν Σιών ἔχομεν νῦν, / ἦνπερ Κωνσταντῖνος καὶ Ἑλένη ἡ πιστὴ / τῷ κόσμῳ ἐδωρήσαντο / μετὰ διακοσίους πενήτηκοντα χρόνους τοῦ πτωθῆναι (Grosdidier de Matons, 1981, 54.22). It is noteworthy that this passage mentions only Constantine's building projects in Jerusalem. Not a word is said about the founding of Constantinople and the churches built in the capital. In this way, the passage is less about Constantine as emperor than it is about the significance of the church he built in Jerusalem as antithesis of the Jewish Temple.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 3,33,1–2; on this passage, see Ousterhout 1990 and Ousterhout 2010, 233–239.

<sup>72</sup> Ἄλλ' ἐνταῦθα μετὰ μίαν τῆς πτώσεως ἤρξαντο ἡμέραν / τὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐγείρεσθαι ἔργον· / καὶ φαιδρύνεται λαμπρῶς καὶ τελειοῦται· (Grosdidier de Matons 1981, 54.22). With respect to the date of the hymn's presentation, the verb τελειοῦται in the present tense could be interpreted indicating that the church is about to be completed or already is completed.

<sup>73</sup> Οἱ μὲν βασιλεῖς δαπάνην φιλοτιμοῦνται, ὁ δὲ δεσπότης ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον (Grosdidier de Matons 1981, 54.22).

Just as the hardships that befell the people of Constantinople are explained with reference to basic human sin, Justinian's activity is placed into an explicitly Christian framework: Romanos depicts him as the pious leader of his people and their intermediary before God in imitation of Moses and David; the reconstruction of the Hagia Sophia relates to the famous Solomon and his Temple. However, similar to the mechanism employed in Juliana's case, the aspect of surpassing the past prevails: Romanos compares both the long time (χρόνῳ μακροτάτῳ) that Solomon needed to build the Temple, as well as the 250 years that lay between the destruction of the Temple and the building of Constantine's churches, with the rapidity of Justinian's endeavor. In contrast to the Polyeuctus epigram, however, the aspect of surpassing Solomon is anchored in Christian logic that understands the relations of the Old Testament as antecedents to Christ's incarnation and events yet to come. Thus, both the Temple of Solomon and the churches of Constantine figure as antecedents to the Hagia Sophia.<sup>74</sup> Romanos makes no attempt to construct a real imperial genealogy for Justinian like the one Juliana displayed in the Polyeuctus epigram. Instead, Justinian emerges as the peak of a spiritual line originating in the Old Testament. Moreover, the hymn defines the emperor's relationship to God: the verse "The rulers prided themselves on the expenditure; the Master dispenses eternal life," distinguishes the physical, earthly level of Justinian from the spiritual, heavenly realms of God. Nevertheless, there is a clear parallel between the earthly *basileus* and heavenly *despotes*, reflecting official imperial ideology.<sup>75</sup>

Eventually, stanzas 23 and 24 give another detailed account of the emperor's accomplishments for the capital and its population. "Now they [Justinian and Theodora] have revealed things that are great, brilliant, and worthy of wonder, indeed surpassing all the men of old, they who at this time reverently manage affairs of the Romans. In a short time, they rebuilt the entire city so that the hardships of all who had suffered were forgotten. The very structure of the church is erected with such excellence that it imitates Heaven, the divine throne, which indeed offers eternal life."<sup>76</sup> The verb ἀνέστησαν takes up the contrast with the Jewish Temple, which had never been rebuilt, and aligns Justinian's work of restoration with Christian resurrection; for Constantinople, the emperor's building projects correspond to God's gift of eternal life. Romanos concludes by representing the newly built church as

<sup>74</sup> On the antithesis Solomon – Justinian, see Catafygiotu-Topping 1978, 32–33; Koder 1994; and Nickau 2002, 614.

<sup>75</sup> This parallel, supported by the μὲν-δέ construction, is also highlighted by Catafygiotu-Topping 1978, 34; similarly Silvano 2002, 58. Nickau 2002, 615–616, in contrast, interprets this verse as downplaying Justinian's achievements – unconvincingly, in my view.

<sup>76</sup> Μεγάλα ὄντως καὶ φαιδρὰ καὶ ἄξια θαυμάτων καὶ ὑπερβεβηκότα / ἅπαντας τοὺς ἀρχαίους βασιλεῖς ἔδειξαν νυνὶ / οἱ ἐν τῷ παρόντι τῶν Ῥωμαίων εὐσεβῶς / τὰ πράγματα διέποντες / ἐν χρόνῳ γὰρ ὀλίγῳ ἀνέστησαν ἅπασαν τὴν πόλιν, / ὡς καὶ λήθην ἐγγενέσθαι τοῖς πάσχοισι πάντων τῶν δυσκόλων· / ὁ οἶκος δὲ αὐτὸς ὁ τῆς ἐκκλησίας / ἐν τοσαύτῃ ἀρετῇ οἰκοδομεῖται / ὡς τὸν οὐρανὸν μιμεῖσθαι, τὸν θεῖον θρόνον, / ὃς καὶ παρέχει ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον (Grosdidier de Matons 1981, 54.23).

mimesis of Heaven and reflection of God's throne. While Juliana's dedicatory inscription is mostly lacking in Christian symbolism, Romanos' hymn expresses such symbolism to perfection. The relation between the earthly church (θρόνος τῆς ἐκκλησίας) and the heavenly/divine throne (τὸν θεῖον θρόνον) corresponds to the parallel between the earthly *basileus* and the heavenly *despotes*. The concluding prayer that makes up stanzas 24 and 25 continues this tone and beseeches God "to strengthen the undertaking and grounding of his church" (τὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας στερεῶσαι τῆς αὐτοῦ ἐγγείρημα καὶ ἔδρασμα) so as to bring joy to the rulers (βασιλεῖς), the citizens (πολίται), and the priests (ιερεῖς). Recalling the terror and confusion to which the capital had been exposed, Romanos concludes by praying to Christ to save the entire city, churches, and emperors: Σῶτερ, (...) πᾶσαν σῶσον τὴν πόλιν, σῶσον τὰς ἐκκλησίας, σῶσον δὲ καὶ τοὺς βασιλεῖς.

As indicated at the beginning of this section, the Nika Riot radically challenged Justinian's authority and could only be brought under control through military force causing a high number of casualties. In this context, the hymn paints a picture of a severely traumatized city struggling to overcome the rift between the emperor and his people. Romanos' perspective can be understood as a coping strategy: he presents a means for the congregation to deal with the horrific events of the immediate past by developing a specific, religiously oriented interpretation.<sup>77</sup> Its gist is to present the Nika Riot in line with natural disasters as divine punishment; instead of making specific actors responsible for burning down the churches or the massacre in the Hippodrome, Romanos places human sin and divine wrath in a universal context. This interpretation not only serves to exculpate Justinian from slaughtering his people,<sup>78</sup> but also shows him in a pointedly positive light during this critical phase of reintegration. By virtue of his exceptional piety, the emperor, as the spokesman for his subjects who have succumbed to sin, shares in God's salvific master plan. Against the background of disaster, his Christian integrity and his accomplishments for the good of the city – both as the intermediary between his people and God and as the builder of the destroyed church – come to the fore; his reconstruction of the Hagia Sophia is emblematic of God's pity. The hymn makes no explicit reference to Justinian being almost overthrown by collective dissent; on the contrary, it – almost cynically – propagates harmony between the urban population and the emperor, as he and his wife are depicted among those praying to pacify God's wrath. In Romanos' interpretation, Solomon, together with Moses and David, not only serves as an illustrious archetype from the Old Testament that reinforces the emperor's position in the imperial capital; by referring to Solomon's Temple, the reconstruction of

<sup>77</sup> For nuanced interpretations of the hymn in its historical context, see especially Nickau 2002 and Silvano 2004.

<sup>78</sup> His harsh actions against the rebels met with criticism elsewhere; for example, Malalas (ed. Dindorf), 476; cf. Proc. *hist. arc.* 7 on Justinian's relationship with the circus factions.



the Hagia Sophia, which grew out of the Nika Riot, is represented as fulfilling Old Testament models – thus sanctioning both building and builder.<sup>79</sup>

The question whether Justinian himself commissioned “On Earthquakes and Fires” has to remain open.<sup>80</sup> Nonetheless, it is highly likely that the emperor appreciated Romanos’ interpretation of the recent past and his own role in it. As discussed above, hymns seem to have been the most sensible medium for reaching a broad audience and communicating a certain message. By establishing a religiously charged interpretation of the Nika Riot, the hymn served as a means of reinforcing Justinian’s authority; it contributed to restoring the *consensus omnium* in Constantinople and to reuniting the estranged parties – βασιλεῖς, πολῖται and ἱερεῖς.

Next to “On Earthquakes and Fires”, another contemporary source, an anonymous hymn, connects Solomon with Justinian and his Hagia Sophia. Although this second hymn does not offer such clear references to the lived experience of the community as the one analyzed above, we can clearly reconstruct the context in which it was originally performed. The acrostic gives the title ΤΩΝ ΕΓΚΑΙΝΙΩΝ Ο ΥΜΝΟΣ, and *oikos* 2 explicitly refers to the inauguration of the Hagia Sophia.<sup>81</sup> Since the invocation of the emperor in the concluding prayer in stanza 18 appears in the singular, the hymn must have been composed after Theodora’s death in 548. That only leaves the rededication of the Hagia Sophia on Christmas 562, after its dome had collapsed following an earthquake.<sup>82</sup> In his edition, Constantine A. Trypanis argues that the hymn should be understood as a popular counterpart to the ekphrasis of Paul the Silentary, which was recited on the same occasion several days later in the imperial palace and the patriarch’s residence.<sup>83</sup>

The overarching theme of the hymn is the question of whether or how God could find a dwelling place on earth. Solomon’s statement in 2 Chron 6:18 – Εἰ θεὸς μετ’ ἀνθρώπων οἰκήσει – is interpreted as prophesying the incarnation, which in turn lays the ground for earthly churches: “Having once resided in flesh the Word consents, by the operation of the Spirit, to reside in temples built by hand, assuring his presence by mystical rites.”<sup>84</sup> However, it soon becomes apparent that the hymn does not refer to churches in general, but to the Hagia Sophia in particular: “This is why we have now consecrated the sanctuary of Wisdom as a manifestly di-

<sup>79</sup> On the connection between the Hagia Sophia and the Temple of Solomon, see Ousterhout 2010, 239–243 and Scheja 1962 (1963), who argues that the dimensions of the Hagia Sophia should be understood as an imitation of the Temple.

<sup>80</sup> On the relationship between Justinian and Romanos, see Koder 2008 (2010); Koder 1994, 141.

<sup>81</sup> “This is why we have now consecrated the sanctuary of Wisdom...” Διὰ τοῦτο προφθάσωμεν τῆς Σοφίας τὸ ἁγίασμα; cf. also *oikos* 7. The hymn is edited in Trypanis 1968, 139–147; the English translation here and subsequently is taken from Palmer 1988, 140–144; on the question of authorship, see Trypanis 1968, 139, and Palmer 1988, 138.

<sup>82</sup> On the date, see Trypanis 1968, 139, and Palmer 1988, 137–138.

<sup>83</sup> Trypanis 1968, 139, following Friedländer 1912, 110; cf. Palmer 1988, 138.

<sup>84</sup> Ἐν σαρκὶ ἐνοικήσας ὁ Λόγος κατοικεῖν ἐν ναοῖς χειροτέκτοις εὐδοκεῖ ἐνεργεῖα τοῦ πνεύματος / μουσικαῖς τελεταῖς τὴν αὐτοῦ παρουσίαν πιστούμενος (Trypanis 12.4).

vine place for the honor and worship of the mystery.”<sup>85</sup> This church alone is deemed worthy to serve as the “most sacred residence of God” (τὸ θαυμάσιον τέμενος τοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ), as a “kind of heaven on earth” (οὐρανός τις ἐπίγειος), “since it surpasses the whole of mankind’s knowledge of architectural technology” (τεχνικὴν ἄπασαν ὑπερανέχον ἐπιστήμην ἀνθρώπιον ἐν τοῖς δώμασιν).

After *oikoi* 6–9 draw an epic comparison between the church and the firmament (στερεώμα), *oikos* 10 again turns to the Old Testament: Moses had seen the image of the Tabernacle (σκηνὴν μαρτυρίου), but he could not describe it in words; thus Bezalel, “endowed with the wisdom of God” (ὑπουργὸν ... σοφίαν [ἐκ] θεοῦ), was entrusted with building it. In stanza 12, the hymn transitions from the Old Testament to sixth-century Constantinople, linking the two spheres by the following analogy: “We have the Savior as our lawgiver, as all-holy Tabernacle this divinely constructed temple, we propose our believing Basileus for Bezalel’s office.”<sup>86</sup> With the Tabernacle established as the model for the Hagia Sophia, Justinian turns into another Bezalel, enlightened by God’s wisdom. From Moses and Bezalel, the poet moves on to Solomon and his Temple in Jerusalem, which is described in stanzas 13 and 14: “That temple was commonly known as the place of God, to which appeal was made by all; and the whole of Israel flooded to it under compulsion, driven together by the whip of the Law, for in it they used to make their offerings.”<sup>87</sup> Following the description of the Jewish Temple, the familiar topic of surpassing Old Testament models is taken up again: “But they [the Jews] would certainly have to give us the credit for surpassing them, for the very evidence of the senses demonstrates that this divine *chef d’oeuvre* transcends everything; and its buttress is Christ.”<sup>88</sup> While the Temple of Jerusalem gathered only one nation, and did so under the compulsion of the law, all people freely acknowledge their admiration for the Hagia Sophia, “so that even the unbelievers admit unequivocally that the one who lives in it is God.”<sup>89</sup> The differences between the Jewish Temple and the Hagia Sophia are detailed further in *oikos* 16, contrasting the bloody sacrifices of the Jews with the Christian spiritual sacrifice. In the concluding prayer, the poet addresses God:

O Savior, born of a virgin, preserve this house until the consummation of the world! (...) Heed the cries of the servants of thine house and grant peace to thy people by banishing heresies and

**85** Διὰ τοῦτο προφθάσωμεν τῆς Σοφίας τὸ ἀγίασμα / ὡς βασιλεία ἐμφανῶς θεϊκὰ πρὸς ἀνευφήμησιν καὶ λατρείαν τοῦ μυστηρίου (Trypanis 12.2).

**86** Νομοθέτην ἡμεῖς τὸν σωτήρα κεκτημένοι, σκηνὴν παναγίαν τὸν θεάρμοστον ἔχομεν τοῦτον / ναόν, ἐν Βεσσελεὴλ βασιλέα πιστὸν προβαλλόμενοι (Trypanis 12.12).

**87** Ὑπὸ πάντων ἐπίκλητος τόπος τοῦ θεοῦ τῷ ὀνόματι εἶναι ὁ ναὸς ἐθρυλεῖτο ἐκεῖνος, / καὶ εἰς τοῦτον ὁ πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ ἐπειγόμενος [συν]ἔρρει / νομικῇ μάστιγι σθνασμένους, / ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ προσέφερον τὰ καρπώματα (Trypanis 12.14).

**88** ἐν ἡμῖν δὲ τὰ κρείττονα καὶ βεβαίως [γὰρ] ἀνευφήμουν <ἄν> / ἀνεδείχθη γὰρ ἀληθῶς αἰσθητῶς [ἅμα καὶ νοητῶς] τὸ μεγαλουργημα ὑπεραίρον τοῦτο τὸ θεῖον / ὑπὲρ <ἄ>παντα, ὃ στηρίζει Χριστός (Trypanis 12.14).

**89** ὅθεν καὶ ἄπιστοι μετὰ θάρσους ὁμολογοῦσιν, / ὡς ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ ὁ οἰκῆτωρ θεός (Trypanis 12.15).

crushing the strength of the barbarians! Keep the faithful priest(s) and the Basileus safe and adorned with all piety.<sup>90</sup>

Whereas “On Earthquakes and Fires” explicitly addresses past calamities and offers a strategy to reintegrate the community after traumatizing events, the anonymous inauguration hymn strikes a purely celebratory tone: reference to the collapse of the dome is lacking.<sup>91</sup> The gist of the second hymn is to underscore the significance of the Hagia Sophia as *the only* worthy dwelling place for God on earth, as the center of the Christian *kosmos*. Setting the Hagia Sophia above other churches is initially legitimated by the technological superiority of the building; in a second step, the Church is distinguished as housing the divine by typologically linking it to the Jewish Tabernacle. Jewish cult sites, which were regarded as the dwelling places of God in Old Testament times, are presented as ephemeral steps toward divine incarnation and Christian churches in which God’s presence manifests itself through the Eucharist.<sup>92</sup> Beyond that, Solomon’s Temple serves to contrast Jewish compulsion with the voluntary initiative of Christians; the hymn indeed mentions its magnificent decoration, albeit noting that the Hagia Sophia obviously eclipses it. By virtue of analogy to Bezalel, the emperor is presented as a builder endowed with divine wisdom, but he takes second place to the magnificence of the church.<sup>93</sup> No direct comparison between Justinian and Solomon is made.

The last evidence for the topos of surpassing Solomon and his temple stems from Gorippus’ verse panegyric in honor of Emperor Justin II, written shortly after his coronation in 565.<sup>94</sup> After interpreting Justinian’s construction of the church of the Holy Wisdom as prophesying the reign of Justin II and his wife Sophia and briefly describing the church and its symbolism, the poet concludes: “Let the description of Solomon’s temple now be stilled” (4,283: *Salomoniaci sileat descriptio templi*). In this case, Solomon’s Temple is not referred to as an Old Testament archetype foretelling Christian churches; it rather serves as one of the *cunctorum miracula nota locorum* (4,284) that have been overshadowed by the Hagia Sophia.

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<sup>90</sup> Σύ, σωτήρ, ὁ τεχθεὶς ἐκ παρθένου, διαφύλαξον τοῦτον τὸν οἶκον ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ κόσμου, / (...) / [καὶ] τὰς φωνὰς πρόσδεξαι τῶν οἰκετῶν σου / καὶ εἰρήνην τῷ λαῷ σου χαριζόμενος [καταπέμψον] / τὰς αἰρέσεις ἐκδιώξον καὶ βαρβάρων ἰσχὺν σύντριψον, / ἱερεῖς δὲ καὶ βασιλεῖα πιστοῦς πάση συντήρησον εὐσεβεῖα κεκοσμημένους (Tyrpanis 12.18).

<sup>91</sup> We may suspect implicit references in certain verses, such as in *oikos* 14, which brings forward the idea that Christ will support the building (ὁ στηρίζει Χριστός).

<sup>92</sup> See Palmer 1988, 148.

<sup>93</sup> It is also interesting that the priests are mentioned before the emperor in the concluding prayer.

<sup>94</sup> Edition and translation by Cameron with commentary on the Solomon comparison in Cameron 1976, 204–205. On the date of the work, see Cameron 1976, 4–7.

## Conclusion

With respect to the overarching theme of this volume, this chapter traces an ideological connection between Constantinople and Jerusalem,<sup>95</sup> highlighting the presence and impact of an Old Testament king in the political discourse of the Byzantine imperial capital.<sup>96</sup> The sources discussed here show how the idea of Solomon was evoked to convey specific political messages. Both Solomon and his temple could be endowed with multiple layers of meaning. Neither the Polyeuctus epigram nor the hymns on the Hagia Sophia claim that either church imitates or revives the Jewish Temple in the imperial capital.<sup>97</sup> Instead, we witness the creation of a powerful topos governed by the claim of *surpassing* the Old Testament king and his temple. The differences in how the Polyeuctus epigram, on the one hand, and the hymns on the Hagia Sophia, on the other hand, refer to Solomon attest to distinct strategies of communication. In light of the declining relevance of the Anicii in the imperial capital, Juliana created an imperial aura that draws on every category of former greatness: it stretches from her imperial ancestors over the Christian emperors par excellence, Theodosius and Constantine, to the Jewish King Solomon and his temple in Jerusalem. Romanos' hymn, by contrast, refers to Solomon and his Temple in order to bestow Justinian's building project, which grew out of the Nika Riot, with a distinctively positive Christian meaning. It interprets both destruction and rebuilding of the Hagia Sophia as part of God's salvific master plan, rehabilitates Justinian as a pious leader of his people, and thus strengthens the emperor's position within the political structure of the capital. The anonymous hymn uses the Temple of Solo-

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**95** The topos of surpassing Solomon was part of a wider process that bestowed the capital with attributes of Jerusalem; Constantinople was established as New Jerusalem in addition to its status as New Rome; cf. the chapter by Paul Magdalino in this volume. The perception of Constantinople as New Jerusalem is documented as early as the sixth century: cf. *Vita Danielis Stylitae* 10: "Go to Byzantium and you will see the Second Jerusalem, Constantinople" (ἄπελθε εἰς τὸ Βυζάντιον καὶ βλέπεις δευτέραν Ἱερουσαλήμ, τὴν Κωνσταντινούπολιν). On Constantinople as New Jerusalem, cf. e.g. Meier 2003a, 65 n. 94; Külzer 2000, esp. 58–59 and Magdalino 1993, 11–12. Besides the discursive presence of Jerusalem in Constantinople, relics frequently made their way from Jerusalem to Constantinople; see especially Ousterhout 2012; Ousterhout 2006, and (with respect to the Hagia Sophia) Scheja 1962 (1963). In my postdoctoral project, I investigate the translation of relics to Constantinople from the fourth to the seventh century as a means to construct a Christian sacred topography in the imperial capital.

**96** The references to Solomon discussed here are by no means the only ones made between an Old Testament figure and a late Roman / Byzantine emperor; numerous examples have been collected in Rapp 2010. The Old Testament in late antiquity served as a "guiding principle" alongside others, such as Roman imperial tradition, for discussing and negotiating Byzantine monarchy; see the pointed remarks of Dagron 2003, 50.

**97** Such a claim would in fact bear negative connotations in a Christian sense; cf. Dagron 1984, 304; Milner 1994, 75; Ousterhout 2010, 225.

mon as a foil to present the Hagia Sophia as God's rightful dwelling place, while simultaneously celebrating the achievements of its builder, Justinian.

In conclusion, it seems plausible that Solomon's presence in the hymns correlated with the efforts Justinian made in order to respond to Juliana's provocation. The hymns on the Hagia Sophia pick out the vision of Solomon from Juliana's representation, adapt it to Justinian's own strategy, and transform it into an argument in his favor. Glancing at the *Patria Konstantinopouleos*, we may conclude that, in the long run, Justinian's reference to Solomon had a bigger impact than Juliana's. The evidence analyzed above indicates that the connection between Justinian's building activity and the Jewish Temple reached a broad public: the hymns spread the idea much further than Juliana's epigram, an essentially elitist statement. On that basis, the connection between the Byzantine emperor and the Old Testament king became deeply ingrained in the political discourse of the capital; it remained rooted in the collective memory to such an extent that it could re-emerge prominently in the *Diegesis*, although in a slightly distorted way.

Justinian, however, was not the last Byzantine emperor to appropriate the topos of surpassing Solomon. After a substantial gap in new imperial church building projects, Basil I dedicated the Nea Ekklesia in or adjoining the imperial palace in the late ninth century. Relating the inauguration ceremony, various chronicles report what at first glance appears to be a strange legend: the emperor supposedly sacrificed a statue of Solomon from the Basilica Cistern in the substructures of his church.<sup>98</sup> Apparently, the topos of surpassing Solomon and his Temple, as it was established in the sixth century, not only found its way into the *Diegesis* but also impacted the ideology of imperial church building up to the ninth century and beyond.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Leo Gramm. 257; Ps. Sym. 692; Geo. Mon. Cont. 844; see Dagron 1984, 269, 309; Magdalino 1987, 58 with references to the sources and *ibid.* *passim* on the Nea Ekklesia. On the statue of Solomon, see n. 3 above. On imperial church building after Justinian, cf. Paul Magdalino's chapter in this volume.

<sup>99</sup> For the transmission of the legendary account of Justinian, the Hagia Sophia, and its connection to Solomon (also beyond the *Diegesis*), see Prinzing 1986, 89–92. In the eleventh century, Psellos compared the Peribleptos Church, sponsored by Romanos III Argyros (1028–1034), to both the Temple of Solomon and Justinian's Hagia Sophia, although in a critical way; see *ibid.* 91.

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