

## About the Clergy and Religion

### From *Peri Strategias*

*Anonymous, the 6<sup>th</sup> century*

The following are excerpts from an anonymous Constantinople treatise on military strategy, *peri strategias*.<sup>1</sup> It is traditionally dated the 6<sup>th</sup> century, but some scholars think it was composed in later centuries.<sup>2</sup> The treatise opens with a general discussion of the state, society, and its class of citizens, among which it addresses the clergy, religion and their place in society.

#### [1. Statecraft and Its Divisions]

... writers, public speakers, physicians, farmers, and those in like professions.

Priestly service might also be classed as a profession, but I do not think it should be, nor it be listed as a science, unless the simple possession of special knowledge qualifies as a science. It is, after all, something sacred and far above our natural capabilities. Neither should the legal profession called a science.

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#### [2. The Reasons for the various Classes in the State.]

Holy orders have been established for the worship of God, the first and universal cause, by whom and through whom all things came into being and are governed in the ways of goodness known to him alone.

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<sup>1</sup> *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, translation and notes by George T. Dennis. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Texts, 1985.

<sup>2</sup> Irfan Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs: The 6<sup>th</sup> century*, Vol. I. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Texts, 1995, pp. 582-583.

[3. Officials]

The preceding chapters have explained the nature of the state and enumerated the classes of citizens and the reasons for their existence. But since each of these classes must be organized under a leader, we have to say something about such officials. First of all, what should be their qualifications, in general and in particular? What should be their principal concerns? What sorts of assistance might they require?

As far as the qualifications expected of the priests are concerned, it is clear that they ought to be experienced in the laws of God and be of excellent character. Their assistants must also be pure and should carry out the duties imposed on them by the bishops and priests in a meek and dignified manner. Such matters; however, lie outside our competence and belong rather to the Apostles and those who observe their way or life.

All persons in authority should possess natural intelligence, be uprights in their way of life, experienced in the matters committed to them, in control of their actions and especially of their emotions, and not be more concerned about themselves than about their subjects.

...

[47. Envoys]

Envoys are sent by us and to us.

...

The envoys we send out should be men who have the reputation of being religious, who have never been denounced for any crime or publicly condemned. They should be naturally intelligent and public spirited enough to be willing to risk their own lives.

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