PREFACE

Long ago Jane Austen wrote in *Pride and Prejudice*: 'It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.' Somewhat varying on this theme, one could say: it is a truth universally acknowledged that every single book, regardless its contents, must be in want of a preface. Both Byzantine law books and the present study have complied with this maxim.

However, the preface to this study is considerably less majestic and far-reaching than the prefaces to Byzantine law books. The present preface lacks theological and philosophical considerations. It does not contain quotations from the Bible in order to reflect on law and justice. It does not refer to a preceding law book and omits a dispositio. It does not include a survey of the sources of Byzantine law and lacks a rubric providing an invocatio, author's name and date. It does not even aim at introducing the present study: this will - hardly surprisingly - be done in the introduction.

Then what is the point of this preface? First, to provide a number of rather down-to-earth preliminary remarks.

The first remark concerns names occurring in this study. These names have been written in accordance with the system used in the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. The second remark concerns the dating of Byzantine legal manuscripts. Unless indicated otherwise, these manuscripts are dated in accordance with the recently published first volume of the Frankfurt repertoire listing the manuscripts containing secular law. A third remark concerns the list of abbreviations and the bibliography. The list of abbreviations merely records the names of periodicals referred to in the bibliography and the sources used most frequently and quoted in an abridged way throughout this study. The bibliography lists the works consulted and referred to in an abbreviated form in the footnotes. The list of abbreviations and the bibliography should be used in conjunction with one another.

The main purpose of this preface is, however, of a completely different nature. A book is mostly written by one author who is entirely responsible for its contents. This does not imply that the book concerned has come into existence through one person only. On the long and sometimes very slippery road which has eventually led to the genesis of this study, I have encountered many persons who supported me in every possible way. First and foremost Prof. Dr. N. van der Wal must be mentioned. It is he who initiated me into the subject-matter of this study, prevented me from making many missteps, ever encouraged me to continue and was and still is always prepared to listen, to teach and to talk. Moreover, he showed me the close link that exists between writing a thesis and writing a detective story. He has truly been my first antecessor in the field of Byzantine law. My deeply felt, but inadequately expressed gratitude also extends to my supervisors Prof. Dr. B.H. Stolte and Prof. Dr. J.H.A. Lokin. Their support and guidance equal those of Van der Wal's.

I am greatly indebted to my former teachers Prof. Dr. W.J. Aerts, Prof. Dr. D. Holwerda and Prof. Dr. S.L. Radt for giving me their valuable and indispensible comments on many details.
and issues. I am also very grateful to Prof. Dr. J. Roldanus who through his comments in all probability stopped me from adding a new heresy to the long and impressive list of existing ones and thus prevented me from making the world of Byzantine theology even more complex and intricate than it already is.

My gratitude extends to the members of the Department of Byzantine Law at the Max-Planck-Institut für europäische Rechtsgeschichte in Frankfurt/M., especially to Dr. L. Burgmann, Prof. Dr. M.Th. Fögen and Dr. A. Schminck for the many stimulating conversations and for their ever continuing interest and encouragement, both during and after my visit to Frankfurt in 1991. Of my colleagues in the Department of Legal History in the Faculty of Law of the Groningen University, three must be mentioned in particular: R.J.H. Brink LL.M. whose help proved to be indispensable in the final stages of the genesis of this study: its lay out; Dr. Roos Meijering who translated the Dutch version of chapter 6 into English and never failed to give me her advice and moral support, and Lia Scheffer M.A. who indefatigably typed earlier drafts of this study, prevented me from dating a manuscript to the first second of the eleventh century, taught me how to use Nota Bene and helped me in compiling the indices.

The research was supported by the Foundation for History, Archaeology and Art History, which is subsidized by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO).

I also owe many thanks to the Stichting ‘Het Groningsch Rechtshistorisch Fonds’ and to the Aemilius Papinianus-Stichting in Utrecht for their financial contributions to the publication of this thesis.

It almost goes without saying that the present study to a large extent owes its very existence to what may be alluded to as the home front. Many friends and relatives who for the sake of brevity must remain unnamed, but are certainly not forgotten, never ceased to take a keen interest and never stopped to provide the sometimes highly necessary inspiration. I confine myself to mentioning the names of those who represent my home front: Alida Everts, and Joanneke Goebertus, my ‘paranimfen’; and above all Anneke Ypma, my wife, who translated this book into English (with the exception of chapter 6). She thus participated in its creation and saw it all happen, from the cradle to the press. She witnessed all ups and downs from within and bore the brunt of every season. I cannot thank her enough for that. Having met and married her has truly proved to be my good fortune.