

# A Coptic Version of the Discovery of the Holy Sepulchre

*H. A. Drake*

THE RECOVERY of the site of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is one of the major accomplishments of the reign of Constantine the Great, commemorated in one of the most widely circulated of Christian legends—that of the discovery of the Cross by his mother, St Helena.<sup>1</sup> A peculiar version of this well-known tale survives in Coptic in a manuscript acquired early in the nineteenth century by the Museum of Turin and published more than 80 years ago by Francesco Rossi,<sup>2</sup> now reedited by Tito Orlandi with an English translation by Birger Pearson.<sup>3</sup> In it, the Holy Sepulchre is discovered by neither Constantine nor Helena but by an otherwise unknown virgin sister of the emperor named Eudoxia. Moreover the persecuting Emperor Diocletian ends his days blind and begging at the city's gates, and his successor Constantine fights a war with the Persians, in the course of which he is first rescued from certain capture by a pillar of cloud and then achieves victory by drawing water from a rock in the desert with a blow from his rod.<sup>4</sup>

But numerous Coptic legends give similar accounts of Diocletian's fate,<sup>5</sup> and Constantine's impossible war with the Persians—including

<sup>1</sup> See the familiar version in Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea* ed. Th. Graesse<sup>3</sup> (Bratislava 1890, repr. 1965) ch.68, pp.303–11. See further *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*<sup>3</sup> I 121–25 *s.n.* *Constantinus imp.*, III 81–87 *s.v.* *Crux D.N. Iesu Christi*; *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina s.n. Helena imperatrix*, I 563–65; and n.18 *infra*. Euseb. *Vita Constantini* 3.25–40, ed. F. Winkelmann (Berlin 1975) 94–101, gives a contemporary account of the recovery and adornment of the Holy Sepulchre.

<sup>2</sup> Museo Egizio di Torino, Cat. 63.000, Cod. Ib, fol. 10<sup>v</sup>–41<sup>r</sup>; transl. F. Rossi, *Mem Torino*<sup>2</sup> 37 (1886) 84–115, 150–62. See T. Orlandi, “Les papyrus coptes du Musée égyptien de Turin,” *Muséon* 87 (1974) 115–27.

<sup>3</sup> T. Orlandi, B. Pearson, H. Drake, *Eudoxia and the Sepulchre: A Constantinian Legend in Coptic*, Testi e documenti per lo studio dell'Antichità, ser. copte (forthcoming, Milan 1980) [hereafter, ORLANDI].

<sup>4</sup> Orlandi pp.9–13, 21–31.

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, the panegyrics on St Claudius by Severus of Antioch and Constantine of Assiout in G. Godron, ed., *Textes coptes relatifs à Saint Claude d'Antioch* (PO 35.4, 1970) 491ff, 577; “Les Actes du martyre de Saint Isidore,” ed. H. Munier, *BIFAO* 14 (1918) 182f; the Encomium and Ninth Miracle in E. A. W. Budge, *The Martyrdom and*

the specific sequence of initial defeat, miracle and victory—occurs in a number of Byzantine sources.<sup>6</sup> The story of Eudoxia is, by contrast, unique to this account. Why was it created? When and how? It is to these questions that this essay is addressed.

On first reading, the origin of the Eudoxia story seems disarmingly obvious: it is merely a clumsy retelling of the famous legend of Helena and the True Cross. In her royal chambers, the virgin Eudoxia is summoned by a vision to rescue Christ's tomb from oblivion. With Constantine's enthusiastic support, she travels to Jerusalem and extorts from the Jews the whereabouts of one Jacob, a Christian presbyter who has knowledge of its location. When opened, the tomb reveals, among other things, the Inscription to the Cross—the Cross itself having already been discovered by Helena. Constantine wishes to take this Inscription with him, but is prevented because the Lord wishes it to remain on the site until the last days. Instead, he constructs a replica, which thereafter precedes him everywhere, moving by its own power. Eudoxia stays in Jerusalem to build a church on the site of the tomb, after which she also endows the sites of Jesus' birth, baptism and arrest on the Mount of Olives, and adorns the rock where He washed the apostles' feet. Then she too returns to Constantinople.

The imprint of the Helena legend is clear, although the author seems to have gotten little of it straight. Instead of the Jew Cyriacus, who in the Helena story holds the secret of the Sepulchre's locale, he introduces the Christian Jacob, thereby making the whole episode with the Jews curiously superfluous. He fares no better with Helena's endowments, correctly attributing to her surrogate, Eudoxia, only the church at Bethlehem.<sup>7</sup> Most puzzling of all is the arbitrary

---

*Miracles of Saint George of Cappadocia* (London 1888) 273, 325; ps.-Cyril, "The Discourse . . . on the Cross," in *idem, Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (London 1915) 209, 788. A similar fate is assigned by legend to Justinian's famous general Belisarius. But the earliest version of this story dates to the IX cent., whereas the Eudoxia legend appears to have been written in the VII cent. See H.-G. Beck, *Geschichte der byzantinischer Volksliteratur* (Munich 1971) 150ff, and n.23 *infra*.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., F. Halkin, "Une nouvelle vie de Constantin dans un legendier de Patmos," *AnalBoll* 77 (1959) 69, 83–92, 102; M. Guidi, ed., "Un B'loc di Costantino," *RendLinc*<sup>5</sup> 16 (1907) 316ff; Cedrenus, *Hist.comp.* 283c, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB 23 (Bonn 1838) I 496. Theophanes also describes this war but puts Constantine's son in command: *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig 1883) I 20.

<sup>7</sup> Helena did build on the Mount of Olives, but the site she commemorated was that of the Ascension, not Jesus' arrest. See Euseb. *V.Const.* 3.41–43. On her constructions in Palestine see H. Leclercq, "Hélène, impératrice," *DACL* VI.2 (1925) 2131ff.

separation of the discovery of the Sepulchre from that of the Cross, which as the author himself acknowledges had already been performed by Helena.<sup>8</sup> In an apparent effort to compensate for this loss he has introduced the Inscription to the Cross as a sort of makeshift Labarum, thereby effecting the join between this event and Constantine's conversion, accomplished in the traditional story by the discovery of the Cross itself.

Why was this separation necessary? We must presume that for the author—a term used advisedly, without meaning to suggest that the Eudoxia story necessarily was developed by a single person *sua sponte*—this version, despite its flaws, accomplished something which the Helena legend did not. There is no reason in this case to believe that this version developed independent of or earlier than the Helena legend, for the author clearly is familiar with her discovery of the Cross. Indeed, it is more likely that the enormous popularity of the Helena legend kept him from tampering with this aspect of the event.

But if the Helena story was so well known, how was he able to change any part of it? The answer, I would argue, lies in the fact that the author lived in the Greek East rather than the Latin West. Because of differences in terminology and liturgical practice between the two halves of the Empire, it was easier for someone in the East to separate the discovery of the Tomb from that of the Cross than it would have been for a counterpart in the West.

The site of the Holy Sepulchre is complex, embracing several separate and distinct locations—not only the tomb but also the site of Calvary on Golgotha and an adjoining basilica ordered built by Constantine.<sup>9</sup> In the East popular idiom distinguished the tomb from the basilica, referring to the one as the 'Anastasis' and the other as the 'Martyrium', whereas in the West the entire site usually was embraced within the single title of the 'Church of the Holy Sepulchre'. The result was that in the West the distinct components of the site, while certainly known, often became blurred in a way

<sup>8</sup> In Orlandi p.57, Constantine vows to Eudoxia that he will do everything that the Lord commanded, "just as I did with my mother Helen on the day of the discovery of the Cross" (transl. Pearson).

<sup>9</sup> H. Vincent and F.-M. Abel, *Jérusalem, Recherches de topographie, d'archéologie et d'histoire*, II: *Jérusalem nouvelle* (Paris 1914–22) chs. 5–6. In matters of detail, C. Coüasnon, *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem* (London 1974), is preferable. E. Wistrand, *Konstantins Kirche am Heiligen Grab in Jerusalem nach den ältesten literarischen Zeugnissen* (Acta Gothoburg. 58, 1952), has useful testimonia.

that did not occur in the East. Thus in the Eudoxia story (p.54) the virgin tells Constantine that Christ has ordered her to “go to Jerusalem and discover my Martyrion and my Anastasis”—the popular designations for buildings which, technically, would not yet even have existed. By contrast, when the Western pilgrim Egeria wrote to describe the site to her sisters at the end of the fourth century she used the terms ‘Anastasis’ and ‘Martyrium’ in a self-conscious and confusing way, often bungling their precise meanings.<sup>10</sup>

The point of this distinction is that the basilica, the ‘Martyrium’, rapidly came to be associated specifically with the discovery of the Cross. Its underground caverns were named the ‘Chapel of St Helena’, commemorating the place where she was believed to have prayed for guidance, and the ‘Crypt of the Invention’, believed to embrace the cistern where the Holy Wood itself was discovered.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the Martyrium itself occasionally was identified simply as the ‘Church of the Cross’.<sup>12</sup> Thus in the East the Tomb and the Cross possessed separate physical identities in the Anastasis and the Martyrium which, as always, could have generated independent literary traditions.<sup>13</sup> In the West the opposite was the case, with a single physical identification, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, serving further to cement the natural ties between these two parts.

<sup>10</sup> For instance, Egeria frequently uses some explanatory phrase with the word ‘Martyrium’ as if uncertain whether her sisters would understand the word by itself as a reference to the particular building. Thus the phrase *in ecclesia maiore, id est ad Martyrium* (or a near equivalent) occurs at 30.2, 30.3, 32.1, 38.1, 39.2, 41, 43.2, 45.2, 46.1, 46.5 and 49.3. See also her misidentification of the Basilica at 24.8 (*in basilica, quae est loco iuxta Anastasim, foras tamen*) and 24.10 (*tota basilica Anastasis*). As her translator, J. Wilkinson, remarks, “*basilica* seems to be a word unfamiliar to Egeria”: *Egeria’s Travels* (London 1971) 230. For the text, see *Itinerarium Egeriae*, ed. A. Franceschini and R. Weber, CCSL 175, pp.37–90. On the much-disputed date of Egeria’s pilgrimage, see now Wilkinson pp.237–39.

<sup>11</sup> Vincent and Abel, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.9) 131–34. The date of these caverns is uncertain. K. Conant thought they were part of the original Constantinian structure, though not immediately identified with Helena: “The Original Buildings at the Holy Sepulchre,” *Speculum* 31 (1956) 11. However, the archaeological study conducted by Père Couânon, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.9) 41, has thrown this theory into doubt.

<sup>12</sup> Vincent and Abel, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.9) 190. Cf. the entry for the consulship of Optatus and Paulinus (A.D. 334) in the *Paschal Chronicle: τὰ ἐγκαίνια τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ ἁγίου σταυροῦ*, ed. L. Dindorf, CSHB 9.1 (Bonn 1832) 531.

<sup>13</sup> H. Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, 4th ed. transl. D. Attwater (New York 1955) 29ff.

It is the same with the liturgy. Since the Roman calendar awarded only a single day to the discovery of both the Tomb and the Cross, the tendency in the West was to celebrate the two as part of the same event.<sup>14</sup> But Eastern tradition allowed for an eight-day celebration, reflecting Constantine's original dedication ceremony in 335.<sup>15</sup> As Egeria informs us, this celebration ranked with Epiphany and Easter as one of the three great celebrations in the calendar of the Jerusalem church.<sup>16</sup> During these eight days, various Eastern church calendars came to mark the discovery of the Cross and that of the Tomb on separate dates, usually September 13 for the one and September 14 for the other.<sup>17</sup> Here, once again, was a practice which permitted Eastern Christians to conceive of the two as separate events.

Once the Tomb and the Cross are separated in this way, a distinction ordinarily not apparent to Western eyes emerges from the Helena legend itself, which came to focus almost exclusively on the discovery of the Cross. The discovery of the tomb, even when it is mentioned, is incidental to this greater find; but just as often the discovery of the tomb is omitted.<sup>18</sup> A Western reader would

<sup>14</sup> As the *Paschal Chronicle* shows (*supra* n.12), the event originally was commemorated in September. But after Heraclius' restoration, commemorated as the 'Exaltation of the Cross', was added to that date, the celebration of the 'Invention of the Cross' came to be held on May 3. See the *Acta Sanctorum* for 3 May and 17 September, and A. Linder, "The Myth of Constantine the Great in the West: Sources and Hagiographic Commemoration," *Studi Medievali*<sup>3</sup> 16 (1975) 54.

<sup>15</sup> The original dedication is described at Euseb. *V.Const.* 4.43-45, ed. Winkelmann pp.101-03.

<sup>16</sup> *Itin.Eger.* 49.1-3, CCSL 175, pp.89-90.

<sup>17</sup> See, *e.g.*, the entries under 13 and 14 September in the Maronite, Melchite and Coptic calendars edited by R. Griveau, *Martyrologes et Ménologes orientaux* (PO 10.4, Paris 1916); *Synaxarium Alexandrinum*, ed. J. Forget, CSCO, Scr.arab.<sup>3</sup> vols. 3-5, 11-13; and G. Garitte, ed., *Le calendrier palestinogéorgien du Sinaiticus 34 (X<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Subsidia Hagiographica 30, Bruxelles 1958). The exact date of the split is unknown, but it had occurred in the Greek calendar before 572: Garitte p.330.

<sup>18</sup> The emphasis is evident in St Ambrose, who in A.D. 395 connected Helena with the Invention of the Cross in *De obitu Theodosii* chs. 40-48, ed. D. Caillau, *Ambrosii Opera omnia* VIII (Paris 1844) 133-36. Elaborated versions appeared soon thereafter in Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 31.4-5 (Migne, *PL* 61, 327-29), who added the interrogation of the Jews and a test of the wood through resurrection of a corpse. Rufinus, *HE* 10.7-8, ed. T. Mommsen (E. Schwartz, *Eusebius' Kirchengeschichte* II.2 [Leipzig 1908] 969ff) and Socrates, *HE* 1.17 (Migne, *PG* 67, 117ff), offer a less spectacular proof, involving cure rather than resurrection. It is noteworthy that the Helena account is found in *Acta sanctorum* for 3 May under the heading of 'Inventio crucis' (I [Paris 1866] 365ff). On the legend, see H. Leclercq, *DACL* III.2 (1914) 3131-39; J. Vogt, *RAC* III (1957) 372-74; and, more recently, Linder, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.14) 84ff.

immediately fill in this blank because he is predisposed to think of the two as concurrent. But to an Eastern Christian like the Eudoxia author this gap represented a genuine opening, which was readily filled by the existence of a separate structure and separate liturgy for the tomb. Thus it would not have seemed immediately contradictory to him either to think of the two as separate events or to give credit to Helena's discovery of the Cross in his own account of the discovery of the Sepulchre.

But the change in treatment of the Jews suggests that this was not the only gap which the Eudoxia legend filled. In the Helena legend the Jew Cyriacus is rather a heroic figure who eventually became the subject of a legend of his own.<sup>19</sup> His conversion to Christianity after valiantly trying to protect his Jewish brothers charged the episode with a certain missionary purpose, which is lost from the Eudoxia narrative by the transfer of his part to the Christian Jacob. It appears that this result was not accidental, for the author has systematically transferred all the positive features of the Jewish rôle in the Helena legend to the Christian Jacob, leaving to the Jews only the negative aspects of their part in the discovery—the interrogation and torture. It would have been easier and more consistent to have omitted the Jews entirely as superfluous. Yet he kept them, even though by so doing he created the ludicrous circumstance of Jacob waiting for the Jews to reveal his existence to Eudoxia. Because this change entailed so many clumsy and unsatisfactory alterations, it probably reflects an age when hostility toward the Jews had so escalated that attributing any positive action to them was no longer acceptable.

At the same time, internal indications suggest that the Eudoxia story was composed following a period of destruction in Jerusalem.<sup>20</sup> Taken together with this anti-Jewish sentiment, these indications point to a date of composition after the Persian sack of the Holy City in A.D. 614—a sack which assertedly received the wholehearted support of the resident Jewish population.<sup>21</sup> At the other end,

<sup>19</sup> BHG<sup>3</sup> I 142 *s.n.* Cyriacus; BHL II 1021–22 *s.n.* Quiriacus. On the development of the Cyriacus legend, J. Straubinger, *Die Kreuzauffindungslegende* (Paderborn 1912) 1–81.

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, the quotation of *Psalm 78* (79) at the opening of the tomb: "O God, heathens have invaded your inheritance," etc. Zion also is emphasized in such a way as to indicate a desire to link it with the rebuilding of the Sepulchre: see Orlandi pp.82, 87, 90.

<sup>21</sup> Theophan. *Chron.* ed. de Boor, I 300–01; *Expugnatio Hierosolymae*, ed. G. Garitte, CSCO 348, Scr.arab. 29 (Louvain 1974) 100, 130.

a fragment of the Eudoxia story on a papyrus which seems to date no later than A.D. 700 shows that the Eudoxia story must have been written at some time during the seventh century.<sup>22</sup> For other reasons, this period can be narrowed considerably, and we can fairly safely assign a date of composition to the middle years of the seventh century—around 640–650.<sup>23</sup>

This date, I believe, explains more than the author's hostility to the Jews. The relic of the True Cross, taken by the Persians in 614, had been restored by the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius with elaborate ceremony in 630 or 631,<sup>24</sup> only to be removed once again shortly thereafter—this time to Constantinople—in the face of the Arab threat. Discomfited by the zeal with which sister Sees sought to take their relics into protective custody, the inhabitants of the Holy Land quite naturally wanted to protect and exalt those which they continued to possess. Hence this narrative's emphasis on the tomb—which obviously could not be displaced—and relative disinterest in the Cross itself. Hence also the divine sanctions placed around the still-remaining Inscription to the Cross, which in the legend Constantine is forced to leave in the Holy City until the last days.

But if this was the motive for the legend, how do we account for the introduction of Eudoxia? There is little reason to doubt that she derives from the fifth-century Empress Athenais-Eudocia, wife of Theodosius II (the variant spelling is a common mistake, made by both ancient and modern authors).<sup>25</sup> In 438 Eudocia undertook a pilgrimage to Jerusalem which rivaled that of Helena herself, and

<sup>22</sup> Rylands Coptic fragment 520. On the date, see Orlandi's introduction (*supra* n.3).

<sup>23</sup> In Orlandi p.95, Constantine's plan to remove the Inscription is thwarted in a way reminiscent of difficulties attributed to Heraclius at the Restoration of the Cross, indicating a date post-630 (see next note). An appropriate atmosphere for the retelling of legends of Constantine the Great would have been created by the Constantinian revival fostered by Heraclius' grandson Constans II (641–668), who featured a Cross with the legend *ἐν τούτῳ νικᾷ* on his coins: see P. Grierson, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whitmore Collection* II.2 (Washington 1968) 406, 442–53. For further discussion, see Orlandi ch.4.

<sup>24</sup> The traditional date of 628 for the Restoration has been revised to 630, but V. Grumel now suggests 631 instead. See "La Reposition de la Vraie Croix à Jérusalem par Héraclius. Le jour et l'année," *ByzForsch* 1 (1966) 139–49.

<sup>25</sup> The confusion no doubt is due in part to the fact that both Eudocia's mother-in-law and daughter were named Eudoxia. See A. Boyce, "Eudoxia, Eudocia, Eudoxia: Dated Solidi of the Fifth Century," *ANSMN* 6 (1954) 131–42. For examples of such a slip, see the reference to 'Eudoxia' by the VI-cent. pilgrim Antoninus, CCSL 175, p.142, and A. H. M. Jones, *Later Roman Empire* I (Norman 1964) 180.

some years later she returned permanently to the Holy Land, to remain the city's patroness until her death in 460.<sup>26</sup> The similarity between these two pious benefactresses made juxtaposition of the one with the other virtually inevitable.<sup>27</sup> Indeed it may well have been through the attraction of Eudocia that Helena was transformed from a simple *stabularia* into the learned princess which she became in Western hagiography.<sup>28</sup>

One of Eudocia's benefactions was a large hospice for pilgrims next to the Holy Sepulchre,<sup>29</sup> and it is not unlikely that the Eudoxia legend got its start from enthusiastic tour guides who allowed her generosity to spill over into the Sepulchre itself.<sup>30</sup> We may find traces of the route this influence took in the Coptic *Discourse on the Cross* attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem, in which Constantine undertakes to discover the Cross himself, bringing with him both "his mother and his sister, who was a virgin."<sup>31</sup> In another Coptic tract, the *Encomium on St George of Cappadocia* attributed to the sixth-century bishop of Ancyra, Abba Theodotus, this sister finds a name: Eudoxia.<sup>32</sup> It is perhaps significant that in this tract Constantine goes not to find the Cross but to build the Church of the Resurrection.

Thus we know who the prototype for Eudoxia was, and we also know how she was able to enter what at first seemed an exclusive turf. But in the story itself Eudoxia does little, on the surface, that Helena herself could not have done. Indeed, so little of the historical Eudocia survives in this account that her major endowments—a

<sup>26</sup> Socr. *HE* 7.47; Evagr. *HE* 1.20–22, ed. J. Bidez and L. Parmentier (London 1898; repr. Amsterdam 1964) 28–33.

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g. the comparison by J. Grey, *A History of Jerusalem* (New York 1969) 202: "The Empress Helena had inaugurated this phase of the history of Jerusalem; it was consummated by the work of the Empress Eudocia . . ."

<sup>28</sup> On Helena's royal descent, see Linder, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.14) 91f; W. Mulligan, "The British Constantine, An English Historical Myth," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 8 (1978) 257–79. The tradition that Helena was a *stabularia* is reported by Ambrose, *Obit. Theod.* 42.

<sup>29</sup> *DACL* XIV.1 (1939) 119.

<sup>30</sup> A pilgrim tour is, in fact, a reasonable explanation for the particular assortment of buildings attributed to 'Eudoxia' in Orlandi pp.102–03 (see summary above, p.382), for they are all linked in one way or another with either the Sepulchre itself or the liturgies celebrated during the week of the Encaenia. Compare the sites mentioned by the pilgrim Egeria, *Itin.Eger.* 25.8–11.

<sup>31</sup> In Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts* (*supra* n.5) 794.

<sup>32</sup> *idem*, *St George of Cappadocia* (*supra* n.5) 325.



Church of St Stephen and new walls for the city—are ignored in the list of the virgin's benefactions.<sup>33</sup> Why, then, introduce her? Heraclian politics may have played a part, for in the dynastic struggles that followed the death of Heraclius one of the rival factions was composed of the offspring of Heraclius by his first wife, also named Eudocia, and there was even a period of a few months in 641 when the reigning Byzantine emperor was a son of Heraclius named Constantine who, like the Constantine in this legend, had a sister named Eudocia.<sup>34</sup> But such political situations rarely play the primary rôle in the formation of legend, and the real answer, as well as the key to this legend, appears to lie in the tangled situation produced in the Monophysite lands of the Middle East by Imperial concepts of Orthodoxy and the advent of Islam.

As is well known, Imperial persecution of Monophysites helped pave the way for the triumph of Islam in these lands. But Monophysite hostility to the Christian Empire can be overstated. The *Chronicle* of John, bishop of Nikiu, written late in the seventh century, provides a less one-sided picture of Monophysite sentiments.<sup>35</sup> Blaming the doctrinal error of the emperors for the success of Islam in his native Egypt,<sup>36</sup> John (120.33) nevertheless vigorously expresses his hatred for Egypt's new masters—hoping, among other things, that God might drive them like Pharaoh of old into the sea. It is clear that John's loyalty remains with the Empire, and he in fact concludes that it would be better to suffer bad Christian rulers than endure infidel ones.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Evagr. *HE* 1.22. On Eudocia's special identification with St Stephen see J. T. Milik, "Notes d'épigraphie et de topographie palestiniennes," *RBibl* 67 (1960) 577. The legend's silence may also indicate a post-614 date, since St Stephen's was not rebuilt after the Persian sack.

<sup>34</sup> Fabia Eudocia wed Heraclius in 610 and gave birth to a daughter, Epiphania Eudocia, and a son, Heraclius *véoc Κωνσταντινός*, before her death in 612. The son ascended the throne in 641 as Constantine III but died after a reign of three months. See G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*<sup>2</sup> (New Brunswick 1969) 112f. On Heraclius' daughter Eudocia see Nicephorus, *Opuscula Historica*, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig 1880; repr. New York 1975) 16, 21, 24.

<sup>35</sup> Transl. R. H. Charles (London 1916).

<sup>36</sup> At 115.9, for instance, John notes how "the hostility of the people to the emperor Heraclius, because of the persecution wherewith he had visited all the land of Egypt in regard to the orthodox faith" had weakened the Romans and emboldened the Moslem (transl. Charles p.184). *Cf.* 121.2.

<sup>37</sup> At 117.7-8 John quotes the following with approval: "But God has been patient with the apostates and heretics. . . . How then is it not far better for us to endure patiently the trials and punishments which they inflict upon us?" (Charles p.187).

This ambivalence in Monophysite thinking found its expression in apocalyptic literature of the seventh century, as Paul Alexander demonstrated in unraveling the legend of the “last Christian Emperor.”<sup>38</sup> This was the emperor who in the last days would lay down the instruments of earthly power on Golgotha after defeating the last of Christ’s secular enemies, and thereby usher in the millennium. One branch of Monophysite thinkers argued that this Emperor would be an Ethiopian, presumably because this was the sole Monophysite throne in existence. But since Ethiopia posed no immediate threat to Islam, this position also implied that Monophysites were free in the interim to collaborate with their Arab masters. By contrast, another camp held that the last emperor would be Byzantine, and this belief would have encouraged Monophysites to stand firm in their loyalty to the Empire, which after all had recovered earlier in the same century after seeming to have been as decisively beaten by Persia.

Some Monophysites, therefore, had not despaired of the Empire in the seventh century. What they longed for was not release but a return of the emperors to what they considered to be the path of Orthodoxy, departure from which had caused all the present troubles. It will be remembered that reference to the “last days” is made also in the Eudoxia legend, and not only at the point where Constantine makes his copy of the Inscription to the Cross: the Christian Jacob is introduced with pointed references to Enoch, the patriarch appointed to await the last days.<sup>39</sup> This suggests that the Eudoxia author not only was acquainted with this apocalyptic controversy but also that he used it to color the texture of his narrative.

This slender thread of Monophysite leanings is what the figure of Eudoxia/Eudocia adds to this legend. For the great fissure of Chalcedon occurred during the Empress Eudocia’s seclusion in Jerusalem, and in this break Eudocia sided with the Monophysites.

<sup>38</sup> “Byzantium and the Migration of Literary Works and Motifs: The Legend of the Last Roman Emperor,” *MedHum* n.s. 2 (1971) 47–68.

<sup>39</sup> At Orlandi p.74, Jacob speaks of “Sibyl, the sister of Enoch,” apparently referring to the Tiburtine Sibyl, who was considered Enoch’s sister in Coptic tradition. See B. Pearson, “The Pierpont Morgan Fragments of a Coptic Enoch Apochryphon,” in G. Nickelsburg, ed., *Studies on the Testament of Abraham* (Missoula [Mont.] 1976) 239f. Later, in 76, Jacob describes himself to Eudoxia in Enoch-like terms as having been ordained to live until her search was undertaken.

According to Western tradition, she eventually was restored to the bosom of the Church by the blandishments of Pope Leo and the counsel of Simeon Stylites.<sup>40</sup> But as the same *Chronicle* of John of Nikiu shows, if such a change of heart did occur, it went unacknowledged by the Monophysites. Eudocia, John says (87.45), “went to her rest in the holy Jerusalem, full of good works and a pure faith.” By giving a Monophysite empress a rôle in the great discovery myth of Imperial Christianity, the Eudoxia story added subtle reinforcement to the Monophysite belief that Byzantine emperors had lost to Islam because of their lapse from the true faith.

The apocalyptic innuendo in the narrative suggests that the ultimate significance of the Eudoxia legend must be seen in terms of this great ideological battle that raged in Monophysite lands in the seventh century. For a tenet of the legend of the last emperor was that he would be named Constantine;<sup>41</sup> surely it is no accident that in the Eudoxia legend Constantine first picks up the symbols of power which his legendary namesake will return to the same site to lay down. The Eudoxia narrative casts the opening drama of the Christian Empire into a form which complements and foreshadows the end. Constantine first picks up the instruments of power with significant strings attached: he cannot take with him the Inscription found in the tomb, because this is destined to stay in the Holy City until the last days. Instead he takes only a replica, which is used by the legendary Constantine in precisely the same manner that the historical Constantine used his Labarum, the *chi-rho* ensign which became the symbol of divine authority for all subsequent Byzantine emperors.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Theophan. *Chron.* ed. de Boor, I 107; Leonis Magni *Ep.* 123 (Migne, *PL* 54, 1060f); Cyril Scyth. *Vita S.Euthymii* 30, transl. A.-J. Festugière, *Les moines d'Orient* III.1 (Paris 1962) 101–03; Niceph.Call., *HE* 15.9, 13 (Migne *PG* 147, cols. 29f, 39f). Cf. *RAC* VI (1966) 845; *RE* 6 (1907) 908f. On political effects see most recently F. M. Clover, “The Family and Early Career of Anicius Olybrius,” *Historia* 27 (1978) 177. Eudocia is remembered on 13 August in the Orthodox calendar: *Synax.Const.*, ed. H. Delehaye (Bruxelles 1902; repr. 1954) col. 890.

<sup>41</sup> Linder, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.14) 52.

<sup>42</sup> See Orlandi p.98: “The king made a great cross of refined gold with a golden inscription fastened to it, and raised it up on the chariot on which he had put the inscription, and had it going before him at all times. He never again mounted it, but every place the king would desire in his heart to go, the chariot would go by itself until he came there . . .” (transl. Pearson). On Constantine’s relics in Constantinople see Linder, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.14) 58f.

A plea to preserve the relics for Jerusalem, this episode takes on new significance in view of Monophysite apocalyptic. For not only is it the Monophysite heroine Eudoxia who finds the symbol of power for Constantine but, since it is only a facsimile which he takes with him, the implication is clear that the Lord wished genuine authority to rest with His church in the Holy Land. Thus in a symbolic and figurative way, the Eudoxia narrative urges the same conclusion that John of Nikiu uttered more directly in his *Chronicle*: Monophysite Christians owed their loyalty to the Empire, but it was the duty of the Emperors to heed the teachings of the true church.

It would be misleading to conclude that the Eudoxia author wrote with the conscious intent of contributing to the dialogue on the fate of the Empire. We must rather conclude that in the course of telling or, more probably, retelling a story, he constructed and embroidered it in such a way as to betray the influence of that dialogue on his thought. Although a local legend with little direct influence of its own, the Eudoxia narrative thus illustrates the way legend can reflect and reinforce major political and ideological influences of the day.<sup>43</sup>

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA  
*September, 1979*

<sup>43</sup> A version of this paper was read at the VIII International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, 6 September 1979. Research was begun while I was a visiting member of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, in 1976–77 under an NEH fellowship and was completed with the aid of the Research Committee at the University of California, Santa Barbara. I wish especially to thank my two collaborators, Birger Pearson and Tito Orlandi.