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## RECEPTION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES IN PSELLOS'S IMPERIAL ORATIONS DEDICATED TO ROMANOS IV DIOGENES

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**Abstract:** This study analyzes the biblical motifs used by Michael Psellos, one of the most learned figures of the eleventh-century Constantinople intellectual elite, as prototexts for his imperial orations dedicated to Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes. A comparative analysis of his imperial orations and the Holy Scriptures reveals Psellos's exceptional knowledge of the Bible. Through biblical motifs, Psellos affirmed the Byzantine imperial ideology in practice, which held that the Byzantine emperor was God's emissary on Earth.

**Keywords:** Holy Scriptures, imperial orations, Michael Psellos, Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes, eleventh century.

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### 1. Introductory Remarks

In the mid-eleventh century Byzantine Empire, the imperial oration (βασιλικὸς λόγος) or encomium (ἐγκώμιον), a special form of epideictic rhetoric, surpassed the early Byzantine epoch's imperial *logoi* in beauty and style.<sup>1</sup> The man responsible for this state of affairs was Michael Psellos, an esteemed Byzantine philosopher, rhetorician, and politician.

It has been well-established that imperial orations relied on ancient culture, but they were also permeated with the Christian dogma of the Romans. Byzantine imperial orations utilized pagan motifs, predetermined virtues for poetic praise that adorned ancient heroes, and numerous allusions and metaphors taken from the works of classical writers. They were also interwoven with the universal ideology of the divine origin of Roman imperial power;

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is the result of research conducted within the project *History Today, Challenges and Temptations*, conducted at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš (No. 336/1-6-01). For information on imperial speeches in the early Byzantine period, see: Radošević 1993: 267–287; Radošević 1994: 7–20; Vanderspoel 1995; Radošević 1999/2000: 17–26; Lauritzen 2007: 1–10; Lauritzen 2010: 217–226; Lauritzen 2012: 113–125; Lauritzen 2013: 309–319.

the belief that the *basileus*, as Christ's chosen one, fulfilled God's will on Earth; and that Byzantium was a kingdom protected by the Almighty.<sup>2</sup>

A comparison of Byzantine rulers to heroes from the Holy Scriptures was a common compositional segment of imperial orations.<sup>3</sup> Byzantine scholars often used Moses, Solomon, David, Noah, and Zerubbabel as value parameters in extolling their patrons.<sup>4</sup> At times, Byzantine writers would explicitly reference the segments of the Holy Scriptures they used. More often, however, they simply alluded to biblical stories or crafted metaphors referencing them. They also used Old or New Testament heroes as paradigms without citing the Bible as their source. This was the case with Psellos's orations dedicated to Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes (1068–1071).

Michael Psellos composed four encomia for Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes: public orations 18, 19, 20, and 21 in George Dennis's critical edition.<sup>5</sup> The imperial orations are not of equal length. The first imperial oration, oration 18, was created at the beginning of 1068, shortly after Romanos Diogenes was enthroned as emperor, which Psellos himself states in the speech's title (Εἰς τὸν βασιλέα τὸν Διογένην ὅτε ἐβασίλευσεν).<sup>6</sup> This is the longest of Psellos's orations dedicated to Emperor Diogenes and consists of seventy-five lines. The second encomium, oration 19 (Τῷ αὐτῷ ὡς ἐν ἐγκωμίῳ προσχρήματι), contains forty-six lines and is dedicated to the emperor's departure on a campaign against the Turks. It was most likely created in March 1068.<sup>7</sup> The third, oration 20, has forty-nine lines and was read to the ruler during a formal dinner at the imperial palace before his campaign against the Turks (Προσφώνησις πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα κῦρ Ῥωμανὸν τὸν Διογένην παρὰ τῶν πολιτῶν ἐν κλητορίῳ).<sup>8</sup> The oration was created either in February/March 1069 or sometime between January 1070 and the end of March 1071. The fourth and the last imperial oration, number 21 (Συντακτῆριος πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα), is the shortest of all Psellos's orations dedicated to Diogenes. It consists of twenty-three lines and refers to the emperor's (αὐθις) 'renewed' (second or third) military campaign that was undertaken in the east of the empire.<sup>9</sup> It can thus be assumed that it was created in either the spring of 1069 or the spring of 1071.<sup>10</sup>

Since there is no translation of Psellos's imperial orations into any world language, the praises addressed to Emperor Romanos Diogenes are available only in Ancient Greek. Michael Psellos wove biblical quotations or allusions sourced from the Holy Scriptures into all four imperial orations dedicated to Romanos IV Diogenes. In the textual analysis segment of this paper, the King James Version was consulted for the discussion of

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<sup>2</sup> For the form of presentation used in encomiums, choice of metaphors, and thematic arrangement, see *Menander Rhetor*; Previale 1949: 72–105; Previale 1950: 340–366; Pertusi 1959; Hunger 1978: 88, 120–132; Magdalino 1994: 413–488; Nixon – Rodgers 1994; Heath 2004; Angelov 2007: 29–180; Jeffreys 2008: 831–833.

<sup>3</sup> For the motif of comparing Byzantine emperors with biblical heroes in Byzantine rhetoric, see Radošević 1994: 16 and note 34.

<sup>4</sup> Radošević 1987: 81.

<sup>5</sup> *Psellos, Orationes panegyricae*: no. 18, 19, 20, 21, 175–186.

<sup>6</sup> *Psellos, Orationes panegyricae*: no. 18, 175.

<sup>7</sup> *Psellos, Orationes panegyricae*: no. 19, 180; Vries de-van der Velden 1997: 277.

<sup>8</sup> *Psellos, Orationes panegyricae*: no. 20, 182.

<sup>9</sup> *Psellos, Orationes panegyricae*: no. 21, 185.

<sup>10</sup> *Psellos, Orationes panegyricae*: no. 21, 185; Vries de-van der Velden 1997: 277.

references, allusion and metaphorical expressions.<sup>11</sup> The Koine greek Old Testament quotations were taken from an edition of the Patriarchal Text available online.<sup>12</sup> All English translations of these quotations are mine.

## 2. Historical Context

Romanos Diogenes was a prominent Byzantine military commander. He held the title of *vestarches* and was the duke of Serdica toward the end of Emperor Constantine X Doukas's reign (1059–1067).<sup>13</sup> After Constantine X's death, Diogenes attempted to usurp the throne and was exiled to his native Cappadocia, where he remained until the ruling structures in the capital, led by the *augusta* Eudokia Makrembolitissa, Constantine X's widow, recalled him to Constantinople and appointed him magistrate and *stratelates* (μάγιστρος τιμᾶται καὶ στρατηλάτης προβέβληται παρὰ τῆς βασιλίδος).<sup>14</sup> Despite a promise given to her husband and the oath taken before the *synkletos* and the synod not to remarry, Empress Eudokia married Romanos Diogenes on January 1, 1068<sup>15</sup> after Patriarch John Xiphilinos (1063–1075) annulled Eudokia's oath to Constantine X.<sup>16</sup> As the *augusta*'s husband, Romanos IV Diogenes became emperor and agreed to respect the hereditary ruling rights of Constantine X and Eudokia Makrembolitissa's sons.<sup>17</sup>

Following the death of Emperor Constantine X, times were uncertain. Representatives of the Doukas dynasty led by Caesar John Doukas, the brother of the late Emperor Constantine X Doukas,<sup>18</sup> came under threat. Michael Psellos then composed an imperial oration for Eudokia Makrembolitissa that justified and extolled the *augusta*'s decision to remarry.<sup>19</sup> In the oration, the court philosopher explained the significance of the *augusta*'s political act and her great sacrifice. During Diogenes's reign, Michael Psellos grew close to the emperor. Once a close friend of Caesar John Doukas, who had sought to keep the Doukas dynasty on the throne, Psellos had now befriended the very man who threatened to destroy the Doukai.

The reign of Romanos IV Diogenes was a time of serious foreign policy crisis for the empire, with the Seljuk Turks regularly attacking Syria and Armenia.<sup>20</sup> During his reign, Diogenes personally led three military campaigns against the Turks. His very last military campaign ended in a catastrophic defeat for the Romans at the Battle of Manzikert on August 26, 1071.<sup>21</sup> This Byzantine defeat paved the way for the Turks to move further into

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<sup>11</sup> *King James Bible*. (2008). Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1769)

<sup>12</sup> Diakonia, A. (n.d.). Αποστολική Διακονία της Εκκλησίας της Ελλάδος. [https://apostoliki-diakonia.gr/bible/bible.asp?contents=old\\_testament%2Fcontents\\_Genesis.asp&main=OldTes](https://apostoliki-diakonia.gr/bible/bible.asp?contents=old_testament%2Fcontents_Genesis.asp&main=OldTes)

<sup>13</sup> *Atal.*: 73–75; *Scyl. Cont.*: 76; *Zonaras* III: 684; Cheynet 1980: 436; Cheynet 1990: 74–75; Cheynet 1991: 69 and note 37.

<sup>14</sup> *Atal.*: 75–76; *Scyl. Cont.*: 78; *Zonaras* III: 685.

<sup>15</sup> Oikonomidès 1963: 125.

<sup>16</sup> *Atal.*: 75–76; *Scyl. Cont.*: 78–80 ; *Zonaras* III: 685–687; Oikonomidès 1963: 126–127; Šaranac Stamenković 2020: 112.

<sup>17</sup> Maksimović 1984: 91; Oikonomidès 1963: 127; Šaranac Stamenković 2013: 65–69.

<sup>18</sup> Polemis 1968: 34–41.

<sup>19</sup> *Psellus, Orationes panegyricae*: no. 12, 123–126; Šaranac Stamenković – Ljubomirović 2019: 75–89.

<sup>20</sup> *Psellos, Chronographia*: 734, 740, 742; *Atal.*: 75, 79; *Scyl. Cont.*: 82; *Zonaras* III: 688, 690.

<sup>21</sup> Vriesde-van der Velden 1997: 274–310; Cheynet 1998: 131–147

Asia Minor.<sup>22</sup> The Normans also captured Bari, the last Roman stronghold in Italy, in 1071, and began attacking the Balkans.<sup>23</sup>

Romanos IV remained the Byzantine emperor until his defeat and capture at Manzikert. When the news of his defeat reached Constantinople, a short-lived joint rule of Augusta Eudokia Makrembolitissa and her son Michael was established.<sup>24</sup> However, after learning that Diogenes had been released and had reached an agreement with the Seljuk Turks, at the instigation of Caesar John Doukas, Romanos IV Diogenes was deposed and blinded.<sup>25</sup>

### 3. Textual Analysis

#### 3.1. The First Imperial Oration

Michael Psellos begins this imperial oration with:

Νῦν ἡμέρα σωτήριος, νῦν ἐλευθερία κακώσεων, νῦν τῆς νέας Ῥώμης ἰσχὺς καὶ κραταιώσεις, νῦν βασιλείας πύργος ἀκλόνητος, τείχος ἀκράδαντον, στῦλος ἄσειστος, θεμέλιος ἐπὶ τῶν τοῦ κυρίου ἐστηρυμένους χειρῶν. νῦν ἐπεσκέψατο κύριος τὴν κληρονομίαν αὐτοῦ.  
Now is [begun] the day of salvation, freedom from troubles, the strength and power of the new Rome, the steadfast tower of the empire, the unbreachable wall, the firm pillar, the foundation supported by the hands of the Lord. Today the Lord has visited His **inheritance**.<sup>26</sup>

The term κληρονομίαν (inheritance) is taken from the Bible,<sup>27</sup> specifically the Old Testament, and refers to the people of Israel, whom God acquired for Himself when He made a covenant with them. The term is thus synonymous with the concept of a chosen people and originally referred to the Jews and the Jewish state. However, Michael Psellos

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<sup>22</sup> Cheynet 1980: 410–438; Angold 1984: 21–26; Cheynet 1990: 348.

<sup>23</sup> Angold 1984: 32.

<sup>24</sup> Maksimović 1984: 92.

<sup>25</sup> *Psellos, Chronographia*: 768, 770; *Atal.*: 130–132.

<sup>26</sup> *Psellus, Orationes panegyricae*: no. 18, 175. 3–7.

<sup>27</sup> Psalm 78: 62 (77: 62): “He gave his people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with **his inheritance**.” (καὶ συνέκλεισεν εἰς ῥομφαίαν τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν κληρονομίαν αὐτοῦ ὑπερεῖδεν). ΚΛΗΡΟΝΟΜΙΑ is a word in Greek that, in addition to its usual meaning of inheritance within the context of inheritance law, also had a political connotation of selecting assembly members by sortition, i.e. by lottery (κλήρος). As with many other words and concepts from Ancient Greek, through the translation of the Septuagint, this term acquired a specific Semitic theological color and usage. In the Old Testament, it is commonly used to translate the term *nachalah*, which, as in Greek, signifies inheritance within the context of inheritance law (Genesis 31: 14; Deuteronomy 32: 9). In Judaism, the term began to denote the possession of land that a Jewish tribe received from God in the Promised Land (a political and theological connotation) (Joshua 11: 23). However, this possession was not granted in perpetuity, and it was dependent on obedience to God’s law: If Israel did not follow God’s laws, the possession of κληρονομία would be taken from them and given to other nations (the theology of Exile). However, the imaginative and rich theological usage of the term κληρονομία does not end there. It is not used only with humans as subjects but is also attributed to God: Israel is God’s κληρονομία (Isaiah 47: 6). In the New Testament, as in the Old Testament, there is a legal dimension to the term when it denotes inheritance (Mark 12: 7; Luke 20: 14), property, or possession (Acts 7: 5). The specifically Christian usage builds upon the theological aspect of the term’s use in the Old Testament and further enhances it through its connection with Christ, where κληρονομία is salvation in Christ, and in Hebrews 9: 15, it is equated with the Kingdom of Heaven established by the New Covenant; see Kittel 1965: 776–785.

seamlessly changes the referent of the term inheritance so that it refers to the Byzantine Empire, which he perceives as the Lord's inheritance.

Psellos continues his narrative, saying,

νῦν θεθάμεθα βασιλέα, οὔτε τὴν κλησιν οὔτε τὸ σχῆμα ψευδόμενον, μέγαν ὡς γίγαντα, ὑψηλὸν τῷ βραχίονι, κραταιὸν τῇ δυνάμει, καὶ ἄοπλον φοβερὸν καὶ ὀπλισμένον ἰσχυρόν τε καὶ ἀνυπόστατον, τὸ μὲν εἶδος τῷ ὄντι τυραννίδος ἄξιον, τὴν δὲ καρδίαν ἀνθάμιλλον τῷ προφήτῃ Δαυίδ.

Today we have seen a *basileus*, who is neither false in origin nor appearance, great as a giant, **with a stretched out arm**, of extraordinary strength, who even unarmed is yet formidable [to his enemies], who when armed is strong and unstoppable, of a countenance truly worthy of an autocrat, **with a heart equal to that of the prophet David**.<sup>28</sup>

It is evident that the philosopher is comparing the emperor to God by using the biblical expression 'with an outstretched arm' (ἐν βραχίονι ὑψηλῷ), which refers to the God of the Israelites fighting for the Jews in a Holy War.<sup>29</sup> This quotation depicts God as a warrior. Yet in the same sentence, Psellos also directly compares Diogenes to King David. The Bible states:

...καὶ οὐκ ἦν ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ τελεία μετὰ κυρίου θεοῦ αὐτοῦ καθὼς ἡ καρδία Δαυιδ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ  
... and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.<sup>30</sup>

There is no doubt that Michael Psellos has introduced a biblical motif into the imperial ideology. David is the founder of a dynasty, the ideal Jewish ruler, a victor over the eternal enemies of the Jews, and as such, a prototype of the Messiah.<sup>31</sup>

In the central part of the imperial oration, Michael Psellos describes the new ruler, saying:

...θεοειδῆς τὸ κρυπτόμενον σεμνὸς τὰ πρὸς αἴσθησιν, λαμπρὸς τὰ πρὸς νόησιν, εὐσταθὴς τὸ φρόνημα, εὐφυὴς τὸ ἐνθύμημα, τὸν νοῦν ὀξύς, τὴν γλῶτταν ταχύς, ῥήτωρ καὶ στρατιώτης ὁμοῦ. ὦ τοῦ παραδόξου θαύματος τὰ διηρημένα, λόγους καὶ ὄπλα, τόξα καὶ μέτρα, ῥήματα καὶ ὀρμήματα, σοφίαν καὶ πανοπλίαν, εἰς μίαν τὴν σεαυτοῦ παραδόξως ψυχὴν συνήγαγες, καὶ πολεμεῖς μὲν ὑψηλῷ τῷ βραχίονι, ὀμιλεῖς δὲ ἐλευθέρως καὶ στρογγύλως τῇ γλῶττι, καὶ ἔοικας ποταμῷ ἅμα καὶ ὄχετῷ. ὁ μὲν γὰρ νοῦς ποταμηδὸν ἐπιχεῖ τὰ νοήματα, ἡ δὲ γλῶττα ἡρέμα ἐπικλύζει τὴν ὄχετηγίαν τῶν λέξεων.<sup>32</sup>

...you are godlike even in what is unseen, restrained from sensual things, of brilliant mind, firm in opinion, shining in intelligence, sharp-witted, eloquent, simultaneously a rhetorician and a soldier. **What an extraordinary marvel: what is divided [between people]**, speech and arms, bows and poetry, words and courage, wisdom and belligerence, you have unusually combined in yourself. **And you fight with a stretched out arm**, and speak aristocratically with a refined tongue, and **you are simultaneously like a river and a canal**. For your mind flows like a river with thoughts, while your tongue peacefully irrigates channels of words.

<sup>28</sup> Psellus, *Orationes panegyricae*: no. 18, 176. 18–23.

<sup>29</sup> Exodus 6: 6.

<sup>30</sup> I Kings 11: 4.

<sup>31</sup> Matthew 21: 9; Luke 1: 32; John 7: 42; Romans 1: 3. Alexander 1977: 217–237; Marjanović-Dušanić 1997: 197–200.

<sup>32</sup> Psellus, *Orationes panegyricae*: no. 18, 177. 32–42.

The antithesis between body and soul dominates the beginning of these lines and is depicted as the antithesis of visible and hidden. With the words ‘what is divided [between people],’ the philosopher masterfully alludes to Christ who unites the incompatible in the Epistle to the Galatians:

οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλληγ, οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ· **πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἰς ἐστὲ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.**  
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.<sup>33</sup>

Psellos then repeats the biblical expression used at the beginning of the imperial oration in which he portrays Diogenes as a Warrior-God.<sup>34</sup> He concludes by comparing Diogenes to a sage and alluding to the Book of Sirach, in which a sage is compared to rivers:

He filleth all things with his wisdom, as Phison and as Tigris in the time of the new fruits. He maketh the understanding to abound like Euphrates, and as Jordan in the time of the harvest<sup>35</sup>...I also came out as a brook from a river, and as a conduit into a garden. I said, I will water my best garden, and will water abundantly my garden bed: and, lo, my brook became a river, and my river became a sea.<sup>36</sup>

It is possible that Psellos’s mention of channels in the imperial oration refers to the irrigation systems of great rivers such as the Tigris and Euphrates to which the sage is compared.

The end of the central segment of the imperial oration terminates with a description of Diogenes’s military policy, in Psellos exclaims:

οὗ δὲ ἀνάγκη συνασπισμοῦ καὶ συντάξεως, καὶ κατὰ μέτωπον στήση καὶ ἑκατέρω τῷ κέρα, καὶ ὑπερφαλαγγίσεις καὶ περιελίξεις τὴν φάλαγγα καὶ ἐξαλλάξεις τοὺς λόγους καὶ μετασηματίσεις τὴν τάξιν καὶ στρατηγικῶς **ἐμβριμήματι** καταπλήξεις τὸ βάρβαρον.  
And when the need arises to form more densely grouped units and a battle line, you will stand in the front line with both wings of the army, and you will spread the phalanx and encircle the enemy phalanx, and you will reposition the lochoi and change the battle order, and with strategic **indignation**, you will terrify the barbarian.<sup>37</sup>

There is no doubt that Psellos compares Diogenes waging war against the Turks with God waging war against the Jews by using the biblical term for indignation (ἐμβριμήματι), which is identical to the one used to describe God’s indignation when guiding the hand of Nebuchadnezzar to achieve His victory over the Jews.<sup>38</sup>

### 3.2. The Second Imperial Oration

Michael Psellos concludes the final paragraph of the imperial oration by expressing

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<sup>33</sup> 3 Galatians: 28.

<sup>34</sup> Exodus 6: 6.

<sup>35</sup> Sirach 24: 25–26.

<sup>36</sup> Sirach 24: 30–31.

<sup>37</sup> *Psellos, Orationes panegyricae*: no. 18, 178. 50–54.

<sup>38</sup> Lamentations 2: 6.

good wishes to Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes:

Δυναμωθείς ἐπὶ πάντα ἐχθρὸν καὶ πολέμιον, καὶ στεφανωθείς τὴν κεφαλὴν ἐπὶ τροπαίοις λαμπροῖς, κοσμηθείς τοῖς κατὰ τῶν βαρβάρων ἀριστεύμασι, καὶ νίκαις δορυφορηθείς πολλαῖς. **μὴ συγκαύσαι σε ἡμέρας ὁ ἥλιος, μηδὲ ἡ σελήνη τὴν νύκτα, ἀλλὰ σε στῦλος ὀδηγήσοι φωτὸς, καὶ σοὶ διασπείθῃ μὲν θάλασσα,** ὑπαναχωρήσαιεν δὲ ποταμοί, καὶ ἄγγελοι σε φωτὸς ἐπὶ πάσαν γῆν παραπέμψαιεν.

May God grant you strength over every enemy and opponent, and crown your head with a victory wreath for glorious battles. May He adorn you with feats over barbarians, and protect you with many victories. **May the sun not strike you by day, nor the moon by night, but may a pillar of fire lead you [at night], and may the sea be parted for you,** and rivers drawn back, and may angels of light accompany you throughout the land.<sup>39</sup>

Psellos also skillfully intermixes his lines with verses taken from the Psalms:

ἡμέρας ὁ ἥλιος οὐκ ἐκκαύσει σε καὶ ἡ σελήνη τὴν νύκτα  
The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.<sup>40</sup>

Drawing from the Book of Exodus, the philosopher draws a parallel between the Byzantine Emperor Romanos Diogenes and the Old Testament religious leader Moses, directly referencing the pillar of fire (ἐν στύλῳ πυρός)<sup>41</sup> and the parting of the sea (καὶ ἐσχίσθη τὸ ὕδωρ).<sup>42</sup>

### 3.3. The Third Imperial Oration

In the introductory segment of this imperial oration, Michael Psellos uses the biblical term ‘indignation’ (ἐνβριμῆματι)<sup>43</sup> – which he also used in the first speech composed for Romanos IV Diogenes – wishing to draw a parallel between the fate experienced by the enemies of Byzantium in battle with the emperor and the defeat of the Jews by God. Thus, the scholar says:

ἀστράπτει μὲν σου ἡ κεφαλὴ τῷ χρυσοῦ στέμματι, οὐδὲν δὲ ἤττον καὶ ἡ δεξιὰ φοβερῶ δόρατι· καὶ προσηνεῖ μὲν ἡμᾶς τοὺς πολίτας ὀρεῖ ὄμματι, καταπληκτικῶ δὲ τοὺς βαρβάρους καταδειμαίνει βλέμματι. γλυκεῖα μὲν ἡ πρὸς ἡμᾶς σου φωνή, δριμεῖα δὲ ἡ πρὸς τοὺς ἀντικειμένους βοή. ἰλαρὸν μὲν ἡμῖν σου τὸ πρόσσωπον, φοβερὸν δὲ τοῖς ἀντιμαχομένοις τὸ στρατηγικόν σου **ἐμβριμῆμα**.<sup>44</sup>  
A golden crown gleams on your head, no less gleaming than the terrifying spear in your right hand. And you look at us citizens with a kind eye, while the barbarians are terrified of your fierce gaze. To us, your voice is sweet, but to the enemies, it is a sharp roar. You look at us with a joyful face, while your strategic **indignation** is terrifying to the opponents.

<sup>39</sup> Psellos, *Orationes panegyricae*: no. 19, 181. 36–41 – 182. 42–43.

<sup>40</sup> Psalm 121: 6 (120: 6).

<sup>41</sup> Exodus 13: 21.

<sup>42</sup> Exodus 14: 21.

<sup>43</sup> Lamentations 2: 6.

<sup>44</sup> Psellos, *Orationes panegyricae*: no. 20, 182. 4 – 183. 5–11.

### 3.4. The Fourth Imperial Oration

In the central segment of this imperial oration, Michael Psellos wishes Emperor Romanos Diogenes success in overcoming the enemies of the empire:

Ἀστράναις ἐκ τῆς ἐφῶς εἰς τὴν ἀνατολὴν αὐθις διαβαίνων, ὡς ἥλιος ἀπεῖρω κύκλω, πλουσίῳ φωτί, καὶ καταλάμπναις μὲν καὶ τὸ ὑπήκοον, καταφλέξαις δὲ καὶ σύμπαν τὸ βάρβαρον. ἐπὶ τούτοις κατασβέσαις μὲν **πῦρ Βαβυλώνιον**, χαλινώσαις δὲ λεόντων ὀρμάς καὶ **πῦρ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐφελκύσαις** κατὰ τῆς δυσμενοῦς φάλαγγος. **θάλασσαν διαρρήξαις** καὶ **ποταμὸν ἀνακόψαις** καὶ **καταπολεμήσαις τὸν Ἀμαλήκ**.<sup>45</sup>

May you shine like lightning from the east, returning to the east like the sun in an endless, full circle of light, and may you illuminate your subjects, may you incinerate all barbarism. Accordingly, may you extinguish **the Babylonian fire**, restrain the lion's attacks, and **draw fire from heaven** against the enemy army. May you **part the sea** and **cut off the river**, and may you **overcome Amalek**.

By using verses from the Book of Daniel, the Byzantine philosopher compares the barbarians to the Babylonians. In other words, Psellos associates the Babylonian attack on the Jews—the chosen people—with the barbarians' attack on the Byzantine Empire, thus drawing a parallel between the people of Byzantium and God's chosen people through analogy.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the enemy army was to be defeated by 'fire from heaven' (καταβήσεται πῦρ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ).<sup>47</sup> Here, Psellos depicts Emperor Romanos Diogenes as Moses by using the familiar motif of parting the sea (καὶ ἐσχίσθη τὸ ὕδωρ)<sup>48</sup> and comparing the Turkish sultan Alp Arslan (1063–1072), the chief enemy of Byzantium, with Amalek.

The Old Testament states:

καὶ ἐτρέψατο Ἰησοῦς τὸν Ἀμαλήκ καὶ πάντα τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν φόνῳ μαχαίρας.  
And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, here Diogenes also resembles Joshua, as the emperor's 'cutting off of the river' in Psellos's text undoubtedly echoes Joshua's crossing of the Jordan and his entrance into the Promised Land.<sup>50</sup>

The imperial oration continues with Psellos exclaiming:

Νεφέλη μὲν σκιάζουσα ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς ἀφέλοιτό σου τὸν καύσωνα, **στῦλος δὲ φωτὸς** ὀδηγήσαι σε τῆς σῆς ἀσπίδος προπορευόμενος. **ἐξομαλίσαι σοι κύριος πᾶν ὄρος ὑψηλὸν καὶ ἀκρότομον, καὶ ἀναπληρώσαι μὲν σοι τὰς φάραγγας, τὰ δὲ σκολιὰ ποιήσαι εὐθύτατα.**

May the cloud over your head protect you from the heat, may a **pillar of fire** guide you before your shield. **May the Lord level every high and steep mountain for you, and fill every valley for you, may He straighten the curves for you.**<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Psellus, Orationes panegyricae*: no. 21, 185. 7–12 – 186. 13–14.

<sup>46</sup> Daniel 3: 15–30.

<sup>47</sup> 2 Kings 1: 10.

<sup>48</sup> Exodus 14: 21.

<sup>49</sup> Exodus 17: 8–16.

<sup>50</sup> Joshua 3: 13–17.

<sup>51</sup> *Psellus, Orationes panegyricae*: no. 21, 186. 15–19.



By referencing the pillar of fire, it is certain that the philosopher is making a direct allusion to Moses.<sup>52</sup>

However, Psellos's next sentence is an allusion to the Book of Isaiah, which describes the beginning of God's intervention during the Jews' return from Babylonian exile by employing a messianic note:

Φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ Ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν Κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν. **πᾶσα φάραγξ πληρωθήσεται, καὶ πᾶν ὄρος καὶ βουνὸς ταπεινωθήσεται· καὶ ἔσται πάντα τὰ σκολιὰ εἰς εὐθείαν, καὶ ἡ τραχεῖα εἰς πεδία.**

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.<sup>53</sup>

The concluding segment of this oration represents an apex of sorts of the entire speech and also expresses his primary guidance addressed to the Byzantine emperor:

Εἰ δὲ καὶ καταλλάξαις τὰ διεστώτα καὶ **τὸ τοῦ φραγμοῦ ἀφέλοις μεσότοιχον**, καὶ τὸ δυσμενὲς εὐμενὲς ποιήσας τῷ κράτει σου, βασιλικώτατον δὴ τοῦτο καὶ τῷ ὄντι νικητικώτατον.

If you reconcile what is divided and **if you break down the middle wall of partition** and if you turn enemies into friends, that would be the most exalted imperial and truly victorious [deed].<sup>54</sup>

There is no doubt that here the philosopher is alluding to Christ's unifying work as described in the Epistle to the Ephesians:

Αὐτὸς γὰρ ἔστιν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν, ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφοτέρα ἓν, καὶ **τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας.**

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, **and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.**<sup>55</sup>

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

In all four of Psellos's imperial orations addressed to Emperor Romanos Diogenes, which total 193 lines, there are nineteen direct or indirect biblical motifs. The first and longest oration contains seven motifs, the second has three, the third has one, and the fourth and shortest contains eight, the most of all the orations. Of the nineteen biblical motifs with which the imperial orations are imbued, seventeen were drawn from the Old Testament, and only two from the New Testament. This is somewhat logical, as the Old Testament heroes, with their innate and acquired virtues, were suitable figures to compare with the Byzantine emperors to whom the orations were addressed.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Exodus 13: 21.

<sup>53</sup> Isaiah 40: 3–4.

<sup>54</sup> *Psellus, Orationes panegyricae*: no. 21, 186. 24–27.

<sup>55</sup> Ephesians 2: 14.

<sup>56</sup> To some extent, the situation is reversed in the case of laudatory speeches dedicated to ecclesiastical figures. For example, speech 17 in the edition by George Dennis addressed to John Mauropous contains twelve Old Testament motifs and over twenty New Testament motifs in 869 verses; *Psellus, Orationes panegyricae*: no. 17, 143–174.

It is clear that the compositions of Psellos's imperial orations largely imitate the compositional schema of the encomia composed by the rhetoricians who preceded him. Of course, with the choice of theme left to the individual rhetor,<sup>57</sup> Psellos used those motifs he deemed appropriate for the current political moment. He lived during a time when the Turkish threat loomed large over the Byzantine Empire. Psellos thereby demonstrated that he was not only a good interpreter of Byzantine state ideology but was also an excellent scholar of the Holy Scriptures.

The imperial orations he composed for Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes demonstrate that Michael Psellos was a distinguished expert in theology and Christology. Even at the end of his career, Psellos gladly referenced the Holy Scripture in his works.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Cormack 1976: 41–60.

<sup>58</sup> Psellos died while serving under the successors of Emperor Romanos Diogenes.

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**РЕЦЕПЦИЈА СВЕТОГ ПИСМА  
У ПСЕЛОВИМ ЦАРСКИМ ГОВОРИМА  
ПОСВЕЋЕНИМ РОМАНУ IV ДИОГЕНУ**

**Резиме**

У раду се анализирају мотиви из Светог писма које је Михаило Псел, један од најученијих првака цариградске интелигенције XI века, користио као прототекст за царске говоре посвећене цару Роману IV Диогену. Михаило Псел саставио је за Романа Диогена четири енкомиона. Реч је о енкомионима број 18, 19, 20 и 21 у критичком издању Џорџа Дениса. Сва четири царска говора Псел је проткао библијским цитатима или алузијама из Светог писма. Први и најдужи царски говор садржи седам мотива, други има три, трећи – један, а четврти, најкраћи царски говор садржи највише библијских мотива – осам. Од укупно деветнаест библијских мотива којима су прожети царски говори, седамнаест припадају Старом завету, а само два припадају Новом завету. То је логично будући да су старозавтни јунаци својим урођеним и стеченим врлинама били врло погодни за поређење са византијским царевима којима су говори намењени. Псел је састављао говоре у периоду када се турска опасност надвијала над Византијским царством, те је показао да је не само добар тумач владарске државне идеологије Византије – према којој је византијски цар Божији изасланик на Земљи – већ и одличан познавалац Светог писма.

**Кључне речи:** Свето писмо, царске беседе, Михаило Псел, цар Роман IV Диоген, 11. век.

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