

Kazimierz Ginter, *Wizerunek władców bizantyńskich w „Historii kościelnej” Ewagriusza Scholastyka [The Image of Byzantine Emperors in Evagrius Scholasticus’s Ecclesiastical History]*, Byzantina Lodziensia XXXV, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2018, pp. 337

A dynamic growth of the series started in 1997 by professor Waldemar Cerań, and successfully continued by his students, led by professor Mirosław J. Leszka, bore fruit in the form of a broad spectrum of publications issued by Byzantina Lodziensia, including such ones which had not had, owing to various unfavourable conditions, the possibility of enriching the Polish (and not only) scientific dispute on the history of the empire with the capital in Constantinople. A good example here is the work by Rev. Kazimierz Ginter concerning Evagrius Scholasticus, the reedited and extended doctoral dissertation of 2006, defended at the Jagiellonian University, which perfectly fitted the trend in research into the Byzantine historiography represented in the Łódź centre by Maciej Kokoszko¹, Sławomir Bralewski² and Mirosław J. Leszka³. Currently, Kazimierz Ginter works at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, dealing with the relationships between liturgy (in which he defended his doctorate at the aforementioned Roman university in 2013) and politics and ideology of authority during late antiquity and early Middle Ages.

The author of the reviewed work took up the issue of the image of Byzantine Emperors presented in Evagrius Scholasticus’s *Ecclesiastical History*, focusing on several elements which were important for the creation of the image of individual rulers – mentions which concerned their character, family, attitude towards military issues and conducting diplomatic activities, undertakings in the field of religious politics – in the context of both theological matters (responses to heresies which occurred in church) and institutional ones – relationships with individual bishops and councils, the rulers’ construction

¹ *Descriptions of Personal Appearance in John Malalas’ Chronicle*, Łódź 1998, pp. 181.

² *Obraz papieżstwa w historiografii wczesnego Bizancjum*, Łódź 2006, pp. 334.

³ *Wizerunek władców pierwszego państwa bułgarskiego w bizantyńskich źródłach pisanych (VIII–I połowa XII wieku)*, Łódź 2003, pp. 168.

programme, elementary disasters faced by the empire at the time they ruled, as well as the supposed fates of the emperors after death. The findings presented in the work were preceded by a thorough analysis of the life of the author of *Ecclesiastical History*. However, Kazimierz Ginter did not limit himself to analysing the few mentions referring directly to Evagrius in available sources, but he also attempted at constructing an exceptionally detailed account of the possible intellectual inspirations of the Antiochian historian and lawyer: religious, those resulting from his belonging to the local imperial elite, or those relating to culture in which he lived – the Greek-speaking community of Antioch (pp. 28-50). Equally important seem the remarks about authors whose work influenced the final shape of *Ecclesiastical History*, among whom a lot of space was devoted to Eusebius of Caesarea, Synesius and Philostratos (pp. 68-79). Ginter did not forget to also frame the historiographic background which accompanied the creation of Evagrius's work, by briefly discussing various styles of historical writing in the Byzantine tradition (such as ecclesiastical stories, chronicle, hagiography or panegyrics – pp. 54-68). Determination of the intellectual environment of Evagrius's work seems to be of special importance for the conclusions formulated by the Byzantinologist concerning *Ecclesiastical History*, particularly in the context of challenging theses formulated by researchers who had written about the topic, which concerned the progressing secularisation of the genre of ecclesiastical stories, visible in the analysed work (pp. 279-280). References to other historiographic traditions, related to both genre (especially in the classical dimension) and religion (represented either by radical Chalcedonian or monophysite trend), are an inherent element of the analysis of imperial images described in the work – and it is one of the vital advantages of the reviewed book – the author will not let the reader forget about the broader context. His remarks about the views of such chroniclers as John Malalas, John of Nikiû, or Theophanes the Confessor are not merely a derivative demonstration of scientific findings but Ginter's original contribution, and can form the introduction to further analyses of those historiographers' views regarding the image of individual emperors. It is worth mentioning that the scholar did not restrict himself only to intellectual issues – in his analyses an important place is also taken by the question of Evagrius's social background, as well as his attachment to the idea of the empire and local – Antiochian – patriotism, represented by him to the same degree.

The main part of the discussion, devoted to the image of emperors, is opened with an account of a polemic between Evagrius and Zosimos, concerning the

person of Constantine the Great, which Ginter treated almost as a presentation of the programme lying behind the construction of the ideological integrity of Evagrius's work. Constantine seems to play a key role – as a reference, example of a perfect ruler, and the defence of his legacy was an absolute priority. In this respect, Evagrius must definitely be regarded as a continuator of the concept of Eusebius of Caesarea, for whom the emperor's authority was a reflection on earth of what is in heaven. The vision of history in which Constantine's rule was a certain positive culmination of the history of the development of the Roman system – from republican, through imperial to the alliance of the emperor with the Christian God, influenced, according to the Byzantinologist, the entire account of history presented by Evagrius (pp. 81-84). The programme, as it is appropriately proven by the reasoning of the author of the reviewed work, was articulated by the Antiochian historian in the presented image of the subsequent emperors – Theodosius II (pp. 85-107), Marcian (pp. 107-133), Leo and Zeno (pp. 133-159), Anastasius (pp. 159-186), Justin I (pp. 186-193), Justinian (pp. 194-227), Justin II (pp. 227-240), Tiberius (pp. 240-250) and Maurice (pp. 250-272). Each description must be regarded as a fully individual account of the subject, finished with very helpful summaries of the main theses concerning the image of individual Byzantine rulers. The presented analyses aim at demonstrating conclusions on the desirable features in emperors (pp. 274-279), among which, according to Ginter, the most important were those usually referred to as cardinal: justice, moderation, prudence and valour, although the first of them is often replaced with *philanthropia*. Thanks to the application of new research methods – mainly *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, the author was able to demonstrate the often surprising connections between Evagrius and ancient and Byzantine texts (each of the subchapters devoted to subsequent emperors is opened with an introduction concerning the use of his predecessors' texts by the Antiochian historiographer). The Byzantinologist proved that when constructing the image of emperors, the author of *Ecclesiastical History* made use of the conceptions formulated not only by other ecclesiastical historians (Eusebius, Socrates Scholasticus, Sozomen, Theodoret) and representatives of Neoplatonism (Synesius), but also by the Neopythagorean philosopher Philostratos, or classical authors such as Thucydides and Euripides⁴.

Finally, it is worth noticing that the lecture is conducted very clearly, and the presented material was organised in a clear manner, allowing the less attentive

⁴ See K. Ginter, *Nieznanne źródła „Historii kościelnej” Ewagriusza Scholastyka*, “Vox Patrum”, 2000, volume 38/39, pp. 521-535.

reader to easily and quickly return to the interesting problems. To sum up, it only remains to express regret over the fact that Kazimierz Ginter's work was published so late, over ten years after the dissertation had been defended. At the same time, it is impressive that the presented findings remain valid.

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