

WILLIAMS COLLEGE LIBRARIES – CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS

Your unpublished research paper, submitted for a degree at Williams College and administered by the Williams College Libraries, will be made available for research use. You may, through this form, provide instructions regarding copyright, access, dissemination and reproduction of your paper.

In each section, please check the ONE statement that reflects your wishes.

I. PUBLICATION AND QUOTATION: LITERARY PROPERTY RIGHTS

A student author automatically owns the copyright to his/her work, whether or not a copyright symbol and date are placed on the piece. The duration of U.S. copyright on a manuscript--and Williams papers are considered manuscripts--is the life of the author plus 70 years.

☐ I do not choose to retain literary property rights to the paper, and I wish to assign them immediately to Williams College.

Selecting this option will assign copyright to the College. This in no way precludes a student author from later publishing his/her work; the student would, however, need to contact the Archives for a permission form. The Archives would be free in this case to also grant permission to another researcher to publish small sections from the thesis. Rarely would there be any reason for the Archives to grant permission to another party to publish the paper in its entirety; if such a situation arose, the Archives would be in touch with the author to let them know that such a request had been made.

☐ I wish to retain literary property rights to the papers for a period of three years, at which time the literary property rights shall be assigned to Williams College.

Selecting this option gives the author a few years to make exclusive use of the paper in up-coming projects: articles, later research, etc.

☒ I wish to retain literary property rights to the paper for a period of 20 years, ~~or until my death, whichever is the later~~, at which time the literary property rights shall be assigned to Williams College.

Selecting this option allows the author great flexibility in extending or shortening the time of his/her automatic copyright period. Some students are interested in using their paper in graduate school work. In this case, it would make sense for them to enter a number such as '10 years' in the blank, and line out the words 'or until my death, whichever is the later.' In any event, it is easier for the Archives to administer copyright on a manuscript if the period ends with the individual's death--our staff won't have to search for estate executors in this case--but this is entirely up to each student.

II. ACCESS

The Williams College Libraries are investigating the posting of theses online, as well as their retention in hardcopy.

☒ Williams College is granted permission to maintain and provide access to my paper in hardcopy and via the Web both on and off campus.

Selecting this option allows researchers around the world to access the digital version of your work.

☐ Williams College is granted permission to maintain and provide access to my paper in hardcopy and via the Web for on-campus use only.

Selecting this option allows access to the digital version of your work from the on-campus network only.

☐ This paper is to be maintained and made available in hardcopy form only.

Selecting this option allows access to your work only from the hardcopy you submit. Such access pertains to the entirety of your work, including any media that it comprises or includes.

III. COPYING AND DISSEMINATION

Because papers are listed on FRANCIS, the Libraries receive numerous requests every year for copies of works. If/when a hardcopy paper is duplicated for a researcher, a copy of the release form always accompanies the copy. Any digital version of your paper will include the release form.

☒ Copies of the paper may be provided to any researcher.

Selecting this option allows any researcher to request a copy from the Williams College Libraries, or to make one from an electronic version.

☐ Copying of the paper is restricted for years, at which time copies may be provided to any researcher.

This option allows the author to set a time limit on copying restrictions. During this period, an electronic version of the paper will be protected against duplication.

☐ Copying of the paper or portions thereof, except as needed to maintain an adequate number of research copies available in the Williams College Libraries, is expressly prohibited. The electronic version of the paper will be protected against duplication.

Selecting this option allows no reproductions to be made for researchers. The electronic version of the paper will be protected against duplication. This option does not dis-allow researchers from reading/viewing the work in either hardcopy or digital form.

Signed (student author) ☐ Signatures Removed

Name (printed) _____

Please underline your surname, i.e. family name

Thesis title Justinian's Reconquest of the West: Ideology, Warfare, Religion, and Politics in Sixth-Century Byzantium

Date 5/19/2008

Accepted for the Libraries ☐ Signature Removed

Date accepted 5/19/2008

**Justinian's Reconquest of the West
Ideology, Warfare, Religion, and Politics in Sixth-Century Byzantium**

**By
James Walker Matthews**

Professors Eric J. Goldberg and Edan Dekel, Advisors

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors
in History

Williams College

Williamstown, Massachusetts

April 14, 2008

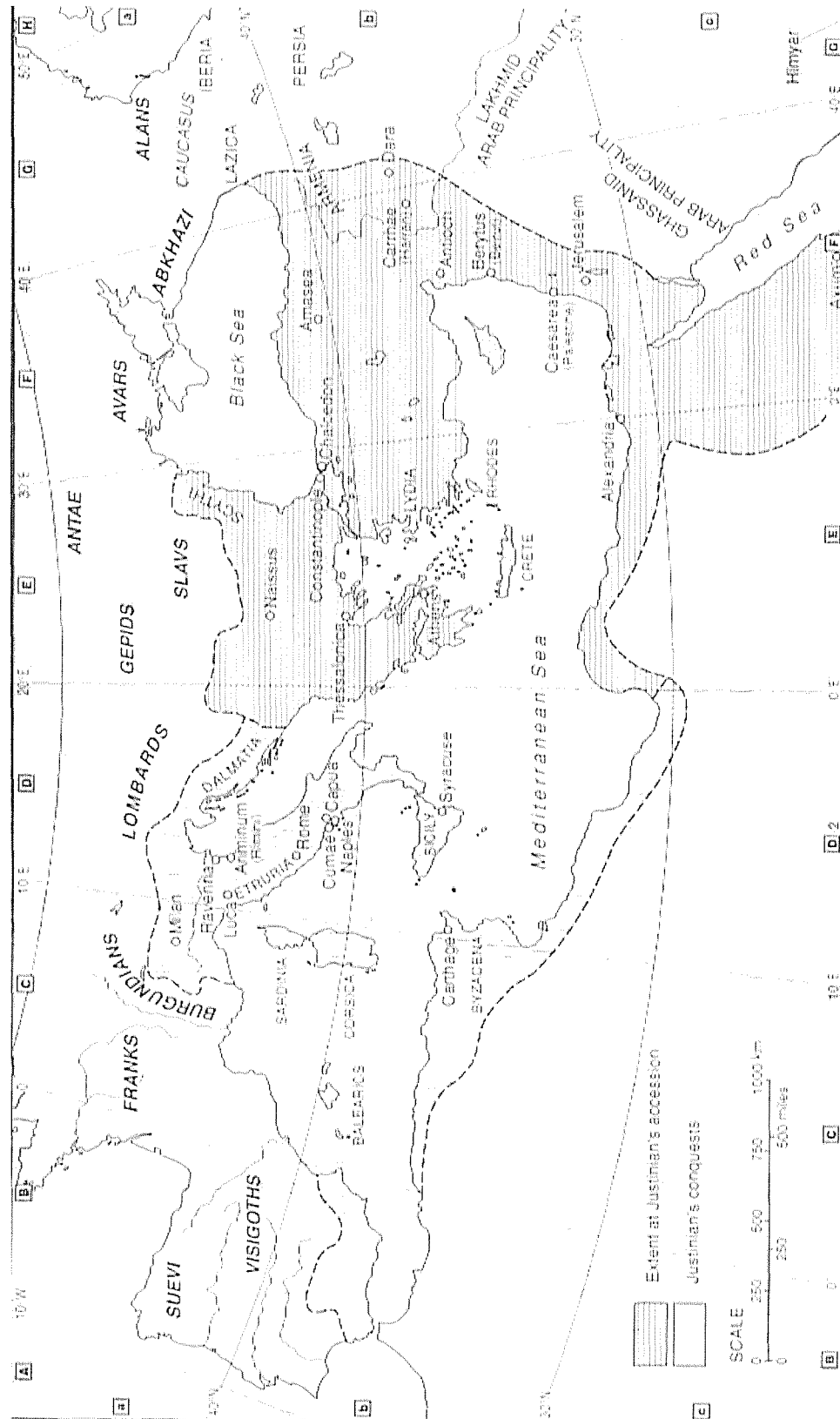
CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ii
Map: Justinian's Empire in 565	iii
Introduction: God's Regent on Earth	1
Before the Wars	20
<i>Byzantine Ecclesiastical Policy</i>	21
<i>Legal and Political Unity</i>	32
<i>Imperial Authority</i>	35
<i>Imperial Prestige</i>	41
The Vandal War (533-534)	46
<i>Going to War against Heresy</i>	47
<i>Reconquering the West</i>	52
<i>Practical Expansion</i>	55
<i>Imperial Status</i>	58
The Gothic War (535-554)	65
<i>Heresy in Italy</i>	67
<i>Rebuilding the Empire</i>	71
<i>Rome and Romanitas</i>	80
<i>The Papacy and Justinian</i>	83
<i>Imperial Authority in the Gothic War</i>	88
Epilogue: After the Wars	96
<i>The Three Chapters Controversy and the Fifth Ecumenical Council</i>	96
<i>The Pragmatic Sanction</i>	98
<i>The Eastern Focus</i>	99
Bibliography	107

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Professor Eric Goldberg for his assistance and unlimited patience in getting my thesis topic pointed in the right direction and providing me with a much-needed foundation in the first semester. Thanks also to Professor Edan Dekel, for agreeing to adopt my orphaned thesis at the end of January and for his invaluable comments and criticisms during the revision process. Thank you to my faculty shadow, Professor Chris Waters, for ensuring that it adhered to its objective. Finally, of course, thank you to Allie, my friends, and everybody else who was kind enough to endure my dry, self-deprecating commentary during my many months surrounded by a fortress of knowledge.

The Empire Before and After Justinian (527 and 565 CE)



Peter Sarris, *Economy and Society in the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

INTRODUCTION: GOD'S REGENT ON EARTH

On May 7, 558 CE, Constantinople was struck by its second earthquake in less than eighteen months. Already weakened by the 557 quake, the large central dome and eastern supporting semi-dome of the Hagia Sophia—Justinian's greatest architectural accomplishment and the largest church in the world—completely collapsed. Undaunted, the aging emperor immediately set to work restoring the cathedral, relying on Isodorus the Younger (nephew of Isidore of Miletus, one of the original architects) to redesign the building, which would boast an even taller dome and surpass the majesty of its previous form, already the greatest feat of engineering of its age. At the cathedral's rededication ceremony on December 23, 562, Justinian, determined not to let the troubles of his reign overshadow its accomplishments, is reported by an anonymous chronicler to have approached the ambo lectern alone, raised his hands to Heaven, and proclaimed, "Glory to God, who has deemed me worthy of such a work. Solomon, I have surpassed you!"¹

Solomon, of course, was the builder of the original house of God, the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem in the tenth century BCE that housed the Ark of the Covenant. The temple's last incarnation was finally destroyed in 70 CE, when the future emperor Titus decisively suppressed a Judean rebellion, though the Ark had long been unaccounted for after the sack of Jerusalem and destruction of the original temple by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. Despite the temple's fate, Justinian's declaration claimed that he himself had a special relationship with God, even more

¹ J.A.S. Evans, *The Age of Justinian: The Circumstances of Imperial Power* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 258.

privileged than that of Solomon, whose reputation for piety and wisdom made him the iconic role model of medieval kingship, and that through the Hagia Sophia he had glorified God more greatly than Solomon had in Jerusalem. In so doing, Justinian laid claim to God's sanction for his own rule and sought to legitimize his ability to carry out the obligations of the imperial office as a successor to the great Hebrew kings of the Old Testament. Such an assertion was fundamental to Justinian's self-perception. This thesis will examine the guiding ideology of Justinian's emperorship and how that ideology especially manifested itself in terms of Justinian's diplomacy and his relationship with the former provinces of the Western Roman Empire. It will also consider how the emperor's ideology regarding the West, as well as his justifications and motivations for his momentous efforts to reconquer it, changed over the course of Justinian's reign.

By the accession of Justinian in 527, the Roman Empire (as the rulers of Constantinople still thought of their realm) had undergone a dramatic decline since attaining its furthest boundaries under the emperor Hadrian in the early second century. In response to increasing pressure on the imperial administration, which had grown out of a government structure ill-equipped to handle efficiently such a massive amount of territory, Diocletian (r. 284-305) instituted a series of reforms that changed the face of the empire. While he vastly increased the number of civil administrators to accommodate the empire's size, his more famous, and more significant, reform established the tetrarchy, effectively splitting the empire into four parts ruled by two senior emperors (each with the title of *Augustus*) and two junior emperors (with the title of *Caesar*), a process completed by 293. Although this strict division did not

hold, its principle did; until the end of the Western Empire, there was rarely only one emperor, and usually two or three. By the time of Justinian, however, the West had been without an emperor for over fifty years, and imperial power held sway in the East alone.

The fourth century saw the empire's administrative structure undergo the changes that would ultimately lead to the downfall of the Roman Empire in the West and its continuation in the East. Up to the time of Diocletian, imperial officers were considered equally responsible for, and capable of, leadership in civil and military spheres. Governors oversaw both the smooth administration and necessary defense of their provinces, and praetorian prefects were powerful enough to act as commanders-in-chief under the emperor, wielding both civil and military responsibilities over vast territories. Gradually, these two obligations diverged. Praetorian prefects became strictly civil administrators without military authority, such as John the Cappadocian would be under Justinian, and a similar fate befell the rest of the civil sphere. Meanwhile, military leadership came to be placed in the hands of *duces*, army commanders, and eventually *magistri militum*, the Masters of Soldiers.

By 360 CE, the two branches of the administration were completely distinct, only united in the person of the emperor himself.² In the East, this newly exclusive military authority was divided up among five field commanders, the *magistri pedites praesentales*, and three *magistri militum* in Thrace, Illyricum, and the East (that is, Asia and Egypt). In the West, however, all military authority rested in a single commander-in-chief, who also held the title of *magister militum praesentales*, rather

² J.H.G.W. Liebeschuetz, "Government and Administration in the Late Empire (to A.D. 476)," in his *From Diocletian to the Arab Conquest* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1990), 456-7.

than being dispersed among several regional commanders. As a result, western generals controlled the entire army in that half of the empire, rendering them too powerful for even an emperor to oppose or replace save by assassination or battle, and the strength and ambition of these men frequently frustrated—and eventually destroyed—even potentially strong emperors such as Majorian, while making usurpation both easy and commonplace.³

In 395, the last emperor to rule the entire Roman Empire, Theodosius I, died, leaving behind two young, weak sons. Although the empire remained conceptually undivided, with a single currency throughout and imperial constitutions issued in the names of all contemporary emperors, the fates of East and West quickly diverged.⁴ The Western Empire, which passed to the underage Honorius, rapidly began to fall apart, and some of the greatest losses of the West can be attributed to his reign. After rampaging through Gaul since 407, the Germanic tribes of the Alans and Vandals invaded and seized the bulk of Spain in 409-411, the first significant casualty of the old empire. In 410, with Saxon raiders pillaging Britannia, Honorius responded to a Romano-British request for imperial aid against the invaders by informing the people of Britannia that the empire was unable to help them. The island quickly disappeared from the imperial radar, as the troops stationed there were withdrawn to the Continent and the Britons left to fend for themselves.⁵ That same year the Visigoths, led by Alaric, ended three years of attempts to negotiate a settlement with Honorius in Italy by sacking Rome. Yet this event was not as severe as it seems at first glance; by this

³ Ibid., 469.

⁴ Ibid., 456.

⁵ Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 245.

point, Rome was no longer critical to imperial administration, as Honorius had moved the capital to Ravenna years earlier, and the sack itself, one scholar claims, was “one of the most civilized sacks of a city ever witnessed.” Nevertheless, this was still a significant event in the eyes of many further away from Rome, particularly those in the East, who viewed the city as symbolic of “everything that was good and worthwhile.”⁶

The situation in the West hardly improved after the reign of Honorius, and in many ways served merely to set the stage for Justinian’s rule a century later. In response to Roman and Visigothic campaigns in Spain, the Vandals eventually left the Iberian Peninsula in 429 under the leadership of Geiseric, invading Africa during the reign of Valentinian III. By 442 the Vandals controlled the wealthy heartland of Roman Africa (holding most of modern Tunisia) from their capital at Carthage, holding by treaty the provinces of Proconsularis and Byzacena. Geiseric himself was officially not a conquering enemy, but a client ruler, *rex socius et amicus*, allied king and friend.⁷ Meanwhile, between 469-490, the Visigoths under Euric replaced the Vandals in Europe by carving out a large kingdom in Spain and the southwestern third of Gaul that was independent of any semblance of Roman rule, while Childeric and the Salian Franks took control of Belgica Secunda (modern Belgium), prompting other regional powers to carve up the remainder of the province during the 470s. Childeric’s son Clovis later united the Frankish tribes (with not a little force) to control all of Gaul up to the Visigothic holdings, and frequently came into conflict with the Visigoths and Italian Ostrogoths.⁸ The final nail in the coffin came in 476, when, after a series of brief (and often violently ended) rulers, the *magister peditum*, Odoacer, deposed the

⁶ Ibid., 225-229.

⁷ Ibid., 267-272; 292.

⁸ Ibid., 416-418, for Childeric and Euric. For Clovis, 452-453.

emperor Romulus Augustus, whose name improbably combined both those of Rome's first king and first emperor, and sent the imperial regalia to Constantinople rather than assume them himself.

Throughout all of these events, the East came to be dominated by civil administrators rather than military leaders during the reigns of weak emperors, of which Theodosius' eastern heir, Arcadius, was one. Despite a constant atmosphere of intrigue, the East "followed consistent, if unheroic policies when expedient, diverting threatening barbarians with large payments, so that they attacked the west (sic) instead. Thus the east weathered the storm in which the west foundered."⁹ Less than sixty years after the western empire finally breathed its last, Justinian would begin his attempts to reconquer the lost territory.

Justinian ascended to the throne after the death of his uncle, Justin I, in 527, although he is frequently considered to have been in power from the time of Justin's ascension in 518.¹⁰ The first part of his reign was predominantly occupied with war against the Persians under the emperorship of Khosroes I (r. 531-579), but the most famous event of the years between his coronation and the first of his western forays was the Nika Riot in 532.¹¹ Ignited by a spike in street violence, within a few days the riot posed a serious threat to Justinian's rule, as the mob tried to proclaim a senator in Constantinople as their own emperor. According to Procopius, Justinian was on the verge of fleeing the city, when the empress Theodora intervened with the famous line, "May I never be separated from this purple, and may I not live that day on which those

⁹ Liebeschuetz, *From Diocletian*, 469.

¹⁰ Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 97.

¹¹ For a critical examination of the Nika Riot, see Geoffrey Greatrex, "The Nika Riot: A Reappraisal" in *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 117 (1997), 60-86.

who meet me shall not address me as mistress. If, now, it is your wish to save yourself, O Emperor, there is no difficulty... As for myself, I approve a certain ancient saying that royalty is a good burial shroud.”¹² Supposedly inspired by his wife, Justinian opted for fight over flight, and the rioters were brutally suppressed. It was at this time that Justinian began the construction of the Hagia Sophia to replace the church of the same saint that had been destroyed during the violence. This first of Justinian’s Hagia Sophia incarnations was completed five years later in 537.

Only a year after the Nika Riot, in 533, having reached a peace agreement with Persia, Justinian ordered the invasion of the Vandal kingdom in Africa, which spanned most of the western half of the African Mediterranean coast from modern day Tunisia to Morocco. The expedition was generally opposed by imperial advisors in Constantinople and was carried out by a relatively small army under the general Belisarius, Justinian’s principal military commander and one of the two officers who helped quash the Nika Riot.¹³ Nevertheless, the campaign was a great success; it took only nine months and a handful of rapid, decisive victories for Belisarius to dethrone the Vandal king Gelimer. Despite the swift victory, the Byzantine forces had to devote many more years to consolidating the territory due to incessant raids by the nearby Moors and equally problematic mutinies among the army over wage shortages. These subsequent problems, however, would be dealt with by other commanders, as Belisarius returned to Constantinople in triumph.

The Vandal War had hardly been concluded when Justinian, likely inspired by the quick defeat of Gelimer, sent Belisarius back into the West. This time the target

¹² Procopius, *History of the Wars*, trans. H.B. Dewing, Vol. I (New York: Macmillan Company, 1914-1940), 231-233.

¹³ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. III, 91-97.

was Italy, held by the Ostrogoths. For the first few years of the war, it appeared that the successes of the Vandal War would repeat themselves; after arriving in 535, Belisarius captured all of Italy from Sicily to Ravenna by 540 and deposed the Gothic king Witigis. Unfortunately for the Byzantines, the remaining Goths had no intention of going quietly. While Belisarius moved back to the Persian front, the Goths chose a new king, Totila, who was more than a match for the Byzantine commanders left in Italy and who was able to match up with Belisarius when the latter finally returned. After years of conflict, most of it in the form of sieges, that devastated the country without bringing a decisive conclusion, Belisarius was recalled once again and a new general, Narses, sent in his place, this time with a much larger and better funded command. Totila died in battle in 552, and the final victory for the Byzantines came in 554 with the similar death of the last Gothic leader, Teias.

After the end of the Italian campaign, Justinian was largely unconcerned with the West. Rather than focus on his new acquisitions, Justinian directed his attention towards the religious unrest in the eastern parts of the empire, especially the theological conflict between the orthodox Chalcedonian Christians and the heretical Monophysites. In addition, these years were marked by several military emergencies in the East from both within and without the empire. After an earthquake severely damaged the Hagia Sophia in 558, Justinian had the church repaired and enlarged once again, rededicating the cathedral in 562. Three years later, Justinian died in the midst of further religious controversy and another attempt to reconcile the two major eastern factions.

Justinian's historic efforts to reunite the Roman world have long fascinated historians of Late Antiquity. During the primacy of Edward Gibbon's model of decline and fall in the Roman Empire, which he particularly attributed to barbarian invasions and Christianity, Justinian's reign was seen predominantly as a futile and misguided effort to counter the decay that ultimately crippled the Roman Empire.¹⁴ Although that is no longer the case, more recent historiography often views Justinian's western campaigns narrowly, as if wearing blinders. There is a tendency for scholars to focus on the military side of Justinian's reconquests, approaching the campaigns strictly as military history and a series of marches, battles, and sieges.¹⁵ Following his campaign in Africa in 533-534, the quick and unexpected success of the Byzantine army is considered to have been the true reason for Justinian's interest in Italy.¹⁶ Although historians have certainly considered the rich ideology of Justinian's rule, they have overlooked its relationship with the western campaigns. Evans comes the closest, albeit only briefly, by making the assertion that Justinian's reconquests were not only governed by opportunism, but "were also his answer to the dispraise of the old ruling classes."¹⁷

Justinian's dynasty, begun by his uncle Justin, was an upstart one. As a consequence, Justinian and his wife, Theodora, were forced to compensate by augmenting the ceremonial grandeur of the emperorship, including prostration of senators and patricians in the presence of the emperor and empress. But this only gets at a small slice of Justinianic ideology. Justinian's self-presentation as an emperor

¹⁴ Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 1.

¹⁵ The entirety of Chapter 3 in Evans, *Age of Justinian* is one such example.

¹⁶ John Moorhead, "Ostrogothic Italy and the Lombard Invasion" in *The New Cambridge Medieval History I: c. 500-c.700*, ed. Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 149.

¹⁷ Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 269-270.

preserving the ancient traditions of his office and fulfilling the antique imperial obligations (such as triumphal processions), while recognized by scholars, is not explicitly related to his reconquests or even his eastern campaigns against Persia.¹⁸ Although the emperor's duties in directing and maintaining the defense of the empire is self-evident to any reader, their relationship to offensive campaigns against distant enemies is certainly less clear, especially given that the eastern policy for two centuries had essentially consisted of buying off barbarian threats, a tradition that Justinian certainly upheld when convenient.

Similar to, and often connected with, Justinian's ideology are his religious policies, which suffer the same fate of generally being considered separately from his wars. Justinian's objective of orthodox Christian unity within the empire crops up in virtually any academic consideration of him, and the historiography does not incorrectly identify his goal to establish an empire united under God's favor by means of a single religion.¹⁹ Despite the Italian Ostrogoths, the African Vandals, and the Iberian Visigoths all being Arian Christians, and therefore heretics in the eyes of the papacy and the orthodox emperor, this fact is generally overlooked (especially as pertains to Justinian's wars) in favor of the more domestic religious problems, most notably the Monophysites who, despite their heretical beliefs, were nevertheless loyal subjects of the emperor whom Justinian could reasonably hope to reconcile with the orthodox position.²⁰

¹⁸ Charles Pazdernik, "Justinianic Ideology and the Power of the Past" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 186.

¹⁹ Michael Maas, "Roman Questions, Byzantine Answers: Contours of the Age of Justinian" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 14.

²⁰ Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 105.

This thesis will examine the connection between Justinian's imperial ideology and his western policies, in particular his relations with Vandal Africa and Ostrogothic Italy and subsequent decisions to launch economically and militarily exhaustive military campaigns in these sections of the "lost" Roman West. Justinian's ideology shaped his attitudes towards the "barbarian" west, ultimately manifesting in his attempts to restore them to the imperial realm as part of his divinely-appointed mandate as ruler of the Christian Roman Empire. In sum, Justinian's self-perception as emperor, his military ventures in the West, and his desire to unite the Late Roman world within orthodox Christianity must be seen as intertwined and inseparable.

Justinian's reign is also worthy of examination because of its lasting effect on the evolution of medieval Europe. On the one hand, Justinian's wars were immensely draining on the state, and the Byzantine Empire began losing its newly acquired territory almost immediately after his death, all the while weakening its military capabilities and setting it up for defeat during the Arab invasions less than a century later. However, the claims made by Justinian to universal jurisdiction, under which he sought to position himself as both the head of the secular state and the head of the Church, had great influence on the development of European law and politics.²¹ Moreover, Justinian's repeated portrayals of himself as God's divinely appointed viceregent on Earth paved the way for the emergence of divine right monarchical ideologies in Western Europe.

The Sources

²¹ Padzernik, "Justinianic Ideology" in *CCAJ*, 188.

Scholars of the Age of Justinian are blessed with a number of contemporary and near-contemporary primary sources. The largest and most thorough body of work on the reign of Justinian is narrated by Procopius of Caesarea, succinctly assessed by Edward Gibbon as having “successively composed the history, the panegyric, and the satire of his times.”²² Procopius, whose corpus has been exhaustively analyzed by Averil Cameron, is exceptionally valuable to the historian of Justinian’s wars because he was in the privileged position of having been present for nearly all of them.²³ As the legal advisor and private secretary to Justinian’s premier general, Belisarius, who led the African campaign, various stages of the Gothic war, and various campaigns against the Persians, Procopius was an eye-witness to many events in the military domain after the accession of Justinian in 527.²⁴ Hailing from Anatolia, Procopius exhibited cultural values rooted in Greek classical authors such as Plato, Herodotus, and especially Thucydides, on whose *History of the Peloponnesian War* Procopius models his own *History of the Wars*.²⁵ As a result, Procopius is critical of Justinian’s ideologically-based persecutions of heretics and skeptical of the value of investigating the nature of a divine and unknowable God, calling such pursuits “insane.”²⁶

Procopius left us three considerable works. The *History of the Wars* is the largest and earliest of his works, presented in eight books. Books I-II deal with the

²² Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, Vol. 5 (London: The Folio Society, 1987), 58.

²³ Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). Cameron’s main contribution to scholarship on Procopius is her approach to the *History of the Wars*, the *Secret History*, and *Buildings* not as erratic and contradictory works, but as a single body with consistent, unifying themes. The most salient of these themes is the close relationship between secular emperors and God.

²⁴ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, trans. H.B. Dewing, Vol I (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914), 3-5.

²⁵ Cameron, *Procopius*. Procopius’ strong affinity for the classicizing tradition of secular military history is perhaps the strongest theme in his *History of the Wars*.

²⁶ Anthony Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 4-5.

Persian Wars, III-IV with the Vandal Wars, and V-VIII with the Gothic Wars, and thus they are generally known by these three names, although Book VIII, written last and published separately, has a smattering of information pertinent to all of the arenas, bringing the entire series up to date with events as of 554. The *Anecdota*, more commonly called the *Secret History*, is a merciless attack on the emperor, Belisarius, and their wives, Theodora and Antonina. The *Anecdota* offers an image of debauchery, intrigue, and scandal, and it is viciously critical of the imperial administration, singling out Theodora in particular as the primary target of the diatribe.²⁷ Unsurprisingly, the book was almost certainly not published until after the death of Justinian in 565.²⁸ Finally, *Buildings*, a work at the other end of the spectrum from the *Anecdota*, is an overt attempt to curry imperial favor, perhaps in response to displeasure at his *History of the Wars* (which portray Belisarius far more favorably than Justinian), “written in the empty style of the fawning flatterer.”²⁹ *Buildings* is an account of all the public construction projects in Justinian’s reign throughout the empire, extending as far as western Africa and Armenia. Although typically considered a panegyric, it is nevertheless valuable for study of the period. The genre played an important role in late antique literature, and *Buildings* is especially important due to its information on the empire’s domestic administration, its emphasis on the closeness between God and the emperor as his earthly representative, and its demonstration of how easily accepted the belief in divinely-backed rule was.³⁰

²⁷ The *Anecdota*’s message of depravity is certainly not hindered by the women’s non-noble background as circus performers, a profession virtually synonymous with prostitution.

²⁸ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. 1, x-xi.

²⁹ Ibid., xii.

³⁰ Cameron, *Procopius*, 84-87, 112.

Another important chronicler of Justinian's reign, particularly for his relations with Ostrogothic Italy, is Jordanes, author of the *Origin and Deeds of the Goths*, also known as the *Getica*. Although Jordanes was ethnically Gothic, he was not a westerner, belonging to a group of Goths who remained in Thrace rather than follow Theoderic into Italy in the late fifth century. Jordanes was nevertheless thoroughly Byzantine in culture, an orthodox Christian, and strongly anti-Arian (and thus an advocate of Justinian's campaigns against Arian westerners). Jordanes worked in Constantinople after 550 CE, and he was alive for Justinian's reconquests. It is widely accepted that his *Origin and Deeds* is an abridgment of Cassiodorus Senator's non-extant 12-volume Gothic history. Cassiodorus' history was completed in 533, before the reconquests, and therefore Jordanes was *not* drawing on Cassiodorus for the period of 533-540, when the *Getica* ends.³¹ Cassiodorus, an Italian aristocrat, was an administrative assistant to the Ostrogothic king Theoderic, as well as to his successors Athalaric and Theodahad, and he was a decided supporter of the Amal dynasty, using his own writings to portray Theoderic as the rightful ruler of Italy (as opposed to the Byzantine emperor). It has been argued that Jordanes' redrafting of Cassiodorus' history was a part of Justinian's ideological campaign, in that it sought to bring Cassiodorus' work, which upheld the Goths as the worthy and proper rulers of Italy c.533, into sync with the accomplishments of Justinian up to 540, including the ousting

³¹ Walter Goffart, "Does the Distant Past Impinge on the Invasion Age Germans?" in *On Barbarian Identity*, ed. Andrew Gillett (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2002), 21-38; Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, trans. Thomas J. Dunlap (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 3; Andrew Gillett, "Was Ethnicity Politicized in the Earliest Medieval Kingdoms?" in *On Barbarian History*, ed. Andrew Gillett (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2002), 85-121; Peter Heather, *The Goths* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 9. For critical analysis of Jordanes, including the relationship between his work and that of Cassiodorus, see Goffart, "Jordanes' *Getica* and the Disputed Authenticity of Gothic Origins from Scandinavia" in *Speculum* 80 (2005), 379-398; Brian Croke, "Cassiodorus and the *Getica* of Jordanes" in *Classical Philology*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (Apr., 1987), 117-134.

of Witigis and the establishment of Byzantine administrative institutions. The goal of this endeavor was to eliminate Cassiodorus' portrayal of Theoderic as the rightful ruler of Italy. Despite having knowledge of events in Italy up to 550, Jordanes leaves out all information after 540, including the rise of Totila and the Byzantine Empire's subsequent quagmire, which could have easily been seen as a stain on imperial ideology and triumphal imagery.³²

A few other lesser chronicles also address the reign of Justinian, either specifically or as part of a larger work. The *Anonymous Valesianus* is a two-part work; the first, *Origo Constantini Imperatoris*, a biography of the emperor Constantine the Great, was composed around 390, but the second part, *Item ex libris Chronicorum inter cetera*, was written around the same time as Jordanes and Procopius were writing, and covers the period of 474-526. Although it does not run into Justinian's reign, as he was not named emperor until 527, it is valuable for setting the stage in Italy, as it is concerned primarily with the reign of King Theoderic the Great. Unlike Procopius, the unknown author is decidedly anti-Arian and is much more willing to pass judgment on the heterodoxy of the Goths.³³

Marcellinus Comes, or Count Marcellinus, offers another source familiar with the workings of the imperial court. He served as *cancellarius* for Justinian (a sort of personal legal secretary) and held senatorial status, although he resigned his post before Justinian's accession to the emperorship. The first edition of his *Chronicle* was published around 518 upon the accession of Justin I, but it was later updated; the surviving edition comes from 534 and was potentially intended as a tribute to the

³² Goffart, "Jordanes' *Getica*, 395-6.

³³ *Anonymous Valesianus* in Ammianus Marcellinus, trans. John C. Rolfe, Vol 3 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939), 506-507.

triumph of Marcellinus' former employer in the Vandal War. Beyond these facts, there is little other information about the author, save that he wrote two other non-extant works and was, like Justinian, an Illyrian. He focuses on the court, providing insight into how the imperial court and the capital were affected by various barbarian conflicts (particularly invasions from the north, beyond the Danube), and he is strongly pro-Justinian. His *Chronicle* contains an anonymous continuation from 534 to 548, whereupon it abruptly breaks off. The continuator was from Constantinople, and, like Marcellinus, reflects the perspective of the imperial court, and in particular the attitudes towards the Italian campaign. He is religiously orthodox, anti-Gothic, and pro-Belisarius, but his frequent misdating of events suggests that he was not especially close to them as they unfolded.³⁴

The *Chronicle* of John Malalas is a curious source. Malalas was fairly well-educated and originally from Antioch, later moving to Constantinople. He is considered by many modern historians to be naïve and ignorant, but he is nevertheless useful because of the unique information he provides.³⁵ Translators of Malalas counter the criticism by asserting that Malalas was not necessarily ignorant, but that he reflected contemporary knowledge and interpretation of Roman republican history, classical mythology, and culture, even if it was not strictly accurate. Though he draws on written sources for the reigns of the Emperor Leo and all of his predecessors, he utilizes oral sources for those of Zeno, Anastasius, Justin, and Justinian. Thus, Malalas

³⁴ Marcellinus Comes, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus*, trans. Brian Croke (Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1995), xix-xxv.

³⁵ John Malalas, *Chronicle*, trans. Elizabeth Jeffreys, Michael Jeffreys, Roger Scott, et al. (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986), xxi-xxii; A.T. Olmstead, *The Chicago Theological Seminary Newsletter* 31.4 (1942), 22; A.A. Vasiliev, *A History of the Byzantine Empire*, Vol. 1 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1958), 183; A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1964), 267.

is particularly important in that he reflects an emerging Byzantine view of the past, manifesting itself in the framework of Justinianic ideology.³⁶

The *Liber Pontificalis*, or the Book of Popes, was originally compiled in the sixth or seventh century, making it nearly, but perhaps not quite, contemporary with Justinian, after which it was added to upon the death of each successive pope. From the seventh century forwards it is a collection of the annals of the papal court, where the narrator had at least some knowledge (even if flawed) of the events about which he was writing. The earlier portion is “a mesh of veritable fact, romantic legend, deliberate fabrication, and heedless error,” dealing with events remote to the author and for which few accounts were available, and thus making it often outright fraudulent, in part demonstrated by the compiler’s abominable sense of dating.³⁷ Despite these flaws, one of the goals of the compilation was to present the ideal western image of relations between the Roman Church and Constantinople, hence its relevance and important for evaluation of Justinian’s ideology regarding the west.³⁸

A career Byzantine bureaucrat in the first half of the sixth century, John Lydus is the author of a treatise on imperial administration, *De Magistratibus*. He was born in Lydia (in Asia Minor) in 490 and moved to Constantinople in 511. Naturally, his manuscript, which was probably written between 554 and 565 (the death of Justinian), is the most valuable source for investigation into the nuts and bolts of the imperial administration during the reign of Justinian. Lydus could be excused for being

³⁶ Malalas, *Chronicle*, xxi-xxii.

³⁷ *Liber Pontificalis*, trans. Louise Ropes Loomis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), ix-xi.

³⁸ Claire Sotinel, “Emperors and Popes in the Sixth Century” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 275.

somewhat bitter and jaded, as the administrative reforms of Justinian negatively affected Lydus' retirement, due to new regulations regarding pension.³⁹

No study of Justinianic ideology could ignore the most direct source of all, Justinian's *Corpus Iuris Civilis*. Begun as a legal compilation issued by Justinian at the outset of his reign, between 529-534, the *Corpus* consists of the *Codex Justinianus*, the *Digests*, the *Institutes*, and the *Novellae*. The *Codex Justinianus* compiles all imperial law code dating back to the emperor Hadrian in the early second century, and draws especially heavily on the *Codex Theodosianus*, a similar work by Theodosius II a century earlier. The *Novellae* are, perhaps, the most relevant section of the *Corpus*, consisting of the new laws issued by Justinian after 534. Consequently, they are important for study of Justinianic ideology as it pertains to the West and the western military campaigns, since they begin immediately after the successful conclusion of the Vandal War and continue throughout the lengthy and problematic Gothic War. The *Corpus*, and in particular the *Novellae*, provide the most direct access to Justinian himself, frequently allowing his ideology to manifest in the introductions and bodies of his laws. It is a massive information-gathering enterprise comparable to those seen in the contemporary west in Cassiodorus' *Variae* and legal codes issued by "barbarian" rulers in Burgundy and Visigothic Spain.⁴⁰

Finally, the reign of Justinian also produced a wealth of visual sources both artistic and archaeological. A number of coins minted under Justinian in Constantinople, Antioch, and other major eastern cities have survived, predominantly

³⁹ T.F. Carney, *Bureaucracy in Traditional Society*, Vol 3, *John Lydian on the Magistracies of the Roman Constitution* (Lawrence: Coronado Press, 1971), 1-2.

⁴⁰ Caroline Humfress, "Law and Legal Practice in the Age of Justinian" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 163; Maas, "Roman Questions," *CCAJ*, 19.

from the period during and immediately after the Vandal War. Also around the time of the African campaign is the Barberini Ivory, a diptych panel from Constantinople portraying a mounted Justinian in triumph over “barbarian” peoples and accompanied by Victory. Further West, a large mosaic in the church of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy, from the later years of the Gothic War, shows Justinian and Theodora on opposite walls of the apse, each surrounded by an entourage and carrying one of the halves of the Eucharist. Finally, some potential visual evidence has not survived but is described in textual accounts, most notably the equestrian statue of Justinian in Constantinople that is detailed in Procopius *Buildings*.

Thus, Justinian’s era abounds with crucial primary source material. Those mentioned here and their less prominent companions are all invaluable in piecing together Justinian’s reign and uncovering the connections between his ruling ideology and his campaigns of reconquest in the former Western Roman Empire.

CHAPTER I BEFORE THE WARS

When he then perceived that the whole earthly element was like a great body, and next became aware that the head of the whole, the imperial city of the Roman Empire, lay oppressed by bondage to a tyrant...he declared that his life was not worth living if he were to allow the imperial city to remain in such a plight, and began preparations to overthrow the tyranny.¹

Eusebius' account of Constantine I the Great's march on Rome in 312 could just as easily belong to the twenty-eight years of Justinian's rule and his efforts to rebuild the Roman Empire of old during the sixth century. Constantine's campaign, which initiated a series of civil wars that would eventually unite the entire empire under his governance, serves as a striking precursor to Justinian's own approach to the former Western Empire. The account also demonstrates that the applications of Justinianic imperial ideology to foreign policy concerning the West did not spring fully formed from the will of the emperor. On the contrary, Justinian was able to reach back over two and a half centuries for precedents and inspiration for the proper behavior of a Christian emperor: from Constantine's march on Rome and assumption of the Chi-Rho labarum before his victory over the Western augustus Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (312) to Justinian's immediate predecessors, Justin and the religiously flexible Anastasius. This chapter examines those precedents established not only by past emperors, but also by patriarchs of Rome and Constantinople, regarding the proper handling of religion, legal and political conceptions, and manifestations of imperial authority and prestige. I will also look at how Justinian responded to his predecessors, whether by emulating them or by actively distancing

¹ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, trans. Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 79.

himself, in the first years of his reign prior to the Vandal War, which erupted in 533.² Although Justinian did not assume the emperorship until 527, he is considered by both scholars and contemporaries to have been a major force in Justin's policy decisions, and perhaps the power behind the throne of his allegedly senile and uneducated uncle from 517 on.³ For this reason, it is appropriate to consider Justin's reign as reflecting the ideology of his nephew. By the outbreak of the Vandal War, Justinian had forged for himself an imperial ideology that merged the traditions of the past with the demands of the present.

Byzantine Ecclesiastical Policy

Following the final loss of Rome in 476, the policies of the intervening emperors Zeno and Anastasius and the Roman Church's newfound independence from imperial supervision led to Constantinople and Rome quickly growing apart. This estrangement, a long process originating in the Council of Nicaea but finally brought to the fore by Zeno's *Henotikon* and the Acacian Schism, presented a serious problem

² Although the chapter has discreet sections—religion, law, etc.—it must be pointed out that Byzantine imperial doctrine is a complex, tightly-woven tapestry that seamlessly merges concepts that modern observers may naturally wish to force seams upon. Thus, in the interests of clarity and structure, this chapter will make those distinctions, although the reader will quickly notice the substantial and unavoidable overlap between the sections.

³ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, trans. H.B. Dewing, Vol. III, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1914-1940), 85: "[Justinian] had not yet come to the throne, but was administering the government according to his pleasure; for his uncle Justinus, who was emperor, was very old and not altogether experienced in matters of state." Procopius, *Buildings*, trans. H.B. Dewing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), 39: Procopius credits all those churches erected during the reign of Justin to Justinian "since Justinian administered the government also during his uncle's reign on his own authority." *History of the Coptic Patriarchs of Alexandria*, trans. B. Evetts, in *Patrologia Orientalis* 5 (1910), 451-452: Justin is completely replaced with Justinian, "And Anastasius the believing prince died; and they raised up after him an evil man, a heretic, whose name was Justinian, that he might govern the empire." For modern scholars who accept Justin's "role": J.A.S. Evans, *Age of Justinian: The Circumstances of Imperial Power* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 97; Harold Lamb, *Constantinople: Birth of an Empire* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1957), 56-67, who describes Justin as "unthinking." For a full treatment of Justin I, A.A. Vasiliev, *Justin the First: An Introduction to the Epoch of Justinian the Great* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950).

to the Byzantine emperors, who saw their control over the Church and papal cooperation both slipping away. This exacerbated the sectional problems of the empire, in particular its ability to deal with the conflict between orthodox Christians and Monophysites and the domestic unrest it caused. Consequently, the emperors adopted the very Byzantine solution of seeking doctrinal uniformity as a means of maintaining public order.⁴ Theological reunification with Rome became a cornerstone of Byzantine imperial policy. The emperors believed that, without the compliance of Rome, religious compromise and doctrinal uniformity, and therefore religious peace, were out of reach. Zeno was unlikely to effect any sort of reconciliation, since he was the emperor who caused the Acacian Schism and leaned towards the Monophysites. Anastasius, then, took up the mantle of reunification but was seriously hindered by his own Monophysitic tendencies. Anastasius' unwillingness to compromise with the papacy in order to heal the schism, embodied in his refusal to enter into any relations with Rome unless the pope accepted imperial demands and Zeno's *Henotikon*, guaranteed that unity would not be achieved during Anastasius' reign.⁵

Despite Anastasius' failed attempts to dictate reconciliation to Pope Hormisdas, the notion of reunity nevertheless was established as a key issue in imperial policy and remained so into the reign of Justin, for whom the principal religious policy aim was the resumption of normal relations with Rome.⁶ Considering the reputation of Justin "the orthodox" in Rome as a champion of orthodoxy, it is quite

⁴ Michael Maas, "Roman Questions, Byzantine Answers: Contours of the Age of Justinian" in *Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 6.

⁵ Peter Charanis, *Church and State in the Later Roman Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1939), 23-26.

⁶ Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, 161-162; *Liber Pontificalis*, trans. Louise Ropes Loomis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), 127: Justin is given the epithet "the orthodox", in contrast to the heretical Anastasius.

likely that his push to end the Acacian Schism was driven by his own piety and was something that he would have pursued even without the instigation of Justinian, who followed up the speedy request (he began the march towards reconciliation within a year of acceding to the throne) of Justin and Patriarch John of Constantinople for papal legates from Hormisdas with a rather imperious letter of his own demanding the presence of the pope himself.⁷ Despite the boldness of the letter, it is unlikely that Justinian was fitting his correspondence into some already-formulated autocratic policy, given that his later overbearing approach to the papacy was contingent on possession of Rome itself. Rather, Justinian's letter was likely born of his personal zeal and dedication to the policy of reunification, as even contemporary critics emphasize Justinian's theological interests and commitment to restoring Orthodoxy.⁸

However, merely to reunite the churches of the East and West was not the true goal of the Byzantine emperors. Restoration, though deemed necessary for domestic peace, would be hollow if it did not conform to the imperial ideology of Constantinople. Justin, guided by his nephew in this regard, had no intention of surrendering any authority to the pope—a stance strikingly similar to that of Anastasius, but one that was easier to reconcile since Justin's convictions were a far cry from his predecessor's heretical beliefs. With an orthodox emperor on the throne, a return to normal relations was much easier for both sides to effect, but the Byzantines could not pass up the opportunity to reassert their claim as rightful rulers of all Christendom. A letter from Patriarch John to Pope Hormisdas after the healing of the

⁷ Vasiliev, 164. The author considers this to be “anticipating his future autocratic policy towards Pope Vigilius,” but there is no evidence in any contemporary work to suggest that Justinian was already harboring plans to reconquer Italy in 518.

⁸ Peter Sarris, *Economy and Society in the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 205.

schism attributes everything to Justin, nearly ignoring the role of the pope and pointedly asserting the central role of the emperor in both the political and religious world.⁹

Ultimately, the healing of the Acacian Schism was accepted by Byzantium as conforming to imperial ideology, although such reconciliation could be achieved only because it was given two different interpretations by the sides involved. To Constantinople, Rome had been reintegrated into the imperial system, absorbed back into a world where, at least in so far as rulership was concerned, the religious and secular spheres coincided. While this fit in quite nicely with Byzantine conceptions about the nature of religious control, the restoration held a rather different meaning for the pope, who considered that the emperor had finally accepted that Rome was the ultimate authority on all ecclesiastical matters, and that such matters were, contrary to Zeno's attempts to force compromise through political channels, under religious, not imperial, control.¹⁰ Although this misunderstanding would lead to a quick collapse of the somewhat strained concord, the healing of the Acacian Schism did have notable effects on imperial policy. Now that the key objective of reunity had been accomplished, Constantinople, particularly because of its skewed perception of what the reconciliation truly meant, was more invested in the welfare and domestic affairs of

⁹ Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, 179-184. Vasiliev has suggested that even in 523, with the succession in Rome of Pope John I (who would go on to be arrested by Theoderic, die in captivity, and be hailed as a martyr all before Justinian took the throne in 527), Justinian realized that the return to friendly relations with the pope and the Roman Senate would pave the way for "the success of his plan of reconquering Italy to the empire in the future...[since] during the last years of Justin's reign such a plan had already been definitely formed in the head of Justinian." However, there is virtually no basis for this claim and, as discussed in Chapter 3, the contemporary sources quite clearly point to the Gothic invasion as arising from the circumstances of the Vandal War and the succession of Theoderic, not from any long-premeditated plot to recapture the West.

¹⁰ Claire Sotinel, "Emperors and Popes in the Sixth Century" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 271.

Western Catholics than it had been at perhaps any point in the past, and certainly more than any point since the fall of the Western Empire four decades earlier.¹¹

However, simply bringing Rome and Constantinople back into religious harmony was far from the only element of imperial religious policy. A far more pressing obstacle to the emperor's drive toward doctrinal uniformity and religious peace could be found within the empire's very borders: the prevalence of, and imperial reactions to, heresy. Eliminating heresy had been important to Roman emperors as far back as the Christian persecutions by pagan emperors, but in a specifically Christian imperial context it became a central concern starting with the First Council of Nicaea under Constantine in 325. Socrates Scholasticus asserts that the council was called to address a problem Justinian could certainly relate to, as it sought to resolve two major points of discord within the Church: the Melitian schism in Alexandria and the controversy of an Alexandrian presbyter named Arius, whose teachings would eventually be adopted by both the Goths and the Vandals.¹² Although Constantine's anti-heretical policies never reached the same level of viciousness as the persecutions of Christians under Diocletian in the third century or the worst of the anti-heretical periods later, he nevertheless established the imperial role of upholding orthodoxy and combating heresy (and paganism) by outlawing congregations and public assembly of heretical groups, thereby restricting all public worship to the Catholic Church.¹³

¹¹ John Moorhead, "Byzantines in the West" in *New Cambridge Medieval History I: c.500-c700*, ed. Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 122.

¹² Mark Edwards, "The First Council of Nicaea" in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Origins to Constantine*, ed. Margaret M. Mitchell and Frances M. Young (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹³ Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* in *Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd series, Vol. II, trans. A.C. Zenos, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1890), 280-281.

While Constantine set the precedent for imperial responsibility for doctrinal unity, it took another century for Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople from 428-431, to instill forever in the imperial ideology an explicitly persecutory attitude towards heresy. Nestorius took advantage of his appointment to the patriarchate to exhort Theodosius II with the words, "Give me, my prince, the earth purged of heretics, and I will give you heaven as a recompense. Assist me in destroying heretics, and I will assist you in vanquishing the Persians."¹⁴ Due to his vigorous persecution of heresy, Nestorius was considered an "incendiary" even by his own people, as the citizens of Constantinople were more concerned with peace and order than violently enforced orthodoxy. Nevertheless, Nestorius' attitude and willingness to share it with Theodosius II reveal two important ideas that became central to Byzantine imperial beliefs: first, that the emperor has a responsibility to eliminate heresy for his own salvation; second, that the elimination of heresy is a prerequisite to success of the state, especially in foreign affairs and wars. This point was not only seized upon by Justinian but even simplified in its practice to eliminating heretics *by means of* foreign wars, resulting in the combination of combating heresy at home with invading the two most powerful Arian polities in the world.

The conflict between heresy and orthodoxy set the stage for imperial ideology in the sixth century, as Justin "the orthodox" positioned himself in stark contrast to Anastasius, emphasizing his own orthodoxy and interest in religious reunification as the defining elements of his reign. Such a change was hailed by the orthodox after decades of Zeno and Anastasius. Both emperors inclined towards Monophysitism and preferred to avoid altogether the issue of controversy over the

¹⁴ Ibid., 169.

Council of Chalcedon by reverting to pre-Chalcedonian positions and rejecting the insistences of *both* sides. Justin and Justinian, on the other hand, represented themselves as heralding a return to Chalcedon, and thus a return to orthodoxy and concordance with Rome.¹⁵ The prevailing concern in Constantinople over the notion of a heretical emperor is seen in the pledge extracted by Patriarch Euphemius from Anastasius upon the latter's accession to the throne to make no "religious innovations," an oath indicative not only of the fears of the city's orthodox population that Anastasius might attempt to force the issue of his Monophysite beliefs but also of the emperor's actual power to make such innovations in the first place.¹⁶ So great was the unease regarding Anastasius and Zeno that, as a condition for resolving the Acacian Schism, Justin removed both emperors from the diptychs, thereby forbidding orthodox churches from including their names in the list of recipients of prayers and further cementing his own position as a champion of orthodoxy.¹⁷

Over the course of the reign of Justin, imperial policy towards anti-Chalcedonian beliefs passed through three stages. In the wake of the reconciliation with Rome, Justin pursued violent, government-sanctioned persecutions throughout the Near East, particularly in Antioch, one of the bulwarks of Monophysitism. The end of the Acacian Schism was intended to lead to the persecution and conversion of the anti-Chalcedonian easterners, but their vehement resistance made this impossible and rendered Byzantium "unable to keep the pledge to which it had committed itself by

¹⁵ For the policies of Zeno and Anastasius: Patrick Gray, "The Legacy of Chalcedon" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 224-225. For Justin and the return to orthodoxy, Gray, 227-228; Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, 153; and *Liber Pontificalis*, 127.

¹⁶ Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 11.

¹⁷ Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, 177.

signing the *libellus*.” Due to stalwart opposition by the fanatical eastern clergy, monks, and masses to this aggressive government policy, Justin and Justinian realized that such a policy was useless and concluded that a milder management of the dissidence was necessary out of fear of losing the economically vital Near East if persecutions continued. Despite overtures to Pope Hormisdas, papal sanction of greater leniency and flexibility was not forthcoming, so Justin and Justinian promptly disregarded their commitments to Rome and pursued the policy anyway. Ultimately this unsuccessful policy was abandoned late in Justin’s reign, culminating in a scathing edict against heretics in 527.¹⁸ This seesaw political approach may have been a reflection of the escalating ill will between the Arian Ostrogothic king Theoderic and Justin, especially in light of the executions of the Roman senators Boethius and Symmachus. One near-contemporary source suggests that Theoderic planned to respond to Justin by confiscating all orthodox churches under his control and that he was only prevented from doing so by his death on the very eve of its execution.¹⁹

Both leniency and harshness had ample precedents as imperial policies. Theodosius I outlawed the assembly, preaching, and ordination of members of any heretical groups in the late fourth century, yet “great as were the punishments adjudged by the laws against heretics, they were not always carried into execution, for the emperor had no desire to persecute his subjects; he only desired to enforce uniformity of view about God through the medium of intimidation.”²⁰ This attitude of stability being valued above violent orthodoxy was seized upon by Justin for much of his reign,

¹⁸ Ibid., 221-223. For quote and obstinance of Hormisdas, 211.

¹⁹ *Anonymous Valesianus*, 567-569.

²⁰ Sozomenus, *Ecclesiastical History in Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd series, Vol. II, trans. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1890), 383.

and he even allowed an unorthodox successor to a deposed orthodox bishop to remain in his seat against the wishes of Pope Hormisdas, choosing maintenance of order above sparking civil unrest. After the death of Dioscorus II, the Monophysite patriarch of Alexandria in 518, another stalwart Monophysite, Timothy III, was appointed with no opposition from Justin, much to the dismay of Hormisdas.²¹

The different religious climates in the East and West proved a key reason for the disjunction between papal and imperial attitudes towards heresy. The battle lines of the East were simply not as rigidly drawn as those under papal jurisdiction, and the position of Monophysites in the Eastern theological struggle was equally uncertain. After all, the Byzantine Empire had just witnessed the reign of the second consecutive Monophysite emperor, and Monophysites dominated Egypt and Syria, whereas heresies were much weaker in the West. Some assert that “Monophysites were still loyal subjects whom Justinian hoped to unite with the Orthodox under a single creed,” and this is certainly at least partly true, in that Justinian did hope to achieve uniformity of belief throughout the empire.²² However, the Alexandrians themselves had a different view of the situation, describing Anastasius as the “believing prince” and Justinian as “an evil man, a heretic.” Nevertheless, Justinian sought throughout his reign to conciliate the Monophysite bishops like ex-Patriarch

²¹ Vasiliev, 188-189, 284. Vasiliev also reproduces a lengthy quote from Justin on the subject of flexibility: “Some cities and churches both Pontic and Asian and particularly Oriental, whose clerics and people have been tested by threats and persuasions, have been however in no way prevailed upon to annul and remove the names of the priests whose views are in high esteem among them. They consider life harder than death, if they condemn the dead on whose lives those who are alive pride themselves. Thus, what can we do to such pertinacity, which fails to obey orders and despises tortures to such an extent that they think it would be great and joyous for them to abandon their bodies rather than their religious opinions? It seems to us, indeed, it is necessary to act more mildly and more gently...Willing to avoid blood and tortures, we have accepted the *libellus*.”

²² Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 105.

Severus.²³ This has given rise to a conflicting argument by scholars, that the Egyptian population was the bulwark of Monophysitism, using the sect, without even understanding its intricacies, as an outlet “through which to express its nationalistic and *anti-imperial* tendencies.”²⁴ If this is considered to be true, Justinian would have wanted to rein in the anti-imperialism in addition to achieving religious unification, as Monophysites constituted important Egyptian economic groups (e.g. the Alexandrian shipwrights), and any emperor would want to avoid the major disruption of the imperial economy that would follow attempts at persecution. Justinian already had imperial precedent for seeking compromise, with Zeno and the *Henotikon* being the most notable despite their failures and alienation of the Roman Church. Zeno ignored the Council of Chalcedon in his attempt to reconcile Monophysites and orthodox. He then deposed and replaced Calandion, the patriarch of Alexandria, with Peter Fuller, when the former refused to sign the document. Rome, outside imperial control, also withheld approval of the *Henotikon*, “shocked by the news [that] the decisions of a general council were to be set aside by imperial edict.”²⁵ Zeno’s attempt at imperially-imposed religious policy resulted in the excommunication of Acacius (the patriarch of Constantinople who lent the schism his name) and Peter Fuller. While that policy was initially somewhat successful in the East, it quickly fell apart due to extreme Monophysites, thereby both failing to bring together the East and alienating the West. Nevertheless, Zeno’s heavy-handed religious policies offered Justinian a relatively recent manifestation of the imperial ideology of ruling not just Christendom, but Christianity.

²³ *Patriarchs of Alexandria*, 451-452.

²⁴ Charanis, *Church and State*, 16.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 14-16.

Harshness in religious policy was not an unfamiliar element of imperial doctrine, either. The assertion that Justinian was less concerned with strict theology than with ecclesiastical unity and peace carries some merit, especially considering the events of the end of his reign, but to ensure ecclesiastical peace it was necessary for Justinian to maintain positive relations with the West in order to appease Constantinopolitan religious elements, thereby limiting the amount of religious leniency he could reasonably expect to be allowed.²⁶ In the aftermath of a visit from Pope John at the command of King Theoderic, Justin enacted extremely harsh legislation against all heretics and dissidents, including Manichaeans and Samaritans, but he made one exception, allowing Goths, who were mostly Arians, to continue serving the empire as *foederati*, military allies and auxiliaries. This concession to the Arian king was not likely to antagonize either the papacy, since the pope had been forced into making the journey on Theoderic's behalf to request tolerance for the Arians of Constantinople, or any powerful religious groups within the empire itself.²⁷ It did not take long, however, for Justin to turn around and attempt to reconsecrate the Arian churches of Constantinople as Catholic, thus angering the Gothic king.²⁸

Immediately after the death of Justin and the accession of Justinian to sole possession of the imperial office in 527, the new emperor zealously pursued persecution, bringing to mind the words of Nestorius rather than the more conciliatory policy of the preceding half-century. Shortly after taking power, Justinian denied heretics "all earthly advantages, so that they might languish in misery," although it is likely that his decision to ramp up persecution in Constantinople and confiscate the

²⁶ Gray, "Legacy of Chalcedon," 228-229.

²⁷ Vasiliev, *Justin the Great*, 219.

²⁸ *Liber Pontificalis*, 131.

property of heretics was influenced by the vast wealth of heretic sanctuaries, particularly those belonging to the Arians.²⁹ Whatever the financial benefits, however, Justinian's persecutions still owed their origin to long-standing imperial practice. This is evidenced in his destruction of pagan temples in Egypt built for *foederati* by Diocletian in the third century and in other legislation by Justinian against paganism. Given that by the sixth century paganism was of no threat at all to the empire, these undertakings betray the rising enthusiasm of the emperor and his assumption of persecution as a focal point of imperial ideology.³⁰

Legal and Political Unity

Religious peace and cohesiveness was not the only form of unity lacking in the Byzantine Empire upon the accession of Justinian. The realm lacked unity and firm direction in the legal sphere as well, leading to Justinian's decision almost immediately upon assuming the throne to undertake a complete revision of the Romano-Byzantine legal code, a complicated jumble of often-outdated and irrelevant legislation stretching back over nearly half a millennium.³¹ Recodification of Byzantine law was, at this point, a necessity even without the ideological underpinnings with which Justinian imbued it. By the early sixth century, virtually anything could be justified in court by a skilled barrister learned in obscure, ancient laws and their equally convoluted and obscure commentaries, making the task of

²⁹ For quote: Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, 244-245. For wealth of heretics, Procopius, *Anecdota*, trans. H.B. Dewing (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), 135-137.

³⁰ For destruction of pagan temples: Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. 1, 189. For anti-pagan agenda, Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 67.

³¹ Maas, "Roman Questions," 6.

paring down both laws and interpretations vital to judicial order.³² For Justinian, the law was a means of progress, and it was the responsibility of the emperor to serve his subjects by ensuring progress that accommodated changing conditions. It was no doubt this guiding belief that prompted Procopius to bitterly complain that the emperor “kept everything in turmoil” with his legal reforms and other enactments.³³

Justinian threw himself into the endeavor, remarking that “There is nothing to be found in all things so worthy of attention as the authority of the law, which properly regulates all affairs both divine and human, and expels all injustice.”³⁴ This statement from the preamble of the *Digest*, combined with the declaration that the interpretations of Justinian would override all older legislation, sheds light on Justinian’s conception of imperial rule. Justinian declared the law the supreme power over both secular and religious spheres, granting that power to whoever controlled the law. The emperor then complemented this move by seeking to make the emperor in general (and himself in particular) the sole source of the law by recompiling all previous incarnations in his own name and casting the new code in a strictly religious/imperial format, going so far as to issue every text in the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* jointly in the name of Justinian and Jesus, ensuring that all legislation, past and present, would fall within an explicitly Christian framework.³⁵

³² Lamb, *Constantinople*, 75-76.

³³ For law as progress: Charles Pazdernik, “Justinianic Ideology and the Power of the Past” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 201; and Justinian, *Digest or Pandects, Corpus Iuris Civilis: The Civil Law* (New York: AMS Press, 1973). For turmoil and bitterness, Procopius, *Anecdota*, 119.

³⁴ Justinian, *Digest or Pandects* in CIC, vol. 2, pt. 2, First Preface, 179.

³⁵ Pazdernik, “Justinianic Ideology,” 200; Caroline Humfress, “Law and Legal Practice in the Age of Justinian” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 162; Justinian, *Corpus Iuris Civilis*.

Byzantine imperial ideology never hesitated to merge religious and secular rulership, and Justinian was hardly one to break the mold in this regard. The first paragraph of the *Codex Justinianus* (the earliest part of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*) attributes the compilation to divine inspiration, while the first title of the work begins with a fourth-century law of Theodosius, Gratian, and Valentinian requiring citizens of Constantinople to adhere to orthodoxy. The work goes on to include even pre-Christian classical laws recast in a distinctly Christian context.³⁶ This process adhered to the close ideological association between imperial legislating and divine mandate, a critical concept for Byzantine autocracy and, later, medieval European notions of sacral kingship.³⁷ Justinian's manifestation of this fusion of secular and divine jurisprudence, fueled by his claim that the emperor was granted his legislative powers directly from God Himself, was not limited to imperial declarations, but reached out to touch virtually every citizen of the empire.³⁸ Justinian ordered his legal decrees to be posted on church doors throughout the realm, and at the same time for the gospels to be posted in the courtrooms, while all participants in civil trials were required to swear oaths of Christian faith.³⁹ Similarly, all judicial and extrajudicial records were required to begin by acknowledging "God the creator" in addition to the emperor and his regnal year, and all provincial magistrates hearing legal appeals took an oath rooted

³⁶ Justinian, *Codex Justinianus* in CIC, vol. 12, 3-9; Humfress, "Law and Legal Practice," 167: for recasting of pre-Christian legal works.

³⁷ Maas, "Roman Questions," 6.

³⁸ Justinian, *Novel 72* in CIC, vol. 16, part 6, 269: "... those to whom permission has been given by God to enact laws; We mean by this him who is invested with sovereignty."

³⁹ Humfress, "Law and Legal Practice," 179-180. John Malalas, *Chronicle*, trans. Elizabeth Jeffreys, Michael Jeffreys, Roger Scott, et al. (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986), 282-283.

in religion, swearing loyalty to the emperor in the name of God.⁴⁰ This seeming harmony of secular and religious elements of rule, though an alien and unsettling concept to the West and, as has been seen, a source of tension between the imperial administration and the papacy in particular, continued the long-standing Byzantine ideology of synergy between the two spheres and the emperor's responsibility for the well-being of both and for ensuring that well-being through God-mandated legislation.

Imperial Authority

To the western observer, Byzantine imperial policy, with its ability to move seamlessly between ecclesiastical and secular spheres as if they are one and the same, would likely be termed "caesaropapism."⁴¹ The relationship between the emperor and God, furthermore, was the cornerstone of imperial authority both within the empire and abroad. Justinian would have been able to draw ample basis for this approach from the reign of his uncle Justin, whose rise to power was captured in a painting by Marinus of Apamea that charted the rise of Justin from his humble Illyrian beginnings to the imperial power with so much accuracy that, if not for some quick thinking and explanations, Marinus would have subjected himself to considerable danger. The artist justified his work as proclaiming that "rich men and men of high family may not trust

⁴⁰ Justinian, *Novel 47*, CIC vol. 16, part 5, 213-215. Humfress, "Law and Legal Practice", 169. For the magistrate's oath: Lamb, *Constantinople*, 141.

⁴¹ First put forth by Iustus Henning Boehmer, *Ius ecclesiasticum protestantium* (Halle, 1756). Such an idea as caesaropapism would probably be foreign to Byzantine thought, since it (somewhat pejoratively) suggests the merging of secular and religious rule. Since such merging necessarily demands that the secular and religious be initially separated—and since in Byzantine thought, they *were* very nearly one and the same and certainly not separate concepts—attempting to combine two concepts that were already ideologically inseparable would naturally make no sense. However, for purposes of maintaining relatively familiar terminology, caesaropapism will henceforth be used to categorize this Byzantine thought, and the reader should bear in mind that, in this work, it neither carries any negative intent nor suggests the fusion of separate ideas, but is the tightly interwoven harmony of the secular and ecclesiastical elements of imperial rule.

in their power and their riches and the greatness of the noble family, but in God, who raises the poor man out of the mire, and places him as chief over the people, and ruler of the kingdom of men, which He will give to whom He will, and over which He will set the lowest among men.”⁴² With this defense, Marinus captured the essence of imperial authority as deriving from the will of God, not from wealth or from aristocratic power, much to the chagrin of the Constantinopolitan senators.

Reinforcing the idea of the divinely sanctioned emperor, during the visit of Pope John I to Constantinople, Justin had himself “re-crowned” by the pope, an act that, though carrying essentially no political significance, held considerable ideological weight, as the pope represented the western part of the former Roman Empire, which had been separated from Constantinople.⁴³ Particularly when considered as a parallel to Justin’s first coronation by the Patriarch of Constantinople “at God’s command”, such an action may indicate that the imperial claim to sovereignty of the West was still alive and healthy, although it may also be a more limited statement of the emperor’s authority over both “halves” of the Church in the wake of the resolution of the Acacian Schism less than a decade earlier.⁴⁴ Justin was not acting in a vacuum in this regard; the first emperor to be crowned by the patriarch had been Marcian in 450, a relatively recent event for the Byzantine Empire, who borrowed the idea for the ceremony from the Persians. Unlike western royal coronations, the ceremony did not represent the

⁴² Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, 89-90. The description of the painting comes from a Syriac copy of a non-extant Greek original. The painting itself, like the Greek description, does not survive.

⁴³ Ibid., 218.

⁴⁴ Malalas, *Chronicle*, 230-231): The quote from John Malalas indicates that the notion of divine-right rule was not limited to the imperial conception, but a reality for contemporary Byzantines.

church imbuing the emperor with authority, but “symbolized the coalescence of ecclesiastical and temporal power” in the single person of the emperor.⁴⁵

The ideology of divinely mandated rule was picked up by Justinian in his *Digest*, where he asserted that the empire was “delivered to [Justinian] by His Celestial Majesty.”⁴⁶ However, divine sanction did not always translate into free reign over the Church, especially for a heretical emperor like Anastasius, who endured ongoing conflict with Patriarch Macedonius over the emperor’s authority to “pursue a religious policy independently of the patriarch of the capital.”⁴⁷ Macedonius naturally sought to obstruct the pro-Monophysitic policies of Anastasius, refusing to anathematize the Council of Chalcedon, which was the crux of the conflict between Monophysites and orthodox, on the grounds that only an ecumenical council with the pope as president could effect such a deed. Macedonius’ retort to Anastasius was a direct slap in the face to imperial ideology, as the patriarch was essentially subordinating not just the Church of Constantinople, but the emperor, to the discretion of the pope on matters of religious policy.

Had Justinian been in Anastasius’ position, he would have certainly clashed with the Constantinopolitan Church as well, as he readily adopted the imperial claim to be the source—outranking even the patriarchs—of both secular and ecclesiastical law, even alleging authority over churches outside the bounds of the empire. In claiming this authority, Justinian was not only turning to Byzantine imperial ideology but also

⁴⁵ Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 61. This distinction is an important one, and goes back to the earlier point that ecclesiastical and secular power were not considered separate entities, and so one could not empower the other. Despite the patriarchal involvement in the coronation, the ceremony did not move into a church until 602 with the end of the Justinianic dynasty and the accession of Phocas.

⁴⁶ Justinian, *Digest*, 179.

⁴⁷ Charanis, *Church and State*, 36-37. Like most westerners, Charanis sees Anastasius as smacking of the pejorative “caesaropapism.”

reaching back to “ancient Rome.”⁴⁸ However, the authority of the emperor was not conferred by God alone, although, to be sure, that was the only source of authority necessary; Justin recognized that authority should also derive from the subjects of the emperor, appointing Justinian as co-emperor with the phrase “by will of my people” and thus investing him with popular, in addition to divine, sanction.⁴⁹ Justinian, after the death of Justin and the commencement of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, went a step further and invoked the ancient *Lex Regia* as imbuing him with authority over the citizenry, and at the same time staked the new compilation on his own authority in a bid to prevent future emperors from nullifying legislation in the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, just as he had done to many laws of previous emperors.⁵⁰ Through this approach, it emerges that the initiatives of Justinian were motivated not only by a need for administrative efficiency, but also by the need of Justinian to make manifest his role and authority as divinely-appointed/inspired emperor.⁵¹

In cementing the authority of the emperor, Justin and Justinian felt it necessary to separate themselves from the reigns of their predecessors. One reason,

⁴⁸ Justinian, *Novel 9*, 65-66. “No one is ignorant of the fact that, in ancient Rome, legislation originally emanated from the head of the Pontificate. Hence We now deem it necessary to impose upon Ourselves the duty of showing that We are the source of both secular and ecclesiastical jurisprudence by promulgating a law consecrated to the honor of God, which shall be applicable not only to this city but to all Catholic Churches everywhere, and exert its salutary vigor over them as far as the Ocean, so that the entire West as well as the East, where possessions belonging to our churches are to be found, or may hereafter be acquired by them, shall enjoy its advantages.”

⁴⁹ Lamb, *Constantinople*, 67. It is, of course, unlikely that Justin actually consulted “his people” in his decision to name Justinian as co-emperor, but he nevertheless felt that emperors should be able to claim popular mandate. Given Constantinople’s proclivity to anti-imperial rioting, one could simply interpret the silence of the population as tacit approval—at least until the very vehement disapproval of the Nika Riots five years later, where Justinian relied on the swords of his soldiers rather than the will of his people to safeguard his authority.

⁵⁰ Justinian, *Digest*, 181: “Since by an ancient law...the *Lex Regia*, all the rights and power of the Roman people were transferred to the Emperor, We do not derive Our authority from that of other different compilations, but wish that it shall all be entirely Ours, for how can antiquity abrogate our laws?”

⁵¹ John Haldon, “Economy and Administration: How Did the Empire Work?” in *Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 49.

already discussed, was the religious rift between the Monophysitic Zeno and Anastasius and the orthodox Justin and Justinian, but assertions of piety were not the only avenue to this goal nor was religious peace its only objective. In one of the first acts of his reign, Justin repealed a law of Anastasius allowing illegitimate children to inherit in the absence of legitimate heirs.⁵² Such a law seems fairly insignificant, but the action carried symbolic importance as an immediate claim to break with the previous reign. Justinian criticized emperors before him for “squandering the Roman inheritance entrusted to their care, likely referring to Anastasius and Zeno but perhaps reaching as far back as Honorius, under whose reign the collapse of the Western Empire, in terms of loss of territory, had begun.”⁵³ Even contemporaries drew a sharp division between Justinian and, at the least, Anastasius, whether through incisive attacks against Justinian as in the *History of the Coptic Patriarchs* or through similar invective against Anastasius, such as that hurled by Marcellinus Comes, charging Anastasius with “evil scheming” and “civil war on the dignity of those of the orthodox faith.”⁵⁴ Like Marcellinus, Justin and Justinian set the imperial role firmly within the framework of orthodox Christianity, with the emperor at its head and holding sole responsibility for regulating the spiritual lives of both laymen and priests.⁵⁵

Before Justinian, and culminating in the reign of Anastasius, the emperor was seen as something of an estate manager for the imperial aristocracy, a conservative leader whose primary responsibility was to ensure that those in power remained in

⁵² Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, 396.

⁵³ Pazdernik, “Justinianic Ideology,” 193.

⁵⁴ Marcellinus Comes, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus*, trans. Brian Croke (Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1995), 31.

⁵⁵ Sarris, *Economy and Society*, 206. See also Justinian’s *Novellae*, which offer numerous regulations of monasteries, churches, and ecclesiastical offices.

power and prospered.⁵⁶ This undermined the emperor's authority in the face of the aristocracy, and Justin and Justinian were quick to reverse the trend and weaken the Byzantine aristocracy's independent power as far as they were able, earning for themselves a healthy dose of bitterness from the nobility. This animosity from the aristocratic bureaucracy, combined with general unrest in Constantinople due to a spike in the incessant factional strife between the Greens and Blues, culminated in the infamous Nika Riots, which began on New Year's Day, 532 CE.⁵⁷ In an attempt to crack down on factional violence without showing favoritism, Justinian had criminals belonging to both factions arrested. However, rather than quell the unrest, the move prompted the factions to collaborate and launch a prison break, setting off unprecedented rioting that destroyed, among many other buildings, the church of St. Sophia, the baths of Zeuxippus, and part of the imperial residence, while Justinian, the Empress Theodora, and a handful of senators stayed shut up in the palace.

At first, the hostility of the rioters focused on the hugely unpopular praetorian prefect, John the Cappadocian, and the quaestor Tribonian, who also headed up the legal team that compiled the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*. However, despite Justinian's agreement to replace both of the men, the rioting continued and turned anti-imperial with some prodding from the senators who were not trapped in the palace, as the mobs declared Hypatius, one of Anastasius' three nephews and also a senator, emperor,

⁵⁶ Sarris, *Economy and Society*, 200-201.

⁵⁷ The best contemporary account of the Nika Riots comes from Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. 1, 219-239. Given that Belisarius was present in the city, it is almost certain that Procopius was an eyewitness to the events. The Greens and Blues were the leading circus factions, groups identified by their favored charioteers colors in the races at the hippodrome, but also associated with other forms of entertainment such as the theater. However, they were also vehicles for expression of popular opinion in the face of centralizing imperial politics. For a general treatment, see Alan Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976). For a specific examination of the Nika Riots: Geoffrey Greatrex, "The Nika Riot: A Reprisal," in *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 117 (1997), 60-86.

allegedly against his will. The rioters eventually congregated in the hippodrome and, at the urging of Theodora, Justinian chose to stay and fight rather than flee the city. Soldiers led by Belisarius and Mundus, the general of Illyricum, stormed the hippodrome from two sides, caught the rioters in the middle, and massacred over 30,000 of them including, not surprisingly, Hypatius.

This decisive action marked a grisly end to the riots, but the ordeal heralded a drastic change in imperial authority relative to the senatorial aristocracy. Following the outburst, Justinian took measures to weaken the senate severely, bolster the power and authority of the emperor, and (as Louis XIV would do over a thousand years later) tie the dependency of the aristocracy, and the senate in particular, inexorably to the imperial court.⁵⁸ Furthermore, Justinian, who had been on the cusp of fleeing, abdicating, or being fatally overthrown, interpreted his survival of the Nika Riots in terms of the established beliefs about imperial authority and responsibility, casting survival as an indicator of divine support and a declaration of the close connection between the imperial office and God.⁵⁹

Imperial Prestige

Closely related to ideas about imperial authority were concerns about the prestige of the emperor and the empire arising in the late fifth and early sixth centuries. One of the principal sources of these concerns was the attitude that preceding emperors had allowed the deterioration of the imperial domain. Zeno had conferred recognition on Geiseric as king of Roman Africa, Corsica, Sardinia, and Sicily in exchange for an

⁵⁸ Haldon, "Economy and Administration," 40.

⁵⁹ Maas, "Roman Questions," 7.

end to Vandal raids on Greece, effectively finalizing a 442 treaty between the Vandals and the Western Empire that placed the heart of Roman Africa, the provinces of Proconsularis and Byzacena (roughly modern Tunisia) with the capital at Carthage, under Geiseric's control, recognizing him as a client king of the empire.⁶⁰ Justin, although certainly not going so far as to recognize the independence of Ostrogothic Italy, was nevertheless conciliatory towards the Goths in the interests of papal reconciliation and avoided antagonizing Theoderic over the issue of Arianism out of an overriding desire to cement the healing of the Acacian Schism, rather than out of imperial acknowledgment of a Gothic "revival" of the Western Empire.⁶¹

However, the replacement of what had been the Western Empire by predominantly Arian "barbarians" (as Roman imperial citizens would have considered them) generated an atmosphere of unease in Constantinople regarding the "fallen" West. The idea that the West had been lost equated this occurrence with a loss of imperial greatness, which in turn may have justified Justinian's "policy of military 'recovery'" by couching the campaigns in terms of restoring the empire to its rightful position in the world.⁶² Given that, despite this perception, Justinian's immediate predecessors had made no effort to reclaim the property of the empire (whether out of preoccupation with Persia or out of disinterest in the West), it comes as no surprise that, if Justinian felt the need to restore imperial prestige, he would naturally distance himself from Zeno and Anastasius as poor stewards of the imperial realm. However, it

⁶⁰ For Zeno's recognition: Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 81. For the 442 treaty: Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 292. Geiseric was officially a *rex socius et amicus*, an allied king and friend, although that didn't stop him from sacking Rome 455 on the pretense that the assassination of Valentinian III voided his earlier agreement.

⁶¹ Peter Heather, *The Goths* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 253.

⁶² Walter Goffart, "Rome, Constantinople, and the Barbarians" in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 86, No. 2 (Apr., 1981), 298-299.

is worth noting that before the reign of Justinian, there was no pervasive attitude of blaming Byzantine emperors for failing to defend or regain the West, suggesting a shift in attitude upon Justinian's accession, although even in the days without blame there was a clear sense of a "lost" Western Empire.⁶³ The city of Rome itself held a particular mystique for the Eastern observer, and its loss was considered an especial blow to imperial prestige, as evidenced by Socrates Scholasticus' overblown account of Alaric's sack in 410, in which "the barbarians that were with him destroying everything in their way at last took Rome itself, which they pillaged, burning the greatest number of the magnificent structures and other admirable works of art it contained."⁶⁴

Although the West was perhaps the sorest subject where imperial prestige was concerned, it was not alone. Justin's reign is the first to see official documentary reference to the Patriarch of Constantinople as the "Ecumenical Patriarch," perhaps a title arising out of a bid to increase the prestige of the city and the patriarchate within Christendom.⁶⁵ The bid to augment imperial reverence with appeals to religion can also be found in Anastasius' policies stating that the ecclesiastical sphere was subordinate to imperial authority and that the emperor held power "to deal with the religious situation of the empire as he sees fit, irrespective of the wishes of the

⁶³ Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle*. Marcellinus makes no disparaging comment about Honorius or Arcadius for the events of their reigns, has nothing to say on Zeno or Anastasius regarding loss of the West, and gives a very matter-of-fact account of Odoacer's seizure of Italy. However, he *does* condemn Valentinian for the murder of Aetius, the general who led the defense against Attila the Hun: "With him fell the Western Kingdom and it has not as yet been able to be restored."

⁶⁴ Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 157-158. Hardly one of the most peaceful sacks of a city known to history noted by Heather.

⁶⁵ Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, 146. The "Ecumenical Patriarch" was so named because he was the patriarch of the οἰκουμένη, the entire known world, of which Europe, and Rome, constituted only a part: F.W. Buckler, "Regnum et Ecclesia" in *Church History*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Mar., 1934), 16-40.

ecclesiastical officials or the edicts of the church.”⁶⁶ However, an emperor did not necessarily need to conjure up esteem by invoking religious authority over the Church and over the entire known world, but could, in the eyes of Justinian’s contemporaries, increase imperial prestige simply by his own character, “for when the Emperor is pious, divinity walks not afar from human affairs, but is wont to mingle with men and to take delight in associating with them,” and the right emperor could field an army against such an enemy as the Persians “with the help of God.”⁶⁷

Imperial foreign policy abroad leading up to the reign of Justinian, and especially under Justin, dealt primarily with the south (Arabia), the east (Persia), and the north (the Danube and the peoples who lived above it), where the greatest threats to the security of the empire resided, whereas the West was generally outside the realm of imperial concern. Indeed, national security took a back seat to rigorous pursuit of doctrinal unity, as Justin had no trouble forging an alliance with the Monophysitic King Elesboas of Abyssinia on the basis not only of common political interests, but of common religion, despite the potential thorn of heresy. As far as the West was concerned, there was little threat to the empire posed there, and Justin was happy to keep it that way by nominating Theoderic’s son-in-law Eutharic consul in 519, making him the first Italian Goth to hold the consulship, as a demonstration of desire for peaceful relations regardless of the religious differences between Byzantium and Ostrogothic Italy.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Charanis, *Church and State*, 56.

⁶⁷ Procopius, *Buildings*, 53-55; Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. 1, 115-117.

⁶⁸ Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, 254 (for Justin’s foreign policy concerns), 283 (for King Elesboas), 323 (for Eutharic’s consulship).

Following Justin, Justinian's public relations activities presented him as preserving the ancient traditions of his office as a way to hearken back to the glory days of the emperorship, although he was quite willing to break with tradition when and where it was necessary. At the same time, he employed his legislation, and in particular the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, as a means of promotion both for himself and his reign in general.⁶⁹ Justinian cast himself as an *imperator plebis*, emperor of the people, boosting the prestige of his office by cultivating an image of public service, an image made all the more visible by his extensive construction campaigns, including the construction of the first churches to Saints Peter and Paul in Constantinople.⁷⁰ Justinian's choice of patron saints was especially significant in the ongoing efforts to improve the imperial image, as the original churches of St. Peter and St. Paul lay in Rome, built by Constantine in the early fourth century. Thus, Justinian was able both to claim the legacy of Constantine and to draw parallels between new and old imperial cities.

For all of his concern with imperial prestige, however, Justinian had to realize that his efforts to invoke the traditional splendor of the imperial office would have no meaning outside of the empire unless the power and prestige of the empire itself were restored. This required an entirely new foreign policy with the heritage of the old Roman Empire leading the way, a policy that would seek to bend the West back towards imperial control:

In accordance with the work of Salvius Julianus which declares that all states should follow the custom of Rome, which is the head of the World, and not that Rome should follow the example of other states;

⁶⁹ Pazdernik, "Justinianic Ideology," 186-191.

⁷⁰ For *imperator plebis*: Lamb, *Constantinople*, 75-77. For churches of Peter and Paul: Procopius, *Buildings*, 43-45.

and by Rome is to be understood not only the ancient city, but Our own royal metropolis also [i.e. Constantinople], which by the grace of God was founded under the best auguries.⁷¹

⁷¹ Justinian, *Digest or Pandects*, CIC, 181-182.

CHAPTER II

THE VANDAL WAR (533-534)

Upon sealing his treaty with Rome in 442, the Vandal king Geiseric became the officially sanctioned client ruler of Roman Africa, comprising the center of the old Carthaginian Empire in modern Tunisia. Less than a century later, Gelimer, the last king of Vandal Africa, was taken to Constantinople as a prisoner, and his holdings became absorbed by the Byzantine military and civil administration.

In 530, Gelimer had overthrown the reigning Vandal king, his relative Hilderic. Although Hilderic was no great leader, suffering defeat from the Moors and ruining diplomatic relations with the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy, his reign was a welcome respite for orthodox Roman Africans who had endured bitter persecution under most of his predecessors, and this endeared him to Justinian. Consequently, Gelimer's revolt prompted Justinian to write him. In the letter, he condemned Gelimer's actions (made more offensive by the fact that the usurper was already in line to inherit the throne after Hilderic) and invoked the blessings of God in an effort to return the deposed king to his rule. Nevertheless, Gelimer openly defied the demands of the emperor.¹

After securing peace with the Persians, Justinian organized an expedition to Africa on the pretense of punishing Gelimer and restoring the imprisoned Hilderic. Belisarius and 15,000 soldiers landed in early September, 533 CE, and were met at Decimum, ten miles from Carthage, by Gelimer's army on September 14. After a confusing battle, the failure of the Vandal armies to synchronize their attacks, and the

¹ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, trans. H.B. Dewing, Vol. III (New York: Macmillan Company, 1914-1940), 82-91.

death of Gelimer's brother, the Byzantines prevailed and entered Carthage to considerable fanfare.² Gelimer escaped, and three months later met the Roman army again at Tricamarum, probably less than twenty miles from Carthage, and was again defeated.³ Gelimer escaped once more, but after being trapped in his mountain refuge he finally surrendered to Belisarius in March, 534 CE.⁴

The war that cost Gelimer his kingdom was surprisingly short; only six months elapsed between the arrival of the Byzantine army under Belisarius and the surrender of Gelimer. However, it was the first successful campaign of restoration by the East, the only prior attempt being a debacle in 467 during the reigns of Leo in Constantinople and Geiseric in Carthage that committed six times the soldiers that Belisarius led sixty-five years later. While this alone speaks to Justinian's guiding belief system, the campaign itself was the first opportunity for the emperor to make manifest the position of the "lost" territories of the former Western Empire within that belief system. This chapter will examine how the imperial ideology of the emperor was employed in his motivations for prosecuting the Vandal War, his decision to enter it, how it was conducted, and how it was represented in a variety of media both in Africa and in Byzantium.

Going to War against Heresy

The ideological position of the Vandal War was deeply rooted in the constant conflict between orthodoxy, championed by the Byzantine emperor, and

² Philip Henry Stanhope [Lord Mahon], *Life of Belisarius* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2006), 44-51.

³ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. IV, 219-235.

⁴ Ibid., 264-269.

heresy, an interminable problem for the empire and one that was every bit as present in Justinian's dealings with the West as it was in his domestic policies. Self-proclaimed imperial authority to handle ecclesiastical matters hinged on the concept of a special connection with God that legitimized all of the emperor's actions with divine blessing. Procopius' descriptions of the Hagia Sophia and the fortress of Dara, both constructed around the time of the Vandal War and both elaborately detailed and impressive, have been considered "more as illustrations of Justinian's special relationship with God than a meticulous record," indicating through accounts of a breathtaking cathedral in Constantinople and a strong defensive fortification on the Persian border the extent to which this bond could be invoked.⁵ The Hagia Sophia, though built by the emperor, was declared magnificently crafted "by the influence of God," and divine inspiration was attributed to Justinian's solution to the cathedral's engineering challenges during its construction. Likewise, the duty of fortifying the frontier of the empire had been entrusted to Justinian by God himself, and it was with this sacred obligation that Justinian undertook such extensive building campaigns around the empire's fringes.⁶

Legislative duties, whether secular or ecclesiastical, were similarly proclaimed to be divinely appointed to the emperor around the time of the Vandal War. Justinian, in issuing a law on church property and addressing the pope himself, proclaimed that he had received from God his legislative powers over both secular and religious law.⁷ After the Vandal War, Justinian took upon himself the responsibility of

⁵ J.A.S. Evans, *Age of Justinian: The Circumstances of Imperial Power* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 3.

⁶ Procopius, *Buildings*, trans. H.B. Dewing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), 26-31; 137.

⁷ Justinian, *Novellae in Corpus Iuris Civilis: The Civil Law*, vol. 16, pt. 2 (New York: AMS Press, 1973), 66-67.

promoting dialogue and understanding and effecting a compromise on religious policy (concerning, of course, heretical Easterners) during a 535 conference in Constantinople, though his attitude turned harsh after a visit from Pope Agapetus, papal condemnation of the patriarch of Constantinople, and insistence on strict Chalcedonianism.⁸

Military campaigns were no different. War, and in particular war to ensure the safety of the empire and of its Christian subjects, was considered by Justinian to be one of the God-given duties of the emperor despite never personally leading the army.⁹ Opposition in Constantinople to an African campaign was widespread, particularly when recalling the great loss of money and manpower that accompanied the Leonine campaign, and a persuasive speech by the praetorian prefect John the Cappadocian nearly convinced Justinian to call off the expedition. However, the divine connection between the emperor and God once more came into play, as Procopius recounts that Justinian was visited by a refugee bishop, who claimed that God had ordered him in a dream to impel Justinian towards the campaign and had granted a divine blessing on the endeavor that guaranteed success. At the same time, the bishop invoked the vital role of the emperor as protector of Christendom to influence his decision.¹⁰ Tales and assertions of divine favor continued throughout the war, from the army's landing in Byzacium, where they were blessed with a miraculous fresh water spring, to Belisarius' inspirational speech before Decimum in which he proclaimed that "the

⁸ Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 111.

⁹ A.D. Lee, "The Empire at War" in *Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 113-114. See also Brian Croke, "Justinian's Constantinople" in *Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, 67. Since the death of Theodosius I in 395 AD, it was very rare for emperors to personally go on campaign, instead entrusting the armies to appointed generals.

¹⁰ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. III, 90-99. The divine support is repeated in *Buildings*, 381.

alliance of God follows naturally those who put justice forward.”¹¹ It is important to note that such claims and portents were not only being spread in Africa by the Byzantines, but were repeated at home in Constantinople shortly afterwards. While Procopius’ accounts came some time later, Marcellinus Comes, publishing much closer to the event, similarly proclaimed that Africa had been liberated by God’s will.¹²

However, divine inspiration alone was not the only religious component of the Vandal War. The Arian faith of the Vandals had been presenting problems in Roman Africa almost from the beginning. It was widely considered by the Byzantines to be a defining element of barbarian tribes as a whole, that “faith with the Romans cannot dwell in barbarians,” and fostered an attitude of perpetual enmity rather than peaceful coexistence.¹³ Considering the history of the Vandal kingdom in Africa, this is hardly surprising. Upon his arrival, Geiseric confiscated the lands of wealthy Christian Libyans and redistributed them to his Vandal followers, promptly alienating the local populace. Geiseric’s successors, Honoric and Gundamund, continued the persecutions against orthodox Africans, forcing conversion to Arianism, torturing Christians, cutting out their tongues, and burning them alive, all of which led to increasingly sour relations with the Byzantine Empire.¹⁴ Statements in Constantinople that the persecution of Africa “was visited upon our catholic people” emphasize the perceived bond shared by all orthodox Christians by assuming all are included in a single group, ostensibly with the emperor at its head and responsible for its well-

¹¹ Ibid., 141; 161-163.

¹² Marcellinus Comes, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus*, trans. Brian Croke (Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1995), 44-45.

¹³ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. III, 51.

¹⁴ Ibid., 51, 73-75.

being.¹⁵ However, in the early years of Justinian's reign, and even back to Anastasius, relations had been greatly improved. During the reign of Anastasius, the Vandal king Thrasamund approached the orthodox with an eye to swaying them with gifts and grants of amnesty, but otherwise he ignored them rather than violently persecute them and was considered a "very special friend" of Anastasius. After him, Hilderic proved even more tolerant and was Justinian's *xenos*, a guest-friend of special importance.¹⁶

Improved relations and tolerant rule in Africa did not prompt Justinian to adopt a similar attitude at home, and shortly before the Vandal War Constantinople saw heavy persecution of Arians and other heretics, a threat to outlaw their right of inheritance, and seizure of their property. Many of the new acquisitions were rededicated to the Church, a matter lamented by the more liberal Procopius, who exclaimed that Justinian "kept destroying the rest of mankind" in the name of piety.¹⁷ Yet Justinian was not the only anti-Arian force in Constantinople, as the rift between the Arian Vandal rulers and their Christian subjects led to the migration of many to Constantinople, where they applied further pressure on the emperor to take action.¹⁸ Immediately before the war, Justinian, angry at the usurpation of Gelimer, ordered Theoderic's young successor Athalaric not to acknowledge the rebel's claim to kingship.¹⁹ However, Justinian's letter to Gelimer suggests that the Byzantine objective was not directed towards conquest. In it, he urges Gelimer to allow Hilderic

¹⁵ Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle*, 28-29.

¹⁶ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. III, 75-83.

¹⁷ Procopius, *Anecdota*, trans. H.B. Dewing (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), 135-137; 157-159.

¹⁸ Michael Maas, "Roman Questions, Byzantine Answers: Contours of the Age of Justinian" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 11. Brian Croke, "Justinian's Constantinople" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 75.

¹⁹ John Malalas, *Chronicle*, trans. Elizabeth Jeffreys, Michael Jeffreys, Roger Scott, et al. (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986), 269.

to remain as a figurehead ruler, with assurances that upon Hilderic's passing, Gelimer will step into full power. This indicates that Justinian may have been more concerned with ensuring the welfare of African Christians, which they were virtually guaranteed with Hilderic's pro-orthodox sympathies, than with returning the region to Roman governance.²⁰ However, after Gelimer's refusal and subsequent murder of Hilderic during the invasion, the military successes of Belisarius returned Africa to the Byzantine emperor and the tide of persecution rapidly shifted. The conquered Arians were denied access to the holy sacraments unless they converted, and religious persecutions and restrictions were quickly imposed on the new territory, forbidding the Vandals and any other Arians from practicing their rites.²¹

Reconquering the West

Adherence to and protection of orthodoxy were not the only components of Justinian's imperial ideology that factored into his western campaigns. Africa had, until quite recently, been under the yoke of the Roman Empire, and Carthage had been perhaps the greatest Western city behind Rome itself. Thus, the restoration of key lost portions of the Western Empire had a major role to play in Justinian's attitude towards and presentation of his military excursions.

The *Vandal War* opens with a geography of nearly the entire known world, and concludes this introduction by stating, "Such, then, was the size of the Roman Empire in the ancient times."²² Such a simple statement embodies a sense of entitlement and rightful ownership that proves a recurring character in Justinianic

²⁰ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. III, 87.

²¹ Procopius, *Anecdota*, 215; *History of the Wars*, Vol. IV, 331.

²² Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. III, 1-7.

ideology. To further augment this notion that the emperor was the deserving ruler of all of the former empire, Procopius goes on to disparage Theodosius II for losing Africa in the first place, despite the fact that at the time Africa was “lost” to Geiseric, Theodosius II was the eastern emperor, not the western emperor who was responsible for the territories of western Africa. Similarly, Theodosius’ successor, Marcian, is blamed for disregarding the loss of Libya and not responding with a bid for restoration, while the western emperor Majorinus is praised as the most virtuous of all past emperors for his planned campaign to recover Africa, although it fell apart before it began when Majorinus died of illness during the preparations.²³

With only the precedent of Leo for carrying out a campaign of recovery in Libya, let alone in the West in general, it is a telling comment on Justinian's conceptions of imperial rule that he chose to add the responsibility of recovering former provinces (regardless of how long ago they had been "lost") to the existing list of imperial obligations, which included securing the frontiers and spreading Christianity.²⁴ Despite his letter to Gelimer urging simple restoration of Hilderic, the usurpation of Gelimer hinged on the accusation that Hilderic was conspiring with Justinian to hand over Africa to the emperor. Regardless of the veracity of such a claim, the fact that it carried enough weight to overthrow a king indicates that there may have been pre-war interest in reintegrating Libya into the empire. Once the war was underway, Justinian justified it by claiming that the campaign was to avenge the loss of Africa, and that therefore he was acting completely within his rights, and

²³ Ibid., 27; 37; 65-69.

²⁴ Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 78.

indeed his responsibilities, as emperor.²⁵ This clear explication of the legitimacy of reconquest can be seen behind several events immediately after the conclusion of the Vandal War. In Sicily, and Ostrogothic territory, the Byzantines attempted to press claims to the city of Lilybaeum on the island's western point, a former Vandal city given by the Ostrogoths as a dowry and which they had reclaimed following the end of the Vandal monarchy. In the exchange that followed, Procopius cites Belisarius as asserting that all of Italy was rightfully Justinian's, echoing the earlier, parallel justification for the African campaign.²⁶ Meanwhile, a Moorish revolt in Africa provided the Byzantine forces there with a rationale to carry the reconquest beyond Vandal territory, reclaiming not only additional formerly-Roman territory but even land that had never been under the purview of the empire.²⁷

Justinian's intention to spread new legislation to the restored territories in Africa demonstrates his belief that the provinces were inherently "imperial" and that they would be immediately and directly reassumed into the administration of the empire.²⁸ In his *Digest*, issued immediately after the African campaign, Justinian declares that the new laws will apply "not only in the East, but also in Illyria, and in Africa," extending imperial rule with no delay to a region that had been outside of the empire for a century.²⁹ However, this delay seems to pose no obstacle to Justinian's beliefs about Africa, as the "very reason the emperor had entered into war with the Vandals" was because the Libyans were former Romans, came under the Vandals

²⁵ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. III, 85-89.

²⁶ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. IV, 251-253.

²⁷ Ibid., 275-279.

²⁸ Caroline Humfress, "Law and Legal Practice in the Age of Justinian" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 164.

²⁹ Justinian, *Digest*, CIC, 207. Justinian also exults in his successes and emphasizes the importance of having returned Vandal Africa to imperial rule: "...after having overthrown the nation of the Vandals, and for a second time united Carthage, nay indeed all Libya with the Roman Empire...": *Digest*, 189.

unwillingly, and suffered under them, but would naturally return to their proper place with the reimposition of imperial rule.³⁰ This perception that the West would be inherently disposed towards Byzantine rule is seen in other Justinianic legislation, as even when Africa is not explicitly mentioned as one of the areas of a law's application, Justinian dubs the law "applicable not only to this city but to all Catholic Churches everywhere...so that the entire West as well as the East...shall enjoy its advantages," happily legislating even for religious establishments outside the political borders of the Byzantine Empire.³¹ However, it must be remembered that, for Justinian, this posed no problem or inconsistency, because as the head of Christianity the emperor was responsible for *all* Christians, even those residing beyond the secular reach of the empire.

Practical Expansion

Alongside notions of combating heresy, protecting orthodoxy, and returning formerly Roman lands to their rightful owner lay the much more pragmatic issue of empowering the empire through expansion into certain spheres. This played into the ideological demand that the emperor protect the empire, and is seen in Justinian's attitude of quick assimilation and reintegration. After the surrender of Gelimer, censors and tax collectors were among the first new arrivals to Africa, which is indicative of a goal of financial gain as a critical part of the campaign. Swiftly establishing a taxation infrastructure was in part a necessity of the campaign itself, as

³⁰ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. III, 175.

³¹ Justinian, *Novellae*, CIC, 65-66.

the expedition was plagued by a deficiency of soldiers and low or delayed payments.³² The shortage of imperial troops even resulted in enlisting former Vandal soldiers in the imperial army to fight on the Persian front.³³ Furthermore, Libya was a very wealthy territory in agriculture and trade, and the Vandals amassed great wealth there in their 95 years of rule.³⁴ The prospect of adding such a prosperous region to an empire dogged by financial hardship had to have been an appealing one, and the importance of this is demonstrated in the orders given to the Byzantine soldiers to prevent them from pillaging the land or cities they captured or otherwise devastating the country so as not to damage future imperial property.³⁵ The initial intention of Justinian and the leading administrator in Africa, Solomon, was even to register the conquered lands of the Vandals as public land and part of the imperial patrimony, rather than distributing them among the settled soldiers. Unsurprisingly, this resulted in mutiny and the abandonment of the policy, but it demonstrates how central the hope to bolster the imperial financial situation was to the prosecution of the Vandal War and the subsequent administration of Africa.

By the same token, everything Justinian did regarding the African campaign indicates that he was playing for keeps and had every intention of incorporating Africa as another province of the Byzantine Empire. Despite the small size of the expedition, the empire endured massive financial strain as a result of supporting it, so much so that officials in Constantinople opposed the campaign

³² Procopius, *Anecdota*, 215; 279. *History of the Wars*, Vol. IV, 279.

³³ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. IV, 331-333.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 233-235.

³⁵ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. III, 143. These orders also stemmed from a belief that the Libyans would be loyal to the Byzantines and hostile to the Vandals, and so served the additional purpose of not antagonizing the local population against their "liberators."

because of its vast expense. That the emperor went through with it despite objections and cost emphasized the importance Justinian placed on the undertaking.³⁶ Within the conception of the campaign, the weight given to not just reclaiming the territory, but to maintaining it, is seen in the worries of John the Cappadocian, who argued that even if the campaign were successful, it would be impossible to hold Libya with Sicily and Italy in the hands of others.³⁷ Considering that the Vandals regularly plundered not only Sicily and Italy, but also the Eastern domains of Illyricum, the Peloponnesus, and other parts of Greece, it would be inconceivable that Justinian would be content merely to displace Gelimer and allow a new potential threat to arise in his place; once the Vandals were defeated, the empire needed to ensure that Africa remained safe.³⁸

This need promptly began to be addressed following the conquest of Africa. Byzantine military officials in Africa drew higher salaries than civil administrators, which, given the region's instability due to the Moors, rebellions, and mutinies, suggests that it was deemed more important simply to keep the territory secure at the present than to have perfect management but vulnerable holdings. This matter was reiterated by Justinian's recall of Belisarius from Africa, a decision potentially fueled by concern that the general would seek to assume for himself the now-vacant throne in Carthage.³⁹ The importance of maintaining control of Libya at whatever present expense is finally seen in the Byzantine response to the mutinies protesting missed salary payments. Rather than insistence on full punishment of the mutinous troops, the soldiers were instead exhorted to look to their loyalty to the emperor and assurance

³⁶ Lee, "Empire at War," 116.

³⁷ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. III, 91-93.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

³⁹ Procopius, *Anecdota*, 215. T.S. Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers: Imperial Administration and Aristocratic Power in Byzantine Italy A.D. 554-800* (Rome: British School at Rome, 1984), 9.

that the penalty for their mutiny would be remitted if they simply returned to their proper duties.⁴⁰

The necessity of securing the new holdings in Africa was further demonstrated through Justinian's vigorous urban restoration programs.⁴¹ Throughout former Vandal territory, Justinian saw to the fortification of unwalled cities such as Leptis Magna (about 80 miles east of modern Tripoli), which had lost their defenses when Geiseric and the Vandals (or, depending on the city, Moorish raiders) ordered the walls torn down so that, in the event that the cities should be captured by an enemy, they would be indefensible against recapture.⁴² The emphasis on fortification was especially prevalent in Byzacium, a region plagued by Moorish raids, where a series of strong outposts were erected to safeguard the cities and their surrounding territory.⁴³ This program served a dual purpose: first to fulfill the imperial intention to hold the newly acquired land against possible loss, since it was an imperial obligation to protect his subjects, and the Libyans were now the emperor's subjects; second as a symbolic reversal of Vandal rule, embodying the shift from vulnerability under the Vandals to protection under Justinian and further emphasizing the ideological responsibility of the emperor to ensure the safety of those under his rule and the security of the empire.

Imperial Status

⁴⁰ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. IV, 359-363

⁴¹ Kenneth Holum, "Classical City in the Sixth Century: Survival and Transformation" in *Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 93.

⁴² For Leptis Magna: Procopius, *Buildings*, 373-377. For general program: Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. IV, 377. For Moors: Procopius, *Buildings*, 381.

⁴³ Procopius, *Buildings*, 387.

In the wake of the Nika Riots, Justinian's near loss of the throne, and the massacre that ensued, the Vandal War played yet another critical role in promoting the emperor's image at home. Justinian committed an immense amount of resources to ensure not only victory, but also a public perception that he was fulfilling the imperial obligation of restoring the greatness of the empire.⁴⁴ Despite the constant struggle between the Romans and the Moors in Africa following the war, Procopius insists that, even when the two parties are in conflict, the Moors would only accept a leader among themselves if he received the tokens of his office from the Roman emperor, highlighting the prestige of the Roman Empire and the clout it wielded with neighboring peoples.⁴⁵ At the same time, the plan to use the reconquest to absorb the newly conquered lands into the imperial demesne would have greatly increased the resources Justinian could draw on for enforcing domestic policies and for self-publication.⁴⁶

It was this self-advertisement that proved the greatest means to boosting imperial status in the aftermath of the Vandal War, and Justinian used every opportunity to paint himself as a herald of military victory. On his return to Constantinople, Belisarius was treated to a triumphal procession, a hallmark of the glory days of the Roman Empire (and before that, the Republic) that had fallen out of use over the centuries. But the general, despite his leadership on the campaign, was not the focal point of the triumph. In a move very different from the imperial triumphs of antiquity, Belisarius walked, rather than rode in a chariot, to the hippodrome,

⁴⁴ Pazdernik, "Justinianic Ideology," 194.

⁴⁵ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. III, 201.

⁴⁶ Peter Sarris, *Economy and Society in the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 215.

prostrating himself before Justinian and Theodora. Although Justinian had never left the city during the campaign, the victory was very explicitly presented as belonging to him.⁴⁷



Reproduction of a gold solidus, minted at Constantinople c. 534-535.
Obverse: Justinian I. Reverse: Justinian preceded by Victory.

In almost every medium of publicity, domestic representations of the Vandal War set the emperor in a prominent position. Coins minted in Constantinople in 534-535 clearly portray Justinian in the role of military victor, riding armed and armored behind a personification of Victory. Minted to commemorate the triumph of Belisarius, the coins further appropriate the success for Justinian alone, at the same time being sure to demonstrate the close connection between Justinian and God and the divine favor bestowed on both the emperor and his enterprises.⁴⁸ The pro-Justinian writer Marcellinus Comes refers to him as *victor Iustinianus*, Justinian the Victor, when recounting his renovations of the hippodrome even before the entry on the liberation of Africa.⁴⁹ Even Africa itself got involved, where one city that had been

⁴⁷ Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 60.

⁴⁸ John Beckwith, *The Art of Constantinople: An Introduction to Byzantine Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1961), 14.

⁴⁹ Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle*, 43-45.

stripped of its walls by the Vandals, following the emperor's rebuilding and fortification program, renamed itself from Adramytus to Justinianê.⁵⁰



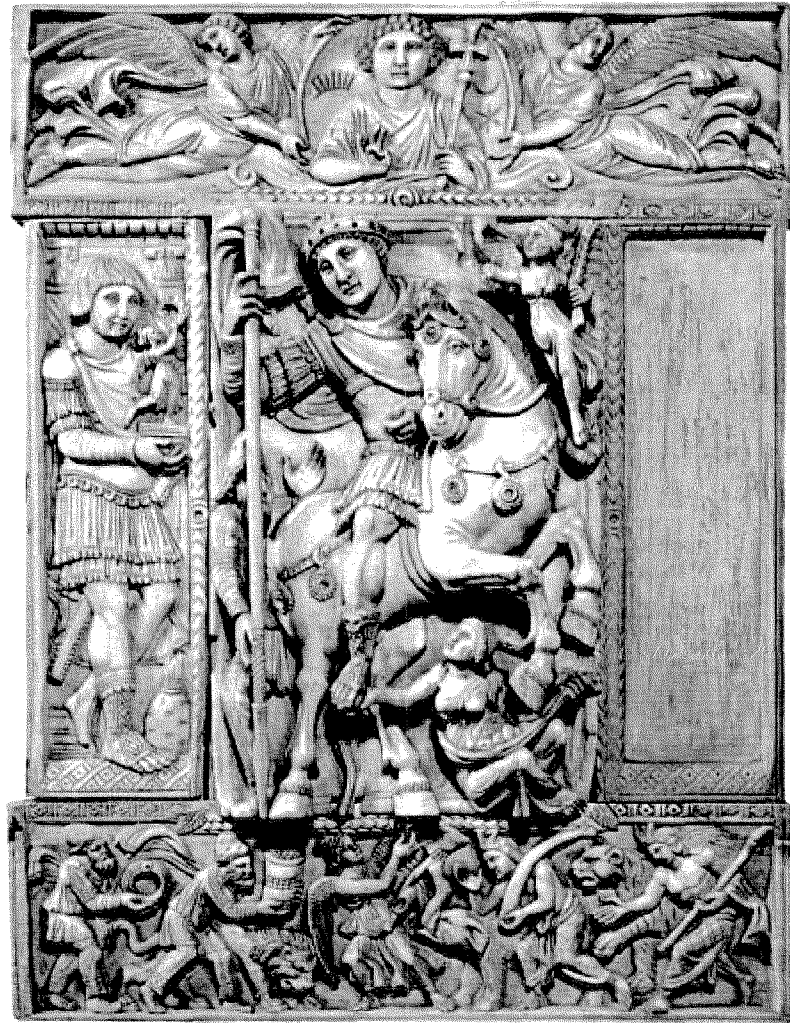
Anastasius I, Consular Diptych, 517.

Justinian also presented himself in another traditional imperial medium, the diptych. Yet Justinian's triumphal diptych, known as the Barberini Ivory, stands in stark contrast to the consular diptych of Anastasius. While Anastasius sits enthroned,

⁵⁰ Procopius, *Buildings*, 383-385.

wearing imperial regalia, above merrymakers, Justinian wears battle gear, carries a spear, and rides a horse, rearing up above a personification of Gaia, who supports the emperor's foot, while Victory flies in front of him and Christ presides above. Perhaps most important is the panel beneath Justinian, where the revelers have been replaced with barbarians submitting themselves to the emperor and bringing him tributes of food, ivory, and other resources, with an angel in the center gesturing upwards to the equestrian panel. The figures on the right can be identified as Persians or other easterners by their caps, their skirts, and the elephant and tiger that accompany them, while the figures on the left, wearing pants and accompanied by a lion, bear the distinctive hats of the Vandals.⁵¹ Justinianic ideology is neatly and wholly encapsulated by the Baberini Ivory: the link between God and the emperor, the military might of the empire under him, and Justinian's own addition, the subjugation of barbarian territory to both glorify and enrich the Roman Empire.

⁵¹ André Grabar, *The Golden Age of Justinian: From the Death of Theodosius to the Rise of Islam*, trans. Stuart Gilbert and James Emmons, ed. André Malraux and Georges Salles (New York: Odyssey Press, 1967), 278-279.



Leaf of the Barberini Ivory, Louvre, Paris.

Unfortunately, Justinian's equestrian statue, perhaps the greatest proclamation of his victories and imperial ideology following the Vandal War, is lost, though it is vividly described by Procopius. As in the Barberini Ivory, Justinian is mounted on a horse in motion—perhaps a means for Justinian to symbolize the empire as moving forward rather than lying stagnant—but the statue makes a less militant presentation of the emperor. Justinian holds no weapon, but instead carries the *globus cruciger*, a globe with a cross on top, “the emblem by which alone he [had] obtained both his empire and his victory in war,” signifying the emperor's dominion over the

whole world and, critically, the name of Christianity. While Justinian's right hand stretches towards the East, implicitly commanding the Persians to stay out of Roman territory, the *globus* makes a statement just as strong.⁵² The emperor needs no weapon to defend the empire. Faith, bringing with it the support of God, is the only weapon necessary for a strong realm.

⁵² Procopius, *Buildings*, 33-37.

CHAPTER III
THE GOTHIC WAR (535-554)

While the Vandals had been securely established in Africa for almost a century before Justinian initiated his campaign of reconquest, the Ostrogoths were relative newcomers to the world of the former Western Empire. Hardly forty years separated their arrival in Italy from the onset of warfare, although the hostilities would not be concluded for another twenty years afterwards.

Theoderic's campaign against Odoacer ended with the latter's murder and the former's coronation as king in 493. Contemporaries on all sides widely hailed Theoderic's leadership, considering him "although...a usurper, yet in fact...as truly an emperor as any who have distinguished themselves in this office from the beginning."¹ Even the most hostile of sources had words of praise for the Goth's rule and his general tolerance of orthodox Christians, a far cry from the condemnation of Gelimor for his persecutions in Africa.² Although even contemporary sources hardly agree on the nature of the relationship between the Emperor Zeno and Theoderic's campaign into Italy, and thus on the "legitimacy" of his rule there, the Byzantine emperors during Theoderic's reign, Anastasius and Justin, were generally on good terms with Italy.

Late in Theoderic's reign, however, the accord began to deteriorate. Theoderic ordered the execution of three prominent Roman senators—Albinus, Boethius, and Symmachus—for ambiguous reasons potentially concerned with their relationship with Justin, while Justin began stepping up his persecution of heretical sects, Arians

¹ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, trans. H.B. Dewing, Vol. V (New York: Macmillan Company, 1914-1940), 13.

² *Anonymous Valesianus* in Ammianus Marcellinus, trans. John C. Rolfe, Vol 3 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939), 545.

included, in Constantinople. This action on the part of the Byzantine ruler prompted Theoderic to send Pope John I to argue the Gothic case for returning to Constantinopolitan Arians their confiscated property. After an elaborate reception, but no concessions, by Justin, John returned as far as Ravenna before being imprisoned by Theoderic and dying shortly thereafter.³

Theoderic's heir apparent, his son-in-law Eutharic, predeceased the king. As a result, the first Ostrogothic king of Italy was succeeded by his daughter Amalasuntha as regent for her minor son Athalaric. While Athalaric grew into a depraved youth prone to carousing and troublemaking, eventually dying of a wasting disease at the age of eighteen, Amalasuntha continued the praiseworthy traditions of rule established by Theoderic.⁴ Fearful for her position, Amalasuntha crowned her cousin Theodahad as co-ruler, only to be murdered at his command within the year.⁵

As was the case in Africa, the murder of a pro-Byzantine "barbarian" ruler provided the impetus for Justinian's invasion. However, unlike the swift completion of the Vandal War, the campaign in Italy was a quagmire for twenty years, interrupted by plague, renewed Persian aggression, shortages of manpower and finances, and the consistent ability of the Ostrogoths to produce a leader to rally the resistance. Although the mission seemed accomplished in 540 with the defeat of Witigis, the war dragged on for another fifteen years, most notably under the leadership of Totila. The vast discrepancy in their durations is but one example of the radical differences between the Vandal and Gothic Wars. Both the long duration of the war, which was unexpected after the quick success of the African campaign, and the symbolic

³ Ibid., 561-565.

⁴ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. V, 15-27.

⁵ Ibid., 37-41.

importance of the new Italian theater and Rome itself, posed new challenges and opportunities to Justinian. This chapter will consider how the emperor's ideology adapted to and took advantage of the new situations of the Gothic War.

Heresy in Italy

One of the most salient differences between the kings of Vandal Africa and of Ostrogothic Italy was their different approaches to governing a religiously diverse region. Unlike with the Vandals, the Arianism of the Ostrogoths was rarely an issue in their rule of Italy; instead, the Gothic kings were generally accommodating to their orthodox subjects, much more so than Justin and Justinian were towards religious dissidents in the Byzantine Empire.⁶ While his Vandal counterparts earned considerable ire, Theoderic was much praised for his own rule and especially for conducting no persecution of Catholics despite his Arianism.⁷ Instead, Theoderic treated Catholics as well as could be asked: he received Saint Caesarius of Arles as a man of God rather than attacking his Catholicism, and even some pro-Byzantine sources hardly make any mention of the Goth's Arianism.⁸ Even Theoderic's

⁶ Ironically, the Goths were converted to Arianism by the eastern Roman emperor Valens in the second half of the fourth century when they were seeking land along the Danube for settlement. Jordanes, *Origin and Deeds of the Goths*, trans. Charles C. Mierow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1908), 41-42; Isidore of Seville, *History of the Kings of the Goths, Vandals, and Suevi*, trans. Guido Donini and Gordon B. Ford, Jr. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), 5.

⁷ *Anonymous Valesianus*, 545.

⁸ *Vita S. Caesarii Arelatensis a discipulis scripta*, I, trans. G. Morin, *S. Caesarii Arelatensis Opera Omnia*, III (Maredsous, 1942) in *Christianity and Paganism, 350-750: the Conversion of Western Europe*, ed. J.N. Hillgarth (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 39; John Malalas, *Chronicle*, trans. Elizabeth Jeffreys, Michael Jeffreys, Roger Scott, et al. (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986), *Chronicle*, 285. The life of Saint Caesarius never mentions Theoderic as an Arian, and Malalas only rarely identifies the Goths as Arians.

appointed deputy ruler in Spain after the death of the Visigothic king, Theudis, was accommodating towards the Catholics in the Iberian Peninsula.⁹

Despite his generally accepting attitude towards Catholics in Italy, Theoderic nevertheless defended Arianism when necessary, and there is plentiful evidence that the Byzantines and other orthodox were highly sensitive to the issue of even a hospitable Arian ruling Catholics. In response to Justin's escalating persecutions in Byzantium, Theoderic ordered an unwilling Pope John I to Constantinople on behalf of the targeted Arians to request their restitution, an indication that Theoderic was willing to assume the position of defender of the Arians as a counterbalance to the Byzantine emperor's role as defender of orthodoxy.¹⁰ This opposition was underscored by Justin's response to the event. While other visiting popes who reigned under non-Ostrogothic regimes in Italy received no welcomes worthy of special contemporary mention, the elaborate reception of John, "gloriously received" at Constantinople by Justin, highlighted the reverence due to a pope enduring the political rule of an Arian.¹¹ John's status and the respect he held within the orthodox world reached legendary proportions upon his return, when "the Arian king, Theoderic" detained him in Ravenna—by some accounts going so far as to imprison him as punishment for his failure to secure restitution for the Arians persecuted by Justin—and John, already in poor health from the journey, died shortly thereafter.¹² Although writing two centuries later, the Venerable Bede's dramatized account of Theoderic putting John to death demonstrates the enduring Catholic perception of John as a martyr and the importance

⁹ Isidore, *History of the Kings*, 20.

¹⁰ *Anonymous Valesianus*, 563-565.

¹¹ Venerable Bede, *Martyeology*, trans. Felice Lifshitz, in *Medieval Hagiography: an Anthology*, ed. Thomas Head (New York: Garland Publishers, 2000), 185.

¹² *Ibid.*

of Theoderic's Arianism. Although this serves as an interesting counterpart to more contemporary sources such as Procopius and Jordanes, who tended to downplay the heretical beliefs of the Goths, such a perception could only have persisted if it was built up at the time. Therefore it is probable that there was some Arian-based propaganda going on around the time of the campaign, which suggests that the Byzantine imperial administration attributed at least some ideological significance to Italian rule by heretical "barbarians." Although no written record has survived that explicitly demonstrates the Byzantine government's position on Arian rule in Italy, Pope John's body was interred in St. Peter's basilica in Rome, an enormous honor that emphasizes the reverence afforded him due to his situation and fate.¹³

Despite their comparatively positive disposition towards the orthodox, the Goths were not exclusively pro-Catholic. At times Theoderic supported Jewish communities that had been wronged by Catholics, as in the case of the burning of synagogues in Rome and Ravenna, a decision that aroused considerable ire from the Catholics who felt they were in the right.¹⁴ Furthermore, the behavior of the Goths in general were not always in accordance with that of their rulers; one group of soldiers is recorded attempting to burn Saint Benedict alive, although the holy man was miraculously saved, suggesting some hostility among the orthodox towards "sub-royal" Goths.¹⁵

Closer to and during Justinian's reign, however, the anti-Arian rhetoric becomes more common in some sources. The most prominent example is an

¹³ Léon Clugnet, "Pope John I," *Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910).

¹⁴ *Anonymous Valesianus*, 559-561.

¹⁵ Gregory, *Dialogues*, trans. Odo John Zimmerman, in *Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 39 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1977), 148. This ill-will may not have been widespread, as it is not discussed in other sources.

anonymous account of Theoderic's alleged plan to confiscate the property of Catholic churches and bestow the land and possessions to Arian churches, a move reminiscent of the behavior of most of the Vandal kings.¹⁶ However, this event is unattested in any other source except the *Liber Pontificalis*, suggesting that the tale was made up. This trend continues beyond Theoderic's reign, as his successor and grandson Athalaric is explicitly designated a heretic as opposed to clear references to Justin as Catholic and Justinian as "most pious, most Christian," which highlights the sensitivity of the papacy to the religious gulf between the orthodox and the Goths.¹⁷ The fact that both mentions of Theoderic's planned hostility towards Catholics and the majority of focus on religious difference occur in western sources indicate that while Theoderic's Arianism and his advocacy for the "churches of the heretics" were on the minds of Italians, they were at best a minor issue for the Byzantines.¹⁸ This marks a considerable change in ideology from the Vandal War, which heavily emphasized the religious rift between the Vandals and their subjects, and between the Vandals and the Byzantine imperial administration.

Instead of the frequent references to the Arianism of the Vandals and their crimes against Catholicism, Byzantine writers such as Procopius, Malalas, and Jordanes seem disinterested in the religious facet of relations with the Ostrogoths. Procopius makes his own disinclination to discuss religious disputes very clear, and consequently he would naturally downplay or ignore any religious motive behind the

¹⁶ *Anonymous Valesianus*, 597-599.

¹⁷ *Liber Pontificalis*, trans. Louise Ropes Loomis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), 140-145.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

Gothic War when composing his histories.¹⁹ However, no other writers express such qualms, so their silence on the matter suggests that such disputes played a much lesser role in the Italian campaign than in the African.

Nevertheless, indirect allusions to the prominence (or unimportance) of religion in imperial attitudes towards the Gothic War do exist, frequently undermining scholarly proposals that the death of Theoderic opened in Justinian's mind the possibility of freeing Italian clergy from their Arian lords.²⁰ According to a proposed peace agreement with Theodahad during the early stages of the war, Theodahad would have been forbidden from initiating any sort of persecution without the consent of Justinian, which would naturally eliminate any anti-Catholic movements. However, by the time of a similar treaty offered to Witigis a few years later, no "persecution clause" is mentioned, hinting that the problem may have been unique to Theodahad or that it was a trivial element of peacemaking in the first place.²¹ Similarly, after the Byzantine capture of Rome, it was because of fear that they would collaborate with the Gothic army that the Arian priests were expelled from the city, not simply because of their Arianism, which was what had led to their Vandal counterparts being driven out of Carthage.²² And although Justinian admonished Theodahad in the years before the war over the property losses of a Gothic convert from Arianism, Theodahad quickly conceded and restored the property of the new Catholic, precluding prolonged conflict over religion as a contributing factor to the Gothic War.²³

¹⁹ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. V, 25.

²⁰ For one such claim, Harold Lamb, *Constantinople: Birth of an Empire* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1957), 145.

²¹ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. V, 49.

²² Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. VII, 227-229.

²³ Cassiodorus, *Variae*, trans. T. Hodgkin (London: Henry Frowde, 1886), Book X.26, 437.

Rebuilding the Empire

In contrast to the diminishing importance of heresy in Justinian's western wars, the theme of recreating the Roman Empire of old took on an increasingly prominent role due to the brewing idea that Italy rightfully belonged to the empire, not to the Goths. Much of this notion hinged on the ambiguity of Theoderic's arrival in Italy. The usual pro-Byzantine view was the Theoderic had agreed to rule in Zeno's stead and "to defend Italy" for the emperor only until Zeno arrived to take over control. This position was complicated by Zeno's death before Theoderic's final victory over Odoacer.²⁴ Theoderic was subsequently proclaimed king by the Goths without the consent of Zeno's successor, Anastasius.²⁵ The Gothic ruler notably used the title of *rex*, king, instead of typical Roman-imperial language such as *basileus* or *imperator*, and he did not claim the garb or title of the emperor.²⁶ On the one hand, this appears to avoid infringing on imperial authority; on the other hand, Theoderic's choice of title immediately casts him outside the mold of the imperial administration and implies an attempt to assert independence from Constantinople. Furthermore, the absence of a qualifier in Theoderic's title declares an extension of his rule to include both Goths and non-Goths.²⁷ Some sources made their accusations against Theoderic even more explicit, going so far as to claim that Theoderic went to Italy of his own accord and driven by lust for land rather than in accordance with any arrangement with the

²⁴ *Anonymous Valesianus*, 539.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 545.

²⁶ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. V, 11.

²⁷ John Moorhead, *Theoderic in Italy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 38. It was more common for "barbarian" leaders to adopt a modifier to their title to specify whom they ruled, e.g. *rex gothicorum*, king of the Goths. Theoderic had no such modifier, implying his dominion over all groups.

emperor Zeno.²⁸ This is indicative of the growing mindset that Italy had been lost, was under attack, and was in need of recovery or defense--a mindset possibly engendered by the reign and ideology of Justinian.

Justinian was heavily motivated by an interest in being a “worthy emperor of the Romans,” and thus it was wholly appropriate for him to seek to reclaim land that he felt rightfully belonged to the realm.²⁹ Even within the conflicting accounts of the Ostrogothic acquisition of Italy, Justinian was able to fit this policy of repossession. Jordanes sets forth the belief that Theoderic received Italy as a gift from Zeno in exchange for his campaign against Odoacer, that he was therefore ruling by the grant of the emperor, and that, implicitly, he could have that gift taken away by the emperor as well, although it is unclear why Justinian would have accepted this version of events that legitimizes the Gothic regime.³⁰ In fact, this is very close to the account Procopius puts in the words of the Goths, who argue that Zeno sent Theoderic to Italy to defeat Odoacer, so that “thereafter, *in company with the Goths*, [he might] hold sway over the land as its legitimate and rightful rulers.” Belisarius quickly follows this argument with one of his own, which may be taken to represent the Byzantine position: Theoderic was sent to restore Italy to the dominion of the emperor, but he violated this agreement by holding Italy for himself.³¹ This gave credibility and moral authority to Justinian’s campaign by painting the Goths as having gone back on their word to the emperor and Italy as having always been properly under the domain of the Byzantine Empire.

²⁸ Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle*, 29-30.

²⁹ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. V, 53.

³⁰ Jordanes, *Origin and Deeds of the Goths*, 93.

³¹ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. VI, 341-343.

It is also possible that Justinian may have been concerned that the Goths were growing too powerful in the West, particularly after Theoderic extended his control to Spain and the Visigoths after the death of his son-in-law Alaric II.³² No Byzantine ruler would have wanted a large, strong, Arian kingdom in the West and a large, strong, Sasanian Persia in the East. By Theoderic's death, although there is perhaps no indication that Byzantium intended to invade Italy, the imperial administration certainly wanted to curb Ostrogothic power, primarily by detaching other states, such as Burgundy, Vandal Africa, and Spain, from the Ostrogothic sphere of influence.³³ The Ostrogothic threat had been even more clearly demonstrated by Theoderic's capture of Sirmium and subsequent defeat of the Byzantine army of Illyricum, a display of Gothic strength that the Byzantines could not have been comfortable with.³⁴ With the potential danger of the Ostrogoths looming in Italy, the speedy success of the Vandal War may have prompted Justinian to begin eying Italy even before Amalasuntha's murder.³⁵

There is direct evidence that Justinian was interested in reintegrating Italy directly into the imperial system, and that the murder of Amalasuntha was the *casus belli* that gave that aim a military flavor. Justinian had already been negotiating with Theoderic's heirs, Amalasuntha in particular, to restore direct imperial authority over Italy.³⁶ Athalaric's illness prompted his mother and regent to plan to give Italy to Justinian out of fear of the Gothic nobles and for her own safety, a plan that fell

³² Jordanes, *Origin and Deeds of the Goths*, 96.

³³ Peter Heather, *The Goths* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 255.

³⁴ Jordanes, *Origin and Deeds of the Goths*, 95-96.

³⁵ John Moorhead, "Ostrogothic Italy and the Lombard Invasion" in *New Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 149.

³⁶ Claire Sotinel, "Emperors and Popes in the Sixth Century: the Western View" in *Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 275-276.

through because of the well-timed murder of her chief aristocratic rivals.³⁷ Despite her murder by Theodahad's henchmen, Justinian initially continued pursuing a more peaceful avenue towards reconquest. Theodahad had been a prominent landholder in Tuscany before his accession, when he had planned to sell his estates to Justinian in order to live in luxury in Byzantium.³⁸ Although that prospect failed, after Amalasuntha's death and the early stages of the Byzantine campaign in Italy went badly for the Goths, Justinian offered Theodahad an estate in Byzantium worth 86,000 *solidi* per year in exchange for his abdication rather than allow him to cede overlordship of Italy but continue to rule as a subordinate. This decision is demonstrative of Justinian's attitude towards Italy, and in particular his conviction that only the emperor or his appointee should govern in that province.

Despite Theodahad's consideration of selling Italy, Amalasuntha's murder was a blow to Justinian's plans in the region, since the emperor was on excellent terms with Theoderic's daughter. Particularly given the precariousness of her position, it is likely that Amatasuntha was quite pliable to the will of Constantinople, and Justinian would have naturally been angered by the murder of an easily-controlled ruler of the Goths.³⁹ The loss of such a well-disposed ruler would certainly have prompted Justinian to seek different means to assert imperial authority, namely by sending an army "to free all Italy from the bondage of the Goths."⁴⁰ Yet he also pursued less militant options: after Witigis' defeat in 540, Justinian married Theoderic's granddaughter Matasuntha to Germanus, a Byzantine general and cousin of Justinian, such that the "union of the

³⁷ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. V, 27.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁹ Jordanes, *Origin and Deeds of the Goths*, 97; *Liber Pontificalis*, 147.

⁴⁰ *Liber Pontificalis*, 144.

race of the Anicii [the family lineage of Justinian] with the stock of the Amali [the Ostrogothic royal family] gives hopeful promise with the Lord's favor," a way of legitimizing the reconquest by giving the imperial family a blood right to the Gothic throne to complement the historical right to ownership of Italy.⁴¹

The haste with which Justinian sought to bring Italy into the imperial fold after the Byzantine victories in the first stage of the Gothic War was amplified by concerns elsewhere in the empire and the need to devote resources to other spheres. Italy might even be considered to occupy only third place on Justinian's list of concerns, behind the Persians and the constant raids and rebellions in Africa.⁴² Despite the military demands of Italy and the manpower problems caused by a massive plague the year before, Justinian committed one of the largest armies of the sixth century, 30,000 soldiers, to Persarmenia in 543-544 to combat Sasanian advances. The potential wars with the Persian emperor Chosroes were initially deemed more important than Italy was, as further evidenced by the decision to recall Belisarius from the West and move him to the Persian front.⁴³ However, discounting Justinian's commitment to the West is hardly a bulletproof claim, as he eventually sent a second army as reinforcement for the region and returned Belisarius to Italy rather than keep him on the battlefield against the Persians, demonstrating the emperor's commitment to the success of the war and his determination to bring Italy once and for all into the imperial sphere.⁴⁴

This resolve is exemplified by Justinian's desire to consolidate Byzantine power as quickly and effectively as possible, which was so great that he was the target

⁴¹ Jordanes, *Origin and Deeds of the Goths*, 100.

⁴² J.A.S. Evans, *Age of Justinian: The Circumstances of Imperial Power* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 171.

⁴³ Ibid., 165; Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. VI, 63.

⁴⁴ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. VII, 229, 387.

of charges of the “exploitation” of Italy through taxes and the appointment of imperial administrative officials.⁴⁵ However, the policy was not limited to administration, but is frequently seen in the Byzantine military strategy as well. As in Africa, the Byzantine goal was to absorb the territory and people whenever possible, as seen in the terms of surrender given to a Gothic garrison: become subjects of the emperor and receive complete equality with the Roman army. This demonstrates a clear desire to incorporate them into the empire and expand imperial power rather than wipe them out, a decision Belisarius repeated in preferring to absorb a group of surrendering Goths in exchange for their remuneration rather than allow them to return to Ravenna and rejoin Witigis.⁴⁶ Even before the defeat of Witigis, the Byzantine army was treating captured cities as “subject to the emperor” despite being in the middle of a Gothic countersiege, and Belisarius was appointed praetorian prefect of Rome in the middle of the war, all clear indicators of the intent to establish control in Italy as quickly as possible.⁴⁷ When the opportunity was presented to choose between stability and consolidation or additional conquest, Justinian consistently opted for the former. A treaty proposal would have given Witigis all the land north of the Po River, while the Byzantines would have received everything south.⁴⁸ After Witigis’ defeat, Byzantine consolidation was quick; a praetorian prefect for Italy, a financial minister,

⁴⁵ Procopius, *Anecdota*, 217.

⁴⁶ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. VI, 33, 111-113.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 7; Vol. V, 201.

⁴⁸ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. VI, 125. This treaty would have ended the war, but Belisarius refused to agree to it, ostensibly out of a desire to lead Witigis as a captive during a second triumph, no doubt thinking of his earlier honor with King Gelimer. Unfortunately, the vast devastation caused by the Italian campaign resulted in the general being denied a triumph: Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 151.

and even a new pope were all appointed by Justinian, allowing him to assimilate Italy speedily and make final its rightful place as an arm of the empire.⁴⁹

Procopius argues against such a commitment, and initially his claim seems to carry some weight. He accuses Justinian of being more concerned with doctrinal debates and achieving conciliation than with the Italian campaign, blaming the emperor's lack of interest for his failure to send a commander to Italy in Belisarius' place.⁵⁰ Although there was some indecision over whom to appoint, resulting in hesitation and inaction, Justinian also refused to so much as hear a Gothic envoy seeking a treaty and alliance even after the capture of a Byzantine fleet by Totila, which suggests that by that point he was still determined to see the war through to the end.⁵¹ Ultimately, Procopius concedes that Justinian was negligent in the initial prosecution of the war, but eventually made the necessary preparations at its end in the form of huge sums of money to hire new soldiers and pay back wages to old ones.⁵²

Financial concerns such as these played a formative role in the emperor's approach to the campaign as a whole. In a radical departure from the Vandal War, the Byzantine army mercilessly plundered Italy in order to finance the war, more likely out of necessity than out of a belief that Italy unspoiled was less important than Africa unspoiled.⁵³ Ideology, however, may have taken a backseat to pragmatism, as evidenced by the intense strain on the treasury caused by maintaining a large army in Italy and the attempts by Alexander the Logothete to "correct" it, going so far as to

⁴⁹ John Moorhead, "The Byzantines in the West in the Sixth Century" in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. 1, ed. Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 126. As early as 539 a Ravenna scribe employed the Byzantine formula of $\chi\mu\gamma$, probably an acronym for $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\nu\ \mu\alpha\rho\iota\alpha\ \gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\alpha$, "Mary bore Christ."

⁵⁰ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. VII, 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 15-21.

⁵² Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. VIII, 329.

⁵³ Procopius, *Anecdota*, 57.

cancel a government supply of corn for urban beggars established by Theoderic.⁵⁴ However, such harsh financial measures in Italy were still ideologically justified by Justinian's firm belief that the wealth brought to Constantinople was the rightful property of the state and was, along with the territory of the empire, being restored from wrongful ownership.⁵⁵ This commitment to restoration of the empire is clear when Justinian deviated late in the war from his earlier focus on consolidation to complete conquest, rejecting a Gothic offer to surrender Sicily and Dalmatia, the only areas not ruined by the war and therefore economically useful, instead insisting that he drive the Goths "absolutely from the Roman domain."⁵⁶

The Italian campaign contributed to Justinian's policy of empire rebuilding in yet another way: the consolidation of the new holdings in Africa. The conflict with the Goths might be considered to have begun with a complaint over the fortress of Lilybaeum on the western tip of Sicily, a Gothic possession that had been given to the Vandals as a dowry by Theoderic. Justinian claimed that, as it was held by the Vandals, the fortress should fall to the Byzantines as a result of their war in Africa, while the Goths refused on the grounds that the fortress reverted to them with the end of the marriage for which it had been gifted. The power of Italy in Justinian's reconstruction of the empire was bolstered by logistical necessity: during the Vandal War, the Byzantine army was dependent on buying supplies from Sicily and on grants of passage by the Goths in order to reach Africa, and the security of the principal sea passage to the empire's new territory would go a long way towards consolidating those

⁵⁴ Ibid., 313; Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. VII, 159.

⁵⁵ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. VII, 153.

⁵⁶ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. VIII, 305. This underscores both Justinian's devotion to fully rebuilding the empire and his overriding belief that all former imperial lands were still rightfully the property of the empire regardless of their current rule.

lands; the Byzantines would likely be unable to hold Libya in the long run without also holding Sicily.⁵⁷ One of the earlier potential agreements with Theodahad would have seen the Goths relinquish Sicily, pay annual tribute, and provide soldiers for the imperial army. These terms point to an early imperial motive of consolidating Africa, achieving financial stability, and augmenting the military, all critical to Justinian's strategy, although this gave way much later to a policy of complete domination.⁵⁸

Rome and Romanitas

Perhaps even greater than the practical advantages of holding the territory of Italy was the immense ideological importance of holding the city of Rome in particular. So great was the status of Rome that one chronicler characterized the success of the Gothic War as "how Sicily, Rome, and Italy" were liberated, emphasizing the city's importance by separating it from the rest of the area.⁵⁹ Despite the declining fortunes of the city in the waning years of the western empire, when it was heavily depopulated and saw the imperial capital leave for Ravenna, Rome still emanated an aura of greatness as a highly symbolic place.⁶⁰ Even though the capital of Ostrogothic Italy followed the precedent of Odoacer and the late empire by residing in Ravenna, Theoderic was still considered by western writers to have been "made king in Rome" by Zeno. Theoderic only went to Rome once during his reign, mostly remaining in Ravenna, a behavior that had not been unusual even for emperors since the days of Constantine. Nevertheless he restored "much of the greatness of the city of

⁵⁷ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. V, 29-31; Vol. VI, 345.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁵⁹ Agathias, *Histories*, trans. Joseph D. Frendo (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1975), 8.

⁶⁰ Isidore of Seville, *History of the Kings*, 2.

Rome” during his visit and received a golden statue from the senate.⁶¹ The ideological significance of the city is evident in the amount of attention it receives both by writers and by rulers disproportionate to its strategic and monetary value.

The Byzantines were no exception to the tendency to prize Rome for its symbolism. After Totila recaptured the city, hoping to undermine the Byzantine campaign by eliminating the glory of regaining Rome, the Gothic leader planned to raze the city to the ground, but he was ultimately dissuaded by envoys from Belisarius.⁶² Despite the damage suffered by the city during the war, the ravaging of its surrounding area, massive depopulation, and its loss of the imperial capital, Rome was claimed to be the greatest city in the world by Belisarius’ envoys, who emphasized the glory that would be conveyed to the one who controlled Rome and the “abundant gratitude” of Justinian should Totila preserve Rome and the Byzantines triumph in the war.

This exaltation of Rome was even represented by the emperor and empress back in Constantinople, where they decorated the Chalke Gate outside the palace with an image of Justinian and Theodora surrounded “in festal mood” by the Roman Senate, which was giving Justinian “honors equal to those of God.”⁶³ Even if Procopius is using “Roman” in the sense of “imperial” rather than “of the city of Rome,” this still connotes the importance of *romanitas*, “Romanness,” that permeated the Byzantine Empire throughout its history. Justinian was deeply invested in linking himself to this notion of *romanitas*, inscribing even imperial coins minted in heavily Greek-speaking areas such as Nicomedia and Antioch (although by the sixth century this applied to

⁶¹ Ibid., 19.

⁶² Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. VII, 345-349.

⁶³ Procopius, *Buildings*, 87.

virtually the entire Byzantine Empire, including the imperial administration) in Latin, using Greek only for the date and appealing to the imperial reputation and the power of the past.⁶⁴ He was even identified as the redeemer of Rome by a contemporary magistrate, underlining the importance placed by Justinian on being Roman and being directly tied in any way possible to the city itself.⁶⁵

This connection to Rome was most heavily emphasized in the imperial push to reassert its fulfillment of the obligation to protect “Romans,” both in the city and in the rest of Italy. Theoderic managed to antagonize this facet of Justinianic ideology during the reign of Justin by executing one prominent Roman senator, Albinus, on charges of conspiring with the Byzantine emperor, and two others, Boethius and Symmachus, for defending Albinus.⁶⁶ The healing of the Acacian Schism in 518 had only made the Byzantine imperial administration more invested in the welfare of western Catholics, and in Justinian’s mind the best way to ensure their welfare was to rule them directly.⁶⁷ One of the biggest reasons that Amalasuntha was favored by Justinian during her regency was that she allegedly never punished a Roman or allowed the Goths to wrong Romans, but this still implies some existing racial hostility of the Goths and a need for protecting the Romans.⁶⁸ For decades, the protection of Rome had been outside the imperial prerogative; during the invasions of Attila, it fell to Pope Leo, not to the emperor or even a Roman general, to act as defender of Rome

⁶⁴ Anna Gonosová and Christine Kondoleon, *Art of Late Rome and Byzantium* (Richmond: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 1994), 338-341.

⁶⁵ Pazdernik, “Justinianic Ideology,” 198. John Lydus’ characterization of Justinian may have been a desperate attempt by the former administrative official to combat his own perception of the empire’s cultural erosion during the reign of Justinian.

⁶⁶ *Anonymous Valesianus*, 561-563.

⁶⁷ Moorhead, “Byzantines in the West,” 122.

⁶⁸ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. V, 15-17.

by intervening with the “Scourge of God” and persuading him to turn his armies away from the city.⁶⁹

Justinian sought to restore the emperor as the rightful protector of Rome, accusing the Goths of being trespassers on imperial land and claiming that the Byzantines were entirely within their rights in forcibly retaking it.⁷⁰ The extent to which he was successful can be seen when, in a reversal of the leadership displayed by Leo, Pope Vigilius entreated Justinian to act as the champion and protector of Italy and Belisarius was praised for having “defended the Roman name” and “saved the city.”⁷¹ Justinian considered himself to be fulfilling an imperial obligation in looking after the Romans in Italy by restoring the Italian landowning nobility that had been devastated during the war, even though the aristocracy did not suffer under Theoderic, since the Gothic king expropriated no land but paid the Goths with a percentage of the taxes, a much more preferable system than the land seizures by the Vandal kings.⁷² Thus Justinian set his campaign in Italy firmly within the framework of protecting the interests and well-being of the Roman people and of the city of Rome itself.

The Papacy and Justinian

In addition to protecting the Roman people, Justinian was also intensely concerned with defending and directly associating himself with orthodoxy, and in many ways this manifested in his relationship with, and attempts to control, the papacy. One of the popes of Justinian’s reign was considered to have “contemplated

⁶⁹ Jordanes, *Origin and Deeds of the Goths*, 69.

⁷⁰ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. V, 199.

⁷¹ For Vigilius: Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. VII, 461. For Belisarius, *Liber Pontificalis*, 148.

⁷² Moorhead, “Ostrogothic Italy”, 151; Moorhead, *Theoderic in Italy*, 34-35.

nothing contrary to the faith just as he was adjoined by emperor,” thus intimately linking Justinian’s influence with proper papal behavior.⁷³ The overwhelming presence of Justinian in the religious sphere can be seen in the internal politics of Rome prior to the Gothic War, when both clergy and aristocracy were split on what stance to take towards Constantinople on primarily theological rather than secular grounds, until the executions of Albinus, Boethius, and Symmachus for “treasonous communication” made the matter one of self-preservation instead.⁷⁴

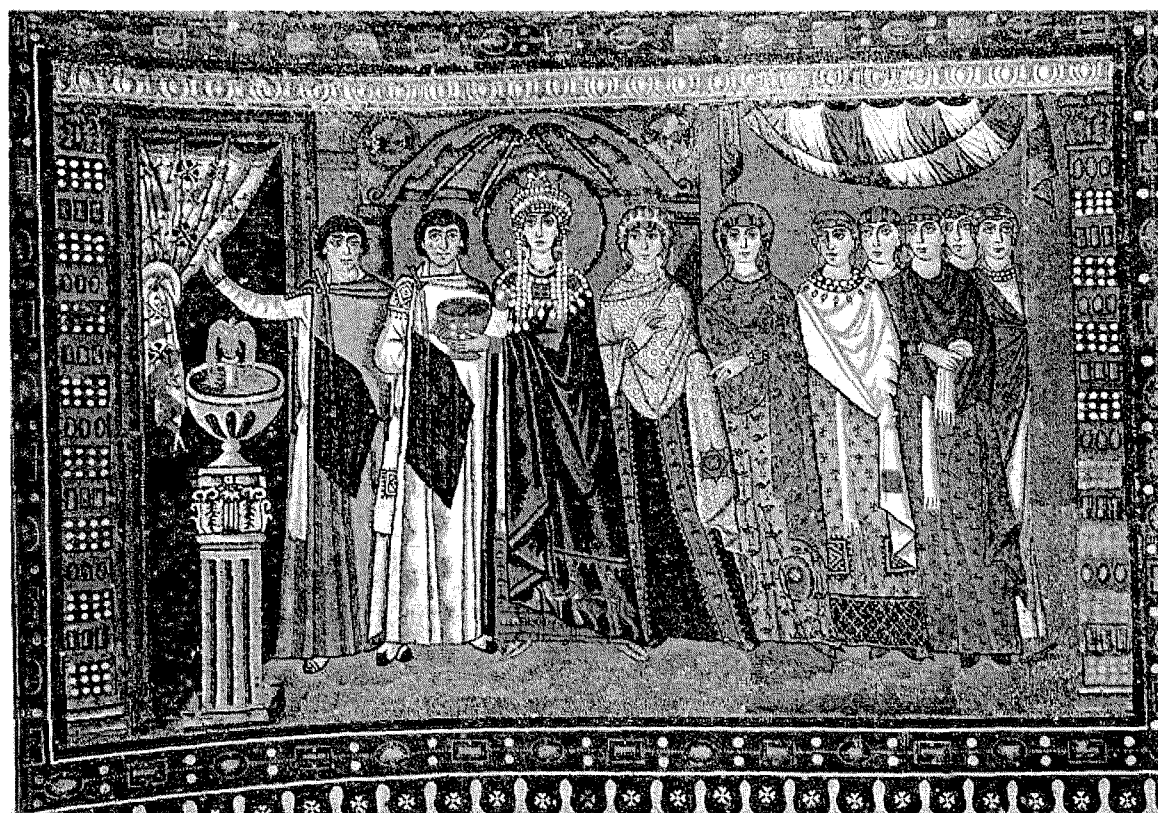
However, the centrality of Justinian’s religious eminence in his self-representation is best demonstrated by the choir mosaics in the church of San Vitale at Ravenna. Commissioned by Bishop Maximianus in 547 to redecorate the basilica, which had been constructed in the late 520s, the San Vitale mosaics place the imperial couple at the forefront of religious worship. On the left side of the choir stands Justinian surrounded by his retinue, a collection of men indicative of his ideology of rule. Immediately next to the emperor is the mosaic’s commissioner, the only named figure in the work; the men are flanked by senators, soldiers (whose shields carry the Chi-Rho symbol), priests, and monks. This arrangement closely aligns Justinian with the ecclesiastical leaders of the empire and juxtaposes that religious element to the military element. Moreover, Justinian holds in his hands the paten, the plate on which the bread of the Eucharist is placed during the rite of communion, which intricately ties the emperor to one of the fundamental liturgical rites of the Church. Theodora is in a similar position; although she has no soldiers, she is accompanied by two priests and a retinue of noble women, possibly nuns, and she is carrying the second half of the

⁷³ Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle*, 46.

⁷⁴ Sotinel, “Emperors and Popes,” 273-274.



Ravenna, San Vitale. Choir Mosaic: The Emperor Justinian and his Retinue.



Ravenna, San Vitale. Choir Mosaic: The Empress Theodora and her Retinue.

Eucharist, the chalice of wine. The imperial entourage is given further religious centrality by their position in the basilica: the mosaics are on either side of the altar, and therefore they surround the liturgical center of worship, with the emperor and empress taking the leading role. Justinian and Theodora are set off from their retinues by a final detail: they are the only figures in the composition whose heads are surrounded by halos.⁷⁵ This key characteristic combines with all the other elements of the mosaics to emphasize through artistic representation the powerful connection between imperial and divine power, and between the emperor and Christ, for an audience in the Byzantine administrative capital of Italy.

Justinian's own conception of his relationship to orthodoxy changed considerably from a view of the pope as the rightful keeper of orthodoxy upon the accession of Justin I in 517 to annoyance with papal intransigence against imperial will by the time the Byzantines controlled Rome in 540. He had come to believe that it was the emperor, not the pope, who acted as foremost religious authority in Christendom.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, papal approval was vital to Justinian in his attempts to reconcile Chalcedonians and Monophysites in the East, and the emperor was determined to get such endorsement even by coercion. The western church benefited considerably from Arian political rule because it found itself outside the political jurisdiction of the Byzantine emperors, who proved incapable of asserting their own ecclesiastical authority in lands ruled by "barbarians."⁷⁷ Such lack of control could have proved a

⁷⁵ André Grabar, *The Golden Age of Justinian: From the Death of Theodosius to the Rise of Islam*, trans. Stuart Gilbert and James Emmons, ed. André Malraux and Georges Salles (New York: Odyssey Press, 1967), 102-104. Also, Lawrence Nees, *Early Medieval Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 102-104.

⁷⁶ Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 271-272.

⁷⁷ Walter Goffart, "Rome, Constantinople, and the Barbarians" in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 86, No. 2 (Apr., 1981), 300.

significant motivator given Justinian's intense concern with religious unity. Theoderic had been for almost thirty-five years the true political authority with whom Italian Christian leaders had to deal, and he was a rather flexible ruler in regards to the internal workings of the Catholic Church. The non-interference of the Ostrogothic government gave Italian bishops their greatest level of independence since Constantine, and the independence from Constantinople prompted a new balance of power between the senatorial and ecclesiastical rulers that operated under the assumption of Roman, rather than imperial, authority on doctrinal matters.⁷⁸ Justinian felt that it necessary to reassert imperial control over the papacy, and thereby over the western church, so much so that some contemporaries felt that the emperor was more concerned with theology and doctrinal conciliation than with Italy itself.⁷⁹

Byzantine control of Rome was key in this objective, as it allowed direct coercion of the pope and allowed Justinian to force the compliance (even through arrest) of popes such as Vigilius. This highhanded approach posed little problem for Byzantine observers, who characterized Justinian's propensity for ordering the papacy about as the pope acting "in *obedience* to the emperor's summons."⁸⁰ Justinian's own behavior of using his conquests to further his goal of religious peace and unity is easily tracked, as he attempted to force Pope Silverius to reconcile a deposed Constantinopolitan patriarch almost as soon as the Byzantine army first entered the city of Rome, and shortly thereafter Belisarius seized control of the papacy and senatorial offices in the name of Justinian, deposed Silverius, and deported

⁷⁸ Sotinel, "Emperors and Popes," 268.

⁷⁹ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. VII, 463.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 281.

uncooperative senators to Constantinople.⁸¹ This is indicative of Justinian's autocratic approach to governing Italy in general and his complete willingness to treat the papacy as another imperially-bestowed administrative office. Not even Silverius' personal role in the Byzantine capture of Rome, when the pope convinced the city to peacefully accept the imperial army rather than fight against a siege, saved him from Justinian's retribution after refusing to reconcile the deposed patriarch.⁸² Ultimately, Justinian's approach to the Gothic War was heavily influenced by his desire to use the campaign as an opportunity to, in his view, return the papacy to dominance by the imperial administration, as a means both to support his attempts to reconcile factional strife in the East and to extend imperial religious influence over western Christendom.

Imperial Authority in the Gothic War

Because of the ideological significance of Rome and Italy and the chance to manipulate the papacy afforded by the Byzantine campaign in Italy, the Gothic War was even more influenced by the demands of imperial authority and prestige than the Vandal War.

For Justinian, Gothic rule of Italy could be considered a personal insult, as the Gothic rulers (and Theoderic in particular) were usurping the usual role of the Roman emperor. During Theoderic's visit to Rome, his triumphal entrance procession and his stay in the city carried noteworthy imperial overtones: he initiated a building program to restore the city's walls and palace, a welfare program to feed the urban poor, and games in the circus and the amphitheatre (which were even compared to those of

⁸¹ For Pope Silverius and the deposed Patriarch Anthemius: *Liber Pontificalis*, 150-152. For Belisarius' actions in Rome: Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. V, 243.

⁸² Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 145-146, and Sotinel, "Emperors and Popes," 279.

Trajan and Valentinian), all the usual prerogatives of the emperor. Likewise, he repaired a major aqueduct and completed the imperial palace in Ravenna and constructed baths and another palace at Verona.⁸³ In all of these actions, Theoderic was behaving like an emperor despite his assumption of the title of *rex*, and Justinian may have feared that the proper role of the emperor was being compromised by a foreign ruler. Theoderic's visit to Rome was even described in imperial terms, and the king's principle administrative assistant called Theoderic *princeps*, one of the customary imperial titles.⁸⁴

Consequently, Justinian was not necessarily out for the destruction of the Goths (at least not initially), but was instead seeking to punish them for rising above their station. Witigis, the Gothic king for much of the first stage of the war, was given a noble position in Constantinople and enjoyed ties with Justinian until his death, suggesting that Justinian was happy to send the message that he was the one in control by returning Witigis to his proper place rather than eliminating the defeated ruler outright.⁸⁵ Similarly, an earlier potential agreement with Theodahad would have forbidden him from advancing people to the rank of patrician, a customary right of the emperor, without Justinian's permission, and simultaneously would have required Justinian's name to be pronounced first (before Theodahad's) at the theatre and hippodrome, while a statue of Justinian was to accompany any statue of Theodahad and to occupy the place of authority.⁸⁶ All of these were ways for Justinian to establish

⁸³ Anonymous *Valesianus*, 545-551.

⁸⁴ Moorhead, *Theoderic in Italy*, 42-48. Despite this, Theoderic's own language of rule was more similar to that of a magistrate issuing edicts than to an emperor issuing laws.

⁸⁵ Jordanes, *Origin and Deeds*, 99-100.

⁸⁶ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. V, 49-51. This suggests that prior rulers had been in the habit of giving their own statues the place of authority, thus disgracing the emperor and usurping his role. See: Heather, *Goths*, 220.

his supremacy and the supremacy of imperial ideology over Theodahad, the Goths, and Italy as a whole without necessarily possessing the territory.

In line with this message of improperly imperial Gothic behavior was the justification for the Italian campaign that the Goths were not entitled to rule that territory, and that they should have returned it to the emperor after Odoacer's defeat.⁸⁷ Although the Goths initially appeared to be operating at least partially in the framework of the imperial administration, with Theoderic minting coins in Zeno's image rather than his own and thus clearly affiliating himself with Constantinople, this façade collapsed during the reign of Justinian. Theodahad became the first Gothic king to issue coins in his own name, indicative of both the bad relations of the time and his attempt to claim for himself the "imperial prerogative."⁸⁸ Other rights claimed and ceremonies performed by the Ostrogoths further stressed their independence, and perhaps more offensively, their equality relative to the Byzantine emperors, putting a severe dent in the image of world hegemony promulgated by Constantinople.⁸⁹ The long-established notion of divinely inspired rule and the special role of the political government in the greater cosmos was appropriated by Theoderic's reign, undoubtedly offending the Byzantines not least of all because the king attributed his rule to God despite being Arian and thus, in the view of Constantinople, outside of God's favor for governance.⁹⁰ Nevertheless Theoderic was willing to claim that "divine help" was sustaining his reign over the Romans in a letter to Anastasius, a means of asserting that Theoderic was just as legitimate and just as much a part of God's order and plan as the

⁸⁷ Moorhead, "Byzantines in the West," 125.

⁸⁸ Moorhead, *Theoderic in Italy*, 23, 49.

⁸⁹ Heather, *Goths*, 221.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 222-223.

Eastern Empire. This was a claim that could hardly be allowed to go unchallenged, particularly when Theoderic followed it with the Senigalia Medallion, which portrayed the king in imperial dress and holding the orb of the world.⁹¹

It was in response to this that Jordanes wrote his abridgment of Cassiodorus' Gothic history. An agent of imperial ideology, he was tasked with portraying "barbarism" and excluding the Goths from the rightful possession of Italy, instead ensuring that only the Byzantines could properly claim to be the inheritors of both a Christian and imperial Rome. Based heavily on the very pro-Gothic history of Cassiodorus, the primary goal of Jordanes' *Getica* was to excise the legitimacy of Gothic rule in Italy from Cassiodorus' now-lost volume that argued exactly that.⁹²

Aside from legitimation, Justinian was very concerned with restoring imperial face in the wake of the Ostrogothic regime. With the invasion of Odoacer and deposition of Romulus Augustulus, Byzantines considered that "thus the Western Empire...perished," offering a clear view of a definite cut-off point for the empire of the West and thus a clear conception that the imperial prestige had been sullied. To top it off, the Goths had been a nuisance to the empire for decades before Theoderic's invasion of Italy, capturing former imperial towns without returning them and laying waste to Illyricum and Macedonia.⁹³ Given how well Theoderic and the Ostrogoths had been treated by the empire (at least in the opinion of the imperial administration), this naturally fostered a sense of betrayal. In exchange for help against a usurper, Zeno had made Theoderic a consul and patrician and given him substantial financial

⁹¹ Ibid., 229-234.

⁹² Walter Goffart, "Jordanes' *Getica* and the Disputed Authenticity of Gothic Origins from Scandinavia" in *Speculum* 80 (2005), 396-397.

⁹³ Jordanes, *Origin and Deeds*, 90-92.

rewards, while before that Theoderic had lived in Constantinople under the tutelage of the Emperor Leo for ten years, ultimately receiving such honors as imperial adoption and a statue in the city.⁹⁴ Despite all of this, Theoderic “was never satisfied by the favors of Zeno Augustus,” ultimately invading Thrace and subsequently being redirected to Italy, which crowned what the Byzantines would have considered his career of ungratefulness with the ultimate insult of capturing Italy without restoring it to the empire.⁹⁵ Theoderic had thus set a dangerous precedent for Byzantine relations with other “barbarian” groups by sending the message that the empire could be slighted, wronged, and even backstabbed with no worry of retaliation.

After the Ostrogothic campaign to Italy, the insults continued with the Gothic capture of another former Byzantine city, Sirmium and the subsequent defeat of a nearby imperial army, but the final disgrace came with the murder of Amalasuntha. The Gothic queen regent had entrusted her personal safety to Justinian, especially after the death of Athalaric, and Justinian reacted to her death “as if he had suffered personal injury,” highlighting the importance of pride and dignity to imperial ideology.⁹⁶ Although later peace negotiations betrayed Justinian’s more immediate interests of consolidating his territory and securing smaller but sure gains over larger but risky ones, at the time of Amalasuntha’s murder Theodahad was threatened with “war without peace,” while “the emperor, upon learning [of the murder]...immediately entered into the war” and “being rightly aggrieved, avenged her death.”⁹⁷ Such representations make it clear that Justinian was drawing a deliberate association

⁹⁴ Anonymous Valesianus, 535-539; Jordanes, *Origin and Deeds*, 86, 92.

⁹⁵ Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle*, 29.

⁹⁶ Jordanes, *Origin and Deeds of the Goths*, 97.

⁹⁷ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. V, 41-43. Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle*, 45.

between the murder and his justification for war, emphasizing the personal insult he felt at Theodahad's actions.

Justinian was deeply concerned with using the opportunity of the Italian campaign not just to repair imperial dignity but also to augment the prestige and glory of the empire significantly. This is seen in the classical approach of Byzantine writers to the Goths, often building them up into a worthy foe to make their defeat all the more spectacular. Procopius, for example, has many kind words for Theoderic—he observed justice, preserved the laws, protected the land from other barbarians, maintained wisdom and virtue—and even praises him as equal to the best emperors and loved by both Italians and Goths.⁹⁸ However, Procopius' disposition may have been the result of his dislike for Justinian rather than out of adherence to any propaganda.

Jordanes, on the other hand, was operating very much within the framework of explicit Justinianic ideology and clearly demonstrates the practice of praising the enemy. In recounting Caesar's own inability to subdue the Goths, Jordanes immediately places Justinian above one of the greatest names in Roman leadership.⁹⁹ Not content with even this exaltation, he places Theoderic, Amalasuntha, and Athalaric in a list of Amali "demigods," a line that ended with Athalaric. Not only does this make Justinian's triumph (for it is always Justinian's, not Belisarius') that much greater, but it also magnifies the prestige of the marriage of Matasuntha, Athalaric's

⁹⁸ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. V, 11-13.

⁹⁹ Jordanes, *Origin and Deeds*, 21-22.

sister, to Germanus, Justinian's cousin, and thus the immense glory of combining the imperial and Amali bloodlines.¹⁰⁰

The honor and status conveyed by holding Italy were perhaps more valued than its practical advantages. The country held an ideological significance that persisted for years after the Lombard Invasion in the late sixth century, but the practical gains of holding even a portion of a healthy and unharmed Italy were frequently discarded in favor of the ideological glory of holding the entire territory no matter the damage. Italy was severely plundered in order to finance the war with virtually no effort by Justinian to stop it, even when Totila and Goths were much more respectful of the Italians, often causing the Byzantines to treat Italy as enemy territory rather than as friendly territory that was being reclaimed and reintegrated.¹⁰¹ As a way to further enhance the prestige of the conquest, Justinian put the treasury of the Ostrogoths (seized after Witigis' defeat in 540) on private display for the senate in Constantinople, demonstrating the glory of the empire and its conquests to some of his most vehement detractors.¹⁰²

Ultimately, the Italian campaign was used as a vehicle for increasing imperial authority, prestige, and control both at home and abroad. Justinian was able to eliminate the office of the consul in 541, a move perceived by his critics as the triumph of tyranny over Roman liberty despite the fact that consuls had held no real power for about five and a half centuries. Nevertheless, the action was pregnant with the ideological message of imperial power.¹⁰³ This move may have been related to the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 25.

¹⁰¹ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Vol. VII, 221-223, and *Anecdota*, 57.

¹⁰² Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 150.

¹⁰³ Pazdernik, "Justinianic Ideology," 197.

animosity between Justinian and the established elite of Constantinople—who would normally have held the consulship—as the Justinianic dynasty was an upstart one and thus unpopular among the aristocracy. As a result, Justinian’s western policy was opportunistic not just in seizing land that had formerly belonged to the empire but also as a way to combat the animosity and criticisms of the nobility, as well as their attempts to discredit his rule.¹⁰⁴

Concern with imperial prestige is also evident in the conduct of the last leg of the war. Despite having knowledge of the ten years after the defeat of Witigis, which were very problematic for the Byzantine presence in Italy, Jordanes completely omits them from his chronicle, likely considering them as a stain on imperial prestige that should not be publicized and preferring instead to focus on the glory of victory.¹⁰⁵ Jordanes’ abridgment of Cassiodorus as part of the ideological campaign of Justinian was meant to bring Cassiodorus’ own history, which declared the Goths as the rightful rulers of Italy, into sync with both Justinian’s own claim to rulership and the accomplishments of Byzantium up to 540, but beyond that the history is silent.¹⁰⁶ By the time of Totila’s entreaties for peace in 550, in which he offered Justinian the only economically viable territories remaining, Dalmatia and Sicily, Justinian had invested too much prestige in the policy of reconquest to abandon it or to compromise, since doing so would have been a stain on imperial honor to match that of Amalasuntha’s murder at the beginning of the war.

¹⁰⁴ Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 269-270.

¹⁰⁵ Goffart, “Jordanes’ *Getica*,” 394. Most of the work was composed in the months leading up to the departure of Narses in 551 in response to Belisarius’ failures and deteriorating Byzantine fortunes in Italy. Narses managed to secure the final victory three years later.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 395-396.

EPILOGUE

JUSTINIAN AFTER ITALY (552 – 565)

The general Narses arrived in Italy in 550 and quickly began the last stage of the Byzantine campaign against the Goths. In stark contrast to the sluggish progress over the previous fifteen years and the setbacks of the previous ten, Narses concluded the Italian campaign swiftly. Totila died of wounds received in battle in 552, after which the war was all but over, and the campaign turned into a cleanup operation for the next two years until the death of the last Gothic general, Teias, in 554.

After this, Justinian proved himself to be little concerned with the West. Although he issued the Pragmatic Sanction in 554 to formalize the Byzantine annexation of Italy, the remainder of his political and military focus returned to the East to combat both invasion and insurrection. On the religious front, Justinian played a leading role in the Three Chapters Controversy and the subsequent Fifth Ecumenical Council, but both of these issues were likewise predominately concerned with Eastern problems and in particular with reconciliation between the Chalcedonians and the Monophysites. With the fall of the Goths in Italy, the Arian heresy had lost all its power in Italy and Africa, and the Arian Visigoths of Spain would ultimately convert to Catholicism two and a half decades after Justinian. As Arianism declined so too did Justinian's religious interest in the West beyond securing the compliance of the papacy. This chapter will examine the major events of Justinian's reign after the Gothic War, starting with Totila's death in 552, and his striking move away from interest in his newly conquered territories.

The Three Chapters Controversy and the Fifth Ecumenical Council

To consider the Fifth Ecumenical Council (also known as the Second Council of Constantinople), we must go back to the latter half of the 540s, when the Three Chapters Controversy arose during the worst years of the Italian campaign. Justinian, in one of his characteristic attempts to unite the Monophysites and Chalcedonians in the East, set forth an imperial edict condemning three clerics who were the subject of some contention between the two branches of Eastern Christianity.¹ However, the condemnation of two of these men had been expressly ruled against at the Council of Chalcedon itself, so when Justinian attempted to push his edict through he was resisted by the orthodox priesthood and by the western bishops in particular, who were led by Bishop Facundus of the African diocese of Hermiane. Facundus insisted that faith must be defined exclusively by the priesthood, not by secular rulers, although he notably did not object to imperial interference of other varieties. Justinian's imperial declaration was a "violation of the old compromise between imperial and Episcopal rights that aroused much opposition in the West and Africa," and the African and Italian bishops would have none of it even when the emperor strong-armed Pope Pelagius into supporting the condemnation of the Three Chapters.² In addition to the stubborn resistance of the Western clergy, the lack of the weight of imperial authority in the West can be seen in the coerced Pope Pelagius' attempts to secure the

¹ The three "chapters" were the clerics Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Ibas of Edessa. Justinian sought to condemn the Three Chapters, which would have violated Chalcedonian doctrine but ostensibly appealed to the Monophysites.

² Francis Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Background* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1966), 825-6.

subscription of his peers; the pope never appealed to or invoked the authority of the emperor as part of his argument.³

In 553, Justinian convened the Fifth Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in response to opposition to his condemnation of the Three Chapters and in an attempt to seek a compromise once again. For some scholars who view Justinian without much sympathy, the “Fifth Council... brought Justinian to the pinnacle of his caesaropapism,” but in actuality it fit completely with his constant pursuit of reconciliation through compromise.⁴ The council was also meant to discuss Justinian’s *Confession of Faith* written three years previously, in which he officially declared himself the guardian of the orthodox faith; the meeting at Constantinople was an opportunity for the emperor to get universal approval.⁵ Justinian failed on both fronts: his edicts proclaiming himself as head of both church and state were rejected by the council, and only one of the Three Chapters, a cleric heavily involved with the Nestorian heresy, was fully condemned, while the council only anathematized a small number of selected writings by the other two priests. This dealt a severe blow to Justinian on both fronts and ultimately rendered his attempt to involve the western clergy in his pursuit of reconciliation between the two major Eastern factions a failure.⁶

The Pragmatic Sanction

³ Claire Sotinel, “Emperors and Popes in the Sixth Century: the Western View” in *Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 285.

⁴ For the quote, and more about hostility towards Justinian: John W. Barker, *Justinian and the Later Roman Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 189.

⁵ Harold Lamb, *Constantinople: Birth of an Empire* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1957), 296-7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, and Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Michael Whitby (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 242-248.

In 554, the year following the Fifth Ecumenical Council, Justinian issued the Pragmatic Sanction, the most directly western-looking of his actions following the end of the Gothic War. This edict added Italy as a province and dissolved the Ostrogothic political system, but it also established the capital at Ravenna, which was perhaps indicative of the emperor valuing the defense of the territory (since Ravenna was closer to the northern border) over the symbolic value of returning the capital to Rome.

However, the edict was designed primarily to restore the social fabric of Italy, rent asunder by the twenty-year war, to its state of existence under Amalasuntha and Theodahad, although the devastation of the war made this a futile effort.⁷ Nevertheless, the Pragmatic Sanction confirmed the past decrees of Athalaric and Amalasuntha, and even the appointments of Theodahad, but voided the acts of Totila, allowing Justinian to recognize the prestige of the Amal dynasty that had ended with Athalaric.⁸ Justinian also revived the grain dole in Rome and commanded restoration of the city's buildings, the market, the harbor, the aqueducts, and the channel of the Tiber River, all part of the responsibilities of a good emperor, and, it must be remembered, paralleled by Theoderic).⁹ Lastly, Justinian made a gesture to the leaders of Italy, leaving the appointment of weights and measures for the province in the hands of the Pope and Senate rather than imperial administrators. This is indicative of the emperor's respect for the rising importance of the bishop, even going so far as to give

⁷ J.A.S. Evans, *Age of Justinian: The Circumstances of Imperial Power* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 181.

⁸ Ferdinand Gregorovius, *History of the City of Rome*, 485-6.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 487-9.

the Italian bishops legal authority over imperial officials in their territory, and of the existence, history, and symbolic importance of the Roman Senate.¹⁰

The Eastern Focus

Justinian did manage to exhibit some small amount of additional interest in the West, even embarking on a final campaign to Spain. After the assassination of the Visigothic king Theudisclus, civil war broke out in the peninsula and one of the two sides sought Byzantine aid. An expeditionary force arrived in 552 and quickly carved out a strip of territory along the southern coast that would manage to endure until 624.¹¹ The foray into Spain was made under the pretense of aiding one of the sides in the conflict and protecting Africa from any potential spillover, although Justinian is commonly considered to have authorized the expedition on purely opportunistic grounds.¹²

In Italy, Justinian subsidized teachers of grammar, rhetoric, medicine, and law, both in an attempt to prop up that ruined class of citizens and perhaps to support and restore the legendary culture of Rome.¹³ The emperor clearly meant himself to be remembered as the man who restored that culture and that city, appearing in inscriptions on even relatively minor works throughout Rome, such as one bridge that declares him *piissimus* and *triumphalus semper*, most pious and ever-triumphant.¹⁴ At the same time, Justinian's presence was felt in other ways: the "liberated" Italians

¹⁰ Ibid. Despite the Pragmatic Sanction, the Roman senatorial class was unable to recover from the wars: Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 201.

¹¹ Peter Heather, *The Goths* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 278-283.

¹² Evans, 269.

¹³ Michael Maas, "Roman Questions, Byzantine Answers: Contours of the Age of Justinian" in *Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 21.

¹⁴ Gregorovius, *History of the City of Rome*, 497-8.

allegedly came to fear and hate the imperial tax collectors more than they did the "barbarians" from whom they had been freed, highlighting the imperial focus on Italy from an administrative and financial perspective.¹⁵

But by far the most salient characteristic of Justinian's final ruling years as regards his campaigns in Africa and Italy is the dramatic shift of focus back towards the East following the victory in Italy. This is perhaps most concisely embodied in Justinian's equestrian statue in Constantinople, which faces the Persian frontier rather than the new land in the West and appropriately turns its back on Africa and Italy, clearly representing the reorientation of the emperor to the East.¹⁶ Given the events of Justinian's years after Italy, this is hardly surprising, as the situation in the East was so consistently bad that one scholar remarked that "the final decade of Justinian's reign reads like the transcript of the Last Judgment upon his administration...a recital of disasters and ominous portents for the future."¹⁷ In 556, Justinian put down a brief but embarrassing Samaritan revolt; the following year he faced a rebellion by one of his eastern annexations, the Tzani; the populace of Constantinople rioted over a bread shortage, filling the hippodrome with demonstrations in the presence of the Persian ambassador; the city was struck by a resurgence of the bubonic plague, which it had faced in 542 as well. To round out the period's misfortunes, Constantinople was struck by an earthquake on May 7, 558, causing the collapse of the eastern semidome and part of the main dome of the Hagia Sophia, the jewel of Justinian's empire.¹⁸

¹⁵ Barker, *Justinian and the Later Roman Empire*, 202.

¹⁶ John Malalas, *Chronicle*, trans. Elizabeth Jeffreys, Michael Jeffreys, Roger Scott, et al. (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986), 287 and Procopius, *Buildings*, trans. H.B. Dewing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), 33-37.

¹⁷ Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 253.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Justinian also faced two more threatening problems, one old, one new. Between 557 and 561, the treasury was literally emptied in order to buy peace with Persia and make a down-payment on a long-term agreement, prompting Justinian's successor Justin II to complain of "the treasury crushed by debts and reduced to the last degree of poverty."¹⁹ On the other side of Constantinople, the empire faced an invasion by a Hunnic tribe known as the Kotrigurs. With almost no money and soldiers scattered to the furthest ends of the empire, Byzantium was gravely imperiled when the Kotrigurs crossed the Danube. Justinian relocated to Selymbria, a site on the Propontis nearer the invasion, seeking to project the image of an active warrior and imperial protector despite his advanced age of 77, and he even called the elderly Belisarius out of retirement.²⁰ Justinian's return to Constantinople in 559 was that of a victor, a triumphal procession of his own and the first of its kind to include a church in the proceedings, a novelty indicative of Justinian's growing emphasis on religiosity.²¹

This addition to the ceremony is symptomatic of Justinian's last years, when "his infirm mind was devoted to heavenly contemplation, and he neglected the business of the lower world."²² This progression was strong in the East, but largely unconcerned with affairs in the West. The Manichaeans, adherents of a Gnostic mystical tradition vehemently attacked by fourth-century Christian theologians, were "persecuted into extinction" in the East. Members of the sect and lapsed Christians were subject to capital punishment, but they remained relatively unaffected in North

¹⁹ Ibid., 257.

²⁰ Ibid., 253-255. Belisarius managed to repel Kotrigurs with a paucity of soldiers (anchored by his own personal bodyguard) and not a little deception, but was quickly ushered back to obscurity.

²¹ Brian Croke, "Justinian's Constantinople" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 78. Justinian stopped at the Apostoleion (which he had built) to light candles at the sarcophagus of Theodora.

²² Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, Vol. 5 (London: The Folio Society, 1987), 304.

Africa.²³ In the East, Justinian was becoming more and more pietistic. In 562 he authorized anti-pagan parades and book burnings in Constantinople. Around the same time he survived an assassination attempt during a rise in factional street violence, and a eulogist at the rededication of the Hagia Sophia attributed the failure of the assassination to Justinian's unwavering trust in God.²⁴

Aptly describing the end of the emperor's reign, one contemporary observed that "the old man no longer cared; he was altogether cold and only grew warm with love of another life." This highlights Justinian's increasing concern with his own salvation as his death approached.²⁵ The vital affairs of state and key decisions were either neglected or deferred in favor of burying himself in theological study.²⁶ Finally, at age 81, shortly before his death, Justinian made the difficult pilgrimage to the Galatian shrine of St. Michael, which held a piece of Christ's tunic. Here he displayed a very different image from that of the emperor ruling over all facets of Christendom, instead casting himself, no doubt sincerely, as a penitential pilgrim, thus betraying the extent to which spirituality had come to monopolize his thoughts.²⁷

However, Justinian still had breath left to ensure that his ideology of imperial primacy persisted. At the Dec. 23, 562 rededication of the Hagia Sophia, which Justinian had repaired after the earthquake and which he crowned with an even taller dome than before, the emperor celebrated his greatest accomplishment with a great procession involving the emperor and patriarch. An anonymous source recounts

²³ Evans, 251.

²⁴ Ibid., 249-256.

²⁵ Flavius Cresconius Corippus, *In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris*, trans. Averil Cameron (London: University of London Athlone Press), 2.265-266.

²⁶ Barker, *Justinian and the Later Roman Empire*, 189.

²⁷ Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 261.

Justinian's speech on the occasion: he proceeded alone to the cathedral's ambo, from which the deacon normally read the Gospel, raised his hands to the skies, and uttered his famous exclamation, claiming to surpass Solomon himself.²⁸ Here it is clear that Justinian was still attributing his reign and his accomplishments to God by way of a fusion of the emperorship and divine blessing, drawing a clear parallel with one of the two most famous Biblical kings and, implicitly, the Temple of Solomon. Because the Temple had been built to house the Ark of the Covenant, and therefore to house God, Justinian's celebration emphasized the religious significance of his own accomplishments by asserting that he had surpassed Solomon in glorifying God.

Justinian's final action was a last grasp at reconciliation between Chalcedonians and Monophysites. Although this attempt was characteristic of his reign and his indefatigable drive for religious harmony, sadly it also had characteristic results. Although he had proclaimed the supremacy of orthodoxy at the Hagia Sophia's rededication ceremony, in 564 Justinian issued an edict affirming the incorruptibility of Christ's body.²⁹ This desperate ploy makes it clear that neither the death of the pro-Monophysite Empress Theodora in 548 nor the setback at the Fifth Ecumenical Council had lessened Justinian's resolve to achieve unity between Chalcedonians and Monophysites.³⁰ According to the doctrine supported by the edict, Christ retained the human characteristics ascribed to him at Chalcedon (but rejected by the Monophysites), but suggested that they were different from those of ordinary mortals; Christ was of flesh, but it was a non-human, incorruptible flesh.³¹ Justinian sought to

²⁸ Anonymous of Banduri in Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 258.

²⁹ Evans, 262. This doctrine, known as Aphthartodocetism, was the product of Julian of Halicarnassus.

³⁰ Barker, *Justinian and the Later Roman Empire*, 188.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 190.

force acceptance of the doctrine, but his efforts failed once again. Both Pope John III and Patriarch Eutychius of Constantinople refused to sign, and after Eutychius' arrest and deposition in the middle of a service on Jan. 22, 565, his successor, John Scholasticus, did the same. Justinian died on the night of November 14/15, 565, before he had the opportunity to retaliate.

Justinian's death brought to a close a turbulent reign. His early years had seen him assume an ideologically rich stance towards the West, marked not only by his desire to restore the prestige and dignity of the Roman Empire but also by a firm conviction that the emperor was both the champion and protector of orthodoxy. However, as his reign progressed, Justinian's reconquest ideology began to shift. Instead of remaining the defender of orthodoxy, as he was when he freed the heavily-persecuted Christians in Africa from the Arian Vandals, he became the dictator of orthodoxy, deposing and strong-arming popes in an attempt to force recognition of his religious edicts. At the same time, the campaigns became decreasingly pragmatic, as peace negotiations with the Goths that would have greatly benefited Byzantium fell through time and again. In place of pragmatism, prestige took on more and more significance, as Justinian insisted on total victory over the Goths and ultimately subsidized an expedition to Spain that was of almost no practical or religious relevance.

Yet some common threads can be found throughout Justinian's relationship with the West. The centrality of the prestige of the emperorship and the glory of the empire can be seen from Justinian's role in the healing of the Acacian Schism early in his uncle's reign to the invasion of Spain's southern coast forty years later. Justinian

constantly sought to restore imperial influence and authority in the West, wavering only in the last years of his reign when he was weighed down by age, instability in the East, and religious conflicts between the two major Christological sects of the empire. Similarly, Justinian can be seen to have highly valued the emperor's status and position within Christendom, and his conviction that the emperorship had a critical role to play in the welfare and governance of the Christian world unifies his reign and policies. Whether freeing the orthodox from oppression or ardently striving for religious peace and reconciliation between opposing factions by highly controversial means, Justinian frequently included the western Christian community and the papacy in particular in his universal view of administering a Christian empire. Thus, Justinian's ideology comes down to posterity as one that, while variegated in the relative intensities of its components, was united by key themes throughout his reign. It was an ideology inextricably linked to imperial involvement in Western affairs, and one which would, in that regard, never be repeated.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Agathias. *Histories*. Trans. Joseph D. Frendo. New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1975.
- Anonymous Valesianus*. In *Ammianus Marcellinus*. Vol. 3. Trans. John C. Rolfe. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939. 506-569
- Cassiodorus. *Variae*. Trans. T. Hodgkin. London: Henry Frowde, 1886.
- Evagrius Scholasticus. *Ecclesiastical History*. Trans. Michael Whitby. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000.
- Eusebius. *Life of Constantine*. Trans. Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.
- Flavius Cresconius Corippus. *In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris*. Trans. Averil Cameron. London: University of London Athlone Press, 1976.
- Gregory, *Dialogues*. Trans. Odo John Zimmerman. *Fathers of the Church* 39. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1977.
- History of the Coptic Patriarchs of Alexandria*. Trans. B. Evetts. *Patrologia Orientalis* 5. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1910.
- Isidore of Seville. *History of the Kings of the Goths, Vandals, and Suevi*. Trans. Guido Donini and Gordon B. Ford, Jr. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966.
- Jordanes. *The Origin and Deeds of the Goths*. Trans. Charles C. Mierow. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1908.
- John Malalas. *Chronicle*. Trans. Elizabeth Jeffreys, Michael Jeffreys, Roger Scott, et al. Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986.
- Justinian. *Corpus Iuris Civilis: The Civil Law*. Trans. S.P. Scott. New York: AMS Press, 1973.
- Liber Pontificalis*. Trans. Louise Ropes Loomis. New York: Columbia University Press, 1916.
- Marcellinus Comes. *Chronicle*. Trans. Brian Croke. Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1995.
- Procopius. *Anecdota or Secret History*. Trans. H.B. Dewing. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935.

- Procopius. *Buildings*. Trans. H.B. Dewing. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940.
- Procopius. *History of the Wars*. 5 Vols. Trans. H.B. Dewing. New York: Macmillan Company, 1914-1928.
- Socrates Scholasticus. *Ecclesiastical History*. Trans. A.C. Zenos. *Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 2. Series 2. Ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1890.
- Sozomenus. *Ecclesiastical History*. Trans. Chester D. Hartranft. *Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 2. Series 2. Ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1890.
- Venerable Bede. *Martyrology*. Trans. Felice Lifshitz. *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology*. Ed. Thomas Head. New York: Garland Publishers, 2000.
- Vita S. *Caesarii Arelatensis a discipulis scripta*. Trans. G. Morin. *S. Caesarii Arelatensis Opera Omnia* III (Maredsous, 1942) in *Christianity and Paganism, 350-750: The Conversion of Western Europe*. Ed. J.N. Hillgarth. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989.

Secondary Sources

- Amory, Patrick. *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489-554*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Barker, John W. *Justinian and the Later Roman Empire*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966.
- Barnwell, P.S. *Emperor, Prefects, and Kings: The Roman West, 395-565*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992.
- Beckwith, John. *The Art of Constantinople: An Introduction to Byzantine Art, 330-1453*. Glasgow: University Press, 1961.
- Brown, T.S. *Gentlemen and Officers: Imperial Administration and Aristocratic Power in Byzantine Italy A.D. 554-800*. Rome: British School at Rome, 1984.
- Buckler, F.W. "Regnum et Ecclesia." *Church History* 3 (1934): 16-40.
- Burns, Thomas S. *A History of the Ostrogoths*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

- Cameron, Alan. *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.
- Cameron, Averil. *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Cameron, Averil. *Procopius of and the Sixth Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
- Charanis, Peter. *Church and State in the Later Roman Empire: The Religious Policy of Anastasius the First, 491-518*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1939.
- Clugnet, Léon. "Pope John I." *Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910.
- Croke, Brian. "Cassiodorus and the *Getica* of Jordanes." *Classical Philology* 82 (1987): 117-134.
- Croke, Brian. "Justinian's Constantinople." *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*. Ed. Michael Maas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 60-86.
- Dagron, Gilbert. *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium*. Trans. Jean Birrell. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Dvornik, Francis. *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Background*. Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1966.
- Edwards, Mark. "The First Council of Nicaea." *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Origins to Constantine*. Ed. Margaret M. Mitchell and Frances M. Young. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 552-567.
- Evans, Helen C. *Byzantium: Faith and Power*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004.
- Evans, J.A.S. *The Age of Justinian: The Circumstance of Imperial Power*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Every, George. *The Byzantine Patriarchate, 451-1204*. London: S.P.C.K., 1962.
- Gibbon, Edward. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Ed. Berry Radice. London: The Folio Society, 1986.

- Gillett, Andrew. "Was Ethnicity Politicized in the Earliest Medieval Kingdoms?" *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*. Ed. Andrew Gillett. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2002. 85-122.
- Goffart, Walter. "Does the Distant Past Impinge on the Invasion Age Germans?" *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*. Ed. Andrew Gillett. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2002. 21-38.
- Goffart, Walter. "Jordanes's *Getica* and the Disputed Authenticity of Gothic Origins from Scandinavia." *Speculum* 80 (2005): 379-398.
- Goffart, Walter. "Rome, Constantinople, and the Barbarians." *The American Historical Review* 86 (1981): 275-306.
- Goffart, Walter. *Rome's Fall and After*. London: Hambledon Press, 1989.
- Gonosová, Anna and Christine Kondoleon. *Art of Late Rome and Byzantium*. Richmond: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 1994.
- Grabar, André. *The Golden Age of Justinian: From the Death of Theodosius to the Rise of Islam*. Trans. Stuart Gilbert and James Emmons. Ed. André Malraux and Georges Salles. New York: Odyssey Press, 1967.
- Gray, Patrick. "The Legacy of Chalcedon: Christological Problems and Their Significance." *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*. Ed. Michael Maas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 215-238.
- Greatrex, Geoffrey. "The Nika Riot: A Reappraisal." *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 117 (1997): 60-86.
- Gregorovius, Ferdinand. *History of the City of Rome in the Middle Ages*. Trans. Gustavus W. Hamilton. Vol. 1. London: George Bell & Sons, 1900.
- Haldon, John. "Economy and Administration: How Did the Empire Work?" *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*. Ed. Michael Maas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 28-59.
- Heather, Peter. *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Heather, Peter. *The Goths*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.
- Holum, Kenneth G. "The Classical City in the Sixth Century: Survival and Transformation." *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*. Ed. Michael Maas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 113-133.

- Humfress, Caroline. "Law and Legal Practice in the Age of Justinian." *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*. Ed. Michael Maas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 161-184.
- Kaldellis, Anthony. *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History, and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.
- Kunkel, Wolfgang. *An Introduction to Roman Legal and Constitutional History*. Trans. J.M. Kelly. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973.
- Lamb, Harold. *Constantinople: Birth of an Empire*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957.
- Lee, A.D. "The Empire at War." *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*. Ed. Michael Maas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 113-133.
- Liebeschuetz, J.H.G.W. "Government and Administration in the Late Empire (to A.D. 476)." *From Diocletian to the Arab Conquest*. Aldershot: Variorum, 1990. 455-469.
- Maas, Michael. "Roman Questions, Byzantine Answers: Contours of the Age of Justinian." *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*. Ed. Michael Maas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 3-27.
- Moorhead, John. "The Byzantines in the West in the Sixth Century." *The New Cambridge Medieval History*. Vol. 1. Ed. Paul Fouracre. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 118-139.
- Moorhead, John. "Ostrogothic Italy and the Lombard Invasions." *The New Cambridge Medieval History*. Vol. 1. Ed. Paul Fouracre. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 140-161.
- Moorhead, John. *Theoderic in Italy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Murray, Alexander Callander, ed. *After Rome's Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998.
- Nees, Lawrence. *Early Medieval Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Nicol, D.M. "Byzantine Political Thought." *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c.350-c.1450*. Ed. J.H. Burns. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. 51-82.
- Pazdernik, Charles. "Justinianic Ideology and the Power of the Past." *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*. Ed. Michael Maas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 185-214.

- Randers-Pehrson, Justine Davis. *Barbarians and Romans: The Birth Struggle of Europe, A.D. 400-700*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983.
- Runciman, Steven. *The Byzantine Theocracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Sarris, Peter. *Economy and Society in the Age of Justinian*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Sotinel, Claire. "Emperors and Popes in the Sixth Century: The Western View." *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*. Ed. Michael Maas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 267-290.
- Stanhope, Philip Henry [Lord Mahon]. *The Life of Belisarius: The Last Great General of Rome*. Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2006.
- Tabacco, Giovanni. *The Struggle for Power in Medieval Italy: Structures of Political Rule*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Townsend, W.T. "The Henotikon Schism and the Roman Church." *Journal of Religion* 16 (1936): 78-86.
- Vasiliev, A.A. *Justin the First: An Introduction to the Epoch of Justinian the Great*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950.
- Ware, Timothy. *The Orthodox Church*. London: Penguin Books, 1993.
- Wolfram, Herwig. *History of the Goths*. Trans. Thomas J. Dunlap. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.